[Chapter Nine]

Good, Bad, Better, Worse

Aristotle's arguments against Plato's Form of the Good have left a complex

legacy. When we explicate them, we find at a minimum that they are more complicated

than they first seem; we also find that they are not as decisive as the relatively brusque

presentations of them in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 and *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 can make them

appear. Even so, they raise legitimate questions about Plato's Form of the Good—about

its existence, about its explanatory efficacy, about it putative univocity, about its ideality,

about its use as a paradigm in deontological contexts. Aristotle's arguments show that

Plato's axiological commitments embroil him in difficulties, but they do not show that

Plato is incapable of mounting responses that a sympathetic critic would judge

satisfactory.

Easily lost in this dialectic is one evident advantage in Plato's metaphysics of

goodness, one that presumably served as a motivation for Plato's postulation of the

Form of the Good in the first place. This is that the Form of the Good, if it exists, serves,

precisely as Plato contends, as a paradigm for all good things, offering a sort of metric

by which any two things can be compared.[1] Although Platonic paradeigmatism needs

to be given content and made precise if it is to be defensible, there is some point in

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[1] On Plato's paradeigmatism, see Chapter One § I (vii).

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trying to do so.   If successfully articulated and defended, Platonic paradeigmatism

offers one key advantage to Plato's approach to rational choice: the Form of the Good

offers a single measure for weighing goods, what we might term a *propinquity metric*.

That is, in determining how to act, one can always appeal, ultimately, to the Form of the

Good as the ultimate adjudicator. The closer an action or state of affairs is to the Good,

the more it emulates the Good, the better it is. This is presumably why Plato finds

himself at liberty to assert, without qualification, that 'everyone seeks the things that

really are good. . . every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its

sake' (*Rep*. 505d8, dl, 1-el).[2] When given a choice, one will seek what is better, what is

really better and not merely apparently so. What is really better is what more closely

approximates the Form of the Good.[3]

Aristotle has complained that even if one were to grant its existence, the Form of

the Good would offer nothing by way of practical guidance in the conduct of our lives.[4]

Even if it could be shown to obtain, Plato's axiology would be, he thinks,

deontologically otiose. Aristotle asks, in effect, for some reason to suppose that Plato's

propinquity measure is practicable.

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[2]' ἀλλὰ τὰ ὄντα ζητοῦσιν. . . Ὃ δὴ διώκει μὲν ἅπασα ψυχὴ καὶ τούτου ἕνεκα
πάντα πράττει. . . ' (*Rep*. 505d8, dl, 1-el); Cf. *Gorgias* 462b2-6, *Meno* 77b, *Phaedo* 98c2-3.

[3] Cooper (1999, 144-145): One who knows the Form of the Good 'recognizes a single
criterion of choice: What, given the circumstances, will be most likely to maximize the
total amount of rational order in the world as a whole?'

[4] This contention is discussed in detail above in Chapter Eight.

One may thus ask fairly in return whether Aristotle's criticisms of Plato's Form of the Good yield a conception of goodness that fares better or worse in this regard. One may pose this question most fruitfully by supposing that the cumulative effect of Aristotle's assaults on Plato's univocity assumption succeed. Let us, then, simply grant them, as a hypothesis. Just as Aristotle contends, we will suppose that goodness is not 'something common, universal, and one ' (κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν, *EN* i 6, 1096a28). Having made that supposition, the question arises: how does Aristotle propose that we proceed in the absence of a Platonic propinquity measure? As soon as we pose this question, we uncover a deep tension in Aristotle's own axiology. This tension has immediate repercussions for his own deontology.

I. A Tension in Aristotle

On the surface, Aristotle's axiology embraces an inconsistent triad of propositions. Whether the inconsistency cuts very deep, or is in the end merely verbal, is unclear, and so a matter to be investigated. This sort of investigation is best served by stating the case against Aristotle as forthrightly as possible.

The inconsistent triad in question is this:

- Value Multivocity (VM): goodness is non-univocal.

- Value Commensurability (VC): For any value property ϕ, x and y are commensurable as ϕ only if x and y are univocally ϕ.

- The Commensurability of the Good (CG): good things are commensurable as good.

Taken unrestrictedly, these theses do seem to form an inconsistent triad. If goodness is non-univocal, then if value commensurability requires univocity, good things are incommensurable. If he holds that good things are commensurable, then Aristotle seems constrained to give up, or qualify, either Value Multivocity or Value Commensurability.

More fully, Value Multivocity tells us that goodness is non-univocal, that there is no single, non-disjunctive essence-specifying account of goodness. Value Commensurability denies that ϕ-things which are non-univocally ϕ can be judged relative to one another as ϕ-things. If Jacob is tall and Amber is tall, then we can readily determine which of the two, if either, is taller. It seems we have exactly three possibilities: Jacob is taller than Amber; Amber is taller than Jacob; or neither is taller than the other, because they are the same height. By contrast, if we say that Matisse's Blue Nude is blue, meaning that it exemplifies the colour blue, and that Camus is blue, meaning that he is suffering from *ennui*, we cannot readily determine which, if either, is bluer. So too for value predicates, including goodness: if goodness is univocal then we can in principle rank all good things as we rank all tall things, but if goodness is non-univocal, then at the very least we will need a special account of their comparability.

(One can rank them 'in principle' because even if perfectly univocal, there may be formidable epistemic problems to effecting the rankings.)

Yet Aristotle, who argues for the non-univocity of goodness, seems perfectly prepared to compare a broad cross-sections of goods as good: the activity of reason is better than the having of even a constellation of practical virtues in the absence of wisdom, for instance (*EN* x 7, 1077b17-26), and it is better to be a god than a human being (*EN* vi 7, 1141a20), and better to be a human being than a fish (*Gen. An.* i 23, 731a25-b4, 732b28-29). More generally, he seems perfectly willing to offer extremely broad, cosmic rankings, ranking god above humans and humans above non-human animals, the latter because reason is superior to perception.[5] Evidently, then, unless goodness is univocal across these applications, there is a question as to how he effects these rankings.

Immediately, however, we should take note of the fact that predicates can be univocal across one domain of application and non-univocal across another. This is because every judgment of univocity or non-univocity is domain-specific. So, every claim that ϕ is non-univocal is in fact shorthand for saying that '. . .is ϕ' is non-univocal as applied to a and b in domain Δ. So, for instance, '. . . is blue' will be univocal as applied to paintings by Matisse and the sky but non-univocal as applied to paintings and moody existentialists. By the same token, two things can be non-univocally ϕ but

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[5] See Bodnar (2005) for a discussion of this and like hierarchies. See also n. # below.

univocally ψ. Thus, a statue honouring Camus and Camus himself will be non-univocally humans and univocally masses. Indeed, taking both domain- and predicate-relativity together it is possible for a Jaguar to be costlier than a Mercedes in the domain of sticker prices but less costly than the same Mercedes in terms of its environmental impact—if the Jaguar is an expensive electric vehicle and the Mercedes a moderately expensive diesel vehicle.

These examples are fairly clear. Matters become comparatively murky when asking whether '. . .is good' applies univocally or non-univocally to some individuals in a given domain. Still, importantly, these sorts of examples show how Aristotle could consistently hold that good is non-univocal even while maintaining that *within* the indexed domain *good-for-humans*, wisdom is better than bravery or *eudaimonia* is better than pleasure. His offering this sort of comparison would certainly be consistent with his denying the existence of the Form of the Good. So, when asking whether Aristotle in fact embraces this inconsistent triad, one must bear in mind these sorts of qualifications.

Further, in general, if we are to arrive at a fair judgment about Aristotle's attraction to these three theses, some greater precision about their individual commitments is apposite. First, 'commensurability' is used in a variety of non-equivalent ways in rational choice theory. Properly speaking, we say that x and y are commensurable only if there is a common cardinal measure by which we may rank x

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and y. Even so, the term is often enough used in a more relaxed sense, such that

commensurability means simply 'ordinally rankable.' (A series may be ordinally

rankable even in the absence of a common cardinal measure.)[6] 'Commensurable' is

used here in the more relaxed sense of being ordinally rankable—without the additional

assumption that the ranking admits of a common cardinal measure.[7] This is all that is

required, at least initially, to pose the question about Aristotle's rejection of Platonic

univocity.[8]

Further, let us collapse value-bearers and values, by speaking of value-bearers

only in terms of values borne. Let us further say that values v^1 and v^2 are

commensurable (in our weak sense) only if there is a bridge value, v^3, in terms of which

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[6] There is a further terminological issue in rational choice theory, as between the phrases
'commensurable' and 'comparable'. Some, including Raz (1986) and Anderson (1997),
use these terms interchangeably. Others, like Stocker (1990) and Chang (1997), prefer
this stricter (and more appropriate, given its provenance) use of the term. So, Chang
(2015, 205): 'Two items are incommensurable just in case they cannot be put on the same
scale of units of value, that is, there is no cardinal unit of measure that can represent the
value of both items.' items' On this stricter use, incommensurability plainly does not
entail incomparability.

[7] Some, including Chang (1997) prefer 'comparable' over 'commensurable' for this
reason. That is understandable in one way, but I have avoided 'comparable' because
everything is comparable to everything else along some dimension. Generally
speaking, cheese is more expensive that cheese. It tastes better as well.

[8] A more fine-grained distinction may also be drawn, as between *strong* and *weak*
commensurability. Weak commensurability asserts ordinality between
any two domain-specific values, whereas strong commensurability requires a single
measure for ordering all values, across all domains. Aristotle does not overtly
distinguish strong from weak commensurability, but seems to accept strong
commensurability in cases where he accepts commensurability at all.

v^1 and v^2 can be compared as valuable. So, for instance, one may say that *political liberty* and *economic security* are commensurable, because both are autonomy-enhancing.[9] By contrast, there is at least a question about whether the values of being *elegant,* said of a performance of a Schubert Impromptu, and being *sturdy,* said of a house built on a coast prone to hurricanes.   These are both valuable features in their respective domains, but one should wonder whether the question of whether it is better to be elegant than sturdy. If, however, goodness is perfectly univocal, then it should be possible in principle to rank them. In terms of Plato's propinquity metric, the better is the one nearer to the Form of the Good. [10]

With that much in place, we can turn to the question of whether Aristotle states or implies each of our three theses in turn. We find that *prima facie*, he does. Even if that is so, however, it does not follow that this is final and considered judgment. We therefore need to consider challenges to this way of understanding him.

Value Multivocity: The first thesis is plainly endorsed by Aristotle. He says that goodness is not 'something common, universal, and one ' (κοινόν τι καθόλου καὶ ἕν,

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[9] Again, however, this too is a domain-specific ranking. Political liberty may be better than economic security in terms its being more autonomy-enhancing, yet worse in terms of its reducing world hunger. (So, e.g., Kurt Weill: 'Until you feed us, right and wrong can wait.')

