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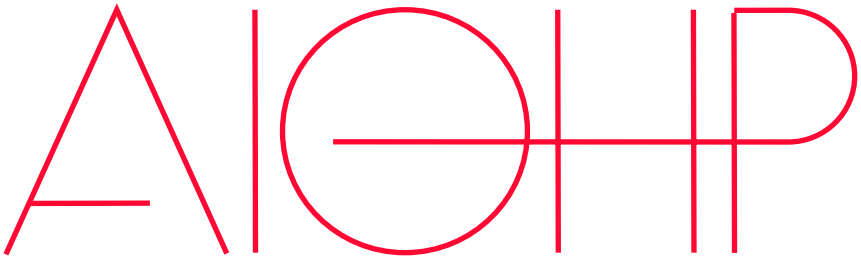

CONTENT

Teleology in Aristotle's Practical Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

This article contributes to the debate on the relation between Aristotle's practical and theoretical philosophy. It argues that his practical philosophy depends to a considerable extent on his teleological conception of nature. This thesis is primarily directed against scholars who maintain that Aristotle does not derive political and human relations from natural or cosmic conditions. The paper defends David Sedley's anthropocentric interpretation of Aristotle's natural teleology and shows how Aristotle applies teleological explanations to power relations among human beings – among men and women and among freemen and natural slaves – and their purposes and goals. The article focuses on Aristotle's human 'function' (*ergon*) argument, which is a teleological argument at the centre of his practical philosophy. It argues that this argument, which Aristotle presents to define 'human flourishing' or 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*), depends on his definition of man as the only 'living being that has language and reason' (*zôon logon echon*). It further claims that the dispute about whether Aristotle identifies *eudaimonia* only with a life of contemplation or whether *eudaimonia* includes a political life can be clarified by referring to the natural purpose of *logos*.

* For many astute and helpful comments on this article I thank Nevim Borçin, Thornton Lockwood, and Carlo Natali. For instructive discussions on the problem of the meaning and translation of "*teleiotatên*" at *Eth. Nic.* 1.6, 1098a16–18, I thank Maria Elena De Luna and Francisco L. Lisi.

1. THE RELATION BETWEEN ARISTOTLE'S PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL PHILOSOPHY

An important controversy in Aristotle scholarship concerns the relation between his practical and theoretical philosophy. Many scholars claim that Aristotle's practical philosophy – mainly ethics and political philosophy – is independent of his theoretical philosophy and in particular of his theory of being.[1] In contrast, Andreas Kamp argues that Aristotle's political philosophy depends especially on his theory of 'substance' (*ousia*), which is often considered the centre of his theoretical philosophy (Kamp 1985, 11, 353).[2]

1 For a long list of works that defend this view, see Kamp (1985, 9). Kamp lists works by William L. Newman, Alexander Grant, Werner Jaeger, H. v. Arnim, Hellmut Flashar, Günther Bien, Hans Jochim Krämer, Manfred Riedel, Eckart Schütrumpf, Wolfgang Kullmann, and several others which claim the independence of Aristotle's practical philosophy just en passant. Aristotle himself claims that the various sciences are autonomous and that usually one science cannot prove "the theorems of a different one" (*An. Post.* 1.7, trans. Barnes).

2 Apart from Aristotle's theory of 'substance' (*ousia*), Kamp considers his theory of *logos* and his conception of *soul-nous* to be the central instances of the dependence of his political theory on his theoretical philosophy; see Kamp's synopsis (1985, 353–362). Partly in line with Kamp, Irwin (1980) claims that Aristotle's ethics depends on his psychological and metaphysical doctrines. For a volume which argues that Aristotle's ethics is considerably more similar to a science (as conceived in his two *Analytics*) than usually assumed, see Henry and Nielsen (eds. 2015). The editors explain on p. 2: "The central question of the volume is: To what extent do Aristotle's ethical

While Kamp claims that Aristotle's political philosophy depends on his metaphysics, Fred D. Miller, Jr. persuasively argues that it depends on his philosophy of nature: "Aristotle's politics may be characterised as 'naturalistic', in the sense that it assigns a fundamental role to the concept of nature (*phusis*) in the explanation and evaluation of its subject-matter" (Miller, Jr. 1995, 27). Similarly, David Keyt (1991, 120, 140) characterises Aristotle's peculiar "standpoint in political philosophy" by three "basic ideas": "that the polis is a natural entity like an animal or a man", "that man is by nature a political animal", and "that the polis is prior in nature to the individual".[3]

This article contributes to the debate on the relation between Aristotle's practical and theoretical philosophy. Its main thesis claims that Aristotle's practical philosophy – both his *Nicomachean Ethics* and his *Politics*[4] – depends to a considerable extent on his teleological conception of nature. This means that Aristotle conceives of human beings as animals and as part of nature and that he applies teleological explanations to the goods, goals, and purposes of humans, to the power relations among them, and to their parts, such as 'reason' or 'speech' (*logos*). Aristotle's teleological conception of nature is a central element of his philosophy of nature and of his biology, which constitute important parts of his theoretical philosophy. The main thesis of this paper is primarily directed against scholars such as Günter Bien who maintain "that in Aristotle

treatises make use of the concepts, methods, and practices that the *Analytics* and other works characterise as 'scientific'?"

3 Cf. Miller Jr. (1995, 27–66, 335). Both Keyt (1991) and Miller Jr. (1995, 45–56) understand Aristotle's claim that the *polis* "is by nature (*physei*) prior (*proteron*) to the household and to the individual" (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a18–19) to be an independent third thesis and theorem. For a different interpretation of the three "basic ideas" that are mentioned and for reasons why Aristotle's claim of the natural priority of the *polis* is not an independent third thesis or theorem, but rather functions as a strong argument for the thesis that man is by nature a political animal, see Knoll (2017). For a persuasive "reinterpretation of Aristotle's political teleology" and a "denial that Aristotle treats the polis as a natural substance with its own internal principle of motion", see Yack (1991, 16); cf. Yack (1993, 92). As early as 1980, Kullmann (1991, 114) argues: "Any kind of substantial interpretation of the political is far from Aristotle's mind." In agreement with Kullmann, Pellegrin (2020, 93) concludes that "the city is not a natural substance (οὐσία)". On the contrary, Trott (2014, 51) claims that Aristotle holds that the *polis* has "a nature of its own". In his chapter "A Biological Politics?", Pellegrin (2020, 67–93, 93) examines *Pol.* 1.2 and concludes, as in several of his articles, that "we must firmly resist the temptation to make of Aristotle an ancestor of sociobiology". Cf. Pellegrin (2015, 45, 2017). For the thesis that Aristotle understands the city as a product of both nature and art and for the distinction between a 'natural city' and an 'ethical city' and, correspondingly, between a 'primary teleology' and a 'secondary teleology', see Leunissen (2017).

4 Ernest Barker even claims that "the teleological view" "is everywhere present in the *Politics*" (Barker 1959, 276). In line with the main thesis of this article, Miller Jr. (1995, 18) claims: "Natural teleology also has an important place in Aristotle's practical science". Similarly, Leunissen (2017, 112) explains: "The clearest indication that Aristotle is conducting natural science in the *Politics* lies in his use of the teleological principle that nature does nothing in vain"; cf. Leunissen (2017, 107).

political-human relations are not derived from natural, cosmic or in any case extra-human conditions".[5]

Section 2 of this article introduces Aristotle's teleological conception of nature and briefly shows how he applies teleological explanations to organic parts, living beings, and natural processes. In order to clarify the thesis that Aristotle's practical philosophy depends on his natural teleology, it is necessary to at least outline the underlying interpretation of teleology. In the literature, whether Aristotle's teleology is about explanation or causation is a disputed issue. This article presupposes that it is about both and that, for Aristotle, teleological explanations correspond to the structure of the world. The primary reasons for this view are that Aristotle believes that a scientist can know the truth about the principles and (final) causes of both the cosmos and the sublunary world of nature and that language, thought, and the world form a unity.[6]

Section 3 examines the place of human beings in Aristotle's teleological conception of nature and his teleological explanation of the relationship of plants, animals, and humans. Aristotle considers human beings to be gregarious animals (*Hist. animal.* 1.1, 488a7–10, cf. *Protrepticus* 51, 5–6 = Aristotle 2017, 47). As he conceives human animals to be part of nature and the natural order, he holds that they can be best understood by teleological explanations. Section 3 defends David Sedley's (1991) anthropocentric interpretation of Aristotle's natural teleology against Monte Ransome Johnson's (2005) criticisms. Aristotle understands nature as a hierarchical order of purposes in which plants exist for the sake of animals and animals for the sake of men. Nature displays an order of rank in which the different parts have different values. According to the natural hierarchy, the better living beings, the better parts of them, and the better persons are destined to rule or govern over the worse. Section 3 shows how Aristotle applies teleological explanations to power relations among human beings and their purposes and goals; in particular it examines the relation between men and women and between freemen and natural slaves.

Section 4 scrutinises Aristotle's human 'function' (*ergon*) argument –usually referred to below as the *ergon* argument – which is at the centre of his practical philosophy and of his philosophy of man. This argument, which establishes what 'human flourishing' or 'happiness'

5 Bien (1980, 198), my trans. Although Keyt (1991), Knoll (2017), and Miller Jr. (1995) do not explicitly engage with Bien's view, the texts they examine and their arguments refute it.

6 For Aristotle's understanding of science as knowledge of the four causes, see e.g. *Met.* 1.1-3, 980a22–983b5. Aristotle explains about his fundamental model of the relationship between reality, thought, speech, and writing: "Now spoken sounds (*phônê*) are symbols (*symbola*) of affections in the soul (*en tê psychê pathêmatôn*), and written marks symbols of spoken sounds. And just as written marks are not the same for all men, neither are spoken sounds. But what these are in the first place signs of— affections of the soul—are the same for all; and what these affections are likenesses (*homoiômata*) of—actual things (*pragmata*)—are also the same" (*De interpr.* 16a3–8, trans. J. L. Ackrill).

(*eudaimonia*) is for the human animal, is clearly a teleological argument. It claims that man's ultimate good and purpose – *eudaimonia* – can be discovered by first detecting man's specific 'function' (*ergon*) in the natural order. The *ergon* argument gives strong support to the thesis that Aristotle's practical philosophy and his philosophy of man depend to a considerable extent on his teleological conception of nature. Section 4 argues that the *ergon* argument depends on Aristotle's definition of man as the only 'living being that has language and reason' (*zôon logon echon*). Section 5 demonstrates that an important dispute about Aristotle's understanding of *eudaimonia* can be clarified through an adequate understanding of Aristotle's *ergon* argument and by referring to the natural 'purpose' (*telos*) of *logos*. As the human function and task is an active life of *logos*, and as the natural purpose of *logos* is to give man a sense to both perceive and to communicate what is advantageous, good, and just, it is evident that *eudaimonia* includes a political life, which is the life of a citizen dedicated to politics and public affairs. This is a strong argument against scholars who claim that Aristotle identifies *eudaimonia* only with a life of contemplation.

2. ARISTOTLE'S TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPTION OF NATURE

Aristotle's teleology, often summarised by the phrase "Nature does nothing in vain", is a central and rather innovative part of his philosophy.[7] Aristotle's teleological conception of nature is inextricably linked to his conception of final causality.[8] Organic parts, living beings, and natural processes have purposes, which are connected to some good (*De somn. vig.* 2, 455b17–18). On the level of living organisms, this means that all their parts exist for the sake of something, have a given 'purpose' (*telos*) or a specific 'task' or 'function' (*ergon*), and serve some particular 'good' (*agathon*). For example, the specific function and given purpose of the eye is to see and that of the hand or claw is to grasp some objects. To have such parts that serve different purposes is good for the well-being of a living organism. In order to explain the parts of a natural organism and their presence, Aristotle refers to the purpose and good that they serve (*De part. animal.* 1.1, 639b12–21). The front teeth exist *for the sake of* cutting the food and the molars *for the sake of* grinding it (cf. *Phys.* 2.8, 198b24–26). Plants possess roots that grow into the earth to take in nutrition and leaves exist to provide shade for the fruit and to protect it (*Phys.* 2.8, 199a23–29). In the literature, it is sometimes not appreciated enough that Aristotle's natural teleology is not linked only to his concept of a final cause, but also to his view that everything has a given 'task' or 'function' (*ergon*). As he explains in the *Politics*, "all things are

7 *De caelo* 1.4, 271a33; *De somn. vig.* 2, 455b17–18; *De incessu* 2, 704b15–18; *Pol.* 1.2, 1253a9; *Pol.* 1.8, 1256b15–22. For a discussion of "Aristotle's dialectical interrogation of his predecessors", see Johnson (2005, 7, 94–127).

8 Aristotle identifies the 'end', 'goal', or 'purpose' (*telos*) of something natural with "that for the sake of which" (*to hou heneka*) (*Phys.* 2.2, 194a27–29; *Phys.* 2.3, 194b32–33).

defined by their function (*ergon*) and capacity (*dynamis*)" (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a23, trans. H. Rackham; cf. *Meteor.* 4.12, 390a10–12).[9]

Living beings are composed of form and matter. According to Aristotle's terminology, form and matter are 'nature' (*physis*), while living beings are 'by nature' (*physei*) (*Phys.* 2.1, 192b8–12; *Phys.* 2.2, 194a12–13). The form coincides with the final cause (*Phys.* 2.7, 198a25–26). The 'complete' or 'perfect' (*teleia*) actualisation of the form is the 'goal' (*telos*) of living beings, which have an internal 'drive' (*hormê*) to actualise their specific form and potential entirely. Aristotle also calls such a causal principle or internal impulse to 'change' (*kinêsis*) 'nature' (*physis*) (*Phys.* 2.1, 192b18–22; *Phys.* 3.1, 200b12–13).[10] For instance, one kind of seed contains as its inherent goal the form of an olive tree, another kind the form of a human being (*Phys.* 2.4, 196a31–33). These seeds contain the 'potential' or 'possibility' (*dynamis*) of becoming an olive tree or a human being and the forms inherent in them urge out of themselves to the continuous change up to their completed 'realisation' (*energeia*) of this 'potential'. The form of the human being is inherent in the seed of the father, which acts on the matter provided by the mother. The father's seed contains both the final and the efficient cause of the newly emerging human. However, the human being and the reality of its species-form exist earlier than the seed. Thus, as Aristotle frequently declares, "a human being generates a human being" (*Phys.* 2.7, 198a26–27; *Met.* 9.8, 1050a3–7; cf. *Phys.* 2 and 3).

On the level of nature as a whole, plants, animals, and human beings are part of a hierarchical order of purposes, in which everything has a given purpose and function. Such a broader understanding of teleology, which restricts it not only, as some scholars do, to the "internal structure and functioning of individual organisms", is persuasively defended by David Sedley (1991).[11] In his interpretation of a classical and disputed text from the *Physics*, Sedley (1991, 184, cf. 182–187) demonstrates that, for Aristotle, natural processes are directed towards goals. Winter rainfall partly serves "to make the crops grow" and summer heat partly "serves to ripen the olives of Attica".[12] In line with this, the disputed passage from the *Physics* concludes with Aristotle's statement: "Therefore action for an end is present

9 Aristotle also identifies the 'goal' or 'end' (*telos*) of something with its *ergon* (*Eth. Eud.* 2.1, 1219a8; *De caelo* 2.3, 286a8–9). Nature makes the organs of a living being for their 'task' or 'function' (*ergon*) (*De part. animal.* 4.12, 694b14).

10 Aristotle distinguishes between four kinds of 'change' (*kinêsis*): (a) change in quantity (e.g. growth or increase versus decrease), (b) change in quality (e.g. a human being becoming educated), (c) change in space or locomotion, and (d) change in essence (coming to be and passing away) (*Phys.* 3.1, 201a11–15).

11 Sedley lists several works that defend a narrower interpretation of Aristotle's teleology and several others that defend the broader interpretation he supports with his article (Sedley 1991, 179). Among the works that defend a narrower interpretation is Nussbaum (1978).

12 For other discussions of the "rainfall passage", see Leunissen (2020, 45–46) and the literature she refers to in note 10.

in things which come to be and are by nature" (*Phys.* 2.8, 199a7–8, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye; cf. *Phys.* 2.8, 199a29–30). Nevertheless, Aristotle does not reduce change in nature and natural processes to final causes and teleological explanations. Besides those, there are also mechanical and material processes going on in nature. Those latter processes are linked to the four elements and their underlying matter. Fire has an inner urge upward and is hot, earth strives by nature downward and is cold. However, just as things that exist by nature and natural processes cannot be reduced to teleological explanations, neither can they be reduced to material causes and mechanical necessity, a reduction defended by several of Aristotle's predecessors (cf. Gotthelf 1987[13]; Leunissen 2010, 215–217; Leunissen 2020, 44–50; Sedley 1991, 182).

In *De caelo*, Aristotle presents a version of the core principle of his natural teleology in which he equates nature with God: "God and nature create nothing that is pointless" (*De caelo* 1.4, 271a33, trans. J. L. Stocks). However, for him the world is an eternal and uncreated order. There exists no creator outside of the world.[14] Aristotle's God is merely a cosmological and physical God, who, like the God of deism, does not care about the world and human beings. God is a pure 'Mind' or 'Reason' (*nous*) whose eternal activity is "thinking on thinking" (*noêsis noêseôs*) (*Met.* 12.7, 1072b14–30; 12.9, 1074b15–35). Such a God is the ultimate final cause that moves everything in the cosmos as being loved and desired (*Met.* 12.7, 1072a26–b4). Not only the heavenly bodies, but also the contemplative 'intellect' (*nous*) of the philosopher strives towards the divine and eternal. Living beings strive towards God by eternally replicating and reproducing their species-form, by eternally transmitting it from parent to offspring (*De an.* 2.4, 415a27–b7; *De gener. animal.* 2.1, 731b18–732a11). God is contained in the "nature of the universe" both as "something separate and by itself" and as the order of all its parts (*Met.* 12.10, 1075a12–14, trans. H. D. Ross). This eternal order of all the parts of the world is a teleological and hierarchical order of purposes. Since ever and forever the divine has been and is contained in nature as its teleological order. As Aristotle explains, "On such

13 Allan Gotthelf designates his "interpretation of Aristotle's conception of final causality" as the "'irreducible potential' interpretation". This means that "the development, structure, and functioning of living organisms cannot be wholly explained" and ontologically reduced to material or 'chemical' elements and the actualisation of their potentials. Rather, it can be explained by the actualisation of specific forms or by "primarily the actualization of a single potential for an organism of that form", which cannot be reduced to material or 'chemical' elements (Gotthelf 1987, 212, 227–230).

14 For the persuasive claim that "Aristotle rejects the external, divine, and providential model of teleology as presented, for instance, in Plato's *Timaeus*", see Leunissen (2020, 42). In line with Leunissen, in his book Johnson (2005, 3) wants to "reopen a line of Aristotelian interpretation" that "recognized that the most important feature of Aristotelian teleology is that it presents an alternative to the anthropocentric, creationist, and providential schemes of teleology that were favored by Aristotle's predecessors".

a principle, then, depend the heavens and the world of nature" (*Met.* 12.7, 1072b14, trans. H. D. Ross). In the sublunary world of nature, organic generation and development mainly consist of an eternal replication and actualisation of all the existing forms.

3. THE PLACE OF HUMAN BEINGS IN ARISTOTLE'S TELEOLOGICAL CONCEPTION OF NATURE

In his article mentioned above, Sedley (1991, 179–180) claims that the structure of Aristotle's "global teleology" is "*anthropocentric*", which means that it is "centred on man" and that "man is the ultimate *beneficiary*" of the natural world.[15] Nevertheless, Sedley (1991, 179) is aware that Aristotle "believes in a cosmic hierarchy in which god, not man, is the best thing". To substantiate his anthropocentric interpretation of Aristotle's teleology, Sedley quotes a well-known passage from the *Politics* which claims

> that plants exist for the sake of animals and the other animals for the good of man, the domestic species both for his service and for his food, and if not all at all events most of the wild ones for the sake of his food and of his supplies of other kinds, in order that they may furnish him both with clothing and with other appliances. If therefore nature makes nothing incomplete or without purpose, it follows that nature has made all the animals for the sake of men (*Pol.* 1.8, 1256b15–22, trans. H. Rackham, slightly modified).

In this passage, Aristotle understands nature as a hierarchical order of purposes, in which plants exist for the sake of animals and animals for the sake of men.[16] The quote also contains one of several statements in Aristotle's work that summarise the core principle of his natural teleology: "nature makes nothing incomplete or without purpose". Sedley (1991, 180–181) persuasively defends his anthropocentric interpretation of the passage against attempts to dismiss its seriousness. Nevertheless, not all scholars have been persuaded by this defence.[17] Therefore,

15 More than 15 years after the publication of his article in 1991, Sedley (2007, 202–03) still defends his view that an "anthropocentric teleology" is present in Aristotle's natural philosophy.

16 It seems clear that the passage implies that plants too exist for the sake of men. One could object that in the biological treatises Aristotle never mentions that the purpose of animals is to provide food for humans and that this purpose is not consistent with the end of animals to strive towards God by eternally replicating and reproducing their species-form (see Section 2). However, considering that Aristotle thinks in hierarchies, the eternal replication and reproduction of animals can be interpreted as a goal that is at the same time a means for the higher goal to serve eternally as food, a tool, and a resource for men.

17 In line with Sedley, Johnson (2005, 231) argues against several unconvincing interpretations of this passage (W. Wieland, M. Nussbaum, D. M. Balme, R. Wardy). Nonetheless, Johnson (2005, 231–237) also criticises Sedley's anthropocentric interpretation. For instance, Johnson (2005, 232) argues that the passage does not say that seasons and weather "exist and function

it is appropriate to adduce some more passages from Aristotle's practical philosophy that elucidate his view. The main reason why Aristotle thinks that plants exist for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of men, is his conviction that "man is the best of the animals" (*Eth. Nic.* 6.7[18], 1141a33–34, trans. H. D. Ross; cf. *Protrepticus*[19]). There are two main reasons why the human being is the best of the animals. First, only man possesses 'speech' and 'reason' (*logos*)" (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a9–10; cf. Section 5). Second, in man a divine element – 'intellect' (*nous*) – is present. Man's divine intellect enables him to lead a life of contemplation, which is a divine life.[20] Aristotle conceives of nature as a hierarchical order in which humans have a much higher value than plants and animals. In the context of his reflections on the hierarchy of the different parts of the soul, Aristotle makes an important generalisation: "The worse is always (*aiei*) for the sake of the better; this is manifest alike in the products of art and in those of nature" (*Pol.* 7.14, 1333a21–23, my trans.). For Aristotle, the natural hierarchy of purposes corresponds to the natural hierarchy of beings. In the cosmos, God is the highest being and purpose; in the sublunary world of nature it is the human being.[21]

Monte Ransome Johnson (2005, 5) understands the refutation of Sedley's anthropocentric interpretation of Aristotle's teleology to be one of the "main objectives" of his book. Johnson (2005, 4) defines 'anthropocentrism' as "the position that human beings are the center – or rather the end – of everything; everything has value or is good only in relation to human beings".

primarily for the benefit of man" (Sedley 1991, 180). This argument misses the point because Sedley does not substantiate this claim with this passage from the *Politics*, but with Aristotle's statements in *Phys.* 2.8, 198b16–199a8. Johnson (1985, 232) further argues against Sedley's interpretation that the natural 'function' (*ergon*) of plants and animals is not primarily the benefit of man. However, neither Aristotle's passage nor Sedley's interpretation makes such a claim. Existing for the benefit of man is not the function of plants and animals, but their purpose.

18 All references to *Eth. Nic.* are to I. Bywater's edition (W. D. Ross divides the chapters in a different way than Bywater).

