

Les philosophies morales et
politiques au Moyen Âge
Moral and Political
Philosophies in the Middle Ages

Actes du IXe Congrès international de
Philosophie Médiévale
Ottawa, du 17 au 22 août 1992

Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress
of Medieval Philosophy
Ottawa, 17-22 August 1992

Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale
(S.I.E.P.M.)

sous la direction de / edited by

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1995



Couverture: *Livre d'Heures*. Parchemin ; XVe siècle (vers 1460-1480) ;
225 x 163 mm ; 187 ff. Vienne, ONB, Ms. 1857.

Opuscule sur la la fortune. Parchemin ; XIIIe siècle (vers 240) ; 170 x 127 mm ;
72 ff. ; écriture caroline de transition. Oxford. BL. Ms. Ashmole 304 (25168).

New York

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PRACTICAL WISDOM, MORAL VIRTUE, AND
THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE: THE PROBLEM OF THE
AUTONOMY OF THE PRACTICAL REALM IN ARABIC
PHILOSOPHY.

One of the most distinctive features of the Aristotelian approach to ethics is Aristotle's insistence upon the autonomy of the ethico-practical realm and the irreducibility of practical knowledge to theoretical.¹ The *sui generis* character of the practical realm is emphasized in a variety of contexts within the *Nicomachean Ethics*, from its very opening chapters; at bottom, it appears to be a position required by the radically particular character of the ethical realm and by the contingency and flexibility that this entails in the objects of practical knowledge. Because ethics deals with actions to be done, and because those actions are particular, contingent phenomena, the capacity for practical reasoning and the virtue of practical wisdom cannot simply be modelled on the paradigm of theoretical knowledge.

There are, of course, numerous places throughout Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* where this autonomy is in evidence. For my purposes, it will be sufficient here to mention Aristotle's efforts in Book 6 to define the place of φρόνησις among the intellectual virtues. There he is insistent that practical wisdom cannot be identified with any of the theoretical intellectual virtues. Nor does Aristotle show any inclination to make practical wisdom ancillary to, or dependent upon, any other intellectual capacity: whatever cognitive capacities are required for the correct execution of virtuous choices, practical wisdom alone must be able to account for them. And although Aristotle focuses upon deliberation about particulars to make his point in this regard, he still allows practical wisdom to encompass whatever universal knowledge is involved in dealing with the particular situation at hand: "Nor is practical wisdom concerned with universals only" it must also recognize the particulars; for it is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars (VI, 7, 1141b 12-16).² And Aristotle is apparently unwilling even to entertain the possibility of giving practical wisdom a foundationalist basis in the intellectual grasp of first principles. When faced with the comparison between νοῦς and φρόνησις Aristotle not only denies their identity, but proceeds to argue

that, if any form of immediate understanding is a fitting model for practical wisdom, it is αἴσθησις "perception" since practical wisdom too pertains to the grasp of an "ultimate particular" in a single act an instance of the universal, "akin to that by which we perceive that the particular figure before us is a triangle" (VI, 8, 1142b 27-29).³

For Aristotle, then, the autonomy of practical wisdom, while firmly rooted in the particularity of the objects of practical knowledge, extends even to the more general and universal facets of practical reasoning. For Aristotle himself there appears to be no meaningful sense in which practical wisdom can be said to possess a theoretical component or to depend upon some prior theoretical knowledge. Practical wisdom is totally self-sufficient within its own realm. In the present paper, my aim is to explore how two representatives of Aristotelianism in the Arabic Middle Ages — al-Fārābī and Avicenna — understood these aspects of Aristotelian ethics, and to consider to what extent they were willing to accept the basic Aristotelian tenet of the autonomy of practical wisdom.

Al-Fārābī

As recent scholars on Fārābī's ethical and political thought have pointed out, there are passages in Fārābī's writings where he appears to recognize the autonomy of Aristotelian practical wisdom, as in his definitions of practical wisdom in the *Epistle on the Intellect* and *Selected Aphorisms*.⁴ In the former work, practical wisdom is discussed twice: once in its proper Aristotelian context, and once as it is viewed by the masses, whom Fārābī's claims apply the name of "intelligent" (*ʿāqil*) as if it were a synonym for "practically wise" (*mutaʿaqqil*).⁵ Fārābī's description of practical wisdom in this context clearly differentiates it from theoretical wisdom: it is deliberative excellence (*jayyid al-rawīyah*) which presupposes a truly rather than an apparently good end and is accompanied by moral virtue.⁶ Such a separation of theory and practice is also evident in Fārābī's presentation of the meaning of practical intellect and practical wisdom in the Aristotelian corpus itself. In Aristotle's writings, Fārābī finds that the term "intellect" can be applied both to the understanding of first principles discussed in *Posterior Analytics* II., 19 and to the practical intellect as portrayed in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.⁷ These two uses of the term are distinguished, however, because of the differences between theoretical and practical knowledge. The capacity for grasping first principles that is discussed at the end of the *Posterior Analytics* is applicable to the speculative sciences alone, since it pertains to universal, true, and necessary premises that are acquired only by intuition and nature, without any previous cogitation or reflection.⁸ By contrast, in Bk. VI of the

Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle discusses the acquisition of the first principles of practical wisdom and cleverness, which are acquired by repetition, habituation, and experience, leading to "certitude about propositions and premises concerning voluntary matters whose nature is to be chosen or avoided." These propositions are the analogues in the practical realm of the first principles of speculative science, differing from them principally to the extent that, rather than being inborn, they require long experience and can therefore be perfected and increased over the course of one's life. The end result of such a process is the development of "expert opinion" regarding specific genera of voluntary matters which prompts other people to seek one's advice in practical matters, and to accept that advice without demonstration or further consultation.⁹

In his *Selected Aphorisms*, Fārābī similarly seems, at least at the beginning, to uphold the Aristotelian principle of the autonomy of the practical realm. Fārābī's opening use of the medical analogy favoured by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* includes a statement echoing Aristotle's important claim in I, 13 that the practitioner of practical-political philosophy only needs to know enough about the soul in order to be able to cure souls, just as the doctor only needs to know enough physiology to be able to cure the body. This suggests a recognition of the subordination of theoretical to practical concerns in the ethical realm, particularly with reference to the degree of the theoretical understanding one needs of human nature and human psychology.¹⁰ But in place of Aristotle's own division of the soul into rational and irrational parts, Fārābī proceeds to outline the basic principles of Aristotelian physics, culminating in the *De anima*'s properly theoretical account of the different powers of the soul.¹¹ This in itself suggests a dissatisfaction on Fārābī's part with Aristotle's less-than-theoretical account of the psychological underpinnings of the virtues, despite the surface agreement with the principles of I, 13. As in the *Epistle on the Intellect*, moreover, the account given of practical wisdom again identifies it strictly with deliberative excellence in abstraction from all consideration of the fittingness of the end itself.¹²

To the extent that one can, then, find a few passages such as these in which Fārābī appears to recognize the Aristotelian view of practical wisdom's autonomy, one also finds that Fārābī tends to dilute that claim, either by an implicit reference to the theoretical account of human nature proper to Aristotelian psychology, or by an explicit identification of practical wisdom with deliberative excellence.¹³ The latter move is not entirely un-Aristotelian, of course, and popular versions of Aristotelianism are fond of the maxim that practical wisdom concerns itself with the means while moral virtue determines the end. But Fārābī's telescoping of practical wisdom to the capacity for deliberation has a rather different motivation from that

of recognizing the traditional role of moral virtue in setting the end of any concrete deliberative process. Fārābī wishes to maintain, as his modification of *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 13 already suggests, that practical wisdom confines itself to deliberation because setting the end of practical activity is itself a theoretical, and not a practical, task.

Evidence that this is Fārābī's overarching motivation in his approach to practical wisdom emerges in numerous passages in which he asserts the dependence of happiness upon a strictly theoretical, philosophical understanding of the human good and the human end. These are found principally in works such as the *Political Regime*, the *Attainment of Happiness*, and the *Selected Aphorisms* itself. In the *Political Regime*, for example, Fārābī argues that practical wisdom and practical reasoning are dependent upon a theoretical grasp of the nature of human happiness. Here the identification of practical wisdom with excellence at deliberation about means is again reinforced; but the traditional association of moral virtue with the determination of the particular end to be done is replaced by a theoretical grasp of the ultimate end to which all practically wise decisions aim to contribute:

"Happiness, which only human beings can know and perceive, is known by the theoretical-rational faculty and by none of the remaining faculties. Human beings know it when they make use of the first principles and primary knowledge given to them by the Agent Intellect. When a human being knows happiness, desires it with the appetitive faculty, [and] deliberates by the practical-rational faculty upon what ought to be done in order to attain it ... then everything that originates from the human being will be good. It is only in this way that the voluntary good comes into being."¹⁴