[10] This is putting matters unsubtly for clarity. Plato can of course add *ceteris paribus* clauses, allow of context sensitivity, organicism, and to allows judgements to reflect a consideration of all things relevant. That is to say, then, that it is not a consequence of Platonic univocity that one could simply rank the virtues atomistically on a scale. See Oddie (2001) on axiological atomism and additivity.

EN i 6, 1096a28). We should note, however, that there are various ways of denying the

univocity of goodness, some quite mild and others more extreme. The most modest

way of doing so would be simply to deny the existence of the Form of the Good,

conceived as a single univocal good against which all good things are measured. This is

in effect, however, nothing more than a denial of an ultimate bridge principle, in terms

of which all values can, ultimately, be commensurated. So modest a denial leaves room

for a great deal of domain-specific commensurability. Let us, then, term this a principle

of *minimal value multivocity:*

- Minimal Value Multivocity: There is no ultimate value property such as the

  Form of the Good in terms of which all subordinate values can be

  commensurated.

That Aristotle accepts minimal value incommensurability seems without doubt. Yet it is

important to note that his doing so is consistent with his holding to commensurability

in this or that domain, where domains may be variously specified. In general, minimal

value incommensurability is consistent with local commensurability relative to a given

indexed good. For instance, consistent with his endorsement of minimal value

incommensurability, Aristotle could maintain that the predicate '. . .good for human

beings' is perfectly univocal, such that everything good in that domain could be ranked

against every other good in that domain.

Minimal value multivocity would also be consistent with Aristotle's categorial argument against transcategorial predica,tions of goodness, since as far as that argument is concerned, goods within any given category of being could be ordinally ranked. So, for instance, Aristotle could hold that it is better to be god than a human being, and better to be a human being than to be a fish.[11]

That acknowledged, it is equally true that at least one other Aristotelian argument is inconsistent with even this much value commensurability. Consider, for instance, the response given by Aristotle in conjunction with his reaction to the Platonic riposte regarding intrinsic goods. Recall that in that connection, Aristotle has evidently committed himself to an extreme form of intra-categorial non-univocity, holding that different intrinsic goods differ in so far as they are good, so that the predicate '. . .is good', even as it attaches to knowledge and various other intrinsic goods indexed to human beings vary: 'the accounts of goodness as it pertains to honour, intelligence, and pleasure are different and divergent (ἕτεροι καὶ διαφέροντες), precisely in the way in which they are good' (*EN* i 6, 1096b22-24).[12] On the assumption that this observation generalizes to all intrinsic goods, then Aristotle embraces an extreme form of value multivocity:

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[11] This argument has been explored in depth in Chapter Four.

[12] This argument was considered in detail in Chapter Seven.

- Extreme Value Multivocity: for any two intrinsic goods g^1 and g^2, the predicate ' . . . is good' applies non-univocally g^1 and g^2.

Needless to say, if he endorses this extreme form of value multivocity, then if he also accepts the thesis VC, the thesis for any value property ϕ, x and y are commensurable as ϕ only if x and y are univocally ϕ, Aristotle will have a difficult time making any direct value rankings at all.[13]

Of course, there are a variety of intermediary, moderate positions between minimal and extreme value multivocity. One question will concern whether Aristotle has any mechanism for endorsing Minimal Value Mulitivocity, as he clearly does, without sliding into a form of Extreme Value Multivocity.

Value Commensurability (VC): Next we consider whether there are compelling reasons for understanding Aristotle to embrace the thesis that for any value property ϕ, x and y are commensurable as ϕ only if x and y are univocally ϕ. If he does, Aristotle will have a difficult time making any direct value rankings at all; for in the absence of univocity, given (VC) he will have no space to rank them.   Even so, there is some reason for supposing that Aristotle does indeed accept (VC). First, even within *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Aristotle voices an understandable concern regarding the consequences of his commitment to value non-univocity. He at least poses the question, after voicing what

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[13] This is not to say he could make no rankings of any kind. Though he could not say, e.g., that being rational is better than being courageous, he could say that being more courageous is better than being less so.

seems an extreme form of value incommensurability: 'But how, then, is goodness spoken of?' (ἀλλὰ πῶς δὴ λέγεται?; *EN* i 6, 1096b26). This is a question he should pose, given his awareness of the relation between commensurability and synonymy in the *Topics* i 15:

> Further, we should observe at the same time whether terms are meant so as to admit of a more <or less> or so as to be used similarly, for instance in the cases of *loud* voices and *loud* garments,[14] or *sharp* flavours and *sharp* sounds. For neither of these is said to be loud or sharp in the same way and neither admits of a more <or less>. Accordingly, *loud* and *sharp* are homonymous. And neither admits of a more [or less]. For *all* synonyms are commensurable (συμβλητόν), since they will be meant so as to admit of a more or less or will be used similarly (*Top*. i 15, 107b13-17).[15]

Since all synonyms are commensurable, and in the context being homonymous is introduced as being sufficient for both non-synonymy and non-commensurability, two

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[14] Aristotle's illustration is difficult to capture in directly parallel English. He is speaking of the homonymy of λευκός, which, as applied to voices means *clear* or *distinct*, whereas applied to garments it means *bright* or *white*.

[15] Ἔτι εἰ μὴ συμβλητὰ κατὰ τὸ μᾶλλον ἢ ὁμοίως, οἷον λευκὴ φωνὴ καὶ λευκὸν ἱμάτιον, καὶ ὀξὺς χυμὸς καὶ ὀξεῖα φωνή. ταῦτα γὰρ οὔθ' ὁμοίως λέγεται λευκὰ ἢ ὀξέα, οὔτε μᾶλλον θάτερον. ὥσθ' ὁμώνυμον τὸ λευκὸν καὶ τὸ ὀξύ. τὸ γὰρ συνώνυμον πᾶν συμβλητόν. ἢ γὰρ ὁμοίως ῥηθήσεται ἢ μᾶλλον θάτερον (*Top*. i 15, 107b13-17).

predicates will be commensurable if and only if they are synonymous (cf. *Met*. 1055a6-7; *Pol*. 1284a6).

Aristotle reinforces this same point in the *Physics*:

Whatever is not synonymous is, in every instance, incommensurable (ἀλλ' ὅσα μὴ συνώνυμα, πάντ' ἀσύμβλητα). For example, why is it that no pen, wine, or musical scale is *sharper* than any one of the others? It is because whatever is homonymous is incomparable (ὅτι ὁμώνυμα, οὐ συμβλητά) (*Phys*. vii 4, 248b7-9).

Taking these observations all together then, Aristotle introduces synonymy as a condition of commensurability (COM):

- COM: The predicate φ as it occurs in '*a* is φ' and '*b* is φ' is commensurable in terms of φ-ness if, and only if, φ is synonymous in these applications.[16]

Since (COM) entails (VC) as a special case, we may conclude that prima facie at least, Aristotle holds that for any value property φ, *x* and *y* are commensurable as φ only if *x* and *y* are univocally φ.

Commensurability of the Good: That leaves only the third of our inconsistent triad, good things are commensurable as good. The first and crucial observation here is that

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[16] I say 'commensurable in terms of φ-ness' since two things might be non-synonymously φ while being commensurably ψ. For example, perhaps no pen is sharper than any wine, though the wine is heavier than the pen. Here one must bear in mind that judgments of synonymy and homonymy are always predicate relative. See Shields (1999, 11, 14, and 126).

this thesis, as written, is plainly ambiguous, indeed, intentionally so. It too admits of a local and a global formulation:

> Local Commensurability: For some domain Δ, if a and b in Δ are good, then a and b are commensurable as good.

This is just to say that within a given domain, it will always be the case, if a and b are good, that either a is better than b, b is better than a, or a and b are equally good. This is a very mild thesis, and relative to some domains there can be little doubt that Aristotle accepts it. That is a far cry, however, from a global formulation, which Aristotle must resist:

> Global Commensurability: for any two good things a and b, a and b are commensurable as good.

Global commensurability is as extreme as local commensurability is mild. It holds that *any* two good things, in any domains whatsoever, are commensurable as good. This implies, for instance, that if a rendition of an aria by a mezzo-soprano is good, and a gesture of kindness by a poor person to a rich person is good, then the gesture is either better, worse, or as good as the rendition. This may strain credulity, but here too one can at least bear in mind that Platonic paradeigmatism offers a propinquity metric and that there being an axiological fact of the matter does not by itself entail that just anyone —or indeed anyone at all—is equipped to discern the ranking.

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Aristotle nowhere directly asserts that all good things are commensurable as good things. Even so, he makes two sorts of judgements which call his consistency on this score into question. First, even within indexed goods that appear to rely on non-univocal value predicates, he seems to offer express rankings. Second, more globally, Aristotle seems willing first to speak of comparisons of good things as always made relative to a single standard (ὅϱος), in a way that is almost reminiscent of Platonic paradeigmatism.

The first sort of case is relatively simple and common. In ranking *eudaimonia* as more choiceworthy than pleasure or honour, Aristotle observes:

> *Eudaimonia* seems to be most of all this sort of thing; for we always choose it
> because of itself and never because of another, whereas while we choose honour,
> pleasure, reason, and every virtue because of themselves (for if nothing resulted
> from them we would still choose each of them), we also choose them for the sake
> of *eudaimonia*, supposing that through them we shall have *eudaimonia*. But no
> one chooses *eudaimonia* for the sake of these, nor generally for anything other

than itself. The same result appears from <the standpoint> of self-sufficiency as well, for the complete good seems to be self-sufficient (*EN* i 7, 1097a34-b8).[17]

In making happiness more choiceworthy than any other intrinsic good, Aristotle judges it to be better, because more complete and more self-sufficient.

It will be observed, correctly, that this sort of comparison falls easily within the domain of one sort of indexed good, namely the good for human beings. That is correct, of course; but it only postpones our question, since it grounds what is better for human beings in something's being more complete (τέλειον) and more self-sufficient. There are more restricted principles perhaps available, but so far, at least, Aristotle seems to be suggesting that if *a* is more complete than *b*, *a* is more choiceworthy than *b*, which in turn is to imply that *a* is better than *b*.

