The Concept of Honour in the Structure of Aristotle’s Ethical Treatises

The relationship between the three ethical works which have come down to us under the name of Aristotle has long been debated, but the theory of Jaeger represents the current orthodoxy. On his view the Eudemian Ethics is a genuine work of Aristotle, prior to the Nicomachean Ethics. The Nicomachean Ethics is not only Aristotle’s fullest treatment of the subject (together with the Politics, into which it leads), but his latest. The Magna Moralia (which, in spite of its title, is a much lighter work) is a post-Aristotelian work which draws heavily on the Eudemian Ethics.

I shall accept this theory as a working hypothesis, without at this stage attempting to evaluate it. I shall therefore ignore the Magna Moralia. Since the structure of the Eudemian Ethics is close to that of the Nicomachean

Ethics, I shall deal with these works in parallel, the Eudemian Ethics being discussed first in each case, in accordance with this hypothesis. My purpose is to examine the treatment of the concept of honour (timē) in the two works. If it appears that the development in respect of honour is away from the teachings of Plato and towards a more traditional and popular view, this will tend to confirm Jaegar’s hypothesis, since he postulates this development on other evidence; honour was not a major consideration with him. It may also be that independent evidence will emerge that will confirm that the Eudemian Ethics is earlier than the Nicomachean Ethics. However that may be, it is certainly necessary to take a brief look at the traditional Greek concept of honour and at Plato’s opposition to it. Adkins’ work has probably been the most influential of recent discussion on the subject. His main thesis is that the Greek words most nearly corresponding to our ‘good’ (agathos) and ‘bad’ (kakos) are applied exclusively in Homer and predominantly in later authors (with the conspicuous exception of Plato) to men not on the basis of their public spiritedness and respect for the rights of others, or the reverse, but on the basis of their success, or failure, in maintaining a standard of excellence (aretē) which wins honours from their fellows. Greek society is thus what the anthropologists have taught us to call a shame-culture rather than a guilt-


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culture. To uphold one's own reputation is the ultimate necessity; to fail to uphold it, the ultimate disaster. Considerations of morality are secondary, if they occur at all; to be *agathos* is not necessarily to be *dikaios* (just), and there is no logical basis for choosing *dikaiosyne* (justice) if the two are in conflict. An alternative word for 'good' (*kalos*) suggests an alternative approach to the question of morality. Literally it is 'beautiful', and this could be taken to imply that moral goodness is aesthetically pleasing. But inasmuch as what is *kalos* invites admiration, it too has connexions with the honour code; in Homer, at least, it may appear as a weaker synonym of *agathos*. I believe that Adkins exaggerates his case; there are examples to the contrary even in Homer of the moral use of such words as *kakos* and *elenchos* 'disgrace', and even Adkins has to concede a moral dimension to the didactic poets and the tragedians. But his main thesis, though exaggerated, seems to be in essence sound.

In practice, as Adkins demonstrates, it was possible to avoid the potential conflict of values most of the time. The individual *agathos* of the Achilles-type, concerned almost exclusively with maintaining his own claim to honour by taking revenge on any who had diminished his honour, evolved into the *agathos politês* (good citizen). Whether he demonstrates his excellence in the traditional way by valour in war (as especially at Sparta) or whether contributions to good government or to public works are at least equally important (as at Athens), the *agathos politês* can compete with his fellows for his share (or, with luck more than his share) of the finite quantity of available *timē* while at the same time displaying to some extent the social (Adkins: 'quiet') virtues in the service of his country.

The most fundamental challenge to this compromise came from Aristotle's teacher Plato, himself influenced by his mentor Socrates. In his *Republic* he puts in the mouths of Glaucon and Adeimantus an emphatic demand that *dikaiosyne* must be seen to be worth choosing for itself, irrespective of any incidental benefits. In particular, Glaucon paints two pictures: the perfectly unjust man, who by his ingenuity combines a life of successful crime on the grand scale while maintaining a high reputation, and the perfectly just man, who has an undeserved reputation for wickedness and ends in humiliation and impalement or crucifixion (it is not surprising that

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4 See e.g. J.G. Peristiany (ed.), *Honour and Shame* (Chicago, 1966).

5 *Iliad*, ix. 636, *Odyssey*, xxi. 331-3 (the former is ignored, the latter explained away (Adkins, op. cit. pp. 39-40) as a 'persuasive definition').

6 *Republic* II, 360c-367e.
C.S. Lewis\(^7\) enrols Plato among the prophets, though the legitimacy of so doing may be questioned. Why, in these circumstances, should anyone choose to be good rather than seem good? The rest of the Republic largely consists of the attempt to establish, by arguments that Adkins finds fallacious, that even in this extremity one should choose the path of moral rectitude, which represents psychological health in this world, and perhaps a ground for confidence in the next. Plato entrusted to his morally perfect philosophic visionaries (with Socrates he believed that to know ‘the good’ was to do it) the control of his ideal state. Later, in his old age, he reverted to a more conventional view in making law the sovereign of the state.

