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Protreptic Aspects of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics

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18     Protreptic Aspects of Aristotle's  
          *Nicomachean Ethics*

In order to reach the fullest understanding of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, we would do well not only to study the details of his argumentation but also to appreciate the various purposes that these details serve. Aristotle tries to inform his audience about his own ethical and social standpoint and how it is founded on arguments consistent with his wider philosophical commitments; but he also tries to motivate members of his audience to engage in their own philosophical inquiries, as applied not only to concrete moral and political questions but also to the most abstract and inapplicable forms of philosophy.

We hope to show that the overall protreptic plan of Aristotle's ethical writings is based on the plan he used in his published work *Protrepticus* (*Exhortation to Philosophy*), by highlighting those passages in his ethical writings that primarily offer hortatory or protreptic motivation rather than dialectical argumentation and analysis, and illustrating several ways that Aristotle's ethical works adapt certain arguments and examples from his *Protrepticus*.<sup>1</sup> We confine our attention in this contribution to the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The most explicit references to Aristotle's audience and his purpose in writing any of his ethical discourses are found in *NE* x. Early in the book, he writes this: "True arguments, then, seem to be the most useful, not only in the acquisition of knowledge, but in how we live. For since they are in harmony with the facts, they are believed, and for that reason they exhort (*protrepontai*) those who understand them to live

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<sup>1</sup> We have argued in Hutchinson and Johnson 2005 that Aristotle's *Protrepticus* can be reconstructed on the basis of the authentication of the major excerpts (amounting to at least five hundred lines) contained in chapters VI–XII of the *Protrepticus* of Iamblichus. In our work in progress on an edition, translation, commentary, and reconstruction (continually published at [www.protrepticus.info](http://www.protrepticus.info)), we show how the other pieces of evidence can be related to the framework recoverable from these seven authenticated chapters of Iamblichus's *Protrepticus*.

in accordance with them" (1.1172b3-7).<sup>2</sup> Toward the end of the book, however, he focuses on the qualification "those who understand them" rather more: "As things are, though they [sc. philosophical arguments] appear to have the power to influence and exhort (*protrepsasthai*) those young people who possess generosity of spirit, and perhaps to make susceptible to virtue a character that is well bred and truly loves what is noble, they seem unable to exhort (*protrepsasthai*) the masses in the direction of what is noble and good" (9.1179b7-10, modified). For the majority of people, then, politics and laws are called for, not ethics and philosophy.

But then whom does Aristotle expect to influence by his philosophical ethics, if not the masses, and how? The answer is given in the same passage: he aims to *exhort certain students*, those students who possess maturity of mind and character. At the most general level, Aristotle's *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics* should be interpreted as particular modes of protreptic discourse. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines protreptic as a kind of deliberative speech, employed either in private counsel or in public assemblies: deliberative discourses aim to encourage (*protrepein*) or discourage (*apotrepein*) something (1.1358b8-10). If and when these works were lectures delivered to students in the Lyceum, they were protreptics for a private assembly; when the *EE* and the *NE* began to circulate publicly in written copies, they began to function as protreptics giving public counsel to everyone.

What hortatory counsel does Aristotle offer? In the first chapter of *NE* x, Aristotle urges the study of pleasure and pain, because of its centrality in the development of virtue; we "educate the young by steering them in the right direction with pleasure and pain" (1.1172a20-21). The knowledge of pleasure and pain is valuable in the scientific study of legislation, which in the last chapter Aristotle earnestly recommends for mature young men who are going to be responsible for children in private households, as well as for those who plan a career of public service (9.1180b23-28).

In this context, Aristotle mentions "some people" who think that "legislators ought to summon people (*parakalein*) to virtue and exhort them (*protrepsasthai*) to act for the sake of what is noble – on the assumption that those who have been trained well in their habits will respond" (1180a5-8, modified), referring to a remarkable claim made by Plato in *Laws* iv: codes of laws should not be bare prohibitions provided with penalty clauses but should first make an attempt, in literary preambles to each law, to persuade the citizens by intelligent considerations

<sup>2</sup> Crisp trans., modified. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the *NE* are cited unmodified from the Cambridge University Press translation by Roger Crisp; all other translations are ours.

that motivate them to obey (718c–723e).<sup>3</sup> For example, to someone tempted to rob temples, in the preamble “you might talk to him and exhort him (*protrepsasthai*) as follows” (ix 854a), and then Plato offers some sample considerations.

For Aristotle, however, such preambles seem to be useless, and laws motivate citizens directly, without any need for motivating preambles, by punishing wickedness and rewarding virtue, “as if exhorting (*protrepsontes*) the one while deterring the other” (iii 5.1113b25–26, modified). It would seem that Aristotle has little faith in the power of protreptic discourse when presented to most people, either by philosophers or by legislators in their preambles; as we shall see, he saves his protreptic speeches mainly for the purpose of exhorting talented and well-raised young adults to adopt scientific attitudes of study and research, not using protreptic discourse much for the purpose of exhorting them to virtue.<sup>4</sup>

Early in his career, while still a member of Plato's Academy and during the time that Plato was working on his *Laws*, Aristotle wrote a work entitled *Protrepticus* (*Exhortation to Philosophy*),<sup>5</sup> and that work, now lost, had as its goal to encourage the youth to the conclusion that one should do philosophy.<sup>6</sup> The dramatic scenario seems comparable to those found in the Platonic dialogue *Rival Lovers* and in Plato's *Euthydemus*, where young men form the audience to a lively debate about the nature and value of philosophy. In the background of Aristotle's *Protrepticus* is the intense rivalry for students between Isocrates and the Academy; as evident in Isocrates' *Antidosis*: “It is not about small things, either the argument or the judgment in which we are engaged, rather it is about the greatest of things. For you are going to cast a vote not about me alone, but also about an occupation to which many of the youth are applying their mind” (*Antidosis* 173). Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* gives as an example of a

<sup>3</sup> See Bobonich 2002, 97–105, for a useful discussion of the preludes and several more examples.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Burnyeat 1980, 81: “He [Aristotle] is not attempting the task so many moralists have undertaken of recommending virtue even to those who despise it: his lectures are not sermons, nor even protreptic argument, urging the wicked to mend their ways. . . . Rather, he is giving a course in practical thinking to enable someone who already wants to be virtuous to understand better what he should do and why.”

<sup>5</sup> On the ancient Greek lists of Aristotle's writings, *Protrepticus* is the twelfth title on the list of Diogenes Laertius (v 22), and the fourteenth on the list appended to the *Vita Hesychii*. Both lists indicate that the work was one book in length. See Gigon 1987, 22, 26.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander of Aphrodisias reports that “one should do philosophy. . . as he says in the *Protrepticus*” (*Commentary on Aristotle's Topics*, CIAG II:2, 149.9–15; cf. Olympiodorus, *Commentary on Alcibiades*, 144.15–17 Westerink). Later commentators add the detail that a group of boys is being exhorted: “as Aristotle says in his writing entitled *Protrepticus*, in which he exhorts the youth to do philosophy” (Elias, *Prolegomena to Philosophy*, CIAG XVIII:1, p. 3.19; cf. David, *Prolegomena*, CIAG XVIII:2, p. 9.2–12); these appear to be references to the scene of a dialogue.

rhetorical argument: "You are going to judge not about Isocrates but about an occupation, whether one must do philosophy" (ii 3.1399b9-11).

Aristotle's *Protrepticus* was apparently a dialogue that involved at least three speakers, one being "Isocrates," a character whom Aristotle has constructed out of Isocrates' writings, somewhat as Plato had earlier constructed for his own purposes characters such as "Protagoras" and "Gorgias" and composed speeches for them that were more or less based on what was known about their teachings from their writings.<sup>7</sup> This "Isocrates" defends a rhetorical and political conception of philosophical education, one that is highly critical of the Academy's preoccupation with abstruse theoretical speculation in subjects like astronomy and geometry.

