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Two Concepts of Honour in Aristotle

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Abstract

This thesis aims to reconstruct the concept of honour as a recognition of worth and the corresponding emotions and activities in Aristotle's corpus. It primarily distinguishes between two types of honour: *conventional honour* and *natural honour*. Conventional honour overlaps with the received interpretation of Aristotelian honour as the establishment and fulfilment of interpersonal obligations, falling within the scope of apparent good. In contrast, the less-studied concept of natural honour refers to the recognition of genuine goodness, which is independent of public opinions and closely associated with the recognition of Aristotelian god, godlike men, and the orderly consequences that depend on them. This thesis mainly investigates the mechanism of natural honour within Aristotle's theoretical framework and applies this concept to clarify several honour-related texts in Aristotle's ethical writings. I think a reassessment of this often neglected or underestimated concept sheds light on the normative foundation of Aristotelian virtues.

This thesis first reviews contemporary research on honour as an inclusive and dynamic value and defines the concept as based on interpersonal obligations enforced by public disapproval and individual sentiment. This thesis then reviews ancient Greek literature to establish the consistency between the concept of honour in ancient Greek society and that in contemporary society. Aristotle's concept of conventional honour is presented against this social backdrop.

Chapter Two identifies the key terms and passages that indicate the concept of honour and categorises the passages into two groups: one involves social interactions, and the other do not. It then provides a preliminary account of this binary opposition of honour through a textual analysis of *Nicomachean Ethics* I. 12, in which Aristotle claims that god and happiness should not be praised but honoured for praise is always with reference to something else. I argue that, although Aristotle does not explicitly outline the mechanism in his ethical works, he implicitly proposes two distinct approaches to evaluative judgment, which underpin the broader distinction between conventional honour and natural honour.

The following three chapters aim to incorporate the concept of natural honour into Aristotle's general theoretical frameworks in three main aspects. Chapter Three focuses on the theological foundation of natural honour. It identifies the cognitive shift of *thaumazein* in heavenly bodies inspired by the Aristotelian god in *Metaphysics* Λ as the divine source of natural honour. I extend this argument in two directions. First, the natural order that ascends towards god has the

same capacity to evoke *thaumazein*. Second, the human intellect possesses the same ability to evoke *thaumazein* as the divine intellect, which is the substance of god. Thus, I speculate that Aristotle's theology allows for the practical manifestations of human intellect to inspire the emergence of natural honour in those who observe the manifestations.

Chapter Four addresses the epistemological aspects of natural honour, focusing on two key questions: How can goodness be perceived? And how can one attain a universal understanding through the perception of a single particular entity? Based on the textual evidence from *Posterior Analytics*, I argue that Aristotle's concept of the first principle encompasses a wide range of elementary propositions, including the definitions of natural entities and moral concepts. All these propositions, which fall under the scope of the first principle, can be intuitively grasped through the perception of a single particular entity via Aristotelian *induction*. In this way, Aristotle allows for the cognitive possibility of recognising genuine goodness through the perception of a particular entity that manifests goodness, thereby supporting the independence of natural honour. I further clarify that the cognitive distinction between those who recognise natural honour and those who are naturally honourable lies in two types of understanding of the first principles, paving the way for the ethical account of natural honour.

Chapter Five addresses two ethical concerns regarding natural honour: how can the godlike men who lead a contemplative life be *perceived* and then *identified* in daily life to inspire natural honour? Drawing from *Nicomachean Ethics* X, I argue that godlike men also engage in political life, rendering them visible to other community members. I refer to textual evidence from *Protrepticus* to speculate that godlike men possess an unqualified understanding of the boundary marks or definitive features of moral virtues, which distinguishes them from those who live the second-best life of politics. Finally, I revisit the honour-related passages in *Nicomachean Ethics* IV and offer an alternative interpretation of the two honour-related virtues, based on Aristotle's distinction between conventional and natural honour.

Lay Summary

This thesis examines the concept of honour in the writings of Aristotle. It identifies two types of honour in Aristotle: conventional honour, which reflects social identities and depends on public opinion, and natural honour, which is inspired by true goodness and independent of societal views.

The study begins by defining honour as a recognition of worth and then shows its wide existence as a social phenomenon that depends on shared values in society. It then examines how this idea is consistent with ancient Greek cultural practices and how Aristotle's philosophy reinterprets it as conventional honour within his ethical framework.

Based on this understanding of conventional honour, this thesis then examines the concept of natural honour, which Aristotle attributes to true goodness, together with God and extraordinary individuals, described as 'godlike' by Aristotle, who possess true goodness. This aspect of honour is less explored and offers insights into Aristotle's broader ethical and philosophical ideas.

Key chapters of the thesis aim to fit natural honour into different perspectives of Aristotle's theoretical frame. Chapter Three explores how Aristotle's concept of divinity inspires natural honour. It argues that admiration for the Aristotelian god is the initial form of natural honour. Natural order and the activity of human intellect also inspire such admiration. Chapter Four discusses how people can perceive true goodness and understand it universally through Aristotle's ideas about first principles and induction. Chapter Five examines how godlike individuals can be identified in daily life and inspire others through their virtuous actions. These individuals bridge the gap between a life of contemplation and political engagement, demonstrating the practical impact of natural honour. In the end, the concept of natural honour is applied to explain Aristotle's two honour-related virtues.

This work highlights how Aristotle's concept of natural honour challenges the conventional understanding of virtue by emphasising the recognition of inherent goodness, offering new perspectives on his ethical philosophy.

Acknowledgement

The journey of a PhD is rarely an easy one for any doctoral student, though the challenges each person faces are uniquely their own. My own journey has been no exception. The obstacles I have encountered have not been limited to academic bottlenecks, nor have they followed a straightforward, linear progression; instead, they have felt more like a profound path of self-questioning and exploration. Along the way, I have grappled with moments of confusion and self-doubt but have ultimately persevered, facing each challenge with resilience and determination.

During my PhD journey, I have been fortunate to receive the support and guidance of many remarkable individuals. First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervision team, particularly my primary supervisor, Dr. Inna Kupreeva. Her decision to take me on and guide me when I chose to change my research approach midway through my PhD was a pivotal moment. Without her steadfast presence, I might have lost the very opportunity to see my PhD research come to fruition. Whenever I reflect on that time of confusion and helplessness, I feel an enduring and heartfelt gratitude toward her. Her belief in me enabled me to emerge from the depths of self-doubt, showing me that the senseless criticism and hollow scorn of others could not truly undermine me but only served to strengthen my resolve to persevere.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Two Contexts of Honour in Aristotle's Ethics

When the term 'honour' (τιμή) is introduced in *Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter *EN*), it is not placed in a positive context. In Book I.5, Aristotle summarises several beliefs about human happiness and critically discusses some of them to pave the way for his own view. Honour is proposed as a candidate for the goal of the life of politics, but Aristotle immediately rejects its status because happiness should be something of one's own and immune to external factors (τἀγαθὸν δὲ οἰκεῖόν τι καὶ δυσαφαίρετον εἶναι), but honour depends more on those who bestow it than those who receive it.[1] Moreover, Aristotle concludes at *EN* X.8 that the life of politics is only the second-best form of happiness,[2] and even within this context, honour does not qualify as the goal of this life. In this context, honour is granted no greater ethical significance than other disqualified candidates for happiness reviewed in this section, such as pleasure and wealth.[3] It is likely for this reason that the term is often overlooked in commentaries, and the concept of honour has not received significant academic attention.[4]

However, in *EN* I.12, honour is mentioned in a much more positive light. Aristotle first introduces a new question without any prior context: whether happiness belongs to something to be *praised* (ἐπαινετός) or *honoured* (τίμιος). He then answers that, because honour belongs to things that are complete, divine, and the best, happiness should be honoured.[5] Moreover, Aristotle deems the connection between honour and happiness to be independent of public opinions, as it is 'absurd to praise the gods, thereby judging them by reference to us.'[6]

Before conducting a detailed analysis, it is clear that within the same book of *EN*, honour is placed in two different contexts. In one context, honour is one of the elements that constitute public life, similar to money, as an immaterial resource that affirms value in social interaction;

[1] *EN* 1095b22–28. Aspasius notices the different disapprovals Aristotle assigns to honour and pleasure, and comments that, unlike honour, pleasure should be believed by the mass to be of one's own and not easily deprived of, as if honour is a worse candidate than pleasure as the end of life.
[2] *EN* 1178a9–10
[3] Ross (1969) also comments that, in this chapter, honour is grouped with views on pleasure and wealth as pursuits that stand in contrast to the life of contemplation.
[4] E.g., Irwin (1985), Broadie & Rowe (2002). On the other hand, some other scholars have overinterpreted the ethical significance of opinion-based honour, even to the extent of using public opinion to justify Aristotle's moral propositions (e.g., Cordner, 1994, Kraut, 2006, Cairns, 2011, Rabbås, 2015). This is the viewpoint that this thesis will challenge.
[5] *EN* 1101b10–1102a4
[6] *EN* 1101b18–20: δῆλον δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ἐκ τῶν περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς ἐπαίνων: γελοῖοι γὰρ φαίνονται πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀναφερόμενοι.

whereas in another context, honour is closely linked to Aristotle's moral paragon, to the extent that Aristotle uses it alongside the adjective 'godlike' to describe human happiness. In fact, these two words frequently appear together throughout *EN*, often in the discussion of key concepts. For example, in IV.4, the individual with greatness of soul (μεγαλοψυχία) is only concerned with honour because it is the prize for god;[7] in *EN* VII.1, the superhuman virtue is deemed as a godlike state that deserves honour more than other virtues;[8] and in *EN* X.7, Aristotle explicitly states that it is vulgar (φορτικός) to praise the life of contemplation as something godlike, but contemplation is honourable in itself.[9]

Does Aristotle hold two concepts of honour? If so, what is the generic difference between them? Are they associated with each other to some degree? These are the fundamental research questions of this thesis. To fully address them, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive analysis of Aristotle's discussions across multiple works—an undertaking I lacked full confidence in but endeavoured to complete to the best of my ability.

Before delving into the analysis, it is worth noting as an intellectual background that it is not uncommon for philosophers to propose broad distinctions regarding forms of value recognition. For example, Kant expressively distinguishes three kinds of 'Achtung', often translated as respect, by translating them into different Latin or German words. The first is 'respekt'—a raw pre-moral idea that involves an uneasy and watchful attitude driven by fear; the second is 'observantia'—an attitude we show others in virtue of their merits and accomplishments; the third is 'reverentia'—an experience of moral force only towards the majestic law itself or indirectly towards those people and actions in which the law is exemplified.[10] In this case, Kant distinguishes between the practice of recognition in social interactions and the value judgments formed in response to moral principles, echoing the two contexts in which Aristotle mentions honour.

Another example can be found in the Confucian classic *Xunzi*. In Book *Zhenglun*, the concept of 荣 (honour) is distinguished into two types: honour related to one's social position (埶荣) and honour derived from one's overall morality (义荣).[11] The former is contingent on external factors, such as political prerogative, while the latter originates from internal factors. Again,

[7] *EN* 1123b19–21
[8] *EN* 1145a19–28
[9] *EN* 1178b16–17, 32–33.
[10] For further details, see Paton (1947, 63–65), Feinburg (1973).
[11] All translations of *Xunzi* are from Hutton (2014).

the worth of moral principles is recognised in a distinct and more reliable manner compared to other factors that are deemed by the public to be valuable.

I hope the above introduction has sparked the reader's interest in the concept of honour. Next, I will explain the specific research rationale and provide a clear definition of the concept of honour.

1.2 Research Rationale

In the extensive research on Aristotle, the concept of honour is generally treated only as an integral part of political life, understood either as a reflection of apparent values or as social status linked to those values.[12] In *EN* I. 5, it is treated as a superficial goal of political life; In *Rhetoric*, making the audience feel deprived of honour is effective in arousing anger;[13] In *Politics*, the disproportional distribution of honour in relation to certain agreed standards among citizens is considered the fundamental cause of civil strife.[14] It is thus tempting to assume a consistency of meaning of honour across Aristotle's corpus, even though some works are more empirical while others are more normative.

In addition to the above contextual evidence, there is also textual evidence that suggests a downplaying of the significance of Aristotelian honour. First, Aristotle never explicitly differentiates the meanings of honour in his ethical works—unlike his treatment of pleasure, where he provides distinct elaborations,[15] or courage, where he distinguishes between genuine and civic courage with specific qualifiers.[16] Second, he does not consistently adhere to the binary of honour and praise introduced in *EN* I. 12. In *Rhetoric*, for example, he expressly lists god as the object of praise together with humans and inanimate things.[17] Third, in *Eudemian Ethics* (hereafter *EE*) II. 1, Aristotle also addresses the question of why happiness should not be praised, a passage that parallels *EN* I.12.[18] However, his explanation in *EE* appears to present praise as merely a speech or rhetorical device that declares certain state of an object, which does not suit happiness as an ultimate end. Instead, felicitation (εὐδαιμονισμὸς) is the appropriate form of discourse for happiness, distinguishing it from mere praise. This

[12] Bywater (1890): τιμή as office and τιμή as value.
[13] *Rh*. 1386b14–15
[14] *Pol*. 1302b12–15. The standards vary according to polity: in aristocracy, the standard is virtue, oligarchy is by wealth, and democracy by freedom (*Pol*. 1294a10–12). For further details see Cairns, Canevaro, & Mantzouranis (2022).
[15] *EN* X. 1–5
[16] *EN* 1116a16–18: ἡ ἀνδρεία…ἡ πολιτική.
[17] *Rh*. 1366a28–30
[18] *EE* 1219b8–16. All translations of *Eudemian Ethics* are from Inwood & Woolf (2012).

explanation in *EE* offers a more modest, deflationary view compared to the implications in *EN* I.12.[19]

For these reasons, it is understandable that scholars may adopt a deflationary interpretation of the concept of honour, even though it is sometimes closely associated with key concepts in Aristotle's works. I summarise several deflationary approaches to honour when the concept is presented in a positive context. The first approach is to take honour here as a purely rhetorical expression. For example, in *Metaphysics* Λ, honourability is attributed to the Aristotelian god, alongside other essential attributes such as completeness and eternality.[20] While the attributes of completeness and eternality ascribed to the Aristotelian god are generally seen as having deep theoretical significance, the honourability of god is often interpreted as a rhetorical expression rather than a substantive aspect of divinity, emphasising the principal role of god or intellect within Aristotle's framework.[21]

The second approach is to resort to conventional forms of speech. As illustrated above, the various modes of worth recognition in *EN* I. 12 can be read as distinct types of speech that address different sources of worth according to societal convention, with honour attributed to the most esteemed values within a given cultural context. In this way, the distinction between honour and praise is not a fundamental difference rooted in cognitive mechanisms, but a formal one, as both are societal constructs used to recognise value of different sorts.[22]

The third approach sidesteps the question of the honourability of happiness by proposing that honour attained by those who lead a happy life is reflected in the subject's self-respect, namely the recognition of their own worth.[23] In this way, this approach avoids tackling specific distinctions of natural honour, such as the way one can be honoured without being dependent on the opinion of those who bestow honour. This perspective is often based on Aristotle's discussion of greatness-of-soul, where he asserts that a person with greatness-of-soul has a proper self-assessment and deserves great honour.[24]

[19] Cf. *Rhetoric* 1367b28–36 on the three types of speech: praise, encomium, and felicitation. See Chapter 2.4 for a comparative analysis with *EN* I. 12.
[20] *Met*. 1074b25–32
[21] E.g., Judson (2019, pp. 309–311) pays little attention on the honourability of god.
[22] E.g., Irwin (1985). Broadie (2002, p. 291) briefly considers the possibility of a generic difference but quickly dismisses this proposal. See Chapter 2.4 for a detailed response.
[23] Crisp (2006)
[24] *EN* 1123b1–3, 20–22

The fourth approach contends that objects of praise, such as bodily strength and moral virtues, can also be honoured when they are viewed as components of or instrumental to happiness. In other words, Aristotle might not establish a clear distinction between honour and praise in *EN* I.12, suggesting that there is no need to seek an alternative interpretation of Aristotelian honour.[25]

As an initial response to the deflationary interpretation of Aristotelian honour, it is important to note that whether Aristotle creates specific terminologies or consistently maintains the binary of honour and praise throughout his works does not diminish his intent to ascribe additional significance to the concept of honour. In the *Organon*, Aristotle asserts that names are established by convention (συνθήκη) because nothing is inherently assigned a name by nature.[26] Consequently, he must rely on conventional terminology to convey the essence of honour. Aristotle also acknowledges that names and the things they denote are not intrinsically in pair; while the number of names is finite, the number of things is infinite. As a result, a single term can often encompass multiple meanings, making it common for a word to be used in various senses.[27]

Aristotle further concedes that ambiguities in language can lead to misunderstandings or deceptions in arguments,[28] and creating new terms for previously unnamed concepts can help avoid such confusion.[29] On the other hand, he also notices that people are often reluctant to make such distinctions due to the established popularity of certain usages, as they wish to avoid appearing overly pedantic.[30]

Given this context, it is plausible that Aristotle recognises the dual meanings of honour but deliberately chooses not to explicitly differentiate them for the sake of convention. Therefore, the absence of clearly defined terminology should not lead us to adopt a purely deflationary interpretation of the concept of honour in his works.

Some deflationary interpretations of honour can be readily dismissed. The claim that objects of praise can simultaneously be honoured as components of, or instrumental to, the object of honour represents a common fallacy that derives from the negligence of the qualification of

[25] I am grateful to Prof. Douglas Cairns for raising this issue during our meeting in 2021.
[26] *Int.* 16a19–20, 26–28
[27] *SE* 1658–15
[28] *SE* 169a23–25
[29] *Cat*. 7a5–7, 7b11–12
[30] *SE* 175b33–37

attributes. Aristotle extensively refutes this type of fallacy, illustrating it with the example of an Ethiopian, who cannot be both black and white simultaneously, except in a specific respect, such as having white teeth.[31]

It is challenging to find textual evidence that directly refutes the other approaches that downplay the normative significance of honour. After all, Aristotle does not provide explicit illustrations of the characteristics of natural honour. However, the shortcomings in the current understanding of honour can be observed through many scholarly interpretations of honour-related texts, which often appear ambiguous and contentious. For instance, the distinction between honour and praise in *EN* I. 12, though placed in the foundational book of a sophisticated ethical treatise, has received relatively little attention from commentators compared to other parts of the book.[32]

The scholarly debate is even more intense concerning the two honour-related virtues in *EN* IV. 3–4, namely greatness of soul and proper pride, to the extent that there is even considerable disagreement over the defining characteristics of these virtues and their interrelationship. Specifically, there is no consensus on whether greatness-of-soul should be classified as a theoretical virtue,[33] moral virtue,[34] or 'superhuman' virtue,[35] or if it qualifies as a virtue at all. Among scholars who view greatness-of-soul as a moral virtue, some find fault with this trait, while others defend it.[36] Additionally, some argue that the trait's perceived deficiencies are intentionally constructed to convey implicit views.[37] Among those who do not find fault with the trait, some argue that the concern for honour that constitutes the motive of greatness-of-soul implies a communitarian element of Aristotelian ethics,[38] while others maintain that the desire for honour can be consistent with the framework of virtue ethics.[39]

Based on the concerns outlined above, the primary rationale of this study is to offer a comprehensive interpretation of honour within Aristotle's theoretical framework, through which a coherent understanding of his honour-related discussions in ethical works may be reached. By proposing an alternative mechanism of honour distinct from conventional honour,

[31] *SE* 166b38–167a20
[32] E.g. Broadie's (2012, pp. 290–291) commentary on this passage also reflects an element of uncertainty.
[33] Gauthier (1951), Howland (2002)
[34] Curzer (1991), Crisp (2006)
[35] Hardie (1978)
[36] Curzer (1991), Cordner (1994)
[37] Sherman (1988), Fetter (2015)
[38] Cordner (1994), Sarch (2008)
[39] Tolland (2013). See Chapter 5.4 for a more detail review of this contention.

this study seeks to explain why the Aristotelian god and godlike men are not only inherently *honourable* but also reliably *honoured* without relying on the opinions of those who bestow honour. Additionally, it aims to clarify why Aristotle classifies the honour received by the godlike men as the focus of a separate virtue, namely greatness-of-soul, and why he describes it in a unique manner that has been criticised by some scholars as malign,[40] marking a significant departure from his treatment of other virtues.

Aside from a coherent interpretation of honour-related texts, this thesis aspires to explore a fundamental issue of Aristotelian ethics, a question that has puzzled me since my initial encounter with Aristotle's works: Is there any *external phenomenal justification* for the virtues that constitute or lead to happiness? Consider the virtue of courage as an example. The Aristotelian courage involves a proper disposition, determined by rational deliberation, towards the emotion of fear.[41] Assume there is indeed such a proper disposition, so that we avoid the open question of why certain traits are objectively good or virtuous.[42] Since this disposition is not arbitrary but a normative mark within the spectrum of fear, it is justified by the state of soul—specifically, the actualisation of the natural *ergon*—of those who possess and actualise it. But this justification is internal, in that it is manifested and realised through the individual's own flourishing and not easily demonstrable to others through external signs that unequivocally distinguish true courage from its imposters.[43] For instance, it is difficult for those who observe the scene to determine whether Leonidas's self-sacrifice on the battlefield—a paradigmatic act of courage—was motivated by a commitment to the virtue itself or by the prospect of immense public acclaim. Therefore, the quest for an external phenomenal justification for such a disposition remains crucial for affirming the legitimacy of Aristotelian virtues.[44]

In the case of the Aristotelian god, the internal justification of its goodness lies in its state of eternal actuality, and the external phenomenal justification is the circular motion of heavenly bodies, for which god serves as both the efficient and final cause.[45] In other words, if god were not good, it would not instigate the movement of heavenly bodies as an act of imitation.

[40] Curzer (1991)
[41] *EN* 1106b35–1107a2, 1115a6
[42] For this objection against naturalist accounts of goodness, see Moore (1903).
[43] *EN* 1116a15–1117a5, *EE* 1229b15–1230a25
[44] The ethical significance of external justification is further strengthened by the fact that Aristotle claims that happiness is also associated with certain amount of external goods (e.g., *EN* 1179a5–13). Whether the possession of external goods is component of happiness or consequence of happiness, it can be regarded as an external indicator of the state of happiness. Due to space limitations, this topic will not be discussed in detail here.
[45] *Met*. Λ. 6–10. See Chapter 3.2 for a detailed illustration.

However, Aristotle does not specify whether a similar external justification exists for human happiness.

This theoretical gap might contribute to the 'endoxic' reading of Aristotelian ethics. Some scholars claim that Aristotle treats received opinions (ἐνδοξά) as 'the proposed method for testing the truth of ethical propositions,' regarding received opinions *per se* as the starting point of Aristotle's moral reasoning.[46] Building on this line of reasoning, further speculation is argued that the honour status of social identities is determined by received opinions on worth as general principles, which in turn constitute the substance of Aristotle's virtue. For example, they draw on Aristotle's account of civic courage, which is motivated by a desire for honour from one's community and is merely a homonymous form of the genuine virtue of courage, to argue that the desire for honour is an essential component of Aristotle's conception of virtue.[47] Therefore, it is the alignment of the honour status of those involved or affected by certain behaviours that qualifies the behaviours as virtuous.[48]

The above 'endoxic' approach is neither supported by sufficient textual evidence[49] nor aligns with Aristotle's critique of identity-based honour. This identity-based characteristic of honour is found in conventional honour, as will be demonstrated in the next section, which is dismissed in *EN* I. 5 as the goal of life of politics, and thus cannot serve as an external indicator of virtue. However, the prevalence of the 'endoxic' reading indicates the gap in Aristotle's theoretical framework, namely, that he does not specify any external phenomenal justification for the virtues. This omission, whether unintentional or deliberate, leaves room for the emergence of the speculative 'endoxic' reading. The contrast with the clear external justification for the goodness of God highlights this issue further, as there is no such ambiguity in the case of god: the circular movement of the heavenly bodies serves as the clear external justification for the goodness of god.

Through the examination of two concepts of honour, I aim to offer a constructive perspective on this issue. I propose that the natural honour inspired by the life of godlike men could serve as the external phenomenal justification for Aristotelian virtues, whereas conventional honour is rooted in received opinions about worth that only incidentally reflect moral principles.

[46] Kraut (2006, pp. 88–90)
[47] Cordner (1994, p. 299)
[48] Cairns, (2011), Rabbås, (2015)
[49] Frede (2012)

1.3 Honour as A Judgment of Worth

Before delving into Aristotle's honour, it is necessary to first define the concept of honour and delimit its semantic range in both Aristotle's corpus and the corresponding social context. This thesis defines honour as *a judgement of worth through consideration of some fact about the object*. Compared to the usage of the term 'honour' in contemporary society, this definition is considerably broader, as it imposes no limitation on the circumstances, subjects, or processes involved in making value judgments. This section will justify this definition through a historical review of the usage of the word 'honour.' It will then compare it with a widely accepted definition of honour that puts restrictions on the process of the judgment of worth.

Nowadays, the common usage of the word 'honour' is often associated with a very specific set of values and behaviours in specific communities, such as Mediterranean societies and some inner-city gangs.[50] It is usually not considered an everyday expression but a short-in-supply non-material commodity, pursued mainly by men in small-scale, face-to-face communities in more or less aggressive forms of zero-sum competition.[51]

However, the semantic range of honour does not always stay the same. Historically, the word carried significant social value prior to the twentieth century, being closely associated with Christian morality and patriotism.[52] This situation was then severely undermined by the wars fought, ostensibly, for reasons of national honour, such as the First World War and the Vietnam War, and the increasing popularity of individualistic morality, eventually leading to a drastic reduction of the semantic scope. Nevertheless, situations involving similar characteristics persist. In some cases, 'honour' is replaced by alternative terms, such as respect, esteem, and deference, while in other cases, the situations become unexplainable, as the genuine motive has turned into a social taboo in the dominant anti-honour culture of mainstream society.[53] For example, some have claimed that the anti-honour culture has prevented the US government from acknowledging the true reason for waging the Second Gulf War, which should have been the need to restore its national honour after 9/11, and replaced it with a moral motive, namely the fictitious Weapons of Massive Destruction.[54] It is true that, in the official documents and public speeches, honour is not proposed to justify the invasion of Iraq, but the fact that the

[50] Peristiany (1965), Brennan and Pettit (2004)
[51] Carins (2011)
[52] Welsh (2008)
[53] Bowman (2006) provides a history of the connotation of honour, though he may have confused the term with the social phenomenon that may or may be denoted by it.
[54] Ibid., pp. 293–301.

decision was eventually made and initially supported by the majority indicates the crucial effect of patriotism, though being deprived of the name 'honour.'

The above historical remarks on the scope of honour shows the inclusiveness and flexibility of the semantic range of the term. However, although honour-related words are attached to different ideals in different societies, the terms always involve *the formation and expression of evaluative judgments*, whereas the semantic alteration of the word is attributed to a shift in the agreed objects of evaluative judgment. Therefore, it is reasonable to adopt a more expansive definition of honour, despite its more restricted usage in modern society, as this broader conception better captures the fundamental characteristics of honour—a judgment of worth—throughout the long history of human society.

Having established the definition of honour for this thesis, I will now compare it with a widely accepted definition of honour, substantially developed over the past two decades, which imposes specific restrictions on the process of evaluating worth. The widely accepted definition of honour does not differ from the one proposed in this thesis in that both regard honour as a judgment of worth. However, contemporary studies often assume a fixed paradigm for the process of bestowing and receiving honour, where evaluative judgments must be formed through *mutual affirmation* among members of a community. As will be demonstrated in the next section, this paradigm of honour was as prevalent in ancient Greek society as it is in the modern world. In this thesis, conventional honour, as a subset of Aristotelian honour, will be defined as judgments of worth made in accordance with this paradigm.

In contemporary studies, honour is generally understood as a social phenomenon that embodies public opinions on worth, developed through mutual recognition and validation among members of a community. Empirical evidence suggests that the content of honour is closely tied to specific social identities, which are formed and reinforced through continuous feedback from others.[55] These studies underscore the role of honour in both individual socialisation and community cohesion. At the individual level, honour serves as a motivating force for socialisation: to gain honour within a community, one must conform to the group's standards as part of the maturation process. Simultaneously, individuals define their roles in society (e.g., as a father, friend, or soldier) through the specific types and degrees of honour they receive. At the community level, the practice of honour helps to uphold social norms, values, and even

[55] Stewart (1994), Welsh (2008), Cairns (2011)

legal codes by facilitating mutual affirmation of these standards in daily interactions.[56] According to this interpretation, a wide range of honourable qualities can be identified across various interpersonal relationships, making honour accessible to nearly all members of the community.

The reciprocal mechanism of honour is evident both in specific actions and from a broader perspective. In individual activities, the behaviours that confer honour often coincide with those that claim honour. This overlap occurs because both actions contribute to establishing one's social identity, and failing to engage in either diminishes that identity and undermines the overall functioning of honour-related behaviours. A clear example is the demeanour of a doctor: wearing a white lab coat and carrying a stethoscope not only signifies a professional and serious attitude toward patient care—thereby conferring honour on the patient—but also allows the doctor to claim honour, as these behaviours affirm their professional identity.[57]

From a broader perspective, the pursuit of honour, fulfilled through the act of honouring others, mirrors the dynamics of supply and demand in a market economy, both of which feature the exchange of goods and services.[58] Rational choice theory, often applied in economics, has similarly been applied to explain many honour-seeking and shame-avoiding strategies. At the community level, honour may thus be perceived as a quasi-economy, where different personal qualities are commensurable in terms of honour. A relatively stable allocation of social recognition, namely an equilibrium, is maintained through the reciprocal negotiation of honour among community members.

However, there are significant differences between the economy of honour and a traditional economic system. For example, in the economy of honour, the production, consumption, and exchange of honour often occur simultaneously and are less easily distinguished. When one shakes hands with a friend, the honour conveyed through the gesture is produced, consumed, and exchanged all at once. Unlike in a conventional economy, one cannot stop the exchange and retain the produced honour for oneself. Additionally, there appears to be a limit to the amount of honour that can be conferred in any relationship. While a baker might earn more money by producing higher-quality bread, excessively honouring a friend does not necessarily result in increased honour in return. Despite these differences, the economy of honour provides

[56] Stewart (1994)
[57] Goffman (1956)
[58] See Brennan and Pettit (2004) for an extensive illustration of this perspective.

a useful framework for understanding the complex dynamics of honour within social interactions.

Last but not least, although the standards for evaluative judgment come from reciprocity with the external world, they do not always appear as external factors. These standards can be internalised as moral principles and knowledge, allowing them to function independently even in the absence of external observers. In reality, most evaluative standards are internalised to some degree, but we can broadly distinguish between highly and minimally internalised standards using the dichotomy of guilt and shame.[59] This thesis argues that regardless of the degree of internalisation, any standard established and maintained through mutual affirmation with the external world falls within the scope of conventional honour.

In summary, contemporary studies interpret honour as a cross-cultural phenomenon rooted in mutual affirmation. The recognition of worth may be expressed through both material and non-material forms, and this worth can pertain to either others or oneself (as in the case of self-respect). However, in all instances, the recognition of worth relies on an evaluative standard that is arbitrarily established and upheld through mutual affirmation among members of a community. In contrast to the definition proposed in this thesis, contemporary studies impose an additional restriction on the judgment of worth, namely, that it must be realised through public consensus and social recognition. In other words, mutual affirmation is the only appropriate way of consideration of the honoured object.

1.4 Honour in the Ancient Greek Literature and Society

Having defined the concept of honour and clarified its semantic boundaries in the modern context, the next step is to examine whether this definition applies to the ancient Greek society in which Aristotle developed his understanding of honour. Scholars with a progressivist view of morality may regard many ancient communities, even some modern ones, as morally primitive, and Archaic Greece—especially as depicted in Homeric poems and Greek tragedies—is often seen as a paradigm of a primitive honour society.[60] At first glance, this interpretation seems plausible, as many protagonists in these works address honour-related issues with a level of intensity that exceeds that of their modern counterparts. They are often

[59] Benedict (1946/2005)
[60] E.g., Bowman (2006, pp. 21–40)

sanctioned for actions committed unintentionally or under unusual mental states, and their sense of honour is typically heteronomous, largely shaped by external perceptions and opinions.

For example, in Sophocles' *Ajax*, the title character commits suicide after being mocked by the Greek army for his accidental mistreatment of unallocated livestock. Similarly, in Homer's *Iliad*, Achilles withdraws from the Trojan War due to the dispute over the allocation of a captured woman. Progressivist scholars might argue that these behaviours reflect a primitive understanding of moral responsibility and autonomy. Compared to the concept of honour as defined by contemporary empirical evidence, honour in ancient Greece appears to take on a more aggressive, exclusionary form of competition, rather than a win-win system of mutual affirmation.[61] Honour in this context was primarily pursued by a small group of aristocrats, rather than being accessible to nearly all members of the community. If this interpretation holds, it raises the question of whether the modern understanding of honour, which is more inclusive and based on mutual recognition, can be effectively applied to the moral framework of ancient Greece, which is regarded by some scholars as upholding a morality rooted in competition and rivalry.[62]

If we apply a primitive conception of honour to Aristotle's writings, the life of politics, which seeks honour from virtuous individuals for one's excellence, may be seen as heavily dependent on external resources. Honour in this context would be granted only to those who visibly benefit the community, a process that often requires considerable wealth or political power.[63] Consequently, external resources and fortune might be interpreted as morally significant in Aristotle's framework, as the life of politics as secondary happiness appears to be a life of political distinction, not merely political participation.[64] Such a reading of the life of politics, however, is inconsistent with the broader principles of his ethical theory.

Fortunately, a closer examination of ancient Greek literature reveals that the contemporary understanding of honour—conceived as a judgment of worth formed through mutual affirmation and corresponding behaviours—can also be identified in these texts. In fact, in Homeric poetry, honour appears to be as dynamic and inclusive as its modern counterpart. Rather than being solely a rigid or exclusionary concept tied to aristocratic elites, honour in

[61] See Woodruff (2011) for an engaging review of Ajax's moral dilemma.
[62] E.g., Adkins (1960)
[63] *EN* 1163b3–8
[64] Cf. Aufderheide (2019, pp. 9, 201–202)

these works often involves reciprocal recognition within the community and reflects a broader, evolving social dynamic.

The cluster of terms centred on τιμή, commonly translated as honour, denotes both individual worth—the honourable—and the recognition of that worth—the honoured. Another key term, αιδώς, refers to the awareness of worth and the honour-related emotions, which is translated either as respect or shame, depending on the context.[65] A third frequently occurring term is κλέος, often translated as fame or glory, particularly as it is transmitted through oral performance. All three terms—τιμή, αἰδώς, and κλέος—cover a broad range of qualities in Homeric poetry.

For example, the honourable qualities encompass individual traits, such as prowess in warfare, wealth, age, and special skill or profession, as well as relations with the community, including military and political rank, noble birth, kinship, and roles like being a good wife, slave, friend, and even an outsider of the community.[66] In the *Odyssey*, for example, Odysseus honoured Eurybates not only for being one of his loyal companions but also for the close friendship they shared.[67]

Honour is manifested through a wide variety of manners, both material and non-material. In the *Iliad*, for example, the spoils of war serve as symbols of honour during the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon.[68] Material markers of honour also include the choice cuts of meat, full cups of wine, and gifts and prizes in general.[69] More common are the non-material means to confer honour, including gestures such as admiring gazes, verbal greetings, and privileges like the best seat at a banquet or the authority to issue commands.[70] In sum, honour in archaic Greek society was not a rare or elite phenomenon, as some moral progressivists suggest, nor was it limited to aristocratic circles. Instead, honour permeated all aspects of community life, from everyday interactions to moments of public recognition.

The mechanism of honour in Homeric poems also operates on the principle of reciprocity or mutual recognition, where the assertion of one's own honour is intrinsically linked to the honour due to others. This reciprocal negotiation and commensuration of honour moves the

[65] See Cairns (1993) for a thorough review of the term αιδώς.
[66] See e.g., *Iliad* 1. 278, 5. 78, 9. 160, 237–239, 319, 630; *Odyssey* 1. 432, 7. 66–69, 165, 14. 205.
[67] *Odyssey* 19. 247
[68] *Iliad* 1. 134–138, 161–165.
[69] *Iliad* 12. 310–314.
[70] *Iliad* 12. 311; *Odyssey* 16. 304–307.

community toward a quasi-equilibrium. Even Achilles, one of the most proud and independent heroes in Homeric literature, navigates his actions and emotions through mutual respect at every stage.

At the outset of the *Iliad*, the nemesis Achilles feels is provoked by the denial of his due honour, which he later clarifies as a violation of the shared norms within the Greek army;[71] His withdrawal from battle, although framed as a personal decision, can be interpreted as a strategic attempt to reclaim the public recognition of his identity, which has been undermined by Agamemnon;[72] Ultimately, Achilles' return to the battlefield is motivated by a belated realisation of the honour he owes to his fallen comrade, Patroclus, highlighting how even the most seemingly autonomous hero is bound by the communal framework of reciprocal honour.[73]

Indeed, the competitive aspect of honour—often represented by the tension between physical prowess, political rank, and the readiness to retaliate—comprises some of the most eye-catching content of the *Iliad* and other Homeric poems. Consequently, these qualities tend to stand out more prominently to readers. However, a deeper analysis of the texts reveals a shared understanding of honour between archaic Greek audiences and modern readers: honour is reciprocal, multifaceted, and closely tied to social identity and convention. Thus, competitiveness was not an intrinsic feature of honour in ancient Greece but rather an incidental outcome when various honourable qualities become incommensurable in particular cases.

From an ethical perspective, this paradigm of honour underscores the enduring relationship between individual morality and public opinion, a dynamic that persists from ancient Greek tragedies to contemporary social structures. To align personal ideals of what is right with the community's standards, several factors come into play, including the capacity for shame, the rational pursuit of long-term self-development, and the natural human desire for community and a stable social identity.[74] Each of these factors acknowledges that individual morality is, to some extent, shaped by public opinion, and that moral obligations are often learned through reciprocal exchanges of respect.

The features of honour discussed above are also evident in other contemporary literature. For instance, in Sophocles' *Ajax*, the inclusiveness and flexibility of conventional honour are

[71] Iliad 9. 400–416.
[72] *Iliad* 9, 602–605.
[73] *Iliad* 18, 79–104.
[74] Smith (1759/1976, p. 116)

portrayed through the ongoing interpersonal conflicts within the play. The term stems from τιμή first emerges in line 98 when Ajax considers revenge against the Atreidae for having been dishonoured in the allocation of Achilles' arms.[75] Although this event occurs prior to the play's timeline, it continues to affect Ajax's honour status, with conflicting views on its moral implications. Ajax perceives himself as dishonoured by the Atreidae, while they believe their actions were justified and express no αἰδώς (here understood as shame) for their decision.[76] In this context, the value of Achilles' arms symbolises the honour they bestow upon their recipient, as Ajax feels deprived of his rightful prize and, by extension, his honour. Thus, honour in *Ajax* appears to function as a concept linked to value and status, which is consistent with the Homeric tradition in which honourable heroes are entitled to the best portions of food and drink, symbolising their elevated status within the community.

The assessment of honour can be conducted independently and simultaneously by both the subject and others—here represented by Ajax and the Atreidae—discrepancies between these assessments can directly fuel interpersonal conflict. This pattern of conflicting honour judgments recurs throughout the play and is central to advancing the plot. For instance, Ajax engages in a discussion with Tecmessa regarding the proper response to his divine punishment and the ridicule he faces from the Greek army.[77] Ajax has resolved to commit suicide, believing that his honour as a warrior has been irreparably destroyed by his mistreatment of the unallocated sheep.[78] Tecmessa, however, reminds him of his noble heritage and his duties to her and their son.[79] Tecmessa's argument concerning honour is twofold: first, she asserts that Ajax's honour, derived from his noble birth, should remain intact despite his disgrace in battle; second, she claims that Ajax's family, including herself and their son, are entitled to his honour, which in this case would be demonstrated by his decision to live.[80]

Another typical example of honour-related conflict occurs in the dispute between Odysseus and Agamemnon over Ajax's burial. Agamemnon justifies his desire to dishonour Ajax's body by invoking the principle of retaliation, asserting that Ajax's lethal and hubristic intentions toward him were dishonourable. In contrast, Odysseus argues that Ajax deserves burial due to

[75] ὥστ᾽ οὔποτ᾽ Αἴανθ᾽ οἵδ᾽ ἀτιμάσουσ᾽ ἔτι.
[76] Sophocles, *Aja*x, 1134–1136.
[77] Ibid., 430–600
[78] Ibid., 473–480
[79] Ibid., 495, 506
[80] Woodruff (2011)

his bravery in battle, which should not be overshadowed by his actions against the Greek army.[81]

We should be cautious in assuming that Aristotle fully adopted the prevailing paradigm of honour, as illustrated above, in his conception of conventional honour. As will be demonstrated in detail throughout this thesis, Aristotle subtly reconfigures the conception of conventional honour: while it remains connected to the common understanding, it acquires a deeper theoretical significance through a geneological linkage to natural honour that surpasses its ordinary social usage. Nevertheless, the common understanding of honour shared between ancient Greek and modern societies provides an essential context for interpreting Aristotelian honour within his broader ethical framework. It is through a critical examination of this traditional concept of honour that Aristotle develops his distinctive and more nuanced account of honour.

1.5 Methodology and Key Arguments

This thesis illuminates puzzling passages by adducing texts from various works of Aristotle, including surviving fragments of the lost *Protrepticus*.[82] This holistic approach, as a practical matter, helps synthesise Aristotle's scattered reflections on honour across his various writings. By examining these interconnected texts, the thesis aims to construct a more cohesive understanding of Aristotle's concept of honour, despite the dispersed treatment of the subject across different areas of his philosophy. However, this methodology requires justification, as it risks suggesting that Aristotle's works present a fully consistent and rigid system of thought.

In employing this method, I do not intend to presuppose a fully consistent and rigid system within Aristotle's corpus, where passages from one work can simply be cross-referenced to resolve puzzles in another, as if using building blocks from one structure to repair gaps in another. While cross-referencing passages from different works can yield valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge the nuances and signs of ongoing development in Aristotle's thought, even on the same subjects.[83] Thus, it is crucial to avoid assuming absolute coherence, as Aristotle's ideas may allow for flexibility or evolution across his writings.

[81] Ibid., 1326, 1340
[82] For the authentication of *Protrepticus*, see Hutchinson & Johnson (2005).
[83] For example, the nuances between the five types of purported courage outlined in *EN* 1116a17–1117a28 and *EE* 1229a11–33; See Kenny (1978) for a comprehensive analysis on differences in Aristotle's treatment of happiness, virtue, and the human good across the two works.

However, I do assume that the foundational principles of Aristotelian philosophy remain consistent throughout his works and are applicable to both theoretical disciplines, such as natural science, and practical areas, including ethics and politics.[84] This approach is supported by Aristotle's occasional cross-reference between his ethical and metaphysical works.[85] This assumption allows for a cohesive interpretation of Aristotle's thought across different subjects, despite potential variations in emphasis or detail.[86] Consequently, it is unnecessary to avoid non-ethical works when providing a well-founded interpretation of ethical topics, particularly when the ethical subject in question is insufficiently developed within Aristotle's ethical writings, such as the concept of honour. Non-ethical works can offer valuable insights and reinforce our understanding of ethical issues, allowing for a more comprehensive and integrated reading of Aristotle's philosophy.[87]

There are two primary objections to the approach I propose. The first stems from Aristotle's statement in *EN* I.3, where he asserts that ethical inquiry possesses its own level of precision.[88] Additionally, he emphasises the importance of the character and maturity of the audience for his ethical treatise,[89] suggesting that ethical knowledge may require a different path of acquisition compared to other types of knowledge. This critique thus speculates that practical wisdom, due to its close connection to particular experiences, may not be derived through the same methods applied to theoretical disciplines. Consequently, passages addressing theoretical knowledge should not be used as interpretative references for passages concerning practical wisdom.[90]

I believe that the two passages discussed above, which address the precision of moral knowledge and the maturity required of moral students, serve only to highlight the distinct nature of practical wisdom compared to other types of knowledge. However, they do not provide sufficient justification for its separability from the theoretical principles found in works like the *Posterior Analytics*, *Metaphysics*, or *De Anima*.[91] While practical wisdom is indeed less precise than scientific knowledge—since it cannot be acquired through demonstration or

[84] On the holistic approach to Aristotle's ethics, see Irwin (1980), Reeve (2012: ix). For insights on how metaphysical considerations can enhance our understanding of *EN*, see Achtenberg (2002: ch. 3).
[85] E.g., *Met*. 981b25 refers to ethical works and *Pol*. 1252a26–b5 refers to metaphysical principles.
[86] This standpoint will be further developed in Chapter Four in which I apply conclusions drawn from *Posterior Analyics* to account for ethical issues.
[87] See Henry & Nielsen (2015) for an overall introduction of this approach.
[88] *EN* 1094b20–25
[89] *EN* 1095a2–8
[90] Aufderheide (2019, pp. 2–3)
[91] These three works constitute the main theoretical source of this thesis.

scientific deduction[92]—there may still be foundational principles from which practical wisdom is deduced, albeit in a non-scientific manner. As Aristotle notes in Book I of EN, ethical inquiry should begin from a certain understanding of principles—though not those that are familiar by nature, but rather those that are familiar to us.[93] It is also unlikely that he would regard the acquisition of practical wisdom as possible without engaging in such inquiry, whether through moral education or reflection.

Unlike the first principles of geometry, such as the definition of parallel and triangle,[94] the first principles of ethical knowledge require more sophisticated experience with the external world, which is not easily accessible to everyone, even those with rational capacity. Thus, the emphasis on the proper character and age of Aristotle's audience may not indicate separate principles of inquiry but rather reflect the complexity of grasping corresponding theoretical principles, such as the definitions of courage and happiness.[95]

The second objection argues that Aristotle's ethical writings do not explicitly appeal to any specific theoretical assumptions as the 'objective principles' governing the subject. Therefore, although there is overall consistency between the theoretical and practical treatises, it does not necessitate dependence on any theoretical principles.[96] In response, it is important to recall that Aristotle clarifies his research method at the outset of the *EN*, stating that his ethical inquiry begins from 'what is knowable to us' rather than 'what is knowable without qualification.' He distinguishes the above two states of understanding as knowledge of *that* (ὅτι) and knowledge of *why* (διότι), with the latter representing a clear acquisition of causes and justifications.[97]

A clear grasp of the theoretical principles underlying ethical knowledge pertains to knowledge of why, as it elucidates the causality and foundation of ethical propositions. Given that Aristotle clarifies that his ethical inquiry does not begin from a well-defined understanding of these principles (to the extent of natural limit), he does not need to explicitly reference them in the following writings. In a word, the absence of explicit theoretical principles in his ethical writings does not negate their underlying presence.

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[92] *APo*. 71b16–18: ἀπόδειξιν δὲ λέγω συλλογισμὸν ἐπιστημονικόν.
[93] *EN* 1095b2–4; see Chapter 4.4.1 for a detailed account of this point.
[94] *APr.* 66a11–15, *APo*. 71a25–27.
[95] Cf. *APo*. 72a15–16, some first principles (θέσις) are only require for particular knowledge.
[96] See Polonsky (2017) for a sturdy defense of this approach. Irwin (1988, pp. 23–25) holds the necessity of first principles as the source of 'objective principles' for the Aristotelian ethics.
[97] *EN* 1095a30–b8

I acknowledge that there is a trade-off between informativity and rigour when interpreting Aristotle's corpus. On the one hand, treating each of Aristotle's works as self-contained allows for the exploration of multiple interpretive possibilities, but it limits our ability to discern Aristotle's genuine intention behind concise illustrations. On the other hand, treating Aristotle's corpus as a cohesive whole provides a better opportunity to uncover his genuine intention, though it carries the risk of overinterpretation. In this thesis, the aim is to investigate an underappreciated concept—honour—and, as such, I have chosen to prioritise the exploration of overlooked information, even at the expense of some methodological rigour.

Thus far, this thesis has outlined the research question, rationale, and significance of the study. It first presents the contextual evidence that suggests a twofold concept of honour in Aristotle's ethics. It then argues that this evidence cannot be reduced to hortatory techniques or rhetorical conventions, and that current interpretations of honour-related texts—often being either ambiguous or contentious—may stem from a lack of recognition of this twofold structure in Aristotelian honour.

To clarify the two concepts of honour, the thesis defines honour as a judgment of worth based on some factual consideration of the object. It further demonstrates the cross-cultural nature of honour through a comparative analysis of modern studies on honour and the portrayal of honour in ancient Greek literature, thereby situating Aristotle's understanding of honour within its broader social context. Additionally, I examine a widely accepted view of honour, which assumes a fixed paradigm wherein evaluative judgments are formed through mutual affirmation within a community. This paradigm, prevalent in both ancient Greek society and the modern world, informs one of Aristotle's two concepts of honour—conventional honour—which will be examined in detail in the following chapter.

In what follows, I will mainly argue for the existence of natural honour in Aristotle's ethical frame and fit the concept of natural honour in Aristotle's metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical accounts.[98]

Chapter Two provides an overview of key terms that signify the concept of honour and explores their close interrelation in Aristotle's texts. These include general terms such as τιμή, ἔπαινος,

[98] It should be noted that natural honour does not refer to the recognition of natural virtues described by Aristotle in *EN* VI.13. Natural virtue is essentially primitive and inborn dispositions that coincidentally align with the standards of virtue. In contrast, the term *natural* in natural honour denotes the objective regularity underlying such honour-related phenomena.

ψόγος (blame), καλόν (noble/beautiful), and αἰσχρόν (shameful). The chapter also addresses terms that reflect honourable worth, such as ἀξία (worth) and εὐδοξία (good repute), and terms that describe the psychological and epistemological aspects of honour, including αἰδώς (shame/respect), θαυμάζω (wonder/admire), καταφρονέω (look down upon), and ζηλόω (envy/emulate).

The chapter then highlights a different usage of these honour-related terms, referred to as *natural honour*, which contrasts with their conventional use. This distinction is hinted at in various passages but is most clearly articulated in *EN* I.12. Through a textual analysis of the passage, the chapter outlines the key features of natural honour: it is bestowed exclusively upon the Aristotelian god, godlike men, and happiness. Natural honour is conferred for the true goodness in the honourable object itself, without reference to external, other-regarding standards. In contrast, the term ἔπαινος in the text represents conventional honour, which is given through mutual affirmation for what is seemingly good.

This preliminary account of natural honour encounters challenges in multiple domains as it seeks to fit within Aristotle's broader theoretical framework. The following three chapters tackle some of the key obstacles. Chapter Three demonstrates the theological foundation for natural honour. Drawing primarily on passages from *Metaphysics* Λ, this chapter identifies the cognitive shift of *thaumazein* (translated as either wonder or admire) in heavenly bodies, inspired by the Aristotelian god as both an efficient and final cause, as the divine source of natural honour.

This argument is then developed further in two directions. First, the natural order that ascends towards god evokes *thaumazein* in the same way as god itself, as Aristotle states in *Metaphysics* Λ. 10 that the goodness of god can be manifested by the natural order as its consequence, much like the commanding capacity of a general is manifested through the orderliness of his army. Second, human intellect possesses the same capacity to inspire *thaumazein* as the divine intellect, which Aristotle identifies as the substance of god. This is grounded in Aristotle's reference to human intellect as divine and his treatment of it as separable from the human composite in *De Anima* III. 1–5. Based on this, I speculate that Aristotle's theology allows for the practical manifestations of human intellect to give rise to natural honour, akin to how the divine intellect inspires wonder and reverence.

Chapter Four examines the epistemological dimensions of natural honour by addressing two fundamental questions: How can goodness be perceived? And how can one attain a universal understanding of goodness in the first place through the perception of god? Based on the textual evidence from *Posterior Analytics*, I argue that Aristotle's concept of the first principle encompasses a wide range of elementary propositions, including the existential premises and definitions of natural entities and moral concepts. Both the existential premiss and definition of goodness fall into the scope of moral concepts, and thus belong to the first principles.

I then examine Aristotle's account of induction in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, demonstrating that all first principles, including that of goodness, can be intuitively grasped through Aristotelian induction. By drawing on three examples of this cognitive process identified in *Prior Analytics* and *Physics*, I further argue that the perception of *a single particular entity* provides sufficient information for the inductive grasp of the first principles embodied within that entity. In this way, Aristotle allows for the cognitive possibility of recognising genuine goodness through the perception of a particular entity that manifests it. This epistemological mechanism aligns with the independent nature of natural honour, reinforcing the idea that natural honour can be recognised without reliance on external validation or social conventions.

Additionally, I clarify that, as illustrated by the stadium metaphor in *EN* I.4, the cognitive distinction between those who recognise natural honour and those who are naturally honourable lies in two types of understanding of goodness: one type of understanding is knowable in relation to us/universal (καθόλου), and the other type is knowable by nature/without qualification (ἁπλῶς).

Chapter Five addresses two key ethical concerns regarding natural honour: how can godlike men, who lead a contemplative life, be *perceived* and *identified* in everyday life, thereby inspiring natural honour? Drawing on *EN* X.6–8, I argue that godlike men also participate in political life, making themselves visible to other members of the community. I further refer to textual evidence from *EN* VI.1 and the *Protrepticus* to speculate that godlike men possess an unqualified understanding of the boundary markers or defining features of moral virtues, setting them apart from those who pursue the second-best life of politics. Finally, I revisit the honour-related passages in *EN* IV and propose an alternative interpretation of the two honour-related virtues, based on Aristotle's distinction between conventional and natural honour: the virtue of greatness-of-soul is linked to natural honour, while the virtue of proper pride corresponds to conventional honour.

Chapter 2: Aristotle's Binary of Honour

2.1 Key terms and scenarios that indicate the concept of honour

In *Rhetoric* I.5, Aristotle defines τιμή as a sign of good repute (εὐδοξία) for well-doing, which can be conferred upon those who have already performed good deeds as well as those with the potential for such actions (τιμῶνται δὲ δικαίως μὲν καὶ μάλιστα οἱ εὐεργετηκότες, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ τιμᾶται καὶ ὁ δυνάμενος εὐεργετεῖν).[1] Aristotle elaborates on the term in the following ways. The standard for well-doing is not solely based on the action itself but also considers the surrounding circumstances in which the deed is performed (ἢ εἴς τι τῶν ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν, ὧν μὴ ῥᾳδία ἡ κτῆσις ἢ ὅλως ἢ ἐνταῦθα ἢ τότε); honour can be conferred in various ways, both materially, such as through grants of land or statues (τεμένη, εἰκόνες), and immaterially, such as through front-row seats at civic celebrations or state funeral (προεδρία, τάφοι). These methods of conferring honour serve merely as symbolic markers of honour, and their significance is not assessed based on their intrinsic value (δῶρα τὰ παρ᾽ ἑκάστοις τίμια. καὶ γὰρ τὸ δῶρόν ἐστι κτήματος δόσις καὶ τιμῆς σημεῖον).[2] In other words, their importance lies entirely in the recognition and social acknowledgment they represent, rather than in the material or practical worth of the tokens themselves.

This definition of τιμή conceptualises honour as a form of opinion and underscores the inclusiveness and flexibility of the term's semantic range. It aligns with the concept of honour found in both contemporary society and ancient Greek literature, demonstrating Aristotle's acute awareness of social dynamics. Through this definition, we can discern three levels of honour's dependence on external circumstances.

First, whether an action is worthy of honour depends not solely on the action itself but also on the context, including the time and place of its occurrence. Second, the act of conferring and receiving honour depends on mutual agreement between the giver and receiver about the symbolic value of a specific object or action. This agreement can grow into a broader consensus as more people accept the same value standard. Third, and most crucially, the essence of honour

[1] *Rh*. 1361a27–29
[2] *Rh*. 1361a30–b2

lies in reputation, which, according to Aristotle's earlier definition, is shaped by the evaluative judgments of others.[3]

In sum, Aristotle assigns τιμή and εὐδοξία the same function, enabling individuals to construct a social identity through the recognition of others.[4] This external, other-regarding nature of honour echoes Aristotle's statement in *EN* I.5, where he asserts that honour depends more on those who bestow it than on those who receive it.

Compared with τιμή, Aristotle approaches ἔπαινος and its antonym ψόγος with greater flexibility in *Rhetoric*. He sometimes confines the objects of praise to good qualities or capacities, such as individual virtues, distinguishing them from the objects of encomium, which pertain to completed actions or achievements (ἔστιν δ᾽ ἔπαινος λόγος ἐμφανίζων μέγεθος ἀρετῆς…τὸ δ᾽ ἐγκώμιον τῶν ἔργων ἐστίν).[5] At other times, Aristotle seems to adopt a broader application of these terms, extending them to include the exercise or practice of good capacities. For instance, when discussing epideictic speech as a rhetorical genre concerned with the present, Aristotle makes a general observation that this type of speech encompasses both praise and blame.[6]

Given this context, it is difficult to determine whether Aristotle intends ἔπαινος to be used exclusively for potential goodness or whether, like τιμή, it can be conferred upon those who have already performed good deeds, as well as those who possess the potential for such goodness.[7] The overlap between ἔπαινος and τιμή, along with Aristotle's broader rhetorical framework, leaves room for interpretation regarding the conditions under which praise is given.