The theoretical grasp of happiness is represented in this passage as the necessary starting point of all practical deliberation, and there is no hint of a lesser or attenuated grasp of happiness that is purely practical and equally capable of effecting voluntary goods. In a parallel passage in the *Selected Aphorisms*, Fārābī makes plain just how stringent this necessary theoretical grasp of the foundations of practical deliberation must be. It is a full-fledged, metaphysically refined, philosophical knowledge. In order to have a true understanding of human happiness, we must have a perfect and profound understanding of human nature, not only in itself, but also as it forms an essential part of the entire ontological ordering of the universe:

"Since wisdom is particularly knowledge of the ultimate causes of every last existent, and the ultimate end on account of which a human being exists is happiness ... then wisdom is that which acquaints one with what is true happiness. Also, since wisdom alone possesses knowledge of the One, the First, from which the rest of the existents derive virtue and per-

fection ... and a human being is one of the existents which derive perfection from the One, the First, then [wisdom] knows the greatest perfection which a human being derives from the First, namely, happiness. Wisdom then acquaints one with true happiness, and practical wisdom acquaints one with what must be done to attain happiness. These two then are the two ingredients in the perfecting of human beings, so that wisdom is that which gives the ultimate end, and practical wisdom gives that by which the end is attained."¹⁵

The two passages that I have just cited indicate that Fārābī views his description of practical wisdom as a unique and distinctive intellectual virtue to be compatible with its overall subordination to theoretical wisdom. As I have already suggested, I believe he is able to do so precisely insofar as he simply identifies practical wisdom with deliberative excellence, leaving open to theoretical wisdom the subordinating task of setting the end upon which deliberation is dependent. What remains unresolved in such a solution, however, is how to reconcile this type of dependence of practical wisdom upon theoretical wisdom with Fārābī's argument in the *Letter on the Intellect* that the practical realm and the theoretical each has its own unique set and source of first principles. If practical wisdom depends upon theoretical wisdom to set its end, what can be its relation to its own principles?¹⁶

The answer to this question is given most explicitly in the *Attainment of Happiness*. In this work, Fārābī argues that deliberation about voluntary intelligibles involves determining how to bring about the accidents and states that these intelligibles acquire when actually existent outside the soul, accidents which admit of greater and lesser degrees of variation according to their circumstances, even though the intelligibles themselves remain one throughout these variations.¹⁷ While recognizing the traditional notion of the reciprocity of practical wisdom and moral virtue in accounting for the determination of the end, Fārābī nonetheless argues that deliberative virtue is subordinate to theoretical virtue because of the implicit role that the latter has in determining what the end to be pursued is. Since the deliberation perfected by practical wisdom concerns itself only with the accidents of the intelligibles to be enacted, it must depend upon prior theoretical knowledge of the essences of the intelligibles themselves which are the end of the practical activity: theoretical virtue alone is able to cause the intellect to grasp what the moral virtues are.¹⁸

There appear, then, to be two distinct but related types of practical principles recognized by Fārābī: one type is dependent upon experience and acquisition, and it pertains to the accidental characteristics of the virtues which their concrete enactment realizes; the other type is directly acquired from the Agent Intellect, and it is indistinguishable from the theoretical intelligibles. The two types of principles are not

incompatible, but complementary; both, moreover, are also compatible with a conception of practical wisdom, in its strictest sense, as a purely deliberative virtue ultimately dependent upon theoretical wisdom for its starting points. Those practical principles that involve the direct acquisition of intelligibles from the Agent Intellect reflect the claim that practical wisdom depends upon a prior theoretical grasp of human nature and human virtue. Their labelling as "practical" reflects their ultimate ordination to action, not their proper epistemic character.¹⁹ But when the practical realm is considered solely from the perspective of practical wisdom as deliberative excellence, practical principles are properly described, not as universal and intelligible in the strict sense, but as deriving from real experience of particulars in concrete situations. The Aristotelian ideal is respected by Fārābī in this way, but only within the context of the overall subordination of practical wisdom to a theoretically-based ethics.

Avicenna

At first glance, Fārābī's emphasis upon the theoretical underpinnings of practical wisdom, with the attendant elevation of ethics to the status of a demonstrative science, would appear to be in stark conflict with Avicenna's purported emphasis upon the subjective and customary character of ethical propositions familiar from his logical writings. Yet in Avicenna, as in Fārābī, there are passages which unequivocally identify theoretical underpinnings for practical wisdom. Before examining these passages, however, it is first necessary to examine Avicenna's purported ethical subjectivism to determine if it is indeed incompatible with the claim that practical wisdom requires truly theoretical underpinnings.