19 In the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle explains: "certainly a human is the most honorable of the animals down here, hence it's clear that we have come to be both by nature and according to nature" (51, 5–6, trans. by D. S. Hutchinson and M. R. Johnson, Aristotle 2017, 47).

20 Aristotle argues that contemplation is the highest form of activity since it is based on 'intellect' (*nous*), which is the best part of human beings and apprehends the best knowable objects. Since he conceives of God as 'intellect' (*nous*) and God's activity as contemplation, human 'intellect' (*nous*) and human contemplation are akin to God and God's eternal activity (*Eth. Nic.* 10.7, 1177a19–21, 1177b26–1178a8; cf. *Met.* 12.6-10).

21 While in the texts of his practical philosophy Aristotle usually clearly sets humans apart from other animals, his zoological writings rather display a gradualist view. However, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* he attributes 'prudence' (*phronêsis*) to some animals (*Eth. Nic.* 6.7, 1141a26–28; cf. Labarrière 1990 and Pellegrin 2020, 87). In the literature, the "anthropological difference" is a disputed issue (for the term, see Keil and Kreft (2019, 4)). While Sorabji (1993, 13) holds that Aristotle "allows for a sharp intellectual distinction between animal and man", Steiner (2005, 76) claims that he recognises "a continuum between human beings and animals".

This is, however, not Sedley's definition of anthropocentrism. Sedley (1991, 179, 196) is aware that, for Aristotle, the "world is *theo*-centric": God, not man, is the end of everything and the highest good and value. Sedley's interpretation of Aristotle's teleology limits the meaning of 'anthropocentrism' to "sublunary nature" and its hierarchy, in which the human being is "the highest beneficiary of all" (Sedley 1991, 196). On the basis of his definition of anthropocentrism, Johnson (2005, 5) criticises *the* anthropocentric interpretation of Aristotle's teleology. He argues that "it would be a grave mistake to infer from Aristotle's discussion of the instrumental value of plants and animals that Aristotle therefore holds that such natural substances do not at the same time have intrinsic ends independent of their instrumental value to humans". To be sure, the intrinsic end of plants and animals is to completely or perfectly actualise both their species-form and their specific 'function' or 'task' (*ergon*) and 'good' (*agathon*) (*Met.* 9.8, 1050a21–23). The specific functions and goods of plants and animals are to reproduce, flourish, and survive. In contrast to plants, animals have additional functions and goods because they are capable of moving in space, perceiving their environment, and having proper pleasures (*De an.* 2.4, 415a26–27; *Eth. Nic.* 10.5, 1176a3–9; cf. Johnson 2005, 220, 232–235, 241). The observation that plants and animals have intrinsic ends and natural functions and goods does not contradict Sedley's anthropocentric interpretation of Aristotle's teleology and he does not deny this anywhere. Johnson (2005, 226) accurately observes that Sedley does not mention or confront the arguments of two passages from *Eth. Nic.* 6.7–8, 1141a20–33, a33–b14, which are supposed to "contain the undoing of the anthropocentric interpretation". As mentioned before, Johnson's criticism of Sedley, which is mainly based on Aristotle's statement that man is not the best thing in the cosmos, is not convincing because Sedley is aware of this hierarchy and limits his interpretation to sublunary nature. Johnson's criticism is also based on Aristotle's statement that "what is healthy and good is different for men and fish" (1141a22–23, my trans.; cf. Johnson 2005, 10, 226). To be sure, this shows that, for Aristotle, fish have an intrinsic good and function. Nevertheless, this does not change Aristotle's view that their ultimate purpose is to serve as food for humans.

Sedley's anthropocentric interpretation of teleology and in particular *Pol.* 1.8, 1256b6–26 provides the first evidence that Aristotle's "philosophy of man" (*hê peri ta anthrôpeia philosophia*)[22], which is a philosophy of human affairs and human conduct, is connected to his teleological conception of nature. The term "philosophy of man", which Aristotle introduces at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, is very close to the term "practical philosophy", because the main sub-disciplines of both sciences are ethics and political philosophy. Aristotle applies teleological explanations not only to organic parts, living beings,

22 For the term "philosophy of man", see *Eth. Nic.* 10.10, 1181b15.

natural processes, and the relationship of plants, animals, and humans, but also to the relationship between human beings. Right at the beginning of the *Politics*, where Aristotle presents the key ideas of his philosophy of man, he explains that men and women have a joint natural goal and task; therefore they unite "of necessity" (*anagkê*). Men and women couple not "from intentional choice but – as is also the case with other animals and plants – from a natural (*physikon*) striving to leave behind another that is like oneself". Men and women couple "for the sake of reproduction", which is the final cause of their union (*Pol.* 1.2, 1252a26–30; trans. C. Lord). As will be examined below, Aristotle also interprets the relationship between free Greeks and natural slaves as being necessary and goal-directed. The embeddedness of Aristotle's theory of natural slavery in his teleological conception of nature further demonstrates that his practical philosophy depends to a considerable extent on his teleology. It provides another argument against Bien's (1980, 198) view "that in Aristotle political-human relations are not derived from natural, cosmic or in any case extra-human conditions".[23]

The last paragraphs of Section 2 have elucidated that, for Aristotle, the world is "a single well-ordered system" (Sedley 1991, 194). As demonstrated, many parts of this teleological and hierarchical system have a given purpose and function. That most parts of this system are by nature unequal and differ in value are also central features. This is true of the various parts of which living beings are composed, of the different kinds of living beings, and of the different kinds of human beings. These inequalities and inequalities in value are the natural basis of the various natural hierarchies or nature-given rank orders. Thus Aristotle conceives the relation between reason and affects, soul and body, men and animals, masters and slaves by nature, Greeks and barbarians, men and women, parents and children, and capable and bad Greeks, in each case as a natural or nature-given order of rank.[24] In all these hierarchical relationships recognisable in the order of nature, the member or entity superior in rank is inherently better than the one inferior to it.

The natural order of rank specifies which living beings, which parts of them, and which people are destined to rule or govern and which ones are destined to be ruled or governed. According to the natural hierarchy, Aristotle sees it as natural and just when the higher rules over the lower and the better over the worse. Power relations exist by nature. Aristotle explains that "immediately from birth certain things diverge, some toward being ruled, others toward ruling" (*Pol.* 1.5, 1254a23–24, trans. C. Lord). Since power relations exist by nature, they are justified in their various forms. Rulership is not only a "natural" (*physei*), "necessary"

23 Bien (1980, 198) emphasises in particular that "the Aristotelian theory of slavery" is not derived "from natural, cosmic, or in any case extra-human conditions" (my trans.).

24 For a detailed study of the inequalities among human beings, see Knoll (2009, 135–140).

(*anagkaios*), and "beneficial" (*sympheron*) phenomenon, but also a universal one (*Pol.* 1.5, 1254a21–32).[25] The main reason why Aristotle considers rulership to be natural, necessary, and beneficial is that rulership makes it possible for different parts of an organism and different interacting humans to be able to perform the natural 'task' or 'function' (*ergon*) that belongs to them together (*Pol.* 1.5, 1254a28).[26] Aristotle's teleological argument regarding the relation between the many different parts of the order of nature claims not only that the "worse always (*aiei*) exists for the sake of the better", but also that rulership is "according to nature" (*kata physin*) or "by nature" (*physei*) and good both for the worse and for the better part (*Pol.* 7.14, 1333a21–22; *Pol.* 1.5, 1254b7–8, 13). Aristotle prepares his justification of the rule of free Greeks over natural slaves with the argument that there exist significant analogies between different kinds of relationships: between the different parts of the soul, between men and tame animals, and between men and women. Aristotle argues that it is

> evident that it is according to nature and advantageous (*kata physin kai sympheron*) for the body to be ruled by the soul, and the passionate part of the soul by intellect and the part having reason, while it is harmful to both if the relation is equal or reversed. The same holds with respect to man and the other animals: tame animals have a better nature than wild ones, and it is better for all of them to be ruled by man, since in this way their preservation is ensured. Further, the relation of male to female is by nature (*physei*) a relation of superior to inferior and ruler to ruled (*Pol.* 1.5, 1254b6–14, trans. C. Lord).

In all the mentioned relationships in the natural order, the different parts have different values. These differences in value are considerable and are the natural basis of the natural hierarchies between the different parts. These natural hierarchies exist 'by nature' (*physei*), which means that they are part of the natural order. They determine which part should rule and which part ought to be ruled. Therefore, the rule of the better parts over the worse is 'according to nature' (*kata physin*), which also means that it is good for both parts and allows both of them to perform their natural 'task' or 'function' (*ergon*). For example, it is obvious that it would be harmful for a person if he were ruled by his appetites and not by his reason. Such a rule would be 'against nature' (*para physin*) or against the hierarchical order of nature. As a consequence, it would

25 This passage, as Eckart Schütrumpf (1980, 29) accurately argues, is an important reason for refuting Bien's (1980, 198) view "that in Aristotle political-human relations are not derived from natural, cosmic or in any case extra-human conditions".

26 In *Historia Animalium*, Aristotle distinguishes animals that live gregariously from animals that live solitarily. Of the gregarious animals, some live politically and some are scattered. Animals that live politically "are those that have a function in common (*koinon ergon*), which not all the gregarious animals do. Of this sort are man, bees, wasps, ants, and cranes" (*Hist. animal.* 1.1, 488a7–10, my trans.).

prevent a person from performing his 'task' or 'function' (*ergon*) in the natural order (cf. Section 4).

Aristotle's justification of the rule of free Greeks over natural slaves, which has often been criticised, is a teleological argument. This justification is based on the natural principles of rulership introduced in the passage quoted above. After justifying the patriarchic rule of the man over the woman,[27] Aristotle makes an important generalisation:

> The same must of necessity hold in the case of human beings generally. Accordingly, those who are as different from other men as the soul from the body or man from beast—and they are in this state if their task or function (*ergon*) is the use of the body, and if this is the best that can come from them—are slaves by nature (*physei douloi*). For them it is better to be ruled in accordance with this sort of rule, if such is the case for the other things mentioned (*Pol.* 1.5, 1254b14–20, trans. C. Lord, slightly modified).

It is important to notice that Aristotle does not defend or justify "slavery as natural" or "as a natural practice", as is often claimed (Johnson 2005, 242–43).[28] With his distinction between slavery by nature and slavery by convention or law (*kata nomon*), like Plato before him, Aristotle criticises the common practice of Greeks enslaving Greeks (*Pol.* 1.6, 1255a4–7; cf. Knoll 2009, 149–156; Knoll 2020, 41–44). Aristotle considers such a practice to be 'against nature' (*para physin*) (*Pol.* 1.5, 1254a19). With his claim "that barbarian and slave are by nature (*physin*) the same thing", Aristotle identifies slaves by nature and barbarians (*Pol.* 1.2, 1252b9, trans. C. Lord).[29] Nevertheless, he provides precise criteria for those who fall into the category of a 'slave by nature'. In the crucial passage quoted above, Aristotle defines the slave by nature first by his low position in the hierarchical order of nature and second by using a key concept – *ergon* – of his teleology. First, a slave by nature is supposed to differ from a free Greek man as much as the soul differs "from the body or man from beast". Therefore, as for other inferior parts of the natural order – the body, the passionate part of the soul, tame animals, women – it

27 In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle calls the rule of the man over the woman "aristocratic", and in the *Politics* "political" (*Nic. Eth.* 8.10, 1160b32–34; *Pol.* 1.12, 1259b1; cf. Knoll 2009, 158–59). Aristotle also justifies the rule of the man over the woman with the implausible claim that women possess the ethical excellences or virtues not in a ruling but in a serving form (*Pol.* 1.13, 1260a20–24).

28 The prevailing view, which claims that with his theory of natural slavery Aristotle "justified the universal Greek practice of slavery" (Sorabji 2006, 23), is highly problematic.

29 Against this interpretation one might argue that Aristotle is just making explicit what the poets say. However, the preceding statement that the barbarians have no naturally ruling element, which he holds to be a main trait of slaves by nature, makes this reading implausible (*Pol.* 1.2, 1252b6–7; *Pol.* 1.5, 1254b22–23). For arguments against the widespread view that Aristotle identifies slaves by nature and barbarians, see Lockwood (2021).

is advantageous and better for a slave by nature to be ruled by his superior counterpart. Second, the purpose and the 'task' or 'function' (*ergon*) of the slave by nature is to work for his master and owner with his body. Aristotle even claims that 'nature' (*physis*) makes their bodies strong for their bodily services (*Pol.* 1.5, 1254b27–28).[30]

The tasks and functions of slaves by nature are natural and correspond to another definition Aristotle offers for them: slaves by nature participate "in reason only to the extent of perceiving it" and lack the "deliberative part of the soul" (*bouleutikon*) (*Pol.* 1.5, 1254b22–23, trans. C. Lord; *Pol.* 1.13, 1260a12, my trans.). In contrast to the free Greek, who is a master and rules 'by nature' (*physei*), the slave by nature cannot "foresee with the mind"; his task or function is to use his body to perform the labour that is necessary for his and his master's 'preservation' (*sôteria*). This is the natural 'goal' or 'purpose' (*telos*) of their union. As the union of free Greeks and natural slaves is for the sake of their preservation, "the same thing is advantageous for the master and the slave" (*Pol.* 1.2, 1252a30–34). The work of the slave provides the master with the free time and leisure that is necessary for him to perform his 'task' or 'function' (*ergon*) in the natural order. Aristotle determines the *ergon* of the human being with his famous human 'function' (*ergon*) argument, by which he achieves his core definition of 'human flourishing' or 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*).

4. ARISTOTLE'S HUMAN 'FUNCTION' (*ERGON*) ARGUMENT

Aristotle's human 'function' (*ergon*) argument is a primary reason that supports the thesis that his practical philosophy depends to a considerable extent on his teleological conception of nature. The *ergon* argument is at the centre of Aristotle's practical philosophy and of his philosophy of man.[31] This is elucidated by the fact that he presents it to establish what 'human flourishing' or 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*) is for the human animal. Aristotle conceives *eudaimonia* as "the highest of all goods achievable by action" and introduces a preliminary definition: "living-well (*eu zēn*) and doing-well" (*eu prattein*) (*Eth. Nic.* 1.2, 1095a16-19, trans. H. D. Ross).[32] Human flourishing or happiness is the ultimate 'good' (*agathon*) and final natural 'goal' or 'purpose' (*telos*) both for the individual and for the *polis*, the political association and organisation of individuals. The key concepts of the human function argument – *ergon*, *agathon*, *telos* – are at the same time the key concepts of Aristotle's teleology. The argument, which Aristotle presents in both the

30 In this context, Aristotle admits that nature often fails to achieve its aims; see *Pol.* 1.5, 1254b32–34; cf. *Pol.* 1.6, 1255b3–4.

31 For a precursor of Aristotle's *ergon* argument in Plato's *Republic*, see *Resp.* 1.352d–354c. For some of the main criticisms of the argument, see Johnson (2005, 218 n. 6).

32 Carlo Natali (2010) calls this the "nominal definition" of *eudaimonia*, a term that is widely used in the context of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*.

Nicomachean and *Eudemian Ethics*, is clearly a teleological argument or a teleological explanation of *eudaimonia* (cf. Johnson 2005, 218). For Aristotle, nature is a hierarchical order whose organic or living parts have given and specific functions and purposes. The *ergon* argument claims that the final cause of the human being, *eudaimonia* as man's ultimate good and purpose, can be discovered by first detecting man's specific 'function' or 'task' (*ergon*) in the natural order.

Before Aristotle presents his *ergon* argument in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he extensively criticises Plato's view that among the order of forms there is one highest form, the *one* universal form of the good (*Resp.* 6, 505a–517c; *Resp.* 7, 540a/b).[33] For Plato, everything good is good because it participates in the one universal form of the good. In contrast, Aristotle argues that there exist many different goods and a plurality of distinct meanings of the term 'good'.[34] Subsequently, in line with the first phrase of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he explains that different actions and arts aim at different goods. Nevertheless, the good is always the final cause; it is "in every action and pursuit the end (*to telos*)" or "that for whose sake everything else is done" (*Nic. Eth.* 1.5, 1097a18–24, trans. H. D. Ross). There exist many different goods and ends and not all are final goods and ends. However, the supreme and 'perfect good' (*ariston teleion*) achievable by human action is a final end. In line with the first paragraphs of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle calls this good and end 'human flourishing' or 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*) and argues that this "end of action" is 'self-sufficient' (*autarkes*) (*Nic. Eth.* 1.5, 1097a28–b21, trans. H. D. Ross).

In order to determine exactly what the supreme good or *eudaimonia* is, Aristotle introduces his *ergon* argument. In the Anglo-Saxon literature, '*ergon*' is usually only translated as 'function'. However, it can also mean 'task', 'performance', 'job', or 'work'.[35] Aristotle starts his argument with the suggestion that "a clearer account" of *eudaimonia* could be achieved by first ascertaining "the function of man (*to ergon tou anthrôpou*)". This approach to discovering man's ultimate good and purpose by first investigating man's specific function or task is based on Aristotle's view that in the natural order a thing's *ergon* and *agathon* are inextricably linked. Seeing and grabbing objects, the functions of eyes and hands, e.g., are good for the well-being of the human organism. At the beginning of the *ergon* argument and in line with the analogies he draws in *Physics* 2 and other texts between 'art' (*technê*) and 'nature' (*physis*), Aristotle

33 Johnson (2005, 217–18) rightly draws attention to the fact that in both the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle introduces the *ergon* argument "just after he argues that there is no univocal concept of the good, or at any rate no useful or attainable separate good". This article focuses just on the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

34 Like 'being', 'good' is referred to in all the ten 'categories' which Aristotle understands as the ten supreme kinds of propositions (*Eth. Nic.* 1.4, 1096a23–29).

35 In his translation of Aristotle's passages related to the *ergon* argument in *Eth. Nic.* 1.6, Olof Gigon renders '*ergon*' as '*eigentümliche Leistung*'.

refers to the functions and activities of both artists and organic parts and claims that everything has a function:

> For just as for a flute-player, a sculptor, or any artist, and, in general, for all things that have a function (*ergon*) or activity (*praxis*), the good (*tagathon*) and the doing well (*to eu*) are thought to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function. Have the carpenter, then, and the tanner certain functions or activities, and has man none? Is he naturally functionless? Or as eye, hand, foot, and in general each of the parts evidently has a function, may one lay it down that man similarly has a function apart from all these? What then can this be? (*Nic. Eth.* 1.6, 1097b22–33, trans. H. D. Ross, slightly modified).

An important assumption of Aristotle's argument is his generalised claim that "for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the doing well are thought to reside in the function". As in the order of nature all living organisms and all organic parts have functions or tasks that are good for their well-being, Aristotle assumes that the human animal too has such an *ergon* linked to his good.[36] Aristotle presents his answer to the question of what the specific human *ergon* is as the result of a process of elimination of possible candidates (cf. Natali 2001, 148):

> Life seems to be common even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man. Let us rule out, therefore, the life of nutrition and growth. Next there would be a life of perception, but *it* also seems to be common even to the horse, the ox, and every animal. There remains, then, an active life of the element that possesses reason (*leipetai dê praktikê tis tou logos echontos*) (of this, one part has reason in the sense of being obedient to reason, the other in the sense of possessing it and exercising thought). (*Nic. Eth.* 1.6, 1097b33–98a5, my trans. based on R. Crisp and H. D. Ross).

The first step of Aristotle's process of elimination is to exclude mere 'life' (*zên*), "the life of nutrition of growth". To reproduce, to flourish, and to survive are the specific functions and goods of plants. However, they are also functions and goods of animals and humans.

36 The *ergon* argument does not "set out to *prove* that human beings have a function". Rather, Aristotle assumes the existence of such a function, which follows from his "broader metaphysical functional determination thesis" (Shields 2015, 241–42). MacIntyre (1984, 148) explains that Aristotle's ethics "presupposes his metaphysical biology". For Aristotle, the human being is a gregarious animal which is part of nature and the natural order. Therefore, he extends his teleological interpretation of nature to the human being. For unconvincing attempts to deny that the *ergon* argument is based on a scientific and external perspective, on Aristotle's natural teleology, or on facts about human nature, see Gomez-Lobo (1989), McDowell (1995), and Nussbaum (1995); for an extensive criticism of Nussbaum's "internalist" interpretation, see Knoll (2009, 219–31).

The second step of Aristotle's process of elimination is to exclude "a life of perception". As mentioned before, compared to plants, animals have additional functions and goods because they are capable of moving in space, perceiving their environment, and having proper pleasures. However, as humans share these functions and goods with animals, they cannot be considered to be their specific functions and goods.

After eliminating two candidates, Aristotle claims that there only remains a life of the activity of the rational part of the soul as the specific human *ergon* (1098ab3–4). A few lines later he rephrases this first definition, determining the function or task of man as "an activity of the soul in accordance with reason or not without it" (*psychês energeia kata logon he mê aneu logou*) (1098a7–8, my trans.).[37] Aristotle further refines this first and main result of the *ergon* argument by adding that the human *ergon* is not only a life of the activity of the rational part of the soul, but a life of the excellent or virtuous activity of this part.[38] This definition of the human *ergon* leads Aristotle to his definition of *eudaimonia* as the "activity of the soul (*psychês energeia*) in accordance with excellence or virtue (*kat'aretên*), and if there are several excellences or virtues, in accordance with the best and most complete (*kata tên aristên kai teleiotatên*)"; he further adds that this must be over a "complete life" (*biô teleiô*) (*Nic. Eth.* 1.6, 1098a16–18, my trans.). Aristotle also explains that this definition of *eudaimonia* is just an outline or a rough sketch of the ultimate human good which needs to be filled in later. In fact, this is just Aristotle's core definition of *eudaimonia* and in the following sections he adds that a good and happy life also requires the goods of the body, such as health and beauty, and external goods, such as friends, wealth, and political power (*Nic. Eth.* 1, chapters 8–9, 1098b9ff.). In Books 2–5 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle fills in his outline or rough sketch of *eudaimonia* by investigating the ethical virtues, such as 'temperance' (*sôphrosynê*), 'courage' (*andreia*), and 'justice' (*dikaiosynê*), which are excellences of the character. In Book 6, he scrutinises the intellectual virtues, such as 'prudence' (*phronêsis*) and 'wisdom' (*sophia*), which are the main two excellences of human reason. After presenting his theory of the human 'soul' (*psychê*) at the end of Book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains that the distinction of excellences or virtues in 'intellectual' (*dianoêtikas*) and 'ethical' (*ethikas*) ones corresponds to the distinction of the parts of the soul.

Although Aristotle presents the result of his search for man's specific

37 Martha Nussbaum mistakenly claims that this is already the conclusion of the *ergon* argument (Nussbaum 1995, 113–14; cf. Knoll 2009, 224–31). The conclusion and core definition of *eudaimonia* is only phrased at *Nic. Eth.* 1.6, 1098a16–18.

