

Aristotle's Treatment of φρόνησις in *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII, 1 (1246b.4-1246b.36)*

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Abstract: In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, traditionally assumed to be the last of the three ethical writings attributed to Aristotle, practical wisdom (*phronesis*) is given two descriptions whose relationship is far from being completely elucidated. *Phronesis* is described as the capability of truly understanding the end of human life and also of discerning the appropriate means to attain this end. In their attempt to capture the way in which these two definitions are coordinated, scholars have proposed considerably different hypotheses. These would be enough reasons to justify a detailed analysis of the highly corrupted text dealing with the subject of *phronesis* in the *Eudemian Ethics*.

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From an exegetical point of view, *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII, 1 is one of the most important sources for establishing the chronological relationship between Aristotle's ethical treatises. The passage at 1246b.4-1246b.36, which is the only section of the *Eudemian Ethics* dedicated to the subject of wisdom (φρόνησις), was one of the mainstays of Jaeger's theory arguing for the strongly Platonic character of *Eudemian Ethics* and thus its early date.¹ Likewise, it is from the same passage that H. von Arnim in his critique of Jaeger's view draws new arguments against a "theonomic" reading of the conclusion of the *Eudemian Ethics*.² The difficulties encountered by any interpretation of the text are, however, proportionate to its importance. In the first place, the text of the chapter seems to be merely a fragment of a longer excursus.³ Moreover, the highly corrupt state of the text that has come down to us makes it extremely difficult to reconstruct the sequence of theses, arguments and counterarguments and the precise relevance of the examples.

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¹ Werner Jaeger, *Aristoteles. Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1923), 249–250.

² Hans von Arnim, *Das Ethische in Aristoteles' Topik* (Vienna and Leipzig: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1927), 35–37.

³ Paul Moraux, "Das Fragment VIII, 1. Text und Interpretation", in *Untersuchungen zur Eudemischen Ethik: Akten des 5. Symposiums Aristotelicum*, eds. P. Moraux and D. Harlfinger (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 254.

However, the difficulty of interpretation depends to the same extent on a less circumstantial aspect, namely the meaningful occurrence in this Aristotelian text of a series of elements that relate to the method of argument, such as the procedure of aporetic considerations. With regard to these, it proves difficult to establish when they imply a reference to another text, a specifically Aristotelian thesis, or a thesis characteristic of a certain stage in the evolution of his doctrine; and when they reflect a hypothesis that results from the presentation of the problem to be argued against or merely a given nuance. As we shall see, it is precisely the debates connected to this aspect that have inspired the multiplicity of interpretations and textual reconstructions, which sometimes propose significant modifications to the traditional text.⁴ These are just some of the reasons that justify a re-evaluation of some of the most controversial passages in the text of *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII, 1. In the following, this re-evaluation will take as its starting point a discussion of the main interpretations that have been put forward, and, as a separate end, will shed light on Aristotle's use of dialectical reasoning.

At the core of the discussion in *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII, 1 stands once again the Socratic principle according to which each virtue is a form of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), a thesis that Aristotle has already argued against in the first book of the treatise.⁵ The strategy of argumentation adopted by Aristotle can be divided into three sections: (1) 1246a.26-35 lays out the problem of the dual use of knowledge, (2) 1246a.35-b.4 raises the question of the Socratic identification of virtue with knowledge, and (3) 1246b.4-36 applies the model to the previous section in the case of identification of practical wisdom (φρόνησις) with knowledge. The argument against the third thesis, contained in the longest and most elaborate section of the text, is achieved by two procedures: (a) an exposition of the consequences that would result from identifying φρόνησις with ἐπιστήμη, bearing in mind the possibility of the dual use of the second, and (b) an examination of the factors which might, in the case of φρόνησις, lead to a use that is distorted in relation to its natural purpose. The key moments in these two directions of attack are reflected in the three passages that are the most difficult to reconstruct and interpret, as well as being the most illustrative from the point of view of the method of argumentation. Thus, setting out from the question of whether the sentence at 1246b.4-5, “ὅλλ’ ἐπεὶ φρόνησις ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀληθές τι” is an Aristotelian thesis or a reference to the Socratic theory of virtue, exegesis has formulated, as we shall see, far reaching

⁴ Extended commentaries on the text of *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII, 1 can be found in Arnim, *Das Ethische*, 27–35, Franz Dirlmeier, *Aristoteles Eudemische Ethik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1979), 470–478, Henry Jackson, “Eudemian Ethics, Θ i, ii (H xiii, xiv). 1246a26 – 1248b7”, *Journal of Philosophy* 32 (1913): 201–208, Moraux, “Das Fragment VIII, 1”. For the text, see mainly: Leonhard Spengel, *Ueber die unter dem Namen des Aristoteles erhaltenen ethischen Schriften* (München: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1843), 534–540 and *Aristotelische Studien*, II (München: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1866), 620–621; Adolph Theodor Frietzsch in his commentary to his 1851 edition of the text and Franz Susemihl in his notes to his 1884 edition; Otto Apelt, “Zur Eudemischen Ethik”, *Jahrbuch fuer classische Philologie*, 40 (ed. A. Fleckeisen, 1894): 745–748, Arnim, *Ibid.*, 28–29, Jackson, *ibid.*, 174–179, Moraux, *ibid.*, 280–283.

⁵ *Eudemian Ethics*, 1216b.2-10. See also *Magna Moralia*, 1189a.15-23, 1183b.8-11, 1198a.10-13, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1144b.14-21, 28-30, 1246b.32-36.

hypotheses about the meaning of φρόνησις in *Eudemian Ethics*. But as this question is raised once more in the very next sentence, at 1246b.7-8, the interpretation of this difficult passage will prove to be a valuable clue in examining the hypotheses at stake. As far as the difficulties identified in 1246b.4-5 of the traditional text are concerned, these have formed the basis of a textual reconstruction and version of interpretation that aims to shed new light on the whole argument at 1246b.12-36.⁶

Let us begin with a succinct presentation of the three sections of the argument.

1) The opening lines of the text (1246a.26-31), which exposit a classification of the possible ways of using things in general, are particularly corrupt, and in places the lacunae might amount to entire lines. The different versions of textual reconstruction, which differ with regard to a number of details, seem to converge as far as the argument is concerned. According to the textual reconstruction, the types of use envisaged by Aristotle are: 1) the use of a thing “qua the thing itself” (ἢ αὐτό) and “for its natural purpose” (ἐφ’ ᾧ πέφυκε) 2) use of the thing “qua the thing itself” (ἢ αὐτό), but in an improper manner or for some different purpose (ἄλλως), and 3) use of the thing neither qua the thing itself nor for its natural purpose, but in an accidental way (κατὰ συμβεβηκός).⁷ By applying this model to the case of knowledge (1246a.31-35), illustrated by a further example, that of intentionally incorrect writing,⁸ knowledge might also be employed for its natural purpose or for an opposite one, and therefore the “knower” may act not only as a knower but also, intentionally, as an ignorant man. These observations are followed by the abrupt launch in its most concentrated form of the Socratic thesis according to which all virtues are forms of knowledge. The Socratic thesis is introduced as part of the argument against it: if virtue were knowledge, then a virtue such as justice (δικαιοσύνη) might be used as injustice so that it would be possible to act unjustly, performing unjust acts starting from justice (1246a.35-37). But if such consequences are inconceivable, then virtues are not forms of knowledge, and therefore the Socratic thesis is false (1246a.38-1246b1).