To clarify this issue, we may draw evidence from passages where the terms ἔπαινος and τιμή are used in parallel or interchangeably. For instance, when discussing the role of unwritten law in determining right and wrong in public affairs, Aristotle lists ἔπαινος and τιμή alongside

[3] *Rh*. 1361a26–27
[4] *Rh*. 1371a8–17
[5] *Rh*. 1367b27–30; cf. *Rh*. 1381a36–b1, *EE* 1219b8–9.
[6] *Rh*. 1358b11–18: τῷ δ᾽ ἐπιδεικτικῷ κυριώτατος μὲν ὁ παρών (17–18).
[7] In the following analysis of *EN* I.12, the meaning of the passage shifts, depending on whether ἔπαινος is viewed as exclusive to potential virtue or applicable to both potential and actualised virtue.

one another as resources of unwritten law.[8] In other words, they play a shared role in shaping communal values and promoting specific behaviours without relying on formal codification.

Another example appears when Aristotle explains that in order to praise someone appropriately before a particular audience, one must understand the qualities that are honoured by that audience.[9] In this case, the two terms are clearly used interchangeably, implying that to praise is to honour what is worthy.

Based on the textual evidence above, we can identify two distinct uses of ἔπαινος. First, ἔπαινος refers to a conventional practice of expressing recognition, where its object is confined to good qualities and capacities. Second, the term is employed as the synonym for τιμή, thus encompassing a much broader range of objects, including both the potentiality and the actualisation of goodness. The ambiguity surrounding the concept of praise presents significant challenges for the forthcoming textual analysis that identifies the twofold concept of honour, which is why it warrants particular emphasis here.

The remaining honour-related terms can be identified through their association with τιμή and ἔπαινος. This does not imply that these terms only bear honour-related meanings, but rather that one of their connotations is related to the concept of honour. The terms καλόν (noble/beautiful) and αἰσχρόν (shameful) function as antonyms closely linked to ἔπαινος/ψόγος. In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle asserts that people praise the καλόν and blame the αἰσχρόν,[10] as the καλόν is both desirable for its own sake and worthy of praise.[11] Moreover, καλόν is also associated with τιμή. When discussing how to deliver an effective speech to a particular audience, Aristotle advises describing those considered honourable by the audience as 'καλοί' in order to be persuasive, as people tend to view these two concepts as adjacent.[12]

It is important to note that the term καλόν is also used in aesthetic contexts, often translated as 'beauty,' where it is not explicitly tied to the concept of honour. Aristotle employs the term to describe the features that are attractive and pleasant to the onlookers, such as peacock

[8] *Rh*. 1374a21–24 ταῦτα δ᾽ ἐστὶν τὰ μὲν καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν ἀρετῆς καὶ κακίας, ἐφ᾽ οἷς ὀνείδη καὶ ἔπαινοι καὶ ἀτιμίαι, καὶ τιμαὶ καὶ δωρεαί.
[9] *Rh*. 1367b7–12
[10] *Rh*. 1358b27–29, 1359a17–21
[11] *Rh*. 1366a23–35
[12] *Rh*. 1367b10–11

feathers[13] and well-decorated houses.[14] He also distinguishes between types of καλόν, stating that some bring pleasure, while others are desirable in themselves, indicating the different connotations of the term.[15] Nevertheless, when καλόν is placed within the context of forming and expressing evaluative judgments, it is reasonable to interpret καλόν/αἰσχρόν as meaning honourable/dishonourable, in the sense that they denote value as the object of honour.[16]

The term ἀξία denotes honourable worth. Aristotle clarifies its connection with other honour-related terms in *Rhetoric*, illustrating how ἀξία operates within the broader context of Aristotelian honour as a key concept in determining the value attributed to individuals or actions, reinforcing its significance in Aristotle's discussion of honour:

> καὶ τὰ ἐπαινετώτερα: καλλίω γάρ. καὶ ὧν αἱ τιμαὶ μείζους, ὡσαύτως: ἡ γὰρ τιμὴ ὥσπερ ἀξία τίς ἐστιν.[17]
>
> And things which are more praiseworthy, since they are nobler. And in the same way things of greater honour, for honour is, as it were, a kind of worth.

In this passage, ἀξία is directly linked to honour, as honour serves as the measure of worth through a judgment of value. The relationship between honour and ἀξία underscores the concept that individuals or actions are deemed honourable based on the worth they embody. Moreover, the derivatives of the other two honour-related terms, ἔπαινος and καλόν, are also present in this text. The condensed structure of the sentence reinforces that the concept of honour is closely tied to and expressed by these interconnected terms, demonstrating the flexibility and breadth of Aristotle's honour terminology.

In addition to the general terms, there are specific terms that describe the psychological and epistemological dimensions of honour. The following discussion presents textual evidence that supports the connection between these terms and the broader honour-related concepts, underscoring their integral role in Aristotle's honour framework.

The term αἰδώς refers to an awareness of one's own worth in relation to the worth of others.[18] In Aristotle's corpus, it is typically associated with the feeling of shame and is defined as a fear

[13] *Hist. an.* 630a35
[14] *Rh*. 1392a13–15
[15] *Rh*. 1362b8–9
[16] See Irwin (2010) for a detailed review of different usages of καλόν.
[17] *Rh*. 1365a6–8
[18] Carins (1993, pp. 13–20)

of disrepute or dishonour, often accompanied by a bodily reaction when something αἰσχρόν (shameful) has occurred or is about to occur.[19] Despite the relevance to honour, αἰδώς does not appear in the textual evidence discussed in this thesis, and thus will not be elaborated upon here.

The term θαυμάζω is translated as either 'admire' or 'wonder'. Aristotle states that being admired is pleasant for the same reason as being honoured, suggesting that admiration reflects the affective aspect of honour.[20] Additionally, admiration is also associated with the feeling of shame. Aristotle notes that we tend to feel shame before those who admire us, those whom we admire, and those we wish to be admired by.[21] If we interpret shame as a deprivation of honour, it follows that admiration confers honour upon the object by recognising its worth, thereby making it vulnerable to potential loss of honour. In other words, admiration is a form of respect, and failure to meet the expectations tied to that respect results in shame.

The terms ζηλόω and καταφρονέω refer to a pair of honour-related emotions. Aristotle explicitly defines ζηλόω as a form of pain caused by perceiving good things being honoured in those whose nature is like our own.[22] As these good things are attainable for the subject due to the similarity of nature, the emotion of ζηλόω must be accompanied by a disposition to acquire these good things for oneself—that is, to imitate the person or object of the emotion.[23] Aristotle clarifies that if the pain leads to a desire to undermine the good things possessed by others rather than to emulate them, the emotion is no longer ζηλόω but φθονέω (envy)—the counterpart of ζηλόω possessed by the vice.[24] Thus, while ζηλόω can mean both envy and emulation in a broader sense, Aristotle uses it exclusively to refer to emulation.

Emulation is linked to honour because the good things that inspire emulation are often recognised through being honoured. In other words, the emotion and disposition of emulation arise as a result of a judgment of worth. Aristotle further connects emulation with other honour-related terms, noting that we tend to emulate those who are admired by the majority, those whom we ourselves admire, or those praised in public discourse.[25] On the other hand,

[19] *EN* 1128b10–14, *Rh*. 1367a7–10
[20] *Rh*. 1371a21–22
[21] *Rh*. 1384b28–32
[22] *Rh*. 1388a30–32
[23] *Rh*. 1388a32–34
[24] *Rh*. 1388a34–36, see *Rh*. 1387b21–1388a28 for Aristotle's account on envy.
[25] *Rh*. 1388b20–22

καταφρονέω is the opposite of emulation; it involves the disposition to avoid bad things that are held in dishonour, often translated as 'despise'.[26]

In sum, Aristotle invokes the concept of honour through a series of terms that refer to either the judgment of worth, the worth being judged, or the mental states associated with such judgments. In the following investigation, these terms will serve as indicators of honour in Aristotle's discussions, particularly in his theoretical works, where the concept of honour can easily be overlooked.

2.2 The conventional usage of honour-related terms

The previous section has outlined the key evaluative terms employed in the Aristotelian corpus to indicate the concept of honour and demonstrated their close association. This section will show that, in many instances, the honour conveyed through these terms falls within the category of *conventional honour*. As illustrated in Chapter One, conventional honour is defined as a judgment of worth established through mutual affirmation between the individual and the public sphere. Accordingly, we can identify conventional honour when honour is exchanged with reference to some dynamic standards that are shaped and constantly adjusted by received opinions and social customs. This type of honour often exhibits considerable flexibility, as the universal standards for the judgment of worth are often arbitrary and fluid.

This section will explore Aristotle's nuanced understanding of the dynamic relationship between individual behaviour and the social codes of honour, particularly as it is reflected in his discussions of political affairs. Aristotle demonstrates a keen awareness of how conventional honour operates within the sociopolitical realm, where the expectations and recognition of worth can be influenced by context, reputation, and public opinion. An appreciation of conventional honour in Aristotle's work paves the way for the subsequent examination of natural honour—the other concept of honour underpinned by intrinsic and stable criteria.

When discussing effective strategies for amplifying the effect of praise in epideictic speeches, Aristotle explains that one should highlight whether the object of praise is unique, the first of

[26] *Rh*. 1388b23–29

its kind, or of superior state or quality, as these characteristics are considered noble (καλόν).[27] The term καλόν here apparently denotes the honourability of these characteristics. Additionally, Aristotle notes elsewhere that individuals can attain greater honour by possessing qualities or achieving successes that are not commonly found in others, particularly in areas where no unworthy person can succeed.[28]

A common feature of the praiseworthy characteristics discussed above is that they are all identified *in relation to* external factors. Aristotle clarifies that terms like 'greater' or 'more' always imply a comparison with something 'smaller' or 'less.'[29] In this context, for something to be the 'only' or the 'first' suggests the existence of other, similar cases, while for something to be 'better' implies the presence of something worse or a common standard serving as the reference point. Conventional honour, therefore, is conferred primarily through the comparison of these external factors, reinforcing the notion that honour relies on the relative status of an individual or action in relation to others.

Conventional honour not only involves comparison with external factors but also requires superiority (ὑπεροχή) in that comparison. Aristotle explicitly states that one source of nobility is superiority, whether it is superiority over others or over common expectations.[30] He recognises that superiority, being a relational concept, can be achieved in two distinct ways. It can be attained by emphasising one's above-average qualities and deeds, such as those previously discussed, or by diminishing the worth of others. Aristotle illustrates this second form of superiority through the example of Achilles, explaining that those who consider themselves superior are often inclined to deprive others of the honour they are due.[31] Furthermore, those of noble birth tend to look down on the family backgrounds of others, presumably as an approach to reinforce their own sense of superiority.[32]

Aristotle also acknowledges the flexibility inherent in conventional honour. He realises the multifaceted nature of conventional honour that can sometimes lead to contradictory outcomes without proper commensuration. For instance, it can be considered a dishonour not to share in

[27] *Rh*. 1368a11–13: χρηστέον δὲ καὶ τῶν αὐξητικῶν πολλοῖς, οἷον εἰ μόνος ἢ πρῶτος ἢ μετ᾽ ὀλίγων ἢ καὶ ὃ μάλιστα πεποίηκεν: ἅπαντα γὰρ ταῦτα καλά. Cf. *Rh*. 1392a4–5, amplification is the essential feature of epideictic speeches.
[28] *Rh*. 1363a27–28, 36–37
[29] *Rh*. 1363b9–12
[30] *Rh*. 1367b14–15, 1368a22–26
[31] *Rh*. 1378b29–33
[32] *Rh*. 1390b15–19

what everyone participates in, while at other times, it is an honour to be scarcer and exclusive.[33] Another example he provides is that gold is deemed more valuable than iron due to its rarity, whereas iron is more valuable than gold for being plentiful and thus more useful.[34] This flexibility of conventional honour is evident in public life as well, where not all men honour the same virtues, leading to varying standards of honour.[35]

Aristotle frequently applies the paradigm of conventional honour to explain the maintenance and civil strife of a polis. He argues that a true citizen of a polis is distinguished by their participation in the communal distribution of honour. Exclusion from citizenship, therefore, is not merely a political or social restriction but is seen as a deprivation of honour (ἀτιμία), signifying a loss of recognition and status within the community.[36] Moreover, the standards by which honour is distributed in different forms of polity are central to their ideal structures. In an aristocracy, honour is distributed based on the standard of virtue, in an oligarchy, the standard is wealth, and in a democracy, it is individual freedom.[37] According to Aristotle, the preservation of a city relies on each citizen receiving benefits that are proportionate to their contributions, with this proportion being determined by a universal standard of worth collectively agreed upon by the members of the community. This system ensures that honour and benefits are distributed in alignment with the merit and service each individual provides, thereby maintaining social harmony and justice within the political structure.[38]

On the other hand, civil strife arises when there is disagreement over the distribution of honour. Aristotle explains that civil strife is not primarily caused by an unequal distribution of honour in numerical terms, except incidentally, as numerical equality is an objective standard that does not necessarily gain common affirmation within a community.[39] Rather, it is the violation of consensual standards or the incommensurability of multiple standards of worth, often manifesting in disputes over the criteria of distributive justice in the political sphere, that incites civil conflict. In the first scenario, honour-loving individuals breach commonly recognised standards of worth to satisfy their desire for superiority over other citizens.[40] Aristotle parallels

[33] *Rh*. 1365a4–6
[34] *Rh*. 1364a23–28
[35] *Pol*. 1327b2
[36] *Pol*.1278a36–38, 1281a29–34
[37] *Pol*.1294a10–12, cf. *Pol*.1269b24 on honouring the wealthy.
[38] *EN* 1132b33
[39] *Pol*.1266b39–1267a2
[40] *Pol*.1267a12–14

this desire for honour with the desire for wealth, observing that both are frequent causes of human wrongdoing.[41]

In the second scenario, civil strife arises when different groups within the same polis hold divergent standards of worth that fail to achieve commensurability. For instance, commoners might advocate for a numerically equal distribution of honour, justified by their equal status as free citizens. In contrast, oligarchs may argue that honour should be distributed proportionally to their wealth, reflecting their superior financial contributions to the community. From each group's perspective, the other's demands seem disproportionate and unjust. The commoners perceive wealth as an arbitrary measure of honour, while the oligarchs view numerical equality as failing to recognise the value of wealth in civic contribution. This lack of a mutually accepted standard of worth results in civil strife, as neither group can affirm the legitimacy of the other's claims. The failure to harmonise these competing standards of worth creates a conflict over which values should govern the distribution of office, leading to social and political instability.[42]

Through the analysis of the conventional usage of honour-related terms, it becomes evident that Aristotle depicts this form of honour in much the same way as modern sociological studies do. Conventional honour is never derived solely from the inherent qualities of the honoured individual but is always contingent upon relationships with external factors. In this sense, there is an intrinsic element of *relative* that exists in this type of honour, which is introduced from the paradigm of common affirmation. As a result, honour-related predicates, when used in this context, are logically incomplete and require further qualification. For example, to assert 'Ajax is honourable' is similar to saying 'the rent is double'—both statements demand a reference to external standards to complete their meaning. In the case of honour, it is the comparison with others or with societal norms that gives the statement its full sense. This relational characteristic of honour, derived from external validation, marks a clear distinction between conventional honour and natural honour, as will be explored in the following textual analysis of E*N* I.12. Natural honour, as Aristotle conceives it, does not depend on external standards or mutual affirmation, but rather on the intrinsic qualities of the honoured subject.

[41] *Pol*. 1271a17–19
[42] *Pol*.1302b12-15. See Cairns, Canevaro & Mantzouranis (2022) for a comprehensive analysis of civil strife driven by issues of honour.

To better understand Aristotle's account of relatives, it is helpful to refer to his *Categories*, where he classifies relatives within the broader framework of his ten-fold division of genera. These genera are distinct and non-composite, each representing fundamental ways in which things can be spoken about or exist.[43] The ten categories are as follows: (1) substance, (2) quantity, (3) quality, (4) relatives, (5) place (where), (6) time (when), (7) being in a position (posture), (8) possession, (9) action, and (10) being acted upon (passion). There has been considerable scholarly debate about the nature of Aristotle's ten categories, dating back to the earliest commentaries. Some scholars argue that the categories represent a linguistic classification, as Aristotle introduces them as divisions of 'things that are said' (τᾶ λεγόμενα). According to this view, Aristotle's primary concern is how different terms function within language. On the other hand, other scholars interpret the categories as offering ontological insights, reflecting different modes of being in the world, as suggested by the names of the categories themselves—such as 'substance' and 'quality'—which seem to denote kinds of entities or attributes that exist in reality.[44]

This thesis does not intend to delve into the complex and long-standing debate about many basic aspects of Aristotle's *Categories*, Instead, the analysis will rely on the examples that Aristotle provides for each category, focusing more on their contents than on defining their exact boundaries. For example, in the case of the category of relatives, which Aristotle calls 'things towards something' (τὰ πρός τι),[45] he includes both abstract relations, like 'double' and 'greater,' and concrete entities defined by their relational nature, like 'slave' in relation to 'master.' Thus, we can develop a general understanding of the wide-ranging ontological scope of this category, even without precisely defining its boundaries. Following this understanding of relatives, the concept of conventional honour fits into this category as it inherently refers to external standards of worth.

Conventional honour also satisfies the reciprocal (ἀντιστρέφω) standard that Aristotle uses to determine whether a pair of relative terms is properly established.[46] The practice of conventional honour indicates the existence of external standard of worth, and the external standard of worth can only be formed and maintained through practical mutual affirmation

[43] *Cat*. 1a16–17, 1b25–27.
[44] See Studtmann (2008, 2024) for a detailed review of scholarly debate on this issue.
[45] *Cat*. 6a38
[46] *Cat*. 6b28–7a5, Aristotle provides the example of 'wing' and 'bird' to demonstrate when the reciprocation check fails. While all birds have wings, not all things that have wings are birds (e.g., insects). Hence, 'wing' is not inherently reciprocal with 'bird.'

among members of a community, namely the practice of conventional honour. Such a dynamic relationship between individual behaviour and the social codes of honour has been elaborated on in previous discussions.

2.3 A different usage of honour-related terms

Having demonstrated the comprehensive nature of conventional honour, the implicit account of natural honour in Aristotle's works becomes more apparent. Central to Aristotle's ethical theory is the concept of an objective source of value for human activities, often expressed as 'goodness' (τὸ ἀγαθόν).[47] Aristotle conceptualises this goodness as both complete and self-sufficient, distinguishing it from the 'apparent good' that can vary among individuals based on personal preferences and often influenced by external conditions.[48] This self-sufficiency of goodness signifies that the objects of such genuine goodness is desirable in itself (καθ᾽ αὑτὸ αἱρετὸν).[49]

Since my thesis defines honour as a judgment of worth, the recognition of this objective and self-sufficient goodness can be regarded as a form of honour—because it involves acknowledging and affirming a value that is intrinsically worthy, independent of external validation. In this case, Aristotle's complete and self-sufficient goodness may be considered a form of intrinsic worth. Such worth is distinct from other forms of value that are contingent upon external factors, namely the apparently good, by being the true goodness that is independent of external circumstances.[50] Thus, the recognition of such worth through evaluative judgment, being unconditional and not dependent on external validation, aligns with the notion of natural honour, which operates independently of social interactions and agreements.

Before moving forward with deeper analysis, it is important to clarify that, although certain entities may be attributed self-sufficient worth in theory, this does not necessarily imply that these values are independently recognised in practice. Theorising the existence of an invisible elephant in the room is one matter; making people acknowledge or experience it is quite another. The concept of natural honour, as defined in this thesis, involves not only the intrinsic value of

[47] E.g., *EN* 1097a15
[48] *EN* 1095a24–25, 1113a15–b2,
[49] *EN* 1097a35
[50] Note that the true good also aligns with what appears good to a virtuous person. However, this correspondence is incidental rather than constitutive, and should not be taken to reduce Aristotle's concept of true goodness to mere appearance or subjective opinions.

objects but also the corresponding metaphysical, cognitive, and ethical mechanisms that enable a rational agent to recognise such value. These mechanisms are essential for facilitating the acknowledgement of natural honour, even in the absence of external validation or social conventions. This section offers only a preliminary exploration of the objects of natural honour in Aristotle's works, setting the stage for a more detailed investigation in subsequent chapters.

In *Rhetoric* I.13, Aristotle contrasts two sources of worth: particular law (ἴδιος νόμος) and universal law (κοινὸς νόμος), which serve as standards for judging just and unjust actions. Just actions, understood as good actions within the realm of interpersonal interaction,[51] are evaluated by reference to either of these two types of law, which provide the normative framework for assessing their moral quality. Particular law is established within each specific community, encompassing both written laws and or unwritten consensus (ἴδιον μὲν τὸν ἑκάστοις ὡρισμένον πρὸς αὑτούς, καὶ τοῦτον τὸν μὲν ἄγραφον, τὸν δὲ γεγραμμένον).[52] It is apparent that this type of law applies specifically to members of the community and derives its authority from societal consensus and the enforcement of legal sanctions. In contrast, universal law suggests the existence of natural standards by which human conducts and legal arrangements can be evaluated, independently of specific agreements or associations (κοινὸν δὲ τὸν κατὰ φύσιν…κἂν μηδεμία κοινωνία πρὸς ἀλλήλους ᾖ μηδὲ συνθήκη).[53] In this respect, his position coincides with key features of the natural law tradition, even if he does not articulate a systematic doctrine of natural law.

In the above passage, although Aristotle does not explicitly reference honour-related terms, my interpretation proposes that the two forms of value he distinguishes can be understood as corresponding to two types of honour. I recognise that Aristotle does not himself frame the distinction between particular and universal law in terms of honour. However, by situating honour as a form of value-recognition, I argue that we can identify an implicit correspondence.

Particular law, rooted in public agreements and customs within a community, represents the conventional source of value. Honour, in this case, is tied to social recognition and public consensus, where value is affirmed through mutual agreement within a specific cultural or societal context. This form of honour is flexible and subject to change, so long as it depends

[51] *EN* 1129b26–28 Just actions are part of good actions that involve interactions with others.
[52] *Rh*. 1373b4–6
[53] *Rh*. 1373b1–9, cf. *Rh*. 1368a7–10 for a similar division of law, see Miller (1991, pp. 282–285) for a detailed analysis.

on the collective opinions and customs of a given society.[54] On the other hand, universal law implies a source of value that exists independently of social agreements or customs. It is considered valid without qualification, applying universally to all people regardless of cultural or social context. Honour associated with this source of value, referred to as natural honour, is not contingent upon public recognition or societal validation but instead arises from the intrinsic worth of certain actions or individuals.

Before proceeding with further analysis, two points need clarification. First, Aristotle's division of law, as outlined in the passage, is not consistently presented across his corpus. In some texts, Aristotle seems to solely include written law in particular law, neglecting the regulative role of social conventions.[55] This discrepancy raises interpretative challenges regarding Aristotle's conceptual boundaries of law. However, this thesis does not delve into Aristotle's exploration of the classification of law itself. Instead, the focus here is strictly on the two types of evaluative standards he introduces: one based on conventional agreements and the other grounded in natural principles.

Second, Aristotle does not explicitly state whether written law requires social consensus as its foundation, and we can easily recall examples from real life where laws are arbitrarily established according to the preferences of those in power. given Aristotle's description of natural law in this context as independent of social consensus, it is reasonable to infer that, conversely, the other type of law must rely to some extent on social consensus.

The core significance of this passage lies in Aristotle's consequent explanation of the self-sufficient feature of natural law as a standard of value judgment. He asserts that all men in a manner divine a common idea of natural justice and unjust(ἔστι γάρ τι ὃ μαντεύονται πάντες, φύσει κοινὸν δίκαιον καὶ ἄδικον).[56] This source of value is explicitly contrasted with values acquired through social interaction and mutual affirmation, as those who have no association or agreement with each other also share this idea of natural justice (κἂν μηδεμία κοινωνία πρὸς ἀλλήλους ᾖ μηδὲ συνθήκη).[57] Aristotle often refers to this type of standard as 'natural' in both this passage and related texts, which is one of the reasons the thesis

[54] As Chapters 4 and 5 will demonstrate, the arbitrariness of conventional honour is naturally limited by its intrinsic connection to natural honour at its origin.
[55] *Rh*. 1368b7–10: the social consensus is a given community is not acknowledged everywhere, and thus neither belongs to particular law nor general law in the context.
[56] *Rh*. 1373b7–8
[57] *Rh*. 1373b8–9

labels the honour based on these natural standards as 'natural honour.' In this context, Aristotle contrasts the source of natural value sharply with traditional values and the conventional honour arising from them, thereby placing natural honour in direct opposition to conventional honour.

Aristotle then offers three examples to illustrate this distinction between these two types of honour. In one of his examples, Aristotle references the debate in Sophocles' *Antigone*. In the play, Antigone defends her decision to bury Polyneices, arguing that while the act violates the established laws and customs, it is nonetheless just according to a universal law grounded in nature—one that, she contends, ought to take precedence over human laws based on mutual agreement. As previously illustrated, funerals were a typical token of honour in ancient Greece. This example thus reinforces Aristotle's division between two evaluative standards for justice or two sources of honour through the contrasted views of Antigone and the community law: one based on societal laws and norms, and another based on inherent, universal principles.[58]

Although Aristotle's placement of this distinction within *Rhetoric*, a text with a more instrumental and pragmatic aim, might suggest that he is simply offering two types of rhetorical strategies, this interpretation overlooks the deeper normative significance of the argument. Critics might claim that natural justice, as expressed by Antigone, is nothing more than another socially accepted principle, one which requires consensus to be effective in practice. They could argue that Antigone's speech merely appeals to a shared value of equality already internalised in her audience's minds.

However, Aristotle's insistence that the universal law grounded in nature does not depend on societal agreement challenges this reductionist view. Regardless of the actual situation, the burial of Polyneices is deliberately framed in the context as an act that transcends human-made conventions, rooted instead in a unchanging principle of justice that is spontaneously divined by all human beings, even without societal recognition. Thus, Antigone's defiance of Creon's laws can be seen as an example of claiming natural honour, where justice is grounded in an intrinsic value that does not rely on common consensus.

This twofold framework of value judgment also extends to specific realms of value, particularly in Aristotle's famous distinction between two usages of the term 'slave' (δοῦλος) in *Politics* I.

[58] *Rh*. 1373b9–18, cf. *Antigone* 456–457. The other two examples are from Empedocles and Alcidamas, each of whom, in different contexts, proclaimed that killing any living being is unjust.

5–6. In ancient Greece, slavery represented a significant deprivation of honour, as an individual's freedom was central to their social worth. Echoing his broader account of two types of justice, Aristotle illustrates that one can be a slave either by convention or by nature. He clarifies that the convention for slavery is an unwritten agreement (ὁμολογία τίς) across various city-states, in which those conquered in war are considered the property of their conquerors.[59] In contrast, he introduces and explains a natural source of slavery, where certain individuals are slaves due to their inferior state of soul.[60] Those who possess a naturally inferior soul are deemed slaves by nature, regardless of societal conventions. From this binary view, Aristotle concludes that while some people are slaves universally by nature, others may only appear as slaves due to societal conventions, though they are not naturally so.[61]

Last but not least, we should not ignore the subtle connection between natural and conventional sources of honour, which grants conventional honour greater normative significance beyond mere moral obligations derived from social consensus.[62] It is true that the variation and irregularity in societal honour systems may lead to outcomes that conflict with natural honour—as in the case of slavery, where a person who is a slave by convention may not be a slave by nature, and vice versa. However, as will be further explored in Chapter 3.5 and Chapter 4.4.3, Aristotle may not view conventional honour as completely arbitrary. Instead, conventional honour could be seen as a deviation from natural honour. Although it may contain inconsistencies or fallacies in various ways, it nevertheless stems from natural honour and reflects its principles to some extent.

This nuanced perspective underscores Aristotle's recognition that socially constructed forms of honour, despite their imperfections, still maintain a connection to deeper, more essential natural standards. While conventional honour is shaped by societal norms, cultural practices, and power dynamics, it is not entirely disconnected from the concept of natural honour, which is rooted in universal, objective principles. This relationship suggests that conventional honour—however arbitrary it may appear—still echoes natural honour, albeit in a distorted or incomplete form. In Chapter 4.4, I will further elaborate on the epistemological underpinnings of this connection between the two types of honour. Specifically, I will investigate the cognitive processes that link them and argue that, for Aristotle, at least some principles of conventional

[59] *Pol*. 1255a6–7
[60] *Pol*. 1254b18–20
[61] Critical literatures on this passage are abundant, e.g., Smith (1983), Heath (2000), Fortenbaugh (2006).
[62] See Rabbås (2015) for this interpretation of honour.

honour may emerge from distorted inferences of the principles of natural honour. These principles of natural honour, which are intuitively grasped by the human intellect, can be perceived through entities that embody natural worth.

This thesis has extensively outlined the antithesis between nature and convention as two sources of honour in Aristotle's ethical framework. Nature in this sense refers to universal principles that exist independently of human perspectives, agreements, or societal constructs. This is distinct from another Aristotelian usage of nature that refers to innate traits or dispositions that emerge in particular cases. For instance, in *EN* VI.13, Aristotle refers to a type of 'natural' virtue (ἡ φυσικὴ ἀρετὴ) as some innate dispositions that happen to concord with the rational prescriptions of practical wisdom.[63] However, this 'natural' virtue is contingent and particular, arising in specific individuals. In this thesis, the term 'nature' does not bear this meaning.[64]

An appreciation of the above antithesis helps interpret texts when the distinction is not accompanied by further explanation. In *EN* I. 3, the term καλόν is also categorised in this way:

> τὰ δὲ καλὰ καὶ τὰ δίκαια, περὶ ὧν ἡ πολιτικὴ σκοπεῖται, πολλὴν ἔχει διαφορὰν καὶ πλάνην, ὥστε δοκεῖν νόμῳ μόνον εἶναι, φύσει δὲ μή.[65]
>
> Fine things and just things, about which political expertise inquires, involve great variation and irregularity, so that they appear to be so by convention alone, but not by nature.

As illustrated before, this thesis includes καλόν as an honour-related term and identifies it as the object of honour, at least in ethical contexts. In this passage, Aristotle implicitly draws a comparison between convention, signified by the term νόμος particularly as unwritten law, and nature as two distinct standards for evaluating what is noble. While Aristotle does not explicitly clarify the difference between these two uses of καλόν, we can infer based on previous analysis that conventional nobility reflects what is deemed honourable according to mutual affirmation and societal consensus within a particular community. In contrast, natural nobility pertains to honour conferred based on principles that are universally valid, independent of communal agreements or conventions.

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[63] *EN* 1144b1–7, see also *EN* 1151a18–19. Broadie (2002, p. 383) includes dispositions acquired through upbringing into the scope of 'natural' virtue, but Aristotle specifies that these tendencies dwell in us from birth.
[64] Both usages of the term 'nature' meet Aristotle's definition of nature as inner principles of change and being at rest (*Ph.* 192b20–23), except one is universal and the other is particular. Cf. Stavrineas (2015).
[65] *EN* 1094b14–16

One might argue that the above lemma references the Sophistic contrast between naturalism and conventionalism, with the term φύσει serving as a general allusion to Sophistic naturalism.[66] From this perspective, it may seem far-fetched to interpret the passage as suggesting the existence of a universal and self-sufficient source of nobility. Nevertheless, the above concern does not diminish Aristotle's intent to distinguish between the two sources of nobility. Specifically, the context of the lemma suggests that his primary aim in this passage is to highlight the inherent imprecision of ethical knowledge. He emphasises that natural nobility is subject to significant variation and irregularity, making it challenging to distinguish natural nobility from conventional nobility based solely on the external consistency of actions.[67] Aristotle cautions against being misled by the apparent similarities in outcomes produced by these differing principles and warns against reducing all forms of nobility to the domain of mutable social conventions.

Moreover, this passage carries an additional layer of meaning. Not only do both conventional and natural honour manifest variations in specific instances, but a given instance can be honoured by both conventional and natural standards simultaneously. In Aristotle's account quoted above, the mistake lies not in attributing honour to convention, but in assuming that convention is the sole source of nobility (ὥστε δοκεῖν νόμῳ μόνον εἶναι). That is to say, conventional honour and natural honour are compatible in specific cases. Not only are there two usages of the term καλόν in ethical contexts, but the term may also bear two layers of meaning in particular usages.

The dual interpretation of καλόν offers a helpful framework for resolving the scholarly debate regarding whether the term in Aristotle's ethical works carries a distinct ethical significance or retains some of its aesthetic connotations, often translated as 'beauty'. Terence Irwin, in his study, identifies four distinct usages of καλόν throughout Aristotle's corpus. Based on this classification, Irwin argues that, in the ethical context, καλόν specifically refers to moral correctness, devoid of any aesthetic implication associated with beauty or visual appeal.[68] This means that moral actions, unlike artistic performances, are not subject to aesthetic evaluation and are judged solely by their moral value.

[66] On the sophistic contrast between nature and convention see Guthrie (1971, pp. 55–134), Kerferd (1981, pp. 111–130).
[67] Broadie (2002, p. 265)
[68] Irwin (2010, p. 384) admits that the divisions are rough and not mutually exclusive, but he nonetheless believes that Aristotle uses the term to pick out four distinct properties.

Irwin summarises that Aristotle speaks of καλόν in four distinct contexts: (1) Aesthetic; (2) Natural; (3) Abstract; and (4) Ethical. He describes the term as a homonym with a four-fold usage, though with some overlap. The aesthetic usage refers to καλόν as an appreciation of physical beauty that is immediately pleasing or attractive to onlookers. The aesthetic sense does not involve deeper value judgments about the object's significance or function. Instead, it is an immediate response to the beauty of form. Typical examples include features such as the 'black horn of the bison' or the 'feathers of peacocks.'[69] The natural usage refers to καλόν that lies in the natural teleological order—things that manifest purpose or function according to nature. For instance, καλόν is used to describe healthy teeth or the orderly generation of bees.[70] Here, it reflects harmony with nature's intended purpose, and καλόν in this sense is present in all animals.[71] The abstract usage refers to καλόν that lies in abstract entities or ideas, such as mathematical notions or entities that exhibit order, symmetry, or proportionality.[72]

In addition to these three usages of καλόν—aesthetic, natural, and abstract—Irwin proposes a distinct ethical usage of the term that is specifically tied to moral rightness. He argues that, although Aristotle does not explicitly define which type of καλόν is relevant in ethics, it is evident from his works that the ethical καλόν refers to actions that are morally correct or virtuous, distinguished from its aesthetic usage by its independence from public opinion. Irwin further claims that the objects of ethical καλόν are praiseworthy because they involve voluntary actions, which distinguishes them from the καλόν seen in peacock feathers, the natural order, and mathematical concepts.[73]

However, as Anton Ford points out in response to Irwin's interpretation, even in Aristotle's ethical works, καλόν retains an association with the appraisals of others. Ford emphasises that the opposite of καλόν—αἰσχρόν (commonly translated as 'shameful')—is inherently interpersonal, as shame involves the judgment of someone else, whether they are actual or imagined onlookers. By extension, καλόν also carries this relational dimension, functioning as an interpersonal predicate. Ford contends that because καλόν is used in contexts where

[69] *Hist. an*. 630a35
[70] *Part. an.* 661b7–8, *Gen. an.* 760b1–3
[71] *Part. an.* 645a23–25
[72] *Met*. 1078a31–b2: The chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences demonstrate in a special degree (Barnes, trans, 1995).
[73] Irwin (2010)

judgments of others play a role, it cannot be reduced to an abstract notion of moral rightness, as Irwin suggests, but must retain a degree of aesthetic connotation.[74]

In the above debate, while both sides present different interpretations of καλόν in ethical contexts, they share the underlying assumption that the term *maintains a consistent meaning* throughout Aristotle's ethical works. However, if we adopt a binary interpretation of honour-related terms, the approach offers a more synthetic way to interpret καλόν as something worthy of honour in the ethical domain. In *Topics*, Aristotle identifies καλόν with a sense of fittingness (πρέπω).[75] Yet the criteria for determining what counts as fitting can arise either from social conventions or from natural principles. Accordingly, things and deeds can be viewed as noble either due to societal norms or because they align with natural principles.

Irwin's four-fold division of καλόν can be reduced to the above two sources of nobility. The aesthetic usage of καλόν, which relates to visually pleasing or attractive physical features, can be understood as deriving from societal consensus, similar to how beauty standards evolve over time. This suggests that the aesthetic value attributed to physical traits reflects changing societal norms, not a constant or universal standard.[76] In contrast, the meanings of καλόν that refer to natural order and mathematical principles are grounded in universal laws. These principles are universally valid, which are independent of external influence or public opinion.[77]

However, the ethical usage of καλόν proposed by Irwin may be a composite of the conventional and natural usages. The conventional usage is evident when the term is associated with external factors, such as good birth and wealth, or put in contexts that involve public opinions.[78] As Ford points out, the latter case often takes the form of honour when Aristotle claims it to be 'the greatest external good' that depends more on those who confer honour.[79] Nevertheless, we should not assume this otherness to be present in all ethical usages of καλόν.

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[74] Ford (2010)
[75] *Top*. 135a12–14
[76] Note that not all aesthetic experiences are included in this division. For example, the Kantian beauty of morality, as found in his *Critique of Judgment* p. 59, is excluded from this division because it is not rooted in social consensus or communal validation. Instead, Kant's notion of beauty in morality refers to the intrinsic beauty of moral actions, which are perceived as aesthetically pleasing due to their conformity with universal moral laws, rather than because they align with societal or communal standards.
[77] Due to the limit of space, I will not further explain the reduction of Irwin's divisions of καλόν.
[78] E.g., *Rh*. 1361a19–21, *EN* 1124a21–27, 1123b21.
[79] Ford (2010)

Take Aristotle's account of courage as an example: he clarifies that genuine courage arises from the recognition that it is καλόν to act courageously, whereas civic courage is driven by concerns for honour and shame within the subject's community.[80] In this case, καλόν is devoid of any reliance on societal norms or external judgments when set in stark contrast with conventional honour. Instead, it represents pure moral rightness grounded in a natural principle that informs and justifies the virtue of courage.

2.4 A Textual Analysis of Nicomachean Ethics I. 12

This chapter has so far provided an introductory analysis of Aristotle's binary conception of honour. It first outlined the key evaluative terms and contexts that convey the idea of honour as a judgment of worth grounded in the consideration of some factual aspect of the object being evaluated. Subsequently, it distinguished and contrasted two distinct usages of honour-related terminologies within Aristotle's practical works. The conventional usage aligns with the widely accepted interpretation of honour in contemporary studies, discussed in Chapter One, which emphasises common affirmation as the standard framework for determining worth, thereby incorporating an inherent element of *relation* in the concept. Next, I identified several instances where Aristotle juxtaposes this relational paradigm with another form of honour, which this thesis terms 'natural honour.' According to this alternative model, certain forms of worth can be acknowledged by those who discern the entities that embody such worth, independently of prior interpersonal interactions or collective agreements.

The contrast between nature and convention as two separate principles of honour becomes particularly prominent in *EN* I.12, where Aristotle raises the question of whether human happiness is an object of honour or praise. In this context, Aristotle distinctly assigns happiness to honour rather than praise.[81] Despite this chapter's placement as a foundational part of the *EN*, acting as an introduction to the ethical theory Aristotle develops throughout the work, its normative importance is often undervalued by commentators, especially when compared to other chapters within the same book.

As mentioned in Chapter 1.2, this marginalisation is not entirely unfounded. Aristotle never explicitly provides a well-defined distinction between the two types of honour. Additionally, in

[80] *EN* 1116a17–b4, Aristotle nonetheless agrees that these two forms of courage most resemble with each other, implying the connection between the two distinct types of honour.
[81] See Chapter I. 1 for an brief overview of this passage.

the corresponding passage of *EE* II.1, he reframes the question into a more descriptive inquiry, asking which type of traditional speech—praise, encomium, or felicitation—is commonly agreed to address the worth of happiness. Consequently, the normative depth of this inquiry into the nature of honour as a characteristic response to happiness is often eclipsed by a more rhetorical or formal interpretation of the passage.[82]

This section intends to demonstrate, through a detailed textual analysis of *EN* I. 12, that Aristotle continues to employ the two sources of value he previously introduced, differentiating the intrinsic value of happiness from individual virtues of characters and bodily excellences.[83] More significantly, Aristotle uses this passage to elaborate on the objects and distinctive features of natural honour. This elaboration forms the foundation for a more in-depth investigation of the mechanisms underlying natural honour, which the subsequent chapters will explore. By doing so, Aristotle not only clarifies the nature of happiness as the highest good but also distinguishes it from other forms of virtue that may be praised or recognised through different external measures.

Below is the full text of *EN* I.12 and its translation, with key phrases underlined for emphasis:[84]

> διωρισμένων δὲ τούτων ἐπισκεψώμεθα περὶ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας πότερα τῶν ἐπαινετῶν ἐστὶν ἢ μᾶλλον τῶν τιμίων: δῆλον γὰρ ὅτι τῶν γε δυνάμεων οὐκ ἔστιν. φαίνεται δὴ πᾶν τὸ ἐπαινετὸν τῷ ποιόν τι εἶναι καὶ πρός τι πῶς ἔχειν ἐπαινεῖσθαι: τὸν γὰρ δίκαιον καὶ τὸν ἀνδρεῖον καὶ ὅλως τὸν ἀγαθόν τε καὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐπαινοῦμεν διὰ τὰς πράξεις καὶ τὰ ἔργα.
>
> Now that these matters have been clarified, let us consider whether happiness is a thing to be praised or rather something to be honoured. For it is clearly not found among capacities. Everything praised appears to be praised for being of a certain quality and standing in a certain relation to something: for we praise the just person, the brave person, and in general the good person, and virtue because of their actions and deeds.
>
> καὶ τὸν ἰσχυρὸν δὲ καὶ τὸν δρομικὸν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστον τῷ ποιόν τινα πεφυκέναι καὶ ἔχειν πως πρὸς ἀγαθόν τι καὶ σπουδαῖον. δῆλον δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ἐκ τῶν περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς ἐπαίνων: γελοῖοι γὰρ φαίνονται πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀναφερόμενοι, τοῦτο δὲ συμβαίνει διὰ τὸ γίνεσθαι τοὺς ἐπαίνους δι᾽ ἀναφορᾶς, ὥσπερ εἴπομεν.

[82] Externality generally refers to the side effects or consequences of an action that affect a third party who is not directly involved in the action. In this case, the emergence of natural honour as a consequence of happiness, understood as the ultimate actualisation of human function, can be interpreted as an externality of that happiness.
[83] *EN* 1101b14–16
[84] *EN* 1101b10–1102a5; this translation is inspired by Rackham (1934), Broadie & Rowe (2002), and Crisp (2014), with a critical revision of Rowe's translation, which I will defend in the subsequent textual analysis.

> And we praise the strong person, the fast runner, and each of the others, because they naturally possess a certain quality and stand in a certain relation to something good and excellent. This is also clear if we consider praises offered to the gods; for they appear absurd if they are offered by reference to our case, and this actually occurs because, as we have said, praise involves a reference of its object to something else.
>
> εἰ δ᾽ ἐστὶν ὁ ἔπαινος τῶν τοιούτων, δῆλον ὅτι τῶν ἀρίστων οὐκ ἔστιν ἔπαινος, ἀλλὰ μεῖζόν τι καὶ βέλτιον, καθάπερ καὶ φαίνεται: τούς τε γὰρ θεοὺς μακαρίζομεν καὶ εὐδαιμονίζομεν καὶ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τοὺς θειοτάτους μακαρίζομεν. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν: οὐδεὶς γὰρ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ἐπαινεῖ καθάπερ τὸ δίκαιον, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς θειότερόν τι καὶ βέλτιον μακαρίζει.
>
> But if praise is of things like this, it is clear that the best things do not merit praise, but something greater and better, as indeed appears to be the case in practice, for we call the gods 'blessed' and 'happy' and we call the most godlike men 'blessed.' Similarly in the case of the most godlike among good things: for no one praises happiness as one does justice, but rather deems it blessed, as being something more godlike and superior.
>
> δοκεῖ δὲ καὶ Εὔδοξος καλῶς συνηγορῆσαι περὶ τῶν ἀριστείων τῇ ἡδονῇ: τὸ γὰρ μὴ ἐπαινεῖσθαι τῶν ἀγαθῶν οὖσαν μηνύειν ᾤετο ὅτι κρεῖττόν ἐστι τῶν ἐπαινετῶν, τοιοῦτον δ᾽ εἶναι τὸν θεὸν καὶ τἀγαθόν: πρὸς ταῦτα γὰρ καὶ τἆλλα ἀναφέρεσθαι. ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἔπαινος τῆς ἀρετῆς: πρακτικοὶ γὰρ τῶν καλῶν ἀπὸ ταύτης: τὰ δ᾽ ἐγκώμια τῶν ἔργων ὁμοίως καὶ τῶν σωματικῶν καὶ τῶν ψυχικῶν. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἴσως οἰκειότερον ἐξακριβοῦν τοῖς περὶ τὰ ἐγκώμια πεπονημένοις:
>
> And Eudoxus seems to have been right in advocating the claims of pleasure for the top prize in the contest of the goods. He believes that the fact that it is not praised despite its goodness indicates that it is better than things that are praised; and he thought that God and the Good are like this, because it is to these that other things are referred. For praise is appropriate to virtue, since it makes people capable of noble actions; whereas encomia are for deeds accomplished, in the spheres of the body and in that of the soul alike. However, to achieve a precise account perhaps belongs to those who have worked on the subject of encomia.
>
> 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.
>
> As for us, it is clear from what has been said that happiness is something honourable and complete. This also seems to be so because it is a principle; for it is for its sake that all men do all other things, and we hold that the principle and cause of goods be something honourable and divine.

In this chapter, Aristotle gives a clear and direct response to the question raised at the beginning of the text. He distinguishes between *honour* and *praise* as two distinct ways of value recognition and classifies the types of objects that are proper to each form. However, Aristotle's

description of the objects of praise as 'τῷ ποιόν τι εἶναι καὶ πρός τι πῶς ἔχειν' has led to two very different interpretations, adopted by various translators.

The first interpretation aligns with the nature/convention distinction discussed earlier, suggesting that honour and praise are rooted in different value recognition frameworks. On this view, honour is reserved for complete and self-sufficient goodness that exists independently of societal validation, while praise operates within a framework of mutual recognition and social convention that intrinsically involves an element of *relation*.[85]

The second interpretation, by contrast, understands praise as recognition of a disposition or capacity *in relation to* its actuality, while honour is reserved for the actualisation of that capacity in deeds or actions. In this framework, praise is seen as a more preliminary form of recognition, directed at potential goodness, while honour is awarded once that potential is realised in concrete achievements.[86]

In what follows, I will first illustrate both interpretations, then present my critique of the second with reference to Aristotle's definition of quality and relation in *Categories*, and finally, I will analyse the objects and characteristics of honour based on the first interpretation.

The first type includes habits and dispositions (*ἕξις καὶ διάθεσις*), where habits are enduring and stable dispositions, such as knowledge or virtue. The second type consists of natural capacities and incapacities (*δύναμις φυσικὴ ἢ ἀδυναμία*), exemplified by abilities like excelling in running or boxing. The third type includes affective qualities and affections, while the fourth pertains to external forms or configurations.

According to the first interpretation, Aristotle attributes two essential features to praise: it must involve both a certain quality (ποιόν τι) and a certain relation (πρός τι). In his *Categories*, Aristotle identifies four distinct types of quality within the category of quality. The first type includes habits and dispositions (ἕξις καὶ διάθεσις), where habits are enduring and stable dispositions, including knowledge and virtue of character.[87] The second type consists of natural capacities or incapacities (δύναμις φυσικὴ ἢ ἀδυναμία), exemplified by abilities like

[85] Rackham (1934), Irwin (1985), Crisp (2014).
[86] Broadie & Rowe (2002)
[87] *Cat*. 8b27–30

excelling in running or boxing.[88] The third type includes affective qualities and affections, while the fourth pertains to external forms or configurations.[89]

The examples of praiseworthy objects overlap significantly with the examples of quality in *Categories*.[90] Justice as a moral virtue and a praiseworthy object is identified in the illustration of the first species of quality, and the ability to run fast as a praiseworthy object is also found in the illustration of the second species of quality as natural capacities.[91] This alignment underscores Aristotle's consistent application of his categories to ethical discussions, particularly when evaluating praiseworthy traits and actions.[92]

More importantly, this interpretation indicates that the practice of praise in the context involves not only a quality as its object, but also a *relation* as its mechanism.[93] The essential role of relation is further supported by the following elaboration, in which praise is tied to something good and excellent (ἔχειν πως πρὸς ἀγαθόν τι καὶ σπουδαῖον), thereby forming the relation through which particular qualities are recognised as praiseworthy. Aristotle deepens this concept by explaining that offering praise to gods appears absurd (γελοῖοι) because it assumes that divine value can be measured against human standards (πρὸς ἡμᾶς). This absurdity underscores that praise, as a relational judgment, is contingent on the evaluator's standards and their subjective interpretation of what is 'good' and 'excellent.'

Furthermore, this interpretation highlights a certain flexibility in these evaluative standards. Although standard of praise is first labelled as 'good and excellent,' these terms are not rigidly fixed but allow for subjective variations.[94] A more nuanced reading suggests that the standards for praise may correspond to personal, subjective understandings of the ideal state rather than an objective, universally accepted standard of the ideal.[95] This flexibility parallels Aristotle's observations in *EN* I.4 where, although most people agree that happiness is a form of living and doing well, they differ in their views about what constitutes happiness in practice.[96]

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[88] *Cat*. 9a15–18
[89] *Cat*. 9a30, 10a10. These two species are not relevant to the subsequent textual analysis, they will not be addressed here. See Studtmann (2003) for a critical interpretation of Aristotle's category of quality.
[90] *EN* 1101b14–16
[91] *Cat*. 8b35, 9a16.
[92] *Cf. EN* II.4 on the genus of virtue.
[93] This is reflected in the translations by Rackham (1934), Irwin (1985), and Crisp (2014).
[94] *EN* 1101b18
[95] Note that these two sets of standards can overlap and coexist in specific cases; for example, a societal agreement on certain virtue may incidentally align with the prescriptions of natural honour. However, their fundamental distinctions remain unchanged.
[96] *EN* 1095a17–25

Following this interpretation of praise, Aristotle's assertion that the best cannot be praised (δῆλον ὅτι τῶν ἀρίστων οὐκ ἔστιν ἔπαινος) becomes well-reasoned. From a logical perspective, praising the best would presume the existence of something superior to the best, which serves as the evaluative standard for such praise. It is for this reason that praising the gods by human standards is absurd. However, this scenario is impossible, as 'the best' is defined precisely by the fact that nothing surpasses it in worth. Therefore, praise is unsuitable for something like happiness, which Aristotle identifies as the best of human goods.

Aristotle arrives at the same conclusion from another angle toward the end of the passage, where he highlights happiness as a principle (ἀρχή), an ultimate, self-sufficient good that makes life desirable on its own.[97] Happiness, in this sense, is complete and not dependent on anything external to enhance its value. Since happiness is inherently desirable and not contingent upon external standards or relations, it transcends the scope of praise, which is based on relational evaluation.

Although Aristotle does not provide a detailed definition of honour in this passage, it can be reasonably inferred—based on the contrast drawn with praise mentioned in the opening sentence—that honour serves a distinct function.[98] The honouring of something is not done in comparison to something else, but rather, honour arises directly from the inherent qualities of the honoured object. Thus, while praise is relational, honour is self-contained and bestowed upon something based on its intrinsic worth. The qualification of the subject who is capable of conferring such honour will be examined in Chapter Three.

In this formulation, the distinction between honour and praise in Aristotle's work reflects elements of the broader nature/convention binary, a debate originally raised by the Sophists.[99] Praise operates within a conventional framework, relying on mutual recognition and social standards, making it relational in nature. On the other hand, honour is reserved for something complete and self-sufficient, such as happiness, which exists independently of external validation or societal norms. This form of honour is not derived from comparison or relational judgment but stems from the intrinsic value of the honoured object itself. Honour, in this sense, recognises worth that is absolute and exists without qualification. This interpretation holds that

[97] *EN* 1097b8–22
[98] *EN* 1101b10–11
[99] It is important to note, as will also be demonstrated in Chapters 3 and 4, that Aristotle does not align himself with either side of this debate, nor can his position be reduced to the Sophistic opposition between nature and convention. The reference to the Sophists is included solely to clarify the distinction between conventional honour and natural honour.

Aristotle identifies two distinct mechanisms of evaluating worth—one based on conventional standards and the other through the direct appreciation of inherent, self-sufficient goodness.

In contrast, Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe adopt the second interpretation in their edition of *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*.[100] According to their reading, Aristotle attributes only *one* feature to the object of praise in the phrase 'τῷ ποιόν τι εἶναι καὶ πρός τι πῶς ἔχειν', namely that it must be a quality (ποιόν τι εἶναι). They interpret the subsequent phrase, 'καὶ πρός τι πῶς ἔχειν', as explanatory of the former. More specifically, they read πῶς ἔχειν as a dispositional term, which, in Aristotle's ethical discussions, refers to the way an individual is disposed towards actions.[101] In this interpretation, πρός τι serves as a supplement that signifies the relation between the disposition and the corresponding activity.

Broadie and Rowe therefore argue that Aristotle intends to clarify that the first species of quality—habits and dispositions—is involved in the object of praise.[102] As a result, honour, in their view, is reserved for the active expression of these praiseworthy dispositions. Hence, they interpret Aristotle's statement that praising the gods is absurd because the Aristotelian god is defined as eternal actuality, meaning it exists in a state of perpetual activity and thus does not possess the kinds of potential dispositions that praise is meant to acknowledge.[103]

The core distinction between these two interpretations centres on how one understands the phrase 'πρός τι πῶς ἔχειν.' On the first interpretation, priority is given to the term 'πρός τι,' which is understood as denoting a relationship. This interpretation translates the phrase as 'standing in a certain relation to something,' and posits that the two elements of this relation are *praise* and the *evaluative standards* by which the object of praise is assessed. In this view, praise operates within a relational framework, involving the comparison of the praised object with certain external, often socially constructed, standards of worth.

In contrast, the second interpretation focuses on the dispositional meaning of 'πῶς ἔχειν.' According to this reading, the phrase is rendered as 'being disposed in a certain way towards something (activities),'[104] with the two related entities being *disposition* and *activity.* This

[100] Broadie & Rowe (2002). Aspasius also adopts this interpretation as he comments that things are praised in relation to activities (Konstan, 2014, p. 33).
[101] E.g., *EN* 1114b21–23, 1120b3–4, 1140b14–16.
[102] Broadie & Rowe (2002, p. 290)
[103] *Met*. Λ. 7. See Chapter 3.1 for a detail demonstration of the Aristotelian divinity.
[104] Broadie & Rowe (2002, p. 108)

interpretation aligns with Aristotle's general treatment of virtues as dispositions, meaning that the object of praise is understood as a potential disposition rather than an actualised activity. Consequently, the relationship established by 'πρός τι πῶς ἔχειν' reflects the disposition's orientation toward corresponding actions, distinguishing praiseworthy dispositions from the honoured activities that express them.

Two key passages are often cited to support this interpretation. First, after outlining the characteristics of praise, Aristotle explains that we praise the just and courageous *because of* their actions and deeds (διὰ τὰς πράξεις καὶ τὰ ἔργα).[105] Since this statement immediately follows the description of praise, it is tempting to interpret the causal relationship between disposition and activity as the relation signified by the phrase 'πρός τι πῶς ἔχειν.'[106]

Second, Aristotle contrasts praise with *encomium*, a traditional form of celebration for accomplishments already achieved, in the following illustration. He claims that while praise is appropriate for virtues, which make people capable of noble actions, *encomium* celebrates deeds already completed.[107] This distinction can also be identified in the corresponding passage in *EE* II. 1 and *Rhetoric* I. 9, where Aristotle juxtaposes praise with *encomium* and *felicitation* as three kinds of speeches that are conventionally agreed upon to address different forms of goodness and are applied in accordance with public norms.[108] The contrast thus supports the second interpretation that praise refers to dispositions and capacities rather than actions and deeds. Therefore, based on this interpretation, which centres on the distinction between praise and encomium, the entire passage may be read as an empirical analysis of conventional speech used to articulate different types of goodness, with praise specifically addressing dispositions and capacities.

