

THE ELEATIC STRANGER'S METHOD IN ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS

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This article examines Aristotle's method for defining the concept of happiness in his *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean ethics*. In particular, the article draws attention to a methodological passage (*Eth. Eud.* 1.6 1216b26–35), in which he claims that 'If we start from what is truly yet not clearly spoken, clarity will be won as we make progress'. This expression comes from Plato's *Statesman* 275a and 281d. Aristotle then seems to adopt the Eleatic stranger's method in two ways to clarify the initial imprecise statement that happiness is the greatest and best of human goods: first, he distinguishes a target object from other similar objects, and second, he refers to appearances as illustrations to clarify more abstract ethical concepts. This analysis illuminates the influence of the later Platonic method on Aristotle's ethics from a new angle.

1. Varieties of Aristotle's methods of ethics

Controversy continues as to what method Aristotle uses in his ethical enquiry. In the recent literature, it is widely agreed that dialectic does not play a central role in defining the highest good in ethics, i.e. the concept of happiness (εὐδαιμονία). Certainly, Aristotle applies what is called the 'endoxic method' (as formulated in *Nicomachean ethics* [*Eth. Nic.*] 7.1 (or *Eudemian ethics* [*Eth. Eud.*] 6.1)¹ 1145b2–7) when he examines the problems of the weakness of will (ἀκρασία). The endoxic method sets out people's common beliefs or appearances, goes

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¹ For a discussion of the chronological issue between these two ethical treatises, see Bobonich (2006). I follow the standard view that *Eth. Nic.* was written after *Eth. Eud.*, though I leave aside this chronological issue (compare Kenny (2016), especially 'Reconsiderations 2016', 272–305). The present article hopes to explore the

through puzzles and attempts to prove the common beliefs by resolving the puzzles.² This endoxic method is, however, not identical with dialectic. As Brunschwig (1967) xxii–xxiv, Devereux (2015) 131–4 and Fink (2012) 2 put it, dialectic is the art of rule-governed debates between a questioner and an answerer in public. It is directed at someone else and concerned with opinion, not necessarily with the truth (*Topics* [Top.] 1.1 100a8–b23; 1.14 105b30–31; 8.1 155b7–16). To be sure, Aristotle considers common opinions in his ethical enquiry, but he does so only when he compares his own outlook with other people's ideas, such as in *Eth. Nic.* 1.8, after he has formulated his view of happiness. Thus, dialectic is not key to characterising Aristotle's method for formulating ethical concepts.³

Recent studies draw attention to the philosophical, scientific aspects of Aristotle's method of ethics and claim that his scientific method is key to reaching the truth (Karbowski (2015, 2019), Natali (2010), Nielsen (2015)). They refer to Aristotle's *Posterior analytics* [*An. post.*] as a basis for his view of science, treat his method of ethics as aimed at a demonstrative explanation, not a dialectical explanation, and explore how he uses demonstrative arguments for formulating the first principle of ethics – the concept of happiness. However, a demonstrative argument *per se* cannot prove its first principle; rather, it lays down the principle as an assumption from which it explores its subject. How to define the concept of happiness is a major issue of the Aristotelian methodology.

In what follows, I will examine the *Eth. Eud.* method first, because in the light of this version it is possible to illuminate the characteristics of the *Eth. Nic.* method more clearly. In particular, I will draw attention to the less-known method, expressed in *Eth. Eud.* 1.6 1216b26–35, where Aristotle says, 'If we start from what is truly yet not clearly spoken (ἐκ γὰρ τῶν ἀληθῶς μὲν λεγόμενον οὐ σαφῶς δέ), clarity will be won as we make progress'. This expression comes from Plato's *Statesman* 275a and 281d.⁴ Aristotle then seems to be influenced by the Eleatic stranger's method⁵ in clarifying the initial unclear statement that happiness is the greatest and best of human goods. This influence of Plato's *Statesman* on

methodological similarities and differences between Aristotle's two ethical treatises. As to the text of *Eth. Nic.*, I have followed Bywater (1984), unless stated otherwise, and have regularly consulted Crisp's (2014) and Irwin's (1999) translations. As to the text of *Eth. Eud.*, I have followed Walzer and Mingay (1991), unless stated otherwise, and have regularly consulted Inwood and Woolf's translation (2013) and Kenny's (2011). As to translations of Aristotle's other works, I refer to Barnes (1984), unless stated otherwise. In following Bekker's (1960) edition, I refer to the 'common books' (*Eth. Nic.* 5–7 = *Eth. Eud.* 4–6) as part of *Eth. Nic.* (though the common books seem to have belonged originally to *Eth. Eud.* and to have later been transposed to *Eth. Nic.*).

2 For descriptions of the endoxic method, see Devereux (2015) 135 and Scott (2015) 189. For discussions of the traditional view that Aristotle's method of ethics is dialectical, see Barnes (2011) and Owen (1986b).

3 For a summary of this type of doubt, see the most recent monograph on Aristotle's method of ethics (Karbowski (2019) 4–5). See also Devereux (2015) 140–1 and Zingano (2007).

4 For this suggestion, see Burnet (1900) xliii, though Burnet (1900) 251 assumes that the *Eudemian ethics* was written by Eudemus. Cf. *Eth. Eud.* 2.1 1220a15–18, 8.3 1249b5–6, *Eth. Nic.* 6.1 1138b25–26 and *De anima* [*De an.*] 2.2 413a11–13.

5 This method is argued in the *Statesman* within a framework for the well-known 'Platonic' method of division, but I describe it as 'the Eleatic stranger's method', because Plato may not identify the stranger's arguments with his own views. For discussions of Plato's position, see Annas and Waterfield (1995) xxii–xxiv, Rowe (1995) 8–11 and Wallach (2001) 336. As to the translations of Plato's works, I use Cooper (1997), unless stated otherwise.

Aristotle's *Eudemian* methodological passages seems to me to illuminate the method for defining the concept of happiness in Aristotle's two ethical treatises. Daniel Devereux (2015) and Joseph Karbowski (2015, 2019) examine the *Eth. Eud.* passage (1.6 1216b26–35) in detail, but do not draw attention to this influence.⁶ Although Karbowski (2019) 51 maintains that 'Aristotle's [negative] attitude towards dialectic constitutes a major break from his Platonic legacy', I think that the influence of the later Platonic method on Aristotle deserves more attention in the literature on ancient philosophical methodology.

In section 2, I will explore what method Aristotle uses in *Eth. Eud.* to define the concept of human happiness. In particular, I will illustrate how Aristotle begins with the true yet unclear statement and clarifies it by distinguishing the target concept from other similar concepts and using examples as illustrations. In section 3, I will argue that this method is influenced by the Eleatic stranger's arguments offered in Plato's *Statesman*. I will also explore how the stranger and Aristotle differ in their formulations of argument. In section 4, I will explore the similarities and differences between *Eth. Eud.* and *Eth. Nic.* and show how *Eth. Nic.* also reflects the *Eth. Eud.* method in some way to define the concept of human happiness, even though *Eth. Nic.* does not make explicit the *Eudemian* method in its methodological passages. Overall, the current article seeks to illustrate the Platonic background for Aristotle's ethical enquiry. The appeal to a Platonic antecedent will illuminate the characteristics of Aristotle's method from a new angle.