Naturally enough, some will respond on his behalf that Aristotle need not appeal to any such general principle. He need only say, to make the domain-specific comparisons he makes here that if *a* is a more complete (τέλειον) for ф-things than *b*, *a* is more choiceworthy for ф-things than *b*, which in turn is to imply that *a* is better than *b*, again, for ф-things. We will return to this question below, but note now in passing

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[17] τοιοῦτον δ' ἡ εὐδαιμονία μάλιστ' εἶναι δοκεῖ· ταύτην γὰρ αἱρούμεθα ἀεὶ δι' αὐτὴν καὶ οὐδέποτε δι' ἄλλο, τιμὴν δὲ καὶ ἡδονὴν καὶ νοῦν καὶ πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν αἱρούμεθα μὲν καὶ δι' αὐτά (μηθενὸς γὰρ ἀποβαίνοντος ἑλοίμεθ' ἂν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν), αἱρούμεθα δὲ καὶ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας χάριν, διὰ τούτων ὑπολαμβάνοντες εὐδαιμονήσειν. τὴν δ' εὐδαιμονίαν οὐδεὶς αἱρεῖται τούτων χάριν, οὐδ' ὅλως δι' ἄλλο. φαίνεται δὲ καὶ ἐκ τῆς αὐταρκείας τὸ αὐτὸ συμβαίνειν· τὸ γὰρ τέλειον ἀγαθὸν αὔταρκες εἶναι δοκεῖ.

that it would be odd, and strained, to iterate such judgments without co-ordinating

them in any way. To say that *a* is a more complete (τέλειον) for φ-things than *b is*, and

that *a* is more choiceworthy for φ-things than *b*, which in turn implies that *a* is better

than *b*, again, for φ-things, *and* that *a* is a more complete (τέλειον) for ψ-things than *b*,

that *a* is more choiceworthy for ψ-things than *b is*, which in turn is implies that *a* is

better than *b*, again, for ψ-things, and so on for every sortal '. . . φ*', without asking

whether the general comparative '. . . is more complete (τέλειον) than. . . ' is itself to be

held to be univocal or multivocal. If univocal, then we seem again merely to have

postponed the argument; if multivocal, then this contention too will require an

argument.[18]

These sorts of concerns are especially to the point, since Aristotle himself seems

to embrace a kind of trickle-down theory of teleological goodness at least in some areas.

So, for instance:

> Since every organ is for the sake of something, and each of the parts of the body
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> is for the sake of something, and that for the sake of which is some action, it is
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> clear that the body taken as a whole is for the the sake of complex action. For the
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> sawing did not come to be for the sake of the saw but rather the saw for the sake
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> of sawing, for sawing is a sort of activity (χρῆσις). Accordingly, the body too is
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> somehow for the sake of the soul, and its parts for the functions to which each is

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[18] We take up these sorts of questions below, in #

naturally related (*Part. An.* i 5, 645b15-20; cf. *Part. An.* i 1, 642a12-4; *Gen. An.* i 2 716a23-5; *EE* vii 10 1242a13-17).[19]

Nothing about the good is mentioned directly in this passage. Yet, in general, when we say that some action a is for the sake of some end e^1, and e^1 is for the sake of e^2, and e^2 for the sake of e^3, and so on until we reach some final end e^n, we say that a is for the sake of e^n. Thus, if deliberating about diet is for the sake of eating healthily, and eating healthily is for the sake of being healthy, and being healthy is for the sake of human flourishing, then deliberating about diet is for the sake of human flourishing.[20]

If we also think, as most do,[21] that among natural substances with a good, the end for kind K is the good for members of K, then we also have reason to think the transitivity of ends marches in step with a concomitant transitivity of goods. This sort of connection is made clearer in the *Eudemian Ethics* vii 9, in a discussion of equality and partnership (κοινωνία):

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[19] Ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ μὲν ὄργανον πᾶν ἕνεκά του, τῶν δὲ τοῦ σώματος μορίων ἕκαστον ἕνεκά του, τὸ δ' οὗ ἕνεκα πρᾶξίς τις, φανερὸν ὅτι καὶ τὸ σύνολον σῶμα συνέστηκε πραξεώς τινος ἕνεκα πολυμεροῦς. Οὐ γὰρ ἡ πρίσις τοῦ πρίονος χάριν γέγονεν, ἀλλ' ὁ πρίων τῆς πρίσεως· χρῆσις γάρ τις ἡ πρίσις ἐστίν. Ὥστε καὶ τὸ σῶμά πως τῆς ψυχῆς ἕνεκεν, καὶ τὰ μόρια τῶν ἔργων πρὸς ἃ πέφυκεν ἕκαστον.

[20] So far, then, even those who suppose that teleology is always indexed to a certain biological kind, such as Gotthelf (1987) and Nussbaum (1978, 59-106), can endorse this claim. There might after all be a plurality of local ends, each of which is ordered in this fashion.

[21] One noteworthy exception is Gotthelf (1987). For contrast, see Owens (1951), Rist (1965), Cooper (1982), Sedley (1991), and Kahn (1985).

But since the case is similar in the relation the soul bears to the body and the craftsman to a tool, and the master to a slave, between each of these pairs there is no partnership; for they are not two, but <the first of these> is one and the other is for the sake of that one. Nor is the good to be distinguished in each of the two, but the good of both is the good of the one for whose sake the other exists (*EE* vii 9 1241b17-22).[22]

Here Aristotle makes clear that the good of a teleologically subordinate part is parasitic on the good whose interest it serves. Applying this to the case of deliberating about diet: since human flourishing is good, health is good as contributing to flourishing, and eating healthily is good as contributing to health, with the result that, finally, deliberating about diet is good as contributing to eating healthily. This chain is an instance of a local trickle: one can find the goods of various actions in the human sphere as deriving from ends beyond themselves, ultimately from some final good for human beings, which is good in its own right.

To be clear, even if we accept such local instances of local trickle down goods, it does not follow that *all* goods trickle down in this way; and it is especially not clear that

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[22] ἐπεὶ δ' ὁμοίως ἔχει ψυχὴ πρὸς σῶμα καὶ τεχνίτης πρὸς ὄργανον καὶ δεσπότης πρὸς δοῦλον, τούτων μὲν οὐκ ἔστι κοινωνία. οὐ γὰρ δύ᾽ ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ἕν, τὸ δὲ τοῦ ἑνός. οὐδὲ διαιρετὸν τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἑκατέρῳ, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀμφοτέρων τοῦ ἑνὸς οὗ ἕνεκα ἐστίν (*EE* vii 9 1241b18-24).

all good trickle down from some one common, final good.[23] In the first place, even if we

endorse such local trickle-down goods, there could be a plurality of final goods, one for

each kind. More importantly, even if we were to think that all natural kinds *K* had

exactly one final good from which all subordinate goods derived their goodness, it

would not follow that the goods of the various kinds derived their goodness from any

further good. Local trickle down, even of a broad and encompassing sort, does not

imply global trickle down, that is, the thesis, certainly congenial to Plato, that all good

things ultimately derive their goodness from some one final good, the Form of the

Good.

Even so, some things Aristotle says strongly suggest that he has a similar sort of

approach, though obviously not one featuring the Form of the Good at its core. These

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[23] Bodnar (2005) discusses ways in which the goods of entities in one domain might be
thought to provide a basis for goods in another. He finds occasion to criticize Sedley
(2000) and Matthen (2001) for maintaining that the goods of individual kinds which are
derived from the goods of others, or from the entire cosmos, do so on the basis of some
principle of holism, to the effect that the general, independent nature of the cosmos
provides goods to its parts by ordering them. Bodnar (2005 25), rightly stressing a
distinction between two notions of teleology in Aristotle (roughly the end *cuius* and the
end *cui*), concludes: '. . . the behaviour of the subservient entities need not be in any
substantive sense directed, by their own nature, independent of the operation of the
beneficiary, at the benefit of the entity which uses these subservient entities to its own
advantage. They can follow the patterns of behaviour arising out of their own nature,
all they need to do is pursue their very own ends.' More generally, one need not
suppose that Aristotle must believe that the end of an entity, if derivative from its
relation to another, cannot be good for the entity itself. The derivation itself might be
holistic or it might be direct and unmediated: in either case, the derivation may be a
benefit to the entity whose end it is, whether or not its actualization also serves to
benefit another.

things are, in fac,t so strongly suggestive that one eminent scholar is able to say, without

a hint of any misgiving, 'After all, if there is one thing that we know for certain about

Aristotle, it is that he believes in a cosmic hierarchy in which god, not man, is the best

being.'[24] Talk of a cosmic hierarchy with god at its apex is strongly suggestive of a

global teleologically centred trickle-down theory of goodness. So suggestive is it that in

his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aquinas takes it as more or less

uncontroversial that Aristotle accepts the existence of a single good from which all other

goods derive. After pointing out that Aristotle's primary target in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6

is not separation but unity,[25] Aquinas contends:

> Therefore, he affirms that the good is predicated of many things not as with
>
> many things with different meanings, as happens in those cases which are
>
> equivocal, in so far as all good things depend on a single, primary source
>
> (*principium*) of goodness, that is, as they are ordered to one end. For Aristotle
>
> did not intend the separate good be the idea or *ratio* of all goods things, but their

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[24] Sedley (1991, 147).

[25] See Chapter Two § III (3) for a discussion of Aquinas's commentary.

source and end (*principium et finis*). Good things are called good according to analogy, that is an analogy of proportionality (*Sent. lib. eth.* I, l. vii, 96).[26]

Here Aquinas is prepared to deny that there is a single *ratio* (account, here = λόγος) of goodness, even while affirming that all good things have a single source of their goodness, which is their ultimate end.   So, he thinks that goodness trickles down, but non-univocally.

Aquinas might be right about this sort of global trickle down, but much more would need to be said in order to vouchsafe his contention.[27] For now we may merely note that he is rightly interested in finding some systematic way of bringing Aristotle's various judgements about goodness into some manner of commensuration. If we think that the polis of our prayers is better than other forms of political arrangements, that polity is better than democracy, but democracy is better than tyranny, that the best constitution will be the one under which all citizens posses moral virtue and the ability to enact the virtue they possess and thus attain a life complete happiness (*Pol.* iv 1, 1288b21-35, vii 13, 1332a32-38), then we think that some political arrangements are better than others, and we will think this because we suppose that some lives are more

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[26] *Sic ergo dicit, quod bonum dicitur de multis, non secundum rationes penitus differentes, sicut accidit in his quae sunt casu aequivoca, sed in quantum omnia bona dependent ab uno primo bonitatis principio, vel inquantum ordinantur ad unum finem. Non enim voluit Aristoteles quod illud bonum separatum sit idea et ratio omnium bonorum, sed principium et finis. Vel etiam dicuntur omnia bona magis secundum analogiam, id est proportionem eandem* (*Sent. lib. eth.* I, l. vii, 96).

