Protreptic Aspects of Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics*

D. S. Hutchinson and Monte Ransome Johnson

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Introduction (209)

Aristotle's dialogue *Protrepticus* is not only his earliest work of ethics but also the root of all his subsequent investigations into ethics. Here we explore the various ways Aristotle retained in memory the contents of the *Protrepticus* and redeployed them in the *Eudemian Ethics*, including the common books. Since Aristotle himself does not explicitly acknowledge the foundational significance of the *Protrepticus* to his later works, our exploration must proceed on the basis of our knowledge of the earlier work, which can then related to comparable passages in the treatises. But the *Protrepticus* is a lost work, unlike the *EE* and the *EN*, in the sense that no medieval manuscripts of it have survived. And so it first needs to be reconstructed on the basis of the streams of reception that deposited information in surviving works by later ancient authors. We begin in part 1 by reviewing the surviving evidence of the *Protrepticus* before presenting our wider reconstruction and conception of the work as a dialogue in part 2. In part 3, we discuss ideas and arguments in the reconstructed dialogue that are retained and redeployed in the *Eudemian Ethics*, focussing on the account of intellectual virtues in *EE* v and the introduction and methodological framework in *EE* i-ii.1.

1. The surviving evidence of the *Protrepticus* : a brief history (966)

Before Bywater's 1869 article "On a lost dialogue of Aristotle", the only known evidence about the work were one report about its dedication and a set of reports about an argument against an opponent arguing against doing philosophy: in doing so the opponent refutes himself by actually doing philosophy. Several generations later, Walzer's 1934 edition of fragments (later adapted into a new edition of the fragments by Ross and translated for the Oxford edition of Aristotle) included most of the material in *Protrepticus* VI-XII, as well as the two reports and a number of others. But in

Gigon's 1987 edition of fragments, all the new material attributed to *Protrepticus* was rejected (only the two original items were retained), in a widespread collapse of credibility, though not all scholars were as deeply sceptical as Gigon.

Four factors explain this unsatisfactory situation. First, whereas Bywater and others believed the lost work was a dialogue, an interpretation of the work as an "oratorical letter" in the manner of Isocrates was mistakenly embraced by both Jaeger and Düring. Second, Jaeger in his 1923 monograph misread the *Protrepticus* as expressing Aristotle's early Platonic phase of that philosophy after which distinctive Aristotelian views eventually developed; but his developmentalist interpretation was weakly evidenced and fiercely contested by other scholars especially Düring, whose own developmental theory contradicted Jaeger's but received even less uptake. Third, for over a century after Bywater's initial discovery, the citation techniques of Iamblichus had still not been properly scrutinized and seemed unreliable, and so it was irresponsible to attribute further material to the lost work by accretion to the less-than-solidly attributed Iamblichus evidence.[1] Finally, the lack of proper scrutiny of the Iamblichus citations permitted Düring to present them in a wilful and bewildering rearrangement in his 1961 book *Aristotle's* Protrepticus: *an attempt at a reconstruction*, an attempt that caused incredulity in some scholars and little credibility in most others. Given these intractable disagreements between the greatest Aristotle scholars of the twentieth century, it was reasonable for Gigon in 1987 to declare this a zone of uncertainty and pare the reliable evidence back to the two original reports, both of which are self-authenticating because they name author and work. No fragments remained.

This situation changed fundamentally in 2005 when we demonstrated that almost all the Iamblichus evidence in *Protrepticus* VI-XII consisted of reliable citations from Aristotle's

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[1] Rabinowitz 1957 was right to point out that the proper authentication of the Iamblichus citations had not been performed, especially for *Protr.* Vb, which was the focus of his study. Hutchinson and Johnson 2005 left this problematic section on one side and succeeded in authenticating the main section VI-XIIa.

Protrepticus, and that the original sequence of citations was preserved in Iamblichus' selection of readings. These are fragments, not merely reports; they are decisively authenticated; and they have a determinate order. The only modifications made by Iamblichus to his source texts were stripping away particles of dialogue and reducing the material to monologue, which means that a dialogue conception of Aristotle's work is compatible with its monologue presentation in Iamblichus, just as his monologue presentation of Platonic dialogues presents no obstacle to interpreting the originals as dialogues. Further research convinced us that the *Protrepticus* was a dialogue;[2] and other investigations allowed us to expand the fragment collection well beyond the fragments identified by Bywater. The systematic way of building up the fragment collection is by sequential accretion to the hitherto authenticated fragments (in *Protr.* VI-XII), starting with the most trustworthy new fragment, then adding to this expanded fragment collection the most trustworthy remaining new fragment, and so on; but this is a complex iterative procedure best executed in another context. Here we have space only for an outline account of the authenticated evidence that results from our current application of this procedure.

There is a sequence of fragments from near the end of Iamblichus, *Protr.* V (34.5) up to the end of *Protr.* XII;[3] there are no further fragments in this book; and there is no further evidence, except that *Protr.* II contains relevant maxims that perhaps had been selected from the lost work. There is a sequence of fragments in the third textbook of the Iamblichus sequence, the *De Communi Mathematica Scientia*, from *DCMS* xxii to xxvii.[4] The relative sequence of most fragments is

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[2] Our conclusions from these investigations are explained in Hutchinson and Johnson 2018.

[3] All references to Iamblichus' *Protrepticus* will be abbreviated "*Protr.*" and cited according to the chapter numbers (represented by upper-case Roman numerals), and page and line numbers in the 1888 edition of Pistelli.

[4] All references to Iamblichus' *De communi mathematica scientia* will be abbreviated "*DCMS*" and cited according to the chapter numbers (represented by lower-case Roman numerals), and page and line numbers in the 1891 edition of Festa (revised by Klein in 1975).

completely determined by the textual overlap between *Protr.* VI and *DCMS* xxvi; earlier material in

DCMS must precede this point, and later material cited in *Protrepticus*, including the final speech,

must have come later in Aristotle's work; but arguments of probability are needed to establish the

relative position of the material in *Protr.* V-VI that precedes the overlap, as well as the position of the

material in *DCMS* that succeeds it. The speech in P.Oxy.666 is confirmed as a fragment;[5] the

agitated protest against philosophy in P.Oxy.3659 is proposed to be from the lost work;[6] and the

dialogue preserved in P.Oxy.3699 is suggested to be taken from this lost work, or another lost work

that engages the same interests as the speakers in the *Protrepticus*.[7] All fragments are either papyri or

citations by Iamblichus; all other evidence hitherto collected should be regarded not as actual

fragments but as putative reports, some of which are reliable.

