Introduction

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Aristotle's ethics are the most important in the history of Western philosophy. However, precisely how his ethics have mattered over the centuries has varied enormously. Additionally, present knowledge of Aristotle's influence on his successors ranges widely. There is much to be said about both the significance of Aristotle's ethics for his successors and the spectrum of effects they had on them. The essays collected in the present volume speak to precisely these issues.

In this brief introduction, I want to prepare readers for the essays by elaborating on the general orientation of the volume. I shall also explain the criteria used for selecting philosophers or philosophical eras to include in the book. Finally, I shall say a little about the contributors themselves. Something I will not attempt is a summary of the contents of the chapters. While the details will obviously vary, the basic thrust or main aim of the thirteen chapters is highly similar. I will present this common aim here and let readers go to the chapters for the details.

So let me begin with the general orientation of the volume. It aims to provide an account of Aristotle's reception from ancient times to the near present. It does so by pairing Aristotle with thirteen of his successors. These successors vary from philosophical eras to individual philosophers. In all cases, the accounts given include *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and conceptual analysis. Since these terms can be interpreted differently, I should explain how they are used in the present instance.

Insofar as the essays are doing *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, they are clarifying Aristotle's actual influence on the persons or eras included in their scope. This is a matter of history. As such, the authors have dealt with historical issues such as the availability and circulation of Aristotle's texts as well as the actual mention of those texts in the writings of the persons or eras they are addressing. Here are some questions they might tackle:

Do we have reason to believe that the person/era had access to Aristotle's ethical treatises? If so, do we have reason to believe that he or they read those works? If they did read them, do we have reason to believe they read them with care? What evidence is there to show that Aristotle's ethical views affected the views of the person/group being discussed? Is it more likely or more accurate to think that an Aristotelian ethical perspective was important to the person/group than Aristotle's?

In some instances (e.g., Roman philosophy), these questions remain open. Where that is the case, the author has argued his own view of the correct answers. In other instances (say, thirteenth-century Scholastic philosophy or nineteenth- and twentieth-century Anglo-American philosophy), they are reasonably settled. If so, then the contributor has just summarized the facts for the benefit of those readers who may not know them.

In addition to *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, the essays make conceptual comparisons between Aristotle's views and those of his heirs. Here authors were given more license and, not surprisingly, they have conducted their investigations in different ways. For example, the chapter on Augustine concentrates on happiness, whereas the next chapter, on Plotinus, seeks to align broader features of Plotinian ethics to Aristotle's.

On a different matter, authors have argued either for or against the influence of Aristotle's ethics on those receiving them. Thus, the author of the chapter on Hellenistic philosophy argues for Aristotle's importance to the Hellenes. Conversely, the author of the Kant chapter supports the "traditional theory" that Aristotle and Kant's ethics are "fundamentally opposed to each other." Likewise, the chapter on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Anglo-American ethics shows Aristotle's nugatory contributions to ethics for many decades starting in the mid-1800s.

There is a third way in which the conceptual analyses of the different chapters vary. Those chapters addressing whole schools or eras had to be very selective in choosing which material to discuss. So they tended to provide different kinds of selections. Some authors chose to make generalizations about entire schools or eras (see, e.g., the chapter on Arab and Islamic reception or that on the seventeenth century). Alternatively, others focused on individual philosophers (see the chapter on the fourteenth century).

Though the authors were given license to conduct their conceptual analyses in ways that they deemed appropriate, they always discuss the engagement of Aristotle by his heirs. Moreover, though *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and conceptual analysis are identified here as two separate objectives, authors

have not always pursued them independently. Indeed, they have often achieved one in the course of dealing with the other.

Such is the general nature of the essays. Now a word on the criteria employed when deciding which philosophers or eras to include in the volume. First, I wanted to provide as complete a history as possible, beginning with Aristotle's immediate successors and continuing to the present day. Since it would be impossible to include everybody, I devised two main selection criteria: first, the philosophers or eras to be included had to be especially important to the history of ethics; second, the philosophers or eras had to be those whose intersection with Aristotle was either problematic or interesting. While the list of philosophers or eras that satisfy those criteria remains very long, the thirteen covered by the individual chapters certainly exemplify them.