[27] We say a bit more about it below, in § IV.

desirable than others. If we think that some forms of life are more desirable than others,

that the life of virtue is preferable to the life of dissolute pleasure, or that the life of \

reason, both practical and theoretical, is better than the life of bovine cud chewing, if, in

general, we think that *eudaimonia* is the 'most choiceworthy of all goods' (πάντων

αἱρετρωτάτην ⟨viz. ἀγαθῶν⟩; *EN* i 7, 1097b16; cf. *EN* i 5, 1095b17-23, *DA* ii 3, 414b1-6),

then we think that some forms of life are better than others. Finally, if we think that

choice in action requires deliberation, then once again we seem in even these quotidian

ways committed to commensurating competing goods: 'whether one is to do this or that

is already the work of reasoning—and it is necessary that measuring take place by one

measure; for one pursues the best' (*DA* iii 11, 434a7-9).[28] In all these ways, great and

small, Aristotle rightly embraces some version, or versions, of the Commensurability of

the Good, that thesis that good things are commensurable as good.

　　We have found, then, that Aristotle finds attractive three theses—Value

Multivocity, Value Commensurability, and the Commensurability of the Good—which,

taken unqualifiedly, yield a difficulty for him. If good things are multivocal and

commensurability requires univocity, then good things are not commensurable. Yet

good things are commensurable, both locally and more globally. Even though we have

not been given reason to believe that every good is commensurable with every other

good, a thesis of universal commensurability, we have found Aristotle offering broad-

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[28] πότερον γὰρ πράξει τόδε ἢ τόδε, λογισμοῦ ἤδη ἐστὶν ἔργον· καὶ ἀνάγκη ἑνὶ
μετρεῖν· τὸ μεῖζον γὰρ διώκει ((*DA* iii 11, 434a7-9).

based, cross-domain comparisons of relative goodness. Yet we have also found him

maintaining a remarkably fine-grained form of non-univocity, insisting that various

intrinsic goods which he definitely brings into commensuration, though good, differ

and diverge precisely in so far as they are good (*EN* i 6, 1096b22-24).[29]

To be clear, the point of sketching his attraction to this trio of theses has not been

to catch Aristotle out by exposing a contradiction in his axiology. It has rather been to

hold him to account for his anti-Platonism, scrutinizing his own commitments by

following his own edict that 'though we love them both, piety bids us to honour the

truth before our friends' (*EN* i 6 1096a16–17). If it is not exactly an exercise in piety, this

investigation means to join Aristotle in aiming at the truth.

The truth here seems to be that Aristotle needs to explain how, having rejected

Plato's axiology, he can deploy a replacement up to the task of making the deontological

judgments he wishes to make. In service of this sort of question, our *prima facie*

inconsistent triad is merely a heuristic for coming to appreciate how he might best

proceed in the value world he prefers to Plato's.

II. Two Ways Out

In this respect, it is important to be clear that we are not asking anything of

Aristotle which he does not already ask of himself. To appreciate this, one can contrast

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[29] See Chapter Seven §5 for a discussion of Aristotle's contention that even intrinsic
goods within a single category of being are non-univocally good.

his axiological attitude with the sort of response to our *prima facie* inconsistent triad

which takes a direct way out: it simply denies the commensurability of goodness. One

thought would be that we simply live in a value-pluralist world: there are various

goods and we cannot choose amongst them on any rational basis. Since justified

rational choice requires a covering value between discrete values and there are no

covering values, when we are asked to make a justified rational choice between

incommensurable goods, we cannot.[30] Instead, we merely make an existential lunge.[31]

Should we choose to live as an artist, maximizing beauty, or as a jurist, maximizing

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[30] Some doubt that commensuration is required for rational choice. So, e.g. Anderson (1997) and Griffith (1997) in different ways suggest that choice between incommensurables may yet be rational; rational norms on this way of thinking do not require ordinality for rational adjudication. Others, including Stocker (1997), think that commensuration plays no role in choice: one simply does what one deems good; Raz (1997) and, in a different way, Finnis (1997) contend that reason sets a bar of eligibility but then gives out, making room for naked expressions of will or the sway of (non-rational?) feelings. Aristotle seems not to be among their number: 'whether one is to do this or that is already the work of reasoning—and it is necessary that measuring take place by one measure; for one pursues the best' (*DA* iii 11, 434a7-9; cf. *EN* 111b26, 113a15; 1139a11; vi 9).

[31] Although she does not endorse this way of thinking, Chang (1997, 9) gives it a good expression: 'Call comparativism the view that all choice situations are comparative. Even if a choice situation changes because there is a shift in choice value, the new choice situation will require the comparability of the alternatives with respect to the new choice value. There is, according to comparativism, no avoiding the comparability of alternatives with respect to the choice value if there is to be justified choice. Thus, if comparativism is correct, the significance of incomparability among alternatives is very great indeed. For if alternatives are incomparable, justified choice is precluded, and the role of practical reason in guiding choice is thereby restricted.' Similarly, Chang (1997, 14): 'If two alternate are incomparable with respect to an appropriate covering value, justified choice between them is precluded.' For doubts about this line of reasoning, see Stoker (1997), Griffin (1997) and Anderson (1997).

justice? We cannot do both; that would simply be impractical in a single life. Yet we are the sorts who want to maximize the overall value of the world. If justice and beauty are discrete values, and there is no covering value φ, such that this much beauty is more φ than that much beauty, then we have open to us only to lurch towards one life or the other; we should not pretend that we are making a deliberation-delivered decision countenanced by rationality, one directing us to select this life over that as most value-rich alternative available to us.

Aristotle shows no indication that he understands himself to live in a universe of plural values of this sort. Despite his protracted assault on Plato's univocity assumption, to his credit, he shows some discomfort about the consequences of his anti-Platonism. Recall that in the midst of his rejection of Platonic univocity, he pauses to ask himself a perfectly apposite question:[32]

> But how, then, is goodness spoken of? For it does not seem akin to those things which are homonymous by chance. Is it, then, spoken of [like those instances of homonymy] where all things derive from one thing or contribute to one thing? Or is it rather spoken of by analogy? For as sight is to body, so reason is in the soul, and, in general, as one thing is in another so a different thing is in yet another (*EN* i 6, 1096b26-29).

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[32] We considered Aristotle's concern Chapter Seven §6.

The question now takes on a kind of urgency, because it shows that Aristotle is keen to entertain alternatives which fall well short of simply embracing value pluralism.

That he so much as raises this sort of question already shows that Aristotle is concerned about the ways in which his anti-Platonic polemic may come back to haunt him. Plato has an easy way out of our inconsistent triad: he loudly denies multivocity of value. That route is closed to Aristotle. It remains for him, then, either (i) to deny one of the remaining two propositions, namely Value Commensurability or the Commensurability of the Good, perhaps by restricting one of the other in such a way as to render the putative inconsistency moot; or (ii) to show how the *prima facie* inconsistency never was a *bona fide* inconsistency in the first place.

He considers two possible ways forward: analogy and some notion of core-dependent homonymy. Within *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 he already gives very brief illustrations of how these two approaches might be developed (*EN* 1097b25; on homonymy, cf. *Met*. 1003a27, *EE* 1236a14, b20; on analogy see, *Phys*. 191a8, *Met*. 1048a37).

That the homonymy he envisages is not mere equivocity is clear: he dismisses directly the thought that the kind of homonymy in view is the kind where things are homonymous merely by chance alone (ἀπὸ τύχης). He is here setting aside the thought that, for instance, the predications '. . .is good' in these three sentences:

- God is good.

- Virtue is good.

- Xanthippe's health is good.

might as well be regarded in the way that we regard the predications of 'suit' in:

- To redress these injuries, the barrister introduced a suit into court.

- He looked quite the dandy, wearing his florid new suit.

- The rules of bridge specify that players must follow suit if they can.

In the latter case, presumably the accounts of 'suit' each feature different lexical definitions. Aristotle's own example is '*kleis*' which means either 'door-key' or 'clavicle' (*EN* v i, 1129a30). This signals, then, that if homonymy is in view for goodness, it is not, in Aristotle's estimation, the kind of homonymy which results from inconsequential linguistic accidents. The predicate ' . . .is good' in the first three sentences are meant to be connected.

He mentions two possibilities, where the possibilities are meant to form an exclusive disjunction: analogy and homonymy, but not, then, chance homonymy.[33]

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[33] That the alternatives are exclusive seems clear in the phrasing: 'or are they *rather* one by analogy? (ἢ μᾶλλον κατ' ἀναλογίαν; *EN* i 6, 1096b28). For this reason, we should reject the more inclusive suggestion of Mirus (2004, 534-535) : 'In fact, it would seem that both homonymy *pros hen* and analogy are at work in the predication of "good".'

The first alternative is, then, analogy. What would this consist in? Aristotle is careful in the way he refers to analogy, in several different passages.[34] For example, in discussing justice in distribution in *Nicomachean Ethics* v 3, he says:

> For analogy is equality of accounts (λόγων), and involves four terms at least
>
> (that discrete proportion involves four terms is plain. . .') (ἡ γὰρ ἀναλογία
>
> ἰσότης ἐστὶ λόγων, καὶ ἐν τέτταρσιν ἐλαχίστοις; *EN* v 3, 1131a31-2).

Here we have a four-term relation of the following form:

$$a : b : : c : d$$

This structure is confirmed, for instance, in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 (1096b28-30):

$$\text{sight : body : : reason : soul}$$

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[34] Here it bears reinforcing the thought that analogy in Aristotle is not the notion later developed under that name to describe what he called homonymy, including core-dependent homonymy. Owens (1951, 59) puts that point well enough: '[t]he nature and functions of the two kinds of equivocals should not be confused. To call the πρὸς ἕν type 'analogous' is not Aristotelian usage, though common in later Scholastic works.' See also Lonfant (2004, 106): 'la doctrine de l'*analogia entis* n'est pas une doctrine aristotélicienne, mais une invention médiévale, correspondant à diverses relectures des corpus aristotéliciens grecs et arabes, successivement apparus en traduction chez les latins.' There is, however, one important passage which raises a problem for this view, in that it seems to offer analogy as a type of homonymy with is 'near' (ἐγγύς) and so easily missed: 'This discussion signifies that the genus [of motion] is not some one thing, but there are many things beyond this one escapes our notice, and there are among homonyms some which are distant from one another and others which are some similarities, and some which are near either in genus or by analogy; and this is the reason why they do not seem to be homonyms, though they are.' (καὶ σημαίνει ὁ λόγος οὗτος ὅτι τὸ γένος οὐχ ἕν τι, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τοῦτο λανθάνει πολλά, εἰσίν τε τῶν ὁμωνυμιῶν αἱ μὲν πολὺ ἀπέχουσαι, αἱ δὲ ἔχουσαί τινα ὁμοιότητα, αἱ δ' ἐγγὺς ἢ γένει ἢ ἀναλογίᾳ, διὸ οὐ δοκοῦσιν ὁμωνυμίαι εἶναι οὖσαι' (*Phys.* vii 4, 249a21-24). Here, however, he seems to be using the notion of homonymy in the broadest sense, to mean 'things with the same names' (cf. *Soph. El.* 4, 165b38; *Rhet.* iii 2, 1404b38).