2. The reconstructed *Protrepticus*: a condensed account (1642)

The narrative that emerges from this fragment collection begins when the value of philosophy is

challenged by a riled-up political speaker who ridicules the intractable disagreements among

philosophers, offering the comic thought experiment that "if you locked up philosophers in one house

and an equal number of madmen in a house next door, you would hear much, much greater screams

from the philosophers than from the madmen" (P.Oxy.3659, i.17-25). The internal audience of

youngsters is then addressed by three pro-philosophy speakers, 'Isocrates', 'Heraclides', and 'Aristotle'

himself, each offering rebuttals. One of these takes the form of the self-refutation argument

mentioned above.[8] The rebuttal by 'Isocrates' is in a bombastic Socratic vein instantly recognizable to

students and readers of Isocrates, where impressive slogans and maxims are mixed up with

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[5] P.Oxy.666, ed. Vendruscolo 1989.

[6] P.Oxy.3659, ed. Cockle 1984.

[7] P.Oxy.3699, ed. Verhasselt 2015.

[8] See Hutchinson and Johnson 2018: 127-136.

elementary considerations about external goods. For example, "neither wealth nor strength nor beauty is anything good," since the more excessive they are the more they harm someone who lacks intelligence, "for the saying 'no knife for a child' means 'don't hand the permission over to the bad'," on his interpretation (P.Oxy.666, iii.25-46).

The next contributions by 'Heraclides' and 'Aristotle' concern the Pythagorean conception of philosophy as including mathematics, astronomy, and other sciences, perhaps offered in response to a critique levelled by 'Isocrates' against Pythagoras, who had been viciously slandered in Isocrates' *Busiris* (28-29), but also directed against Isocrates' argument in *Antidosis* 261-268 that mathematical sciences like astronomy were only useful, if at all, as a sort of gymnastic training of the young mind. 'Heraclides' explains why pure mathematics is central to Pythagoreanism, and why the "glimmers" of Pythagoras' teachings should be preserved and incorporated into everyone's way of life. For his part, 'Aristotle' delivers a grand speech in praise of astronomy, with a rhetorical counterattack against 'Isocrates', 'Aristotle' next gives an alternative and more subtle account of why astronomy is important and was important for the Pythagoreans, emphasizing both the accuracy of the knowledge and the surpassing value of its objects (*DCMS* xxiii). In several dense passages, Aristotle visibly competes with Heraclides by representing himself as more knowledgeable about Pythagoreanism and more able to discern the importance of the "glimmers" of their thought that remain for contemporary philosophy. For example, Aristotle gives an account of the split between 'mathematici' and 'acousmatici' among the Pythagoreans, explaining it as originally a division between younger acolytes at leisure to do mathematics and older followers who were busy with politics (*DCMS* xxv), a distinction that later takes on methodological significance for Aristotle, as we will see. 'Aristotle' concludes that wisdom (*sophia*) is intrinsically valuable, but that intelligence (*phronêsis*) is worthwhile because of the actions it controls (*Protr.* V, 34.5-35.9); a conclusion 'Heraclides' argues for, but with different premises (*Protr.* V, 35.14-36.24): nothing can be taken away from someone who has "alienated himself" from contingent goods and "is connected to the measureless felicity of a god."

In this earlier part of the lost work, there are many gaps, some evidently quite large, and entire episodes may have been lost, so that it is not safe to assert that any topic or idea was *not* addressed; any argument from silence would be especially unreliable here.

The later part of the reconstructed dialogue, which is less lacunose than the earlier part, continues with Isocratean complaints against Academic philosophy, that it pursues abstract and useless knowledge rather than being a focussed study of good conduct; after all, "we are not healthy by being acquainted with what produces health, but rather by applying it to our bodies … nor do we live well by knowing certain sorts of beings, but by acting well, for this is truly what it is to have *eudaimonia*" (*DCMS* xxvi, 79.5-81.4). Replying to this takes up the rest of the dialogue, where the paraphrased dialogues and the cited speeches are all the work of 'Aristotle', apart from the material in *Protr.* VIII which cites the ending of the final speech of 'Heraclides'. In part of his reply, 'Aristotle' agrees with 'Isocrates' that philosophy is useful for politics and private life, as "only philosophy includes this 'correct judgment' and this 'infallible commanding intelligence' within itself" (*Protr.* VI, 37.3-21), after which he targets the anti-Academic critique of Isocrates. Philosophy is in fact feasible, it is one of the greatest of goods, it is easier than it appears, and it is now making great progress (*DCMS* xxvi, 81.7-83.5, overlapping with *Protr.* VI, 37.22-41.5), and so, despite being a newcomer, mathematical science "beats the other sciences by far, in all these respects, because it leads every vocation in beauty and accuracy" (*DCMS* xxvi, 83.6-25). Further, being able to judge in outline about mathematical topics is part of a general education, as is insisting on mathematical rigour when appropriate, and knowing the state of development of the various sciences; these arguments are also directed against 'Isocrates' (*DCMS* xxvii, 84.21-87.16).

The more narrowly ethical portion of *Protrepticus* begins with 'Aristotle' as the dominant speaker, announcing principles familiar from his other works: being intelligent (*to phronein*) is worthwhile in itself and also for its results; *eudaimonia* consists in either enjoyment, or virtue, or intelligence; body serves soul as tool and soul rules body; the irrational part of the soul serves the rational part and the rational part rules (*Protr.* VII, 41.6-22). A dense speech follows, in long

citations rich in Aristotelian distinctions and principles, establishing the conclusion that "being intelligent and contemplating (*to phronein kai to theôrein*) is the function of the virtue" that is highest, "and this is the most worthwhile thing of all for humans, comparable to seeing for the eyes" (41.22-43.25). The result is that since "intelligence is more worthwhile than sight and all the other senses, and is more in charge of living than true opinion, the main pursuit of humans is to be intelligent" (43.27-44.26).

