

ARISTOTLE AND THE PROBLEMS OF METHOD IN ETHICS

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JOHN BURNET'S thesis about the dialectical character of Aristotelian ethics seems nowadays to have become a common view, held by most if not all interpreters.¹ In addition, the dialectical method is now considered Aristotle's primary method of philosophical investigation: not only his ethics, but also his physics and its branches, and even his theology are taken to be fundamentally dialectical.² The sole exceptions recognized are mathematics and logic.

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¹ J. Burnet, *The Ethics of Aristotle* (London, 1900), xvii: 'the Ethics is, and from the nature of the case must be, a dialectical and not a demonstrative work'. However, what dialectic means for him is less clear. On the one hand, 'the word *dialektikê* properly means nothing more than the art of dialogue or discussion—it signifies the theoretical formulation of the practice of Sokrates' (xxxix). However, this is too vague a notion of dialectic; moreover, according to this definition, dialectic will be particularly involved in *ad hominem* arguments, but as Hardie has remarked, 'for the most part Aristotle argues from premisses which state his own views or views which he has made his own. Burnet, who held that the *EN* is "dialectical throughout" (p. v), exaggerates the extent to which Aristotle starts from the opinion of others, especially Plato and the Academy' (W. F. R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, 2nd edn. (Oxford, 1980), 39). On the other hand, the meaning of dialectic is defined according to the *Topics*, which Burnet cites on pp. xxxix–xlvi. A dialectical argument is, according to this second meaning, an argument whose premisses are *endoxa*, reputable premisses, accepted by all or most philosophers, including Aristotle. The latter meaning will be retained and considered throughout this paper.

² Authors with different perspectives accept this expanded version, even if some acknowledge that dialectic poses a threat to the status of truth in practical wisdom. Jonathan Barnes, in an outstanding article, accepts the expansion and identifies the problem, but tries to soften it owing to an optimistic finalism; he ends by saying: 'Yet Aristotle's practical philosophy is not, I think, seriously marred by his method', among other reasons because 'Aristotle's actual philosophising was not greatly affected by his reflexion on how philosophy ought to be conducted' (J. Barnes, 'Aristotle and the Methods of Ethics', *Revue internationale de philosophie*, 34 (1980), 490–511 at 510). Enrico Berti has strongly defended the expansion of dialectic in a series of essays (*Le ragioni di Aristotele* (Bari, 1989); see also 'Il metodo della filosofia pratica secondo Aristotele', in A. Alberti (ed.), *Studi sull'etica di Aristotele* (Naples, 1990), 23–63, and 'Does Aristotle's Conception of Dialectic

This expansion has been made at times with certain restrictions on the sort of dialectic considered,³ but it has at other times been adopted without restriction.⁴ I think that there are good reasons to resist such an expansion, particularly regarding physics, although in the present study I want to examine the dialectical thesis at its core, that is to say, in ethics.

My thesis is that Aristotelian ethics was initially dialectical in its method: *EE* systematically held that dialectic is the appropriate means of proof for morals. However, Aristotle himself abandoned such a view, and in *NE* the kind of proof required was no longer dialectical. This does not mean that, once abandoned in ethics, dialectic could not still find a place in other domains, such as physics, even if I think that unlikely. Nevertheless, I intend to show here only what happened with the method in ethics, from *EE* to *NE*, without regarding what might have happened in other domains.

I

I begin with three points and a caveat. First, (1) I shall determine what we are to call dialectic. In a broad sense, a dialectical argument is simply an argument that is disputed, but this sense is too general

Develop?', in W. Wians (ed.), *Aristotle's Philosophical Development* (Lanham, Md., 1996), 105–30).

³ Adopted notably by Terence Irwin, whose book *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford, 1988) and several papers on Aristotelian ethics have been very influential. The main points of Irwin's strategy are: (1) to distinguish a strong from an ordinary dialectic, so that the problem of truth can be overcome by the former although not by the latter; (2) to take ethics as a non-autonomous discipline, dependent on metaphysics and psychology for its central theses, so that, even though a strict dialectical justification falls short of the ambitions of ethics, dialectic conceived of in a broad coherent sense can respond to such ambitions so long as it gains support from (1). Granted (1) and (2), Irwin pleads for ethics as 'dialectical throughout' (T. Irwin, 'Aristotle's Methods of Ethics', in D. J. O'Meara (ed.), *Studies in Aristotle* (Washington, 1981), 193–223 at 208). I think one can resist (1) and (2).

⁴ Particularly by M. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1986), and 'Saving Aristotle's Appearances', in M. Schofield and M. Nussbaum (eds.), *Language and Logos: Studies in Ancient Greek Philosophy Presented to G. E. L. Owen* (Cambridge, 1982), 267–93. But see critical comments by John Cooper, 'Aristotle on the Authority of "Appearances"', in id., *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (Princeton, 1999), 281–91, and William Wians, 'Saving Aristotle from Nussbaum's Phenomena', in J. P. Anton and A. Preus (eds.), *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy, v. Aristotle's Ontology* (Albany, NY, 1992), 133–49.

to be useful here. Neither is the Platonic sense helpful, since, by contrast, it is too restricted. The Platonic dialectician makes divisions and establishes a strict internal agreement between Ideas, abandoning all links with the sensible world, and thus limiting his *dialegesthai* to too narrow a sense. For this and other reasons, he is unfit to argue Aristotelian ethical claims. The meaning of dialectic that I am proposing is rather the one provided by Aristotle himself when he writes at the beginning of the *Topics* that a dialectical argument is one whose premisses come from reputable opinions (1. 1, 100^a29–30). Aristotle takes reputable opinions to be those that ‘are accepted by everyone or by the majority or by the wise—i.e. by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable and reputable of them’ (100^b21–3).⁵ This is a well-known passage, but it would not be amiss to insist that, in the very determination of what is a reputable opinion, the notion of being ‘reputable’ reappears, in that a reputable opinion is the opinion of the most *reputable* wise. A premiss of a dialectical syllogism relies upon its reputability; and its reputability can be founded, in the last resort, on the reputation of whoever asserts it. If the opinion is accepted by everyone, or almost everyone, or by the wise and, among them, by almost all or by the most reputable, then this opinion is fit to be a premiss of a dialectical syllogism. A dialectical argument has other characteristics—for instance, it is produced for a dispute by means of questions and answers—but, so far as concerns our present enquiry, the nature of the premisses is by far the most interesting feature: the premisses of dialectical arguments are accepted or reputable propositions. If Aristotle’s method in ethics is dialectical, the kind of proof used in ethics should be founded upon accepted or reputable premisses in the sense we have just provided.

It is also necessary to consider (2) the purpose for which dialectical argument is to be used in ethics. The general recent positive reevaluation of the role of dialectic in Aristotle’s philosophy is closely linked to an approach according to which dialectic would function as the method of discovery in sciences, the one that, by enquiring from all points of view, would bring us to the threshold of rules and principles. Perhaps it would not grasp them directly, but none the less it would pave the way for the intellect (*nous*), which could then

⁵ The translation is from *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation [ROT]*, ed. J. Barnes (Princeton 1984). This translation will be used unless otherwise stated.

effect the apprehension of principles. In this sense, dialectic would play an intermediary role between the perception of particular cases and the intellection of principles. This heuristic role of dialectic also offers a highly plausible explanation of the fact that, despite the strictly deductive version of the sciences found in the *Posterior Analytics* (according to a method clearly inspired by mathematics), the science *en œuvre* that we find in Aristotle's treatises, notably the biological ones, rarely obeys the syllogistic and deductive scheme; instead, it is accomplished by much more flexible means, some of which are characterized by reputable opinions, making them similar or even identical to dialectical reasoning.⁶

This gap—or rather, abyss—between the deductive project of the *Posterior Analytics* and the science displayed in the physical treatises requires an explanation, and for this explanation one can reasonably expect to ascribe an important place to dialectic in the discovery of principles. However, regarding ethics, the gap—if it exists—lies elsewhere, for it is not between the dialectical ways of the enquiry and the rigorous deductive presentation of results. It lies, on the contrary, within the very presentation of results in moral matters, because, as we are about to see, dialectic is offered as a kind of proof of moral truths, and not just for the discovery of principles. Thus, one can momentarily put aside the problem of finding an explanation for the distance between the analytical project of scientific deduction and the profuse enquiry in the domain of theoretical sciences, since in practical matters dialectic is an element of the very presentation of moral rules. Consequently, investigating the nature of the dialectic used in practical proofs puts us in a privileged position for determining how far, and for what purposes, dialectical argument can be used.

Finally, (3) perhaps it is misleading to consider Aristotelian ethics as a unitary project. Perhaps one has seriously to consider whether

⁶ To quote only one well-known paper by Paul Wilpert: 'sie [dialectic and induction] führen bis an die Schwelle, bereiten die Klarheit vor, die dann aber als Evidenz der Principien sich von selbst ergeben muss. Der Weg der Hinführung birgt noch nicht die Einsicht in die innere Begründung selbst. Und so scheiden sich Induktion und Dialektik als Wege des Aufspürens und der Nous als die Methode der Einsicht. . . . Episteme ist die in streng apodeiktischer Form gebotene Darstellung der Begründungszusammenhänge in der ausgebauten Wissenschaft, wie sie musterhaft die Mathematik darbietet. Dialektik aber ist der Weg der Forschung, der Prüfung des Für und Wider, die sich der induktiven Methode bedient, vom Wahrscheinlichen, noch nicht Gesicherten ausgehend' (P. Wilpert, 'Aristoteles und die Dialektik', *Kant-Studien*, 48/2 (1956–7), 247–57 at 255).

his ethics presents different approaches. There are three treatises on ethics: the *Magna Moralia*, *EE*, and *NE*. We can disregard the *Magna Moralia*, whose authenticity remains controversial, noting none the less that its style and theses are very similar to those of *EE*. The other two treatises, as is well known, have three books in common (*NE* 5–7 = *EE* 4–6).