38 Instead of talking about a refinement of Aristotle's first and main result of the *ergon* argument, Nevim Borçin suggests distinguishing between the *ergon* of man and the human good. She explains that the *ergon* of man is the activity of the rational part of the soul, while the human good is the good and noble performance of the human *ergon*. I am grateful to her for this persuasive suggestion.

function or task as the result of a process of elimination, it actually already presupposes his famous definition of a human being from the *Politics*, according to which man is the only 'living being that has language and reason' (*zôon logon echon*) (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a9–10; see Section 5).[39] This is also confirmed by the terminology he uses in both passages.[40] The *ergon* argument further presupposes Aristotle's related theory of the human 'soul' (*psychê*), to which he refers in the longer passage quoted above. However, he explains this theory only a few sections later, in *Nic. Eth.* 1.13. At the beginning of *Nic. Eth.* 1.13, he makes it clear that his understanding of the human soul is connected to his *ergon* argument and its conclusion, the core definition of *eudaimonia*. Aristotle divides the soul into one part that is 'non-rational' (*alogon*) and one that 'has reason' (*logon echon*) (*Nic. Eth.* 1.13, 1102a28). As the cause of nutrition and growth, the non-rational part is essentially vegetative. From this part, Aristotle distinguishes another non-rational part which he calls the 'appetitive part' (*epithymetikon*) and in general the 'desiring or striving part' (*orektikon*). This part is only somewhat non-rational because it shares in *logos* and, in persons of virtuous character, listens to and obeys reason (*Nic. Eth.* 1.13, 1102b30–31). In *Nic. Eth.* 6, Aristotle divides the part of the soul that 'has reason' (*logon echon*) and exercises thought in the proper sense in practical and theoretical reason. The specific virtue of practical reason is 'prudence' (*phronêsis*), which requires experience (*Nic. Eth.* 6, chapters 8–9). Theoretical reason is perfected through learning or studying and the actualisation of the intellectual virtue Aristotle calls 'wisdom' (*sophia*).[41] These two intellectual excellences or virtues correspond to the two forms of life that enable 'human flourishing' or 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*). The life of contemplation of the

39 This claim does not imply that the *Politics* was written before the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Rather, it is likely that the *Politics* was written after the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This is indicated by the back-references to Book 5 of *Eth. Nic.* (which corresponds to Book 4 of the *Eudemian Ethics*); *Pol.* 3.9, 1280a18; *Pol.* 3.12, 1282b 19–20. It is also suggested by Aristotle's mention of a future political treatise at the end of *Eth. Nic.* 10.10, 1181b12–23, which in all likelihood refers to the eight Books of the *Politics* (cf. Knoll 2011, 128–130). Although the definition of man as the only living being that has *logos* is only phrased in *Pol.* 1.2, Aristotle had already developed it in Book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This definition is at the centre of both his *ergon* argument and of his theory of the human 'soul' (*psychê*). This theory distinguishes between one part that is 'non-rational' (*alogon*) and one that 'has reason' (*logon echon*) (*Nic. Eth.* 1.13, 1102a28; cf. *Nic. Eth.* 1.6, 1097b3–4). The latter wording is identical with *Pol.* 1.2, 1253a9–10, which additionally focuses on the distinctions between the nature of human beings and other higher animals (see above and Section 5).

40 In correspondence to the claim that man is the only 'living being that has language and reason' (*zôon logon echon*), according to Aristotle's presentation the *ergon* argument's process of elimination leads to the result: "There remains, then, an active life of the element that possesses reason (*leipetai dê praktikê tis tou logos echontos*)" (*Nic. Eth.* 1.6, 1097b3–4).

41 Aristotle defines wisdom as "intellect (*nous*) in combination with scientific knowledge (*epistêmê*)" (*Nic. Eth.* 6.7, 1141a19, trans. R. Crisp).

scientist or philosopher requires wisdom; the political life of the citizen is based on prudence, experience, and the ethical virtues.[42] In *Nic. Eth.* 10, chapters 6–9, Aristotle presents several arguments why a life of contemplation is superior to a political life (cf. Natali 2001, 157–165).

5. TWO ARGUMENTS FOR AN INCLUSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF *EUDAIMONIA*

In the literature, there is a well-known dispute about the correct interpretation of Aristotle's understanding of *eudaimonia*. Broadly speaking, this dispute is about the question of whether Aristotle identifies *eudaimonia* exclusively with a life of contemplation of the scientist or philosopher or whether Aristotle has a more inclusive understanding that comprises a political life, moral actions, and the exercise of ethical virtues.[43]

The exclusive view leans on Aristotle's praise of a life of contemplation in *Nic. Eth.* 10, chapters 6–9, and on his core definition of *eudaimonia* as the "activity of the soul in accordance with excellence or virtue, and if there are several excellences or virtues, in accordance with the best and most perfect/complete (*kata tên aristên kai teleiotatên*)" (*Nic. Eth.* 1.6, 1098a16–18). Proponents of the exclusive view translate "*teleiotatên*" as "the most perfect" and hold this to refer to the intellectual virtue of 'wisdom' (*sophia*), which is required for a life of contemplation. In his persuasive defence of the inclusive understanding of *eudaimonia*, John L. Akrill (1980) suggests that "*teleiotatên*" should be rendered as "the most complete", a translation which was adopted for good reasons by both R. Crisp and H. D. Ross. On the basis of this translation, Ackrill (1980, 28) argues that the core definition of *eudaimonia* should be understood as "referring to total virtue, the combination of all virtues", for which he gives some linguistic arguments.[44] Another argument for the inclusive view is that a central requirement of *eudaimonia* is 'self-sufficiency' (*autarkeia*), in the sense that a life is self-sufficient if it is "worthy of choice and lacking in nothing" (*Nic. Eth.* 1.5, 1097b14–15).[45]

42 In all likelihood, in the *ergon* argument Aristotle refers to these two forms of life in *Nic. Eth.* 1.6, 1098a5–6.

43 For a summary of the debate and many references to the older literature, see Heinaman (1988). The central issues of the debate are not only the relation of a life of contemplation and a political life, but the relation of *Eth. Nic.* Book 1 and 10; see also Kullmann (1995). Heinaman distinguishes between an inclusive and an exclusive view of *eudaimonia* and calls the inclusive account "the comprehensive view" (Heinaman 1988, 31). Others distinguish between an inclusive and a dominant interpretation of Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia* (Horn 1998, 83–85). However, the term "dominant" presupposes an understanding of *eudaimonia* that is focused on a life of contemplation, but could comprise a political life, moral actions, and the exercise of ethical virtues. As a consequence, a "dominant" interpretation becomes a subcategory of an inclusive interpretation and not its opposite.

44 Although Ackrill's interpretation of the meaning of "the most complete" as a translation of "*teleiotatên*" constitutes an important argument against the exclusive view of *eudaimonia*, philologically it seems a bit forced.

45 For a critical discussion of the argument from self-sufficiency and the conclusion that it "offers no support for the

The preceding analysis of Aristotle's natural teleology and of his *ergon* argument leads to two additional and complementary arguments for an inclusive understanding of *eudaimonia*. The first and main result of the human function argument is that the specific human *ergon* (and thus *eudaimonia*) consists in a life of the activity of the rational part of the soul or in "an activity of the soul in accordance with reason or not without it" (*Nic. Eth.* 1.6, 1098ab3–8). These definitions clearly refer to both theoretical and practical reason.[46] Since the political life of the citizen is based on both the ethical virtues and on 'prudence' (*phronêsis*), the excellence of practical reason, such a life is clearly implied by the main result of Aristotle's *ergon* argument. In political life citizens use their practical reason to deliberate about political questions or decisions and to determine the appropriate means for a virtuous, good, and happy life. Therefore, such a life is a crucial part of the actualisation of man's nature as a 'living being that has language and reason' (*zôon logon echon*). Despite Aristotle's arguments for the superiority of a life of contemplation, as a citizen the scientist or philosopher usually desires to participate in the political life of the *polis*: "But in so far as he is a human being and lives together with a number of others, he chooses to do actions in accordance with virtue" (*Eth. Nic.* 10.8, 1178b5–7, trans. R. Crisp). This implies that *eudaimonia* includes both a life of contemplation and a political life.[47]

The second argument for an inclusive understanding of *eudaimonia* is based on the natural purpose of *logos*, which Aristotle explains in *Politics* 1.2 in the context of his well-known definition of man as a 'political animal by nature' (*physei politikon zôon*) (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a2–3). Aristotle refines this definition by adding the much-discussed proposition that "man is *mallon* a political animal than bees or any gregarious animal", which could mean either that man is a political animal in "a higher degree" or that he is "more of" one than other gregarious animals (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a7–9). If "*mallon*" is translated as in "a higher degree", the proposition refers to a quantitative difference. If it is rendered as "more of", it refers to a qualitative difference, which also means that only man can appropriately be called "political" and that other gregarious animals are "political" only in an imprecise and metaphorical sense.[48]

comprehensive interpretation of eudaimonia", see Heinaman (1988, 50; cf. 41–51).

46 For good reasons, Ackrill (1980, 27) argues that "practical reason, so far from being in any way less distinctive of man than theoretical, is really more so; for man shares with Aristotle's god the activity of *theoria*". Nussbaum even goes one step further and claims that the "human function" argument "attempts to establish" a "basis of agreement about the centrality of practical reasoning" for "the good human life" (Nussbaum 1990, 182). As Nussbaum's one-sided interpretation neglects the great importance Aristotle attributes to theoretical reason and a life of contemplation, it is not persuasive.

47 For the relation of the two forms of life, see Kullmann (1995), Lisi (2014), and Ottmann (2001, 168–171).

48 For the debate and the literature, see Knoll (2017) and Miller Jr. (1995, 30–36). Knoll (2017) primarily defends the thesis that only man can be called a political animal because

In the phrase that immediately follows the claim that "man is *mallon* a political animal than bees or any gregarious animal", Aristotle refers to his teleological understanding of nature on which his subsequent analysis of the difference of the nature of animals and humans is based: "Nature, as we claim, does nothing without purpose" (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a9, my trans.). In the next phrase, he presents his famous definition of a human being: "Man is the only animal (*zôon*) that possesses speech and reason (*logos*)" (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a9–10, my trans.). Despite the close interdependence between speech and reason and the meaning of the word *logos*, in almost all translations "logos" is rendered only as "speech", and not as well as "reason".[49] However, the following phrases elucidate that in Aristotle's definition "logos" refers to both speech and reason. While nature gives 'voice' (*phonê*) to all animals, it gives the gift of *logos* (speech/reason) only to human beings.[50] In a first step, Aristotle distinguishes between the natural purposes of *phonê* and *logos* in the meaning of speech. The natural purpose of voice is to communicate the sensations of pleasure and pain. The natural purpose of speech is "to reveal (*deloun*) the advantageous and the harmful (*sympheron kai to blaberon*), and hence also the just and unjust (*dikaion kai to adikon*)" (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a14–15, trans. C. Lord). In the context of this distinction, Aristotle elucidates the difference between the 'nature' (*physis*) of animals and humans. He explains about animals that "their nature has come this far, that they have a perception (*echein aisthêsin*) of the painful and pleasant and signal these things to each other" (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a12–14, trans. C. Lord). Immediately after clarifying the natural purpose of speech, Aristotle refers to the natural purpose of *logos* in the meaning of reason. Thereby, he continues his explanation of the distinctive characteristics of humans compared to other higher animals:

> For it is peculiar to man as compared to the other animals that he alone has a perception (*aisthêsin echein*) of good and bad (*agathou kai kakou*) and just and unjust (*dikaion kai to adikon*) and the other things of this sort; and community in these things is what makes a household and a city (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a15–18, trans. C. Lord).

If *logos* in *Pol.* 1.2 were translated only as speech, this passage would be partly redundant because in this case Aristotle would mainly be repeating what he had explained before about the

only man possesses *logos* and because *Pol.* 1.2. focuses on the concept of the *polis*. Still, not all scholars seem to be aware of the double sense of "mallon" and several translate it, in line with most translations of the *Politics*, simply as "more" or "more of", e.g. Karbowski (2019, 226), Leunissen (2017, 110, 114), and Müller (2019, 122). In contrast, see Keil and Kreft (2019, 4, 10–12) and Pellegrin (2020, 81, 86).

49 This one-sided translation is often reproduced in the secondary literature; see e.g. Karbowski (2019, 226) and Leunissen (2017, 110, 114).

50 In *Historia Animalium*, Aristotle is more precise and explains that nature gives 'voice' (*phonê*) only to animals that breathe (*Hist animal.* 4.9, 535a29–b3).

difference between animals and humans and the natural purpose of speech.[51] However, this is not the case because in this passage Aristotle further explains the specific capacities of human nature and the difference between the natural purposes of *logos* in the meaning of speech and of reason. The main natural purpose of 'reason' (*logos*) is that man has 'a perception' or 'a sense' (*aisthêsin echein*) of what is good and bad and just and unjust.[52] This shows that *logos* – in line with its meaning in *Eth. Nic.* 1 – needs to be translated as reason, because speech alone would not suffice to endow man with the capacity to have such perceptions. In contrast, the natural purpose of speech is to give humans the capability to communicate and to 'reveal' or 'explain' (*deloun*) their perceptions about these phenomena to others.

The first and main result of the *ergon* argument defines the human function as an active life of the element that possesses reason (*praktikê tis tou logos echontos*). Neither in his *ergon* argument nor in his theory of the human 'soul' (*psychê*) does Aristotle mention the specific capacities of *logos*. He mainly does this in *Eth. Nic.* 6 and in *Pol.* 1.2. The natural purpose of *logos* is to give man a sense to perceive and communicate what is advantageous, good, and just. These values or virtues and their exact meaning are the central practical and moral issues which citizens discuss and deliberate in political life. Therefore, Aristotle concludes his explanation of the difference of the nature of animals and humans in *Pol.* 1.2 with the remark that "community in these things is what makes a household and a city". As the human *ergon* is an active life of *logos*, and as the specific capacities and purposes of *logos* (reason/speech) are inextricably linked to the moral and political life of citizens, it is evident that *eudaimonia* includes political life. This is a strong argument for both an inclusive interpretation of *eudaimonia* and against an exclusive understanding, which identifies *eudaimonia* only with a life of contemplation.

6. CONCLUSION

The previous three sections have demonstrated that Aristotle's practical philosophy depends to a large extent on his teleological conception of nature. This is especially true for Aristotle's analysis of power relations among human beings, for his *ergon* argument, and for his view of the natural purposes of *logos*. His *ergon* argument is related to his theory of natural slavery, which again is based on his teleological and hierarchical conception of nature. The natural *ergon* of the slave by nature is to work for his master and owner with his body, which provides the latter with the free time and leisure that is necessary to perform his *ergon* in the natural

51 Probably because he does not recognise the double sense of *logos* in this context, Pellegrin (2020, 84) complains that "Aristotle expresses with an insistence that verges on pleonasm" that human beings are "the only animals endowed with perception of ethical values".

52 At the beginning of § 39 of his *Theory of Justice*, John Rawls derives the human "sense of justice", a key term of his theory, from *Pol.* 1.2.

order. In this context, Aristotle claims that both the bodies and souls of free persons and slaves are different. In contrast to the body of the slave by nature, the body of the free man is not fit for work, but "useful with a view to a political way of life" (*Pol.* 1.5, 1254b27–31, trans. C. Lord).

At the beginning of the *ergon* argument, Aristotle suggests that a definition of *eudaimonia* could be achieved by first ascertaining "the function of man (*to ergon tou anthrôpou*)". However, the common denomination of the *ergon* argument as the "human function argument" is something of a misnomer. First, from Aristotle's view of slaves by nature, whom he identifies with barbarians, it follows that they are not able to achieve *eudaimonia*. Second, it is doubtful whether Aristotle holds women to be capable of *eudaimonia* because he claims, e.g., that they possess the 'deliberative part of the soul' (*bouleutikon*) 'without decision-making power' (*akyros*) and the ethical virtues not in a ruling but only a serving form (*Pol.* 1.13, 1260a12–13, 20–24).[53] Third, Aristotle is convinced that the vast majority of Greek men are incapable of excelling in virtue (*Eth. Nic.* 10.10, 1179b10–16, 1180a4–14; *Pol.* 5.1, 1301b40–1302a2). In line with this, he claims that the multitude is only capable of developing military virtue (*Pol.* 3.7, 1279b1–2). Only a few Greek men have the natural potential to develop all the human excellences or virtues and to achieve true *eudaimonia*. In addition, most free men have to work. This is a crucial social obstacle in the path of the development of the human virtues because such a development presupposes leisure and free time (*Pol.* 7.9, 1328b33–1329a2).[54] Therefore, the result of Aristotle's *ergon* argument does not really refer to the natural *ergon* of all human beings, but to the *ergon* of free Greek elite men.

53 There are even reasons to believe that Aristotle thinks that women cannot develop the virtue he calls 'prudence' (*phronêsis*); see Knoll (2009, 157).

54 Cf. Knoll (2009, 135–40).

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What Are We Fighting For?: The Noble Goal of Courage in Aristotle's Ethics

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ABSTRACT

Aristotle's analysis of the virtue of courage presents a number of interpretative difficulties. The initial thesis that courage consists in overcoming the fear of death in the context of war for a worthy or noble cause will be analysed against several other, seemingly inconsistent, definitions of this virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The normative aspect of the present study aims at making sense of what could qualify as a noble goal of a fearless action for the Aristotelian model, given that one's personal *eudaimonia* cannot be the goal of a warrior willing to sacrifice his life in battle. Reference to the intended proper end of courageous behaviour is one of the constitutive features of the Aristotelian holistic account of this virtue and this normative provision remains unexplained in the text. Two options are considered: (1) the noble goal of courage is an altruistic concern for the good of the *polis*; (2) the goal of courage is personal honour (including postmortem glorification). It is argued that the second option is a better fit with the Aristotelian model of virtue ethics, which should be seen as a form of enlightened egoism.

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1. PREFACE: INTRODUCING THE TENSION

As careful readers of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are well aware, Aristotle presents a teleological account of ethical virtues by stipulating personal *eudaimonia* (happiness or human flourishing) as the final goal, the *telos*, of moral development.[1] Being a morally virtuous person, for Aristotle, is a necessary (albeit not sufficient) condition for reaching the ultimate goal of all human activities, and that view provides both a normative and a strong motivational reason for developing those praiseworthy traits of character that he calls virtues of character and intellectual virtues. The list of Aristotelian virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is a fascinating historical document of how the Athenian intellectuals conceived of an exemplary gentleman and an ideal citizen during the fourth century BCE. At the same time, many elements of Aristotle's analysis of the

1 A teleological account of ethical virtues is contrasted here with a deontological account, according to which a virtuous character should be acquired for its own sake, as something intrinsically valuable, regardless of any further benefits. Admittedly, Aristotle agrees that virtues have intrinsic value when he writes that "every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves, because we would choose each of them even if it had no further result" (*Eth. Nic.* 1097b3-4). At the same time, he adds, "we *also* choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy" (*Ibid.*, my emphasis). In that sense, happiness retains its unique status as "an end that is complete without qualification" and virtues are still seen as instrumental for reaching the chief good of happiness.

essential human excellences retain their cross-cultural and cross-temporal significance even to the present day. Both the ancients and the moderns would agree on the praiseworthiness of a courageous character, and both would disdain cowardly behaviour. Although the substantive content of the concept of courage has changed considerably in the contemporary world, it still remains one of the most paradigmatic virtues of a morally mature character.[2]

Together with the virtues of friendship and justice, courage (ἀνδρεία) receives the most elaborate treatment in Aristotle's ethics. It is also an arête that stands out from all the other virtues in one crucial respect. Unlike the case with, for example, temperance, friendship, or generosity, a consistent and repeated exercise of martial courage greatly diminishes one's chances of achieving happiness in this life, since it now becomes less likely that the courageous fighter will live long enough to enjoy the benefits of a lasting peace. Paradoxically, a coward who "throws away his shield and takes to flight"[3] and thus survives the battle has an advantage over the courageous warrior who perishes while fighting when it comes to his chances of achieving happiness. Being alive, after all, is a basic precondition for being happy.[4]

What is it, then, according to Aristotle, for the sake of which one should become and remain courageous even in the most desperate circumstances? What should properly motivate a courageous warrior to stay put in the front line of a phalanx when the chances of survival are negligible? How is the motivation of a truly courageous person different from the motivation of a self-controlled person, or one who merely approaches the state of genuine arête? Before we tackle these theoretical questions, we should begin with an overview of the several definitions of courage provided by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

2. ARISTOTLE'S DEFINITIONS OF COURAGE

Aristotle's "Doctrine of the Mean" is arguably the best-known part of his ethical doctrine, and in it he famously postulates that each moral virtue can be defined as a mean state between two vices: the vice of excess and the vice of deficiency. Thus, a temperate man, for example, is positioned at some midpoint between two characters: a self-indulgent character ("the man who indulges in every pleasure and abstains from none"), and an insensible character ("the man who shuns every pleasure")

2 On the difference between the Aristotelian conception of courage and the modern approaches to this virtue see Zavaliy and Aristidou (2014).

3 *Rhetoric* 1383b21.

4 It does not seem that Aristotle, unlike Socrates in the *Apology* or in the *Phaedo*, seriously entertained the possibility of some form of postmortem existence of a conscious self. In the *Eth. Nic.* he is straightforward: "Death is the most terrible of all things; for it is the end, and nothing is thought to be any longer either good or bad for the dead" (1115b25-27). The speculations about the indestructible nature of the human mind (νόος) in *De Anima* (408b17-30) do not imply the possibility of personal immortality either.

(1104a23-26). In a similar manner, Aristotle first introduces the virtue of courage as a state of character that is positioned between the vices of cowardice on the one hand and rashness on the other (11104a22). He further defines this virtue by referencing not one but two relevant feelings or 'passions' which ought to be properly controlled by a morally mature agent. The original definition runs as follows:

> With regard to feelings of fear and confidence (φόβος καὶ θάρσος) courage is the mean; of the people who exceed, he who exceeds in fearlessness has no name, while the man who exceeds in confidence is rash, and he who exceeds in fear and falls short in confidence is a coward (1107a31-b3).

This initial introduction of courage in Book II of the *Eth. Nic.* sets the general context for his understanding of this virtue, but it does not go far enough in specifying the proper objects of fear and confidence, and neither does it clarify how to discover the ideal balance between these basic passions of fear and confidence.[5] A special and more detailed discussion of courage and cowardice is reserved for Book III, Chapters 6-9 of the *Eth. Nic*. This is where we should turn our attention to now.

The detailed analysis of the virtue of courage in Book III is intriguing and puzzling for a number of reasons. Elsewhere, I argue that Aristotle's take on courage in those chapters should be interpreted as pursuing two main objectives: first, to counter the overly inclusive conception of this virtue advocated by Plato (especially in the *Laches*), and, secondly, to return to the Homeric roots of genuine courage by radically limiting the scope of the truly courageous agents and restricting its manifestation to the martial context (Zavaliy 2017). Plato's take on courage may serve as a helpful background for our discussion of Aristotle. The most conspicuous difference between Plato's Socrates and Aristotle concerns the scope of actions which should properly fall under the category "courageous". There is a clear tendency in the *Laches* towards the widening of the scope of courageous actions with Socrates suggesting, contrary to the initial opinion of his interlocutors, Laches and Nicias, that soldiers in battle are not the only ones who can manifest courage, but so can those suffering the perils of the sea, resisting the fear of pain, fighting a disease, coping with poverty, or confronting a politically precarious situation. All these people are potentially exhibiting essentially the same virtue too (191d1-e1). Moreover, Socrates was willing to include in the category of the courageous agents even those who "are mighty to contend against desires and pleasures" (191e1), i.e. individuals showing an unusual

5 Aristotle makes it clear that fear is the more important of the two emotions (1117a29-30). The somewhat uneasy relationship between these emotions on the Aristotelian model of this virtue is analysed by Daniel Putnam (2001). For the claim that fear and confidence actually yield two different virtues see Urmson (1980).

level of self-control when faced with strong temptations, and, perhaps, even some wild animals (196e).[6]

We may assume that Socrates' list of courageous agents was not meant to be exhaustive, but rather instrumental in switching Laches' attention from the external circumstances which might prompt a courageous response to the internal aspects of such a reaction. Indeed, as in many other cases, here, too, the internal state of the agent is of primary importance in Socratic investigation. As Santas rightly observes, for Socrates "whether a man is courageous depends not only on the objective situation, but also on his estimate of the situation, what we might call the psychological or intentional aspects of courage" (1971, 191). According to this view, a young sailor might be acting truly courageously during his first storm at sea if he is convinced that the storm presents a real danger to the ship, and yet his more experienced comrade, while behaving in a similar manner, would not be properly called brave as long as he knows (say, from past occasions) that the danger is merely apparent. One's sincere beliefs about the situation (even if false) and one's behaviour in response to those beliefs are both constitutive of the virtue of courage for Socrates.

