

LIFE FORMS AND DELIBERATE CHOICE IN ARISTOTLE'S TELEOLOGICAL ETHICS¹

FORMAS DE VIDA E ESCOLHA DELIBERADA NA ÉTICA TELEOLÓGICA DE ARISTÓTELES

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Abstract: By presenting happiness [εὐδαιμονία] within the framework of a properly human philosophy [ἀνθρωπίνη φιλοσοφία]², Aristotle also clarifies the extent to which any attempt to access a finalistic understanding of acting well [εὖ πράττειν] in view of a well-living [εὖ ζῆν] will have to make its way through a compact tangle of fluid opinions and divergent perceptions as to its nature and extent. On the other hand, given the contingent cut-off of the action-not only because the possible course of its outcome is indeterminate [ἀδιόριστος] but also obscure [ἄδηλος] the possible outcome of its course - one can hardly conceal the praxeological impact of the glossed expression “we deliberate not about the ends, but about the means” [βουλευόμεθα δ' οὐ περὶ

τῶν τελῶν ἀλλὰ περὶ τὸς τὰ τέλη: EN III, 3, 1112b 11-12] On the assumption that Aristotelian practical philosophy compages a double teleological routing - one more tied to the practice of virtue [ἀρετή], the other more rooted in the exercise of deliberation [βούλευσις] -, the notion of end [τέλλος] acquires thickened ethical coloration in the multiple throws that bring into play the fundamental question that makes us wonder about the properly human good [τἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν]. Now, if in Plato the practice of virtue founded on a Good is what, at the end of the dialectical ascent, should finally make us happy [Res pub, 508 e], in Aristotle, on the other hand, it is important that happiness arises from the completion of a practical good [πρακτὸν ἀγαθόν] called supreme [μέγιστος] not because it is “above” or “beyond” all other goods, but because, in being “chosen-in-reason-of-itself” [αἰρετός καθ'αὐτό] needs mediation [μεσότης] either of “goods-perceived-as-total” [φαινόμενα ἀγαθά] according to which the elective appropriation of different modes of human life [ἀνθρώπινος βίος] takes place, or of prudential conditions by which a deliberate choice [προαίρεσις] is exercised on the basis of the judicious adjustment of a formal universalization of the norm to the contingent particularity of a limit situation.

Keywords: Aristotle. Life forms. Deliberate choice. Teleological Ethics.

Resumo: Ao apresentar a felicidade [εὐδαιμονία] no quadro de uma filosofia propriamente humana [ἀνθρωπίνη φιλοσοφία], Aristóteles esclarece igualmente até que ponto qualquer tentativa de aceder a uma compreensão finalística do agir bem [εὖ πράττειν] em vista um bem-viver [εὖ ζῆν] terá de abrir caminho através de um emaranhado compacto de opiniões fluidas e de percepções divergentes quanto à sua natureza e extensão. Por outro lado, tendo em conta o recorte contingencial da acção – não só por ser indeterminado [ἀδιόριστος] o possível percurso do seu

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desfecho, mas também obscuro [ἄδηλος] o possível desfecho do seu percurso – dificilmente se poderá escamotear o impacto praxiológico da glosada expressão “deliberamos não acerca dos fins, mas acerca dos meios” [βουλευόμεθα δ' οὐ περὶ τῶν τελῶν ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη: EN III, 3, 1112b 11-12]. No pressuposto de que a filosofia prática aristotélica compagina um duplo encaminhamento teleológico – um mais vinculado à prática da virtude [ἀρετή], o outro mais enraizado no exercício da deliberação [βούλευσις] –, a noção de fim [τέλος] adquire adensada coloração ética nos múltiplos lances que colocam em jogo a questão fundamental que nos faz interrogar pelo bem propriamente humano [τάνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν]. Ora, se em Platão a prática da virtude fundada num Bem é o que, no termo da ascensão dialéctica, nos deve tornar finalmente felizes [Res pub., 508 e], já em Aristóteles, por seu turno, importa que a felicidade decorra da finalização de um bem prático [πρακτὸν ἀγαθόν] dito supremo [μέγιστος] não porque esteja “acima” ou para “além” de todos os outros bens, mas porque, ao ser “escolhido-em-razão-de-si-mesmo” [αἰρετός καθ'αυτό], necessita da mediação [μεσότης] quer de “bens-percebidos-como-tais” [φαινόμενα ἀγαθά] em função dos quais se efectiva a apropriação electiva dos diferentes modos de vida humana [ἄνθρωπινος βίος], quer de condições prudenciais mediante as quais uma escolha deliberada [προαίρεσις] é exercida com base no criterioso ajustamento de uma universalização formal da norma à contingente particularidade de uma situação-limite.

Palavras-chave: Aristóteles. Formas de vida. Escolha deliberada. Ética teleológica.

Introduction

By presenting **happiness** [εὐδαιμονία] within the framework of a **properly human philosophy** [ἀνθρωπίνη φιλοσοφία]², Aristotle also clarifies the extent to which any attempt to access a finalistic understanding of **acting well** [εὖ πράττειν] in view of a **well-living** [εὖ ζῆν] will have to make its way through a compact tangle of fluid opinions and divergent perceptions as to its nature and extent. On the other hand, given the contingent cut-off of the action-not only because the possible course of its outcome is **indeterminate** [ἀδιόριστος] but also **obscure** [ἄδηλος] the possible outcome of its course - one can hardly conceal the praxeological impact of the glossed expression “we deliberate not about the ends, but about the means” [βουλευόμεθα δ' οὐ περὶ τῶν τελῶν ἀλλὰ περὶ τὸς τὰ τέλη: EN III, 3, 1112b 11-12] On the assumption that Aristotelian practical philosophy compagnes a twofold teleological routing-one more closely tied to the practice of **virtue** [ἀρετή], the other more rooted in the exercise of **deliberation** [βούλευσις] -, the notion of **end** [τέλος] acquires thickened ethical coloration in the multiple throws that put into play the fundamental question that makes us ask for the **good properly human** [τάνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν]. Now, if in Plato the practice of virtue founded on a Good is what, at the end of the dialectical ascent, should finally make us happy [Res pub., 508 e], already in Aristotle, for his turn, it matters that happiness arises from the completion of a **practical good**

2 On the philosophical scope of the polyvalent meaning of the expression ἀνθρωπίνη φιλοσοφία, cf. the masterful study by RODRIGO Pierre, *Aristote et les “choses humaines”*, Bruxelles: OUSIA, 1998

[πρακτὸν ἀγαθόν] said to be **supreme** [μέγιστος] not because it is “above” or “beyond” all other goods, but because, in being “chosen-for-itself” [αἰρετός καθ'αὐτό], needs **mediation** [μεσότης] either of “goods-perceived-as-total” [φαινόμενα ἀγαθὰ] according to which the elective appropriation of different **modes of human life** [ἀνθρώπινος βίος] takes place, or of prudential conditions by which a **deliberate choice** [προαίρεσις] is exercised on the basis of the judicious adjustment of a formal universalization of the norm to the contingent particularity of a limit situation.