An apparently prevailing consensus holds that *EE* was written before *NE*, the common books being part of *EE*, at least in their original version (which could have undergone revisions in order to be adapted to *NE*). However, it has also been insistently maintained that this chronological priority, even if accepted, is of no philosophical importance; for what would really be important in distinguishing these two treatises is the public to which each work is addressed. According to this interpretation, *NE* consists of lectures for young or would-be legislators (a learned public, but not strictly philosophical), whereas *EE* consists of lectures addressed to philosophy students (probably those of the Lyceum) with a typically philosophical background. According to this interpretation, discrepancies between the two treatises are best explained as due to the public to which they are addressed.

Such an interpretation may explain some differences between the two texts, but I do not think it grasps the essential point for explaining why there are two treatises. There are discrepancies between the texts which are due to philosophical changes, and which are not just superficial ones attributable to the diversity of the audience to which they are addressed. One could even imagine that *EE* is the first draft, whose problems and difficulties required a rewriting with a sharply distinct thesis. The outcome of this sort of revision is what we now know as *NE*.

Many clues make the thesis of a revision quite plausible, but I cannot develop them here.⁷ In fact, I do not even need to argue

⁷ Owen's thesis pointed to one fundamental element by showing how the absence of the notion of focal meaning for *good* and for *being* is an incompatibility between *EE* and the project of a single science of being, announced in book *I* of *Metaphysics*, whereas the corresponding version in *NE* is perfectly compatible with this project (G. E. L. Owen, 'Logic and Metaphysics in Some Earlier Works of Aristotle', in I. Düring and G. E. L. Owen (eds.), *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-Fourth Century* (Göteborg, 1960), 163–90, repr. in Owen, *Logic, Science and Dialectic: Collected Papers in Greek Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY, 1986), 180–99). Closely linked to the notion of focal meaning, the changes made in the analysis of the three types of friendship, which is governed in *EE* by the notion of focal meaning, whereas in *NE* it is governed by the notion of resemblance, seem to indicate that *NE* is the more satisfactory—and

for it. I present it here merely as a hypothesis which will help me to make certain points more easily, without its being necessary for my argument. All that is necessary is that one accept the possibility of there being philosophically important differences between both treatises. I shall then endeavour to show that the problem of method is one of them. I want to suggest that, regarding the problem of method, *NE* assumes a thesis that is clearly distinct from that of *EE*, and that this difference is of strong philosophical import: as a result of this change, ethics becomes more satisfactory as a philosophical discipline. In my view, philosophical changes are central to explaining why Aristotle wrote two treatises, notwithstanding differences of style and public. As I hope to make clear by the end, such a difference in method can also serve as a clue for their historical relationship, but I shall not insist upon it. All that is necessary is the possibility that the two treatises are philosophically divergent, and that this divergence is relevant for ethics as a philosophical discipline. Hence, on the basis of this possibility, I shall examine separately Aristotle's two *Ethics*, intending to illustrate my case from the perspective of the problem of method.

Now the caveat: who is counted as dialectical? When we read passages such as *EE* 1. 6 (to be examined in the next section), the answer is: the philosopher who exercises *theōria* about practical matters, since the problems dialectic deals with are, for example, what bravery is and what happiness consists of, enquiry into which belongs to the philosopher, and not 'How should one act bravely here and now?' or 'Am I under such circumstances happy?', whose answer is provided by the prudent man. None the less, the prudent man is not very different, at least in *EE*. In *EE* the prudent man seems also to appeal to reputable opinions; as he builds on his practical syllogisms, he takes such opinions as his major premisses and from them works out what he should do. What distinguishes him from other people who also appeal to reputable opinions is that he alone has a kind of moral perception that enables him to see the precise thing he has to do in the various circumstances in which he finds himself here and now. In formulating practical syllogisms, the prudent man shows his special ability properly not in the major premiss (which, as a reputable opinion, is in a way avail-

probably the later—version. There are other clues that point in the same direction; nevertheless, they would demand a minute analysis of the texts, which cannot be undertaken here.

able to everybody), but rather in the minor premiss, which applies a certain rule to the occurrence in question. Prudence thus operates fundamentally in the second premisses and is closely connected to perception, although it cannot be assimilated to a simple sensation.

In *NE*, on the other hand, we can see that the philosopher and the prudent man are more clearly set apart. They still have close connections, which ultimately are rooted in the way Aristotle conceives ethics as a philosophical discipline; for instance, the argument in book 10 about primary *eudaimonia* is carried out by the philosopher, although it has clear moral content since it determines what is the best life to live, and this kind of determination should be incumbent on the prudent man rather than the philosopher. However, the philosopher now enquires—or at least I claim he does—in a typical scientific pattern. As is said in *NE* 2. 2, the philosopher perceives that the agent *always* decides by considering the circumstances involved, and neither is this remark a reputable opinion (for it claims to be necessarily true), nor is its exactness—for it is expressed with perfect accuracy—in any way affected by the conditions of accuracy *NE* assigns to the moral decisions or advice of the prudent man, which do not take the form '*A* is always *B*'. As I shall try to show in this paper, in *NE* neither the philosopher nor the prudent man appeals in a relevant way to dialectic. This fact allows Aristotle to separate the philosopher from the prudent in a more satisfying manner than he did in *EE*, although I do not believe that he succeeds in distinguishing between them clearly. Aristotle continues to oscillate in *NE* between the philosopher and the prudent man. However, in this case too we can see that such blurring, because it obliterates clear demarcation of both roles, becomes almost harmless in *NE*, and I would like to suggest that this relative gain of clarity is largely due to a better understanding of the method applied in ethical subjects.

II

The passages concerning method in *EE* strongly support the use of dialectical method in ethics. In 1. 6 Aristotle writes:

About *all these matters* we must try to get conviction by arguments, using the *phenomena* as evidence and illustration. It would be best that all men should clearly concur with what we are going to say, but if that is unattain-

able, then that all should in some way at least concur. And this if *converted* they will do, for every man has some contribution to make to the truth, and with this as a starting-point we must give some sort of proof about these matters. For by advancing from true but obscure judgements he will arrive at clear ones, always exchanging the usual confused statement for more real knowledge. (*EE* 1. 6, 1216^b26–35)

This passage clearly represents dialectical debate, but it demands some explanations. First of all, the questions here referred to by ‘all these matters’ are ethical questions, such as the ones Aristotle mentioned previously: ‘What is bravery?’, ‘What is justice?’, or, more broadly, ‘What is virtue, wisdom or happiness?’ Secondly, when ascribing meaning to ‘phenomena’ (τὰ φαινόμενα) one may wonder whether these are empirical facts or opinions. It has been established in a very convincing manner that in ethical contexts the expression refers to opinions or sayings.⁸ In the present passage, this is confirmed by the ‘true but obscure judgements’ of lines 32–3. I take ‘this if converted [μεταβιβαζόμενοι] they will do’ in line 30 as meaning that those who hold certain views change their formulation when required, and this also reinforces the dialectical nature of the passage. In *Topics* 1. 2, regarding the usefulness of the treatise for dialectical encounters, Aristotle says that when we make an inventory of the beliefs and opinions of other people we should not address them with theses alien to them, but with their own theses, making them sometimes reformulate what does not seem correctly formulated (101^a33–4: μεταβιβάζοντες ὅ τι ἂν μὴ καλῶς φαίνωνται λέγειν ἡμῖν). Aristotle does not say that we should make them reject the assertions that we do not accept,⁹ but on the contrary that, regarding what they say in a confusing manner (μὴ καλῶς), we should make them reformulate their opinions so as to clarify them—yet these opinions should continue to be their own assertions, even

⁸ G. E. L. Owen, ‘Tithenai ta Phainomena’, in S. Mansion (ed.), *Aristote et les problèmes de méthode* (Louvain, 1980), 83–103, repr. in Owen, *Logic, Science and Dialectic*, 239–51.

⁹ Pace J. Brunschwig, who translates as follows: ‘quand nous voudrions les persuader de renoncer à des affirmations qui nous paraîtraient manifestement inacceptables’ (J. Brunschwig, *Aristote: Topiques I–IV* (Paris, 1967)). Robin Smith’s comments are very instructive: ‘Aristotle has in mind the correction, or conversion, of others’ opinions, not “shifting the ground” in an argument so as to defeat one’s opponent. Compare 8. 11 161a29–36, and *EE* 1. 6 1216b28–35: the latter makes clear the role of this in leading others to philosophical understanding, claiming that we all have some understanding of the truth, on which philosophical education builds’ (*Aristotle: Topics I and VIII* (Oxford, 1997), 52).

though reformulated thanks to our intervention. It is the same in our passage from *EE*: the idea is not to correct their assertions in the sense of making them accept our opinions and beliefs, abandoning their own, rather it means that they should reformulate their own confused opinions.