Plato's overly inclusive and internalised conception of courage was unacceptable to Aristotle, who, in the spirit of Homer, sought to limit the scope of truly courageous feats to those performed on a battlefield. As a first step, Aristotle switches the focus from the characteristically Socratic type of question, "What is courage?" back to the more practical one, "Who is a courageous person?" The latter question, though, should not be seen as a question about the specific names of brave individuals, but rather as an inquiry into the behavioural, emotive, and situational conditions necessary for courageous behaviour. Skipping a painful Socratic process of *elenchus*, Aristotle gives birth to his second definition of a courageous agent, which will prove to be more intricate than it initially appears to be:

> Legitimately speaking (κυρίως δὴ λέγοιτ᾽), then, he will be called brave who is fearless in the face of a noble death (καλόν θάνατον ἀδεής), and of all emergencies that involve death; and the emergencies of war are in the highest degree of this kind (1115a32-35).

The opening phrase here – "legitimately (or properly) speaking" – suggests that Aristotle is not going to use the term 'courageous' loosely or simply by analogy (the way Socrates presumably did in the *Laches*) but instead will seek to define it as a technical term with a set of rather stringent conditions for

6 The other Platonic dialogue in which courage gets detailed treatment is the *Republic*. Surprisingly, Plato's take on the role of this virtue in the ideal city is much closer to Aristotle's *Eth. Nic.* than to the views of Socrates in the *Laches*. Nonetheless, in his discussion Aristotle seems to be objecting specifically to the earlier dialogue and disregards the much-modified position presented in the *Republic*. For an overview of the evolution of Plato's views on courage see Zavaliy (2000, 180-197).

application. The next thing to notice is that Aristotle's focus from the beginning is on military valour as the highest or, perhaps, the only type of true courage. Here Aristotle picks up the position preferred by both Laches and Protagoras from Plato's early dialogues, both of whom connected courage with battlefield endurance, but he adds several important qualifying details. Much of what follows in the subsequent chapters of the *Eth,. Nic.* deals with the discussion of the spurious types of courage – those cases that might appear as instances of courageous behaviour but are not truly so. As one might expect, most of the scenarios and characters that were explicitly endorsed by Socrates in the *Laches* are ruled out by Aristotle. The long list of those who *fail* to qualify as truly brave individuals, according to Aristotle, includes those who fearlessly face poverty or disease, those experiencing perils at sea, those citizen-soldiers defending their city because of their fear of penalties or desire for honours, those professional mercenaries who are fearless in war because of their superior military skills, those who rush into battle because they are driven by strong passions, and those who stand their ground on the battlefield because they underestimated the strength of the opponent (1116a15-1117a27). In all these cases, the character trait manifested is either "similar to" or "appears like" or is "most like" courage, and yet still does not measure up to genuine virtue.

One of the effects of Aristotle's initial description of courage and its counterfeit varieties is that it now becomes extremely problematic to find a suitable example of a single courageous person, whether taken from the rich ancient literary heritage or from real historical episodes. Surprisingly, neither the Homeric heroes nor the proverbial Spartans are recognised as truly courageous people by Aristotle, albeit for different reasons. While there is little doubt that Socrates himself would be a paradigmatic example of a courageous person for Plato, a person who exhibited military, intellectual, and political courage, it is much harder to determine whether any real person in the context of war has ever shown true courage according to Aristotle's demanding standards.[7] All of the specific historical and literary examples mentioned by Aristotle are brought up to illustrate examples of 'less-than-truly-courageous' behaviour, while not a single positive case of "true" courage has been identified in the text. For an author who was, without a doubt, brought up on the stories of the great battles and great heroes of the Persian Wars, and who was also a contemporary of Alexander's remarkable military achievements in Asia, such an omission is baffling.

The third point about the definition that deserves our attention is Aristotle's mentioning of fearlessness in the face of "a noble death". We will reserve

7 Alcibiades testifies to Socrates' military prowess in the *Symposium* (220d-220e), and Laches bestows similar praise (*Laches* 181b). Socrates' autobiographical story from the *Apology* about his refusal to obey the order of the Thirty Tyrants while facing the real risk of execution (32d) is an example of political and moral courage.

the discussion of the nobility of death for the end, but a few comments should be made about the notion of 'fearlessness'. There is a familiar objection that contrasts the apparent demand for fearlessness in this definition with the description of a courageous agent given just a few pages later in the *Eth. Nic.* The description in question (which is also the third definition of a courageous agent) runs as follows:

> The man, then, who faces and who fears (φοβούμενος) the right things from the right motive, in the right way and at the right time, and who feels confidence under the corresponding conditions, is brave (1115b16-18).

The quote suggests that a courageous person must have a medial level of fear which he is able to control and thus be able to resist the desire to flee to safety. What counts as a medial level of fear and confidence in the circumstances is determined in each case by one's practical wisdom (φρόνησις) – an indispensable rational capacity for all virtuous choices. Nevertheless, contrary to our modern intuitions, which are rooted both in the Kantian ideal of an agent who fulfils his moral duty despite contrary inclinations and the Christian image of a saint who overcomes strong temptations, Aristotle considers a self-controlled person to be a morally inferior character when compared to a virtuous one. Whereas a self-controlled person is able to control and subdue his deviant desires, a truly virtuous agent acts from a character that excludes the possibility of temptation to act otherwise. Every inclination and every passion of a virtuous agent is brought into line with his unwavering commitment to a rationally justifiable end and this is clearly recognised by Aristotle as a preferable state.[8]

Does a soldier, who has the virtue of courage in its entirety, feel any fear at all? Does that person, when confronted with a life-threatening situation in battle, experience a corresponding desire to flee even in the slightest degree? Aristotle's general requirement for the 'purity' of virtues seems to suggest that a courageous agent would simply have no deviant passions to control. Indeed, on a number of occasions in the *Eth. Nic.* a brave man is univocally described by Aristotle as fearless.[9] But how exactly should we understand this attribution of fearlessness to a courageous agent?

8 Not everyone would be unhappy if virtue would be reduced to continence or self-control. Ross (2004), for instance, insists that virtue is really self-control, and blames Aristotle for failing to see this clearly.

9 Aristotle uses four different terms in the *Eth. Nic.* in his description of a courageous man, all of which can be understood as indicating the absence of fear: ἄφοβος (1115a16; 1117a18), ἀδεής (1115a32), ἀνέκπληκτος (1115b9-10), ἀτάραχον (1117a18). But whereas ἄφοβος ('without fear') is the least ambivalent term, the other three are more nuanced in their semantic content, and might suggest both an internal "state of the soul" and an external manifestation. Some of the common English renderings include: ἀδεής – "fearless" (Rackham), "fearless" (W. D. Ross), "intrepid" (Irwin); ἀνέκπληκτος – "being proof against fear" (Rackham), "dauntless" (W. D. Ross), "unperturbed" (Irwin); ἀτάραχον – "undismayed" (Rackham), "undisturbed" (W. D. Ross), "unperturbed" (Irwin).

Some modern scholars insist on taking Aristotle's terminology seriously and prefer to take the claim of fearlessness at face value. For example, it has been argued by Michelle Brady that viewing courage as involving fearlessness in the literal sense has the theoretical advantage "of making this particular virtue compatible with the rest of Aristotelian virtue", because it now seems to nicely fit at least one part of the original ethical model (2005, 193). Furthermore, Brady's interpretation of courage as implying complete fearlessness accords well with Aristotle's claim that the virtues are not only concerned with directing actions, but also with controlling passions (e.g. 1104b14), and, in addition, it counters the real threat of reducing Aristotelian virtue to mere self-control or continence. After all, a frightened hoplite who has successfully managed to control his passion of fear and remained standing in the phalanx is not morally different from someone who struggled against the temptation to indulge in an illicit or excessive pleasure and came out victorious in the end. If the latter person would *not* be recognised as truly temperate by the philosopher (but merely as a continent or a self-controlled person), neither should the former soldier be seen as courageous. On this reading, true courage is incompatible with any degree of fear. We may call this a *strong* or *internal* interpretation of fearlessness.

A complication arises when we consider the corresponding vices from the traditional list, where one of the vices is defined by Aristotle as "excess in fearlessness" (1115b25), and when we also recall the third definition of a courageous person as one who *fears* but does so "in the right way" (1115b16-18). The strong or internal interpretation of fearlessness has a further practical disadvantage of placing the virtue of courage out of reach for the overwhelming majority of ordinary human beings, which many readers would take to be much more troublesome than any potential theoretical incongruities with other parts of Aristotle's virtue ethics. Ultimately, experiencing no fear whatsoever in the face of a likely death in war is hardly human.[10]

Faced with these objections, one may prefer instead a *weak* or *behavioural* interpretation of fearlessness as a more plausible alternative. A courageous agent only acts *as if* he feels no fear of death, even if the feeling of fear is present as a real subjective experience. One of the defenders of this approach, David Pears, writes that Aristotle most probably had in mind the "behavioural use" of the word "fearless" in this context, "which comments only on the manner of the agent's conduct," rather than on his mental experience (1980, 178-79).[11] On this sensible reading, the qualification "fearless" should properly apply to one's external behaviour rather than to the internal state of someone who boldly faces the dangers of war. An inexperienced

10 Aristotle cites anecdotal evidence of the Celts, who "fear nothing", but implies their pathological deviation from the 'normal' human condition (1115b27).

11 See also (Urmson 1988) for a similar position on the meaning of fearlessness in Aristotle.

warrior may tremble greatly "in his soul" at the prospect of death or injury, but what ultimately matters is his "fearless" performance during military action.[12] The weak interpretation is more in accord with our common intuitions. But, in addition to the tensions with the textual evidence that were cited earlier, it makes the distinction between a virtuous and a self-controlled person problematic, at least in the case of courage. Nonetheless, it appears to be the only acceptable reading unless we are willing to limit the category of courageous agents to pathological characters only. After all, as Aristotle observes, "he would be a sort of madman or insensible person if he feared nothing" (1115b26).[13]

12 There exists textual support for such an interpretation. Aristotle, at one point, claims that "the courageous man is proof against fear (ἀνέκπληκτος) *so far as a human may be (ὡς ἄνθρωπος)*" (1115b10) (my emphasis). The qualifying final clause probably takes the limits of human psychology into consideration, requiring fearlessness as a relative rather than absolute condition. Likewise, a line from 1115a16, which Rackham and Ross render as a straightforward affirmation of fearlessness: "the courageous man is also a fearless person (ἄφοβος γάρ τις καὶ ὁ ἀνδρεῖος)" should rather be translated in a more qualified sense: "a courageous person is *a sort of* (*a type of*) fearless person" (together with Irwin and Crisp). I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer of the earlier draft of this paper for this observation.

13 Stanley Rachman, for instance, cites modern empirical studies which suggest that natural fearlessness is a real but extremely rare condition; there are a small number of people who are relatively impervious to fear, but this condition, if not manifested in immature children, is often correlated with psychological pathologies (2004, 151-73).

With the weak interpretation of fearlessness as a constitutive element of courage, we have come full circle and have returned to the purely behavioural definition of courage as advanced by Laches in Plato's dialogue: a courageous man is someone "who does not run away, but remains at his post and fights against the enemy" (190e4-6). We observed earlier that Aristotle favoured Laches' suggestion to limit the occasions for courageous action to a military context. However, it is less likely that he would also be content with limiting the definition of the virtue itself to a description of the agent's external behaviour, without considering the relevant "passions" and, most importantly, the normative reasons for action. According to Aristotle, a soldier who "does not run away" simply because he underestimated the force of the enemy, or because his appetite for future spoils is more intense than his fear of death, would exhibit a merely spurious form of courage. But reference to an observable behaviour alone would not allow him to make these distinctions. In other words, courage cannot be reduced to a formal description of one's actions in a risky setting. There must be something *for the sake of which* a courageous action is undertaken and that goal must be of a certain quality.

3. THE ΚΑΛΟΝ OF A COURAGEOUS ACTION

We have observed that making fearlessness, when literally understood, into a prerequisite for courage would drastically reduce the number of courageous

individuals, since true fearlessness, even if not downright pathological, appears to be a rare phenomenon. A fearless person is truly an exception, but it is reasonably clear that fearlessness (in whatever sense we understand it) is not identical with courage for Aristotle, nor is it a sufficient condition for this virtue. A courageous person is praiseworthy, admirable, and commendable. The inherently normative element of courage would preclude the attempts to reduce courage to mere fearlessness, since the latter term lacks any obvious evaluative features when divorced from contextual clues. After all, mere mastery over the emotion of fear in the face of the fearsome is not a *moral* accomplishment in itself.[14] Similarly, as Aristotle would surely have realised, omitting the specification of the proper goal of a courageous action from the definition of courage threatens to eliminate the normative or teleological aspect of courage. Unless courage leads to some substantive good or the action is undertaken with the intention of reaching that good, it is not clear what makes it into a virtue and why it is at all desirable to acquire this character trait. The substantive good that a courageous agent ought to consider as the final goal of his behaviour is captured by Aristotle in his notion of the "noble end (τέλος καλόν)" of courage.

Admittedly, Aristotle never uses the exact phase τέλος καλόν ('noble end') in the extant text, but the notion is a natural derivation from these three affirmations: "The brave man… will face [dangers] for the sake of the noble (τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα)" (1115b11-13); "To the brave man bravery is noble; hence the end it aims at is also such [i.e. noble] (τῷ ἀνδρείῳ δὲ ἡ ἀνδρεία καλόν. τοιοῦτον δὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος)" (1115b21-22), and "The real motive of courageous men is the noble (τὸ καλόν)" (1116b30). It seems obvious from these quotes that Aristotle has a particular goal in mind which he thinks should be the main motivating reason for a truly courageous warrior.

The notion of nobility in Aristotle's discussion of courage remains one of its most elusive elements. The initial complication arises from the notorious semantic ambiguity of the adjective 'καλόν,' which, depending on the context, can be translated as 'virtuous,' 'beautiful,' 'morally good,' 'noble', or simply 'fine.' In the text, the qualification "noble" (καλόν) is applied by Aristotle in the context of his analysis of this virtue to the circumstances of war (1115a27-30), to death (1115 a32-35; 1115b5-7), to danger (1115a30), to courage itself (1115b20-22), to the deeds of war (1117b14), and, most importantly, to the intended result of a courageous action (1115b22-24; 1116b30). Some of these attributions are more obvious than others. We can interpret Aristotle's contention that courage is καλόν as analytic truth, which simply follows from his conception of a virtue – a trait of character that contributes positively to fulfilling the specifically human purpose or

14 Notably, a person who overcomes fear of pain and death and commits suicide would be considered a coward by Aristotle (1116a11-15).

function (ἔργον) (1099a20-21).[15] Indeed, in many cases Aristotle uses the term καλόν (noble) as a close synonym of 'virtuous' (Lannstrom 2006, 12-13). But, as Curzer justly observes, this cannot be the correct sense of καλόν, at least as it is used in connection with the final goal of courage, a constitutive element of this virtue: "Since Aristotle is using the notion of nobility to specify what counts as courageous, he cannot define nobility in terms of courage, and then define courage in terms of nobility" (2012, 27).[16] The goal of a courageous action, in other words, cannot be καλόν by default, simply because the virtue of courage, just like all other virtues, has this property.

Other attributions of καλόν cannot be easily understood as being derived from the nobility of virtue itself but must refer to some further, external value. Thus, the nobility of death must be seen as being derived from the nobility of the circumstances in which death occurs (we may say that nobility is a "transitive" property in this context). But the paradigmatic example of the circumstances in which a noble death could occur or in which one could face a noble danger is, for Aristotle, the circumstances of war.[17] But what is it that makes a war or a battle noble? It surely cannot be the case that war is noble and desirable for its own sake. As Aristotle observes elsewhere, "no one chooses to be at war for the sake of being at war" (1177b9-10). Hence, it must be some further goal of war that alone bears the attribute "noble" non-derivatively.

There are a number of benefits one can gain by waging a successful war. However, as Aristotle observes, one such important benefit is more obvious than others: "We make war that we may live in peace" (1177b6). Still, peace, we may agree, is not the ultimate goal of war either, but is merely an instrumental one. We value peace primarily because it creates suitable conditions for pursuing our final end – εὐδαιμονία (happiness, well-being, flourishing). Indeed, Aristotle, when speaking of happiness, uses a number of superlatives, emphasising its unique status as a final goal of all intentional actions, calling it "the best, noblest (κάλλιστον), and the most pleasant thing in the world" (1099a24-25). He also acknowledges

15 The obviousness of the attribution of 'nobility' to virtue is emphatically affirmed, for example, by Protagoras in the eponymous dialogue: "Unless I am quite mad, [virtue] is the most honourable (κάλλιστον) of all things" (349e5-7). In another dialogue, Laches makes a similar affirmation with regard to courage (*Laches* 192c5).

16 Curzer, likewise, rules out the translation of καλόν as 'beautiful' (a common Homeric meaning) when used in the phrase "καλόν death" on the grounds that "it is quite possible to die aesthetically from disease or at sea, and unaesthetically on the battlefield" (*Ibid.*).

17 This, of course, is the source of one of the traditional charges against the Aristotelian conception of courage. Curzer, among many others, observes that "limiting courage to life-threatening situations [in war] flies in the face of common sense" (2012, 25). Elsewhere I argue that such a narrow conception of the circumstances in which courage can be manifested should be explained by Aristotle's desire to conform to the Homeric paradigms of courage (Zavaliy 2017).

that "the more [the brave man] is possessed of virtue in its entirety, the happier he is" (1117b7), which reiterates an earlier remark (1104b6-9) about a peculiar kind of delight (το χαίρον) that a courageous agent experiences even at the moment of the greatest danger. This point about the joy that accompanies military engagement will not be lost on careful readers of Homer either, as in his works many a hero shows real bloodlust and eagerness for close encounters with the enemy.[18]

This reading should partly alleviate the common worry that for Aristotle the term "noble" connotes some esoteric, mysterious property that cannot easily be transported to a different cultural milieu. Courage is noble in the same sense as that in which friendship is noble (cf. 1155a29), and deeds of courage, which might often involve fighting in a battle, are also noble, because they aim to achieve the noblest goal of happiness. Noble, in this context, simply qualifies a highly desirable state of affairs, something that one is willing to risk one's life for. Yet, as always, there is a complication hiding behind the obvious.

While the goal of war is peace, which is a natural precondition of happiness, which, in turn, is the noblest goal overall, it does not follow that the same goal may 'ground' a virtuous action of a particular warrior fighting in a war. If a courageous person is willing to die in battle, and if his death is nonetheless noble and praiseworthy, the nobility of such a death evidently derives not from the person's achieving his own pleasure and happiness, but from some other worthy goal that is somehow furthered by the person's perishing on the battlefield. As we observed earlier, one must be alive (at the very least) in order to achieve personal *eudaimonia*. But what could that *other* goal be? What should be the motive of a warrior to act courageously even in those drastic circumstances where one's perishing is nearly assured? Surprisingly, Aristotle does not give us as much as a single hint of the possible options here. A short remark in the *Politics*, where Aristotle *seems* to be commenting on the proper goal of courage, is not very helpful either. We learn from that text that courage should *not* be practised for the sake of wealth (χρήματα), but when it comes to a more positive formulation, Aristotle's words remain cryptic: "For [...] the function of courage is to produce daring (ποιεῖν θάρσος)" (1258a11-12). The short line is not illuminating at all as it fails to specify the desirable goal of that 'daring' and thus borders on being an empty platitude.[19] I suggest, then,

18 "He who stands his ground against things that are terrible and delights (χαίρων) in this or at least is not pained is brave, while the man who is pained is a coward" (1104b6-9). In Homer, a desire to prove oneself worthy of one's martial aretê goes beyond mere readiness to fight when forced to by the attacking enemy; eagerness and even a strong yearning (μέμαα) for fighting are also qualities that distinguish the courageous leader. A real bloodlust is felt, for instance, in the words of Achilles, who encourages Agamemnon: "Now let us remember our joy (χάρμης) in warcraft" (*Il*.19.148 and esp. 213-14; cf. also *Il*. 4.304; 5.569).

19 The word θάρσος is a term that was also translated in a different context as

that we should attempt to identify a plausible candidate for the noble goal of courage by a method of exclusion.

4. A SELF-REGARDING VIRTUE

The answer to the question that we formulated earlier – What should motivate sacrificial behaviour in war? – may appear to be too self-evident to require much elaboration. Michelle Brady, for one, believes that Aristotle's silence on this subject of the noble goal can be explained by its obviousness to his immediate audience. According to Brady, it was a universally shared assumption in Aristotle's Athens and elsewhere in Greece that the soldier's sacrifice was made for the preservation and well-being of the *polis,* a point that Aristotle simply felt no need to reiterate (Brady 2005, 199). Brady's suggestion does not lack initial plausibility and may be illustrated by a historical episode. In a famous scene, related by Herodotus, King Leonidas and his 300 Spartans stood at the Thermopylae Pass and observed the massive onset of the Persian army. As he deliberated, he had to consider the options for action. While other Greek troops lost their spirit and preferred to withdraw, Leonidas, according to the historian, remained and cited two main reasons for his decision to stand his ground despite the tremendous odds: "For himself [for King Leonidas], however, it was not good to leave; if he remained, he would leave a name of great fame (κλέος μέγα), and the prosperity (εὐδαιμονίη) of Sparta would not be blotted out" (*Hist*. 7.220). Besides the traditional Homeric value of great glory (κλέος), *eudaimonia* was apparently among the motivating reasons for King Leonidas' actions as well. But, to be sure, it was not his own happiness; it was rather the city of Sparta that stood to benefit from his sacrifice on the battlefield.[20] *Eudaimonia*, as the final goal of any intentional action, according to Aristotle's original assumption, is being transferred here from an individual to a collective entity – but it is still perceived by the individual agent (namely, Leonidas) as something extremely valuable, something that is worth fighting and dying for. The happiness of King Leonidas, in other words, is closely connected with the happiness of his native *polis* and is simply inconceivable apart from it.

By choosing a nearly certain death over withdrawal, King Leonidas was acting in accordance with the injunctions of the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus, whose inspiring martial elegies he had surely memorised from early childhood. In one of the fragments, Tyrtaeus seems to explicitly identify the goal of courageous behaviour with communal prosperity:

'confidence' – one of the two emotions with respect to which courage was initially defined (*Eth. Nic.* 1107a31-b3). Outside of philosophical parlance, θάρσος is a common synonym for courage itself.

20 A straightforward connection between happiness and courage was affirmed earlier by Pericles, where *freedom* was the natural link between the two: "Happiness (εὐδαιμονία) is the fruit of freedom and freedom [is the fruit] of valour (εὔψυχος)" (Thuc. 2.43.4).

> This is the common good, for the *polis* and the whole *demos*,
> when a man stands firm in the front ranks without flinching
> and puts disgraceful flight completely from his mind (12.15-17W).

The pan-Hellenic fame of the legendary King Leonidas and the indisputable authority of Tyrtaeus as the foremost martial elegist of all Greece confirm Brady's suggestion that there was little doubt in the mind of an average Greek about the proper justificatory reason for a soldier's sacrifice in war.