I. The choice of life forms in view of Happiness

Although entangled in a compact mass of experiences as disparate as they are divergent, the Stagyricus makes the point that common sense views of what it means to be happy constitute meaningful perceptions of a specifically human lived text, or one pertaining to human things. There are three forms of **human life** [ἀνθρώπινος βίος] from which the perceptual field of opinions about happiness is polarized: 1. a **pleasurable life** [βίος ἀπολαυστικός] shaped by the enjoyment of **pleasure** [ἡδονή]; 2. a **political life** [βίος πολιτικός], nourished by the desire for **honor** [τιμῆ]; 3. a contemplative **life** [βίος θεωρητικός] embodied in the disinterested dedication to **knowledge** [σοφίᾳ]³. In this regard, Manuel J. Carmo Ferreira states: “**Life is the question par excellence of Aristotle's ethical thought** (...). The community of meaning of the triple formulation of what will always be at stake resides in the reiteration of the quality of “good” (εὖ) that each in its own way thematizes, and which is identified with the “end” (τέλος) that each thing pursues. The question that will govern the discursive course then gains a greater determination, for what becomes highly concerned is then the question of the **good properly human** (τὰνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν: EN, 1094b 7), for its own purposes. But it is as a **vital question in the context of a given existence that inquiry can begin** (...) (EN, 1095b 15-16). Hence the inevitability of the confrontation of disparate answers, as diverse are the **ways of life**, only surmountable if we manage to go back to the most primitive questioning about the “office,” the “function,” the “exercise” (ἔργον) or the competence of **man as man**, transversal and transcending his status or profession, opening to the discussion of

3 Cf. ARIST, EE, I, 4, 1215a 32 - b 6

the inevitable plurality of ways of seeking to justify the **meaning adopted for existence**.”⁴

What is important is offered between the lines in the opinionated perception of the ways of life contains, therefore, the pre-reflexive phenomenology of a lived ethics. The Aristotelian tripartition of ways of life seems to obey the intention of discarding three candidates for the judicious stabilization of a definition of happiness: pleasure, honor, and wealth.

As far as pleasure is concerned, and the same applies to wealth, they could hardly be equated with happiness, since the former, due to its impulsive dimension, and the latter due to its inflationary impetus, represent inhibiting forces contrary to the discernment of reason. As far as honor is concerned, the examination seems more favorable than that of pleasure. Even so, and despite its immediate link to the relational horizon of political life, its advantage is very fragile and uncertain, since it can camouflage an individual interest more interested in the recognition of conquered merits, than in the than properly committed to the diligent and heroic cultivation of a good life in itself. In fact, it is not enough to possess virtue to be virtuous, if this acquisition does not derive from an appropriation. And the reason is very simple: the individual in the process of “acquiring” virtue through the inductive effect of repeated and trained habit must “make it his own,” conforming his possession to the acts actually chosen, performed and experienced “by himself. As long as it is only “acquireable” as a potential possibility, but not **activated** as an actual capacity, the mere possession of virtue does not make anyone ethically virtuous. Aristotle explains why:

Perhaps one can suppose that it [subent. virtue] is the end of political life. But it still seems incomplete, for the one who possesses virtue may find himself asleep and inactive throughout his life, or even more than that: suffering evils and experiencing misfortunes. Now, no one will congratulate the one who lives this way, except to defend this thesis at all costs.⁵

Following the excerpt, it should be noted that the Eudemonic determination of virtue relies on a subtle and usually neglected conceptual distinction between “perceived life” as ζωή and “aimed life” as βίος, a distinction well attested, incidentally, in a furtive incision of the *Ethica Eudemia*, where the Stagyricus, taking the pulse of the various conceptions of happiness, introduces a curious and unexpected conceptual cleavage

4 FERREIRA Manuel J. Carmo, “Introduction” in ARISTOTELES. *Ética a Nicómaco*, trad. and not. Dimas de ALMEIDA, Lisbon: Edições Universitárias Lusófonas, 2012, 21-22; emphasis added.

5 ἄν τις τέλος τοῦ πολιτικοῦ βίου ταύτην ὑπολάβοι. φαίνεται δὲ ἀτελεστέρα καὶ αὕτη: δοκεῖ γὰρ ἐνδέχασθαι καὶ καθεύδειν ἔχοντα τὴν ἀρετὴν ἢ ἀπρακτεῖν διὰ βίου, καὶ πρὸς τοῦτοις κακοπαθεῖν⁰¹ ἀτυχεῖν τὰ μέγιστα: τὸν δ’ οὕτω ζῶντα οὐδεὶς ἂν εὐδαιμονίσειεν, εἰ μὴ θέσιν διαφυλάττων: ARIST., EN, I, 5, 1095b 30 - 1096a 2

between a **nobler form of life** [βίος κρατητής] and an **excellent form of life** [ζωή ἀρίστη].⁶

This is not a matter of ambiguous semantic handling. Aware of the oscillating way in which Aristotle employs one and the other in different latitudes of his textual corpus⁷, we are in the belief that, nevertheless, this fluctuation of meaning implicitly translates a double conception of “life.” To elide the crucial distinction that unfolds between the “vital experience” of **having life** [ζῆν] and the “lived experience” of **being alive** [βιώναι]⁸, would deprive us of a more dilated understanding of the praxeological scope of the proper and appropriate exercise of virtue.⁹

II. The praxeological deconstruction of the Platonic idea of Good

By using the notion of **universal good** [τὸ καθόλου ἀγαθόν] to subject the Platonic theory of the Good to a test of resistance¹⁰, it may be convenient not to give in too much to the hermeneutic temptation of seeing in this resource an obscure pretext of the Stagyrian to launch a deadly attack on his master's theory of ideas. More than obstructive or destructive, the Stagirite's position is critical and deconstructive. It is not a question, therefore, of making “the” Good [τὸ ἀγαθόν] unviable by subjecting it to a demolishing refutation, but rather to discern to what extent the idea of “supreme good”