Aristotle’s earlier popular writings, presumably, were heavily influenced by Plato, but they have been lost. His extant works have more of the nature of lecture notes (whether his own or his students’); it is reasonable to assume that they will be more independent. The Eudemian Ethics and the Nicomachean Ethics both begin with the search for the good life. They dismiss the life which is devoted to the acquisition of money as (at best) the means to an end, and list\(^8\) three concepts of the good life; those concerned with pleasure, with politics, or with philosophy (contemplation). Aristotle shows himself a true pupil of Plato in rejecting the first (the discussion in Eudemian Ethics\(^9\) is fuller, describing it as a kind of animal existence). However, he also rejects\(^10\) the Platonic concept of a single comprehensive good which includes the political and philosophical spheres. The two kinds of life must therefore be discussed separately; discussion of the philosophical life is postponed, and we proceed to the political life, which will in fact occupy most of both treatises. The method, it is claimed, is to be practical, involving examination of popular concepts rather than \textit{a priori} reasoning from abstract principles, and the object of our search is to be the generally agreed objective, \textit{eudaimonia}\(^11\) (literally


\(^{8}\) \textit{EE} I, iv. 2 (1215a22 - b14); \textit{EN} I, v. 1 (1095b14 - 1096a11).

\(^{9}\) \textit{EE} I, v. 1 (1215b15 - 1216a10).

\(^{10}\) \textit{EE} I, viii. 1 (1217b1 - 1218b7); \textit{EN} I, vi.1 (1096a11 - 1097a14).

\(^{11}\) For the correct translation see especially J.C. Dybrowski, ‘Is Aristotle’s Eudaimonia happiness?’ \textit{Dialogue} 20 (1981): 185-200 with refs. This is also discussed in many of the works which follow. For the validity of the concept and methodology, see especially J.L. Ackrill, ‘Aristotle on Eudaimonia’. \textit{PBA} 60 (1974): 339-59, republished separately (Oxford, 1975) and in \textit{Essays on Aristotle’s...
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'having a good guardian spirit', but the word includes the concepts of success and happiness as well as good fortune).

In the Eudemian Ethics, honour has very little to do with all this. It appears once\(^{12}\) on a list of some possible objectives of the good life (\(\text{t\'ime, doxa 'fame', ploutos 'wealth', paideia 'education'}\)); perhaps its position as the first item and its reinforcement by a partial synonym indicate that Aristotle regarded it as important, but at this stage the concept is not followed up. It is otherwise in the Nicomachean Ethics.\(^{13}\) Honour, we will be told, is the greatest of the external goods, since such other external good as wealth and power are sought for its sake, not it for theirs; and Aristotle introduces the


\(^{12}\) I, ii. 1 (1214b8); a similar list is in VIII, iii. 5 (1248b28). I have found J.W. Organ, An Index to Aristotle in English Translation (Princeton, 1949) useful. F. Bonitz, Index Aristotelicus (Graz, 1955) is standard: J.P. Kiernan, Aristotle Dictionary (New York, 1962) too brief to be of much use.

\(^{13}\) I, v. 4 (1095b24 - 1096a2).
concept early. After a contemptuous rejection of the life of pleasure as ‘a life for cattle’ chosen by the hoi polloi, he continues, ‘but men of taste and active men [chose] honour; for this is more or less the end of the political life’.

Honour, then, is intimately associated with the form of life to which Aristotle proposes to give prior consideration; and the concept of ‘the end’ is absolutely central in Aristotle’s whole pattern of thought, since it determines the nature of whatever exists. However, Aristotle is not prepared at this stage to agree altogether with the ‘men of taste’, and raises two immediate objections. The first is that the giving of honour depends on other people; to rely on its receipt therefore puts one at the mercy of those other people, and detracts from self-sufficiency. The second is that men seek honour in order to be convinced of their own goodness. From this viewpoint it is a means, and the end is virtue. But that will not do either; virtue by itself is not enough for eudaimonia, since it may not involve activity or good fortune, both of which are essential to the good life in Aristotle’s view. We shall see later how Aristotle seeks solutions to these difficulties.

After further discussions we come to the famous definitions of eudaimonia;14 it is ‘an activity of a perfect life’, i.e. ‘an activity of a perfect soul [psychê] in accordance with perfect virtue [aretê] in a perfect life [i.e. not one prematurely cut short]’. Activity of the soul is then explained in a brief discussion of human psychology (fuller in the Nicomachean version); we then naturally turn to a discussion of aretê, or rather of the individual aretai; a single comprehensive moral virtue, in spite of the definition, is not yet in view. Although he has promised to avoid a priori reasoning, it would appear that Aristotle’s own social preferences are in part determining the turn of his argument (especially his distinction between hoi polloi, the mass, and hoi kharientes, men of taste), and this may carry over into his discussion of the virtues.

Aristotle begins this discussion15 with a distinction, which is based on his preceding discussion of human psychology, between the intellectual (‘dianoetic’) virtues and the ethical virtues. In accordance with the general plan of both works, discussion of the former is postponed, and we proceed to the famous discussion of the latter as means between pairs of contrasting extremes. In the course of this discussion we have a preliminary list16 of the individual

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14 EE II, i. 19 (1219a35 - 8); EN I, vii. 14 (1098a7 - 20).

15 EE II, i. 19 (1219a35 - 8); EN I, xiii. 20 (1103a4 - 11).
virtues with their attendant extremes. It is generally held that the order of listing of the virtues is irrelevant. This certainly seems to be true of the *Eudemian Ethics*; there is no obvious rationale in the diagram (gentleness, courage, modesty, temperance, *nemesis*, justice, liberality, candour, friendliness, dignity, hardness, magnanimity, magnificence, practical wisdom), and there are minor divergences from it in the immediately ensuing discussions. When the virtues are discussed in detail separately, the order becomes courage, temperance, gentleness, liberality, magnanimity, magnificence, *nemesis*, modesty, friendliness, dignity, candour, Wittiness, with justice postponed to Book IV (=EN V); the discrepancies in order are noteworthy, although a justification of sorts is offered; the 'virtues' from *nemesis* to Wittiness inclusive have to do with the emotions rather than with purposive choice (*proairesis*) and are best regarded as ancillary to the major virtues; Aristotle spends correspondingly less time on them.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* there is, I would argue, a fundamental difference. It is not merely that the list in the preliminary discussion now is in substantial agreement with that in the subsequent fuller treatment, but that the joint list itself is in a significant order. Virtues which are especially concerned with honour are listed first, and the discussion of them is expanded to a greater degree than is that of the other virtues. The order is: courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, ambition, gentleness, candour, Wittiness, friendliness, modesty, *nemesis*, justice. (The latter two do not occur in books III and IV.) Some philosophical justification is given for the grouping of the virtues of lowest priority; candour, Wittiness, and friendliness have to do with social intercourse in general, and modesty and