Now, I anticipate criticism along the lines of "how could you exclude so-and-so?" Fair enough. For example, given the current flourishing of scholarship on post-Kantian philosophy, gaps in the present volume's coverage include Hegel and other nineteenth-century German philosophers. Another gap arguably lies in the very recent past. Where Chapter 13 leaves off with the rise of Aristotle in the second half of the twentieth century, another essay could pick up the trail by expanding on developments since then – looking at, say, how Donald Davidson drew on Aristotle's account of the practical syllogism when he worked out his philosophical psychology, or the Aristotelian themes of Martha Nussbaum's moral and political philosophy. My only reply to these criticisms is that the volume cannot cover everything. My hope is that readers will find the coverage comprehensive enough to merit their interest.

Turning to the authors I have enlisted, they faced a challenging assignment. They had to possess adequate knowledge of two great philosophers or groups of philosophers: Aristotle and his heirs. They had to be able to express this knowledge succinctly, since they would only have one chapter. Finally, they would have to undertake both *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and philosophical analysis at high levels.

To find a suitable roster of authors, I consulted with experts at various institutions in many different countries. As I did so, it became clear that I should look beyond Philosophy Departments. A key reason for this is that the linguistic demands of certain sub-fields made it highly likely that some of the best candidates would be working in fields outside Philosophy. Indeed, the group of authors ultimately settled upon comes from Classics,

History, Islamic Studies, and, of course, Philosophy. Given this diversity, it is not surprising that the character of the essays varies from the highly philosophical to the more historical. Nevertheless, all of the authors were cognizant of the twin goals of the volume, and each offered (to the best of his or her ability) both *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and philosophical analysis.

So that is the book, in broad outlines. If it is successful, it will appeal to those interested in the history of ethics. Since no single person is likely to know about Aristotle's reception by all the figures it covers, everyone who is interested in the history of ethics will find something of value.

CHAPTER I

The Nicomachean Ethics *in Hellenistic philosophy*
A hidden treasure?

Karen Margrethe Nielsen

Writing the reception history of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*N.E.*) in Hellenistic philosophy is, arguably, an impossible task. The problem is not simply the paucity of evidence. We have no direct citations tying any doctrine discussed by Epicurean, Stoic, or Academic philosophers to views explicitly defended by Aristotle in the *N.E.*, nor any direct evidence for familiarity in the Cyrenaic or Megarian schools. For all the evidence shows, Aristotle's *N.E.* was not cited by any philosopher outside the Peripatos in the period from the death of Alexander (323 BC) to the year Cicero wrote *De Finibus* (45 BC).[1] That brings us almost all the way up to the year that is conventionally considered the end of the Hellenistic period, 31 BC. Even in the Lyceum Aristotle's voice falls strangely silent after the death of his successor Theophrastus of Eresus in *c.* 287 BC.

   The lack of any direct reference proving that the *N.E.* was read in the Hellenistic period is perplexing in light of its profound impact on later ethical theory. But it need not trouble us if we can find strong reasons to infer that particular features of Stoic or Epicurean theories are best explained as developments of Aristotle's ethics. Thus, David Furley has

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[1] The passage appears in Cicero (2001, II.19), where Cicero states that Aristotle defined the highest good ("ultima bonorum") as "virtutis usum cum vitae perfectae prosperitate" – which is a grammatically condensed version of the definition Aristotle gives of *eudaimonia* in *N.E.*I.11, 1101a14–17: happiness is activity in accord with complete virtue, with an adequate supply of external goods in a complete life. The definition has no direct parallel in the *Protrepticus*, *Eudemian Ethics* (*E.E.*), or the *Magna Moralia* (*M.M.*). The corresponding passage in the *E.E.* (II, 1219a25–1219b8) omits reference to external goods, as does the *M.M.* Insofar as Cicero's presentation of Peripatetic ethics in *De Finibus* is based at least in part on Theophrastus, we may wonder whether the apparent citation may not have been mediated by Theophrastus, thus standing at one remove from the *N.E.* itself. However, Piso's reference to a work called the *Nicomachean Ethics* in V.12 proves that Cicero knew of the *N.E.* He would therefore not have *had* to rely on Theophrastus for the definition. In his magisterial study, Moraux (1973–84), vol. I, 50–51, wonders whether Cicero may have relied on summaries in compendia, doxographies, or manuals in his presentation of Peripatetic ethics. But even if Cicero did make use of summaries, the direct reference to *N.E.* makes it unlikely that such summaries were his *only* source.