Another character in Aristotle's *Protrepticus* seems to have been "Heraclides," based on the Academic philosopher Heraclides of Pontus, a contemporary of Aristotle. Heraclides had intellectual inclinations opposite to those of Isocrates: he was interested in the mathematical, astronomical, and cosmological speculations of the Pythagoreans, and even in their more mysterious and secretive traditions. Aristotle appears to have played these characters off one another, but also offered a grand synthesis of their practical and theoretical enthusiasms in the voice of a character called "Aristotle." He reaches the inclusive conclusion that, whatever one's ultimate commitments, whether to pleasure or virtue or knowledge, "one should do philosophy."

How different is this conclusion of the *Protrepticus* from that of the *Nicomachean Ethics*? The argument in *NE x* as a whole is essentially an expansion of the structure of argument that was the culmination of the *Protrepticus*: whether your goal is pleasure or political and social prominence or intellectual activity, in all three cases you should do philosophy. After the rhetorically charged conclusion of *x 8*, Aristotle adds a transition section (ch. 9), to exhort students to the topic of his next lecture course, on politics and legislation; this does not seem to mirror the ending of *Protrepticus*,<sup>8</sup> and yet it shows him returning to the attack against Isocrates and reworking material from his earlier *Protrepticus*. The whole of *NE x*, then, is most clearly viewed through protreptic

<sup>7</sup> Plato never portrayed Isocrates as a character, but he does mention him at *Phaedrus* 278e. Aristotle shows intimate knowledge of Isocrates' published works and frequently refers to them in the *Rhetoric*. For more on the rivalry between Plato and Isocrates (and Aristotle), see Nightingale 2004. On ramifications in later polemics, see Blank 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Nor does any such "transition-to-legislative science" section seem to be part of the *Eudemian Ethics* course, though the concluding part of those lectures, corresponding to *NE x*, is missing; one of the most recognizable differences between the *Eudemian* and the *Nicomachean* is that the ethics is part of politics in the *NE* but not in the *EE* (see Hutchinson 1995, 202 and n5).

lenses, with protreptic themes and *Protrepticus* passages in mind. This is also true to a lesser extent of the entire *NE*, so the plan for the rest of our treatment is to pass in review the protreptic aspects of all the discussions in the other *Nicomachean* books, before returning to a close study of *NE* x, by which time our better polished protreptic lenses ought to help us see its protreptic aspects in better focus.

When we look more widely at Aristotle's ethical writings, we find protreptic aspects of all the books of the *EE* and *NE* but unevenly distributed. The richest lode of protreptic argumentation is in *NE* x, but we also find an important "protreptic to intelligence" in the discussion of intellectual virtues in *EE* v = *NE* vi,<sup>9</sup> and many framework and methodological passages near the start of both treatises are clearly recycled from Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, especially the device of the "three (or four) lives" and the "function" argument that structures Aristotle's analysis of the moral and intellectual virtues. On the other hand, there are scant protreptic elements in *EE* vi = *NE* vii, the book on weakness of will and pleasure, and only a few traces in *NE* viii-ix and *EE* vii, the books on friendship. As for Aristotle's discussions of the moral virtues in *EE* iii and *NE* iii 6-iv and justice in *EE* iv = *NE* v, to a certain limited extent he provides motivations for embracing the virtues, but his main focus is to provide motivations and guidelines for thinking philosophically about the virtues, in showing us by example how we can make progress in developing our own independent and responsible conceptions of private and public morality.

#### I. FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL PASSAGES (NE I)

The rhetorical strategy of the *Protrepticus* is to convince the young that on any reasonable view of what a successful life would be, they should do philosophy. But, as we read in *NE* x 9, only youths of a certain advanced moral character can be expected to benefit from doing moral philosophy. Aristotle had made the same point in greater detail in *NE* i 3, a connected chapter in which Aristotle specifies the task that he sets himself and the students that he is addressing.

He begins by asserting that "our account will be adequate if its clarity is in line with the subject matter, because the same degree of precision is not to be sought in all discussions, any more than in works of craftsmanship" (1094b11-14). No further detail is offered here, but a parallel

<sup>9</sup> In this study we have chosen to limit our scrutiny to the books that are definitely part of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, not relying on evidence from the common books that might be native to the *Eudemian Ethics* instead.

passage from the *Protrepticus* provides concrete examples and evidently seems to be an earlier formulation of the same idea.

Just as we put up with plausible reasoning from an orator, so it is necessary to demand from the mathematician demonstrations that are necessary. And one must not seek the same necessity everywhere, nor, similarly, the same precision in everything, but just as we divide the technical fields by their underlying materials, not seeking precision similarly in gold and tin and bronze, nor in cork and box and lotus, in the same way this is so in the theoretical sciences.<sup>10</sup>

It is at most a different formulation of this *Protrepticus* idea when Aristotle comments that "accepting from a mathematician claims that are mere probabilities seems rather like demanding demonstrations from an orator" (*NE* i 3.1094b25–27, modified). Regarding the degree of precision appropriate to ethical arguments, Aristotle recommends that "We should be content . . . to demonstrate the truth sketchily and in outline" (b19–21). "The details of our claims, then, should be looked at in the same way, since it is a mark of an educated person to look in each area for only that degree of precision that the nature of the subject permits" (b22–25).

When the demonstrations are sketchy outlines, this calls for judgment on the part of the audience, and this excludes those who are immature (1094b27–1095a8).

Each person judges well what he knows, and is a good judge of this. So, in any subject, the person educated in it is a good judge of that subject, and the person educated in all subjects is a good judge without qualification. That is why a boy is not fitted to hear lectures on political science, since our discussions begin from and concern the actions of life, and of these he has no experience. Again, because of his tendency to follow his feelings, his studies will be useless and to no purpose, since the end of the study is not knowledge but action. It makes no difference whether he is young in years or juvenile in character, since the deficiency is not related to age, but occurs because of his living and engaging in each of his pursuits according to his feelings.

The two reasons that young boys *in general* are, unfortunately, not good hearers of political discourses are because they are led by their feelings instead of reason, and because they have not been experienced in practical affairs or generally educated. Not being generally educated, they are

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, apud Iamblichus, *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* (*DCMS*), chapter XXVII, page 86, lines 4–12 (Festa). We now attribute to Aristotle's *Protrepticus* several excerpts contained in chapters XXII–XXVII of Iamblichus's *DCMS*, building on and extending the work of previous scholars. In the *DCMS*, Iamblichus does not explicitly name his sources, using the same techniques as in his *Protrepticus*. In what follows, references to passages of Aristotle cited in the *DCMS* will be given in condensed form, such as *DCMS* XXVII 86.4–12.

incapable of judging the wide-ranging demonstrations that relate to political science.

Interestingly, the problem for these boys is not that the demonstrations are too complex or detailed – in fact, as Aristotle argues in the *Protrepticus*, youths are *better* suited than the old to judge difficult mathematical proofs. Rather it is because undereducated youths do not generally have the experience that allows them to judge arguments *less* precise than mathematical proofs, those based not on necessities but on probabilities, which involve uncertainty and particulars. Aristotle does not make the point about boys being good judges of mathematical proofs in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but he had highlighted this issue (in a passage in the *Protrepticus* or his work *On the Pythagoreans*) in the context of describing how Pythagoras instructed older and younger students differently: “To the ones who were senior and without leisure because they were involved in political affairs . . . he talked in a simple style . . . but with those who were younger and [more] capable of working and learning he conversed using demonstrations and mathematics” (*DCMS XXV 77.7–17*). We can thus get a fairly clear idea of the kind of students to whom Aristotle addressed his *Protrepticus* and his *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, and for what purpose he addressed them: they were relatively older students, not young boys, with some life experience already; and Aristotle’s purpose was to motivate them to acquire some of his philosophical tools of analysis, so that they would be able to develop their own practical philosophies based on his outline account, not to motivate them to become morally better.