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17 *EE* III. A similarly random list is *Rhetoric* I, xi. 5 (1366b2 - 22) (justice, courage, temperance, magnificence, magnanimity, liberality, gentleness, wisdom [practical], wisdom [philosophical]).

18 *EE* III, vii. 1 (1233b16 - 20), 10 (1234a24 - 28).

19 *EN* II, vii. 2 (1107b1 - 1108b9). Cf. *EN* III, vi - IV, ix (1115a4 - 1129b36). The only changes are that in the expanded treatment friendliness is reserved for separate discussion in VIII-IX and *nemesis* is dropped. Ambition is not actually named in the text.
nemesis belong to the sphere of the emotions. It is also observed that magnificence is a higher degree of liberality as is magnanimity of ambition; we are not told why these four virtues stand in this precise order, but may conjecture that it is in order to bring the 'higher' versions together, since they are closely related not only in name (megaloprepeia, megalopsychia) but, as we shall see, in operation. We may note immediately the relegation of gentleness to a lowly position; it remains to be seen whether the detailed discussion of those virtues which now head the list justifies my suggestion that they owe their position to their association with honour.

That courage should come first is highly traditional; the Iliad, to judge from the frequency of citations from it, must have been basic reading at Athenian schools. It would naturally be put first by anybody who held the traditional honour-code; Aristotle does not specifically mention abstract honour in connection with it, but concrete honours are, as we shall see, very much in mind, as in the case of Sarpedon; when he comes to the full discussion Aristotle will show that he too knows his Homer. There is, however, no possibility that he will take the essentially anti-social Achilles as the model soldier for his own society. Plato had already firmly subordinated his soldier class to the best interests of his ideal state, and Aristotle applies a much needed corrective in the concept of sôphrosynê. The conventional translation 'temperance' is misleading; in normal usage the word combines the concepts of knowing one’s place and keeping it with prudent calculation of the future; the sôphron, like the agathos, may be more or less concerned with morality vis-à-vis self-interest in different contexts. Sôphrosynê is thus an essential element for social cohesion, and discussion of it naturally follows the discussion of courage, as it does in Plato.

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21 E.g. Republic, II, 373d-376c, and IV, 429a-430c.

Furthermore, although war was endemic in Greece and the maintenance of an army therefore essential for survival, it was not only by physical courage that the state was to be preserved; both the assumption of financial burdens (*leitourgioi*) and full participation in political activities were required of upper-class Athenians. As will become clear, Aristotle follows Plato in concentrating his attentions on the upper classes, and the next four virtues in the list (which may, as we have seen, be reduced to two, manifested in different degrees) faithfully reflect Athenian society. Of Aristotle's first six virtues, five are concerned with activities in which honours are to be won by serving the state and one with the necessary restraint which prevents such competitive striving from getting out of hand.

This becomes clearer when the virtues are considered in greater detail. After a discussion of voluntary actions and moral choice, we start with courage.\(^{23}\) In both works the discussion is highly abstract; when we come to specific kinds of courage, the *Eudemian Ethics* actually mentions political courage, which is associated with *aidōs* 'modesty' (which, as we have seen, follows courage in the Eudemian list of virtues) before military courage; it then goes on to discuss various kinds of behaviour (e.g. anger) which look like courage but do not properly deserve the name. In the course of this discussion *aidōs* comes in again as the reason why Hector stood to face Achilles; it is best translated as 'fear of incurring disgrace' and Aristotle says that this is not the best motive for courageous action, which should rather be a deliberate choice to face danger for some fine (*kalos*) purpose. We have clearly come some way from the Homeric code, but the ambivalence of *kalos* has already been noted; is it still to be linked with the honour code, or is its value in Aristotle predominantly aesthetic? From the *Eudemian Ethics* we cannot be sure; perhaps the later work can help.

The emphasis in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is different. Military courage is mentioned first, and the word *kalos* makes an early appearance; 'It would appear that the courageous man is not concerned with [facing] every kind of death, such as that at sea or in diseases. In which kinds then? Surely in the finest? Such [deaths] are those in war; this is in the greatest and finest danger. In accordance with these are the honours [*timai*] in the city states and in the monarchies'. Again, we continue with a discussion of kinds of behaviour which resemble courage, and political courage\(^{24}\) is mentioned, but it is

\(^{23}\) *EE* III, i. 1 (1228a23-1230a36); *EN* III, vi. 1 (1115a6-1117b23).