6 Cf. Idem, EE, 1215a 4-5

7 The linguistic conjecture that the term ζῶν depends on an Attic usage which evolved from a primitive semantic nucleus associated with the term βίος is well established and consolidated: see, in this respect, the different points of view of LIDDELL Henry - SCOTT Robert, *Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. H.S. JONES, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996; BAILLY Anatole, *Dictionnaire Grec-Français*, Paris: Hachette, 1997; BOISACQ Émile, *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Grecque étudiée dans ses rapports avec les autres langues indo-européennes*, Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1950; CHANTRAINNE Pierre, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, vol. I-II, Paris: Ed. Klincksieck, 1968-80. This oscillating semantic fluctuation subsists quite patently in Aristotle's philosophy: if, on the one hand, in certain steps, an almost monological employment of ζῶν is kept stable in a textual triangulation that links the treatises *Metaphysics* [concerning the teleology of life in *Metaph*, IX, 6, 1048b 27 and of the life inherent in the divine substance in *Ibid.*, XII, 7, 1072b 26-30], *De anima* [concerning the soul as a vital principle in *De an*, II, 2, 413a 21ff.] and *Politica* [concerning the existence of the polis from life and in view of the good life in *Pol*, I, 2, 1252b 29-30], on the other hand, changes terminological register, when in *Ethica Nicomachea* he uses βίος for the enunciation of the modes of pleasurable, political and contemplative life [in *EN*, I, 5, 1095b 15 - 1096a 11]; in three other steps, however, the employment of ζῶν remains in the semantic immediacy of βίος [cf. *EN*, I, 7, 1097b 9; *X*, 6, 1176a 35; *EE*, I, 4, 1215a 35], which, although unusual and disconcerting, is symptomatic of the need for a non-univocal but differentiated approach to the notion of “life” in his philosophy: cf. KEYT David, “The meaning of bios in Aristotle's Ethics and Politics”, in *Ancient Philosophy* 9 (1989) 1, 15-21

8 In this last case, more than a “go on living”, it is a matter of a conscious and self-appropriate “living life”, to which Rémi Brague, in his work *Aristote et la question du monde*, granted full relevance when defending the presence of a “phenomenology of life” in Aristotelian philosophy: cf. BRAGUE Rémi, *Aristote et la question du monde. Essai sur le contenu cosmologique et anthropologique de l'ontologie*, Paris: PUF, 1988, 474-481; 487-492

9 Cf. MANSION Suzanne, “Deux définitions différentes de la vie chez Aristote?”, in *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 71 (1973) 11, 425-450

10 Cf. in this regard SANTAS Gerasimos, “The form of the Good in Plato's Republic”, in *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 40 (1986) 97-114

[ἀγαθὸς μέγιστος] can be perfectly compatible with the ethical notion of “a certain good” [ἀγαθὸν τι] in relation to what appears to be “**better**” [βέλτιον]. This conception of good has an internal intelligibility of a distinctly **hylomorphic** cut, that is, it is endowed with

1. on the one hand, of a **form** [μορφή] sufficiently shaping to assume a **universal** extension [καθόλου], but not necessarily abstract to achieve a self-referential and separate status vis-à-vis the circumstances to which it connects;
2. on the other hand, of a **matter** [ὕλη] sufficiently moldable to secure a **common** [κοινός] bond, but not necessarily casuistic to find itself subject to the fortuitous and unstable drift of chance or of each individual bias.

Now, it is in the act of decision that the hylomorphic conception of good reaches its most eloquent ontological expression. In this sense, to choose always implies exercising (1) an **intelligible determination in** relation to what is **formally available to reason**, but also, and for this very reason, (2) an **empirical delimitation in** relation to what is **materially available to reason within our reach, which is why the** intuition that, in terms of ethical decision, “best” is always “possible” remains entirely valid, but that, even so, “the best possible” will always possibly be **the best** [τὸ βέλτιον].

Only under the sign of a “thinking” (or “given-to-think”) truth is the Platonic “Good” able to fully satisfy the eidetic and an-hypothetic demands of a purely intelligible design; However, in the light of a “making” (or “given-to-make”) truth in the contingent domain of facticity, Platonic ontology seems totally inoperative to meet the broader and unavoidable demands of Aristotelian praxeology. Now, what the Stagyrian practical philosophy seeks to clarify implies not only thinking “on” or “about” action, but above all experiencing it in the texture of the decisionary act itself. The first indication of this intention appears phenomenologically not so much in the fact that someone chooses this or that in the preferential framework of an option¹¹, but rather in the act of determining his or her dispositional state in the framework of the election of a way of life.¹²

It happens that, in order to prove the inability of Platonic reflection to accommodate all the demands arising from an ethics inscribed at the heart of the decision, Aristotle would have to begin by confronting the “monistic” and “indeterminate” character of the Platonic notion of **Good**¹³, without, with this, we must suppose Aristotle advocated a “substantialization” of action. Ethics, in effect, does not have to be subject to the

11 Cf. STACK George, “Aristotle's concept of choice,” in *The Modern Schoolman* (Saint Louis) 50 (1972-1973) 367-373

12 Cf. ARIST, EN, I, 5, 1095b 15 - 1096th; EE, 1,4, 1215a 32 - b 6

13 Cf. BRAVO Francisco, “¿Es el bien indefinible? El punto de vista de Aristóteles en su crítica a la forma platónica del bien”, in *Cuadernos Venezolanos de Filosofía* 1 (1989) 2, 141-173

requirements of the substantialist metaphysics, even though we are willing to admit that the metaphysical field seems adequate to conceptually infra-structure Aristotle's praxeological reflection in some of its most decisive aspects.¹⁴ In fact, the metaphysical scope of substantialism seems rather restrictive, not to say inoperative, to account for a peculiar field of knowledge where the articulation between the contingency of factuality and the universality of principles requires not formal explanations or apodictic conclusions, but formulations of practical incidence, as is the case of the viability of decisions, in the field of ethics, politics and economics, or the efficacy of discourse, in the field of rhetoric.¹⁵