However, the two textual pieces mentioned above do not provide direct support for the second interpretation. First, the notion that virtues are praised because they can be realised does not imply that realisation is a sufficient condition for receiving praise. One can easily imagine a society that celebrates indulgence, where the virtue of temperance, even when practised, would not be praised externally due to the absence of a corresponding shared value or norm. In such

[105] *EN* 1101b15–16
[106] *EN* 1101b14
[107] *EN* 1101b31–33
[108] *EE* 1219b12–16, *Rh*. 1367b26–35.

cases, even though temperance is realised in action, it would not necessarily be met with social approval or praise, highlighting the contingency of praise on shared societal standards.

Moreover, although the proximity of 'praised in relation to something' and 'praised because of the action' may lead to confusion, his precise use of terminology is significant. When discussing the characteristics of praise, he consistently employs the term πρός τι, whereas, when addressing the connection between disposition and activity, Aristotle distinctly uses διὰ, translated as 'because of', to mark a causal or instrumental relationship between disposition and activity. Therefore, the relation between disposition and activity, signalled by διὰ, may not reflect the same kind of relational structure as πρός τι does in the context of praise.

Secondly, while it is true that in *EE* II.1, Aristotle distinguishes between praise, encomium, and felicitation as three forms of conventional speech and applies this distinction to address why the gods cannot be praised,[109] these two ethical works do not necessarily always say the same thing despite the structural parallelism. As discussed in Chapter 1.5, while this study draws on passages from multiple works and fragments across Aristotle's corpus, it does not assume that Aristotle's works form a fully consistent and rigid system. Therefore, passages from *EE* II.1 should not be cross-referenced to resolve interpretive challenges in *EN* I.12 without considering the context, intent, and nuances of each work.

In the case of the honourability of gods, there is evidence of theoretical development from *EE* II.1 to *EN* I.12.[110] In *EE*, Aristotle's inquiry revolves around the question 'Why is happiness not praised?' The analysis in this context is largely descriptive and empirical, focusing on how people in daily life celebrate happiness differently from other forms of goodness. Aristotle observes this distinction without yet invoking terms derived from τιμή (honour), suggesting that, at this point, he recognised some normative significance in the way happiness is celebrated, but had not yet explicitly articulated this in theoretical terms.[111]

When it comes to *EN*, Aristotle explicitly juxtaposes honour with praise when framing the question of whether happiness is an object of honour or praise. He also refines the analysis, as

[109] *EE* 1219b12–15

[110] The chronological order of *EN* and *EE* has long been a subject of debate. Kenny (1978/2016) argues for an earlier composition date for the *EN* compared to the *EE*, while Rowe (2023) advocates for the reverse, suggesting that the *EE* predates the *EN*. In this context, the formulation of the inquiry question suggests a greater degree of theoretical sophistication in the *EN*.

[111] Woods (1982, pp. 100–101) also realises that the outline account of happiness as an activity is hardly supported by the conclusion drawn in this paragraph that happiness is the standard to which other goods are referred.

discussed in the following analysis, by drawing upon distinctions established in *Categories* to clarify the different natures of honour and praise. While Aristotle also mentions praise and encomium in *EN* as well as in *EE*, in *EN* he only treats the distinction between these two practices as part of a series of empirical observations that echo the normative distinction between honour and praise. Crucially, praise as a form of conventional speech in rhetoric semantically differs from praise juxtaposed with honour in this context. It would therefore be inappropriate to conflate the two or interpret one in light of the other.

Not only is the second interpretation not properly backed by context, but it also encounters significant textual and conceptual challenges. According to this interpretation, the conjunction καὶ in the phrase 'τῷ ποιόν τι εἶναι καὶ πρός τι πῶς ἔχειν' is treated as explanatory, suggesting that one element (πρός τι πῶς ἔχειν) serves to clarify or explain the other (ποιόν τι εἶναι).[112] However, this assumption weakens when viewed in the context of Aristotle's broader theoretical framework, where ποιόν τι (quality) and πρός τι (relative) are treated as distinct and independent categories in his system of classification. These two concepts are not reducible to one another, making it problematic to suggest that one term is simply an exegetical clarification of the other within the phrase. Thus, this interpretation struggles to account for the parallel nature of these two terms in Aristotle's broader philosophical context.

If we bypass the problematic suggestion that conflates the two components of the phrase, and instead read it as denoting two distinct features of praise—namely, a certain quality and a relation between disposition and activity—another conceptual barrier emerges. In *Categories*, Aristotle addresses a potential objection to the division of quality:

> Οὐ δεῖ δὲ ταράττεσθαι, μή τις ἡμᾶς φήσῃ ὑπὲρ ποιότητος τὴν πρόθεσιν ποιησαμένους πολλὰ τῶν πρὸς τι συγκαταριθμεῖσθαι· τὰς γὰρ ἕξεις καὶ διαθέσεις τῶν πρός τι εἶναι ἐλέγομεν. σχεδὸν γὰρ ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν τοιούτων τὰ γένη πρός τι λέγεται, τῶν δὲ καθ᾽ ἕκαστα οὐδέν. ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐπιστήμη, γένος οὖσα, αὐτὸ ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἑτέρου λέγεται (τινὸς γὰρ ἐπιστήμη λέγεται), τῶν δὲ καθ᾽ ἕκαστα οὐδὲν αὐτὸ ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἑτέρου λέγεται, οἷον ἡ γραμματικὴ οὐ λέγεται τινὸς γραμματικὴ οὐδ᾽ ἡ μουσικὴ τινὸς μουσική…Ὥστε αἱ καθ᾽ ἕκαστα οὐκ εἰσὶ τῶν πρός τι.[113]
>
> It must not cause us trouble, however, if someone objects to our statements that, quality being our theme, we include in that category also a good many relative terms. For both

[112] *EN* 1101b13–14; Broadie and Rowe do not explicitly confirm this point, but they comments on this phrase that 'dispositions are a type of quality' (2002, p. 290).
[113] *Cat*. 11a21–33

> habits and dispositions, we admitted to be relative terms. Now, at least in most cases, it happens that the genera, doubtless, are relative; not so the individuals. Knowledge, the genus, we defined by a reference to something beyond it (for knowledge is knowledge of something). Particular branches, however, of knowledge are not thus explained. For example, we do not define knowledge of grammar or music by a reference to something external…Thus particular branches of knowledge are not to be classed among relatives.

The objection claims that many relative terms are also included in the division of quality, particularly those referring to habits and dispositions. Aristotle addresses this by clarifying that the terms representing genera, like knowledge or virtue, are relatives, because their meaning does not specify an object and thus depends on the existence of that object.[114] Aristotle's example of 'wing (πτερόν)' and 'wing-ed (πτερωτόν)' as relational terms illustrates this case.[115] However, when it comes to specific branches of knowledge and virtue, such as grammar or courage, these terms convey their full meaning and do not rely on external references for their definition. Consequently, they are not classified as relatives. For example, the existence of courage as a particular virtue does not depend on its actualisation, as a person is still considered courageous even when asleep.

Aristotle's response to this objection may be ambiguous, but his conclusion is explicit. As stated in the final sentence, specific branches of knowledge and virtue are not classified as *relatives* and, therefore, should not be strictly described using the term πρός τι.[116] In other words, although a disposition is revealed and recognised through its activity—in this context, praised because of the activity—the existence of the disposition itself does not depend on the existence of the activity in the way that 'double' presupposes the existence of 'half.' In the context of Aristotle's explanation of praise, what is being evaluated is not disposition as a *genus*, but rather specific dispositions. Consequently, if we maintain a strict reading of this definition, the phrase 'πρός τι πῶς ἔχειν' cannot denote a relationship between disposition and activity.[117]

Last but not least, proponents of the second interpretation might argue that Aristotle never intends to indicate a relational element through the phrase 'πρός τι πῶς ἔχειν,' but rather stresses 'πῶς ἔχειν' in the phrase to specify the quality being identified as the object of praise.

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[114] Cf. *Cat*. 6b5–6: knowledge and state as genera are included in relatives.
[115] *Cat*. 6b38–7a4
[116] *Cat*. 11a33
[117] Aspasius is likely aware of the conceptual tension here and adopts a loose reading of πρός τι, clarifying that what is praiseworthy is *not* among relative things (Konstan, 2014, p. 33).

The core issue with this amendment lies in its coherence with Aristotle's overall argument in *EN* I.12. Aristotle's reasoning, as indicated in the passage, is that praise is not suitable for 'the best things' because of its inherently relative nature.[118] If Aristotle deems praise as recognition of dispositions and capacities, then praise is unsuitable for not only the best things but also *the rest of activities,* because none of them belongs to dispositions and capacities.

This contextual tension is manifest in Aristotle's account of the absurdity of praise offered to the gods. He attributes the absurdity to the implication that the gods are judged through human standards (πρὸς ἡμᾶς). However, if we accept the second interpretation that understands praise as a recognition of dispositions and capacities in relation to their actualities, the basis for Aristotle's claim about the absurdity of praising the gods shifts: the absurdity would come from the implication that the gods are in a state of potentiality or possess some unrealised capacity, rather than its goodness being judged through some other standards.

Broadie and Rowe's commentary also grapples with this tension. They attempt to explain the πρὸς ἡμᾶς as an imaginary connection between humans and divinity, speculating that human beings are involved in the praise of god for being the beneficiaries of divinity. However, this speculation lacks contextual support and, in my opinion, appears both abrupt and unsubstantiated. They concede that a simpler and more straightforward reading is that the absurdity lies in judging gods by human standards, but they are compelled to reject this explanation because the distinction between disposition and activity does not work in this argument.[119]

In sum, the second interpretation struggles both conceptually and contextually. Aristotle's point about the absurdity of praising gods clearly depends on a relational standard, not potentiality. Therefore, praise is inappropriate for complete and self-sufficient entities such as gods and happiness, reinforcing the idea that honour is the proper recognition of such entities. The second interpretation does not align well with this reasoning.

Based on the above textual analysis of *EN* I.12, it is well-reasoned to say that Aristotle delineates two distinct concepts of honour, represented by 'honour' and 'praise' in the passage, and defines their categorical differences. Natural honour and conventional honour arise from distinct frameworks of value recognition. So far, we have reached the understanding that

[118] *EN* 1101b2122: εἰ δ᾽ ἐστὶν ὁ ἔπαινος τῶν τοιούτων, δῆλον ὅτι τῶν ἀρίστων οὐκ ἔστιν ἔπαινος.
[119] Broadie & Rowe (2002, pp. 290–291)

natural honour is oriented towards complete and self-sufficient goodness, existing independently of social validation and thus rooted in universal principles. Conversely, conventional honour operates within a framework of social convention and mutual affirmation, inherently involving relational elements. The names of these two types of honour may evoke, as mentioned in Chapter 2.3, the nature/convention dichotomy introduced by the Sophists.[120] However, this thesis will demonstrate that the relationship between the two concepts of honour is more complex and intertwined than the straightforward opposition found in the Sophistic nature/convention dichotomy.

Now that we have acquired some characteristics of natural honour, the next step is to examine the object of such honour. Aristotle asserts that happiness is an object worthy of this type of honour, along with *gods*, *godlike individuals*, and *the principle and cause of goodness*. He applies the term 'divine' (θεῖος) to describe all of them, yet does not elucidate their mutual connections in terms of attracting natural honour. To further understand the role of divinity in the mechanism of natural honour, we can turn to Aristotle's theological views, particularly in his *Metaphysics* Λ, where he describes the divine as a primary cause and a source of eternal actuality that inspires admiration from those who appreciate it.

It is also worth noting that an additional task remains incomplete in this thesis. While certain things may theoretically possess self-sufficient worth, this does not imply that their value is independently recognised in practice. Nor does it help illuminate the mechanisms through which these values are acknowledged in real-world contexts. To use a metaphor: theorising the existence of an invisible elephant in the room is one matter; making people acknowledge or experience it is quite another. The latter carries equal, if not greater, normative significance compared to the former. The conclusion of this chapter—that natural honour operates without relational dependency on external contexts—further implies that no obstacles prevent the occurrence of natural honour once the honourable elements are grasped intellectually, rendering the phenomenon a necessary externality of happiness, god, and godlike men.[121]

Therefore, the theory of natural honour must include not only the intrinsic worth of its objects but also the metaphysical, cognitive, and ethical mechanisms that allow a rational agent to perceive and recognise this worth. These mechanisms are essential for facilitating the

[120] See McKirahan (2011, pp. 405–426) for a detailed illustration of the Sophistic nature-convention debate.
[121] The term 'necessary externality' here refers to the inevitable changes that occur in an external object as a result of its contact with the subject in a specific manner.

acknowledgement of natural honour and will be respectively investigated in the next three chapters.

Chapter 3: The Theological Mechanism of Aristotelian Honour

3.1 Introduction

With honour defined as the recognition of worth accompanied by specific emotions and behaviours, we have illustrated Aristotle's intent to introduce a concept of natural honour in juxtaposition with the conventional counterpart. Natural honour is characterised in the first instance by its independence from public opinion, as its occurrence does not rely on any prior evaluative standard, unlike conventional honour. We have also identified several texts in which the phenomenon of honour arises without interpersonal communication and communal agreement (συνθήκη), further demonstrating Aristotle's intention to propose an alternative concept of honour.

At first glance, this proposal may seem radical as an interpretation of Aristotle's concept of honour, considering his frequent reliance on received opinions in the development of his empirical works, including his ethical writings. In fact, the main opposing view to the one defended in the present thesis argues that Aristotle wholly inherited the notion of honour from contemporary culture—where its mechanism depends on interpersonal obligations—and applied it in his ethical works, especially in the account of individual virtue of character, without significant alteration.[1]

The dichotomy of honour (τιμή) and praise (ἔπαινος) in *EN* I. 12 forms a preliminary response to the above concerns by distinguishing natural honour from conventional honour. Conventional honour is defined as evaluative judgments, accompanied by corresponding emotions and behaviours, that are shaped through mutual affirmation with public opinions regarding the standards of worth, the latter serving as the universal principles for judgment. This definition aligns with the concept of honour commonly found in ancient Greek literature. Aristotle is clearly aware of the flexible and inclusive features of this type of honour. He disqualifies it as the end of political life, since happiness should not be dependent on others.[2] He also invokes the flexible evaluative standard of individual worth in his analysis of distributive justice to explain the cause of social strife.[3]

[1] Carins (1993, 2011), Corder (1994), Crisp (2006).
[2] *EN* 1095b25–29
[3] *Pol.* 1302a22–31, for a detailed analysis of this passage that serves as a quintessential example of conventional honour, see Cairns, Canevaro, & Mantzouranis (2022).

It is in contrast to this conventional honour that Aristotle introduces a different concept of honour, whose function is solely based on the inherent quality of the honourable objects without reference to any external or arbitrary evaluative standards.

Natural honour cannot be reduced, as some scholars argue in favour of a unitary conception of Aristotelian honour, to the mere internalisation of social values (with self-respect being a typical example).[4] A key reason for rejecting this reductionist view is that, if natural honour could be entirely explained as the result of social internalisation, Aristotle's distinction between convention and nature as two distinct sources of goodness would become redundant. Specifically, the object of conventional honour—the apparent goods, once internalised, could theoretically be transformed into the object of natural honour—the true goods, effectively erasing the boundary between the two categories of honour.

In *EN* I.12, Aristotle attributes this type of honour to three entities: God, godlike men, and happiness.[5] As will be further elaborated in the following discussion, these three are interconnected as follows: the substance of God is intellect (νοῦς), intellect is the ultimate ruling faculty of the human soul, and happiness represents the ultimate actuality of intellect within a human composite. However, asserting the intrinsic worth of these things, as many scholars have identified in their textual analysis,[6] is one matter; claiming their natural honourability is quite another, as the latter requires a mechanism by which natural honour can occur.

Modern readers might question the feasibility—or even the very conceivability—of such a mechanism. First, what prompts us to recognise the natural honour of God? In the conventional paradigm of honour, the efficient cause for the recognition of certain values lies in public approval and disapproval within an individual's reciprocal interaction with the community. Yet, Aristotle explicitly deems it laughable to suggest that the honour due to God could arise from anything other than God Himself.[7] If natural honour is necessarily conferred upon God and its extensions—godlike men and human happiness, then a plausible hypothesis is that only God can serve as the efficient cause of such recognition. Thus, to address the above question, we must turn to Aristotle's theology, examining the cosmic change attributed to God and assessing

[4] For a sociological account of internalisation see Scott (1987).
[5] *EN* 1101b25–27
[6] E.g., Stewart (1892, pp. 151–156), Broadie & Rowe (2002, p. 289).
[7] *EN* 1101b19–20

whether a cognitive shift in recognising worth is integral to this causal mechanism.

This chapter argues that the primary source of natural honour lies in the effect of God on human beings. Natural honour is rooted in the recognition of God as the most excellent and superior (ὑπεροχή) substance and is expressed through the activity of imitation (μιμεῖσθαι), whereby individuals strive to achieve divine goodness within the limits of their natural capacities. Furthermore, an awareness of one's ignorance (ἀγνοεῖν) and the corresponding pursuit of learning (μανθάνειν) are closely associated with the concept of natural honour. These components are essential for acquiring the knowledge of God's substance, which forms the foundation for imitative actions.

The argument proceeds as follows. The Aristotelian god is defined as pure intellect, capable of initiating movement without being moved, by evoking cognitive and emotional changes in the objects that perceive and recognise it. The initiated movement is a consequence of the cognitive and emotional changes in the moving object. While Aristotle claims that God initiates change through being loved—an idea likely inherited from his predecessors,[8] he offers little elaboration on the connection between the emotion of love and the corresponding cognitive and behavioural changes it induces. However, two types of cognitive changes, namely the recognition of superiority and the recognition of self-ignorance, are linked to God's quality of being *thaumaston* (awe-inspiring or admirable).[9] I propose that Aristotle may not draw a clear distinction between the meanings of 'to be puzzled' and 'to admire' when employing terms derived from *thaumazein* in contexts involving human intellect. Many translations reflect only one of these meanings or adopt ambiguous language that hedges between the two.

To identify the primary cognitive change induced by God, I turn to Aristotle's discussion of the emotion of emulation (ζηλόω) in *Rhetoric* II.11. In this context, *thaumazein*, as the recognition of superiority, is a precursor to the emotion of emulation and the corresponding activity of imitation. Given that the circular motion of celestial bodies caused by God is also described as an imitation of God, it is reasonable to conclude that the primary cognitive change induced by God is the recognition of superiority, akin to the process underlying emulation. This recognition constitutes a key component of natural honour. One implication of this argument is that the *thaumaston* as the quality of God in *Metaphysics* Λ 1072b25–27 should be translated as

[8] On God originating motion by being beloved see *Met*. 1072b3–4; on the influence of predecessors see *Met*. 1072a7–8.
[9] On God being *thaumaston* see *Met.*1072b25–27.

'admirable' rather than any words that connote puzzlement.

The above effect of God is then extended in two directions. First, it applies to the everlasting arrangement or order (τάξις) derived from God—the natural order, positing that both share the same capacity to initiate change.[10] As a result, the moved objects include not only celestial spheres but also, more significantly for this thesis, human beings who can perceive and recognise natural order. A conjecture for our experience of the additional cognitive change, namely the recognition of self-ignorance, is that while we perceive the order derived from God, it may require further inductive reasoning to acquire comprehensive knowledge of God.[11]

Second, the effect extends to human intellect. Drawing on textual evidence that suggests the shared goodness between divine intellect and human intellect, as well as the *thaumaston* quality of human intellect, this thesis argues that activity of human intellect possesses the same transformative efficacy as divine intellect, leading to cognitive and behavioural changes in a comparable manner.[12] Such divine attraction serves as the theological foundation of natural honour, which is expressed through the holistic human response to intellect as the unqualified good.

On the other hand, conventional honour encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioural reactions to the apparent good that depends on collective agreements. Aristotle does, however, provide some theological justification for the normativity of conventional honour. First, he states that the public consensus underlying conventional honour may be a legacy from ancient wisdom;[13] second, it is likely that Aristotle deems those guided by the paradigm of conventional honour will also possess a rudimentary understanding of the principles of natural honour, derived from their perception of the natural order. I conjecture that such rudimentary knowledge shared collectively within a society, acts as a regulating force. It prevents conventional honour—shaped by societal consensus—from becoming entirely arbitrary by anchoring it, however subtly, to the universal and objective principles derived from natural

[10] The key textual evidence for this extension is *Met*. 1075a11–16.
[11] In Chapter 4, I will argue from the perspective of Aristotle's epistemology that human beings, without rational refinement, only grasp a universal (καθόλου), rudimentary understanding of God, while the heavenly bodies may acquire an unqualified (ἁπλῶς) understanding of God from the outset.
[12] On the shared act of contemplation by God and human and the shared goodness between divine intellect and human intellect see e.g. *Met*. 1072b23–25; on the thaumaston quality of human intellect, see e.g. *Met*. 981b14–20.
[13] *Met*.1074b1–15 explains how the true knowledge of the God was first attained by our ancestors but distorted when being preserved and handed down to the contemporary generation, although the former can still be identified and separated from the distorted opinions of God.

honour.[14] This viewpoint will be further developed in Chapter 4.4.

3.2 The substance and capacity of Aristotle's god

3.2.1 Intellect as the substance of God

Aristotle identifies intellect (νοῦς) as the substance of God. The concept of God is explicitly introduced and substantiated in *Metaphysics* Λ.6–10, following a summary of conclusions drawn from earlier investigations into the nature of substance (οὐσία) and change (κίνησις) (Λ.1–5). However, the existence of God and its attributes are already implicitly suggested in these preceding inquiries. For example, Aristotle distinguishes three types of substance, one of which—unchanging substance—corresponds to the nature of God.[15] In his *Physics*, Aristotle also argues for the necessary existence of a Prime Mover, which initiates the chain of change.[16] Therefore, the explicit discussion of God in *Metaphysics* Λ is expected to wrap up the loose ends and provide reliable foundations for Aristotle's theoretical framework.[17]

This idea goes back to Plato. In the cosmology presented in the *Timaeus*, for instance, understanding the cosmic order necessitates reference to the Demiurge, whom Timaeus identifies as a god.[18] Timaeus further claims that the Demiurge desires all things to resemble himself as much as possible and seeks to imbue the cosmic order with intellect. If the cosmic order reflects the Demiurge by embodying intellect, it logically follows that the Demiurge must itself be a form of intellect.[19]

Book Λ provides the only detailed investigation of God within the extant Aristotelian corpus, but its concise and compact composition leaves many key passages open to debate and varied interpretations.[20] Despite this, a general academic consensus on the attributes of God can still be reached, providing a foundation for the subsequent exploration of the divine source of natural honour. Aristotle argues for the existence of God based on the necessity of a primary

[14] Cf. *Met*.993a27–b4 where Aristotle claims that no one misses the mark completely when attaining the truth.
[15] *Met*. 1069a31–1069b1; the other two types of substance contain one being perishable and the other being eternal yet subject to spatial change. These correspond, respectively, to a broad array of sublunary objects and the celestial bodies. For a detailed discussion on the range and characteristics of perishable substances, see Judson (2019, pp. 107–109).
[16] E.g., *Phys.* VII, 242a50–54, VIII, 258b10–12.
[17] It is likely in this sense that the text is considered 'the culminating part of *Metaphysics*' by Judson (2019, p.1).
[18] *Timaeus* 30a2, 30b8, 30d3.
[19] Walker (2018, p. 32)
[20] For this reason, Broadie (2003) interprets the text as primarily a cosmological account rather than a definitive exposition of God's nature. Similarly, Judson (2019) regards it as an outline or blueprint for a more extensive treatise.

efficient cause in the chain of motion.[21] From this, four essential features attributed to God as the primary principle of change can be summarised, all inferred from the eternal and primary motion of celestial spheres.[22]

First, the substance of God must be *eternal* (ἀίδιος) and immune to corruption for being the cause of any eternal motion. If God's substance were to cease to exist, the eternal motion would likewise cease.[23]

Second, God must exist in a state of actuality (ἐνέργεια) to serve as an eternal cause.[24] Here, ἐνέργεια here should be understood as a state of actuality *per se*, rather than as referring to *exercising certain capacities*.[25] The latter interpretation is precisely what Aristotle denies as an eternal cause of change, as it presupposes a prior state of potentiality (δύναμις) in which God would not yet activate its function to impart motion.

Third, God must be *unchanging* in order to be the principle of primary motion, specifically the circular movements of celestial bodies.[26] If God were subject to change, it would undermine this role by making God the object of an even more fundamental change, thereby displacing the celestial bodies as the focus of primary motion.

Fourth, God must be *without matter* (ὕλη), as matter presupposes the potentiality for spatial motion, which is incompatible with God's role as the eternal and unchanging cause.[27]

Aristotle concludes from these attributes that God must be intellect, and its sole activity is 'applying the intellect on itself as an object' (ἡ νόησις νοήσεως νόησις).[28]

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[21] *Phys*. VIII, 258b10–12 attempts an inferential proof of the necessity of an unmoved mover, which, as noted by Wardy (1990), fits well with the *reductio* proof proposed in *Phys*. 242a50–b54. This argument is presented in a short form in *Met*. 1072a20–26. On the other hand, logical reasoning may not be the only way of recognising the existence of God, as Aristotle also suggests an experience-driven approach in *fr.* 12 Ross[3], which is likely more essential in the generation of honour for God.

[22] *Met*. 1071b5–24

[23] *Met*. 1072a26

[24] *Met*. 1072a26, 1072b8; Judson (2019, p. 206) questions the necessity of actuality (ἐνέργεια) in causing change. He challenges Bodnár's (1997, p. 117) 'infinite power' argument, which posits that only an eternal actuality can sustain eternal motion. Instead, she conjectures that both the inactive Platonic Form and intellect, understood as an active form, could serve as causes of eternal motion by being objects of desire. However, Aristotle explicitly rejects the possibility of the Platonic Form serving as the primary cause of change (Met. 1071b15–16).

[25] I agree with Judson's (2019, p. 205) detailed comment on this issue.

[26] *Met*. 1072b7–10

[27] *Met*. 1072b5–6

[28] *Met*. 1074b34–35; Aristotle describes intellect as God for the first time in *Met*. 1072b25, but there are also texts implying that God may be something even superior to intellect (*fr.* 49 Ross[3]). This thesis will focus on the more abundant texts that illustrate intellect as God.

The above conception of the Aristotelian god is broadly accepted by most contemporary scholars, though there are debates about certain nuances. One notable discussion concerns the extent to which ancient Greek tradition influenced Aristotle's account of God. In much of Greek mythology and contemporary literature of Aristotle's time, the gods are portrayed as interacting with mortals on the basis of *conventional honour*. These gods are depicted as committing nemesis (retributive justice) against mortals who engage in hubristic deeds, mirroring the way mortals exercise nemesis toward one another, with the only difference being that the gods evaluate themselves based on their superhuman identity and are more capable of retribution and vengeance.[29]

In this framework, the gods' influence on the mortal realm is fundamentally reciprocal: their acts of nemesis are understood as reactions to mortal hubris, rendering divine activity contingent upon human actions.[30] Furthermore, it has been argued that many Presocratic philosophical concepts draw heavily from the social and political paradigms of justice in ancient Greek society. This connection suggests that not only did the paradigm of conventional honour shape the broader cultural understanding of divinity, but it may have also left its imprint on early philosophical interpretations of God.[31]

If Aristotle were significantly influenced by this tradition, it would constrain his ability to conceive of an alternative paradigm of honour for God. Instead of proposing a notion of *natural honour* rooted in the intrinsic qualities of the divine, he might have defaulted to the established, reciprocal framework of *conventional honour*. Such an influence would limit the originality of his theological contributions and align them more closely with traditional Greek views of divinity.

Richard Bodéüs and Sarah Broadie have, in different ways, advocated for the above reciprocal interpretation of the Aristotelian God, based on several passages that seemingly suggest a great sympathy with traditional religion. In one of the passages in *EN* X.8, for example, Aristotle appears to portray an anthropomorphic divinity by stating that gods would take delight in and reward individuals who lead a contemplative life, as such individuals are most akin to them.[32] Bodéüs strongly asserts that the Aristotelian gods correspond to 'those gods who are honored

[29] Li (2022) elaborates this viewpoint and concludes that a 'cosmic society' can be identified in ancient Greek literature.
[30] *GC* 323a114–15
[31] One typical example is Anaximander's comparison between the juridical sequence of transgression and retribution, which may be seen as a social rectification of worth, and the regularity of cosmic change (BK 12B1). For insightful elaboration see Sedley (2007, pp. 5–7).
[32] *EN* 1179a22–32, examined in Bodéüs (2000, pp. 10–11), Broadie (2003, pp. 67–69).

in the city,' whose standards of honour are evidently shaped by social customs. Broadie adopts a more moderate position, interpreting God as possessing anthropo-psychic qualities—capable of deliberation and interactive responsiveness to specific issues—to support her argument for an implicit virtue of piety within Aristotle's ethical treatises.

However, Broadie's account is challenged by scholars who highlight the limited and superficial treatment of prayer (εὐχή) in Aristotle's extant works. They argue that if the gods actively responded to human behaviour, prayer—and by extension, the concept of piety— would naturally occupy a central position in Aristotle's discussions on human happiness. Instead, these topics are conspicuously absent from most of Aristotle's extant corpus. This omission suggests that Aristotle's conception of the divine may not align with the reciprocal and interactive nature attributed to traditional gods.[33] Notably, the only exception may lie in the lost treatise *On Prayer*, which might have addressed these issues in greater detail but remains unavailable for analysis.

This thesis adopts the non-anthropomorphic and non-anthropo-psychic interpretation of the Aristotelian god for three principal reasons. First, Aristotle describes God as 'thinking either itself' or 'that does not change.'[34] Whether this account represents a definitive depiction of divinity or, as Broadie argues, serves merely as a cosmological explanation for the eternal motion of celestial spheres,[35] it necessarily precludes particular human being as the object of God's activity.

Second, Aristotle explicitly distinguishes his conception of God from that of traditional religions. While he acknowledges a potential genealogical relationship between the two—suggesting that traditional religious ideas may reflect philosophical insights from earlier thought—he considers the anthropomorphic features attributed to gods as later additions designed for utilitarian purposes. These features, Aristotle argues, were incorporated to persuade the masses and support the implementation of legal and social order, rather than to convey the true nature of divinity.[36]

Third, the texts that appear to express sympathy for traditional religious beliefs can be explained away without presupposing that Aristotle sought to appeal to popular opinion or

[33] Mayhew (2007)
[34] *Met*. 1074b21–27
[35] Broadie (2003)
[36] *Met*. 1074b1–8. This distinction is placed after the rigorous account God as intellect, which implies that it is Aristotle's own insight rather than reference of other's viewpoint.

mitigate political risks.[37] Instead, Aristotle may have deliberately integrated certain divine attributes with human traits to elucidate complex philosophical ideas while setting aside their incompatibilities. For instance, when describing those who live a contemplative life as godlike, Aristotle does not suggest that they are immortal in any physical sense. Rather, he uses the term metaphorically to highlight specific qualities of the contemplative life. In the same vein, Aristotle's occasional use of humanlike depictions of God could be understood as a hypothetical figure, designed to assist in conceptualising the divine.

Regarding the omission of piety and prayer in Aristotle's ethical treatises, I would like to resort to the principle of Occam's Razor. I think it is more plausible to attribute the omission of piety and prayer in Aristotle's works to their perceived triviality within his ethical framework, rather than assuming that they were intentionally addressed in a veiled manner.

Consequently, when Aristotle describes God as honourable, the mechanism of honour attributed to God can reasonably be understood as operating independently of any consensus or reciprocal agreement between God and the observers. This interpretation aligns with the self-sufficiency of God's goodness, which should not be contingent upon external validation. Thus, an alternative explanation for divine honour—one that is not reliant on mutual agreement—should be preferred if it is supported by sufficient evidence, as it better reflects the autonomy and intrinsic worth of the Aristotelian God.

Given the above account of God, it is evident that when Aristotle describes the object of God's contemplation as the most divine and most honourable,[38] he does not have in mind conventional honour. His definition of God is innovative for his time and unlikely to align with prevailing contemporary viewpoints.[39] Even if honour were to be somehow bestowed on Aristotelian god in a conventional manner, such an act would appear absurd from Aristotle's

[37] Many scholars resort to Aristotle's Macedonian affiliation to explain the ostensible inconsistencies in his texts, e.g., Whitehead (1975), Sedley (2017, pp.323–324).

[38] *Met.*1074b26–27: δῆλον τοίνυν ὅτι τὸ θειότατον καὶ τιμιώτατον νοεῖ, καὶ οὐ μεταβάλλει. See also *Met*. 1074b21–22, 30–32: the former attributes honour to the activity of intellect itself, and the latter treats honourability as an indicator of divinity.

[39] This is not to say that Aristotle's theology and cosmology are entirely detached from the ideas of his predecessors, which is apparent not the case. However, Aristotle's definition of god as intellect uninvolved in particular issues, represents a significant innovation attributable to his own philosophical contributions. In Plato's *Timaeus*, for example, the notion of intellect is also central to the creation and ordering of the physical world (Sedley, 2019). However, in Plato's case, intellect functions solely as an efficient cause, employed by the Demiurge as a guiding principle to actively create and shape the physical world. Aristotle, on the one hand, does not regard intellect as responsible for creating the substance of the world, and on the other hand, further attribute final causality to intellect and identify it as the very substance of god (Menn, 1992, Broadie, 2011). The complete detachment of divinity from the sublunary world, however, only becomes fully articulated in later philosophical traditions, such as the Epicurean account of God (Sedley, 2011, pp.29–52).

perspective,[40] because God as the unqualified good is judged by some other standards, implying that God is somehow not the supreme standard of excellence—a notion fundamentally at odds with Aristotle's philosophy. Therefore, it becomes essential to investigate the origin of this honour, including the mechanism

3.2.2 The doctrine of love and its limitations

With the above general understanding of Aristotle's conception of God, the next step is to examine the mechanism by which natural honour manifests and the specific attributes or qualities it involves. If the activity of honouring God is not initiated by any external agent, it must be a change caused by God itself. According to Aristotle, the only type of change God can directly bring about as an efficient cause is exemplified by the primary movement of celestial spheres. Consequently, it is reasonable to conjecture that the circular movement of celestial spheres, as a mode of imitating the immutability of God, serves as the physical manifestation of honour toward God.[41] This divine causation preserves God's immutable nature, as God causes change without undergoing change itself. The causality between God and celestial bodies thus diverges from the paradigm of conventional honour relationships, which depends on reciprocity or interdependence (ἀντιστρέφω) arising from relational dynamics (πρός τι).

Since imitation is identified as the manifestation of honour for God, it is natural to inquire about the corresponding cognitive and emotional changes that lead to such honouring activity. After all, heavenly bodies are regarded as ensouled being in Aristotle's cosmology, whose voluntary activities must come from immediate decisions (προαίρεσις) to reflect the intentionality in their actions.[42] To address this question, most scholars and commentators turn to Aristotle's well-known doctrine that God causes motion as something beloved (κινεῖ δὴ ὡς ἐρώμενον).[43] According to this doctrine, God serves as the *efficient cause* of the primary motion by being an object of love while simultaneously acting as the *final cause* of the primary

[40] Cf. *EN* I.12
[41] It is important to avoid the hasty conclusion that there exists a causal relationship of natural honour between God and every other substance that appears to imitate God's eternity. The act of imitation should be regarded as a sign for natural honour but not a sufficient condition, as the imitative activity may lack intentionality and thus may not arise from a recognition of worth. (Judson, 2019, p. 336).
[42] See Broadie & Rowe (2002, pp. 42–46) for a general account of Aristotle's προαίρεσις.
[43] *Met*. 1072b4

motion, as the goal of imitation.[44]

Further insight can be drawn from *Generation and Corruption* I.6, where Aristotle explains the mechanism by which motion is imparted without reciprocal interaction. He categorises causality of movement into two kinds. The first kind involves reciprocal causality, wherein if A touches B, B simultaneously touches A, reflecting ordinary experiences of physical interaction—this model aligns with conventional honour as discussed earlier. The second kind involves non-reciprocal causality, exemplified by the case of a grieving individual arousing sympathy in others while being unaffected himself.[45]

In *EN* IX.1, the asymmetrical relationship between lover and beloved is also introduced as the contrast of the proportionately equal relationship of friendship (φιλία).[46] In friendship, participants share common measures (κοινὸν μέτρον), enabling mutual exchange and equality. In contrast, erotic relationships rely on a coincidental alignment of desires in the sense that both individuals happen to find fulfilment in the other, but without the necessity for reciprocity.[47]

By analogy, Aristotle appears to envision God, as a non-commanding ruler,[48] eliciting love in the ensouled heavenly bodies without any obligation to reciprocate this love. This non-reciprocal relationship initiates the heavenly bodies' imitative activity, aligning with the paradigm of natural honour and differing fundamentally from conventional, reciprocal forms of honour.

With the above interpretation of the love elicited by God, one might expect Aristotle to further elaborate on the cognitive change, presumably an evaluative judgment, that underpins this emotional change. Understanding this cognitive change would shed light on the honour accorded to God, as the essence of honour, as previously demonstrated, is also the subject of judgment of worth. However, Aristotle remains entirely silent on the finer details of this

[44] For Aristotle, something being the final cause is compatible with it being the efficient cause of the same change, which is particularly common in those cases where the goodness in the final cause leads to the occurrence of relevant desire. For an incompatibilist standpoint see Vlastos (1963) developed on *GC*. 324b14–15 that the final cause is not active except metaphorically. On the Prime Mover as final cause, see Kahn (1985); G. Lear (2004: 80–85).
[45] *GC* 323a32–34. *NB*: Aristotle includes both the Prime Mover and the ordinary unmoved movers into the same category of causality of change and does not provide an explicit distinction between them. Nevertheless, it is evident that the difference lies in that the Prime Mover does not possess the potentiality of change whereas the latter is only unmoved in the particular causality.
[46] *EN* 1163b33–1164a9
[47] For a summary of the notion of love in Aristotle see Price (1989, pp. 236–249)
[48] *EE* 1249b13–14: οὐ…ἐπιτακτικῶς ἄρχων ὁ θεός.

doctrine. He says nothing about the specific judgment that gives rise to the emotion of love and the way the emotion translates into particular behavioural intentions.[49] In short, the puzzle of how God attains honour *cannot* be fully resolved through reference to the emotion of love alone.

Another troubling concern prompted by Aristotle's terse presentation of the account of love in *Metaphysics* Λ.7 is whether it was truly his intention to treat love as the emotional change concomitant with the primary movement. Not only does the concept of love receive insufficient elaboration in Aristotle's theological account, but it also receives minimal attention throughout his extant corpus.[50] While love is classified as an emotion, like anger,[51] Aristotle does not examine it in *Rhetoric* Book II, where he discusses a wide range of emotions significant for persuasion. For example, in a deliberative speech, love could be effectively invoked to elicit sympathy from the assembly members and affect their decision. If love were genuinely considered the emotion that drives the primary movement, it raises the question of why such an important emotion is omitted from a rhetorical investigation aimed at provoking action in audiences.

Additionally, in its sexual context, love is often associated with behaviours that fulfil one's appetites through external means.[52] This stands in contrast to the goal of the heavenly bodies' movement, which are for the sake of the good. This discrepancy between the behavioural consequences of love and the purpose of celestial motion creates a gap not bridged in the extant texts. However, *Rhetoric* Book II examines one specific emotion whose behavioural outcomes resemble those of the heavenly bodies: the emotion of emulation (ζηλοῦν), which will be investigated in the next section.[53]

On the other hand, there is a clear historical lineage for the doctrine of love, of which Aristotle is clearly aware through his references to Hesiod and Parmenides, who emphasised the primacy of love in the genesis of the universe.[54] The doctrine may also reflect a broader appropriation of Anaxagoras' view, which holds that God's intellectual activity (νόησις) functions as the

[49] It is probable that, to avoid addressing the complexities inherent in Aristotle's doctrine of love, some commentators interpret his claim as metaphorical. (Kosman, 1994; Berti, 2000).
[50] Price, 1989, p. 249. It is worth noting that, in the record of Diogenes Laertius, several of Aristotle's lost works are titled with references to love, such as Περὶ Ἔρωτος (On Love). It is possible that the concept of love was examined in detail within these works.
[51] *An. Pr.* 68a39–b6, *EE* 1229a20–25.
[52] E.g., *EN* 1171b29–31: the corresponding activity of love is to seek the beloved to fulfil the sexual appetite of the lover. Also see *Rh*. 1384b30–32: lovers demand something that the beloved is able to offer rather than aim to become the beloved themselves.
[53] *Rh*. II.11
[54] *Met*. 984b23–31

cosmic ordering principle and inspires motion as an unmoved object of love.[55]

Love is similarly attributed with a metaphysical role in Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. In these dialogues, love is characterised as a spiritual and intellectual longing for the eternal and the beautiful, prompting individuals to seek truth and goodness.[56] In *Phaedrus*, for instance, the lover experiences ἔρος upon recollecting the divine form of beauty through the perception of the beloved. The causality underlying this interaction aligns with Aristotle's concept of the unmoved mover: like the example of grieving man illustrated earlier, the beloved causes the erotic emotion in the lover while remaining unaffected. The difference between Plato and Aristotle on the role of love lies in that, for Plato, the source of motion in the cosmos is not love but the self-motion of the cosmic soul, whereas there is no such thing as Platonic self-motion in Aristotle. Aristotle's doctrine of love is rather a critical reception of his predecessor's view.[57]

In sum, Aristotle does not develop the account of love as a specific emotional change caused by God, and the lack of information from the extant sources gives us little material to infer the corresponding cognitive processes and behavioural outcomes. It is conceivable that Aristotle's reference to love as a cause of motion may be a restatement of widely accepted views of his time, without signifying his full intellectual commitment.[58] Regardless, the doctrine of love offers limited insight into the mechanism of natural honour attained by God.[59]

Fortunately, apart from the account of love, there is another description of God in *Metaphysics* Λ that suggests a causal relationship between God and the external world: the quality of *thaumaston* (wonderful or admirable). Despite its potential significance, this quality is often dismissed or regarded as sufficiently established by scholars and commentators.[60] Aristotle introduces *thaumaston* after discussing the doctrine of love, stating:

> εἰ οὖν οὕτως εὖ ἔχει, ὡς ἡμεῖς ποτέ, ὁ θεὸς ἀεί, θαυμαστόν: εἰ δὲ μᾶλλον, ἔτι θαυμασιώτερον. ἔχει δὲ ὧδε.[61]
>
> If God is always, as we are sometimes, in this good state, it is **thaumaston**; and if the state

[55] DK59B12–14, See Walker (2018, p.31) for a comparison of Aristotle and Anaxagoras.
[56] *Symp*. 206b–212e; *Phdr*. 251b–d, 256c–257a.
[57] Coope (2015, pp. 245–264)
[58] Charles (2012, pp. 246–253), Bolton (2009).
[59] See Corrigan (2018) for a defense of love as the underlying mechanism of primary movement.
[60] For instance, Judson (2019) makes no comment on the text quoted below (*Met*.1072b25–27).
[61] *Met*.1072b25–27. This thesis will transliterate the term because of its ambiguous connotation in certain context, as will be illustrated in the following section.

is better, it is more **thaumaston**. And God is in this state.

In this text, *thaumaston* is presented as a quality closely associated with God, though it remains unclear whether the term qualifies God himself, God's state, or the fact that God is perpetually in such a state. Nevertheless, we can notice that, as a first impression, the quality of *thaumaston* appears more promising in explaining the honourability of God, as the term more clearly conveys a cognitive activity, and the concept of honour is fundamentally grounded in the recognition of worth. More importantly, Aristotle refers to *thaumaston* in honour-related contexts multiple times throughout his works. For instance, at the beginning of *De Anima*, *thaumaston* is listed as one of the reasons for the honourability of knowledge.[62]

The term is most famously invoked in *Metaphysics* A, where Aristotle asserts that it is owing to *thaumazein* that human beings start philosophising.[63] Aristotle further elaborates on this assertion, in which a link with God can be identified. According to Aristotle, the objects of *thaumazein* evolve from minor puzzles to the regularities of celestial movements, and ultimately to the genesis of the universe. In this context, the final object of *thaumazein* clearly points to the principle of the universe, which can be identified with God. Given that the philosophising of God is defined as contemplation (θεωρία) in *EN*,[64] which is the characteristic activity of both those who live a life of contemplation and the sole activity of God, it turns out that the cognitive change of *thaumazein* eventually leads us, instrumentally, to engage in the activity of God, which can be regard as a form of behavioural imitation of God within the bounds of human nature.

Although Aristotle does not explicitly state what triggers the state of *thaumazein* in *Metaphysics* A, the assertion clearly echoes the quoted description. Furthermore, the behavioural outcome of *thaumazein*—namely, contemplation—seems to correspond more directly to God's effect as the Prime Mover than the doctrine of love. If we connect these claims and hypothesise that God's quality of *thaumaston* serves as the primary cause of human *thaumazein*, this characteristic of God could be understood as a capacity to induce specific mental transformations that ultimately culminate in the activity of imitation.

Moreover, not only are human beings likely encompassed within the sphere of influence

[62] *DA* 402a1–4
[63] *Met.*982b12–13
[64] The philosophising of the universe and celestial movements belongs to cosmology, which is considered the subject most akin to philosophy (*Met*. 1073b4–7).

exerted by God's quality of *thaumaston*, but the text also suggests that human beings themselves can embody this quality within a finite timeframe. This concise observation opens up theoretical space for the idea that a godlike individual may evoke a similar cognitive transformation in other human beings. Therefore, exploring the meaning of *thaumazein* in this context may shed light on the cognitive mechanism underpinning natural honour.

It is important to note that while the common usage of *thaumazein* and love respectively suggests a cognitive change and an emotional change, there is no definitive evidence indicating a causal relationship between them.[65] If we are to consider the doctrine of love as reflecting Aristotle's genuine theoretical commitment, then the fact that the Aristotelian God can only initiate one type of change implies that these two descriptors must refer to different aspects of the same mechanism rather than to entirely distinct processes. However, the limited of information on the account of love in Aristotle's extant works hinders further analysis of the mechanisms through which natural honour arises from this perspective. Consequently, this thesis will focus on the quality of *thaumaston*—a concept more prominently tied to divine honour—to address the unresolved question of how God's 'εὖ ἔχει' attains honour.

3.2.3 The scope of the divine causality

Before proceeding to the analysis of *thaumaston* as a divine quality, it is crucial to delineate the scope of both sides of the divine causality: namely, (i) what entities are capable of perceiving divinity, and (ii) what entities can exhibit it.

Scholars diverge on the first question (i). Some scholars propose a unitary teleological framework, arguing that all changing beings exhibit behavioural tendencies to imitate the Prime Mover.[66] In this interpretation, the Prime Mover exerts a direct influence on the rest of the world. This reading is supported by textual evidence, such as Aristotle's claims that 'all natural beings have a share of the divine'[67] and that they 'share in the eternal and divine as far as they can (τοῦ ἀεὶ καὶ τοῦ θείου μετέχωσιν ᾗ δύνανται).'[68] In contrast, Lindsay Judson restricts the scope of directly affected objects to heavenly bodies, arguing that certain sublunary

[65] The two terms are used in a parallel structure to explain certain deeds several times, which might be a weak evidence for their mutual dependency, e.g., *Rh*.1373a16–18: we commit injustices to ingratiate those being loved or admired (ἢ θαυμαζομένοις ἢ ἐρωμένοις) by us; *Rh*.1391a6–8: all men are accustomed to spend time on what is lovable and admirable to themselves (τὸ ἐρώμενον καὶ θαυμαζόμενον ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν).
[66] Kahn (1985), Sedley (2010).
[67] *EN* 1153b32
[68] *DA* 415a29–b1; cf. *GA* 731b24.

beings, such as plants, lack the emotional or desiring faculties necessary to be directly influenced by God.[69]

This thesis will focus specifically on the question relevant to its argument: can human beings perceive of God? Judson's restrictive remark does not apply to human beings, as we possess both sensitive and rational capacities, enabling us to be affected by divine influence should it be directed toward us.[70]

Regarding the second aspect (ii), *Metaphysics* Λ. 10 offers a clear explanation. To demonstrate the ways in which God is good, Aristotle claims that the goodness of God not only lies in the substance of God but also in the arrangement (τάξις) that depends on it. Aristotle exemplifies this dependence through the analogy of a general and the arrangement of his army: the goodness of the general is manifested both in his own qualities and in the military order that derives from his leadership.[71] Therefore, it is not necessary to perceive God directly, in the way as the heavenly bodies do, to access the goodness of God; instead, one may do so through perceiving the enduring order of the natural world, which is sustained by God's eternal activity.

Some commentators focus on the first aspect (i) of divine causality when interpreting the above explanation: whether there is a *direct* influence by God on every constituent of the arrangement. They conjecture that the arrangement either consists exclusively of the heavenly order or encompasses both the heavenly and sublunary orders. However, Aristotle does not consider a unmediated causality necessary for the embodiment of goodness. In the analogy of the general and the army, for example, the general's commands may be conveyed through intermediate agents, yet the overall arrangement still reflects the general's goodness. Similarly, the good arrangement of the physical world that depends on God does not require direct causality between God and every component within the order. As long as the causal relationships within the system can ultimately be traced back to God, the goodness of God should be adequately manifested.[72]

The two aspects of the scope of divine efficacy are illustrated in an allegory of cavemen,

[69] Judson (2005, 2015, 2019, pp.335–340)
[70] Judson appears to assume a binary framework in which the sublunary world is either entirely influenced by God or entirely independent of any direct divine influence. This interpretation, however, seems to lack sufficient textual support in Aristotle's works. Aristotle's descriptions of divine influence, particularly in relation to sublunary beings, suggest a more nuanced relationship that does not necessarily conform to such an absolute dichotomy.
[71] *Met.*1075a11–26
[72] Judson (2019, p. 342) also agrees that for Aristotle, although the sublunary order is not directly caused by God, the orderliness of sublunary world is an occasion for human 'awe.'

recorded in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* and attributed to Aristotle.[73] In this allegory, Aristotle invites his audience to imagine a group of men living underground, supplied with all necessities, who manage to escape their subterranean dwelling and enter the common world. He conjectures that upon perceiving the grandeur, beauty, and power of the earth, sea, winds, and celestial bodies in the sky, these men would naturally conclude both that gods exist and that these works are accomplished by divine beings.

It should be admitted that, although this study employs a holistic approach to access Aristotle's doctrine, directly citing the paraphrase of Aristotle's account by other ancient scholars may inevitably appear somewhat farfetched. However, the authenticity of the cited remark is bolstered by a cross-reference in the works of Sextus Empiricus, where the author also mentions Aristotle's belief that one of the sources of humanity's concept of God originates from the daily perception of the ordered phenomena of the heavenly bodies. Through such observations, individuals are led to conclude that there must be a divine being responsible for the cause of this movement and order.[74]

In this thought experiment, some of the perceived phenomena, such as the earth, sea, and winds, belong to the sublunary sphere as they are composed of the four fundamental elements. However, their arrangement can still induce emotional and cognitive transformations among the imaginary perceivers. In this case, the cavemen—endowed with the capacities for desire and deliberation—experience a shift in their understanding, attributing the order and magnificence they observe to divine causality. This thought experiment will be revisited in the Chapter 4.3 to illustrate Aristotle's account of intuitive induction.

In sum, this section holds that the goodness of God resides both in itself and in the causal order it produces, and that both are capable of arousing the cognitive change of *thaumazein*, of which the meaning will be examined in the following section, in heavenly bodies and human beings through a direct causal relationship between this goodness and the perceiver.[75] This

[73] *fr.* 12 Ross[3], Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II xxxvii 95. This allegory may have been influenced by Plato's allegory of the cave (*Republic* 514a–520a), as in both scenarios, the act of climbing out of the cave symbolises the attainment of certain knowledge or enlightenment.

[74] *Fr.* 10 Ross[3], Sextus Empiricus, *adversus mathematicos* IX 20–23. Cicero reaffirms this view later in *De Natura Deorum*, paraphrasing Aristotle that those who observe the voluntary movement of heavenly bodies yet still deny the existence of god are both ignorant and impious (*fr.* 24 Ross[3], Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II xv 44: *quae qui videat, non indocte solum verum etiam impie faciat, si deos esse neget*).

[75] It should be noted that there is no direct textual evidence in the extant Aristotelian corpus concerning whether heavenly bodies *thaumazein*. However, the following propositions support a reasoned inference: (1) heavenly bodies are ensouled beings; (2) the quality of *thaumaston* functions as the mechanism underlying primary movement; and (3) imitation is the behavioural consequence of *thaumazein*, with the circular motion of the heavenly bodies representing an imitation of God's goodness. On this basis, it is plausible to suggest that the heavenly bodies also *thaumazein*.

interpretation of the scope of divine causality is essential for this thesis, because it seeks to explain the concept of natural honour as typically arising from human beings, who are unable to perceive general principles directly but can apprehend them only through the perception of their particular manifestations.

3.3 The admiration elicited by God

3.3.1 The two meanings of thaumazein

The above section has narrowed the theological mechanism of natural honour to the cognitive change associated with *thaumazein*. However, the term has two distinct meanings. According to the LSJ Lexicon, words stemmed from *thaumazein* are typically translated as either 'to wonder, to marvel' or 'to admire, to honour.' For the sake of analytical clarity, two preliminary points require clarification.

First, there is semantic overlap between the two translations, as the term 'wonder' inherently implies admiration and awe.[76] To better distinguish between the two usages, this thesis adopts 'puzzlement'—another connotation of 'wonder'—to indicate one specific meaning of *thaumazein*. This translation is not intended to be a definitive rendering of the term but rather aims to emphasise a specific connotation of its meaning. The term should not be conflated with ἀπορεῖν, which signifies a more profound state of intellectual paralysis or impasse, often accompanied with an inability to discern a clear path forward.

Second, while the term 'admiration' suggests an emotional state, *thaumazein* is not classified as an emotion by Aristotle. At the very least, it is not included among the individual emotions discussed in *Rhetoric* II.2–11. Rather, Aristotle employs the term in contexts involving value comparison and frequently associates it with the intensification of other emotions such as shame, anger, and emulation. In this sense, *thaumazein* functions primarily as a cognitive response—specifically, the recognition of superior worth—which may in turn give rise to or amplify certain emotional states.[77] In summary, Aristotle employs *thaumazein* to indicate two types of cognitive change: the awareness of self-ignorance and the recognition of superiority.

[76] Broadie (2012, p. 67) suggests that it is precisely because the term 'wonder' encapsulates both puzzlement and awe that it is the proper translation of *thaumazein*, reflecting the term's inherent flexibility, which Aristotle does not explicitly disambiguate. However, this section will refute Broadie's view by demonstrating that Aristotle indeed clarifies the intended meaning of *thaumazein* through the contextual usage in his works.

[77] E.g, *Rh*. 1379b24–27: the feeling of anger is easily provoked when being slighted in front of those whom we admire and those whom we wish to admire us.

Both meanings of *thaumazein* can be discerned individually within Aristotle's works, and their contextual usage provides clarity. When addressing phenomena such as the growth of caterpillars or the reproduction of animals, *thaumazein* solely signifies the absence of an adequate explanation for these processes.[78] Similarly, in *EN*, the term is contrasted with 'μηδὲν ἄτοπον (nothing strange),' a phrase denoting a clear understanding of knowledge.[79] In these cases, *thaumazein* clearly represents a cognitive state of puzzlement or ignorance.

Conversely, when *thaumazein* is used in evaluative contexts, it exclusively signifies the recognition of superiority in worth. One compelling example is found in *EE*, where an honour-lover prefers to be the object of *thaumazein* even from flatterers because it denotes superiority.[80] In this context, *thaumazein* involves an awareness of superiority that emerges from comparing a particular worth with a universal evaluative standard. This comparison requires the subject to cognitively access the standard, either through explicit understanding or through behaviour shaped by socialisation and interaction with the honour-lover, which facilitates an implicit grasp of the evaluative framework.

Consequently, the cognitive state involved in such usage is far removed from ignorance. Here, *thaumazein* is best translated as 'to admire,' capturing its focus on the recognition of superiority. In these cases, the contexts help identify the meaning of *thaumazein*.[81]

However, the term *thaumazein* is also employed in contexts that appear to involve both types of cognitive states. A notable example can be identified in *EN*:

> συνειδότες δ᾽ ἑαυτοῖς ἄγνοιαν τοὺς μέγα τι καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτοὺς λέγοντας θαυμάζουσιν.[82]
>
> Being aware of their own ignorance, they *thaumazousin* those who say things that are big and superior to them.