\(^{24}\) Grant notes the narrowing of the term courage by comparison with Plato, *Laches*, 198-201 and *Republic*, 430C; he is not concerned to compare the *Eudemian*
immediately described as the kind of courage which inspires citizen troops to face danger in battle, 'because of the legal penalties, reproaches, and honours; through this those [people] appear to be bravest amongst whom cowards are dishonoured and brave men honoured'. The criticism of this attitude which immediately follows in the other version does not follow here; instead we go on to discuss other kinds of apparent courage, with a note that that based on spirit (thymos) appears to be most natural, but that it needs the addition of deliberation. In spite of this belated reference to moral choice, the doctrine of the *Nicomachean Ethics* seems a good deal closer to the Homeric code, and to the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus, than does that of the *Eudemian Ethics*.

The increased emphasis on *time* is echoed by the new prominence of *to kalon* 'the fine'. In the *Eudemian Ethics* the term appears early in a popular usage (*eu zên* 'living well' being quoted with *kalôs zên* 'living finely'), but is not otherwise prominent. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* to *kalon* is one of a trinity of things to be sought (together with the expedient and the pleasant) and we are here told that it is 'the end of virtue'; it is especially relevant not only to courage but to liberality, magnificence, and self-love. We see again that the morally good and the aesthetically beautiful are closely related concepts in Aristotle, but clearly *kalos* has not severed its links with honour.

About temperance little needs to be said; its relationship with the theme of honour is very indirect, and the tendency in both works is to restrict its range by comparison with Plato, though the actual discussion in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is longer. A brief discussion of gentleness follows in the *Eudemian Ethics*: a longer one comes later in the *Nicomachean Ethics* they, too, need not detain us, and we may pass on to what may be called the mercenary virtues. These are in the narrow sense liberality and its higher degree magnificence; but they are closely related to the analogous pair of ambition and its higher degree magnanimity. The discussion of these virtues occupied about three times the space in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that it does in *Ethics*, which he believes to have been written by Eudemus.

25 See, for example, *Greek Lyrics*, trans. R. Lattimore (Chicago, 1960), 14-16 = Diehl, nos. 9 and 8.

26 *EE* III, ii. 1 (1230a37-1231b4); *EN* III, x. 1 (1117b22-1119b18).

27 See fn. 22.

28 *EE* III, iii. 1 (1231b5-27); *EN* IV, v. 1 (1125b26-1126b10).
the *Eudemian Ethics*,\(^{29}\) and this untypical degree of expansion presumably reflects an expanded interest in the later work. Although most attention from modern commentators has been devoted to the ‘magnanimous’ man (*megalopsychos*),\(^{30}\) the intimate link between these virtues is evidenced by the fact that Aristotle’s *megalopsychia* seems to correspond roughly to Plato’s *megaloprepeia* and the orators’ *philotimia*,\(^{31}\) though the orators also use *megalopsychia*.

Liberality and magnificence are relatively non-controversial. The *Eudemian Ethics* does not discuss the matter at length. Liberality (e*leuth*eriotêès) is defined as a mean between meanness and prodigality in the acquisition and expenditure of wealth. The discussion of *megaloprepeia* (‘magnificence’) is postponed until after the discussion of *megaloprepeia*. Magnificence has to do with expenditure only, and consists in spreading neither too much nor too little on a wedding feast or similar entertainment; the extremes are ill-defined, which is hardly surprising. The *Nicomachean Ethics* goes into far more detail. Liberality is no longer primarily a matter of social budgeting; ‘it is more characteristic of the liberal man to give to those to whom he should, than to take from whom he should and not to take from whom he should not’. Clearly appropriate social relationships are more important than finance. Why? ‘It is more characteristic of virtue to do good than to have good done to one, and to do fine actions rather than to avoid...

\(^{29}\) *EE* III, iv. 6 (1231b27-1233b16); *EN* IV, i. 4 (1119b22-1125b26).


\(^{31}\) Gauthier, *Magnanimité*, pp. 41-52; Rees, op. cit. pp. 231-2; Dover, op. cit. (fn.3). Plato, however, tends to reserve the word for philosophers; see fn. 38.
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shameful ones’. The word kalos has crept in again, as it did in the discussion of courage, and so has the concept of reputation: ‘gratitude goes to the giver, not to the one who does not take, and even more so praise’.

Like other virtuous men, the liberal man will enjoy doing virtuous acts; the acquisition of money is primarily a means to its disbursement, since one cannot give what one has not got. It follows that of the extremes (which are discussed at length) meanness is worse than prodigality. Liberality when so defined has a much closer relationship with magnificence than it did in the Eudemian Ethics, and the discussion of the former virtues leads directly on to that of the latter. ‘The magnificent man is like a connoisseur; he sees what is appropriate and spends large amounts accordingly’. No longer does he restrict himself to wedding banquets;

There are some kinds of expenditure which we call honourable, such as those concerned with the gods, votive offerings and buildings and sacrifices... and those which are appropriate to ambition [if that is the correct translation of euphilotimeta] for the common weal, as they consider in some places equipping a chorus conspicuously or provisioning a trireme or giving a state banquet.

Conspicuous private expenditure is also laudable but secondary. There is no need for the evasive ‘in some places’; it is the system of liturgies and donatives at Athens that is being described. There is also no need for the warning, which nevertheless follows, that this virtue is confined to the wealthy few; after discussing megalopsychia, Aristotle reverts to the relationship of liberality and magnificence with the statement (to which I have already alluded) that they are, like megalopsychia and philotimia, different degrees of the same virtue.32

Finally, it is clear that the magnificent man expects to obtain due public recognition of his magnificence (such as laudatory degrees, public meals at the prytaneum, etc.); he is concerned with honour and honours. But in this he has to give way to the real expert in his field; with deliberate stride and appropriate haughtiness the magnanimous man makes his entry.