Now, if, as the Stagirite admits, **all knowledge and all deliberate choice aspire to a certain good** [πᾶσα γνῶσις καὶ προαιρεσις ἀγαθοῦ τινὸς ὀρέγεται]¹⁶, in pointing to research to the **highest of the practicable goods** [τὸ πάντων ἀκρότατον τῶν πρακτῶν ἀγαθῶν]¹⁷, the impossibility of achieving a good whose supremacy is so high that it essentially makes the pursuit and realization of the other goods impossible. Instead, Aristotle validates a notion of a good whose supreme character can simultaneously fulfill two requirements: 1. that it be an index of **“a certain” good** [ἀγαθοῦ τινὸς] and 2. that it come from **the “practical” goods** [τῶν πρακτῶν ἀγαθῶν], that is of the goods capable of realization. Now, among the realizable goods, **happiness** [εὐδαιμονία] appears as the one that is in a position to secure finalistically the **highest** status [ἀκρότατον]. Why? First, because happiness collects, as to name, a “general agreement of a large proportion of men” [σχεδὸν ὑπὸ τῶν πλείστων ὁμολογεῖται]¹⁸. To be the bearer of a **common agreement**

14 See in this regard IRWIN Terence, “The Metaphysical and Psychological Basis of Aristotle's Ethics,” in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. by Amelie O. RORTY, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, 35-53; LONG Christopher, *The Ethical Culmination of Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy 8 (2003) 1. 121-140

15 The idea of rhetoric is not to make the discourse malleable to the passive listener in order to persuade him of a reality pre-determined in its substantial rigidity, as one might presume - and, in fact, the pre-Aristotelian rhetoric of the sophistic type proves it - but to make the receiver malleable to the operative efficacy of the discourse through the rhetorical mediation of argumentation. By molding the conditions of listening, rhetoric simultaneously shapes the listener (making him active) and the very world addressed by and in persuasion (making it performative); its pragmatic virtuality does not aim merely at producing a stylistic effect on expression, but at making it effective and actual, giving it a truly discursive (communication), cosmetic (world), and onto-poietic (being) reach; vide CROISSANT Jeanne, “La classification des sciences et la place de la rhétorique dans l'œuvre d'Aristote”, in *Actes du XIème Congrès International de Philosophie*, XIV, Amsterdam - Louvain: Ed. Béatrice Nauwelaerts, 1953, 269-275; CASSIN Barbara, “Dire ce qu'on voit, faire voire ce qu'on dit. La rhétorique d'Aristote et celle des sophistes,” in *Cahiers de l'École des Sciences Philosophiques et Religieuses (Bruxelles)* 5 (1989) 7-37; CHIESA Curzio, “Structure sémantique et forme logique d'après l'analyse aristotélicienne des phrases d'action,” in *AA.VVV., Philosophie du langage et grammaire dans l'Antiquité, Cahiers de Philosophie Ancienne n° 5 / Cahiers du Groupe des Recherches sur la Philosophie et le Langage n° 6 et 7*, Bruxelles: Ousia / Université de Sciences Sociales de Grenoble, 1986, 181-202

16 Cf. ARIST, EN, I, 4, 1095a 14-15

17 Cf. Ibid., I, 4, 1095a 16-17

18 Cf. Ibid., I, 4, 1095a 17-18

[ὁμολογία] implies, in Aristotelian guideline, that a term exhibits not the mark of an absolute (necessary and assertive) validity, but rather the texture of a **common speech** [κοινὸς λόγος] that only the **mediating action of a consensus** can ensure as a guiding and prospective criterion. Second, because, radiating semantically from this terminological consensus, the sense of “well-being”¹⁹ acquires a status of experiential preponderance that makes happiness the most preferable of goods. Being happy therefore implies a **good acting** [εὖ πράττειν] that culminates in a **good-living** [εὖ ζῆν] not in the hedonistic sense of the “easy life,” but in the challenging sense of a **good life**²⁰, in which action becomes **dwelling** [ἡθός] and, due to this, *eudaimonic*.²¹

If we have to semantically relate the connatural idea of happiness with the meanings of an “achieved life” or a “good life”, the open possibilities seem to reach not a common focus of convergence, but to dissipate in a pulverized mass of meanings: it will reside for some in the enjoyment of pleasure, for others in the attainment of wealth, for still others in the mere conquest of honors. Pleasure, wealth and prestige function, apparently, as disintegrating elements and not as polarizing criteria of a common definition of happiness. Left, therefore, to the free examination of each individual, the notion of happiness varies not only from individual to individual, but also, within the same individual, it varies at different age stages or in different circumstances of his life. How, under these conditions, can we validate a common definition of happiness so as not to compromise the epistemological viability of ethical reflection?

The Platonic solution seems seductive. One can escape the subjective illusion of different sensible masks of happiness by seeking refuge in a perspective according to which happiness requires a good that, by existing by itself and in itself, rises above the multiplicity of particular goods. In this case, “the” Good would be responsible for the unifying and transcendent ballast of the different eudemonic meanings and experiences. The problem, for Aristotle, is to know to what extent the Platonic solution is compatible with the individual and concrete clipping of the goods apprehended as such.

To neglect the difference between “the” Good and “a certain” determinable good

19 It is precisely on the plane of a “well-being” that Bernard Williams, in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, invokes Aristotle's ethics as a praxeological foundation: cf. WILLIAMS Bernard, *Ethics and the limits of philosophy*, London: Fontana Press - William Collins, 1993, chapter 3 “Foundations: Well-Being”, 30-53; in a different but related line, the study of WHITE Stephen, *Sovereign Virtue: Aristotle on the Relation Between Happiness and Prosperity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992.

20 Cf. ARIST, *Pol.*, I, 2, 1252b 30; 4, 1253b 25; III, 9, 1280a 32; b 33, 39; VII, 13, 1331b 39

21 Cf. BOSSI LOPEZ Beatriz, “El concepto aristotélico de eudaimonía”, in *Ethos* [Buenos Aires], 12-13 (1985), 247-283

in a plurivocal connection of “goods”²² is tantamount to forgetting the proverbial incision of the *Ethica Eudemia* according to which what is said of the substance can also be praxeologically transcribed to action, namely **the good <is said> in many ways** [*<λέγεται> πολλαχῶς τὸ ἀγαθόν*]²³. In this sense, Aristotelian reflection will take care of showing us to what extent science “about acting” revolves around a **discourse in action**, or rather **discursive action**, which, like being²⁴, **is said in many ways** [*λέγεται πολλαχῶς*]. More than a semaphore indicating multiple meanings “for” acting, the good imposes itself as an inducer of maximum practical differentiation²⁵, allowing human action to be invested with a challenging **semantic meaning** [*λόγος σημαντικός*]. In Aristotle's praxeological reflection there seems to be insinuated, therefore, what we could call a **semantics of action**²⁶, more even than an explanation “for” the action, as if, in this case, the action was originally devoid and lacking causal meaning.