2. The *Eudemian ethics* method

For our consideration of the method that Aristotle adopts to define the concept of human happiness in *Eth. Eud.*, the following passage is of special importance:

(1) In all these matters we must try to seek conviction through argument, using the appearances as witnesses and examples. (2) For the best situation is that everyone be in manifest agreement with what we are going to say; if not so, that everyone should in some fashion agree, as they will do after a change of mind. (3) For each person has some affinity with the truth, and it is from these that one must prove one's case on these issues in one way or another. (4) For if we start from what is truly yet not clearly spoken, clarity will be won as we make progress, continually

6 Karbowski (2015) focuses on the difference between the *Eth. Eud.* method and the endoxic method, not on the relation between the two ethical treatises, in defining the concept of happiness. He treats the *Eth. Eud.* method as aimed at demonstrative explanation, not dialectical explanation. For discussions of the *Eudemian* method as a quasi-mathematical deduction, see also Allan (1961) and Jost (1991). Karbowski's recent monograph (2019) also stresses the importance of a demonstrative explanation and does not explore the relationship between Plato's *Statesman* and Aristotle's methodology. In contrast, Devereux (2015) examines the *Eudemian* methodology from the angle of the endoxic method and points out parallels between ethical and scientific enquiries.

substituting what is more known for what is usually spoken of indiscriminately (Eth. Eud. 1.6 1216b26–35, the sentence numbers inserted).⁷

There are three things to note here. First, it is not specified what the term ‘appearances’ (φαινομένοις) means in (1). The term could mean either sense-perceptions or opinions that people form from their observations.⁸ The quoted text in (3) seems to suggest that everyone has some cognitive faculty for perceiving the truth, and that their ethical enquiry relies on this faculty. At b31, ‘from these’ (ἐξ ὧν) does not have an antecedent in a plural form but presumably picks up οἰκεῖόν τι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν (lit. ‘something akin to the truth’), signifying appearances that people have collectively. The ‘for’ (γὰρ) in (3) implies that this manner of enquiry helps to reach an agreement with others, as stated in (2), and the ‘for’ (γὰρ) in (2) suggests that this agreement is a form of seeking conviction through argument by using appearances. There is a need to examine what appearances one is going to use as witnesses and examples and how.

Second, in (2) Aristotle considers it second best that everyone will agree after a change of mind. What is unclear is how people change their mind. The term (μεταβιβάζω) has a Platonic background. In *Phaedrus* 262b, Socrates considers that one cannot lead others little by little through similarities away from what is the case on each occasion to its opposite without knowing what each thing is. In its wider context, Socrates criticises rhetorical art as a way of directing the soul by means of speech (ψυχαγωγία τις διὰ λόγων) (261a).⁹ Aristotle also acknowledges the significance of understanding what the case is, as expressed in (3) and (4). His remark in (3) and (4) resists the argument that is not concerned with the truth. How then does Aristotle change the course of his argument to clarify the concept of happiness?

Third, it is also unclear what Aristotle means by ‘what is truly yet not clearly spoken’ in (4). Clarity (τὸ σαφῶς) seems to be contrasted with what is usually spoken of indiscriminately (συγκεχυμένως). The phrase οὐ σαφῶς at 1216b33 is translated into ‘not clearly’ (Inwood and Woolf (2013), Woods (1992)), ‘unenlightening’ (Kenny (2011)) or ‘obscurely’ (Solomon (1984)). When something is obscure or vague, however, it is difficult for us to tell whether it is true or not, though Aristotle here states that the initial views are expressed truly and unclearly. Furthermore, he is going to clarify the initial views by introducing what is more known (τὰ γνωριμώτερα). This is a typical Aristotelian

7 In Greek: πειρατέον δὲ περὶ πάντων τούτων ζητεῖν τὴν πίστιν διὰ τῶν λόγων, μαρτυρίαις καὶ παραδείγμασι χρώμενον τοῖς φαινομένοις. Κράτιστον μὲν γὰρ πάντας ἀνθρώπους φαίνεσθαι συνομολογοῦντας τοῖς ῥηθησομένοις, εἰ δὲ μὴ, τρόπον γέ τινα πάντας, ὅπερ μεταβιβαζόμενοι ποιήσουσιν· ἔχει γὰρ ἕκαστος οἰκεῖόν τι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἐξ ὧν ἀναγκαῖον δεικνύειν πῶς περὶ αὐτῶν· ἐκ γὰρ τῶν ἀληθῶς μὲν λεγομένων οὐ σαφῶς δὲ, προῖοῦσιν ἔσται καὶ τὸ σαφῶς, μεταλαμβάνουσιν αἰεὶ τὰ γνωριμώτερα τῶν εἰωθότων λέγεσθαι συγκεχυμένως.

8 Nussbaum (1986) 244 does not draw a sharp distinction between perception-data and communal beliefs but points out a loose notion of ‘experience’, ‘or the way(s) a human observer sees or “takes” the world, using his cognitive faculties’.

9 For other uses of this term μεταβιβάζω, see Plato, *Gorgias* 517b and *Laws* 5 736d.

term by which he means either what is more known to us or what is more known by nature. The text does not specify which. Therefore, there is need to explain the meaning of clarity (τὸ σαφές) and the method of making clear by introducing what is more known.

In order to address these problems, it is necessary to explore how Aristotle presents the argument that follows. In *Eth. Eud.* 1.7, he adopts this method, referring to the methodological remark as a prologue (1217a18–21). The starting point of enquiry that is spoken of correctly yet unclearly is people's view that happiness is the greatest and best of human goods (*Eth. Eud.* 1.7 1217a21–22). To clarify this view, Aristotle first notes that his argument is concerned about 'human goods', though there might be happiness for some other being such as god (1217a22–24). Next, he draws two distinctions in *Eth. Eud.* 1.7. First, good things are achievable by human action or not; some things are not performed by humans because some things are not susceptible to change though they might be by nature the best of all things, such as order in the universe. Second, the things achievable by human action are the things for the sake of which we act – that is, the purposes of actions – or the things we do for the sake of these purposes. He concludes that happiness is the best of the things achievable by human action (1217a39–40).

He develops this view in *Eth. Eud.* 2.1 (in *Eth. Eud.* 1.8 he criticises Plato's form of the Good and does not advance his own view). At the very beginning, he lays down three assumptions: that good things are either within a soul or external to it and the former is better than the latter; that among things in a soul, some are states or capacities, while others are activities and processes; that virtue is the best disposition, state or capacity of any thing that has some use or function. As to this third assumption, he verifies it by induction, using the examples of a cloak, a boat and a house. Subsequently, he goes on to argue that the function of a thing is better than its state, because the function is a purpose, which is the best for the sake of which other things exist. Furthermore, he identifies the function of a soul with providing life, and that of virtue with an excellent life. From these considerations he concludes that happiness is the activity of the good soul. The reason is that happiness is the best thing, which lies in an activity or function, not a state, and within a soul, not external to it. He adds that happiness is a complete thing, and for this reason it is the activity of a complete life, not a short life, in accordance with complete virtue (*Eth. Eud.* 2.1 1218b31–1219a39).¹⁰

To sum up, Aristotle draws several distinctions and leads the readers or audience in the direction of an account developed from these distinctions to define the concept of human happiness. Although the initial view was indistinct, it becomes clearer that happiness is the activity of a complete life in accordance with complete virtue. The initial view might be mistakenly interpreted as the claim that happiness is the state of a human soul in a short life, but after being elaborated by argument, it means specifically that happiness is identical with exercising complete virtue in a complete life. The initial statement is not wrong. It is true that happiness is the greatest and best of human goods (*Eth. Eud.* 1.7

¹⁰ For details of the logical structure of the argument here, see Woods (1992) 85–8.