2) The next step in the demonstration commences the second section of the argument and consists of assessing the consequences that would ensue from indentifying φρόνησις with ἐπιστήμη, when we bear in mind the model of dual usage previously laid out. If φρόνησις were ἐπιστήμη, the consequences (the same as in the case of the previous supposition, δικαιοσύνη = ἐπιστήμη) would be both conducting oneself unwisely and committing the same acts as an unwise man (1246b.5-7).

3) The entire last section of the argument (1246b.8-32) takes another starting point. If we assume that φρόνησις might be employed in a distorted manner, we have to presuppose the existence of some element capable of causing such a corruption – either a superior knowledge, or moral virtue. In the first place, it is obvious that there is no such science acting upon φρόνησις inasmuch as it is πασῶν κυρία (1246b.10). For the same reason, nor can virtue in general lead to improper use of the φρόνησις. The

⁶ Referred to here is the reconstruction undertaken by Moraux in “Das Fragment VIII, 1”, which we address at greater length later on.

⁷ ἐφ’ ᾧ πέφυκε = “for its natural purpose” and ἄλλως = “otherwise than for its natural purpose” are the equivalents proposed by Jackson, cf. “Eudemian Ethics, Θ i, ii”, 174. Likewise, Franz Dirlmeier translates: “[...] sowohl (1) zu seinem eigentlichen Zweck als auch (2) in uneigentlicher Weise” (cf. *Aristoteles Eudemische Ethik*, 96).

⁸ For the example of intentionally incorrect writing, see Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, IV, 2, 20.

sole variant that remains to be investigated is the influence of the opposite element, namely vice, which is located in the irrational part. But the analysis of the different ways in which the reciprocal influence of the λογιστικόν and ἄλογον might be conceived, depending on whether their character is virtuous or wicked, likewise leads to an unacceptable consequence that is symmetrical with that of the demonstration *ad absurdum* at 1246b.4-7, namely that we cannot conduct ourselves wisely out of ignorance (1246b.25). It therefore results indirectly that the presence of φρόνησις is compatible only with a virtuous ἄλογον: ὥστε δῆλον ὅτι ἅμα φρόνιμοι καὶ ἀγαθαὶ κεῖνται αἱ ἄλλογοι ἔξεις (1246b.32-33).⁹ And since the φρόνησις cannot be distorted, Socrates' thesis that "nothing is stronger than the φρόνησις" is true but, as has been demonstrated, his belief that it is ἐπιστήμη is false (1246b.34-36).

All these three sections raise considerable problems. Let us begin with the first highly controversial passage from section 2 mentioned above. The text (1246b.4-8) reads as follows:

ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ φρόνησις ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀληθές τι, τὸ αὐτὸ ποιήσει κακείνη: ἐνδέχοιτο γὰρ ἂν ἀφρόνως ἀπὸ φρονήσεως, καὶ ἀμαρτάνειν ταῦτ' ἅπερ ὁ ἄφρων. εἰ δὲ ἀπλῇ ἦν ἐκάστου χρεῖα ἢ ἑκάστον, καὶ φρονίμως ἐπραττον οὕτω πράττοντες. [*But since wisdom is knowledge and a form of truth, wisdom also will produce the same effect as knowledge, that is, it would be possible from wisdom to act unwisely and to make the same mistakes as the unwise man does; but since the use of anything qua itself is single, when so acting men would be acting wisely.*¹⁰]

The argument seems to proceed from the Socratic thesis, a hypothesis disproven by *reductio ad absurdum*. But the form in which the thesis of the identification of φρόνησις with ἐπιστήμη is articulated seems to indicate something other than a mere recapitulation of the Socratic hypothesis; "ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ φρόνησις ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀληθές τι" (1246b.4-5) seems to reproduce an accepted supposition, an established truth.

Setting out from Jaeger's interpretation – which holds that the signification of φρόνησις in *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII, 1 is one of the clearest proofs of the Platonism of early Aristotelian ethics, as the term points in a purely Platonic way to a theoretical type of knowledge of supra-sensible being – there is nothing contradictory in attributing the identification of φρόνησις and ἐπιστήμη to Aristotle himself (see also the *Protreptikos*, 41, 22 ff.).¹¹ But the fact that Jaeger's genetic interpretation has been discredited – with all that this implies for the Platonism of *Eudemian Ethics* and, in

⁹ The text of this version was established by Arnim (*Das Ethische*, 29).

¹⁰ In H. Rackham's translation, slightly modified. As Jackson rightly observes, the apodosis καὶ φρονίμως ἐπραττον οὕτω πράττοντες has for its protasis οὕτω πράττοντες, i. q. εἰ οὕτως ἐπραττον. Hence, it is wrong to substitute ἦν for ἢ (see "Eudemian Ethics, Θ i, ii", 205).

¹¹ Jaeger, *Aristoteles*, 249 sq. According to Jaeger, the absurd consequences of identifying φρόνησις with ἐπιστήμη that Aristotle deduces later in the argument, arise only from the restrictive side of this identification, namely the classification of φρόνησις as part of the series of other types of knowledge. Φρόνησις as a virtue of the νοῦς is noetic knowledge, but it is also a superordinate knowledge that by its rank and the breadth of its sphere of action transcends scientific thought of the discursive type. According to its typically Eudemian meaning, φρόνησις is therefore ἐπιστήμη in the Platonic sense, but is distinct from the latter by the fact that it cannot be employed to both a positive and a negative end.

particular, the supposed Platonic meaning of φρόνησις during the Eudemian stage – has undermined this hypothesis, too.

Subsequent arguments have been adduced to show that the Eudemian meaning of φρόνησις is already that of practical wisdom, as found in Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*;¹² and while it proved to be true that in *Eudemian Ethics* φρόνησις is repeatedly employed in the Platonic sense of contemplative wisdom, this usage, as it has been argued, is merely historical, as the occurrences in question are nothing more than references to Platonic doctrine. According to Arnim, the phrase at 1246b.4-5 (ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ φρόνησις ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀληθές τι) should therefore be taken as a quotation, a reference to the Socratic-Platonic thesis that is about to be argued against in the spirit of the new distinctions existing in ethics. As such, τισιν δοκεῖ should be inserted between ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ and φρόνησις and the entire passage should read: “ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ < τισιν δοκεῖ > φρόνησις ἐπιστήμη, <ἢ> καὶ ἀληθές, <ὅ>τι τὸ αὐτὸ ποιήσει κάκειναι.”¹³

But there is a third possible interpretation which, without the disadvantages of Jaeger's suppositions, does not go as far as to alter the existing text and according to which 1246b.4-5 renders an Aristotelian thesis. Bearing in mind the range of examples (writing, dance, medicine) in which the discussion of φρόνησις is embedded, it clearly results, according to Dirlmeier, that the meaning of ἐπιστήμη is that of τέχνη, and the meaning of φρόνησις as ἐπιστήμη / τέχνη is the same as in the *Lysis*, 209c3–d1, i.e. “skill” in the broadest sense. And so φρόνησις is ἐπιστήμη, although not in the metaphysical, ontological/axiological sense it has in the *Charmides* and *Euthydemus*, but in the “architectonic” sense in which φρόνησις governs all the sciences (arts) of the state and the individual's irrational faculties.¹⁴ It is in this sense that φρόνησις is defined in *Eudemian Ethics* at 1218b.9-14 and is nothing other than the practical wisdom denoted as “political” in *Nicomachean Ethics*, I,1 1094a.26-1094b.7.¹⁵ Thus,

¹² Arnim, *Das Ethische*, 23-35, Pierre Defourny, “L'activité de contemplation dans les morales d'Aristote”, *Bulletin de l'Institut historique belge de Rome*, 18 (1937): 93–94, Mary Craig Needler, *The Relation of the Eudemian to the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, (Abstracts of Theses, Humanistic series, 5, Chicago, 1926), 389–395, Anna von Mentzingen, *Interpretationen der Eudemischen Ethik*, (PhD diss., Marburg, 1928), 10–20.