argued that Epicurus' account of the voluntary attempts to solve problems arising from Aristotle's discussion of responsibility for character in *N.E.* III.5 (Furley (1967), 184–209).[2] Similarly, A. A. Long has maintained that the Stoic category of "things in accordance with nature" and the attendant distinction between appropriate acts and successful acts develop essentially Aristotelian insights while equipping nameless Aristotelian categories with convenient labels. According to Long, "The Stoics borrowed many concepts, sometimes altering their language, from the Peripatetics and consciously developed or diverged from others . . . Stoic ethics cannot be completely understood without reference to Aristotle" (Long (1968)). Brad Inwood has reached a similar conclusion regarding Stoic action theory: "The early Stoic theory of human and animal action was influenced by Aristotle as much as was Epicurus'."[3] More recently, Terence Irwin has revived the late Hellenistic view that the disagreements between Stoic and Aristotelian ethics are less profound than critics tend to recognize. Irwin (1990) resists Antiochus' view that the Stoics are merely recasting Aristotelian points in "violently paradoxical" language, for according to Irwin the Stoics are providing an important service by making clear Aristotle's true commitments.

In addition to these more recent attempts to explain features of Hellenistic ethics with reference to Aristotle, there is an older tradition going back to von Arnim and Dirlmeyer for thinking that the Stoic theory of *oikeiosis* develops an observation first made by Theophrastus.[4] Dirlmeyer even claims to find antecedents of the notion in Aristotle's use of the verb *sunoikeiousthai*, which occurs five times in the *N.E.* (Dirlmeyer (1937), 79–80). Dirlmeyer's speculative views have been dismissed, but the idea

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[2] In his review of Furley, Irwin (1980) observes that *N.E.* III.5 has no exact parallel in the *E.E.* (or in the *M.M.*, though the latter work is usually considered spurious). Irwin remarks that "Furley does not argue in detail that Epicurus refers to the *EN* rather than the *EE* or the Common Books," but he nevertheless maintains that there are good reasons to suppose that Epicurus must have been familiar with the specifically *N.E.* treatment of the voluntary. Kenny (1978) maintains that Epicurus was drawing on *E.E.* VIII.2. Irwin (1980, 339) responds that the arguments presented here are "much less detailed and much less appropriate to Epicurus," in particular his preoccupation with proving that some of our actions have their origin in us.

[3] Inwood (1985), 9. Inwood does not argue in detail for his contention, stating that "I do not want to claim that the early Stoics were replying in detail to this or that Aristotelian text." He nevertheless draws attention to striking parallels between the two treatments.

[4] For the now mostly discredited attempt to find a basis for the Stoic concept of *oikeiōsis* in Theophrastus, see von Arnim, (1926), 157–61, and Dirlmeyer (1937). These attempts are rejected by Pohlenz (1940), 1–47; Brink (1956); Pembroke (1971) and Moraux (1973–84), vol. 1. Sandbach (1985) endorses their view, and is followed by Long (1998).

that there are sufficiently important points of contact to allow late Hellenistic authors to expound Aristotle's theory of self-love and friendship in Stoic terms has found a champion in Annas (1990), who argues – more cautiously – for reading the Stoics' *oikeiosis* theory as a philosophical descendant of questions about self-regard and other-regard first raised by Aristotle in his treatment of friendship.

Whatever merits these arguments may have when considered individually, they nevertheless exemplify a type of reasoning that has the potential to fill the gap left by the absence of direct references to the *N.E.* in the extant Hellenistic sources: inferences to the best explanation. Taking as our explanandum the appearance of a term, phrase, image, or argument in a Hellenistic source, we may infer that the feature in question is best explained on the hypothesis that the author was familiar with the broad outlines of Aristotle's ethics, or, more specifically, with one or more of the ten books that make up our *N.E.* or one or more of the eight books that make up our version of *E.E.* Direct evidence is not the only kind of evidence there is. In light of the dismal state of the Hellenistic sources we should take particular care not to treat the lack of direct evidence *for* familiarity with Aristotle's ethics as evidence of a *lack* of familiarity. By way of illustration, Diogenes Laertius reports that Chrysippus produced 705 scrolls of papyrus, none of which survive; he credits Epicurus with 300 scrolls and calls him "quite a prolific writer"; we possess three letters, the *Kuriai Doxai*, and a handful of fragments. Treating the lack of direct evidence as an indication that Aristotle's ethics was unknown or ignored in the Hellenistic age would be an argument *ex silentio* in a setting where our sources are mostly silent.