And also in *Posterior Analytics* ii 14 (*APo*. 98a20123):

<div align="center">spine : fish : : bone : terrestrial animal</div>

In each of these cases we have, just as specified, four terms, where the terms lack a univocal definition.

We also have in these structures some relation R which grounds the analogy, such that: 'a : b : : c : d' simply asserts the existence of a relation R such that aRb and cRd. To put the matter simply, for at least one transparent instance of this form:

<div align="center">pint : quart : : half kilometer : kilometer</div>

The analogy obtains because there is a singe R reflected in the two domains, one of liquid measure and one in the domain of distance measure, namely one-half. Generalizing, for every analogy of this form, the analogy obtains when and only when there is some dyadic relation R and the terms in question stand in R to one another.

If this is correct, however, then this first way out seems of little value. This is so for two reasons. First, assuming that there is some R specifiable in the analogies of goodness, we evidently have a recurrence of Platonic univocity, simply at a higher level.[35] So, suppose that we attempt to articulate the analogy in structural or functional

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[35] Robinson (1952, 466) pushes this point in a different context, in holding that analogy in any sense other than mathematical proportionality 'is merely the fact that some relations have more than one example.'

terms.[36] One might say, for example, that it makes no ready sense to regard this

virtuous woman as better than that sharp knife, even though they are both goods of

their kind. Still, one might reasonably say that this particular knife, though sharp, is not

as far along the scale of knife-ish goodness as that woman is along the scale of human

goodness. She is very highly adept at rational contemplation, which provides a scale of

human goodness (let us allow), while the knife is able to cut, but would benefit from

being sharpened on a whetstone. So, she is, in this attenuated sense, better than it is.

Yet this sort of comparison seems to smuggle in a perfectly univocal account of

goodness, namley:

- x is good $=_{df}$ (i) x is a member of functional kind K; and (ii) x realizes the function
  of K to a high degree.

It is not clear, for instance, why Plato should be constrained to deny this. He does not

tell us, but perhaps if pressed, this would be his account of goodness. If he responded

in this way, his account would be univocal.[37]

Second, and more importantly, it seems difficult even to determine how to map

the apparatus of analogy onto the situation with goodness. If it is not the purely

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[36] This would be to follow the advice of Hesse (1965, 330), commenting on *Topics* i 8:
'When there is similarity in the relation of the parts to the whole in each species, for
example cup is the symbol of Dionysus as shield is of Ares, and, more typically, hand
and claw, scale and feather, wings and fins, and so on, have similar structural positions
or functions in relation to their respective organisms.'

[37] For an account of the roles of similarity/sameness in analogy, see Rapp (1992, esp.
528-531).

functional structure just introduced, then it is unclear how one might proceed. Aristotle

own example in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 is this: 'as sight is to body, so reason is in the soul,

and, in general, as one thing is in another so a different thing is in yet

another' (1096b28-29). This seems to respect the standard schema:

$$\text{sight : body : : reason : soul}$$

or, again, more schematically:

$$a : b : : c : d$$

One can then readily imagine several possibilities for the relation binding the analogy

together: as sight is *a faculty in* the body, so reason *is a faculty in* the soul; or sight is the

most important faculty in the body so reason is the most important faculty in the soul

(cf. *Met.* A 1, 980a25-27); and so on.

Yet it is hard to see how we are meant to structure four terms from such

predications of '. . . is good' in such diverse instances as:

- A cheese course after dinner in the French manner is good.

- In counterpoint constrained vertical contrast is good.

- When desperation threatens, a surfeit of optimism is good.

It is hard to begin to fathom how the analogies are meant to be structured in four

terms.[38]

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[38] One might also observe here that Aristotle does not introduce analogy into the parallel passage in *Eudemian Ethics* i 8 at all. He uses the word only five times in that work, all in connection with friendship: *EE* 1238b31, 1240a13, 1241b33, b36, 1242a4.

Taking that all together, then: Aristotle is rightly concerned that predications of goodness, if non-univocal, should not therefore be regarded as mere chance homonyms. This concern speaks to his attitude regarding Value Commensurability, the claim that good things are commensurable as good things. For some range of predictions of '. . . is good', Aristotle wants to hold out for commensurability in the absence of univocity. His suggestion that analogy might be the way forward seems none too promising.[39]

That leaves the remaining alternative, evidently a form of core-dependent homonymy. As we have noted already, this possibility is not developed in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, its consideration, along with that of analogy, being postponed as best taken up elsewhere, since 'speaking accurately concerning them belongs more appropriately to another [branch] of philosophy' (*EN* i 6, 1096b30-31).[40] Nor is the suggestion made at all in the parallel passage of *Eudemian Ethic*s i 8. Later in that work, however, we do have a relevant discussion in connection with friendship (φιλία), where the language is similar and a contrast is made between speaking of the non-univocity of friendship, which Aristotle affirms, and the prospects of the applications of the term being homonymous by chance, which Aristotle denies, but are instead, he affirms, related to the primary

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[39] I have benefited in thinking about this issue from studying an unpublished paper, partly critical of my earlier work on this topic, 'Aristotle's Good Analogy,' by Kranzelbinder. While I have not given way to his criticisms, he makes an excellent case to be answered.

[40] Speaker 'more accurately' (or 'more exactly'; ἐξακριβοῦν) concerning them is evidently meant in a technical sort of way. Cf. *EE* i 8, 1217b15-21, where it is equated with speaking 'logically' (λογικῶς), on which see Burnyeat (#).

instance of friendship as related to one thing *'pros hen'* (πρὸς ἕν), which is to say as a

core-dependent homonym (*EE* vii 2, 1236b24-26).

Leading into that discussion, Aristotle says something similar regarding the

multivocity of goodness:

Since good is meant in many ways (for we say that one thing is good because it

is of such a sort [i.e. in view of the kind of thing it is, or because of its nature],

and another <is good> in virtue of its being beneficial and useful), and further

the pleasant is in one way pleasant *simpliciter* and good *simpliciter* (ἁπλῶς), and

in another way because of its being pleasant for someone and its appearing

good, and just as where inanimate things are concerned it is possible for us to

choose something and love it because of each of these reasons, so is it in the case

of a human being: <for we choose and love one> in virtue of what sort of human

he is and because of his virtue, and another because he is beneficial and useful,

and another because he is pleasant and because of pleasure. Thus someone

becomes a friend when, being loved, he returns love, and this <reciprocal

affection> does not escape the notice of either.[41]

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[41] ἐπεὶ οὖν τὰ ἀγαθὰ πλεοναχῶς (τὸ μὲν γὰρ τῷ τοιόνδ᾽ εἶναι λέγομεν ἀγαθόν, τὸ δὲ τῷ ὠφέλιμον καὶ χρήσιμον), ἔτι δὲ τὸ ἡδὺ τὸ μὲν ἁπλῶς καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἁπλῶς, τὸ δὲ τινὶ καὶ φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν· ὥσπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀψύχων δι᾽ ἕκαστον τούτων ἐνδέχεται ἡμᾶς αἱρεῖσθαί τι καὶ φιλεῖν, οὕτω καὶ ἄνθρωπον. τὸν μὲν γὰρ <τῷ> τοιόνδε καὶ δι᾽ ἀρετήν, τὸν δ᾽ ὅτι ὠφέλιμος καὶ χρήσιμος, τὸν δ᾽ ὅτι ἡδὺς καὶ δι᾽ ἡδονήν. φίλος δὴ γίνεται ὅταν φιλούμενος ἀντιφιλῇ, καὶ τοῦτο μὴ λανθάνῃ πως αὐτούς (*EE* vii 2, 1236a7-15). The sentence is anacoluthic as it stands in the current text.

This is a very rich passage regarding Aristotle's approach to friendship, which seems subtle and sophisticated in the *Eudemian Ethics* in a way it is not in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,[42] but what is of special note for our purposes now concerns the parallel between friendship and goodness which Aristotle here forges: both are instances of core-dependent homonymy.

The beginning part of the passage gives us a clear expression of the grounds for thinking of the predicate '. . . is good' as non-univocal. Aristotle's illustration directly parallels his introduction of the core-dependent homonymy of being in Metaphysics Γ 4 (1003b6-10; cf. Met. 1017a8-b9, 1026a33-b2, 1028a10-31, 1051a340-b6). The idea in both passages is the same and can be illustrated in the current context by some straightforward examples. Consider:

- God is good.

- Exercise is good.

- A detailed map in a foreign city is always good.

The first illustrates Aristotle's thought that the predicate '. . . is good' applies to some subjects simply in virtue of the sort of thing they are, in virtue of their nature; in the second this same predicate applies because its subject is beneficial, which is to say that it

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[42] For an elaboration, see Kenny (2018). His general conclusions are apt regarding the relative merits of the treatment of friendship; broader conclusions regarding the relationship between the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*, as he realizes, require a separate discussion.

is productive of the good; and in the third it applies to something which is useful, which is to say that it serves some good end.

We are meant to see three things in examples such as this straightaway. First, the predicate '. . . is good' means something different in each these applications, just as the paraphrases provided reveal. Second, we are never the less not in the zone of things which are multivocal by chance (ἀπὸ τύχης); the predicates are clearly related. Third, and perhaps less obviously, the relations borne are systematic: the latter two asymmetrically depend in account on the former. That is, any account of the predicate '. . . is good' in either of the second two instances will ultimately refer the the account of the predicate in the first explication, but not *vice versa*.[43]

Aristotle's purpose in introducing this structure into *Eudemian Ethics* vii 2 is not to give a disquisition on the good, but to show how it applies to friendship, such that there is a primary kind (πρῶτος) of friendship in terms of which the remaining types, friendships of pleasure and and utility are defined.[44] Even so, in proceeding in this way, Aristotle shows how he regards the homonymy of the good: his treatment is a clear instance of his regarding it as a core-dependent homonym. He thus provides an answer

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[43] See Ward (1995) for a full and helpful exposition of the role of homonymy in Aristotle's treatment of friendship in *EE* vii 2.

[44] Thus he speaks of 'the true friend, and the friend *simpliciter* in the primary way, the sort chosen by himself because of himself' (ὁ δ' ἀληθινὸς φίλος καὶ ἁπλῶς ὁ πρῶτος ἐστίν, ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ δι' αὑτὸν αὐτὸς αἱρετός; *EE* vii 2, 1236b28-29).

to the disjunction set out in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, offering the good as homonymous

not by chance but as deriving from a common source.