1217a21–22). However, it is too imprecise to offer useful insights for sharing the view of happiness. After reflection, the initial view becomes more precise and helpful in defining the meaning of happiness.¹¹

Hence, the term μεταβιάζω does not necessarily mean to change minds radically, but rather to lead the argument in one specific direction and clarify the initial imprecise assumption. Aristotle uses this term (μεταβιάζω) in *Top.* 1.2 to mean ‘changing the course of an argument’ in a conversation with ordinary people (101a33). In its wider context, he points out three manners of the use of dialectical studies: exercise, encounters and philosophical sciences. As to the second manner, Aristotle says that a dialectician will speak to the public ‘not from the beliefs of others, but from their own beliefs, changing their minds about anything they may seem to us not to have stated well’ (101a31–34, trans. Smith (1997)).¹² Furthermore, in *Top.* 8.11, this term expresses the appropriate manner of dialectical persuasion. Aristotle distinguishes between dialectical and eristic discussion in that the former is a cooperative work whereas the latter is abusive. A dialectician can persuade his interlocutor by offering an argument stemming from what the interlocutor believes is the case. Aristotle supports this manner of persuasion in saying that ‘anyone who is to change minds well must change them dialectically, not contentiously’ (161a33–34, trans. Smith (1997)). Therefore, this term implies that the method aims to persuade the public with reference to what they believe to be the case.

Eth. Eud. has another argument that relies on the same method. At the end of *Eth. Eud.* 2.1 (1220a15–18), he again states that we must investigate ethical virtue ‘so as to try, always by working through what is expressed truly but unclearly, to arrive at what is both true and clear’ (ὥστε ἄξι διὰ τῶν ἀληθῶς μὲν λεγομένων οὐ σαφῶς δὲ πειρᾶσθαι λαβεῖν καὶ τὸ ἀληθὺς καὶ σαφῶς). As examples of true yet unclear views, he states that health is the best disposition of the body and that Coriscus is the darkest-skinned fellow in the marketplace. These statements do not yet express the features of each in detail but offer an initial clue to having a deeper understanding of each.¹³

The subsequent argument is an application of this method: first, he lays down the true but unclear assumption that the best disposition is brought about by the best things, and that the best actions for each thing result from the virtues of each. These assumptions

11 Karbowski (2015) 204–5 argues that Aristotle’s formulation of human happiness takes the form of ‘demonstration’, i.e. a causal account of the necessary features in terms of the essential property, with reference to *Eth. Eud.* 1.6 1216b35–39. Karbowski draws a sharp contrast between a demonstrative account and a dialectical account and treats the *Eth. Eud.* method as the application of the former. It seems to me, however, that it is somewhat misleading to describe the *Eth. Eud.* method as ‘demonstration’, because Aristotle does not demonstrate the necessary features of happiness from his own definition of happiness. Karbowski (2015) 205 himself says that Aristotle ‘is only working towards the first principles, not proceeding demonstratively from them in the treatise’.

12 Jacques Brunschwig (1967) 116 argues that in this context Aristotle’s dialectician seeks not primarily to correct the logical process of the common argument, but to revise the views of the public, though the term ‘well’ means the good logical form of argument in other contexts.

13 However, it is doubtful whether we can know what a particular individual is, because according to Aristotle we cannot define particulars which are perceived (*Metaphysics* [Metaph.] Z.15 1039b27–1040a7).

are clarified by induction from examples such as exercise and food; a good physical condition is brought about by the best exercise and food. He applies this general notion to virtue and asserts that virtue is a disposition of this kind, which is brought about by the best movements of the soul. Here the initial assumption is clarified, not by leading the argument in one specific way, but rather by way of examples. What appears to us is used to understand the initial assumption better.

In the aforementioned argument, an inductive argument from more intelligible examples is offered at the beginning of *Eth. Eud.* 2.1. There, the assumption that virtue is the best disposition, state or capacity of each of the things that have some use or function is verified by induction (1218b37–a5); a cloak has a virtue or excellence since it has a function or use. The same applies to a boat and a house, and hence to the soul. Here, as elsewhere, the general assumption is true but unclear at first, but it is made clearer with the help of familiar examples. This approach corresponds to the methodological passage (*Eth. Eud.* 1.6 1216b26–35), where Aristotle says that we should use ‘appearances’ as witnesses and examples. Therefore, ‘appearances’ are what are intelligible to people that help them to agree with more abstract, general assumptions.¹⁴

At the end of *Eth. Eud.* 1.6 (1217a10–17), Aristotle again warns us that we should pay attention to appearances as well as to the points made by an argument. It is a good idea to distinguish between inferences and conclusions, because unless we regard the appearances, we have no choice but to accept what is being inferred. Here, the appearances are expected to play a vital role not only in clarifying an abstract concept of ethical values, but also in doubting what is asserted in discussion and offering an alternative perspective, even if we cannot refute the argument. Appearances are not the starting points or assumptions from which ethical beliefs are demonstrated, but are rather evidence or examples in the light of which we can examine the soundness of an assumption or piece of reasoning.¹⁵

In (4) of the methodological passage, Aristotle maintains that we must substitute ‘what is more known (τὰ γνωριμώτερα) for what is usually spoken of indiscriminately (συγκεχυμένως)’ (*Eth. Eud.* 1.6 1216b33–35). *Physics* [Ph.] 1.1 is very helpful in clarifying these concepts. He claims that we must ‘advance from what is more obscure by nature, but clearer to us, towards what is clearer and more knowable by nature. Now what is to us plain and clear at first is rather confused masses (συγκεχυμένα), whose elements and

14 Karbowski (2015) 213 correctly argues that appearances are ‘a heterogenous lot, including *endoxa*, empirical observations, and information garnered from ordinary life experience’. Aristotle does not entirely trust our faculty for empirical recognition and recognises that not every appearance is necessarily true, except when our perception is involved with its own object (*Metaph.* Γ.5 1010b1–3). An appearance is true in one perspective only (*Metaph.* Γ.6 1011a17–24). In *Metaph.* Z.3 1029a33–b12, he also maintains that what is known to us is less intelligible by nature, although we should use it as a starting point to reach what is known by nature. See also Devereux (2015) 143 about the use of appearances in *Eth. Eud.* and its methodological relevance.

15 This is also a piece of evidence for the view that Aristotle is influenced by Plato’s *Phaedrus* 262a–c, in which, as discussed previously, Socrates also argues that we need to know what the case is in order not to be deceived by argument.

principles become known to us later by analysis' (184a19–23). In this context, he claims that in physics we aim to know the principles, causes or elements of natural objects. To this end, we should begin from what is known to us, i.e. a whole that is more perceptible (184a24–25), and analyse it in terms of its elements. For example, the circles we perceive are indistinct, including their variations. By way of analysis, a circle can be defined as a plane figure with all points on its circumference equidistant from a given point. This analysis of its defining elements serves to distinguish a complete circle from similar ones. Aristotle raises another example: children first call all men 'father' and all women 'mother' indiscriminately. Subsequently, they come to recognise the distinctions of father, grandfather, uncle etc. The children's initial understanding of 'father' is unhelpful in specifying who, but drawing distinctions serves to identify whom they call.¹⁶