Both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics*, like the *Protrepticus*, are structured around the traditional theme of the alternative “ways of life” that Aristotle asserts everyone would agree are viable candidates for the good life. In *Nicomachean Ethics* i 5, Aristotle mentions three especially prominent ways of life, the life of pleasure, of politics, and the life of contemplation. The theme of the three (or four) ways of life has its roots in the earliest Greek philosophy, even earlier, in lyric poetry (see Joly 1956). An especially influential and vivid contribution to this theme was made by Aristotle’s contemporary Heraclides of Pontus, when he compared the ways of life to the different kinds of people attending the Olympic Games: some come to make money selling concessions (like those who devote their lives to making money), and others to compete and gain victory (like those who devote their lives to noble and virtuous activity), but some come just to observe the spectacle (like the philosophers). Aristotle himself made use of the analogy of the Olympic Games in his discussion of the three-lives argument in the *Protrepticus*.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle’s *Protrepticus*, apud Iamblichus, *Protr.* chapter IX, page 53.19 to 54.5 (Pistelli). In what follows, references to passages of Aristotle’s *Protrepticus* cited in Iamblichus’s

Almost as an afterthought, Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* dismisses out of hand the "life of making money," a way of life rejected as a candidate for the good life because, according to Aristotle, it is not undertaken voluntarily but only under compulsion. The life of contemplation, he announces, will be examined "in what follows," after briefly mentioning some complexities in connection with the ways of life devoted to pleasure and politics or noble causes. He does not get into the details here but announces his intention to move on "because these issues have been sufficiently dealt with in our circulated (*enkukliois*) discussions" (i 5.1096a3-4, modified), probably referring to his earlier *Protrepticus*.

When we examine the evidence of this lost work, we find that the order of its discussion of "ways of life" seems to have been this: wealth (the subject of an Oxyrhynchus papyrus fragment of the lost work),<sup>12</sup> practical intelligence (preserved in Iamblichus, *DCMS* XXVI and *Protr.* VI), virtue (*Protr.* VI-IX), political intelligence (*Protr.* X), and then pleasure (*Protr.* XI). The overall protreptic conclusion of the work is that, whatever way of life one prefers, one should do philosophy. "Thus we take the position that success is either intelligence and a certain wisdom, or virtue, or great enjoyment, or all [of] these. Thus if it is intelligence, it is evident that living successfully would belong to the philosopher alone; and if it is virtue of the soul or enjoyment, even so it will belong to them either alone or most of all" (*Protr.* XII 59.26-60.4).

The same general topics are discussed in roughly the same order in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, though with much greater detail in most cases. Thus, virtue is discussed in books 2-5, practical and political intelligence in book 6, and pleasure in book 10 (after the discussion of friendship in books 8-9, which seems to have no parallel in *Protrepticus*). The conclusion of the *NE* is more exclusive than that of the *Protrepticus*, insofar as Aristotle argues that the life of contemplation is demonstrably the best one available to a human being, and that the other ways of life, even the one devoted to cultivating moral virtues like justice, cannot compare to the godlike activity of contemplation and philosophy. In the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle pursues a more inclusive strategy; attempting to co-opt the other ways of life by showing that philosophy can make the best of any of them, by making one more virtuous, more politically wise and effective at leadership, or even more capable of enjoying higher and more continual pleasures.

*Protrepticus* will be given in condensed form, viz. *Protr.* IX 53.19-54.5. For Heraclides' use of the three-lives theme and the Olympic Games analogy, see Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* v 3.8-9. There is also a little-noticed parallel to the Cicero passage in Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life* XII 31.20-32.10.

<sup>12</sup> P.Oxy 666 (overlapping with Stobaeus, *Eclogues* iii 3.25, where it is ascribed to Aristotle).

The strategy employed by Aristotle to resolve the question as to which way of life is the best in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 7 is the so-called *ergon* argument, in which Aristotle attempts to deduce an overall *function* for a human being. This argument, which continues to inspire much commentary, appears in two other well-known versions in the corpus of Aristotle: in *EE* ii 1 and *Politics* vii 1. But its original version was probably the one in his *Protrepticus*, cited by Iamblichus in chapter IX of his work of the same name. Whereas in the *NE* we have the examples of "a flute-player, a sculptor, or any practitioner of a skill" (1097b25–26), in the *Protrepticus* the examples are medicine, architecture, writing, farming, and shipbuilding (IX 49.17–50.12 and 50.26–27); in the *Nicomachean Ethics* "the eye, the hand, the foot and <the> other parts of the body" (1097b30–31) have replaced the detailed example of the eyelid in the *Protrepticus* (50.19–26, an account that adds details not found in the biological works). The examples of the life of "the horse, the ox," and of every animal (1098a2–3) correspond to a comment in the *Protrepticus* about the *ergon* of "the animals, either absolutely all of them or the best and most honorable of them" (50.27–51.2), but in both works it seems that Aristotle is focused on humans, commenting on nonhuman animals primarily to offer insight into human nature.

After Aristotle has established his preliminary outline definition that the human good turns out to be "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are several virtues, in accordance with the best and most complete" one (1098a16–18), his next task would be to delve into the topic of virtues, find out how many there are, and evaluate them. This is exactly what he does do, starting at i 13, and the beginning of that discussion contains both protreptic elements and a reference to *Protrepticus* (see Section II). But before he begins that discussion of virtue, he takes the opportunity to offer a variety of considerations that corroborate his analysis and his outline definition (i 8–12). And before he even gets to the corroborations, he offers a rather significant "protreptic to further philosophy," which will repay brief study.

Without apologizing for the fact, Aristotle says that what he has achieved so far is only a preliminary outline; this is a necessary way of proceeding, and enables others to "carry on and complete the details," and "in this task time will bring much to light or else offer useful assistance. This is how skills have come to advance, because anyone can fill in the gaps. But we must bear in mind what we said above [sc. i 3], and not look for the same precision in everything, but in each case whatever is in line with the subject-matter and the degree appropriate to the inquiry" (1098a22–29). We are reminded of the earlier comments on precision that themselves came from *Protrepticus*; we are invited to take part in the collective advance of knowledge, a process that was discussed in the dialogue, and we are encouraged to take responsibility for filling

in and developing these outlines over the course of future time. This protreptic to further philosophy is further specified a few lines later, as a protreptic to dialectic: "Some first principles we see by induction, some by perception, some by a kind of habituation, and others in other ways. We must try to investigate each type in the way appropriate to its nature, and take pains to define each of them well, because they are very important in what follows" (i 7.1098b3-7). There is no mistaking that this is a protreptic passage, and it attempts to motivate us to philosophy.

The section containing corroborations occupies *NE* i 8-12, and it begins with *Protrepticus* material being re-presented, up to near the end of i 8, though there seems little reason to believe that anything in i 9-12 had any antecedent discussion in the dialogue. The inscription at Delos, which Aristotle interprets here (8.1099a24-31), made a prominent appearance in the *Eudemian Ethics*, right at the beginning of that work. It is unclear to us at this point whether it was borrowed for the *EE* from the *Protrepticus*, as is the case with much in *EE* i. However that may be, it seems clear to us that everything in chapter 8 up to this point has been recycled from his earlier dialogue. This set of corroborations, which is the next passage after the preceding protreptic to further philosophy, starts with a division of goods into external activities of the body and of the soul; this is also to be found in *Protrepticus*, and the same is true of the next two basic statements, that the end resides in activities, and that the successful man lives and acts well (1098b12-22).