Aristotle's exposition here is interrupted by a distinctly Pythagorean approach to the same conclusion in the voice of 'Heraclides' in *Protr.* VIII; in a tremendous climax, expressing deep pessimism about the state of human life, he says that everything that seems great is the result of systematic illusion; we are all tortured by having a corpse strapped onto our soul, as if for punishment; "nothing divine or blessed belongs to humans apart from just that one thing worth taking seriously, namely as much insight and intelligence as is in us, for this alone of ours seems to be immortal, this alone divine" and, unless you do philosophy, you might as well die, "since everything else at least seems in a way to be a load of trash and nonsense."

In response, 'Aristotle' in *Protr.* IX agrees with much of what 'Heraclides' had said, but for completely different reasons: incarnation is a natural phenomenon, at least for humans, because "it makes no difference if someone thinks that most animals have come into being unnaturally because of some corruption or faultiness" (49.3-51.7). The natural human purpose emerges with maturity, namely some form of intelligence (*phronêsis tis*), for we have come to be for the sake of "learning and being intelligent about something." That is why 'Aristotle' agrees with what Pythagoras is reported to have said in Phlius about the purpose of human life (according to a lost book written by Heraclides called *Diseases*, or *The Woman not Breathing*);[9] "it was for the sake of this (sc. observing the sky) that he (sc. Pythagoras) passed away into this form of life" (51.7-10) "Therefore Pythagoras was right, according to this argument anyway," says 'Aristotle' in partial agreement with 'Heraclides', "to say

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[9] On this lost work, see the judicious study in P. van der Eijk 2009.

that it is for the sake of cognition and to observe that every human has been constructed by the god. But perhaps later one should inquire whether the object of this cognition is the cosmos or some other nature" (52.6-10), the final qualification being one of several indications that Aristotle's position differs significantly from the Academic Pythagoreans.[10] 'Aristotle' quickly resumes the counterattack against Isocrates (IX, 52.16-54.5), adducing the futility of the infinite regress of usefulness, the Isles of the Blessed where the dead earn "the bounty of intelligence," and the elevated role of the spectator in dramatic competitions and games, this latter theme being adapted from Heraclides above-mentioned book.

In *Protr.* X, Aristotle argues, again contrary to Isocrates, that a real statesman must "have certain guidelines taken from nature itself and from the truth, by reference to which he judges what is just, what is good, and what is advantageous," and why the philosopher "is the only craftsman who lives looking toward nature and toward the divine and, just as if he were a good navigator who hitches the first principles of his way of life onto things that are eternal and steadfast, he comes to anchor and lives life on his own terms." This speech of 'Aristotle' resumes in *Protr.* XI, with a very complex *a fortiori* argument to the conclusion that doing philosophy involves greater vitality and pleasure than any other activity. The conclusion of Aristotle's speech, and of the whole dialogue, draws the trilemmatic conclusion familiar from the first books of both the *EE* and *NE*: whether your goal is pleasure or virtue or intelligence, you should do philosophy (59.24-60.10). This is the best we can manage down here on earth, but "if we were to get on the celestial road and anchor the life that is ours to its companion star, that is when we will be doing philosophy, truly living and observing observations that are extraordinarily beautiful, gazing fixedly with the soul on the truth and observing the origin of the gods, being delighted and feeling continual enjoyment from the observing, enjoying pleasure separate from all suffering" (60.10-61.1). These might well be the last words of Aristotle's dialogue.

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[10] See further Johnson 2019: 80-81.

3. *Protrepticus* ideas in *Eudemian Ethics*: retention and redeployment (275)

The *Eudemian Ethics* was one of the first works developed and written by Aristotle in his Lyceum period, in our interpretation, when he was living the life of philosophy in Athens with Theophrastus, Coriscus, Erastus, and others. Aristotle developed ideas previously articulated in his *Protrepticus*, in ways that will become clear soon. The *Nicomachean Ethics* was a later development, largely on the basis of the *Eudemian Ethics* but modified so as to suit an external audience interested in a two-part course of Ethics and Politics; yet there were also new references to and fresh exploitations of the *Protrepticus* in ways discussed in our previous study. [11] The purpose of this counterpart study is to indicate the locations and ways *Protrepticus* ideas re-appear in the *Eudemian Ethics*, and to compare and contrast it with the *Nicomachean Ethics* in these respects. We finish our paper in **3d** with some direct comparisons and conclusions about the overlapping ethical works; but at this point in **3a** we offer an overview of protreptic aspects of the *EE* as a whole, selecting the most important points to mention, before focussing in **3b** on *EE* v, the discussion of intellectual virtues, and then in **3c** on Aristotle's introductory comments, where the *Protrepticus* looms larger in the background than has hitherto been realized.

3a. Protreptic aspects of *Eudemian Ethics*: overview (1369)

The *Eudemian Ethics* is similar to the *Nicomachean Ethics* in many ways, but there is a striking difference: it does not conclude with any exhortation to philosophy, or to political science, and there is no counterpart of *NE* X.7-9. Why is this so? The simplest and best answer is that the *EE* is a discussion internal to the Lyceum, where everybody already does philosophy and a fresh protreptic would be redundant, unlike the audience of the *NE* which includes a broader and less committed section of the public. Yet when Aristotle brings his discussion to an uplifting close at the end of *EE* viii.3, he paraphrases his earlier work. "One needs to live with reference to the ruler (*to archon*), and

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[11] Hutchinson & Johnson 2014.