There are, however, differences between Ph. 1.1 and Eth. Eud. 1.6: in the former the confused masses are perceived objects while in the latter what is confused is the general statement about which common people also agree. Furthermore, in the former the confused masses will be defined in terms of their elements or causes, whereas in the latter the confused statement will be replaced by the more precise formulation. In the Eth. Eud. methodological passage, therefore, what is more known (τὰ γνωριμώτερα) is presumably what is more known without qualifications and not what is known to us. In the clarification of happiness, the initial uninformed view that happiness is the greatest and best of human goods is elaborated into its more precise statement.¹⁷

Hence, the Eth. Eud. approach (i.e. beginning from a true but unclear statement) is not absolutely identical with the standard version of the Aristotelian method that we should start from what is known to us in order to recognise what is known by nature without qualifications (cf. *Metaph.* Z.3 1129b1–12).¹⁸ Usually, what is known to us is a familiar example or an evident case. The initial unclear statement is, however, not what is known

16 See Charlton (1970) 51–2 for a discussion of how to treat these examples. See also *An. post.* 2.2 (71b33–72a5) and *Top.* 6.4 (141b3–14) for the distinction between what is known to us and what is known by nature or without qualifications. Burnet (1900) xxxix–xlili introduces Aristotle's method of ethics as dialectical with reference to this concept 'things known to us'. Irwin (1988) 347 and Kraut (2006) 88 also think that what is known to us is identical with the starting point of dialectical enquiry. However, the expression 'things known to us' does not necessarily imply people's common beliefs, although it can include them.

17 In Plato's *Republic* 524C, Socrates says that 'Sight too saw the great and the small, we say, not separated (κεχωρισμένον) but confounded (συγκεχυμένον τι)' and that 'for the clarification (σαφήνειαν) of this, the intelligence is compelled to contemplate the great and small, not thus confounded (συγκεχυμένα) but as distinct entities (διωρισμένα), in the opposite way from sensation' (trans. Shorey (1935)). The perception of the confounded properties forces us to reflect further on what is great and small. Although here Plato's Socrates does not develop the method of division, there is a similarity between Plato's Socrates and Aristotle in that both take confused perception as the initial step for us to seek to clarify properties. If we find someone both happy and unhappy and cannot draw a clear distinction, we seek to consider what happiness is. In *Eth. Eud.*, however, the initial imprecise statement is involved not with the contradictory description of one object but with the abstract concept of happiness. This is also a piece of evidence for Aristotle's selective reception of Plato's argument. I owe this connection with Plato's *Republic* to an anonymous reader.

18 Compare Bobonich (2006) 26 for assimilating the *Eth. Eud.* approach to the standard version. In section 4, I shall examine this standard Aristotelian doctrine used in *Eth. Nic.* in detail.

by our perception in this sense, but rather an abstract statement about which common people agree. This abstract statement is clarified during the process of the argument, with reference to clearer examples. Thus, the standard version of the Aristotelian doctrine is incorporated within this approach.

To sum up, in *Eth. Eud.*, Aristotle takes two main approaches to the clarification of ethical values. First, he refers to appearances or examples to clarify the abstract concepts of ethical values. Second, he clarifies ethical concepts by drawing distinctions and leading the argument in the direction of one specific position. The initial true but unclear view is developed by these two approaches, so that it becomes a more precise account verified by more recognisable examples. Aristotle claims that one must prove (δεικνύναι at 1216b32) the initial assumption by taking these two approaches. Here ‘proof’ is not deductive demonstration from first principles. Rather, it is either an inductive inference from clear examples to the general statement or making the initial statement more precise by leading the argument in one specific direction.¹⁹

3. The Platonic background for Aristotle’s method

This section will show that the Eleatic stranger’s method in Plato’s *Statesman* offers an important background for Aristotle’s *Eudemian* method.²⁰ Plato’s *Statesman* influences Aristotle enormously, as it was written in the mid-360s (Wallach (2001) 335), when Aristotle began studying in the Academy. On the one hand, it is well known that Aristotle criticises Plato’s *Statesman* in many respects. In the beginning of the *Politics* [Pol.], he doubts that the positions of statesman, king, household manager and master of slaves are the same (Pol. 1.1 1252a7–16). In its book 1, he explains how they differ by dividing a polis into its constituent parts and distinguishing a polis from a household.²¹ Although he derives his six-fold scheme of constitutions from Plato’s *Statesman*, the standards for distinguishing between correct and deviant constitutions are not identical.²² More importantly, Aristotle criticises the Platonic method of division in *Prior analytics* [An. pr.] 1.31, *An. post.* 2.5 and *On the parts of animals* [Part. an.] 1.2 and 3. It is, however, well known that Aristotle uses the method of division to define a target object. Deslauriers (1990) 208 claims that ‘Plato’s aim was not primarily to classify but to define [...]’.

19 See Burnyeat (1996) for a discussion of Aristotle’s less demanding notion of proof. Burnyeat sees that Aristotle’s induction is not primarily associated with probability but with inferences from several like cases.

20 This view differs from Kenny’s introduction in his translation (2011) xi, in which he says, ‘nothing remains, for example, of Jaeger’s argument that the EE is closer to Plato, and therefore earlier, than the NE’. Recently, however, Kenny (2016) 302–3 reconsiders a Platonic reminiscence in the *Eth. Eud.*

21 As to Aristotle’s rejection of the Eleatic stranger’s thesis, see Schofield (1990) and, more recently, Brown (2020). Schofield (1990) argues that in Pol. 1 Aristotle adopts not the endoxic method but the method of analysis that appeals to reason, and that he seeks to explain the different forms of ruling.

22 Cherry (2012) draws a very sharp distinction between Plato’s *Statesman* and Aristotle’s *Politics*, especially as to the purpose of politics. Inamura (2019) contrasts their typologies of constitutions.

Aristotle indicates the same concern when he maintains that a definition proper must express what the thing defined really is'.²³

Our task lies in the examination of how Aristotle incorporates the stranger's method in his enquiry for defining ethical concepts. By the stranger's method, I mean the enquiry beginning from a true yet unclear statement and aiming to define a target object by distinguishing it from other similar objects and using illustrations. Aristotle uses this stranger's method not for the classification of various objects or for the deductive demonstration of a statement but for the definition of a concept. It is an age-old question whether it is more fruitful to stress that Aristotle is an anti-Platonist or an independent Platonist. It seems better to me to emphasise, rather than to understate, Aristotle's Platonic background, at least for his method of defining ethical concepts.²⁴

Aristotle adopts the Eleatic stranger's method when he seeks to define ethical concepts such as happiness and virtue. The key phrase to analysing this reception lies in (4) of the methodological passage (Eth. Eud. 1.6 1216b26–35), where Aristotle suggests that we should begin from what is truly yet not clearly spoken. As mentioned in the abstract that begins this article, this expression comes from Plato's *Statesman* 275a and 281d. In 275a, the Eleatic stranger is undertaking a task in defining a statesman's rule and considers it 'true but incomplete and unclear' (ἀληθές, οὐ μὴν ὅλον γε οὐδὲ σαφές) that a statesman is one who rules a state as a whole. He recognises that he failed to explain how a statesman rules²⁵ and goes on to elaborate this view, first, by treating the art of a statesman in a broader category – some sort of expertise in 'herd-keeping', 'looking-after' or 'caring for' (275e). He prefers 'caring for' to 'rearing' as its title (276c–d). Second, he distinguishes between divine herdsman and human carer. He also divides the art of human carer into management by constraint and that by consent (276d). This division is necessary for distinguishing kingship from tyranny because their manners of ruling are totally different. Thus, he defines the art of statesman or king as 'the herd-keeping that is voluntary and relates to two-footed living things' (276e).