Avicenna's apparent adherence to the claim that ethical precepts are subjective occurs in the course of his epistemic classification of premise-types, especially in the version presented in the *Remarks and Admonitions*. Amongst the premise-types whose epistemic status he considers Avicenna includes a group of premises known as widely-accepted (*al-mashhūrāt*) or esteemed (*al-mahmūdāt*), corresponding roughly to the Greek notion of *endoxa* as used in Aristotle's *Topics* and *Rhetoric*. Avicenna characterizes these premises as those accepted, not because they are known to be true in their own right, but rather, because of their renown or repute. The examples Avicenna gives of such premises are always drawn from the realm of ethical or religious precepts, such as the condemning of stealing, lying, and injustice as evil acts, or the promotion of justice as something noble. And Avicenna himself observes that widely-accepted propositions are "included among obligations, or reformative education and those things on which divine

laws agree, or they are related to character and passions, or they are inductions."²⁰

The claim that such ethical dicta are purely subjective derives from Avicenna's extended discussion of the role of the various cognitive and affective faculties of the soul in promoting assent to them. Avicenna argues that if we were to imagine ourselves created in a mature state, but free from all the constraints of society and education, including our "psychological and moral feelings" — by which I presume our habituated ethical virtues are meant — none of our cognitive faculties, rational (the intellect) or animal (the estimative sense, *wahm*), would require us to accept the truth of such propositions. We would either remain ignorant of them entirely or simply withhold either affirmative or negative judgement.

Nonetheless, it is clear from a careful reading of this and related texts that Avicenna is not arguing that ethical judgments are merely subjective. His concern is to deny to such beliefs the status of primary principles of demonstration whose truth is intellectually self-evident and intuitively recognized.²¹ The dicta listed by Avicenna in this and other discussions of these premise-types all have two important features in common: they are all capable of being false under some circumstances (e.g., lying to protect the innocent); and they are all dicta that presuppose a social context contributing to the definition of the act prohibited or commanded (e.g., lying, stealing, and justice all imply social rather than purely natural relations amongst human agents). To this extent, Avicenna is very much the Aristotelian here: ethical norms are grounded in human nature, but they are also radically dependent upon the cultural context in which they unfold and hence do not attain the status of self-evident principles, which are necessary and invariable.

That Avicenna denies ethical dicta such as "lying is evil" the status of self-evident principles does not, moreover, set him in opposition to Fārābī in itself insofar as the latter holds for the possibility that ethics can be placed upon a firmly theoretical, universal, and demonstrative foundation. To say that specific sorts of ethical prescriptions or prohibitions are not self-evident is not equivalent to a denial *tout court* that there are theoretical ethical principles.

That Avicenna does accept with Fārābī's some form of theoretical foundation for the practical realm can be seen in two very different contexts: in the *Rhetoric* of the *Shifā'* and in the discussions of the practical intellect in the psychological portions of the *Shifā'* and *Najāh*.²² In the psychological texts, Avicenna identifies the practical intellect as the means whereby the mind controls the actions of the body: its objects are "particular actions proper to deliberation which are in conformity with conventional beliefs which are proper to it." The conventionality of ethical beliefs is here tied explicitly to the deliberative function of

the practical intellect, which seems to take its end or direction from the realm of convention. In the same discussion, however, Avicenna also provides for a theoretical foundation in the formation of these conventional beliefs, and in doing so he alludes to the discussion of ethical premises in his logical writings. The practical intellect, as both intellect and a principle of bodily movement, must necessarily admit of consideration from two perspectives: one in relation to the body and its animal faculties, and the other in relation to itself, just as intellect. To the former relation belongs the peculiarly human manifestations of appetite in the emotions of shame, laughter, weeping, and the like, which provide the psychological seat for the moral virtues.²³ The practical intellect's relation to the animal soul is also responsible directly for the deliberative rational processes characteristic of the practical realm, to the extent that this sort of reasoning pertains to changeable particulars and so requires the intervention of imagination and estimation, which, unlike the intellect, are cognizant of the particular as particular.²⁴ But to the extent that conventional ethical beliefs are universalized and general, they involve the intervention, not of the animal perceptual faculties, but rather, of the theoretical intellect itself: "And its relation to itself is that, through cooperation between itself and the theoretical intellect, it engenders widespread, widely-accepted beliefs,²⁵ such as that lying is base and injustice is base, and the like of these amongst the premises whose distinction from the purely intellectual premises has been defined in the logical writings."²⁶