with reference to the disposition for the activity of the ruler, for example a slave with reference to a master; and each of us with reference to the sovereign that belongs to each of us *(pros tên hekastou kathêkousan archên)*. But since a human is also naturally composed of a ruler and a ruled, then each of us too would need to live with reference to the sovereign in himself" (1249b6-11). This is visibly based on *Protrepticus* premises, of which the most compact formulation comes near the end of *Protrepticus* V (34.9-16), in the voice of 'Aristotle': "a human is naturally constructed of both soul and body; and the soul is better than the body and the worse is always a servant of the better for its sake, and the body is for the sake of the soul. And of the soul one part has reason and the other part does not have it, the one that is in fact worse, so that the irrational part is for the sake of the part that has reason. The intellect is in the part that has reason; thus the demonstration compels everything to exist for the sake of the intellect" (see also VI, 38.14-22, and VII, 41.15-42.6). As a final *envoi* in the *EE* (1249b16-19), Aristotle recommends the quantity of external goods good for philosophers: "whatever selection or possession of natural goods most produces the contemplation of the god[12] … is the best one; and this is the finest standard *(horos)*." This is a redeployment of a speech evidenced at the end of *Protrepticus* V (36.2-4): "one's actions as well as everything else should be organized with reference to intellect and the god *(pros noun kai ton theon)*, and it is also on this basis that what is reasonable for the particular things that belong to us should be measured *(tôn kata meros kathêkontôn to eulogiston anametrêteon)*." The *EE* not only opens but also closes with echoes of *Protrepticus*.

The friendship discussion in *EE* vii in general has few connections with *Protrepticus* ideas, apart from a complicated and much-misunderstood discussion in vii.12. In this chapter, Aristotle refers to the *Protrepticus* on four occasions, as having provided the opportunity for a misunderstanding that he is now obliged to clear away. If *eudaimonia* is a god-like state, as was suggested in *Protrepticus*, and since god is solitary and free of the need for friends, a wrong

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[12] Reading θεὸν with the MSS, not θεῖον (Robinson's conjecture, adopted in OCT).

conclusion seems to result: the more a man enjoys *eudaimonia* the less he needs friends, and "he who lives the best life necessarily has the fewest friends" (1244b10-12). Aristotle's settled view is that "people must live together with friends, that this is what everyone wants, and that the man with the most *eudaimonia* is most of all like that; but this was not evident in the book <sc. *Protrepticus*>, which was actually a reasonable outcome, since what it said was true. The solution is in the combination,[13] since the comparison is true" (1245b9-14). His comparison there between *eudaimonia* and the blessed state of god is not at issue, and Aristotle reaffirms it; yet he does admit there is an apparent problem: "the book that raises the problem says these things, but the function was made apparent that way, so that it's clear that when it raises the problem it misleads us in a way" (1245a26-29). There is no need to go outside the *Protrepticus* to find the solution, which is reached by combining "two things in the book" (1244b34-35). There is nothing wrong with the ideas in that previous work, only perhaps in the way they were expressed, as a crucial distinction "is not noticed, the way it was written in the book, though it's possible in fact for it to be noticed" (1244b30-31). Here we see Aristotle struggling to address a misunderstanding arising from his *Protrepticus* that was apparently troubling some minds in his audience, his fellow Lyceum members.[14]

There are various looser connections to draw with other parts of the *EE,* for example its treatment of *megalopsychia* and its discussion of good luck, both of which were briefly mentioned in the dialogue. There is little to report on the topic of virtue theory and the virtues, topics that were not present in *Protrepticus* it seems but which make up the pillars of Aristotle's new theory of ethics, which we see him erecting on the basis of his introductory comments (see below, **3c**). His treatments are generally brief, apart from justice and intelligence (and wisdom), which are given entire books of

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[13] Rejecting the conjectural negation of Rieckher, ἡ λύσις <οὐκ> ἐστιν, adopted in OCT.

[14] Gaiser 1967 confirmed Jaeger's insight that the two instances of *logos* in 1244b were meant to refer to the *Protrepticus*; this was an understatement since the whole passage and all four instances of *logos* are references to this work. *EE* v.12 is given a comprehensive reinterpretation in Hutchinson (forthcoming).

their own. This disparity of scale between the treatments of these various moral and intellectual virtues is explicable: the discussions of all the other virtues were initial sketches, evidently original *Eudemian* material, but in the case of justice Aristotle was able to reach back and redeploy extensive material from his earlier dialogue *On Justice*.[15] For the intellectual virtues, Aristotle offers a new theory that makes explicit what was latent in the *Protrepticus* (see next section, **3b**). The remaining part of the *EE* is book vi, the linked discussions of weakness of will (which has no counterpart in the *NE*) and pleasure (the discussion of which has a new shape and focus in the *NE*). In both discussions of pleasure, we see Aristotle using ideas about pleasure expressed in the *Protrepticus*, especially in *Protr.* XI. Aristotle's interest in weakness of will is connected with his interest in Socratic intellectualism, which is a theme carried over from the *Protrepticus.* as we will see below (in **3c**), but as far as we know there was no dedicated discussion of weakness of will in *Protrepticus*.

3b. The Account of Intellectual Virtues in *Eudemian Ethics* (2267)

The discussion of intellectual virtues includes: introduction (v.1-2); description of five main intellectual virtues including intelligence (*phronêsis*), and several sub-virtues of intelligence (v.3-11); problems arising from the foregoing, most of which are paradoxes and solutions to problems concerning intelligence (v.12-13 and viii.1); and a fragmentary ending. Whereas in his preliminary discussion at *EE* ii.1 (12204-12) Aristotle included wisdom (*sophia*), cleverness (*deinotês*), and understanding (*sunesis*) as examples of praiseworthy intellectual strengths, in Book v these and other such terms are all compared and contrasted with intelligence.; Understanding and other traits are sub-virtues of intelligence: cleverness is intelligence without ethical goals; wisdom is contrasted with intelligence as presiding over a different and higher realm of subject matter altogether. Aristotle proposes five main intellectual virtues - knowledge, skill, insight, intelligence and wisdom — each of

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[15] This is a principle employed in Moraux's 1957 reconstruction of the *On Justice.*

which featured prominently in *Protrepticus*, where 'intelligence' is the main word for the highest intellectual virtue.