¹³ *Das Ethische*, 34 (previously, on page 28, Arnim proposes ἀλλ' εἴπερ instead of ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ). Arnim's arguments (28-40) commence by providing evidence in support of the idea that the Platonic meaning of φρόνησις was indeed faithfully conserved in the early Aristotelian texts. In the *Topics*, for example, Aristotle regarded φρόνησις not only as virtue (ἀρετή) but also as knowledge (ἐπιστήμη); see especially *Topics* 121b.24-22a.2 where Aristotle's effort to classify φρόνησις as knowledge at any price is abundantly clear. The reason would be, in Arnim's view, the following. In the *Topics*, Plato's tripartite structure has not yet been abandoned: the soul consists of the three departments: λογιστικόν, θυμικόν, ἐπιθυμητικόν, each with its own specific virtue. But the *Topics* does not mention and never makes use of the division of the λογιστικόν into ἐπιστημονικόν and βουλευτικόν, a division that belongs to the ethical treatises. Hence, the φρόνησις is, in the *Topics*, the virtue specific to the λογιστικόν as a whole, whose essence is thought and knowledge. Things will look completely different after the division of the λογιστικόν in the ethical treatises: σοφία becomes the virtue specific to the ἐπιστημονικόν, and φρόνησις the virtue specific to the βουλευτικόν.

¹⁴ The architectonic nature implied by the sense Aristotle has in mind for the φρόνησις is also underlined by Arnim (*ibid.*, 33) who refers to *Eudemian Ethics* 1249b.9 and *Magna Moralia* 1198b.9.

¹⁵ Dirlmeier, *Aristoteles Eudemische Ethik*, 474.

the argument at 1246b.4-8 proceeds from an Aristotelian thesis according to which φρόνησις is ἐπιστήμη in a certain sense.

However, this reading of the passage at 1246b.4-5 seems to be contradicted, or at least thrown into doubt, by the form of the argument that immediately follows (1246b.7-8): εἰ δὲ ἀπλῇ ἢ ἐκάστου χρεία ἢ ἕκαστον, κἂν φρονίμως ἐπραττον οὕτω πράττοντες, which Jackson translates: “and if the uses of a given thing are not distinguished ‘according to whether the end sought is or is not the natural purpose’ ”.¹⁶ Read in this way, the conditional seems intended to highlight more clearly the absurd nature of the consequences that would flow from the identification of wisdom with knowledge in the Socratic sense. It might of course be argued that this reconstruction of the argument is not directly incompatible with the hypothesis according to which 1246b.4-5 expresses an Aristotelian thesis; but if 1246b.7-8 is further proof *per impossibile* of the fact that φρόνησις is not knowledge, then it is much more plausible that the starting point of the entire *reductio ad absurdum* should be the very Socratic thesis that is about to be demolished.¹⁷ The argument as a whole (1246b.4-8) would be as follows: “Inasmuch as φρόνησις is (according to the Socratic thesis) a form of knowledge and truth, then in the case of φρόνησις the same consequences would occur as in that of identifying justice with a form of knowledge: it would be possible to conduct ourselves unwisely out of wisdom and to make the same mistakes as the unwise man. But such a consequence is inadmissible. Moreover, if the use of a thing *qua* that thing were simple or undifferentiated as to its purpose, we would act wisely even when acting foolishly.”

But what is the meaning of such a hypothesis within the framework of the argument? If the distinction between εφ’ ᾧ πέφυκε and ἄλλως leads to absurd consequences in the case of φρόνησις (1246b.4-7), why is it necessary to repeat the procedure of *reductio ad absurdum* setting out from the opposite hypothesis, i.e. the non-distinction of these uses? Presumably, the controversial sentence at 1246b.7-8 is a reference to another thesis of unknown, probably Socratic source.¹⁸ But even so, as long as the whole argument centres on the dual use of knowledge according to its proper or improper end, and since it is precisely from this hypothesis that the unacceptable consequences result, then the introduction of the contrary thesis, aimed, as far as it would seem, at potentiating the absurdity of the consequences, is strange. For, if the use of φρόνησις had not already been supposedly dual, then there would be no absurd consequences of the type ἀφρόνως ἀπὸ φρονήσεως, καὶ ἀμαρτάνειν ταῦτ’ ἄνωγ’ ὅ ἄφρων – to which οὕτω πράττοντες refers in the next sentence – but only consequences of the type φρονίμως κρίνειν καὶ τὰ δέοντα (cf. 1246b.22).

The premise according to which the use of a thing *qua* that thing represents a simple use is obviously incompatible with the typology of the forms of usage laid out

¹⁶ Jackson, “Eudemian Ethics, Θ i, ii”, 176. Bussemaker has proposed the emendation of ἡ τὸ ἦν, a reading also adopted in Susemihl’s edition. Thus: εἰ δὲ ἀπλῇ ἦν ἐκάστου χρεία ἢ ἕκαστον – ἦν *per impossibile* – a reading accepted by Arnim and followed in the translation by Dirlmeier, Décarie, and Woods. The sentence can be taken in this sense, without resorting to the emendation, as is evident in Jackson’s version.

¹⁷ Arnim, *Das Ethische*, 34: “Daß dies die Voraussetzung der ganzen Argumentation ist, muß in der verderbten Stelle 1246b.4 ursprünglich ausgedrückt gewesen sein.”

¹⁸ Moraux, “Das Fragment VIII, 1”, 263.

at 1246a.26-31, according to which the use of a thing qua itself (ἢ αὐτὸ) can aim either at its natural end (εφ' ᾧ πέφυκε) or an improper end (ἄλλως), given that it is dual as such. The improper use of φρόνησις as knowledge leads to absurd consequences, “ἄφρόνως ἀπὸ φρονήσεως, καὶ ἀμαρτάνειν ταῦτα ἅπερ ὁ ἄφρων.” We may observe that this expression is constructed symmetrically with the one above, at 1246a.36-37, regarding justice: εἴη ἂν καὶ τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ ὡς ἀδικία χρῆσθαι, ἀδικήσει ἄρα ἀπὸ δικαιοσύνης τὰ ἄδिका πράττων. To be more precise, the use of virtue or wisdom to an improper end – by analogy with the case of knowledge – leads to two series of consequences, one with regard to the manner of the action (ἀδικήσει, ἄφρόνως), the other with regard to the action as such, the results of such a use (τὰ ἄδिका or ταῦτα ἅπερ ὁ ἄφρων). It is tacitly understood that the objection that might arise – according to which the man who employs knowledge for an improper purpose is not ignorant but merely carries out an action similar to one that springs from ignorance (1246b.1-3) – is that the same situation might also hold in the case of justice: through the improper use of justice, even if it were quite impossible to act in an unjust way (ἀδικεῖν), it would still be possible to commit actions that were unjust (τὰ ἄδिका πράττειν). The distinction between the manner of action and its results therefore demands the explicit rejection of the hypothesis according to which if we act out of justice it is possible for us to commit unjust actions. The hypothesis is rejected at 1246b.3-4 (οὐ τι ἀπὸ δικαιοσύνης γε ὡς ἀπὸ ἀδικίας πράξει) and as such, the rejection of the Socratic identification of virtue and knowledge is complete.¹⁹ But the occurrence of this objection nonetheless betrays the fact that the application of the schema of the dual use whereby ἐπιστήμη may be employed ἀληθῶς καὶ ἀμαρτεῖν (1246a.32) does not automatically and unreservedly lead to the totality of the absurd conclusions that result from δικαιοσύνη = ἐπιστήμη.