Thus, despite the conventional underpinnings of widely-accepted premises, Avicenna clearly requires that they have a theoretical basis, and to this extent the autonomy of the practical intellect is rejected by Avicenna as it was by Fārābī. That this has repercussions for Avicenna's conception of practical wisdom as the intellectual virtue proper to the practical intellect is reflected in Avicenna's discussion of the relationship between ethics and rhetoric in the *Rhetoric* of the *Shifā'*. In this context, Avicenna, following Aristotle, is concerned to demonstrate that even if rhetoric is important principally in the ethico-political realm, it is not for that reason to be confused with a logic of practical reasoning. Rhetoric is not itself a form of φρόνησις, nor does it in any way contribute to the operations of practical wisdom; rather, it borrows the results of practical wisdom in order to promulgate correct ethical dicta on a popular level. Thus, after arguing that rhetoric is especially useful in the ethical realm because it promotes the spirit of community which is necessary for "true judgements about practical matters," Avicenna proceeds to reject explicitly any special connection between practical wisdom and rhetoric:

"So it is clear that demonstration is of slight advantage in inducing the masses to true unity, whereas it is clear that rhetoric is responsible for

this. So one of the virtues of this art is its utility for establishing these aims in people's souls. Moreover, there is [its utility] in the particular affairs which correct practical wisdom (*al-ta'āqqul al-ṣāḥih*) requires. However, correct practical wisdom is not based upon rhetoric and discussion (*al-mukhāṭabah wa-al-muḥāwarah*), but rather, its rules are deliberation and theory (*al-rawīyah wa-al-nazar*) in the same way that demonstration concerning universal speculative matters is based upon truth (*al-haqq*) apart from debate."²⁷

Avicenna's denial of the status of practical wisdom to rhetoric rests upon the assumption, operative in the psychological writings as well, that practical wisdom possesses both a theoretical component and a component of deliberative excellence at the application of this theory to the particular situation at hand. Here rhetoric is denied not only the more obvious theoretical element, but also the deliberative one which, like rhetoric, involves reasoning about particulars. It is suggested that the weighing of particular facts that deliberation involves is distinguishable from the rhetorical manipulation of particulars because the former derives the personal intellectual efforts of a practically wise deliberator, whereas the later involves the acceptance of rhetoric arguments based upon another's practically wise deliberation through discussion, dialogue, and debate. Rhetoric is depicted as taking the more refined results of authentic practical reasoning and translating them into terms communicable to others, that is, others who are not themselves practically wise. So, rather than rhetoric being the basis for φρόνησις, it is in itself dependent upon a prior process of correct practical reasoning for the knowledge that it communicates:

"Therefore, if one wishes to establish in the soul of someone who is beneath the rank of demonstration what has been verified through demonstration in universal, theoretical matters, dialectic is a more helpful thing for establishing this. Likewise, if one intends to confirm in the soul of someone who is himself weak in practical wisdom what has been apprehended by practical wisdom, rhetoric is the most helpful thing for this."²⁸

These two passages on the relationship between practical wisdom and rhetoric and between deliberation and theory within practical wisdom, confirm the perspective already noted in the psychological writings.²⁹ Avicenna's allusion to the twin sources of rules of practical wisdom in the first passage seems to correspond to the two relations the psychological works identify as proper to the practical intellect: its intrinsic relation to the theoretical intellect on the one hand, corresponding to theory here, and its relation to the animal faculties on the other hand, corresponding to deliberation. Given this correspondence, the claim in the *Rhetoric* that practical wisdom is firmly rooted in theory as well

as deliberation can be taken as an allusion to the role of the practical intellect in formulating conventional moral precepts of the sort discussed in Avicenna's logical writings.

Avicenna's introduction of a theoretical component into practical wisdom is rooted in the same tendency seen in Fārābī to demarcate sharply the particular and deliberative aspects of practical reasoning from its more universal insights into the nature of moral virtue and human excellence in general. Nonetheless, Fārābī does appear more strickly committed to the theoretical paradigm than does Avicenna, although the difference between the two is one of emphasis. The penetration of theoretical knowledge into the practical realm in Avicenna appears to extend no further than the universalizing influence of the theoretical intellect over the formulation of conventional ethical dicta. Avicenna stops short of asserting that there are any primary ethical principle that could ground a fullfledged science of ethics. This does not mean, of course, that Avicenna's allusion to the theoretical underpinnings of ethics preclude the notion of the grounding of practical wisdom in a scientific understanding of human nature: after all Avicenna's few forays into political philosophy occur at the end of his *Metaphysics*, which could arguably be taken as implicit confirmation of just such a position. And Avicenna's description of practical philosophy in his division of the sciences in the *Isagoge* of his *Shifā'* also seems to confirm his general agreement with Fārābī on this point. For there Avicenna too declares that the truths upon which practical philosophy is based are all established by theoretical demonstration and the testimony of the revealed law.³⁰

Conclusion

What, then, is the significance of the intrusion of theory into the realm of practice in the ethics of Fārābī and Avicenna, and how does it relate to the broader framework of their approaches to ethical and political philosophy? In these closing reflections, I would like to focus upon two principal points, one of them pertaining to the epistemological motivations for this doctrine, the other to its broader ethical consequences.