But there is a significant new idea in *EE* v that contrasts with the treatment in *Protrepticus*; after accepting the *Protrepticus* division between irrational and rational parts of the soul, Aristotle further subdivides the rational part into the "scientific" (*epistêmonikon*) part "by which we observe (*theôroumen*) the sorts of existing things whose principles (*archai*) do not admit of being otherwise," and the 'reasoning' (*logistikon*) part "by which <we observe> the things <whose principles> do admit <of being otherwise>" (*EE* v.1, 1139a5-15). This is a new development distinguishable from the *Protrepticus*, where "wisdom" seems at times to have been used as a near-synonym for "intelligence". By splitting the field of "intelligence" into two domains ("wisdom" and a narrower sense of "intelligence"), Aristotle extends his thought beyond the *Protrepticus*.

What could account for this? Either this was a new development in his thinking, a division that had not yet occurred to him at the time of writing his *Protrepticus* (Jaeger's developmentalist explanation),[16] or else it was a more explicit expression of his earlier view, for the benefit of this new audience, more explicit than would have been useful in the context of the *Protrepticus*; (our preferred explanation). On any interpretation, the function of both of these freshly differentiated parts of the soul is to be truthful, and their corresponding virtues will be whatever makes them achieve the most truth; and this is a maximization idea already familiar from *Protrepticus* (XI, 58.7-9), according to which "he who is most truthful is most alive, and this is the one who is intelligent and is observing (*phronôn kai theôrôn*) with the most accurate knowledge."

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[16] "Whereas the *Protrepticus* understands *phronêsis* in the full Platonic sense, when we come to the *Metaphysics* the conception has disappeared. The *Nicomachean Ethics* also presents a wholly different picture. In this work the *phronêsis* of the *Protrepticus* is definitively rejected" (Jaeger 1923/1955/1961: 82); "the *Protrepticus* is still completely dominated by the conception of *phronêsis* in the old sense" (84).

In the dialogue was the expression "intelligence about nature and the sort of truth pursued by those in the circle of Anaxagoras and Parmenides" (*DCMS* xxvi, 79.10-15) where, by the terms of *EE* v, this ought to be "wisdom" about such matters. But the explanation is that here the speaker is 'Isocrates', whose favourite word was 'intelligence', and who despised the theoretical sciences for which Aristotle reserved the term 'wisdom'. It is also 'Isocrates' who warns about the dangers of possessing assets "without intelligence," and says that "everyone would agree that intelligence comes from learning or from searching, the capacities for which are included within philosophy. Hence we should do philosophy unreservedly" (P.Oxy.666, iii.39-41 and 47-53). When responding to this part of the speech of 'Isocrates', 'Aristotle' claims that "only philosophy includes within itself this correct judgement and this unerring commanding intelligence," namely the practical intelligence sought by Isocrates (VI, 37.20-21). All this is consistent with Aristotle's restricted sense of 'intelligence' in which it is restricted to non-theoretical matters. But in a slightly later reply, to a different part of the speech of 'Isocrates', 'Aristotle' declares that "one must not flee from philosophy, since philosophy is, as we think, both a possession and a use of wisdom (*sophia*), and wisdom is among the greatest goods; nor should one sail to the Pillars of Hercules and run frequent risks for the sake of assets, while not working hard or spending any money for the purpose of intelligence (*phronêsis*)" (*Protr.* VI, 40.1-6), a declaration notable for including the only definition of 'philosophy' in any work of Aristotle. Here the terms *sophia* and *phronêsis* function as alternatives or near equivalents. We see the same pairing at the beginning of *Protr.* VII (41.7-11): "to be intelligent and to understand" are each valuable; and later in the chapter (43.20-25) he argues that the best knowledge must be theoretical, not productive, "hence being intelligent and being observant" is a function of the highest virtue, conceived as a double virtue rather than two distinct virtues as marked out in *EE* v, practical intelligence and theoretical wisdom.

'Heraclides' conducts his pro-philosophy argument (*Protr.* VIII) entirely in terms of 'intelligence', without use of 'wise' or 'theoretical' or the other terms that distinguish wisdom from intelligence in *EE* v; but when 'Aristotle' responds in *Protr.* IX, although he mirrors the conclusion

that "some form of intelligence is by nature our end, and ultimately we have come to be in order to be intelligent" (52.2-4), he qualifies his agreement by specifying "some form of intelligence" and then being open to whether "the object of this cognition is the cosmos or some other nature" (52.88-10), a suggestion that this might be purely theoretical wisdom, just as in *EE* v. In the climactic remarks directed against 'Isocrates', 'Aristotle' says we will reap the bounty of intelligence in the Isles of the Blessed, but then glosses this as "the observation of the universe" (*Protr.* IX, 53.12-15 and 25-26). Later, 'Aristotle' recommends the "easy" conclusion that "he who observes correctly is more alive, and he who most tells the truth lives most, and this is the man who is intelligent and observing according to the most accurate knowledge" (*Protr.* XI, 58.5-10), where once again he adds to being "intelligent" another factor, "observing (*theôrôn*) according to the most accurate knowledge" a formula that suggests the theoretical domain. Similarly, "the pleasure that comes from being intelligent and observing must be the pleasure that comes from living" (59.9-11), where again "being intelligent" is coupled with "observing". Therefore the theoretical or "observational" sciences and the practical skills of intelligence were already differentiated by Aristotle, but this difference is expressed only in subtle or latent form, since the rhetorical strategy of the dialogue involves undermining the position of 'Isocrates' about what "intelligence" is, while preserving it as the goal; and it would have confused the audience in this context to stress that intelligence is not the highest intellectual virtue.