Let us return to the classification of uses found in the first lines of the chapter (passage 1246a.26-31). The problem of the possibility of one thing having multiple uses is here raised for the second time in the *Eudemian Ethics*. The first Eudemian classification of uses can be found in Book III, at 1231b.38-1232a.4:

διχῶς δὲ τὰ χρήματα λέγομεν καὶ τὴν χρηματιστικὴν. ἡ μὲν γὰρ καθ' αὐτὸ χρῆσις τοῦ κτήματος ἐστίν, οἷον ὑποδήματος ἢ ἱματίου, ἡ δὲ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς μὲν, οὐ μέντοι οὕτως ὡς ἂν εἴ τις σταθμῶ χρήσαιο τῷ ὑποδήματι, ἀλλ' οἷον ἢ πώλησις καὶ ἢ μίσθωσις· χρῆται γὰρ ὑποδήματι. [*I take wealth and the art of wealth in two senses; the art in one sense being the proper use of one's property (say of a shoe or a coat), in the other an accidental mode of using it – not the use of a shoe for a weight, but, say, the selling of it or letting it out for money; for here too the shoe is used.*²⁰]

The subject is not discussed in any of the other two ethical treatises, but it does appear in *Politics* I, 1257a.6-13:

ἐκάστου γὰρ κτήματος διττὴ ἡ χρῆσις ἐστίν, ἀμφοτέραι δὲ καθ' αὐτὸ μὲν ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁμοίως καθ' αὐτό, ἀλλ' ἡ μὲν οἰκεία ἡ δ' οὐκ οἰκεία τοῦ πράγματος, οἷον ὑποδήματος ἢ τε ὑπόδεσις καὶ ἡ μεταβλητική. ἀμφοτέραι γὰρ ὑποδήματος χρήσεις· καὶ γὰρ ὁ ἀλλαττόμενος τῷ δεομένῳ ὑποδήματος ἀντὶ νομίματος ἢ

¹⁹ Jackson, “Eudemian Ethics, Θ i, ii”, 203.

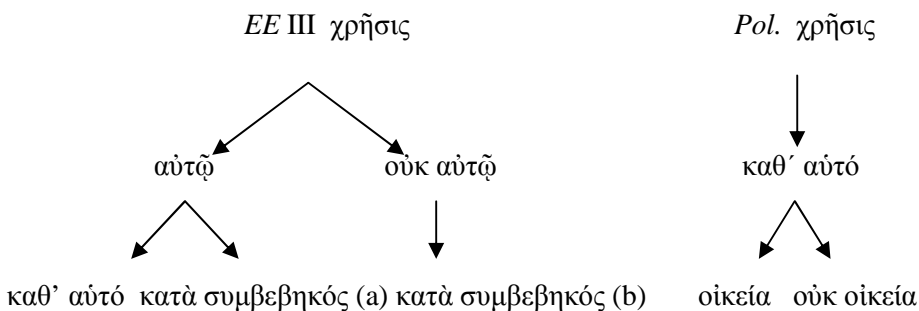
²⁰ Translated by Joseph Solomon, *The Works of Aristotle translated into English*, vol. 9, ed. W.D. Ross (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

τροφῆς χρῆται τῷ ὑποδήματι ἢ ὑπόδημα, ἀλλ’ οὐ τὴν οἰκείαν χρῆσιν· οὐ γὰρ ἀλλαγῆς ἔνεκεν γέγονε. [*Of everything which we possess there are two uses: both belong to the thing as such, but not in the same manner, for one is the proper, and the other the improper or secondary use of it. For example, a shoe is used for wear, and is used for exchange; both are uses of the shoe. He who gives a shoe in exchange for money or food to him who wants one, does indeed use the shoe as a shoe, but this is not its proper or primary purpose, for a shoe is not made to be an object of barter.*²¹]

As we can see, in *Politics* the criterion of the distinction between καθ’ αὐτό οἰκεία and καθ’ αὐτό οὐκ οἰκεία is ἔνεκεν γέγονε, which is, in fact, another way of saying ἐφ’ ᾧ πέφυκε: “χρῆται τῷ ὑποδήματι ἢ ὑπόδημα, ἀλλ’ οὐ τὴν οἰκείαν χρῆσιν· οὐ γὰρ ἀλλαγῆς ἔνεκεν γέγονε”. And as οἰκεία is a use ἔνεκεν γέγονε and οὐκ οἰκεία is a use οὐκ ἔνεκεν γέγονε, it results that οἰκεία and οὐκ οἰκεία correspond to the uses ἐφ’ ᾧ πέφυκε and ἄλλως in *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII.

In *Eudemian Ethics*, III the use is also διχῶς λέγομενα; this time the two categories are καθ’ αὐτό and κατὰ συμβεβηκός. But as we can see, the classification in fact lays out three categories of use, inasmuch as there are two kinds of accidental use. According to the definition at 1232a.2-4, use καθ’ αὐτό is not in opposition to the general category of accidental uses, but rather with the more limited category of those accidental uses which, in the pursuit of an improper end, nonetheless remain uses “of the thing”.

It seems that, despite the variation in language, in both passages the categories of use are the same. We may establish the following relationships between the terms of the two schemata: the category of usage of the αὐτῷ type in *Eudemian Ethics*, III (deduced from χρῆται γὰρ ὑποδήματι) corresponds to the καθ’ αὐτό in the *Politics* and the κατὰ συμβεβηκός (a) use in *Eudemian Ethics*, III corresponds within the schema of the *Politics* to use οὐκ οἰκεία²²; as for use κατὰ συμβεβηκός (b), this is the element lacking from the *Politics* as an opposite to the καθ’ αὐτό superordinate category.²³

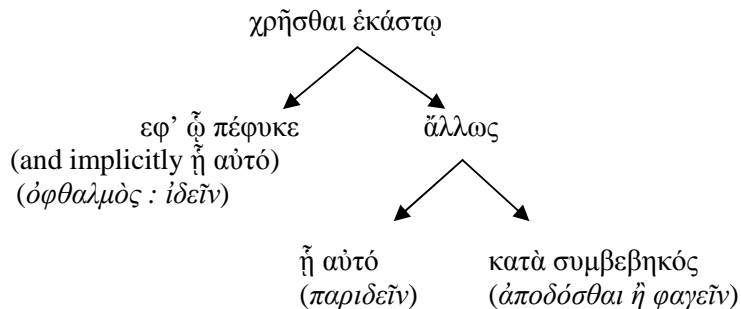


²¹ Translated by Benjamin Jowett, *Aristotle's Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908).