The question is whether individual attempts to trace such influence succeed, or whether they are just so many blank cheques. Inferences to the best explanation are only as convincing as rival explanations are unconvincing, and many critics, led by the Cambridge scholar F. H. Sandbach, have held that there are general reasons to be skeptical of the type of inference drawn in the work of scholars who assert that Aristotle exerted an influence on the Stoics.

Sandbach writes: "Such indications as there are point only rarely to Aristotle as the probable, let alone the certain, origin of Stoic doctrines." Sandbach reaches this conclusion through a study of earlier efforts to connect aspects of Stoic logic, ethics, and physics to Aristotle's extant works. Dismissing what he takes to be unsubstantiated claims to the contrary, Sandbach adds:

I hold even more strongly that it is a mistake to proceed on the a priori assumptions that the Stoics must have known the opinions expressed in [Aristotle's] school-works, must have understood his importance *sub specie aeternitatis* and must therefore have been influenced by him. (Sandbach (1985), 56–57)[5]

In assessing claims about influence, we should be wary of treating the appearance in *N.E.* of terminology later employed by the Stoics as proof that the Stoics were developing Aristotle's ideas. As Annas underlines, "verbal parallels prove nothing if the concepts in question are clearly distinct" (Annas (1990), 86). Insofar as many of our sources for Hellenistic ethics date to the first century BC, when doxographers did not hesitate to employ terminology from one school in expounding the theories of another, we should be particularly reluctant to treat a seemingly "Aristotelian" term in our Stoic source as proof positive that the Stoics inherited the term from him. The overlap may simply reflect the doxographer's syncretism. But although the appearance of verbs such as *sunoikeiousthai* or *katorthoun/katorthousthai* in the *N.E.* does not prove that Aristotle influenced Stoicism, the conceptual role played by such terms is close enough to merit further investigation. While the same terms may hide conceptual differences between two schools, different terms may furthermore hide conceptual agreement. It would therefore equally be a mistake to proceed on the *a priori* assumption that all apparent points of contact are purely coincidental. In the final part of this chapter I will examine Zeno's description of the happy life and compare his views to those expounded by Aristotle in *N.E.* 1. While Zeno promotes his own views as radical departures from tradition, he frequently intervenes in the debate in a way that is best explained on the assumption that he was responding to Aristotle.

This is not to deny that alternative explanations are frequently available. All the Hellenistic schools – with the exception of the Cyrenaics[6] – share the eudaimonist ethical framework developed by Plato, and their ethics can be summarized as different responses to a handful of fundamental questions: What is the nature of *eudaimonia*? Is virtue sufficient for happiness? Does happiness require an adequate supply of external goods, and if so, can happiness be augmented by a greater supply of external goods? Insofar as Aristotle's assumptions can frequently be traced back to Plato, a common ancestry may explain why a Stoic position sometimes looks

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[5] Sandbach's critique is seconded by David Sedley, who remarks that "Aristotle's own positive teachings appear to have been relatively neglected in the Hellenistic period" (Sedley (1998), 353).

[6] The Cyrenaics treat the happy life as a collection of episodic pleasures. These are the Cyrenaics' primary objects of pursuit. For a discussion of the Cyrenaics' purported "aprudentialism," see Warren (2001), 167.

eerily Aristotelian. Before we infer an Aristotelian influence, we should therefore ensure that considerations favoring an Aristotelian source could not equally well support a common Platonic source.[7] It would further-more be a mistake to reduce the question of influence to a question of agreement. That Plato influenced Aristotle can hardly be doubted, but it is equally certain that Aristotle's development of Plato's ethics took the form of a critical reappraisal. Aristotle expressly responds to his predecessors, recasting ethics as a dialectical enterprise. The Stoics did not position their views by expressly relating them to views defended by their predecessors. This means that *we* must identify the positions to which they object by rationally reconstructing the moves in the dialectical exchange in which they took part. If we identify the heart of Zeno's ethics, points where he presses paradoxical views in defiance of tradition, we can reasonably expect to discern the contours of his targets.

I. ARIUS DIDYMUS AND CICERO

The evidentiary situation in the late Hellenistic period (first century BC) is strikingly different from that of the third and second centuries BC. Two late Hellenistic authors display detailed knowledge of Aristotle's ethics.