The Eleatic stranger is, however, not fully satisfied with this definition. He says, 'our account, just like a portrait, seems adequate in its superficial outline, but not yet to have received its proper clarity' (277b–c). This statement also implies that the earlier view serves as an outline for enquiry, though it is not yet perfect. The stranger first draws a rough sketch for the target object. Next, he seeks to give the accurate picture of it by drawing several distinctions. The initial account is true in outline but too indistinct or unilluminating to reach the target.

In the context of 281d, the stranger seeks to define the art of weaving, considering his initial statement to be 'something true, but not clear or complete' (τι ἀληθές, οὐ μὴν σαφές

23 See also Balme (2003) 101–19 and Falcon (1997) concerning the issues of how Aristotle incorporates, criticises and develops the Platonic method of division.

24 See Sedley (2010) for a discussion of Aristotle's Platonism as to global teleology.

25 Originally, he gives this definition in 267c, categorising a statesman's rule as a part relating to a two-footed flock, concerned with rearing of human beings. He recognises this definition as an incomplete account.

γε οὐδὲ τέλειον) that weaving is the finest and most important process in the production of woolen clothing. He goes on to elaborate this view, first by distinguishing between a contributory cause and a direct cause (281d). The expertise relating to the former does not make the thing itself but provides tools. As to wool-making, contributory causes are the skills of making spindles and shuttles. The expertise relating to a direct cause is the skill that brings the product to completion. The skills of carding and spinning are this type of expertise in wool-making and the stranger gives them the title ‘wool-working’ (282a). Next, he divides the skill of wool-working into two: the expertise of separation and that of combination. He treats the skill of carding as the former. As to the expertise of combination, he distinguishes between the skill of twisting and that of intertwinning. The skill of twisting is the manufacturing of firm warp and soft woof. Finally, he defines the art of weaving as the skill of intertwinning warp and woof to produce woolen clothes (283a).²⁶

In Plato’s *Statesman*, thus, the stranger elaborates the initial true but unclear view by drawing many distinctions and advancing the argument in the direction of an account given by the introduction of distinctions. The stranger asserts that he and young Socrates will not have a clear or complete view until they remove all of the skills relating to woolen clothing from the art of weaving (281d). The initial view is true in including the target object, but it is too broad to provide useful insights into a statesman’s rule. The method of articulating a true and clear view is dividing the closely related types and offering a precise account of the target object. When the stranger eliminates all the similar but unnecessary objects from the target, he offers its clear and complete account. By ‘clarity’, thus, the stranger means ‘precision’.

The Eleatic stranger does not use his method for classifying various phenomena, but for specifying the target object. He compares this use to gold-refining (303d–e). Gold refiners need to remove earth, stones and plenty of other materials. They also separate from pure gold something akin to it – copper, silver and adamant. In the similar manner, the stranger has distinguished sophists and demagogues from a genuine statesman. He also separates military art, judicial judgement and political rhetoric from statesmanship. The method of division is primarily used for removing unnecessary elements and identifying the target object of statesmanship (262a–b, 268c, 291c, 292d). The stranger compares himself with hunters or trackers (263b, 264a, 285d).²⁷ Aristotle receives this manner of using the method of division for identifying a target object. He is a good student of

²⁶ See figure 5.2 in Sayre (2006) 107 for an illustration of the stranger’s division of arts related to weaving. Sayre distinguishes between the *Statesman* and the *Sophist* in that in the former the stranger relies on models rather than collection to identify necessary conditions of the target object and uses the method of elimination to arrive at sufficient conditions (pp. 111–12).

²⁷ See Brown (2010) 154–5 for a useful discussion concerning the role of the Platonic method of division. She argues that in Plato’s *Sophist* and *Statesman* the stranger uses the method of division for defining a sophist and a statesman rather than for developing taxonomy. However, she also points out that Plato may aim to offer the taxonomy of at least three types of people – sophist, statesman and philosopher.

Plato, as he adopts the method of division not for classification but for the definition of a concept that is initially expressed in an imprecise statement. Given that Aristotle is greatly influenced by the later Platonic works, it is likely that his methodological ideas are also shaped by this Platonic method of division to define the concept of human happiness.

Furthermore, in the *Statesman*, the task of defining the art of weaving is a part of a broader project of defining statesman-rule; the art of weaving is used as an analogy for statesman-rule. Before introducing the art of weaving, the stranger explains the details of how this illustration works; in 277d, he first says, 'It's a hard thing, my fine friend, to demonstrate any of the more important subjects without using models' (μὴ παραδείγματα χρώμενον). By offering the example of letter-reading, he describes the point of using models as comparing something they know to something else – that they have not yet recognised (278a–c).²⁸ He is going to gain expert knowledge of the statesman-rule or kingship through the use of an analogy, i.e. by examining less significant cases and transferring our attention from them to the most important issue, kingship (278e). The term παράδειγμα is the same as that in the *Eudemian* methodological passage, where the appearances are intended to be used as illustrations. This Platonic background also confirms that Aristotle is referring to 'appearances' as something familiar, and through them illuminates something else that we do not yet have a clear notion of: the concept of human happiness.²⁹

The Eleatic stranger uses the term παράδειγμα not to mean one particular example but to refer to a general concept that is formulated after examining many examples (278b, 278c). In the stranger's method, a model is needed to argue about what can be recognised not by our perception, but only through our language. In the context of 277e–278c, what can be recognised by our perception is construed as becoming a model only after it is examined in many different contexts.³⁰

The stranger explains this characteristic of a model by using the example of reading letters in the syllables. Children first learn letters in the easiest and shortest syllables and next try to identify the same letters in other syllables. If they fail to recognise the letters, they are required to compare what they can recognise with what they cannot, until they

28 See also Plato, *Republic* book 2 368d–369a, in which Socrates argues that justice writ large is easier to understand and that it helps to understand justice writ small. Sayre (2006) 97 rightly argues that the term παράδειγμα should be translated into 'a paradigm' or 'model for' rather than 'an example', as weaving is not an example of statesmanship.

29 For a discussion of the influence of Plato's method in the *Sophist* on Aristotle's *Metaph.* A.3, see Barney (2012) 100–4. She draws attention to 'testimony' or 'witnessing' as a piece of evidence for claiming a close connection between Socratic dialectic and Aristotle's method. She refers to the *Eth. Eud.* 1.6 passage (1216b26–35) and discusses the role of clarification-dialectic in Aristotle's *Metaph.* A.3.

30 Sayre (2006) 73–4 understands that in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* the term παράδειγμα carries the sense of pattern or model in many other contexts rather than the sense of a particular example of a general notion. He points out four criteria for using something as a model: (1) its familiarity to the learner; (2) sharing essential features with the primary object of enquiry; (3) being less significant than the primary object and (4) being verbally expressed (Sayre (2006) 79–81). See also Lane (1998) 47 for a summary of these four criteria. Lane (1998) 90–3 and Sayre (2006) 73–4 describe the wide variety of uses of παράδειγμα in Plato's works.

can identify the letters in all syllables. At this point, they are creating a model by distinguishing one letter from different letters in all syllables. The stranger sums up the epistemological role of a model by saying that it issues a single judgement about the same thing in different objects (277e–278c). What is easily recognised by our perception in one context is not identical with a model. To be a model, it must be examined in other contexts so that we can judge a case in any context. Soon afterwards, the stranger clearly says that one should not begin from false beliefs, even to get to a small part of the truth (278e). He suggests that we should examine a model carefully before using it to clarify a more important concept.