²² As is also proven by the following examples: πώλησις καὶ ἡ μίσθωσις in *Eudemian Ethics*, III and μεταβλητική or ἀλλαγῆ in *Politics*.

²³ Moraux, "Das Fragment VIII, 1", 257.

Let us now return to the classification in *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII. According to one possible reading of the text,²⁴ the classification of uses might be presented schematically as follows:



This schema is constructed on the basis of the interpretation which presupposes that the definition at 27-28, καὶ τοῦτο ἢ αὐτό ἢ αὖ κατὰ συμβεβηκός, refers to the preceding term, ἄλλως. Thus, ἢ αὐτό and κατὰ συμβεβηκός uses would not reproduce the opposition in the proper sense between the use of a thing “qua itself” and the use of a thing “as something else” from *Eudemian Ethics*, III, but would represent two possible *improper uses*: one in accordance with the thing “qua itself” but to a foreign purpose, and the other involving a foreign purpose of the thing “as something else.” The examples ought to reflect these last two categories, but it is obvious that by οἷον ἢ οφθαλμός ἰδεῖν ἢ καὶ ἄλλως παριδεῖν διαστρέψαντα what is illustrated is the first distinction, namely εφ' ᾧ πέφυκε καὶ ἄλλως. Both are then defined as usages relating to the eyes and opposed to use κατὰ συμβεβηκός in the sense of the accidental (b) in *Eudemian Ethics*, III.

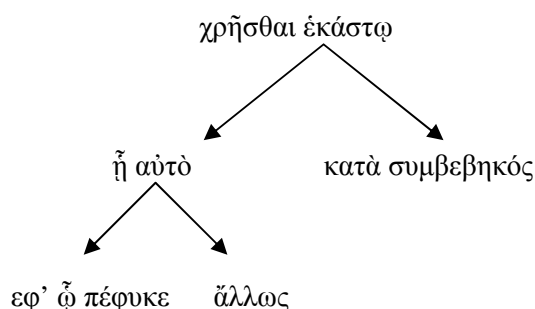
However, a more natural sequence of ideas results if we relate καὶ τοῦτο not to ἄλλως but to εἰ ἔστιν ἐκάστω χρήσασθαι.²⁵ Thus, the first department of the uses would be ᾧ πέφυκε and ἄλλως and the second – depending on the other criterion, according to which a thing is either employed “qua itself” or not – ἢ αὐτό and κατὰ συμβεβηκός. There follows the correlation of these categories of use via examples: if a thing is employed qua that thing, (οἷον ἢ οφθαλμός) it can be employed to a proper end (ἰδεῖν) or an improper end (ἄλλως παριδεῖν διαστρέψαντα, ὥστε δύο τὸ ἐν φανῆναι). The fact that these two uses in accordance with the end are uses of the thing qua itself is reiterated: αὐται μὲν δὴ ἄμφω ὅτι μὲν ὀφθαλμοῦ,²⁶ in order to set the category ἢ αὐτό in opposition to the category κατὰ συμβεβηκός, i.e. the use that does not invoke the thing ἢ αὐτό.²⁷ Thus, according to this reading of the text, use ἢ αὐτό occurs as a self-contained element, defined by opposition to use κατὰ συμβεβηκός, which here has the meaning of κατὰ συμβεβηκός (b) in *Eudemian Ethics*, III.

²⁴ Moraux, *ibid.*, 255. See also Dirlmeier's translation.

²⁵ See Jackson's translation in “Eudemian Ethics, Θ i, ii”, 174: “It is possible to use any given thing (i) for its natural purpose, (ii) otherwise than for its natural purpose, and also to use it (1) in its proper character, or again (2) incidentally.”

²⁶ Lectio proposed by Dirlmeier; ὅτι μὲν ὀφθαλμός ἐστιν, ἣν δ' ὀφθαλμῷ Jackson; ὅτι [μὲν] <ἰδεῖν> ὀφθαλμοῦ ἐστι Moraux; ὅτι μὲν ὀφθαλμός ἐστιν ἢ ὀφθαλμός Walzer-Mingay.

²⁷ See Jackson, “Eudemian Ethics, Θ i, ii”, 202.



What emerges not only from the examples in *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII but also those laid out in the *Politics* and *Eudemian Ethics*, III is the fact that besides the criterion that underlies the dichotomy between εφ' ᾧ πέφυκε and ἄλλως, the classification of uses seems to be based on yet another criterion, one that is apparently independent, according to which a certain type of use is declared use “of the thing.” The οἰκεία and οὐκ οἰκεία uses in the *Politics* are uses “of the shoe”; in *Eudemian Ethics*, III accidental uses of the πώλησις and μίσθωσις types are differentiated from accidental uses such as the employment of a shoe as a weight by the fact of this being one use of the shoe (χρηται γὰρ ὑποδήματι) and, equally, uses 2) and 3) in *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII are subordinated to the same category of use that “is due to the eye” or “depends on the eye.” Thus, prior to the opposition between εφ' ᾧ πέφυκε and ἄλλως, we must assume the existence of another, namely the opposition between the use of a thing as something else and the use of a thing *qua* that thing. Could it not be this last category of use the one referred to by Aristotle when he says that the use of each thing as itself is simple?

The highly corrupt state of the text prevents us to know precisely what Aristotle’s intention was. But by examining more passages from the *Eudemian* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we may identify the problem hidden behind this brief allusion.

There is another place in the *Eudemian Ethics* where the notion of use of a thing forms the core of the argument. At the beginning of Book II of the treatise Aristotle deploys a set of arguments in order to prove that the good life, or happiness, is the activity of the virtue of the soul. First of all, the notions of virtue and function need to be defined. Virtue, Aristotle says, ἐστὶν ἡ βελτίστη διάθεσις ἢ ἔξις ἢ δύναμις ἐκάστων, ὅσων ἐστὶ τις χρῆσις ἢ ἔργον (1218b.37-1219a.1). Aristotle uses the term ἔργον with the technical meaning given to it for the first time by Plato, as the specific work or the “function” of a thing. More precisely the ἔργον of something, or its function, is that which it alone can do, or that which it does better than any other thing. We cannot see with anything other than eyes. Nothing can do the job of cutting better than the knife. As Aristotle claims, for everything that has a function its goodness resides in the function.²⁸ That is to say that for a thing to be good, it has to be able to perform its own function well. The power that renders a thing good and also makes it

²⁸ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b.26-27.

to perform its function well is its specific “excellence,” or “virtue”.²⁹ Between function and virtue there is a strong conceptual connection. When we say that something was designated to perform a definite function, we imply that it was designated to perform that function well, and not badly. As a matter of fact, when we say that the function of the eye is sight, we mean the good sight. In both versions of the function argument, the Eudemian and the Nicomachean one, Aristotle explicitly claims that the function of a thing is one and the same as the function of its virtue. This enables him to conclude that the function of the good man, that is the “active exercise of the soul’s faculties in conformity with rational principle” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a.7) is also the good of the man *qua* man.