These three basic points are followed by three more substantial discussions, of which the first is that Aristotle's analysis is properly inclusive, in that it satisfies all the desiderata that fit the concept of success: some think it is "virtue, some intelligence (*phronēsis*), others a certain wisdom (*sophian tina*), while others think it is a combination of these or one of these along with more or less pleasure" (1098b22-25, modified). The most exact parallel to this way of putting the point occurs near the end of *Protrepticus*: "We take the position that success is either intelligence and a certain wisdom (*sophian tina*), or virtue, or great enjoyment, or all these" (XII 59.26-60.1). The equivocation between "intelligence and a certain wisdom" is a highly significant indication of the very formulation used in the *Protrepticus*; it is a formulation that Aristotle used in that dialogue in order to co-opt the Isocratean leitmotif "intelligence" for his own purposes.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Jaeger's developmental hypothesis rested in part on a mistaken view of the prominence of *phronēsis* in the formulations of Aristotle's ideals. Jaeger took the view (1932 [1948] Engl. trans., 2nd ed., 81-85, 239-240) that this was evidence of an earlier "Platonic" stage of Aristotle's thought, which was superseded by one in which *sophia* was the highest cognitive virtue. On the contrary, our reading of the *Protrepticus* fragments indicates that Aristotle is careful there, in the passages where he agrees with Isocrates

Two more substantial discussions complete the set of corroborations, of which the next one starts this way: "Our account of success is in harmony with those who say that success is virtue or some particular virtue . . . it makes a great difference whether we conceive of the chief good as consisting in possession or in use" (1098b30–33, modified). This discussion is highly consistent with the *Protrepticus* evidence, and the next detail about the Olympic Games reminds us that there was a prominent use of the Olympic Games metaphor already in the dialogue;<sup>14</sup> and yet there is no solid parallel, although its position among other protreptic arguments suggests recycling.

The final corroboration is probably but not certainly recycled from Aristotle's earlier dialogue. "It is also the case that the life of these [sc. virtuous] people is pleasurable in itself. For experiencing pleasure is an aspect of the soul, and each person finds pleasure in that of which he is said to be fond." For example, horse fanciers enjoy horses, and "a lover of justice finds it [sc. pleasure] in the sphere of justice" (1099a7–11). We do not find an exact parallel to this in *Protrepticus*, only a related thought that "everybody chooses most of all what conforms to their own proper dispositions (a just man choosing to live justly, a man with bravery to live bravely, likewise a self-controlled man to live with self-control)" (VI 39.20–23).

## II. THE MORAL VIRTUES (NE I 13 AND II–IV)

After Aristotle establishes and corroborates the main lines of his inquiry into successful human living, he begins an analysis, from *Nicomachean Ethics* i 13 to iii 5, of the concept of virtue and the common features of virtues and of virtuous actions. This specialized analysis takes him beyond the territory he needed to enter in the more general work *Protrepticus*, and overall we see very few signs of common ground between the two works. One of two main exceptions is at iii 4, where Aristotle is suggesting a way out of relativist disputes; he argues that "the good person stands out a long way by seeing the truth in each case, being a sort of standard and measure of what is noble and pleasant" (1113a32–33; cf. ix 4.1166a12–13). It follows that the wise person is the standard of the good, a position that Aristotle had earlier established by asking and

about the importance of *phronēsis*, to keep open the possibility that *sophia* is a higher virtue than *phronēsis*, the position that is explicitly argued in *EE* v = *NE* vi. An insightful recent discussion of these issues with full bibliography is available in Bobonich 2006, 16–23.

<sup>14</sup> "Just as we travel to Olympia for the sake of the spectacle itself, even if nothing more is going to accrue from it . . . and as there are many other spectacles we would choose instead of lots of money, so the observation of the universe, too, is to be honored above all things that are thought to be useful" (*Protr.* IX 53.19–26).

answering a rhetorical question posed in the *Protrepticus*: "Again, what standard do we have, what criterion of good things <, > that is more precise than the intelligent man? For all that this man will choose, if the choice is based on his knowledge, are good things, and their contraries are bad" (*Protr.* VI 39.16–20).<sup>15</sup>

The other passage where we notice protreptic aspects in this discussion is at its very outset, at *NE* i 13, where Aristotle tries to motivate the future political leaders in his audience to acquire at least some knowledge of human psychology, since they should be concerned to promote virtue. "The true politician is thought to have taken special pains over this, since he wants to make citizens good and obedient to the laws" (1102a8–9), as in Crete and Sparta. "If this inquiry is a part of political science, pursuing it will clearly accord with our original purpose" (1102a12–13). Since human virtue is in the soul, "the politician clearly must have some understanding of the sphere of the soul. . . . The politician, then, must consider the soul, and consider it with a view to understanding virtue, just to the extent that is required by the inquiry, because attaining a higher degree of precision is perhaps too much trouble for his current purpose" (1102a18–26). As we will see repeatedly, Aristotle reserves his protreptic discourse mainly for the purpose of motivating those in his audience to an in-depth study of a certain scientific topic that is relevant to their ambitions to become successful politicians.

It is a telling detail that the very next words of Aristotle are a reference back to his *Protrepticus*: "Some aspects of the soul have been dealt with competently in our popular works as well, and we should make use of these."<sup>16</sup> It is said, for example, that one element of the soul has reason,

<sup>15</sup> A similar application of this *Protrepticus* idea, that the intelligent and good man provides the authoritative answer to the question what the true pleasures are, is found in the discussion of pleasure at x 5.1176a10–22.

<sup>16</sup> Bernays speculated that Aristotle's references to *exoterikoi logoi* were references to the popular works of Aristotle, including his dialogues (1863, 91); the passage in *NE* i 13 he took to be a reference to the *Eudemus* (63–69). Diels (1883, 477) later cast doubt on this by arguing that the *exoterikoi logoi* were most likely "discourses external to Aristotle's school" (1883, 492), although he also concluded that the term *exoterikoi logoi* has no univocal sense. Jaeger reviewed the previous scholarship (1932 [1948], Eng. trans., 246–258) and found good reasons to support Bernays's position: "there is no longer anything against Bernays' conjecture that the exoteric discussions were definite writings, and in fact the literary works of Aristotle" (249). Although Jaeger did not comment specifically on the reference to *exoterikoi logoi* at *NE* i 13, he argued that all of the references to *exoterikoi logoi* in the *EE* refer to the *Protrepticus*, and implies that the *NE* reference should be interpreted in line with this. Rees 1957, 117–118, reviewed the issue and argued specifically that *NE* i 13.1102a26–28 is a reference to *Protrepticus* VII 41.27–42.1. Moraux 1960, 115–118, argues that the reference is likely to the *Protrepticus*, though not exclusively (it could at the same time be a reference to the *Eudemus* and *On Justice*, dialogues in which a similar view about the soul was probably discussed). Gauthier and Jolif 1970,

while another lacks it" (1102a26–28). Although this could have been stated in other popular works as well, it definitely was stated in *Protrepticus*: "Part of us is soul, part body; and the former rules, the latter is ruled; the former uses the latter, which supports it as a tool. Further, it is always with reference to the ruler and the user that the use of that which is ruled and the tool is coordinated. And of the soul one part is reason, which by nature rules and judges our affairs; the other part is a follower and is naturally ruled" (VII 41.15–22). On this basis, Aristotle builds his fundamental division between intellectual and moral virtues, and in his ensuing discussion of the moral virtues makes virtually no further use of *Protrepticus* material or protreptic speech.

Aristotle's discussions of the moral virtues from *NE* iii 6–iv would be a natural place to look for protreptic strategies, such as those employed by Prodicus in his famous "Choice of Heracles" story, which was adapted for Socrates to use against Aristippus by Xenophon at *Memorabilia* ii 1; but no, we simply do not find anything like the exhortations to courage and temperance that persuaded Heracles to choose his life of heroic virtue. On the contrary, Aristotle assumes that his audience is already committed to these virtues and does not need further motivation. What he does instead is provide an analytical framework for understanding the virtue in question: "Let us now resume consideration of the virtues, and one by one say what each is, what sorts of things it is concerned with, and in what way; at the same time it will be clear how many there are" (iii 5.1115a4–5).

How many virtues are there, in fact? The canon of the four cardinal virtues – wisdom, justice, temperate self-control, and courage – which had been solidly established in the Academy by Plato, was evidently a tidy simplification of a wider and more complex field of traits or virtues. Aristotle shows himself aware of the centrality of these four virtues and also unwilling to reduce the other virtues to these four. He sometimes argues by eliminations based on these four virtues as if they were the core of the conceptual field (x 7.1177a31–32), and sometimes he refers to these four plus liberality (x 9.1178a28–33); but there are actually quite a few more moral virtues. We see the same tendency in the *Protrepticus*, which bases one of its key arguments on the Platonic quartet of main virtues: "Since everybody chooses most of all what conforms to their own proper dispositions (a just man choosing to live justly, a man with bravery to live bravely, likewise a self-controlled man to live with self-control), it is clear that the intelligent man will choose most of all to be intelligent" (VI 39.20–24). Yet since other virtues also make a prominent appearance there, such as liberality (IX 53.7) and *kalokagathia*

11.1, 93–94, while accepting the attractiveness of that line of argument, conclude that the reference is most likely to the *Protrepticus* (see also their commentary on vi 4.1140a2–3).