The above paragraph exemplifies a dual-layered cognitive process. The reference to 'ἄγνοια[ν]' explicitly denotes a state of ignorance, while the phrase '[τοὺς] μέγα τι καὶ

[78] *GC* 333a16, *GA* 758b28, 771a18–19.
[79] *EN* 1147a9–10. Rowe's (2002, p. 193) translation of *thaumazein* as 'amazing' here may not fully capture the contrast with μηδὲν ἄτοπον.
[80] *EE* 1239a26–27
[81] Aristotle only uses the noun form of the term—θαῦμα—to describe an automatic puppet in several instances (e.g., *GA* 734b10, 741b9; *Met.* 983a14). This usage may imply that an automatic puppet, as an artifact, causes regular change in a manner analogous to that of the natural order. While this connection remains speculative, it provides a weak yet intriguing piece of evidence supporting the argument developed in the next section: namely, that human intellect may cause natural honour through a mechanism similar to that employed by divine intellect.
[82] *EN* 1095a25–27

ὑπὲρ αὐτοὺς' highlights the perceived greatness of the content and its superiority relative to those *thaumazousin*. It should be noted that ὑπὲρ αὐτοὺς can also be interpreted as 'beyond themselves,' in the sense of exceeding their comprehension—an interpretation that still emphasises their awareness of ignorance. Nevertheless, the comparative connotation can be implied through the observers' recognition of the magnitude (μέγα) of what is being said. Therefore, the term simultaneously involves both an awareness of one's lack of understanding and an evaluative recognition of something greater.

These two cognitive states—awareness of ignorance and recognition of superiority—are compatible because one does not need unqualified understanding of goodness to appreciate the superiority of something. For instance, in *Metaphysics* A, Aristotle asserts that those who first invent an art from common experiences are admired by others because they are regarded as wise and superior to the rest.[83] In this context, cognitive ignorance is implicit; those who confer admiration do not need to comprehend the full mechanism of the innovative art. Yet, they can attain a rudimentary understanding of its superiority through the reliable outcomes it produces.

Chapter Four will provide a detailed examination of the cognitive dimensions of natural honour. For now, a provisional analogy may suffice: consider someone encountering a mechanical watch for the first time. They might admire its precise timing without any understanding of its intricate internal mechanisms. Similarly, Aristotle's allegorical cavemen, as discussed in Chapter 3.2.3,[84] likely recognise the existence and superiority of God through their perception of the natural order, despite remaining ignorant of the divine substance itself.[85]

In sum, when both types of cognitive change are involved in the context, either explicitly or implicitly, both translations of the term suffice to maintain the coherence of sentences. The text quoted above can thus be translated in the following two ways:

1. Being aware of their own ignorance, they <u>find puzzling</u> those who say things that are

[83] *Met*. 981b14–17: In this instance, *thaumazesthai* is most commonly translated as 'admire' because the context suggests a recognition of superiority. Broadie (2012, p. 67) comments that 'surely what is meant is stunned admiration rather than puzzlement.' However, this interpretation arises shortly before the Aristotle's assertion that '*thaumazein* initiates philosophising' in the same book of *Metaphysics* (982b12–13). In that context, the term is typically translated as 'wonder.' This apparent inconsistency in translation may be reconciled through a holistic appreciation of the term's dual aspects.
[84] *fr*. 12 Ross[3], Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II xxxvii 95.
[85] In the pseudo-Aristotelian work *Mechanics* (847a11–14), natural phenomena for which the causes remain unknown and the outcomes produced by human art are cited as two sources of human *thaumazein*. This comparison implies that, at least for the author of *Mechanics*, both the orderliness of the natural world and the creations of human ingenuity elicit the same cognitive response of *thaumazein*. This shared capacity of divine intellect and human intellect underscores their analogous role in inspiring natural honour. This topic will be explored in greater depth in the following section.

big and superior to them.

2. Being aware of their own ignorance, they admire those who say things that are big and superior to them.

The ambiguity of *thaumazein* becomes particularly evident in scenarios involving intellect or other types of knowledge whose principle is rooted in intellect. These contexts usually include both the recognition of superiority and a lack of unqualified understanding of the superior object.[86] However, the mainstream translation in such cases tend to be inconsistent and influenced by the contextual emphasis. When the aspect of ignorance is foregrounded, the term is rendered as wonder or puzzlement; when the aspect of superiority is the focus, it is translated as admiration.

For instance, in the above case of innovative art, the term is often translated as 'admire' because the context highlights a relation of superiority between the art and common experiences. Yet this translation fails to capture the observers' simultaneous awareness of their ignorance regarding the mechanism behind the art's outcomes. On the other hand, in the same book of *Metaphysics*, *thaumaston* is mostly translated as marvellous or puzzling when used to convey the perplexity of imagining someone who possesses the mightiest knowledge yet remains unaware of it.[87] Yet the acquisition of such knowledge could also be regard as admirable for its superiority over other types of knowledge.

3.3.2 The *thaumaston* quality of God

With the above understanding of Aristotle's usage of *thaumazein*, we may turn to the text in *Metaphysics* Λ, where God is described *thaumaston* for existing in a good state in a more enduring and persistent manner than human beings.[88] The passage involves an evaluation of God and a comparison with mortal goodness, which implies a recognition of superiority—a key component of the term *thaumaston*. However, many English translations render the term as 'wonderous' or 'that which compels our wonder,' stressing a cognitive change of puzzlement rather than a recognition of superiority, or attempting to encompass both meanings within a

[86] In the above example, art is a type of knowledge based on intellect. The other three types of knowledge are scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, and theoretical wisdom (*EN* VI 3–8).
[87] *Me*t. 992b33–993a2: ἀλλὰ μὴν εἰ καὶ τυγχάνοι σύμφυτος οὖσα, θαυμαστὸν πῶς λανθάνομεν ἔχοντες τὴν κρατίστην τῶν ἐπιστημῶν.
[88] *Met.*1072b25–27

singer term.[89]

On the other hand, it is implicit in the text that the perception of the goodness of God will also cause an awareness of ignorance in human beings. This occurs because, as is often the case with intellect-related phenomena, we initially assess the goodness of God through the observable order derived from it. Only later, through the application of reason in laborious deductions and inductions, do we gain an unqualified knowledge of God, thereby getting rid of state of ignorance.

Two approaches to understanding the term may be dismissed at the outset. First, Broadie's suggestion that Aristotle intentionally refrains from disambiguating the two connotations of *thaumazein* is questionable, as the term is clearly used to indicate one specific meaning without the other in numerous contexts, as shown above.[90] Second, the interpretation that *thaumazein* encompasses both cognitive changes in this particular context, each precisely delineated, is also problematic.[91] If this were the case, there would need to be two distinct physical changes attributed to God as a cause: puzzlement leading to learning, and admiration leading to imitation. As will be elaborated later, while the activity of learning may involve an element of imitation, Aristotle clearly differentiate between imitating to learn and imitating to become. These are fundamentally different activities and should not be conflated. This dual-effect view, however, conflicts with Aristotle's account of primary movement, in which he identifies only a single type of movement originating from the divine. If both cognitive responses were to occur simultaneously, this would imply the existence of two types of primary movement; if they were to occur sequentially, then one of them must not be directly caused by God.

Since the two meanings of *thaumazein* are indeed distinct, and God can only be responsible for one primary cognitive change, it is reasonable to speculate that God initiates a singular primary change in cognition. This change could either be the awareness of ignorance or the recognition of superiority. In the case of human beings, for Aristotle, the appreciation of God's goodness often occurs without a full comprehension of the divine substance, causing both cognitive changes to arise simultaneously. This dual occurrence makes it challenging to pinpoint which change is primary. However, the cognitive change experienced by the ensouled heavenly bodies

[89] E.g., Ross, (1924); Judson, (2019, p. 32).
[90] *EN* 1147a9–10, *EE* 1239a26–27.
[91] Due to my limited reading, I have not identified any proponents of this interpretation. However, Prof. Douglas Cairns' comment on my textual analysis of *EN* I.12, which suggests that virtues of character can be both honoured and praised, prompts me to provide clarification here.

may differ from that of human beings, likely owing to their more divine composition and keener perception.[92] By examining their response, we may gain insight into the specific cognitive effect caused by God.

In the case of heavenly bodies, although Aristotle does not explicitly elaborate on the cognitive changes occurring within their souls,[93] he does assert that some form of cognition must account for their desire for primary movement.[94] Further support for this perspective is found in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, where Aristotle is cited as attributing not only souls to heavenly bodies but also the keenest perception and intellect (*quare cum in aethere astra gignantur, consentaneum est in iis sensum inesse at intellegenitiam*).[95] Moreover, Aristotle suggests that the movement of heavenly bodies is voluntary (*restat igiturut motus astrorum sit voluntarius*), explicitly stating that their motion results from the rational activity of their souls.[96]

Assuming there is a cognitive change that god produces in the heavenly bodies and it is either puzzlement or admiration, we may first employ a process of elimination to identify the primary change. Aristotle asserts that the local movement of heavenly bodies is a perfect imitation of the goodness of God, constrained only by their spatial limits.[97] Also, it is impossible to perfectly imitate something without fully understanding the object being imitated.[98] Consequently, the cognitive change in the heavenly bodies cannot be puzzlement, which involves an awareness of ignorance, and must instead be admiration.

Another way to eliminate the option of puzzlement is that, though lacking textual support, the heavenly bodies cannot perceive the goodness of God through the natural order, as they themselves constitute the initial intermediaries in creating the natural order.[99] The only remaining explanation is that they recognise the goodness of God, as interpreted by later Peripatetics, through direct perception of God's substance,[100] leaving no room for an

[92] *EN* 1141b1–3
[93] The doctrine of love refers to an emotional change. Aristotle claims that a cognitive change is necessary for any emotional change, yet he is silent about the underlying cognitive change behind the love that manifests in heavenly bodies.
[94] *Met*. 1072a28–30: ὀρεγόμεθα δὲ διότι δοκεῖ μᾶλλον ἢ δοκεῖ διότι ὀρεγόμεθα. This sentence, like the entire passage, is very condensed, and δοκεῖ refers to a judgment that 'something seems to be.'
[95] *Fr.* 23 Ross[3], Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II xv 42
[96] *Fr.* 24 Ross[3], Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II xv 44
[97] *Met*. 1072b8–10
[98] *Protrepticus*, B48
[99] *Met*. 1072a24–25
[100] See Kupreeva (2012, pp.113–129) for a detailed analysis of Alexander of Aphrodisias' fragmented commentary on this subject.

appreciation of God's goodness that is accompanied by ignorance.[101]

Two points require clarification here. First, an awareness of ignorance differs from an awareness of inferiority. Upon fully grasping the true goodness of God, the ensouled heavenly bodies may recognise their inferiority to God, both in terms of their specific state and their natural limitations, which prevent them from attaining unqualified eternal actuality. This cognitive shift is likely inseparable from the recognition of God's superiority—two sides of the same coin—and it is unclear whether it can be treated as a distinct cognitive change. Regardless, there is no element of perplexity in this process. The heavenly bodies clearly comprehend their situation of inferiority, and as such, this awareness should not be treated as ignorance.

Second, the conclusion that heavenly bodies fully comprehend God in the primary cognitive change carries significant implications. It suggests that the heavenly bodies transparently understand the activity of God as 'the thought that thinks its own thinking,' a level of understanding that we, as human beings, can achieve only through arduous intellectual effort. Finding explicit textual evidence to support this interpretation is challenging, as Aristotle does not describe the state of soul of heavenly bodies in the same detail as he does the human soul. He only indicates that heavenly bodies are more divine than humans, likely due to their lack of irrationality.[102]

Nevertheless, Aristotle explicitly requires an unqualified understanding of intellect for the perfect imitation of God. He uses this standard to justify philosophers as the sole proper lawmakers of a polis, asserting that the philosopher alone 'imitates that which is exact, for he looks at exact things themselves' (τῷ δὲ φιλοσόφῳ μόνῳ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἀκριβῶν ἡ μίμησίς ἐστιν· αὐτῶν γάρ ἐστι θεατής...).[103] The way philosophers 'look at' divine intellect may imply the way heavenly bodies observe the activity of the divine intellect. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conjecture that, insofar as *thaumazein* is associated with the circular movement of heavenly bodies, the term conveys the meaning of admiration rather than perplexity.

The connection between *thaumazein* as admiration and imitative behaviours is evident in

[101] Aristotle is completely silent regarding the mechanism by which God is directly perceived. For human beings, it may seem inconceivable to perceive universal principles that lack matter and, therefore, do not occupy physical space. However, the sensory faculties of celestial bodies might be more advanced than those of humans, potentially enabling them to perceive a broader range of substances, including those beyond human sensory capacity.
[102] *EN* 1141b1–2, *Protrepticus* B28.
[103] *Protrepticus*, B48

Aristotle's discussion of emulation in *Rhetoric* II.11. Emulation, described as an emotion, is defined as the pain arising from recognising the possession of good things by others of similar natural capacity while one lacks them.[104] Aristotle observes that the objects of emulation are all good and honourable things, and those who possess such qualities are often the individuals whom many *thaumazein* (ἢ οὓς πολλοὶ θαυμάζουσιν, ἢ οὓς αὐτοὶ θαυμάζουσιν).[105] The consequent behaviour of this emotion is the endeavour to attain the admired good things for oneself.[106]

In this passage, *thaumazein* clearly denotes a recognition of superiority, arising from a comparison between the possession of goodness in others and its absence in oneself.[107] This interpretation also clarifies the inclusion of *thaumazein* in Aristotle's discussion of shame within the same list of emotions as emulation. Here, the recognition of others' superiority coincides with an awareness of one's own inferiority, the latter serving as the cognitive basis for the occurrence of shame.[108] The corresponding behaviour associated with emulation appears imitative or aiming at imitation: by acquiring specific good and honourable qualities, an individual seeks to actualise their natural capacities to a degree comparable to the object of their emulation.

Just as the recognition of superiority in human affairs leads to emulation and imitation, the imitative activity of heavenly bodies can similarly be attributed to a recognition of superiority inspired by God's quality of *thaumaston*.[109] Thus, the primary cognitive change experienced by the heavenly bodies should be understood as an awareness of superiority, aligning with their circular movement as an act of imitation of God. This imitation is executed to the fullest extent of their natural limits—being composed of spatial matter, heavenly bodies are inherently endowed with the potentiality for spatial movement—leaving no room for cognitive puzzlement. Consequently, the appropriate translation of *thaumaston* in *Metaphysics* Λ should be 'admirable' rather than 'wonderous,' as it better conveys the effect of God on both heavenly bodies and human beings.

It is important to note that, although admiration and imitation are connected through the

[104] *Rh*. 1388a31–33
[105] *Rh*. 1388b10–12, 20–21.
[106] *Rh*. 1388a35
[107] See also *Rh*. 1384b37: θαυμασταὶ γὰρ οἱ ζηλωταί. Those who feel emulation are the ones who recognise certain superiority.
[108] *Rh*. 1384a28–31
[109] I find no study mentions this parallelism, as the emotion of emulation is rarely studied except in the field of moral education, cf. Kristjánsson (2006, 2007).

emotion of emulation in human affairs, there is insufficient evidence to determine whether emulation plays a role in the context of natural honour. For Aristotle, rational thought alone is sufficient to initiate local movement through the faculty of wish (βούλησις),[110] and he offers no explicit commentary, as he does in the doctrine of love, on the involvement of emulation or admiration in the primary movement of celestial spheres.

Let us now return to the human case. Given that the primary cognitive change caused by God is admiration, the puzzlement we experience should not be attributed to God's inherent qualities. Instead, our awareness of ignorance likely arises later, stemming from our limited capacity to fully comprehend God through perception. After recognising the existence and superiority of God, we may develop a desire to imitate God in the same manner as the heavenly bodies. However, this desire remains unfulfilled due to the limitations imposed by our sensory and irrational faculties, which prevent us from perceiving and understanding the divine intellect in the same manner as the heavenly bodies.[111] At this stage, our inability to imitate God leads to an awareness of ignorance. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 4.4.1, this ignorance is specified as the cognitive gap between a καθόλου (universal) understanding and a ἁπλῶς (unqualified) understanding. This secondary cognitive change is also expressed by the term *thaumazein*, whether it occurs accidentally or as a deliberate realisation of our limitations.

The behaviour associated with puzzlement is learning. In *Rhetoric* I.11, Aristotle treats learning and *thaumazein* as one holistic example of activities that are typically pleasant in the sense that the soul is restored to its natural state.[112] Aristotle further justifies this combination of learning and *thaumazein* by stating that *thaumazein* implies a desire to learn, thereby linking the object of puzzlement to the object of learning. This connection echoes the statement in *Metaphysics* A discussed above that it is owing to *thaumazein* that men begin to philosophise (φιλοσοφέω), as philosophising is a form of learning through which universal understanding is acquired.

It is worth noting that Aristotle also considers imitation a form of learning, as he associates the pleasure of learning with the enjoyment derived from various imitative activities.[113] This overlap suggests that the distinction between imitation and learning may not always be evident in their manifestations, raising the justified question of how the original cognitive change can

[110] *DA* 433a23–24, *EN* III. 4–5.
[111] *DA* 424b20–425a14
[112] *Rh*. 1371a32–35, b4–12
[113] *Rh*.1371b5–10

be traced through the corresponding behaviours.

To address this, it is essential to differentiate between *imitation for learning* and *imitation for becoming*: the former arises from a lack of knowledge about the object being imitated and functions as a means of acquiring understanding. As Aristotle observes in *Poetics* I.4, it is natural for human beings, especially in childhood, to learn through imitation.[114] In contrast, the latter seeks to replicate the object's qualities up to the imitator's natural capacity. This distinction further underscores the idea that the imitation performed by heavenly bodies is not derived from a lack of knowledge but is instead a direct replication of divine qualities within their natural capacities.

In conclusion, the above interpretation of the cognitive change caused by God's admirable quality in the heavenly bodies and humans helps to resolve the puzzle of how the Aristotelian god attains honour from a theological perspective. God initiates the primary movement in the heavenly bodies by manifesting its unqualified goodness through its eternal actuality. As beings endowed with intellect, the heavenly bodies fully comprehend the goodness of God and its superiority in worth in the same way as God understands what it is. This recognition of superiority prompts their imitation of God, and the combination of this cognitive change and the resulting imitative activity constitutes the *prototype* of natural honour.

In the case of human beings, the mechanism is more complex. Unlike the heavenly bodies, humans can only perceive the superiority of God indirectly, through the natural order that derives from it. We may also lack a sufficiently keen perception and rational faculty, owing to the composite of our physical body, that allows us to effortlessly acquire an unqualified understanding of the superiority of God. Consequently, humans undergo an extra awareness of ignorance accompanied by a desire to learn, in the hope of achieving the most precise imitation of God within the boundaries of human natural capacity. As will be elaborated in Chapter 4.4, the ultimate outcome of this learning process is indeed the attainment of theoretical wisdom, of which the contemplative activity is most godlike. Together, these elements provide a coherent account of Aristotle's theological mechanism of natural honour for the case of divine intellect.

[114] *Poet*. 1448b6–8

3.4 Human intellect and divine intellect

We have outlined how the Aristotelian god attains honour, with the scope of divine causality extending on one end to the natural order that depends on God and, on the other end, to human beings who can perceive and comprehend God's true goodness. The next step is to explore whether the same or similar mechanism can also be discovered in the case of human intellect. Specifically, we ask whether the activity of intellect within the human soul, along with the consequences that reflect this activity, can similarly evoke recognition of superiority in those who perceive it.

Given that the dominance of intellect is characteristic of godlike individuals who lead a life of contemplation, the question becomes whether the activity of godlike men can similarly evoke recognition of superiority in those who perceive it. If this parallel holds, it would provide a theological justification for the natural honour attributed to godlike individuals.

Aristotle expounds upon the concept of human intellect in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, *De Anima* III.4–8, and *EN* VI, each with a distinct focus. In *Posterior Analytics*, the emphasis lies on the unique method by which intellect is acquired, distinguishing it from the process of acquiring scientific knowledge.[115] In *De Anima*, Aristotle compares the actualisation of human intellect with the actualisation of colour, claiming that just like light actualises colour from its potential state, human intellect is also actualised from a potential state by a 'productive' intellect.[116] In *EN*, the investigation centres on delineating the boundaries of various forms of knowledge based on their relationship to variability and purpose, with an aim of identifying the faculty of soul that is most fundamental for human happiness.[117] Within this framework, intellect is closely linked to theoretical wisdom, functioning both as its object in one sense and as its governing principle in another.[118]

Nevertheless, for the purposes of the present study, it suffices to establish that, across all the aforementioned investigations, intellect is usually regarded as the principle underlying other types of knowledge, including axioms, and existing premises, and definitions,[119] enabling us, as Alexander of Aphrodisias aptly summarises, 'to separate and abstract the sensible elements

[115] Intellect is acquired through induction whereas scientific knowledge and presumably other types of knowledge are acquired through deduction. Aristotle's conception of induction will be the key concern in Chapter 4 to account for the universal principles of natural honour.
[116] *DA* 431a1–3
[117] *EN* 1139b20–22, 1140a1–3.
[118] *EN* 1141a3–8, 18–20.
[119] *An. Post.* 72a14–24: Chapter 4.2 will offer a detailed investigation on these three categories of Aristotle's first principle.

from the context in which they are perceived and to define them in their own right.'[120] Therefore, human intellect serves as a cornerstone of our faculty of understanding, manifesting itself in both the acquisition and application of other types of knowledge.[121]

Consequently, the production and actions guided by all forms of knowledge can be understood as outcomes originating from human intellect. These outcomes embody the quality of human intellect through their sustained execution and the reliability of their results. For instance, in the field of technological development, the creation and evolution of artificial intelligence rely on the art of programming and the scientific knowledge of machine learning, both of which are rooted in fundamental principles of mathematics and logic. The consistent performance of AI not only depends on a grasp of these principles but also reflects them, analogous to how the natural order depends on God and reflects the goodness of God.

Building on the above concise understanding of human intellect, two approaches can be employed to explore the association between divine intellect and human intellect. The first approach seeks direct evidence that supports the substantial identity between the two types of intellect. This approach is preferable if achievable. As a compromise, the second approach examines the similarities in the effects produced by human intellect and divine intellect, which aims for a result-oriented, 'black-box' explanation of the phenomenon of natural honour.

The main drawback of the second approach is the lack of explicit evidence explaining mechanism through which human intellect affects perceivers. This gap leaves open the possibility that human intellect accidentally leads to the same result as that of divine intellect yet through a different mechanism. However, this limitation is mitigated by the observation that, as previously demonstrated, the effects of divine intellect are solely dependent on its characteristic activity, independent of circumstantial conditions. Consequently, the likelihood of human intellect achieving the same outcomes purely by chance is significantly reduced.

The first approach is to ontologically unify human intellect with divine intellect, treating both as being composed of the substance that is in eternal actuality,[122] while adhering to Aristotle's hylomorphic framework. This approach offers a foundational solution to the problem but is

[120] Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Supplement to On the Soul*, 110, 18–20. It should be noted that

[121] The specific effect of intellect on other types of knowledge, especially practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom, will be expounded in Chapter Five to illustrate the life of contemplation.

[122] The divine intellect consists of this type of substance (*Met.* 1069a35–b2). It is worth noting that Aristotle introduces another division of substance—into matter, form, and particular substance (*Met.* 1070a9–17), which is not directly relevant to this discussion.

fraught with significant challenges. The key text addressing this theme (*De Anima* III.5) is infamous for its brevity and obscurity, having inspired a multitude of interpretations from as early as 200 AD to the present day.[123] Moreover, few widely circulated studies align entirely with the conjecture of this thesis, though many interpretations exhibit partial resonance, as will be demonstrated later.

Fortunately, we have an alternative approach: rather than attempting the ambitious task of unifying the divine and human intellects to explain the natural honour attributed to godlike men, we can instead identify the shared outcome of their respective activities. This more modest approach is sufficient for the purpose of this thesis, as it effectively demonstrates the theological mechanism by which natural honour is conferred upon godlike individuals.

In this section, I will first explore the first approach with the humble aim of identifying evidence that addresses the significant challenges in unifying the two intellects and offers room for such an interpretation. In my opinion, the conjunction of human intellect and divine intellect faces two major challenges. The first challenge lies in the *separability* of human intellect from physical bodies; the second challenge rests on the *potentiality* of human intellect. Then, I will demonstrate the shared manifestations of divine and human intellect, arguing that the account of natural honour in human affairs does not rely on the conjunction of human intellect and divine intellect.

3.4.1 The potential unity of human and divine intellects

A passage from the surviving text of Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, as cited in Iamblichus' *Protrepticus*, may reflect Aristotle's engagement with the broader intellectual context of his era regarding the identity between divine intellect and human intellect:

> οὐδὲν οὖν θεῖον ἢ μακάριον ὑπάρχει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, πλὴν ἐκεῖνο γε μόνον σπουδῆς, ὅσον ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν νοῦ καὶ φρονήσεως. τοῦτο γὰρ μόνον ἔοικεν εἶναι τῶν ἡμετέροων ἀθάνατον καὶ μόνον θεῖον. καὶ παρὰ τὸ τῆς τοιαύτης δυνάμεως δύνασθαι κοινωνεῖν, καίπερ ὢν ὁ βίος ἄθλιος φύσει και χαλεπός, ὅμως οὕτως ὡκονόμηται χαριέντως ὥστε δοκεῖν πρὸς τὰ ἀλλα θεὸν εἶναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον. '<u>ὁ νοῦς γὰρ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός</u>,' εἴτε Ἑρμότιμος εἴτε Ἀναξαγόρας εἴτε τοῦτο, '<u>καὶ ὅτι ὁ θνητὸς αἰὼν μέρος ἔχει θεοῦ τινος.</u>'[124]
>
> Mankind possesses nothing divine or blessed, except for that which alone is worthy of

[123] Ancient authors involved in this discussion are Alexander of Aphrodisias and Thomas Aquinas, modern studies include Frede (1995), Caston (1999), Gerson (2004), Burnyeat (2008), and Cohoe (2013, 2014).
[124] *Protrepticus* 8, B108–110. For the authenticity of *Protrepticus* see Hutchinson and Johnson (2005).

> seriousness, namely intellect and practical wisdom within us. This alone of our possessions seems to be immortal and divine. By virtue of being able to share in this faculty, life, however wretched and difficult by nature, is yet so cleverly arranged that man seems a god in comparison with other animals. 'For intellect is the god in us,' whether it is Hermotimus or Anaxagoras who said so, 'and mortal life contains a portion of some god.'

In this passage, Aristotle not only highlights the divine quality of the intellect within the human soul but also, by referencing the perspectives of other philosophers, implies that the human intellect is substantially identical with the divine intellect in his conception. In other words, Aristotle is portrayed as suggesting, through the voices of other philosophers, that the human intellect is not merely *like* the divine—it might actually *be* divine.

If Aristotle indeed holds this view, it would suggest a profound connection between the divine intellect and the human intellect, potentially interpreting them as unified or as two manifestations of the same substance. Even if Aristotle did not explicitly endorse this stance, the quoted passage nevertheless demonstrates that such a viewpoint on the identification of human intellect with divinity was a prominent concept within the philosophical discourse of the time.

However, this assertion lacks comprehensive substantiation in Aristotle's surviving texts and fails to address critical issues raised in *De Anima*, particularly regarding the separability of the human intellect from the body and its potentiality. Thus, this claim might be better understood as a reflection of the broader intellectual context of Aristotle's era rather than a definitive articulation of his own position.

The separability of human intellect

The question of the separability of the human intellect is frequently raised by those who adopt a naturalistic perspective on Aristotle's theory of the soul. Aristotle famously defines the soul as the first actuality of an organic body, inherently linking the soul's faculties to the physical body.[125] If the intellect, as a faculty of the soul, is separable from the body, it would seemingly contradict Aristotle's foundational theory of the soul as a unified entity.[126]

There is also textual evidence supporting the dependency of intellect on the physical body, underscoring the tension between Aristotle's naturalistic framework and the potential

[125] *DA* 412b5–6
[126] This view is generally endorsed by scholars who categorise Aristotle as functionalist, e.g., Barnes (1979, p. 33), Frede (1995, p. 98).

separability of human intellect. In *De Anima* III.5, Aristotle draws an analogy with matter (ὕλη) when introducing a concept of potential intellect.[127] Since one type of matter is also the material cause of the human body, this analogy could be interpreted as suggesting that a specific type of matter within the body is necessary for the activity of human intellect.[128] Additionally, Aristotle sometimes associates the activity of intellect with the faculty of imagination (φαντασία), which is a capacity of the soul that engages bodily organs.[129] At the beginning of *De Anima*, Aristotle states that if intellect is either a type of imagination or closely linked to it, it cannot exist independently of the body.[130] Thus, the association between intellect and imagination appears to preclude the separability of intellect from the body.

Several passages in *De Anima* appear to address the concern regarding the separability of the intellect from the body. First, intellect is first invoked in *De Anima* in juxtaposition with a passage illustrating Aristotle's hylomorphism.[131] While the soul as a whole is described as destructible through the decay of the body, the intellect is characterised as imperishable and unaffected by the body's deterioration. Although the intellect participates in many faculties of the soul that rely on bodily organs—presumably including imagination—its self-contained activity remains separable from the body.[132]

The separability of intellect is further proposed in *De Anima* II, where Aristotle identifies the intellect as a theoretical faculty and suggests that it is the only faculty of the soul potentially separable from the body.[133] Aristotle also offers a *reductio* argument: if the intellect were mixed with the body, its ability to comprehend all things would be inhibited.[134] This suggests that intellect must remain distinct from bodily influence to preserve its universality and unobstructable capacity for understanding.

Another, less apparent, line of reasoning that supports the separability of the human intellect can be derived from its imperishable nature. Aristotle attributes to human intellect an

[127] *DA* 43010–15
[128] Caston (1999, p. 220) cites this passage as evidence for the inseparability of the soul from the body. He further uses it to argue for a distinction between human intellect and divine intellect, highlighting that the latter is not composed of any matter.
[129] E.g., *DA* 431a14–17, 432a6–14.
[130] *DA* 403a8–10
[131] *DA* 408a34–408b30
[132] Gerson (2004, pp. 350–351, 356) claims based on this passage that there are two types of intellect activity in the case of human being: an ongoing and unchanging activity of intellect itself and an intermittent intellectual activity that involves the composite of human being. Gerson's interpretation may be seen as a defence of Thomas Aquinas' interpretation that the activity of intellect itself is a faculty of human soul that is separable from body.
[133] *DA* 413b24–27
[134] *DA* 429a18–b3. For a thorough examination on why human intellect cannot have a bodily organ, see Cohoe (2013).

imperishable and unaffected quality, distinguishing it from other faculties of the human soul, which also serves as evidence for the divine nature of the human intellect.[135] This immunity from perishability raises the question of the type of substance of human intellect that underpins this attribute.

In *Metaphysics* Λ, although Aristotle does not directly discuss the human soul, he identifies three types of substance: (1) the substance that constitutes the sublunary world, (2) the substance of the heavenly bodies, and (3) the substance of God. Of these, only the latter two are imperishable.[136] Given that the other faculties of the human soul are actualities of the human body, which is composed of perishable substance, these faculties are likely ontologically distinct from the intellect. The intellect, therefore, must be composed of a substance distinct from that of the body, and thus separable from the body.[137]

The potentiality of human intellect

Caleb Cohoe provides an alternative argument for distinguishing between human and divine intellect, proposing that human intellect is marked by potentiality, whereas divine intellect exists in a state of pure actuality.[138] This distinction brings us to the next significant challenge: the potentiality of human intellect, as suggested in the following passage from *De Anima* III.5:

> Ἐπεὶ δ᾽ ὥσπερ ἐν ἁπάσῃ τῇ φύσει ἐστί τι τὸ μὲν ὕλη ἑκάστῳ γένει (τοῦτο δὲ ὃ πάντα δυνάμει ἐκεῖνα), ἕτερον δὲ τὸ αἴτιον καὶ ποιητικόν, τῷ ποιεῖν πάντα, οἷον ἡ τέχνη πρὸς τὴν ὕλην πέπονθεν, ἀνάγκη καὶ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ὑπάρχειν ταύτας τὰς διαφοράς. καὶ ἔστιν ὁ μὲν τοιοῦτος νοῦς τῷ πάντα γίνεσθαι, ὁ δὲ τῷ πάντα ποιεῖν, ὡς ἕξις τις, οἷον τὸ φῶς· τρόπον γάρ τινα καὶ τὸ φῶς ποιεῖ τὰ δυνάμει ὄντα χρώματα ἐνεργείᾳ χρώματα.[139]
>
> Since in every class of objects, just as in the whole of nature, there is something which is their matter, i.e., which is potentially all the particulars, and something else which is their cause or agent in that it makes them all—the two being related as an art to its material—these distinct elements must be present in the soul also. There is one type of intellect which becomes all things, and another type of intellect which makes all things; this is a kind of disposition that resembles light; for in a sense light makes potential into actual colours.

In this text, Aristotle introduces at least two forms of intellect: one is which 'becomes all things,'

[135] *DA* 408b29: ὁ δὲ νοῦς ἴσως θειότερόν τι καὶ ἀπαθές ἐστιν.
[136] *Met*. 1069a31–1069b2, 1071b3–6. There is another categorisation of substance in *Met*. 1070a10–15, but the criteria for the classification does not involve whether the substance is perishable.
[137] Gerson (2004, p. 370) dismisses this line of reasoning, because he finds it inconceivable that the composite nature of human beings could divinise itself through the practice of intellect.
[138] Cohoe (2004, p. 599)
[139] *DA* 430a10–17

being analogous to matter that is 'potentially all the particulars' and the potentiality of colour; the other is which 'makes all things,' being analogous to art as the agent of matter and light that actualises the potential colour.[140] This duality echoes Aristotle's broader hylomorphic framework, where the potential intellect functions like matter, and the agent intellect serves as the efficient cause that actualises this potential. Therefore, it appears to demonstrate a potential state for human intellect that is fundamentally distinct from the divine intellect. If this is the case, the inspiration of natural honour by divine intellect does not guarantee that the human intellect possesses the same capacity to inspire natural honour.

Below is a selection and comparison of several studies on this passage from the extensive body of research to illustrate its contentious nature. For the purpose of this thesis, the primary aim of this section is not to determine Aristotle's genuine views on human intellect but rather to provide a theoretical basis for comparing the consequences generated by the activities of the two types of intellect.

In response to this concern, Alexander of Aphrodisias points out that the alleged potential intellect in this context is not something like matter. Aristotle compares them only because they both consist in the potentiality for particular actualities.[141] Moreover, the conception of the potential intellect in the analogy might only refer to the intermittent intellectual activities that are incorporated with bodily organs, while the activity of intellect itself remains ongoing and unchanging.

In fact, the productive or agent intellect proposed in the quoted lemma is interpreted as divine intellect by many scholars, and this strand of interpretation can find some support in Alexander of Aphrodisias.[142] They generally claim that the productive intellect renders things intelligible by being the primary principle of knowledge, which is responsible for the structure and intelligibility of the physical world.

Nevertheless, those who hold the divinity of productive intellect, taking it to be in a state of eternal actuality, do not include it as a faculty of the human soul, as would be required by a naturalistic approach to understanding Aristotle's theory of soul. Burnyeat comments that the investigation in *De Anima* III.5 is not important for Aristotle's psychology but 'an excursion to

[140] Some commentators, including Alexander of Aphrodisias, read that Aristotle introduces three forms of intellect in this lemma.
[141] Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Supplement to On the Soul*, 106, 20–29.
[142] E.g., Frede (1995), Caston (1999), and Burnyeat (2008).

theology.'[143] This causes tension with the text where Aristotle claims that both the productive intellect and the potential intellect are found 'in the soul.'[144] Frede and an anonymous scholar reported by Alexander of Aphrodisias offer a more adaptive standpoint that the divine intellect as a distinct identity comes to be in our soul when we practice intellectual activities and departs in the same way when the thinking activities cease.[145] However, the fact that Aristotle does not attribute any bodily organ to the faculty of intellect, which is elaborated in the response to the first challenge, suggests that the naturalistic approach and the underlying hylomorphism may be inappropriate in appreciating human intellect. In other words, there is no obvious justification to exclude the divine and productive intellect from the identity of human beings.[146]

In sum, despite the condensed and contested text, there is at least room for Aristotle's human intellect to exist in a separate and actual state, in the sense that it exists even if the body is destroyed.[147] This provides us with a theoretical basis to compare the consequences generated by the activity of the two types of intellect. If, like its divine counterpart, the activity of human intellect and the order derived from it, namely the practices and outcomes of other types of knowledge grounded in intellectual principles, also causes the cognitive changes of admiration and puzzlement in observers and the behaviours of imitation and learning, it is reasonable to treat these consequences as the manifestations of natural honour. In this view, natural honour is stirred by the intellect's operation within the sphere of human affairs. The conclusion drawn through this alternative approach may in turn serve as evidence for the unified interpretation of Aristotelian intellect.[148]

3.4.2 The shared externality of human intellect and divine intellect

In the previous section, we explored the potential for a unified interpretation of human and divine intellects within Aristotle's theoretical framework, with the aim of extending the theological mechanism of natural honour to encompass human intellect. However, given the ambiguity and conciseness of the relevant textual evidence, it is prudent to adopt a more cautious approach. This involves shifting our focus to the second method: identifying the

[143] Burnyeat (2008, p. 39)
[144] *DA* 430a13
[145] Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Supplement to On the Soul*, 112, 5–113, 11.
[146] For the origin of the idea of self-divinisation see Plato, *Timaeus* 90A–E; *Theaetetus* 172A–177D.
[147] Cohoe (2014) also defends the strong separability view of human intellect. Miller (2012) categorises such separateness as 'ontological separability.'
[148] This does not constitute circular reasoning because the uniformity in the consequence of intellect as a premise does not come from the conclusion it is arguing for, namely a unified interpretation of Aristotelian intellect.

shared external effects produced by the activities of human and divine intellects.

In *Metaphysics* A, as previously illustrated, Aristotle elaborates on people's reactions of admiration towards individuals who exhibit the acquisition of various types of knowledge, culminating in theoretical wisdom. He first states that people admire those who invent any art out of common experience, primarily because such inventors appear wiser and superior to others.[149] In this context, the explicit reason for admiration is an awareness of superiority, which in turn justifies the English translation of *thaumazein*. However, a sense of puzzlement may also accompany this reaction, as observers are unable to fully comprehend the art in terms of its underlying mechanisms and principles, and can only recognise its superiority through the reliable outcomes it yields. [150]

Since art is one type of knowledge human soul can acquire based on our equipment of intellect, it may be understood as a manifestation of the activity of intellect. In the same manner, the actions and achievements guided by a specific art can be viewed as orderly consequences of that art. Thus, when observers witness the reliability of outcomes directed by art, they concurrently recognise the underlying goodness of human intellect, akin to how the capacity of a general is reflected in the orderliness of his troop and how the existence and goodness of God is embodied in the natural order.[151]

This conjecture is further backed by an account of the relationship between art and natural order in *Protrepticus*, where Aristotle asserts that art imitates nature and exists to complete what nature leaves unfinished (μιμεῖται γὰρ οὐ τὴν τέχνην ἡ φύσις ἀλλὰ αὐτὴ τὴν φύσιν, καὶ ἐστιν ἐπὶ τῷ βοηθεῖν καὶ τὰ παραλειπόμενα τῆς φύσεως ἀναπληροῦν).[152]

In this lemma, imitation likely refers to the capacity of art to produce enduring outcomes, such as a mechanical watch, which parallels nature's ability to create persistent effects, like the cycle of the four seasons. This imitative relationship is further reinforced by Aristotle's view of art as a 'complement' to nature, completing what nature leaves 'unfinished.' It seems reasonable to speculate that the foundation for this integration of art and nature lies in their shared principles, rooted in intellect—manifested as divine intellect in the case of nature and human

[149] *Met*. 981b13–982a3
[150] Cf. *Mechanics* 847a11-14 a similar illustration of *thaumazein* towards art in which an awareness of ignorance is highlighted.
[151] *Met*. 1075a12–16
[152] *Protrepticus* B23

intellect in the case of art. This perspective suggests a potential integration of the two causes, merging them into a unified meta-system of change. However, given the contentious debates surrounding this topic, as illustrated in the last section, I will refrain from making this inference. Instead, I interpret the lemma as evidence supporting the claim that the activity of art, like that of nature, inspires admiration (*thaumazein*) in observers.

There is also evidence indicating that the practice of practical wisdom, like other types of knowledge, can also evoke admiration. In *EN* IV and V, admiration is frequently associated with individual virtues. For instance, the virtue of munificence (μεγαλοπρέπεια) is described as admirable due to the grandeur and fineness of its achievements.[153] In this case, the observed achievements are perceived as an orderly manifestation of the virtue of munificence, reflecting its inherent goodness.

The moral significance of admiration can also be appreciated from those who do not undergo it. For those who achieved greatness of soul (μεγαλοψυχία), a moral state which requires complete virtue, nothing is admirable for them, since they correctly deem nothing superior in relation to themselves (οὐδὲ θαυμαστικός: οὐδὲν γὰρ μέγα αὐτῷ ἐστίν).[154] Here, the context suggests that the scope of what is considered admirable is limited to human affairs, since it is unlikely that the great-souled person would regard God and divine activity as lacking in admirability.

A potential concern regarding the admiration for knowledge and its theological significance arises from the possibility that such admiration stems not from divine attraction, as is the case with the divine intellect discussed in *Metaphysics* Λ, but rather from *social conventions*. In other words, it could be argued that the value attributed to the acquisition of knowledge is grounded in a communal consensus, deflating the admiration for knowledge into yet another example of conventional honour.

In response, it may serve as circumstantial evidence that some types of knowledge were not appreciated by the majority of the ancient Greek society yet still considered honourable by Aristotle, such as theoretical wisdom and the corresponding lifestyle. But overall, this concern cannot be entirely resolved at its root due to the lack of primary textual evidence directly

[153] *EN* 1122b16–18: τοῦ γὰρ τοιούτου ἡ θεωρία θαυμαστή, τὸ δὲ μεγαλοπρεπὲς θαυμαστόν.
[154] *EN* 1125a2–3; The greatness of soul will be demonstrated as the practical manifestation of the life of contemplation in Chapter Five.

revealing the relationship between human intellect and divine intellect. Nevertheless, there are texts that suggest a comparability between the admiration evoked by the two types of intellect. In *EN* X, Aristotle describes the pleasure associated with the love of theoretical wisdom as admirable for its purity and stability.[155] Broadie interprets this argument as a *fortiori*: if the love of theoretical wisdom—a prerequisite attitude for its acquisition—is marked by such qualities, the acquisition of theoretical wisdom itself must be even more superlative in its pleasurable and admirable nature.[156]

Crucially, the admiration for theoretical wisdom does not derive from any purely conventional evaluative standards confined to particular communities but from its intrinsic features of purity and stability. Furthermore, these qualities mirror key attributes of the divine intellect: God's eternity exemplifies ultimate stability, while its unaffectedness by external factors ensures its absolute purity. Thus, the reasons for admiring theoretical wisdom can be viewed as a human parallel to the divine source of honour. This parallel reinforces the theological connection between human and divine intellects and supports the notion that admiration for theoretical wisdom transcends social conventions.

A similar comparison can be found in the introduction to *Mechanics*. The author, who is likely a Peripatetic philosopher, asserts that our admiration is evoked, first, by natural phenomena whose causes remain unknown to us and, second, by the accomplishments of art for the merits of human being.[157] The first object of admiration clearly refers to manifestations of the natural order, which reflect the inherent goodness of God. The second object of admiration corresponds to the statement in *Metaphysics* A, where Aristotle notes that people admire those who invent art.

The parallel structure of these two objects of admiration suggests that they share a common mechanism for eliciting admiration. Given that the mechanism by which God attains honour is characterised by its independence from the observers' opinions, it follows that the admiration for knowledge, like the admiration for natural phenomena, should similarly be free from the evaluative judgments of those who confer honour.[158] This reinforces the idea that at least one source of admiration for both natural phenomena and the achievements of art is rooted in their

[155] EN 1177a25–26: δοκεῖ γοῦν ἡ φιλοσοφία θαυμαστὰς ἡδονὰς ἔχειν καθαρειότητι καὶ τῷ βεβαίῳ.
[156] Broadie (2002, p. 442)
[157] *Mechanics* 847a11–14. The term *thaumazein* in this text is often translated as 'wonder' due to the cognitive ignorance suggested in the context. However, as argued in the previous section, the primary cognitive change caused by God is admiration. Therefore, an awareness of superiority should also be understood as part of the experience.
[158] Cf. *EN* I.5

intrinsic qualities, rather than in any conventional or communal standards.

In the domain of practical wisdom, an implicit comparison can also be identified between the admiration for God and for human intellect. In the case of munificence illustrated above, Aristotle states that the spectacle of the most honorable achievements, characterised by greatness and nobility, is admirable in the same manner as the deeds of munificence, a virtue of character that embodies the possession of practical wisdom. If we interpret these most honourable achievements as referring to, or at least involving, the activity of God, then the passage suggests that the activity of practical wisdom effectively coincides with divine activity in producing the same external consequence: admiration from the observers.

.[159]

Another example is found in the virtue of justice. Aristotle describes justice as a complete virtue in public life, asserting that it is more admirable than 'the evening star and morning star.'[160] This analogy draws on a description from *Melanippe*, a lost tragedy by Euripides. While this reference may appear to diminish the theological significance of the comparison, as admiration in the original context could stem from contemporary social conventions,[161] it remains conceivable that Aristotle incorporates his own cosmological perspective here, in which the superiority of the heavenly bodies is recognised as a manifestation of divine order. Consequently, for the two sources of admiration to be commensurable—one being more admirable than the other, the complete virtue of justice, as illustrated by Aristotle, must align with the same paradigm of honour as its divine counterpart. In sum, these comparisons between the admiration elicited by human intellect and by divine intellect reveal a commensurability between the two sources of admiration, suggesting that both operate under a shared mechanism of natural honour.

Aristotle provides limited evidence regarding the natural tendency to imitate or learn—both considered behavioural manifestations of natural honour—from those who practically manifest a clearer understanding of intellect. He does, however, offer general claims that support this line of thought. Notably, at the very beginning of *Metaphysics*, he states that 'all men by nature desire to know' (πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει), and further clarifies

[159] *EN* 1122b16–18: κτῆμα μὲν γὰρ τὸ πλείστου ἄξιον τιμιώτατον, οἷον χρυσός, ἔργον δὲ τὸ μέγα καὶ καλόν (τοῦ γὰρ τοιούτου ἡ θεωρία θαυμαστή, τὸ δὲ μεγαλοπρεπὲς θαυμαστόν).
[160] *EN* 1129b27–30
[161] Cf. Li (2022)

that this desire is not driven by utility concerns but for the sake of knowing itself (καὶ γὰρ χωρὶς τῆς χρείας ἀγαπῶνται δι᾽ αὑτάς).[162] Based on the earlier account of natural honour as a theological mechanism, one might speculate that this intrinsic desire arises from a tacit recognition of the superiority embodied in the order, stability, and intelligibility of the natural world—a recognition that begins in infancy through perception and memory and gradually matures into a pursuit of knowledge and imitation. In this sense, the desire to know can be interpreted as a secondary manifestation of natural honour within the human soul.

That said, we must acknowledge that Aristotle does not explicitly identify the source of this natural desire, other than noting that it is not driven by utility but by the intrinsic value of knowing itself. It might therefore appear implausible to associate this desire directly with a cognitive awareness of the superiority of the object of knowledge. One might argue that this desire is simply a natural human function from infancy, shared in part by other species capable of grasping elements of the external world through the faculty of imagination.

However, we should be cautious not to overstate the gap between the natural desire to know and the recognition of worth. First, although many animals possess some capacity to engage with the external world through imagination, Aristotle maintains that only human beings among the sublunary creatures are capable of acquiring universal understandings, and thus of genuine knowing.[163] This strict qualification for knowing significantly narrows the potential subject of the desire to know, confining it to the uniquely rational human soul.

Second, it is likely that this desire is preceded by a cognitive judgment about the value of the object of knowledge. Aristotle makes this relationship clear in *Metaphysics* Λ.12, stating, ‘for we desire something because we believe it is good, not because we desire it that it is good’ (ἐπιθυμοῦμεν γὰρ διὰ τὸ ἀγαθὸν οἰόμενοι, οὐ διὰ τὸ ἐπιθυμεῖν ἀγαθόν).[164] This implies that the desire to know may be informed by a prior cognitive appreciation of the goodness—or superiority—of what is sought.

Therefore, we may reasonably conclude that the natural desire to know, as described by Aristotle, can be interpreted as more than a brute instinct: it reflects a nascent form of evaluative recognition—an implicit honouring of what is intelligible and excellent—thus situating it

[162] *Met*. 980a21–24; This interpretation is backed by *EE* 1245a9–10. For more details, see Cambiano (2012).
[163] *DA* 427b15–429a9, *EN* 1140b3–7.
[164] *Met*. 1072a27–29

within the broader framework of natural honour as a response to perceived worth.

On the other hand, Aristotle does not clarify in the above general statement whether the desire to know is specifically aroused by observing natural phenomena, which reflect the order derived from divine intellect, or whether it can also be inspired by observing human deeds and achievements that embody the activity of human intellect. This ambiguity leaves open the question of whether human intellect can also provoke the disposition to learn and imitate.

Several reasons may partly account for this scarcity of evidence. First, the knowledge underlying such practical manifestations is not immediately transparent to human observers. Initially, we can only grasp these propositions in a rudimentary manner. It is only through the exercise of our rational faculties that we gradually infer and acquire an unqualified understanding of the knowledge.[165] This cognitive limitation restricts the natural tendency to imitate, leaving the tendency to learn as the primary behavioural manifestation of natural honour.

Second, the activity of learning does not necessarily follow a specific form, such as formal instruction by someone with a superior understanding of the knowledge. Instead, learning can occur through a variety of activities. As discussed in Chapter 3.3.2, Aristotle regards superficial imitation as a form of learning. Similarly, the process of philosophising described in *Metaphysics* A, where one gradually progresses from addressing immediate difficulties to contemplating the genesis of the universe, can also be classified as self-directed learning. This process ultimately leads to the acquisition of theoretical wisdom, enabling individuals to escape from ignorance (ὥστ᾽ εἴπερ διὰ τὸ φεύγειν τὴν ἄγνοιαν ἐφιλοσόφησαν).[166]

Last but not least, Aristotle may have been reluctant to explicitly attribute a form of divine attraction to the ideal state of life for observers. Such a claim—akin to his assertion of the separability of the intellect from the human body—might appear abrupt or inconsistent to the audiences when juxtaposed with the substantial empirical evidence that often points in a different direction, risking the popularity of his general doctrine.[167]

One passage in *Politics* III offers a clue to the influence of human intellect on the behaviour of

[165] Chapter Four will elaborate on this epistemological mechanism in the case of honour.
[166] *Met*. 982b11–22
[167] On the other hand, Plato appears more willing to make explicit statements regarding the attraction to divine qualities. E.g., in *Phaedrus* (253c–256e), the lover is depicted as being erotically drawn to the idea of beauty embodied in the figure of the beloved boy, whose physical beauty signifies higher, eternal forms of truth and goodness.

others. In discussing who should rule the city, Aristotle contends that the godlike individuals who are preeminent in virtue, unlike those who are preeminent in other aspects, should neither be expelled from the state nor subjected to any rulers. Instead, all citizens should, as if it is by nature, willingly obey the godlike man and crown him as king of the polis.[168]

In this case, crowning the godlike man as king signifies a recognition of his superiority in worth. Moreover, if we assume that the activities of godlike man in the public life, including the governance and regulation of the polis as a ruler, are guided by a clear understanding of relevant principles,[169] then the citizens' natural inclination to follow his directives can be seen as a means of acquiring an understanding of these principles through participation in the prescribed activities. For Aristotle, the godlike man might not only be the ideal ruler of the polis but also possesses an intellectual force that naturally compels others to recognise his leadership.[170] However, this suggestion emerges within a broader dialectical inquiry, where Aristotle examines tensions between political equality, law, and excellence, rather than issuing a straightforward prescription.

In sum, the activity of the human intellect induces cognitive changes in the human soul akin to those caused by the divine intellect, potentially through the same underlying theological mechanism. While Aristotle seldom elaborates on this directly, it is plausible to infer that such cognitive changes lead to honouring dispositions and behaviours aimed at acquiring intellectual knowledge—specifically, theoretical wisdom—and ultimately aspiring to become godlike as an imitation of the honoured object. This conclusion should sufficiently address the research objective of this thesis, which is to investigate the theological origin of natural honour. It also offers an alternative perspective for interpreting the relationship between Aristotle's conception of human intellect and divine intellect through their externalities.

3.5 A divine origin of conventional honour

Having identified the theological foundation of natural honour, it becomes evident that a taxonomical distinction exists between natural honour and conventional honour in terms of their origins. By taxonomical distinction I mean something can be honourable conventionally

[168] *Pol*. 1284b29–34; Simpson (1998, pp. 179–180).
[169] These principles may include that of the distribution of public resources and the allocation of labour, which are identified at the beginning of *EN* (1094a26–b7) as among the concerns of the most sovereign art of politics. The features of this art will be further discussed in Chapter 5.2.2.
[170] This conclusion may serve as a significant supplement to Aristotle's implicit account of natural justice developed in *Pol*. I & III (Miller, 1991, pp. 293–306).

without being honourable naturally and *vice versa*.[171] While both types of honour involve recognition of worth and behaviour that expresses such recognition, their sources differ fundamentally. Natural honour arises from inherent qualities—specifically, the eternal and unchanging traits of intellect—whereas conventional honour involves an element of relation, relying on the dynamic interplay between those who receive honour and those who confer honour. However, Aristotle appears reluctant to explicitly distinguish these two types of honour by name, with the exception of his differentiation between honour and praise in *EN* I.12. This raises the question of whether, despite the taxonomical separability, there exists a deeper connection or interplay between natural and conventional honour.

As discussed in Chapter 1.2, Aristotle's approach to terminology and distinctions between terms reveals a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, he contends that the ambiguity of expression often leads to deceptions in arguments, necessitating the invention of new terms to name previously unnamed objects for the sake of clarity.[172] On the other hand, he admits that a single term can possess multiple meanings due to the finite number of names available versus the infinite variety of things.[173] Furthermore, Aristotle considers the pragmatic dimensions of rhetoric, noting that people may avoid drawing fine distinctions between terms to adhere to popular usage and to avoid being perceived as overly pedantic or obstructionist.[174]

Given these considerations, it is conceivable that Aristotle deliberately refrains from explicitly distinguishing between natural and conventional honour to maintain accessibility and acceptability, as long as the ambiguity does not significantly compromise theoretical coherence or hinder practical guidance. This hypothesis will be examined in this section from a theological perspective, and additional perspectives will be explored in the subsequent two chapters.

While elucidating his understanding of divinity in *Metaphysics* Λ, Aristotle incorporates an anecdotal explanation of the relationship between his understanding of God and contemporary opinions about God.[175] He recounts that knowledge of God, along with other forms of knowledge, has been discovered and subsequently lost multiple times throughout ancient history. Some remnants of these true beliefs have survived such destruction and have been

[171] *Miller* (2012)
[172] *SE* 169a23–25, *Cat*. 7a5–7, 7b11–12.
[173] *SE* 165a8–15
[174] *SE* 175b33–37
[175] *Met*. 1074b1–14

transmitted to the present generation. Consequently, the current opinions about God consist of two components: the residual true beliefs passed down from ancient wisdom and erroneous views, including anthropomorphic features, later appended in the form of myth for various purposes. In this narrative, these erroneous additions are associated with, if not built upon, the true beliefs of god.

When God is honoured for anthropomorphic features and deeds, the process surely aligns with the paradigm of conventional honour, as the objects of honour are determined by widely accepted mythologies. However, Aristotle's narrative mentioned above attributes a factual element, if not a factual origin, to these mythologies. This factual component—rooted in the true beliefs about God—may impose limits on the arbitrariness of the mythological content and the moral principles derive from it. We may recall Aristotle's remarks on the five erroneous interpretations of the virtue of courage in *EN* III.8 and *EE* III.1. Each of these interpretations has gained acceptance within specific social groups, indicating that they are, to some degree, upheld by conventional honour.[176] The key point is that, while Aristotle critiques these understandings as flawed, they retain certain similarities to true courage. If social consensus were the sole determinant of conventional honour, the public conception of courage could deviate entirely from its genuine essence—so much so that, for instance, an act of sacrificing others to preserve one's own life might be regarded as courageous within such a framework.

This conjecture about the influence of mythologies is further supported by Aristotle's phrasing—'in the form of a myth' (ἐν μύθου σχήματι).[177] This expression might not be intended pejoratively but could instead imply a metaphorical 'façade' of myth surrounding an underlying truth. In this interpretation, myths serve as vessels that preserve and convey remnants of genuine knowledge about the divine, albeit obscured or adapted for practical or rhetorical purposes. Consequently, the honour accorded to god in common practice operates in a *hybrid mode*, blending the functions of both natural honour and conventional honour. Natural honour stems from the inherent qualities of divinity, while conventional honour arises from the mythological framework shaped by public consensus.