From the perspective of epistemology, the views expressed by Fārābī and Avicenna in the texts we have just examined seem to be rooted in a reluctance to allow any fusion of the acts whereby universals and particulars are grasped. For Aristotelian φρόνησις is unique precisely because, while bearing upon knowledge of the ultimate particular, it nonetheless partakes of the characteristics of theoretical knowledge: it involves a simultaneous grasp of universals, and yields certain, infallibly true judgements. Despite the differences between Fārābī's and Avicenna's construal of how stringently the theoretical element in

practical wisdom affects the epistemic character of practical reasoning, it is clear that each philosopher is forced to provide theoretical foundations to the practical realm in proportion to the degree of universality that he discerns within ethical knowledge. As the gap between particular and universal knowledge becomes widened and unbridgeable, the uniqueness of the realm of practical reasoning becomes impossible to maintain, without threatening either its characteristic concern with particulars or its very claim to be a rational, intellectual form of knowledge.

Within the realm of ethics itself, the thesis that complete practical wisdom is dependent upon theoretical wisdom has striking and somewhat disturbing consequences, although they are fully compatible with the generally elitist approach to the relations between religion and philosophy characteristic of Islamic political thought. For if practical wisdom itself is dependent not only upon some sort of rational habituation of the appetites and emotions through moral virtue, but also upon a theoretical grasp of the human good as a function of humanity's place within the overall metaphysical structure of the universe, then not only are the masses denied access to human theoretical perfection, but also to the possession of practical wisdom itself in the fullest sense of the term. Without the theoretical foundations provided by philosophy, virtuous actions cannot be explained or justified: they are not truly rational, except for someone possessing full knowledge of their theoretical grounding. Such a person must belong to the class of philosophers, who have exclusive claims upon theoretical perfection. To place practical wisdom upon theoretical foundations ultimately entails that only if one is a philosopher can one truly be φρόνιμος. And this effectively cuts the vast majority of humanity off, not only from the highest and most divine perfection available through the contemplative life, but also from the secondary and derivative form of happiness offered by the life of moral virtue.

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NOTES

1. Amongst recent Aristotelian scholars, the uniqueness of the ethical realm has been highlighted by Martha Nussbaum in particular, both in the parts of *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge, 1986) devoted to Aristotle, and in the essay "The Discernment of Perception: An Aristotelian Conception of Private and Public Rationality," chap. 2 of *Love's Knowledge* (Oxford, 1990). See also Michael Woods, "Intuition and Perception in Aristotle's Ethics," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*. Volume 4: *A Festschrift for J. L. Ackrill*, ed. Michael Woods (Oxford, Clarendon, 1986), pp. 146-66. Several articles by Joseph Owens also address this point: "The Ethical Universal in Aristotle," *Studia moralia* 13 (1965), pp. 27-47; "The Grounds of Ethical Universality in