The difference between the two intellectual virtues seems only latent in *Protrepticus*, but Aristotle displays flexibility again in his conclusion, where *eudaimonia* must either be "intelligence and a certain wisdom, or virtue," or enjoyment (XII, 59.26-60.1). This is a careful formulation that reserves a place for the doctrine later unfolded with much more detail in *EE* v, that there are two main forms of intelligence, one concerning permanent truths about eternal things, the other one consisting of practical forms of intelligence. Aristotle in the *Protrepticus* expressed this distinction, once when 'Heraclides' says: "animals also have small glimmers of reason and intelligence, but they have absolutely no share of theoretical wisdom, and this is shared only with the gods" (*Protr.* V, 36.9-11), and again when 'Aristotle' declares that "those thought processes that are valuable merely on

account of the observing itself are more honorable and superior to those that are useful for other things; and it is on account of themselves that the observations are honorable; and the wisdom in these observations of the intellect is worthwhile, but the ones according with intelligence are honorable on account of the actions" they enable (*Protr.* V, 35.5-9). These statements occurred before 'Isocrates' speech against the theoretical subjects pursued in the Academy, after which 'Heraclides' and 'Aristotle' were committed to expressing their conclusions in terms of Isocrates' preferred term "intelligence"; but every time he uses "intelligence" thereafter, 'Aristotle' takes care to couple "intelligence" with another term suggesting theoretical wisdom. The contrasts intelligence/wisdom and practical/theoretical were already fully formed in *Protrepticus*, but in the dramatic context of the dialogue the differences were strategically downplayed and expressed quite subtly.

'Aristotle' could also, in that earlier dialogue, argue why theoretical knowledge is higher than practical knowledge, just as Aristotle says in the *EE*, in frank opposition to 'Isocrates', "it would be odd to think that political skill or intelligence is the most excellent form of knowledge, since a human is not the best thing the cosmos" (v.7, 1141a20-22); and intelligence is relative to the individual, so there will be many different forms of intelligence, one relating to animals and another relating to humans or to a particular person. "This is why people even call certain animals intelligent, the ones that appear to have a power of foresight with regard to their own lives" (1141a26-28), which echoes 'Heraclides' remark that "animals also have small glimmers of reason and intelligence." Aristotle's main concern in *EE* v, as in the *Protrepticus*, seems to be to attack Isocrates, saying that "it's obvious that wisdom (*sophia*) is not the same as political skill (*politikê*), for if they say 'philosophy' is a concern for what is to your own benefit, then there will be many different 'philosophies'." Aristotle ranks theoretical wisdom higher than practical intelligence using tests announced in the *Protrepticus*: "we use the same thing to posit one science as being more valuable than another as we use to judge each one to be valuable. And we value one science over another either because of its accuracy or

because what it observes is better and more honorable" (*DCMS* xxiii 72.6-10).[17] On either test, astronomy is higher and nobler than any form of practical intelligence, as 'Aristotle' says in *Protrepticus*, just as Aristotle says in *EE* v.

Aristotle mentioned that in an earlier work he had already said that contingent things fall into things done and things made: "making and doing differ from each other, so that a reasoned capability to do things is something different from a reasoned capability to make things. On this topic we can trust our popular writings; hence neither of these, in fact, is a species of the other, for doing is not a kind of making, and making is not a kind of doing" (*EE* v, 1140a2-6). This could refer to *Protrepticus*, though other popular works may have elaborated this distinction as well.

Another adapted theme concerns the significance of age and experience in these intellectual virtues: "while boys may become geometers and mathematicians and wise in those matters, they don't seem to become intelligent. The reason is that intelligence is about particulars, which become familiar by experience, and a young man is not experienced, since experience takes a quantity of time to acquire" (v.8, 1142a11-16; cf. v.11, 1143b9-13). In the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle provided a legendary basis for this in Pythagorean educational practices: "with the older ones who had no free time because they were occupied with political business, since it was hard to encounter them with mathematical studies and demonstrations, he conversed in a simple way … but all the younger ones who were able both to work and to learn, he encountered such people with demonstration and the mathematical studies" (*DCMS* xxv, 77.7-16). The starting points of intelligence come from experience, "and young people don't believe in them, they just say the words; but it is not unclear to them what mathematical things are" (1142a19-20). Older people tend to have more insight (*nous*) and judgment (*gnômê*) and so we should pay attention to their undemonstrated sayings and opinions no less than to demonstrated conclusions, "because experience has given them an eye, they see

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[17] Compare *Rhetoric* I.7, 1364b7-11; see Johnson 2023.

starting points" (1143b13-14).[18] Intelligence is here being treated as a form of intellectual perception, difficult to acquire without sufficient experience. Later, in *Nicomachean Ethics* I.3, we see these two theses combined, that mathematical demonstrations and plausible reasonings differ, and that the young are better suited for the former and the old for the latter (1094b23-1095a4).

In the third part (*EE* v.12-13 + viii.1) Aristotle delves into paradoxes that arise from the analysis of intelligence just provided, and here the focus is Socratic intellectualism, a topic continued from *EE* i.5 (see above) and given a deeper treatment now. The loose-leaf fragment *EE* viii.1 contains further investigation of these problems and probably witnesses a slightly later passage of the same discussion; the discussion is preserved in *EE* v.12-13 and viii.1, but not preserved in the gap between those two texts, and not preserved once viii.1 ends in the middle of a word. *EE* v.13, where Aristotle addresses the issue raised at v.12, 1143b33-35, that intelligence cannot be in charge of wisdom (since it is inferior) also ends in a damaged way, for Aristotle is just beginning at 1145a6-11 to accumulate *eti* clauses when the discussion breaks off, with no indication of finality. Socratic intellectualism was clearly a pressing issue for Aristotle when he wrote *Protrepticus*, and it was still an important issue for him when he wrote *Eudemian Ethics*, but in the latter work he was able to offer much deeper criticism than could be entrusted to 'Isocrates', the relevant speaker in the *Protrepticus*.