Finally, Aristotle says that, by proceeding in such a manner, one will provide *in some way* a proof about those opinions: *δεικνύναι πως περὶ αὐτῶν* (32). What exactly does this mean? Does it mean that one has *some sort of proof*, an attenuated or not so rigorous one? This is Solomon's translation in *ROT*, suggesting that one has a weakened demonstration—a proof, but not a rigid proof, probably due to the fact that it is carried out with a dialectical argument and not a demonstrative one. However, this is not the only interpretation the passage permits. The adverb 'in a way' can be linked, not to the demonstration, but rather to the elements of the proof: one has a proof of their opinions *in some respects*. According to this latter reading, it is not the deductive power that is weakened, but 'in a way' applies to the opinions that occupy the place of premisses in the argument. It is proven, and one proves it perfectly, but, since some formulations have been changed because of our intervention, one proves it from *what is said in a certain way by them*: having as premisses not exactly the beliefs and opinions held at the beginning, but reformulations of these, now expressed without the confusion they manifested at the beginning.

The dialectical proof is not viewed, according to this reading, as an impoverished proof. On the contrary, it is seen as a fully accomplished proof, which is different from demonstration only because of the nature of its premisses—premisses that can be reformulated within certain limits. Another passage confirms this interpretation: *EE* 1. 3, 1214^b28–1215^a7. The beginning of this passage (1214^b28–1215^a5) has a history of textual problems, requiring a precise examination that I cannot carry out here. Fortunately, I want to consider only the last lines, 1215^a5–7, which have no transmission problems. Having declared that it is useless to examine every opinion (those of children and of the insane, for instance) or even the opinion of the majority of people when they talk idly about anything, Aristotle remarks that each discipline has its own difficulties: in regard to ethics, these *aporai* concern the problems of the best life. He then continues:

It is well to examine these opinions, for a disputant's refutation of what is opposed to his argument is a demonstration of the argument itself. (1215^a5-7)

The context is again undoubtedly dialectical. These opinions engender special difficulties for ethics, notably the discussions regarding the best life. 'To examine' translates *ἐξετάζειν*, typical of the dialectical attitude, particularly of the Socratic one; 'refutation' translates *ἐλεγχοί*, a central term in the dialectical disputes. The most important point here is that, through the refutation of the objections, one obtains the demonstration of the opposite theses without any allusion to a weakening of the proof. As we shall see, Aristotle, in *EE*, typically proceeds through the use of dialectical proofs, according to the rules established in the *Topics*, without questioning the status of the proof, that is to say, without the weakening or diminution of its claims to demonstrate a point. He even writes that with it we arrive at *ἀποδείξεις*, 'demonstrations'. However, what he means is certainly that we obtain perfectly valid deductions, whose premisses, none the less, do not permit a demonstration in the precise sense of the term, owing to their not being necessarily true.

I would like to return to the *EE* 1. 6 passage mentioned above, since it contains an element that I have not examined yet. Aristotle says that 'every man has some contribution to make to the truth' (1216^b31); he also mentions 'true statements' (1216^b32), even if they are confusingly expressed. The theme of the truth may give us the hope of passing from the world of opinion into the domain of science, which would justify talking of 'demonstrations' now in a more rigorous sense. However, I fear that this hope will be disappointed. The opinions may be true, and the reputable opinions may have a stronger probability of being true than mere opinions; none the less, the premiss of a dialectical syllogism is not *necessarily* true. In scientific knowledge, on the other hand, premisses are not only true, but *necessarily* true. Extensionally, dialectic and science may coincide, but they differ radically. There is a gap no opinion can bridge or bypass, whatever dialectic's reputation: even if it is true, it is not *necessarily* true. The dialectical method is consistent with an effort to preserve other people's opinions, something that seems justified by such an epistemological optimism: if every man has some link to the truth, it seems reasonable to preserve everyone's

opinions, even when they are confusingly expressed, hoping that they may lead us to the truth. Such optimism, however, soon reaches its limits, for it is not possible through dialectic to have *de jure* access to the truth, even if, *de facto*, we have already that access.¹⁰

It is also important to understand that the Eudemian dialectical proof is fully compatible with a method of argument that proceeds by hypotheses. As long as these hypotheses are *endoxa*, the deduction may with perfect validity be made through suppositions such as ‘Let *A* be the case’, ‘Suppose that *B*’, etc. That is precisely what we find in *EE*. In this treatise, Aristotle uses arguments introduced by words such as ‘Suppose’, ‘Take’, ‘Let it be’, and ‘Let’s assume’. In a well-known article D. J. Allan strongly emphasizes this methodological feature of *EE*, coining the expression ‘quasi-mathematical method’ to refer to it.¹¹ Allan does not explain the reason for his ‘quasi-’; in fact, he refers to this argumentative structure as if it were ‘a mathematical pattern of deduction’.¹² However, he has good reasons to retain ‘quasi-’. The proof is adequate as it is in mathematics and nothing prevents it from being formulated by way of hypotheses, as happens currently in mathematical sciences. Nevertheless, there is a characteristic that belongs only to ethical argument. In ethics, what is supposed or adopted as a hypothesis must come from reputable opinions; in mathematics, on the contrary, there is no such restriction. It is this difference that compels us to speak of a method which is not properly mathematical, but *quasi*-mathematical.

What particularly interests me here is that a hypothetical formulation is perfectly compatible with the dialectical structure that *EE* adopts for its proofs. Thus, in *EE* 2. 1, in order to conclude that happiness is an activity of a good soul (1219^a34–5), Aristotle *assumes* (*ὑποκείσθω*, 1218^b37) that virtue is the best disposition, state, or power of everything that has any use or work; *admits* (*ἔστω*, 1219^a8) that the best disposition belongs to the best work; reminds

¹⁰ This is why Aristotle can write the following strong caveat against all who intend to produce scientific arguments based on reputable premisses, even if they are true: ‘From this it is clear too that those people are silly who think they get their principles correctly if the proposition is reputable and true’ (*Post. An.* 1. 6, 74^b21–3).

¹¹ D. J. Allan, ‘Quasi-Mathematical Method in the *Eudemian Ethics*’ [‘Quasi-Mathematical’], in Mansion, *Aristote et les problèmes de méthode*, 303–18. Allan remarks that this characteristic is ‘the most singular feature of the method which the author actually uses’ (307).

¹² Allan, ‘Quasi-Mathematical’, 307.

us that *it has already been assumed* (ὑπέκειτο, 1219^a10) that the best end is the one for the sake of which all else exists; *declares* (λέγωμεν, 1219^a19) that the work of a thing is also the work of its virtue, only not in the same sense (for virtue is the best work); *supposes* (ἔστω, 1219^a24) that the work (function) of the soul is to produce living, from which he concludes that the virtue of the soul consists in making good living, which is, precisely, happiness. Formally, the argumentative structure adopts hypotheses and proceeds rigorously to conclusions, as ‘the opinions common to all of us show that we have presented correctly the genus and the definition of happiness’ (1219^a39–40). We should not interpret ‘opinions common to all of us’ as meaning opinions internal to the Aristotelians, since these cannot function here as a guarantee of the results; it means rather external opinions, those shared by everyone, or most people, or by the sages and, among them, by all of them, most of them, or by the most reputable. This is why Aristotle immediately quotes Solon’s famous saying: it is a widely held opinion. A mathematical proof makes no use of opinions, however reputable they may be, but ethical arguments cannot reach the formal structure mathematical proofs have except by appealing to the common nature of the opinions adopted as premisses for the syllogisms.

When we turn our attention to the announcements of method in *NE*, the difference is striking. In the two most important passages on method, there is no reference to dialectical reasoning; there one finds, instead, a discussion about the conditions of exactness for ethical discourse. *NE* strongly stresses that it is necessary to abandon any intention of a *more geometrico* proof. In *NE* 1. 3, 1094^b11–27, after noticing that ethical matters are indeterminate, Aristotle emphasizes that ethical proof must be limited to a rough outline (1094^b20). This standard of *akribeia*, adapted to ethics in opposition to that of mathematics, is due to the nature of the practical object, human action (τὸ πρακτόν), since it takes place under circumstances whose moral value is indeterminate. Similarly, in 2. 2, 1103^b34–1104^a9, Aristotle insists again that moral reasoning must adapt itself to the conditions of its subject-matter, which means that it can neither be offered as a prescription nor adopt the routine production processes of arts and crafts; on the contrary, the agent’s decision hinges dramatically on the circumstances in which action is produced, and one cannot assess in advance the moral worth of the circumstances. The hope of a rigorous proof, which would differ

from mathematical proofs only because of the nature of the premisses, is abandoned; in its place, one now finds a clear admission that ethical reasoning is closely linked to the indeterminate circumstances which bear on its moral value. Consequently, Aristotle even writes that ethics has no precision (1104^a6), but this is overstated; he certainly means that ethics does not have the *same* accuracy as mathematical sciences have, since it does not even have that of the crafts. Concerning method, then, there are two very different schemes: *NE* mentions no dialectical processes in its discussions of method; *EE* contains no reference to conclusions obtained roughly and in outline.¹³ Even the Greek term ‘in outline’ (τύπος), which expresses these new reservations about exactness in *NE*, is singularly lacking from *EE*.¹⁴

¹³ As Daniel Devereux has pointed out (‘Particular and Universal in Aristotle’s Conception of Practical Knowledge’, *Review of Metaphysics*, 29 (1986), 483–505). One can object that I am excessively dramatizing the point, since Aristotle also says in *NE* 1. 3 that ‘in speaking about things which are only for the most part true and with premisses of the same kind [we must be content] to reach conclusions that are no better’ (1094^b21–4). One finds here not only a verb expressing the idea of reaching conclusions (συμπεραίνεσθαι, ^b22), but also the idea that the virtuous man has at his disposition at least some rules expressed in a generalized form ‘for the most part’; it is noteworthy that this register also plays an important role in the natural sciences, so that, in the end, it does not seem that there is so great a difference between reasoning in natural sciences and in practical matters. I cannot answer this objection thoroughly here but shall confine myself to just two remarks. (1) In *NE* 2. 2, which refers back to 1. 3, particularism in ethics is expressly and strongly restated, dramatically underscoring the fact that the agent should decide case by case, no mention being made of the ‘for the most part’ ethical rules. (2) I do not mean to deny that ethical reasoning contains generalized rules in the form ‘for the most part’; however, what I do deny is that they are the basic expressions of practical decisions. I believe that the basic expression of moral decisions is deeply rooted in the particular circumstances within which the agent acts, which leads to a particularist pattern of ethics. From this sort of particular decision one can indeed generate rules that hold sway for the most part, but such rules are secondary and must always remain under the control of such a particularist perspective. These ethical generalizing rules cannot be assimilated to the ‘for the most part’ rules of natural sciences: they not only differ in their degree of contingency but are generated in a very different way as well.

