

# i n t e r p r e t a t i o n

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- 3 Aristide Tessitore Aristotle's Political Presentation of Socrates in the *Nicomachean Ethics*
- 23 Victor Gourevitch Rousseau's Pure State of Nature
- 61 Wilhelm Hennis Tocqueville's Perspective
- 87 Charles Butterworth An Account of Recent Scholarship in Medieval Islamic Philosophy
- 99 *Discussion: "The Closing of the American Mind"*
- 101 William A. Galston Socratic Reason and Lockean Rights
- 111 Harry V. Jaffa Humanizing Certitudes and Impoverishing Doubts
- 139 Roger D. Masters Philosophy, Science, and the Opening of the American Mind
- 145 Will Morrissey How Bloom Did It
- 157 Harry Neumann The Closing of the Philosophic Mind



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# Aristotle's Political Presentation of Socrates in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

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It may be best to begin by stating what this article does and does not seek to clarify. The subject under consideration is Aristotle's political presentation of Socrates in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (henceforth referred to simply as the *Ethics*). The study which follows does not examine the *Ethics* with a view to discovering what (if any) light this book sheds on the historical Socrates. Indeed, the effort to distinguish the historical Socrates from the character we encounter in the works of Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle would appear to be of limited value since it is the latter—a character who no doubt bears some resemblance to the original—who is of greatest interest to students of philosophy.

It is, nevertheless, necessary to qualify this statement in one important respect. There is one historical fact which is crucial for an understanding of Socrates; namely, his trial and subsequent condemnation on charges of impiety and corruption of the young. About this fact, however, there can be no doubt. I cite it here because the significance of this trial and condemnation figures prominently (whether explicitly or implicitly) in all subsequent accounts of Socrates. That significance might be stated in a general way as follows: In the historical figure of Socrates the fundamental tension between the life of the philosopher and the requirements of life in the city was brought into sharpest possible focus; the life of radical inquiry was summoned to the tribunal of political justice and found wanting. Socrates the philosopher was condemned to death because his activity in some way undermined the deep although vulnerable guarantors of public order—the shared beliefs of citizens concerning the gods and the noble. In some obscure yet disturbing way Socrates refused to take his bearings from those beliefs considered most authoritative and praiseworthy by his fellow citizens. If his activity was not subversive in intent it was in effect and combined with Socrates' own apparent intransigence, it elicited the severest possible penalty.

These well-known historical facts concerning the trial and death of Socrates are inseparable from his influence on later generations of students. Perhaps one might say that Socrates, more than any other philosopher, personifies the public face of philosophy; that is, philosophy as it confronts and is confronted by the exigencies of political life. If later generations of philosophers were to gain even the partial acceptance of their fellow citizens, the life and death of Socrates was an event to be reckoned with. This concern is obvious in the writings of Plato and Xenophon, several of which are explicitly apologetic in

#### 4 • Interpretation

character. This concern is also present in the writings of Aristotle, particularly in his moral-political works. Although an additional generation had intervened since the death of Socrates, religious and political charges against philosophers were not a thing of the past as Aristotle's own forced exile to Chalcis made all too clear.<sup>1</sup>

If philosophy were ever to be accepted by the city, that acceptance would require as a constitutive element a new attitude toward its hero-victim; those who had once condemned Socrates for his often outlandish and galling manner would have to see the Socratic way of life in a new light. If Plato and Xenophon had begun this task, they had not completed it. Could the "gadfly of Athens" come to be regarded as the city's greatest benefactor as the Platonic Socrates gratingly claimed (*Apology* 30c–e; 36d–e)?<sup>2</sup> In what follows I hope to show that Aristotle sought to extend the circle of those who might acknowledge the truth imbedded in this Platonic assertion. Although it may prove impossible to mitigate entirely the disruptive consequences of philosophy for civic life, the apologetic character of Aristotle's political writings is suggested by the extent to which they reveal how philosophy is able to offer respectful and substantial clarity regarding matters of vital importance for those who bear primary responsibility for the city.

If the preceding remarks suggest something of the general importance attributed to Socrates by later generations of students, it is also necessary to say something with respect to his particular importance in the *Ethics*. The reason for focusing on this work lies in the fact that the *Ethics* is not addressed primarily to philosophers but rather to the better sort of persons referred to in classical literature as gentlemen.<sup>3</sup> Although I believe it is wrong to presume that Aristotle neglects the concerns of philosophically-minded students in this work, I hope to show that Aristotle's presentation of Socrates belongs to what, from the most obvious point of view, might be called the dominant horizon of the *Ethics*—his concern to foster and in some way shape the best sentiments of his gentlemen readers. In the course of this study Aristotle attempts to bring his gentlemen readers to some positive appreciation for Socrates' life and teach-

1. After the death of Alexander the Great in 323, Eurymedon indicted Aristotle for impiety (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 5.5). Aristotle decided to leave Athens before the matter came to trial, lest, as one tradition reports it, he give the Athenians a second opportunity to sin against philosophy.

2. The incompleteness of the apologetic task as it was undertaken by Plato is further suggested by the following Socratic statement (among others): "Now the men who have become members of this small band [philosophers] have tasted how sweet and blessed a possession it is. At the same time, they have seen sufficiently the madness of the many, and that no one who minds the business of the cities does anything healthy" (*Rep* 496c).

3. Gentleman (*καλόκἀγαθός*) is a term of distinction connoting both social-political status and a certain level of moral excellence. The gentleman is a citizen in the fullest and best sense of the word, one who embodies the highest aims of the polis. See *EE* 1248b8–1249a18. Cf. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953) pp. 142–43.

ing.<sup>4</sup> What is at stake is not merely or essentially the rehabilitation of Socrates' good name, but the acceptance of the place and importance of philosophy to those who will be most influential in the city. It is especially in the *Ethics*, the first part of Aristotle's "philosophy of the human things," that we find an initial treatment of the problematic relationship between philosophy and the city. It would seem reasonable to view Aristotle's presentation of Socrates in this book as an important part of his initial presentation of the philosophic life, a presentation which is marked by its sensitivity to the perspective and concerns of Aristotle's gentlemen readers.

Socrates appears seven times in the *Ethics*. These seven references can in turn be divided into four thematic treatments. Socrates is referred to within the following four contexts: Aristotle's consideration of (1) courage (1116b3–5), (2) truthfulness and irony (1127b25–26), (3) prudence (1144b17–19; 28–30), and (4) incontinence (1145b23–26; 1147b14–17). Each of these references will be considered in turn.<sup>5</sup> Particular attention will be given to the various impressions conveyed by the specific contexts within which Aristotle chooses to speak of Socrates, as well as the larger context provided by the movement and discussion of the *Ethics* as a whole.