The polysemic discursiveness of good and action sometimes seems to go unnoticed in the folds of the most thorough exegesis; yet, understanding it is crucial to understanding the scope of a **philosophy appropriately human** [*ἀνθρωπίνη φιλοσοφία*]²⁷ in two distinct but related strands, namely

1. on the other hand, on a **physiognomic side**, from which one conceives the **practical good** [*πρακτικὸν ἀγαθόν*] - an expression we auspiciously have news of in *De anima*²⁸ - not as a substance or essence alongside the others or above them, but as a **presence inscribed “in being”** [*ἐν τῷ <ᾧντι>*] whose categorical expression shifts from a **figurative model** [*σχῆμα*] of logical thinkability to a manifestation of the **aspect** [*εἶδος*] of action;

2. on the other hand, an **ergonomic aspect**, on the basis of which an **ontology of action** is projected²⁹ whose formulation is narrated not so much in the think of a truth

22 Regarding the multivocality of the good expressed in the differentiated manifestation of goods, cf. the enlightening and well-founded study by FORTENBAUGH William, “Nicomachean Ethics I, 1096b 26-29,” in *Phronesis* 11 (1966) 185-194

23 ARIST, EE, I, 8, 1218b 4

24 Cf. BRENTANO Franz, *Aristotle. Les diverses acceptions de l'être [= Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles*, Freiburg: Herder, 1862 (repr. Hildesheim: Olms 1984)], transl. Pascal DAVID, Paris: Vrin, 2005

25 Cf. LEFEBVRE René, “Un statut ontologique pour la différence chez Aristote”, in *Philosophia* (Athens) 25-26 (1995-1996) 213-223

26 We take this happy expression from the title of the work by RICOEUR Paul (et al.), *La sémantique de l'action*, ed. par Dorien TIFFENEAU, Paris: CNRS, 1977

27 Cf. DESTRIÉE Pierre, “Comment démontrer le propre de l'homme? Pour une lecture dialectique de EN I, 6,” in *L'excellence de la vie. Sur L' “Éthique à Nicomaque” et L' “Éthique à Eudème” d'Aristote*, dir. par Gilbert ROMÉYER DERBEY, Paris: Vrin (2002) 39-61

28 Cf. ARIST, *De an.*, III, 10, 433a 29

29 We glean this designation from AA.VV., “Aristote. Ontologie de l'action et savoir pratique”, in *Philosophie* 73 (2002) 1-95. The words of introduction to the issue seem, by the way, sufficiently enlightening to deserve

“about” acting, but in the **ontopoiesis** of a **truth-made-work**³⁰, along the lines, moreover, of that discrete inciso of the *Metaphysica*, according to which the **work is the end of practical truth** [τέλος ἀλήθεια πρακτικῆς δ' ἔργον]³¹.

The articulation of this double physiognomic and ergonomic dimension is relevant to understand to what extent the exercise of the decisionary act relies precisely on a **hylomorphic capacity to model** each decisionary experience in its **material ubication according to the formal determination of** a universal propensity to **act rationally** not only with an “end in view” but also “to the end”. In fact, between a conception of the Good that is too condescending to the dispersive and erratic meanings attributed by **common speech** [κοινὸς λόγος] and a conception of the Good that is too conniving with Plato's eidetic theorizing³², Aristotle seems willing to adopt a **mediational** solution whose merit lies in the possibility of assuring human action a universal intelligibility of principles without, however, losing his hand and foot in the contingent world of facticity.

III. The Aristotelian reconstruction of the practical good: from the finalistic use of the means to the mediational realization of the ends

Rather than being empowered by the metaphysical requirement of an essential

to appear as hermeneutic justification for the expression used: “**La philosophie moral et politique d'Aristote est avant tout une philosophie de l'action**. La vertu, l'intention morale, les normes sociales sont sans valeur si l'activité humaine ne les rend pas effectives. Aristote ne veut pas se satisfaire, pour autant, d'un pur pragmatisme qui nous ferait prendre le possible pour le bien. Nous devons encore savoir par rapport à quel type d'activité ou de mouvement se définit l'action; si l'action est proprement humaine ou si nous pouvons parler d'actions pour les autres vivants; si l'action est une singularité et une fin en elle-même ou si elle ne prend sens que par son insertion dans une pluralité d'activités, celles de l'individu et celles de la communauté. Nous devons enfin nous demander si l'action résulte d'un simple calcul, d'une estimation statistique de nos chances de réussite, ou bien si elle suppose un authentique **savoir pratique**. Ces exigences, qui peuvent être aussi les nôtres, nourrissent la conception aristotélicienne de l'action (...) et surtout revenir aux préoccupations proprement aristotéliciennes: **élaborer une ontologie de l'action et fonder le savoir pratique**.” [Cf. *Ibid.*, back cover: the highlighted is ours]. We had the dictum of seeing confirmed the possibility of reporting to Aristotle's practical philosophy the thesis of an “ontology of action”, along the lines alluded to above, in a passage of Marco Zingano's work, *Estudos de Ética Antiga*, where the Brazilian philosopher nods to this theoretical possibility: cf. Marco ZINGANO, “Deliberation and indeterminacy in Aristotle”, in *Estudos de Ética Antiga*, São Paulo: Discurso Editorial, 2007, 262. For a more focused approach cf. CHARLES David, “Aristotle: ontology and moral reasoning,” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 4 (1986) 119-144; GIORDANI Alessandro, “Nota sul fondamento ontologico della prassi in Aristotele”, in *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica* 89 (1997) 4, 625-636; SANTIESTEBAN Luis, “El carácter ontológico de la ética de Aristóteles”, in *Analogía Filosófica* 18 (2004) 2, 103-131; conversely, defending the thesis of an ethical reconfiguration of the fundamental and systematizing discourse of ontology itself, see the surprising conclusions of the remarkable study by LONG Christopher, *The ethics of ontology: rethinking an Aristotelian legacy*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004