Whereas the goal, suggested by Brady, fits well with popular opinion and even with common sense, it is less than obvious that it fits equally well with the Aristotelian conception of virtue. Citing the good of *others* as the proper goal (and a motivating reason) of virtuous action implies a form of ethical altruism – a belief that the moral value of a character trait (or a behaviour stemming from it) is constituted by the benefits it confers, or is likely to confer, on other members of a moral community. But whether Aristotle's virtue ethics can be interpreted as a form of altruistic consequentialism is a highly controversial issue, which can only be addressed tangentially here. Admittedly, several places in the *Eth. Nic.* seem to claim that virtues contribute not only to individual happiness but to the common good as well, and, moreover, that the common good is, in some sense, preferable to personal *eudaimonia*. Only two such passages from the *Eth. Nic.* will be briefly examined below. The most frequently cited one reads as follows:

> Those who busy themselves in an exceptional degree with noble (καλόν) actions all men approve and praise; and if all were to strive towards what is noble and strain every nerve to do the noblest deeds, everything would be as it should be for the common weal, and every one would secure for himself the goods that are greatest, since virtue is the greatest of goods (1169a6-11).

Here Aristotle affirms that both the personal good and the common weal would be successfully served if every single citizen strived to develop a virtuous character. The claim appears to be highly plausible as an empirical observation: if all citizens are honest, temperate, friendly, and just, the *polis* itself will surely flourish and prosper. But this factual observation, even if true, can hardly support a normative claim that virtues *should* be practised for the sake of the common weal. Rogers, commenting on this passage, observes that "Aristotle does not say [in these lines] the καλόν promotes an individual's good by promoting the common good, but that it leads to both the common good and that of each individual. Since, however, no priority or hierarchy is established among these goods, the passage no more shows that the καλόν is bound up with the community's than with one's personal good" (1993, 365). In other words, the tendency of virtuous characters to contribute to a harmonious and prosperous community is merely a (fortunate) side effect of their virtuous behaviour but does not constitute the

essence of the virtues. Virtues would still be intrinsically valuable for an individual even in the absence of such a beneficial social effect.

The second quote comes from the very first page of the *Eth. Nic.*, where Aristotle establishes the priority of the science of politics by virtue of the fact that politics, unlike all other sciences, is concerned with the highest good, the good of the collective:

> Politics uses the rest of the sciences, and since, again, it legislates as to what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good for man (sic). For even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state, that of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete whether to attain or to preserve; though it is worthwhile to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike (κάλλιον δὲ καὶ θειότερον) to attain it for a nation or for city-states (1094b6-10).

This idea has a close parallel in the *Politics* (1253a18–29), where Aristotle argues for the priority of the state over an individual, with an obvious correlative inference that the good of the state is more important than the good of a single citizen. But even though the science of ethics is but a branch of the science of politics, their final goals need not be identical. While the final goal of politics is indeed the communal weal, the goal of ethics is individual *eudaimonia*, even if we grant the Aristotelian assumption that the former is in some sense superior and prior to the latter. As a politician, King Leonidas should be primarily concerned with the well-being of his native Sparta and that justifies and explains his decision to engage the Persians in a hopeless battle; as an individual who (hypothetically) would have accepted the Aristotelian ethical model of the virtues, the motive for his behaviour need not be the same. Moreover, one can act admirably and in a 'godlike' manner as a politician, yet still without acting in a truly virtuous manner.[21]

Praiseworthy social consequences of a virtuous behavior are not what makes that behaviour virtuous. We should be careful not to turn Aristotle into an early utilitarian thinker. Rogers rightly warns the readers of the quoted passage not to judge hastily: "To say that benefitting many is more virtuous or καλόν than benefitting one, is not to say that what is virtuous about benefitting many is the fact that one is benefitting many. Analogously, it is more courageous to stand firm in battle than to flee, but standing firm in battle is not what it is to be courageous, but instead a manifestation of courage, which consists, rather, in the

21 Aristotle never mentions the episode with the 300 Spartans, but, despite modern expectations, it is less than obvious that he would consider them as exemplars of true courage. Thus, Pears argues that Aristotle would disqualify them from the list of all courageous warriors on the basis of their apparent excess of confidence (1980, 183). I will suggest below that they probably would have been considered courageous by Aristotle (had he cared to discuss the topic) on other grounds.

proper moderation of one's fears and confidences" (1993, 367).

The form of ethics defended by Aristotle is quite appropriately called 'egoistic *eudaimonism*' – a system of behavioural constraints and the rules for character development where the ultimate beneficiary of one's rationally informed choices (i.e. as judged proper by the power of practical reason – *phronesis*) is the agent himself. There is simply no place in Aristotle's ethics for a sincere and altruistic concern for the well-being of others if it does not contribute in any way to one's own *eudaimonia*.[22] If all virtuous actions (including those proceeding from the virtue of friendship) are self-regarding in the long run, it is highly unlikely that the philosopher would make an exception for courage and would advocate a form of utilitarianism when justifying the risk a soldier is exposed to in battle. We must therefore look elsewhere for the noble goal of bravery.

5. THE NOBILITY OF HONOUR

I suggest that we finally consider one other candidate for the noble goal of courage at the end of this article. In his analysis of the various deficient forms of courage Aristotle mentions the courage of the citizen troops (πολιτική ἀνδρεία), that is, of the soldiers drafted into the army from the rank of ordinary citizens in time of war (as opposed to professional mercenaries) (1116a18-20).[23] He makes a further subdivision with regard to the motivation of these drafted warriors. Some of them join the army out of fear of punishment by the authorities, while others volunteer to fight because of considerations of shame and honour (1116a21-34). The latter group exhibits a form of courage that Aristotle obviously ranks above the former, forced variety. He praises the voluntary courage of the citizens as that "most closely resembling [true courage] (μάλιστα γὰρ ἔοικεν)" and his explanation of this rather favourable estimate is revealing: "For it [the form of voluntary courage of a citizen soldier] is due to shame and desire for a noble object (καλοῦ ὄρεξιν) namely, honour (τιμή)" (1116a28). This quote is unique as it is the only place where Aristotle explicitly identifies honour with "a noble object". By doing

22 In my estimate, Angier (2018) has convincingly shown that all recent attempts to present Aristotle as endorsing a form of altruistic ethics (e.g. in connection with his discussion of friendship) simply do not square with the available textual evidence. Aristotelian ethics is indeed a form of enlightened ethical egoism, but this should not be seen as being a denigrating remark. As Rogers argues, one of Aristotle's greatest insights was precisely the realisation that "altruism is unnecessary for virtue" (1993, 371).

23 Aristotle begins his description of the five forms of courage with the phrase **ἔστι μὲν** οὖν ἡ ἀνδρεία τοιοῦτόν τι, **λέγονται δὲ** καὶ ἕτεραι κατὰ πέντε τρόπους (1116a15-16), which is meant to demarcate his own conception of this virtue from those other popular views that, apparently, compete for the title of true virtue but fall short for various reasons. This much is uncontroversial. It does not imply, however, that Aristotle rejects every single aspect of the description of those subsequent five forms. For example, as I argue below, Aristotle rejects 'political courage' as being identical with his own understanding, without necessarily rejecting the idea that honour, the intended goal of political courage, is nonetheless a noble object.

this Aristotle is apparently legitimising a desire for honour (and glory, we may assume) as the proper final goal of a courageous action. A fearless soldier motivated by his desire to leave a great name behind for posterity is thereby motivated by something truly noble and is to this extent exhibiting genuine virtue. So, perhaps, we have found what we were searching for – the noble goal of a courageous soldier is the noble object of honour.[24] But before resting with this conclusion, we should take a brief look at what Aristotle said about the value of honour in general.

Admittedly, Aristotle's view on the value of honour is somewhat ambivalent. One place where honour is discussed at some length occurs in the context of his search for the true meaning of happiness (εὐδαιμονία) at the beginning of the *Eth. Nic.* After a vulgar life devoted to pleasures was quickly dismissed, honour was presented as a common goal of "cultivated people active in politics," and the question was raised whether it would then be proper to identify honour with the final good. Aristotle's answer is rather straightforward: "[Honour] appears to be too superficial to be what we are seeking [i.e. final good], for it seems to depend more on those who honour than on the one honoured, whereas we intuitively believe that the good is something of our own" (1095b23-26). Thus, he continues, we may likewise safely dismiss political life and its main goal, honour, from consideration, and start looking elsewhere for the kind of life which would lead to happiness.[25] At the same time, as we have seen in the previous paragraph, on at least one occasion Aristotle seems to endorse honour as a noble, and, therefore, as a morally desirable end of action. Can honour, then, while being καλόν on the philosopher's own admission, 'ground' a courageous action as its final and proper goal?

The following conclusion, although tentative, seems to me rather plausible. While rejecting honour as the proper final end of human life in general, Aristotle is not denying its nobility or desirability in the relevant sense of the word. It may well be the case that the true happiness of a fulfilled life is not identical with a life devoted to honour, and yet a courageous agent, as earlier observed, was not expected to pursue his *own* happiness by engaging in life-threatening behaviour during war – for obvious reasons. By recognising honour as noble (καλόν), we are not implying that it is the ultimate self-sufficient final good,

24 It still remains puzzling why the voluntary courage of the citizen troops is not *identified* with genuine virtue by Aristotle but is said to be "most closely resembling" it. What exactly is missing and what else is needed to turn it into virtue? Irwin suggests the following explanation (Irwin prefers to translate καλόν as 'fine'): "These citizen soldiers aim at honor, which is FINE. But they do not aim at the fine, as the virtuous person does. If they aimed at the fine, they would recognize that the action itself is fine whether or not it receives honor" (1999, 213). The explanation seems far-fetched as it turns Aristotle into a deontologist who recognises the absolute intrinsic moral value of an action, regardless of the consequences that it might bring for an agent.

25 The inadequacy of honour, as the common goal of "the many", is also discussed at *Eth. Nic.* 1159a22-27.

i.e. we are not challenging Aristotle's evaluation of εὐδαιμονία as being "the noblest (κάλλιστον)" (1099a24-25). But it seems that a goal of action can still be noble, even without fitting the category of the "most final end" or "the noblest end" in the Aristotelian sense. As we have already seen, the qualification καλόν is freely applied by Aristotle to a variety of virtues, objects, and circumstances, and, when the pursuit of personal εὐδαιμονία comes into conflict with the harsh realities of war, there is no reason why a desire for honour and postmortem glory should be denied the characteristic of nobility.[26]

Finally, Aristotle's brief digression on whether one's state as a happy (or unhappy) person can be affected after death (1100a18-31) may be cited as a supplementary point in favour of the above interpretation – although I do not know how much weight to assign to it. In addition to the "fortune of the descendants" as one of the possible causal factors that are thought (by 'the many') to affect one's happiness, Aristotle specifically mentions "[postmortem] honours and dishonours (τιμαὶ καὶ ἀτιμίαι)" that may befall the deceased as another potential influence (1100a20). After considering the objection that happiness is an activity, he nonetheless tentatively concludes that "it would be odd if [these factors] did not for *some* time have *some* effect on the happiness [of a deceased person]" (1100a30). However mysterious and inconsistent with the Aristotelian conception of happiness this cryptic remark may otherwise sound, it provides direct textual evidence for describing a fallen but properly glorified warrior as not being devoid of *eudaimonia* after all. King Leonidas and his legendary regiment of 300 Spartans fought valiantly for the sake of the noble goal of "great glory (κλέος μέγα)" and the exceptional postmortem veneration they received must have had some effect (on Aristotle's admission) on their *eudaimonia* as well.

If we do accept honour as the proper noble goal of courage, two final observations should be made. First, the Aristotelian conception of courage will turn out to be more Homeric in nature than he was willing to admit in the text.[27] Secondly, for Aristotle the virtue of courage will remain an exclusively aristocratic virtue, the virtue of a select few heroes, as only these characters are capable of being motivated to risk their lives by the prospects of

26 Both honour (τιμή) and glory (κλέος) refer in Homer to the praise and admiration paid to rulers and warriors. While honour is typically enjoyed during the lifetime of a person (and often has monetary value), glory refers to the post-mortem extolment of a hero by later generations. Aristotle focuses on honour (τιμή) in his discussion, but there is no reason to suppose that he takes it to be qualitatively different from glory, as these two terms were used as close synonyms at least as early as the fifth century BCE. Cf. Aristophanes: "Divine Homer, where did he get honour and glory (τιμὴν καὶ κλέος) if not from teaching useful things?" (*Ran.* 1035).

27 Elsewhere I argue that the Homeric model of courage, insofar as it can be reconstructed from the actions of the central heroes of the epics, is fully compatible with the Aristotelian theoretical account, despite Aristotle's explicit protestations (Zavaliy 2017).

postmortem glory alone. The majority of ordinary warriors, such as those who are motivated by money, by fear of punishment, or even by a seemingly altruistic desire to protect their family, will have to rest content with something less than true courage, something that only approximates genuine virtue to various degrees. The obvious elitist implication of this account, I believe, constitutes the main weakness of the Aristotelian view of courage, but its substantive criticism is only possible in conjunction with a well-developed alternative account of what constitutes true bravery. This daunting project, however, will have to be undertaken at another time.

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The Stoic Conception of Bodily Beauty as Symmetry

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an interpretation of the Stoic notion of bodily beauty as the symmetry of parts with respect to one another and to the whole. Symmetry is caused by the structuring activity of the rational spirit in multiplicity, making the beautiful thing an ordered whole. This is true for particular bodies in the world and, even more so, for the cosmos as a particular world order. I follow some traces in Stoic texts suggesting that this is also (and a fortiori) true for the cosmos, in the sense of God in conflagration, which somehow represents symmetry in its purest state.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that the Stoic conception of beauty is linked with symmetry (e.g. Čelkytė 2020, Heath 2015, Bychkov and Sheppard 2010, Bett 2010, Horn 1989, and Tatarkiewicz 1970). We have relatively abundant testimony supporting such a claim, ranging from the old Stoa (e.g. Chrysippus in Galen) to the times of the Roman Empire (e.g. Cicero). However, it is less clear how we are to understand such symmetry. The very Greek word – *symmetria* – has at least two alternative translations: a "natural" one, i.e. symmetry in the ordinary sense, and an alternative one, which is also often used, i.e. proportion. However, there is a nuance here, since symmetry puts much less emphasis on the relation of the parts to the whole than proportion does. Let me explain this a bit. Symmetry is nowadays often understood mathematically as "the quality of being made up of exactly similar parts facing each other or around an axis" (Oxford Dictionary of English 2021).[1] In a symmetrical face, for example, the eyes are of the same size and are positioned at the same distance from the middle axis of the face, as are both halves of the lips, and so on. It is of course true that parts *qua* parts (e.g. the eyes and the lips) are always related

1 Cf. also Čelkytė (2020, 144–145) and Hon and Goldstein (2008, 2–3). Hon and Goldstein also provide the historical background and development of this understanding of symmetry. They argue that such a concept is more recent and emerged only several centuries after the main historical representatives of the old Stoa were dead.

to some whole (in this case, the face), but the mathematical understanding of symmetry does not entail a judgement about the mutual commensurability of the parts that create the whole that is being evaluated, like of the eyes to the lips in the case of a face. A purely mathematical notion of symmetry would apply to a face with, for example, ridiculously small eyes and enormous lips, as long as they are positioned correctly and are all of the same size (i.e. one eye the same as the other, one half of the lips the same as the other half). However, *symmetria* as proportion rather refers to the rule of a common *metron*, which organises parts not only in relation to one another, but also in relation to the whole they constitute. The mathematically symmetrical face just described would not be beautiful insofar as beauty is proportion. Therefore, we should investigate which of the two meanings of *symmetria* – (mathematical) symmetry or proportion – the Stoics had in mind when talking about beauty. Interestingly, the extant Stoic sources could be read as supporting both views: the symmetry of parts alone can be found in Galen, Philo, and Cicero, whereas Stobaeus and Plotinus refer to the symmetry of both parts with respect to one another and with respect to the whole. This potential discrepancy – missed even by Čelkytė (2020), the most detailed and recent publication on this topic – needs to be examined and decided, since it either entails an important connection with, or disconnection from, another Greek aesthetic tradition, which claims that beauty is unity in multiplicity. It will also help us understand in more detail what the Stoics thought *symmetria* to be.

In addressing these topics, I will begin by discussing the group of sources that connect beauty with the symmetry of parts alone (Galen, Philo, Cicero). I will also try to make sense of yet another concept mentioned within the definition of beauty: colour. A brief summary of the second group of texts follows (Stobaeus, Plotinus), with an exposition of the available solutions to the problem of the apparent contradiction between the claims of the two groups. In order to defend their positions as compatible, I will propose a simple line of argumentation: proportion is that which unifies all of the parts, while everything unified is a whole. In order to understand and test this hypothesis, a discussion of the Stoic conception of parts and wholes will be necessary, on the basis of which I will conclude that, for a Stoic, pointing out the relation of parts to the whole they constitute might have seemed superfluous in the case of unified bodies, i.e. those bodies to which the extant sources about symmetry refer. In Stoic thought, the model of symmetry is not a mathematical equilibrium – as it is for us – but an organic, living bodily structure with a functional organisation.

In the last two parts of my paper, I address the question of symmetry, parts, and wholes as it applies to the cosmos in both of its meanings: i.e. as a particular world order and as God, which is the beginning and end of this world order. I will try to show that there is a scale of descending beauty in the

Stoics, with God in conflagration at the top and bodies composed of distinct parts at the bottom. Ultimately, I will endorse the conclusion that the Stoic notion of beauty as proportion is merely a version of the Greek *unitas multiplex* theory,[2] at any rate in the case of the world order and lesser beauties.

My paper does not in any way cover the whole question of beauty in the Stoics. Bett (2010) and, more recently, Čelkytė (2020) published insightful texts on this topic, devoted to many facets of the theme which I will not discuss here, such as the link between beauty and love, beauty in souls (i.e. the ethical dimension of beauty), and the classification of beauty as an indifferent thing. Nevertheless, I find it to be of great importance to be able to explain what the symmetry of parts meant for the Stoics, since beauty is primarily linked with symmetry in the extant sources.

2. BEAUTY AS THE SYMMETRY OF PARTS

We may start with three passages from the fifth book of Galen's *De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, in which he continues his discussion with the Stoics about the nature and the seat of the soul. These passages are highly relevant for reconstructing the Stoic concept of beauty, since Galen explicitly discusses Stoic doctrines, quoting Chrysippus – who, in turn, sometimes quotes Zeno – and summarising Posidonius' critique of Chrysippus. Galen's attempt to explain the Stoic (in this case Chrysippus') account of beauty and the health of the soul may be considered more or less sincere, because this part of the Stoic doctrine supports his own Platonic teachings of a tripartite soul. At the same time, we

2 According to the influential work of Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz (1970 and 1980), the Greeks' great theory of beauty declared "that beauty consisted in the proportion of the parts, more precisely in the proportions and arrangement of the parts, or still more precisely, in the size, quality, and number of the parts and their interrelations" (1980, 125). In the visual arts, Tatarkiewicz links this theory with symmetry (*ibid.* and 1970, 273) and supports his claim with references to Vitruvius. However, he incorrectly presents Vitruvius' doctrine as advocating the symmetry of parts alone (e.g. 1970, 273); however, in other places, Tatarkiewicz also mentions the relation to the whole (e.g. in ibid., 49), and at other times he remains ambiguous (e.g. 1980, 126), whereas he explicitly related them to the whole as well (cf. *De architectura* I.2,4 and the commentary by Hon and Goldstein 2008, 99–106, esp. 101). Moreover, the theory of beauty as symmetry – understood solely as the proportion of parts – was, according to Tatarkiewicz, advocated by the Stoics, as can be seen from his summary of the difference between decorum and beauty: "Decorum embodied the concern for the adjustment of parts to the whole, while symmetria was concerned with the agreement of parts among themselves" (1970, 189). For Tatarkiewicz, the great theory was confronted with several rival concepts, among others the theory of beauty as *unitas multiplex*. According to Tatarkiewicz, the difference between the two theories ought to lie in the fact that "unity [...] does not necessarily imply any particular arrangement or proportions" (1980, 136). However, as I will try to show here, at least for the Stoics, the particular arrangement and proportions they had in mind when talking about beauty always implied unity. For the historical background of the use of unity and proportion in aesthetics, see Heath 2015. For a broader critique of Tatarkiewicz with respect to the Stoic conception of beauty, see Čelkytė 2020, 1–4.

must be careful as well, since he makes little effort to be a charitable interpreter. His attitude towards the Stoics may be described as ironic or even disdainful (see Gill 2006, Chapter 4.4).

The context of the first passage (*De Hippoc. et Plat.* V.2.31.1-38.1 Kühn = partly SVF III.471) is a discussion of affections, which, Chrysippus claims, are unnatural (παρὰ φύσιν) and irrational (ἄλογον), and do not arise in the souls of the better sort of men (τῶν ἀστείων). Chrysippus says that affections are analogous to a body which is susceptible to fever, diarrhoea, or other such ailments, as the result of a minor, chance cause. This position is criticised by Posidonius, who attacks the appropriateness of the analogy by pointing out that wise men become immune to affections, while no body is immune to disease. Moreover, he objects that it is irrelevant whether the cause is minor or major. Nevertheless, he also utilises the analogy between a soul susceptible to affections and a healthy body prone to disease, clarifying that this proneness might already be considered a state of illness, such that the lower soul is rather analogous to the disease itself. However, as Galen points out, Posidonius thus blurs the line not only between the health of a body and its proneness to disease, but even between the health of the body and the disease itself. Hence, a soul which is receptive to affections should, in some sense, be analogous to such a body which is, in a sense, both healthy and diseased, a claim which makes no sense, according to Galen.

Be that as it may, Galen's main intention here is different. He wants to demonstrate that the Stoics use the analogy between the body and soul in order to point out that it implies the existence of parts of the soul, namely those parts identified by Plato. Therefore, he quotes further passages from Chrysippus showing that the latter wishes to preserve a certain analogy between the soul and body on the level of their affections, infirmities, diseases, health, robustness, strength, weakness, and, more broadly, everything that has the same name in both (V.2.26-31 Kühn). According to Chrysippus, a disease of the body is a lack of proportion (ἀσυμμετρία) between its components (τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ), i.e. between hot and cold, dry and wet (θερμοῦ καὶ ψυχροῦ, ξηροῦ καὶ ὑγροῦ). By contrast, health is a kind of good blending and proportion of the things mentioned (εὐκρασία τις καὶ συμμετρία τῶν διειρημένων). Similarly, proportion or lack of proportion in the tendons (ἡ ἐν νεύροις συμμετρία ἢ ἀσυμμετρία) constitutes, respectively, strength or weakness (ἰσχὺς ἢ ἀσθένεια), also termed firmness or softness (εὐτονία ἢ ἀτονία). Most importantly for our purposes, proportion or lack of proportion in the limbs (ἡ ἐν τοῖς μέλεσι συμμετρία ἢ ἀσυμμετρία) constitutes beauty or ugliness (κάλλος ἢ αἶσχος). Galen now presses his attack on Chrysippus: the latter has not explained how a body, which has parts (i.e. on the one hand, the elements, on the other, parts such as tendons and limbs), and a soul, which has no parts, according to the Stoics, can be analogous. Without the soul having parts, the

analogy does not hold, and there is no health or disease – or, we might add, strength or weakness, or even beauty or ugliness – in the soul.

Galen concludes that Chrysippus falls victim to a double error. First, he contradicts himself in saying that a disease of the soul is the same "in name" as a disease of the body, and, simultaneously, he compares this disease of the soul to unstable and precarious health. Second, he is unable to demonstrate the very thing he promised to demonstrate, i.e. the mutual proportion and disproportion between the soul's parts, with reference to which the soul is said to be healthy or diseased. Although he supposes that all of the soul's affections and diseases arise in a single part, he is unable to explain what those parts are.