¹⁴ At the beginning of the treatise on justice (*NE* 5), which is one of the common books, Aristotle uses, none the less, the phrase *ὡς ἐν τύπῳ* (5. 1, 1129^a11). Since I consider the common books to have been originally written for *EE*, this seems to contradict what I have stated. However, here in *NE* 5. 1 the expression does not have the same value that it has in the discussion on method in *NE*. At the beginning of the treatise on justice Aristotle declares that he will follow the same method as used before (1129^a5–6). It is likely that he is thinking of the dialectical method, for the dialectical method is the method of ethics in *EE*. An indication of this is Aristotle’s remarks that ‘all men mean by justice that kind of state which makes people disposed to do what is just and makes them act justly and wish for what is just’ (1129^a6–8),

Two points are called for at this juncture. First, there is one other passage on ethical method which I have not considered thus far: the well-known passage in *NE* 7. 1, 1145^b2–7, at the beginning of the treatise on *akrasia*:

We must, as in all other cases, set the phenomena before us and, after first discussing the difficulties, go on to prove, if possible, the truth of all the reputable opinions about these affections or, failing this, of the greater number and the most authoritative; for if we both resolve the difficulties and leave the reputable opinions undisturbed, we shall have proved the case sufficiently.

This passage sounds perfectly dialectical; indeed, it is the declaration *par excellence* of dialectical method in ethics. Owen's analysis of the passage has shown, quite convincingly, that the 'phenomena' here are not empirical facts but reputable opinions, listed soon after and presented at the end of this chapter as 'the things that are said' (1145^b20). All of this is correct, but it is necessary to add a note: the passage appears in a common book (*NE* 7 = *EE* 6) and, most probably, the common books were written for *EE*. Thus, it is not surprising that the method of proof here is the dialectical method: *EE* in all of its books holds that proof in ethics occurs through dialectical arguments. Consequently, this passage is fully consistent with the rest of *EE*. According to the Eudemian dialectical method, as we have seen, one has to preserve all opinions; if this is not possible, then one should preserve most of them or the

and that injustice is the contrary of this (1129^b9–10), which are in agreement with the method of the *endoxa*. Aristotle writes just after: 'Let us too, then, first lay these things down as a *rough sketch*' (1129^a10–11). We find here our familiar expression 'Let's assume' or 'Let's lay down', which is also typical of the Eudemian dialectical context. However, what are 'these things' (*τὰ ἄτα*), whose treatment shall be a 'rough sketch'? I do not think it refers to the just and the unjust, for they are to be considered *at length*, throughout this book; I take it to refer to certain conditions of the just and the unjust; that is, to what accompanies them as conditions of their voluntary or involuntary character, which permits the distinction between acting (un)justly and being oneself (un)just. These conditions are examined in 5. 8, 1135^a15–1136^a9; as Aristotle himself remarks at 1135^a23, this point has already been examined, more precisely in *EE* 2. 6–11, 1222^b15–1228^a19, in great detail. It is probably due to this that he declares that they will be reconsidered only *roughly* in book 5, that is to say, in a succinct manner. The term *τὸ πω* does not reflect on the accuracy of proof in ethics, but says that a part of what is being exposed will be considered succinctly because its detailed examination has already been carried out. This is also confirmed by the fact that in *EE* 2. 10, 1226^b37–1227^a3, a passage that refers to 5. 8, Aristotle writes that legislators have rightly distinguished between involuntary, voluntary, and premeditated passions, even if not with perfect exactness.

most reputable ones. Our passage asserts exactly that: the goal is to preserve if not all, at least most of the reputable opinions. The verb used is *καταλείπειν*, which means to let the beliefs stand without dispute—that is to say, to accept their contents. Our passage adds, however, that this will be achieved through the development of *aporiai*. Therefore, granted that the reputable opinions raise *aporiai*, they cannot be preserved as such. What needs to be preserved is the element of truth in each belief. The opinions will be preserved, but in a certain manner; that is why, despite the deductive power attributed to the dialectical method, Aristotle says that, having found the solutions to the difficulties, one has ‘sufficiently’ demonstrated: the beliefs must be reformulated in order to have their true content preserved. This passage partakes of the Eudemian dialectical mood. We must pay attention to this, for the passage is often advanced as evidence that *NE* is dialectical; but, as we have seen, *NE*, except for the common books, does not mention a dialectical method; instead, it contains a discussion regarding the exactness of ethical discourse, which is fundamentally different from the dialectical proof.

We also need to take into account another consideration. It is not clear, in this passage, what is meant by ‘as in all other cases’. The first and more natural interpretation is ‘other ethical cases’. However, when we look at the other Nicomachean discussions (excepting the common books), there is nothing *clearly* dialectical. In order to fulfil this expectation, many interpreters have been content to cite the presence of ambiguous phrases such as ‘it seems that’ (*δοκεῖ*), evidence which is far too vague and probably neutral as regards the question at issue.¹⁵ This interpretation seeming doomed to failure, a natural alternative has been to use ‘as in all other cases’ as the basis for proposing an extension of the dialectical method into disciplines other than ethics. Granted that ethics is a philosophical discipline (*κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν*), one may think of extending this method into physics and into other philosophical

¹⁵ One can easily find in *NE* passages in which opinions are listed. A good example is book 1: in 1. 8 Aristotle writes that we ‘must consider it, however, in the light not only of our conclusion and our premisses, but also of what is commonly said about it; for with a true view all the facts harmonize, but with a false one they soon clash’ (1098^b9–12). From here until 1. 12 he compares his results with *reputable opinions*, the most famous being the saying of Solon, examined in 1. 10. However, here Aristotle uses the *endoxa* not for obtaining his own results, but for reinforcing them, and, what is more important, he strives to correct the received opinions under the guidance of his own results. Moreover, ‘facts’ here renders *ὑπάρχοντα*, which refers to data and not to sayings, *τὰ λεγόμενα*: cf. *Post. An.* 1. 19, 81^b21–3.

disciplines, with the single exception of mathematics. I do not deny that there are dialectical contexts, even unambiguously dialectical contexts, in those other Aristotelian treatises that seem to support this expanded interpretation, but probably the kind of proof required for these philosophical disciplines is not *generally* a dialectical one, since they question not only the coherence of the beliefs, but also—and above all—the truth of the propositions.

However, let us keep our attention on ethics and its problem of method. When we relocate this passage to its probable original context, *EE*, the search for other cases in which the discussion is typically dialectical becomes fruitful. In fact, it cannot but be fruitful, since dialectical proofs are to be found everywhere in *EE*. When it is read in its original context, the most natural interpretation is that ‘as in all other cases’ refers to other ethical discussions, all of them clearly dialectical, as typically occurs in *EE*.

A second point needs to be considered. Having defined dialectical argument as deduction from reputable opinions, Aristotle does not forget to stress from the *Topics* onward the distance that separates scientific deduction from the dialectical syllogism. In *Topics* 1. 14, after proposing three sorts of premiss (ethical, physical, logical), Aristotle proposes that these questions ‘must be treated, at the philosophical level, according to the truth, but dialectally according to the opinion’ (105^b30–1). At the beginning of this treatise he has distinguished *endoxa*, reputable opinions, from primitive and true premisses (100^b1), the latter being premisses only of demonstrative syllogisms. He returns to this point when he writes in *Topics* 8. 13, regarding *petitio principii*, that ‘the true account has been given in the *Analytics*; but an account on the level of opinion must be given now’ (162^b32–3). Regarding the same topic, in *Prior Analytics* 2. 16 Aristotle ends the chapter by remarking that ‘in demonstrations the point at issue is begged when the terms are really [*κατ’ ἀλήθειαν*] related in the manner described, in dialectical arguments when they are believed [*κατὰ δόξαν*] to be so related’ (65^a36–7). In *Prior Analytics* 1. 30, where he is enquiring into the search for the middle term, Aristotle writes that, ‘in the pursuit of truth, ⟨one must start⟩ from an arrangement of the terms in accordance with truth [*κατ’ ἀλήθειαν*], while if we look for dialectical deductions we must start from plausible [*κατὰ δόξαν*] propositions’ (46^a8–10). In the *Posterior Analytics* he writes: ‘Those who are deducing with regard to opinion and only dialectically [*κατὰ μὲν οὖν δόξαν συλλογίζομενοις καὶ*

μόνον διαλεκτικῶς] clearly need only enquire whether their deduction comes about from the most reputable propositions possible' (1. 19, 81^b18–20). He concludes: 'But with regard to truth, one must enquire on the basis of what actually holds' (81^b22–3: πρὸς δ' ἀλήθειαν ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων δεῖ σκοπεῖν). This is undeniably a clear expression of the abyss that separates true science from reputable opinion. Dialectical reasoning has premisses that may be true, but, if their criterion is their acceptability or good reputation, they are not necessarily true.