3c. The Introductory Comments in *Eudemian Ethics* (1698)

It is in the introductory comments that we see the foundational importance of his *Protrepticus* to Aristotle's new project in ethics. He commences his *EE* investigations into virtue and the virtues by systematically and self-consciously applying fundamental principles at *EE* ii.1, 1219b26 and onwards, principles that are derived from *Protrepticus* and are largely re-stated in his introduction. This introduction has three component parts: Preface (i.1-6); three Main Theses (i.7-ii.1, 1219a39); and four Corroborations (ii.1, 1219a39-b16). Two of the three Main Theses were certainly

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[18] Reading ὁρῶσιν ἀρχάς at b14 (with Kᵇ and other main family MSS) rather than ὁρῶσιν ὀρθῶς.

redeployed from the *Protrepticus*: that the chief good is *eudaimonia*, and that *eudaimonia* is to be defined in terms of the human *ergon*. There can be no doubt that Aristotle intended to refer to *Protrepticus* in the opening words of *EE* ii, as the place where he distinguished between goods that are outside the soul and the more desirable ones that are in the soul, "distinctions that we make even in our public books;" this is also where he had said that "intelligence (*phronêsis*), virtue, and pleasure are in the soul, and some or all of these are seen to be the end for everyone" (1218b31-36). (However, the middle thesis, that the chief good is not a Platonic Idea, was probably redeployed from *On Philosophy* (and perhaps elsewhere), but probably not from *Protrepticus*, where a direct attack on Platonism and Academic philosophy would have been out of place.) Of the four Corroborations, the first repeats the *Protrepticus* ideas that living well and doing well are the same as having *eudaimonia*, and that "living and doing are each an employment and an activity" (ii.1, 1219a39-b4); and the second (b4-8) is that the quality of being *eudaimôn* is not acquired quickly and is not applicable to children and younger people, which explains Solon's dictum to look to the end of a man's life to settle the question, a point that fits well with the *Protrepticus*, though we lack the evidence to confirm this.[19] All three Main Theses and all four Corroborations were redeployed in the parallel Introduction to *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Turning to the Preface in *Eudemian Ethics* i.1-6, we notice something different. Aristotle has deployed two themes from *Protrepticus* in *EE* i.5 that he later decided *not* to redeploy in the Introduction to the *Nicomachean Ethics*: pessimism about the human condition, and rejection of Socratic intellectualism. "Socrates believed that the goal of life was to know virtue," a reasonable goal if the virtues themselves are all items of knowledge. But intellectualism about the virtues is wrong, according to Aristotle, since the goal is to acquire virtues such as courage and justice, not to know

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[19] The other two corroborations might also derive from *Protrepticus*: Aristotle's theory solves the problem why one is praised for virtue but congratulated for good deeds (1219b8-11), and that it explains why one is not praised or congratulated for *eudaimonia* but is felicitated instead (1219b11-16); it would make sense for 'Aristotle' to depict himself engaging intricacies of rhetorical theory like this in a dialectical encounter with 'Isocrates' on the topic of *eudaimonia*.

them, just as we want to be healthy rather than simply to know what health is (1216b2-25). The same point was made more eloquently in the *Protrepticus*: "we are not healthy by being acquainted with what produces health but rather by applying it to our bodies, nor are we wealthy by knowing about wealth, but by possessing a very substantial amount nor, most important of all, do we live well by knowing certain sorts of beings, but by acting well, for this is truly what it is to be *eudaimôn*" (*DCMS* xxvi, 79.18-24).

Another theme redeployed from *Protrepticus* in *EE* but not in *NE* was a low estimate of the value of human life. Many miseries make non-existence preferable to living; "nobody of good intelligence would tolerate returning to a childish state again;" much of life is neither painful nor truly pleasant; only an utter slave would prefer living for the sake of the bodily pleasures without the cognitive pleasures of knowing and seeing and using their other senses; and the pleasure of sleep is not worth anything at all (1215b15-1216a10). This redeploys a more rhetorically eloquent passage from the *Protrepticus*: "Even if someone had everything, but had a corrupted and sick intelligence, that way of life would not be valuable, for none of his other goods would have any utility. Hence everybody, insofar as they have some sense 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 tolerate being drunk or a child for the rest of his life. So on account of this too, although sleeping is extremely pleasant, it is not valuable, even if we were to hypothesize that all the pleasures were present to the man sleeping," because sleep is a condition of cognitive confusion (*Protr.* VIII, 45.18-46.7). The eloquent speaker here is 'Heraclides' rather than 'Aristotle'. In the peroration to his speech (48.9-21), 'Heraclides' concludes that "nothing divine or happy (*makarios*) belongs to humans apart from just that one thing worth taking seriously, as much insight 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, though by nature unfortunate and difficult, is yet so gracefully managed that, in comparison with other animals, a human seems to be a god. For 'the intellect is the god within us'," as was said by Anaxagoras (or perhaps Hermotimus), and so "we must either do

philosophy or say goodbye to life, since everything else at least seems in a way to be a load of trash and nonsense."

Anaxagoras and Pythagoras were paradigms of wisdom, according to 'Aristotle' in *Protrepticus*, who expresses qualified agreeement that "Pythagoras was right, according to this argument anyway, to say that it is for the sake of cognition and in order to observe that every human has been constructed by the god" (*Protr.* IX, 52.6-8). When he was asked what the purpose of human life is, "Pythagoras said, 'to be an observer of the sky,' and he used to claim that he himself was an observer of nature, and it was for the sake of this that he had passed away into his way of life. And they say that when someone asked Anaxagoras for what reason anyone might choose to come to be born and to live, he replied to the question by saying that it was 'to behold the sky and the stars in it, as well as moon and sun,' since everything else at any rate is worth nothing" (51.8-15). Aristotle recalls this very *Protrepticus* passage when in *EE* i.5 he suggests that the philosophical life is the best way to escape the misery of human life; they say that someone concerned about such matters "asked Anaxagoras whether there was something for the sake of which one might choose to come into being rather than not, and he said it was to observe the sky and the order in the whole cosmos" (1216a11-14). These are two different formulations of the same statement and they cannot both be accurate citations; we regard the formulation in *Protrepticus* as a citation, whereas the formulation in *EE* i.5 is a paraphrase, substituting 'observe' for 'behold' and 'order in the whole cosmos' for 'the stars in it, as well as moon and sun', which contains more detail. He we see Aristotle in the process of composition redeploying an idea he had previously expressed more carefully and precisely.