The second passage (*De Hippoc. et Plat.* V.2.46.1-50.1 Kühn) further expands on what has already been said, or at least implied. Galen stresses that the beauty or ugliness of a soul should analogously lie in the proportion (συμμετρία) or disproportion (termed ἀμετρία here) of the soul's parts (τῆς ψυχῆς μερῶν), and he supports this claim with a direct quotation from Chrysippus: "by analogy the soul will also be called beautiful or ugly in terms of proportion or disproportion of certain parts of such and such kind" (διὸ καὶ καλὴ ἢ αἰσχρὰ ψυχὴ ἀνάλογον ῥηθήσεται κατὰ συμμετρίαν ἢ ἀμετρίαν τοιῶνδέ τινων μερῶν. *De Hippoc. et Plat.* V.2.47.3-4; transl. de Lacy). As can be seen, Galen simply argues that the notion of symmetry or asymmetry is incompatible with the Stoics' unitary conception of the soul, a point also made by Plotinus in treatise I.6.1. Later in the text, he provides further justification for this claim by denying that the activities of the soul may be considered its parts. However, Galen does agree with Chrysippus insofar as the definition of health and disease or beauty and ugliness is concerned (cf. *De Hippoc. et Plat.* V.2.48.1-4 Kühn). Thus, our wariness towards his interpretation of Stoic teachings may be further diminished.

The issue of beautiful bodies reemerges in the third passage (*De Hippoc. et Plat.* V.3.14.1-18.1 Kühn), which still deals with the candidates for the parts of the soul in Chrysippus. According to Galen, Chrysippus accurately distinguishes between health and beauty in the case of bodies: health is the proportion of the elements (τῶν στοιχείων συμμετρία) and beauty the proportion of the members (τῶν μορίων). The definition of beauty shows that it is not connected with the elements themselves, as health is, but rather with the natural members. In the upper body, for example, these are the fingers, the palms, and the bases of the hand,[3] the forearm, and the upper arm. Galen specifies the meaning of proportion here: beautiful fingers are symmetrical to each other (δακτύλου πρὸς δάκτυλον),[4] and all

3 Cf. the explanation of the translation of μετακάρπιον καὶ καρπόν as "the palm and the base of the hand" in the *Postscript* by Stewart (1978), who provides a further reference to Richardson (1977).

4 R. Tobin (1975) suggests that "δακτύλου πρὸς δάκτυλον" actually refers to the symmetry of the phalanx of a finger to a nearby one. However, this reading is not persuasive, as nicely shown by Stewart (1978).

of the fingers taken together are proportionate to the palm and the base of the hand (συμπάντων αὐτῶν πρός τε μετακάρπιον καὶ καρπόν), while these, in turn, are proportionate to the forearm (τούτων πρὸς πῆχυν), just as the forearm is proportionate to the upper arm (πήχεως πρὸς βραχίονα). Galen concludes this list with the proportion of everything to everything else (πάντων πρὸς πάντα), making a reference to Polycleitus' *Canon* (both the treatise and the statue).

There is much dispute about what precisely Polycleitus' *Canon* consisted of, an issue which is very relevant for the discussion here, since πάντων πρὸς πάντα may be interpreted as referring to the proportion of both "all parts to all other parts" and "all parts to the whole". Favouring one or the other of the interpretations on the basis of a conjecture about the nature of the *Canon* would amount to little more than wild speculation. Fortunately, Galen himself mentions Polycleitus in a different context in *De temperamentis* 1.566.3–15, where he claims that the *Doryphoros* received the name *Canon* "from its having a precise commensurability (συμμετρίαν) of all the parts to one another" (πάντων τῶν μορίων πρὸς ἄλληλα; transl. A. Stewart). One could argue that this is a sufficient reason for reading *De Hippoc. et Plat.* V.3.14.1–18.1 Kühn as referring only to the symmetry of parts to one another. However, the commensurability of different types of parts (e.g. not only of the fingers to each other, but also of the fingers to the palm and the base of the hand) already goes beyond the purely mathematical understanding of symmetry sketched out at the beginning of this paper. From these references to Polycleitus, it seems rather that Galen understood the conception of symmetry as the commensurability of all the parts to one another, which establishes, in this sense, a link to the whole, to the rule of a common *metron*, and should therefore be rather translated as proportion. A closer reading of Galen's reports concerning the Stoic understanding of *symmetria* might thus be read as entailing a reference not only to the parts, but also to the composite whole, as is reported by the second group of sources (Stobaeus, Plotinus) discussed below in Section 3.

It is worth noting that in all three passages from Galen, a contrast is drawn between health and beauty. Even though both are linked with symmetry, it is a symmetry of different kinds of parts. In Galen's understanding, while health is said to be the proportion of the most elementary parts – that is, of the elements themselves (τῶν στοιχείων συμμετρία) – beauty is linked with parts that we may in some sense call natural, such as the above-mentioned fingers, forearms, etc. Similarly to how many other Stoic doctrines echo Aristotle's teachings,[5] this too might be linked with

5 The influence of Aristotle's thought on Stoic philosophy is, of course, a matter of dispute, with positions ranging from the denial of any knowledge of Aristotle's work by the early Stoics (Sandbach 1985) to assigning it a significant role in the development of Stoicism (Hahm 1977). Personally, I tend to side with the second group of scholars, although I agree with Sedley, that "... we must avoid the

his understanding of beauty. Aristotle says in the *Poetics* (1450b.34–1451a.6) that the beauty of a thing lies in its magnitude (ἐν μεγέθει) and order (τάξει). In addition to order – which for Aristotle, at least, is self-evident – a beautiful thing must be of a certain size. It must be large enough to be recognisable by the senses. If it were too small, the observer would fail to perceive its distinctness (συγχεῖται γὰρ ἡ θεωρία ἐγγὺς τοῦ ἀναισθήτου χρόνου γινομένη). On the other hand, it must not be too large, so that it remains cohesive, and the observer does not fail to perceive its unity and wholeness (οὐ γὰρ ἅμα ἡ θεωρία γίνεται ἀλλ' οἴχεται τοῖς θεωροῦσι τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ ὅλον ἐκ τῆς θεωρίας). Obviously, the Stoics only emphasise order, i.e. the symmetry of parts.[6] One may thus wonder what happened to magnitude. First of all, the symmetry of elemental (i.e. very small) parts does not equate to beauty, but to health. Thus, the very use of the term "beauty" presupposes some magnitude, namely that of natural parts and not of the elements. As Plutarch (*De commun. Not.* 1079a-b = SVF II.483-4 = LS 50C) notes with reference to Chrysippus, what we mean by the whole or complete parts (ὁλοσχερῆ μέρα)[7] are things like the head (κεφαλή), the chest (θώραξ), and the legs (σκέλλω). These are the first (and, we might add, natural) candidates to be considered parts of the body, and they all have the right magnitude in the Aristotelian sense, which is required to call a body beautiful. From a different perspective, the symmetry of parts itself includes a reference to magnitude, because it is a *syn-metria*, proportion and, in a sense, the size of a given part predetermines the sizes of all other parts, because they all have a share in the same *metron*.[8] Thus, in the context of a human body, where the Stoics linked symmetry with natural parts, it is possible that they perceived Aristotle's emphasis on magnitude to be superfluous and thus excluded it from their definition of beauty here.

A similar testimony to *De Hippoc. et Plat.* V.3.14.1–18.1 Kühn may be found in Philo's *De Vita Mosis* 2.136–140, which is devoted to a discussion of Moses as a priest. A detailed description of the Tabernacle and its appurtenances can be found here, prompting Philo to make some additional comments about beauty. The Stoics are not explicitly mentioned, but the notion of symmetry Philo draws on corresponds to other testimonies.

unhistorical assumption that Aristotle's unique importance was as obvious to his near-contemporaries as it is to us" (Sedley 2003, 12). For a more recent discussion of the topic, see Kupreeva (2009) and Tieleman (2016). For the relation of symmetry to Aristotle's understanding of beauty, see Heath (2015, 388–389).

6 Although Aristotle probably differentiated between order and symmetry (*Met.* 1077b), the former seems to be a superordinate notion to the latter. Thus, the Stoics could easily have replaced τάξις with συμμετρία.

7 Cf. the translation by Paul Scade (2013), whose reflections point in the same direction as mine.

8 See Polycleitus' *Doryphoros* and again the interpretations of Tobin (1975) and Stewart (1978). Regardless of how interpreters reconstruct the content of the treatise *Canon*, they agree on the fact that the statue of the same name was created in accordance with a particular proportion.

Moreover, Philo is known to make "acknowledgements to his anonymous predecessors, whose work he incorporates, sometimes (it appears) as almost unmodified blocks of matter, much as he also transcribes parts of Greek philosophical tracts" (Chadwick 1967; for more detail, cf. Runia 2010b). His attitude towards the Stoics is critical, since he is a Jewish scholar, but, at the same time, he does not refute their doctrines as such. Rather, he tries to merge them with his own.

According to this testimony, beauty of the body consists in a symmetry of parts (συμμετρία μερῶν), a good complexion (εὐχροία), and the good condition of the flesh (εὐσαρκία). Bodily beauty has merely a short period during which it is in full bloom (βραχὺν τῆς ἀκμῆς ἔχον καιρόν), as opposed to the beauty of the mind (διανοία), which does not fade away or become impaired with the passing of time (μὴ χρόνου μήκει μαραινόμενον), but constantly acquires fresh vigour and renewed youth (ἀλλ' ἐφ' ὅσον ἐγχρονίζει καινούμενον καὶ νεάζον) as long as it endures. This beauty of the mind is, by analogy with bodily beauty, identified as the harmony of opinions (ἁρμονίᾳ δογμάτων) and the perfect accord of virtues (ἀρετῶν συμφωνίᾳ). Philo expands further on this claim, stating that it is adorned with the lustrous hue of truth (χρώματι διαπρεπεῖ κεκοσμημένον ἀληθείας), as well as the agreement of its words with its actions (ὁμολογίας ἔργων πρὸς λόγους), of its actions with its words (καὶ πρὸς ἔργα λόγων), and of its thoughts and intentions with both (ἔτι βουλευμάτων πρὸς ἑκάτερα).

As can be seen, Philo is attempting to contrast bodily beauty with the beauty of the mind, in order to show the superiority of the latter over the former. However, the notion of symmetry he uses to define the two forms of beauty is not very suitable for making this point, because it does not show that bodily beauty is transitory (a point made by Plotinus in *Enn*. I.6.1.37–40 and VI.7.22.27–29), as opposed to the beauty of the mind. For this reason, perhaps, Philo adds the criteria of a good complexion (εὐχροία)[9] and the good condition of the flesh (εὐσαρκία), both of which obviously fade away with age and/or illness. On the one hand, one might be inclined to exclude εὐχροία and εὐσαρκία from the Stoic definition of beauty, since they have an obvious purpose in Philo. On the other hand, we might consider the possibility that Philo's text points out some lesser-known details of the Stoic doctrine, according to which an old and/or diseased body cannot be called beautiful, even if it has symmetrical parts. This line of thought would go in the direction of Plotinus' objection mentioned above: the same face – i.e. a face with the same proportions – becomes ugly under certain circumstances (*Enn*. I.6.1.37–40), such as on a corpse (*Enn*. VI.7.22.27-29). Then again, if denying the beauty of a corpse was an integral part of the Stoic doctrine, it seems odd that Plotinus would mention it as an obvious flaw in the symmetry theory.

9 Note, however, that εὐχροία can also be translated as "well-coloured". On this point, see my discussion of Cicero's *Tusc. disp.* below.

However that may be, the Stoic doctrine was surely sophisticated enough to be able to explain the case of a corpse or of a diseased or aged body. According to the Stoics, death is "the separation of the soul from the body" (SVF II.604 = *De Stoic. Repug.* 39.1052c, cf. *Phd.* 67d) which is to be understood as a sort of loosening of the tension of the soul, similar to sleep but much more intense, if not absolute (cf. SVF II.766-7 = DL VII.158; *Plac*. V.24.4). Just as we see that a dead body stops breathing – i.e. loses its tonic movement – we also observe that it slowly starts to decay and loses its shape. Now shape is also an epiphenomenon of the tonic (i.e. pneumatic) movement (cf. SVF. II.451 and II.449). Thus, losing shape is probably to be understood as the gradual loosening of the tension of the soul. Thus, a corpse gradually becomes ugly, because it slowly loses its formerly beautiful proportions. Similarly, the process of ageing could perhaps be explained as the long-term loosening of the tension of the soul, and the phenomenal evidence for losing the shape of one's body as one ages is quite evident. The case of a disease is an interesting one as well. As we have seen in Galen, the elements of a diseased body lose their symmetry. It is possible that Stoic thinking about this matter went in the direction of arguing that the disproportion of the elements ultimately – and, once again, perhaps gradually – leads to the disruption of the symmetry of the natural parts of the body.

The connection between the nature of health and beauty – along with the Stoic understanding of bodily beauty as the symmetry of bodily parts – can, for that matter, also be found in Cicero's *De off.* 1.95–98. As is well known, Cicero claimed allegiance to Academic scepticism. However, he often considers Stoic answers to various problems. On the whole, he sees Stoic views as extreme, but nevertheless admires them for their coherence and considers many of them to be well reasoned (cf. Graver 2002). However, this should not obscure the fact that he was a follower of a rival school and, in this sense, "a hostile witness", as John Rist puts it (1969, 125).

The question at issue in *De off.* 1.95–98 is *decorum* (propriety),[10] which he more broadly defines as "that which agrees with the excellence of man just where his nature differs from that of other creatures" (*quod consentaneum sit hominis excellentiae in eo, in qua natura eius a reliquis animantibus differat*; *De off.* 1.96, transl. Margaret Atkins) and, in a narrower sense, as "that which agrees with nature in such a way that moderation and restraint appear in it, along with the appearance of a gentleman" (quod ita naturae consentaneum sit, ut in eo moderatio et temperantia appareat cum specie quadam liberali; *De off.* 1.96, transl. Margaret Atkins). *Decorum* is substantially linked with virtue, but "in such a way that it is not seen by esoteric reasoning, but springs ready to view (*in promptu*)" (*De off.* 1.95, transl. Margaret Atkins). Thus, Cicero compares the relation of *decorum* to virtue with the relation of health to bodily beauty

10 For an account of *decorum*, see McMahon (2009). For the context of this passage, see Dyck (1996).

(*pulchritude corporis*) or loveliness (*venustas*), in the sense that the two are separable only in one's mind and thoughts (*mente et cogitatione*), while in reality, they always accompany each other. Cicero further explains his concept of *decorum* by showing its meaning in the field of poetry, where characters need to speak in a way that is appropriate to their role. But the role of a real man is, by nature (*a natura*), that of achieving virtue and not being careless towards other people. Therefore, Cicero claims, *decorum* is crucial in both senses, broad and narrow (see above). *Decorum* will shine forth during one's life and arouse other men's approval, just as beauty arouses the eye (*movet oculos*) by the appropriate arrangement of the limbs (*apta compositione membrorum*) and delights it (*delectat hoc ipso*) with the pleasant combination of its parts (*lepore consentiunt*).

Cicero's *Tusculanae disputationes* IV.30–31, which deals with the emotions of a sage, further confirms the previous findings, but this time introducing a new element. In *Tusc. disp.* IV.30–31, Cicero starts with the already well-known analogy of the soul (*anima*) to the body (*corpus*) in both good and bad qualities (*ut in malis … sic in bonis*), meaning that there are qualities such as beauty (*pulchritudo*), strength (*vires*), wellness (*valetudo*), toughness (*firmitas*), or quickness (*velocitas*) in both the body and soul. Like Galen, Cicero specifies that just as there is health of the body, which is a balanced condition (*temperatio*) of the elements, when they fit properly together (*congruunt inter se*), there is also health of the soul, which, in an analogous way, is an agreement of judgements and beliefs (*iudicia opinionesque concordant*). In this context, the question of beauty resurfaces once again. Bodily beauty is said to refer to a configuration (*apta figura*) of limbs (*membrorum*) accompanied by a pleasant colour (*coloris quadam suavitate*). In the case of the beautiful soul, beauty refers to uniformity (*aequabilitas*) and consistency (*consistentia*) of opinions and judgements (*opinionum iudiciorumque*), together with a certain toughness and stability (*firmitate quadam et stabilitate*), which either follows upon virtue (*virtutem subsequens*) or is identical with it (*aut virtutis vim ipsam continens*).

The addition of colour to the definition seems suspicious, since Cicero does not mention it in *Off.* However, following the same procedure as we did in accounting for the addition of εὐχροία and εὐσαρκία in Philo, let us hypothesise that, if this doctrine is genuinely Stoic, colour was an integral part of the Stoic notion of bodily beauty. What would this mean? There are two extant Stoic definitions of colour. According to Aetius (I.15.6 = SVF I.91), colours are "the primary characteristics (πρώτους σχηματισμούς) of matter"[11] and according to Pseudo-Galen (*De hist. philos.* 27.5–6 = SVF I.91), "the surface colouration (ἐπίχρωσιν) of matter". Some time ago, Katerina Ierodiakonou tried to make sense of these two fragments, and I agree with the conclusion she arrived at:

11 For a translation and interpretation, see Katerina Ierodiakonou (2015).

> Colors, according to the Stoics, are intrinsic qualities or attributes of objects which may be either essential, as in the case of the four elements, or accidental, as in the case of the ordinary objects we perceive. An ordinary object has the color it has because of the mixture of elements which are its constituents; and as to the elements themselves, they have the colors they have in virtue of the breaths, or aeriform tensions, permeating them. (Ierodiakonou 2015, 244)

Now, it is difficult to make use of this account to shed light on the question of beauty unless we emphasise the fact that, according to the Stoics, the colour of a body is a direct display of the mixture of the body's elements. In this sense, the colour of a body could be taken to be something like an indicator of the state of the elements constituting the body, one that is visible at a glance. Note too that the term εὐχροία discussed above actually means "well-coloured" and, in this sense, refers to a good complexion. Now we have seen that beauty often emerges – in Cicero and other texts – in the context of health, and we also know that the colour of the body or of its humours and other fluids was used by the ancient physicians in their diagnoses.[12] Thus, the addition of colour to the definition of beauty may once again point in the direction of the fundamental interconnectedness of beauty and health, to the fact that a body cannot be truly beautiful if there is some sort of disproportion in it – i.e. of the elements – albeit a disproportion not yet visible in the natural parts. A possible first sign of such a disproportion could be a change in the colour of the human body, which is most obvious in the case of a corpse that becomes pale when livor mortis starts to develop, a change that occurs long before decay becomes obvious. Moreover, the colour of a human body changes throughout the process of becoming ill or ageing. Colour is, in this sense, an indicator of the state of the elements, although probably not the most obvious or striking one, certainly in the case of ageing but also in that of many diseases. Note too that in *De off.* 1.95–98, Cicero deals with *decorum* which "springs ready to view" (*De off.* 1.95), i.e. he is interested in immediately visible signs of phenomena. Colour could be one such sign, if we interpret it as an immediately visible sign of (dis)proportion between the elements, i.e. of health or disease, which can be separated from beauty only in thought.

12 Cf. e.g. Hippocrates, *Prog.* 12; *Aph.* 3.21; Galen, *SMT* 11.459–461; *MM.* X65–6K; *Caus. Morb.* III.XII.1; *Symp.Diff.* IV.8.

3. BEAUTY AS THE SYMMETRY OF PARTS AND THE WHOLE

To conclude this overview of the sources dealing with bodily beauty, let us consider two other texts that complicate the situation even further. Both Plotinus (*Enn.* I.6.1) and the Stoic sources preserved by Johannes Stobaeus (*Anth.* II.7.5b4) claim that the Stoics considered beauty to be not only the symmetry of parts with respect to one another, but also their symmetry with respect to

the whole. In the previously mentioned passage from treatise I.6.1, Plotinus considers the notion of beauty as the good proportion of the parts to each other and to the whole (συμμετρία τῶν μερῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ὅλον), once again with the addition of a good complexion (τό τε τῆς εὐχροίας). A sensible thing – or, more generally, anything whatsoever – is beautiful, Plotinus reports, if it is well proportioned and measured (τὸ συμμέτροις καὶ μεμετρημένοις). Now, the mention of good colour or a good complexion need not mean anything more than that Plotinus was familiar with Cicero's texts or his sources. But how are we to interpret the fact that proportion is here ascribed not only to parts with respect to each other, but also with respect to the whole?

One might speculate that this is simply a Platonic projection and justify this claim with testimony about Plotinus' extravagant style of writing (See *Vita Plot.* VIII.8-12 and 1-3.). The fact is, however, that in *Anth.* II.7.5b4, Stobaeus reports the same thing. He presents the already well-known analogy between a beautiful body and a beautiful soul as follows: "As beauty of the body is symmetry of the limbs with respect to one another and to the whole, so also is beauty of the soul symmetry of reason and its parts with respect to the whole of it and to one another" (*Anth.* II.7.5b4.12–16; Ὥσπερ τε τὸ κάλλος τοῦ σώματός ἐστι συμμετρία τῶν μελῶν καθεστώτων αὐτῷ πρὸς ἄλληλά τε καὶ πρὸς τὸ ὅλον, οὕτω καὶ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς <κάλλος> ἐστὶ συμμετρία τοῦ λόγου καὶ τῶν μερῶν αὐτοῦ πρὸς <τὸ> ὅλον τε αὐτῆς καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα.; transl. Richard Bett, modified).

It is true that Stobaeus' *Anthologium* has survived only in a partially fragmented version. Nevertheless, it contains a vast amount of doxographical material in the area of physics. Even though Stobaeus gives no indication whatsoever as to what his sources were, there can be no doubt that he made use of the work of Arius Didymus (cf. Runia 2010a).

4. HARMONISING EXTANT SOURCES

Given that we must address this controversy with so few detailed sources at our disposal, it seems to me that we have only three options: 1) we can insist on the difference between the two conceptions, in which case we must either a) deny that Plotinus reports and Stobaeus quotes Stoic doctrines correctly or b) try to explain them as possibly Stoic, but not of third-century BC orthodoxy (i.e. interpret them as eclectic teachings of some sort, as we often do with those of Posidonius); 2) we can say that there is actually no difference in principle between the notion of the symmetry of parts with respect to one another and that of the symmetry of parts with respect both to one another and to the whole. Now let us consider all three options. Option 1a is a hermeneutically dull and arbitrary interpretation that ignores portions of the extant fragments. It represents a viable choice only in cases where some of the sources contradict vast amounts of thoroughly elaborated evidence to the contrary or where we find

an intrinsic contradiction within the disparate sources. However, this is not true in the present case, given that the sources are scarce and the conclusions drawn from them are but interpretative variations. Option 1b seems more plausible, but only if we are unable to find a better solution, since there is nothing to prove such a claim. We should thus focus on option 2, perhaps reasoning as follows: when talking about the symmetry of parts, we actually say that there is some common proportion between them, that there is a *syn-metria*, which is integral to the whole. Such proportion unifies all the parts and everything unified is a whole. Therefore, saying that parts are symmetrical always implicitly relates them to a whole.[13] Moreover, this line of thought is precisely what we found in Galen, when we examined his text more closely, since he talked about symmetry between the parts and the whole with reference to Polycleitus' *Canon*. From a different perspective, Čelkytė (2020, 154–161) has convincingly shown that there is a functional component in beauty in virtue of its relation to τὸ καθῆκον, which the Stoics understood in an ethical context as an act in accordance with nature or, more broadly, as conformity with the natural order (*De commun. not.* 1069E = SVF 3.491 = LS 59A; *Anth.* II.85.13-86.4 = SVF 3.494 = LS 59B; DL VII.107 = SVF 3.493 = LS 59C). As she aptly formulates it: "'the symmetria of parts with the whole' concerns the role that an object has from the functional perspective as well as how the composition of its parts contributes to its playing of that role." Using the aforementioned Polycleitian example, the function of the hand is grasping and the symmetry between the size of the fingers and that of the palm plus the base of the hand is required for the hand to perform its function properly. In order to refine this claim, however, we must investigate whether there are more types of wholes, with more than one type of relation to their parts. As we shall see, this is, in fact, the case according to the Stoics. A more detailed inquiry into this matter is thus required.