Now it is obvious that when Plato and Aristotle speak about function, they sometimes mean making use of it, as in the case of knives we use to cut, or the eyes we use to see. Aristotle clearly states in the function argument that sometimes ἔργον is χρῆσις:

ἀλλὰ τὸ ἔργον λέγεται διχῶς. τῶν μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἕτερόν τι τὸ ἔργον παρὰ τὴν χρῆσιν, οἷον οἰκοδομικῆς οἰκία [15] ἀλλ’ οὐκ οἰκοδόμησις καὶ ἰατρικῆς ὑγίεια ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὑγίανσις οὐδ’ ἰάτρευσις, τῶν δ’ ἡ χρῆσις ἔργον, οἷον ὄψεως ὄρασις καὶ μαθηματικῆς ἐπιστήμης θεωρία. [*But there are two different ways in which we speak of work. In some cases the work is a product distinct from the operation, as the work of the housebuilder craft is the house and not the building of it, and the work of medical skill is health rather than healing or curing. In other cases, the work is nothing other than the operation, as seeing is the work of sight, and understanding is the work of mathematics.*³⁰]

When the function is the use of the thing, it has to be the thing’s specific use, the use that corresponds to its nature or to the specific goal for which it was designated. And if the eye, the shoe, knowledge or anything else has but one proper function, as itself, or in its proper character, it means that there is just one use of a thing as itself, regardless of how it is in fact used.

If this is what Aristotle alludes to in his argument concerning the use of φρόνησις, it is a serious objection which derives from the very structure of the argument. Scholars have read the passage as a *reductio ad absurdum*. But the Eudemian analysis continues with the question “what could distort the use of φρόνησις,” a question that shows that, even after this argument, it is not at all self-evident that φρόνησις couldn’t be misused in the way ἐπιστήμη can. Secondly, is the suggestion that someone could be seen making use of φρόνησις when he intentionally commits the errors characteristic to the conduct of those who lack it really so absurd?

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI, φρόνησις is defined as being a rational faculty whose function is “to do the actions that must in the nature of things be done in order to attain the end we have chosen” (1144a.21-23). But there is still another faculty of the same part of the soul that seems to have the same function, namely to choose those means that lead to the aim we have in mind. In the absence of this faculty, φρόνησις itself couldn’t exist. Its name is “cleverness” (δεινότης); when its aim is a

²⁹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106a.15-19.

³⁰ *Eudemian Ethics*, II, 1219a.13-17, translated by Anthony Kenny, *The Eudemian Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

good one, it is a praiseworthy faculty, but its aim could also be base. Aristotle speaks about cleverness in order to clarify the essence of φρόνησις and some of his remarks let us suppose that the two could be easily confused. Φρόνησις has been defined as a faculty conducing to the proposed aim; when it is defined more exactly, as a rational capacity and a form of knowledge and truth in practical matters, its similarity to cleverness is more obvious. Sometimes, as Aristotle points out, we speak of the prudent man as being clever. So we can overlook the fact that the main characteristic of φρόνησις is to ensure the realisation of the *good* aim, of that particular aim that is set by virtue. The same as, in the absence of φρόνησις, virtues are just natural virtues, or simple traits of character, φρόνησις without virtue would be just a natural ability, a power that can be used either for good or for evil. In this case, its function would not be different when it pursues a good aim or when it pursues a base one. We do not name clever only the prudent man, but also, says Aristotle, the knave (πανούργος). He could be that person who will act for his base interests as someone who lacks φρόνησις; thus, such a person might humiliate himself or behave foolishly, in order to avoid, for instance, taking on a responsibility, or facing a danger that the courageous man would face for the sake of the virtue in itself. He might make use of a rational capacity that selects the adequate means for attaining his momentary, base goals; his means will be the right ones as reported to these goals. But the means of the prudent man will be always right *in themselves*, and that is because his rational capacity, φρόνησις, cannot be used in a distorted way.

If in our Eudemian passage Aristotle had in mind precisely this distinction between practical wisdom and simple cleverness, the controversial statement εἰ δὲ ἀπλῇ ἢ ἐκάστου χρεία ἢ ἑκάστων might be designed to hint at a real difficulty in the arguments countering the idea that φρόνησις is a sort of knowledge. Thus, the hypothesis merely underlines an implicit feature of the correlations established between the categories of use: if we take into account the use of a thing only from the viewpoint of its nature, its specific function, then both the natural use and the improper use will reflect the proper nature of the thing employed, as both are merely instances of use according to function – examples of φρονίμως πράττειν in the case of φρόνησις. For, just as intentionally committed τὰ ἀγνοητικά ἀπὸ ἐπιστήμης (cf. *supra*, 1246a.32-33: οἷον ὅταν ἐκὼν μὴ ὀρθῶς γράψῃ) do not imply ἀγνοεῖν, but ἀμαρτάνειν μόνον and therefore when errors are knowingly committed it is by using the methods of knowledge (i.e. ἐπιστημονικῶς rather than ἀγνοοῦντως), it is obvious that if φρόνησις were knowledge, ταῦτα ἅπερ ὁ ἄφρων would be committed φρονίμως. But this is precisely the conclusion drawn by the conditional at 1246b7-8. The argument is thus symmetrical in every detail with the previous one regarding justice, even the objection already rejected at 1246b.1-3 being integrated in a new form at 1246b.7-8.

But if this interpretation is correct, it means that 1246b.7-8 is not the final step in a demonstration that might be regarded as concluding the rejection of the Socratic thesis. The fact that the identification φρόνησις = ἐπιστήμη remains the premise from which the third section of the text proceeds is an indication that the unacceptable consequences resulting from the premise ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ φρόνησις ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀληθές τι are not considered a good enough basis for rejecting it completely. But this may mean that the premise itself is not considered to be wholly unacceptable, since, taken to a certain extent and with some appropriate specifications, it is a thesis to which Aristotle

himself subscribes. This is also suggested by the vague formulation of the idea (ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀληθές τι), a formulation specific to the dialectical method and aimed at gradual clarification of the notions and arguments initially expounded in an imprecise form (cf. *Eudemian Ethics* I, 6, 1216b.32- 33: ἐκ γὰρ τῶν ἀληθῶς μὲν λεγομένων οὐ σαφῶς δέ, προϋῶσιν ἔσται καὶ τὸ σαφές). Moreover, the formula καὶ ἀληθές τι may be connected to a series of references to φρόνησις in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI. Thus, also as part of the series of arguments intended to prove that one cannot possess practical wisdom without being virtuous (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1144a.36-1144b.1), the relationship between φρόνησις and truth is repeatedly reassessed.³¹

Now we come to the third section of the argument. What needs to be demonstrated is that the use ἢ αὐτό of φρόνησις is not like that of knowledge, divisible into εἰς ὃ πέφυκε and ἄλλως. The entire section 1246b.8-32 is intended to prove it, setting out from the question of what instance might corrupt wisdom, diverting it from its natural purpose.