If, as seems generally agreed, the Posterior Analytics is earlier than both Ethics, the first major reference to ‘magnanimity’ is that of Post. Anal. II, xiii (97b 14-26). Since Gauthier in particular makes a great deal of this passage, let us consider it first. The context is one of general definitions; Aristotle observes that the term megalopsychia is applied to two groups of

32 As Gauthier and Jolif point out, it is also hard to distinguish them from justice (EN V: e.g. V, ii. 12 [1130b30-1131a9]); cf. also EN VIII, xiv. 3 (1162b5-12).

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people. The first group (Alcibiades, Achilles, Ajax) have in common their refusal to tolerate insult, which induced Alcibiades to change sides in the Peloponnesian War, Achilles to sulk in his tent, and Ajax to commit suicide (I have slightly expanded Aristotle’s details). The second (Lysander, Socrates) have in common failure to be upset (apatheia) by (the vicissitudes of) fortune (they are, as it were, primitive Stoics). Can the two characteristics be shown to have enough in common to justify the common name? If not, the name is ambiguous and the attempt at a single definition fails. Although Aristotle does not specifically say so, this does indeed seem to be the case: our first group has too much regard for other people’s opinions of them, our second group very little (perhaps too little).

The Eudemian Ethics seems to pick up the discussion from this point. Aristotle observes that opposite characters sometimes lay claims to the same quality; e.g. the prodigal man may claim to be liberal, the obstinate man proud, the bold man brave, and so on. ‘So, too, the magnanimous man seems similar to the proud man and the magnificent man; he is naturally disdainful because of his caring for few things, and these great ones.’ He prefers the opinion of one virtuous man to that of many ordinary men, and of the external goods he is concerned only with honour. There is an apparent contradiction here, which Aristotle attempts to resolve by saying that honour is to be valued not for the mere quantity of it but when it is conferred by the right people for the right reasons, i.e. the greatness of the man who earns it. Aristotle concludes by discussing four attitudes; he who is worthy of great things and claims them is magnanimous; he who is worthy of small things and claims them is prudent; he who is worthy of small things but claims great things is boastful; he who is worthy of great things but claims small things is mean-spirited (‘parvanimous’?). These last two attitudes are the vices between which magnanimity is a mean. Gauthier sees here an attempted synthesis of the two kinds of magnanimity discussed in the Posterior Analytics, the disdain for popular opinion is that of Lysander and Socrates; the preoccupation with honour is that of Achilles, Ajax and Alcibiades; the common element of the two groups is a feeling of greatness. He has (reasonable) doubts on the success of this attempt; it is as well to withhold our judgement until we have considered the version of the Nicomachean Ethics.

33 For this group, see Gauthier, Magnanimité, pp. 21-36 (with other examples); for the second group, ibid. pp 37-40 (he adds Odysseus). Bartling, op. cit. pp. 1-52, and Kirsche, op. cit. pp. 31-62 discuss this and other references at length.

Again, there is a feeling that we are starting where the earlier work left off, in this case with a discussion of the four attitudes of the *Eudemian Ethics*. As in that work the magnanimous man lays claim to honour, which is 'the greatest of the external goods, which we offer to the gods, and which those of repute especially aim for, and is a prize awarded for the finest [deeds]'; the term *kalos* makes an early entrance, as in the case of courage and liberality. The *Nicomachean Ethics* goes on to break new ground. A justifiable claim to honour implies true virtue of every kind; 'magnanimity therefore appears to be a sort of crowning ornament [kosmos] of the virtues; it makes them greater, and cannot occur without them'. A more determined attempt to hold together the two kinds of magnanimity follows; a discussion of the relative merits of honour according to the bestowers resembles the version of the *Eudemian Ethics*, and we are then told that the magnanimous man 'will not be too joyful in good fortune or too sad in bad fortune; he is not even so disposed about honour. He to whom even honour is a small thing, will regard the rest [e.g. power and wealth] likewise'. In actual life men are honoured for power and wealth, 'but in reality only the good man is to be honoured; however, he who has both [i.e. external prosperity and virtue] is thought more worthy of honour'.

With this expanded discussion comes a large mass of rather uncoordinated incidental information about this paragon; one cannot imagine him running away in battle; he resembles the haughty man, who is trying to imitate him; he is not anxious to run into danger, although he will give his life in a great cause; 'he is the sort of man to do a good deed, but is ashamed of having one done for him, since the former is the mark of a superior, the latter of an inferior'. He prefers to remember the benefits he has conferred, not those he has received; he appears sluggish because he will not engage in any undertakings that are not truly great; he is candid but sometimes ironical; he is not prone to flattery, wonder, resentment, gossip, or cries for help. 'He is the sort of man who prefers to acquire what is fine [kalos again] and useless rather than useful and expedient; this is a sign of self-sufficiency'. He walks slowly and speaks deliberately and in a low voice. Aristotle then reverts to the mean-spirited and vain men; the latter is closest to the magnanimous man, and perhaps we should not be surprised to be told that it is better to be vain than mean-spirited. A brief and superficial discussion of ambition (a kind of magnanimity *manqué*) concludes the section.
It is not surprising that many scholars\textsuperscript{35} have criticized Aristotle’s conception of the magnanimous man. This does not mean that we can simply brush the portrait aside as a conventional viewpoint which Aristotle himself does not necessarily endorse,\textsuperscript{36} still less that it is intended to be funny;\textsuperscript{37} as I hope I have shown, the passage is too well integrated in its philosophical context to be so easily dismissed.