We expect, then, the good to adhere to the general framework for core-dependent

homonymy:[45]

> *a* and *b* are homonymously ϕ in a core-dependent way *iff*: (i) *a* is ϕ; (ii) *b* is ϕ; (iii)
>
> the accounts of ϕ-ness in '*a* is ϕ' and '*b* is ϕ' do not completely overlap; and
>
> (iv) the account of ϕ in '*b* is ϕ' necessarily makes reference to the account of ϕ in
>
> '*a* is ϕ' in an asymmetrical way (or vice versa).

The notion of account dependence here requires some explication. Aristotle's basic

thought is that an account of the primary instance of being-ϕ must show up in the

accounts of all non-primary occurrences. The 'must' here derives from the fact that in

an essence-specifying definition, the *definiens* captures the nature of the *definiendum*; in

treating the core instance as prior in this way, Aristotle introduces the thought that the

primary instance is controlling (*kurios*) as a source (*archê*) and cause (*aition*) of the non-

core instances (*Met*. Γ 4, 1003b6; *Cat*. 14b12-13).

If this is correct, then we should expect Aristotle to address our prima facie

inconsistent triad by denying Value Commensurability, the thesis that for any value

property ϕ, *x* and *y* are commensurable as ϕ only if *x* and *y* are univocally ϕ. To do so,

however, he owes an account of precisely how core-dependent homonymy allows one

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[45] This framework agrees with the characterization developed and defended in Shields
(1999). See especially Chapter Two § 6 and Chapter Four §§ 2-5.

to make cross-domain comparisons. If medicine is good because it helps preserve the good of health and friends—true friends, friends in the primary way— are good because they promote virtue, then one may yet ask: which is better? Are friends or doses of medicine more choiceworthy?

Put thus abstractly, the question does not admit of a direct or easy answer. Even so, one can see the beginnings of an answer in the thought that each of the non-primary goods stands in some determinate relation to the primary good, in this case, let us say, the indexed good-for-human beings, and receives its goodness precisely in virtue of this relation. We may have, then, a *principle of augmentation*, which is unlike Plato's propinquity metric, but which never the less provides a bridge value for comparison. What is better among the non-core instances is that which in the current circumstance most augments or enhances the primary or core good. Because the core instance is responsible for the goodness of the non-core instances, we are in a position to determine, reciprocally, indirectly, which best enhances the good which is its cause.

This, however, requires taking seriously the thought that goodness, in its core manifestation, is the cause of the goodness of other good things. That sort of contention begins to sound vaguely Platonic: 'In the realm of what is known,' says Plato, 'the Form of the Good is last and is hardly seen; but once it has been seen, it is necessary to conclude that it is in every way the cause of all that is right and fine (*Republic* vi 517b7-c1).

III. Goodness as Cause: a Rapprochement

Even before he enters into the axiological chapter of *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6,

Aristotle draws attention to some early ways of thinking about the good:

> Among the wise, some used to think that beyond these many good things there
>
> is some other good, something good in its own right (τι καθ' αὐτὸ εἶναι), which
>
> is the cause (αἴτιον) of the goodness of all these good things' (*EN* i 4,
>
> 1095a26-28).[46]

Aristotle does not name Plato, though he has him in mind; he uses precisely the kind of

language Plato was in the habit of using when characterizing the Form of the Good.[47]

The purport of the suggestion seems to be that in so speaking, Plato was misguided,

that there is nothing answering to the description the 'good in its own right' (τι καθ'

αὐτὸ εἶναι) serving as a cause (αἴτιον) of the goodness of other good things.

Yet Aristotle himself comes around to speaking of *eudaimonia* as a cause of good

things:

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[46] ἔνιοι δ' ᾤοντο παρὰ τὰ πολλὰ ταῦτα ἀγαθὰ ἄλλο τι καθ' αὐτὸ εἶναι, ὃ καὶ τούτοις πᾶσιν αἴτιόν ἐστι τοῦ εἶναι ἀγαθά (*EN* i 4, 1095a26-28)

[47] See Chapter One # for this language. It is also noteworthy that in this passage Aristotle used the imperfect tense (ᾤοντο), which is his tendency in describing his ongoing discussions with Plato, as opposed to the the present tense when reporting something written by Plato or others. He uses the same imperfect tense a few lines further on, where he does mention Plato by name (*EN* i v 1095a32).

To us it is clear from what has been said that *eudaimonia* is among the things that are honourable and complete. It also seems this way because of its being a source (or principle, ἀρχή); for it is an account of this [source (or principle, ἀρχή)] that we do all the other things that we do and we take the source and cause of good things to be something honorable and divine (τίμιόν τι καὶ θεῖον) (*EN* i 12, 1101b35-1102a4).[48]

Aristotle does not contradict himself in making this sort of claim. The good he has in view in this context, *eudaimonia*, is clearly an indexed good, namely the good for human beings (cf. *EN* i 13, 1102a13-16). So, it is consistent with a denial of there being a good *simpliciter,* which is the cause of the goodness of all good things, that there be an indexed good, good$_i$, where good$_i$ is the cause of the goodness of all good things in some domain or other. That is to say, for example, that Aristotle can consistently allow that there is a good$_i$, the good-for-humans, which is the cause of all things which are good for humans, even though there is no good *simpliciter* which is the cause of the goodness of this good$_i$, the good-for-humans.

Even so, the proposal that the predicate '. . . is good' is in effect a core-dependent homonym opens the door to a more encompassing conception of goodness as a cause,

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[48] ἡμῖν δὲ δῆλον ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων ὅτι ἐστὶν ἡ εὐδαιμονία τῶν τιμίων καὶ τελείων. ἔοικε δ' οὕτως ἔχειν καὶ διὰ τὸ εἶναι ἀρχή· ταύτης γὰρ χάριν τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα πάντες πράττομεν, τὴν ἀρχὴν δὲ καὶ τὸ αἴτιον τῶν ἀγαθῶν τίμιόν τι καὶ θεῖον τίθεμεν (*EN* i 12, 1101b35-1102a4)..

one which does not run afoul of Aristotle's rejection of univocity even while moving in the direction of a more universal notion of goodness.

One can appreciate this possibility once one further feature of Aristotle's notion of core-dependent homonymy is borne in mind. This is that the notion of account dependence is itself elastic. When one account depends upon another, the dependence cannot be just of any form of necessity; for then even instances of '. . . is a bank' or '. . . is sharp' could be made to be core-dependent, merely by inserting some necessary relation or other between them. The asymmetric relations must be genuinely explanatory, which is to say that, in Aristotle's terms, the non-core instance of a predicate '. . .is φ' must stand in one of the four-causal dependency relations to the core.[49] The more accurate conception of core-dependent homonymy is thus:

> *a* and *b* are homonymously φ in a core-dependent way *iff*: (i) *a* is φ; (ii) *b* is φ; (iii) the accounts of φ-ness in '*a* is φ' and '*b* is φ' do not completely overlap; (iv) necessarily, if *a* is the core instance of φ-ness, then *b*'s being φ stands in one of the four-causal relations to *a*'s being φ ; and (v) *a*'s being φ is asymmetrically responsible for *b*'s being φ.

With this fuller account of core-dependence available, we are in a position to see how Aristotle can regard goodness as a cause in a domain-independent way, even while he rejects Plato's univocity assumption.

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[49] This was a point rightly emphasized in Cajetanus, *De Analogia Nominum*, developed and recast in Shields (1999, Chapter Four § 4).

The crucial causal connection upon which Aristotle insists is teleological. This can be shown in two very different ways. First, and less importantly, Aristotle allows for a kind of direct teleological cause as an object of love; second, and more importantly, Aristotle criticises his predecessors for failing to appreciate the way in which goodness causes, and his criticisms reflect a view according to which goodness is present in what we will call a fine-grained intensional manner, which allows it to play precisely the role offered it in our fuller and more accurate account of core-dependent homonymy.

Let us take these in turn, the first only briefly.

Aristotle's readers divide on the question of whether the prime mover of *Metaphysics* Λ moves objects in the sublunar realm indirectly or directly as well.[50] On the indirect approach, the prime mover moves only the outer sphere of the heavens, which in turn moves the less spheres and on down (so, e.g. *Met*. Λ 8, 1073a33). The details of how this motion is effected are disputed, but for present purposes we can grant this form of indirect causation. More pertinent at present is the question of whether there is also a more direct form of motion, as a direct object of desire. Various passages suggest so. For instance, *De Anima* ii 4 contains the suggestion that all living beings desire to participate in immortality in a manner which befits their kind:

For the most natural among the functions belonging to living things, at least those which are complete and neither deformed nor spontaneously generated, is

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[50] Kahn (1985) reviews the controversy and sides, rightly, with those who recognise a direct form of causal activity.

this: to make another such as itself, an animal an animal and a plant a plant, so that it may, insofar as it is able, partake of the everlasting and the divine. For that is what everything desires, and for the sake of that everything does whatever it does in accordance with nature (*DA* ii 4, 415a26-b2).[51]

The good desired here is the good of a final cause, as is more fully attested in

Metaphysics Λ 9:

One must inquire into whether the nature of the universe as a whole contains the the good, i.e. the highest good as something separate and by itself or as its order. Or in both ways, as in an army? For the excellent (τὸ εὖ) is found in the order and in the leader, and more so in the latter; for he is not <good> because of the order but rather the order <is good> because of him. And all things are ordered together somehow, not not all in the same way—for instance, fishes and fowls and plants; and the world is not such that one thing has nothing to do

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[51] φυσικώτατον γὰρ τῶν ἔργων τοῖς ζῶσιν, ὅσα τέλεια καὶ μὴ πηρώματα ἢ τὴν γένεσιν αὐτομάτην ἔχει, τὸ ποιῆσαι ἕτερον οἷον αὐτό, ζῷον μὲν ζῷον, φυτὸν δὲ φυτόν, ἵνα τοῦ ἀεὶ καὶ τοῦ θείου μετέχωσιν ᾗ δύνανται· πάντα γὰρ ἐκείνου ὀρέγεται, καὶ ἐκείνου ἕνεκα πράττει ὅσα πράττει κατὰ φύσιν (*DA* ii 4, 415a26-b2).

with another, but there is some <order>. For all things order to one (πρὸς ἕν)

(*Met.* Λ 9, 1075a11-19; cf. 1076a4).[52]

In both these passages, Aristotle seems to speak of a more direct form of dependence on

the prime mover, given in terms of the dependence of the order of the universe on the

good of the prime mover and in terms of the desires and strivings of living beings in the

sub-lunar realm (cf. *De Caelo* i 9, 279a22-30).[53]

These sorts of passages represent the universe as a whole as well-ordered, as

featuring a highest good (τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον), as a universe whose order

depends upon the goodness of its core final good, the one good towards which all

things are ordered in their striving and desiring.