The starting point of the argument as a whole, initially articulated at 1246b.12-15 and taken up again at 1246b.19-21, is that vice existing in the ἄλογον (i.e. ἀκρασία here regarded as κακία τοῦ ἀλόγου τῆς ψυχῆς) might divert virtue from the λογιστικόν and lead it to practical conclusions opposed to those dictated by reason (1246b.12-14). Thus, if φρόνησις were knowledge, φρόνησις in the λογιστικόν might be diverted in such a way that λογίζεται τὰναντία (1246b.15). But if the virtue in the λογιστικόν can be transformed into its opposite by the vice in the ἄλογον, it obviously results (δῆλον ὅτι) that vice, this time in the λογιστικόν, can divert the virtue in the ἄλογον (1246b.16-17). Hence the correspondingly paradoxical consequences: ὥστε ἔσται δικαιοσύνη τ'οὐ δικάως χρῆσθαι καὶ κακῶς καὶ φρονήσει ἀφρόνως (1246b.17-19).³² But if these uses were possible, namely the usage of justice in an unjust way and of wisdom foolishly, then we would have to allow the opposite possibilities, namely use of the vices in the ἄλογον and the λογιστικόν as virtues. In other words, the transformation from positive to negative implies the possibility of the transformation from negative to positive,³³ and thus it is possible from ignorance φρονίμως κρίνειν (1246b.21-22) and from intemperance σωφρόνως πράττειν (1246b.24). The following sentence, introduced by γάρ (1246b.19-24), is intended to explain how these consequences arise: if we accept that irrational vice distorts rational virtue, then it would be absurd not to accept that virtue, located in the irrational part, might in its turn distort rational vice (1246b.21-22) and that virtue located in the rational part might distort vice in the irrational part (1246b.23-25), with the last of these hypotheses constituting the very definition of self-control. But if we accept that virtue in the ἄλογον might transform vice in the λογιστικόν, then we should accept that it would be possible to act wisely out of this vice, i.e. out of ignorance. This is inconceivable,

³¹ Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139b.15-17: ἔστω δὲ οἷς ἀληθεύει ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ καταφάναι ἢ ἀποφάναι, πέντε τὸν ἀριθμὸν· ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶ τέχνη ἐπιστήμη φρόνησις σοφία νοῦς; 1140b.4-6: λείπεται ἄρα αὐτὴν [scil. φρόνησις] εἶναι ἕξιν ἀληθῆ μετὰ λόγου πρακτικὴν περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπων ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακά; 1140b.20-21: ὥστ' ἀνάγκη τὴν φρόνησιν ἕξιν εἶναι μετὰ λόγου ἀληθῆ περὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπινα ἀγαθὰ πρακτικὴν; 1141a.3-5: εἰ δὲ οἷς ἀληθεύομεν καὶ μηδέποτε διαπνευδόμεθα περὶ τὰ μὴ ἐνδεχόμενα ἢ καὶ ἐνδεχόμενα ἄλλως ἔχειν, ἐπιστήμη καὶ φρόνησις ἐστὶ καὶ σοφία καὶ νοῦς [...].

³² τ'οὐ Jackson, τὸ Mss.

³³ Moraux, "Das Fragment VIII, 1", 267.

however, inasmuch as vice in general does not possess the superiority of virtue, taken as a force or aptitude whereby it is possible to achieve both the natural and the improper end. It is only from virtue that we are able to do what we do from vice, not the other way around (1246b.28-32).

This is the main course of the argument exposed at 1246b.8-32. Given that the text is no less corrupt than that of the passages preceding it, a number of details remain controversial. On the one hand, this does not prevent us from reconstructing the existing text in the form of an argument that has a certain internal coherence. On the other hand we encounter the same difficulty in deciding whether the hypotheses exposed in the argument are mere working premises that depend on a purely logical approach or whether they are theses specific to or at the very least in agreement with Aristotelian doctrine. For instance, we may deduce from the example at 1246b.27–31 that as long as rational virtue is likened to the ἐπιστήμη, then Aristotle accepts the hypothesis at 1246b.12-15 as such; it will prove unacceptable in the case in which φρόνησις is regarded as ἐπιστήμη. Likewise, the hypothesis at 1246b.23-24 corresponds to the Aristotelian definition of ἐγκράτεια; the level at which it is valid seems to be that of Aristotle's doctrine proper. What then should we suppose with regard to the other two hypotheses? Are they merely transpositions of terms and as such merely logical possibilities? Or is it to be expected that their content is compatible with Aristotelian doctrine?

As the interpretation put forward by Paul Moraux proves, the question can be decisive not only in establishing the text but also in reconstructing the stages of the argument. A series of considerable emendations to the traditional text are considered to be indispensable precisely in order to make the claims of the Eudemian text agree with what we know to be specifically Aristotelian with regard to the relationship between the λογιστικόν and the ἄλογον. Thus, the first hypothesis (1246b.12-15) refers to the Aristotelian model of ἀκρασία,³⁴ and the second (1246b.16-17) likewise reflects an Aristotelian thesis: the superiority of the λογιστικόν over the ἄλογον when the latter possesses virtue. What acts contrary to the λογιστικόν is only the vice of the irrational part, never its virtue. The model of ἀκρασία, which can be described as the rebellion of the ἄλογον against the λογιστικόν, therefore claims that the irrational part is wicked. Thus, the third premise (1246b.21-22), according to which the virtue of the ἄλογον might transform the λογιστικόν (by transforming the vice it contains into its opposite), needs to be modified accordingly. It must therefore be presumed that there is a lacuna of a number of lines in the traditional text, which must have originally contained the hypothesis according to which irrational *vice* (and not virtue) transforms the vice in the

³⁴ In fact, according to Aristotle's concept of ἀκρασία, the incontinent man (ὁ ἀκρατής) does not obey the dictates of reason and acts in contradiction to them, although his judgement is correct. But the hypothesis in the text presupposes that the λόγος itself is distorted (λογεῖται τάναντία), a thing that is specific to the wicked man, to the ἀκόλαστος, rather than the ἀκρατής (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1146b.19-24). However, Aristotle passes over this difference, treating ἀκρασία as κακία, as an element capable in effect of distorting the rational judgement. The purpose of this artifice is probably to refer to the Socratic thesis cited at the end of the argument in the form "nothing is stronger than φρόνησις", in particular ἐπιθυμία (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1145b.21-27; 31-34; 1147b.14-17, *Magna Moralia* 1200b.25-29; see also Th. Deman, *Le témoignage d'Aristote sur Socrate* (Paris: les Belles Lettres, 1942), 89–90.

λογιστικόν into its opposite, i.e. φρόνησις. An additional argument in favour of this reconstruction of the text seems to be supplied by the example at 1246b.27-31, which raises the question of whether rational vice (ἄγνοια) can be distorted by the vice in the irrational part, i.e. ἀκολασία.

Let us therefore suppose that lines 1246b.21-23 are corrupt and that all we know about the hypothesis they exposit is that it refers to the possibility of employing the ἄγνοια in a wise manner under the influence of the irrational part, but we do not know whether the irrational part is wicked or virtuous. The transformation of the vice in the λογιστικόν into virtue under the influence of the vicious ἄλογον is a Sophistic argument laid out in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1146a.21). But the other possibility, namely that of virtuous action based on the influence wielded by the virtuous ἄλογον over the wicked λογιστικόν can be found in *Magna Moralia*, 1201a.17-27. Thus, both possibilities are attested as arguments employed by Aristotle to a dialectical end. But Moraux believes that the approach in *Magna Moralia* cannot be deduced from the Eudemian passage, given that in the second part of the process described it is a question of the influence wielded by the re-established φρόνησις over irrational vice (ἐν τῷ ἀλόγῳ ἀκολασίαν: 1246b.23-24), which “completely eliminates from discussion the virtuous character of the ἄλογον in the initial situation”.³⁵ Moraux thus sees the hypothesis at 1246b.23-24 as an extension of the process begun in the hypothesis laid out at 1246b.21-22: the ἀκολασία transforms ἄγνοια into φρόνησις, and once the latter has been re-established, it transforms the ἀκολασία into σωφροσύνη in its turn.