- Aristotle," *Man and World*. 2 (1969), pp. 171-93 (reprinted in *Aristotle: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens*, ed. J. R. Catan [Albany, 1981], pp. 148-64); and "The KAAON in the Aristotelian Ethics," in *Studies in Aristotle*, ed. D. J. O'Meara (Washington, DC, 1981), pp. 261-77.
2. An example of a practical syllogism follows: someone might know that eating light meats is good for us, but not be able to recognize chicken as a light meat.
 3. Aristotle explicitly identifies the analogue here as incidental rather than proper perception. He goes on in VI, 11, 1143.b 5-6 to identify this sort of αἴσθησις, as νοῦς in the practical realm. It is important to note, however, that Aristotle ultimately assigns this perception of the universal-in-the-particular to practical wisdom itself. On this point, cf. D. K. Modrak, "Aisthesis and the Practical Syllogism," *Philosophical Studies* 30 (1976), pp. 379-91.
 4. Miriam Galston, *Politics and Ethics: The Political Philosophy of Al-Fārābī* (Princeton, 1990), pp. 59-84; 109-127.
 5. Cf. *Selected Aphorisms*, ed. and trans. D. M. Dunlop, Fuṣūl al-Madani: *Aphorism of the Statesman* (Cambridge, 1961), § 48, p. 48 (slightly modified). Hence, the view of "intelligence" attributed to the masses is equivalent to the Aristotelian notion of φρόνησις.
 6. "And the idea of practically wise for Aristotle is deliberative excellence in the discovery of what it is necessary to do of virtuous deeds, at whatever time one acts, in whatever circumstances, if one is morally virtuous as well" (*Epistle on the Intellect*, ed. Bouyges, *Risāla fi al-ʿaql* [Beirut, 1948], p. 7).
 7. These are the third and fourth meanings of ʿaql in Fārābī's list. Notice that Fārābī is depending here upon the fact that ʿaql can be used in Arabic both for the Greek νοῦς and for the Greek φρόνησις. The latter is usually translated by the cognate term *taʿaqqul*, based upon the same root as ʿaql but using the *maṣḍar* or verbal noun of the fifth derived form.
 8. *Epistle on the Intellect*, pp. 8-9.
 9. This appears to be akin to the notion of consultative practical wisdom developed in Fārābī's political writings a notion that is itself indicative of the tendency to make practical wisdom the prerogative of select few.
 10. Dunlop §§ 1-4, pp. 27-8.
 11. *Ibid.*, §§5-6, pp. 28-31. The list includes the nutritive faculty, with all its subdivisions, the sensitive, imaginative, appetitive, and rational faculties. It culminates in the distinction between the practical and theoretical intellects. Once again, the practical intellect is identified principally as a reflective-deliberative faculty (plus a skillful or artistic one, reflecting the notion of production and art) concerned solely with determining how to effect what we have decided to do.
 12. *Selected Aphorisms*, Dunlop, § 36, p. 45; § 49, p. 48. Cf. also the description of practical wisdom (*al-taʿaqqul*) Fārābī attributes to the ancients in the *Kitāb al-Millaḥ*, §14, ed. M. Mahdi (Beirut, 1968), p. 59, which associates it with determining the particular conditions of actions: "And this faculty is not attained by knowledge (*bi-maʿrifah*) of the universals of the art and by an ex-

- haustive enumeration of them all, but through length of experience concerning individuals."
13. On this point, compare the opening of the *Attainment of Happiness*, where Fārābī enumerates four varieties of virtues which promote happiness: theoretical, deliberative, moral, and artistic. Here too, the practical intellectual virtue of φρόνησις is identified principally as a deliberative virtue.
 14. Trans. F. M. Najjar, in R. Lerner and M. Mahdi, eds., *Medieval Political Philosophy*, 35, (Ithaca, N.Y., 1963), p. 35 (slightly modified).
 15. Dunlop, § 49, p. 48.
 16. Since practical deliberation takes the end-to-be done as the principle from which it reasons.
 17. In *Al-Fārābī's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, trans. M. Mahdi (New York, 1962), § 24, pp. 26-27.
 18. *Ibid.* §§ 34-35, pp. 32-33.
 19. Cf. the teleological description of practical knowledge adopted in the *Dialectic*, ed. R. Al-Ajam, in *Al-Mantiqīnāda al-Fārābī* vol. 3 (Beirut, 1986), pp. 69-70, where Fārābī agrees with Aristotle that practical knowledge is futile if it does not terminate in action, which is its end. While the teleological perspective on practical wisdom is of course an important part of Aristotle's motivation for insisting on the self-sufficiency of practical knowledge, Fārābī is able to accommodate it into his own view of practical wisdom as subordinate to theoretical. Fārābī simply makes the ultimate end alone definitive of whether or not knowledge is practical and rejects Aristotle's implicit claim that the end itself affects the cognitive character of all knowledge that contributes to its completion.
 20. *Ishārāt wa-tanbihāt*, ed. J. Forget (Leiden, 1892), p. 59, trans. S. C. Inati (Toronto, 1984), p. 133.
 21. M. E. Marmura recognizes this and notes the importance of the Muʿtazilite background as a foil for Avicenna's views. See his "Ghazali on Ethical premises," *Philosophical Forum* 1 (1969), pp. 393-403, esp. pp. 394-96.
 22. *Shifāʾ: Nafs*, 1. 5, ed. F. Rahman, *Avicenna's De anima* (London, 1959), pp. 45-47; Najāh, ed. M. T. Daneshpazhuh (Tehran, 1985), pp. 330-32; Trans. F. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology* (1952; reprint Westport, 1981), pp. 32-33.
 23. Avicenna himself does not explicitly make this point, but it seems a reasonable inference from what he says. The capacity for reason to influence the irascible and concupiscible appetites is what allows them to be habituated in such a way as develop into moral virtues.
 24. "And its relation to the animal estimative and imaginative faculty is that it uses them in discovering plans concerning generable and corruptible matters" (Najāh, ed. Daneshpazhuh, 331; *Shifāʾ: Nafs*, 1. 5, ed. Rahman; 46; cf. Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology*, chap. 3, pp. 32-33).
 25. The label "widespread" (*dhāriʿāt*) is used for these premises in the logic section of the *Najāh*.
 26. *Najāh*, pp. 331; *Shifāʾ: Nafs*, p. 46.