Aristotle offers neither empirical data nor inferential reasoning to substantiate the above conjecture regarding the association between true understanding and public opinions of god. This lack of supporting evidence can undermine both the significance and validity of the

[176] The five different understandings of courage listed in *EN* is slightly different from that in *EE*.
[177] *Met*. 1074b3

argument. It may be plausible to interpret Aristotle's approach as an attempt to selectively identify elements within myths that align with his theological and cosmological framework, using them to reinforce his philosophical account. This interpretation would reverse the causal direction suggested above—namely, that Aristotle applies his understanding of god to partially vindicate the myth-rooted religions.[178]

Furthermore, the validity of Aristotle's claim is open to scrutiny. There is no verifiable evidence to demonstrate that knowledge of god has been repeatedly discovered and lost over time, nor can it be guaranteed that any accurate beliefs about god have been preserved and passed down into contemporary religious opinions. Without such evidence, the claim remains speculative and reliant on Aristotle's theoretical assumptions rather than objective validation.

It must be admitted that discovering historical evidence to resolve the aforementioned concerns is challenging, if not entirely unfeasible. However, the central issue lies not in tracing the origins of true beliefs about god but in determining whether such beliefs exist within myth-rooted religions, irrespective of their provenance. To this end, we may revisit Aristotle's allegory of the cavemen discussed in Chapter 3.2.3.[179]

When the cavemen escape their subterranean existence and enter the external world, they recognise both the existence of a divine being responsible for the natural order and its superiority, as evidenced by the persistence of that order. For Aristotle, while the cavemen have much to learn to acquire an unqualified understanding of god, their initial understandings are nonetheless true beliefs. Given that humans share the same cognitive nature, we should also undergo a similar process of recognising the divine when observing the natural order in the sublunary world. This rudimentary yet universal understanding of god, which Aristotle argues is intrinsic to human cognition, might serve as a more stable and foundational source of knowledge about god than anecdotal or inherited myths.

It may be in this sense that Aristotle claims that the investigation of truth is in a way easy because no one gets completely wrong on goodness,[180] as there is always a rudimentary understanding of goodness in evaluative judgments even when they are made based on public standards of worth.[181] This integration ultimately obscures the distinction between natural and

[178] Palmer (2000, p. 280)
[179] *fr.* 12 Ross[3], Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II xxxvii 95.
[180] *Met*. 993a27–993b4
[181] Particular evaluative judgments require an additional understanding of the nature or definition of the object in question. Accordingly, Aristotle asserts that evaluative judgments in human affairs must be grounded in an understanding of human

conventional honour, despite their taxonomical separability. The cognitive perspective of this integration will be developed in greater detail in Chapter 4, and serves to argue for the ontological inseparability between the two concepts of honour.

nature (*EN* 1098a7–17). On the other hand, a rudimentary understanding of goodness is a universal prerequisite for any evaluative judgment—including those concerning God and the natural order.

Chapter 4: The Epistemology of Aristotelian Honour

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have argued that the activity of divine intellect serves as the divine source of *natural honour*. Divine intellect is good without qualification, being in a state of eternal and changeless actuality, and human beings recognise its goodness through the natural order that arises from it, which then prompts a disposition of imitation. Natural honour thus consists in recognition of God as the most superior (ὑπεροχή) substance, along with the subsequent disposition and activity of imitation (μιμέομαι), through which individuals strive to embody God's goodness within the limits of their natural capacities. I further argued that human intellect can produce effects similar to those of divine intellect. The exercise of various types of knowledge stemming from human intellect generates reliable outcomes, which can be seen as the human analogue of the natural order in the sense that observers of these reliable outcomes also undergo the cognitive change of natural honour.

Yet this theological account of natural honour raises several epistemological problems: what are the principles that underlie the cognitive transformation associated with natural honour, and how do we come to understand these principles? In the paradigm of conventional honour, the immediate principles of evaluation come from public opinions, internalised by individuals through the discipline of mental pain and pleasure before they make particular judgments on the worth of certain things.[1] This thesis does not deem these immediate principles to be completely random and arbitrary,[2] but it serves to highlight the cognitive challenges within the paradigm of natural honour: the actuality of natural honour must not depend on any external source, as it would be absurd for Aristotle to suggest that the honour attributed to God originates from standards external to God rather than being rooted God's inherent qualities.[3]

Instead, we must acquire the relevant principles solely through contact with God. This restriction introduces two critical issues requiring further examination in the cognitive process:

1. Can abstract concepts, such as goodness, be perceived through sensory experience? Aristotle often emphasises the role of perception in the acquisition of knowledge, but

[1] The pain and pleasure here refer to those caused by a creation of deficiency in needs and the fulfilment of the deficiency rather than pleasures associated with complete and natural activities (cf. *EN* 1152b1–1154b34, *EE* 1230a1–1231a10).
[2] See Chapter 3.5 and 4.4.3.
[3] See *EN* I. 12

whether abstract notions like goodness can be apprehended in this manner is a complex question.

2. Can universal knowledge be derived from the perception of a single object? Aristotle's account of induction is often read as involving multiple particular instances to arrive at universal knowledge. If this interpretation is comprehensive, it is unclear how one might recognise the universal goodness of God solely through the perception of natural order as a single, particular case. Even if we take a step back and treat the natural order as a composite of many instances, questions remain concerning the validity of the universal knowledge derived from engaging with these particulars. In short, the cognitive mechanism by which universal knowledge arises is not fully evident—an ambiguity that becomes especially pronounced when considering the cognitive dimension of natural honour.

These challenges suggest a tension within Aristotle's epistemological framework: can it accommodate the recognition of God's goodness through the perception of natural phenomena, or does it require an alternative explanation for the cognitive mechanism underpinning natural honour? Exploring these questions might initially appear to diverge from the central theme of this thesis. However, they represent a crucial aspect of the broader investigation into the concept of natural honour and are therefore essential to address. By examining the cognitive and epistemological mechanisms through which natural honour operates, we gain a deeper understanding of how Aristotle's theology aligns with his ethical and epistemological frameworks, ultimately enriching the analysis of how honour is conferred and justified in his philosophical system.

This chapter seeks to address the epistemological mechanism underlying natural honour, focusing on Aristotle's concept of induction. The issue at its core is Aristotle's approach to acquiring universal principles from particular cases, a process he terms ἐπαγωγή. At the outset of the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle asserts that pre-existing knowledge is required for all learning and teaching—except that of first principles.[4] Thus, for one to form an evaluative judgment of God, certain foundational propositions must first be acquired. The perplexing question, however, is how these propositions are obtained.

Aristotle broadly claims that universal propositions are derived from particular cases that

[4] *APo*. 71a1–2

exemplify them, but he does not provide a detailed explanation of the underlying mechanism.[5] Engberg-Pedersen encapsulates this ambiguity by interpreting Aristotelian induction as 'attending to particular cases with the consequence that insight into some universal point is acquired.'[6] In its modern sense, induction involves identifying commonalities among multiple particular cases as the universal features, and it appears to highlight the importance of the number and diversity of particular cases as the foundation for a universal proposition. Some commentators argue that Aristotle, successfully or otherwise, aims to defend this modern understanding of induction.[7]

When applied to the case of natural honour, however, this explanation encounters challenges. The initial understanding of God can only be derived from a single object of observation—the natural order. Although various phenomena within the natural order can be treated as ordered subsystems, they all reflect the attributes of a single God. Within the framework of modern induction, these particular instances, due to their shared origin, do not introduce new, non-redundant information to differentiate accidental attributes from essential ones or refine the definition of their origin. Consequently, there is no additional object for comparison or basis from which to derive commonalities, casting doubt on the applicability of modern induction to explain the acquisition of the necessary principles underlying natural honour.

To illustrate this issue, I propose a thought experiment. Imagine an artificial intelligence (AI) program tasked with defining the essence of a human being. The AI is given the existential premise of 'human being' and the life trajectory of a single individual as its sole data input. Assume that the definition of 'human being' is 'a rational animal.' From one perspective, the data includes numerous instances of reason, as the individual applies reason repeatedly throughout his life. However, the AI, lacking any prior understanding of human being and, more crucially, without a potential intellect that can be activated by a productive intellect,[8] cannot distinguish these instances of reason from accidental attributes of the individual, such as their long-term beard growth. Simply increasing the number of instances of reason in that particular individual does not help the AI differentiate these two attributes. Only by introducing the life trajectory of another individual—one who does not grow a beard—could the AI potentially exclude beard growth as an essential attribute of 'human being.'

[5] *APo*. 71a5–10
[6] Engberg-Pederson (1979, p. 305)
[7] E.g., Ross (1949, pp. 49–50), Hamlyn (1976)
[8] *DA* III.5

The core idea of this thought experiment is that it is impossible, in the modern sense, to induce a universal proposition about a genus from particular instances that all originate from a single entity of that genus. The reason we might think otherwise is that we subconsciously incorporate pre-existing knowledge of the genus into our reasoning. As a result, we perceive each instance as embodying a principle we have already grasped, and mistakenly regard these instances as sufficient grounds for inductive reasoning. Another reason lies in that, in the specific case of God, the orderliness of the natural world is the only input and there is no other accidental attribute of God, but this conclusion is not an induction in the technical sense; rather, it functions as a reductio argument.

Lastly, one might contend that Aristotle's God, as a being composed of first principles, qualifies as a universal entity. Consequently, it transcends particular instances within a genus—such as the specific life trajectory of an individual inputted into the AI—by offering a qualitatively distinct type of information through its perception. In this context, the ordered subsystems within the cosmos could, after all, be interpreted as independent particular instances that reflect these principles. I acknowledge this potential limitation in my argument and hope to explore this issue further in the future.

This chapter seeks to offer a positive solution to these cognitive concerns. I will argue that the necessary principles underlying the cognitive change characteristic of natural honour, namely the recognition of superiority of intellect in the souls of heavenly bodies and humans through the perception of intellect or orders that depends on intellect, are embedded within Aristotle's conception of first principles of knowledge. Furthermore, I will contend that the inductive grasp of these first principles can be achieved through the perception of a single particular that reflects the principle.

This interpretation of Aristotle's theory of first principles and induction provides a coherent framework within his epistemology for recognising the inherent goodness of God and godlike individuals—the essential foundation of natural honour—based on the perception of one exemplary case. Such an account also sheds light on Aristotle's indifference—evidenced by his lack of any direct response—to potential critiques based on moral scepticism or metaethics that challenges the knowability and even existence of objective moral values.

The argument will proceed as follows. I will begin by summarising the three types of first principles or primitive assumptions classified in *Posterior Analytics* I. 2 and I. 10. These first

principles, whose truth is deemed indemonstrable, constitute the substance of intellect and can only be grasped through induction. They function as the premises for deductive reasoning, through which other types of knowledge are acquired—including practical wisdom, whose acquisition, as I will argue, also involves non-scientific forms of deduction grounded in moral principles. Following this, I will trace the principles required for the cognitive change associated with natural honour and demonstrate their reducibility to Aristotle's three types of first principles.

I will then examine Aristotle's account of induction mainly through a textual analysis of *Posterior Analytics* II.19 and three cases that I believe exemplify the inductive grasp of first principles. I will argue that—despite the apparent inconsistency with the account of induction proposed in *Prior Analytics* II.23—there is room for first principles to be grasped as universal (καθόλου) understanding through the perception of a single object. This interpretation of Aristotelian induction accounts for the accessibility and reliability of principles for the cognitive change of natural honour.

Finally, I will distinguish between the first principles grasped as universal understanding and those acquired as unqualified (ἁπλῶς) understanding that reside in the faculty of theoretical wisdom. I will argue that the former are responsible for *recognising* what is naturally honourable, while the latter are responsible for *actualising* what is naturally honourable. This distinction will be explored further in the next chapter, which will examine the ethical significance of natural honour, particularly as it relates to the life of contemplation.

4.2 The First Principles for Natural Honour

4.2.1 Three types of first principles

Before delving into Aristotle's epistemology as presented in *Posterior Analytics*, it is worth noting that the work primarily employs examples drawn from scientific concepts, such as the definition of triangles and eclipse. In Aristotle's category of knowledge, scientific knowledge differs from art and practical wisdom in that it pertains to the knowledge of universals and cannot be otherwise, whereas art and practical wisdom are also associated with particulars and involves matter that can be otherwise.[9] Therefore, one might wonder if the conclusions in this

[9] See *EN* 1139b15–1140a23, in which the conclusions drawn in *Analytics* are referred only in the discussion of scientific knowledge.

work bear an ethical application. Put differently, do the first principles discussed in *Posterior Analytics* function in the same way in art and practical wisdom as they do in the realm of scientific knowledge?

I believe the answer is affirmative. First, several scholars have argued that Aristotle implicitly supports the idea of a demonstrative science of ethics. This interpretation finds support in passages from the *Metaphysics* E.2 and *Posterior Analytics* I.30, where Aristotle asserts that what holds 'for the most part' (ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ) can still be considered part of demonstrable knowledge.[10] This is significant because much of Aristotle's ethical theory operates with less precision than scientific knowledge. He attributes this to the inherent limitations of ethics as a subject and observes that we should not expect the same degree of precision in all areas of inquiry.[11] Consequently, scholars have posited that, with various interpretations of ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, certain aspects of Aristotle's ethical theory are sufficiently systematic to align with the principles of Aristotelian science.[12]

Secondly, even if the above speculation does not hold—meaning that art and practical wisdom, being forms of knowledge with less precision, cannot be expressed through the same rigorous logical structures as scientific knowledge—this distinction does not invalidate Aristotle's assertion in the opening of the *Posterior Analytics* that all learning and teaching—except that of first principles—presuppose pre-existing knowledge. In other words, the differences among various types of knowledge—as states of the human soul by which truth is apprehended—are compatible with their ultimately being grounded in certain indemonstrable first principles as their starting points.[13] In fact, when Aristotle shifts his focus from scientific deduction, it is not uncommon for him to integrates non-scientific concepts into discussions of first principles. For instance, he explores foundational notions like God and greatness of soul in ways that connect them to these starting points.[14] In *EN*, Aristotle explicitly claims that 'the first principle and cause of goodness is honourable and divine.'[15] This assertion will be further explored in the subsequent chapter. For now, it suffices as evidence that there are first principles underlying the existential grounding and definitions of moral concepts such as goodness, happiness, and

[10] *Met*. 1027a20–21; *APo*. 87b19–22, 96a17–19.
[11] E.g., *EN* 1094b12–27; 1098a25–34.
[12] Reeves, (1992); Winter (1997).
[13] *EN* 1139b15–17
[14] *APo*. 89b32–35 mentions the existential premise of God; *APo*. 97b16–25 discusses the grasp of the definition of greatness-of-soul, which will be further examined later.
[15] *EN* 1102a3–4: τὴν ἀρχὴν δὲ καὶ τὸ αἴτιον τῶν ἀγαθῶν τίμιόν τι καὶ θεῖον τίθεμεν.

the individual virtues of character.

The foundational role of first principles in the realm of practical wisdom is also made clear in *EN*. In *EN* I.4, Aristotle explicitly states that every inquiry, including ethical investigations, must begin with certain starting points. He then employs the well-known stadium metaphor to distinguish between two types of starting points from which moral reasoning begins.[16] Moreover, Aristotle briefly mentions the state of mind that is deprived of the first potentiality for developing any understanding of the first principles. He names this condition brutishness and ranks it as inferior to the state of vice, because the latter at least retains the capacity to grasp first principles, whereas brutishness is described as a beast-like state for the lack of such capacity.[17] Therefore, the first principles discussed in the *Posterior Analytics* hold significant ethical relevance.

Based on the above considerations, it is reasonable to identify the principles underlying ethical propositions among the Aristotelian first principles. Aristotle asserts that all forms of learning necessarily presuppose some pre-existent knowledge. However, he also argues that this epistemological regress cannot extend infinitely, nor can it be circular. Instead, there must exist first principles that do not require any prior knowledge for their acquisition.[18] He then classifies the first principles into three categories:

> Ἐκ πρώτων δ' ἐστὶ τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῶν οἰκείων· ταὐτὸ γὰρ λέγω πρῶτον καὶ ἀρχήν. ἀρχὴ δ' ἐστὶν ἀποδείξεως πρότασις ἄμεσος, ἄμεσος δὲ ἧς μὴ ἔστιν ἄλλη προτέρα… ἀμέσου δ' ἀρχῆς συλλογιστικῆς θέσιν μὲν λέγω ἣν μὴ ἐστι δεῖξαι μηδ' ἀνάγκη ἔχειν τὸν μαθησόμενόν τι· ἣν δ' ἀνάγκη ἔχειν τὸν ὁτιοῦν μαθησόμενον, ἀξίωμα· ἔστι γὰρ ἔνια τοιαῦτα·τοῦτο γὰρ μάλιστ' ἐπὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις εἰώθαμεν ὄνομα λέγειν. θέσεως δ' ἡ μὲν ὁποτερονοῦν τῶν μορίων τῆς ἀποφάνσεως λανβάνουσα, οἷον λέγω τὸ εἶναί τι ἢ μὴ εἶναί τι, ὑπόθεσις, ἡ δ' ἄνευ τούτου ὁρισμός. ὁ γὰρ ὁρισμὸς θέσις μέν ἐστι· τίθεται γὰρ ὁ ἀριθμητικὸς νομάδα τὸ ἀδιαίρετον εἶναι τακὰ τὸ ποσόν· ὑπόθεσις δ' οὐκ ἔστι· τὸ γὰρ τί ἐστι μονὰς και τὸ εἶναι μονάδα οὐ ταὐτόν.[19]
>
> To proceed from primitives is to proceed from appropriate first principles, for I call the same things primitives and first principles. The first principle of demonstration is an immediate proposition, and a proposition is immediate if there is no other proposition prior to it… An immediate deductive [first] principle I call a posit if it cannot be proved but need not be

[16] *EN* 1095a30–b4: the ethical inquiry carried out in *Nicomachean Ethics* begins from the first principles grasped through particulars.
[17] *EN* 1145a15–18; see also *Protrepticus* B28: men being deprived of intellect is turned into brutes.
[18] *APo*. 72b5–10, Aristotle rejects two extreme viewpoints regarding human understanding: first, the idea that we cannot understand anything due to the absence of an epistemological starting point, and second, the belief that we can understand everything through a circular process of demonstrative syllogism; cf. Barnes (1993), Bronstein (2016).
[19] *APo*. 72a14–25; this classification is treated again in 76b12–15.

> grasped to learn anything. If it must be grasped for anyone who is going to learn, I call it an axiom. For there are certain things of this kind, and we are accustomed to applying this name especially to them. A posit which assumes either of the parts of a contradictory pair—what I mean is that something is or that something is not—is a supposition. A posit which does not is a definition. A definition is a kind of posit; for the arithmetician posits that a unit is what is quantitatively indivisible. But it is not a supposition; for what a unit is and that a unit is are not the same.[20]

In this passage, Aristotle begins by clarifying the subject of discussion: the nature of principles of demonstration. He describes these principles as primitive and immediate propositions that have no prior propositions upon which they depend. Aristotle then categorises these immediate deductive principles into two main types: *posit* and *axiom*. Further refining the concept of a posit, he divides it into two subcategories: *supposition* and *definition*, adding up to three distinct types of first principles overall.

The first category consists of axioms (ἀξιώματα), which Aristotle briefly describes as principles necessary for any type of learning. He further distinguishes axioms as common (τὰ κοινὰ), applicable across all sciences, in contrast to other first principles that are proper (τὰ ἴδια) to particular disciplines.[21] Aristotle provides two examples of axioms: the mathematical principle that 'if equals are taken from equals, the remainders are equal,' and the logical principle that aligns with the law of non-contradiction.[22]

The context suggests that Aristotle is mindful of the flexible usage of the term ἀξιώματα, as he explicitly notes that he adopts the term because it is commonly used to refer to this class of principles. Nevertheless, Aristotle clearly aims to establish ἀξιώματα as a technical term within his epistemological framework. Consequently, despite its varied applications across Aristotle's works, it would be inappropriate to interpret the term as propositions tied to any particular subject matter.[23]

Barnes questions the universal necessity of axioms. He refers to Aristotle's frequent application of the term within the mathematical domain and speculates that Aristotle only intended axioms to serve as necessary propositions for particular subjects rather than for all kinds of learning.[24]

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[20] I refer to Barnes' (1994) translation of the text with some light modifications.
[21] *APo*. 76a37–41.
[22] *APo*. 76a41, b20, 77a31.
[23] For the different meanings of ἀξιώματα see Ross (1949, pp. 510–511)
[24] Barnes (1994, p. 99) further asserts that either axioms should be understood as necessary propositions specific to a single science, or the 'equals' principle does not qualify as an axiom at all, as it is not applied in some other disciplines.

For example, he argues that the axiom of 'if equals are taken from equals, the remainders are equal' may only be necessary in acquiring mathematic knowledge but not involved in many other domains. In response to Barnes' concern, two points merit consideration.

First, the 'equals' principle need not be confined to mathematics. Its underlying logic can be applied more broadly in practical and ethical reasoning. For instance, in a context of distributive justice, if two individuals are equally deserving and are both deprived of the same benefit, the resulting loss is judged to be equal—an assumption that implicitly invokes the same axiom. This principle plays a role in evaluating fairness and proportionality in moral and legal judgements, suggesting that axioms of this sort have a conceptual function beyond mathematical demonstration.

Second, it is unlikely that Aristotle intended every axiom to apply universally to all knowledge acquisition processes. If that were the case, the 'equals' principle would not even qualify as an axiom within mathematics itself, as not all mathematical knowledge relies on subtraction. A more plausible interpretation is that individual axioms serve an instrumental role in the acquisition of knowledge across multiple disciplines. This contrasts with the other two types of first principles, whose applicability is confined to a specific field and therefore need not be understood when studying subjects outside that domain.

The second category of first principles is suppositions (ὑποθέσεις). Aristotle describes suppositions as addressing the question whether something is (εἶναι) or is not. This category includes the existential premises of entities that compose universal propositions and are often presupposed in the application of these propositions.[25] For instance, in a proposition 'every A is B,' the existential premises—namely, 'A exists' and 'B exists'—are implicitly assumed. In the case of natural honour, the existential premises of the entities that constitute the characteristic cognitive change must be grasped for the cognitive change to take place.

The third category of first principles is definitions (ὁρισμοί), which deals with the question 'what something is (τί ἐστι)' or 'what the attribute of something is' (τὰ πάθη), both referring to certain qualities of the defined subject.[26] Jaakko Hintikka interprets 'the attribute of something' and 'what something is' as representing two distinct types of first principles, leading

[25] Cf. *APo*. 92b4–11
[26] Also see *APo*. 76a34–35, 76b15.

to a total of four types of first principles.[27] However, this reading can be difficult to reconcile with Aristotle's clear statement that every demonstration requires only three types of premises.[28] In this thesis, these two expressions will be treated as referring to the same concept.

Aristotle illustrates this category with the example of a unit, defined as 'what is quantitatively indivisible.' This definition offers valid information about the unit without being tautological. Moreover, the feature of quantitative indivisibility is not an arbitrary attribute of the unit, but represents the essence of the unit (τί ἐστι κατ' οὐσίαν).[29] This essentiality is marked by an immediate (ἄμεσος) or 'atomic' connection between the defining feature and the defined object.[30]

Examples of non-immediate connection can be found in scientific demonstrations. To prove a proposition such as 'every A is B' typically requires an intermediary term, C, that involves in the propositions 'every A is C' and 'every C is B.' Aristotle later elaborates at length that the insertion of a third term can be seen as an epistemological regress, that 'it is by adding a term internally, and not externally, that a proposition is demonstrated.'[31] In contrast, an immediate, atomic connection cannot be demonstrated through the insertion of a third term. Given that the epistemological regress cannot proceed *ad infinitum*, it must terminate at a point where the connection between two terms, such as A and B, is immediate and cannot be explained further through a third term. These unanalysable premises are considered one type of the first principles, directly stemming from the impossibility of infinite regress.[32]

Aristotle consciously notices the uniqueness of the defining feature, namely the definition, in comparison to other attributes of an object. For example, when he claims that every attribute of an object must be demonstrated, he explicitly excludes its essential feature, which lies outside the scope of demonstrable knowledge.[33] Since an object's essence and its definition are synonymous in Aristotle's logical works, the essential feature is understood to be the definitive

[27] Hintikka (1972)
[28] *APo*. 76b12–17, 23–24; Nevertheless, Aristotle introduces the classifications of elements of knowledge in various ways in *APo*. I.1–10 with no attempt to coordinate them (Barnes, 1994, pp. 145–146). This thesis does not aim to account for all the classifications.
[29] See e.g. *APo*. 92a6
[30] Hintikka (1972, p. 58) first describes definitions as premisses about atomic connections.
[31] *APo*. 82a21–84b3. For the quote see 87a36–37.
[32] Aristotle contrasts the above two categories of first principles, namely suppositions and definitions, by describing them as 'two different ways of possessing knowledge...that they are clearly not the same,' (*APo*. 71a12–16) and the supposition of an object cannot explain its definition.
[33] *APo*. 92b12–13: Εἶτα καὶ δι' ἀποδείξεώς φαμεν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι δείκνυσθαι ἅπαν ὅ τι ἐστιν, εἰ μὴ οὐσία εἴη.

attribute atomically connected to the object.[34]

The three categories of first principles outlined above suggest that Aristotle's conception of indemonstrable knowledge is likely much broader than what contemporary readers might assume. Modern audiences tend to expect specific relationships between two terms, unless tautological, to undergo some degree of reasoning, if not rigorous demonstration, before being accepted as valid. In contrast, Aristotle explicitly includes some of these propositions within the domain of indemonstrable knowledge—knowledge that cannot initially be acquired through scientific deduction or other forms of deduction. For Aristotle, the initial grasp of these first principles is through a different cognitive mechanism. It is this alternative mechanism that secures the grasp of first principles underlying the cognitive change of natural honour.

4.2.2 Decomposing the proposition of natural honour

With the understanding of Aristotle's three types of first principles of knowledge, we can now investigate the necessary first principles underlying the cognitive change associated with natural honour, specifically the proposition that God is good because he is in a state of eternal and changeless actuality. This can be achieved by deconstructing the proposition into its fundamental components to uncover its underlying principles.

In *Metaphysics* Λ.6–7, Aristotle identifies God as being characterised by eternal and changeless actuality. Thereafter in this chapter, this state will be abbreviated as eternal or eternality. He also asserts God is both eternal and good (φαμὲν δὴ τὸν θεὸν εἶναι ζῷον ἀΐδιον ἄριστον).[35] If we assume that it is by virtue of existing in such an eternal state that God is good, the proposition can be logically reformulated as follows:

God is eternal; eternity is good; therefore, God is good.[36]

In the above proposition, the existence of the three terms involved in the inference—denoted by God, eternity, and goodness—must be explicitly postulated as premises. These suppositions serve as existential foundations specifically for the cognitive transformation associated with

[34] Aristotle objects that essential features can be demonstrated in *APo*. II. 6.
[35] *Met*. 1072b28–29
[36] There is no direct textual evidence to support this deductive structure. Aristotle's ending sentence that 'this *is* God (τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ θεός)' after illustrating its eternity may be a weak support (*Met*. 1072b31); however, even if this logical inference proves untenable, it does not compromise the subsequent analysis.

natural honour, rather than as universally applicable assumptions.

In the above proposition, the generic existence of its components—God, eternity, and goodness—must be postulated. In other words, the cognitive change of natural honour must presuppose the suppositions that God exists, eternity exists, and goodness exists. At the beginning of *Posterior Analytic* II, Aristotle explicitly lists the supposition and definition of God as examples of existential premises and the definitive premises. He states that 'certain items we seek in another way, for example, if a centaur or a god is or is not (οἷον εἰ ἐστιν ἢ μὴ ἐστι κένταυρος ἢ θεός). And having grasped that it exists, we then seek what it is, for example, what is a god (οἷον τί οὖν ἐστι θεός) or what is a man?'[37] This passage supports the conjecture that the inquiry into divinity is seamlessly integrated into Aristotle's broader epistemological framework, following the same process as inquiries into the sublunary world. It affirms that the knowledge of divine existence is subject to the same principles of cognitive inquiry outlined in *Analytics*.

Third, the immediate connections between God and eternity, as well as between eternity and goodness, must be grasped to form the essential proposition of natural honour. In chapter 3.2.1, I demonstrated that the state of eternal and changeless actuality is the defining characteristic of the Aristotelian god, and goodness is embodied in this state, being recognised and imitated by heavenly bodies and human beings. These connections are immediate and do not rely on a third term for proof, qualifying them as definitions within Aristotle's framework of first principles.

Based on the analysis above, the essential proposition of natural honour can be broken down into foundational principles. All these principles fall within the scope of Aristotle's first principles, making them accessible through the process of Aristotelian induction.

However, as discussed in the introduction, the cognitive mechanism for acquiring these principles is far from self-evident. The primary epistemological challenge lies in understanding how the second and third types of first principles—*existential premises* and *immediate connections*—are acquired. If a universal is represented by only one particular observable object, how can we ascertain the existence of the universal as a specific combination of multiple attributes rather than dismissing it as an incidental composite of attributes? Furthermore, how can we reliably distinguish the attribute that is immediately connected to that universal from

[37] *APo*. 89b32–35

those that are not?

Before addressing the concerns raised above in the next section, it is necessary to further explain the supposition and definition of goodness in Aristotle's epistemology. It seems counterintuitive that the primary knowledge of goodness can be acquired in the same manner as the knowledge of God and eternity. Our everyday experience suggests that whenever we judge something to be good, we do not rely solely on the physical attributes or observable consequences of the object but instead appeal to certain normative propositions. For instance, when I claim that 'this nutritious food is good,' the statement implies an implicit normative premise: 'we ought to have nutritious food.' Without this underlying normative proposition, the conclusion cannot be derived purely from the perception of the food. This implies that moral concepts like goodness are not defined by perceptible traits alone and, therefore, cannot be apprehended through perception alone.

Based on similar reasons, many contemporary scholars argue that the existence and definition of moral concepts are fundamentally different from that of God and eternity. The definitions of God and eternity are usually assumed to be descriptive premises about what *is* the case. In contrast, due to the hidden premise, moral concepts usually connote normative prescriptions about what *ought* to be the case. This distinction has led to prominent critiques, such as the 'is-ought fallacy' or the 'naturalistic fallacy' articulated by G.E. Moore in *Principia Ethica*.[38] These critiques contend that it is impossible to derive normative conclusions solely from descriptive premises.

It should be admitted that in *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle primarily illustrates his account of deduction through examples of scientific deduction, namely demonstration. This raises the concern that his epistemological framework may not accommodate the first principles of moral concepts, such as goodness, which do not fall within the category of scientific knowledge. However, while scientific deductions serve as Aristotle's primary examples, this does not confine the applicability of his epistemology to scientific knowledge alone; it can also be extended to other domains.

In *Posterior Analytics* II.13, Aristotle explicitly refers to greatness-of-soul (μεγαλοψυχία), a moral concept that bears positive connotation, to illustrate the method of division as a means

[38] Moore (1903)

of discovering definitions.[39] He explains that one can define greatness-of-soul by identifying particular great-souled individuals, observing the traits that distinguish them—such as their intolerance of insult or indifference to fortune—and then searching for commonalities among these traits until the definition emerges. As a particular state of soul that is actualised in public life, greatness-of-soul should be treated as a moral concept and one closely related to honour. It thus falls within the domain of practical wisdom rather than science. Yet, Aristotle employs it as an example to explore how definitions, a key component of first principles, can be acquired.

This example offers a suggestive starting point for considering whether Aristotle's epistemology can accommodate the principles underlying moral concepts—such as goodness—in a manner analogous to its treatment of natural concepts. While there are important differences between ethical and scientific knowledge, Aristotle's account of learning from perception and experience through induction may still provide a framework within which moral knowledge can be traced to first principles. If so, the acquisition of such knowledge would not be entirely separate from the broader epistemological structure that underpins other domains of inquiry, but would instead follow a similarly inferential, albeit less precise, process grounded in observation and rational discernment.

The perception of goodness is also suggested in *EN* III.5, where Aristotle refutes the claim that individuals are not responsible for their wrongdoing because they cannot control how goodness appears to them.[40] Using a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, he asserts that if this claim were valid, virtuous deed would be equally involuntary as vice deeds, since none of them could be performed with an understanding of true goodness as the aim, which is apparently not the case.[41] In this way, Aristotle attributes the cognitive capacity to perceive and grasp an understanding of true goodness to every healthy human beings, thereby holding individuals accountable for their virtues and vices.

This line of reasoning can be traced back to Plato. In the *Laws*, an imaginary conversation unfolds concerning the relationship between various virtues. The central question posed is: how can distinct virtues be grouped under the overarching term 'virtue'? The dialogue suggests that there must be an underlying unity among particular virtues that justifies their shared designation. Those who study philosophy, therefore, should strive to uncover this unity, which

[39] *APo*. 97b16–25
[40] *EN* 1114a31–33
[41] *EN*. 1114b5–15

requires an insight into what connects and generalises the diverse virtues into a single concept.[42] In this context, moral concepts are analysed in a manner analogous to scientific concepts, suggesting that ancient philosophers sought to address a broader range of cognitive problems than those typically considered in modern epistemological theories. While Aristotle does not endorse Plato's view of analysing ethics and science in the same way—explicitly distinguishing ethics from the exact sciences in *EN* I.3—he does hold that human beings are capable of grasping the principles of both science and ethics.

Aristotle's inclusive epistemology of first principles, which encompasses both moral and scientific concepts, helps alleviate the 'naturalistic fallacy' by narrowing the cognitive gap between descriptive statements 'is' and normative conclusions 'ought.' Moral concepts such as goodness are understood to manifest as perceptible features that can be grasped without recourse to additional normative principles. I believe that the gap between the descriptive premise 'the food is nutritious' and the normative conclusion 'I ought to eat it' is narrowed by substituting the former with the proposition 'the food is good.' Aristotle further asserts that 'we desire something because it is good, rather than it being good because we desire it (ὀρεγόμεθα δὲ διότι δοκεῖ μᾶλλον ἢ δοκεῖ διότι ὀρεγόμεθα).'[43] In other words, our rudimentary understanding of the first principles of moral knowledge cultivates the corresponding behavioural impulses, which aligns with Aristotle's account of practical syllogism that links moral reasoning with action.[44]

In sum, Aristotle's account of the first principles of knowledge includes a wide assortment of logical and metaphysical laws, existential premises, and elementary facts of science and ethics. The principles underpinning the cognitive change associated with natural honour align entirely with this framework. Specifically, the propositions 'God exists,' 'eternity exists,' and 'goodness exists' are classified as existential premises (suppositions), the propositions 'God is eternal' and 'eternity is good' belong to immediate connections (definitions).

Though these principles may not be applied in practical reasoning in the same way as those applied in demonstrative science, their initial acquisition requires the same stages as the acquisition of the principles of scientific knowledge.[45] The next step is to examine whether

[42] *Laws*, 963c–965d
[43] *Met*. 1072a28–30
[44] *EN* 1143a8–9
[45] See McKirahan (1992) a detailed analysis of Aristotle's theory of demonstrative knowledge.

Aristotle's account of induction provides a viable mechanism for grasping these first principles through the perception of particular objects that embody them—in this case, the natural order—thereby supporting the epistemological foundation for natural honour.

4.3 Aristotelian Induction and The Intuitive Grasp of Principles for Natural Honour

4.3.1 Aristotle's ambiguous account of induction

The key issue in acquiring honour-related first principles lies in the singularity of particular cases. This issue is most evident in Aristotle's allegory of cavemen, as recounted in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*. In the allegory, the cavemen come to recognise, in a certain way, the existence and definition of God emerging from their subterranean dwelling and perceiving the natural order.[46] From the perspective of the cavemen, there exists only one particular entity that exemplifies the existence and definition of God, namely the divine intellect.

Human intellect, as demonstrated in Chapter 3.4.2, is also a proper object of natural honour. If human intellect is of a different substance from divine intellect, this distinction might mitigate the issue of singular particulars by providing multiple instances of the corresponding principles. However, this consideration does not apply to the cavemen in the allegory, who evidently attain an understanding of God without reference to any other object of natural honour.[47]

It is crucial to clarify that the individual components of the natural order should not be regarded as particular cases of God, as none of them satisfies the defining criterion of eternity by itself. Instead, it is the natural order in its entirety that reveals both the existence and the essential definition of God. Consequently, while the act of observation may occur repeatedly across different objects, these observations ultimately converge on the recognition of one entity.

This singularity raises significant questions, particularly in light of Aristotle's explicit assertion that first principles are grasped through induction. Common interpretations of the term 'induction' often stress the significance of the number and diversity of particular cases on which an inductive inference is based.[48] In modern accounts, induction as a logical method typically involves identifying shared characteristics among various instances within a category to establish a definition of that category. As such, increasing the number of observed instances is

[46] Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2.37.95–96
[47] It is also an implausible implication that the true goodness embodied in godlike individuals could only be recognised by comparing the behaviours of multiple godlike individuals—a notion that is not suggested anywhere in Aristotle's extant corpus.
[48] See a summary of this trend in Bayer (1997, p. 110)

thought to enhance the reliability and robustness of the conclusion. This perspective has also given rise to critiques, such as David Hume's arguments on the inherent incompleteness and uncertainty of the inductive process.[49] Given this modern framing, it is understandable for contemporary readers to question the feasibility of acquiring universal knowledge when only one particular entity is available for observation.

In light of the above concern, a comprehensive analysis of Aristotle's account of induction appears to be the appropriate approach. Such an analysis would aim to determine the extent to which Aristotle's conception diverges from the modern interpretation and whether it can accommodate the apprehension of honour-related first principles. However, Aristotle does not provide a systematic account of the process of acquiring knowledge through induction comparable to his explicit theory of scientific deduction. He even remarks in *Topics* that induction, 'as an advance from particulars to universals,'[50] 'it is obvious what sort of process induction is.'[51] What we have instead are brief and often obscure remarks scattered throughout his *Organon*.[52]

To complicate matters further, the term ἐπαγωγή is applied by Aristotle in contexts that appear to involve distinct cognitive processes. On the one hand, it is associated with the process of adducing multiple instances to identify shared characteristics, closely resembling the modern view of induction that emphasises the enumeration of particulars. This application is most clearly demonstrated in *Prior Analytics* II.23, where Aristotle states that induction operates through an enumeration of all instances. He illustrates this account of induction with an example: by observing that all bileless animals have a long lifespan, one can infer the universal proposition that all bileless animals are long-living.[53]

On the other hand, ἐπαγωγή is linked to a three-stage cognitive process—perception, memory, and experience—outlined in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, through which universals are instilled from perception.[54] This explanation shifts focus away from the number of observed objects and instead highlights the presence of universal principles within each particular entity. This dual

[49] See Groarke (2009, ch. 1) for a summary of the received modern view of inductive theory with which Aristotle's view of induction is sharply contrast.
[50] *Top*. 105a13
[51] *Top*. 157a8
[52] Groarke (2009, p. 5)
[53] *APr*. 68b15–30. Ross (1994) treats this chapter as the main account of Aristotle's 'perfect induction,' and Hintikka (1980, p. 424) also calls it the 'official account' of induction.
[54] See Barnes (1994, p. 267) who first pairs the question with the answer. However, he appears to think that this part of the discussion only bears trivial significance to the main argument of the chapter, namely the machinery of induction.

usage of the term suggests that Aristotle's concept of induction encompasses broader and more nuanced processes than the enumeration-centric interpretation associated with modern accounts.

Consequently, scholars generally agree only on a broad understanding of Aristotle's concept of induction: it is a mental process that engages with particular cases, leading to insight into a universal principle.[55] On this understanding, the starting point (observation of particulars) and endpoint (the acquisition of universals) are well-defined, but the specific cognitive steps involved remain subject to debate, even concerning some fundamental aspects.[56] This ambiguity creates challenges in determining how honour-related first principles might be grasped through this process.

To address this issue, this thesis will momentarily depart from its main theme to explore Aristotle's somewhat ambiguous account of induction. The aim is to demonstrate that the principles underpinning natural honour can indeed be discerned and justified through the Aristotelian framework of induction.

4.3.2 An analysis of the argument of *Posterior Analytics* II. 19

Considering the ambiguity and complexity surrounding the primary evidence for Aristotle's theory of induction, this thesis will refrain from engaging in debates about Aristotle's genuine intention or attempting to reconcile the differing usages of induction into a unified account. Instead, I will focus on the application of induction as outlined in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, supplemented by a textual analysis of relevant passages and examples that I believe illustrate the same cognitive mechanism.

I will argue that, at least within this framework, Aristotle's account of induction enables one to grasp first principles through the perception of a single particular object. This interpretation provides epistemological grounds for explaining the cognitive change associated with natural honour. Finally, I will speculate that the former type of enumerative induction, as described in *Prior Analytics* II.23, may not pertain to the primary grasp of first principles but rather to a secondary cognitive process.

Before engaging in the textual analysis, it is essential to reiterate the state of mind of the

[55] E.g., Ross (1949, p. 48), Engberg-Pedersen (1979), Gasser-Wingate (2016, p. 1).
[56] Upton (1981) summarises that the crux of the dispute lies in whether Aristotle's account of induction is incomplete and ill-conceived and whether it can be the reliable basis of demonstration.

cognitive agent in the pre-induction stage. This is a critical distinction because when interpreting Aristotle's primary evidence and conceiving of this cognitive stage, we might inadvertently introduce pre-existing knowledge of first principles that are considered common sense for most individuals, such as logical laws or basic concepts.

The pre-induction stage in the understanding of a given object is marked by the absence of any universal conception of that object in the subject's cognition, distinguishing it fundamentally from later stages of knowledge acquisition. This absence of universal is not due to the underdevelopment or dysfunction of relevant psychic faculties but rather to a lack of exposure to particular instances that exemplify certain universals. Failure to fully appreciate this state of complete unawareness can lead to significant misinterpretations. A useful analogy is the visual experience of individuals born entirely blind. It is a common but incorrect assumption that such individuals perceive their visual field as entirely black. Interviews with congenitally blind individuals reveal that, because they have never experienced colour or formed any concept of it, their visual field is not black but a void entirely devoid of the attribute of colour.[57] This misunderstanding arises partly because it is difficult for sighted individuals to imagine a world devoid of colour and partly because they tend to project their own visual experience—such as the sensation of closing their eyes—onto the blind. [58]

This concern is highly relevant to our analysis of induction in Aristotle's works. First, when Aristotle explicitly discusses the acquisition of first principles, we must recognise that the subject in his account possesses no prior knowledge of universals, except incidentally. Second, when we identify instances of prior knowledge necessary for a specific proposition, we must also recognise that such propositions cannot belong to the category of first principles, as they presuppose earlier stages of universal cognition. [59] In sum, acknowledging the lack of universals at the pre-induction stage is crucial for an accurate understanding of Aristotle's theory of induction and its application to the grasp of first principles, particularly in the context of natural honour.

[57] This thesis will not engage with the debate regarding whether knowing all the physical facts about colour equates to actually experiencing it—an issue often explored through the thought experiment 'Mary's Room,' proposed by Frank Jackson (1982).
[58] Cf. Groarke (2009, p. 9) for another analogy of bridge-building to illustrate this state of mind.
[59] There is no hierarchical order among different types of first principles. This means that one type of first principle cannot serve as the precondition or prior knowledge for another type. Aristotle asserts that while the definition of an entity and its existential premise are closely intertwined, neither is inferred from the other (*APo.* 92b4–8, 93a27–28). Regarding axioms, although Aristotle explicitly states that they must be grasped if we are to learn anything at all (*APo.* 72a15–18), the context of this statement makes it clear that Aristotle is referring to the objects of learning that depend on deductive reasoning. Axioms serve as the foundation for deduction, but they do not necessarily precondition the acquisition of other types of first principles.

With this concern in mind, an overview of *Posterior Analytics* II.19 will be conducted, focusing on a detailed analysis of argument that may shed light on the cognitive mechanism underlying the phenomenon of natural honour. In the opening lines of this chapter, Aristotle summarises the accomplishments of his prior investigations, particularly the definition and mechanism of demonstration as a means of acquiring scientific knowledge. He then introduces the theme of this chapter—the method of acquiring indemonstrable knowledge, namely the first principles:

> περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀρχῶν, πῶς τε γίνονται γνῶριμοι καὶ τίς ἡ γνωρὶζουσα ἕξις, ἐντεῦθεν ἔσται δῆλον προαπορήσασι πρῶτον.[60]
>
> As for the first principles—how they become known and what is the state in which we know them, will be clear from what follows, when we have first set out the puzzles.

This introductory statement clearly distinguishes the focus of this chapter—indemonstrable knowledge—from that of earlier discussions, which centre on demonstrable knowledge.[61] Aristotle outlines two key research questions for this chapter. The first concerns the cognitive procedure to grasp the first principles, and the second addresses the state of mind during this cognitive process. Several commentators argue that these two questions are distinct and separable, suggesting that each can be addressed independently.[62] However, I doubt if the cognitive process can be properly appreciated without considering the state of mind that informs and guides it. A proper synthesis of these two aspects is essential for a holistic understanding. I will offer a unified answer to both questions at the conclusion of this analysis.

There is an often-overlooked detail in the quoted text: the state (ἕξις) in which we grasp the first principles differs from the state in which we possess them. The former corresponds to what Aristotle classifies as the first potentiality, while the latter aligns with the second potentiality. Although Aristotle uses the term ἕξις to describe both cases, many commentators interpret it as referring to the second potentiality in this context, because Aristotle appears to identify this state as the faculty of intellect (νοῦς), a second potentiality, at the end of the chapter.[63]

However, if ἕξις here does indeed signify the second potentiality, it fails to illuminate the inductive mechanism of knowing first principles (ἡ γνωρὶζουσα ἕξις). Instead, it merely

[60] *APo*. 99b17–19

[61] It is not necessary to follow Barnes' (1994, p. 271) speculation that this chapter as 'an independent essay that was at some later stage tacked on to the discussion of II. 1–18,' as the delineation of research topics within the work supports its thematic coherence. This delineation also challenges interpretations such as that of Bronstein (2012), who suggests that Aristotle had already explained the grasp of first principles in earlier chapters.

[62] E.g. Barnes (1994. pp. 259–268) in order to reconcile the empiricist elements and the rationalist elements in the text.

[63] E.g., Ross (1949, p.673), Barnes (1994, p. 260), Bayer (1997, p. 63).

describes the state of mind that possesses the first principles after they have been known.[64] In other words, intellect *is* the knowledge of the first principles, not the state of mind *by which* we grasp the knowledge of the first principles.

According to the nature of first principles—the initial knowledge in the process of learning that takes place in the case of a rational cognitive agent, the prior state of mind, namely the pre-induction stage, must lack any universal knowledge. For example, in the case of congenital blindness, blind individuals are in a state of readiness to grasp colour-related first principles, a potentiality that will only be actualised if their sight is restored. This readiness, devoid of prior universal knowledge but psychically prepared for its acquisition, is the state of mind that should be the primary focus of investigation when considering Aristotle's account of induction.

Some scholars have interpreted Aristotle's text as suggesting that intellect is the faculty enabling us to grasp first principles.[65] However, given that Aristotle explicitly defines intellect as the knowledge of first principles, such reading risks reducing Aristotle's argument to a tautology or circular reasoning: intellect enables us to grasp first principles because it is already defined as the knowledge of first principles. I think we should avoid interpretations that underestimate Aristotle's intellectual sophistication whenever possible.

It is true that the phrase 'ἡ γνωρίζουσα ἕξις' can, on its own, be interpreted either as the state of knowing or as the state of possessing knowledge. However, the following paragraph helps clarify this ambiguity, as Aristotle directly addresses and analyses the relevant issues concerning the acquisition of knowledge of first principles. One issue he raises is whether such a state exists in us unnoticed or whether it arises in us afterwards.[66] Aristotle rejects both possibilities.

The first option goes back to Plato's *Meno*, which explores the paradox of learning. Plato's solution suggests that we once possessed knowledge of universals but forgot it and later recollect it through interaction with external stimuli.[67] In Plato's theory of recollection, knowledge is not merely dormant but entirely forgotten. Aristotle criticises Plato's solution as absurd (ἄτοπον), arguing that if such knowledge were truly present, it could not simply escape

[64] *EN* 1141a8: λείπεται νοῦν εἶναι τῶν ἀρχῶν.
[65] E.g., Tuominen (2010, p. 120) Ierodiakonou (2010)
[66] *APo*. 99b25–27
[67] Barnes (1994, p. 261). Adamson (2010) points out that there are three Platonic references in this chapter, which suggests that Plato is the dialectical opponent with whom Aristotle is engaged in II.19, and Aristotle attempts to provide a different answer to the same question faced by Plato.

notice.[68] The underlying reason for Aristotle's rejection likely stems from his view that actual knowledge is incompatible with the regression from a state of second potentiality (inactive yet retained) to a state of first potentiality (lacking the capacity for actualisation).

The second option, that this state arises afterwards, is dismissed due to epistemological regress. Aristotle invokes his earlier proposition that all learning presupposes pre-existing knowledge. If the state were actual knowledge present in the soul, it would lead to an infinite cognitive chain, which Aristotle deems untenable.

Aristotle's rejection of both alternatives further underscores that his concern lies with the state by which we *acquire* the first principles, rather than the state in which the first principles reside once acquired. If his focus were on the latter, there would be no need to engage with Plato's theory of recollection—which seeks to explain the origin of our initial knowledge by positing its pre-existence—or to address the issue of epistemological regress.

After negating the above two options, Aristotle offers his own resolution by stating we must possess some sort of *capacity* (ἀνάγκη ἄρα ἔχειν μέν τινα δύναμις).[69] The use of the verb ἔχειν—the root of ἕξις—indicates that Aristotle identifies the state by which we grasp the first principles as a specific form of capacity. Importantly, this capacity cannot be equated with the state of inactive knowledge as a second potentiality, as Aristotle is clearly addressing the same cognitive problem Plato grapples with in the *Meno*.

It should also be noted that this capacity cannot be merely passive or unselective, as it must ensure the truth of the first principles. This stipulation distinguishes it from the general potentiality of the human soul to hold any kind of opinion, whether true or false.[70] Aristotle is concerned with a reliable cognitive potentiality that can only be actualised by first principles, not an undifferentiated ability to form beliefs.

Having asserted that the state in which the first principle is grasped is a capacity, Aristotle does not specify what the capacity is but turns to the other problem, namely the cognitive stages of grasping the first principles.[71] When the term ἕξις reappears in the last paragraph of this

[68] *APo*. 99b26–27
[69] *APo*. 99b32–33
[70] Engberg-Pedersen (1979, p. 307) overlooks the essential requirement that the capacity to grasp first principles must ensure their truth. Instead, he interprets this capacity as a passive and procedural mechanism of generalisation 'that is responsible for a universal point whether this point be true or false.'
[71] I will analyse Aristotle's account of this problem afterwards.

chapter, it is reasonable to assume, as many scholars do, that Aristotle resumes the previous topic and eventually specifies that human intellect is the state in which the initial grasp of the first principles takes place.[72] However, one may immediately realise the difficulty of reconciling the conclusions of the two paragraphs: the faculty of intellect is not a first potentiality, whereas the capacity through which the first principles are grasped must be a first potentiality. This contradiction is most evident in that intellect is described as a faculty more precise than scientific knowledge (καὶ οὐδὲν ἐπιστήμης ἀκριβέστερον ἄλλο γένος ἢ νοῦς),[73] whereas the capacity through which the first principles are grasped is not more valuable in respect of precision (μὴ τοιαύτην δ' ἔχειν ἢ ἔσται τούτων τιμιωτέρα κατ' ἀκρίβειαν).[74]

A close textual analysis reveals that Aristotle addresses two distinct questions concerning the epistemological development of first principles, each corresponding to a different stage of cognition:

A close analysis of the text reveals that the last paragraph deals with another question (A) than the question that Aristotle proposes at the beginning (B). The question in the last paragraph is regarding the state of mind (A1) in which the knowledge of first principles resides. The answer is thus a second potentiality, namely the faculty of intellect. In contrast, the question proposed at the beginning is regarding the state of mind (B1) through which the knowledge of first principles is grasped. The answer should thus be a first potentiality. These two questions target different epistemological stages in the development of human intellect, and the state of mind (B1) is prior to (A1). Ierodiakonou also realises that there are two questions associated with the grasp of first principles. However, she deems the state of mind (A1) as Aristotle's answer to the question (B).[75] Such an interpretation, as discussed above, assumes the existence of prior knowledge of first principles, which Aristotle explicitly opposes.

On the other hand, although the answer (A1) provided in the final paragraph does not directly address Question (B) regarding the capacity through which first principles are grasped, it nevertheless helps clarify that capacity by identifying its actualisation. Aristotle's argument in the last paragraph employs a process of elimination to establish that the faculty of intellect is

[72] *APo*. 100b6–17
[73] *APo*. 100b8–9
[74] *APo*. 99b33–34
[75] Ierodiakonou (2010, pp. 60–62)

the only suitable state of mind capable of housing the knowledge of first principles. By extension, it is reasonable to conjecture that the corresponding capacity for grasping first principles is the *first potentiality* of intellect—what Aristotle refers to as the *potential intellect*, which is a preparatory stage in which the potential intellect enables the subject to engage with particular instances and extract universal principles.

Aristotle only briefly addresses the concept of potential intellect in *De Anima* III.4–5. In the previous chapter on the divine source of natural honour, I argued that the potential intellect in the human soul is actualised by a 'productive,' likely divine intellect—a process Aristotle likens to light transforming potential colours into actual ones. Similarly, in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, while Aristotle does not explicitly differentiate between the first potentiality and the second potentiality of intellect,[76] he clearly identifies the prior state required for the grasp of first principles as a capacity or potentiality (δύναμις).

If the δύναμις is understood as referring to the first potentiality of human intellect, the epistemological process described in *Posterior Analytics* II.19 agrees with the actualisation of human intellect outlined in *De Anima* III.5, offering complementary perspectives on the same transformation in the human soul. If this interpretation reflects Aristotle's response to the question of how the truth of first principles can be secured and their accurate cognition guaranteed, it would validate his comment in *Topics* that the process is indeed 'obvious.' [77]

Eustratius offers a comparable interpretation of the state in which the first principles are grasped in his commentary on *Posterior Analytics*.[78] According to Eustratius, Aristotle holds that the human soul does not possess actual knowledge of the first principles at birth but only has the capacity to know them potentially. He further suggests that, if an individual were deprived of all sense perception at birth, their soul would remain incapable of grasping the first principles even later in life. Eustratius emphasises that the potential intellect is actualised through the sensory information we acquire and retain in memory. This process culminates in the development of the faculty of intellect—a state we achieve once we have grasped the first principles. In this view, the state of mind (B) in which the first principles are apprehended is

[76] Ierodiakonou (2010, p. 61) highlights the absence of an explicit reference to the concept of potential intellect in *APo.* II.19 as evidence challenging the interpretation advanced in this thesis. This omission, she argues, suggests that Aristotle may not have intended to connect the acquisition of first principles directly with the framework of potential and actual intellect.
[77] *Top*. 157a8: ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐπαγωγὴ ὁποῖον τί ἐστι δῆλον…
[78] Eustratius, *On APo*. 255.1–270.14

the potential intellect inherent in the human soul.[79]

The above detailed analysis of the distinct states of mind in which the knowledge of first principles is both grasped and subsequently housed may appear a digression, yet it offers critical insights into Aristotle's conception of induction, which is crucial for evaluating whether the principles of natural honour can indeed be discerned through the perception of a single particular.

Firstly, although Aristotle identifies the potential intellect as a capacity, its actualisation is, as suggested in *De Anima* III.4–5, directed toward a fixed mode of operation that can only be realised through the influence of the divine intellect. This intrinsic orientation implies that the cognitive process in question is not arbitrary and cannot lead to the formation of erroneous propositions. In other words, it is fundamentally different from the general potentiality of the human soul to form opinions, which are subject to error.[80] This inference casts doubt on the interpretation of this chapter as an account of *enumerative induction*, as the propositions derived from enumerative induction are supposed to reflect *any* attributes that are common among the perceived particulars.

Secondly, Aristotle analogises the actualisation of the potential intellect with the process of light revealing colours in *De Anima* III.5. In this analogy, light enables the potential colours of an object to become actual and visible. If we extend this analogy to the process of induction, the 'illumination' corresponds to the perception of individual cases, suggesting that the cognitive process required for grasping the first principles might rely on the perception of only one particular instance as its empirical source—just as a single beam of light is sufficient to make colours visible. This aspect of Aristotle's analogy further challenges the enumerative interpretation of induction. Unlike enumerative induction, which relies on identifying commonalities across multiple particular instances, the actualisation of the potential intellect, as depicted here, does not depend on the aggregation of empirical observations.