Before going on to discuss what I take to be the significance and function of this passage, I think I must remove what I consider to be two major misconceptions. The first is Gauthier’s, which (as he points out) finds some support in the most noteworthy of the ancient scholiasts on the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, Aspasius.\textsuperscript{38} Aristotle has (in his view) solved the problem of the \textit{Posterior Analytics} by dropping his first group of ‘magnanimous’ men (Alcibiades, Achilles, Ajax) and confining the term to the second group, whose characteristic is to be imperturbable whatever fate may bring. Gauthier has already rejected Lysander as a true member of this group — he owed his place in it merely to popular opinion\textsuperscript{39} — so we are describing the magnanimity of Socrates, who has respect only for the opinion of the truly wise. The tragedians teach resignation to the blows of fate; Aristotle’s view is more optimistic. Confident in his justified assurance of his own virtue the magnanimous man relies on his virtuous actions to obtain the appropriate recognition, without caring greatly if he fails to get it. In prosperity he possesses all the external goods including honour; in adversity it is enough that he honours himself. He does not have to participate in social activities to buy

\textsuperscript{35} References in Hardie, \textit{Aristotle’s Ethical Theory}, pp. 119-120 include Ross and Russell: of the other works cited in fn. 30 Kirsche, Krook, and McNamee are especially hostile, Krook being the most entertaining.

\textsuperscript{36} So especially Clark, Jaeger, Oates, and Ross, op. cit.; Hardie withdraws from this position on p. 372 of his second edition.

\textsuperscript{37} So especially Burnet and Joachim in their commentaries.

\textsuperscript{38} In Heylbut, xix: 114; but Aspasius does not specifically ascribe this idea to Aristotle (his wording is ‘Surely one would not go wrong in saying about him [the \textit{megalopsychos}] that he is entirely a \textit{theologos} [as opposed to the \textit{anthrōpolologos} ‘gossip’ of \textit{EN} IV, iii. 31 (1125a51)]’; he also gives a cross reference in Plato, \textit{Theaetetus}, 173d. Gauthier on p. 273 of his commentary lists various 19th century scholars who make this equation.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Magnanimity}, pp. 37-8. The main discussion is on pp. 55-118.
popularity; he is a true philosopher, the contemplator, whom we have already met in Plato Republic VI and will meet again in Nicomachean Ethics X. The politician must be content with lesser goods; he is the ambitious man, not the true man of grandeur.

One must concede that the magnanimous man and Socrates have some characteristics in common, as Sneddon especially argues. Preoccupation with acquiring honour, however, does not seem to be one of them. When Socrates suggests that his appropriate reward is free public entertainment for life he is joking (the megalopsychos does not seem to feel the need for a sense of humour); if we want to know how low is the popular opinion of the true philosopher we need turn only to the Republic.\(^{40}\) Krook surely has a case when she maintains\(^{41}\) that in his willingness to tolerate injustice done to himself rather than claiming his just deserts Socrates is rather an example of Aristotle's mean-spirited man, and (by Aristotle's standards) merits strong condemnation. Even sympathetic scholars (such as Osborne) have failed to agree with Gauthier that the magnanimous man is the contemplative philosopher. Bartling, Dirlmeier, and Hardie have dealt with this proposition at length and (I believe) have succeeded in refuting it; I need only give a few of their arguments:

1. The discussion of the magnanimous man nowhere mentioned the contemplative man (theòrètikos), and the discussion of the contemplative man nowhere mentions the magnanimous man.

2. Magnanimity is listed among the ethical virtues; the contemplative man is concerned with the intellectual virtues.

3. Aristotle makes it clear that the difference between the magnanimous man and the ambitious man is quantitative, not qualitative.

4. The references to winning honour by great deeds are entirely inconsistent with the life of the theòrètikos.

\(^{40}\) Plato, Apology, 36d; cf. Republic, VI, 487b-489a, VII, 514a-518b.

\(^{41}\) Op. cit. (fn. 30), pp. 73-8, citing Plato, Gorgias, 508e. A side-issue is the relationship (if any) with the sketches of young men, old men, and men in their prime given in Rhetoric, II, 12-14 (1388b36-1390b5): I agree with Krook against Bartling that the magnanimous man resembles the man in his prime rather than the young man.
There is, however, a related theory advocated specially by Schmidt and Osborne. They concede that the magnificent man is involved in political life rather than in contemplation, but see a significant gain in the Nicomachean Ethics when compared with the Eudemian Ethics. The emphasis has, in their view, shifted from honour to virtue; the magnificent man despises honours accorded to anything except virtue, and even in this field will, if necessary, be content to honour himself. We thus have a new ethos based essentially on self-respect. Again, there is something to be said for this view; we must concede that the link between virtue and honour is much stronger in the Nicomachean Ethics than in the Eudemian Ethics. But a great deal of additional detail has nothing to do with virtue at all, as we have seen, and the stress on honour seems to be greater not merely in the general body of the later work but in the specific portrayal of the magnanimous man. It is the Nicomachean Ethics which tells us that it is better to be boastful than mean-spirited, i.e. better to claim honours to which one is not entitled than to fail to claim honours to which one is entitled. This hardly suggests an ethos based on virtue rather than on honour, rather we may conjecture that Aristotle is defending as morally acceptable an established institution to which he is committed because it is established, as he defends tragedy in the Poetics and the social divisions of Athenian society, including slavery, in the Politics.