We have shown that the end of *EE* i.5 (against Socratic intellectualism) is derived from *Protrepticus*, as is the beginning of *EE* i.5 (low evaluation of human life). This is also true of the intervening material, which represents Anaxagoras as the leading example of a philosopher and Sardanapallus as the leading example of a hedonist. This continues the discussion from *EE* i.4 about the three main eligible ways of life, the philosophical, the political, and the hedonist, which are focused on knowledge, virtue, and pleasure, respectively. This discussion too was based on

Protrepticus ideas, to which Aristotle refers obliquely. The first time he refers to the 'three lives' idea, he says that "of the lives that have been distinguished," some are ineligible, but "others are prescribed for a vocation that tends to *eudaimonia*" (1215a25-27). Where have they been previously distinguished? The *Protrepticus* is the only reasonable answer. Again, a few lines later, different people are called *eudaimôn*, "as was said previously as well"; but it was not said previously in this book, so it must have been that previous book *Protrepticus*.[20]

Whereas we need to see chapters 4-5 of *EE* i (1215a20-1216b25) as derived from *Protrepticus*, this does not seem to be true of chapters 2-3 or chapter 6. What remains to study is the first chapter (up to 1214b6), which contains four discrete passages or paragraphs, some or all of which are derived from *Protrepticus*. The fourth passage (1214a30-1214b6) definitely depends on *Protrepticus*, where Aristotle mentions three main goals (intelligence, virtue, and pleasure), and that different people see these goals as factors making different relative contributions, a point likely derived also from the same *Protrepticus* passage. Aristotle opens the *EE* with a maxim inscribed on Delos, which suggests Aristotle had already used it in a rhetorical context such as *Protrepticus*. The second passage (1214a8-14) reverts to a key distinction in *Protrepticus*, that some subjects are purely theoretical, whereas other ones are concerned with doing and producing things; and while the present inquiry includes theoretical elements, its main focus is on how to do something, namely to be *eudaimôn*. The deep division between the theoretical and the non-theoretical sciences was first established in *Protrepticus*, but became a structural feature of the *EE* discussion of the intellectual virtues, as we have seen.

3d. *Protrepticus, Eudemian Ethics,* and *Nicomachean Ethics* (727)

We conclude with some necessarily terse observations about the three main ethical works, and the role that each of the previous works played in the design and composition of the later works. The

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[20] In this short chapter we think there is also a third reference to *Protrepticus* at 1215b6-8, but since the same point was also mentioned in the 4th section of the 1st chapter of *EE*, this could be construed as an internal back-reference.

Protrepticus was composed and circulated in the late 350s, when Aristotle was still a member of Plato's Academy, whereas the *Eudemian Ethics* was discussed and composed when Aristotle was living and working in the Lyceum after 335 BCE, and it was intended for Lyceum consultation, not for public circulation. Despite the very different literary styles and contexts, there is complete continuity between Aristotle's settled views as expressed in his *Protrepticus* and the outlines of Aristotle's ethical theory as later developed. As we have seen, *Protrepticus* ideas are recalled and redeployed only occasionally in the *Eudemian Ethics*, except for the introductory portions, where they are heavily redeployed, and in the discussion of the intellectual virtues, *EE* book v, where his understanding of "intelligence" and "wisdom" is consistent with the *Protrepticus* but more explicitly expressed. We have been treating *EE* i-v as a unit, partly because of the authorial transition sentences binding *EE* iii.7 to *EE* iv.1 and *EE* iv.11 to *EE* v.1; we recognize that *EE* v has a damaged ending that is only partly restored by *EE* viii.1; we recognize *EE* viii.2-3 as the end of the ethical portion of the work, with an authorial transition connecting *EE* viii.3 to *EE* vii.1, which itself has a damaged ending. The *Eudemian Ethics* is unfortunately a damaged document with several gaps, and it has been slightly re-arranged by ancient editors so that the friendship discussion of *EE* vii precedes the two fragments that now comprise *EE* viii.

As for the *Nicomachean Ethics*, by far the most important source for Aristotle was his previous *Eudemian Ethics*, which served as his template for the later work, though he never literally copied anything from the earlier work. At some point Aristotle decided to deliver comments on ethics to a wider audience as the first part of a two-part course on Ethics and Politics, and this new context explains almost all the changes and developments between the two works, including references to and fresh exploitations of *Protrepticus* ideas at the beginning (Book I) and the end (Book X.7-9). This later work evidently also suffered damage, so that it breaks off in Book IV, with the discussion of shame barely begun and the promised discussion of nemesis not commenced, and there is no discussion of justice or of the intellectual virtues. But the record of this later lecture course resumes in *NE* VIII-IX with an expanded discussion of friendship, a fresh discussion of the value of pleasure in

NE X.1-5, and a new peroration, with a double protreptic, to philosophy and to scientific political theory, at the end of *NE* X, with a clear transition to a set of lectures on political theory. We believe that this incomplete record of the later lecture course did not circulate until the famous discovery of the manuscripts of Theophrastus in Scepsis, manuscripts that later formed some of the basis of the Andronican edition of Aristotle in Rome in the 1ˢᵗ c. BCE. And for this purpose, the 7 surviving books of the later course of ethics were supplemented by 3 of the books of the *Eudemian Ethics*, namely *EE* iv (as *NE* V), *EE* v (as *NE* VI, with the fragmentary ending of *EE* v, but not the partial supplement in *EE* viii.1), and *EE* vi (as *NE* VII), resulting in the familiar 10 book *Nicomachean Ethics*. This is not a work designed by Aristotle; it is an editorially supplemented document that had been damaged in the middle, which is why it has always had those awkward disputed common books.

Because the *Protrepticus* was both a public work to inspire a broad audience and also a careful work of philosophy that established basic principles of Aristotelian metaethics and value theory, it was a useful basis on which to build his first fundamental investigation into ethics, his *Eudemian Ethics*, and it was also a plentiful reservoir of ways to appeal to the broader audience that he was facing when delivering the *Nicomachean Ethics*. That is why he exploited his own published work twice, in different ways, the first time for a narrower circle of colleagues, the second time for a wider selection of the public.