13 Ultimately, Čelkytė (2020, 154–161) comes to a similar conclusion, albeit from a different perspective, namely that of the necessary connection of beauty as symmetry with each thing being able to perform its particular function. This function is determined by its relation to the whole.

5. PARTS AND WHOLES IN STOIC TEACHINGS

In a passage from Sextus' *Adv. math.* (IX.78 = SVF II.1013), as well as in Seneca's *Epistles* (*Ep.* 102 = SVF III.160), we find a report that the Stoics distinguished between unified bodies (ἡνωμένα, *continua*) that are dominated by a power holding them together (τὰ ὑπὸ μιᾶς ἕξεως κρατούμενα), such as plants, animals, or people, and bodies composed (*composita*) either of connected (τὰ δὲ ἐκ συναπτομένων) or of distinct parts (τὰ δὲ ἐκ διεστώτων). Bodies composed of connected parts consist of juxtaposed elements (ἔκ παρακειμένων) that incline towards a common dominating unity (πρὸς ἕν τι κεφάλαιον νευόντων). The Stoics provide the following examples: a chain, a boat, a house, or a burial

vault. By contrast, bodies composed of distinct parts consist of elements that are disjoined (τὰ ἐκ διεζευγμένων, *ex distantibus*) and by nature (*natura*) separate (κεχωρισμένων, *diducti*) that are autonomous (καθ' αὑτὰ, *singuli*), such as an army, a flock, a choir, a nation, or a senate. They hold together on the basis of a law or duty (*iure aut officio*), at least in some cases. Both types of composite bodies are distinguished from unified ones by virtue of the sympathy that governs the latter. This may be seen in the cosmos, where celestial bodies influence the growth and wasting away of animals, high tide and low tide, and changes in the atmosphere. A somewhat different example of the difference between unified and composite bodies is that of a surviving soldier who is unaffected by the demise of the rest of the army, as opposed to the cutting off of a finger, which affects the entire body (τὸ ὅλον συνδιατίθεται σῶμα). Moreover, as Seneca reports, whatever is composed of parts is not good, since everything good is connected by a single leading breath (*uno spiritu*). This is the case of unified bodies that are held together either by holding (ἕξις), as in the case of stones or wood, by nature (φύσις), as in the case of plants, or by the soul (ψυχή), as in the case of animals. In other words, they are all modalities of *pneuma*, which holds everything together.

For the Stoics (cf. SVF II.471-473) pneuma was a mixture (μίξις) of active elements (fire and air). Bodies were also considered blendings (κρᾶσις), namely of pneuma and passive elements (water and earth), in which the former holds the latter together. In every mixture or blending, it is possible to have a different proportion of constituents. Pneuma itself may be more or less hot or cold, i.e. more or less active or passive. Correspondingly, the Stoics distinguish four modalities of pneuma: reason (λόγος or νοῦς), soul (ψυχή), nature (φύσις), and holding (ἕξις). However, there may also be a different proportion of constituents in different blendings (κρᾶσις). In all cases of mixtures and blendings, the activity of holding together is accomplished by what is termed pneumatic motion (κίνησις πνευματική), i.e. a movement into itself (πρὸς or εἰς ἑαυτό) or back (οπίσω) and at the same time a movement out of itself (ἐξ αὑτοῦ) or forth (πρόσω). The first phase of the pneumatic motion holds the body together, producing cohesion (συνέχεια), unity (ένωσις) and being (οὐσία), while the second movement is the source of the bodies' dimensions (μεγέθη) and qualities (ποιοτήτες). The Stoics call the simultaneous nature of these contrary movements "tension" (τόνος) or "tensional movement" (τονική κίνησις). Consequently, different mixtures of active and passive elements have different tensions, i.e. different cohesion, unity, being, dimensions, and qualities.

All of this might be of use in answering the question of whether symmetry relates solely to parts or to the whole as well. As we have seen, Galen, Philo, and Cicero all comment on the bodily beauty *of a living human body*. Galen, who is interested in the analogy between the symmetry of the body and that of the soul, discusses beauty in the context of

health, strength, and other such predicates, connecting it with the natural parts of the human body. In one passage, he mentions a statue (Polycleitus' *Canon*), but it is, once again, a statue of a human body unified by the proportion given to it by its creator. Moreover, this particular statue was considered the paradigm of a piece of art governed by a single proportion. Philo contrasts the beauty of a body with that of the soul and criticises the former for its transitory nature, resulting from its connection with a good complexion and the condition of the flesh, i.e. with health and youth. Cicero also connects beauty with the symmetry of the limbs, i.e. of parts of the human body, and links it with health. In all these cases, the symmetry under consideration thus concerns unified bodies governed by the soul (ψυχή), nature (φύσις), and holding (ἕξις). In these cases, each part is necessarily related to the whole. Galen, Philo, and Cicero are thus able to focus exclusively on the symmetry of the parts to each other, since their symmetry with respect to the whole can be naturally presupposed. Thus, both Plotinus' and Stobaeus' testimony could be taken as being in accord with this position in the case of unified bodies.

That having been said, the situation would probably look different in the case of composite bodies, especially those composed of distinct parts. In the latter case, the relation of the parts to the whole is not a matter of course. If there is such a relation, it would need to be pointed out. Both Plotinus and Stobaeus may perhaps have had in mind this broader notion of beauty, which is applicable to all types of bodies, when compiling their reports on Stoic doctrines – in Plotinus' case to criticise them, in that of Stobaeus to preserve them. By contrast, it is possible that Galen, Philo, and Cicero focused strictly on the question of the beauty of a unified living body and thus simplified the definition of beauty. While plausible, there is also no direct evidence for such a claim,[14] which is motivated solely by the desire to understand the extant sources as compatible in a philosophically interesting fashion. Moreover, the objection could be raised that both Plotinus and Stobaeus also refer to the beauty of a human body and thus could have presented the Stoic doctrine in a similar way to Galen, Philo, and Cicero. Nevertheless, if one tries to avoid venturing out onto the shaky ground of mere speculation by rejecting options 1a and 1b, as laid out in Section 4, it is difficult to identify a plausible way of making sense of the extant sources.

There is, however, some indirect evidence for the claim that the Stoics genuinely believed that wholes consist of parts related not only to each other, but also to the whole they co-constitute, i.e. in some stronger sense than just conceptually (all parts qua parts are related to some whole). Two passages from Sextus directly address the relationship between parts and wholes

14 At least in the case of Philo and Cicero. Galen's reports, as I have tried to show, presuppose the relation of parts to the whole they constitute, which could be considered direct evidence.

(*Adv. math.* IX.336 and XI.24). According to these passages, a part is neither something other than the whole nor the same thing as the whole (οὔτε ἕτερον … οὔτε τὸ αὐτό; οὔτε τὰ αὐτὰ … οὔτε ἑτεροῖα). This is because it is included in the whole, just as a hand is included in a man (σὺν αὐτῇ [scil. ἡ χειρ] γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος; σὺν γὰρ τῇ [ὅλῃ] χειρὶ ὅλος ὁ ἄνθρωπος), but it is also not coextensive with it, just as a hand is not coextensive with a man (οὐ γάρ ἐστιν [ἡ χειρ] ἄνθρωπος; ἡ χειρ οὔτε ἡ αὐτή ἐστιν τῷ ὅλῳ ἀνθρώπῳ). In wholes of this kind, i.e. in unified bodies, the parts are always related to the whole they compose. This claim may be interpreted as saying that the reciprocal relations between different parts always presuppose their relation to the whole, insofar as they are parts of the whole. But the relation between the parts and the whole they compose is not merely conceptual, in the above-specified sense. Nor is it mathematical in the sense of a whole, e.g. a group of ten units, which is composed of some random combination of parts, e.g. 5 + 5 or 4 + 6. Such a reading does not give its due to the substantially organic or biological nature of Stoic thought, i.e. to the fact that they primarily have organic structures in mind, such as a man and his hand (cf. Sambursky 1959, 9ff). The relation of a man to his hand is not just a formal relation of the concept of a part to the concept of a whole, but rather a man is a whole when he has his hand (see the expression σὺν γὰρ τῇ [ὅλῃ] χειρὶ ὅλος ὁ ἄνθρωπος above) and if a man cuts off his hand (or a part of it, such as a finger – see *Adv. math.* IX.78 = SVF II.1013 above), the whole body is affected. A part of an organic structure serves some purpose, i.e. has its own function within the whole, and its size – among other things – must be appropriate to this function. In other words, there is always some communication (διάδοσις) between the parts and the whole in unified bodies, and there is an interlacing union (συμφυῆ ἕνωσίν) of the individual properties (SVF 2.391 = *In Arist. Cat.* 214.24ff = LS 28M).[15] On these grounds, I propose a stronger reading of the passages from Sextus, according to which both the whole and its parts share in the same proportion. If so, it could support the claim that, in the case of unified bodies, it may have been unnecessary for a Stoic to point out the relation of the parts to the whole, since they were talking about living organisms. A Stoic philosopher would perhaps be similarly surprised if one were to comment on his definition of beauty as the symmetry of parts, saying that he surely means existing, corporeal parts. For him, this would go without saying. Thus, when the Stoics said that beauty is some sort of symmetry, it is possible that they had precisely an organic and living bodily structure in mind as a model. Moreover, in such organic structures, the parts are not linked to the whole merely on the conceptual level, but rather there is a much closer relationship between them, as the examples above show. Saying that a thing is beautiful because it is symmetrical should thus be read as implying that this thing is a structure

15 Cf. Sambursky (1959, 10ff).

within which the parts are related to each other and to the whole (an organic structure being the model in this theory). As Čelkytė (2020, 154–161) has once again shown, these relations are governed by the concept of function, i.e. each part serves its purpose and has a correspondingly apt arrangement and size to do this.

6. THE BEAUTY OF WORLD ORDER (ΔΙΑΚΟΣΜΗΣΙΣ)

The Stoics did not apply the conception of beauty as symmetry in the sense of an aptly arranged structure only to individual bodies that are parts of the cosmos, but also to the cosmos itself, since it is also a body.[16] In their cosmology, they even relate parts, the whole, and beauty more explicitly than they do in the case of particular bodies within the cosmos. This situation was perhaps mainly due to the mechanistic teachings of Epicurus and his followers (cf. LS 13), which might have generated the need to spell out the obvious relationship between the parts and the whole (i.e. obvious for a Stoic, of course). According to Stobaeus' sources (SVF II.527 = *Anth.* I.21.5.2-22), the Stoics distinguished between, on the one hand, the cosmos (κόσμος) in the sense of a system of the heavens, the earth, and the natures within them (σύστημα ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς καὶ τῶν ἐν τούτοις φύσεων) or of the gods, the people, and that which came to be because of them (τὸ ἐκ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων σύστημα καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἕνεκα τούτων γεγονότων) and, on the other hand, the cosmos in the sense of God (θεός), in accordance with whom the particular world order comes to be and comes to be complete (καθ' ὃν ἡ διακόσμησις γίνεται καὶ τελειοῦται).[17] In other words, *diakosmēsis* was a term referring to the present state of organisation of the world, i.e. to the state in which the world is multiple (cf. SVF II.527-528, 558 and Hahm 1977, 242). According to the extant Stoic fragments (see the discussion below), the cosmos is beautiful in both senses, i.e. as a particular world order (διακόσμησις) and as God (θεός), who is the beginning and end of every world order.

Let us first consider the cosmos as a particular world order (διακόσμησις). According to the reports on Stoic doctrines compiled by Alexander of Aphrodisias (SVF II.441 = *De Mixt.* 223.25-36 = LS 47L; transl. R.B. Todd), pneuma acting as a sustaining cause (αἴτιον συνέχον, cf. 224.6-9) is that "through which things are bound together and have continuity with their related parts, and are connected with juxtaposed bodies" (ὑφ' οὗ συνδούμενα τήν τε συνέχειαν ἔχει τὴν πρὸς τὰ οἰκεῖα μέρη καὶ συνῆπται τοῖς παρακειμένοις). In this fashion, each individual body is related to the whole of the cosmos, of which it is but a part (SVF II.550 = *De Stoic. repugn.* 1054e–f = LS 29D). As Scade (2013) rightly points

16 Of course, the cosmos is a unique body, as Plutarch reports (SVF II.550 = *De Stoic. repugn.* 1054e). As opposed to individual bodies, which are imperfect "since their existence is not independent but is their particular relation to the whole" (transl. Harold Cherniss), the cosmos is only disposed towards itself, thus being a proper whole.

17 For a discussion of the role of the God in the world order, see Bénatouïl (2009).

out, it can be shown in Sextus (SVF II.524 = *Adv. math.* IX.332 = LS 44A) and Plutarch (*De commun. not.* 1074b–c) that the Stoic understanding of the notion of the Whole, which is the cosmos, is connected with the idea of structure. Sextus reports on the Stoic distinction between the Whole (τὸ ὅλον) – which is said to be limited (πεπερασμένον) and coextensive with the cosmos – and the All (τὸ πᾶν) – which is unlimited (ἄπειρον) and coincides with the void together with the cosmos. Plutarch confirms Sextus' report and, moreover, connects the concept of the Whole with what is ordered (τεταγμένου), as opposed to the All, which is indeterminate (ἀόριστον) and lacking in order (ἄτακτον).

As Scade (2013) has observed, other sources (Chalcidius 295, DL 7.140, and Cleomedes in *Caelestia* 1.1.7–10 and 1.1.104–110) link several characteristics of the cosmos (ἕνα, *unum*, *totum*, *essentia*, *cohaerent*, etc.), including the notion of its structure and order (διακόσμησις), with the fact that it is limited (πεπερασμένος, *determinatum*). As was pointed out earlier, a unified body is what it is because of the pneumatic motion that first produces cohesion (συνέχεια), unity (ἕνωσις), and being (οὐσία), followed by dimensions (μεγέθη) and qualities (ποιοτήτες). Only that which becomes a unified existing whole, i.e. that which receives a limit, becomes an ordered structure with dimensions and qualities.

But the Stoics have more to say about how a structure becomes ordered. There are testimonies for the claim that the cosmos – as the most perfect body (τέλεον μὲν ὁ κόσμος σῶμά; SVF II.550 = *De Stoic. repugn.* cp. 44 p. 1054 e.) – is the most beautiful thing (τὸ πᾶν κάλλιστον; SVF I.110 = *Adv. math.* IX.107). This claim is explained with reference to the fact that the cosmos is an ensouled living being (ζῷον ἔμψυχον) endowed with reason and intelligence (νοερόν τε καὶ λογικόν) and was naturally (κατὰ φύσιν) created in agreement with reason (ἀπειργασμένον ἔργον κατὰ τὸν εἰκότα λόγον). This agreement with reason, i.e. the fact that the cosmos itself is endowed with reason and intelligence, is the cause of its being legitimately called beautiful. This claim must, in turn, be connected with Sextus' reports (SVF II.1016 = *Adv. math.* IX 111-114) concerning Stoic demonstrations of the existence of the gods from the motion of the Universe (ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου κινήσεως). Among other options, they reject here the possibility that the Universe is moved by a vortex (ὑπὸ δίνης) and of necessity (κατ' ἀνάγκην). In arguing against the former option, they assume that a vortex is either disorderly or orderly (ἄτακτός ἐστιν ἢ διατεταγμένη). Now, if it were disorderly, it could not have moved anything in an orderly way (τεταγμένως τι κινεῖν). For the Stoics, however, the cosmos does, in fact, move in an orderly fashion, as can be seen especially clearly when we look at the movement of the stars in the heavens (cf. e.g. SVF I.528 = *De nat. deor.* II 13–16). Whatever moves something else in a way that is orderly and harmonious (μετὰ τάξεώς τι κινεῖ καὶ συμφωνίας), must be intelligent, divine, and supernatural (νοερά; θεία τις ἔσται καὶ δαιμόνιος). This is not the case

with a vortex, which is disorderly and short-lived (ἄτακτον καὶ ὀλιγοχρόνιον), but it is the case with God. Moreover, we know from Chalcidius (SVF I.88 = Chalcidius 292), that the moving agent of the world (*spiritum porro motivum illum* [scil. *mundum*]), which is a rational soul (*animam et quidem rationabilem*) or God (*deum*), not only makes the world a living creature (*vivificans sensilem mundum*) but also adorns it with its present beauty (*exornaverit eum ad hanc, qua nunc inlustratur, venustatem*). In another formulation, preserved by Alexander (SVF 2.310 = *De Mixt.* 225,1-2 = LS 45H), God is mixed with matter (μεμῖχθαι τῇ ὕλῃ λέγειν τὸν θεόν), pervades all of it (διὰ πάσης αὐτῆς διήκοντα), and thus shapes it (καὶ σχηματίζοντα αὐτήν), structuring it (καὶ μορφοῦντα) and making it into the world (καὶ κοσμοποιοῦντα τούτῳ τῷ τρόπῳ).

There is clearly a line of thought running through all these testimonies, which may be summarised as follows: there is an intelligent, divine, and supernatural cause of movement in the world (i.e. God) which is mixed with matter and pervades it, thus structuring and shaping it and making it into a living, ordered cosmos that moves in an orderly and harmonious way. As such, the cosmos is in harmony with God's reason and intelligence, and it is thus beautiful or – since it is a perfect body – even the most beautiful thing. For the cosmos and for the individual bodies as its parts, this means that they become limited and structured, i.e. ordered, receiving cohesion, unity, being, dimensions, and qualities. The process of the formation of such wholes is triggered by pneumatic motion. The structure and beauty of the world and of its particular bodies thus reflect the intelligent nature of God as its cause and, for this reason, may serve, at least in the Stoic mind, as "proof" of God's existence, intelligence, and other such attributes.

These interpretative suggestions may be further supported by the connection of beauty and providence, which is synonymous with the rational nature of God.[18] In his summary of Stoic philosophy, Diogenes Laertius defines providence (or fate or destiny) as "an endless chain of causation, whereby things are, or as the reason or formula by which the world goes on" (αἰτία τῶν ὄντων εἰρομένη ἢ λόγος καθ' ὃν ὁ κόσμος διεξάγεται; SVF I.175 = DL VII.149; transl. Robert Drew Hicks), adding that *all things* happen by fate or destiny. Thanks to Cicero (SVF I.172 = *De nat. deor.* II 58), we know that Zeno compared the nature of the cosmos to the craftsman (*artifex*), whose foresight plans out the work to serve its use and purpose in every detail (*consultrix et provida utilitatum opportunitatumque omnium).* This nature of the world-mind (*mens mundi*), which may be called prudence or providence (*causam vel prudentia vel providentia appellari recte possit*), is chiefly directed at and concentrated upon three goals: 1) securing for the world the structure that is most suitable for survival (*ut*

18 For a discussion of the Stoic understanding of fate, see Meyer (2009). The basics of the Stoic doctrine of the rationality of the cosmos are well summed up in Powers (2012).

mundus quam aptissimus sit ad permanendum); 2) absolute completeness (*ut nulla re egeat*); and 3) consummating beauty and embellishment of every kind (*ut in eo eximia pulchritudo sit atque omnis ornatus*). In other words, it is once again the rational nature of God that causes the beauty of the cosmos and each of its individual parts, because it orders the world and each part in the best possible way (cf. SVF II.1150 = *De prov.* II.74). We have seen that for the Stoics, beauty can be deduced from God's reason and intelligence. However, this reasoning also works the other way around: the fact that there is beauty around us testifies to the existence of God or providence. Indeed, according to Cicero, the "proof" of the existence of providence might be derived from – among other things – the beauty of the world (cf. SVF II.1106 = *De nat. deor.* II 75). Since the cosmos is a living, ordered structure moving in an orderly and harmonious way in accordance with God's reason and intelligence, there must be providence.

On the basis of this preliminary understanding of the Stoic way of thinking about beauty, we are better placed to understand what Aetius reports about the beauty of the cosmos (SVF II.1009 = *Plac.* I.6). According to Aetius, the Stoics define the essence of God (τὴν τοῦ θείου οὐσίαν) as an intellectual and fiery spirit (πνεῦμα νοερὸν καὶ πυρῶδες) that continually changes into what it pleases (μεταβάλλον εἰς ἃ βούλεται) and assimilates itself to all things (συνεξομοιούμενον πᾶσιν), while it itself has no shape (οὐκ ἔχον μορφήν). Knowledge of this God was first acquired from the beauty of things which appeared to our eyes (ἀπὸ τοῦ κάλλους τῶν ἐμφαινομένων προσλαμβάνοντες), since these things must have been created by the art of a great mind that produced the world (μετά τινος τέχνης δημιουργούσης). According to Aetius' testimony, the fact that the world is beautiful (καλὸς δ' ὁ κόσμος) may be clearly established from several of its characteristics: 1) its shape (ἐκ τοῦ σχήματος), which is spherical (σφαιροειδής), a shape which is exceptional for being round and whose parts are likewise round (περιφερὴς δ' ὢν ἔχει τὰ μέρη περιφερῆ); 2) its colour (καὶ τοῦ χρώματος), which shines so brightly (στίλβουσαν δ' ἔχει τὴν ποιότητα) that the heavens can be seen even at such a great distance. In other words, because of this great efficacy of the colour of the heavens (τῷ τῆς χροιᾶς συντόνῳ), it cuts through the large interval of air; 3) its magnitude (καὶ τοῦ μεγέθους), because that which is above (τὸ ὑπερέχον) everything else is beautiful, such as an animal or a tree; 4) the variety of stars which adorn it (τῆς περὶ τὸν κόσμον τῶν ἀστέρων ποικιλίας), which reflect the beauty of the world for us. Most importantly, this passage concludes with an explanation of the beauty of the world and its parts. That which is divine (τὸ θεῖον), i.e. the cosmos, is most excellent (κυριώτατον). Among its living parts, man is adorned with the greatest beauty (τῶν δὲ ζώων ἄνθρωπος κάλλιστον) and is also the best (τὸ κράτιστον), being distinguished by virtue above all others because of his intellect (<κε>κοσμημένον ἀρετῇ διαφόρως

κατὰ τὴν τοῦ νοῦ σύστασιν). In this fashion, man resembles that which is the best and most beautiful (τοῖς οὖν ἀριστεύουσι τὸ κράτιστον ὁμοίως καὶ <κάλλιστον ἐπιτιθέναι> καλῶς ἔχειν διενοήθησαν).

Once again, we see that beauty is explained by the activity of an intelligent, understanding, or rational spirit in the world, which gives the whole and each of its parts shape, colour, and magnitude, while at the same time preserving its variety. These are all just different ways of expressing the activity of an intelligent, divine, and supernatural cause structuring and shaping the world, resulting in the orderly and harmonious movement of the living and ordered cosmos. In this process, all the parts of the cosmos must take on a limit and structure in order to be distinguishable as parts. Moreover, these parts are said to be beautiful insofar as they resemble what is best and most beautiful. This resemblance is once again based on the activity of the rational spirit in each individual part. We have seen that pneuma is active in different ways in different natural parts of the world (i.e. in unified bodies). In some, it is active as pure *hexis*, in others as *physis* or even *psychē*. In those that are unified in the manner of *hexis*, the rational spirit is active as pneumatic movement, giving these bodies cohesion, unity, being, dimensions, and qualities. In bodies governed by *physis*, pneuma also provides the ability to nourish, change, and grow, while in ensouled bodies, it also provides the capacity for sense perception (cf. SVF II.458 = *Leg. Alleg.* II.22).