With an understanding of the states of mind in which the first principles are grasped, we can now examine the cognitive procedure for acquiring the first principles. Aristotle begins by illustrating the initial two cognitive stages common to many animal species: perception and memory.[81] At these two stages, although perception is described as a discerning capacity (ἓξις

[79] Eustratius, *On APo*. 257.31–32
[80] As Upton (1981) points out in refutation of Engberg-Pedersen's account that intellect is merely a generalising ability.
[81] *APo*. 99b35–100a3

γὰρ δύναμιν σὺμφυτον κριτικὴν), the first principles are not yet grasped, not to mention the other types of knowledge derived from the first principles.[82] Aristotle then introduces a cognitive stage exclusive to humans and presents it in the following cognitive sequence:

Ἐκ μὲν οὖν αἰσθήσεως γίνεται μνήμη, ὥσπερ λέγομεν, ἐκ δὲ μνήμης πολλάκις τοῦ αὐτοῦ γινομένης ἐμπειρία. αἱ γὰρ πολλαὶ μνῆμαι τῷ ἀριθμῷ ἐμπειρία μία ἐστίν. ἐκ δ' ἐμπειρίας ἢ ἐκ παντὸς ἠρεμήσαντος τοῦ καθόλου ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, τοῦ ἑνὸς παρὰ τὰ πολλά, ὃ ἂν ἐν ἅπασιν ἓν ἐνῇ ἐκείνοις τὸ αὐτό, τεχνης ἀρχὴ καὶ ἐπιστήμης.

Thus from perception comes memory, as we call it, and from memories that are often of the same object comes experience; for memories which are many in number form a single experience. And from experience, or from all of the universal which has come to rest in the soul, (the one apart from the many, whatever is one and the same among all these memories) there comes the first principle of art and scientific knowledge.[83]

The above lemma can be read as that the accumulation of multiple memories (μνήμη) of the *same* object forms a unified experience. At the stage of experience (ἐμπειρία), patterns or consistent features begin to emerge, leading to a more general understanding that transcends isolated instances. Human soul is capable of grasping a universal (καθόλου) understanding of first principles at the stage of experience. Based on this cognitive sequence, the principles necessary for the cognitive change of natural honour, listed in the previous section, can be grasped at the stage of experience, derived from repeated perceptions and the accumulation of memories of natural phenomena as a whole.

However, three concerns caution against hastily concluding that Aristotle's account of experience directly supports the grasp of first principles based on a single particular instance. The first concern is regarding the ambiguity of 'τοῦ αὐτοῦ' in the quoted lemma. The phrase can be translated as both 'of the same category' and 'of the same object.'[84] The former translation aligns more closely with an enumerative model of induction, which relies on generalising from multiple particulars within a category.

The second concern lies in the lack of explicit definition of experience as a cognitive faculty. Aristotle does not provide a detailed account of the concept of experience beyond situating it

[82] Cf. Tuominen (2010, pp. 129–134) who argues that Aristotle considers the stage of perception as the starting point—or the first principles—of inquiries. To avoid the implication that lower animals might also possess intellect, she suggests that Aristotle should have clarified the distinction between mere perceptions, which do not lead to the grasp of universals, and the human perception that does.
[83] *APo*. 100a3–8
[84] E.g. Sorabji (2010, p. 3)

as an intermediary stage between memory and scientific knowledge or art.[85] This vagueness has led to considerable scholarly debate regarding its precise nature and scope, leaving the concept open to various interpretations.

The third concern is associated with the second. Due to the debate over the scope of the concept of experience, scholars disagree on the meaning of the conjunction ἢ in the clause 'ἐκ δ' ἐμπειρίας ἢ ἐκ παντὸς ἠρεμήσαντος τοῦ καθόλου ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ.'[86] Scholars with a deflationary view of experience often translate ἢ as 'or rather,' suggesting a progressive relationship between experience and 'all of the universals.' This interpretation would effectively exclude 'all of the universals' from the domain of experience, implying that universals emerge at a stage beyond experience rather than being encompassed by it.

The three concerns outlined above are reasonable, as the Greek terms used by Aristotle can support either interpretation. Furthermore, without a clear understanding of the state of mind in which the first principles are grasped, the alternative reading—aligned with the paradigm of enumerative induction—may seem more plausible to many scholars.[87] This underscores the importance of addressing the two questions posed at the beginning of this chapter—the first concerning the cognitive process involved in grasping first principles and the second concerning the state of mind during this process—in an integrated manner rather than treating them separately. From the perspective of enumerative induction, Aristotle's suggestion that first principles can be grasped through a single particular entity might appear radical, if not entirely inconceivable. However, if this cognitive process is understood as an illustration of the actualisation of potential intellect, then a single particular entity suffices for this process. As Aristotle himself analogises in *De Anima*, the actualisation of potential intellect is akin to light illuminating colours, a process that does not require multiple beams of light but only one.[88]

Among the three concerns outlined above, only the first—regarding the number of particulars required for the intuitive grasp of first principles and the scope of objects included in these principles—is fundamentally relevant to the theme of this thesis. The next section will respond

[85] See e.g. Ross (1949, p. 676): 'it is not easy to see what Aristotle wants to say about ἐμπειρία, the connecting link between memory and art or science.'
[86] Tuominen (2010, pp. 125–128) summarises three different meanings of ἢ in the text: the first is a genuine disjunctive, the second is progressive, and the third is epexegetic. She defends the second reading and preserves a contrast between experience and what is universal.
[87] E.g. Tuominen (2010, pp. 126–127) easily dismisses the interpretation of τοῦ αὐτοῦ as 'of the same object,' finding it implausible within the paradigm of enumerative induction.
[88] *DA* 430a15–17

to this concern with three examples of induction. The other two concerns, while significant in broader discussions, are less critical here because, regardless of a deflationary reading of the scope of experience, the first principles will ultimately be reached in the form of universal knowledge. Nevertheless, I would like to briefly address these secondary concerns.

Regarding the scope of experience, I propose that its cognitive breadth—as an intermediate stage between memory and scientific knowledge or art—is likely more expansive than is commonly assumed based on its use in specific contexts. Aristotle employs the term to denote a range of cognitive capacities, leading to an apparent tension in its application. For instance, in *Metaphysics* A.1, experience is characterised as a clear understanding of causality in particular cases, enabling one to make accurate judgments, such as prescribing appropriate treatments for individual patients.[89] In contrast, in *EN* VI.7, experience refers to a grasp of general medical facts without understanding their underlying causes—for example, recognising that bird meat is light and healthy without knowing why.[90]

This tension between experience as understanding of causality in particular cases and as general observation without causal insight can be reconciled by adopting a more inclusive interpretation of this cognitive faculty. Between the memory of particulars and the full acquisition of universal propositions lies a broad cognitive continuum. This continuum may involve understanding of universal facts without grasping the causes, knowledge of particular causes, and an initial, intuitive recognition of universal truths, which is most pertinent to this discussion. This broader understanding allows experience to bridge the gap between particular memories and universal scientific or ethical knowledge, supporting Aristotle's conception of an intermediary cognitive stage.

The above interpretation of the scope of experience helps address the third concern regarding the translation of the conjunction ἢ. A deflationary reading of the concept of experience that necessitates a progressive interpretation of ἢ is no longer required.[91] Instead, it is at the stage of experience that the potential intellect in our soul is actualised. This process is reflected epistemologically as the primitive grasp of the first principles. It is not a mere accumulation of

[89] *Met*. 981a7–13

[90] *EN*. 1141b14–21. See Hasper & Yurdin (2014) for a summary and comparison of different usages of ἐμπειρία.

[91] Even among those who adopt the epexegetic meaning of the conjunction, there is a tendency to favour a deflationary reading of the concept of experience. E.g., Barnes (1994 p. 264) proposes a fourth stage beyond that of experience to account for the apprehension of first principles; Sorabji (2010, p. 3) appears to equate experience to the mere accumulation of numerous memories.

numerous memories, nor is it a straightforward identification of commonalities among them. Rather, it represents the actualisation of an innate potentiality unique to humans.

In this sense, I personally find that Aristotle's account of the acquisition of initial knowledge bears notable similarities to Plato's perspective. While Aristotle explicitly rejects Plato's doctrine of recollection and the notion of innate knowledge, his appeal to an innate potentiality to explain the origins of knowledge reveals a rationalist inclination. Both thinkers ultimately posit that the human soul is inherently equipped with the capacity to attain fundamental truths, even if they diverge on the mechanisms through which this capacity is realised.

In sum, the above digression to Aristotle's account of induction illustrated the cognitive mechanism by which the first principles necessary for the cognitive change of natural honour are grasped. The inductive process presented in *Posterior Analytics* II.19 effectively accounts for two issues: the first is specific for the acquisition of honour-related principles, which is the singularity of particular cases, and the second is regarding the inherent incompleteness and uncertainty in the modern understanding of induction. By linking the intuitive grasp of first principles to the actualisation of potential intellect in the human soul, Aristotle provides a cognitive mechanism that ensures the correct inductive understanding of first principles through the perception of singular particulars. The next section will further elaborate on this mechanism using three examples that likely illustrate its operation.

4.3.3 Three examples of induction

This section addresses the concern regarding the number of particulars necessary for the inductive grasp of first principles by examining three examples that likely illustrate the process of inductive reasoning leading to such principles. The first example appears in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, immediately following Aristotle's general account of the cognitive stages through which first principles are apprehended.[92] By embedding the example within this cognitive framework, Aristotle demonstrates the practical application of his theory, illustrating how inductive reasoning progresses from particular observations to universal principles:

> ὃ δ' ἐλέχθη μὲν πάλαι, οὐ σαφῶς δὲ ἐλέχθη, πάλιν εἴπωμεν. στάντος γὰρ τῶν ἀδιαφόρων ἑνός, πρῶτον μὲν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ καθόλου (καὶ γὰρ αἰσθάνεται μὲν τὸ

[92] I will omit the *rout* metaphor (*APo*. 100a10–15) because it lacks clarity to effectively illustrate the questions explored in this chapter. In this metaphor, the multiple stands that form a trail can either be read as multiple perceptions of the same object, which aligns with this thesis' interpretation, or as the perception of multiple objects of the same kind, represented by the stands of various retreating soldiers. This ambiguity limits the metaphor's usefulness for the present analysis.

καθ' ἕκαστον, ἡ δ' αἴσθησις τοῦ καθόλου ἐστίν, οἷον ἀνθρώπου, ἀλλ' οὐ Καλλίου ἀνθρώπου).[93]

Let us say again what we have just said but not said clearly. When one of the undifferentiated items makes a stand, there is a primitive universal in the soul; for although it is particulars that are perceived, perception is of universals—of man, not of Callias the man.

In this lemma, Aristotle begins by clarifying that the paragraph serves as a further elucidation of the central argument, namely the cognitive procedure to grasp the first principles. The connection between this explanation and the earlier discussion is evident in the recurring reference to 'universals in the soul (ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ καθόλου).'[94] If these universals are understood as the apprehension of first principles, Aristotle explicitly indicates that this process requires only a single particular as the object of perception. For example, the perception of a specific individual—Callias—is sufficient to facilitate the formation of a universal understanding of humanity.

It is noteworthy that this example can be misinterpreted in two significant ways if its purpose—demonstrating the inductive process of acquiring the universal concept of humanity—is overlooked.[95] First, it might be mistakenly understood as resembling our everyday experience of perceiving a particular individual and simultaneously associating that perception with a pre-existing universal concept of humanity in our minds. However, this interpretation is incorrect, as it presupposes the prior acquisition of a universal understanding of humanity. Instead, in the context of Aristotelian induction, the subject in this example does not possess such prior knowledge. The universal concept of humanity is grasped *through* the act of perception itself.

In this respect, the example diverges from our daily experience. Nevertheless, it becomes more plausible if we conceive of the subject in this example as an infant who has never encountered a human before, with Callias representing the baby's father and the only human perceptible to him. Indeed, these additional contextual conditions are explicitly specified in another example of induction, which will be discussed in the subsequent section.[96]

Second, it may also be implausible to interpret the universal concept of humanity in the

[93] *APo*. 100a15–b2

[94] Therefore, we should not read 'ἡ δ' αἴσθησις τοῦ καθόλου ἐστίν' as saying that the faculty of perception by itself is capable of grasping universals, but should take it as meaning that the faculty of perception is one of the cognitive stages that lead to the grasp of universals.

[95] I think Aristotle may also bear some responsibility for these misinterpretations, as he does not clearly differentiate the example from ordinary, everyday experiences, thereby obscuring the unique epistemological significance of the example.

[96] Whether a baby can genuinely grasp the concept of "human" from a single exposure—as he likely does with a simpler concept such as "red"—remains a matter of debate. Here, the focus is on Aristotle's intention.

example as a confused cluster of attributes observed in Callias, only to be gradually refined and distinguished as more particulars are perceived. This interpretation, advanced by Greg Bayer and Gerard A. Hauser, represents an attempt to reconcile Aristotle's view of induction with the prevailing modern understanding.[97]

More specifically, Bayer argues that while Aristotle holds that the essential attributes of a universal can be apprehended through the perception and memory of a single particular entity, these essential attributes are initially intertwined with accidental ones. On this interpretation, if we perceive a human being for the first time and are told that this is a human being, we initially grasp a confused cluster of attributes manifested in that particular individual, assuming that every human being possesses identical attributes.[98] As more individuals are perceived, the incidental attributes are gradually eliminated from the cluster, ultimately leaving the definitive attributes that constitute the universal concept of humanity.

However, Bayer's interpretation of the inductive grasp of first principles is challenged by the meaning of the term καθόλου as the 'universals' in the soul. The term καθόλου is consistently used in *Posterior Analytics* II.19 to describe the form in which first principles are initially apprehended through perception.[99] I argue that καθόλου should be understood as a technical term in Aristotle's cognitive theory. In the first chapter of *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle explicitly distinguishes two modes of understanding—καθόλου (universal) and ἁπλῶς (unqualifiedly, without qualification)—to address the epistemological puzzle raised in Plato's *Meno*, namely the dilemma that one either learns nothing or only what is already known.[100]

As the same puzzle is echoed in II.19 as an introduction to Aristotle's exploration of induction,[101] the meaning of καθόλου in these two passages should be understood consistently. Aristotle uses these terms to delineate two ways of knowing: ἁπλῶς refers to an understanding furthest removed from perception and better known in nature, while καθόλου refers to an understanding closest to perception and, consequently, better known to us.[102] In practice,

[97] Bayer (1997), Hauser (1985).
[98] Bayer (1997, p. 129)
[99] *APo*. 100b5: Aristotle explicitly summarises the process of induction as 'the way perception instils universals.' This text also implies that the knowledge of universals grasped in experience *are* that of first principles.
[100] *APo*. 71a25–30; *Meno* 80d–e.
[101] *APo*. 99b26–27
[102] *APo*. 71b33–72a5, *APr*. 68b35–37. See *EN* 1095a30–b8 where Aristotle applies this distinction in his ethical inquiries.

ἁπλῶς understanding is incompatible with errors, whereas καθόλου understanding is, due to a lack of clear acquisition of first principles, susceptible to error and can lead to incorrect conclusions. Aristotle thus partially resolves the *Meno* puzzle by asserting that deductive inquiry begins with καθόλου understanding and culminates in ἁπλῶς knowledge.[103] This distinction allows for a progression from a universal, rudimentary understanding to an unqualified knowledge, addressing the epistemological challenges posed by the process of learning.

It is true the καθόλου understanding of first principles is rudimentary in the sense that it belongs to the scope of 'intuition' or 'insight,' as translated by many commentators, and cannot be explicitly articulated through reason. However, it does not admit wrongness *in itself*, whereas according to Bayer, the universal knowledge of humanity mingled with other accidental attributes of the category is clearly a wrong universal understanding. Bayer is aware of this flaw in his interpretation and amend it by claiming that the term καθόλου in this context is not a technical term but of an unusual usage, referring to a single composite with many unselected attributes as parts.[104] However, this amendment is unconvincing given that the term never means an unselected cluster of attributes in *Posterior Analytics*. Instead, Aristotle consistently employs καθόλου as a technical term to signify a universal concept, making Bayer's proposed interpretation inconsistent with Aristotle's established usage.

In sum, Aristotle genuinely seeks to demonstrate, through the example of Callias, that the perception of a single particular entity suffices for the universal grasp of the corresponding first principles. It is important to note, however, that the first principles grasped in this manner are not equivalent to those acquired without qualification. In the case of Callias, we derive a καθόλου (universal) understanding of the existential premise and the definition of humanity based on the perception of Callias, allowing us to recognise and categorise other individuals as humans. Yet, if we were asked to identify the primary and immediate feature of humanity, we would be unable to provide a definitive answer at this stage. Thus, the knowledge of the first principles at this level remains rudimentary and lacks the precision characteristic of the unqualified understanding. This example also supports the interpretation of 'τοῦ αὐτοῦ' as 'of

[103] *APo*. 71a25–29

[104] Bayer (1997, p. 129) refers to *Physics* 184a21–26 in which he claims καθόλου is used in this way. However, the subsequent third example that appears in *Physics* raises significant doubts about the validity of this interpretation, suggesting that the usage of καθόλου in the *Physics* remains consistent with its technical definition as a universal concept.

the same object' in the previous section.

Barnes' commentary on this paragraph astutely recognises Aristotle's intention to use the example of Callias to illustrate the initial grasp of universals. However, Barnes expresses dissatisfaction with Aristotle's choice of example, arguing that a more elemental object of perception—such as colour, sound, shape, or motion—would better exemplify this cognitive process. He critiques the use of a composite concept like humanity, noting the difficulty in conceiving how such a complex idea can be directly derived from perceptual data and implanted in the mind.[105]

Barnes' concern reflects a broader scepticism regarding the cognitive leap from raw sensory data to the abstraction of universal concepts, especially when the perceived entity, like Callias, is a multi-faceted and composite being. Essential objects of perception, in contrast, provide more immediate and discrete data that seem easier to process into universal knowledge. For example, perceiving the colour red or the sound of a bell involves simpler perceptual elements that can more readily serve as the foundation for a universal category (e.g., 'redness' or 'sound'). In comparison, the concept of humanity involves an intricate web of attributes—biological, behavioural, and social—that may seem beyond the scope of straightforward perceptual apprehension.

In response to Barnes' critique, it is helpful to examine Aristotle's second example of induction, in which he illustrates the cognitive process through the perception of a fundamental geometric shape—a triangle. This example highlights a more straightforward induction process, as a triangle's essential properties are easily abstracted from perceptual data. Through this lens, I would argue that Aristotle likely recognises the illustrative clarity provided by essential objects, such as geometric shapes or other basic perceptual phenomena. However, his deliberate choice to use the concept of humanity in his initial example underscores a broader epistemological claim.

Aristotle's inclusion of humanity as an example suggests that he does not categorically distinguish between the abstraction of fundamental geometric or sensory objects and the abstraction of more complex natural entities or moral concepts in the context of first principles. As discussed in the previous section, the scope of Aristotle's first principles is expansive, encompassing existential premises and immediate attributes not only of essential objects like

[105] Barnes (1994, p. 266)

colour, shape, and motion but also of natural composites such as humanity and moral concepts like goodness. By choosing humanity as an example, Aristotle likely seeks to demonstrate the robustness of his theory of induction across a range of cognitive domains, including natural, moral, and scientific knowledge. While the concept of a triangle may more readily align with modern intuitions about induction, Aristotle's inclusion of humanity reinforces his view that even complex, composite entities can provide the perceptual basis for universal knowledge, thereby showcasing the breadth of his epistemological framework. This has particular relevance for the theme of this thesis, as it supports the claim that the principles underlying natural honour—such as goodness, God, and eternity—can be grasped through the same inductive mechanism.

Aristotle introduces the example of triangle in *Prior Analytics* II. 21 as part of his criticism of Plato's epistemological solution in the *Meno*, where learning is framed as a process of recollection. Aristotle points out that it only appears to be a recollection because we grasp certain understandings of universals through induction (τῇ ἐπαγωγῇ) at the same moment as we apply them to particular cases. To illustrate his point, he states that we know something straightforwardly (ἔνια γὰρ εὐθὺς ἴσμεν),[106] and then proposes the example that we know a figure has angles equal to two right angles, once we know it is a triangle (οἷον ὅτι δύο ὀρθαῖς, ἐὰν ἴδωμεν ὅτι τρίγωνον).[107]

There are two signs in this passage supporting the categorisation of the examples of the triangle and humanity into the same epistemological group. First, Aristotle's reference to the *Meno's* epistemological puzzle is evident in both contexts, signalling a shared theoretical backdrop.[108] Second, in both discussions, Aristotle explicitly identifies induction (ἐπαγωγή) as the operative cognitive process. These parallels justify interpreting both examples as illustrations of the same cognitive phenomenon: the intuitive grasp of first principles.

Despite their brevity, these passages should not be interpreted as describing the everyday experience of perceiving a particular object with a triangular attribute and then associating it with an already-existing universal concept of a triangle in the mind. Instead, the examples aim to illustrate how we grasp the definition of a triangle—or any universal concept such as

[106] *APr*. 67a24–25
[107] *APr*. 67a25–26
[108] *APr*. 67a21–22, *APo*. 71a29–30, 99b26–27.

humanity or goodness—for the first time. This likely occurs upon consciously encountering an entity possessing the defining spatial attributes of a triangle or the essential characteristics of humanity. Otherwise, there would be no reason for Aristotle to reference Meno's puzzle, except the connection between the examples and the puzzle is crucial for understanding the topic under discussion.

Aristotle answers that we are capable of grasping the immediate attribute of triangle—its interior angles summing to two right angles—upon consciously perceiving a single entity that possesses the triangular attribute. In this case, the grasp of knowledge is clearly rudimentary or *qua* καθόλου,[109] as many people cannot articulate this geometric property but can nonetheless recognise a triangle when they see one and categorise particular instances of triangle under a single concept. This example thus aligns with the cognitive process exemplified in the case of Callias, through which a universal understanding of first principles is grasped.

The triangle example resonates more intuitively with common sense, as it reflects our natural inclination to recognise essential perceptual objects instantaneously when encountering an entity that embodies them.[110] By contrast, it is less intuitive to think we could grasp the principles of humanity in the same immediate way, hence the critique raised by Barnes.[111] Extending this further, it is even more challenging to conceive how we might derive abstract principles such as goodness through the perception of a single instance.

However, it is essential to consider Aristotle's inclusive understanding of first principles, which encompasses natural composites and moral notions alongside essential attributes. Suppositions and definitions as two types of first principles apply broadly within his epistemology. Consequently, the process of induction applies universally across these categories, treating essential concepts (e.g., triangle), composite concepts (e.g., humanity), and moral concepts (e.g., goodness) as epistemologically equivalent in the process of grasping first principles. An appreciation of

To further support my interpretation of Aristotelian induction, I reference a third example

[109] Here καθόλου is a technical term defined in *Posterior Analytics* I.1.
[110] See *DA* II. 6 for Aristotle's account of essential features of perception, where he claims that no error is possible in recognising them (418a12–16).
[111] Barns (1994, p. 266)

introduced by Aristotle at the beginning of *Physics*:

> Πέφυκε δὲ ἐκ τῶν γνωριμωτέρων ἡμῖν ἡ ὁδὸς καὶ σαφεστέρων ἐπὶ τὰ σαφέστερα τῇ φύσει καὶ γνωριμώτερα· οὐ γὰρ ταὐτὰ ἡμῖν τε γνώριμα καὶ ἁπλῶς…Ἔστι δ᾽ ἡμῖν πρῶτον δῆλα καὶ σαφῆ τὰ συγκεχυμένα μᾶλλον· ὕστερον δ᾽ ἐκ τούτων γίνεται γνώριμα τὰ στοιχεῖα καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ διαιροῦσι ταῦτα. διὸ ἐκ τῶν καθόλου ἐπὶ τὰ καθ᾽ ἕκαστα δεῖ προιέναι· τὸ γὰρ ὅλον κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν γνωριμώτερον, ὸ δὲ καθόλου ὅλον τί ἐστιν…καὶ τὰ παιδία τὸ μὲν πρῶτον προσαγορεύει πάντας τοὺς ἄνδρας πατέρας καὶ μητέρας τὰς γυναῖκας, ὕστερον δὲ διορίζει τούτων ἑκάτερον.[112]
>
> The natural way of [investigation] is to start from what is more knowable and clearer to us and proceed towards what is more knowable and clearer by nature; for what are knowable to us is not the same thing as what are knowable without qualification…Now what is initially obvious and clear to us is rather indiscriminate. Its elements and principles become known to us later by analysis. Thus we must advance from universals to particulars, for a whole is more knowable to sense-perception, and universal is a kind of whole… and a child initially call all men 'father' and all women 'mother,' but distinguish each of them later on.

In the context of this example, Aristotle explains that the natural course of inquiry begins with universals (καθόλου) that are more knowable and apparent to us, eventually progressing toward knowledge without qualification (ἁπλῶς), which is more knowable by nature. In order to achieve this, one must first apply the universal understanding to particular cases so as to refine the indiscriminate understanding.[113] The example is then proposed as an illustration of the former state of understanding. Therefore, the context of this example implies the same theme as the previous two examples, which is the intuitive grasp of the first principles.

It is noteworthy that Bayer observes Aristotle's depiction of the universal as being 'indiscriminate' (συγκεχυμένα). Bayer interprets this term to mean that καθόλου in this context represents a composite of many unselected attributes. However, I believe Bayer overinterprets the meaning of συγκεχυμένα. Aristotle likely uses the term not to imply an indiscriminate collection of attributes but to emphasise the rudimentary and indistinct nature of our initial grasp of universals, especially when contrasted with the clarity of unqualified understanding.

The third example concerns a baby initially calling all males 'father' and all females 'mother'

[112] *Physics* 184a17–184b14

[113] This process will be explored in greater detail through the stadium metaphor in Chapter 4.4.1.

only to distinguish each of them later and address them differently.[114] The significance of this example lies not in the specific utterance of names but in the baby's ability to classify different individuals under a single category. More specifically, it is reasonable that the baby has encountered only one man—his/her biological father—before uttering 'daddy' for the first time. Nonetheless, he/she is capable of categorising every other man into the same composite concept despite individual differences, as reflected in his/her use of the same term to address them. In essence, the baby intuitively grasps the rudimentary principles of male humanity through the perception of one particular male. This example also challenges Bayer's interpretation of συγκεχυμένα: if the baby merely possessed a composite of many unselected attributes of a human being, he/she would not be able to classify individuals without differing accidental attributes under a single category.

This example of the baby helps address potential misinterpretations of the example of Callias by clarifying the cognitive preconditions for induction. In the example of Callias, Aristotle does not explicitly state whether the subject has already acquired the principles of humanity prior to perceiving Callias. This omission allows readers to interpret the example through the lens of their daily experiences, potentially misunderstanding its significance. However, if we assume that the example of the baby addresses the same cognitive process, it becomes clear that the subject in the Callias example is intended to have not yet grasped the principles of humanity. Instead, these principles are acquired through the perception of Callias as the sole particular entity.

By synthesising the three examples—Callias, the triangle, and the baby—it is reasonable to conclude that Aristotle's epistemology allows for the rudimentary grasp of both the existence and the definitive attribute of certain concepts denoted by ordinary language, including those composing the proposition of natural honour, through the perception of a single particular entity. This understanding underscores the capacity of Aristotelian induction to bridge the gap between particular observations and universal knowledge.

One might question the validity of these examples as representative of the intuitive grasp of first principles by arguing that, for instance, the baby in Aristotle's example might not form a universal understanding but instead categorises individuals by grouping similar ones together without invoking any genuine generalisation. Evidence for such an interpretation could be

[114] *Physics* 184b12–14

drawn from Aristotle's treatment of *example* (παράδειγμα) as a means of rhetorical argument in the *Rhetoric*, where he describes the relationship between an example and the proposition it supports as being based on 'part to part' or 'like to like.'[115]

It is indeed plausible that multifaceted psychological mechanisms are involved in real-life situations akin to the examples discussed, some of which may overlap with the cognitive processes of non-human animals capable of grouping different particulars.[116] This raises the possibility that such mechanisms operate without necessitating the formation of universal principles in the Aristotelian sense.

However, it is equally important to acknowledge the challenges in identifying perfect real-life examples of the intuitive grasp of first principles. Those who have not yet acquired certain first principles are often individuals whose physiological and cognitive development are incomplete, such as infants. Consequently, these examples should not be interpreted as exact empirical descriptions of the process but rather as illustrative analogies. Thus, these examples serve their purpose in elucidating the intuitive grasp of first principles despite the limitations and ambiguities inherent in their empirical basis.

Lastly, it is important to note that Aristotle describes other cognitive processes as induction outside the account in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, one of which appears in *Prior Analytics* II.23 and is regarded by some scholars as the official account of Aristotelian induction.[117] In this passage, Aristotle illustrates a reasoning process that involves the practice of enumeration and appears to label it as induction. He explains that by enumerating all bileless animals and long-lived animals, we arrive at a universal proposition through induction: 'all bileless animals are long-lived.' The account of induction in this context clearly aligns well with the paradigm of enumerative induction outlined in Chapter 4.3.1.

While some scholars attempt to reconcile this usage of induction with the account in *Posterior Analytics* II.19,[118] it is necessary to highlight that the theme of the passage in *Prior Analytics* II.23 is unlikely to address the intuitive grasp of first principles. Although the term induction

[115] *Rh*. 1357b25–27. Hauser (1985) applies this treatment of example to explain the account of induction in *Posterior Analytics* II. 19. He argues that it is through this function of example that we are capable of grouping particulars together as a prerequisite of grasping any universal. Therefore, he is likely to agree that the baby can identify similar objects without invoking any generalisation.
[116] Cf. *DA* III. 3 on the role of imagination in guiding the actions of animals and especially (429a5–8) how it interferes with intellect in guiding the actions of men.
[117] Ross (1949, pp. 47–51) mostly refers to this chapter in his interpretation of Aristotelian induction; Hintikka (1980, p. 424–425) thus labels it as the 'official account' of induction.
[118] E.g. Hintikka (1980) argues that the two types of induction target at different types of first principles.

(ἐπαγωγή) is explicitly used in the opening sentence, Aristotle follows it with an epexegetic clarification, describing the process as essentially 'a deduction derived from induction' (ὁ ἐξ ἐπαγωγῆς συλλογισμὸς).[119]

More decisively, the conclusion in the example—that bileless animals are long-lived—does not meet the criteria for a first principle, particularly in the form of a definition. Definitions, as Aristotle describes, require an immediate connection between the two terms in the proposition, without reliance on a third term. In this case, the relationship between being bileless and being long-lived depends on an explanation of bile's function, which serves as the mediating term. This reliance on a third term places the proposition outside the scope of Aristotle's first principles, and thus the account presented in *Prior Analytics* II.23 is unlikely to address the intuitive grasp of first principles.

4.3.4 The intuitive grasp of universal principles of natural honour

An overall appreciation of the three examples of Aristotelian induction, combined with an analysis of the cognitive stages outlined in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, provides a coherent framework for understanding *the cognitive state of those who bestow natural honour*. This digression from the main topic, though seemingly tangential, is vital for addressing one of the most potent critiques that targets the cognitive foundations of natural honour. This critique is likely proposed by those who interpret Aristotle's concept of honour solely through the lens of common affirmation. A common articulation of such criticism is: *If there exists an objective standard of goodness, independent of public opinions and societal values, how can we claim to have come to know it in the first place?*

This epistemological issue surrounding natural honour becomes particularly evident in the allegory of the cavemen. Prior to encountering any particular entity that manifests the principles necessary for the cognitive shift associated with natural honour, the cavemen had no grasp of these principles. Here, Although Aristotle does not elaborate on the nature of the cave in this allegory, it should not be conceived as an ordinary cave situated within the natural world and governed by familiar physical laws. Rather, the allegory implies a more radical epistemic isolation. Admittedly, the scenario is difficult to conceptualise, but the essential point is that the cavemen, before emerging, would have had no awareness of concepts such as goodness,

[119] *APr*. 68b15–16

God, or eternity, nor any understanding of the relationships among them. Yet upon perceiving natural phenomena in their totality, they form the proposition that the god responsible for this order is good—a fundamental intuition underlying the experience of natural honour.

To address the above query and establish an epistemological foundation for grasping the goodness of God for being eternal, Aristotle first needs to introduce a mechanism that allows us to acquire a certain understanding of the principles that constitute 'God is good for being eternal' from particular sources. As a preliminary response, induction is introduced as a mechanism for learning, where particular instances serve as the input and universal propositions constitute the output. Through this cognitive process, the imaginary cavemen can grasp the existential premises of goodness, eternity, and God, and the immediate connections among them by perceiving the natural phenomena as an entirety that embodies the eternity and goodness of God. Extending to human intellect, individuals in real life can also grasp an understanding of the same principles by perceiving the deeds of godlike individuals as a whole that embodies the activity of human intellect.

However, this account of the initial acquisition of honour-related principles faces two major challenges. The first issue lies in the number of particular instances required to validate a universal proposition. According to the framework of enumerative induction, the number of instances is associated with the validity of corresponding universal propositions. In the context of natural honour, however, the natural order itself constitutes a single particular that reflects the traits of one particular God. This raises doubts about the validity—or even the availability—of universal principles derived from such limited data.

Aristotle resolves this by elaborating on the cognitive stages of induction in *Posterior Analytics* II.19. He explains that the perception of a single particular can suffice for forming a universal (rudimentary but correct) understanding of underlying first principles. The fundamental reason for this is that we possess a potentiality for the intellect composed of these first principles. The inductive grasp of the first principles is essentially the actualisation of this potential intellect.

The second issue lies in the scope of the first principles. While accords more with common sense that universal understandings of essential objects of sense perceptions, such as colour and shape, can be grasped through the perception of one particular object, it is less conceivable that composite and normative concepts, such as the concept of goodness, could be understood in the same way.

Aristotle addresses this concern, as examined in Chapter 4.2.1, by first proposing a broad scope of first principles that includes both natural and moral concepts, as well as the immediate connections between these concepts. Then, as examined in Chapter 4.3.2, Aristotle argues that all the first principles, including that of composite and normative concepts, can be initially grasped through the cognitive process of induction. This inclusivity is further corroborated by the three examples of intuitive induction analysed in Chapter 4.3.3. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Aristotle applies the inductive method to the initial acquisition of all first principles.

Through this framework, Aristotle offers an epistemological model by which ordinary individuals can attain a primitive understanding of the first principles underlying natural honour. This cognitive process is realised through perceiving the natural order as a singular particular that embodies these principles. Once these principles are grasped, individuals can employ them as criteria to evaluate the natural worth of various objects and actions, determining the degree to which they are naturally honourable. This cognitive mechanism accounts for both the experience of *thaumazein* directed toward the natural order and the similar response elicited by individuals who derive art from experience.[120]

Having addressed the cognitive process of those who bestow honour, the next step is to examine the honourable side—specifically, the cognitive state of those who attract natural honour. This analysis will clarify how this state distinguishes itself from, yet relates to, the cognitive state of the honouring party. Furthermore, it is important to compare the cognitive differences and connections between natural honour and conventional honour, exploring the potential interplay between honour as a recognition of natural goodness and apparent goodness.

4.4 The Stadium Metaphor, Theoretical Wisdom, and Natural Honour

In the previous investigation, we argued that Aristotle attributes two roles to the concept of intellect. It is both the divine source of natural honour and the cognitive capacity by which one grasps the principles of natural honour. In other words, intellect plays pivotal roles on both the honouring side and the honourable side. At the cognitive level, this manifests as the actuality of human intellect being responsible for both the bestowal and attraction of natural honour.

However, this dual role of human intellect—both as a divine source of honour and as a

[120] *Met*. 981b15–17, cf. *Protrepticus* 9, B13 for Aristotle's account of the relationship between art and natural order.

cognitive capacity to grasp honour-related principles—calls for further clarification on their relation. Are they attributed to the same state of mind? If so, given that intellect can be grasped with the perception of particulars, including those that enable one to recognise the natural worth of God and godlike men, why don't those who grasped such understanding of intellect apply it to guide their own deeds and become honourable, in the same way as the heavenly bodies imitate the eternity of God within their natural limit? If they are attributed to different states of mind in our soul, what is the state that attracts natural honour and how it is related to the state that confers natural honour?

As a preliminary observation, it is evident that the two roles of intellect are attributed to different cognitive states in the human soul, as there is an apparent cognitive gap between the capacity for identification and the capacity for application. More specifically, those who recongised the goodness of God or godlike men cannot effectively apply such understanding to guide their activities as an imitation of the object of natural honour. Otherwise, human beings would behave in the same manner as the heavenly bodies, the latter's activity being predominantly guided by intellect. Therefore, the state of mind of those who inspire natural honour, namely the godlike men, must be different from that of those who confer natural honour.

Based on the above considerations, this section will examine the state of mind of those who inspire natural honour, namely Aristotle's godlike men, by distinguishing the two types of knowability (γνώριμος) of intellect that have been sketched in Chapter 4.3.2 based on Aristotle's stadium metaphor. It argues that the cognitive state of those who attract natural honour is theoretical wisdom, which is featured by a true and refined understanding of intellect and a disposition of contemplation. Theoretical wisdom is thus different from the rudimentary grasp of the first principles that may occur during the stage of experience.

In the stadium metaphor, these two types of understanding of the first principles are placed separately at the two ends of the track, and both may serve as the starting point of a race or an inquiry. Based on this interpretation of the stadium metaphor, I conjecture that individuals become godlike and naturally honourable by progressing from the rudimentary side towards the refined side with regard to the acquisition of first principles.

This process may be interrupted midway, for instance, at the stage of practical wisdom, or undergo fallacious reasonings and end with false beliefs due to the affections of the irrational part of the soul. Aristotle likely deems that the standards of conventional honour arise from

beliefs that are either fallacious inferences or atelic reasonings from the universal understanding of first principles. These beliefs may not fully align with the first principles, but their existence still fundamentally depends on a universal understanding of honour-related principles, such as the definition of goodness. In other words, although conventional honour is taxonomically separable from natural honour, in the sense that the object of conventional honour may not be the object of natural honour, the two concepts of honour are not ontologically separable.

4.4.1 The stadium metaphor of two types of starting point

In *Nicomachean Ethics* I 4, Aristotle clarifies the starting point of his ethical inquiries by distinguishing two types of understanding of the first principles and likens the relationship between them to a Greek stadium:

> μὴ λανθανέτω δ᾽ ἡμᾶς ὅτι διαφέρουσιν οἱ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχῶν λόγοι καὶ οἱ ἐπὶ τὰς ἀρχάς. εὖ γὰρ καὶ ὁ Πλάτων ἠπόρει τοῦτο καὶ ἐζήτει, πότερον ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχῶν ἢ ἐπὶ τὰς ἀρχάς ἐστιν ἡ ὁδός, ὥσπερ ἐν τῷ σταδίῳ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀθλοθετῶν ἐπὶ τὸ πέρας ἢ ἀνάπαλιν.ἀρκτέον μὲν γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν γνωρίμων, ταῦτα δὲ διττῶς: τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἡμῖν τὰ δ᾽ ἁπλῶς. ἴσως οὖν ἡμῖν γε ἀρκτέον ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμῖν γνωρίμων.[121]
>
> It must not escape our notice that there is a difference between arguments that begin from first principles and arguments that work towards first principles. Plato rightly raised difficulties here regarding whether the way of inquiries was from first principles or to them, just as in the stadium one may start from the race steward towards the ending point or in the reversed direction. For one must begin from what is knowable, but there are two types of 'knowable': there is what is knowable in relation to us and what is knowable without qualification. Perhaps in our case, we must begin from what is knowable in relation to us.

The metaphor can be reconstructed as follows: in a typical stadium, both ends of the track can serve as the starting point of a race. The stadium can thus be seen as possessing two starting points while only having one track, and the middle point of the track can be achieved from both ends. In analogy, Aristotle proposes two ways of 'what is knowable' as the starting point of any inquiry, and 'what is knowable' here refers to an understanding of first principles, as clarified in the first sentence.

Therefore, Aristotle intends to distinguish two ways of understanding the first principles in this passage: one is in relation to us (ἡμῖν) and the other is without qualification (ἁπλῶς). His ethical inquiry starts from the understanding of first principles in relation to us and progress

[121] *EN* 1095a30–1095b4

towards, presumably, the unqualified understanding of first principles, belonging to 'arguments that work towards first principles.' We should also bear in mind that ethical questions can also be inferred from the unqualified understanding of first principles—'arguments that begin from first principles', in which case the goal can be particular ethical propositions exemplified by the middle point of the track.

There is an apparent link between the ἡμῖν/ἁπλῶς distinction of starting points and the καθόλου/ἁπλῶς distinction of starting points illustrated in *Posterior Analytics* I.1–2.[122] In both cases, the Meno's puzzle is referenced, or at least hinted, as a theoretical backdrop, suggesting a shared cognitive issue of these inquiries.[123] Moreover, term γνώριμος is used in both contexts to indicate the state of understanding. In the discussion in *Posterior Analytics*, the term καθόλου interchanges with the phrase πρὸς ἡμᾶς, and the term ἁπλῶς interchanges with the phrase τῇ φύσει.[124] While ἡμῖν (to us) and πρὸς ἡμᾶς (relative to us) are not identical expressions, they both indicate a state of understanding grounded in subjective familiarity rather than objective clarity. Aristotle also states that these two starting points are opposite to each other (καὶ ἀντίκειται ταὐτ' ἀλλήλοις), echoing the stadium metaphor in the former case.[125]

Therefore, Aristotle equates the understanding of first principles in relation to us (ἡμῖν/πρὸς ἡμᾶς) with a universal (καθόλου) grasp of these principles. The former expression highlights the proximity of this state of understanding to human sense-perception within the stages of cognitive development, while the latter stresses the validity of this understanding.[126] In the context of intellectual reasoning—likened to a stadium—this initial yet correct grasp of first principles represents one end of the spectrum of intellectual progress. For one type of argument—'arguments that work towards first principles,' the ultimate goal is to advance toward the other end of the stadium, achieving an ἁπλῶς or natural understanding of first principles.

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[122] *APo*. 71a25–30

[123] Broadie (2002, p. 266) comments that the wording suggests personal recollection of Plato's discussion, but this difficulty is associated with the *Meno*'s puzzle of either you will learn nothing or what you already knew. If the inquiry starts from certain first principles, one must know them in advance; if the inquiry aims at certain first principes, it cannot proceed without pre-existent knowledge. Therefore, Aristotle's response should be read in conjunction with his response to the *Meno*'s puzzle.

[124] *APo*. 71a25–31, 71b35–72a6

[125] *APo*. 71b35–72a6

[126] Broadie (2002, p. 267) accurately describes the state of understanding in relation to us as 'know unsystematically on the basis of ordinary experience,' but this interpretation may undermine its correctness.

In practice, the ἁπλῶς state of understanding is featured by a clear acquisition of knowledge that does not allow mistakes in application on particular cases.[127] In contrast, the universal state of understanding is *not* immune from mistakes in particulars. In the last section, we illustrated the intuitive grasp of the principles of triangle as an example of how induction leads to a universal understanding of first principles. Aristotle follows up on this example and adds that:

> Τῇ μὲν οὖν καθόλου θεωροῦμεν τὰ ἐν μέρει, τῇ δ' οἰκείᾳ οὐκ ἴσμεν, ὥστ' ἐνδέχεται καὶ ἀπατᾶσθαι περὶ αὐτα, πλὴν οὐκ ἐναντίως…[128]
>
> Whereas we observe particular things by universal understanding, we do not know them in their proper nature. Hence it is possible to be mistaken about them, not because we have contrary knowledge about them…

In this elucidation, Aristotle specifies that, although universal understanding is by no means contrary to reality, it can lead to mistakes when apply on particular cases, because universal understanding differs from understanding in proper nature (τῇ οἰκείᾳ), which may be an alternative expression for understanding by nature (τῇ φύσει), and both phrases likely refer to the understanding without qualification.

He then illustrates two cognitive mechanisms for the occurrence of this type of particular mistake and applies them to explain those with a universal understanding of triangle may fail to identify particular triangle features.[129] The first mechanism is the negligence of particulars (ἀματᾶσθαι δὲ τὴν κατὰ μέρος): one may grasp the universal understanding that all A is B and A is composed of C as particulars, and yet fail to recognise the existence of a certain C.[130] Consequently, one will not categorise C as either A or B.

The second mechanism is the deceit in respect of middle terms (ἡ κατὰ τὸ μέσον ἀπάτη): one may grasp the propositions that all A is B and all B is C, but fail to recognise the state of B as a middle term that links the two premises, if he does not consider the two propositions in conjunction, thereby reaching erroneous propositions regarding the connection between A and C.[131] Such propositions will systematically lead to particular mistakes when serving as

[127] See the previous section for a detailed distinction between καθόλου and ἁπλῶς, cf. *APr*. 67a8–16.
[128] *APr*. 67a27–30
[129] *APr*. 67a19–21
[130] *AP*r. 67a29–30; 67a8–13: ἀλλ' οὐδὲν κωλύει ἀγνοειν το Γ ὅτι ἔστιν, here ὅτι ἔστιν is technical that refers to the existential premise of certain entity (cf. *APo*. 71a12, 72b4–7, 16–22.).
[131] *APr*. 67a31–37

practical guidelines.

Aristotle also suggests in the context that the underlying reason for the compatibility of universal knowledge and particular error lies in the state of understanding, namely καθόλου. He explains that the understanding of triangle in the discussion is not without qualification (οὐχ ἁπλοῦν ἐστιν) but either καθόλου understanding or known by particulars.[132] The implication is that ἁπλῶς understanding of principles will not allow for the occurrence of the above two types of particular errors.

In this way, Aristotle addresses the question of why one can identify the trait of natural honour but cannot practice it oneself from an epistemological perspective. He distinguishes two types of understanding of first principles: one is universal (καθόλου) and the other is without qualification (ἁπλῶς). When we grasp the principles of natural honour through the perception of particular instances that reflect such principles, like the cavemen grasping the goodness of God through perceiving the natural phenomena, the understanding is rudimentary/καθόλου rather than a clear/ἁπλῶς one.

Consequently, it may lead to particular mistakes when serving as practical guidance, preventing those who confer natural honour from effectively imitating those who inspire natural honour. Universal understandings lead to particular mistakes in two ways. First, one may fail to identify certain objects of natural honour or misidentify some traits and deeds as objects of natural honour, rendering the universal understanding ineffective in practice from the outset. For instance, a person might recognise the genuine goodness embodied in a godlike individual through a universal understanding of honour-related principles; yet he misidentified certain accidental attributes of that individual—such as good fortune or wealth—as the definition of goodness. As a result, he might pursue wealth in an attempt to imitate the godlike individual and blame misfortune when failed to achieve goodness.

Second, divergence may occur during the intellectual process from καθόλου to ἁπλῶς understanding of first principles. Due to the mistakes when considering various principles in conjunction, erroneous propositions can be reached. For example, a person may recognise that

[132] *APr*. 67a16–21: …οὐχ ἁπλοῦν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μέν τῷ τὴν καθόλου ἐέιν ἐμιστήμην, τὸ δὲ τὴν καθ' ἕκαστον. Aristotle explains that the understanding of triangle in the discussion is not without qualification (οὐχ ἁπλοῦν ἐστιν). The implication is that such type of understanding will not allow particular errors for it cannot be otherwise (cf. *EN* 1139b21).

the natural order is good, and that the natural order is composed of various natural phenomena, but deems certain natural phenomena to be bad.

4.4.2 Theoretical wisdom as the naturally honourable

Having clarified the possibility of cognitive error in applying καθόλου/rudimentary/universal understanding of first principles to both particular instances and general reasoning, the discussion will proceed to the progression of cognitive development towards an ἁπλῶς/clear/unqualified understanding of first principles. It will also identify the corresponding faculty in human soul that ensures this accurate and secure acquisition of first principles within Aristotle's epistemological framework. I will argue that the faculty that involves an unqualified understanding of first principles is *theoretical wisdom*, which aligns with Aristotle's description of godlike men who lead a life of contemplation that is guided by theoretical wisdom. Therefore, theoretical wisdom is the characteristic faculty of those who are naturally honourable.

Given that the two types of understanding of first principles as the starting points of inquiry are true, the cognitive stages between them must also be true. In *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.3–7, Aristotle lists and elaborates on five kinds of states by which our soul possesses truth: intellect, art, practical wisdom, scientific knowledge, and theoretical knowledge.[133] Among these candidates, he explicitly indicates that, having ruled out the other four types of knowledge, the only possibility remaining is that the faculty of intellect involves the knowledge of first principles (λείπεται νοῦν εἶναι τῶν ἀρχῶν).[134] However, the key question is what is the state of mind that secures a clear grasp of first principles and what is the relationship between this state of mind and the rest of cognitive states. In other words, what is the cognitive stage that is closest to the endpoint of the stadium?

Aristotle's elaboration on art and practical wisdom excludes them as the states of mind for a clear grasp of first principles, because their objects include what can be otherwise whereas the first principles cannot be otherwise.[135] On the other hand, scientific knowledge is illustrated to include objects that cannot be otherwise. Aristotle refers to the corresponding account in the *Analytics* that scientific knowledge is a state that is active in scientific deduction through which

[133] *EN* 1139b16–18
[134] *EN* 1141a8: λείπεται νοῦν εἶναι τῶν ἀρχῶν.
[135] *EN* 1140a1, a21–24

one achieves a clear understanding without qualification (ἁπλῶς) of demonstrable knowledge.[136] However, Aristotle's first principle is indemonstrable knowledge—they cannot be explained by a middle term. Thus, scientific knowledge is disqualified as a candidate for the state of mind that includes a clear acquisition of the principles. Bearing in mind the characteristics of the above types of knowledge, Aristotle's response to this issue is reflected in the following passage:

> ὥστε δῆλον ὅτι ἀκριβεστάτη ἂν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν εἴη ἡ σοφία. δεῖ ἄρα τὸν σοφὸν μὴ μόνον τὰ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχῶν εἰδέναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς ἀληθεύειν. ὥστ᾽ εἴη ἂν ἡ σοφία νοῦς καὶ ἐπιστήμη, ὥσπερ κεφαλὴν ἔχουσα ἐπιστήμη τῶν τιμιωτάτων.[137]
>
> So it is clear that theoretical wisdom is the most precise type of scientific knowledge. Those who possess it must not only know what follows from the first principles, but also possess truth about the first principles. Therefore, theoretical knowledge is a combination of intellect and scientific knowledge—as if it is the scientific knowledge of the most honourable objects holding a crowning state.

In this text, Aristotle compares theoretical wisdom with scientific knowledge and lists two components of theoretical wisdom: a true grasp of first principles and what follows from first principles. A true grasp of first principles refers to a clear understanding of them. For instance, a geometer who clearly understands that the definition of a triangle is that its interior angles sum to two right angles can be considered to have a true grasp of this principle. A true grasp of what follows from first principles refers to the ability to apply these principles in scientific deductions and other forms of reasoning with the ultimate aim of explaining particular cases. In the stadium metaphor, this aspect of theoretical wisdom ensures the correctness of all inferences that begin from the ἁπλῶς understanding of first principles.

At first glance, it is tempting to interpret theoretical wisdom as a sub-category of scientific knowledge, namely scientific knowledge of the first principles. Although this reading is implied in the first sentence of the quoted text, we should not interpret it as Aristotle's true intention. This is because there is a categorical difference between theoretical wisdom and scientific knowledge, as explained in *Posterior Analytics*, the knowledge of first principles is indemonstrable while the objects of scientific knowledge are demonstrable.[138]

A more reasonable interpretation is that the feature of scientific knowledge helps appreciate the

[136] *EN* 1139b20–35, for the reference to the *Analytics* cf. *APo*. 71a1–2.
[137] *EN* 1141a16–20
[138] E.g., *APo*. 72b19–21

nature of theoretical wisdom. First, the term ὥσπερ in the last sentence indicates the similar manifestation of these two types of knowledge in our mind. A true grasp of first principles should refer to a clear understanding of them in the same way as that of scientific propositions. Both types of knowledge are understood without qualification and cannot be otherwise. Second, the acquisition of scientific knowledge is necessary for the acquisition of corresponding theoretical wisdom. This is because the latter involves a clear grasp of what follows from the first principles, including scientific propositions explained by the first principles. It is worth noting that, in the case of the universal understanding of first principles, one possible deviation is the negligence of middle terms. In contrast, such deviation is impossible in the case of theoretical wisdom due to the clear grasp of what follows from the first principles.

In this way, we identify a pathway from a rudimentary understanding of first principles to a clear and comprehensive understanding. This journey begins at the cognitive stage of experience, where the initial and rudimentary understanding of first principles likely resides after being grasped through Aristotelian induction. From there, one progresses through the stage of scientific knowledge, which provides structured and systematic insights into demonstrable propositions, and ultimately reaches the stage of theoretical wisdom, which ensures a clear and profound understanding of the intellect.

Theoretical wisdom, characterised by the ability to comprehend first principles in their entirety, is thus the defining faculty of those who attract natural honour, because this advanced stage of cognitive development not only entails a deep understanding of abstract principles, but also, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, reflects a divine intellectual capability that commands respect and admiration when being perceived. This interpretation meshes with Aristotle's frequent reference to honour, admiration, godlike men, and divinity in his ethical works when illustrating theoretical wisdom and the life of contemplation, which will be investigated in the next chapter.

Another pathway between the two types understanding of first principles is through practical wisdom and art. While these two types of knowledge heavily rely on experience of particulars, they still depend on first principles as the aim of these practical projects.[139] Although Aristotle may not consider the inference in this pathway as scientific deduction, this does not prevent him from thinking that practical wisdom and art also require certain first principles to justify

[139] *EN* 1140b16–17

their existence.

Based on the preceding analysis, it can be inferred from Aristotle's definition of theoretical wisdom that this intellectual virtue is manifested not only through the contemplation of first principles but also in its capacity to guide all activities involving reason. While contemplation is a distinctive activity of this faculty of the soul, it is not the sole means by which it is manifested. Therefore, it is misleading to conceive that individuals whose lives are governed by theoretical wisdom are exclusively engaged in contemplation and somehow isolated from societal involvement. On the contrary, theoretical wisdom, as a fully developed state of mind, inherently involves the acquisition and integration of the other three types of knowledge. Consequently, those who possess theoretical wisdom will also engage in activities that draw upon these subordinate types of knowledge.[140] The next chapter will further develop this argument and assert that the life of contemplation lived by godlike men can be reliably perceived and identified by members of society.

4.4.3 The cognitive state of conventional honour

Having addressed the epistemological issue of natural honour, we may now turn to Aristotle's standpoint on the cognitive state of conventional honour. This concept is usually interpreted, as illustrated in Chapter 1.3, as evaluative judgments based on common agreement and interpersonal obligations.[141] On this interpretation, since people can form a consensus on many opposing things, this standard of value judgment is often considered arbitrary, making it difficult to endow it with moral significance beyond maintaining social stability.

Aristotle is also aware of this feature of conventional honour. He mentions that personal value judgments are influenced by the irrational part of the soul and that people tend to value health when they are ill and wealth when they are poor.[142] Moreover, these opinions will conflict with factual particular cases, when what is honoured, like wealth or courage, turns out to be a source of damage.[143] Consequently, people cannot prove their opinions through empirical facts but can only resort to mutual recognition with those who adopt the same opinions as a source of proof. Opinions need to be collectively agreed upon within a community, transforming into

[140] As the central concern of this argument is to identify the state of mind of those who attract natural honour, I omit several issues regarding the relationship among art, practical wisdom, and scientific knowledge, such as whether scientific knowledge plays a dominant role in corresponding art and whether the teaching of scientific knowledge requires pre-existent experience. Aristotle never specifies this issue in his epistemological investigation.
[141] *EN* 1095b23–25
[142] *EN* 1095a24–25
[143] *EN* 1094b18–20

commonly accepted beliefs, to sustain the function of conventional honour. This feature aligns with Aristotle's assertion that honour depends more on those who bestow it than those who receive it.[144]

However, the above interpretation of conventional honour through the received paradigm does not mesh with Aristotle's emphasis on commonly accepted opinions as the starting point of his moral investigation. Aristotle claims that his moral investigation starts from some of the commonly accepted opinions.[145] He also refers to these reputable beliefs as the starting point of investigation in the individual examination of moral virtues.[146] Consequently, we are faced with two options: either to accept a deflationary interpretation of Aristotle's ethical doctrines, as some scholars do,[147] which views Aristotelian moral virtues as essentially interpersonal obligations, or to reassess whether Aristotle attributes a normative basis to conventional honour and the underlying commonly accepted opinions, thus qualifying them as the starting point of his moral investigation.

An appreciation of the καθόλου grasp of first principles may offer valuable insight into the normative basis of conventional honour. As illustrated in Chapter 4.3.4, καθόλου understanding possesses three key features. First, it is correct, meaning that that knowledge grasped in this manner is inherently valid. Second, it is rudimentary, as this form of understanding cannot be fully articulated and therefore does not guarantee correct reasoning derived from it. Third, it is widespread, in that all psychically developed individuals are capable of grasping first principles in this manner through the perception of particular instances that embody these principles.