(see subsequent discussion), Aristotle's consistent view would seem to be that the four main virtues are central but not cardinal.

We see no signs of protreptic motivation in the direction of either self-control or courage. What we do see, however, is *apotreptic* language about lack of self-control, when Aristotle says in iii 11 that those who stuff themselves are "utterly slavish" and that some of what the intemperate man enjoys is "detestable" (1118b25 and b20-21), after having said in iii 10 that his status is "brutish" (1118b3-4), since the bodily sense he particularly enjoys, the sense of touch, is essentially part of our animal, not our human, nature. To repel the minds of his listeners and readers from this vice, Aristotle deliberately focuses on the most disreputable pleasures. This *apotreptic* to vice is the only one in all of Aristotle's discussion of the virtues and vices (there is not even any *apotreptic* to the extravagant wasting of money in the discussion of liberality, which would have been an easy rhetorical exercise), and there are no protreptics to any of the cardinal virtues.

When it comes to the noncardinal virtues, which Aristotle discusses in *NE* iv, we see the same pattern generally confirmed: Aristotle's main focus is to encourage his students to acquire his well-tested analytical tools so that their understanding of the virtue can be more intelligent and productive, not so that their commitment to the virtue can be deeper and better motivated.

If there is any protreptic orientation to any virtue in Aristotle's ethics, any virtue that he particularly attempts to motivate, it would be the virtue of self-respect, or rather to its large-scale counterpart *megalopsuchia*, being "great souled." In his *NE* discussion of *megalopsuchia*, Aristotle subsumes *kalokagathia* within *megalopsuchia*, saying "Greatness of soul, then, seems to be a sort of crown of the virtues, because it makes them greater and does not occur in isolation from them. This is why it is hard to be truly great souled, since it is not possible without a noble and good character (*kalokagathia*)" (iv 3.1124a1-4). This term is very prominent in Xenophon's Socratic works; and Isocrates criticized Socratic teachers for pretending to be able to foster *kalokagathia* (*Against the Sophists* 6; *Helen* 8). The term *kalokagathia* features in a prominent way three times in the Isocratean speech of advice *To Demonicus* (6, 13, 51), to whom the character "Aristotle" replies in his *Protrepticus*, accusing "Isocrates" of having no idea what *kalokagathia* actually amounts to (IX 52.28-53.2). Aristotle thought he knew better than Isocrates what *kalokagathia* is, and devoted discussions to it, which are preserved in the Aristotelian *Magna Moralia* ii 9 and in the fragment (vii 3) that was placed by ancient editors at the end of the *EE*. At the start of *NE* x 9, as we have already seen, arguments of moral philosophy are incapable of exhorting the many

(*hoi polloi*) to *kalokagathia* (1179b10), which is a politician's virtue par excellence.<sup>17</sup> In his focus on the "crown of the virtues," we see Aristotle occupying the same dialectical and rhetorical territory as he had occupied in his earlier *Protrepticus*.

### III. FRIENDSHIP (NE VIII–IX)

We find Aristotle's extended discussion of friendship in *NE* viii–ix to be virtually free of protreptic aspects. There is a brief self-contained protreptic to friendship at the opening of that discussion, describing it as not only most necessary but also noble, highly beneficial, totally natural, and as being a type of social glue that is the truest form of justice. Having assembled this rather conventional protreptic to friendship (to which there is no parallel in his *Protrepticus*, as far as we can judge from the limited evidence), Aristotle briskly proceeds to an enumeration of the debates on the topic.

The one clear case in which Aristotle redeploys a line of thought that he had deployed in the *Protrepticus* for protreptic purposes is his resolution (ix 9.1170a13–b19) of one of the current debates about friendship, about whether a successful man would need to have friends; Aristotle argues that he would, employing a line of thought he had already deployed in his *Protrepticus*. Only by means of a friend is the good human being able to perceive goodness in action and perceive that "life itself is good and pleasant" (1170a19–20). And "people define animal life by the capacity for perception, and human life by the capacity for perception or thought, so living in the real sense seems to be perceiving or thinking" (1170a16–19). In the *Protrepticus* he had argued that "living is distinguished from not living by sensing, and living is defined by its presence and power, and if this is removed life is not worth living, as though life itself were removed along with sensation" (VII 44.9–13). This is a key line of argument that also structures Aristotle's discussion of pleasure, to which we now turn.

### IV. PLEASURE (NE X 1–6)

As he reminds us at the beginning of *NE* x 6, Aristotle aims to take up the discussion about which way of life was the best, from the point he had left it in i 7. There were three candidates left in the running: the lives focused on pleasure, virtue, and science, and of these three candidate lifestyles,

<sup>17</sup> It counts as an argument in favor of elections to high office, rather than selection by lot, that as a result "prominent people will practice *kalokagathia*" ([Aristotle], *Rhetoric to Alexander* 1424a17–18).

the one focused on pleasant amusements is briefly and decisively rejected by three arguments in x 6. The second of these three arguments for rejection is based on a line of thought probably already articulated in *Protrepticus*: the activity of the better person (or better part of a person) is more virtuous, hence superior, hence more conducive to happiness, together with a premise that may not have been in that earlier dialogue, that a life of virtue consists of serious things, not amusements (1177a1-6). It is hard to say whether any elements of the first and third arguments may have also been derived from *Protrepticus*.

Aristotle's highly analytical treatment of pleasure itself in x 1-5 divides neatly into three parts: a protreptic to the objective study of pleasure and pain (x 1), a review of the contemporary range of arguments on the value of pleasure and pain (x 2-3), and an outline of Aristotle's preferred analysis and evaluation of pleasures (x 4-5). Some of the Academic arguments that all pleasure is bad (x 3.1173a13-b31) may have featured in *Protrepticus*,<sup>18</sup> and at least one of the arguments for Aristotle's view that not all pleasures are good was recycled from that dialogue. In both works we are asked to conduct a thought experiment, to assess the value of a life richly provided with pleasure but entirely deprived of intelligence; in the *NE* version, "no one would choose to live the whole of his life with the mind of a child, even if he were to take the utmost pleasure in what pleases children" (*NE* x 3.1174a1-3). This can be seen as being a brief version of this *Protrepticus* argument, put into the mouth of the character "Heraclides": nobody would choose a life deprived of intelligence, "not even if they were going to live enjoying the wildest pleasures, in the way that some people carry on who are out of their right minds" (VIII 45.9-11); "even if someone had everything, but has some affliction affecting his intelligence, that way of life would not be valuable, for none of his other goods would be of any benefit. Hence everybody, insofar as they have some perception of being intelligent and are capable of having a taste of this thing, think other things to be nothing; and this is the reason why not a single one of us would put up with being either drunk or infantile up to the end of our life" (VIII 45.18-25).

Given the great swarm of arguments hostile to pleasure in Plato's Academy, Aristotle found it necessary to protest against a certain unscientific mixture of ideological and factual communication. In *NE* x 1

<sup>18</sup> The first two arguments are capped by an extremely brief third argument, a counterfactual claim that pleasure cannot be the only good thing, because cognitive and moral activities would still be worth choosing even if pleasure did not accompany them (1174a4-8). This is entirely consistent with Aristotle's reasoning in *Protrepticus*, indeed it is a logical consequence of it, but it is unlikely that any version of it occurred there, as Aristotle would be undermining his main motivational message there if he were to take time to explore the idea that cognition might not be pleasant.