In Stobaeus' compendium of ancient philosophical schools, *Eclogae* II, 116–152, we find a summary of "The Ethics of Aristotle and the Other Peri-patetics." This summary has been traced back to a compendium written by the mid-first century BC Stoic Arius Didymus. Arius' presentation of Peri-patetic ethics draws heavily on Stoic terminology. Julia Annas has argued persuasively that this cannot simply be written off as "mindless eclecticism" on Arius' part. It is not that Arius did not know better, and interspersed Stoic terms in his exposition of Aristotelian ethics in blissful ignorance that the terms are nowhere to be found in Aristotle's ethics. Nor is Arius trying to prove that Aristotle really agreed with the Stoics on most or all important points. Instead, Arius proceeds on the assumption that using Stoic terms to express Aristotelian thoughts is philosophically unproblem-atic. The philosophical lexicon has changed – why not use fashionable Stoic terms to illuminate the ideas of a school that is no longer dominant, the Peripatetics? This tendency toward terminological syncretism persists in the work of later commentators, as the surviving account of Aristotle's

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[7] It is furthermore commonly agreed that the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle's "popular" exhortation to philos-ophy, was in circulation from the early Hellenistic period. In the *Protrepticus*, Aristotle's ethical views are still strongly reminiscent of those found in Plato's *Republic*.

ethics in Alexander of Aphrodisias' *De Fato* (late second century AD) attests. Arius' own sources are uncertain, but the compendium shows that Aristotle's ethical views were fairly well understood by the middle of the first century BC.

Are there reasons to posit acquaintance with Aristotle's ethics before the first century BC? The earliest reference to "*The Nicomachean Ethics*" by name is contained in a remark in Cicero's *De Finibus* V.12. In the course of expounding the Peripatetic view of the supreme good, Piso, the spokesperson for the "harmonizing" view of Antiochus of Ascalon, expresses reservations about Theophrastus' emphasis on the role that good fortune plays in promoting happiness. In his work *On the Happy Life* (now lost), Theophrastus denied that happiness was entirely in the power of the wise person, insisting instead that happiness can be diminished or destroyed by external bad fortune. Piso remarks:

This position, though, seems to me, if I may say so, too soft and delicate to do justice to the power and weight of virtue. So I shall confine myself to Aristotle and his son Nicomachus. Now the elaborate treatise on ethics is attributed to his father, but I do not see why the son should not have matched the father. We can still follow Theophrastus on many points, provided that we allow virtue a more robust strength than he did.

As Kenny has observed, the remark presupposes that there were other ethical treatises bearing Aristotle's name in circulation at the time.[8] Whether this was the *Eudemian Ethics* or the *Magna Moralia* or some hybrid treatise is a matter of speculation. The question raised by Piso is whether Aristotle should be considered the author of the Nicomachean treatise, a question he answers in the negative.[9]

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[8] The dramatic date of *De Finibus* V is 79 BC. Cicero and Piso are attending lectures by Antiochus of Ascalon in the revived Academy in Athens, now housed in the Ptolemaeum. After touring Colonus, Sophocles' village, earlier in the day, Piso experiences the philosophical equivalent of Jerusalem syndrome while touring the grounds of Plato's Academy in the afternoon: "Those little gardens just nearby not only bring Plato to mind, but actually seem to make him appear before my eyes. Here come Speusippus, Xenocrates and his pupil Polemo, who sat on that very seat we can see over there" (Cicero (2001), V.2).

[9] The remark also reveals that there was a debate internal to the Peripatetic school about the role of fortune in happiness. Cicero acknowledges that the discussions of the supreme good in the Peripatetic school sometimes appears inconsistent, but he writes this off as a result of the division between two kinds of books, the popular "exoteric" works and the more specialized treatment in the "notebooks" – the school works that Aristotle calls "esoteric." To Cicero, Aristotle's treatment may have seemed to place less emphasis on external goods like health, wealth, friends, beauty, political power, good birth, and good children than Theophrastus' because Cicero read *N.E.* X as stating that wisdom is sufficient for happiness: "The way of life that [the Peripatetics] most commended was one spent in quiet contemplation and study. This is the most god-like of lives, and so most worthy of the wise person. Some of their most noble and distinguished writing is to be found on this theme" (V.11).