Consequently, we can identify three potential sources of normativity for conventional honour, although Aristotle does not explicitly address this topic in his ethical works. First and foremost, one must grasp the existential premise of goodness as a necessary foundation for forming any proposition about it—whether concerning true goodness or apparent goodness. While Aristotle recognises that the affections of pleasure and pain significantly influence people's judgments about what appears to be good,[148] it is implausible to interpret him as reducing apparent

[144] *EN* 1095b25–26
[145] *EN* 1094b20–24
[146] For an explicit statement see *EN* 1129a6–9: ἡ δὲ σκέψις ἡμῖν ἔστω κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν μέθοδον τοῖς προειρημένοις. ὁρῶμεν δὴ πάντας τὴν τοιαύτην ἕξιν βουλομένους λέγειν δικαιοσύνην…
[147] E.g., Cairns (1992), Cordner (1994), Rabbas (2015).
[148] *EN* 1104b4–28

goodness merely to a nominal expression of these feelings. Instead, any judgment about apparent goodness must also involve an underlying acknowledgment of the existential premise of goodness—that is, the belief that goodness exists as a meaningful and objective concept beyond subjective experiences of pleasure and pain.

Additionally, propositions concerning apparent goodness may be improperly derived from the definition of true goodness, of which the process is explained in the next point. This suggests that forming propositions about conventional honour likely depends on an underlying grasp of the principles essential to the cognitive transformation associated with natural honour. Although the concepts of natural and conventional honour are clearly distinct in a taxonomical sense, they may not be entirely separable in an ontological sense.

Second, as illustrated in the stadium metaphor, incorrect propositions can not only be derived from irrational part of the soul but also from the καθόλου grasp of first principles. People may rudimentarily grasp the immediate connections between A and B and between B and C, yet fail to recognise B as the middle term linking A and C. In the same vein, it is plausible that people might misidentify a certain B as the middle term when it appears in two propositions that cannot compose a syllogism.

For example, Aristotle refutes the incorrect yet popular opinion that God is anthropomorphic in *Metaphysics* Λ. He also speculates that this incorrect opinion might be a modified version of the knowledge of God acquired by ancestors and passed down to their descendants, with the alteration into mythical form intended to persuade the masses.[149] The effectiveness of this alteration in aiding persuasion can be explained by the following cognitive process. Many individuals of the time had a universal (καθόλου) grasp of the proposition that 'God is good' and 'godlike men are good.' Influenced by the mythical understanding of God, they might misidentify the notion of goodness in these two propositions as the middle term, leading to the incorrect belief that 'God is godlike men,' thereby anthropomorphising God.[150] Although this belief is erroneous, its popularity in society implies the prevalence of the premises of this belief among individuals as a shared starting point of reasoning. In other words, the goodness of God and godlike is widely grasped in the community where God is anthropomorphised. Otherwise, people would reach arbitrary conclusions regarding the substance of God. This example

[149] *Met*. 1074b5–7
[150] This speculation can also explain the idea of viewing regular natural phenomena as divine, which will not be elaborated upon here.

illustrates that some erroneous opinions, especially those held by a significant amount of people, come from distorted inferences of first principles with identifiable patterns. Therefore, this type of common beliefs and the corresponding practice of conventional honour may be seen as a distorted manifestation of first principles and thus serve as a convenient but cautious reference in Aristotle's moral investigation.

The connection between commonly accepted opinions and first principles clarifies Aristotle's varying perspectives on existing opinions on the concept of eudaimonia. In *Nicomachean Ethics* I, he quickly dismisses the possibility of value judgments driven by bodily affections as a basis for eudaimonia, such as the emphasis on health when one is ill; he also chooses not to reference the idea of wealth as the definition of eudaimonia in his moral investigation, despite its popularity at the time. In contrast, he extensively addresses the widely held opinion that happiness is pleasure, labelling it as 'not unreasonable' (οὐκ ἀλόγως), and repeatedly respond this viewpoint in subsequent analyses.[151] The underlying reason may be that only the last belief results from a distorted inference based on first principles, granting it the validity as a reference for the starting point of Aristotle's moral investigation and providing a normative basis for the corresponding conventional honour.[152] It is likely for the same reason that Aristotle considers the young and those immature in character not appropriate audiences for his ethical inquiry. Because these people are inexperienced (ἄπειρος), namely lacking the necessary perceptions for a rudimentary grasp of the principles of eudaimonia in their faculty of experience, yet Aristotle's inquiry starts from this.[153]

Third, the normativity for conventional honour also lies in its important role in the practice of moral virtues. As illustrated in the stadium metaphor, starting from the universal grasp of first principles, we can achieve an understanding of practical wisdom with the exactness prescribed by the nature of the subject.[154] At the cognitive stage, we can identify and stay in the disposition that is appropriate to particular situations in public life, which is usually an intermediate state relating to certain affections.[155] However, as we have not reached the endpoint of the stadium,

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[151] *EN* 1095b15

[152] It should be noted that the statement in *EN* 1101b27–31 that 'pleasure should not be praised' reflects neither Aristotle's own position nor the common agreement that underpins conventional honour, but rather the opinion attributed to Eudoxus. Moreover, Eudoxus does not regard pleasure as worthless; on the contrary, he considers it to be of the highest value, deserving of an even greater form of recognition than praise.

[153] *EN* 1095a3–5: διὸ τῆς πολιτικῆς οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκεῖος ἀκροατὴς ὁ νέος: ἄπειρος γὰρ τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πράξεων, οἱ λόγοι δ᾽ ἐκ τούτων καὶ περὶ τούτω.

[154] Cf. *EN* 1095b20–30 on the different levels of precision between practical wisdom and scientific knowledge.

[155] See e.g. *EN* 1114b27–28

we have not acquired a ἁπλῶς understanding of the principles that prescribe and explain the intermediate state. Therefore, we lack a determining mark to clearly explain the normative source of moral virtues despite the universal understanding of it.[156] This issue is also identified by Aristotle as a research deficiency after analysing individual virtues, indicating that at this stage of personal moral development, one cannot clearly recognise the determining mark (ὅρος) of moral actions.[157] At this stage, we certainly cannot ignore the role of natural honour as a normative force, as people will still recognise and admire the goodness of human intellect reflected in virtuous behaviours. However, this normative force can be counteracted by other sources of impulses before being clearly understood by theoretical wisdom.

For example, in the domain of scientific knowledge, a sane person can assert that 1+1=2 regardless of external influences, but if a person does not clearly understand the zoological principles about humanity, he might be persuaded by a sophist to believe that a human is a featherless biped. Practical wisdom derived from experience faces a similar situation with the latter case, manifested in reality where many who possess practical wisdom can correctly make practical decisions but cannot clearly articulate the guiding principles with regard to their decisions.

At this point, conventional honour as a means of maintaining virtue in public life shows its unique value. Aristotle mentions in analysis of individual virtues the role of shame as an affection in the habituation of virtuous dispositions. This shame is different from the emotion of emulation produced when observing the divine mentioned earlier, which is part of natural honour. Rather, the affection of shame is a mental pain caused by public criticism and belongs to the scope of conventional honour. Overall, conventional honour is an effective means in real political life to maintain the normal operation of society and the continuity of social values, but considering it as the only normative source of Aristotelian ethics, interpreting his ethics as a form of deontology, is too far-fetched.[158]

[156] If the moral reasoning starts from the other side of the stadium, namely from theoretical wisdom, one will understand the moral principles in a ἁπλῶς way and thus can explain this and be immune from external influences. This distinction will be illustrated in the next chapter as the different manifestation between political life and contemplative life.
[157] *EN* 1138b24, 34
[158] Rabbas (2015, p. 3)

Chapter 5: The Ethical Account of Natural Honour Revisited

5.1 Introduction

The last two chapters have investigated the mechanism of natural honour respectively from the theological and epistemological perspectives. The fundamental paradigm of natural honour is rooted in the cognitive shift of admiration that God incites in the soul of heavenly bodies, motivating their imitation of God's eternal actuality. Aristotle argues that it is not only God Himself but also the order that depends on God that manifests the goodness of God, both being capable of eliciting admiration in those who observe them. Thus, the natural order, as an orderly manifestation of the divine actuality, also serves to inspire admiration, at least in beings equipped with rationality.

This idea is illustrated in the cavemen's allegory: imaginary cavemen once living in isolation, upon witnessing the regularity of the natural order, would come to recognise the existence of God and His inherent goodness. Building on this view, this study extends that Aristotle categorises the intellect as the substance of God together with the human intellect, or at least attributes to them the same externality in terms of the evocation of admiration. Consequently, the Aristotelian godlike men, who possess the clearest grasp of intellect within human limits, can similarly inspire a cognitive shift of admiration in observers through their orderly activities. In other words, people naturally bestow honour upon godlike men.

Aristotle's epistemology provides a foundation for the above cognitive shift that features natural honour. Through a selective analysis of his account in *Organon*, it becomes clear that Aristotle's concept of first principles encompasses not only divine and celestial entities and mathematical objects but also existential premises and immediate connections among a wide array of entities.[1] This broad range includes natural composites, such as humans, and moral concepts, such as goodness, all of which Aristotle uses as examples in the *Analytics.* Additionally, Aristotle's theory of induction in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, in conjunction with his lemma in *De Anima* III.5, is considered the cognitive manifestation of the actualisation of potential intellect. This interpretation allows for the grasp of first principles through the perception of a particular instance that embodies these principles. Thus, the goodness of a

[1] Cf. Rorty (1980, p. 379) labels the objects of contemplation as 'the unchanging forms of what does change.'

godlike man can be apprehended in an undifferentiated or rudimentary way through direct perception, leading naturally to an experience of honour.

In this way, this thesis has argued for a self-sufficient mechanism by which the intrinsic worth of happiness—a concept universally acknowledged and central to Aristotle's ethics—is *outwardly manifested and reliably recognised* by other individuals, rather than remaining in a state of 'invisible elephant in the room'—something alleged to be real but unnoticeable—that is acknowledged only through self-respect or recognition from like-minded.

However, before applying this paradigm of natural honour to illuminate some of the more controversial honour-related chapters in Aristotle's ethics, two additional issues regarding the life of godlike men require clarification. First, can godlike men be *perceived* in actual life? We have argued that godlike men live a contemplative life, characterised by the activity of contemplation (θεωρία), which leads to the unconditional (ἁπλῶς) acquisition of first principles.[2] Given that contemplation is a self-sufficient activity, it raises the question of whether godlike men would choose to engage in public life at all, except incidentally—for instance, to meet nutritive needs.[3] As discussed in Chapter 4.3.2, the occurrence of natural honour requires the perception of honourable objects. If godlike individuals prioritise isolation over interaction in order to secure the leisure necessary for contemplation, they may go unnoticed by others—particularly if they are supported by ample external resources—thereby preventing the arousal of natural honour.

Second, if godlike men do participate in public life, how can they be *distinguished* from other lifestyles, particularly the ideal political life, which Aristotle regards as the second happiest?[4] For godlike men to be recognised by others, they must not only engage in public life but do so in a manner visually distinct from others, as the distinction in the states of soul cannot be perceived. However, it remains unclear how they would behave differently from the *phronimos*—those who are guided by practical wisdom and moral virtues. Aristotle states that

[2] Some scholars refer to *EN* 1145a22–25 and speculate that Aristotle's godlike men merely possess an excess of moral virtues that enables them to behave virtuously in extreme situations (Bae, 2003). However, the description of contemplative life as godlike in *EN* 1177b31–35 discourages this interpretation; see also *Protrepticus* B28: 'Man deprived of intellect alone is turned into a brute; deprived of irrationality but retaining intellect, he becomes godlike;' cf. the contrast between godlike and brutish in *EN* 1145a15–33.

[3] *EN* 1178b33–1179a3. Some scholars (e.g., Kenny, 1992) argue that external resources are integral to Aristotle's concept of happiness, making their pursuit essential, rather than incidental, to the contemplative life. However, regardless of which interpretation is adopted, this does not significantly affect the main issue in the context—that godlike men would choose to detach from the community as much as possible.

[4] *EN* 1178a9–14

practical wisdom 'see to the coming into being (ὁρᾷ ὅπως γένηται)' of theoretical wisdom,[5] yet he does not clarify how the practical actions of those with theoretical wisdom differ from those solely driven by practical wisdom.

This chapter will first address the above two practical challenges of identifying honourable godlike men, followed by a revisitation of *EN* I.12 with a synthetic understanding of the mechanism of natural honour. Lastly, I will seek to revive and complement a classic interpretation, proposed by John A. Stewart, of Aristotle's two honour-related virtues in *EN* IV. 3–4. This interpretation treats the two virtues as addressing different qualities of honour rather than mere differences in quantity and understands the virtue of greatness-of-soul as the public characteristic of Aristotle's godlike philosopher.

5.2 The Perception and Distinction of Life of Contemplation

5.2.1 The visibility of contemplative life

In *EN* X.8, after introducing the life of politics in accordance with all the virtues except theoretical wisdom as the second happiest life, Aristotle elaborates on its relationship to the contemplative life as follows:

> τῷ δὲ θεωροῦντι οὐδενὸς τῶν τοιούτων πρός γε τὴν ἐνέργειαν χρεία, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς εἰπεῖν καὶ ἐμπόδιά ἐστι πρός γε τὴν θεωρίαν: ᾗ δ᾽ ἄνθρωπός ἐστι καὶ πλείοσι συζῇ, αἱρεῖται τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν πράττειν: δεήσεται οὖν τῶν τοιούτων πρὸς τὸ ἀνθρωπεύεσθαι.[6]
>
> The person engaged in contemplation needs none of these things (external goods) for the activity, but one might almost say that they are actually impediments to contemplation; but in so far as he is a human being and lives with the many, he chooses to do the deeds that accord with virtue, and so he will need such things to live a human life.

From the above passage, it seems that those who lead a contemplative life will still participate in public life and, more importantly, act according to practical virtues, rather than choosing a reclusive lifestyle or overlooking human cares and duties due to the self-sufficiency of contemplation.[7] In other words, a godlike man who exercises and cultivates intellect will

[5] *EN* 1145a9
[6] *EN* 1178b3–7
[7] The life of a hermit is also ruled out by *EN* 1097b8–11. Cf. *EN* 1177b33–4, where Aristotle appears to suggest an amoral ideal of the contemplative life; however, this interpretation should be refuted in light of the argument presented in the quoted text.

incorporate aspects beyond contemplation into his life and, therefore, can indeed be observed in real life.[8]

Some commentators treat this passage as an affirmative and straightforward response to the visibility issue of contemplative life.[9] However, two underlying issues complicate this assertion and may hinder the subsequent demonstration of the practical distinction of contemplative life. The first issue concerns the compatibility of a contemplative life with public engagement. Since the defining activity of contemplative life is self-sufficient and inward-focused, one might question whether public engagement—requiring outward-focused actions and interactions—can align with the contemplative life; the second issue relates to the motivations behind godlike men, who prioritise intellectual pursuits, for choosing to participate in public life in a morally exemplary way.[10]

Regarding the first concern, it is true that Aristotle's formal description of happiness as complete and self-sufficient allows for the interpretation that it consists solely of the actuality of intellect, given that this activity alone is entirely complete and self-sufficient.[11] However, it is important to note that while a particular type of activity may be the primary goal of a way of life (βίος), that way of life need not consist exclusively of this activity. Instead, it represents an entire way of life structured around the primary activity. Thus, a contemplative life is not limited to the time spent in contemplation alone but encompasses the entirety of one's life, fundamentally organised around contemplation.[12]

In response to the second concern, various explanations have been proposed, assigning different instrumental roles to virtuous actions—such as acquiring necessary external resources for sustenance or facilitating leisure.[13] However, these accounts of the virtuous actions of godlike men are, at best, *ad hoc*, since it is easy to imagine a situation in which the godlike man is blessed with abundant external resources and, therefore, would no longer need to choose virtuous actions for these reasons. Furthermore, the quoted text suggests that the primary reason

[8] *EN* 1179a24–26 confirms the godlike feature of these people by claiming that they would be most dear to God, if God had any care for human affairs, because God should delight in that *which is most akin to them*.
[9] E.g., Stewart (1892, p. 454)
[10] Aufderheide (2020, p. 203)
[11] Irwin (2012) labels this interpretation as 'intellectualism,' contrasting it with 'pluralism, and aligns himself with the pluralist perspective. For a representative intellectualist approach, see Charles (2014).
[12] For a systematic review of this view on Aristotle's way of life see Walker (2018, p. 35).
[13] Broadie (2002, p. 445) suggests that the motive for an intellectually accomplished paragon to exercise practical virtues is the need for external resources. However, the surrounding context, which emphasises the paragon's independence from external resources, weakens this interpretation. Aufderheide (2020, p. 202) refines this view, proposing that external resources serve primarily as means to secure the leisure necessary for contemplation.

for the godlike man's virtuous actions is his nature as a human—specifically, as a social animal who lives among many others (ᾗ δ᾽ ἄνθρωπός ἐστι καὶ πλείοσι συζῇ).[14] The role of external resources merely supports this primary factor. Thus, even with ample resources to support leisure, the godlike man would still choose to engage in public life.

Drawing on the epistemological framework outlined in Chapter 4.4, I propose a more explanatory account for the virtuous actions of godlike men. In Aristotle's stadium metaphor, a clear and unqualified understanding of first principles—referred to as theoretical wisdom—is positioned at the end of the stadium and can be reached only by progressing through successive intermediate stages of cognitive development.[15] This paradigm applies equally to the unqualified acquisition of moral principles. Such unqualified moral understanding can be attained only after an individual has first cultivated the appropriate moral dispositions through habituation and then developed practical wisdom, which enables sound moral judgment and action in particular scenarios.

In this sense, Aristotle claims that practical wisdom 'sees to the coming into being (ὁρᾷ ὅπως γένηται)' of theoretical wisdom.[16] Practical wisdom not only arranges external affairs conducive to the free exercise of theoretical wisdom but, more importantly, establishes the cognitive conditions necessary for the corresponding theoretical wisdom.[17] On this interpretation, godlike men must have already acquired practical wisdom, and they have no reason or motivation to act otherwise in public life.

Some scholars may critique the above view of Aristotle's cognitive theory, which suggests a successive progression toward theoretical wisdom. Drawing on evidence from *Metaphysics* A and *EN* VI.3, they argue that, while some knowledge requires experience, other forms can be acquired solely through being taught—and that theoretical wisdom falls into this latter category.[18] In other words, they claim that Aristotle views human intellect as fully actualisable through extensive training in philosophical thought alone, without requiring the virtues of character that are prerequisites for practical wisdom.[19]

[14] *EN* 1178b5
[15] See Chapter 4.4 for a detailed explanation.
[16] *EN* 1145a9
[17] Cf. Aufderheide (2020, p. 187) for a different interpretation of the text.
[18] Met. 981b7–12, EN 1139b25–28
[19] Aufderheide (2020, p. 20)

The dispute over the godlike man's motivation for virtuous activity will influence the subsequent discussion of the practical distinctions between the contemplative life and the political life and therefore warrants further elaboration.

I believe the above interpretation of Aristotle's epistemology arises either from an underestimation of the scope of intellect or an overestimation of the role of teaching. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the first principles constituting intellect encompass a wide range of foundational propositions. Some of these are universal axioms essential to all areas of knowledge, while others are necessary for particular subjects, including suppositions and definitions.[20] Consequently, theoretical wisdom, as a faculty marked by the unconditional grasp of first principles, also encompasses a broad array of primary knowledge.

It would be unnecessarily deflationary, for instance, to restrict the objects of theoretical wisdom to the principles of scientific knowledge simply because Aristotle describes theoretical wisdom as akin to the scientific knowledge of intellect in *EN* VI.[21] As demonstrated in Chapter 4.4.2, theoretical wisdom is not a subcategory of scientific knowledge, nor does it overlap with the latter in any sense, since the object of theoretical wisdom is, by definition, indemonstrable. Rather, Aristotle's comparison serves to highlight theoretical wisdom's unqualified grasp of first principles that underpin both scientific knowledge and practical wisdom. With this fuller understanding of the scope of theoretical wisdom, it becomes evident that experience is essential for at least the acquisition of some of its components. Without direct perception of entities such as the sun, one cannot fully comprehend their existential premise and definitions, regardless of the extent of philosophical training and instruction.

With regard to teaching, it is true that Aristotle states that scientific knowledge is a form of universal knowledge whose subject matter can be taught and learned.[22] However, this does not imply that no prior understanding is necessary when learning scientific knowledge from teaching. In fact, immediately after asserting that scientific knowledge can be taught and learned in *EN* VI.3, Aristotle clarifies that all teaching must proceed from what is already known, which aligns with the opening sentence of *Posterior Analytics*.[23] Therefore, even the

[20] *APo*.72a15–25
[21] *EN* 1141a16–20
[22] *Met*. 981b7–12, *EN* 1139b25–26
[23] *EN* 1139b26–28, *APo*. 71a1–10

learner of scientific knowledge must grasp a certain understanding of the corresponding principles in advance, without which he cannot be taught scientific knowledge.

As demonstrated in Chapter Four, the prior understanding required for scientific knowledge—as well as for art and practical wisdom—is a universal (καθόλου) but rudimentary grasp of first principles that may be acquired at the stage of experience. In the same vein, theoretical wisdom, understood as the faculty that involves a clear and unqualified acquisition of first principles, requires corresponding general knowledge as pre-existent understanding, including practical wisdom, thereby forming a cognitive progression from one end of the stadium to the other end. Thus, we should not overestimate the role of teaching as a means by which certain general knowledge can be learned without relevant pre-existent understanding. Aristotle's selective emphasis on the teachability of scientific knowledge may be based on consideration of the readily accessibility of necessary experience for such knowledge.[24] For instance, most individuals have a rudimentary understanding of the features of triangle from daily life, before entering in a geometry class to refine the understanding into scientific knowledge of triangle.

In contrast, practical wisdom is not classified as teachable knowledge despite its status as general knowledge. This is not because it is inherently unteachable—indeed, Aristotle's ethical works aim to convey moral knowledge to his students—but rather because the frontload experience it requires is far less accessible than that required for scientific knowledge. In a word, the quantity and quality of experience prevents the youth to acquire intellectual wisdoms.[25] For Aristotle, habituation serves as the method through which a preliminary understanding of ethical principles is attained, laying the groundwork for the later development of practical wisdom.[26] But proper habituation is not available to everyone. This is why Aristotle states at the outset of the *EN* that those young in age or immature in character are not suited to be his audience, as they lack the experiential background needed for understanding the actions that constitute public life.[27]

In sum, if Aristotle's contemplative life is not exclusively defined by the activity of theoretical wisdom but is instead structured under its guiding influence, this way of life remains compatible with participation in public affairs, regardless of whether such involvement directly

[24] *EN* 1142a18–22, Aristotle mentions there is no difficulty in grasping the definitions of mathematic concepts.
[25] *EN* 1142a16–18
[26] See *EN* 1098b3–5, where Aristotle lists habituation alongside perception and induction as methods through which first principles are apprehended. For a discussion of the role of intellect in habituation, see Sorabji (1980, pp. 214–218).
[27] *EN* 1095a2–10

contributes to personal happiness. The quoted passage from *EN* X.8 thus provides valid evidence that, as human beings living within a community, godlike individuals will naturally engage in public life and act virtuously. As a result, their actions and conduct can be reliably perceived as manifestations of the activity of human intellect, thereby meeting the conditions necessary to inspire natural honour.

5.2.2 The observable difference of contemplative life

The issue regarding the observable difference between godlike individuals and others in public life stems directly from the earlier explanation that they engage in public affairs in a way consistent with the prescription of practical wisdom and moral virtues. For godlike men to be recognised as objects of natural honour, they must exhibit a perceptible distinction from other ways of life, as perception is the first step in the acquisition of knowledge according to Aristotle's account of induction.[28] In this case, the life of politics (ὁ πολιτικὸς βίος) presents the closest comparison. Aristotle labels the political life as the second-best way of life, characterised by the dominance of practical wisdom as the guiding means and moral virtues as the behavioural end.[29] Given that the public life of godlike men is also consistent with the prescription of practical wisdom and moral virtues, it raises the question of how their behaviour meaningfully differs from that of the *phronimoi*—those who are guided solely by practical wisdom and moral virtues.[30]

It is important to first clarify that an observable difference does not necessarily imply distinct behaviours in isolated instances. Rather, the life of contemplation may reveal itself in the broader structure and organisation of one's public life, which is shaped by the way one allocates one's time and resources. This difference may not be immediately evident but instead reveals itself gradually over time and often requires more than mere observation; it usually emerges through sustained interaction and familiarity, much like how the regularity of the seasons becomes clear only through attentive engagement. In the case of citizens who are *philoi*, their ongoing relationships and mutual concern further enable them to discern such distinctions as they unfold.

[28] *APo*. II. 19
[29] *EN* 1178a9–23
[30] See Rorty (1980), who raises this question but provides an answer grounded in the assumption of mutual independence between theoretical and practical wisdom (p. 386).

The question of distinguishing the contemplative life in public sphere can be more effectively addressed by examining the utility (χρήσιμος) of theoretical wisdom—namely, what practical use does theoretical wisdom serve? This is because the practical characteristics of the contemplative life are shaped by the application of theoretical wisdom. Consequently, understanding how theoretical wisdom influences other faculties of the soul can provide insight into the practical characteristics of a life governed by it.

A common response to the utility question of theoretical wisdom, rooted in a widely accepted interpretation of Aristotle's view on contemplation, is that theoretical wisdom is indeed *useless* in providing practical guidance. Thereby, any practical implications of theoretical wisdom are rejected altogether. While the role of intellect within the rational part of the human soul is generally acknowledged,[31] the external influence of theoretical wisdom, as a faculty that involves a clear and unqualified understanding of intellect, on the rest of the soul remains underappreciated. Scholars have long argued for the uselessness of theoretical wisdom and its corresponding activity, contemplation.

In contemporary Aristotelian studies, this interpretation can be traced back to Thomas Nagel and Kathleen V. Wilkes. They describe contemplation as 'subserved by all but generating no feedback' for subordinate functions, asserting that 'the best and purest employment of reason has nothing to do with daily life.'[32] This approach has been adopted and expanded upon by subsequent scholars who argue that contemplation 'can make no practical contribution to anything at all, not even its own maintenance'[33] and that '*theoria* itself is completely detached from *praxis* and does not provide the basis for action.'[34] In a word, this interpretation emphasises the isolation of theoretical wisdom from practical affairs, positioning it as a faculty either entirely removed from the concerns of everyday life, or at least the actuality of it cannot be effectively distinguished in public life.

Proponents of the view that theoretical wisdom is 'useless' may not share the concern about the observable difference of godlike individuals within public life, as they often regard the contemplative life as clearly set apart from other ways of living. For example, they might depict those devoted to contemplation as engaging with the community only to meet their basic

[31] Sorabji (1980)
[32] Nagel (1980, pp. 11–12), Wilkes (1980, pp. 346–347).
[33] Broadie (1991, p. 392)
[34] Nightingale (2004, pp.197–198).

nutritive needs.[35] However, if the godlike men do engage in public affairs in a manner consistent with practical wisdom, as argued in the preceding section, distinguishing them from those leading the ideal political life becomes problematic. This raises a critical issue: if their public behaviours and deeds are indistinguishable, how can godlike individuals be effectively recognised, after being reliably perceived, as the proper objects of natural honour? After all, how can we recognise the strategic thinking of the good general among many if their troops are equally well-ordered?[36]

On the other hand, interpreting theoretical wisdom as 'useless' poses a significant challenge when considered within the framework of Aristotle's natural teleology, particularly the principle 'nature does nothing in vain,' a concept Aristotle reiterates across multiple works.[37] If theoretical wisdom is a natural faculty of the human soul and is associated with the most exact knowledge, a tension emerges between its alleged uselessness and the question how it might contribute to guiding humans toward their ultimate goal of achieving happiness.[38]

In *EN* VI.7, Aristotle indeed uses the term 'useless' (ἄχρηστος) to describe the theoretical wisdom of figures like Anaxagoras and Thales, who were not only the conventional representatives of theoretically wise, but also held a similar view on theoretical wisdom with Aristotle.[39] This seems to align with the common interpretation of theoretical wisdom as detached from practical affairs. However, a closer examination of the context reveals that Aristotle is not dismissing the practical significance of theoretical wisdom altogether. Rather, he is clarifying that the objects of theoretical wisdom do not concern particular things and, as such, cannot *directly* guide specific human actions. This does not imply that theoretical wisdom has no influence on human life in a broader sense.

In this context, only practical wisdom is qualified as useful, as it is inherently action-oriented, equips individuals to deliberate and make appropriate decisions in specific contexts. Although Aristotle does not explicitly state this, scientific knowledge would also fall into the category of 'useless' in this context, as its objects are also universal propositions and thus does not directly

[35] E.g., Broadie & Rowe (p. 445)
[36] Cf. *Met*.1075a12–16 the metaphor of general and army.
[37] E.g., *Phys*. 199a8–199a10, *PA* 639b12–639b14, *EN* 1097B28–35, *Pol*. 1253a9–10.
[38] See Walker (2018) for a comprehensive defence of Aristotle's natural teleology as it pertains to theoretical wisdom, including an analysis of whether theoretical wisdom falls within the scope of natural teleology. Walker also draws on *Protrepticus* to illustrate how theoretical wisdom actively guides human activities. However, his interpretation of Aristotle's first principles—the objects of theoretical wisdom—is limited to the divine, the fixed stars, and possibly mathematical objects. This restriction undermines the final step of his argument, where he derives the practical implications of theoretical wisdom, making it inconsistent with the perspective advanced in this thesis
[39] *EN* 1141b1–8; cf. *EE* 1216a11–14. DK 59 B12–14.

guide human actions.[40] Therefore, Aristotle's classification of theoretical wisdom as 'useless' only reflects its detachment from the immediate and contingent demands of action.

In fact, Aristotle explicitly raises the utility question of theoretical wisdom at the beginning of *EN* VI. 12, alongside that of practical wisdom, in terms of their ability to offer guidance in the practical affairs of life (διαπορήσειε δ᾽ ἄν τις περὶ αὐτῶν τί χρήσιμοί εἰσιν). He further specifies that this question targets exactly those who view theoretical wisdom as useless because it does not directly address human happiness (ἡ μὲν γὰρ σοφία οὐδὲν θεωρήσει ἐξ ὧν ἔσται εὐδαίμων ἄνθρωπος).[41]

Aristotle responds to this question by asserting that:

> πρῶτον μὲν οὖν λέγωμεν ὅτι καθ᾽ αὑτὰς ἀναγκαῖον αἱρετὰς αὐτὰς εἶναι, ἀρετάς γ᾽ οὔσας ἑκατέραν ἑκατέρου τοῦ μορίου, καὶ εἰ μὴ ποιοῦσι μηδὲν μηδετέρα αὐτῶν. ἔπειτα καὶ ποιοῦσι μέν, οὐχ ὡς ἡ ἰατρικὴ δὲ ὑγίειαν, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἡ ὑγίεια, οὕτως ἡ σοφία εὐδαιμονίαν: μέρος γὰρ οὖσα τῆς ὅλης ἀρετῆς τῷ ἔχεσθαι ποιεῖ καὶ †τῷ ἐνεργεῖν εὐδαίμονα.†[42]
>
> First, let us say that [theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom] must be desirable in themselves, because they are the virtues of the two parts of soul respectively, even if neither produces anything. The next point is that they do produce something: not in the way the art of medicine produces health, but in the way health produces health, and this is how theoretical wisdom produces happiness: for being a part of the virtue as a whole, by possessing it and exercising it produce happy persons.

In this passage, Aristotle claims that, while both theoretical and practical wisdom are desirable for their own sake even if they do not produce anything, they are indeed productive (ποιητικός)—they have the capacity to bring about changes beyond their own actualities. This response provides a key foundation for addressing the observable distinction of the contemplative life. The idea that theoretical wisdom produces external effects provides a basis for understanding how the contemplative life inspires natural honour. Its effects serve as markers that distinguish it from other forms of life, such as the life of politics, making it a visible and identifiable candidate for valid recognitions.

[40] Here the term 'universal' is not used in the sense of καθόλου/rudimentary.
[41] *EN* 1143b18–20. Aristotle may also encounter external criticism from Isocrates, who explicitly denies the choiceworthiness of Aristotelian contemplation on the grounds of its perceived uselessness in civic life (*Antidosis* 262).
[42] *EN* 1144a1–7

Unfortunately, Aristotle devotes most of the subsequent discussion to explaining the utility of practical wisdom, offering little elaboration on the role of theoretical wisdom. He famously summarises that 'virtue of character makes the goal correct, while practical wisdom makes what leads to it correct' (ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρετὴ τὸν σκοπὸν ποιεῖ ὀρθόν, ἡ δὲ φρόνησις τὰ πρὸς τοῦτον).[43] However, his treatment of theoretical wisdom is limited to a brief, ambiguous, and—as will be demonstrated—potentially misleading analogy regarding its role. Aristotle states that, as shown in the quoted passage, theoretical wisdom contributes to happiness not in the manner that medical art produces health but rather in the way that health does, because theoretical wisdom is a component of excellence as a whole and that the possession and exercise of it inherently bring about happiness.

The brief treatment and ambiguous nature of the analogy leave considerable room for interpretation. Some may view this as Aristotle sidestepping the challenge of explicitly connecting theoretical wisdom to human flourishing in practical terms. In fact, the prevailing interpretation of the text is that, much like the condition of health 'makes' one healthy, the possession and exercise of theoretical wisdom contributes to happiness by being a constituent part of it.[44] In other words, theoretical wisdom 'produces' happiness only as a *formal cause*, not as an *efficient cause*.[45] This interpretation is often embraced by proponents of the 'useless' stance on theoretical wisdom, as it implies that theoretical wisdom is valuable solely as a formal cause and therefore lacks practical utility in guiding action or achieving happiness in tangible terms.

However, there is a clear tension between the received interpretation of the health analogy and the context in which the analogy is presented. First, as mentioned above, Aristotle explicitly identifies the opposing view that his response to the utility question of theoretical wisdom seeks to address. This opposing view does not deny that theoretical wisdom can be a constituent part of happiness (*qua* formal cause), and thus those who seek happiness do need it for its own actualisation; rather, it challenges the idea that anything arises *from* (ἐξ) theoretical wisdom—essentially rejecting the idea that it serves as an efficient cause of any other components of happiness.

[43] *EN* 1144a8–9
[44] Broadie (2001, p. 381)
[45] Stewart (1892, p. 98)

Second, Aristotle already acknowledged theoretical wisdom as a formal cause of happiness by stating that it is desirable in itself even if it does not produce anything. If being a formal cause is considered a form of 'productivity,' then the question of whether theoretical wisdom produces anything has effectively been settled by this earlier point. Given this, it seems inconsistent that he is merely reiterating its role as a formal cause in the subsequent text, especially since he begins it with ἔπειτα, a marker of sequence that suggests a shift of focus or progression in the argument.[46]

Third, Aristotle mentions the sovereignty (κυρία) of theoretical wisdom over practical wisdom in the conclusion of *EN* VI.13.[47] He further clarifies that what is sovereign is not only superior to the subordinate but also *uses* the subordinate as a means.[48] He compares the sovereignty of theoretical wisdom over practical wisdom to the sovereignty of health over medical art, echoing the earlier analogy, as well as to the sovereignty of God over political art. In this case, the object of the application of theoretical wisdom is identified as practical wisdom, rather than happiness as a whole. This clarification further undermines the received interpretation of theoretical wisdom as a mere formal cause of happiness, as theoretical wisdom cannot function as the formal cause of practical wisdom. In sum, there is ample reason to reject the mainstream interpretation of the health analogy and seek an alternative understanding of how theoretical wisdom is useful in practical terms, thereby leading to tangible distinctions of godlike men.

A valuable insight into the role of theoretical wisdom can be gleaned from Aristotle's analogy in the conclusion of *EN* VI.13, where he compares the superiority of theoretical wisdom over practical wisdom to that of health over the art of medicine and God over the art of politics. While the exact meaning of 'health' in this analogy remains somewhat ambiguous, as previously illustrated, Aristotle explicitly defines 'God' as a technical term for intellect composed of first principles, as discussed in Chapter 4.3. The sovereignty of God over the art of politics can thus be understood in terms of the dominance of relevant first principles over the art of politics. By the same token, it is reasonable to infer that 'health' in this analogy does

[46] *EN* 1144a4
[47] *EN* 1145a7–11, note that Aristotle does not explicitly affirm the sovereignty of theoretical wisdom over practical wisdom. Instead, he observes that it would be 'strange' (ἄτοπον) if this were not the case. He draws an analogy to the absurdity of claiming that medical art is sovereign over health, as the former does not employ the latter (οὐ γὰρ χρῆται αὐτῇ), or that political art is sovereign over God (*cf.* EN 1143b33–34).
[48] Broadie (2001, p. 384) only covers the aspect of superiority but not the aspect of employment.

not refer to the physical condition of being healthy but rather to the first principles of health, which serve as the guiding end for the art of medicine.

By extension, theoretical wisdom—characterised by the clear and unqualified grasp of first principles—may be understood as useful in guiding the faculty of practical wisdom within the soul. It directs practical reasoning—not as a pilot steering means to ends, but as a goal toward which it aspires—toward the perfect imitation God, within the limits of human nature. Following this interpretation, the role of theoretical wisdom is analogous to that of moral virtues acquired through habituation. Both provide the correct goals for moral reasoning, albeit from opposite ends of the cognitive stadium: one is from a universal, rudimentary grasp of first principles, or what is knowable in relation to us, whereas the other is from an unqualified acquisition of first principles.[49]

The above speculation on the role of theoretical wisdom in practical life is further supported and enriched by a corresponding passage in *Protrepticus* as recorded in Iamblichus' *Protrepticus*, in which Aristotle not only affirms the function of theoretical wisdom as an efficient cause, using analogies that echo the health and medical art analogy, but also situates theoretical wisdom within the context of real-life decision-making and action. This strengthens the argument that theoretical wisdom is not merely abstract but has tangible implications for guiding behaviour. This practical application of theoretical wisdom serves as a key marker to distinguish godlike men from others within a practical context:

> [B 46] Ἀλλὰ μὴν ὅτι γε καὶ ὠφελείας τὰς μεγίστας ἡμῖν πρὸς τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον παρέχεται ἡ θεωρητικὴ φρόνησις, εὑρήσει τις ῥᾳδίως ἀπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν. ὥσπερ γὰρ τῶν ἰατρῶν ὅσοι κομψοὶ καὶ τῶν περὶ τὴν γυμναστικὴν οἱ πλεῖστοι σχεδὸν ὁμολογοῦσιν ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς μέλλοντας ἀγαθοὺς ἰατροὺς ἔσεσθαι καὶ γυμναστὰς περὶ φύσεως ἐμπείρους εἶναι, οὕτω καὶ τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς νομοθέτας ἐμπείρους εἶναι δεῖ τῆς φύσεως, καὶ πολύ γε μᾶλλον ἐκείνων…
>
> [B 46] But that contemplative wisdom also offers the greatest usefulness to us for our human life can easily be seen from the cases of arts. For as clever doctors and most experts in physical training generally agree that those who are to be good doctors or trainers must be experienced of nature, so good lawmakers too must be experienced of nature, and indeed much more than the former…
>
> [B 47] καθάπερ γὰρ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις τέχναις ταῖς δημιουργικαῖς ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως εὕρηται τὰ βέλτιστα τῶν ὀργάνων… ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὸν πολιτικὸν ἔχειν τινὰς <u>ὅρους</u> δεῖ ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως αὐτῆς καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας, πρὸς οὓς κρινεῖ τί δίκαιον

[49] *APo* 71a25–31; *EN* 1144a8–9: ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρετὴ τὸν σκοπὸν ποιεῖ ὀρθόν.

καὶ τί καλόν καὶ τί συμφέρον… [B 48] τοῦτο δ' οὐχ οἷόν τε μὴ φιλοσοφήσαντα δύνασθαι ποιεῖν μηδὲ γνωρίσαντα τὴν ἀλήθειαν. καὶ τῶν μὲν ἄλλων τεχνῶν τὰ τε ὄργανα καὶ τοὺς λογισμοὺς τοὺς ἀκριβεστάτους οὐκ ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν πρώτων λαβόντες… τοὺς τε λόγους ἐξ ἐμπειρίας λαμβάνουσι· τῷ δὲ φιλοσόφῳ μόνῳ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ἀκριβῶν ἡ μίμησις ἐστίν…

[B 47] For just as in the other craftsmen's art the best tools were discovered from nature… similarly the statesman must have certain *boundary-markers* taken from nature itself and from truth by reference to which he will judge what is just, what is good, and what is expedient… [B 48] However, nobody who has not practised philosophy and acquired truth is able to do this. Furthermore, in the other arts men do not take their tools and their most accurate reasonings from first principles… base their reasonings on experience. The philosopher alone imitates that which is exact…

[B 51] ἔστι μὲν οὖν θεωρητικὴ ἥδε ἡ ἐπιστήμη, παρέχει δ' ἡμῖν τὸ δημιουργεῖν κατ' αὐτὴν ἅπαντα. ὥσπερ γὰρ ἡ ὄψις ποιητικὴ μὲν καὶ δημιουργὸς οὐδενὸς ἐστὶ (μόνον γὰρ αὐτῆς ἔργον ἐστὶ τὸ κρίνειν καὶ δηλοῦν ἕκαστον τῶν ὁρατῶν), ἡμῖν δὲ παρέχει τὸ πράττειν τι δί' αὐτὴν καὶ βοηθεῖ πρὸς τὰς πράξεις ἡμῖν τὰ μέγιστα (σχεδὸν γὰρ ἀκίνητοι παντελῶς ἂν εἴμεν στερηθέντες αὐτῆς), οὕτω δῆλον ὅτι καὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης θεωρητικῆς οὔσης μυρία πράττομεν κατ' αὐτὴν ὅμως ἡμεῖς, καὶ τὰ μὲν λαμβάνομεν τὰ δὲ φεύγομεν τῶν πραγμάτων, καὶ ὅλως πάντα τὰ ἀγαθὰ δι' αὐτὴν κτώμεθα.[50]

[B 51] This knowledge is indeed contemplative, but it enables us to create all things in accordance with it. For just as sight is not capable of producing and creating anything (since its only function is to judge and to show everything that can be seen), yet enables us to act for its own sake as it gives us the greatest assistance towards action (for we would be entirely motionless if deprived of it), so it is clear that, though knowledge is contemplative, yet we do innumerable things in accordance with it, choose some things and avoid others, and in general gain as a result of it everything that is good.

Before analysing the text, it is important to address a terminological inconsistency between *Protrepticus* and *EN*. In *Protrepticus*, Aristotle does not adhere to the strict classification of knowledge found in *EN* VI. Instead, he flexibly uses terms such as 'contemplative wisdom' (ἡ θεωρητικὴ φρόνησις) and 'contemplative science' (θεωρητικὴ ἥδε ἡ ἐπιστήμη) to refer to the type of knowledge critiqued for its alleged uselessness.[51] However, Aristotle clearly specifies that this knowledge can only be acquired by philosophers, thereby aligning it with theoretical wisdom (σοφία). Therefore, there is no significant discontinuity between these works that would prevent us from reading them together.[52] The terminological variations

[50] Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* 54.10–56.12 (B46–B51); translation informed by Barnes (1984) and Walker (2018).

[51] In *Protrepticus*, Aristotle also uses the terms σοφία and φρόνησις interchangeably. Walker (2018, p. 143) interprets this as a rhetorical strategy aimed at addressing Isocrates' criticisms.

[52] See Hutchinson and Johnson (2014) for a comprehensive argument supporting the argumentative and thematic consistency between *Protrepticus* and *EN*. For responses to additional concerns regarding the validity of cross-referencing *Protrepticus*, see Walker (2018, pp. 141–145).

reflect Aristotle's rhetorical strategies in addressing different audiences rather than a fundamental divergence in his philosophical position.

In the above fragment of Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, he provides a robust account of the utility of theoretical wisdom that meshes with my interpretation of the analogy of health presented in *EN* VI.12–13. In the opening sentence of B 46, he identifies the domain in which theoretical wisdom is useful—namely, the human aspects of life, specifically the public sphere where individuals interact with members of their community.[53] The subsequent comparison with sight further illustrates this effect: although sight—presumably along with the other senses—does not directly produce anything but merely supplies particular information about the external world, we would be 'entirely motionless' if deprived of it, in the sense that we would lack any particular goal for our movement. This explanation supports the notion that theoretical wisdom functions as an efficient cause, influencing the other faculties of the soul by providing universal propositions that inform the universal goals of their function.

To illustrate how contemplation can usefully guide practical reasoning, Aristotle employs a medical analogy similar to those found in *Nicomachean Ethics* I.13 and X.9.[54] However, in this context, he uniquely clarifies that the best doctors are distinct from others by the acquisition of an understanding of certain *boundary-markers* (ὅρος), which are typically derived from the faculty of experience. The term ὅρος originally refers to a stone boundary marker used to demarcate land.[55] In *EN* VI.1, Aristotle also uses this term to refer to the marks that determine the intermediate states (τις ἔστιν ὅρος τῶν μεσοτήτων) between excess and deficiency of particular moral virtues.[56]

This thesis reads such boundary-markers as metaphorical representations of definitions (ὁρισμός) of certain objects, specifically referring to the feature most immediately connected to the concept being defined. Three reasons support this interpretation. First, these two terms share the same etymological root, suggesting an intrinsic conceptual link. Second, the boundary-marker of a particular moral virtue, as described in *EN* VI.1, is immediately connected to that virtue; it conveys essential information about the virtue in the same way that quantitative indivisibility accounts for a unit, which cannot be further explained by a third term.

[53] *EN* 1178a9–16: the second happiest life is a human life, which is featured by virtue of characters and practical wisdom.
[54] *EN* 1102a20–24
[55] For this use of ὅρος, see *Constitution of Athens* XII.4 (on Solon's removal of ὅροι).
[56] *EN* 1138b23

Therefore, the usage of boundary-marker in ethical context meets the criteria of a definition.[57] Third, Aristotle illustrates in B 48 that good doctors and physical trainers derive their grasp of such boundary-markers from experience. In comparison, as demonstrated in Chapter 4.3.2, definitions, as a subset of Aristotle's first principles, are initially grasped through a progression of cognitive stages that also involve experience.[58] Taken together, it is reasonable to interpret boundary-markers in the context as the definitions of certain objects.

Through the analogy of good doctors, Aristotle then asserts that good lawmakers also require an understanding of certain boundary-markers, which enable them to make moral judgments. In other words, the good practice of legislation necessitates an understanding of the definitions of moral concepts. The moral significance of such an understanding is also highlighted at the beginning of *EN* VI, where Aristotle states that the doctrine of mean is valid but insufficiently explanatory in practice, because the boundary-marker of the intermediate states is not yet clarified and should therefore be the next focus of his moral inquiry.[59]

On this interpretation, the definition of each moral virtue is the intermediate state of the corresponding emotional or behavioural disposition, which is linked to the virtue by an immediate connection that cannot be further accounted by interpolating a third term in the proposition. The intermediate state of a virtue is thus akin to the definition of a triangle, namely that its internal angles sum to two right angles.

However, the good lawmakers differ from the good doctors in that the understanding of definitions required for the former can *only* be acquired through the practice of philosophy—that is, by those who have attained theoretical wisdom. In contrast, Aristotle observes that doctors typically derive their general understanding from experience. This difference in the methods of acquiring understanding of first principles once again exemplifies Aristotle's epistemological framework: the first principles can be understood in two ways, either in a universal/rudimentary way through the cognitive development of experience or in a clear/unqualified way through intellectual training. Scientific knowledge, art, and practical wisdom can be acquired from both ends. In this context, Aristotle states that the arts of medicine and physical training are derived from the universal/rudimentary understanding of

[57] Walker (2018, ch. 8) reads the boundary-markers of virtues as the delimitation between human and divine goods, a view stemming from his narrow understanding of Aristotle's first principles. However, this interpretation is inconsistent with Aristotle's explicit attribution of the boundary-markers to the mean state of virtues of character.
[58] Cf. *APo*. II. 19
[59] *EN* 1138b21–35

corresponding definitions, whereas the knowledge required for legislation must be derived from the clear/unqualified understanding of corresponding definitions.

It is important to note that the art of medicine can also originate from theoretical wisdom. As suggested in the analogy of health in *EN* VI.12–13, health is paralleled with theoretical wisdom in its functional role of guiding practical affairs. If we interpret health in this context as representing the first principles of health that set the goals for the practice of medical art, these two discussions can be reconciled as illustrating the dual pathways for the acquisition of medical knowledge: it can be obtained through reasonings both from experience and from theoretical wisdom.

In the same vein as medical art, specific moral propositions can also be deduced from two types of understanding of moral principles. In this context, moral principles encompass not only broad assertions about human goodness, such as the doctrine of the mean and natural teleology, but also the definitions of individual moral virtues as intermediate states with regard to corresponding emotions and behaviours.

The first type of understanding is derived from what is familiar to us. Through perception, memory, and—particularly in the case of moral education—habituation, we develop an intuitive, universal, and rudimentary grasp of moral principles likely during the cognitive stage of experience. This may explain why Aristotle advises his audience to attend to the undemonstrated opinions of experienced and older individuals,[60] as these individuals indeed possess a rudimentary understanding of moral principles that can effectively guide their behaviours in particular cases by identifying the appropriate goals for action. As Aristotle clarifies in *EN* I. 4, this is also the approach he adopts in composing his ethical works: starting from empirical observations and undemonstrated opinions, he builds toward a systematic account of practical wisdom.[61]

The second type of understanding is derived from what is familiar without qualification. Once practical wisdom has been developed through habituation and moral reasoning, one is then qualified to look for an unqualified understanding of moral principles that compose of theoretical wisdom.[62] Aristotle never explicitly explain this intellectual process within the

[60] E.g., *EN* 1143b11–14.
[61] *EN* 1095b2–6
[62] It seems unlikely that Aristotle would agree that an unqualified understanding of first principles can be taught while bypassing the earlier cognitive stages, particularly in the context of moral education, where the cognitive prerequisites are especially demanding. If such an understanding could be directly taught, there would be no need for a good upbringing as a

context of ethical reasoning. Nevertheless, we may refer to the counterpart process in scientific reasoning, where the middle terms of demonstrable propositions are progressively induced until they reach immediate connections. This comparison offers a general understanding of how a similar process might operate in the acquisition of moral principles. In Aristotle's stadium metaphor, this intellectual progress is represented as advancing from intermediate stages to the endpoint—inquiries towards the first principles (ἐπὶ τὰς ἀρχάς ἐστιν ἡ ὁδός).[63] Those who have reached this intellectual endpoint are the Aristotelian godlike men, individuals who have attained theoretical wisdom.

Having attained theoretical wisdom, godlike men can, in turn, deduce particular moral propositions from moral principles that are known without qualification. In the framework of the stadium metaphor, the endpoint of intellectual development can also serve as the starting point for moral inquiry. For instance, from a clear and precise understanding of the definition of courage, they can infer specific life-risking dispositions. This mechanism underpins Aristotle's assertion that philosophers alone, through their unqualified understanding of moral principles, are qualified to be good lawmakers. Therefore, the utility of theoretical wisdom lies in its ability to effectively produce moral dispositions based on what is most *exact* within the moral domain.[64]

Two points require clarification concerning the preceding argument regarding the utility of theoretical wisdom in moral practices. First, practical wisdom derived from experience should not be diminished to the point where it permits errors in forming particular moral judgments.[65] As demonstrated in Chapter 4.4, the universal understanding of first principles—being closest to perception and therefore better known to us—may be crude, and many commentators describe it as 'intuitive,' emphasising its non-propositional nature. Such understanding can also be influenced by excessive pleasure or pain and may lead to errors in subsequent reasoning.[66] Nevertheless, once practical wisdom is developed from this type of understanding of moral principles, it serves as the correct method of deliberation that guarantees the alignment of moral judgments in particular instances with moral principles. It is therefore inappropriate to

foundation for moral education, and Aristotle would have chosen to teach the unqualified understanding of moral principles directly, rather than painstakingly building from empirical evidence. *Cf.* Chapter 5.2.1.

[63] *EN* 1095a30–32

[64] *Protrepticus* B48: the philosopher alone imitates that which is exact in lawmaking.

[65] This view is likely held by Bae (2003) who claims that virtue of characters and practical wisdom only enable us to perform virtuously in ordinary cases, but we may deviate from their guidance in extreme cases.

[66] *EN* 1140b12–20

excessively diminish the effectiveness of practical wisdom in order to create space for the utility of theoretical wisdom.

Second, the exactness of moral dispositions derived from theoretical wisdom is compatible with the inherent inexactness of ethics as a discipline, because these two types of precision are assessed from distinct perspectives. The former type of precision is measured by the degree to which an individual comprehends a specific body of knowledge, varying according to subjective state of cognition. The latter type of precision pertains to the inherent precision of a particular discipline. The inherent inexactness of ethics as a discipline does not render it unintelligible for the human soul. As Aristotle explains, although what is natural among human beings is subject to change, much like what is not natural, there remains a distinction between these two types of arrangement (ἀλλ᾽ ὅμως ἐστὶ τὸ μὲν φύσει τὸ δ᾽ οὐ φύσει).[67] Such distinctions can be comprehended by the human soul with varying levels of precision.

In sum, the foregoing analysis has argued for the utility of theoretical wisdom in practical affairs. Theoretical wisdom, as a clear and unqualified understanding of intellect, functions as the efficient cause of practical wisdom by serving as its final cause,[68] thereby enabling one to become a good steersman (κυβερνήτης) on the ship of life.[69] This does not imply that only those who possess theoretical wisdom are capable of attaining practical wisdom. In fact, the opposite is true: only individuals who have developed practical wisdom through the cognitive stage of experience are truly prepared to pursue theoretical wisdom within the ethical domain. But once theoretical wisdom is acquired, it exerts a force to practical wisdom by offering an unqualified understanding of moral principles that is not available in other cognitive stages. Consequently, godlike men, whose practical aspect of life is guided by theoretical wisdom in this manner, should be distinguished from those whose lives are governed solely by the rest of virtues that belong to human, and thus can be reliably identified by others as proper objects of natural honour.

Yet how exactly does this distinction manifest in particular cases? After all, as outlined above, in any particular situation that involves a practical decision (προαίρεσις), individuals leading an ideal political life—the second happiest life—would behave in the same way as those living a contemplative life, both being able to achieve the intermediate state that defines individual

[67] *EN* 1134b28–33
[68] See Chapter 3.2 on something being both the final cause and efficient cause, cf. *GC* 323a32–34.
[69] *Protrepticus* B50; cf. Plato, *Republic* 488a–489a.

moral virtue. This similarity parallels the observation that individuals who lack the unqualified understanding of the definition of a triangle can still identify particular triangles in the same way as those who possess such understanding.

To deal with this difficulty, we must first acknowledge that Aristotle does not explicitly address this question in his ethical works; if he had, there would be no room for speculations regarding the alleged uselessness of theoretical wisdom. Nevertheless, the question of how theoretical wisdom contributes to practical wisdom remains a topic of ongoing discussion among Aristotelian scholars, particularly those who explore the potential practical relevance of theoretical wisdom.[70]

Based on the preceding interpretation of the utility of theoretical wisdom, as derived from a textual analysis of fragments from the *Protrepticus*, the practical manifestation of godlike men must be observable in external phenomena, rather than being confined to internal or subjective states, as the moral propositions they hold are qualitatively distinct from those possessed by ordinary *phronimoi*. This requirement excludes subjective differences, such as a heightened self-consciousness or a unified self-identity,[71] as sufficient markers of distinction. Furthermore, this manifestation cannot rely on the potential for error in practical wisdom, as doing so would undervalue the moral significance Aristotle attributes to the practical wisdom associated with virtues of character.[72] Practical wisdom, as Aristotle defines it, is a reliable guide to virtuous action even without theoretical wisdom, and its role should not be diminished to highlight the uniqueness of godlike men.

The following is a proposal that is woven out of threads and materials provided by Aristotle, carefully addressing the above concerns by establishing an observable distinction of godlike individuals without undermining the moral significance of practical wisdom. In the quoted passage from *Protrepticus*, Aristotle explicitly associates the practical utility of theoretical wisdom with the governance of a polis (B 46–47). He argues that while a rudimentary grasp of relevant first principles may suffice for the practice of many arts, it is inadequate for becoming good lawmakers (νομοθετέω) within a political community. The best laws, which achieve the highest possible conformity to nature, can only be established by godlike men whose moral

[70] E.g., Rorty (1980, p. 380) raises a critical question: 'After all, the phronimos knows what to do and how to do it. Why isn't practical wisdom in all its glory sufficient unto the day? This is just the difficulty.' This issue also serves as the central research question in Walker's study (2018).
[71] Rorty (1980), Walker (2018).
[72] Bae (2003)

reasoning is grounded in an unqualified understanding of first principles. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the practical utility of theoretical wisdom must be expressed in a distinctive aspect of lawmaking, one that is absent in arts such as medicine and physical training.