If proof in ethics is dialectical, as is held consistently in *EE*, does the abyss so clearly identified render all scientific claims on the part of ethics illusory? The answer is: yes. In *EE*, practical matters are expressed in terms of opinion. If we look at them closely, the keywords of *EE* are directly connected with opinion and its corresponding faculty. The virtuous or prudent man is the one who deliberates or chooses well. In *EE* 2. 10 Aristotle shows that choice can be identified neither with the three sorts of desire (*θυμός*, *ἐπιθυμία*, *βούλησις*) nor with opinion (*δόξα*). But this does not preclude choice from being essentially associated with opinion, and in fact, in the terms of *EE*, choice is a composite of desire and opinion (2. 10, 1226^b4: 'consequently it results from both of them').

Soon after, at 1226^b9, Aristotle declares that choice is made by a deliberative opinion (*ἐκ δόξης βουλευτικῆς*). Some lines after this, at 1227^a3–5, he notes that 'it is clear that choice is not simply wish or simply opinion, but opinion and desire [*ἀλλὰ δόξα τε καὶ ὄρεξις*] together when following as a conclusion from deliberation'. If the prudent man is the one who chooses well by means of deliberation, he is, in consequence, the one who *opines well*. In the treatise on prudence, another common book (*NE* 6 = *EE* 5), Aristotle writes that prudence is, along with cleverness, one of the two species of excellence of our opinion-forming part, τὸ δοξαστικόν (6. 13, 1144^b14–15; cf. 6. 5, 1140^b26). Ethics is deeply rooted in the world of opinion, so it is perfectly consistent with dialectical arguments, at least in *EE*. There is no gap between the claims of ethics and dialectical proof in *EE*: dialectic is the proper sort of proof in the domain of opinion.

Examining *NE*, one finds an altogether new world. Choice is no longer defined as a deliberative opinion, *δόξα βουλευτική*; on the contrary, it is now taken as a deliberative desire, *ὄρεξις βουλευτική*. This change seems to be trifling, but it is not. As he had already done in *EE*, Aristotle refused in *NE* the identification of choice with

one of the three sorts of desire or with opinion; nevertheless, in a significantly different manner from *EE*, he no longer assimilates choice to a composite of desire and opinion, but henceforth speaks of a deliberative desire belonging to our power of doing or not doing something. This new stance makes it possible to distinguish practical deliberation *entirely* from opinion.¹⁶ In *NE* deliberation becomes the faculty that elevates the prudent man to the realm of the truth. He is no longer in the world of opinion; he is now a resident of the world of truth. In a passage of *NE*, which has no parallel in *EE*, Aristotle writes that the virtuous man is the one who ‘judges correctly each action, and in each, the truth appears to him’ (3. 4, 1113^a29–30). The virtuous man, once capable only of providing good opinions, now sees truth in each action. As soon as Aristotle makes such a change, he has to abandon the dialectical syllogism as the type of proof for ethics, for ethics is now in a place which opinion cannot systematically reach: the world of (practical) truth.

The Nicomachean virtuous man lives in the realm of truth, but this place is not quite so comfortable. He can be there only by diminishing his claims to accuracy in practical matters. This is why the central problem of method in *NE* is related to what kind of precision the moral discipline may claim. In *NE* 1. 3, 1094^b11–27, a passage we examined earlier, the virtuous man must abandon claims of reasoning by demonstrations, and be content with indicating the truth by means of a rough sketch. In Aristotle’s own words, ethics may only ‘indicate the truth roughly and in outline’ (παχυλῶς καὶ τύπῳ τᾶληθῆς ἐνδείκνυσθαι, 1094^b20–1). Here ‘indicate’ contrasts with ‘demonstrate’; this new ethical notion diminishes the claims

¹⁶ In *NE* 3. 2, 1112^a11–12, after refusing any identification between opinion and choice, Aristotle writes that it is not the moment to discuss whether an opinion precedes or accompanies choice, for it suffices to know that they are not identical. According to Stewart, ‘that opinion precedes (and accompanies) choice is undoubtedly Aristotle’s opinion’; he refers to 3. 3, 1113^a4, ‘the object of choice is that which has been judged upon as a result of deliberation’, as well as to *EE* 2. 10, 1226^b9, and to other passages belonging to the common books (J. Stewart, *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford, 1892), 250). Regarding *EE* and the common books, this is not surprising, for choice is seen there as derivative from opinion. None the less, so far as concerns *NE*, Aristotle has carefully *avoided* any talk about opinion, replacing it instead with ‘what has been judged’ (κρίθην). The comments of Gauthier and Jolif seem to be more correct: ‘Aristote, qui dans l’*Éthique à Eudème*, II, 10, 1226b9, consentait encore à donner à ce jugement le nom platonicien d’*opinion*, l’évite dans l’*Éthique à Nicomaque*’ (R.-A. Gauthier and Y. Jolif, *L’Éthique à Nicomaque*, 2nd edn. (Louvain, 1970), ii/1. 197).

of ethics regarding scientific demonstrations, at the same time as it refuses to locate the practical man in the world of opinion. In place of demonstration, the prudent man aspires only to an 'indication'. However, despite this decreasing exactness, the virtuous man lives now in the domain of truth. He does not demonstrate, he only indicates, but what he indicates is the (practical) truth. The price of dwelling in the realm of truth is a reduction in accuracy; the advantage is that he is enduringly installed in the world of truth. *In this new world, dialectical reasoning is an inefficient manner of proving.*

Aristotle writes for his time. By 'indicating the truth' he is not proposing something that could not belong in a syllogism or argument, a sort of pointing to the world that would take the place of reasoning when reasoning is ineffective. Showing the truth means that the premisses from which the syllogism occurs are true, and necessarily true, but they are different from scientific premisses in a crucial way, and this crucial difference consists in their differing degrees of exactness. In the domain of science, the kind of proof *par excellence* is the syllogism Barbara, the one whose two premisses are universal affirmative propositions: *A* belongs to every *B*; *B* belongs to every *C*; therefore *A* belongs to every *C*. Science can fall short of this high standard and deploy itself in 'for the most part' formulae, but it is precisely this pattern that governs the ideal of proof in scientific reasoning. Now, in practical matters, what the prudent man shows is that *A* is *B* in circumstances *C* for the agent *S*. There is a certain necessity: the necessity of duty, expressed in the imperatives of the prudent man. There is just one thing to be done, that thing that the prudent man ordains or wishes to be done. There is also a certain universality affecting every agent involved, but each practical decision is expressed case by case, owing to the circumstances in which they occur. We can hope to generalize these prudential determinations and then obtain practical 'for the most part' rules, as in 'we must for the most part return benefits rather than oblige friends, as we must pay back a loan to a creditor rather than make one to a friend' (*NE* 9. 2, 1164^b31-3), but the nature of ethical reasoning is such that the syllogism Barbara cannot be effective as a paradigm. On the contrary, ethics is rooted in the particular, and will perhaps never be able to escape it in a positive form.¹⁷ Here we

¹⁷ Moral decisions are similar to political edicts, which rule particular cases, and only at a secondary level are they similar to laws and constitutions, which are ne-

reach bedrock regarding the difference between ethics and the theoretical sciences. Ethics, even when generalized to the maximum, is always close to the particular; science inevitably universalizes, even though sometimes it contents itself with mere ‘for the most part’ generalizations. However, such a difference is not surprising. Science and ethics are both in the domain of truth, and both use the same rules of inference; what now distinguishes them can no longer be the gap between (theoretical) knowledge and (practical) opinion; instead, it is the accuracy of their respective judgements: that is, the register in which practical and theoretical truths are expressed. The scientific man demonstrates theoretical truth, taking as paradigm the syllogism Barbara; the virtuous man indicates practical truth, contenting himself with at most generalizations. For this reason they differ one from another, but both seek truth.

It is now time to consider an apparently strong objection. I have taken the common books as having been originally part of *EE*, and I believe that I have shown, among other things, that in the treatise on prudence, a common book, there were signs of the Eudemian doctrine according to which prudence is privileged with regard to opinion (for it is a good deliberative opinion). However, one cannot deny that, throughout book 6, Aristotle insists upon the notion of practical truth. Deliberation belongs to the calculative part (*λογιστικόν*: 6. 1, 1139^a12), not only to the opinionative part (as in 6. 5 and 13). Furthermore, choice is presented in this book as a deliberative desire (6. 2, 1139^a23), desiderative intellect, or intellectual desire (6. 2, 1139^b4–5). All this is in full accordance with *NE* and its locating of the prudent man in the domain of truth. Prudence itself is twice defined as a true practical disposition accompanied by reason regarding the good and the bad for man (6. 5, 1140^b4–6 and 20–1). Deliberative excellence is rectitude regarding the means to reach an end, ‘of which prudence is the *true* apprehension’ (6. 9, 1142^b33). In spite of the syntactical ambiguity of the

cessarily generalizations. In fact, nothing prevents prudential decisions from being generalized, as long as they have some provisos (for example, that the prudent man can always correct the law according to circumstances). The point is that generalizations either come from particular decisions (by way of certain abstractions) or have to be controlled by particular reconsiderations. There are also, in morals, universal rules, which do not depend on any circumstantial consideration (for example, murder is never morally acceptable). However, perhaps it is no accident that these rules are negatively expressed as *absolute interdictions*. See on this point my paper ‘Lei moral e escolha singular na ética aristotélica’, in M. Zingano, *Estudos de ética antiga* (São Paulo, 2004), 218–42.

pronoun ‘which’ in this last phrase, the fact is that *truth* is clearly indicated in the sentence. Finally, it is said at 6. 8, 1142^a1, that the prudent man is the one who knows (*εἰδώς*) and concerns himself with his own interests; but knowing and expressing opinions are not identical. If book 6 is a book shared by both *Ethics* and belongs originally to *EE*, how can one explain the number of aspects connected to truth?