In any case, there seems to be a scale of beauty, with the cosmos as a whole at the summit, as the most perfect (see the discussion of SVF II.550 = *De Stoic. repugn.* cp. 44 p. 1054 e. above) and beautiful (see the discussion of SVF I.110 = *Adv. math.* IX.10 above) body, followed by unified partial bodies that are beautiful insofar as they resemble this best and most beautiful body. Such a resemblance is based on the activity of the rational spirit in them, which makes them an ordered structure. The more fire or *logos* there is, the more unified a structure is, and thus also more beautiful. In this sense, bodies governed by *psychē* are more beautiful than those ruled by *physis* and these more than those by *hexis* alone, because the rational spirit is present in these in a descending manner (cf. SVF II.634 = DL VII.138), so they lose their resemblance to the best and the most beautiful being.

Moreover, we can also take into account the fact that the structuring activity of the rational spirit in the world can be described in terms of unification. Testimony to this effect may be found in Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus* (SVF I.537 = *Ecl.* I.1.12), which describes the activity of God as making the world one. Among other things, Cleanthes praises Zeus for knowing how to make odd things (τὰ περισσά) even (ἄρτια), and how to bring forth order (κοσμεῖν) from chaos (τἄκοσμα) or even how to make that which is unlovely (οὐ φίλα) lovely (φίλα) for himself. All this is possible because Zeus has joined all things (πάντα συνήρμοκας), the good and the bad (ἐσθλὰ κακοῖσιν), into one

(εἰς ἕν), so that the eternal Word of all things (πάντων λόγον αἰέν) came to be one (ἕνα).[19] On this basis, one might be tempted to speculate further about the scale of beauty depicted above. If the scale of beauties corresponds to the scale of unity, it seems to follow that next in line after *hexis* should be composite bodies, first those with connected parts, then those with distinct parts. However, there is no direct testimony for this, only for their decreasing unity.

7. THE BEAUTY OF THE RATIONAL CAUSE

We know from many sources that the Stoics taught that the world is periodically destroyed by a conflagration and that the same world order is repeatedly recreated out of the conflagration (cf. SVF I.107, 109, 510-12; II.585-620, 622-32, 1133).[20] In the state of conflagration, only fire remains (cf. SVF I.98; II.596, 618, 626), a craftsmanlike fire (πῦρ τεχνικόν; cf. SVF I.171) or God, that is, "the individual being whose quality is derived from the whole of substance; he is indestructible and ingenerable, being the artificer of this orderly arrangement, who at stated periods of time absorbs into himself the whole of substance and again creates it from himself" (θεὸν τὸν ἐκ τῆς ἁπάσης οὐσίας ἰδίως ποιόν, ὃς δὴ ἄφθαρτός ἐστι καὶ ἀγένητος, δημιουργὸς ὢν τῆς διακοσμήσεως, κατὰ χρόνων ποιὰς περιόδους ἀναλίσκων εἰς ἑαυτὸν τὴν ἅπασαν οὐσίαν καὶ πάλιν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ γεννῶν; SVF II.526 = DL VII.137, transl. Robert Drew Hicks). In other words, the world order is recreated from God himself, or, put somewhat differently, multiplicity arises from fire, which is purely one.

This last formulation – which connects the cycles of the creation and destruction of the world order with the generation of multiplicity from what is one – can be justified on the basis of the previously mentioned testimonies to the effect that nothing but fire remains in the state of conflagration (SVF I.98, II.596, 618, 626), or perhaps even more explicitly on that of Seneca's discussion of the life of the solitary sage (SVF II.1065 = *Ep.* 9.16 = LS46O). In this text, Seneca likens it to the life of God or Zeus in the state of conflagration, when he reposes in himself, wholly given over to his thoughts (*sibi cogitationibus suis traditus*). More importantly, Seneca describes the very state of the conflagration, linking it with being purely one (fire) and saying that all this happens when the world is dissolved (*cum resoluto mundo*), when the gods are blended together into one (*et dis in unum confusis*), and when nature comes to a stop for a while (*paulisper cessante natura adquiescit*). The connection of the world order with multiplicity is obvious not only from the definition of διακόσμησις – i.e. as the present state of organisation of the heavens, earth, and natures; cf. the reference to SVF II.527–528, 558 above and Hahm (1977, 242) – but also from the fact that it is composed, and more specifically composed from four different elements (i.e. fire, air, water, and earth; cf. SVF I.102–103, II.413–415).

19 Cf. the interpretation of Asmis (2007).

20 For a discussion of the Stoic understanding of conflagration, see Salles 2009.

If the cosmos as God or fire is not multiple but one, one would not expect it to be called beautiful, given that beauty was linked with symmetry. Nevertheless, there is some testimony that it was even called "the most beautiful", while other testimonies link it with virtue. According to Dio Chrysostom (SVF II.1029 = *Or.* 36.55.1-5), when reason (νοῦς) becomes completely porous (μανότητος) and pours evenly in all directions (ἐπ' ἴσης πανταχῇ κεχυμένος), so that it alone abides everywhere (λειφθεὶς γὰρ δὴ μόνος ὁ νοῦς καὶ τόπον ἀμήχανον ἐμπλήσας αὑτοῦ), i.e. in the state of conflagration of the world, reason becomes most beautiful (κάλλιστος γίγνεται), because it acquires the purest nature of unadulterated light (τὴν καθαρωτάτην λαβὼν αὐγῆς ἀκηράτου φύσιν). The utmost purity (καθαρώτατον) of God in the state of conflagration is also mentioned in Hippolytus (SVF II.1029 = *Philos.* 21; DDG 571.7), signifying a specific state of being one, in which fire is not mixed with anything else. From a different perspective, Plutarch (SVF 2.606 = *De commun. not.* 1067a = LS46N) reports that in the state of conflagration, no evil at all remains (κακὸν μὲν οὐδ' ὁτιοῦν ἀπολείπεται) and the whole is then prudent and wise (τὸ δ' ὅλον φρόνιμόν ἐστι τηνικαῦτα καὶ σοφόν).

It seems that even in the state of conflagration, in which all that there is becomes fire, it is possible to say that, as something unmixed, it is in the purest state (καθαρώτατον) and for this reason becomes most beautiful (κάλλιστος). Since the Stoic conception of beauty as symmetry, in the sense of a structured whole, is closely related to, if not synonymous with, the traditional understanding of beauty as unitas multiplex (see footnote 2 above), it is tempting to go even further in a Neoplatonic direction, speculating about a God that coincides with the One and is super-beautiful or "beauty beyond beauty", as Plotinus puts it when talking about the Good (cf. *Enn.* VI.7.32.29–30, VI.7.33.20). To do so would, however, be a mistake. Even though our sources on this topic are scarce, they seem to imply that the pre-eminent beauty of God does not result from his being beyond everything, let alone predication, but rather from the purity of the fire in this state, i.e. from the fact that it is not mixed at all. This is something one could only with difficulty say about the Good in Plotinus. In Plotinus, the Stoic God in the state of conflagration would rather resemble the beautiful Intellect, in which each part is all of the other parts, so that one cannot really say that there are separate parts composing a whole, but rather that everything is everything else, although in a distinct and determinate way. Similarly, in conflagration, the Stoic God reposes in himself given over to his thoughts, and his thoughts contain everything that will happen in the next world cycle since they are the source of the rationality of the world. But even this analogy is highly tenuous, given that the Intellect is multiple in Plotinus, while the Stoic God is unmixed and one in the state of conflagration. This difference also has implications for how their beauty is understood: In Plotinus, the Intellect is the most beautiful, as the

most unified multiplicity (Gál 2022), while the Stoic God is the most beautiful, as the result of being in the purest (i.e. unmixed) state. Thus, it seems so far that the beauty of the rational cause has nothing to do with symmetry.

However, the enigmatic passages about beauty from Diogenes Laertius (SVF III.83 = DL VII.100) might perhaps be read as stating the opposite. Although they are primarily reported in an ethical context, there is, as we have seen, an analogy between God in conflagration and the solitary sage (cf. SVF II.1065 = *Ep.* 9.16 = LS46O). Diogenes claims here that the reason why the Stoics characterise the perfect good (τὸ τέλειον ἀγαθόν) as beautiful (καλόν) is that it has in full all the numbers required by nature (παρὰ τὸ πάντας ἀπέχειν τοὺς ἐπιζητουμένους ἀριθμοὺς ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως) or because of its perfect symmetry (ἢ τὸ τελέως σύμμετρον). If there is no evil in the conflagaration and the whole is prudent and wise, we could speculate that the Stoics would agree to call this state the perfect good. If so, Diogenes would once again be reporting that this state of the world could be legitimately characterised as beautiful, on the grounds that: 1) all the numbers required by nature are present in this state and 2) it possesses perfect symmetry. The first reason perhaps signifies that God has a determined plan for the whole next cosmic cycle, so that everything that will become beautiful in the world order to be is, in this sense, already present in God's reason.[21] The second part of the argument is rather surprising, because it seems at first to imply that even in the state of conflagration, fire or God is an ordered and unified multiplicity, since it is symmetrical. But perhaps we should not overcomplicate things. The reference to symmetry here should be read instead as pointing to the even distribution of fire in all directions mentioned by Dio Chrysostom (SVF II.1029 = *Or.* 36.55.1-5; see above). God in the state of conflagration could be symmetrical in this fashion, with the perfection of this symmetry pointing to its purity. If so, even the beauty of the rational cause would be linked with symmetry, albeit its meaning changes here. It does not refer to the relationship of the parts to each other and to the whole any more, but rather to such an even distribution of fire.

If we wanted to follow the scale of beauty outlined above even further, the beauty of God in conflagration could be placed at the top of the whole scale. It is beautiful both as rationality itself in the purest form of symmetry and as its source in the world. The most complete reflection of this beauty is the particular world order as a whole, and then come unified partial bodies governed, in descending order, by *psychē, physis*, and, finally, *hexis* alone. Even less beautiful, then, would be bodies composed of connected parts, and the least beautiful of all those with distinct parts. I believe that, beyond this careful statement, we cannot really say much more about the beauty of God in conflagration, but

21 Cf. Scade's interesting interpretation of numbers as geometrical limits that give particular things their distinctness. See Scade (2013, 86).

must confess our ignorance. Because of our lack of sources, it remains unclear whether the purest symmetry that exists in the state of conflagration can be understood as some sort of specific unity in multiplicity or not. If it was some sort of unity in multiplicity, its unity might be given by the fact that there is only fire everywhere, and supported by the fact that fire in this state cannot be lacking order and, in this sense, would constitute a whole (τὸ ὅλον) and not the All (τὸ πᾶν), in line with the distinction that Sextus and Plutarch use to distinguish them (see above, SVF II.524 = *Adv. math.* IX.332 = LS 44A and *Commun. not.* 1074b-c). Multiplicity could be interpreted here as referring either to God's own thoughts or to fire, insofar as it is everywhere, i.e. in different places. However, which of the two options (*unitas multiplex* or the absence of all multiplicity in conflagration) was, in fact, advocated by the Stoics remains a mystery.

8. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I aimed to provide an interpretation of the Stoic notion of symmetry, which is the cause of beauty. I tried to show that if we want to interpret the extant sources on this topic in a philosophically interesting fashion, we should connect symmetry with the relation both of parts to each other and of the parts to the whole they compose, i.e. to the structural nature of a beautiful thing. I argued that, for a Stoic, pointing out the relation of the parts to the whole might have seemed superfluous in the case of unified bodies, which is exactly what all the extant sources about the Stoic conception of symmetry discuss. Furthermore, I explored Stoic statements about beautiful bodies, including the world order itself, in which symmetry is caused by the structuring activity of the rational spirit in multiplicity, making the beautiful thing a structured and ordered whole. I also observed that, in some sources, the cosmos is called beautiful even in the state of conflagration and I interpreted this with some caution as being linked with the notion of symmetry that exists in conflagration somehow being in its purest state. On this basis, I proposed a scale of beautiful bodies in Stoicism, at the top of which is God in conflagration, followed by the cosmos as a whole and by unified partial bodies (in descending order, those governed by *psychē*, *physis*, and *hexis*), then by bodies composed of connected parts, and last by those composed of distinct parts. This scale might, at the same time, be seen as a scale of decreasing unity and increasing multiplicity. If I am right in my interpretation, it follows that, at least for the world order and lesser beauties, beauty is essentially connected with unity in multiplicity even in the Stoics, who might seem, at first sight, to be opposing the theory of beauty as *unitas multiplex*.

ABBREVIATIONS

LS *= Anthony A. Long and David N. Sedley, The Hellenistic Philosophers. Cambridge/ New York.*

SVF *= Hans von Arnim, Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta.*

ABBREVIATIONS (ANCIENT AUTHORS)

Aetius
Plac. = Placita philosophorum

Alexander of Aphrodisias
De Mixt. = De mixtione

Aristotle
Met. = Metaphysica

Cicero
Tusc. disp. = Tusculanae disputationes
De off. = De officiis
De nat. deor. = De natura deorum

Dio Chrysostom
Or. = Orationes

Diogenes Laertius
DL = Diogenis Laertii Vitae philosophorum

Galen
Caus.Morb. = De causis morborum
De Hippoc. et Plat. = De Hippocratis et Platonis placitis
MM = De Methodo Medendi
SMT = De Simplicium Medicamentorum [temperamentis ac] facultatibus
Symp.Diff. = De Symptomatum Differentiis

Hippocrates
Aph. = Aphorismi
Prog. = Prognosticon

Hippolytus
Philos. = Philosophumena (= Adversus haereses I)

Johannes Stobaeus
Anth. = Ioannis Stobaei Anthologium

Philo
De prov. = De providentia
Leg. Alleg. = Legum allegoriae

Plato
Phd. = Phaedo

Plotinus
Enn. = Enneades

Plutarch
De commun. not. = De communibus notitiis contra Stoicos
De Stoic. repugn. = De Stoicorum repugnantiis

Porphyry
Vita Plot. = Vita Plotini

Pseudo-Galen
De hist. philos. = De historia philosophica

Seneca
Ep. = Ad Lucilium epistulae morales

Sextus Empiricus
Adv. math. = Adversus mathematicos

Simplicius
In Arist. Cat. = In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium

Stobaeus
Ecl.= Eclogae physicae et ethicae

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De sphaera Iohannis de Sacrobosco apud Boemos

ALENA HADRAVOVÁ AND PETR HADRAVA. 2019. SFÉRA IOHANNA DE SACROBOSCO – STŘEDOVĚKÁ UČEBNICE ZÁKLADŮ ASTRONOMIE. PRAHA: AKROPOLIS.

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A few years ago, the working group "The Sphere: Knowledge System Evolution and the Shared Scientific Identity of Europe" was established. Under the leadership of Matteo Valleriani, it focused, among other things, on exploring the importance of the *Tractatus de sphaera* of Johannes de Sacrobosco. In addition to numerous articles and other outputs, the group's work has resulted in two collective monographs published in open access mode: firstly *De sphaera of Johannes de Sacrobosco in the Early Modern Period: The Authors of the Commentaries*, ed. M. Valleriani, Springer 2020, and secondly *Publishing Sacrobosco's de sphaera in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by M. Valleriani and A. Ottone, Springer 2022.

Independently of this project, Alena Hadravová and Petr Hadrava, Czech authors who concentrate on researching the history of astronomy and cosmology in the Czech area, have also recently worked on the Sphere of Johannes de Sacrobosco. It is somewhat unfortunate that the research of the Hadravas and that of Valleriani's team were conducted separately. When the Hadravas published their book in 2020, they mentioned Valleriani's project in the introduction, but with a note that they learned about it only after they had finished their work on the book. Similarly, the aforementioned monographs published by Valleriani and his team do not mention the work of the Hadravas, except for one rather marginal reference in the second publication. This is certainly because the Hadravas' book is written in Czech, which, of course, has a good

reason. The aim of the book is to bring the significance of Johannes de Sacrobosco's textbook closer to the Czech reader. On the other hand, however, the publication also contains a lot of non-trivial information and research results, especially regarding the reception of the Sphere in the Czech lands, which would be useful for foreign researchers as well. The aim of this review is therefore to bring the Hadravas' book closer to foreign readers.

Alena and Petr Hadrava have become a well-known two-person team in the Czech lands, dealing with the history of astronomy with a combination of systematic and historical aspects. Petr Hadrava, an astronomer and physicist, is able to look at historical texts from the perspective of modern science, while Alena Hadravová, as a classical philologist, provides a philological and historical perspective on the text under study. Together, they have prepared a number of texts in Czech translations for Czech readers, starting with Tycho Brahe's *Instruments of Renewed Astronomy* (1996), Johannes Kepler's *Dream* (2004), and Galileo Galilei's *Starry Messenger*, together with Kepler's *Discussion* (2016), to the four-volume work on the *Ninth Sphere*, *Sphaera octava*, including Czech translations of Pseudo-Hygin's *Fables*, Hyginus' *On Astronomy*, medieval treatises on the constellations, and medieval catalogues of the stars and the Premyslid celestial globe (2016). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that they also turned their attention to Sacrobosco's 13th-century medieval astronomy textbook, which became a key text for astronomy and its teaching well into the 17th century.

In their book *The Sphere* of Johannes de Sacrobosco - *The Medieval Textbook of Elementary Astronomy*, the Hadravas present Sacrobosco's book itself, its sources and astronomical foundations, as well as manuscripts, incunabula and prints. Their aim, however, is not to prepare a critical edition of *De sphaera*. They refer to the edition prepared by Lynn Thorndike who used only a few manuscripts, but they rightly point out that to attempt a critical edition of the text would be, on the one hand, almost impossible, given the extent of its distribution in manuscripts and prints, and, on the other hand, actually useless, given the small number of different readings, since it was a textbook. Hadravas's goal is something else, not even just to introduce *De sphaera* and translate it into Czech. Their aim is to present Johannes de Sacrobosco's *Sphere* in a special Bohemian context. This aspect, however, and it should be critically pointed out, is not apparent either from the title of the book or from the first insight into it.

Thus, more than half of the book's introduction is devoted to the topic of "Reception of the Treatise on the Sphere and Commentaries on it". The Hadravas divide this part into three sections. First, they deal with adoptions from the text, specifically passages taken from the Sphere by the master Paulus de Praga, Paulerinus (c. 1417-1471), in his encyclopaedic *Book of the Twenty Arts*. Here, the paragraphs concerning climates are particularly relevant; the Hadravas present them in Latin form and supplement them with a Czech translation. The subsection on Paulerinus is relatively short, but readers can be referred to their article on his astronomy ("Astronomy in Paulerinus' Fifteenth-Century Encyclopaedia Liber viginti arcium", *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 38, 2007, 305-324).

The second part, concerning the reception of the Sphere, is the topic of comments. The Hadravas first briefly mention the commentaries dealt with by Lynn Thorndike in his edition of the *Sphere*, i.e. that of Robertus Anglicus and a commentary ascribed to Michael Scot. They then discuss three commentaries of Bohemian provenance. The scholarly contribution of this part is the greatest of the entire book, as in it texts that are mostly unknown are analysed. So let us dwell on them more thoroughly.

The first of the commentators to whom the Hadravas pay attention is Nicholas of Teplá, probably a Premonstratensian from the monastery of Teplá, who, under the name of Ialocin de Alpet (which mirrors Nicolai de Tepla), produced a manuscript copy of the Sphere in 1443 and commented on the measurement of the circumference of the Earth in the margin. This is given here again in the Latin text and in the Czech translation. There is not much mention of Nicholas of Teplá and the manuscript in the book; in fact, it is not explicitly stated whether this is the only commentary in the margin on the text.

The Hadravas devote more space to Martin of Lenčice (Martinus de Lancicia, c. 1405-c. 1474), a master at the University of Prague, and his commentary on the *Sphere*, which is known from a single manuscript dating from 1428-1433. His commentary shows that he was a fairly well-read author who added to Sacrobosco's text on the basis of his knowledge of ancient literature. The Hadravas also point out that this commentary shows a familiarity with Hyginus' *Astronomy*, which seems to be unique in the context of the reception of Sacrobosco's *Sphere* and commentaries on it, especially in the Bohemian Middle Latin milieu. They then select a few passages from Martin of Lenčice's commentary, from passages on climates and on the solar eclipse at Jesus' crucifixion.

Finally, the most important work to which the Hadravas pay attention is the commentary of Václav Faber of Budějovice (c.1455/1460-1518), a Leipzig master and professor of astronomy, later a physician in Most and finally a parish priest in České Budějovice. Faber wrote his commentary in Leipzig in 1491 and published it there in 1495. Many other editions followed. The Hadravas describe them, or give the titles of the individual

prints and information on where and how many of them have been preserved. The number of editions and the extent to which Faber's edition of the *Sphere* with its commentary is represented in libraries shows that this was indeed a widely circulated and popular work in the early sixteenth century. The Hadravas list the sources Faber used in his commentary, also mentioning other works by him, especially astronomical and astrological writings. The Hadravas' approach to Faber's commentary and the whole work is rather descriptive, somewhat lacking in the book's interpretive level.

The third mode of reception of Sacrobosco's *Sphere* that the Hadravas cite is Philip Melanchthon's preface to his *Treatise on the Sphere*. The Hadravas present it to illustrate the impact the *Sphere* had in the humanist period, printing Melanchthon's Latin text followed by a Czech translation. The presentation of Melanchthon's reception is certainly interesting, but it seems somewhat inorganic given that the reception in the Czech environment is not completed here. In particular, one might ask to what extent Melanchthon's approach to Sacrobosco's *Sphere* and the *Sphere* itself was reciprocated by, for example, Thaddaeus Hagecius ab Hayck (1525-1600), perhaps the most important astronomer in the Czech lands in the 16th century, especially in his early works, particularly *Diagramma seu typi eclipsium Solis et Lunae futurarum* from 1551.

The centre of the whole book is the Latin text of Johannes de Sacrobosco's *De Sphaera*, not on its own, but together with a commentary by Václav Faber. Graphically, the two texts are separated so that they can be easily distinguished: the original text of the textbook is set in bold type, while Faber's commentary is set in normal type. This is followed by a Czech translation, and the whole book is supplemented by a Latin-Czech glossary of basic terms, as well as by a bibliography and an index of names. At the end of the book, we find an appendix, which offers photocopies of selected pages from the manuscripts and prints that are mentioned.

Graphically, the book is very elegantly prepared; the individual parts are separated by coloured pages, while the cover of the book is reminiscent of an old print. From the reader's point of view, however, it is a pity that the method of parallel presentation of the Latin text and the Czech translation in juxtaposition was not chosen. This could certainly have led the reader to compare the terms in the translation with those in the Latin, or possibly to try to assess the appropriateness of the translation procedures. Unfortunately, the Latin text and its Czech translation, both of Sacrobosco's book and of the shorter texts that precede it in the Hadravas' book, are given in succession. This makes it difficult to find one's way in the text. On the other hand, a foreign-language reader who wishes to look at the Latin text with Faber's commentary will get to it in a separate section, which may be convenient. However, in the case of other, shorter Latin texts (those of Pavel Žídek, Mikuláš of Teplá, and Martin of Lenčice), these are not graphically separated from their translations, and even

the Czech reader has to look for where the Latin text begins and ends.

For the Czech reader it is still very beneficial to have the Latin edition of Sacrobosco's *Sphere* with the commentary by Václav Faber and its Czech translation, especially as it is introduced by an erudite preface. The Latin text itself could be useful for foreign readers and scholars, so one can only hope that the book will encourage further work with the texts that are mentioned.