30 Cf. BELLO Angela Ales, “The entelechial principle in the onto-poiesis of life. From Aristotle to recent phenomenology,” in *Analecta Husserliana* (Dordrecht) 50 (1997) 25-3

31 ARIST., *Metaph.*, II, 1, 993b 21

32 Cf. FINE Gail, *On Ideas. Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Theory of Forms*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993; FIGUEIREDO Maria José, *O PERI IDEÓN e a Crítica Aristotélica a Platão*, Lisbon: Colibri, 1996

perfection, human action is mobilized by the ergonomic tension of an open-ended perfection. According to the Stagyrian, **honor** [τιμή], **pleasure** [ἡδονή] and, to some extent, **intelligence** [νοῦς] and **virtue** itself [ἀρετή], do not constitute **ends** [τέλη] over-determined by a “Good itself” [ἀγαθόν], but rather “determined goods” [ἀγαθόν τι] **in view** [τὸ ὄξεινα] of a **work** [ἔργον] whose raison d'être is determined in the drive to **happiness** [εὐδαιμονία]³³, taken this as the **best of things realizable by man** [τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρακτῶν ὀριστον]³⁴. If in Plato it is practice founded on a Good that finally makes us happy, in Aristotle, in turn, it is **happiness** that must be converted finalistically into a **practical good** [πρακτὸν ἀγαθόν] aimed at as an **immanent** purpose [ἐνυπαρχόν]. In this teleological context, virtue arises not from an **imitation** [μίμησις] of the law of **nature** [φύσις], but from a **creative realization** [ποίησις] of action. Ontologically finalizable as a **work** [ἔργον], virtue elevates human action to the “over-excedence” of a perfecting.³⁵

It is clear that the claim to view Aristotelian ethics from an **ergonomic perspective** raises some difficulties, both from a strictly etymological point of view and from the point of view of the respective philosophical exegesis. In fact, it would be foolhardy, to say the least, to ignore or reject outright this interpretative risk, a risk that, by the way, Aristotle himself exposed when he admitted the deep ambivalence that dilacerates the meaning of the term in question:

The term work can be referred to in a double sense; there are those cases in which a work exists independently of its use (e.g., the work of building construction is a house and not really the act of building; that of medicine is health and not the act of treating or curing); and there are, on the other hand, those cases in which the use coincides with the work (e.g., the work of the eye is the act of seeing; that of mathematical science is contemplation). Thus, in those cases where the use is identified with the work, the use is necessarily better than the state. Once these distinctions are established, we say that the work of a thing is equivalent

33 Cf. PURINTON Jeffrey, “Aristotle's definition of happiness (NE 1.7, 1098a 16-18),” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 16 (1998) 259-297; HAIR Howard, *Pourquoi l'éthique? La voie du bonheur selon Aristote*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2003

34 Cf. ARIST, EE, I, 7, 1217a 39-40

35 It could not be more pertinent and incisive, in this regard, the observation of Paul Ricoeur according to which “(...) la transition entre les visées limitées des pratiques (métiers, genres de vie, etc...) et la visée de la vie bonne est assurée par le **concept médiateur de l'ergon, de la tâche** qui oriente une **vie humaine considérée** dans son **intégralité**. La tâche d'être homme déborde et enveloppe toutes les tâches partielles qui assignent une visée de bonté à chaque pratique. Quant au dénombrement de ces excellences de l'action que sont les vertus, il ne doit pas barrer l'horizon de la méditation et de la réflexion; chacune de ces excellences découpe sa visée du bien **sur le fond d'une visée ouverte magnifiquement désignée par l'expression de la vie bonne ou mieux du vivre bien**; cet horizon ouvert est peuplé par nos projets de vie, nos anticipations de bonheur, nos utopies, bref par toutes les figures mobiles de ce que nous tiendrions pour les signes d'une vie accomplie(...)”: RICOEUR Paul, “Éthique. De la morale à l'éthique et aux éthiques,” in http://www.philo.umontreal.ca/documents/cahiers/Ricoeur_MORALE.pdf, 5 [vide Ibid., in *Dictionnaire d'éthique et de philosophie morale*, dir. par Monique CANTO-SPERBER, Paris: PUF, 2001, 580-584]; emphasis added.

to that of virtue, even if not in the same way; for example, a sandal is a work where the shoemaker's art and its exercise converge. If there is, therefore, a certain virtue of the art of shoemaking and of the good shoemaker, his work is the good shoe. And the same applies to all other cases.³⁶

Assuming, therefore, that the term ἔργον, although usually translated as “function,”³⁷ can also aggregate the meanings “work” and “task,” we are justified in postulating an **operative conception** of ethics, from which human action is no longer seen as a “role” or “position” to be performed by way of assignment, but as a “task-to-perform” in response to the call of the λόγος.³⁸ It is, in fact, in that “logosic” context that Aristotle will be able to clarify what the specific character of **human work** consists of [ἔργον ἀνθρώπου], by resorting to the well-known snippet “**activity of the soul according to reason (= reflection)**” [ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον]³⁹.

The determination of virtuous action is only attainable in the context of a transfiguration of natural virtue into ethical excellence, from the moment in which the

36 τὸ ἔργον λέγεται διχῶς. τῶν μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν ἕτερόν τι τὸ ἔργον παρὰ τὴν χρῆσιν, οἷον οἰκοδομικῆς οἰκία ἀλλ’ οὐκ οἰκοδόμησις καὶ ἰατρικῆς ὑγίεια ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὑγίανσις οὐδ’ ἰάτρευσις, τῶν δ’ ἡ χρῆσις ἔργον, οἷον ὄψεως ὄρασις καὶ μαθηματικῆς ἐπιστήμης θεωρία. ὥστ’ ἀνάγκη, ὧν ἔργον ἡ χρῆσις, τὴν χρῆσιν βέλτιον εἶναι τῆς ἕξεως. τούτων δὲ τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον διωρισμένων, λέγομεν ὅτι τὸ ἔργον τοῦ πράγματος καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὡσαύτως. οἷον σκυτοτομικῆς καὶ σκυτεύσεως ὑπόδημα: εἰ δὲ τις ἐστὶν ἀρετὴ σκυτικῆς καὶ σπουδαίου σκυτέως, τὸ ἔργον ἐστὶ σπουδαῖον ὑπόδημα. τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων: ARIST., EE, II, 1, 1219a 13-18