Aristotle technically uses the term *παράδειγμα* to mean an inductive or analogical inference from evident cases. In his *Rhetoric* [Rh.] 1.2, he compares *παράδειγμα* (which is usually translated as ‘example’) in rhetoric with induction in dialectic: ‘when we base the proof of a proposition on a number of similar cases, this is induction in dialectic and example in rhetoric’ (1356b14–16). This inductive inference is contrasted with deduction in dialectic and enthymeme in rhetoric. The latter is a proof that, when some propositions are true, a further distinct proposition must also be true universally or for the most part (1356b16–18). When it comes to example in rhetoric, Aristotle stresses that rhetoricians make inferences mainly from one to another similar case, rather than from similar cases to a general proposition. For instance, he says that ‘Dionysius, in asking as he does for a bodyguard, is scheming to make himself a despot. For in the past Peisistratus kept asking for a bodyguard in order to carry out such a scheme, and did make himself a despot as soon as he got it; and so did Theagenes at Megara’ (1357b30–33; cf. *An. pr.* 2.24 68b41–69a13). Although this inference implies the general principle that ‘a man who asks for a bodyguard is scheming to make himself a despot’, in Aristotle’s ‘example’ a rhetorician aims to reach a conclusion about a particular case.³¹

Aristotle points out that when one statement is more familiar than the other, the former is an example (1357b29–30). In *An. pr.* 2.24 (69a13–16), he also stresses that an example infers from one to another similar case and that the former case is familiar. In *Eth. Eud.* 2.1 1218b37–1219a6, as examined in the previous section, he refers to a cloak, a boat and a house as familiar cases to explain virtue in a soul. In 1220a22–37, he considers health as a model for explaining that any disposition is brought into being and destroyed by the same things. Here too, he draws a conclusion about a further distinct case – virtue – though he formulates the general principle.

Of course, the Eleatic stranger’s method is not identical with Aristotle’s. First, in the stranger’s arguments, the starting point for division is not what people generally agree

³¹ Aristotle understands that *παράδειγμα* has the generalising power, though Lane (1998) 94–5 denies it. Its key feature is that its conclusion is drawn about a particular case, whether from or without a generalising principle. Burnyeat (1996) 96–9 suggests that the appeal to example is ‘degenerate induction’, because an example takes a narrower evidential base. He argues that Aristotle weakens the requirement of induction in his *Rhetoric*, because Aristotle seeks to fashion the concept of ‘reasonable inference’. For a discussion of the antithropic relation between rhetoric and dialectic, see Brunschwig (1996).

about, but rather what he himself establishes. In *Statesman* 258b, he sets out the assumption that a statesman is a person who has knowledge, and goes on to divide the types of knowledge to define the characteristics of statesmanship. To be sure, he asks whether the young Socrates agrees with this assumption, but he does not treat this starting point as what seems to people at large to be true. In the context of 275b, the initial statement that a statesman is one who rules a city is not an agreed view, but rather a result of his own division. In contrast, Aristotle's starting point for ethical enquiry is people's view that happiness is the greatest and best of human goods (*Eth. Eud.* 1.7 1217a21–22). He begins from this common view in the hope that he can offer a more precise account of the target concept, happiness.

Second, in the stranger's framework, the relation between the two approaches – drawing distinctions and using a model – is clear; a model is needed to separate the target from other things. For example, the analogy of weaving is used to correctly distinguish the art of statesmanship from other arts. Just before introducing the art of weaving, he says, 'since tens of thousands of people dispute the role of caring for cities with the kingly class, what we have to do is to separate all these off and leave the king on his own; and it was just for this purpose that we said we needed a model' (279a). Creating a model serves to facilitate the process of separation. In contrast, Aristotle does not maintain that he refers to appearances to draw a wide variety of distinctions and change the course of an argument. Instead, appearances are used for defining an ethical concept, such as a function or disposition, from which he infers other ethical concepts.

To sum up, Plato's *Statesman* offers an important background for Aristotle's *Eudemian* method, though they differ in some respects. The Eleatic stranger begins arguing from a true yet unclear statement. He uses the method of division with the help of a model to clarify the initial statement. He can enhance clarity by making the initial statement more precise and explaining it from more evident cases. Aristotle uses this method to define the concept of happiness in the *Eudemian ethics*. Although Lane (1998) 94–7 draws a very sharp contrast between the stranger's method and Aristotle's rhetorical example, Aristotle adopts the former's philosophical method in the central topic of ethical enquiry.³² Certainly, he criticises the Platonic method of division in that it is useless for demonstrating a definition and classifying various species of creatures (*An. pr.* 1.31, *An. post.* 2.5 and *Part. an.* 1.2–3), but he does not discourage us from using it for the definition of a target concept. In fact, he does adopt it to define the concept of happiness by distinguishing the target object from its similar objects and using familiar examples. Aristotle incorporates the following features from the stranger's method:

32 Lane (1998) 94–7 argues that Aristotle's rhetoricians exploit the audience's prior sense of similarity and seek persuasive immediacy, whereas the stranger seeks a gradual and difficult development of an unprepossessing comparison. Her description holds true for rhetoricians, but Aristotle is more philosophical in his ethical enquiry. Rhetoric is not relevant at all for Aristotle in these contexts (whereas Plato is preoccupied throughout with distinguishing what he is doing from rhetoric).

(1) beginning from a true yet unclear statement; (2) separating the target object from its similar objects and (3) using examples to explain an abstract concept. Aristotle was Plato's student for two decades and underwent philosophical training in the Academy. Again, it is more fruitful to stress, rather than neglect, the fact that Aristotle learned from Plato's *Statesman* that an imprecise concept can be clarified by leading the argument in the direction of one specific position and referring to familiar examples.

4. The *Nicomachean ethics* method

In the light of *Eth. Eud.*, *Eth. Nic.* also can be interpreted as using the *Eth. Eud.* method to some extent. To clarify this point, this section will examine the following three elements: first, the *Eth. Nic.* methodological passage; second, the *Eudemian* elements used in defining the concept of human happiness in *Eth. Nic.*; and third, methodological differences between *Eth. Nic.* and *Eth. Eud.* It is beyond the scope of this article to consider every ethical topic and conclude by determining which treatise was written earlier or later in Aristotle's career. The present article only aims to clarify the methodological relationship between the two versions.

First of all, the following well-known methodological passage is indispensable:

We should certainly begin from things known (τῶν γνωρίμων), but things are known in two ways; for some are known to us (ἡμῖν), some known without qualification (ἀπλῶς). Presumably, then, we ought to begin from things known to us. That is why we need to have been brought up in fine habits if we are to be adequate students of fine and just things, and of political questions generally. For we begin from 'the [fact] that' (τὸ ὅτι) [something is so]; if this is apparent enough to us, we do not need 'why' (τοῦ διότι) [it is so]. (*Eth. Nic.* 1.4 1095b2–7, trans. Irwin (1999))

This passage does not express the Eleatic stranger's method, but rather follows the standard Aristotelian doctrine that the starting points of enquiry are things known – more specifically, things known to us, not without qualification. As discussed previously, what is known to us is defined as what is nearer to perception. In *Eth. Nic.*, then, Aristotle suggests that we should start arguing from what is more accessible to our perceptive faculty to define abstract concepts of values.