But there is nothing to indicate the need for such a correlation between the two hypotheses. The explanatory conditional must justify the fact that ἔσται δικαιοσύνη τὸ δικαίως χρῆσθαι καὶ κακῶς καὶ φρονήσει ἀφρόνως implies καὶ τάναντία, i.e. the transformation of vice, both rational and irrational, into virtue. What is the substance of this justification? The answer is the reiteration of the hypothesis at 1246b.12-15, the premise of the entire argument, which reveals the mechanism whereby virtue comes to be distorted, namely by the influence of vice and thus in accordance with the κακία → ἀρετή model. But what is the direct consequence of this model? Obviously, the one relating the same terms in the opposite sens. The fact that the distortion can take place through the influence of virtue on vice is proven by the process whereby self-control (ἐγκράτεια) is defined. Hence, if we assume a potential distortion of virtue under the influence of vice (κακία → ἀρετή), it would be absurd not to admit the possible distortion of vice under the influence of virtue (ἀρετή → κακία) a mechanism leading to consequences of the τάναντία type with respect to the ones flowing from the first hypothesis: on the one hand, the use of rational vice (ἄγνοια) as wisdom, and on the other hand, the use of irrational vice (ἀκολασία) as temperance. Thus, the argument lists four models of distortion:

λογιστικόν		ἄλογον
I. ἀρετή (i.e. φρόνησις)	←	κακία (i.e. ἀκολασία) 1246b.12-15
II. κακία (i.e. ἄγνοια)	→	ἀρετή (i.e. δικαιοσύνη) 1246b.16-17
III. κακία (i.e. ἄγνοια)	←	ἀρετή 1246b.21-22
IV. ἀρετή (i.e. φρόνησις)	→	κακία (i.e. ἀκολασία) 1246b.23-24

³⁵ Moraux, “Das Fragment VIII, 1”, 269.

According to this schema, IV is not the reverse of the process described by III, and as such its terms (φρόνησις and ἀκολασία) should not be linked to the terms in III, since III and IV each illustrate the mechanism whereby vice can be distorted by virtue.³⁶ Therefore, *pace* Moraux, hypothesis III can be viewed as reflecting the approach of *Magna Moralia*, 1201a.17-27.

As we have deduced from the following lines, the absurdity of hypothesis III resides in the fact that vice is incapable of serving as the basis of a dual use. However, the contrary would mean that we were to make the same of vice as we do of virtue; but precisely the opposite is true: we make the same of virtue as we do of vice thanks to the “superiority” of virtue: it is δύναμις, whereas vice is ἀδυναμία. But above all, a phenomenon such as ἀπὸ ἀγνοίας χρῆσθαι φρονίμως does not occur in any circumstance: τοῦτο γὰρ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων οὐδεμιᾷς ὁρῶμεν, ὥσπερ τὴν ἰατρικὴν ἢ γραμματικὴν στρέφει ἀκολασία, ἀλλ’ οὖν οὐ τὴν ἄγνοιαν, ἐὰν ᾗ ἐναντία, διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐνεῖναι τὴν ὑπεροχὴν ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν ὅλως μᾶλλον εἶναι πρὸς τὴν κακίαν οὕτως ἔχουσιν (1246b.27-31).³⁷ We might ask ourselves why Aristotle does not make recourse to an example that would fit the structure of hypothesis III: while it is possible for *vice* (ἀκολασία) to divert the use of the rational virtue represented by knowledge, it is not possible for *virtue* in the ἄλογον to transform ignorance into knowledge. The reason is all too obvious: in fact, what Aristotle is aiming at here is to highlight the superiority (ὑπεροχή) of virtue in the sense of it being able to be employed in contrary ways.³⁸ The factor that might cause this distortion in the case of vice (i.e. ignorance) is less important here; whatever this factor might be, whether vice or virtue in the irrational part, ἄγνοια cannot be employed in contrary ways, because it does not possess the superiority of virtue.³⁹

The fact that an old Sophistic argument – that virtue can be employed in a distorted way, thus enabling the virtuous man to do everything the vicious man does, except better⁴⁰ – is employed to combat another Sophistic argument of the same type as that of “the good incontinent man” in *Magna Moralia*, 1201a.17-27 (repeated here in hypothesis III) shows how far Aristotle is in this polemic from guiding his argument using elements of his own doctrine that are dogmatically taken for granted. Even accepted theses such as ἀλλ’ ἐπεὶ φρόνησις ἐπιστήμη καὶ ἀληθές τι are employed here as mere working hypotheses. Even starting from the classification of usages, which formed the basis of the whole argument and would have provided the best solution for the construction of a *reductio ad absurdum* aimed at rejecting the Socratic thesis,

³⁶ See also M. Woods’ commentary *ad loc.*, in *Aristotle, Eudemian Ethics, Books I, II and VIII* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 161- 163.

³⁷ The reconstruction of the sentence in this form is Jackson’s (cf. “Eudemian Ethics, Θ i, ii”, 178). The science of grammar or medicine, therefore science in the Platonic sense of art, can be distorted precisely because in contrast to virtue and wisdom it pursues relative and subordinate ends (cf. Gauthier – Jolif, *L’Éthique à Nicomaque* (Louvain and Paris: Peeters, 2002), II, 2, 469.

³⁸ Dirlmeier, *Aristoteles Eudemische Ethik*, 477.

³⁹ In any case, the example is constructed as such merely with a view to this conclusion; the case in which ἀκολασία were opposed to ἄγνοια would only be a theoretical possibility (ἐὰν ᾗ ἐναντία).

⁴⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1137a.17-21, *Topics*, 126a.34-36; Plato, *Republic*, 334a.5-8, *Hippias minor*, 375e.9.

Aristotle identifies and highlights precisely that point which might have been employed to sustain the strongest objection to his whole project: namely, that someone might commit the same actions as an ignorant man while claiming to act from higher practical reasons and thus φρονίμως.

We may therefore conclude that what this text reflects as “specifically Aristotelian” to the highest degree is Aristotle’s method of employing his own working hypotheses or those of other thinkers in a way that is sufficiently flexible and nuanced to allow him to neither accept nor unconditionally reject them. In this sense, the approach in VIII, 1 might be seen as a perfect illustration of the methodological principles laid out in *Eudemian Ethics*, I, 6, applied also in the critique of the Platonic theory of absolute good.⁴¹ However, if the strategy employed within this polemic reverts to suggesting the possible lacunae of a theory based on principles that are true and accepted as such, but not in the sense and at the level of universality assumed by their author,⁴² the text of *Eudemian Ethics*, VIII, 1 shows how this method can be extended. Thus, the impartial examination through “raising difficulties on both sides” (πρὸς ἀμφοτέρα διαπορῆσαι⁴³), which is so characteristic of the Aristotelian dialectical method, meant for Aristotle not only to test the theses of the opponent as mere hypotheses, but also to test his own theses, in order to prove that they are true, but only in a certain form and up to a certain well-defined point.

⁴¹ *Eudemian Ethics* I, 8.

⁴² D. J. Allan, “Quasi mathematical Method in the Eudemian Ethics” in *Aristote et les problemes de methode*, ed. Suzanne Mansion (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1961), 309.

⁴³ *Topics*, 101a.36.