This good is an end, and is thus a teleological good. One can thus appreciate the

role of goodness as cause by reflecting on the ways in which Aristotle is critical of those

among his predecessors who failed to grasp the significance of final causation.

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[52] Ἐπισκεπτέον δὲ καὶ ποτέρως ἔχει ἡ τοῦ ὅλου φύσις τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον, πότερον κεχωρισμένον τι καὶ αὐτὸ καθ' αὑτό, ἢ τὴν τάξιν. ἢ ἀμφοτέρως ὥσπερ στράτευμα; καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῇ τάξει τὸ εὖ καὶ ὁ στρατηγός, καὶ μᾶλλον οὗτος· οὐ γὰρ οὗτος διὰ τὴν τάξιν ἀλλ' ἐκείνη διὰ τοῦτόν ἐστιν. πάντα δὲ συντέτακταί πως, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁμοίως, καὶ πλωτὰ καὶ πτηνὰ καὶ φυτά· καὶ οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει ὥστε μὴ εἶναι θατέρῳ πρὸς θάτερον μηδέν, ἀλλ' ἔστι τι. πρὸς μὲν γὰρ ἓν ἅπαντα συντέτακται (*Met.* Λ 9, 1075a11-19).

[53] Passages such as these induced Joachim (1922, 56) to contend: 'Aristotle represents all things in the Cosmos as inspired by love of God, as striving, so far as in them lies, to attain to God; i.e. to imitate in their actives that perfect and eternal life. . . The eternal life, which is God, radiates through the whole system.' Similar if less exalted conclusions of this sort are offered by Zeller (1869, ii 373-375), Düring (1966, 220), Balme (1065, 24), and Kahn (1985, 185).

Significantly, he rejects the views not only of those who fail to recognize it altogether, but also those, like Anaximander who, in his view, recognize it in the wrong sort of way.

To see this, one might wonder how goodness causes, either globally or even in a certain domain as indexed. One thought would be that something good causes by co-inciding with something which is an object of desire, such that:

- x's being good is a cause of y's being φ (or of S's doing α) only if (i) x, in addition to being good, is also ψ, and (ii) x's being ψ suffices for y's being φ (or of S's doing α).

In Aristotle's more precise idiom:

- x's being good is a cause of y's being φ (or of S's doing α) only if (i) x's being good is something co-incident with (κατὰ συμβεβηκός) x's being ψ, and (ii) x's being ψ is a *per se* (καθ᾽ αὑτό) cause of y's being φ (or of S's doing α).

So, for instance, a burrito's being good is a cause of Tamar's walking to the taqueria only if the burrito is also an object of desire (ὀρεκτόν) for Tamar and its being an object of desire (ὀρεκτόν) suffices for her walking to the taqueria.

In fact, however, Aristotle rejects this way of presenting the matter. Where goodness is a cause only co-incidentally (κατὰ συμβεβηκός) when something else causes *per se* (καθ᾽ αὑτό), then goodness may easily prove to be causally irrelevant: Why did the woman give some fraction of her wages each month to charity? If she did

it believing that the charitable funds would be used to alleviate hunger and she wished

to alleviate hunger, then goodness, so far, plays no role in moving her to act. She may

be doing it despite its being good, to placate her boss, for instance, who wants all of her

subordinates to commit to donating to a favoured charity each month. If its being

good merely co-incides with alleviating hunger, then its causal role is no more

vouchsafed in this exchange than is the role of beauty in the curing of the unhealthy

child whom a doctor happens to cure, recognizing that the child is beautiful.

We are naturally disposed to say in response that the charitable woman did not

care to help alleviate hunger just on a lark or simply at random, but rather because the

alleviation of hunger is (or appears to her to be) something good, and that the woman

intended the charitable action in view of its goodness. This seems fair enough; then,

however, when we reintroduce the causally salient feature of the object of desire

(ὀρεκτόν), we point to something ineliminably normative as causally salient, namely its

goodness.

Aristotle will argue that even this is insufficient. Looked at from this perspective,

we may say, in a modern idiom, that even if an appeal to a co-inciding cause is

extensionally adequate as far as that goes, extensional adequacy does not, in Aristotle's

view, go far enough. The inadequacy, he thinks, is two-fold. First, the co-inciding

causes, however extensionally adequate, fail in the first instance to cite the causally

salient feature of the cause denominated, and, second, in so failing it may fail

systematically by ignoring what Aristotle accepts as the manifest normativity in the *explanans*.

We see this sort of rejection most clearly in *Metaphysics* A 3, where Aristotle states plainly the normative dimension of the final cause, which, in this respect evidently, he regards it as 'opposed' to the material cause, as 'that for the sake of which and the good' (*Met*. A 3, 983a30-31). He offers a survey of earlier approaches at the end of which he credits Hermotimus of Clazomenae as an originator and praises his fellow citizen Anaxagoras as an early proponent of the final cause. He remarks that these thinkers were responsive to the demands of the truth itself, which makes plain that neither the material elements nor lucky spontaneity could account for 'being well and beauty in both being and coming to be' (τοῦ γὰρ εὖ καὶ καλῶς τὰ μὲν ἔχειν τὰ δὲ γίγνεσθαι τῶν ὄντων; *Met*. A 3, 984b10). For this, he claims, reason (νοῦς) alone can be responsible.

Aristotle's eventual complaint:

That for the sake of which actions and changes and movements take place, they call a cause in a way, but they do not call it cause the way in which its nature is to be a cause. For some, speaking of reason nous (νοῦς) or love (φιλία), posit these causes as good; they do not speak, however, as if anything among the things that are exists or comes to be for sake of these, but say that their motions are from these. In the same way those claiming that the one or the existent is this

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sort of nature claim that this is the cause of substance, but do not claim that

substance either is or comes to be for the sake of this. Therefore it turns out that

in a sense they both say and do not say the good is a cause; for they do not call it

a cause *qua* good but only co-incidentally. (*Met*. i 7, 988b6-16).[54]

The crucial sentence is the last: citing the cause extensionally is insufficient.

Aristotle is looking for an account of the good as cause in a more fine-grained

intensional manner:

And the science uncovering that for the sake of which each thing must be done

is the most authoritative of the sciences, and more authoritative than any

ancillary science; and this is the good in each class, and generally in the whole of

nature the best good. From all that has been said, then, the name being sought

falls to the same science; this must be a science able to investigate the first

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[54] τὸ δ’ οὗ ἕνεκα αἱ πράξεις καὶ αἱ μεταβολαὶ καὶ αἱ κινήσεις τρόπον μέν τινα
λέγουσιν αἴτιον, οὕτω δὲ οὐ λέγουσιν οὐδ’ ὅνπερ πέφυκεν. οἱ μὲν γὰρ νοῦν
λέγοντες ἢ φιλίαν ὡς ἀγαθὸν μὲν ταύτας τὰς αἰτίας τιθέασιν, οὐ μὴν ὡς ἕνεκά γε
τούτων ἢ ὂν ἢ γιγνόμενόν τι τῶν ὄντων ἀλλ’ ὡς ἀπὸ τούτων τὰς κινήσεις οὔσας
λέγουσιν· ὡς δ’ αὕτως καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων τὰς κινήσεις οὔσας λέγουσιν· ὡς δ’ αὕτως καὶ
οἱ τὸ ἓν ἢ τὸ ὂν φάσκοντες εἶναι τὴν τοιαύτην φύσιν τῆς μὲν οὐσίας αἴτιόν φασιν
εἶναι, οὐ μὴν τούτου γε ἕνεκα ἢ εἶναι ἢ γίγνεσθαι, ὥστε λέγειν τε καὶ μὴ λέγειν πως
συμβαίνει αὐτοῖς τἀγαθὸν αἴτιον· οὐ γὰρ ἁπλῶς ἀλλὰ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς λέγουσιν
(*Met*. i 7, 988b6-16)).

principles and causes; for the good, i.e. that for the sake of which, is one of the

causes (*Met.* i 2, 982b4-10).[55]

This offers, then, a fairly clear picture of how Aristotle is intending to treat the good as a

final cause, and thus as the kind of cause which can serve as a core of a core-dependent

homonymy of goodness.

To appreciate how he proceeds, we can sketch his derivation of goodness as a

final cause more abstractly. Take the general scheme:

- S does *a* in order to φ.

A first attempt is deflationary:

- S does *a* in order to φ *iff* S's doing *a* contributes to φ-ing.

So, for example, the heart pumps blood in order oxygenate the body *iff* the heart pumps

blood because pumping blood contributes to oxygenating the body.

This deflationary account fails. Suppose a ball falls accidentally partway down a

drain, blocking it and thereby filling the sink. This in turn creates pressure which holds

the ball in place. Yet the ball did not fall into the drain *in order* to block it.

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[55] ἀρχικωτάτη δὲ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, καὶ μᾶλλον ἀρχικὴ τῆς ὑπηρετούσης, ἡ γνωρίζουσα τίνος ἕνεκέν ἐστι πρακτέον ἕκαστον· τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ τἀγαθὸν ἑκάστου, ὅλως δὲ τὸ ἄριστον ἐν τῇ φύσει πάσῃ. ἐξ ἁπάντων οὖν τῶν εἰρημένων ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἐπιστήμην πίπτει τὸ ζητούμενον ὄνομα· δεῖ γὰρ ταύτην τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν καὶ αἰτιῶν εἶναι θεωρητικήν· καὶ γὰρ τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα ἓν τῶν αἰτίων ἐστίν (*Met.* i 2, 982b4-10).

What is needed is some introduction of normativity.[56] In fact, given his insistence

on fine-grainedness, Aristotle's approach requires the importation of normatively twice

over. First:

- S does *a* in order to ϕ iff S does *a* such that (i) S's doing a contributes to ϕ-
  ing; and (ii) ϕ-ing is good for S.

So, for instance, Sandra swims in order to be healthy *iff* Sandra's swimming (i)

contributes to her being healthy; and (ii) being healthy is good for Sandra. Yet as

Aristotle's remarks in *Metaphysics* A 3 bring out, this is as yet insufficient. Sandra might,

after all, swim in order to humiliate her enemies. In this case, Sandra's swimming is

good for her, because, as it happens, humiliating her enemies co-incides with a health-

producing activity. So, we need another dose of normativity:

- S does *a* in order to ϕ *iff* S does *a* such that (i) S's doing *a* contributes to ϕ-
  ing; (ii) ϕ-ing is good for S (and so, norm-involving); and (iii) S does a *because*
  ϕ-ing is good for S.