Aristotle raises the same point in *Eth. Nic.* 2.2; he notes that we must make use of evident cases as witnesses (τοῖς φανεροῖς μαρτυρίοις χρῆσθαι (1104a13–14, cf. 1104a29–30)) for what is not evident, and clarify the concept of virtue as a mean by analogy with health and physical strength. He finds in health and strength the mean between excess and deficiency as an essential element for preserving a good condition, and finds the same characteristic in virtue as well, on account of the similarity between virtue as a disposition in a soul and health as a disposition in a body (see *Eth. Eud.* 2.3 for exploring the idea of virtue as a mean, and *Eth. Eud.* 2.1 relating to the fact that virtue is produced and destroyed by the same things, namely pleasure and pain).

Therefore, in *Eth. Nic.* as well as in *Eth. Eud.*, something that is empirically clear is used as evidence or illustrations.

Although these *Nicomachean* methodological passages do not state the use of the *Eudemean* method explicitly, the structure of the argument shows that it is similar to the *Eudemean* method. First, in the same way as *Eth. Eud.*, the *Eth. Nic.* argument starts its enquiry about the highest good by seeking to clarify people's unclear beliefs. At the very beginning of *Eth. Nic.* 1.4, Aristotle says that as far as its name goes, most people agree that the highest good is happiness, though they do not agree about what happiness is. Moreover, soon before engaging in the function argument in *Eth. Nic.* 1.7, he says that it is clearly agreed that happiness is the best good, but we still need a clearer statement of what the best good is (1.7 1097b22–24). Although he has already examined this view by considering the characteristics of the highest good in terms of finality and self-sufficiency, he offers the function argument to clarify people's unclear view. If *Eth. Nic.* was written later than *Eth. Eud.*, the *Eth. Eud.* framework is still used in *Eth. Nic.*³³

Second, the terms used in the function argument show that this argument refers to what is more known to us as illustrations. Aristotle writes, 'just as the good, i.e., doing well, for a flautist, a sculptor, and every craftsman, and, in general, for whatever has a function and action, seems to depend on its function, the same would seem to be true for a human being, if a human being has some function' (*Eth. Nic.* 1.7 1097b25–28).³⁴ He also argues, 'just as eye, hand, foot, and, in general, every part apparently has its function, should we likewise assume that a human being has some function apart from all of these?' (*Eth. Nic.* 1.7 1097b30–33).³⁵ As to the functions of craftspersons and parts of the human body, 'seems' (δοκεῖ) (1097b27) and 'apparently' (φαίνεται) (1097b31) imply that it is known to us that the function expresses the good of a skill, and that some function exists in each part of the human body. Furthermore, the optatives 'would seem' (δοξείεν) (1097b27) and 'should assume' (θεῖν) (1097b32) in the apodoses imply that the apodoses are not beliefs that people actually hold, but rather the consequences of inference from the protases. The apodoses are expected to work out an agreement, on the assumption that the explanation about skill or parts can be applied to the explanation about human virtue or humanity as a whole.

In *Eth. Nic.*, therefore, Aristotle's arguments for defining the concept of happiness include the *Eudemean* elements, first because the argument clarifies the initial unclear view that happiness is the highest good, and second because the argument defines an abstract concept according to what seems to people to be true. The standard Aristotelian doctrine

33 It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss contextual differences between *Eth. Eud.* 1 and *Eth. Nic.* 1. In general, in *Eth. Nic.* Aristotle discusses happiness in terms of finality and self-sufficiency, whereas in *Eth. Eud.* he does not do so explicitly in those terms.

34 In Greek: ὥσπερ γὰρ αὐλήτη καὶ ἀγαματοποιῶ καὶ παντὶ τεχνίτῃ, καὶ ὅλως ὃν ἔστιν ἔργον τι καὶ πράξις, ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ δοκεῖ τάγαθόν εἶναι καὶ τὸ εὖ, οὕτω δόξειεν ἂν καὶ ἀνθρώπῳ, εἴπερ ἔστι τι ἔργον αὐτοῦ.

35 In Greek: καθάπερ ὀφθαλμοῦ καὶ χειρὸς καὶ ποδὸς καὶ ὅλως ἐκάστου τῶν μορίων φαίνεται τι ἔργον, οὕτω καὶ ἀνθρώπου παρὰ πάντα ταῦτα θεῖη τις ἂν ἔργον τι;

does not contradict these elements, because what seems to people to be true is also used to illustrate an abstract concept. The initial true but unclear view only offers a framework for enquiry, within which the method of the standard doctrine can be used. The concept of happiness is made more precise from the agreed, unclear statement in *Eth. Nic.*

In *Eth. Nic.* 6.1, there is an additional example of Aristotle using the same approach as in *Eth. Eud.* At the very start (1138b25–26), he states, ‘to say this [i.e. that the mean states are in accordance with correct reason], though true, is not clear at all (ἔστι δὲ τὸ μὲν εἰπεῖν οὕτως ἀληθὲς μὲν, οὐθὲν δὲ σαφές)’. He then considers it necessary to clarify what correct reason is, and treats this problem as the task of book 6. Subsequently, he develops this argument by distinguishing various types of intellectual virtue, and at the end of book 6, he defines the concept of correct reason as practical wisdom (6.13 1144b27–28). In book 6, the initial unclear statement offers a basic framework for this enquiry, demonstrating that there is a need to clarify various types of intellectual virtue. In this approach, he leads the readers or audience in the direction of the distinctive characteristic of practical wisdom, which is separated from other intellectual virtues.

This is a piece of evidence in support of the view that the common books originally belonged to *Eth. Eud.*,³⁶ because of the similarity of the method. This also implies that the Eudemian framework remains in book 1 of *Eth. Nic.* to formulate the highest good in ethics. In *Eth. Eud.* 8.3 1249b5–6, Aristotle writes that ‘this [the requirement that action should be in accordance with reasoning] is true, but not clear (τοῦτο δ’ ἀληθὲς μὲν, οὐ σαφές δέ)’. In this context (*Eth. Eud.* 8.3 1249a21–b25), he discusses the definition (ὅρος) of good action by analogy with health in the same manner as he does in *Eth. Nic.* 6.1. There is a close similarity between *Eth. Eud.* 8.3 and *Eth. Nic.* 6.1.

Although I have been stressing the similarities between *Eth. Eud.* and *Eth. Nic.*, they do differ in some methodological respects. First, in *Eth. Eud.* Aristotle seeks to offer a scientific causal account of ethical concepts. He claims that ‘one should not, even when it comes to politics, regard as superfluous the kind of study that makes clear not only what something is but also its cause’ (*Eth. Eud.* 1.6 1216b37–39). According to the standard Aristotelian doctrine, we have scientific knowledge about an object when we know its cause (*An. post.* 1.2 71b9–12; 2.11 94a20; *Ph.* 1.1 184a10–16; *Metaph.* 1.1 981a28–b6). What Aristotle has in mind by a causal account in the Eudemian context is better construed with reference to *Eth. Eud.* 1.5 1216b20–21, where he says, ‘when it comes to virtue, knowing what it is is not the most valuable point, but understanding what brings it about’. Here, a causal account is meant to be an explanation of how to cultivate virtue.³⁷ In *Eth. Nic.*, by contrast, Aristotle does not think that offering a causal account is the primary task in ethics (cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1.4 1095b6–7, quoted previously). He asserts that one should not demand an explanation in the same

³⁶ For this view, see Kenny (2016).