## COURAGE

Socrates makes his first appearance in the *Ethics* within the context of Aristotle's account of courage (1115a6–1117b22). It may be helpful to recall the major elements in Aristotle's treatment of courage before turning to the specific place which Socrates occupies within that treatment.

4. This thesis runs contrary to some of the prevailing views on this subject. Alasdair MacIntyre, for example, contends that the *Ethics* contains "a systematic repudiation of the morality of Socrates" and that Aristotle's references to Socrates in the *Ethics* evidence "none of Plato's respect." *A Short History of Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 67–68. Werner Jaeger's influential study seeks to establish a chronology for Aristotle's writings based on the extent to which they evidence a rejection of the Platonic Socrates: the more Aristotle "developed" as a thinker, the more he repudiated the views of his teacher. *Aristotle: Fundamentals of his Development*, trans. Richard Robinson, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948). The correctness of my own view must be judged on the basis of the evidence this article brings to light.

5. Although there is a scholarly tradition of dividing and rearranging Aristotle's works in general and the *Ethics* in particular, recent scholarship has tended to emphasize the integrity of this book as a whole. Typical in this regard is Amélie Oksenberg Rorty who writes, "Even if the book is a thing composed of threads and patches, the organization of those threads and patches composes a perfectly coherent pattern." *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 3. I regard this approach as the best among possible alternatives. Moreover, the remarkable cohesiveness of Aristotle's references to Socrates in the *Ethics* provides a further piece of evidence for the fruitfulness of this approach to the text. Cf. Harry Jaffa, *Thomism and Aristotelianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), especially Chapter 4, and Robert Faulkner, "Spontaneity, Justice, and Coercion: on *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books III and IV," in J. R. Pennock and J. W. Chapman, eds., *Coercion, Nomos XIV* (Chicago: Aldine/Atherton, 1972), p. 85, n. 6.

## 6 • Interpretation

Aristotle describes courage as a mean with respect to the emotions of fear and confidence. Courage is displayed most especially with reference to that which is most fearful—namely, death. However, even death does not in all circumstances afford an equal opportunity for courage. The fullest measure of courage pertains to the noblest form of death. This is death on the battlefield where one has the opportunity to defend himself courageously or die nobly. That death in battle provides the standard for courage is, Aristotle observes, supported by the fact that public honors are conferred precisely on this basis. Although Aristotle acknowledges that it is possible to be courageous in the face of illness or a storm at sea, courage in the full sense (*κυρίως ἀνδρείος*) is found midst the perils of war.

The second major emphasis in Aristotle's treatment of courage is his insistence that the courageous man acts with a view of the noble. Whereas Aristotle had initially described virtue as a mean between excess and deficiency, it is especially within the context of his consideration of courage that he amplifies the essential connection between virtue and the noble. If the formal cause of virtue is best explained as a mean between excess and deficiency, the final cause of virtue is best understood as an attachment to the noble. Aristotle explains that although a courageous man sometimes experiences fear, he does so in the right manner (*ὡς δεῖ*) and as principle (*λόγος*) dictates on account of the noble (*τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα*) (1115b11–13).

Two observations are appropriate at this point. First, Aristotle's initial presentation of courage suggests that this virtue is essentially political. Courage in the proper sense is exhibited by one who fearlessly confronts noble death on the battlefield. Aristotle begins his consideration of moral virtue in general and courage in particular by emphasizing the political or civic horizon within which this excellence is best revealed. Perhaps the obvious and necessary dependence of the city upon courage explains why Aristotle chooses to begin his treatment of moral virtue in this way. Whether or not this is the case, Aristotle draws upon common political experience to support this view of courage. Whether one lives in a polity or monarchy, it is courage on the battlefield—that is, service to one's country—that is most highly esteemed (1115a29–32). Aristotle's solicitude for the civic horizon of his gentlemen readers is evidenced by his willingness to appeal to that which is most valued by the city as that which provides the authoritative standard for courage.

Secondly, Aristotle's initial elaboration of the noble is presented within this same civic horizon. The kind of courage which one might exhibit in confronting a fatal disease (although it might also be borne as one ought, according to principle and for the sake of the noble) fails to provide the full measure of courage because, Aristotle asserts, the noblest kind of death is death on the battlefield. This emphasis is reinforced by Aristotle's explanation at the end of this section that it is not courageous to face death in order to escape poverty, eros, or pain because this is really a sign of weakness and therefore cowardly.

Although Aristotle's examples are chosen to illustrate how one might fearlessly face death out of weakness, it is also striking that each one—unlike death on the battlefield—pertains to an individual or merely personal experience. Aristotle's initial discussion of the noble comes to sight within the context of that which is most highly prized by the city as well as that which is essential for its continued existence.

In the second part of Aristotle's account of courage he takes up five qualities which bear some resemblance to courage but do not constitute courage in the proper or most authoritative sense. The five "types" of courage discussed are: (1) political courage, (2) experience of a particular danger, (3) spiritedness, (4) cheerfulness, and (5) courage based on ignorance.

Of these five qualities, political courage (*ἡ πολιτική*)<sup>6</sup> most closely resembles courage in the sovereign sense. Citizens exhibiting political courage take their bearings from the laws (written and unwritten) of the regime (*διὰ τὰ ἐκ τῶν νόμων ἐπιτίμια*) (1116a18–19). Aristotle's account brings out the extent to which political courage both approximates and at the same time falls short of courage in the full sense. Whereas the virtue of courage is motivated by a desire for virtue itself and an attachment to the noble, political courage is motivated by a sense of shame (*αἰδώς*) (which is not strictly speaking a virtue although Aristotle sometimes refers to it in this way) and a desire for honor which may be noble but is not the same thing as the noble (1116a27–29). Aristotle's description of political courage emphasizes the desire to avoid reproach. As such, it is both similar to and yet different from the virtue of courage which is characterized by a more innate disdain for anything ignoble.

The lowest form of political courage mentioned by Aristotle is found among those who maintain their post because their commanders threaten physical violence if they do not. Although Aristotle indicates that this is inferior to political courage in the best sense, it is a form of political courage nevertheless. Aristotle's consideration of political courage as a whole suggests that it falls short of sovereign courage insofar as it results from a certain kind of compulsion or necessity (*ἀνάγκη*) rather than adherence to the noble (1116b2–3). If this is seen most clearly in the case of those who must be threatened with physical violence, it is also true of those who maintain their post because they fear the reproach of their fellow citizens. The latter exhibit a behavior which is likewise derived from compulsion, albeit of a more subtle kind stemming from the laws and customs of their particular regime. Aristotle's general suggestion appears to be that the various manifestations of political courage are defective to the extent that they are compelled from without.