Aristotle urged his audience to enter into the scientific study of pleasure and pain, the correct application of which is crucial to education and to quality of life. It is right to dissuade the young from certain pleasures, but to say that all pleasures are bad is either an honest misunderstanding or else a deliberately ideological communication on the part of those who think it "is better with a view to how we live to represent pleasure as a bad thing, even if it is not" (1172a29–33), persuading us away from temptation toward moderation. Aristotle rejects this approach, saying that arguments lose their credibility when they conflict with the evident experience of those who hear them, and the arguments that have real power to motivate and exhort people to virtue are the true ones that are in harmony with the facts.

The most significant exploitation of *Protrepticus* arguments for the purpose of Aristotle's discussion of pleasure comes in his positive account in chapters 4–5, where he tries to show how the cognitive pleasures are good and have their proper place in the good life. It seems that Aristotle is here adapting a line of thought he had previously articulated in his *Protrepticus*. The best way to display this adaptation is to translate the last three paragraphs of chapter XI (58.1–59.13) of the *Protrepticus* of Iamblichus, a passage quoted literally by Iamblichus from near the end of Aristotle's *Protrepticus*.

Someone who uses a thing correctly is using it more, for the natural objective and mode of use belong to someone who uses a thing in a beautiful and precise way. Now the only function of the soul, too, or else the greatest one of all, is thinking and reasoning. Therefore it is now simple and easy for anyone to reach the conclusion that he who thinks correctly is more alive, and he who most attains truth lives most, and this is the one who is intelligent and observing according to the most precise knowledge; and it is then and to those that living perfectly, surely, should be attributed, to those who are using their intelligence, that is, to the intelligent. *But if what it is to live is the same, for all animals at least, it is clear that an intelligent person would surely exist most and in the most authoritative sense, and most of all at that time when he is being active and happens to be observing the most knowable of existing things.*<sup>19</sup>

[...]

Furthermore, there is a difference between enjoying oneself while drinking and enjoying drinking; for nothing prevents someone who is not thirsty, or has not been brought the drink he enjoys, from enjoying himself while drinking, not

<sup>19</sup> This sentence at XI 58.10–14 is, we think, a "fast-forward paraphrase" by Iamblichus of (part of) the content of the intervening part of the dialogue, as it seems to condense into one sentence several ideas that would have been elaborated more carefully by Aristotle, to judge from the careful elaboration in the citations that can be firmly established. For other examples, see Hutchinson and Johnson 2005, 227–229.

because he is drinking but because he happens at the same time to be seeing or being seen as he sits there. Thus we will say that this fellow enjoys himself, and enjoys himself while drinking, but not because he is drinking, and not because he enjoys drinking. Thus[,] in the same way we will also say that walking and sitting and learning and every process is pleasant or painful, not insofar as we happen to feel pain or pleasure in their presence, but insofar as we all feel pain or pleasure by their presence. So, similarly, we will also say that a life is pleasant if its presence is pleasant to those who have it, and that not all to whom it happens that they enjoy themselves while living are living pleasantly, only those to whom living itself is pleasant and who enjoy the pleasure that comes from life.

Thus we attribute living more to the one who is awake rather than to the one who is asleep, and to the one who is being intelligent more than to the one who is unintelligent; and we say the pleasure that comes from life is the one that comes from the uses of the soul, for this is being truly alive. Further, even if there are many uses of the soul, still the most authoritative one of all, certainly, is the use of intelligence to the highest degree. Further, it is clear that the pleasure that arises from being intelligent and observant must be the pleasure that comes from living, either alone or most of all. Therefore living pleasantly and feeling true enjoyment belong only to philosophers, or to them most of all.

This subtle and masterful analysis deserves far more study than it has received; there have been two outstanding studies, but these have investigated Aristotle's analysis with respect to some aspects of his logic, not ethics (Owen 1960; de Strycker 1968). Without doing justice to it here, we do need to note for our purposes that the first protreptic conclusion is linked intimately to the second conclusion, that the pleasure of intellectual activity is the only true enjoyment (or at least is the most authentic one), by means of the premises that intellectual activity is the authentic expression of human vitality, and that the pleasure that intrinsically accompanies authentic human vitality is ipso facto the intrinsically authentic pleasure.

Aristotle finds his analysis of pleasure in terms of cognitive activity to be confirmed by a number of corroborating considerations: the weakening of pleasure over time is explained by the weakening of the corresponding cognitive activity (1175a5-10); this analysis explains why it is hard to say whether we aim at life for the sake of pleasure or vice versa (1175a10-21), and it explains why the pleasure involved in an activity strengthens it (1175a29-b1), and why the pleasure involved in a competing second activity weakens the pleasure of the first (1175b1-13). The third of these corroborating considerations claims that those who enjoy intellectual activities do them better, with more precision (1175a29-b1); this has a good chance, based on circumstantial evidence, of being derived from the *Protrepticus*, though there is no direct parallel to be found in the surviving evidence of that lost dialogue.

## V. POLITICIAN VS. PHILOSOPHER (NE x 7–8)

We are now closing in on our objective, the protreptic payload in *NE* x 7–8. Before entering into a discussion of political theory, Aristotle takes the trouble to remind the ambitious men in his audience that there is a yet higher form of human life than the one to which his next lectures are going to prepare them; the philosopher leads a higher life than the politician. The lecture audience of the *NE* was focused on political science,<sup>20</sup> which is why Aristotle finds it opportune to stress this point here, in the hopes that some of these young men would turn to philosophy instead, and that the others who became politicians would support or at least tolerate philosophy. In order to argue this point and stimulate motivation in these would-be politicians to do philosophy, Aristotle reached back to his *Protrepticus* and recycled some of its contents for this new purpose.

In fact, the entire content of *NE* x 7–8 seems to have been recycled from Aristotle's earlier work, except for one line of argument. The line of argument that did *not* occur in *Protrepticus* is the one that opens x 8, clarifying that the political life can be successful "in a secondary way" because it is the virtue of the compound human person, not the "virtue of intellect" that is "separate"; this political life is secondary both because it is the virtue of a lower entity and because it has a lower degree of self-sufficiency (1178a9–b7). This line of argument did not occur there, not because Aristotle had a different view then, but because he had a different purpose: to recommend philosophy in an inclusive way to everybody who might read his book, by arguing that philosophy makes a valid contribution in practical life, both personally and politically. It was not part of his rhetorical strategy in *Protrepticus* to stress the inferiority of the political life to that of the philosopher, as this would alienate some of his readers; but here in the *NE* he is addressing students who have chosen to study philosophy in the Lyceum, perhaps because they were convinced by arguments in *Protrepticus* that it would be valuable for their political careers. They could benefit from a narrow protreptic to pure philosophy.

The preceding line of argument, that the politician leads a secondarily excellent life, is also absent from the parallel passages in *Politics* vii 1–2, which are themselves largely recycled from the *Protrepticus*. Among those who accept Aristotle's framework and agree that the life of virtue is the best life, a question is still to be settled: "whether the practical and political life is or is not more desirable than one which is wholly independent of external goods, for example a life devoted to theory, which some say is the only one for a philosopher. For these are pretty much the two human lives that appear to have been decided upon by those who

<sup>20</sup> On this difference between *EE* and *NE*, see note 8.

have been ambitious in the pursuit of excellence, both in past ages and in our own. Which is true is a question of no small moment" (vii 2.1324a26–33). Aristotle visibly refrains from pushing the point in this *Politics* context that the political life is secondary; but he does do this in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where we find the strongest surviving expression, in all his surviving works, of this valuation of philosophy over politics.

If we now remove from consideration the preceding line of argument and examine the rest of Aristotle's reasoning in *NE* x 7–8, we can tell that most or all of it is derived from arguments of the *Protrepticus*.<sup>21</sup> In some cases, Aristotle refers to his earlier work, and we possess citations of the parts of the dialogue to which he refers; in other cases we see obvious parallels between surviving parts of the two works, though there is no reference on Aristotle's part; in still other cases, there is no surviving part of the *Protrepticus* with which to make the comparison, but its location within this large borrowing and the terms in which it is expressed support the conclusion that some such argument was present in the lost work. It would take far too long to enter into all the details here, and this is a task for future research for other scholars. We limit ourselves to comments on several key passages where there are surviving parallels to study, starting with those passages where Aristotle explicitly says that he is recycling.

The first key passage is the one opening the discussion, in which Aristotle says that he has "already said" that the activity of the best element in us (whether it is intellect or something else, and whether it is divine or just the most divine element in us) will be contemplation, and that this agrees with "our earlier discussion" (sc. *NE* i). Where had Aristotle "already said" this? He had already said this in the following passage of his *Protrepticus* (VII 41.22–42.4):

Everything is well disposed when it is in accordance with its own proper (*oikeios*) virtue, for to have obtained this is good. Moreover, it's when a thing's most authoritative and most estimable parts have their virtue that it is well disposed; therefore the natural virtue of that which is better is naturally better. And that which is by nature more of a ruler and more commanding is better, as a human is than the other animals; thus soul is better than body (for it is more authoritative), as is the part of the soul which has reason and thought, for this kind of thing is what prescribes and proscribes and says how we ought or ought not to act. Whatever, then, is the virtue of this part is necessarily the virtue most valuable of all in the strict sense, both for everything in general and for us; in fact, I think one might actually take the position that we are this part, either alone or especially.

<sup>21</sup> The one comment in x 8 that probably has no parallel in *Protrepticus* is 1179a17–22, where Aristotle appeals to the touchstone of experience in the facts of life as a more reliable indicator than the beliefs of the wise; the older, more experienced members of Aristotle's audience are encouraged by him to rely more on their own insights than on impressive stories about wise men published in some book, even his own.

As René Gauthier said, presenting a longer version of this passage in his commentary, "it is in fact impossible not to recognize" this fragment of the *Protrepticus* as the subject of Aristotle's reference.<sup>22</sup>

And it is important to see that Aristotle's reference to his earlier *Protrepticus* not only refers to the general theses just now articulated but also indicates the provenance of all the remarks that follow. The very next claim in *NE* x 7, that contemplative knowledge is the highest activity (1177a19–21), is probably also a restatement of a *Protrepticus* thesis,<sup>23</sup> and the last claim in the chapter contains another explicit reference<sup>24</sup> to the earlier work: "What we said previously (*proteron*) will apply here as well" (1178a4–5, modified), namely that since it is proper (*oikeios*) for humans to act with intelligent guidance, and what is proper to any living thing is what is best and pleasantest for it,<sup>25</sup> then this is the best and most pleasant activity for us. Since part of this thought was expressed at the beginning of the previously quoted *Protrepticus* passage, and since the other part (on intelligent activity being very pleasant) was expressed in the passages quoted by Iamblichus in chapter XI of his *Protrepticus*, this would seem to be either a new combination of ideas that had been separate in *Protrepticus* or else a recycling of a (now lost) passage that combined these two ideas together in the dialogue.

Since the beginning and the end of this chapter are new exploitations of familiar *Protrepticus* material, it stands to reason that everything else

<sup>22</sup> As far as we know, the first identification of *Protrepticus* as the work referred to by "already said" was made by Gauthier in Gauthier and Jolif 1970, ii 876–878, on the basis of a suggestion made to him by R.P. Dubois. This identification, says Gauthier, "resolves a question debated for a long time," and we agree that it should have resolved this question. S. Broadie, in Broadie and Rowe 2002 ad loc., not seeing a convincing parallel in the *NE*, suggests "the reference might be to the *Protrepticus*."

<sup>23</sup> At the end of a sequence of linked arguments, Aristotle contends that, "according to the most authoritative judgment, intelligence is supreme among goods" (VI 39.26–40.1); this is an answer tailored to respond to the concerns of Isocrates, and in his own voice Aristotle is likely to have expressed the matter in his own preferred terms, that intelligent activity is the highest activity.

<sup>24</sup> It seems that we are the first to recognize this as a reference to the *Protrepticus*. Commentators before Gauthier and Jolif were not much aware of the significance of the *Protrepticus*, nor has there actually been any attempt to settle this reference, not even in the most recent commentary by Broadie 2002. Perhaps the connection had been noticed by Gauthier, who was the first to bring *Protrepticus* passages into evidence in an *NE* commentary (see note 22); but unfortunately his commentary at this point (1970, ii 883) is damaged by what appears to be the accidental loss of all comments on the text from 1177b1–1178a31.

<sup>25</sup> For another example of a general thesis being expressed in terms of "propriety" in the *Protrepticus*, it is instructive to compare an earlier passage (*DCMS* XXIII 70.18–21): "what is similar in nature to each thing is what is proper (*oikeios*) to it, and to the man of free status (*eleutheros*) the dominant end of the activity in accordance with his proper way of life has its reference to himself and to nothing else external."

in the chapter would also be recycled, absent contrary considerations. Therefore we can expect more insight into Aristotle's much-debated remarks by studying them in the light of their argumentative background in the *Protrepticus*, rather than in earlier books of the *NE* (or the common books). This detailed work for x 7 has yet hardly been undertaken,<sup>26</sup> let alone finished, since the requisite comparison<sup>27</sup> would require a fuller presentation of the available *Protrepticus* evidence than has yet been published. Here we can only start.

Consider Aristotle's remark on self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*), "The self-sufficiency that is spoken of will belong to the activity of contemplation most of all" (1177a27-28), because the practice of wisdom needs fewer resources and can even be done alone. Where was this self-sufficiency spoken about? This cannot be a reference to the *NE* i 7 discussion, in which self-sufficiency and ultimate finality were the two marks of being the chief good, because Aristotle explicitly says that he has a different meaning in mind. "We are applying the term 'self-sufficient' not to a person on his own, living a solitary life . . . we take what is self-sufficient to be that which on its own makes life worthy of choice and lacking in nothing" for a person, whether or not they are socially self-sufficient (1097b8-15). The answer is again that we need to look to the *Protrepticus* to find the right parallels; in that work, Aristotle argues that it scores in favor of philosophy that doing it does not need special resources, unlike other activities. "Its practice differs greatly from all others: philosophers need neither tools nor special places for their job; rather, wherever in the inhabited world the mind runs, it latches onto the truth equally everywhere as if it were present everywhere" (VI 40.24-41.2). This makes a point about philosophers being free of need for technical and local resources, whereas the *NE* x 7 point was about philosophers being free of need for social network resources; these are two allied points in one larger argument, part or all of which was argued in the *Protrepticus*.

Issues of self-sufficiency and free status occur in several other contexts in the fragments of this lost dialogue; in fact, it seems to have been one of the central themes of the dialogue, if we are right in seeing *Rhetoric* i 5, on protreptic discourse, as deriving from and providing evidence for

<sup>26</sup> A good start was made by Romeyer-Dherbey 1975. He compared the *Protrepticus* to an island rising from the sea, "still covered in seaweed" (414), but at the time that he did his work interest in *Protrepticus* was plunging, after Düring's 1961 attempted reconstruction, and the island sank back into obscurity for decades.

<sup>27</sup> Hermeneutical dividends can also be expected from the effort of studying the various parts of the evidence of the *Protrepticus* and comparing them to certain other parts of Aristotle's corpus where he visibly recycled themes from that earlier dialogue, especially these: *EE* i and *EE* v (= *NE* vi), *Politics* vii 1-2, *Rhetoric* i 5-7, *Metaphysics* i 1-3, ii 1-3, and *De Part. An.* i 1 and 5.

Aristotle's own *Protrepticus*. It is highly believable that in that earlier dialogue there was a similarly broad list of candidates for the meaning of *eudaimonia* (success): "Let's define success as good conduct combined with excellence, or as self-sufficiency in life, or as the most pleasant life that can be enjoyed securely, or as good condition of property and body, together with the ability to preserve and make use of them. That success is one or more of these things, pretty well everyone agrees" (1360b14-18). For an example of how this focus on self-sufficiency comes into play in the rhetoric of the dialogue, consider this: Aristotle, at a rhetorically charged part of one of his speeches, argues (against Isocrates) that the philosopher is the only producer who lives by looking at nature and the divine; like "some good helmsman who hitches the first principles of his life onto things that are eternal and steadfast, he moors his ship and lives life on his own terms" (X 55.27-56.2).<sup>28</sup>

Much more could be said about the fascinating details of *NE* x 7 with the help of *Protrepticus* perspectives, but let us notice just one more thing, that this is where the gods make their entrance into the argument. The whole protreptic climaxes at the end of x 8 with the claim that the wise person's activity is the one most closely related to that of the gods, and he must be the one dearest to the gods; but this movement of thought is first begun here. The philosopher will lead a life that is "superior to one that is simply human, because someone lives thus, not in so far as he is a human being, but in so far as there is some divine element within him." So "we ought not to listen to those who exhort (*protrepein*) us, because we are human, to think of human things, or because we are mortal, think of mortal things. We ought rather to take on immortality as much as possible, and to do all that we can to live in accordance with the highest element within us; for even if its bulk is small, in its power and value it far exceeds everything" (7.1177b26-1178a2). This last comment is so rhetorically perfect, and so unusual in its literary texture in the context of the *NE* that it should be considered not a revised exploitation of the earlier work but a literal citation from it.

We do not have this exact passage in any other *Protrepticus* evidence, but we do find rhetorically polished expressions of allied thoughts. "When perception and intellect are removed, a human becomes pretty much like a plant; when intellect alone is removed, he turns into a wild animal; when the irrational element is removed but he retains the intellect, he bears a resemblance to a god" (V 35.14-18). "Animals too have some small glimmers of reason and intelligence, but have absolutely no allotment of the intellectual wisdom of contemplation; this is present among the gods alone,

<sup>28</sup> And see note 23; see also an interesting passage in favor of using dialectical analysis of principles in empirical science: "nature itself is able to guide us by itself to the principles, but is not self-sufficient in judging each thing without taking up a different understanding" (*DCMS* XXVII 87.9-11).

just as a human actually falls short of many animals in the precision and power of its perceptions and impulses" (V 36.9–13). Both the preceding remarks seem to have been made by the speaker "Aristotle," and a rhetorically supercharged version of this idea was also put into the mouth of the "Heraclides" (VIII 48.9–21):

So nothing divine or happy belongs to humans apart from just that one thing worth taking seriously, as much intellect and intelligence as is in us, for, of what's ours, this alone seems to be immortal, and this alone divine. And by being able to share in such a capacity, our way of life, although naturally miserable and difficult, is yet so gracefully managed that, in comparison with the other animals, a human seems to be a god. For "intellect is the god in us"—whether it was Hermodotus or Anaxagoras who said so — and "the mortal phase has a portion of some god." One ought, therefore, either to do philosophy or say goodbye to life and depart hence, since all of the other things anyway seem to be a lot of nonsense and foolishness.

This seems to have been at the climax of Heraclides' speech, in just the same way that divine considerations come in at the climax of Aristotle's protreptic speech in *NE* x.

The gods are the topic still when Aristotle resumes his *Protrepticus* recycling at x 8.1178b7 (after putting it down for a different purpose at 1178a9–b7, as noted earlier). Aristotle asks rhetorical questions to force us to see that the only virtuous activity the gods would engage in is intellectual activity, because it makes no sense to conceive the gods having human moral virtues such as justice, courage, and generosity; nor could we imagine the gods to be inactive or asleep like Endymion. This passage triggered the interest of Jakob Bernays (1863, 116–122), who originally postulated that it was a recycling from the lost *Protrepticus*, on the basis of a report by Augustine about Cicero's lost dialogue *Hortensius*, which was known to have been modeled on Aristotle's dialogue. "Cicero in his dialogue *Hortensius* argues thus: 'If we, when we depart this life, were permitted to live for ever, as the fables say, in the Isles of the Blest . . . we should not need courage, where no task or danger was prescribed to us, nor justice, where there was no property of another for us to seek. . . . We should be blessed by the possession of one thing only — science and knowledge of nature, for which alone the life of the gods is to be praised'" (*De Trinitate* 14.9.12 = *Protrepticus* fr. 12 Ross, Ross trans.). This was the beginning of the modern resurrection of the *Protrepticus*, because it inspired Ingram Bywater to search for traces of this lost work, which he found in 1869 in the *Protrepticus* of Iamblichus.<sup>29</sup> He confirmed the speculation of Bernays by discovering

<sup>29</sup> Bywater 1869, 55, gave due credit to Bernays: "The exceeding blessedness of a speculative life was maintained by a line of argument not unlike that in the Tenth Book of the *Ethics*. Guided by such hints as these Prof. Bernays of Bonn has reconstructed the

this rhetorical passage (IX 53.2–10): “One might see that what we say is all the more true if someone conveyed us in thought, as it were, to the Isles of the Blest, for in that place neither use nor benefit would be produced in anything else, and only thinking and observation remains, which we say even now is an independent way of life. If what we say is true, would not any of us be rightly ashamed if when the right was granted us to settle in the Isles of the Blest, we were by our own fault unable to do so?”

As the protreptic ramps up to its climax, we find mention of famous sages of the past, such as Solon and Anaxagoras (NE 1179a9–17), of whom the former may have been held up as an example of wisdom in *Protrepticus*, and the latter certainly was, not only does “Heraclides” invoke Anaxagoras in the previously quoted speech, but “Aristotle” also invokes his wisdom in the speech that follows (X 51.11–15). It is not quite clear whether this mention is derived from the earlier dialogue, but when we consider the absolute climax of the protreptic, all signs point to that conclusion: “If the gods feel any concern for human affairs, as they seem to, it would be reasonable for them to find enjoyment in what is best and most closely related to them – namely intellect – and to reward those who like and honour this most, on the assumption that these people care for what is loved by the gods, and act rightly and nobly. And it is quite clear that all of these qualities belong most of all to the wise person; he, therefore, is dearest to the gods” (1179a24–30).

#### VI. PROTREPTIC TO SCIENTIFIC LEGISLATION (NE X 9)

After the rhetorical high point that ends NE x 8, one gets the impression that the end of the work has been reached, and nothing is left to do but applaud. This may have been the way the *Eudemian Ethics* ended, but indications in NE i show that the NE was part of a two-part course in ethics *and* politics, unlike the *EE*, for which reason Aristotle takes this opportunity to effect a transition to the new subject. And this transition both takes the form of a protreptic and harks back to his *Protrepticus*.

Virtually the first comment in NE x 9 is the one with which we started this investigation, in which Aristotle proceeds from the finding that philosophical arguments have protreptic effects on only some people, not most (1179b7–10). The approach that is effective for all is training and education under good laws, so if we wish to put these philosophical ideas into practice, we must understand what makes good legislation

Aristotelian Dialogue . . . with the critical tact and poetical insight into the mind of antiquity by virtue of which he stands so completely alone among living scholars.”

good; and this is true not only for aspiring politicians but also for those who only need to learn how to govern their own households.

Having motivated his audience to study this subject in general, Aristotle proceeds, in what are virtually his last comments, to distinguish his particular approach from that of "those of the sophists" who "advertise (*epaggellomenoi*) that they teach politics, but appear very far from actually doing so "being completely ignorant about what kind of thing it is and what its sphere of concern is. Otherwise, they would not have classed it with rhetoric or even as inferior to it" (1181a12-15, modified); this is a comment that is aimed squarely at Isocrates, who had declared that imitating and adapting existing laws were easy and sufficient procedures (*Antidosis* 81-84). In attacking Isocrates here, Aristotle revisits his criticism of Isocrates in his *Protrepticus*, where Aristotle recommends direct and scientific study of the realities of social and political life, not the imitative procedures recommended by Isocrates (*Protr.* X).<sup>30</sup> This is ultimately the study to which Aristotle is primarily exhorting his *NE* students, in all its complexity and difficulty, not to the moral virtues.

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<sup>30</sup> Another indication that Aristotle is revisiting the same territory is this: near the end of x 9 law is described as "discourse (*logos*) proceeding from a certain intelligence and insight" (1180a21-22, modified), a comment also found in his *Protrepticus*: "the law is a kind of intelligence, i.e. a discourse (*logos*) based on intelligence" (VI 39.15-16).

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