³⁷ In the very beginning of *Eth. Eud.*, Aristotle raises the issue of how the good life is to be attained (1.1 1214a15) and regards nature, learning, training, habituation and fortune as the sources of almost every change (1.1 1214a28).

way in all cases. He says, 'A good proof that something is the case will suffice in some instances, as with first principles, where the fact itself is a starting-point, that is, a first principle' (Eth. Nic. 1.7 1098a33–b3, trans. Crisp (2014)).

Second, in Eth. Eud. Aristotle makes a universal statement about the concept of virtue by induction, whereas in Eth. Nic. he develops the concept of virtue by drawing an analogy between human virtue and other goods. In Eth. Eud., Aristotle refers to the term 'induction' (ἐπαγωγή) (2.1 1219a1–2, 2.1 1220a28–29 and 2.3 1220b30) and verifies the first premises or assumptions of his arguments inductively in the following two arguments: about virtue (2.1 1218b37–1219a5) and about the best disposition (2.1 1220a22–29) (n.b. there is no induction about the mean relative to us (2.3 1220b27–30)). What is characteristic in these Eudemian arguments is thus that they offer inductive arguments from particular examples in order to provide their comprehensive definitions, and deduce the concept of human virtue from those universal definitions.³⁸

In Eth. Nic., by contrast, Aristotle does not refer to the term 'induction' in the equivalent arguments at all, but rather offers those arguments by analogy. First of all, in the *Nicomachean* version of the function argument, he does not make a universal, general statement about goodness but instead draws an analogy, as discussed above, between a human and a craftsman, and between a human as a whole and the parts of a body. The terms 'just as' (ὥσπερ) – 'so' (οὕτω) and 'just as' (καθάπερ) – 'so' (οὕτω) clearly express the analogical formulation of this argument. The same pattern applies to other arguments (2.1 1103b13–14, 2.2 1104a14–27). Therefore, in Eth. Nic., he does not deduce the concept of human virtue from a comprehensive definition of functional activity or disposition, but instead applies the concept of skill and physical disposition analogously to the concept of human virtue.³⁹

This difference between Eth. Eud. and Eth. Nic. shows us that the Eth. Nic. argument is more elaborate in this respect at least.⁴⁰ One problem with the inductive argument is the question of whether virtue and other goods, such as health and skill, can be generalised to identify the concept of good. By contrast, although an analogical argument also draws attention to similarities between two objects, it can maintain a reservation about their differences. In fact, in Eth. Nic. 2.4 (1105a26–b5), Aristotle notes an important difference between virtue and skill in the sense that while having knowledge is one important condition for developing skill, it is not important for acquiring virtue. In the latter case,

38 Aristotle describes knowledge as developing from perceptive information, and universal principles as forming on the basis of the accumulation of our experiences (An. pr. 1.30 46a17–22, An. post. 2.19, Metaph. A.1). The method of ethics seems to follow this general description of acquiring knowledge, to the extent that it uses what is known by our perception to illustrate abstract ethical concepts. The Analytical basis for ethics is well examined in Karbowski (2015, 2019), Natali (2010) and Nielsen (2015).

39 There is one exception in a different version of function argument in Eth. Nic. 2.6, where Aristotle makes a general statement that 'every virtue causes its possessor to be in a good state and to perform their function well', by raising examples of the virtue or excellence of eyes, and that of a horse (1106a15–24).

40 For a different view, see Allan (1961) and Jost (1991). They argue that the more systematic argument in Eth. Eud. is developed by 'the later Aristotle'.

he argues, it is crucial for an agent to choose virtuous actions for the sake of the actions themselves on the basis of his stable, firm character. This remark is not made in *Eth. Eud.* Therefore, one point that Aristotle makes by analogy in *Eth. Nic.* refers to what is evident as good to explain the characteristics of virtue while retaining some reservation about the differences between various types of goods. Although he does not always draw a sharp contrast between induction and analogy (*Metaph.* Θ.6 1148a35–b9), and analogy is one type of induction in the sense that it infers from particulars, the way the arguments are formulated differs between the two ethical treatises. In this respect, the *Nicomachean* arguments are more elaborate versions of his argument about the human good than the *Eudemean* arguments.⁴¹

Furthermore, this fact shows us that *Eth. Eud.* is intended to offer a philosophically rigorous account (1.6 1216b35–40) and makes no remark about the difference in accuracy between mathematical and ethical arguments, whereas this difference is an important methodological claim in *Eth. Nic.* (1.3 1094b19–27, 1.7 1098a26–33). In *Eth. Eud.*, as previously discussed, ethical notions are inferred from general principles as in a mathematical argument. In *Eth. Nic.*, by contrast, ethical enquiry is not compared to mathematical sciences. Although *Eth. Nic.* also aims to clarify ethical concepts with reference to evident cases, it is less schematic than *Eth. Eud.* when formulating the general principles of ethics.⁴²

5. Conclusion

I have been examining the influence of the Eleatic stranger's method described in Plato's *Statesman* on Aristotle's method of ethics, thereby showing what method Aristotle uses for defining the concept of human happiness. To be sure, in some texts he downplays the importance of dialectical arguments (e.g. *De an.* 1.1 402b26–403a2, *Metaph.* Γ.1 1004b17–26), and the ideal type of knowledge for him takes the form of mathematical deduction from the first principles. However, in the process of formulating the first principle in ethics, he leaves room for the Eleatic stranger's approach.

The existing scholarly literature (Karbowski (2015, 2019), Natali (2010) and Nielsen (2015)) has been focusing on the issue of how Aristotle's *Analytics* offers a basis for his ethical enquiry. The present article has drawn attention to another type of argument that begins from what is truly but unclearly stated. This method plays an important role in both the *Eudemean* and *Nicomachean* ethics, to the extent that it offers a framework for defining ethical concepts. Moreover, it exemplifies the two approaches of distinguishing the target object from its similar objects and using illustrations to help clarify the initial

41 This is a piece of evidence for supporting Owen (1986a)'s view that Aristotle adopts a more schematic method in *Eth. Eud.* than in *Eth. Nic.*

42 Devereux (2015) 145–7 offers another account: in *Eth. Nic.* Aristotle becomes more concerned about the appropriate audience for his lectures on ethics and takes a more reserved attitude towards people's opinions about the nature of happiness.

imprecise statement. Although Aristotle uses a wide variety of methods in his ethics, this Eleatic stranger's method underlies Aristotle's ethical enquiry, especially when he defines the concept of happiness.

In the *Eudemian* methodological passage, he says that 'each person has some affinity with the truth' (1.6 1216b30–31: cf. *Eth. Nic.* 10.2 1172b35–1173a5; *Rh.* 1.1 1355a14–17). Ethical enquiry can begin from our initial beliefs on the assumption that our human nature has some affinity to truth. Unless some reasonable doubt can be offered on the formation of our beliefs, or there is some seeming contradiction found between them, we have good reason to use them as the starting points of enquiry. Aristotle's use of the stranger's method is based on this trust in our human cognitive faculty.⁴³

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43 How Aristotle uses the stranger's method in other works will be an issue of further research because this method seems to be used in other occasions (*Eth. Eud.* 2.1 1220a15–18). For example, *De an.* 2.2 413a11–13 is an important text, where Aristotle says: 'Since what is clear and more familiar in account (τὸ σαφές καὶ κατὰ τὸν λόγον γνωριμώτερον) emerges from what in itself is confused but more observable by us (ἐκ τῶν ἀσαφῶν μὲν φανερωτέρον), we must reconsider our results from this point of view'. Platonic antecedents, Aristotle's developments and the later generations' receptions will also be fields of further research.

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