27. *Shifā' Khaṭābah*, ed. M. Salim Salim and I. Madkour (Cairo, 1954), p. 22, 9-14. Cf. *Fārābi Kitāb al-huruf*, ed. M. Mahdi (Beirut, 1969), §§ 143-44, pp. 151-152: "However, the rhetorical and the poetic are more suited to being used in the instruction of the masses concerning that belief which has been established and verified by demonstration in theoretical and practical things. And after all this, what is required is the imposition of law, and the instruction of the masses in what has been discovered, whose verification has been completed by demonstration, in the way of theoretical matters, and also by what has been discovered by the faculty of practical wisdom (*bi-al-quwwah al-ta'āqqul*) in the way of practical matters." Here Fārābi like Avicenna, suggests that practical wisdom is prior to rhetoric and provides to rhetoric conclusions which serve as the latter's raw material.
28. Avicenna, *Shifā' Khaṭābah*, pp. 22.14-23.6.
29. It appears that dialectic provides the popular knowledge of the theoretical canons of practical wisdom, since widely accepted premises are dialectical for Avicenna. What is not clear is whether there is also a properly demonstrative grasp of these *theoretical* elements of *phronēsis* to correspond to the elite grasp of their deliberative aspects.
30. *Shifā'*: *Isagoge*, translated in M. E. Marmura, "Avicenna on the Division of the Sciences in the *Isagoge* of his *Shifā'*," *Journal of the History of Arabic Science* 4 (1980), p. 247.

Richard Bodéüs

LE STATUT DE LA SCIENCE POLITIQUE SELON THOMAS D'AQUIN

Le statut de la science politique est exposé par Thomas d'Aquin (TA) à la fin du Prologue de son Commentaire à la *Politique*, I-III, 6 d'Aristote (A). Ce texte (C, 5-8 = *In libros Politicorum Aristotelis expositio*, Ed. Spiazzi, Turin-Rome, 1951, pp. 1-2) soulève, à l'analyse, plusieurs difficultés quand on le compare à l'enseignement d'Aristote lui-même dont il paraît s'inspirer. On ne traitera ci-après, faute de place, que des difficultés qui concernent le « genre » de la science politique, en laissant de côté tout ce qui regarde les caractéristiques spécifiques que TA reconnaît à cette science, par exemple, le mode « immanent » de ses opérations.

1. Il est aisé de voir tout d'abord que TA transfère sur la *science* politique un trait qu'A réserve à la *philosophie* politique.

1.1. Sous le nom de « science » politique, TA désigne, en effet, la doctrine ou, si l'on veut, la théorie enseignée sur la cité (...*de civitate doctrinam... quae politica nominatur, id est civilis scientia* : C, 5). Cet enseignement doctrinal est celui que consignent les livres pareils à ceux d'A (...*doctrinam politicam quam Aristoteles in hoc libro tradit* : C, 5). Il est donc l'expression d'une partie de la philosophie (cf. C, 6). Bref, la science est, ici, synonyme de « théorie philosophique ».

1. 2. On en a la confirmation quand TA donne explicitement cette science pour un « complément de la philosophie » (...*ad complementum philosophiae, de civitate doctrinam tradere* : C, 5). Par philosophie, TA entend ici « la sagesse humaine » (...*humanae sapientiae quae philosophia vocatur* : C, 5).

1. 3. Par conséquent, la « science » politique se distingue nettement de ce type de savoir, également appelé politique, que TA analyse par ailleurs comme une « partie subjective » de la prudence (*Somme Théologique* = ST, II-II, q. 48. a. unicus, conclusio; cf. q. 47. a. 11). La science politique envisagée ici n'est pas une espèce de prudence, mais la théorie philosophique enseignée à propos de cette espèce de prudence et de ses objets. Vu son caractère réflexif ou métapolitique par rapport au niveau