What, then, is the major significance of the additional detail? I think we must in the first instance look back to the honour-based political life of EN I, v. 4-5, and to the objections that Aristotle there raised to it; that in its reliance on what is in the gift of others it is not independent enough, and that, since people seek honour in order to be reassured of their own virtue, honour becomes a means with respect to something (virtue) which is itself a means to the active virtuous life. It appears that Aristotle has now solved these problems. Plato's theoretical case of the virtuous man who is altogether without external honour is unlikely to occur, and if it does, it is in the last resort sufficient to the magnanimous man that he honours himself. He can thus retain his independence, and the first difficulty is overcome. Since he is the best of men and knows in what circumstances it is, or (more often) is not, worthwhile to exercise his virtue in working for a cause which must be sufficiently great, his life is a fully satisfactory one which can be unreservedly advocated as an end in itself: the conscious possession and appropriate deployment of all the virtues. This disposes of the second difficulty. There remain the incidental personal characteristics of the magnanimous man. In these clearly Aristotle is reflecting the ethos of his society; but there is no indication that he rejects that ethos. His repeated use of 'it seems that', which is characteristic of the Nicomachean Ethics as a whole, enables him for the most part to remain graciously aloof, since we cannot tell whether his account is prescriptive as well as descriptive. In this section at least Aristotle does seem to display considerable enthusiasm for the character he is describing.
From the viewpoint of Christian or humanist ethics we do not share his enthusiasm; but he is not altogether to be condemned. What is most repulsive in the picture is due to Aristotle's society; the emphasis on true virtue as a necessary precondition of the life of honour is due to Aristotle himself.

After this group of four related virtues the *Eudeman Ethics*\(^{42}\) proceeds to run through the remaining virtues with remarkable speed; it would appear that Aristotle has little or no interest in them individually, but only wishes to demonstrate that they too can be made to illustrate his doctrine of the mean. If we ignore the discussion of gentleness (which has been postponed from an earlier stage in the older work) the expansion in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is considerable, but only about double, not triple as in the earlier group. These virtues have no real connection with the life of honour, and they are clearly regarded as minor.

At this stage our manuscripts of the *Eudeman Ethics* tell us that the next three books (IV, V, VI) are omitted as being identical with the *Nicomachean Ethics* (books V, VI, VII). If the *Nicomachean Ethics* is a revision of the *Eudeman Ethics*, it is not clear what stage in the revision these books have reached.\(^{43}\) Some material may be entirely unrevised; some may have been subject to multiple revisions. In any event, the material for a comparison of early and late versions is lacking.\(^{44}\) Fortunately, these books contain little that is relevant to the topic of honour. There is, however, one very interesting reference.\(^{45}\) Aristotle observes that the just ruler rules in the interest of others rather than his own. An unfortunate consequence is that he will make no material profit from his administration; how can he be given sufficient incentive to rule justly? Plato proposed a radical solution to the problem: the complete abolition of personal property for his administrators. Aristotle, ignoring this solution, proposes one that Plato rejected: 'he must be given some salary, and this is honour and privilege; it is men for whom such things are not adequate that become tyrants'. Plato did not value honour so highly that he was prepared to trust it to keep his rulers on the right track, and

\(^{42}\) *EE* III, vii (1233b17-1234b15); cf. *EN* IV, vi (1126b11-1128b36).

\(^{43}\) Cf. fn. 1 above.

\(^{44}\) Except for the discussion of pleasure in *EE* VI = *EN* VII especially xif, of which there is a presumably later version in *EN* X, if.

\(^{45}\) *EE* IV = *EN* V, vi. 6 (1134b2-8); cf. Plato, *Republic*, 342e, 347b, 416d-417b, 544e-550c.
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to him the society based on honour ranks below the society which he advocates; Aristotle, like Sarpedon, has more confidence in honour and privilege to keep a ruler on the right track.

In the discussion of friendship parallel versions are again available, since EE VII corresponds to EN VIII and IX. Again, honour is not a major theme, but references do occur. One of them is common to both works, and is an application to private life of the principle of political justice enunciated above; in a friendship of superior with inferior, it is natural that the inferior will receive more material benefit, which must be balanced by an appropriate amount of honour allotted to the superior. Another is peculiar to the Nicomachean Ethics. In it Aristotle discusses various attitudes to honour. The many (for whom Aristotle displays his customary contempt) like receiving honour from those in high station not for its own sake, but in the hope of more concrete benefits to come. Others value only honour which comes from good men, because it confirms their own self-respect; clearly we are back in the realm of the magnanimous man. But Aristotle does (for a moment) seem to rise above this;‘but they are pleased at being loved for its own sake; for which reason it would appear [the usual evasive expression!] that it is superior to being honoured’. Again, honour is more prominent in the later version, but it is not everything.

The conclusions of the two works are very different. Book VIII of the Eudemian Ethics has virtually no correspondence with Book X of the Nicomachean Ethics. A discussion of good fortune (which is in the ultimate analysis derived from God) is followed by an attempt at a concerted picture of the virtues working together in harmony, to which the name kalokagathia is given, which is a popular term for the ideal of the Athenian gentleman who combines nobility with goodness, ‘fine and good’ (kalos we have met repeatedly, and the ambiguity of agathos has been noted). These two expressions are firmly equated, and an extra dimension is added; all other goods, whether external or internal, are to be valued entirely as to whether they help or hinder us in our ultimate objective, the contemplation of God. To be a gentleman is not enough; we must also be a philosophical theologian. In spite of the alleged overriding importance of this conclusion, it is introduced abruptly and dealt with extremely briefly, thus naturally raising the question of

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46 EE VII, x. 12-13 (1242b17-21); EN VIII, xiv. 1-2 (1163a24-b5).