This objection may be countered in several ways. The first strategy would be to reply that, even if the common books were originally conceived for *EE*, nothing prevents them from having been revised partially in order to be included in *NE*—and a part of this revision could have consisted in emphasizing the theme of truth in contrast with that of opinion. In fact, there are traces of such an adaptation.¹⁸

A second strategy could attempt to soften the extent of the theme of truth in book 6. Prudence must fulfil two conditions simultaneously: (1) the correctness of the means to the end, which refers to the calculating part; (2) the correctness of the end, which must be morally good. Perhaps truth is connected to the latter condition. Aristotle remarks that temperance preserves prudence because it ‘preserves that kind of apprehension’ (6. 5, 1140^b12–13), which seems to mean that it preserves the apprehension of ends. The end, however, belongs to moral virtue and not to prudence, which, being an intellectual virtue, must rather presuppose it. As regards 6. 9, 1142^b33 (leaving aside the syntactic ambiguity), prudence is true apprehension of the end because, one could say, it presupposes the end that is good. The same point is made in 6. 5, at 1140^b4–6 and ^b20–1: the truth for prudence is connected to the disposition, that is to say, to the condition of the moral end, and not to the correctness that is proper to the reasoning part, that of the means towards the end.¹⁹

¹⁸ To give an example: in *NE* 2. 2, 1103^b31–4, Aristotle writes: ‘That we must act according to right reason is a common principle and must be assumed—it will be discussed later, i.e. both what it is, and how it is related to the other excellences.’ This is a clear allusion to book 6, and can work as a sign of an actual or intended adaptation to *NE* at least so far as concerns that book.

¹⁹ Against this, however, it is interesting to note that in 6. 5, 1140^b20–1, one manuscript (Mb) reads *ἔξω εἶναι μετὰ λόγου ἀληθοῦς*, which links ‘truth’ to ‘accompanied by reason’ and not to ‘disposition’. The same reading is found in Alex. Aphr. (*In Metaph.* 7. 22 Hayduck) for 1140^b4–6. Susemihl follows Alexander and reads *ἀληθοῦς* in both passages; Bywater maintains the reading of the manuscripts. Bywater’s text seems preferable, for there is only one manuscript that, in the second

Truth is a theme firmly present in *NE* 6, but the way it appears throughout this book is by courtesy of the notion of prudence. And what prudence is doing is to place in a favourable light what corresponds to truth in the irrational part, as its moral excellence. Prudence also stands in contrast to the theoretical intellect, as being rather a sort of special perception, always close to particulars, and one whose end is true or good.

These strategies, collectively or separately, do soften the objection, but I do not believe that they really amount to a solution. Choice is also presented in book 2 of *EE* as a deliberative desire (e.g. 2. 10, 1226^b17), just as in *NE*. Moreover, Aristotle does not seem to abandon all claims to truth in *EE*. Even if this claim is not so central as it is in the Nicomachean books, it is not lacking in *EE*. Furthermore, there is no reason for it not to be present in it: an opinion may always be true. When Aristotle writes in *EE* 2. 10, 1227^a4, that choice is both opinion and desire (*δόξα τε καὶ ὄρεξις*), he immediately adds the condition under which the interconnection of desire and opinion produces choice: ‘when following as a conclusion from deliberation’ (1227^a5). It is not any opinion, but an opinion mixed with desire and, above all, an opinion that is the result of a process of deliberation. What is obtained after deliberation seems to be able to assure, in relation to the conclusion, that it is not only an opinion, but also a *true* opinion.

Thus, truth is not absent from *EE*. However, it is present only in the form of a true *opinion*. That seems to be the answer Aristotle offers, in *EE*, to the fact that in moral matters there is always a greater variability, not only in quantity but also in quality, than the variability we find in nature when we consider things from a theoretical perspective. In order to provide an account of this phenomenon in the moral field, Aristotle proposes to restrict moral reasoning to that of opinion, admitting that the conclusions of deliberations become true opinions. Truth finds a place, indeed, but only as accompanying an opinion.

In *NE*, in contrast, the very same phenomenon—the greater variability of the moral world in contrast with nature—has another explanation. The prudent man is already in the domain of truth, and his assertions are not opinions, but propositions that are necessarily true, as are those of the theoretical scientist. Their difference

passage, has *ἀληθοῦς* and, *pace* Alexander, every manuscript links ‘truth’, in the first definition, to ‘disposition’.

consists in the degree of exactness that practical rules can obtain: always close to the particular, no sooner does it get generalized than it demands the intervention of equitable man to correct it. According to these degrees of exactness, practical and theoretical reason are not distinguished from one another as true opinion differs from knowledge; henceforth, both claim the truth inherent in knowledge, with the proviso that practical reason is content with an accuracy differing from that of theoretical knowledge.

These are two possible answers on behalf of moral reasoning: either to locate it in the field of opinion and give up on knowledge, or to rethink its accuracy in order to achieve knowledge. Again, it seems to me that the response brought in by *NE* is philosophically more satisfying.

III

I want to examine now three cases in which questions of method are neatly contrasted between *EE* and *NE*. I shall leave aside the common books, for it is not possible to find such a contrast here. Consequently, I shall examine three topics whose versions from *EE* to *NE* are distinct regarding their method. I shall begin with (1) friendship; afterwards, I shall examine (2) the argumentative structure concerning the well-known notion of human function; finally, I shall reconsider (3) the problem of the object of wish, βούλησις, examined in *EE* 2. 10, 1227^a18–31, and in *NE* 3. 4, 1113^a15–^b2.

(1) The two treatises define friendship as a conscious and reciprocal relation of benevolence, of a practical nature and with altruistic traits. Both treatises acknowledge three types of friendship according to their objects: virtue, utility, or pleasure. The most important difference consists in the manner in which Aristotle connects the three types of friendship to one another. In *EE*, he envisages a focal meaning that will relate one to another (probably advancing for the first time the notion of a focal (πρὸς εἶν) relation), according to which friendship for the sake of virtue has a central position, to which the other two types refer in their meaning. *NE* abandons focal meaning as a means of connecting the three types of friendship, and substitutes a resemblance-ruled relation. Friendship for the sake of virtue maintains its central and first place, but the other two species of friendship now relate to it by resemblance

(καθ' ὁμοιότητα). I cannot examine here all the philosophical aspects involved in this change. What interests me is only the manner in which Aristotle vindicates the theses in each treatise from the point of view of method.

In *EE* the accent is clearly dialectical. The first chapter of the Eudemian treatise on friendship presents a list of typical opinions on the subject. Some think that like is friend to like, among them Empedocles (7. 1, 1235^a11), but others say that opposites are friends; here, Heraclitus is mentioned (1235^a25). For some, only morally good men may be friends; for others, among whom, curiously enough, Socrates is mentioned (1235^a37–9), only utility can ground friendship. Now all 'these' (ταῦτα) are opposed to one another, as we read at 1235^b2–3; by 'these' we must understand 'the phenomena' (the word appears in 1235^a31), that is to say, opinions and sayings. These opinions lead to *aporiai* (1235^a4–5) and the method, clearly dialectical, must account for them. Aristotle then writes:

We must, then, find a method that will best explain the views [τὰ δοκοῦντα] held on these topics, and also put an end to difficulties and contradictions. And this will happen if the contrary views are seen to be held with some show of reason; such a view will be most in harmony with the phenomena [τοῖς φαινόμενοις]; and both the contradictory statements will in the end stand, if what is said [τὸ λεγόμενον] is true in one sense but untrue in another. (7. 2, 1235^b13–18)

It is no longer necessary to highlight the dialectical accent of this passage and its agreement with the method presented in *NE* 7. 1 (*EE* 6. 1) with regard to the problem of *akrasia*. Whatever the results of the Eudemian treatise on friendship may be, the fact is that its manner of proof is typically dialectical. However, the treatment of friendship in *NE* differs radically in its method too. In *NE* 8. 1–2 Aristotle introduces the topic and remarks that 'not a few things about friendship are matters of debate' (8. 2, 1155^b32). As in *EE*, he mentions divergent opinions on the topic that produce *aporiai*, and he also mentions philosophers such as Empedocles and Heraclitus who hold this or that opinion. Furthermore, he explicitly refuses to study his topic in its natural or physical aspects (8. 1, 1155^b8). We might think that he intends to limit himself to opinions, as he has already done in *EE*. However, what he in fact does is limit the examination to the 'problems that are human and involve character

and feeling' (1155^b9–10). This is a remark on the subject-matter that is going to be examined, not on how it is going to be examined. Regarding the latter, Aristotle says a bit later that '[those subjects] perhaps may be cleared up if we first come to know the object of friendship [τοῦ φιλητοῦ]' (8. 2, 1155^b17–18). *If we first come to know the object of friendship*: something that one will not obtain by examining opinions, but through examination of the thing itself, that is to say, by scrutinizing attitudes, relationships, and rapports friends have between themselves, which Aristotle calls the facts (ὑπάρχοντα) of friendship. Since there are three species of objects of friendship, namely virtue, utility, and pleasure (1155^b27), Aristotle takes them as basic for understanding the variety of actual friendships. They will be scrutinized not without an appeal to theses and opinions held by other philosophers, but what is important here is that the type of proof is not a dialectical argument, but an examination of the thing itself, which determines that the study of the types of friendship is to be guided by considerations about the three objects of friendship, themselves disclosed by a study of friends' attitudes and behaviour. Why these three types and not others? Because they are the ones revealed by studying friendly attitudes and behaviour. Whatever the results of the Nicomachean treatise on friendship may be, the fact is that its mode of proof is no longer dialectical, but appeals at its core to attitudes and behaviour between people.