The practice of lawmaking (B 46) should not be reduced to law-related technical skills, such as procedural tasks in legislation or the specific implementation of legal measures. Instead, as Aristotle describes at the beginning of the *EN*, such knowledge should be understood as the most sovereign type of knowledge concerning human affairs (δόξειε δ᾽ ἂν τῆς κυριωτάτης καὶ μάλιστα ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς. τοιαύτη δ᾽ ἡ πολιτικὴ φαίνεται).[73] It arranges the practice of other forms of knowledge, including scientific knowledge, within the polis, and legislation is one of the measures through which this sovereign knowledge prescribes what should be performed by whom and what should be abstained from doing in the polis.[74]

On the other hand, practical wisdom is characteristically expressed through *particular decisions* rather than overall arrangement.[75] It effectively guides individual actions by deliberating the proper means towards the end within the context of the situation: a specific action performed in a particular manner represents the actualisation of general human ends in that specific circumstance.[76] This is not to deflate practical wisdom to experience, even though experience also enables one to make correct decisions in particular situations. The phronimos is aware of the moral principles that account for each of his decisions because he possesses a rudimentary grasp of these principles, likely developed through habituation.[77]

However, the inexactness of the phronimos' understanding of moral principles restricts the scope of his deliberative capacity to the individual level.[78] While he is capable of determining what an individual—whether himself or another—should do in any particular circumstances in the public life, he lacks the ability to arrange public affairs aiming at the goodness of a community. This broader task requires judgments that involve carefully weighing and balancing various goods, demanding the most precise understanding of the principles of

[73] *EN* 1194a26–27

[74] *EN* 1194a28–b6; it should be noted that the term ἡ πολιτικὴ, which represents this sovereign knowledge, may be understood as a homonym, as it often denotes political expertise as a specific art in other contexts. Translating it as 'political expertise' or 'political art' in this context can thus lead to confusion (e.g., Broadie and Rowe, 2002, p. 95; Ross, 1969), as it is unlikely that Aristotle would place an art in a position of sovereignty over scientific knowledge. A better translation of the term may be 'statesmanship.'

[75] *EN* 1141b8–14

[76] *EN* 1144a8–9

[77] See *EN* 1098b3–5, where Aristotle lists habituation alongside perception and induction as methods through which first principles are apprehended.

[78] *EN* 1141b30–31

goodness. As Aristotle aptly states when outlining the aim of his ethical inquiry, 'for though it is worthwhile to attain the good merely for one person, it is more noble and more godlike to attain it for a community or for a polis (ἀγαπητὸν μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἑνὶ μόνῳ, κάλλιον δὲ καὶ θειότερον ἔθνει καὶ πόλεσιν).'[79] On this interpretation, the activity of lawmaking indeed effectively displays the utility of theoretical wisdom, as it distinctively involves weighing and balancing different goods for the welfare of the polis and allocating human and material resources accordingly.

Statesmanship can be a typical illustration of the practical utility of theoretical wisdom, but it should not be regarded as the only expression of this capacity. The ability to weigh and balance different goods—a critical aspect of effective lawmaking—also arises in daily life. This broader application echoes Aristotle's statement that human happiness needs only moderate external resources for its actualisation.[80] Therefore, while political authority is limited to a select few, individuals without political power can still demonstrate their unqualified understanding of moral principles through the thoughtful allocation of their own time and resources in daily life, enabling them to be distinguished and recognised as the object of natural honour.

Consider liberality (ἐλευθεριότης), a virtue of character encompassing all money-related actions.[81] A phronimos may consistently practice this virtue by offering financial aid to wanderers in an amount and manner appropriate to each specific situation. However, without an unqualified understanding of the definition of liberality and its relationship to other moral principles, the phronimos is not capable of weighing the worth of liberality against munificence (μεγαλοπρέπεια), another virtue related to monetary actions that concerns great merits.[82] As a result, the phronimos may allocate excessive resources, with regard to overall arrangment, to matters of minor or moderate importance, which, when considered in isolation, align with the virtue of liberality and practical wisdom. However, when an opportunity to display munificence arises—requiring substantial financial resources—he may find himself unable to act due to insufficient funds. Consequently, he may choose to forgo the opportunity, a decision

[79] *EN* 1094b10–11
[80] *EN* 1179a4–12
[81] *EN* 1119b22–24
[82] *EN* 1122a19–24

that, taken on its own, also appears consistent with the virtue of munificence and practical wisdom.

In contrast, godlike men exhibit greater autonomy in practice, adopting a more rational approach to planning their expenditures with a view to benefiting the community. They may deliberately refrain from consistently displaying their liberality, instead reserving resources for occasions when demonstrating munificence is of greater significance to the community. Aristotle illustrates this distinction with a quote from *Odysseus*: 'many times I gave to a wanderer,'[83] which he claims is indicative of liberality, not munificence. This disposition to weigh the value of expenditures leads Aristotle to compare the munificent individual with a possessor of scientific knowledge. Such individuals can contemplate the concept of appropriateness, ensuring not only the propriety of their spending but also exhibiting refined judgment and good taste in their allocation of significant resources.[84]

The preceding conjecture regarding the limitations of practical wisdom may seem radical, as it can be implausible to consider someone truly practically wise if they regularly allocate time and resources—albeit appropriately—to matters of trivial or moderate significance, only to later find out they lack the means to support actions of greater moral significance. This pattern of decision-making raises a legitimate concern about whether such individuals can still be regarded as fully virtuous as deemed by Aristotle in *EN* VI.13,[85] given that their choices ultimately hinder their ability to pursue higher goods.

In response to this concern, I acknowledge that this conjecture regarding the limitations of practical wisdom may lack substantial textual support in Aristotle's extant works. However, it does not undermine the fundamental reliability of practical wisdom in guiding correct particular decisions. The intention is not to portray practical wisdom as being fragile and susceptible to error in certain contexts, but rather to explore the nuanced ways it might engage with real-life moral situations where competing goods must be balanced. This perspective does not conflict with Aristotle's claim in *EN* VI.13 that practical wisdom, when combined with moral virtues, forms complete virtue and reliably leads to correct action.[86] Instead, it suggests that even the phronimos might encounter difficulties when navigating the prioritisation of

[83] Hom. *Od*. 17.420
[84] *EN* 1122a34–36: ὁ δὲ μεγαλοπρεπὴς ἐπιστήμονι ἔοικεν: τὸ πρέπον γὰρ δύναται θεωρῆσαι καὶ δαπανῆσαι μεγάλα ἐμμελῶς.
[85] *EN* 1144b30–1145a6
[86] Ibid.

various goods—though this does not detract from the overall integrity of his moral reasoning. Nonetheless, I recognise that further study is needed to substantiate and refine this conjecture.

In summary, while the phronimoi consistently achieve the intermediate mark in each particular decision with an awareness of the underlying moral principles, and their behaviours and deeds in public life reliably contribute to the good for the polis, they have not fully realised their potentiality to maximise this contribution. In contrast, the godlike man, while also hitting the intermediate mark in specific cases, can discern which intermediate mark to aim for based on a clear and unqualified understanding of moral principles. This superior capacity sets the godlike individual apart from the phronimos not only in the governance of the city but also in daily life, naturally inspiring honour in those who observe his exceptional actions and contributions.

At this stage, this thesis has achieved its primary objective of uncovering Aristotle's concept of natural honour and integrating it into his broader theoretical framework across several foundational levels. Aristotle's concept of natural honour refers to the subjective recognition of natural worth, a notion implied in his rhetorical and political works and explicitly articulated in his ethical writings in juxtaposition with the conventional source of worth. This recognition is grounded in his theological framework, where the cognitive transformation of *admiration* evoked by the Aristotelian god upon the ensouled heavenly bodies extends to a similar externality exerted by the actions of godlike men on their observers.

Aristotle's epistemological theory allows for the emergence of this cognitive transformation central to natural honour. First, Aristotle's concept of first principle, which serve as the starting points of other types of knowledge, is an inclusive concept that encompasses the existential premises and definitions of both composite objects and moral objects. Then, these first principles can be grasped through intuitive induction based on the perception and memory of singular instances. In this way, individuals can recognise the natural worth embodied in the activities and deeds of godlike men solely through the perception of a single instance, without the need for external evaluative standards.

Finally, on an ethical level, Aristotle's portrayal of godlike men—those whose lives are guided by theoretical wisdom—suggests that these moral paragons engage in public life in a manner akin to, yet distinguished by, a higher degree of autonomy and orderliness compared to the ideal political life. This distinction stems from their clear and comprehensive understanding of

moral principles, which enables them to evaluate the relative worth of various public goods and act in ways that most effectively serve the community's interests, either as the ruler of a polis or ordinary citizens. As a result, the public life of godlike men exemplifies the excellence of human intellect, paralleling how the natural order reflects the excellence of divine intellect. In both cases, these manifestations qualify as stimuli for natural honour.

5.3 An Alternative Interpretation of the Two Honour-related Virtues

In *EN* IV.3–4, amidst his discussion of various virtues of character, Aristotle introduces two honour-related virtues in a distinctive manner. The first virtue is greatness of soul (μεγαλοψυχία, hereafter GS), characterised by a balance between the extremes of vanity (χαῦνος) and smallness of soul (μικρόψυχος). The second is an unnamed virtue associated with a balanced attitude toward honour, positioned between the extremes of ambition (φιλότιμος) and indifference to honour (ἀφιλότιμος). The unnamed virtue will be referred to as proper ambition in this thesis. GS is also discussed in *EE* III.5 in a more exploratory manner, which may serve as a complementary perspective to its treatment in *EN*.[87]

Aristotle's idiosyncratic treatment of these two virtues of character has presented considerable challenges for scholars seeking to interpret them within the broader context of his theoretical frame. For more than a hundred years, nearly every conceivable interpretation has been proposed regarding the nature of GS, its relationship to the other honour-related virtue, and its role within Aristotle's ethics.

To outline these interpretations, they can be arranged along a spectrum ranging from those attributing the least normative value to GS to those assigning it the most normative significance. At the most dismissive end, GS has been regarded as Aristotle's failed attempt to reconcile conflicting conventional views of the trait.[88] Slightly higher on the spectrum, some scholars interpret it as a deliberate inconsistency, intended either as a subtle implication of the limitations inherent in ethical virtues or as a satirical commentary on the prevailing societal values of his time.[89] Further along the spectrum is a more conventional interpretation that aligns GS with other virtues of character, such as courage and temperance, understanding it as

[87] These virtues are also addressed in *MM* I.25, albeit in a less developed and nuanced manner. This investigation will thus primarily focus on their treatment in *EN* and *EE*.
[88] Cooper (1989)
[89] Burnet (1900, p. 179) remarks that Aristotle's treatment of GS 'has much quaint humour and is surely half-ironical;' Fetter (2015) claims that Aristotle intends to illustrate the limitations of a life defined by ethical virtues.

a disposition involving a specific type of passion or action.[90] Further along the spectrum, GS is viewed as a capacity to uphold practical virtues under extreme circumstances, often exemplified by the heroic figures.[91] At the highest level, GS is interpreted as Aristotle's portrayal of his moral paragon, closely linked to theoretical wisdom and the contemplative life.[92]

Building on these widely varying interpretations, scholars have further diverged in their analyses of the relationship between GS and proper ambition, as well as the parallel connections between the two honour-related virtues and the two wealth-related virtues—liberality (ἐλευθεριότης) and munificence (μεγαλοπρέπεια)—previously discussed in *EN* VI.1–2.[93] These differing perspectives have enriched the complex and multifaceted scholarly discourse surrounding this section of the text. The intricacy and apparent contradictions within these discussions have even prompted some commentators to offer only brief analyses of this passage, possibly as a way to sidestep its underlying complexities.[94]

The two concepts of honour outlined in this thesis offer a promising analytical framework for addressing this controversial text. Through the lens of the distinction between the two types of honour, GS can be understood as being primarily concerned with natural honour, which is legitimately claimed and reliably attained by the godlike men, whereas proper ambition relates to conventional honour, which is conferred based on social consensus of worth. As will be illustrated, this approach aligns most closely with the interpretation that views GS as the public manifestation of Aristotle's envisioned ideal life—one guided by theoretical wisdom and contemplation. This perspective was prominently represented by J. A. Stewart in his *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*.

The interpretation advanced in this section serves as an expansion and refinement of Stewart's viewpoint, which has often been unjustly dismissed or overlooked by subsequent scholars. It aims to provide a detailed account of the state of soul that is characteristic of the great-souled individuals, rather than broadly describing them as philosophers, and the nature of the honour associated with this virtue.

This section will begin by developing an interpretation of the two honour-related virtues

[90] Crisp (2006)
[91] Hardie (1978) explicitly classifies GS as the 'heroic virtue' briefly mentioned by Aristotle in *EN* VII.1; Bae (2003) rejects this categorisation but still attributes a similar function to GS.
[92] Stewart (1892, pp. 334–346), Gauthier (1951, pp. 104–114).
[93] *EN* 1125b1–5
[94] E.g., Broadie & Rowe (2001) dedicate only two pages to GS, focusing on relatively minor issues.

through the lens of two kinds of honour. It will first identify and analyse textual evidence from *EN* VI.3 that illustrates the dichotomy between natural honour and conventional honour. Following this, it will employ the mechanism of natural honour and incorporate Stewart's commentary to conjecture the particular type of disposition that defines GS. Then, this section will turn to the contentious elements in this chapter, addressing passages that may support alternative interpretations as well as those that may challenge the interpretation advanced in this section. Through this comprehensive analysis, the significance of the concept of natural honour for understanding Aristotle's ethical theory will be demonstrated.

The most compelling textual evidence linking GS with the contemplative life lies in Aristotle's use of common adjectives in describing both. Aristotle refers to the great-souled individual as possessing all-complete (παντελής) virtue.[95] In *EN* X, Aristotle employs similar expressions to address theoretical knowledge, which he identifies as constituting the ultimate form of human happiness.[96] This shared emphasis on completeness also resonates with the discussion in *EN* I. 12, where Aristotle asserts that happiness alone is honourable for being the most complete.[97]

Additionally, Aristotle characterises the great-souled man as 'self-sufficient' (αὐτάρκης), a term he later applies to the self-sufficient nature of theoretical wisdom.[98] Among these linguistic parallels, perhaps the most striking is Aristotle's use of καλοκἀγαθός, a composite term coined by καλόν (noble) and ἀγαθός (good), to describe both GS and the contemplative life. In the entire *EN*, these are the only two occurrences of the term, underscoring the unique connection between the two concepts.[99] The abundance of these shared adjectives ultimately led J. A. Stewart to interpret Aristotle's account of GS as an imaginative delineation of the public aspect of the contemplative life.[100]

The textual parallels highlighted above are often downplayed by scholars who interpret GS differently. These scholars point to the absence of explicit references to theoretical wisdom,

[95] *EN* 1124a7–8, a29.
[96] *EN* 1178b1
[97] *EN* 1102a1–3
[98] *EN* 1125a12, 1178a24–b7.
[99] *EN* 1124a5, 1179b10.
[100] It is important to note that while Gauthier (1951) also identifies GS with a philosopher, his interpretation differs significantly from that of Stewart. Many subsequent scholars have conflated these two views (e.g., Bae, 2003, pp. 342–343); however, Gauthier interprets GS as representing the contemplative aspect of the philosopher's life, whereas Stewart apparently views it as illustrating the practical dimension of the philosopher's life. This distinction is supported by Stewart's (1892, p. 454) remark on *EN* 1178b4 that 'the θεωρῶν is a man, and chooses to live the social life,' and it was actually 'travestied by those who afterwards made it a life of actual withdrawal from the flesh.' cf. Chapter 5.2.

the contemplative life, or God in Aristotle's account of GS, as well as the reciprocal omission of GS in the discussion of the contemplative life in *EN* X 6–8. Based on this, they argue that the attributes of being all-complete, self-sufficient, and nobly good, ascribed to the great-souled individual, neither imply nor should be interpreted as embracing theoretical wisdom.[101]

The above argument relying on the absence of explicit references (resort to silence) is far from a decisive rebuttal and can be addressed by considering the composing structure of *EN* and the implicit cross-references between the two passages. First, Aristotle explicitly states at the beginning of the *EN* that the starting point of his moral inquiry is 'things familiar to us,' with the ultimate goal being 'things familiar without qualification.'[102] The definition of human happiness as contemplative activity of theoretical wisdom is only explicitly affirmed in Book X.[103] At the stage of Book IV, where Aristotle critically examines social consensus to identify and discuss various virtues of character, theoretical wisdom had not yet been introduced as a technical term denoting a specific faculty of the human soul.[104] Therefore, Aristotle had valid reasons to avoid employing such terminologies while addressing GS, aligning with the developmental nature of his ethical inquiry.

Second, a closer examination of the relevant passages reveals some thematic echoes. In the discussion of GS, Aristotle invokes the term 'god,' stating that the honour appropriate to the great-souled is akin to the honour we accord to the gods.[105] This effectively aligns the state of GS with a godlike state, which he later explicitly associates with the activity of theoretical wisdom in Book X.[106] In turn, Aristotle also clarifies in *EN* X. 8 that the requirement for external resources of those who live a contemplative life, since they still engage in public life and act in accordance with human virtues, is moderate. This remark aligns with his account of GS, where he criticises the received misconception that GS is tied to noble birth, political power, or wealth acquired through good fortune.[107] These parallels further support the association between GS and the contemplative life. In sum, the connection between GS and the contemplative life should not be undermined by the absence of explicit references to theoretical

[101] Hardie (1978, p. 69), Bae (2003).
[102] *EN* 1095a32–b4, see Chapter 4.4.1 for an detailed account.
[103] The inclusion of the contemplative life as one of the three candidates for *eudaimonia* at the beginning of *EN* (1096a4–5) does not, on its own, offer any substantive insight into the nature of this way of life.
[104] Theoretical wisdom as a technical term is not introduced in *EN* until Book VI. 3.
[105] *EN* 1123b16–19
[106] Crisp (2006, p. 164) is thus wrong in claiming that Aristotle never refers to god in his account of GS.
[107] *EN* 1124a21–25. Cooper (1989, p. 196) interprets this reference to the conventional understanding of GS as requiring external prosperity for its realisation. However, as will be demonstrated later, this interpretation lacks sufficient textual support. See Irwin (1985, p. 100) for a similar note on this text.

wisdom and contemplation in *EN* IV.3.

One underlying reason that may discourage scholars from associating GS with the contemplative life of a godlike man is their misinterpretation of the practical manifestation of the contemplative life. Specifically, they misconceive the role of theoretical wisdom by viewing it exclusively as a 'constitutive use'—focused solely on intellectual contemplation—while overlooking its function as a 'regulative idea' that can guide and inform practical action. This narrow interpretation leads to the perception of the contemplative life as intentionally and, to varying degrees, necessarily detached from public involvement. As a result, they may view it as 'conceptually impossible' for GS to embody any godlike trait, as god possesses no virtue of character.[108]

However, as demonstrated in Chapter 5.2, the godlike man actively participates in public life, being regulated by an unqualified understanding of moral principles. Although their activities in public life are distinct from those guided solely by practical wisdom, the godlike man still adheres to the prescriptions of both the virtues of character and practical wisdom. This distinction supports Aristotle's attribution of a practical disposition to the contemplative life, allowing the godlike lifestyle to stand out in public interactions. Through this distinct mode of engagement, the godlike man inspires admiration and becomes a fitting object of natural honour.

With the preceding circumstantial evidence that suggests a close association between GS and the contemplative life led by godlike individuals, the next step is to identify textual evidence within Aristotle's account of GS that reflects the binary distinction between natural and conventional honour. The qualitative difference between the honour associated with GS and that associated with proper ambition has been astutely observed by J. A. Stewart. As Stewart notes in his introductory remarks on proper ambition:

> "Much more striking is the qualitative difference between the respective objects of the μεγαλόψυχος and the ἀνώνυμος of this chapter. The statement that the μεγαλόψυχος is concerned with μεγάλη τιμή and the ἀνώνυμος with μικρὰ τιμή takes us only a short way. It is the different *kind* of τιμή with which each is concerned. The τιμή which the μεγαλόψυχος accepts is but 'the guinea stamp,' which symbolises his intrinsic worth. His object is, not this τιμή, but the personality—the εὐδαιμονία to which it is rendered. But the ἀνώνυμος of this chapter seeks another kind of τιμή—ordinary social recognition; not, indeed, that he may enjoy it selfishly, but that he may be better able to influence society for good, just as the ἐλευθέριος seeks to have money that

[108] Crisp (2006)

he may be liberal with it."[109]

In Stewart's view, the honour associated with GS is qualitatively distinct from the honour associated with proper ambition. He later argues that it is 'therefore somewhat misleading to coordinate μεγαλοψυχία and proper ambition' based on a justification that implies a quantitative difference.[110] This structural issue has likely led many scholars to presuppose GS as a typical virtue of character. Assuming that the object of this virtue is quantitatively great honour, these scholars have faced numerous irreconcilable contradictions in their interpretations of this chapter.

On the other hand, while Stewart's observation reflects a sharp instinct, his argument falls short of adequately defending it. He fails to explain the essential difference between recognition from the good and recognition from the multitude.[111] He also cannot clarify why Aristotle uses external honour as a starting point to illustrate the intrinsic value of his moral paragon, nor can he identify the specific type of moral decisions represented by GS as a practical disposition. Overall, Stewart does not effectively integrate the honour associated with GS into Aristotle's broader theoretical framework, which has rendered his interpretation unconvincing to later scholars.

The two concepts of honour developed in this thesis serve to defend and expand upon Stewart's perspective. The following discussion presents textual evidence indicating that the honour associated with GS is not the conventional type of honour, which inherently involves an relational element between the subject and the community.

The first textual evidence lies in Aristotle's criticism on a public opinion of GS. This view suggests that good fortune effectively contributes to individual's GS, as individuals of noble birth, political power, and wealth are often the recipients of honour. Aristotle further explains that such individuals are honoured for occupying a position of superiority (ἐν ὑπεροχῇ), and this perceived superiority is associated with worthiness of honour.[112]

However, as Aristotle points out, this type of superiority is *arbitrary*, as it is exercised by the multitude randomly and without any justification.[113] It is arbitrary not only because the acquisition of such honourable attributes depends heavily on good fortune, but also because,

[109] Stewart (1892, p. 347)
[110] Ibid.
[111] Cf. *EN* 1124a6–12 on the great-souled man's acceptance of honour from the good and indifference to honour from anyone.
[112] *EN* 1124a21–24
[113] *EN* 1124b7: ὁ μὲν γὰρ μεγαλόψυχος δικαίως καταφρονεῖ (δοξάζει γὰρ ἀληθῶς), οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ τυχόντως.

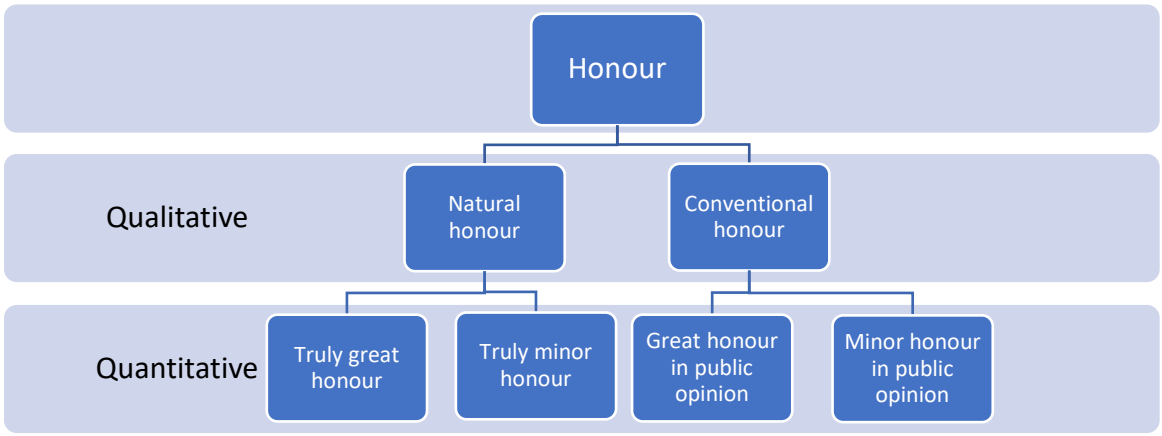
within the paradigm of conventional honour, the honourability of these attributes depends more on those who bestow honour than on those who receive it.[114] Consequently, it is inevitable for one to compare oneself with others and meet certain external societal standards to be deemed worthy of this kind of honour.

Aristotle does not explicitly state that the type of honour described above is qualitatively different from the honour associated with the great-souled individual. However, he does assert that the societal understanding of GS based on external attributes is incorrect, emphasising that, in reality, it is only the good person who is truly worthy of honour.[115] Furthermore, Aristotle later portrays the great-souled individual as someone who does not compare himself with others, as external praise holds little significance for him.[116] In other words, the social recognition derived from relationships with external factors is unlikely to be the type of honour associated with GS.

The second piece of textual evidence can be found in the corresponding passage in *EE* III. 5, where the qualitative binary of honour is further elaborated through an alleged inconsistency in the depiction of the great-souled individual. Aristotle admits that the great-souled is both characteristically concerned with honour and, at the same time, dismissive of the multitude, disagreeing with their perceptions of what is honourable.[117] Such an alleged tension effectively addressed using the framework of the honour binary: the honour the great-souled individual seeks is natural honour, inspired solely by his practical demonstration of goodness, whereas the honour he disregards is conventional honour, arising from the reciprocal affirmations of the multitude.[118]

This interpretation is reinforced by Aristotle's subsequent clarification that 'honour is minor or great in two ways' (ἔστι γὰρ τιμὴ καὶ μικρὰ καὶ μεγάλη διχῶς).[119] One might expect Aristotle to elaborate on this statement by introducing a qualitative and a quantitative standard, as illustrated in the following flowchart.

[114] Cf. *EN* 1095b25–27
[115] *EN* 1124a25–26
[116] It should be noted that certain elements in the portrayal are drawn from empirical observations, which warrant careful consideration. A more detailed account of these elements will be provided in the subsequent textual analysis.
[117] *EE* 1232b14–16
[118] The inconsistency is thus not, as suggested Cooper (1989, p. 196) and Taylor (2006, p. 218), any quantitative disparity between intrinsic worth and external tokens of value. This interpretation also fails to align with the subsequent discussion on the two ways in which honour can be considered great.
[119] *EE* 1232b16–17



The qualitative standard differentiates between natural honour and conventional honour, providing a resolution to the alleged inconsistency in great-souled individual and delineating the objects associated with the two honour-related virtues. The quantitative standard, on the other hand, measures the degree or amount of honour within each category. This approach is also frequently employed by scholars to distinguish between the two honour-related virtues, frequently drawing them into textual inconsistencies.

Unfortunately, Aristotle does not expand on the assertion of 'two ways of greatness' in the detailed manner suggested by the above flowchart. Instead, he adopts a more realistic approach to explanation: first, the greatness of honour differs in being conferred either by the ordinary multitude or by those worthy of consideration (τῷ ὑπὸ πολλῶν τῶν τυχόντων ἢ τῷ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀξίων λόγου); second, it differs in the ground on which honour is given (τῷ τιμίαν εἶναι).[120]

This is far from a clear explanation of the two ways in which honour can be considered great or minor. A critical challenge lies in justifying the greatness of honour conferred by those deemed worthy of consideration. One might argue that this supposed group is merely a collection of individuals who happen to share the same value system as the great-souled individual. If so, the great-souled man could be reduced to someone who values honour only when it is bestowed by those who align with his own values—resembling, in a way, members of inner-city gangs who value recognition within their own circles while disregarding the honour of the broader community.

If Aristotle does not intend to endorse the above interpretation, he bears partial responsibility

[120] *EE* 1232b18–21

for the misreading, as he does not sufficiently clarify the fundamental difference between the honour conferred by the two representative groups. Nevertheless, this straightforward interpretation leads to two problematic consequences.

First, it broadens the scope of inconsistency from the *great-souled* individual to everyone engaged in public life. As Aristotle explains in *EN* I.5, people in political life seek honour only from specific groups for specific actions.[121] Consequently, they may disregard recognition from those outside their chosen group, thereby exhibiting a similar inconsistency attributed to the great-souled.

Second, and more importantly, Aristotle later uses this criterion to distinguish between two types of worth. He argues that 'according to the distinction made before, there are some goods which are honourable in some cases and not in others' (ἐστὶν ἔνια τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὰ μὲν τίμια τὰ δ᾽ ὡς διωρίσθη πρότερον).[122] Presumably, there are some other goods which are honourable without qualification. The interpretation that treats the criterion as representing two distinct communities cannot adequately explain its subsequent application, as either community could regard what the other values as not honourable.

A more nuanced interpretation of Aristotle's elaboration on the 'two ways of greatness' can still align with the categorisation presented in the flowchart, though it is less immediately apparent. The distinction between honour conferred by the multitude and by those worthy of consideration lies not in the specific community bestowing the honour, but in the cognitive state from which the honour originates. Specifically, it is not the multitude itself but the arbitrariness of the value standard embodied by the multitude that defines the first type of honour. As discussed earlier in the corresponding passage of *EN*, superiority attained through such arbitrary criteria does not make one truly great-souled, because honour bestowed in this way fundamentally depends on external factors.

Conversely, the second type of honour is characterised not by communal agreement among those worthy of consideration but by a genuine understanding of worth *qua* itself. This renders the honour associated with the great-souled qualitatively distinct, as it is inspired naturally and without qualification, unmediated by external validation.

In conclusion, viewed through the framework of the distinction between the two types of

[121] *EN* 1095b28–31
[122] *EE* 1232b27–28

honour, we can identify textual indications in both *EN* and *EE* that the honour associated with Aristotle's GS is not conventional honour. The concept of natural honour fills the explanatory gap regarding the mechanism underlying the honour attributed to the great-souled, further enriching Stewart's view on the qualitative distinction of honour associated with GS. Given that the great-souled individual is described as possessing the moral traits of being all-complete, self-sufficient, and nobly good, he is reasonably understood as representing the public aspect of the godlike man who lives a contemplative life. Thus, the natural honour inspired by perceiving the orderly activities of godlike men explains how the great-souled can reliably attain honour while disagreeing with the multitude about what is truly honourable.

If Aristotle's true intention is to portray GS as the practical manifestation of the contemplative life lived by godlike men, with the honour associated with GS being natural honour, the next interpretive question concerns the specific disposition to which GS pertains. Since Aristotle situates the discussion of GS among other individual virtues of character—such as courage, temperance, and liberality—all of which are defined as intermediate dispositions toward particular emotions or actions, it is reasonable to assume that GS also involves a specific disposition. Whether or not GS fully aligns with the traditional virtues of character, it must refer to a distinct and identifiable disposition.

However, even the above preliminary account of GS remains a matter of dispute among commentators and critics. For instance, ancient commentators such as Aspasius and Heliodorus identified GS with practical wisdom.[123] Their reasoning primarily stems from Aristotle's description of GS as follows:

> 'ἔοικε μὲν οὖν ἡ μεγαλοψυχία οἷον κόσμος τις εἶναι τῶν ἀρετῶν: μείζους γὰρ αὐτὰς ποιεῖ, καὶ οὐ γίνεται ἄνευ ἐκείνων. διὰ τοῦτο χαλεπὸν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ μεγαλόψυχον εἶναι: οὐ γὰρ οἷόν τε ἄνευ καλοκαγαθίας.'[124]
>
> So it seems that GS is a sort of κόσμος (order, ornament, or regulator; the proper translation will be discussed later) of the virtues; it augments them and not occur without them. That is why it is difficult to be truly great-souled, as it is not possible without complete virtue.

Aristotle's ambiguous statement that GS appears to serve as a κόσμος of the virtues—augmenting them and existing only alongside them—has been compared to his account of practical wisdom in EN VI, where he presents practical wisdom as inseparable from the virtues

[123] *Aspasius*, 108.1–116.5; cf. Ierodiakonou (1999); Hardie (1978) and Held (1993) also hold this interpretation but defend from different angles.
[124] *EN* 1124a1–5; this piece of text is quoted here because it has been interpreted in significantly divergent ways by various commentators and will be revisited in the subsequent analysis.

of character.

Another group of scholars, including Stewart, who interpret the great-souled individual as Aristotle's depiction of his ideal life of contemplation, naturally identifies GS with theoretical wisdom. As discussed earlier, this view is largely based on the attributes of the great-souled individual, described as possessing all-complete and self-sufficient virtue, which elevates him above those who are merely 'conscious of the moral law through their φρόνησις'[125]

It is important here to distinguish between equating GS with theoretical wisdom *per se* and identifying the great-souled individual as theoretically wise. The latter interpretation acknowledges that the figure characterised by GS encompasses more than the specific trait of GS alone, but also embodies both the prerequisites and consequences of GS, extending beyond the particular disposition associated with it. From this perspective, theoretical wisdom can be understood either as a premise or as a result of GS. This interpretation marks a key point of divergence between this thesis and Stewart's reading: while both agree that the great-souled figure possesses theoretical wisdom, this thesis does not regard it as the defining essence of GS.

We should first acknowledge that Aristotle himself bears some responsibility for interpretations of GS as a meta-virtue or comprehensive virtue, due to the distinct way he presents GS compared to other individual virtues of character. Aristotle typically follows a structured scheme when discussing particular virtues, outlining 'what they are, what things they relate to, and how (τίνες εἰσὶ καὶ περὶ ποῖα καὶ πῶς).'[126] For instance, in his discussion of courage, Aristotle begins by stating that courage is an intermediate state concerning fear.[127] However, Aristotle deviates from this scheme when addressing GS. Instead of analysing the virtue itself, he focuses on the great-souled individual, justifying this departure by claiming that it makes no difference whether one examines the disposition or the person who embodies it.[128] While Aristotle may have had a specific reason for this digression, it has inadvertently led some readers to view the prerequisites and consequences of GS as its defining essence, as demonstrated in the interpretations discussed above.

However, interpretations of GS as an all-round virtue face both contextual and textual challenges. Aristotle's placement of GS alongside other virtues of character strongly suggests

[125] Stewart (1892, p. 336)
[126] *EN* 1115a4–5
[127] *EN* 1115a7
[128] *EN* 1123a36–b1

that it should be understood as a particular disposition, akin to courage or temperance, even if its development may require the prior acquisition of certain general knowledge.

More textual evidence supporting this view can be found in both EN and EE. In the previously quoted passage, Aristotle suggests that the existence of GS is not necessary for the existence of other virtues, noting that GS augments complete virtue rather than constituting it. This stands in stark contrast to the interdependent relationship between practical wisdom and virtue of character.[129] Consequently, it follows that in theory one can possess complete virtue without qualifying as great-souled, indicating that GS should be treated as an independent trait rather than as an overarching or integrative one.

Further evidence for the taxonomical separateness of GS is found in EE, where Aristotle points out that, although every virtue in a way contributes to GS, 'there is nevertheless a single trait as GS alongside of the other virtues (ἀλλ᾽ ὅμως ἐστί τις παρὰ τὰς ἄλλας ἀρετὰς μία μεγαλοψυχία).'[130] This passage reinforces the idea that GS is a separate and unique characteristic, rather than merely a synthesis of other virtues.

Echoing the above textual evidence, the concept of natural honour also requires GS to be a particular disposition. As previously demonstrated, GS describes the public life of godlike individuals, enabling them to inspire natural honour from observers. To fulfill this role, GS must allow godlike individuals to be perceptibly distinguished from those who lead other lifestyles, thereby providing the observers with the necessary perceptual data to intuitively grasp universal principles associated with moral excellence. If GS were merely an aggregation of virtues, individuals guided by the rest of virtues would be indistinguishable from the great-souled individual, rendering GS redundant from the standpoint of perception.

Having established that GS is unlikely to represent an all-encompassing virtue, it is equally important to avoid interpretations that, in seeking to explain its capacity to enhance other virtues, inadvertently diminish the effectiveness or significance of Aristotle's concept of complete virtue—the integrated development of moral virtues in conjunction with practical wisdom.[131]

For example, some scholars propose that GS represents a specific disposition that empowers an individual to excel in any domain of virtue by steadfastly following the dictates of practical

[129] Bae (2003, p. 341) believes this sufficiently undermines the alleged identification of GS with practical wisdom.
[130] *EE* 1232b23–26; For the definition of 'taxonomical separability' see Miller (2012).
[131] *EN* VI.13

reasoning under extreme circumstances.[132] In this view, the great-souled individual is portrayed as a 'mental athlete,' embodying the qualities of figures such as Hector, who displays exceptional valour, or Priam, who exemplifies extraordinary endurance. According to this interpretation, GS functions as a capacity to rise to the most significant challenges across the spectrum of virtue.

However, such an interpretation of the essence of GS, beyond its issues with textual inconsistency,[133] implicitly diminishes the significance of moral virtue and practical wisdom in Aristotle's ethical framework. The claim that an additional disposition like GS is necessary to enhance either the performance of a specific virtue or to strengthen the overall effectiveness of practical wisdom inherently implies a deficiency within these faculties. Specifically, the argument that GS enables an individual to display courage in extreme circumstances implies that those who possess ordinary virtue of courage, even when guided by practical wisdom, cannot uphold this virtue under such conditions. This implicit devaluation of practical wisdom is evident in Hardie's account of GS, where he likens moral virtue to the state of continence (ἐγκράτεια),[134] suggesting that even a virtuous person's desires may render right decisions challenging in extreme circumstances, whereas only the great-souled individual is portrayed as being immune to such internal conflicts.[135]

A similar concern arises with interpretations that define GS as a state of self-knowledge.[136] Proponents of this view often cite Aristotle's description of the great-souled individual as one who 'thinks himself worthy of great things and is indeed worthy of them,' arguing that such a correct self-assessment—whether conceived as a cognitive state or a behavioural disposition—constitutes the core essence of GS. However, as previously noted, the attributes of the great-souled individual extend beyond the specific disposition of GS to include its prerequisites and consequences. Thus, the broader traits associated with the great-souled individual should not be conflated with the distinct disposition that defines GS.

Another significant issue with defining GS as a capacity or disposition of self-knowledge is that it implies that individuals who possess complete and self-sufficient virtue but are not great-souled lack this self-awareness of their own worth. This interpretation leads to a substantial

[132] This interpretation, with subtle variations, is advanced by Hardie (1978) and Bae (2003). Hardie views this disposition as Aristotle's conception of heroic virtue, whereas Bae regards it as a component of the ordinary virtues of character.
[133] Cf. Bae (2003, pp. 344–346) attempts to reconcile the textual inconsistency by introducing an alternative meaning of the κόσμος + genitive plural construction.
[134] *EN* 1145a15–20: the state of continence is a state qualitatively inferior to moral virtue.
[135] Hardie (1978, pp. 71–72)
[136] Curzer (1990), Crisp (2006)

distortion of Aristotle's account of intellectual virtues by suggesting that only the great-souled are capable of such self-knowledge, thereby undermining the broader applicability and significance of intellectual virtue in Aristotle's ethical framework.

The preceding analysis has highlighted the challenges in precisely identifying the particular disposition that defines GS. The concept of *natural honour* provides a new perspective for addressing this issue, presenting the potential to identify a distinct disposition for GS without compromising the moral significance of moral virtues and practical wisdom. As demonstrated in Chapter 5.2, the distinct disposition of godlike individuals in public life involves allocating time and resources, whether personal or public, with reference to the relative worth of various available virtuous deeds. This deliberate prioritisation aims to maximise the well-being of the polis, thereby manifesting a higher degree of autonomy and orderliness compared to other ways of life.

If it is indeed Aristotle's intention to depict GS as the practical manifestation of contemplative life led by the godlike individual, and if the honour associated with GS is understood as natural honour, then it is reasonable to identify the distinct disposition of godlike individual with the particular disposition of GS. In this interpretation, Aristotle's concept of μεγαλοψυχία can be understood as the specific disposition of properly regulating the exercise of various virtues. This regulation is unattainable without a clear and unqualified understanding of moral principles, grounded in the faculty of theoretical wisdom. Moreover, the evocation of natural honour serves as a necessary sign of such regulations.

The above interpretation of the essence of GS effectively addresses the challenges previously identified. Unlike the conception of GS as an all-encompassing virtue—which inherently precludes its separability from other virtues—this interpretation positions GS as an independent disposition. Furthermore, it upholds the effectiveness and significance of Aristotle's practical wisdom by ensuring that GS does not encroach upon the decision-making process in particular cases, a domain sufficiently governed by practical wisdom and individual moral virtues. Rather than overriding specific moral judgments, GS complements Aristotle's ethical framework by functioning as a regulative principle that identifies and prioritises the particular situations in which virtuous activities are most appropriately enacted. In doing so, GS elevates the communal value of selected virtues, aligning individual moral actions with the broader merits of the community.

Such an interpretation of Aristotle's conception of GS, grounded in the concept of natural

honour and its mechanism of occurrence presented in this thesis, significantly departs from mainstream interpretations. First, it avoids the approach of *finding fault* with Aristotle, rejecting the claims that the concept of GS fundamentally violates the principles of virtue or that Aristotle harbours non-academic or non-philosophical intentions in his analysis of this concept. Second, it refrains from interpreting the honour in the text as conventional honour, which would risk reducing the great-souled individual—and, by extension, Aristotle's entire ethical framework—to being overly dependent on external judgments and societal standards.[137] Finally, this interpretation directly engages with the conditional relationship between GS and the complete virtue, which asserts that GS serves to enhance complete virtue and cannot exist without it, referenced in the previous quoted text.[138]

Despite the novelty of this interpretation, it finds textual support with a careful revisit of Aristotle's depiction of GS and its relationship to other virtues. In the previously quoted text, GS is famously described as a sort of κόσμος of complete virtue.[139] Most scholars translate the term κόσμος as ornament, adornment, or crown, emphasising its decorative connotation. Admittedly, this translation concords well with the immediate context: an adornment can complement the main body, and its decorative identity is contingent upon the existence of the main body. But this interpretation offers little insight into the ethical role of GS in relation to complete virtue. It fails to illuminate in what sense and through what mechanism GS makes the complete virtue even greater, without undermining the completeness of the latter. This lack of clarity may contribute to interpretations that involve implicit deflation of Aristotle's complete virtue.[140]

However, the term κόσμος carries multiple meanings beyond its decorative connotation. In its most fundamental sense, κόσμος signifies 'order' or 'arrangement,' often implying harmony and an organised structure. By extension, Aristotle also uses it to describe the universe as a harmonious and orderly whole. Additionally, κόσμος can metaphorically represent a 'ruler' or 'regulator,' denoting a figure responsible for establishing and maintaining societal order.

[137] Adkins (1960) offers one of the most representative articulations of this perspective. His central thesis asserts that in ancient Greek thought, the terms good (ἀγαθός) and bad (κακός) were used to evaluate individuals solely based on their success or failure in upholding standards that garnered honour from their peers. Hester (1991) and Corder (1994) builds on this view, employing it to explain Aristotle's justification for the concept of virtue of character.
[138] *EN* 1124a1–5
[139] Ibid.
[140] E.g., Crisp (2006, p. 167) suggests that individuals who possess complete virtue but lack GS may abstain from noble actions that they would otherwise undertake, owing to a sense of diffidence.

This alternative reading of κόσμος, understanding it as signifying an essential role in the practical arrangement of complete virtue, aligns with the conception of GS grounded in the framework of natural honour. As previously argued, GS complements Aristotle's ethical framework by functioning as a regulative principle that identifies and prioritises the particular situations in which virtuous activity should be most appropriately enacted.

In the context of public life, the great-souled individual, as an ordinary citizen, autonomously allocates personal time and resources in accordance with the relative value of various virtuous actions, aiming to maximise the well-being of the polis he lives in. This deliberate prioritisation reflects a level of orderliness and rational organisation that surpasses other ways of life.

In the role of a ruler or lawmaker, the great-souled individual's capacity for GS is further magnified. With access to greater public resources, he applies his disposition to determine which public activities should be prioritised, who should be responsible for them, and to what extent they should be pursued.[141]

Through these activities, GS functions as a regulator of the practice of other virtues or, at the very least, manifests itself in the arrangement and prioritisation of their enactment. In this capacity, GS is not merely an isolated virtue but actively enhances the practice of moral virtues by introducing a higher level of order.

If the term κόσμος in the previously cited passage is interpreted with the connotation of 'order' or 'regulation'—rather than a purely decorative meaning—this description of GS effectively implies both in what sense and through what mechanism it elevates complete virtue. This reading also aligns seamlessly with the understanding of GS as a practical disposition that embodies natural honour, providing a coherent and integrated framework for its role in Aristotle's ethics.

Another clue supporting the interpretation of GS as a regulative disposition can be found in Aristotle's discussion of munificence (μεγαλοπρέπεια), a wealth-related virtue that Aristotle considers parallel to GS.[142] Munificence is described as the virtue of using wealth with good taste (ἐμμελής), often in ways that benefits the entire polis.[143] Aristotle illustrates this feature with a telling example: repeatedly giving money to wanderers, while admittedly a virtuous

[141] Cf. *EN* 1094a26–b9, *Protrepticus* B47–48; See Chapter 5.2 for a detailed account of the public life of godlike men.
[142] *EN* 1125b1–4
[143] *EN* 1122a35, 1122b20–25.

deed viewed in particular cases, does not exemplify munificence. Munificence requires more than liberality; it involves deliberately selecting expenditures that create the greatest and most appropriate effect within a given expenditure.[144]

Here, Aristotle appears to suggest a disposition to choose among various virtuous ways of using wealth in a manner that maximises the benefits to the community. Based on this understanding, it is reasonable to infer that GS, as a parallel concept to munificence, would involve a comparable disposition. The practical disposition of GS derived from the concept of natural honour is indeed comparable to that of munificence. Both includes the deliberate allocation of external resources—whether time, wealth, or effort—among activities that are individually virtuous as particular decisions, but are prioritised in a way that maximise the overall merit of the community.[145]

A third clue lies in Aristotle's attitude towards the sound-minded (σώφρων), namely those who is worthy of small things and regards himself as such. One might expect that, as one of the opposites of GS, sound-mindedness would be critically remarked as the other two opposites, vanity and small-mindedness. However, Aristotle refrains from criticising sound-mindedness from the angle of voluntariness in EN, and in EE, his remark on this disposition can even be read in a positive light.

In EN, this disposition is never labelled with adjectives that bear negative connotation. Even its name, sound-mindedness, resembles the term used for the virtue of temperance (σωφροσύνη).[146] Moreover, Aristotle differentiates it from GS only in terms of the scale, stating that just like small people can be neat and well-proportioned, but not beautiful, sound-mindedness cannot rise to the level of GS. This analogy carries two significant implications. First, it suggests that the sound-minded individual also performs virtuous deeds, echoing the neat and well-proportioned traits of small people. Second, it implies that is not up to the voluntary decision of the sound-minded individual to choose deeds with less worth, just as being small is not a matter of choice for small people in many cases. This indicates that sound-mindedness, while distinct from *GS*, remains grounded in virtuous behaviours within the limitations of an individual's capacity or circumstances.

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[144] *EN* 1122b14–15: …ἀπὸ τῆς ἴσης δαπάνης τὸ ἔργον ποιήσει μεγαλοπρεπέστερον.
[145] Due to space constraints, this thesis will not delve into the scholarly debates surrounding munificence or its relationship to GS, but it is worth noting that the spectacle of munificent deeds can also arouse admiration (*EN* 1122b17–18: τοῦ γὰρ τοιούτου ἡ θεωρία θαυμαστή, τὸ δὲ μεγαλοπρεπὲς θαυμαστόν).
[146] *EN* 1117b24

In EE, the above implication is further illustrated that the sound-minded individuals are by no means blameworthy, as they act in accordance with what reason bids. This suggests that such individuals do not deviate from moral virtues in their particular deeds. Probably the most compelling evidence is Aristotle's following assertion that the sound-minded individual is 'the same by nature as the great-souled individual, since both deem themselves worthy of what they are truly worthy of (καὶ ὁ αὐτός ἐστι τῇ φύσει τῷ μεγαλοψύχῳ, ὧν γὰρ ἄξιοι, τούτων ἀξιοῦσιν αὑτοὺς ἄμφω).'[147]

Given that the nature of a moral virtue of character lies in its particular behavioural disposition and the corresponding cognitive state, this statement indicates that sound-mindedness, despite being an opposite state of GS, shares the same degree of understanding of moral principles. This clarification effectively discourages interpretations of GS that involve moral decisions within the domain of practical wisdom, as such interpretations would necessarily include sound-mindedness into GS as well.

The analysis of sound-mindedness further points to the amount of external resource, instead of any internal trait, as the sole distinction between it with GS. Now the amount of external resources, much like physical size, are determined by factors of luck factor and remain beyond the influence of subjective will. If sound-minded individuals are identified as those who have the same cognitive capacity and moral dispositions as the great-souled but lack sufficient external resource, it appears that the only way these two groups of people can be distinguished in practice lies in the inability of the sound-minded to fully manifest their understanding of moral principles through actively arranging their resources in ways that most benefit the community.

This interpretation of sound-mindedness reconciles with the interpretation of the particular disposition of GS based on the concept of natural honour. According to this reading, the reason the sound-minded do not inspire natural honour in the same way as the great-souled comes down to a practical matter: it is not because the former lack an unqualified understanding of moral principles but because the public aspect of their lifestyle—shaped by limited resources—cannot be distinguished perceptibly from those guided merely by ordinary practical wisdom and moral virtues.[148]

Overall, this section employs the concept of natural honour, as introduced and developed in

[147] *EE* 1233a23–24
[148] Cf. Chapter 5.2.2

this thesis, to provide an alternative perspective on the contested notion of *greatness of soul* within Aristotle's ethical framework. By drawing on the distinction between natural honour and conventional honour, as well as the association of natural honour with godlike individuals, I posit that the honour linked to GS is best understood as natural honour, a claim supported by relevant textual evidence.

This section further situates the quality of GS within the public life of godlike individuals, building on Aristotle's assertion that GS must presuppose complete virtue and the earlier arguments that only God and godlike men can inspire natural honour. By doing so, it critically engages with various interpretations of this trait proposed by other scholars, highlighting their limitations and offering an alternative perspective grounded in the concept of natural honour.

Lastly, building on the analysis of the practical dimensions of the contemplative life in Chapter 5.2.2, this section propose a plausible conjecture that the defining disposition of GS is the proper allocation of available resources among various virtuous and expedient deeds, with the aim of maximising the overall merit of the polis. This interpretation resolves textual inconsistencies present in many earlier accounts and is substantiated by substantial textual evidence. While this interpretation of GS based on natural honour may not fully align with all relevant discussions in Aristotle's works, the application of the distinctions between natural and conventional honour demonstrates their significant value in elucidating the foundational principles of Aristotle's ethical reasoning.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has sought to reconstruct the concept of honour in Aristotle's corpus by distinguishing between two types of honour: conventional honour and natural honour. It has proposed that Aristotle's framework for honour extends beyond interpersonal obligations upheld by public consensus (conventional honour) to include a spontaneous recognition of intrinsic worth that is independent of external validation (natural honour). By incorporating these two concepts of honour into Aristotle's theoretical framework in the dimensions of theology, epistemology, and ethics, this thesis aims to reassess its significance and demonstrate its pivotal role within Aristotle's broader theoretical framework. This new understanding of Aristotle's concept of honour has helped address longstanding ambiguities and contentious interpretations in Aristotelian scholarship concerning honour-related texts.

The investigation began by situating Aristotle's concept of honour within its broader cultural and philosophical context. Honour was defined as a judgment of worth based on factual considerations of the object. A comparative analysis of modern studies and ancient Greek literature established that the phenomenon of honour operated through interpersonal obligations upheld by public consensus has persisted across cultures and epochs and involved an inclusive array of value. Aristotle's notion of conventional honour resembles this broader societal paradigm, as its function also depends on common affirmation within a community. The study then proceeded to argue that Aristotle's writings also contain evidence for a second type of honour—natural honour—that is grounded in the spontaneous recognition of genuine goodness. It further argued that although there is taxonomical difference between natural honour and conventional honour, but conventional honour may not be ontologically separable from natural honour.

Theological Foundations of Natural Honour

Chapter Three explored the theological foundation of natural honour, grounding it in the concept of *thaumazein* as a cognitive response to the Aristotelian god. Drawing from *Metaphysics* Λ, it demonstrated that the god's state of eternal and changeless actuality evokes *thaumazein* in the heavenly bodies, which serves as the divine source of natural honour. This cognitive response is not limited to divine entities; it extends to the natural order as a manifestation of god's goodness and to human intellect as an analogue of divine intellect. The chapter argued that human intellect shares with the divine intellect the capacity to inspire

natural honour. This dual capacity—to evoke natural honour and to recognise it—highlights the role of human intellect as both a recipient and an agent of natural honour within Aristotle's framework.

Epistemological Dimensions of Natural Honour

Chapter Four addressed the epistemological concerns surrounding natural honour, particularly the cognitive process by which it is recognised. Two key questions were raised: How can goodness be perceived? And how can one attain a universal understanding of goodness through the perception of a single particular entity? Drawing on *Posterior Analytics*, the chapter argued that Aristotle's concept of the first principles encompasses both natural and moral propositions, including the existential premises and definitions of goodness. It then examined Aristotle's account of induction in *Posterior Analytics* II.19, arguing that first principles can be intuitively grasped through the perception of a single particular entity.

To support this claim, the chapter analysed three examples of Aristotelian induction, illustrating how the perception of a particular entity—whether a geometric shape, a natural object, or a composite concept—can lead to a universal understanding of the corresponding first principles. This inductive process aligns with Aristotle's description of the actualisation of potential intellect, wherein the potentiality innate in human beings is transformed into an intuitive grasp of first principles. By extending this mechanism to include moral and metaphysical concepts, the chapter demonstrated that Aristotle's epistemology provides a robust framework for recognising genuine goodness, thereby supporting the independence of natural honour from social conventions.

Aristotle may also consider the establishment and maintenance of conventional honour to stem from the same intuitive grasp of moral principles. Consequently, although Aristotle admits that the practice of conventional honour relies on common affirmation, the standards of conventional honour should not be regarded as entirely arbitrary, as suggested by some contemporary studies on the concept of honour. Rather, the values upheld by conventional honour is treated as a distorted or incomplete reflection of moral principles. For this reason, conventional honour and public opinions that sustain it may serve as a useful—though cautiously employed—point of reference in Aristotle's moral inquiry.

Ethical Implications of Natural Honour

Chapter Five turned to the ethical dimensions of natural honour, focusing on how godlike men are perceived and recognised in public life as as a necessary condition for inspiring honour in others. Drawing on *EN* X, it argued that godlike men, despite leading contemplative lives, also engage in public activities, thereby making their activities visible to the broader community. Furthermore, the chapter conjectured that godlike men can be distinguished in public life—particularly from those leading the second-best life of politics—by their exceptional capacity to weigh and balance various goods that best serve the merit of the community. This visibility and distinctiveness are essential for the recognition and bestowal of natural honour.

Building on the preceding multifaceted analysis of Aristotle's two concepts of honour, this chapter lastly examined the honour-related virtues discussed in *EN* IV 3–4, proposing an alternative interpretation grounded in the distinction between conventional and natural honour. The virtue of greatness-of-soul was linked to natural honour, as it involves the recognition of intrinsic worth and the capacity to inspire honour through actions aligned with genuine goodness. In contrast, the virtue of proper ambition was associated with conventional honour, as it reflects the fulfilment of interpersonal obligations within the framework of social expectations. The great-souled individual is thus interpreted as the public aspect of godlike men, and the quality of greatness-of-soul is interpreted as the practical disposition to allocate external resources among various virtuous deeds in a manner that best serves the merit of the polis.

Significance and Implications

By reconstructing the concept of natural honour, this thesis sheds light on a largely overlooked aspect of Aristotle's ethics. It demonstrates that natural honour is not merely an abstract ideal but a practical mechanism that informs the recognition of worth and the cultivation of virtue. This mechanism operates independently of social conventions, offering an alternative paradigm for understanding honour as a universal and objective value.

The theological, epistemological, and ethical analyses presented in this thesis also contribute to broader discussions within Aristotelian scholarship. The identification of natural honour as a distinct concept challenges existing interpretations of honour-related texts, providing a fresh perspective on Aristotle's views on evaluative judgment and the nature of goodness. Moreover, the exploration of Aristotelian induction and the intuitive grasp of first principles offers valuable insights into his epistemological framework, particularly its applicability to moral and

metaphysical concepts.

Future Directions

While this thesis has focused on natural honour within Aristotle's corpus, it opens avenues for further research. Comparative studies could examine how natural honour relates to similar concepts in other philosophical traditions, such as Kantian respect or Confucian virtue ethics. Additionally, the implications of natural honour for contemporary ethical theories merit further exploration, particularly in the context of debates over objective moral values and the role of admiration in moral development.

In conclusion, the reconstruction of natural honour as a recognition of intrinsic worth and the corresponding emotions and activities enriches our understanding of Aristotle's ethics. By situating this concept within his theological, epistemological, and ethical frameworks, this thesis provides a comprehensive account of natural honour and its significance for both individuals and communities. This reinterpretation not only clarifies ambiguities in Aristotle's writings but also highlights the enduring relevance of his thought for contemporary discussions on honour, virtue, and the nature of goodness.

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