37 If returned to its etymological subsoil, the notion of “function” is too mortgaged to the Roman legal-administrative meaning of fungor [= “to perform an office,” “to fulfill an incumbency” (very rarely “to feed someone”)] to be able to conveniently accommodate the operative or operative connotation that Aristotle intends to aim at in his use of the Greek term ἔργον. σκυτοτομικῆς καὶ σκυτεύσεως ὑπόδημα: εἰ δὲ τις ἐστὶν ἀρετὴ σκυτικῆς καὶ σπουδαίου σκυτέως, τὸ ἔργον ἐστὶ σπουδαῖον ὑπόδημα. τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον καὶ ἐπὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων: ARIST., EE, II, 1, 1219a 13-18

38 Rather than being immediately translatable as “reason,” the term λόγος can be translated, in this specific context, as “thought” or, better yet, “reflection.” Rooted in the etymological niche of λέγω / λέγειν [read-count-narrate / gather-count-calculate], the term discursively associates a polychromatic range of meanings ranging from the spoken or communicated word to the formalizable calculation. For Aristotle, such discursive status constitutes a key component of his political anthropology, beginning to occupy a prominent place precisely in the context of “practical life”: “man is by nature a living politician (...), and the reason (...) is obvious: (...) only man, among all animals, is the holder of speech. Thus, while the voice indicates pleasure or suffering, (...) speech, on the other hand, serves to express the useful and the harmful, and therefore the just and the unjust. (...) Now, it is the community of these [subent. experiences] that produces [= makes] the family and the city” [ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον, (...) διότι (...) δῆλον (...): λόγον δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζῴων ἢ μὲν οὖν φωνὴ τοῦ λυπηροῦ καὶ ἡδέος ἐστὶ σημεῖον, (...) ὁ δὲ λόγος ἐπὶ τῷ δηλοῦν ἐστὶ τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ βλαβερόν, ὥστε καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἀδίκον: (...) ἢ δὲ τούτων κοινωνία ποιεῖ οἰκίαν καὶ πόλιν: ARIST., Pol., I, 2, 1253a 2-18] The translation of λόγος by “reason” becomes, therefore, not only very controversial and debatable, but even untenable, if by “reason” is understood that connotation of certain and infallible faculty that, since Cartesian modernity [cf. DESCARTES René, Méditations Métaphysiques, AT, IX, 13-26], still underlies it today; following a pertinent hermeneutical suggestion by Franz Dirlmeier [cf. commented translation in ARISTOTELES, Nikomachische Ethik, Berlin, 1999 (10th ed), 279], it is better, in our opinion, to place λόγος in the proximity of both λογίζεσθαι and λογισμός (richtiger Plan; rationales Element; erwägende Reflexion), whose semantic meanings incorporate meanings such as “reflect”, “calculate”, “establish rules”, etc.; other reputable translators and commentators of Aristotle follow an analogous trend, as with René-Antoine Gauthier (calcul; règle moral) and Jonathan Barnes (reason; discourse; language; calculus).

39 ARIST., EN, I, 7, 1098a 7

activity of the specific kind of life that each one has chosen is aimed at perfecting its own order. Such improvement is not so much obtained through the mechanical rigidity of a set of mimetically replicable attitudes or behaviors, nor through the more or less abstract enthronement of a discourse on action, but is installed at the heart of a **heuristic temporality** whose prospective horizon constitutes a **mediational vector of an** ethiccity embodied in **discursive action**. In teleological terms, the good for man will consist, this time, in a **certain activity of the soul in conformity with complete virtue** [ψυχῆς ἐνέργειά τις κατ' ἀρετὴν τελείαν]⁴⁰ whose achievement consists in the completion of his natural perfection, or better said in the maximum and integral perfecting of the practical nature, since perfection designates, in relation to a given nature or faculty, a culmination that is reached both on the plane of being and on that of action.⁴¹ There are several possible activities and, in this sense, several virtues inherent to them. The definition of happiness is therefore finalistically co-implicated in the constant and progressive maturation of a **full life**, whose **work** [ἔργον] essentially characterizes the human being not insofar as that he feels “full of life” or finds himself with a “stuffed life”, but because he aims at the **plenitude of a life-in-full**.⁴²

Avoiding the pitfalls of a merely hypothetical speculation, nominally pulverized in the unaccountable plurality of possible ends, Aristotle's teleological eudemonism configures an understanding of action whose end becomes ethically feasible in the **virtuous improvement**

Of a **life of integrity** [ζωὴ σπουδαία] realized as a **work** [ἔργον]:

Therefore, since the virtue of the soul and its virtue are necessarily one and the same thing, the work of the virtue of the soul will consist in a life of integrity: this is, after all, the perfected good that corresponds to happiness.⁴³

In light of the excerpt, one now fully understands why it makes perfect sense to subject the definition of happiness to the confrontation of both the opinionated mainstream and the philosophical theses that support its discursive and practical appropriation. As the modus operandi employed in most of his treatises, Aristotle knows well the advantages of critical deconstruction. In the case of the Ethics, the Stagyrican

40 Ibid., I, 13, 1102a 5-6

41 See KENNY Anthony's masterful study, Aristotle on the Perfect Life, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996

42 Cf. FARWELL Paul, “Aristotle and the complete life”, in History of Philosophy Quarterly 12 (1995) 3, 247-263

43 ἀνάγκη ἐν καὶ ταῦτό ἐῖναι τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς, ἔργον ἂν εἴη τῆς ἀρετῆς ζωὴ σπουδαία. τοῦτ' ἄρα ἐστὶ τὸ τέλος ἀγαθόν, ὅπερ ἦν ἡ εὐδαιμονία: ARIST., EE, II, 1, 1219a 26-28

subjects the “popular morality” of his time to critical scrutiny⁴⁴ not to mark a neutral theoretical submission to the data gathered from the different levels of sociological perception of the problem, but to redefine a methodical program of unifying synthesis of the different elements at play, through of the conceptual intersection of the notions of happiness and the supreme good.⁴⁵ In praxeological terms, this means that ethical virtue does not depend essentially on technical know-how, functional savoir-faire, or a scientific *modus cognoscendi*, but on a prudentially oriented will to act in “conformity” with what is known⁴⁶, seeking **to see the truth in each situation** [τάληθές ἐν ἐκάστοις ὄραῖν]⁴⁷ within a **deliberative act** [βούλευσις] capable of articulating a consideration **about ends** [περὶ τῶν τελῶν] and a consideration **about means** [περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη]:

We do not deliberate about the ends, but about the means [liter. about what leads to the ends]. In fact, neither the doctor deliberates whether to cure, nor the orator whether to persuade, nor the politician whether to produce good legislation, nor in any other case about their end: instead, once the end is established, they consider how and by what means they will reach it. And if this seems to them to be achievable by many means, they will examine the easiest and most appropriate ones.⁴⁸

Now, unless no outside obstacle or external coercion intrudes itself into that operative circuit, subverting the final outcome of its the agent becomes the **artificer** [δημιουργός] of the connection between means and ends, on the assumption that, from the point of view of efficient cause, he is already **master** [κύριος] and **progenitor** [τεκνοποιητής] of the action in progress.⁴⁹ That which appears last in the order of logical analysis of an action, namely the consideration of the means, constitutes precisely that from which must begin, in the order of generation, the process of operationalization in view of ends whose rectitude has already been rationally established and the appropriation autonomously assimilated by the agent. This idea is reinforced in one of the most complex and aporetic steps in Aristotelian praxeology:

Sometimes we investigate the means, sometimes their use, and in the same way [sub. proceed] in other cases: sometimes [sub. investigate] the

44 See DOVER Kenneth, *Greek popular morality in the time of Plato and Aristotle*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994.

45 For a comprehensive overview of the “teleological” and “eudemonic” determination of the supreme good in Aristotelian praxeology, see position in the dense study by MÉTIVIER Pierre, *L'éthique dans le projet moral d'Aristote. Une philosophie du bien sur le modèle des arts et techniques*, op. cit.

46 Cf. ARIST, EN, II, 4, 1105a 26 ff.

47 Ibid., III, 4, 1113a 33

48 βουλευόμεθα δ' οὐ περὶ τῶν τελῶν ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν πρὸς τὰ τέλη. οὔτε γὰρ ἰατρὸς βουλεύεται εἰ ὑγιάσει, οὔτε ῥήτωρ εἰ πείσει, οὔτε πολιτικὸς εἰ εὐνομίαν ποιήσει, οὐδὲ τῶν λοιπῶν οὐδεὶς περὶ τοῦ τέλους: ἀλλὰ θέμενοι τὸ τέλος τὸ πῶς καὶ διὰ τίνων ἔσται σκοποῦσι: καὶ διὰ πλείονων μὲν φαινομένου γίνεσθαι διὰ τίνος ῥᾶστα καὶ κάλλιστα ἐπισκοποῦσι: Ibid., III, 3, 1112b 11-17

49 Cf. Ibid., III, 5, 1113b 18

means by which, sometimes the way or through whom (...). But if we deliberate always and always, we will advance to the unlimited. Now, what one deliberates about and what one chooses is the same, except if what one chooses is already determined, since, in that case, one chooses what has already been decided by deliberation. Indeed, each one ceases to seek how he will act whenever he brings the principle [subent. motive of the action] back to himself, and from there to the guiding part [= guideline = i. e. rational], since it is this that he chooses.⁵⁰

In light of this thorny excerpt, it seems clear that the decisionary outcome of the **guided choice** [προαιρούμενον] results from the conformity of a **prior assessment** [προβεβουλευμένον] of the means available to the agent to the tutelage of a **driving element** [τὸ ἡγούμενον] whose directive capacity - which we know is already contained in the part of the soul endowed with reason - enables one to perceive the “apparency/appearance” [φαινόμενον] of the **choice** [αἵρεσις] as worthy of election or preference, preventing action from paralyzing and dissolving into a regressive and endless series of deliberations ad infinitum [εἰς ἄπειρον].

In this sense, an agent does not choose something because it “seems” good to him or because it “appears to be good” according to his volatile impressions or subjective tastes; quite the contrary, what **appears to be good** to the agent **at the end** of a **thoughtful rational deliberation** is what must fulfill as **teleological content** the imperative (one would almost say “deontological”) to **choose well** what can be eligible. That is, by **choosing well** what he **can use** following the **guidance of reason** [ὁρθὸς λόγος], the agent **will realize well** what he **should aim at** in finalistic terms.

Conclusion

The acquisition of virtue depends, therefore, on the answer to the central question of the conditions of access to happiness, the meaning of which is only attained not in this or that punctual moment of existence, but in the manifestative horizon of an entire life.

According to this **phenomenological and teleological matrix**, it becomes absolutely imperative to highlight two aspects correlated with the deliberative act, whose

⁵⁰ ζητεῖται δ' ὅτε μὲν τὰ ὄργανα ὅτε δ' ἡ χρεῖα αὐτῶν: ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς λοιποῖς ὅτε μὲν δι' οὗ ὅτε δὲ πῶς ἢ διὰ τίνοσ (...). εἰ δὲ αἰεὶ βουλευσεται, εἰς ἄπειρον ἦξει. βουλευτὸν δὲ καὶ προαιρετὸν τὸ αὐτό, πλὴν ἀφωρισμένον ἤδη τὸ προαιρετὸν: τὸ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς βουλῆς αἰεὶ προαιρετὸν ἐστίν. πάνετα γὰρ ἕκαστος ζητῶν πῶς πράξει, ὅταν εἰς αὐτὸν ἀναγάγη τὴν ἀρχήν, καὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ ἡγούμενον: τοῦτο γὰρ τὸ προαιρούμενον: Ibid., III, 3, 1112b 28-29; 1113a 2-7

implications have, in our view, a remarkable impact on Aristotle's practical philosophy:

1. the first aspect concerns the conviction that the **poietic modeling of** a human deliberation rationally engaged in the realization of the **practical good** [πρακτὸν ἀγαθόν] has no room for giving way to any kind of relativistic intrusion or subjective vehemence;
2. the second aspect attends to the need to distinguish between the Platonic “an-hypothetical” conception of **Good** [τἀγαθόν] and the phenomenal conception of a **certain good** [ἀγαθόν τι] **visible** [οὗ ἕνεκα] as **supreme** [ἀκρότατον], whose finalistic tension the Stagirite architecturally integrates into the civic and political horizon of a **good life** [εὖ ζῆν] performed in view of a **properly human good** [τἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν].

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11-40 [= reed. in Idem, Studies in Ancient Ethics, São Paulo: Discurso Editorial, 2007, 73-110].