48 EE VIII, viii. 1 (1248b11), 10 (1249a17), 15-17 (1249b9-25).
whether it is the real main point of interest for Aristotle or rather an appropriate gesture of respect to his teacher at the end of a work whose main emphasis is quite different.

One might suppose, consistently with Jaeger's hypothesis, that this abrupt and brief discussion of contemplation would vanish from the later work. The discussion of good fortune has, indeed, vanished from the *Nicomachean Ethics*; instead Book X starts with a new discussion of pleasure. But contemplation is still with us, though it is discussed in a different way, which seems to owe less to the emergence from the cave in Plato's *Republic* and to have more connection with the other aspects of Aristotle's own philosophy. If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the strongest virtue, and this would be the virtue of the best part. Aristotle goes on to say that this best part is intellect (*nous*), and its activity is contemplation (*theoria*), which is therefore the best activity and brings the greatest happiness. It also depends least on external goods, apart from those necessary to our survival; however it does require leisure, and is thus inconsistent with a military or political life. There is indeed something divine about the life of contemplation. The moral life, on the other hand, is purely human and clearly inferior; it lacks independence from possessions or physical attributes. The contemplative life is closest to the life of the gods and furthest removed from that of the lower animals; the political life is, by comparison with it, clearly second-best.

The contrast with the *Eudemian Ethics* is marked. No longer can the political life be regarded as an addition to the contemplative life, but as an obstacle to it. It is, however, no longer clear what the contemplator is

contemplating: the activity may be divine, but is its object also divine? I have no wish to add to the extensive investigation of this astonishing development, and will content myself with a few unoriginal comments which attempt to reflect the prevailing view. The Nicomachean Ethics seem to reflect discussions in both the De Anima and the Metaphysics: the rational part of man's psyche is subdivided into passive and active functions, the latter being independent of earthly activities and engaged in 'thinking about thought'; its activity is divine in the sense that it is what God does. In giving it absolute priority over the political life which occupies the larger part of his ethical treaties, Aristotle has subjected the unity of his ethical system to a strain which many consider is too great to be borne. The contemplative man may, to some extent, be integrated into other areas of Aristotle's philosophy. He may be linked with psychology (since he is performing a mental function which has no activity as an end), with metaphysics (since he is a kind of unmoved mover), and with ethics (since his activity is truly self-sufficient). But none of these possible connections appear to be necessary. Perhaps in his old age Aristotle reverted, in feeling rather than logic, to the contemplative philosopher of the Republic VI-VII; but since he has abolished the Platonic concept of the single good and seems in this work to have also abandoned the concept of God as the object of contemplation, there is no clear object of contemplation except, perhaps, contemplation itself. Like his master, Aristotle has in part abandoned the optimistic synthesis of his earlier work and returned in his old age to earlier ideas.

So far, many scholars would agree with me (though many would not). But I believe that there is a second kind of reversion detectable in the Nicomachean Ethics which has not been generally noticed; the reversion, which I have tried to document, to the traditional code of honour. It is the combination of these two retrogressions (since they are in mutually inconsistent directions), rather than either of them by itself, which has created

50 Especially De anima, III, v (430a10-25); Metaphysics, XII, ix (1074b15-35) and vii (1072b15-31). These passages are themselves the object of much scholarly debate.

51 EE I, viii (1217bl-1218b7); EN I, vi (1096all-1097a14).

52 Contrast EE VIII, iii. 16 (1249b20) and fn. 38 above. For a full discussion see Gauthier and Jolif, pp. 848-860 with refs. They go on to discuss (pp. 860-66) the question of whether the contemplative life can be combined with other lives, but I think that their positive answer is refuted by Adkins (op. cit. [fn. 49]) and Koury (op. cit. [fn. 11]); however, the topic is highly controversial since EN IX, ix. 3 (1169b17-22) seems to contradict EN X, vii.
the extreme tensions perceptible in that work. The tension between EN X, vii and viii cannot be resolved. The contemplative life is self-sufficient in the highest possible degree, but it does not earn honour in itself, nor does it allow time for the pursuit of honour as a side issue. The politically active life aims at honour, the greatest of external goods, but is to some extent dependent on others for the granting of that honour, and does not provide for the highest good, which is internal.

It is time to remember that the postulated development of Aristotle's thought relies upon an hypothesis, that of Jaegar, which put the Eudemian Ethics before the Nicomachean Ethics. The danger of a circular argument is clear; we must not date the works on the grounds that they show a postulated development of thought, and then use the dating as evidence for the development. Do the discussions of honour in the two works provide any evidence independent of such development, which could justify the relative dating and avoid the vicious circle?

I believe that they do. There is surely a good deal of reason to believe that the fuller work is the later. I have found that the tendency in revising my lectures is to indefinite expansion, and that excisions are made only in response to the external tyranny of the timetable and the curious insistence of one's colleagues that they, too, have a valuable contribution to make. Aristotle had no such constraints. This argument is, no doubt, rather subjective; I believe that the list of the virtues is a stronger one. I cannot believe that Aristotle could ever have taken the logical ordering of the Nicomachean Ethics and disarranged it to produce the chaos of the Eudemian Ethics. This argument can, therefore, reinforce those of Jaegar and justify his relative dating. If this dating stands, then so does the development of thought which has been the main topic of my article. Clearly the link between the Nicomachean Ethics and Athenian upper-class values is very close; Aristotle, unlike his ideal contemplator, is deeply involved in the ethos of his own society, and this involvement had had a

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greater effect on the structure of his ethical treatises, especially the *Nicomachean Ethics*, than is generally realised, perhaps greater than he himself realised.\(^5^4\)

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