Although Aristotle introduced his initial discussion of the noble within an

6. Plato also speaks of political courage which he defines in the following way: "the preserving of opinion produced by law through education about what—and what sort of thing—is terrible" (*Rep* 429c). Aristotle appears to have Plato's discussion in mind, for, as we shall see, his own account is essentially a more muted presentation of the same idea.

## 8 • Interpretation

explicitly political horizon, his consideration of political courage as something which falls short of courage in the sovereign sense, suggests that the noble, although it may presuppose politics, cannot be simply identified with the horizon of needs and concerns fashioned by the body politic. Aristotle's account clearly indicates that actions undertaken because they are noble are both higher and better than those undertaken for the sake of political honors or out of fear of public disgrace. It must be noted, however, that Aristotle does not (in the present context) suggest any conflict between actions based on the noble and those based on the laws and customs of the city. He simply maintains that the former are more perfect and consequently provide the standard for the latter. In fact, far from being in opposition to the noble, the law is presented in this discussion as commanding what virtue requires. Political courage appears to be a training ground for courage in the fullest or most authoritative sense.

The second mistaken or imperfect view of courage identifies it with confidence as it results from experience in the face of some particular danger (1116b3–23). It is within this context that Aristotle first speaks of Socrates, asserting that this view was at the origin of Socrates' supposition that courage is knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*) (1116b3–5). Aristotle explains that this type of courage is exhibited most clearly by professional soldiers. Due to their superior experience, professional soldiers are able to distinguish false alarms from the real thing and so often appear courageous owing to the ignorance of their fellow soldiers regarding the true situation. Moreover, the greater experience of professional soldiers makes them adept at fighting, for they know how best to use their arms and possess the best quality arms both for attack and defense. Generally, the superior experience of professional soldiers makes them like armed men fighting against unarmed or trained athletes fighting against amateurs.

Despite their superior fighting ability, Aristotle explains that professional soldiers possess less courage than those citizens who act on the basis of political courage. The reason for this is that professional soldiers rely on their superior strength whereas citizen soldiers are constrained by the fear of disgrace. Hence, whereas citizen soldiers prefer death to safety procured in a shameful way, professional soldiers prove to be cowards when the danger imposes too great a strain or when they are at a disadvantage in numbers or equipment. Aristotle concludes that the type of superiority shown in this case is only incorrectly understood as courage in the proper sense of the word.

It is striking that Aristotle chooses this context for his first statement about Socrates in the *Ethics*. Several aspects of this account warrant further comment. The first and most obvious point to be noted is that, from Aristotle's point of view, Socrates' understanding of courage was inadequate. The identification of superior experience or knowledge with courage is mistaken; it is not the virtue of courage as Aristotle has elucidated it. The second point bears on

the particular example which Aristotle uses in this section, that of professional soldiers who, according to Aristotle, best exemplify the Socratic understanding of courage. Aristotle's example clearly invites his readers to compare the Socratic understanding of courage with the kind of courage exhibited by professional soldiers. However, this type of courage may be even more intimately related to Socrates. Might there be a further resemblance between the kind of courage characteristic of professional soldiers and that which was exhibited by Socrates himself, particularly as he faced the prospect of death at his trial?

A few tentative comparisons suggest themselves. In the first place, like professional soldiers, Socrates did not appear to be especially attached to the polis, at least not after the fashion of those citizen soldiers whom Aristotle has just finished discussing. Moreover, if (as the context makes clear) Aristotle is speaking of foreign mercenaries (*ξένοι*), this does not seem an altogether inappropriate way to introduce Socrates who must have seemed like a "foreigner" or "stranger" to many of his fellow Athenians (cf. *Apology* 17d). Second, although Aristotle indicates that professional soldiers do not possess the virtue of courage, he does acknowledge their superiority in fighting. As Aristotle points out, it is not necessarily the most courageous men who are the best fighters. If this second point is applied to Socrates it suggests that he may exhibit a real superiority, although it is a superiority which cannot be understood in terms of courage—at least not as it is defined by Aristotle and exhibited by gentlemen. This second observation necessarily points to a third, one which bears on the major point in Aristotle's discussion. The superiority of professional soldiers derives from their experience which provides them with a greater knowledge of war (Aristotle specifically mentions the ability to distinguish false alarms from real ones) as well as a more extensive and specialized training in the art of fighting. Does this description of the superior experience and consequently superior knowledge of professional soldiers have any bearing on Socrates?

Even those not particularly attracted to Socrates would probably have been impressed by his unwavering refusal to beg for mercy or plea bargain at his trial. Might this Socratic courage be based on an ability to distinguish between false and true alarms? Perhaps, as Socrates maintained at his defense, death (at least in some circumstances) is less to be feared than acting in a way which does not befit a superior man (cf. *Apology* 29a–b and 34c–35b). We might also wonder whether Socrates' life of inquiry and clever speaking ability did not in fact provide him with the best possible training and arms as he faced death, ostensibly at the hands of the Athenian demos.

Whatever we make of these particular comparisons, Aristotle clearly indicates that neither the teaching of Socrates nor the example of professional soldiers reveals the virtue of courage in its most authoritative sense. Aristotle's treatment of courage establishes a hierarchy. Courage in the sovereign sense is undertaken for the sake of the noble. Political courage is undertaken because of

the honors and reproaches which are meted out by the city. Although great experience and superior strength have the appearance of courage, these qualities must be ranked still lower because the one who possesses them is not constrained by honor and disgrace as it is understood by the city. Aristotle concludes his consideration of the Socratic view of courage by drawing attention to its political limitations; in contrast to the citizen soldier who thinks it disgraceful to run away, professional soldiers do not (1116b15–22) for they lack attachment to any particular city and the way of life transmitted by its laws and traditions. Aristotle's initial presentation of Socrates expresses a certain sympathy for the perspective of his gentlemen readers insofar as it quietly acknowledges Socrates' apparent "strangeness," particularly his lack of attachment to what the city regards as honorable or reprehensible. At the same time, however it should be observed that Aristotle's presentation also suggests that Socrates may be characterized by a real superiority which, although not properly understood as courage, is in some way based upon knowledge or experience.

With respect to the remainder of Aristotle's treatment of courage, it is sufficient to add two observations regarding his account of spiritedness (*θυμός*), the third imperfect "type" of courage (1116b23–1117a9). First, Aristotle is harsh in his criticism of spiritedness. He begins by comparing those emboldened by spiritedness to wild beasts. Aristotle's account emphasizes the subhuman quality of *θυμός* which causes one to rush into danger like a wild or wounded animal spurred on by pain or anger and blind to whatever dangers are present. Aristotle's comparison of a spirited individual to a wild beast effectively emphasizes the problematic character of spiritedness. The spirited individual is indiscriminate in his action; like a wild beast he blindly strikes out at all who appear to pose a threat. In light of Aristotle's immediately preceding account, his harsh criticism of spiritedness might stem from a very specific problem. The spirited individual is likely to act without sufficient deliberation against all those who in some way pose a threat to the polis—whether they are enemies on the battlefield or "foreigners" living within the city walls.

The second emphasis in Aristotle's treatment of spiritedness in some way softens the harshness of his initial (and dominant) criticism. Aristotle acknowledges that courageous men are also spirited. He explains, however, that they are courageous not because of any feeling (*πάθος*) but because their action takes its bearings from the noble (*τὸ καλόν*) and is guided by principle (*λόγος*). Indeed, Aristotle goes so far as to suggest that spiritedness may provide the natural basis for the virtue of courage. Spiritedness by itself, however, is not sufficient; it requires the addition of deliberation (*προαίρεσις*). This second emphasis in Aristotle's discussion mitigates the harshness of the first insofar as it suggests that spiritedness, properly directed, may lead to the virtue of courage. What is needed is the presence of some guiding principle

and capacity for deliberation. We should note that the addition of precisely these qualities would cause spiritedness to lose its indiscriminate character.

## IRONY

After a consideration of courage and self-control in Book III, Aristotle takes up liberality and magnificence as he begins an ascent to one of the high points of the *Ethics*, his account of magnanimity in Book IV. The magnanimous man is one who not only possesses all the other virtues but possesses them to a great or extraordinary degree. In the latter part of Book IV Aristotle descends from this peak in order to consider several qualities which, although lacking proper names, are part of human excellence as a whole. He discusses ambition, gentleness, agreeableness, truthfulness, wittiness, and a sense of shame. It is within the context of Aristotle's discussion of truthfulness and, perhaps not surprisingly, within the more specific context of his consideration of irony that he turns for a second time to the figure of Socrates.

Aristotle begins his account of truthfulness (1127a13–1127b32) by explaining that he is not speaking in the present context of honesty in agreements or in matters involving justice and injustice, but rather that virtue which manifests itself even when nothing is at stake because it is the result of a fixed disposition (ἔξις). The boaster (ὁ ἀλαζών) pretends to praiseworthy qualities which he does not possess whereas the ironic or self-deprecating individual (ὁ εἰρων) disclaims praiseworthy qualities which he does possess. The mean is found in the straightforward man (ὁ αὐθέκαστος) who acknowledges the truth about himself without exaggeration or understatement. The man who possesses this quality is considered morally good (ἐπιεικής) and even praiseworthy because the one who loves truth (ὁ φιλαλήθης) even when nothing is at stake is likely to be even more truthful when something is.

Aristotle indicates that both excess and deficiency (boastfulness and self-depreciation) may be pursued with or without an ulterior motive. Lacking an ulterior motive, the words, actions and conduct in question reveal an individual's true character. Thus, Aristotle explains, the one who pretends to more than he deserves with no ulterior motive should be considered more foolish than bad. If, however, his pretensions have glory or honor as their aim, such an individual is subject to censure (although not severe censure). It is, however, more disgraceful (ἀσχημονέστερος) if the object of one's striving is money or something that will get money.

In contrast to the boaster, Aristotle indicates that the one who understates his merits possesses a more gracious or beautiful (χαριέστερος) character since he is not motivated by gain but by a concern to avoid ostentation. Aristotle adds that those falling into this category sometimes deny or reject the most

generally accepted and highly praised opinions (*τὰ ἔνδοξα*). It is Socrates whom Aristotle cites as his example. He then goes on to speak of those who disclaim insignificant and obvious qualities. These, he maintains, are appropriately despised. Aristotle suggests that this latter sort of self-depreciation might even be understood as a kind of boastfulness, for both excessive attention and extreme negligence bespeak an element of pretense. However, those who employ (*οἱ χρώμενοι*) understatement in a measured way (*μετρίως*) regarding things which are not commonplace or obvious appear to be gracious (*χαρίεντες*) (1127b29–31). Hence, Aristotle concludes, it is really the boaster who is the opposite of the truthful man because he is inferior to the one who expresses himself with irony.

Several points should be observed regarding this account of an apparently minor moral virtue. To begin once again with the most obvious point, Aristotle praises the man of straightforward character (*ὁ ἀνθέκαστος*) because he embodies the virtuous mean between boastfulness and self-depreciation. Such an individual, Aristotle maintains, is worthy of praise because a love of the truth which expresses itself in small things will naturally embrace greater things as well. It should be noted, however, that the same word which Aristotle uses to describe the straightforward man also describes someone who is blunt or plain. Although these latter qualities are not such as to incur moral blame, one might wonder if the type of character which comes closest to the mean in this case is in every respect superior to the one who uses irony in a measured way—the one whom Aristotle twice refers to as “gracious.” It is within the context of this apparent paradox that Aristotle makes his second reference to Socrates. Could it be that while Aristotle wishes to give the straightforward man his due, he also wishes to direct his readers in a gentle way to some appreciation for the more gracious and certainly more complex character of Socrates?

As we have seen, Aristotle indicates that one may be characterized by boastfulness or irony with or without any ulterior motive. With respect to the former case (those who act from an ulterior motive), Aristotle offers only two examples, those who exaggerate their abilities for the sake of honor and those who do so for monetary gain. Although both individuals are boastful, Aristotle perceptively remarks that when pretense is undertaken for another purpose, it is no longer pretentiousness which best describes the character of those in question. What is most revealing about the individuals in Aristotle’s examples is not the exaggerated claims which they make for themselves but their desire for honor and money respectively.

Since Aristotle’s only two examples of acting from an ulterior motive pertain to boastfulness, the reader is left to wonder what kind of ulterior motive might lead one to use irony in a deliberate way. Indeed, the only indication furnished by Aristotle in the present context is his reference to Socrates who is clearly placed into the category of those who use irony in a measured way to

speak about things which are not obvious or easily seen. Why did Socrates speak ironically?

Although one might offer a number of different answers to this question, the immediate context suggests one in particular. The specific topic under consideration is the virtue of truthfulness. If the straightforward man reveals his love of the truth (*φιλαλήθης*) in small matters of no consequence, might Socrates' love of the truth lead him to use irony in matters of great import?<sup>7</sup> Does Socrates use irony because the truth requires it or is best approached in this manner?

A second and related reason for using irony emerges within the context of Book IV as a whole. In his account of the magnanimous man, Aristotle indicated that such an individual reveals his greatness toward men of position and fortune whereas he is measured (*μέτριον*) in dealing with those of moderate station because it is vulgar to lord it over the weak (1124b17–23). Moreover, when addressing the many, he speaks with ironic self-deprecation (*είρωνεία*) so as not to call attention to the sharp difference in character which separates a superior man from an inferior or ordinary one. In fact, Aristotle describes the magnanimous man as one who is marked by a curious combination of truthfulness or candor (*ἀληθευτικός*) and irony (1124b26–31).

As already noted, Aristotle's discussion of the minor virtue of truthfulness takes place in the shadow of his account of magnanimity. By recalling this earlier peak in Aristotle's exposition of moral virtue, his present discussion is cast in a new and striking light. Most pertinent in this regard is the fact that irony—that trait for which Socrates stands as Aristotle's sole exemplar in the present context—cannot always be understood as a deficiency but is sometimes employed in a measured way by those who embody the highest human excellence.

## PRUDENCE

Aristotle's third and fourth references to Socrates occur within the context of his consideration of the relationship between prudence and moral virtue as a whole. It will prove useful to summarize Aristotle's own teaching on this matter before turning to his remarks about the Socratic one.

Aristotle's consideration of prudence and moral virtue (1144a6–1145a11) might be likened to a revolving door which can be entered from either of two sides. On the one hand, prudence requires moral virtue, since it is moral virtue

7. At the outset of the *Apology*, Socrates ironically acknowledges that he is a clever speaker but, unlike his accusers, he speaks cleverly with reference to the truth (17a–b). In fact, Socrates is initially presented in the *Apology* as an unusual combination of *ὁ ἀνθέκαστος*, who will speak plainly in his accustomed manner, and *ὁ εἴρων*, who acknowledges his ability to speak cleverly. In the defense which follows, the Platonic Socrates proceeds to give the reader a remarkable demonstration of great subtlety clothed in simple, straightforward speech.

which furnishes the good at which a prudent man aims. Prudence discovers the particular means through which that good is attained. Since the good only appears as such to the good man, the absence of moral virtue means that the good for which one strives will be defective. Whereas such an individual may be clever in the choice of means to attain his end, he cannot be called prudent unless the end at which he aims is the one given by moral virtue. On the other hand, Aristotle maintains that moral virtue cannot exist without prudence. Although Aristotle acknowledges that the dispositions for particular moral virtues are somehow already present by nature, he points out that even good natural dispositions (*αἱ φυσικαὶ ἕξεις*) can be harmful without the guidance of intelligence. Aristotle uses the image of a man with a powerful frame who has lost his sight and as a consequence meets with a particularly heavy fall when he moves. It is precisely prudence which supplies guidance or “moral vision” for one with a strong natural disposition for virtue. If someone possessing natural excellence (*ἡ φυσικὴ ἀρετή*) acquires prudence, then the disposition which previously only resembled virtue becomes virtue in the full or sovereign sense (*ἡ κυρία ἀρετή*). Hence, Aristotle concludes, if it is true that prudence requires moral virtue it is also true that moral virtue in the proper sense does not exist without prudence.

After offering this helpful but not entirely satisfying account of the relationship between prudence and virtue, Aristotle considers and amends the opinions of others on this subject. He speaks first of Socrates, maintaining that his line of inquiry was right in one way but wrong in another. Socrates was mistaken in thinking that all virtues were forms of prudence, although he spoke well in maintaining that they cannot exist without prudence (1144b17–21). Aristotle explains that Socrates conceived of the virtues as rational principles (*λόγους*), supposing all of them to be forms of knowledge (*πάσας ἐπιστήμας*) (1144b28–30). If Socrates overstated the relationship between reason and virtue, Aristotle thinks that his contemporaries understate it. They maintain that virtue is a disposition determined in accordance with right reason and that right reason is what is meant by prudence. In this case too, Aristotle finds it necessary to offer a slight modification. Virtue does not merely conform to right reason as to something external (*κατὰ τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον*), rather virtue is accompanied by right reason (*μετὰ τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου*) (1144b25–27). The rational principle from which virtue takes its bearings does not exist outside the virtuous man, it is rather something within him which enables him to be virtuous.

Aristotle adopts a middle position between the Socratic and contemporary views. On the one hand, Aristotle criticizes the paradoxical Socratic identification of virtue with knowledge, although he agrees with Socrates that virtue cannot exist without being accompanied by a rational principle. Moreover, although unwilling to identify all the virtues with prudence, Aristotle does acknowledge that the one who possesses this single virtue necessarily possesses

all the rest (1145a1–2). On the other hand, in contradistinction to his contemporaries, Aristotle maintains that one does not possess moral virtue simply because he acts according to some rational principle (for example, commands issued by a prudent lawgiver) since moral virtue in the full sense cannot exist without prudence.

We would do well to try to grasp something of the significance of these different positions and most especially the difference between Aristotle and Socrates on this question. In the *Meno*, the Platonic dialogue to which Aristotle appears to be referring in the present instance,<sup>8</sup> Socrates begins his conversation with Meno by confessing complete ignorance about the nature of virtue (71b). Socrates' statement startles, not to say scandalizes, Meno and understandably so since it flies in the face of a conventional civic education as well as the common experience of decent persons, both of which lead most people to assume that they know what virtue is. Socrates is, however, undaunted by Meno's ridicule and adds to his initial admission of ignorance that he has yet to meet *anyone* who knows what virtue is (71c). One could hardly describe this manner of inquiry as conciliatory. Indeed, in light of this latter remark, Socrates' confession of ignorance almost sounds like a boast. At the very least, Socrates' remarks are intended to challenge or provoke Meno to begin an investigation of something which he believes he already understands.

In the *Meno* (as in other dialogues), Socrates' insistence on knowing and subsequent confession of ignorance is shown to have a direct bearing on his own way of life. As long as one cannot claim to know what virtue is, the most important activity would seem to be the attempt to discover what it is (something which Socrates is not very successful in getting Meno to do precisely because and to the extent that Meno remains unconvinced of his own ignorance). Such an activity, one could argue, properly takes precedence over the effort to conform one's actions to the admonitions of famous teachers, great statesmen, or even the laws of the city itself. Perhaps the life of inquiry should be regarded as the only truly "virtuous" life whereas all others, to borrow from the final image of the *Meno*, are merely lives lived among shadows.

In contrast to Socrates' jarring and provocative approach to the question of virtue,<sup>9</sup> Aristotle addresses this question in a way which is likely to be much more acceptable to his gentlemen readers. Aristotle sheds light on the common but complicated experience of decent persons by clarifying that experience to a great extent and only gently suggesting the limits of that clarification. Aristotle had warned at the outset of his study that it is the mark of a well-educated

8. In the *Meno*, Socrates undertakes an investigation of virtue. Socrates' paradoxical identification of virtue and knowledge emerges in the course of this dialogue, where it takes the particular form referred to by Aristotle in the present context: namely, the identification of virtue with prudence (88a–89a).

9. It may be appropriate to recall that the frustrated Meno likens the effect of Socratic argument to that of the torpedo fish which numbs anyone who comes into contact with it. It is also interesting to note that Socrates in no way disavows the propriety of this comparison (80a–d).

person to expect only that degree of precision of which a subject matter admits (1094b12–27). By de-emphasizing the problematic question concerning the precise relationship between knowledge and virtue, while at the same time bringing an appropriate clarity and rigor to his treatment of virtue as a whole, Aristotle is able to acknowledge the dignity of moral virtue without, however, offering final clarity or precision about the nature of the good. Perhaps we should understand Socrates' inquiry into the relationship between knowledge and virtue as an expression of Socrates' uncompromising desire for precise knowledge of his subject matter. Whether or not this is so, it is clear that in contrast to the impression conveyed by the surface of the Platonic dialogues, the life of moral virtue as it is practiced by gentlemen is not presented by Aristotle as a shadowy kind of existence, but as a way of life which is intellectually serious and capable of substantial happiness.

The disagreements between Aristotle and Socrates on this issue should not, however, obscure a deeper agreement. The well-known conclusion of the *Ethics* explicitly teaches that a life devoted to the practice of moral virtue is not the simply best or happiest way of life. Moreover, we should also bear in mind that what Aristotle does recommend to his readers as a serious, if secondary, way of life is the practice of moral virtue as it has been elucidated and amended by Aristotle the philosopher. In the present context, Aristotle modifies the contemporary view of virtue by moving closer to the Socratic one; he insists that virtue requires the active presence of some guiding principle. The major difference between Aristotle and his contemporaries on this question appears to be that Aristotle shifts the center of gravity away from those norms which exist outside an individual toward those which come from within. Aristotle's subtle emendation rules out the possibility that the standard for human excellence could be provided by one who simply obeys the laws of his regime. Such an individual might be a good citizen but he should not be considered a simply good man (cf. *Pol* 1276b16–1278b5, esp. 1277b25–29 and 1278a40–1278b5).

The fuller significance of this distinction is suggested by Aristotle's concluding remarks in this section. If it is true that sovereign virtue (*ἡ κυρίως ἀρετή*) cannot exist without prudence which perfects the deliberative part of the soul, Aristotle points out that prudence, even though it both presupposes and directs all the moral virtues, does not possess more authority (*κυρία*) than wisdom, nor does it govern the better part of the soul. To maintain otherwise, Aristotle says, would be like asserting that political science, since it governs everything in the city (including religious festivals), also wields authority over the gods (1145a6–11). Aristotle concludes his treatment of moral and intellectual virtue by holding up the wise man—and not merely the prudent one—as the embodiment of the most authoritative human excellence. This conclusion gently points to the limits of his preceding consideration. Although virtue in the sovereign

sense properly qualifies one to rule in the city,<sup>10</sup> the wise embody a higher and more authoritative human excellence. Although as citizens the wise are de facto subject to the political authority of those who rule, Aristotle quietly presents a famous, even strident, Socratic teaching on this issue; namely, those who rule, indeed the city itself, should be subject to the greater authority of the wise.

Before turning to the final three references to Socrates in the *Ethics*, it may be helpful to order (at least to some degree) the impressions conveyed thus far by viewing Aristotle's references to Socrates within the broader context of the *Ethics* as a whole. Aristotle introduced Socrates at the beginning of his consideration of moral virtue. Socrates' thesis about virtue first came to sight as a strange understanding of courage which Aristotle respectfully but emphatically corrected. Aristotle next referred to Socrates as an example of someone who spoke with irony, often confounding the most accepted opinions. Although Aristotle maintained that those who habitually indulge in understatement are in some way deficient, he also appeared to use this discussion to suggest something of the subtlety of the superior man since those who embody the highest human excellence also speak with irony. Aristotle's next reference to Socrates was at the end of his consideration of intellectual virtue. Although Aristotle does not simply endorse the Socratic view of virtue, it is clear that he is far from dismissing it. Whereas Aristotle introduced the Socratic paradox with reference to the particular virtue of courage (courage is knowledge), his consideration at the end of Book VI addresses that teaching in more general terms (virtue is knowledge; prudence is virtue). More importantly, whereas Aristotle's initial consideration of the Socratic paradox in Book III emphasized the relationship between virtue and the noble (as was appropriate since the horizon of inquiry was at that point restricted to a consideration of moral virtue), in Book VI Aristotle comes closer to considering the Socratic thesis on its own terms. (This is also appropriate given that the horizon of inquiry now embraces both intellectual and moral virtue.) It is within this broader horizon of inquiry that Aristotle voices considerable appreciation for Socrates' view without, however, entirely agreeing with it (moral virtue is not knowledge but must be accompanied by rational principle; prudence is not simply virtue but it does presuppose the presence of all the other virtues). Nevertheless, even the broader horizon of inquiry established in Book VI is limited as Aristotle himself acknowledges in his concluding remarks. Although it is especially the virtue of prudence which qualifies one to run the affairs of the city, Aristotle concludes his consideration of this virtue by acknowledging the existence of a still greater authority; namely, that which properly belongs to the wise who, by virtue of their godlike wisdom, embody the highest and most authoritative

10. Aristotle's example of a prudent man was Pericles who is said to have possessed a capacity for discerning what things were good both for himself and for mankind, a capacity which, Aristotle maintains, characterizes one who is capable of managing both households and cities (1140b8–11).

human excellence. Are we meant to think of Socrates who was condemned by the city for his wisdom—a wisdom which, although he insisted that it was merely human, was described as divine by those who condemned him (*Apology* 20e)?

Perhaps Socrates' teaching and mode of investigation regarding virtue are and must be considered imprudent from the point of view of the city. However, this still leaves open the possibility that from a different point of view—perhaps a more detached or transpolitical point of view—Socrates' paradoxical teaching and manner of inquiry may prove to contain still greater truth than we have been led to acknowledge thus far. In any case, it is at this point in Aristotle's study that he decides to undertake a "new beginning," one which promises a consideration of heroic, indeed a kind of divine, excellence (1145a15–33). We should not be surprised that Aristotle once again turns to the figure and teaching of Socrates. Aristotle's concluding remarks about Socrates in the *Ethics* are all found within the context of his new beginning in Book VII where for the final time Aristotle takes up Socrates' problematic thesis regarding the relationship between knowledge and virtue.

## INCONTINENCE

Aristotle's final references to Socrates occur within the context of his discussion of continence/incontinence. His general consideration of this theme is divided into three parts. Aristotle lists a variety of opinions regarding continence and incontinence (1145b8–20), brings to light six problems (*ἀπορίαι*)<sup>11</sup> entangled in those opinions (1145b21–1146b8), and then attempts to disentangle them (1146b8–1152a36). It is the very first *ἀπορία* which is of greatest interest to us for it is here that Aristotle returns to the problem raised by Socrates: How is it possible for someone to act in a morally wrong way at the same time that he correctly supposes that what he is doing is wrong? Aristotle elaborates the problem by citing the view of those who say that one cannot act in this way if he knows (*ἐπιστάμενος*) the act to be wrong since, as Socrates supposed, it would be strange if, while knowledge was present, something else should overpower it and drag it around like a slave (1145b21–24). In fact, Aristotle observes, Socrates used to combat this view altogether (that a man could know what is right and do what is wrong) in such a way as to imply that there was no such thing as incontinence (1145b25–27). Socrates believed that

11. *Ἀπορία* can also be translated by "dilemma" or "antinomy" and is likened by Aristotle to a knot or tangle (*δεσμός*) which binds the intelligence (*Meta* 995a27ff. cf. *NE* 1146a21–27). Wherever the fuller connotations of the word are essential for understanding the argument, I have retained the Greek. For a discussion of the meaning of *ἀπορία*, see H. H. Joachim, *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. D. A. Rees (London: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 219, and John Burnet, ed., *The Ethics of Aristotle* (London: Methuen, 1900), pp. xi–xli.

no one acts contrary to what is best knowing that what he does is bad; one only acts against what is best out of ignorance.

We are now in a position to observe that of the seven references to Socrates in the *Ethics*, all but one (Aristotle's reference to Socratic irony) pertain to the problematic Socratic thesis regarding the relationship between knowledge and moral goodness. At the very least, Aristotle's sixfold reference suggests something of the weight and seriousness which he attaches to this Socratic teaching. To this we might add that although Aristotle has referred to the Socratic thesis several times, it is only at this point that he deals with it in a thematic way. It is within the context of his thematic treatment that Aristotle indicates the most radical or jarring aspect of Socrates' approach to the question of moral goodness; it led him to deny the very existence of incontinence.<sup>12</sup> In fact, as Aristotle frames the issue for a final time before offering his own evaluation, he no longer hesitates to call attention to the strange or extreme character of the Socratic stance. Indeed, he expresses sympathy for those who continue to experience Socrates' outlandish teaching on such an important matter with something like frustrated indignation—the Socratic view of this matter, Aristotle asserts, is clearly at odds with the most obvious facts (1145b27–28)! Given the character of Aristotle's previous references to this Socratic teaching as well as his expression of its apparent inconsistency, the thematic treatment which follows is surprising. It would be difficult to construe Aristotle's final evaluation as anything other than a rehabilitation and even endorsement (although qualified) of the Socratic view, notwithstanding the fact that it is at odds with the most obvious things.

Given the subject of this study it is not necessary to list each of the five other *ἀπορίαι* which Aristotle finds to be entangled in current views regarding incontinence. However, it is worth noting that whereas Aristotle lists six *ἀπορίαι*, his own consideration of them follows neither the order nor the list which he has just furnished. Although Aristotle's treatment does address all the *ἀπορίαι* which he has brought to light, he orders his thematic treatment in a new way, presumably one which reflects the relative importance which he attaches to the various *ἀπορίαι* which he has raised. What is most striking about Aristotle's order of consideration is the emphasis which it places on the Socratic paradox. As Burnet incisively points out, it is as if Aristotle says, "We have first to deal with the great *ἀπορία*, *πότερον εἰδότες ἢ οὐ*; and then we can take all the rest together."<sup>13</sup>

12. The radical character of Socrates' denial of incontinence is even more evident in light of his explanation of what actually occurs. Socrates' analysis of incontinence leads him to assert that there is no good apart from pleasure and that virtue consists in knowing how to choose the greatest pleasure. See *Protagoras* 351c–361c, esp. 357a and 358b. The harsh implications of the Socratic consideration of incontinence are not only unacceptable but even antagonistic to the best sensibilities of decent persons. Although regrettable, it is not surprising that Socrates' mode of inquiry eventually elicited the condemnation from his fellow citizens.

13. Burnet, *Ethics*, p. 298.

Aristotle's thematic treatment of Socrates' teaching is divided into a preface and four (difficult and abbreviated) arguments which lead to his final evaluation (1146b24–1147b19)<sup>14</sup> It is sufficient for our purposes to summarize the conclusions of each of these arguments, noting especially their bearing on Aristotle's final evaluation of Socrates.

After a preface in which he dismisses the argument of those who adhere to the Socratic thesis in a modified form, Aristotle offers three dialectical (*λογικός*) arguments. The first argument concludes with the assertion that it would not be surprising if someone were to act against knowledge which he possessed but was not currently using, although it would be strange (*δεινός*) if he acted against knowledge while he was actively beholding (*θεωροῦντα*) it. Aristotle's second argument amounts to a technical rendition of the first. It would not be strange if one knew both universal and particular propositions in a habitual way but, in a particular case, considered only the universal and not the particular. (For example, one might know that dry food is healthy, but fail to realize that the food before one was dry.) Aristotle adds, however, that it would be astonishing (*θαυμαστόν*) if the individual in question knew in the sense that both universal and particular propositions were apprehended as concrete particulars. Aristotle's analysis thus far differentiates different ways of knowing. However, he has not yet joined the issue since it is only the last kind of knowing that is involved in incontinence; namely, when one undertakes a particular (that is, concrete) action which he knows (in some sense) to be wrong.

In his third argument Aristotle speaks of the kind of knowing which characterizes someone who is asleep, mad, or drunk. Aristotle likens this type of knowing to young students who correctly reel off formulae but without understanding the significance of what they are saying. The incontinent, Aristotle says, fail in the same way. They may act against what they know but that knowledge is in some way defective for it has not become part of them or, to

14. Commentators generally agree that these four arguments break up into two types: the first three are *λογικός* (based on the distinction between having and exercising knowledge) whereas the fourth is *φυσικῶς*. However, there is a remarkable degree of difference in the way these arguments are evaluated. Robinson maintains that the *φυσικῶς* explanation—although it is often used by Aristotle to present a topic from a distinct and “better” point of view—has in this case no real bearing on what Aristotle takes to be a logical puzzle: Robert Robinson, “Aristotle on Akrasia,” in *Ethics and Politics*, Vol. 2 of *Articles on Aristotle* (New York: St. Martin's, 1978), pp. 84–87. On the other hand, Burnet maintains that the first three arguments are essentially dialectical whereas the *φυσικῶς* explanation reveals Aristotle's real answer to the problem (*Ethics*, p. 299). Walsh maintains that by grouping together these four arguments, Aristotle indicates that there is no fundamental difference between these two approaches: James Walsh, *Aristotle's Conception of Moral Weakness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 99–100. Randall makes the general suggestion that Aristotle normally follows a pattern of investigation which moves from the *λογικός* or “talker” to the *φυσικῶς* or “natural philosopher” as the inquiry is brought into the wider context of nature: John Randall, *Aristotle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 59–61. I have found Randall's general observation to be borne out in the present case.

express this in more precise Aristotelian terms, it is a kind of knowing which is not characterized by *σύμφυσις* (1147a22). While each of Aristotle's arguments explain how it is possible to act against what one knows to be right (in opposition to the Socratic view), it should also be observed that each of these arguments points to another way of knowing—perhaps the kind of knowing which Socrates sought—which, Aristotle says, it would be surprising, even astonishing, if one were to oppose by one's actions.

Aristotle's final argument addresses the Socratic paradox from the viewpoint of the natural philosopher (*φυσικῶς*). Aristotle describes a physiological state in which rational control is temporarily overcome by passion or pleasure, a state comparable to that produced by drunkenness or sleep. What is most pertinent for our purposes is that Aristotle's analysis clearly shows that the one acting under the influence of passion or pleasure either does not possess knowledge or possesses it in a defective way, much like a drunken man who might repeat the sound moral maxims of Empedocles without their altering his behavior in the least. Aristotle's conclusion is striking: "We seem to be led to the position which Socrates sought to establish—it is not knowledge in the sovereign sense (*κυρίως ἐπιστήμη*) which is overcome in an incontinent act, nor is such knowledge dragged about by passion" (1147b14–17).

For all the difficulty of Aristotle's particular arguments in this section, their overall effect is clear. On the one hand, Aristotle argues that it is in fact possible to act against "right opinion." In opposition to the Socratic paradox, Aristotle maintains that incontinence both exists and is intelligible. On the other hand, Aristotle's consideration also brings to light a kind of knowing which apparently cannot be overcome by the emotions. While disagreeing with Socrates in such a way as to shed light on an all too familiar aspect of human experience, Aristotle also begins to suggest the proper way to understand a much less familiar Socratic maxim. What initially seemed to be outlandish is now revealed to have seemed so to the extent that one lacked a proper appreciation for the kind of knowing which Socrates sought. Whereas Aristotle's disagreement with Socrates helps to clarify the experience of incontinence, Aristotle's final vindication of Socrates provides his readers with some appreciation for "sovereign knowledge" as it is sought by the philosopher—that rare and in some way godlike knowledge which Aristotle had (in his previous reference to Socrates) attributed to the wise.

The particular arguments which Aristotle makes in this section address the question of moral goodness within a horizon which is broader than that which has hitherto constrained his inquiry. Aristotle no longer restricts himself to the horizon of gentlemen but shows himself willing to consider the question of moral goodness from the perspective of natural philosophy. It is within this broader horizon of inquiry that Aristotle attempts to bring his readers from an initial frustration with the patently outlandish character of Socratic inquiry to some, even partial, appreciation for the less than obvious truth to which that

inquiry was devoted. In effect, Aristotle's justification of the Socratic paradox provides his readers with a greater appreciation for the requirements of knowledge in a strict sense, that is, knowledge as it is sought by the philosopher.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper has been to suggest that Aristotle's presentation of Socrates in the *Ethics* is both more careful and more sympathetic than is often acknowledged. The more typical evaluations regarding Aristotle's repudiation of the Platonic Socrates as well as his culturally determined understanding of human excellence do not do justice to the suppleness of Aristotle's mode of inquiry in the *Ethics* in particular and his political writings generally.<sup>15</sup> It is by taking seriously the apologetic dimension of Aristotle's political writings that both his awareness of the limitations of the code of gentlemen and his appreciation for the Socratic mode of inquiry assume their full and proper force. I have attempted to show that in the course of the *Ethics* Aristotle seeks to bring his readers to some positive appreciation for Socrates' life and teaching. On the one hand, he mutes and in some cases corrects the most disturbing aspects of Socrates' teaching on moral virtue, approaching those teachings in a way which reflects his own concern to preserve and foster the best sensibilities of his gentlemen readers. On the other hand, Aristotle directs his readers to an appreciation for the seriousness of Socratic inquiry, however outlandish and galling it might initially appear. Without trying to persuade his readers that the "gadfly of Athens" was in fact the city's greatest benefactor, Aristotle's double appreciation for the dignity of moral virtue as it is lived by gentlemen and the life of radical inquiry as it was embodied in the life and death of Socrates is uniquely suited to bring his readers to a new and positive appreciation for the Socratic way of life. For Aristotle, as for Plato (although in a way which differs from Plato), Socrates continues to personify the public face of philosophy. Aristotle's prudent rehabilitation of the exemplar par excellence of the philosophic life in the *Ethics* can be understood as part of his larger effort to secure an at least partial acceptance for the place and importance of philosophy in the city.

15. Consider, in addition to MacIntyre and Jaeger (loc. cit.), John Randall who identifies Aristotle's teaching on human excellence with "the values, the norms or ideals of Greek culture the ethic of an upper class in a slave society." *Aristotle*, p. 248.