(2) Another example is the argument concerning the proper function, or *ergon*, of man. It is well known that this argument plays an important role in the conceptual framework of Aristotelian ethics. In *EE* it appears in 2. 1, 1218^b37–1219^b26, in a complex proof about what happiness is. The argument begins with the thesis that virtue is the best disposition, state, or capacity of each thing. As frequently in *EE*, such a starting-point is obtained by simply assuming a hypothesis (1218^b37: ὑποκείσθω, expressed in the vocabulary Allan named *quasi-mathematical method*). Next, it is taken for granted that the function of each thing is its end (1219^a8) and that the function is better than the disposition or the state of each thing (1219^a11–12). None the less, a thing's *ergon* is mentioned in two different ways: either as its product (a house, for instance, as the *ergon* of building), or as its use (for example, vision as the *ergon* of sight, and contemplation as the *ergon* of mathematical knowledge, 1219^a16–17). When *ergon* corresponds to the activity, it is necessarily superior to the disposition. It is then declared (1219^a19:

λέγωμεν) that the function of a thing and its excellence do not operate in the same manner. A pair of shoes is the *ergon* (here: the product) of the art of the cobbler, but the excellence of this art is such that its *ergon* (the product again) will not be a pair of shoes, but a good pair of shoes. It is then declared that the function of the soul is to produce living (1219^a23–4). From everything that has been agreed, it is deduced that excellence of the soul is a good life (ζωὴ σπουδαία, 1219^a27). However, a good life is nothing more than happiness; in the following lines, 1219^a28–39, Aristotle shows that, always in agreement with what has been supposed (1219^a28–9, ἐκ τῶν ὑποκειμένων), *eudamonia* means *to live well*, which is precisely the proper function of the human soul. Having stated this, Aristotle says that everything here is in agreement with ‘common opinions’ (1219^a40): he quotes Solon (1219^b6); he mentions the practices of *encomia* (1219^b8–16), and he concludes his argument showing why, during sleep, the prudent are no better than the bad (so long as there are no other activities than that of the vegetative soul, 1219^b16–26). The unfolding of the argument and its vocabulary are archetypically dialectical.

In *NE* 1. 7, 1097^b22–1098^a20, the argument about man’s *ergon* also concludes with the claim that human happiness consists in an activity of soul in conformity with virtue or excellence (1098^a16–17). By way of his introduction it is shown that the function proper of man is to live in accordance with, or not without, a rational principle (1098^a7–8). It is not clear in that context whether ‘rational’ includes both theoretical and practical reason, or only the latter, so long as this is divided into a part that listens and another that commands. The framing of the passage seems to lend more support to the second perspective (1098^a4–5), but nothing prevents us from seeing in it a reference to reason in general, without distinction for both uses, or else seeing in it a complex expression with two branches, each referring to one of the uses of reason. Despite these obscurities, the aim of the argument is clear: its goal is to distinguish between living and living well, the latter being life in accordance with excellence, which includes a necessary reference to reason, be it practical or theoretical. This is exactly the same as the definition of happiness: so *eudamonia* consists in living well, and living well requires living in accordance with, or not without, the rational principle: QED.

What I would like to emphasize in this lengthy and complex

argument is how the notion of the function of man is introduced. We have seen that, in *EE*, the notion of *function* is simply taken for granted, and it can be easily supposed because it is one of the reputable opinions that are at hand. Now, in *NE*, the argument about the function of man is no longer supposed or assumed; on the contrary, it is supported by two analogies. According to the first analogy, presented at 1097^b27–30, given that every art or technique has a function, it would be very peculiar that man should not possess a certain function, but be by nature functionless (1097^b30). The second analogy comes into play at 1097^b30–3: considering that each part of the body has a function (e.g. the eyes, the hands, the feet), we are invited to infer that man too should have a certain function over and above those of his organs (1097^b32–3). It is not difficult to see that neither of these two analogies, either collectively or separately, allows us to conclude that man has a certain function—and not, for example, many functions, or even, as a whole, no function at all. That is true; but, as has already been said, the most important point here is that ‘the idea that there is an *ergon anthrōpou* is not an assumption that Aristotle simply adopts without discussion’.²⁰ The analogies may not suffice to settle the point, but what is really important here is that they are now filling the vacuum left when the method of simply assuming reputable opinions was discontinued. For that method is absent from *NE*. The central point here is that, henceforth, it is necessary *to justify the theses adopted*, and not simply to assume them. The manner of justifying the theses consists in referring to the world and the nature of things: eyes, arms, feet, arts, techniques, and so on. In the present case, both analogies produced are too weak to prove the point fully. But they do introduce a different, and non-dialectical, means of proving a point.

(3) My final example is a decisive passage regarding the introduction of (practical) truth in *NE*. I am thinking of *NE* 3. 4, 1113^a15–^b2, where Aristotle writes that the good man ‘judges rightly each action and in each the truth appears to him’ (1113^a29–30). This last statement is the conclusion of an argument that may at first glance seem typically dialectical. This is surprising, not only because it occurs in *NE* but also because nothing corresponds to it in *EE*. The argument is as follows: on the one hand, the Platonists

²⁰ G. E. R. Lloyd, ‘The Role of Medical and Biological Analogies in Aristotle’s Ethics’, *Phronesis*, 13 (1968), 68–83 at 70.

think the natural object of wish (*βούλησις*) is the good; if it is not in truth good, but a good only in appearance (*φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν*), it is not actually an object of wish (that is, of desire by the rational part of the soul), but is the object of an irrational desire (either of the appetite or of *thumos*). On the other hand, the sophists propose that what appears to be good for someone is actually good for him. Aristotle is not content with either of these arguments, and the solution he proposes aims to circumvent both obstacles. His solution declares that the real good is the object of wish in truth (*ἀπλῶς καὶ κατ' ἀλήθειαν*), but for each person it is the apparent good (1113^a22–4). For the good man, what appears to be a good is actually the good in truth; for the base man, some other thing will appear to be good. Initially, it appears as if Aristotle has arrived at this thesis by preserving what is true in each of the theses that are opposed and rejecting what is false in them. If this is so, is he not then applying to it the Eudemian dialectical method, which would thus turn out to be exemplified in *NE*?

This is a strong objection, which threatens to undermine my arguments against the presence of dialectic in *NE*. Again, we could try to evade the objection with the consideration that, even though in *NE* the kind of proof is no longer dialectical, Aristotle might sometimes have occasion to use dialectical arguments. This answer, however, although not implausible, does not seem to me compelling. Aristotle could of course have used the dialectical method here, but has he in fact used it? I do not think so. At first glance, his solution does seem to conciliate between the disputed positions in the way required for a dialectical proof. However, is Aristotle's solution really conciliatory? The Platonists and the sophists share a common thesis. For both of them, it is a *sufficient* condition of anything's being an object of a wish either that it is in fact good (for the Platonists), or that it seems to be so (for the sophists). Aristotle's answer, however, makes no compromise: according to him, for anything to be an object of a wish, it is a *necessary* condition that it is taken as good, that is to say, that it appears to somebody to be so—in other words, that it is an apparent good (*φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν*). Nevertheless, this is in no case a sufficient condition for being good. Aristotle, in fact, rejects both positions unconditionally. The naturalness of the good is not contrasted with the conventionality attributed to it by the sophists in such a way as to preserve some truth in both. It is not a case of preserving one or another, or the truth of each. According

to Aristotle, the naturalness of the good is no longer tenable, for from now on what is good has to be taken as good by man. In other words, the good is directly connected to conditions of apprehension, whose expression is inevitably intensional. Intensionality in practical matters is something novel, which Aristotle discovers in the course of explaining practical statements. Although not fully aware of its consequences, he sees clearly its novelty, in that it does not rely on any point of agreement or of disagreement between the other disputants. *Such a thesis can be formulated in simultaneous opposition to those of the Platonists and sophists, and is not the outcome of preserving the truth of each of these.* An indication of its originality is the radically different meaning the expression ‘apparent good’ now conveys in Aristotle: it no longer means what has only the appearance of good without actually being good, but points to the necessity of something’s being taken as a good in order for it to be an object of desire. All good is *bonum apprehensum*, to recall Aquinas’ commentary on this passage: this is what Platonists and sophists ignore and what cannot be obtained by conflating their theses, although it can be explained by means of a contrast with their theses.