This is hyperintensional final causation—which is to say, Aristotelian teleology.

The hyperintensionality is important, because it explains how goodness serves as

a core instance of non-univocal goods within or even across domains. Where goodness

is a final cause, citing it *as good* is required to explain the goodness of the non-core

instances. They are good because they stand in a necessary, asymmetric dependence

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[56] This view of Aristotelian teleology is thus intended to reject the non-normative
characterization of Gotthelf (1987). See n. # above.

relation on the core instance of goodness, which is the source (ἀρχή) of their goodness. More precisely, they stand in a necessary, asymmetric dependence relation on the core instance of goodness *in so far as it is good*, which is then the source (ἀρχή) of their goodness.

IV. The Core of Goodness

On the hypothesis that Aristotle has available to him a notion of core-dependent goodness, the question naturally arises as to the nature of the core. It would be surprising if it were itself an indexed good.[57] Indexed goods are tailored for specific domains: good *for* members of kind *K*, good *in so far* as something is a ϕ, good in context C_1 but not in C_2, good *as apprehended* by S, and so forth. If the core of goodness were itself indexed, then it would be hard to see how non-core instances—all non-core instances, whether themselves indexed or not—could be account dependent upon it. For then its domain would need to be part of their accounts, in which case the generality and neutrality of the core would be threatened. It is as if one were to attempt to define the goodness of a knife, a knife which functions well, in terms of, say, the goodness of a majestic vista in the Southern Alps of New Zealand. Rather, one should expect, if anything, for the account of the goodness of majestic views and of knives to depend upon some context-insensitive, kind-independent, non-indexed good.

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[57] See Chapter One § II on indexed and non-indexed goods.

To make this plain, we can make overt precisely how, in principle, a core-dependent framework for goodness would need to look. The general schema which we have introduced in agreement with Cajetanus as applied to goodness holds:[58]

> *a* and *b* are homonymously good in a core-dependent way *iff*: (i) *a* is good; (ii) *b* is good; (iii) the accounts of goodness in '*a* is good' and '*b* is good' do not completely overlap; (iv) necessarily, if *a* is the core instance of goodness, then *b*'s being good stands in one of the four-causal relation to *a*'s being good; and (v) *a*'s being good is asymmetrically responsible for *b*'s being good.

If the core instance of goodness in this schema were in one way or another constrained in terms of domain, then it would not qualify as sufficiently general or universal, not in the sense of its being univocal across all goods, of course, but in the sense of all non-core instances being equally entitled to cite it in their own essence-specifying accounts. One might adapt and deploy an observation of Aristotle's about being: if there is a prior, core good, it would be universal in this way, because it is first.[59]

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[58] This general schema also renders precise our impressionistic talk of 'trickle-down' approaches to goodness above in §II.

[59] What he actually says: 'But if there is some changeless substance, this is prior and philosophy is the first <science>, and it would be universal in this way, because it is first; and it would belong to this science to investigate concerning being *qua* being, both what it is and that which belongs to it *qua* being' (*Met.* E 1, 1026a29-32; εἰ δ' ἔστι τις οὐσία ἀκίνητος, αὕτη προτέρα καὶ φιλοσοφία πρώτη, καὶ καθόλου οὕτως ὅτι πρώτη· καὶ περὶ τοῦ ὄντος ᾗ ὂν ταύτης ἂν εἴη θεωρῆσαι, καὶ τί ἐστι καὶ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ᾗ ὄν).

There is, however, a legitimate question as to whether Aristotle so much as

recognizes an absolute good.[60] As we have seen, some think that his rejection of Plato's

Form of the Good is precisely the liberating insight that there is no such thing as an

absolute good; his advance resided precisely in his humanizing ethics by recognizing

only the human good, the good for human beings.[61]

Indeed, there is some question as to what it would mean for there to be a core of

goodness which was itself indexed in no way whatsoever. It is true that when people

speak of an absolute good, as when they speak of intrinsic value, they do not all speak

about the same things: some speak of an absolute good as an unimprovable good,

others as the good that is most final, as what is unqualifiedly good, as a correct object of

love, as the good which would remain good even in all isolation, as incorruptible, or

simply as that which ought to exist.[62] Still others eschew any attempt at defining or

even characterizing. So Moore: 'If I am asked 'what is good?' my answer is that good is

good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked 'How is good to be defined?' my

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[60] This question is raised most clearly and forcefully by Kraut (2011, 210-211).

[61] This is the view of Jacquette, discussed above in Chapter Two, § III.6. See also the more scholarly remarks of Brüllmann (2011).

[62] Feldman (1998) runs through a series of characterisations, ending with an encouragement that we stop hyperventilating about intrinsic goodness. Moore hazarded a simple definition of intrinsic value (1960, 260): 'We can in fact set up the following definition: To say that a kind of value is intrinsic means merely that the question whether a thing possesses it, and in what degree it possesses it, depends solely on the intrinsic nature of the thing in question.'

answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it.'[63] It is not,

however, clear how many of these characterizations should be taken to be definitional;

nor indeed is it clear whether they should be thought to be in competition for one

another.

For our purposes, however, we can stipulate, negatively and as a minimum, that

a core good for Aristotle would need to be non-indexed.[64] Does he even allow the

possibility of such a good? It seems so. For instance, in *Nicomachean Ethics* v 1, in a

discussion of the unjust person, Aristotle observes: 'people ought to pray that what is

good without qualification will also be good for them' (*EN* v 1, 1129b3-6).[65] The context

of this claim are nuanced,[66] but the mention of what is 'good without qualification' calls

to mind Aristotle's contrast between what is good without qualification and indexed

goods, in this case, what is good for human beings. Thus, for instance, in his discussion

of friendship in *Nicomachean Ethics* viii 5, Aristotle observes:

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[63] Moore (1993, 58).

[64] This is the primarily negative strategy of Lemos (1994, 3-4): '. . .according to the traditional view, intrinsic value is a *nonrelational* concept. When one says that something is intrinsically good. . . he means just that, that is is intrinsically good *period*. He does not mean that it is intrinsically good for me, for himself, for human beings, or for rational beings.'

[65] '. . .ἀλλ' εὔχεσθαι μὲν τὰ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθὰ καὶ αὑτοῖς ἀγαθὰ εἶναι, αἱρεῖσθαι δὲ τὰ αὑτοῖς ἀγαθά (*EN* v 1, 1129b3-6).

[66] The nuance enters because the adverb 'without qualification' (ἁπλῶς) can be used in strict and less strict ways. One can say that health is unqualifiedly good for human beings, but then note that the return to health of a sickly crazed tyrant might be bad for human beings all the same. See *Top*. 115b3-35, 166b22.

> Friendship is most of all a friendship of good people, just as we have often said. For what is lovable and choiceworthy seems to be what is good or pleasant without qualification (τὸ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθὸν ἢ ἡδύ), and what is lovable and choiceworthy to each person seems to be what is good or pleasant to himself; and both of these make one good person < lovable and choiceworthy> to another good person (*EN* viii 5 1157b25-28; cf. 1113a23, 1155b7; *De Caelo* i 9, 279a22-30, ii 12, 292a22-b5).[67]

In identifying the unqualified good as an object of choice, and contrasting it what is choiceworthy for someone, Aristotle contrasts a kind of good which is non-indexed, the unqualified, with another goodness which is indexed, the good *for someone.* What is good for someone is pursued by the one for whom it is good through action; but 'what is in the best state has no need of action (πρᾶξις) for it is itself that for the sake of which (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα) <actions are done>' (*De Cael*o ii 12, 292b5-6). It is this unqualified sort of goodness which can serve as the core of goodness conceived as a core-dependent homonym.

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[67] Μάλιστα μὲν οὖν ἐστι φιλία ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν, καθάπερ πολλάκις εἴρηται· δοκεῖ γὰρ φιλητὸν μὲν καὶ αἱρετὸν τὸ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθὸν ἢ ἡδύ, ἑκάστῳ δὲ τὸ αὑτῷ τοιοῦτον· ὁ δ' ἀγαθὸς τῷ ἀγαθῷ δι' ἄμφω ταῦτα.

V. Concluding Considerations

Aristotle recognizes in *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6 that his rejection of Platonic univocity comes with consequences. Once univocity is rejected, so too is easy commensurability. Indeed, given some things he himself says about the requisites of commensurability, to the effect that commensurability for any two ϕ things a and b requires that a and b be univocally ϕ, Aristotle seems to deprive himself of the sorts of ordinal rankings he requires within his deontology and then also the sorts of hierarchies of goodness is is wont to insist upon more globally.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* i 6, Aristotle offers two possible unifying strategies, but only in passing, namely analogy and core-dependent homonymy. Some have sought to show how analogy might suffice; others have supposed that he might avail himself of both strategies, even to the extreme of taking one strategy to be a special case of the other. Those approaches fail.

That leaves some version of core-dependent homonymy as his unifying principle. We should not, however, be in the least sanguine about his prospects for success. After all, even considering for the briefest moment some his own preferred examples of core-dependent homonymy in *Metaphysics* Γ 4, we should be hard-pressed to say how Socrates' complexion is healthier than his exercise regime or, still less, how a scalpel is more or less medical than a medical text book. Even so, one can appreciate how the framework will provide a kind of comparability for goodness, since goodness

is given by Aristotle a teleological causal role: different ways of being good might yet, in their diversity, be more or less *good-augmenting.* Nor is there any reason to suppose that all good-augmenting relations be precisely the same; what is required is that their goodness stand in a final-causal relation to the good they enhance, whether that good be indexed or non-indexed.

Accordingly, since goodness can be a cause without its being the case that the goods it causes to be good are good in precisely the same way, Aristotle is entitled to speak of goodness in both domain-specific and domain-transcendent ways without being constrained to embrace Platonic univocity. He can do so, moreover, in such a way that he can deny Value Commensurability in a principled way. That thesis holds that for any value property ϕ, x and y are commensurable as ϕ only if x and y are univocally ϕ. Aristotle can now appeal to a relaxed principle, which allows that no value property is commensurable with any other if they are merely homonymous, or homonymous by chance ($\dot{\alpha}\pi\dot{o}$ $\tau\acute{v}\chi\eta\varsigma$)—a principle he should not abandon—even while allowing a mediated commensurability for goods which are core-dependent homonyms.

His doing so brings him closer to Plato than his criticisms of him may initially have suggested that he intended to be. Aristotle never, however, wanted to part company with Plato in thinking that goodness is a cause.