One can obtain the very same result if one compares this passage with another found in *EE*, which would have been the Eudemian parallel to the supposed Nicomachean thesis—if there were such a passage. In *EE* 2. 10, 1227^a18–31, Aristotle writes that ‘the end [τὸ τέλος] is always something good by nature’ (1227^a18) and that what is contrary to nature and by perversion is not the good, but only the apparent good (1227^a21–2: *παρὰ φύσιν δὲ καὶ διὰ στροφήν οὐ τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν*). The cause of this perversion is to be found in the fact that, although certain things can be employed only towards their natural ends, there are others that can be employed in a manner differing from their natural ends: for example, as medical science is related to both health and disease. Conversely, sight can be used only for seeing, but science can be used for good or evil. Aristotle concludes: ‘Similarly wish [βούλησις] is for the good naturally, but for the bad contrary to nature, and by nature one wishes the good, but contrary to nature and through perversion the bad as well’ (1227^a28–31). In this passage, two issues matter. Firstly, the thesis of the naturalness of the good is upheld. Secondly, such a defence is the dialectical outcome achieved by an opposition between the natural and the conventional character of the good.

According to this perspective, Aristotle is, on behalf of naturalness, accepting that to the perverted what appears good to them is only apparently good, owing to its perverted nature. However, they do *wish* these bad things as if they were good things, which is a partial acknowledgement of the conventionalist position. This perspective preserves something from both positions and is the outcome of a dialectical admixture of both. Such a thesis appears sporadically in Aristotle's works,²¹ but, essentially, this solution is philosophically surpassed by a much more radical, and conceptually independent, thesis: the thesis of the inevitable intensional rooting of everything concerning the practical world, a thesis present not in *EE*, but only in *NE*.

IV

In conclusion, I would like to offer a final comment on the fate of the dialectical method in Aristotle's philosophy. I have examined it here only from the perspective of his studies in ethics, but I believe that one can show that its function as a kind of proof in the philosophical disciplines, including ethics, cannot but decrease after the clear distinction, introduced by the *Analytics*, between the necessary truth of the premisses of a scientific syllogism and the reputability of the premisses of a dialectical argument. Despite this, dialectic does not vanish completely—nor should one expect it to do so without leaving traces. In the *Physics* it is easy to find arguments containing dialectical strategies; the discussions on the nature of time and space are a good example of this. I cannot examine these aspects here, but I would like to mention two vestiges of the dialectical attitude that will play a very important role in Aristotelian scientific demonstrations. The first is the examination, preparatory to a discipline, of the difficulties and *aporiai* philosophers have encountered. *Aporiai* are often found in dialectical discussions, but they are neither essential elements of a dialectical argument nor found only in dialectical arguments. As we have seen, there is an epistemological optimism in Aristotle: each man contributes to the

²¹ Particularly at *DA* 3. 10, 433^a28–9, where *φανόμενον ἀγαθόν* has the sense of 'apparent good', i.e. 'false good', 'good only apparently'. This is surprising, for one of the few occasions on which we see in Aristotle an explicit acknowledgement of the logical feature of practical propositions (due to the fact of their being irremediably intentional) is found precisely at *DA* 3. 7, 431^b10–12.

truth. Every art and technique has a history that one should not forget; furthermore, the chances of finding the truth and making a scientific advance are greater if we begin with results already acquired. Aristotle never tires of stressing the collective character of scientific research. To recognize the difficulties, to frame clearly the *aporai* other scientists have encountered, is an appropriate device in this regard. Nevertheless, such a strategy does not mean that the argument in which it appears is dialectical.²² In book 1 of the *De anima*, for instance, Aristotle presents the history of previous studies in psychology, then announces some difficulties and lists questions that remain unanswered; none of this, however, spoils the typically scientific argument with any of the dialectical aspects that he considers in book 2 regarding the nature of the soul. On the contrary, book 2 begins with a series of theses that are independent of everything that has been discussed before, but which are meant to dissolve the problems.

A second point, but no less important: there is a negative counterpart of the dialectical method used for discovering the truth. In certain contexts *logikōs* arguments (those made from, in Aristotle's terminology, a 'logical' point of view, *λογικῶς*) are purely verbal arguments, downgraded as proceeding in a 'vainly dialectical' way (*διαλεκτικῶς καὶ κενῶς*). In this sense, they are considered empty and deceptive conversations.²³ However, we may discover some useful features of a thing in the very manner in which we talk about it before scrutinizing the thing itself. In such cases, a *logikōs* argument has some advantages, for it can be a reliable guide when beginning a search in some fields, notably those of wide diversity. In this case, a *logikōs* argument can be followed by a proper scientific argument, or by *phusikōs*-led research, but nothing forces us to consider it idle

²² A passage from *De caelo* illustrates my point well. In *De caelo* 1. 10 Aristotle wants to maintain the ingenerability and incorruptibility of the universe. At the beginning, he writes, 'Let us start with a review of the theories of other thinkers; for the proofs of a theory are difficulties for the contrary theory' (279^b5–7). This passage resembles *EE* 1. 3, examined above: 'It is well to examine these opinions, for a disputant's refutation of what is opposed to his arguments is a demonstration of the argument itself' (1215^a5–7). There certainly is a similarity, but also an important difference. In the Eudemian passage, the refutation of the objections amounts to a (demonstrative) proof; in *De caelo*, the demonstration of one thesis constitutes a difficulty for whoever wants to hold the contrary thesis. In the latter case, it is clearly reasonable to hear what the opponents have to say, but the sort of proof demanded is not (necessarily) a dialectical proof.

²³ e.g. *DA* 1. 1, 403^a2; *EE* 1. 8, 1217^b21. See also G. Mosquera, 'L'interprétation de l'argument *logikos* chez Aristote', *Études classiques*, 66 (1998), 33–52.

talk with no serious results. On the contrary: in *Metaphysics Z*, for instance, the *phusikōs*-guided examination of substance is preceded by *logikōs* analyses, and these latter prove to be very profitable for the scientific character of the enquiry.²⁴ Another example of the scientific interest of an analysis conducted formerly in a *logikōs* manner is one that occurs in *Posterior Analytics* 1. 22 concerning the nature of predication.²⁵ The division of every proposition into subject and predicate, and the distinction between essential and accidental predication, reveal important elements of reality, and they are obtained through a *logikōs*-conducted enquiry. In no case do the *Analytics* use dialectical arguments, but this does not prevent them from introducing *logikōs*-guided arguments. The *logikōs*-acquired standpoint is a remnant of the former dialectical disputes, but it is a remnant that does not spoil the argument with dialectic.

One can now better understand the heuristic function of dialectical arguments, as well as their remnants and traces in Aristotle's scientific research. It is worth noting that Aristotle does not have the extremely promising empirical-experimental method of the natural sciences. He makes some observations and conceives some experiences, but he has never conceived of a clearly experimental method for natural sciences. It is not surprising, then, that some dialectical passages are found among scientific arguments, and it is even less surprising that some dialectical strategies (such as the locating of difficulties and the inventory of *aporiai*) play a positive role in a mode of reasoning henceforth scientifically governed and directed at the truth, but without a method of its own. In evaluating the strategies Aristotle adopts, some with dialectical

²⁴ The enquiry into the nature of quiddity, one of the candidates for substance, is conducted in *Z* 4, 1029^b13, by *logikōs*-guided remarks, beginning with the meanings by which something is said to be itself (1029^b14). It is not so clear where that *logikōs*-guided investigation ends and where the *phusikōs*-guided examination begins; none the less, it is pretty clear that there is a positive value for the *logikōs*-guided enquiry (thus not to be mixed up with the *logikōs* declaration at 1030^a25 that non-being is, which is of no scientific use).

²⁵ The examination carried out in *Post. An.* 1. 22 on predication—which appeals to fundamental elements of Aristotelianism (the distinction between essential and accidental predication, for instance)—is said to be a *logikōs* enquiry (1. 21, 82^b35). Proofs according to the *logikōs* manner are said to be sufficient to arrive at conviction (84^a7–8); some considerations are then added of an *analutikōs* type (87^a8), which corresponds, at the logical level, to the *phusikōs* proofs of the theoretical sciences. It is not easy to show where exactly the difference lies between the *logikōs* and the *analutikōs* examination; however, what is clear is that the *logikōs* argument is certainly not a dialectical argument.

origins and trends, one needs to take into account the absence of the empirical-experimental method.

Concerning moral matters, however, what could supplant the dialectical method? This is a question whose answer remains unclear. If we consider Aristotle's declarations in *NE* on the impossibility of pinpoint accuracy in ethical matters, it is highly unlikely that the experimental method could replace the dialectical method as successfully as it did in the natural sciences of late modernity. On the contrary, such a method seems entirely inconsistent with ethics, since Aristotelian ethics is wary of generalizations and is guided rather by the particular conditions or circumstances within which each action occurs. Nowhere in Aristotle is there a clear answer to this issue. We can see that his mature answer to a certain extent consists in valuing attitudes and feelings, but this has a great deal to do with opinions and judgements, which are likely to recall the dialectical strategies he intended to discard. Perhaps Aristotle has not provided us, in his extant writings, with a clear answer to this problem. But, by eliminating the dialectical method and its claim of a quasi-mathematical deduction in ethics, he has at least enabled us to formulate more clearly the questions that need to be asked about ethical method.

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OXFORD STUDIES
IN ANCIENT
PHILOSOPHY

EDITOR: DAVID SEDLEY

VOLUME XXXII

SUMMER 2007

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS