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Wisdom in Plato and Aristotle

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WISDOM IN PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Claudia M. Yau

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the accounts of wisdom (*sophia*) developed by Plato and Aristotle in the *Republic, Nicomachean Ethics,* and *Metaphysics.* In endorsing particular conceptions of wisdom, Plato and Aristotle were engaging in a long-standing dispute, spanning the archaic and classical periods, over the title. '*Sophia*' conferred significant power and prestige, so there were real stakes in the outcome of the contest. Wisdom also does significant explanatory work in their ethics, politics, and epistemology: it is the highest virtue of the rational soul and is required for the best human life and a flourishing political community. Despite wisdom's importance, there has not been much systematic treatment of it for either philosopher.

Plato and Aristotle are standardly thought to agree that wisdom is the ability to understand certain abstract, metaphysically basic entities: Plato thinks wisdom is knowledge of the Forms and Aristotle thinks wisdom is understanding about divine beings. The central aim of this dissertation is to show that they in fact endorse diametrically opposed conceptions of wisdom. According to Plato, wisdom makes use of and requires knowledge of Forms, but its purpose is to make good judgments about the perceptible realm. Aristotle, by contrast, explicitly denies that wisdom is aimed at action; wisdom proper deals with the abstract, fundamental metaphysical truths of reality.

This dissertation contains four chapters. Chapter 1 argues that wisdom is not identical to knowledge of the Forms. Chapter 2 defends the following definition: wisdom is the ability to make good judgments, referencing the Forms as a standard, about the city or soul as a whole. Chapter 3 shows that in the *NE*, Aristotle offers a rigorous, though compressed, argument for his conception of wisdom as *epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things. The argument relies on a commitment to a hierarchy of intellectual states and the identification of *sophia* as the state

which ranks highest. Chapter 4 turns to the *Metaphysics*, where Aristotle appears to present two competing characterizations of wisdom. I argue that that these conceptions describe a single, unified state, and that this is the very state Aristotle identifies as wisdom in the *NE*.

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To 爷爷、奶奶、外公、外婆

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Introduction

This dissertation investigates the accounts of wisdom (*sophia*) developed by Plato and Aristotle in the *Republic, Nicomachean Ethics,* and *Metaphysics.* Wisdom does a great deal of explanatory work in Plato's[1] and Aristotle's epistemology, ethics, and politics: both agree that wisdom is the highest excellence or virtue (*aretē*) of the rational soul, that the best life is one which makes central the activity of wisdom, and that cultivating wisdom should be a central goal of our political communities. Moreover, in endorsing particular conceptions of wisdom, Plato and Aristotle were engaging in a dispute which spanned the archaic and classical periods over the term. As Kurke notes: "*Sophia* is still in this period and later the bearer of tremendous cultural and political prestige and authority—a form of 'symbolic capital' to which all participants in the cultural field want to be able to lay claim."[2] Despite wisdom's historical and philosophical significance, there has not been much systematic treatment of it for either philosopher. This dissertation aims to offer such a treatment.

It is standardly held that Plato and Aristotle stand in broad agreement as to what wisdom is: it is the ability to understand certain abstract, metaphysically basic entities. Plato (on this common view) thinks wisdom is knowledge (*epistēmē*) of the Forms; Aristotle thinks wisdom is understanding about divine beings. Hence, Kerferd ascribes to Aristotle the view that wisdom is "the study of things divine, above the world and unchangeable" and then remarks, "in this case there are surely affinities with Plato's view of the unchanging world of the Forms which alone can be the object of knowledge and so of *sophia* or wisdom."[3] Cooper endorses the same account

[1] Unless otherwise noted, when I attribute views to Plato, I mean the views as presented in the *Republic.*
[2] L. Kurke, *Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose*. (Princeton, 2011), 120
[3] G. B. Kerferd, "The Image of the Wise Man in Greece in the Period before Plato," in *Images of Man in Ancient and Medieval Thought*, ed. Gerard Verbeke (Leuven, 1976), 19-20.

of wisdom for Aristotle and claims—also without much defense—that wisdom in the *Republic* consists exclusively in knowledge of Forms:

> "In fact, though Socrates does not make a point of saying this there, in book IV, it is actual, unqualified wisdom itself, the full human virtue, consisting in a final and complete knowledge of the whole system of the Forms, and, especially, knowledge of that system as having as its apex the Form of the Good" (356; cf. 424 n.44)"[4]

Wisdom, of course, is still acknowledged to have great practical import. On the Platonic picture, wisdom *contributes* to good judgments about the spatiotemporal realm of perceptibles.[5] On the Aristotelian picture, *phronēsis*, the intellectual excellence to do with thinking about the domain of action, requires and might even partly consist in deliberating well about how to achieve the objectively best life, which he argues is a life of contemplation (*theōria*), i.e. a life of the activity of wisdom (*sophia*) (see esp. VI.9, 1142b28-33). Nevertheless, the standard reading holds that for both Plato and Aristotle, wisdom itself is resolutely theoretical.

The central aim of the dissertation is to show that Plato and Aristotle in fact endorse diametrically opposed conceptions of wisdom. According to Plato, wisdom deals centrally with the spatiotemporally extended realm of perceptibles, and its purpose or work (*ergon*) is to issue good judgments about the practical realm. Wisdom makes use of, requires, and presupposes knowledge of the realm of intelligibles, but it is not centrally directed at it. Aristotle, by contrast, explicitly and repeatedly denies that wisdom is aimed at action; wisdom proper deals with the abstract, fundamental metaphysical truths of reality.

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[4] J.M. Cooper, *Pursuits of Wisdom: Six Ways of Life in Ancient Philosophy from Socrates to Plotinus*. (Princeton, 2012), 424 n.44 makes a similar point: "Plato can speak of just three of the virtues in the Republic's system (justice, courage, moderation) as being due to habituation and training, since the "wisdom" he counts as the fourth really is, despite its use in the practical activities of directing the life of the city, a work of pure understanding, acquired through philosophical study of mathematics and "dialectical" discussion of ethical questions" (cf. 313-314). J. Annas in *An Introduction to Plato's Republic.* (Oxford, 1981) offers resources for a possible alternative to this traditional interpretation, on which the Platonic conception of *sophia* is entirely practical. I discuss this view in Chapter 1.

[5] Cooper 63n59

How can two thinkers who operated out of the same cultural and intellectual communities and who interacted with one another—we know that Plato directly influenced Aristotle, and Aristotle possibly influenced Plato as well—arrive at such different conceptions of the same extremely importantly, actively investigated concept? This divergence is especially surprising because, in addition to assigning similarly important roles to wisdom in their epistemology, ethics, and politics, they also agreed on some key constraints on any satisfying account of wisdom: they both took it to be connected to the divine and, I'll argue, they even agreed on some of the metrics for ranking intellectual accomplishment such as stability and fundamentality.[6]

The best way to understand this disagreement is as follows. Two philosophers can agree that *sophia* marks out the highest intellectual accomplishment, and even agree on many of the metrics for evaluating intellectual accomplishments, but still disagree on which, among all the different kinds of intellectual excellences, ranks the highest and so merits the title, *sophia*. The dispute between Plato and Aristotle therefore amounts to a substantive disagreement over what the best intellectual achievement for a human being is, and, given the partly constitutive relationship between the exercise of wisdom and a flourishing human life, it amounts to a substantive disagreement about the kind of activity around which we should structure our lives.

What I have articulated so far is at the heart of what is at stake in understanding Plato's and Aristotle's conceptions of *sophia*, and many of the comparative upshots of the dissertation will focus on these. Still, we would be missing something crucial if we understood the importance of the disagreement only in the terms just stated: that dispute could be conducted without placing much independent emphasis on the term *sophia.* As I noted earlier, *sophia* was a itself hugely

[6] I'm grateful to Benjamin Morison for encouraging me to pursue an answer to this question and to Hendrik Lorenz for suggesting this way of framing the dissertation.

important and contested term, and an understanding of this context enriches our understanding of the substance, importance, and stakes of the disagreement.

Background

There is a rich and active literature on *sophiē, sophia* and cognates throughout the archaic and classical periods. On one account of the history, which enjoyed widespread endorsement until the late-20th century and which was recently revived by Wolfsdorf in 2019, the meaning of *sophia* evolved over time. *Sophiē* and *sophos* originally meant 'skill in craft' (*Iliad* 15.410-13), in contrast to the meaning 'wisdom', and then in the sixth century broadened to include political skill. By the end of the fifth century, it was used in philosophical contexts to mean 'wisdom' where it was connected to theoretical contemplation and the divine, by contrast with *technē*.[7]

This developmental or evolutionary picture of the meaning of wisdom has been widely rejected, first by Kerferd in 1976, and later by Kurke, Moore, and Billings, among others.[8] Kerferd reinterprets the primary texts, showing that the archaic passages cited in fact do not support the idea that wisdom is restricted to crafts—more frequently, wisdom refers to the *content* or *knowledge*, typically bestowed by a god, expressed in the craft. He also offers error theories for the popularity of the evolutionary model: 19th and early 20th century scholars were guided by the expectation that, as we go farther back in time, there will be a primitive or original meaning of the term from which later meanings are developed, and that the primitive meaning will be similar to and more limited in range than the evolved meaning. These guiding

[7] D. Wolfsdorf, "'*Sophia*' and '*Epistēmē*' in the Archaic and Classical Periods," in *The Philosophy of Knowledge: A History, Volume I: Knowledge in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Nicholas D Smith (London, 2018), 11-28; R. A. Gauthier and J. Y. Jolif, *L'Ethique à Nicomaque, Introduction, traduction et commentaire* vol. 2 (Paris, 1959), 481

[8] C. Moore, *Calling Philosophers Names: On the Origin of a Discipline*, (Princeton, 2020); J. Billings, *The Philosophical Stage: Drama and Dialectic in Classical Athens*, (Princeton, 2021)

assumptions in fixing the meaning of terms are now dismissed as illegitimate.[9] Proponents of the evolutionary picture also took at face value the history of *sophia* as presented by fifth and fourth century authors. For instance, scholars cite as support for the evolutionary picture a piece of the *Protrepticus* and a passage in Philoponus attributed to *De Philosophia*, which themselves present views echoed in *Met.* A.2 and *NE* 6.7. But, Kerferd notes, there is a danger that this picture was itself a motivated re-writing of history. For example, the teleological narrative recommended by the evolutionary picture culminates in the Aristotelian conception of wisdom — wisdom as the abstract, theoretical contemplation of the divine.[10] For these reasons, we should reject the idea that *sophia* evolves in meaning over time.[11] As Kerferd puts it, "The meaning throughout was what we call 'wisdom, knowledge and understanding'. No matter that in different contexts and for different writers the content of such wisdom may vary – of course it does. But these are not variations in the meaning of the term, nor do they justify us in attempting to trace 'stages' in the development of its meaning. So far as meaning is concerned there is throughout a single concept of 'wisdom.'"[12] All agreed on the *meaning* of the word '*sophia*' but people still disagreed, as one would expect, about its extension.

Kerferd's point, that we should be wary of taking fifth and fourth century characterizations of the history of *sophia* as truth, is an important one.[13] Kurke explains that what *sophia* was and who had it were subjects of debate well before the late fifth century. There were real stakes to the competition, because the term, *sophia*, conferred a significant amount of social

[9] Kerferd18-19; Kurke 97
[10] Kerferd, 24-5; Kurke, 117
[11] Kerferd also attributed some of the appeal of the developmental model to "the Marxist tendency to relate the origins and developments of philosophy to technology, and the basically contrary view that the history of Greek thought can be understood as involving the progressive emergence of *Geist* (Mind or the Spiritual) from humbler, lower, more primitive levels of thought." (Kerferd, 18-19)
[12] Kerferd, 27
[13] Kerferd, 18

and political authority and prestige to its possessors. *Sophia* was understood to be a kind of bringing to light of what is normally invisible to human senses.[14] This feature of *sophia*, which clearly influenced both Plato's and Aristotle's conceptions of it, lent epistemic authority to those who were wise. *Sophia* was also taken to be bestowed by gods and to deal with divine objects. Kurke argues, "precisely because of its divine sources and fields of application, we might simply say that *sophia* is always a superlative. As such, it is also always a domain of contest among competing claims, because the possession of *sophia* endows its possessor with enormous cultural authority."[15]

In contrast with the unquestioned authority that accompanied *sophia* in the archaic period, the late fifth-century saw the emergence of suspicion of *sophia* as well as alertness to the possibility of false or deceptive forms of *sophia*.[16] The political stakes of these issues must have been on at least Plato's mind—as Billings notes, this suspicion is well illustrated in the *Apology.* Socrates recites the criticism of his earlier accusers, who he claims influenced those presently condemning him: "there is some Socrates, a wise (*sophos*) man, a thinker about what is in the sky, who has sought out all that is below the earth, and who makes the weaker argument the stronger" (ἔστιν τις Σωκράτης σοφὸς ἀνήρ, τά τε μετέωρα φροντιστὴς καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆς πάντα ἀνεζητηκὼς καὶ τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιῶν; 18 b6-9).

Billings further argues that the cultural role of *sophia* and the kind of authority it should confer itself became a matter of dispute. Whereas the earliest conceptions of *sophia* were always tied to cultural activities which manifested it, such as poetry, religion, and politics—one practiced wisdom *as a poet*, *as a politician*—the Socratic conception of *sophia* allowed for the

[14] Kurke, 101; Broadie remarks in her commentary on *NE* 6.7 that *sophos* denotes virtuosity in an area, in S. Broadie and C. Rowe, *Nicomachean Ethics: Translation, Introduction, Commentary*, (Oxford, 2002)
[15] Kurke, 98
[16] Billings, 162-3

possibility of being, simply, a wise *thinker*.[17] As Billings puts it: "part of Socrates' rejection of the Athenian *sophoi* is a rejection of this idea of *sophia* as inherent in cultural activity of one sort or another: the *sophōtatos* turns out to be the one who thinks the best, not the one whose activity is the best. To debate *sophia* in the late fifth century is to consider the grounds of intellectual authority—whether it is based in divinely guided activity or in human thought, or, put another way, whether it relates to the unseen and unknowable or to the apparent and demonstrable."[18] Socratic *sophia* was domain unrestricted; it need not be exercised in a particular domain of work or in any *particular* social role. As we'll see, Aristotle, unlike Socrates, conceive of wisdom as playing a particular social role, and Plato held a view in between.

There were, then, two kinds of pressure that Plato and Aristotle faced in proposing their accounts of *sophia.* One was inherited; in defining wisdom, Plato and Aristotle were entering into a longstanding competition over what wisdom was and which people were wise. They had to explain how their definitions of wisdom captured common associations with the concept, for instance, by explaining how it related to the divine. They also had to indicate why what they called *sophia* merited the epistemic authority and political power that comes with the term. To assign *sophia* to a specific intellectual accomplishment was to rank it as supreme in some domain, so they needed to defend their notion of wisdom against competitors. It is no wonder, then, that Plato and Aristotle were so meticulous in distinguishing their conceptions of *sophia* from competing kinds of intellectual accomplishments, that Plato was so concerned with the

[17] The analogy with *technē* might be useful for illustrating the point. One has *technē* in relation to a domain of work (farming, carpentry, woodworking, etc.)—one doesn't simply have *technē*. Socrates is insisting that *sophia* needn't be domain restricted in this way.
[18] Billings 163

etymology of *philosophia*,[19] and that Aristotle goes so far as to *mis*-represent aspects of the history of the term.[20]

The other kind of pressure Plato and Aristotle faced came from the suspicion of *sophia* and distrust of *sophoi* in their immediate cultural environment. They both sought to preserve *sophia* as an authoritative, positively-valanced concept. They therefore had to justify holding wisdom in high esteem, address suspicions about it, and distinguish it from false, deceptive *sophiai*. In their discussions of wisdom, they also took, often explicitly, a stand on what authority and power—political, epistemic, moral—wisdom should confer. Such views about wisdom would have been noteworthy and context encourages us to attend to their defense of these positions.

Overview

This dissertation contains four chapters, each written to advance a self-contained thesis. These claims, taken together, support the overall aim of the dissertation. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the *Republic*, where Plato argues that wisdom is the virtue or excellence of the rational part of the soul and thereby required for the best human life. Wisdom is also the virtue of a political leader, and only those who are wise can serve as guardians of the ideal city. That wisdom plays

[19] *Rep.* V.474

[20] Kerferd remarks, "Aristotle quotes these lines in order to contrast being wise in general (overall) and being wise in some particular field or in any other limited respect, apparently supposing that the *Margites* passage established the overall wisdom of Margites by contrasting this wisdom with various kinds of particular wisdom which Margites did *not* possess. But the completion of the quotation by Clement (with the words after *sophon*) makes it clear that the passage refers to the overall stupidity of Margites (for which see frs. 3-4K) so that the phrase *out allōs ti sophon*, so far from referring exclusively to 'particular' wisdom in the form of other crafts, could as well be taken to include overall wisdom. At least, it should be clear that, whatever be the precise reference of *sophon* here, there is no contrast between two kinds of wisdom and there is no reason to restrict its meaning in the way that has been usual as a result of what Aristotle says. Aristotle's interpretation is in fact completely unhistorical and also linguistically absurd." (Kerferd, 24-25; cf. Kurke 117; Bollack)

this central role in Plato's ethics and political theory is uncontroversial—the problem is with understanding how wisdom, as it is standardly understood in Plato, can do this explanatory work.

Many have assumed that wisdom is identical with knowledge (*epistēmē*) of the Forms. Call this the **Identity Reading**. This view is so widely accepted that it is often invoked without explicit acknowledgement or defense. Its attractiveness stems from the way the discussion proceeds in the *Republic*—Plato calls wisdom an *epistēmē* in book IV and claims that those who possess it in the city are the guardians. He then argues that philosophers should serve as guardians, because they alone have *epistēmē* of the Forms, and he goes on to explain how such *epistēmē* can be attained. Moreover, *epistēmē* of the Forms is often seen as the highest intellectual accomplishment for Plato—perhaps even the only kind of *epistēmē*—and *sophia* is seen as the correct title for what is the highest intellectual accomplishment. Finally, philosophers, Plato holds, must be compelled to rule, and this is understood to be because they would rather exercise their wisdom—and wisdom is exercised in relation to the realm of intelligibles, whereas ruling deals with the perceptible realm.

This pressure to identify wisdom with knowledge of the Forms gives rise to an especially challenging version of a longstanding puzzle. The Forms are abstract, unchanging, and perfect entities that belong to the realm of intelligibles. It is difficult to see why knowledge of Forms should be the virtue of guardians, given that they guard the ever-changing, imperfect city, which belongs to the realm of perceptibles. The problem is worsened if one holds that knowledge cannot be of perceptible items. One cannot know, in the strict sense, which actions or states of affairs are just, because knowledge in this sense is exclusively of Forms. One wants to say that the virtue of a political ruler is the ability to rule well—to identify problems of injustice if and when they occur, to know what the just outcome would be, and to know how to make the city

more just. To say that the virtue of a political leader is knowledge of the Forms is a bit like saying the virtue or excellence of a surgeon is not the ability to perform surgeries well, but the ability to understand medical principles.

There are resources in the secondary literature for an alternative interpretation of wisdom. On the **Practice Only** account, which is suggested but not fully developed by Julia Annas, wisdom is the "ability to use one's practical intelligence in a way that rises above one's own concerns." Importantly for Annas's view, "there is no indication here that such practical reasoning might demand a great deal of very theoretical study."[21] Thus, wisdom does not require knowledge of the Forms. Chapter 1 focuses mainly on the Identity Reading, but it will also develop and refute the Practice Only account. While Practice Only gets us the desired philosophical picture—wisdom equips the guardian with the practical intelligence necessary for making good judgments about what benefits the city—it does not accommodate the claims Plato makes about the importance of Knowledge of the Forms.

The Identity Reading and the Practice Only Reading both get something right. The former gets right that knowledge of the Forms is an important part of wisdom, and the latter gets right that what one is wise *about* is the city or soul. But neither gets everything right: the Identity Reading misconstrues what wisdom is *about*, because it fails to see that wisdom is about the whole city and soul, rather than the Forms, and Practice Only misunderstands the *job* that wisdom accomplishes.[22] The job of wisdom is to apply certain kinds of standards when making judgments about the city and soul, and these standards are the Forms. Wisdom therefore does require knowledge of the Forms but is not identical to it.

[21] Annas 112-3

[22] I'm grateful to Sukaina Hirji for discussing this point with me.

If wisdom were identical to *epistēmē* of the Forms, then disputes about wisdom in *Republic* would, to a significant extent, duplicate the extensive research on *epistēmē*. Moreover, given that I accept the reading of *epistēmē* as being exclusively of Forms,[23] it would turn out that Plato and Aristotle do share extremely similar conceptions of *sophia* (as the traditional reading assumes). Part of the task of chapter 1 is to clear the ground by showing that *sophia* and *epistēmē* of Forms cannot be identical, before setting the stage for the positive project of Chapter 2.

The aim of chapter 2 is to defend this alternative account of wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to judge, using the Forms as a standard, how the city and soul would fare best. Like the two alternatives, my account takes wisdom to be a power or ability, which is *about* something and which *does* something. Wisdom, on my view, is about the whole city and soul, and its job is to judge by reference to the Forms. The lesson from Plato will be that the excellence of the rational part of the soul and of political leaders involves both abstract knowledge and practical experience. Wisdom will turn out to be highly context-specific in the following way: a guardian who is a wise ruler of one city might not be a wise ruler of another, and a person who is wise in one context may not be wise in another. Though unorthodox as a reading of Plato, the interpretation is textually preferable and philosophically attractive. Chapter 2 also presents tentative upshots for the structure of the *Republic.*

Chapters 3 and 4 turn to Aristotle's conceptions of wisdom. In the *NE,* Aristotle defines wisdom as understanding (*epistēmē*) and immediate insight (*nous*) about the most honorable

[23]For the traditional puzzle, see: G. Fine, "Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* V," *Archiv Fur Geschichte der Philosophie* 60 (1978), 121-39 and G. Fine, "Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* V-VII," in S. Everson ed. *Epistemology*, (Cambridge 1990), 85-115. For responses: F. Gonzalez, "Propositions or Objects? A Critique of Gail Fine on Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* V," *Phronesis* 51 (1996), 245-75, D. Sedley, "Philosophy, the Forms, and the Art of Ruling," in G.R.F. Ferrari ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic*, (Cambridge 2007), 256-283; W. Schwab, "Understanding *Epistēmē* in Plato's *Republic*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 51 (2016): 41-85. J. Moss, *Plato's Epistemology: Being and Seeming*, (Oxford, 2021)

things. The central contribution of chapter 3 is to insist that Aristotle presents a sophisticated—if compressed—argument for this conception of wisdom in *NE* VI.7. His argument relies on a broader epistemological commitment to a hierarchy of intellectual accomplishments (including intellectual virtues — both theoretical and practical). This hierarchy is organized according to two metrics: the exactness (*akribeia*) of the intellectual accomplishment and the excellence of the subject matter which it grasps. Wisdom is the name we assign to whichever intellectual accomplishment scores highest on this metric, and since *epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things scores highest, wisdom is defined as *epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things.

Chapter 4 turns to the *Metaphysics,* where Aristotle conceives of wisdom in two, apparently conflicting ways: the general understanding of all beings (*qua* being), and the specific understanding of divine beings. How these two kinds of understanding can be unified is a longstanding puzzle internal to the *Metaphysics.* For our purposes, it is important to decide whether both are characterizations of wisdom, and if not both, then which is wisdom in the strict sense. Moreover, we must determine whether the conception of wisdom that arises in the *Metaphysics* is identical to the one in the *NE,* and if so, how this can be the case. I'll argue that the two descriptions found in the *Metaphysics* are two aspects of the same state (*hexis*) of the soul. Roughly, wisdom is a single state that can be exercised in two ways: to contemplate (*theorein*) all beings (*qua* being) and to contemplate divine beings. In this respect, it is analogous with Aristotle's conception of justice and virtue: they are the same state but can be exercised in two different ways. Moreover, wisdom as described in the *Metaphysics* is identical to wisdom in the *NE.*

I close with comparative remarks. I want to insist that although Plato and Aristotle are, in significant respects, allies in this longstanding competition—they agree that wisdom is a virtue, that it confers some kind of authority, and even on many standards for ranking wisdom—they ultimately disagree on what wisdom is, what its purpose is, and the kind of authority and power it confers. By attributing to Plato the idea that wisdom's activity consists in contemplation of the Forms, scholars who endorse the traditional interpretation have overlooked a remarkable feature of Plato's account. Plato drew from the past, in conceiving of wisdom as ultimately directed toward the specific cultural and social world to which one belongs, but he does not entirely conform to it; wisdom also consists in contemplation about matters fully abstracted from the contingencies of a particular social reality. The traditional interpretation also understates Aristotle's contribution to the dispute. On Aristotle's conception, the activity of wisdom was as far removed from culture, history, the polis, and other aspects of the socio-temporally extended world as is possible for a human being.

A note on scope: the dissertation is restricted to the *Republic, NE,* and *Metaphysics* for the following reasons. Treating other Platonic texts where wisdom features prominently, such as the *Euthydemus* and *Hippias Major*, poses methodological challenges, given the different authorial voices and different starting assumptions in different Platonic dialogues.[24] The second is that a major aim of the dissertation is to argue that Aristotle develops an account of wisdom that is opposed to Plato's. It is widely understood that Aristotle has the *Republic* in mind in his *NE* VI discussion of wisdom and the intellectual virtues. Centering the comparative picture on these

[24] Cooper 66-67

texts therefore situates the comparative question where Aristotle implicitly raises it. It is in these texts that the comparative question most naturally arises.

Chapter 1: *Sophia* and *Epistēmē* in Plato's *Republic*

0. Introduction

Wisdom (*sophia*) does a great deal of explanatory work in the *Republic.* It is the highest intellectual accomplishment for human beings and it is required for the best human life. Wisdom is also the virtue that makes someone an excellent political leader and qualifies one to be a ruler. Guardianship of the city should therefore go to the wise, and features that have no bearing on wisdom must be excluded when deciding who should lead. In fact, Plato goes so far as to claim that the city as a whole is wise in virtue of the wisdom of the guardians who rule it (428b-c). By appeal to the city-soul analogy, Plato makes the same claims about the soul. It is fitting for the rational part of the soul—which corresponds to the guardian class—to rule, since it is wise (*sophos*) and has foresight (*promētheia*) over the whole soul (441e4-6), and the soul as a whole is wise in virtue of the wisdom of the rational part.

What, then, is wisdom? Surprisingly, given the importance of this virtue for Plato, there are few systematic treatments of the topic. The philosophical literature on the epistemology of the *Republic* has largely overlooked *sophia*—at least *de dicto*—in favor of studying *epistēmē*.[25] One explanation for this gap is that many take *sophia* and *epistēmē* of the Forms to be identical—they are two words for the same capacity. If this interpretation, which I call the Identity Reading, is correct, then the dispute over what constitutes *epistēmē* is also a dispute about what *sophia* is. The central aim of this chapter is to show that the Identity Reading cannot be correct. Since *sophia* and *epistēmē* cannot be identical, we cannot take the literature

[25] There are two notions of *epistēmē* in play in the *Republic.* One is a looser notion, on which farming (*geōrgikē*) is an *epistēmē.* The other is stricter and is set over intelligibles. Farming is not an *epistēmē* in the stricter sense, since the expertise of farming does not have intelligibles as its object. Unless otherwise specified, "*epistēmē*" refers to the strict sense.

accounting for *epistēmē* to also account for *sophia*. The second is to make progress on an alternative account of *sophia*.

Though the Identity Reading enjoys widespread endorsement, it is often presupposed, rather than argued for. I consider reasons to endorse the Identity Reading in section I. In section II, I give a philosophical argument against the Identity Reading. In section III, I offer textual evidence from *Rep.* IV-VII against the view. The upshot of these two sections is that *sophia* and *epistēmē* cannot be identical; they are not just two words for the same capacity. In section IV, I give a proposal for what *sophia* is. I consider objections in section V before spelling out upshots in section VI.

I. The Identity Reading

The attractiveness of the Identity Reading, that wisdom and *epistēmē* of the forms are identical, is easy to see. Plato identifies wisdom in Book IV, where he repeatedly calls it a kind of *epistēmē* and locates it in the class of guardian-rulers (*Rep.* IV 428c11-d10; 428e7-429a3). He then devotes a great deal of space to developing his view of *epistēmē*, as if the kind of knowledge that constitutes wisdom is knowledge of the Forms. For instance, Plato argues that philosophers are best equipped to serve as guardians of the city, because they alone have knowledge of the Forms. The *Republic's* educational program, designed to train guardians to rule in the ideal city, is aimed at equipping guardians with knowledge of the Forms, especially the Form of the Good. Yet another reason is that knowledge of the Forms is taken to be the highest intellectual accomplishment, and it seems that this accomplishment best deserves the title of *the* virtue of the rational part of the soul.

So widely accepted is the Identity Reading that scholars often invoke it without defense.[26]

From Reeve's *Philosopher-Kings*:

> The first virtue to be identified is wisdom. The Kallipolis is wise because it is "well counseled" (428b3-4). And conventional ethical thought agrees, first, that good counsel is a kind of knowledge, "for it is because of knowledge, not ignorance, that people counsel well" (428b6-8), and, second, that the particular kind of knowledge in question is knowledge not of carpentry or of bronze manufacture, but of "how the polis as a whole would be best both in relation to itself and in relation other poles" (428d1-3). **This knowledge—which we know to consist in knowledge of the good itself** (2.11-12)—is located in the class of rulers, which is the smallest class (428d5-7)…[27]

From Irwin's *Plato's Ethics*:

> Bravery is described as preservation of right belief under the control of the wisdom in the rational part; temperance is concord between the parts under the control of the wisdom in the rational part. **Each of these accounts mentions the rational part and its wisdom, which is its knowledge of the good**.[28]

From Cooper's *Pursuits of Wisdom*:

> In fact, though Socrates does not make a point of saying this there, in book IV, it is actual, unqualified wisdom itself, the full human virtue, consisting in a final and complete knowledge of the whole system of the Forms, and, especially, knowledge of that system as having as its apex the Form of the Good.[29]
> Plato can speak of just three of the virtues in the *Republic*'s system (justice, courage, moderation) as being due to habituation and training, since the "wisdom" he counts as the fourth really is, despite its use in the practical activities of directing the life of the city, a work of pure understanding, acquired through philosophical study of mathematics and "dialectical" discussion of ethical questions.[30]

From Wolfsdorf's "'*Sophia*' and '*Epistēmē*' in the Archaic and Classical Periods:"

> While '*epistēmē*' is Plato's preferred knowledge term, he uses '*sophia'* and '*epistēmē*' (among other terms such as '*phronēsis*') interchangeably. [31]

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[26]Julia Annas points this out as well and sets the foundation for an alternative.
[27]C.D.C. Reeve, *Philosopher Kings: The Argument of Plato's* Republic, (Hackett 2006), 238. Reeve's reference to chapters 2.11-12 of the book makes clear that he means for the knowledge to be of intelligibles.
[28]T. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, (Oxford, 1995) 263; cf. 230, 236-7
[29]Cooper 356
[30]Cooper 424 n.44
[31]Wolfsdorf 26-7. Our focus here is on *sophia* and *epistēmē*, but I should note that, although it's true that Plato sometimes uses *phronēsis* where we would expect the term, *sophia* (e.g. σωφροσύνης καὶ ἀνδρείας

From Kerferd's "Images of Man in Ancient and Medieval Thought:"

> Certain features of this classification we need not doubt are due to Aristotle himself, especially No. 5 [*sophia* as the study of things divine, above the world and unchangeable, the highest form of wisdom], although even in this case there are surely affinities with Plato's view of the unchanging world of the Forms which alone can be the object of knowledge and so of *sophia* or wisdom.[32]

The account of wisdom that they attribute to Plato is one entirely constituted by knowledge of the Forms, especially the Form of the Good. When philosophers rule, they can use their wisdom, conceived of as knowledge of the Forms, to help guide the city, but the guidance of the city is not the work of wisdom. The work of wisdom is to contemplate Forms—it deals with the realm of intelligibles, not perceptibles.

II. Philosophical arguments against the identity of *sophia* and *epistēmē*

Before investigating whether *sophia* and *epistēmē* are identical, we must say what we mean by *epistēmē.*[33] This issue is notoriously fraught.[34] Some argue that *epistēmē* is set over – or takes as its objects – the Forms *exclusively.*[35] Others argue that *epistēmē* has a special, but *non-exclusive* relationship to the Forms. There are further disagreements among those who reject the exclusivity reading as to how one should characterize the special relationship between a power and its object. Kamtekar argues that a power can, *without assistance*, apprehend its objects; Vogt

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καὶ φρονήσεως in *Rep.* IV 433b7-c2), they are not always interchangeable. In 433dc4-d9, Plato glosses *sophia* as practical-wisdom (*phronesis*) and also guardianship present among the rulers (ἡ ἐν τοῖς ἄρχουσι φρόνησίς τε καὶ φυλακὴ ἐνοῦσα). The *te kai* indicates that *phronēsis* and *phulakē* are two irreducible components of *sophia.*

[32] Kerferd 19-20

[33] Much of the related literature on the *Republic* has focused on *epistēmē* and Plato's distinction between *epistēmē* and *doxa*, often in response to the puzzle Fine raises (cited above). This chapter takes for granted that *epistēmē* is of objects, not propositions (Gonzalez).

[34] Many thanks to Jessica Moss for guiding me through these arguments and the literature, and for sharing with me her then unpublished manuscript for "Being and Seeming."

[35] See Moss ["Being and Seeming"], 18-49 for a comprehensive discussion.

argues that a power can, *without any deficiency*, grasp its objects, and Harte argues that a power *typically* grasps its objects. Applied to *epistēmē,* the idea is that *epistēmē* can grasp objects other than the Forms *with the aid of another power*,[36] *in a deficient way*,[37] or *atypically*.[38] There are, then, two general camps: on the one camp, *epistēmē* is exclusively exercised over the Forms; on the other camp, *epistēmē* bears a special relationship to the Forms, but is not exclusively exercised over them.[39] Following Moss, I'll call the first camp the Traditional Reading, and the second the Overlap Reading.[40] The claim I'm defending in this chapter, that *sophia* and *epistēmē* are not identical, will hold true regardless of which interpretation one supports, and the argument for non-identity will be similar, as we'll see. I prefer the Traditional Reading, at least with respect to *epistēmē*,[41] and so I focus on showing that *sophia* and the traditional reading of *epistēmē* are non-identical.

Since the Traditional and Overlap views are about what *epistēmē* is, rather than how it relates to *sophia,* neither camp is explicitly committed to the Identity Reading. However, whether the Identity Reading is correct does bear on the dispute. A well-known objection to the

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[36] R. Kamtekar, "The Powers of Plato's Tripartite Psychology," *Proceedings of the Boston Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 24 (2009), 127-150. Kamtekar notes, "What it is for a power to set over an object, I propose, is that the power by itself is capable of coming into intentional (cognitive or conative) contact with the object" (142)

[37] K. Vogt, "Belief and Investigation in the *Republic*" in Belief *and Truth: A Skeptic Reading of Plato* (Oxford, 2012), 52-70

[38] V. Harte, "Knowing and Believing in *Republic* V," in V. Harte and R. Woolf eds., *Rereading Ancient Philosophy: Old Chestnuts and Sacred Cows* (Cambridge, 2017): 153, 154 fn. 20.

[39] Other readings: N.D. Smith, "Plato on Knowledge as a Power," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38: 146-168 (2000); "Plato on the Power of Ignorance," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, (2019); J. Szaif, "*Doxa* and *Epistēmē* as Modes of Acquaintance in *Republic* V," *Etudes Platoniciennes* 4:253-72 (2007); 253-272. Prominently, Fine in 1978, 1990 argues that *epistēmē* and *doxa* do not grasp objects (like intelligibles or perceptibles), but propositions. *Epistēmē* grasps true propositions; *doxa* grasps true and false propositions. The claim that *sophia* and *epistēmē* are non-identical would hold true whether one took *epistēmē* to be set over the Forms or over true propositions. One would just need to change the object-focused language of this paper to be propositional. The argument will be that *epistēmē* ranges over what is true, but *sophia* ranges over propositions which can be false.

[40] This way of dividing up available interpretations is introduced in Moss [Being and Seeming], 20ff.

[41] This claim is intended to be agnostic as to whether all *dunameis* exclusively deal with their objects

view that *epistēmē* is exclusively of the Forms is that *epistēmē* is what makes the guardians excellent at ruling, but the guardians rule over the city, which is in the perceptible realm. It's difficult to see how this can be so if *epistēmē* cannot even range over perceptibles. Thus, the argument goes, if there is a textually available reading on which *epistēmē does* range over perceptibles, then we should adopt it.[42]

We see this argument doing at work in, for instance, Harte's proposal. The bulk of Harte's paper is aimed at showing that powers *can* range over objects for which they are not tasked. As Harte acknowledges, that the domain of knowledge *need* not, on the basis of its being a power, be restricted to intelligibles is insufficient to show it *is* not in fact restricted to intelligibles. Harte's motivation for interpreting knowledge as being set over perceptibles is that if knowledge is ranged over intelligibles, then it will be difficult to see how it can help the philosopher govern.[43] I'll argue that a correct understanding of *sophia* resolves the problem, so that Harte's interpretation of *epistēmē* as being set over perceptibles will not be required to resolve the puzzle.

II.1. The philosophical problem with the identity of *sophia* and *epistēmē*

On either the Traditional or Overlap interpretation of *epistēmē,* it is philosophically unappealing to hold that *sophia* and *epistēmē* are just two words for the same power. Since guardians rule over the perceptible world, wisdom, the capacity which makes someone an excellent guardian and justifies putting guardians in charge, should have the grasp of perceptibles

[42] Sedley and Schwab discuss solutions to the puzzle in independent papers cited above.
[43] Consider also *Rep.* 520c1-5 cited in Harte. "There is at least one contextual reason why Plato *ought* to allow for knowledge in relation to the objects proper to belief, for it is hard to see the benefit of philosopher rulers having knowledge, if it does not enable them to know, for example, of some particular action that it is just." (Harte 156)

as a central component. The identification of *sophia* and *epistēmē*, however, makes this difficult.[44] On the Traditional Reading, *epistēmē* cannot be of perceptibles, and on the Overlap Reading, perceptibles are atypical, deficient, or unnatural objects of *epistēmē*.

Here is an analogy to show why an attractive account of wisdom must make prominent mention of perceptibles. Consider an aspiring tax attorney who has learned all of the theory required for taxes—the general rules about taxes and the mathematics required for calculating taxes. Before she has looked at an actual tax form and has had practice working with people on their taxes, she cannot be considered an excellent (or even capable) tax-attorney. The intuition is that, in addition to the generalizations about taxes, she needs to know facts about particulars, such as where to find information about income if someone is in one country rather than another, how to fill out the relevant forms, what questions to ask her clients to acquire the right information, and what to do with other contingencies in light of her knowledge of generalizations about taxes. This example shows, first, that knowledge of generalizations about taxation is not sufficient for being an excellent tax attorney. Second, the requisite knowledge of particulars does not come for free with the knowledge of generalizations. Intuitively, some other kind of knowledge—one that deals with spatiotemporally extended objects—is acquired when the aspiring tax-attorney works through her first real tax form. Finally, the knowledge of tax-generalizations isn't even the main explanatory feature that makes someone an excellent tax attorney. When explaining what makes someone an excellent tax attorney, one does not cite her knowledge of general principles, but her ability in each case to get the right result regarding the particulars—her ability to ask all and only the important questions about particulars to do with taxes and to calculate taxes accurately.

[44] A version of this puzzle is standardly raised against the view that *epistēmē* is of the Forms. The puzzle I am raising here is against the identity of *epistēmē* and *sophia*.

These points might be even clearer in the medical case. Someone who has just finished the component of medical school that involves knowing various medical principles, such as what health is for a human, is not yet an excellent doctor. To become an excellent doctor, she must be trained to identify physical symptoms, understand which physical symptoms are important for making a diagnosis, ask patients the right questions (e.g. when they began experiencing symptoms, ways they might have been exposed), make the right diagnoses, and so on. This ability to make good judgments about particulars is necessary for being an excellent doctor, but it does not come for free with the grasp of medical principles—this is why students in medical school have lab, rotation, and residency requirements. Further, in explaining what it is that makes someone an excellent doctor, one does not appeal (solely, if at all) to the doctor's knowledge of medical principles, but to her ability to make the right prescriptions and diagnoses, partly on the basis of these principles, for the many different patients she might encounter.

The same holds for the guardian or leader of a political constitution. Knowledge of what justice is, what goodness is, what beauty is, and so on is not sufficient for being an excellent guardian. To be an excellent guardian, one must also make the right judgments about states of affairs in the city—whether the population is a sustainable size, whether wealth is fairly distributed, whether to stand by allies, when to go to war, and the like. Moreover, this knowledge of particulars does not come for free with knowledge of the Forms.[45] Just as the tax attorney learns something when she first works through a tax form, and the surgeon when she first operates on a human being, the guardian learns something when she becomes acquainted with the city and practices making decisions on the basis of her knowledge of general principles.

[45] I'll argue further for this later, but for now, note that there is a distinction between, on the one hand, whether the one knowledge comes for free with the other, and on the other, whether one can *acquire* (given contingent facts about humans or facts about the organization of social institutions) one knowledge without acquiring the other.

Finally, just as what makes someone an excellent doctor is not centrally or solely her knowledge of medical principles, but that she can make good judgments about particular patients and ailments, what makes someone an excellent guardian is not centrally or solely her knowledge of the Forms, but her ability to make good judgments about the affairs of the city.

Wisdom, as the capacity that makes someone an excellent guardian and justifies putting someone in charge of the city, should have perceptibles as a prominent and central component. The point of wisdom is to get right affairs in the spatiotemporally extended realm, so the proper objects of wisdom should be perceptibles. This is incompatible with the view that wisdom and knowledge of the Forms are identical. On the Traditional Reading, *epistēmē* cannot make reference to perceptibles at all. On the Overlap Reading reading, *epistēmē* can make reference to perceptibles, but only defectively, atypically, or with the aid of another power. But the doctor's ability to make good judgments about particulars is a typical, non-defective exercise of the capacity that makes her an excellent doctor. Similarly, the guardian's ability to make good judgments about perceptibles is a central, typical, and non-defective exercise of the capacity that makes her an excellent guardian. Wisdom, then, should be set over (typically, centrally, or without the aid of another power) perceptibles, and since *epistēmē* is not (in the respective ways) set over perceptibles, wisdom and *epistēmē* cannot be identical. Given the philosophical unattractiveness of the Identity Reading, if an alternative is available, we should adopt it.

III. The textual evidence against the identity of *sophia* and *epistēmē*

There is also strong, independent textual evidence against the identity of wisdom and *epistēmē*. In what follows, I give an in-depth analysis of Plato's most explicit discussion of *sophia* in the *Republic.* The central aim of the explication is to make the following two

arguments. First, *Rep.* IV makes clear that wisdom is either identical to or a kind of judiciousness (*euboulia*).[46] Judiciousness centrally has perceptibles as its object. Thus, wisdom centrally has perceptibles as its object. Since *epistēmē* cannot have this feature, wisdom and *epistēmē* must not be identical. Second, Plato identifies wisdom as guardianship-knowledge (*phulakikē epistēmē*). Guardianship-knowledge has perceptibles—in particular, the city—as its object. For this reason as well, we can conclude that wisdom has perceptibles as its object. Wisdom therefore has a central and ineliminable perceptible component. Again, since *epistēmē* cannot have this feature, they cannot be identical. As I'll show, besides ruling out the identity of *sophia* and *epistēmē,* the discussion of judiciousness in *Rep.* IV will give us a blueprint for understanding how *epistēmē* and *sophia* relate. As we'll see, the point of wisdom is to achieve beneficial results in the realm of perceptibles.

Plato introduces *sophia* as a virtue in the context of the search for justice in a city and a soul. After establishing the ideal city, Socrates remarks that if the city has been founded correctly, then it will be wise, courageous, moderate, and just. He notes that if we had any four things and wanted to find one of them, we could do so in two ways. The first would be to find the object of our search directly. The second would be by recognizing the other three things. In so doing, we would find what we are looking for because it would be what remains. Once he establishes this principle, he applies it to the virtues—since there are four virtues, we can locate justice by first locating the other three virtues (wisdom, courage, and moderation). [47]

[46] *Euboulia* here translated as "judiciousness" to distinguish it from the Aristotelian conception of deliberation. *Euboulia* for Aristotle is about the means, not the ends, but there isn't such a restriction for Plato's conception.

[47] In applying this method of discovery to justice, Socrates implicitly endorses the view that the four virtues are exhaustive of the states that make the city good when they come to be in it. If they were not exhaustive, then the method would not succeed in identifying justice. The result for our purposes is that if anyone is tempted to take *phronēsis*, *euboulia*, or *epistēmē* to be virtues that make the city good, then they will have to subsume them under one of the four virtues Plato lists.

Socrates opts for the second route: not identifying justice directly, but first identifying wisdom, courage, and moderation, so that what remains is justice. He starts with wisdom.

[T1] 428a11-b5

"Well, the first thing that seems to me to be visible in it (sc. the city) is its wisdom (ἡ σοφία), and something appears about it appears unusual."
"What?" He said.
"The city which we have detailed seems to me to be truly wise (σοφὴ τῷ ὄντι), for (γάρ) it is judicious (εὔβουλος), is it not?"
"Yes."

Socrates begins his remarks on wisdom by noting that there is something odd about it (428a11-b1). As will be revealed, the oddity of wisdom is that the city as a whole is wise by virtue of the smallest part in it (428e7-429a1).[48] Socrates notes that the city just detailed is *truly* wise (*sophē tō onti*), because it is judicious (*euboulos*) (428b3-4). Already in these preliminary remarks, Socrates makes two important points about *sophia.* First, Socrates indicates with the modifier '*tōi onti*', 'truly' or 'really', that he is not speaking of *sophia* in a loose or ordinary sense (as in 337a, 338b, 339e5), but that he is after a stricter notion of wisdom.[49] The city is called *truly* wise, as opposed to wise in some ordinary sense, when it has the virtue, wisdom, in it.

[48] An alternative reading would be that the oddity of wisdom is that the city as a whole is wise because of a part of it being wise. Against this reading is the consideration that the same would apply to courage—the city as a whole is courageous because a part of the city, the auxiliary class, is courageous. It would be at least a little strange, then, that Plato does not restate this oddity in the discussion of courage. One might account for this slight strangeness by pointing out that Plato is mentioning the oddity here alone because it is the first time this oddity appears. On the option that I prefer, what Plato says is odd about wisdom is *distinctively* odd about wisdom. It is not the case for any other virtue in the city—courage, moderation, or justice—that the city as a whole has that virtue because of the smallest part of it having that virtue. It's true that the city as a whole is courageous because of a part of it, the auxiliary class, being courageous, but the auxiliary class is not the smallest part of the city.
[49] Wolfsdorf argues that Plato uses *sophia* interchangeably with *epistēmē* and *phronēsis* (Wolfsdorf 24ff.). Even if Plato sometimes uses these terms loosely (e.g. *sophos* 426c6), he is here taking a strict understanding of the term. Wolfsdorf doesn't discuss this possibility.

Second, Socrates highlights the relationship between true wisdom and judiciousness. We know that the ideal city is wise in the sense we seek to understand, for (*gar*) the city is judicious. Getting clear about the connection between *sophia* and *euboulia* will be important for understanding what *sophia* is in the *Republic*. The exact work done by this particular *gar* clause, however, is at this stage indeterminate. Minimally, this clause indicates that the city's being judicious somehow explains its being wise in the strict sense.

Socrates goes on to make clear that the search for wisdom will be guided by our understanding of judiciousness (*euboulia*), underscoring the importance of *euboulia* in our grasp of *sophia*:

[T2] 428b6-c10

"But this is clear, isn't it, that this very thing, judiciousness (ἡ εὐβουλία), is some knowledge (τίς ἐπιστήμη), for it's surely not by means of ignorance (ἀμαθίᾳ), but by means of knowledge (ἐπιστήμῃ), that people judge well (εὖ βουλεύονται)."
"Clearly."
"But there are many and various kinds of knowledge in the city."
"Of course."
"Then is it because of (διὰ) the knowledge of the carpenters that the city should be called wise and judicious (σοφὴ καὶ εὔβουλος[50])?"
"Not at all," he said, "but it's called skilled in carpentry because of this."
"Then a city which judges how these things would be best should not be called wise because of the knowledge over (ὑπὲρ) the wooden things."
"No."
"How about the knowledge over objects made from bronze or other things of this sort?"
"Not at all," he said.
"Nor knowledge over the production of fruit from the earth, but this is called farming.
"That seems right to me"

Socrates begins by arguing that, since people judge well by means of knowledge, judiciousness is some knowledge. Since the conclusion appears not to follow directly from the

[50] σοφὴ καὶ εὔβουλος: the *kai* should be read epexegetically. This is the sense of *sophē* from 428a, where it overlaps with *euboulia.*

premise,[51] we might be surprised that Socrates calls the argument clear and that Glaucon readily agrees. To spell out the argument, we must understand how judging well, judiciousness, and knowledge relate so that this inference holds. The datives, ἀμαθίᾳ (by means of ignorance) and ἐπιστήμῃ (by means of knowledge) as well as the connection between εὐβουλία (judiciousness) and the verbal phrase εὖ βουλεύονται (judging well) are helpful clues as to what this relationship could be. In *Rep.* I, Plato uses the same grammatical constructions to describe the relationship between functions and virtues, which is perhaps why Glaucon readily understands the inference:[52]

> "Whatever their virtue (the virtue of eyes) is—for I am not now asking this, but rather asking whether they do their work well (ἔργον εὖ ἐργάσεται) by means of their own virtue (τῇ οἰκείᾳ μὲν ἀρετῇ), and badly by means of their own vice?
> "What you say is true," he said
> "Then ears too, if they are deprived of their virtue, will do their work badly?"
> "Right."
> "And we make the same argument about everything else?"
> "Seems right to me"
> "So then, after these matters, consider this. Is there some work of the soul which you could not do by means of another thing among the things which are, for example, this: caring, ruling, judging (βουλεύεσθαι), and everything of this sort. Is there any other thing at all than the soul to which we could justly assign these things and could say that it is its own?
> No other thing at all. (353c5-d8)

In this passage, Plato claims that the eyes do their work well (ἔργον εὖ ἐργάσεται) by means of their own virtue (τῇ οἰκείᾳ μὲν ἀρετῇ), and eyes do their work badly by means of their vice. This parallels Plato's claim in Text 2, that people judge well (εὖ βουλεύονται) by means of knowledge (ἐπιστήμῃ) and not by means of ignorance (ἀμαθίᾳ). This suggests that, in T2,

[51] For example, if people study well by means of their fear of failure, it doesn't follow that studiousness is some fear of failure. There must be some special relationship between judging well, judiciousness, and knowledge.
[52] Cf. Harte in ["Knowing and Believing"]

judging well is a work or function (*ergon*).[53] The virtue is what Plato puts in the dative case—the virtue that makes someone judge well is some knowledge (*tis epistēmē*). The vice, that by which one judges badly, is ignorance.

The first argument in this passage, then, is:

1. The virtue by means of which people judge well is some kind of knowledge[54]
2. Judiciousness is (identity) the virtue by means of which people judge well (supplied, with help from *Rep.* I, 428b6-7; cf. 428c11-d3)

C. Judiciousness is some knowledge (1-2)

Notice that if judiciousness is the virtue by means of which people judge well, then many people—including carpenters, who judge well about wooden things, farmers, who judge well about plants, and the like—can be said to be judicious. Though a full interpretation of *euboulia* is beyond the scope of this paper, if I am right that *sophia* requires (without being exhausted by) *epistēmē* of the forms and if *euboulia* has no such requirement, then it will turn out *sophia* and *euboulia* are non-identical. The view that *sophia* is a kind of *euboulia* would still be available. I will later argue that sophia must be either identical to or a kind of *euboulia* and it is worth flagging that the discussion we have here favors the latter option.

After establishing judiciousness as a kind of knowledge, Socrates remarks that there are many sorts of knowledge (*epistēmai*) in the city, and that we are searching for the one because of which the city should be called *wise and judicious* (*sophē kai euboulos*). The *kai* should be read epexegetically and restrictively, so that we are looking for some knowledge that will make the city wise in the sense of also being judicious:[55] recall that in T1, Plato claimed that we are

[53] Notice that Plato himself calls judging (*bouleuesthai*) an *ergon* of the soul at the end of the *Rep.* I passage I've included.

[54] Knowledge is here used in a broad and general sense, rather than as knowledge of the forms—Plato says that farmers have knowledge.

[55] Just as in "animal and rational", where 'rational' can restrict animal, i.e. rational animal. Similarly, here, *euboulos* restricts *sophos* to mean something like, "having the kind of wisdom that is judicious"

looking for true wisdom, as opposed to ordinary wisdom, and that it is the city's judiciousness that explains its being truly wise. We expect that Plato will go on to explain the distinction between *true* wisdom and ordinary wisdom and to show that judiciousness distinguishes the former from the latter. An epexegetic reading of the *kai*, but not a conjunctive reading, will help us make progress on these issues. In claiming that we are looking for the knowledge that makes the city wise *in the sense of* judicious, Plato suggests that what distinguishes true wisdom from the ordinary notion is judiciousness, and that judiciousness explains the city's being truly wise, because true wisdom—as opposed to wisdom in an ordinary sense—is restricted by judiciousness. That we are looking for the knowledge that makes the city wise in the sense of judicious is some (though by no means decisive) evidence in favor of the view that true wisdom will either be identical to or a kind of judiciousness.

In response to Socrates's question, "is it because of the knowledge of the carpenters that the city should be called wise and judicious?" (428b12-13), Glaucon answers in the negative; the knowledge of the carpenters does not make the city as a whole wise, but it does make the city skilled-in-carpentry (*tektonikē*). Socrates's next move is an important reframing of Glaucon's answer: "then a city which judges how these things would be best should not be called wise because of the knowledge over the wooden things" (428c2-3). Glaucon agrees with the reframing and they proceed to rule out knowledge over bronze objects and knowledge over the production of fruit as the knowledge because of which the city is called wise and judicious.

By reframing Glaucon's answer, Socrates shifts the emphasis away from those who possess the knowledge, the carpenters, to introduce the objects over which the knowledge is set, knowledge over the wooden things. This is important for understanding the main philosophical move of this section (428c2-10). The idea so far is that the city we have constructed is wise,

because it is judicious. Judiciousness is the virtue by means of which people judge well, so wisdom is at least closely connected with the power to judge well—and the epexegetic *kai* above suggests that wisdom will also be some kind of power to judge well. Judiciousness, Plato has argued, is some sort of knowledge (*tis epistēmē*), so we must turn to the different sorts of knowledge in the city to see which of these might make the city as a whole wise. We turn first to the class of carpenters, and we see that they have some knowledge—leaving open the possibility that they are judicious in some sense—but, as Plato underscores in his reframing of Glaucon's answer, their knowledge is restricted to the domain of wooden things. Similarly, the bronze-workers have some knowledge, but the knowledge of bronze-working is restricted to the domain of bronze. The intuition driving what is to come is that each of these workers have some kind of knowledge, but *because the domain of each kind of knowledge is so narrow in scope*, these kinds of knowledge cannot make the city as a whole wise. The wisdom of the city, then, will not be located in the class of carpenters, bronze-workers, or farmers, and although the city can be called skilled-in-carpentry because of the knowledge of carpenters, it cannot be called truly wise because of it.

[T3] 428c11-d10; 428e7-429a3

So, is there some knowledge in the (city) just now founded by us, in some of its citizens, which does not judge some one thing among the things in the city, but over (ὑπὲρ) it as a whole, in what way it would associate best both with itself and with other cities?
There is.
What is it? And what is it in?
It is guardianship (knowledge) (ἡ φυλακική) and it is in those rulers which we now called complete guardians.
Then because of this knowledge (διὰ ταύτην οὖν τὴν ἐπιστήμην), what will you call the city?
Judicious, he said, and truly wise. (εὔβουλον, ἔφη, καὶ[56] τῷ ὄντι σοφήν.)

[56] Read *kai* as epexegetic (restrictive). *Sophēn* restricts *euboulon* to refer to judicious in the sense of also being wise. See FN 55.

[…]
Then it is in the smallest class and part of itself, and the knowledge in it (τῇ ἐν τούτῳ ἐπιστήμῃ)—because of the guarding and ruling (class) (τῷ προεστῶτι καὶ ἄρχοντι)—that the city founded in accordance with nature would be wise (σοφὴ) as a whole. And this, it seems, is by nature the smallest class, for which it is fitting to have a share of this knowledge, which alone among other kinds of knowledge must be called wisdom (σοφίαν).

Socrates here relies on the intuition established in 428b6-c10 that what disqualifies farming, wood-working, and bronze-making knowledge as wisdom is that they judge over parts of the city, rather than the whole of it. He establishes that it is not *epistēmē* which judges over how wooden things or bronze things would be best that makes the city judicious and truly wise, but *epistēmē* that judges over how the city as a whole would be best—how it would associate best with itself and with other cities.[57] Crucially, Plato identifies this knowledge we are searching for as guardianship-knowledge (*phulakikē*). Among all of the other knowledges (*epistēmai)* in the city, guardianship-knowledge *(phulakikē)* alone is to be called wisdom. What distinguishes guardianship *epistēmē* from, for instance, carpentry *epistēmē* is its domain. Guardianship-knowledge judges over the city as a whole, not just a part of it.[58]

We are now in a position to turn to the arguments for thinking that wisdom has perceptibles among its objects. Consider first the relationship between *sophia* and *euboulia.* Socrates's argument relies on the inference from *euboulia* being *tis epistēmē* [Text I] to *sophia* being *tis epistēmē* [Text 3]. For this inference to hold, we need to supply a premise. The two most plausible ones are that *sophia* and *euboulia* are identical and that *sophia* is a kind of *euboulia.* If *sophia* and *euboulia* are identical, then the inference would be:

1. *Euboulia* is an *epistēmē*

[57] Emphasize "judicious and truly wise"
[58] On this reading, I am taking *phulakikē* to be an adjective modifying *epistēmē*. There's an alternative, which is to take *he phulakikē* to be a substantive adjective, so that Socrates may well have said *phulakē.* The former is preferable, first, because our search is for the *epistēmē* that counts as *sophia*, and Plato calls *he phulakikē* an *epistēmē* immediate afterward, and second, because Socrates uses adjectival form, *phulakikē* (rather than, say, *phulakē*).

2. *Sophia* is identical to *euboulia* (supplied)
3. *Sophia* is an *epistēmē.*[59]

One upshot of this view is that farmers, carpenters, and the like cannot be said to have *euboulia*, because Plato is clear that they cannot be said to have *sophia.* One might qualify this point by saying that farmers are judicious *in some sense,* but not in the strict sense, since judiciousness in the strict sense *just is* true wisdom. The challenge for this view will be to show that Plato has something like a strict and loose sense of *euboulia* in play here.

The second option is that *sophia* is a kind of *euboulia*. On this option, farmers and carpenters can be judicious, but not in the sense that makes them truly wise. Only guardians have the kind of judiciousness that qualifies as true wisdom. If *sophia* is a kind of *euboulia,* then the inference would be:

Sophia = *euboulia* + some differentia
1. *Euboulia* is an *epistēmē*
2. *Sophia* is a kind of *euboulia* (supplied)
3. *Sophia* is an *epistēmē.*

Here's an example: Human = animal + rational being
p1. Animal is a living thing
p2. Human is a kind of animal (supplied)
c. Human is a living thing

On this second formation, we will have to say what it is that distinguishes true *sophia* from the other kinds of *euboulia*, such as carpentry, farming, bronze-working, and the like. So far, we know that it is distinguished by its broad domain. Unlike carpentry, which is about what is good

[59] This is not a statement of the Identity Reading, which holds that *sophia* is identical to *epistēmē* of the Forms. *Epistēmē* here is used generally to include farming, carpentry, and the like, and since those *technai* do not grasp forms, they cannot be kinds of *epistēmē* in the strict sense (i.e. of Forms). It's available, of course, to read *epistēmē* of Forms as a kind of *epistēmē* in this general sense.

for a part of the city, true wisdom is about what is good for the city as a whole. As we'll see, what gives *sophia* this scope in its domain is its grasp of intelligibles.

I've given some reason to disfavor the view that *sophia* and *euboulia* are identical, but either option will do for now. That wisdom is identical to or a kind of judiciousness, however, is not yet enough to show that wisdom is of perceptibles. To get there, we need the further premise that judiciousness is at least partly of perceptibles. Plato does not say outright that judiciousness is of perceptibles, but we might adopt this view on the basis of three arguments.

First, Socrates uses judiciousness as a non-technical, ordinary notion to guide our search for true wisdom. Judiciousness, *euboulia*, is closely connected with the noun *boulē* (council), which is a heavily practical term. The ordinary sense of judiciousness is certainly not of the forms, and there is no indication in Plato or elsewhere that judiciousness ordinarily means something like grasp of the Forms exclusively or centrally. Rather, on the ordinary understanding of judiciousness, one could felicitously call judicious the carpenter who judges well about wooden things and I've given some reason in my analysis of T2 and *Rep.* I to think that this is what Plato has in mind.

Second, a view on which judiciousness ranges exclusively over intelligibles would be extremely odd. To see this, suppose judiciousness were set over intelligibles. Judiciousness, conceived of as being set over intelligibles, would be what makes someone judge well about the Forms exclusively or centrally. These would be judgments such as, "the Form of the Good is Good," "the Form of the Just is Just," "the Form of the Just is Good," "there are [some number of] forms that are Good" and so on. It would be puzzling as to why these kinds of judgments would make the guardian judge well about the internal and external affairs of the city, or why this the ability to make these judgments would make the city as a whole judicious and truly wise.

The final point is more constructive—it is a proposal for understanding the relationship between wisdom and judiciousness, and for seeing how knowledge of the forms fits into the picture. As I noted, judiciousness is meant to be an intuitive notion useful for guiding our understanding of true wisdom. Consider Plato's example of the farmer. What makes a farmer judicious (in an ordinary sense) is that she has the capacity to make good judgments about how her crops will thrive. This will require knowing some generalizations about farming—e.g. that plants need water and sunlight, basil need more water than succulents—and bringing this knowledge to bear on decisions about their crops. The skill of farming, which Plato says is over the production of fruit from the earth, consists in the capacity know what to do with particulars—the actual fruit—in light of general rules about crops. The suggestion is that judiciousness is a kind of knowledge that relates generalizations to particulars.[60]

Since true wisdom is a kind of judiciousness, it also will relate generalizations to particulars. While the farmer's judiciousness is over a restricted domain, crops, the guardian's judiciousness must be over the entire city—all of its internal matters as well as its relations to other cities. Guardians, since they will serve as judges in the city, must know whether particular actions are just or unjust, whether certain states of affairs are good or bad, whether the city is too large or too small, whether the farmers are good farmers and the bronze-workers are good bronze-workers, and so on. Therefore, unlike the farmer, who can know whether her crops are doing well on the basis of her knowledge of the general rules of farming, in order to know whether the city as a whole is faring well, the guardian must have knowledge of principles that apply to a great variety of domains in the perceptible world. The obvious items in Platonic metaphysics that must be appealed to in determining not just whether some narrowly restricted domain of things is

[60] I am grateful to Corinne Gartner for helping me see this point.

good or just, but whether a host of vastly different things in the perceptible world are good or just, are the Form of the Good and the Form of the Just themselves. Whereas the judiciousness of the farmers relates farming generalizations to particular crops, then, the judiciousness of the guardians, which is true wisdom, relates the Forms to the affairs of the city. Of course, at this stage in the dialogue, Plato has not yet introduced the Forms. Already, though, we have via the relational aspect of judiciousness some idea of where the Forms might fit in.

For these three reasons, judiciousness has a central and ineliminable perceptible-grasping aspect. Since wisdom is either identical to or, more plausibly, a kind of judiciousness, wisdom too must have a central and ineliminable perceptible component.

The next argument in favor of the view that *sophia* is of perceptibles comes from the relationship between wisdom and guardianship. Socrates identifies wisdom with guardianship knowledge (*phulakikē epistēmē*) and specifies that guardianship knowledge judges *over the city as a whole*. In his discussion of the work of the guardians, he makes clear that the guardian's job is to rule the perceptible world, making judgments about practical matters internal to the city—such as guarding against wealth and poverty (422a1ff.), the city being too large or too small in size and reputation (423c2-5), and corruption of the city (424b3-8)—as well as determining how the city would best relate to others—what alliances it should form, when it should wage war against another city. Since wisdom (in the city) is identical to guardianship knowledge, and guardianship knowledge is at least centrally of the perceptible world, wisdom too is at least centrally of perceptibles. At the end of Text 3, Socrates re-emphasizes that it is because of the knowledge in the guarding and ruling class that the city would be wise, and that this knowledge, which is set over the city as a whole, rather than its parts, is *sophia.*

After identifying wisdom in the city, Socrates discusses courage, moderation, and justice in the city, before turning to the discussion of these four virtues in the soul. In these contexts, too, Socrates's language suggests that *sophia* is at least in part of perceptibles. He specifies that the work of the rational part of the soul is to judge about (*bouleuesthai*) and guard over (*phulattein*) the whole soul and body as well as possible against external enemies (442b5-9; 442c5-8**)**. Plato also characterizes wisdom as the knowledge that is set over just actions (σοφίαν δὲ τὴν ἐπιστατοῦσαν ταύτῃ τῇ πράξει ἐπιστήμην), and actions belong to the perceptible realm. Notice that he uses *epistatein* language, mirroring the language used to denote the objects of powers (*dunameis*). (443c9-444a2), further suggesting that *sophia* is a *dunamis*.[61]

On the basis of the relationship between wisdom and judiciousness, and the identity of wisdom and guardianship-knowledge, we can conclude that wisdom has a central and ineliminable perceptible component. Since, on either the Traditional or the Overlap Reading, *epistēmē* cannot have this feature, they cannot be identical. If *epistēmē* is the power to grasp intelligibles exclusively (as in the Traditional Reading), then we can give the following argument against the identity of *sophia* and *epistēmē*:

1. Wisdom is a power that is centrally set over perceptibles.
2. *epistēmē* is the power that is set over intelligibles, exclusively
3. If powers A and B are set over different objects, then A and B are different powers (*Rep.* V 477c6 ff.)
4. Wisdom and *epistēmē* are not identical (1-3)[62]

[61] Further in support of the view that *sophia* is a power: on any plausible interpretation, *epistēmē* is a *dunamis* (a power or capacity). Since our task is to understand how *epistēmē* and *sophia* relate, it is important to determine whether *sophia* is a *dunamis.* Note that taking *sophia* to be a *dunamis* is required to get the interpretation of *sophia* and *epistēmē* as identical off the ground. This is because Plato explicitly identifies *epistēmē* as a *dunamis*—Glaucon even calls knowledge the most formidable of all the powers (477d7-9). Since *epistēmē* is certainly a power, if *sophia* turns out not to be a power, then they cannot be identical. Anyone who is attracted to the identity of *sophia* and *epistēmē*, then, should be sympathetic to the view that *sophia* is a *dunamis*.

[62] We can reframe the objection in the form of a puzzle. Wisdom, as the virtue that makes the guardian class best suited to rule, has to deal with perceptibles. *Epistēmē*, however, is exclusively of intelligibles. Knowledge that is exclusively over intelligibles cannot deal with perceptibles. A version of this puzzle is

If *epistēmē* is the power to grasp intelligibles *on its own, non-deficiently, or centrally,* but not exclusively (as in the Overlap Reading), then the argument against the identity of *sophia* and *epistēmē* is as follows:

1. Wisdom is a power that is on its own, non-deficiently, or centrally set over perceptibles
2. *epistēmē* is the power that is on its own, non-deficiently, or centrally set over intelligibles
3. If powers A and B are on their own, non-deficiently, or centrally set over different objects, then A and B are different powers (*Rep.* V)
4. Wisdom and *epistēmē* are different powers (from 1-3)

We can pose a further objection for the identity of wisdom on Vogt or Harte's understanding of *epistēmē.* All are agreed that wisdom is the virtue that judges well about the city or soul as a whole. But then one ends up with the following three commitments, which are difficult to square:

1. *epistēmē* is set over intelligibles, but can grasp perceptibles in an atypical or deficient way
2. *Sophia* is the virtue that judges well over perceptibles (e.g. the city and soul).
3. *Sophia* and *epistēmē* are identical.

It is odd to say that *sophia* (= *epistēmē*), which only set over perceptibles atypically or deficiently, is the virtue that judges well over sensibles.

Despite wisdom having the grasp of perceptibles as a central and ineliminable component, there is good reason to suspect that *epistēmē* of the Forms will play a crucial role in *sophia*. In fact, on the interpretation I prefer, *epistēmē* of the Forms partly constitutes *sophia.*

IV. Upshots for the positive project

used to challenge Plato's claim that *epistēmē* is what makes philosophers best-suited to rule, but this version of the puzzle poses a challenge for any view on which *sophia* and *epistēmē* of the Forms are identical.

So far, I've argued that *sophia* and *epistēmē* cannot be identical. Absent the understanding of *sophia* as *epistēmē* of the Forms, we are in need of a new account. I have also suggested treating judiciousness (*euboulia*), which requires bringing generalizations to bear on judgments about particulars, as a blueprint for understanding the relationship between *epistēmē* and *sophia.* Just as a judicious farmer determines what is best for her particular crops on the basis of generalizations as to what is good for crops, the guardian determines what is best for the city on the basis of generalizations about the city and its constituents. Further, I argued that there is good reason to suspect that the general principles required for determining what is good for something as heterogenous as an entire city will be the Forms themselves. Since Plato had not yet, at that point in the discussion, introduced the Forms, the most we can show from the *Rep.* IV discussion is that there is a textually available, philosophically attractive view of *sophia* on which it also involves *epistēmē* of the Forms. In the next chapter, I will draw from subsequent books, *Rep.* V-VII, to argue that this is precisely the view Plato has in mind.

For now, I'll simply state the account I endorse. On my reading, wisdom is the power to judge well about the city or soul as a whole, by referencing the Forms. Wisdom, then, partly consists in *epistēmē* of the Forms. Whereas the judgments of those with *epistēmē* of the Form are paradigmatically propositions like, "The Just is X," the judgments of those who are wise are paradigmatically propositions like, "this city is not yet just," "the city is nearly just" and "to make the city just, we must do such-and-such." These are, I take it, the sorts of judgments that, when correct, make someone an excellent guardian. Unlike the Identity Reading, this account evades the philosophical objection I raised above.

V. Three Objections

The first objection one might raise targets my reliance on *Rep.* IV in spelling out what wisdom is: Plato focuses on wisdom in *Rep* IV because he has not yet introduced the Forms or *epistēmē,* the power that naturally grasps the Forms. Contrary to my interpretation, the book IV discussion does not give us a blueprint for understanding wisdom, but is instead a placeholder to give us an adequate grasp of wisdom in our search for justice, before we have the tools necessary to give a proper account. Once Plato develops the picture of what *epistēmē* is, it turns out that what makes the guardians best suited to rule is *epistēmē* of the Forms, rather than a certain kind of judiciousness about perceptibles. As evidence for this view, one might cite passages in which Plato stresses that *epistēmē* is what makes philosophers best suited to rule.

Response: Plato never indicates that the account of *sophia* in *Rep.* IV needs replacement; he only indicates that it needs to be supplemented with an account of the good (*Rep.* VI 504b-506b). On the contrary, as I've argued, he repeatedly underscores the perceptible aspect of the capacity to govern throughout *Rep.* V-VII. As for passages in which Plato stresses that *epistēmē* is what makes the philosophers suited to rule, it is compatible with this that what makes the philosopher with *epistēmē* an excellent ruler is her *sophia*—her ability to grasp, judge, and organize perceptibles using the Forms as a model. It is important that we do not treat passages arguing for the importance of *epistēmē* when ruling as passages that show that *all that is required* for being an excellent guardian is *epistēmē.* The texts in which Plato aims to show the importance of *epistēmē* in ruling are compatible with, and in fact support, my view. Since *epistēmē* is a component of (and therefore necessary for) *sophia*, all else equal, those who have *epistēmē* should rule. We can therefore treat these texts as spelling out the *epistēmē* component of *sophia.*

Objection 2: Anyone who has *epistēmē* will also have *sophia*, because in order to have knowledge of all of the Forms, including the Form of the Good, one needs acquaintance with the perceptible world. To support this reading, one might appeal to the end of *Rep.* VII, where the guardian must have sufficient exposure to relevant sensible aspects of the city before being acquainted with the Form of the Good.

Even if it turns out that *sophia* comes for free in virtue of *having to go through the processes of* acquiring *epistēmē*, it does not follow that *epistēmē* is identical to *sophia*. If we want to state which capacity *itself* makes someone an excellent guardian, or what capacity *itself* justifies putting someone with it in power, it will not do to answer '*epistēmē*' even if *having epistēmē* is enough to have *sophia.* The answers to these questions must be *sophia.*

The distinction between one's *having* a capacity and the capacity itself is important, and getting clear on this distinction will rule out many passages that might at first look like counterexamples to my view, so it is worth explaining it more carefully. My goal was to show that *sophia,* rather than *epistēmē,* is the virtue of the guardian. To do this, I ruled out the identity of *sophia* and *epistēmē* and argued that they are different capacities, differently defined, and stand in a part-whole relationship. These are claims about how they relate as capacities and in their definitions.

There is a further, but importantly separate question as to how *sophia* and *epistēmē* relate as a matter of contingent fact about humans. Two capacities can be completely different, but be such that, as a matter of contingent fact, anyone who has one will also have the other. For instance, the capacity to teach a philosophy class and the capacity to metabolize nutrients are different capacities and they do not stand in a part-whole relationship, but as a matter of contingent fact, all philosophers can metabolize nutrients. Plato is clearly interested in contingent

facts about human psychology and how they relate to wisdom: whether those with wisdom also have knowledge of Forms, whether those who have wisdom will have moderation, courage, a great memory, and so on. He invokes some views like these to motivate aspects of the *Republic*'s educational curriculum for rulers in the city and to address resistance to putting philosophers in charge of the ideal city. For our project, though, which is restricted to understanding *sophia* and *epistēmē*—and not whether people who have one will also have the other—we can set aside these kinds of issues. It is important that we guard against construing texts where Plato argues about these contingencies—especially in *Rep.* VI where he defends the rule of philosophers against dismissal and ridicule by those who take philosophers to be useless to the city—as texts containing arguments about what the capacities themselves are.

There's a related objection in the vicinity. One only counts as having *epistēmē* of the Forms if one knows how to apply it when judging about the perceptible realm, so *sophia* does not do any additional explanatory work. Reply: consider the Traditional Reading of *epistēmē*. It would be odd to say that one only counts as having knowledge of the forms if one can apply the forms to something outside of the domain of knowledge. Or take the Overlap reading: it is odd to say that one only has knowledge of the Forms if one is able to apply this knowledge to objects that are atypical, unnatural, etc. to knowledge. It would be a bit like saying that a pruning knife is only really excellent if, in addition to being able to prune a vine, it can also be used for carving a pumpkin. Even if in order to count as *having epistēmē* of the forms, one would need to be able to apply them to perceptibles, the ability to apply them to perceptibles cannot be *epistēmē* of the Forms. Rather, as I've argued, this ability or power is *sophia*, and it is significant that Plato takes *sophia* to be of perceptibles, rather than intelligibles.

The final objection is an alternative to my view: *sophia* is exclusively over perceptibles, and *epistēmē* exclusively over intelligibles. On this picture, *epistēmē* and *sophia* are disjoint, rather than standing in a part-whole relation. In her introduction to the *Republic,* Julia Annas sketches a view on which *sophia* is practical reasoning over the city as a whole. She claims that in restricting *sophia* to good judgment exercised in planning for a whole, rather than for a part of the city, Plato rules out non-guardians, who have knowledge of only part of the city, as candidates for ruling in the ideal city. Annas adds, "there is no indication here that such practical reasoning might demand a great deal of very theoretical study."[63] It is not entirely clear whether Annas takes wisdom to range over perceptibles alone, but one might adopt such a view on the basis of her remarks. Annas's interpretation of the domain of *epistēmē* is that "only the Forms are objects of knowledge, being the only things that truly and unqualifiedly are (480a)."[64] An Annas-inspired view on wisdom and *epistēmē,* then, is that wisdom is over sensibles alone, and knowledge is over the Forms, alone.

Many of the passages I've cited which emphasize the importance of the Forms in guardianship already make this view implausible. Further, contrary to Annas's claim that the practical reasoning required for the guardian seems not to require theoretical study, I've argued that the *Republic* IV discussion gives us good reason to suspect that guardianship knowledge (i.e. wisdom) is distinguished from the other kinds of knowledge in the city, precisely because the principles it employs will be the Forms themselves. The guardians must make determinations about how the many different constituents of the city can fare well, and the most obvious item in Platonic metaphysics to appeal to in this determination, I argued, is the Form of the Good.

[63]Annas 112-113
[64]Annas 203

The second reason to reject this view is that it does a poor job explaining Plato's focus on *epistēmē* in V-VII. Plato is clear in *Rep.* IV that wisdom is the capacity that makes the guardian best suited to rule, and on this alternative interpretation, wisdom is *exclusively* (or centrally) of sensibles. We should find it extremely puzzling, then, that Plato thinks grasp of the forms distinguishes philosophers as rulers over non-rulers, emphasizes the importance of the rulers' having *epistēmē* of the Forms throughout *Rep.* V-VII, and organizes the education of the guardians so that it culminates in their grasp of the Form of the Good. *Rep.* V-VII clearly indicates that an excellent guardian must know the Forms. On this alternative interpretation, then, Plato suggests two incompatible answers for what qualifies one to be a guardian—the answer in *Rep.* IV is, *sophia*, which, on this view, is exclusively the grasp of perceptibles. The answer in *Rep.* V-VII is *epistēmē,* which is the knowledge of intelligibles. Since Plato never retracts his account of *sophia* in *Rep.* IV, the dialogue, on this reading, would conclude without adequate guidance as to which answer to prefer.

VI. Conclusion

I've argued that wisdom, rather than knowledge of the forms, is the capacity tasked with explaining why someone with it will be an excellent ruler. Standard interpretations are correct in taking *epistēmē* to play *some* role, but in omitting *sophia* or identifying *sophia* with *epistēmē*, they demand more justificatory work from *epistēmē* than is warranted. This has made the puzzle about the usefulness of *epistēmē* for guardianship more difficult to resolve. My interpretation makes available a new response to this worry. The capacity that makes someone an excellent guardian so as to justify putting those who have it in power is wisdom, and this is the power to judge well over the city or soul and to determine how they would be best, using the Forms as a model. Wisdom requires recognizing a just action as an instantiation of the Form of the Just or

recognizing that a particular bad state of affairs is *not* an instantiation of the Good, as well as knowledge of how to make the state of affairs approximate the Good. This way of responding makes good use of past scholarship on *epistēmē*, especially Sedley's and Schwab's views on how *epistēmē* can guide *doxa*.

This interpretation of wisdom as the capacity that makes someone an excellent guardian is philosophically attractive, and it captures the upshots we were after in section I. Consider again the example of a capable tax attorney. What makes someone an excellent tax attorney isn't just that they have an excellent grasp of the generalizations to do with taxation, but that they can calculate taxes well in light of the grasp of these generalizations. Similarly, what makes for an excellent doctor isn't just her knowledge of medical principles, but that she can treat patients well in light of this knowledge. On my reading, this is precisely the result we get for the guardian. The capacity that makes someone an excellent guardian, so as to justify putting her in charge of the city, is not only her grasp of intelligibles, but her ability to make good judgments about the city in light of the Forms.

Chapter 2: Wisdom in the *Republic*

In chapter one, I ruled out two accounts of wisdom for Plato. Wisdom is neither identical to *epistēmē*,[65] contra Reeve, Irwin, and others, nor is it practical reasoning wholly devoid of *epistēmē*. In this chapter, I offer an account of wisdom: wisdom is the power to judge well, using the Forms as a standard, about the city and soul as a whole.

I'll begin by establishing some success conditions for the project. First, a satisfactory account of wisdom should explain why *epistēmē* is necessary for wisdom. Wisdom is the virtue of the guardian class that makes them excellent rulers of the city, and Plato repeatedly claims that what distinguishes philosophers from others as excellent rulers of the city is that they alone possess *epistēmē* of the Forms. Further, the educational program of the guardians culminates with *epistēmē* of the Form of the Good, implying that *epistēmē* is required for the guardians to become excellent at their work. The excellence of the guardians is wisdom, strongly suggesting that *epistēmē* is necessary for wisdom.

Second, the account of wisdom we attribute to Plato should do the explanatory work required by the arguments in the *Republic.* Plato claims putting wise rulers in charge is the quickest way of bringing about the closest possible approximation to the ideal city. Any account of wisdom should explain why Plato took wisdom to be so effective in doing so. Further, wisdom's role in bringing about the closest possible approximation of the ideal city explains why philosophers in particular must rule. As I noted in chapter one, the pressure to make Plato's account of *epistēmē*, which is of the Forms, explain why philosophers should rule over the city, which is in the perceptible realm, motivated scholars to expand the reach of *epistēmē* so that its

[65] Unless otherwise stated, *epistēmē* refers to the knowledge of intelligibles, especially the Forms. Plato sometimes uses *epistēmē* loosely—e.g. *tektonikē epistēmē*—and I'll note when I mean to use it in this loose sense.

objects included perceptibles. There, I argued that *sophia,* rather than *epistēmē*, is what does this explanatory work, taking away the philosophical pressure to expand the domain of *epistēmē*. The task now is to show that my account of *sophia* is capable of this work.

The chapter will proceed as follows. Section I focuses on powers (*dunameis*). Section II covers what *sophia* accomplishes (*apergazesthai*), which I argue is judging by reference to the Forms. Section III covers what *sophia* is set over, which is the city and soul as a whole. The definition of wisdom that I will defend, then, is that wisdom is the power to judge well, by referencing the Forms as a standard, about the city and soul as a whole. In section IV, I show that my account of wisdom meets the success conditions I set out above and present some upshots of my proposal.

I. *Dunamis*

The starting point for my account is the fairly uncontroversial claim that wisdom is a power (*dunamis*).[66] There is no text in the *Republic* where Plato explicitly calls wisdom a power, but it is highly plausible that it is one.[67] I'll take this for granted and focus instead on showing what sort of power it is—what distinguishes it from other powers, like *epistēmē*, *doxa*, shepherding, and sight—and whether it is a single, unified power.

Plato characterizes powers as follows:

> "**We'll say that powers are some class (*genos*) among the things which are (*tōn ontōn*), and in fact the ones by means of which we—and all others which may be capable—are capable of what we are capable.** For example, I say sight and hearing are among the powers, if you understand the kind (*eidos*) about which I wish to speak."
> "I understand," he said

[66] I'm grateful to Merrick Anderson for many illuminating conversations on *dunamis.*
[67] Everyone who assumes wisdom is identical to *epistēmē* of the Forms takes wisdom to be a power, because *epistēmē* certainly is a power. Second, Plato defines powers as those things by means of which we do whatever we are capable of. Wisdom enables the rational part to rule over the whole soul, and enables the guardians to rule over the whole city.

> "Now listen to what seems to me to be right about them. Of a power, I don't look at color, shape, or any of the other sorts of things which many others have, attending to which I distinguish for myself some things from others. **But of a power, I look only to what it is over together with (te…kai) what it does/accomplishes (δυνάμεως δ' εἰς ἐκεῖνο μόνον βλέπω ἐφ' ᾧ τε ἔστι καὶ ὃ ἀπεργάζεται), and I call each of them a power in this way. And (kai) what is set over the same thing and (kai) does the same thing, I call the same power, but what is over something different and does/accomplishes a different thing I call another power (καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῷ τεταγμένην καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀπεργαζομένην τὴν αὐτὴν καλῶ, τὴν δὲ ἐπὶ ἑτέρῳ καὶ ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένην ἄλλην).** But what about you? How do you do it?"
> "I do this," he said. (V.477c1-d6)

All powers are *over* (*epi*) something and *do* or *accomplish* (*apergazesthai*) something. What a power is *over* is what the power acts on primarily, typically, or exclusively.[68] What a power *accomplishes* is its work (*ergon*), when there is a work.[69] For example, the work of hearing is to hear, so what hearing *accomplishes* is to hear. What one hears is sounds, so hearing is *over* sounds. This language will strike contemporary readers as odd—we do not think of powers, rather than possessors of powers, as doing work. For example, we do not say in idiomatic English that "*hearing* hears" or that "hearing is *over* sounds". As a gloss, it might be helpful to think of it in the following way. What is the special work that one does with hearing? One *hears* with hearing. This is what's meant when Plato says that what hearing *accomplishes* (*apergazesthai*) is to hear. What does hearing hear? Hearing hears *sounds*. That's what Plato means when he says that, hearing is *set over* sounds.[70]

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[68] Kamtekar, 142-3; Vogt, 54-5; Harte, 145-148. All three agree that a power has a special relationship to its object, and they all reject the view that the relationship is that a power *exclusively* grasps the object over which it is set. Kamtekar argues that a power can, without *assistance,* apprehend its objects; Vogt argues that a power can, *without any deficiency*, grasp its objects, and Harte argues that a power *typically* grasps its objects. Moss discusses each of these views and argues convincingly that *epistēmē* is instead exclusively over the Forms, see Moss [Being and Seeming], especially ch. 2.

[69] Harte, 149

[70] Despite how unidiomatic Plato's language sounds to our ears, I will continue to use this locution, since it best reflects Platonic and Aristotelian ways of thinking, and since saying "hearing hears" has the

If two powers are both set over the same thing and they do the *same* thing, then they are the same power. If two powers are both set over and do *different* things, then they are different powers. Socrates does not offer as much guidance on the converse of the latter conditional: if two powers are different, then is it the case that they both are set over different things and do different things? Such a principle will be useful for determining what *sophia* accomplishes, so it will be helpful to establish it here.[71] Socrates's argument following the passage above suggests that the principle holds:

> Knowledge and opinion are different powers…so, each of them, since they are capable of something different, is by nature over something different (Ἐφ' ἑτέρῳ ἄρα ἕτερόν τι δυναμένη ἑκατέρα αὐτῶν πέφυκεν; 477d7-478a3-4).

If two powers are different, then they must be set over different things.[72]

Plato acknowledges a sub-set of powers, to which skills (*technai*) and rule (*archai*) (at least) belong,[73] which benefit or seek out what is best for what they are set over. In *Republic* I, Thrasymachus argues that justice in all cities is the advantage (*sumpheros*) of the established rule (1.339).[74] Socrates points out that rulers are liable to error, and Thrasymachus replies that no craftsman or ruler, understood in the strict sense, will err at the moment they rule (340e). Socrates, relying on the idea of a craftsman in the strict sense, argues that no craftsman or ruler

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advantage of focusing on the power itself, whereas "one uses hearing to hear" focuses on the person who has hearing.

[71]Most think that the converse holds—e.g. Fine, Harte.

[72]As Kamtekar and Harte note, this doesn't preclude the possibility that a power act on something that is not its proper object—but this would be an atypical exercise of the power.

[73]M. Lane, "*Technē* and *archē* in Plato's *Republic* Book 1, in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 57 (Oxford, 2020): 1-23. Lane remarks that *archē* "conceptually a structure of subordination between individuals or entities, in which the relationship is a question of 'who whom'—as Plato might, like Lenin, have been willing to say. Yet it is likewise conceptually a structure of service, in which the ruler is defined by hir purpose of providing benefit to the ruled, and in which the perfection of the rule qua rule lies in the realization of the ability to provide that benefit fully and precisely."

[74] Many of these arguments can be found in Verity Harte's "Knowing and Believing." There, she argues for the view that *technai* are a sub-class of powers which seek to benefit their objects. She also makes a case for the importance of this passage in understanding the book V discussion of powers.

in the strict sense exercises his craft or rule to his own advantage, but to the advantage of those he rules.

> τῇ δὲ ποιμενικῇ οὐ δήπου ἄλλου του μέλει ἢ ἐφ' ᾧ τέτακται, ὅπως τούτῳ τὸ βέλτιστον ἐκποριεῖ – ἐπεὶ τά γε αὐτῆς ὥστ' εἶναι βελτίστη ἱκανῶς δήπου ἐκπεπόρισται, ἕως γ' ἂν μηδὲν ἐνδέῃ τοῦ ποιμενικὴ εἶναι – οὕτω δὲ ᾠμην ἔγωγε νυνδὴ ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι ἡμῖν ὁμολογεῖν πᾶσαν ἀρχήν, καθ' ὅσον ἀρχή, μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ τὸ βέλτιστον σκοπεῖσθαι ἢ ἐκείνῳ, τῷ ἀρχομένῳ τε καὶ θεραπευομένῳ, ἔν τε πολιτικῇ καὶ ἰδιωτικῇ ἀρχῇ. (I. 345d1-e2)
>
> **The shepherding craft is concerned with nothing other than that over which it is set (*tattein*), how it will provide what is best for this**—since it has surely been adequately provided with its own so as to be best, when it in no way falls short of being the shepherding-craft (*poimenikē*)—and in this way I thought it was necessary just now for us to agree that every (case of) rule (*archē*), in as much as it is a rule (*archē*), looks to (*skopein*) what is best (*to beltiston*) for nothing other than that (namely) what it rules and also cares for (*therapeuein*), in both public and private rule.

Here, Socrates observes that the shepherding craft provides what is best for what it is set over. He then emphasizes that all skills and rule have this feature in common: they do what is best for the objects in their respective domains:

> Οὐκοῦν, ὦ Θρασύμαχε, τοῦτο ἤδη δῆλον, ὅτι οὐδεμία τέχνη οὐδὲ ἀρχὴ τὸ αὑτῇ ὠφέλιμον παρασκευάζει, ἀλλ' ὅπερ πάλαι ἐλέγομεν, τὸ τῷ ἀρχομένῳ καὶ παρασκευάζει καὶ ἐπιτάττει, τὸ ἐκείνου συμφέρον ἥττονος ὄντος σκοποῦσα, ἀλλ' οὐ τὸ τοῦ κρείττονος. (I. 346e3-7)
>
> Therefore, Thrasymachus, this is now clear, that **not a single craft nor rule provides a benefit to itself, but as we were just saying, it provides (a benefit) for what it rules and is set over, seeking the advantage (*sumpheron*) of that which is weaker, rather than the advantage of the stronger.**

As Harte argues, each craft provides some special benefit (*to ōphelimon*) to the objects in their domain. What the craft does or accomplishes is to provide the benefit. For instance, the medical-craft provides health (the benefit) to bodies (the objects in it is domain) (Harte 151-3). [75]

[75] Harte's full picture, which I endorse, is as follows: There exists a class of powers, of which a subclass are skills. Such powers are set over a domain and they are specially tasked to the performance of some work or function in connection with that domain; the performance of this work or function is constitutive of the power as a power; the work or function sets standards for the correctness of the operation of the

The language of doing what is best for the objects of crafts comes up again in a passage that will be central to our understanding of *sophia.* It first appears in Plato's discussion of the expertise of carpentry (*tektonike epistēmē*) in *Rep.* IV:

> Then is it because of (διὰ) the knowledge of the carpenters that the city should be called wise and judicious (σοφὴ καὶ εὔβουλος)?"[1]
>
> "Not at all," he said, "but it's called skilled in carpentry because of this."
>
> "Then a city which judges how these things would be best (βουλευομένη ὡς ἂν ἔχοι βέλτιστα) should not be called wise because of the knowledge on behalf (ὑπὲρ) the wooden implements."[76]
>
> "How about the knowledge on behalf of what's made from bronze or some other such sort of thing?" (Τί δέ; τὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐκ τοῦ χαλκοῦ ἤ τινα ἄλλην τῶν τοιούτων;)
>
> "Not at all"
>
> "Nor the knowledge on behalf of the production of crops from the earth, but it (it would be called) *skilled-in-farming*. (Οὐδὲ τὴν ὑπὲρ τοῦ καρποῦ τῆς γενέσεως ἐκ τῆς γῆς, ἀλλὰ γεωργική.)"
>
> "It seems so to me." (IV. 428b12-c10)

Here, the knowledge (*epistēmē*)[77] over or on behalf of (*huper*) the wooden things is the skill of carpentry, and this skill consists in judging how wooden things—what carpentry is set over—would be best. Plato characterizes bronzeworking and other skills of this sort in the same way: as kinds of knowledge which are over or on behalf of (*huper*) the objects in their domain.

In light of these texts from *Rep.* I and IV, we can spell out craft and rule[78] in the following way: if *x* is a *technē* or *archē*, then there is some *y* over which *x* is set, and *x* provides

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power. In some subclass of cases, including but not necessarily restricted to the exercise of those powers that are skills, the performance of the power's work or function produces a benefit that accrues to the items in the relevant domain." (Harte 154)

[76] Οὐκ ἄρα διὰ τὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν ξυλίνων σκευῶν ἐπιστήμην, βουλευομένη ὡς ἂν ἔχοι βέλτιστα, σοφὴ κλητέα πόλις. Adam reads *bouleuomenēn.*

[77] *Epistēmē* in this context is not knowledge of the Forms—carpenters are here said to have knowledge, but carpenters do not have knowledge of the Forms.

[78] More can be said about the relationship between crafts and rule (see Lane 2020). One might argue that all crafts involve rule, because all crafts involve exercising some power to look after the objects of the craft. For our purposes, either the view on which crafts and rules are co-extensive or the view that kinds of rule are a subset of crafts will do. I try to remain neutral on the topic here. I am grateful to Melissa

what is best for or benefits *y*. All *technai* and *archai* are powers. They allow people to do what they are capable of doing, have something over which they are set, and accomplish something in relation to those objects. Not all powers, however, are *technai*, because not all powers provide what is best for their objects—Knowledge of the Forms does not provide what is best for the Forms, sight does not provide what is best for colors. *Technai* and *archai* are therefore a sub-class of powers: "Don't we say every time that each of the skills is different in virtue of this, having a different power (*dunamis*)?" (346a1–2).[79] Furthermore, all *technai* and *archai* benefit their objects.

The overall picture, then, is that there are different kinds of powers. Crafts and kinds of rule such as shepherding, medicine, and carpentry are alike in that what they accomplish (*apergazesthai*) is providing what's best for their objects (ὅπως τούτῳ τὸ βέλτιστον ἐκποριεῖ. *Rep.* I 345d1-2) and judging how their objects would be best (βουλευομένη ὡς ἂν ἔχοι βέλτιστα, IV. 428b12-c2). By contrast, powers such as knowledge are not concerned with determining how their objects would be best or providing what's best for them, but rather grasps or picks up on them *as they are*: "knowledge is over what-is, to know what-is *as it is*" (Ἐπιστήμη μέν γέ που ἐπὶ τῷ ὄντι, τὸ ὂν γνῶναι ὡς ἔχει, V. 478a6). Belief (*doxa*), sight (*opsis*) and other powers are, in this way, akin to knowledge (*epistēmē*). Both kinds, insofar as they are powers, are set over their objects and do or accomplish something in relation to them.

Since wisdom is a *dunamis,* to determine what it is, we should investigate what it is set over and what it does. Once we have answered what wisdom is, we will see that wisdom has an

Lane for conversations on how to understand the relationship between *technē* and *archē*, and their connection to *sophia*.

[79]Having (*echein*) here is in the sense of being constituted by. As in, "this ice has water." Cf. Harte 150-1

important relationship to crafts and rule, on the one hand, and knowledge of the Forms, on the other.

II. What wisdom does

I'll argue that what wisdom accomplishes is judging by reference to the Forms. The evidence in favor of taking some sort of judging to be what wisdom accomplishes comes from book IV, Plato's most explicit treatment of wisdom. There, Plato defines wisdom as "a kind of knowledge that judges (*bouleuesthai*) on behalf of the city as a whole, in what way it would associate best both with itself and with other cities." The conversation leading up to this definition further supports the view. Plato's first step in identifying the city as truly wise is to note that it is judicious (*euboulos*). Plato emphasizes that the search for wisdom is a search for the kind of knowledge that makes the city judicious and truly wise (*euboulos kai tōi onti sophē*) and later asks for the kind of knowledge because of which the city should be called wise and judicious (*sophē kai euboulos*). One available and attractive reading is to take the *kai*'s here as epexegetic and restrictive, so that, on the one hand, a certain kind of judiciousness (*euboulia*) counts as true wisdom (the judiciousness that the guardians have, but not the judiciousness of the farmers) and, on the other, a certain kind of wisdom counts as a kind of judiciousness (true wisdom, which we will define, is a kind of judiciousness, but not the colloquial and loose uses of wisdom employed elsewhere in the *Republic*[80]). *Euboulia* is etymologically connected to judging well (*eu bouleuesthai*), a connection Plato himself uses when he argues that judiciousness is a kind of knowledge, because it is through knowledge that one judges well (*eu bouleuesthai*). Both because of the discussion leading up to the definition of wisdom, and (especially) because of the

[80] E.g. *Rep.* 426c6

definition of wisdom as some kind of knowledge that judges well, we should take a certain kind of judging well to be a serious candidate for what wisdom does.

It is tempting to say on the basis of this passage that what wisdom accomplishes is simply judging. The problem is that wisdom is not the only thing that judges. Just as the expertise of carpentry (*tektonike epistēmē*) judges how wooden things would be best, farming, shepherding, bronzeworking, and many other *technai* also judge how their objects—what they're set over—would be best:

> Then is it because of (διὰ) the knowledge of the carpenters that the city should be called wise and judicious (σοφὴ καὶ εὔβουλος)?"[1]
> "Not at all," he said, "but it's called skilled in carpentry because of this."
> "Then a city which judges how these things would be best (βουλευομένη ὡς ἂν ἔχοι βέλτιστα) should not be called wise because of the knowledge on behalf (ὑπὲρ) the wooden things."
> "No."
> …
> So, is there some knowledge[81] in the (city) just now founded by us, in some of its citizens, which does not judge (βουλεύεται) some one thing among the things in the city, but over/on behalf of (ὑπὲρ) it as a whole, in what way it would associate best both with itself and with other cities? (ὅντινα τρόπον αὐτή τε πρὸς αὐτὴν καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἄλλας πόλεις ἄριστα ὁμιλοῖ;)
> There is.
> What is it? And what is it in?
> It is guardianship (knowledge)[82] (ἡ φυλακική) and it is in those rulers which we now called complete guardians.
> Then because of this knowledge (διὰ ταύτην οὖν τὴν ἐπιστήμην), what will you call the city?
> Judicious, he said, and truly wise. (εὔβουλον, ἔφη, καὶ τῷ ὄντι σοφήν.)
> (428b12-d10)

Given that these other kinds of knowledge/expertise (*epistemai*) also judge, to say that *sophia* merely judges is an inadequate specification of what *sophia* does.

One attempt at a way out of the problem is to reject that these other *epistemai* are kinds of *euboulia*, so that *sophia* is the only thing that judges, but I find this option unattractive. On the

[81] *Epistēmē* is used in a broad sense, *not* in the restricted sense where *epistēmē* is only of the Forms. This is why farmers and the like are described as having *epistēmē*.
[82] *Epistēmē* is, in context, the best word to supply. The search here is for some kind of knowledge (428c11) and Plato, after this line, references *hē phulakikē* with *tautēn tēn epistēmēn*).

line of thinking that I prefer, *euboulia* should be understood as the ability to judge well by means of some sort of knowledge over some corresponding domain. Farmers are judicious in that they use farming knowledge (*geōrgikē epistēmē*) to judge well about plants, carpenters are judicious because they use carpentry knowledge (*tektonike epistēmē*) to make good judgments about wooden things, and guardians are judicious in that they use guardianship knowledge (*phulakike epistēmē,* i.e. *sophia*) to make good judgments about the city as a whole, how it would fare best. All of these kinds of knowledge, and in fact all crafts judge how their objects would be best. Rather than taking this route, to characterize what wisdom does, I'll specify the kind of judging that sets wisdom (*phulakikē epistēmē*) apart from the other kinds of *epistēmai*.

Wisdom, unlike farming knowledge and the like, judges by reference to the Forms. For this view, two aspects of the book IV passage cited above are crucial: (1) that wisdom judges and is a kind of judiciousness, and (2) that wisdom is over or on behalf of the city as a whole, rather than some part of it.

I'll begin with two observations. First, judging—especially judging how something would fare best—always has a certain structure: one judges about something *by reference to or according to some standard*. For instance, when a carpenter judges how a wooden table would be best (e.g. that it would be best if it had four legs rather than two), she uses some standard for wooden tables. Their knowledge of the standard of judgment is required for and partly constitutes their judiciousness. Now consider again Plato's definition of wisdom from IV: wisdom judges about the city as a whole, how it would associate best both with itself and with other cities. In judging that a city would associate best internally and externally by doing such-and-such, one must rely on some standard. As in the case of carpentry, knowledge of this standard, which will turn out to be the Forms, is both required for and partly constitutes wisdom.

We'll see that while the shepherd can come to know the standards for good sheep without knowing the Forms, the guardian cannot know the standards for a good city without doing so.

The second observation is that the discussion in *Rep.* IV leaves space for—and perhaps even calls for—something like the picture I'm sketching, on which wisdom judges by reference to the Forms. Plato identifies wisdom by defining it as a kind of knowledge that is set over the city as a whole, but he doesn't say much more in that passage about what this knowledge is like. In her commentary on the passage, Julia Annas objects: [83]

> "[Plato] never, though, argues...that the ability to use one's practical intelligence in a way that rises above one's own concerns must be limited to a few. He commits himself without argument to the anti-democratic thesis that the citizens with the wisdom that will make it well-governed will be the smallest class in the city" (Annas 113).

The objection is that Plato does not show that wisdom is so exclusive that only a few can have it. We might take on board Annas's insight but conclude instead that Plato has not *yet* done all of the justificatory work (IV.435cd; VI.504bc). We can then—keeping in mind the *Republic* as a whole—think about the sort of explanation that could be supplied.

Consider the carpenter, one of the examples of knowledge in book IV that must not be the wisdom of a city. The carpenter only needs to make judgments about a narrowly restricted domain, and to make these judgments, she needs to appeal to her knowledge of the standards relevant to carpentry. By contrast, the guardians must make judgments about many varied domains in the perceptible world. It's difficult to find a single standard to which one can refer when making judgments about each of these areas. To see this, imagine using the standards one uses for carpentry to design an educational curriculum for all members of a political community, or using standards for judging a trial when determining whether to restrict access to certain forms

[83] Plato himself claims that the view in IV was a sketch (435cd) and that it fell short of exactness and was incomplete (504bc), but nowhere suggests that it was incorrect.

of art, or think of the familiar, catastrophic consequences of using only standards relevant to money-making to deal with the health of a political community. The guardian's standard must guide her judgments about vastly disparate cases. The obvious item in Platonic metaphysics that can be appealed to when determining whether a host of vastly different things in the perceptible world are good or when making comparative judgments about goodness (e.g. weighing the good for one group versus that of another), is the Form of the Good itself. If this is the standard the guardian uses, then there's a readily available explanation for Plato's decision to leave it out of the book IV discussion—*Epistēmē* of the Forms does not get an explicit and detailed treatment until *Rep.* V (cf. VI.405b ff.).[84]

These two observations illustrate the philosophical attractiveness of the view that wisdom judges by reference to the Forms. The observations are well-supported by the text. In *Rep.* III, Plato emphasizes that judgments are made by reference to a model or standard (*paradeigma*),[85] that the standard used by the best judge is gained through knowledge, not experience, and that the soul of such a judge is good (*agathos*) and wise (*sophos*). This discussion of standards for judgment, judging, knowledge, experience, wisdom, and virtue is extremely useful for better understanding Plato's account of wisdom.

Plato begins by contrasting doctors and judges. Doctors treat others' bodies with their own souls, rather than with their bodies, so the best doctors will have good and healthy souls, but bodies which are acquainted with every sickness (III.408d10-e6). Doctors use their bodily experience with sickness as a standard (*paradeigma*) for their judgments about the health of

[84] Plato suggests as much in 435cd, 504c. I am grateful to Alexander Nehamas for conversations on the structure of the *Republic* and for showing me an unpublished draft on the Forms in *Rep.* V.
[85] I use 'model' or 'standard' as translations for *paradeigma,* following J. Adam, *The Republic of Plato* (Cambridge 1902). The idea is of something one uses to evaluate a product (as with miniature architectural models).

other bodies. If doctors treated others' bodies with their own bodies, then the excellent doctors would not be the one with sickly bodies. Just as the doctor's instrument for treatment must be good, the judge's instrument for judgment must be good:

> But the judge, my friend, rules soul with soul, in which case it's impossible for it (the soul) to have been brought up among base (*poneros*) souls from youth and also to have associated with them and to have passed through doing every injustice, **so that it determines keenly from itself (ἀφ' αὐτῆς τεκμαίρεσθαι) the injustices of others, as in the case of bodies with respect to diseases.** Instead, it must be inexperienced and unmixed with evil characters while it is young, if it is to healthily judge matters of justice (*ta dikaia*) and to be fine and good. This is why when they are young, those who are decent/suitable (*epieikeis*) appear simple and easily-deceived by the unjust, since they don't have in themselves models/standards affected in the same way as those of base people (παραδείγματα ὁμοιοπαθῆ τοῖς πονηροῖς). (409a1-b3)[86]

The good doctor's exposure to sickness gives her a standard or model from her own body to diagnose the sick. By contrast, good judges must not develop an internal standard (*aph'autēs*) for diagnosing others' injustices, by exposing their souls to many evil characters from youth. Since judges judge other souls with their own souls, their own souls must be good, not vicious through acquaintance with injustice.

Plato acknowledges that the judge must learn what injustice is later in life:

> "So a good judge must not be young, but old, having been late to learn what sort of thing injustice is, not perceiving it as his own (*oikeios*), present in his own soul, but as another's, in the souls of others, since he has long practiced distinguishing what sort of evil (*kakon*) it (sc. injustice) is by nature, using knowledge, not his own experience (ἐπιστήμῃ, οὐκ ἐμπειρίᾳ οἰκείᾳ κεχρημένον.)"
> "This sort of judge would seem to me to be most noble," he said. (3.409b4-c2)

When the judge is older, she will be able to determine what injustice is, not through her own experience of it, but through knowledge (*epistēmē*). This understanding of injustice through knowledge (*epistēmē*) is, in context, analogous to the doctor's grasp of sickness through

[86] Adam: τοῖς πονηροῖς is equivalent to *tois tōn ponērōn paradeigmasi* "the models/standards of the base"

experience. Both serve as models or standards (*paradeigmata*) for diagnosing or judging. This judge, Plato claims, will be good, wise, and virtuous:

> Οὐ τοίνυν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τοιοῦτον χρὴ τὸν δικαστὴν ζητεῖν τὸν ἀγαθόν τε καὶ σοφόν, ἀλλὰ τὸν πρότερον· πονηρία μὲν γὰρ ἀρετήν τε καὶ αὐτὴν οὔποτ' ἂν γνοίη, ἀρετὴ δὲ φύσεως παιδευομένης χρόνῳ ἅμα αὐτῆς τε καὶ πονηρίας ἐπιστήμην λήψεται. σοφὸς οὖν οὗτος, ὥς μοι δοκεῖ, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁ κακὸς γίγνεται.
>
> "So," I said, "one must not seek this person as a good and wise judge, but the earlier one. For baseness could never know both virtue and itself, but virtue, if its nature is educated (φύσεως παιδευομένης), will in time grasp knowledge of itself as well as baseness at once. Thus, this man comes to be wise, it seems to me, but not the bad one. (3.409d6-e2)

Unlike the good judge, the vicious person makes decisions by looking to the models of injustice within herself (πρὸς τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ παραδείγματα ἀποσκοπῶν), which she gained through direct experience with injustice (3.409c3-d6). Such a person lacks models of a different sort—goodness and healthy characters—and so, though she appears wise (*sophos*), she isn't (3.409c3-d5).

Thus, in order to be a good judge, one must have a good standard or model (*paradeigma*) for judgment. The use of standards is not special to professional judges—doctors too use them when diagnosing, which is itself a kind of judging, bodies. Unlike the doctor, who is well acquainted with sickness, the judge, while young, is inexperienced with injustice, the subject matter of her judgment.[87] Further, unlike the doctor, who uses her own bodily experience with illness as an internal standard or model, the good judge uses knowledge (*epistēmē*).[88]

This evidence strongly supports one part of the view that I was sketching in my analysis of book IV: judgments are always made by reference to some standard, so that wisdom's judging well over the city and soul as a whole must also be a judgment by reference to some standard.

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[87] Plato does not say explicitly whether judges can be exposed to injustices as adults, after they've gained knowledge of injustice and see it as foreign to their own souls—but this is presumably acceptable. Such exposure seems required in order for them to make judgments *about* injustices.

[88] This does not suggest that experience plays no role in making good judgments—just that it is not that by which the judge acquires the standard for judgment.

Further, just as the good judge differs from the doctor in her use of *epistēmē,* the guardian differs from carpenters, farmers, and the like in her use of *epistēmē.*

I made a further claim, which was that the standard used by the guardians was the Forms, and that the grasp of this standard was *epistēmē* of the Forms. It is tempting to take Plato's claim in book III, that the good and wise judge uses *epistēmē* as a standard or model, to support this view, but since the Forms are not yet introduced at that point, such a reading would be strained.[89] Instead, my evidence for this further claim comes from *Rep* VI and VII, after Plato's discussion of the guardian's possession of *epistēmē* of the Forms. In these two passages, Plato confirms that Forms are the models or standards to which the guardians refer when they make their judgments. Notice also a reappearance of the *paradeigma* language we saw in book III.

> ***Rep* VI 484b6-485a8**
> We should establish as guardians those who are clearly capable of guarding the laws and the ways of life of the city.
> That's right.
> And isn't it clear that a guardian who is to keep watch over anything should be keen-sighted rather than blind?
> Of course it's clear.
> **Do you think, then, that there's any difference between the blind and those who are really deprived of the knowledge of each thing that is? The latter have no clear model (*paradeigma*) in their souls, and so they cannot—in the manner of painters—look to what is most true, make constant reference to it, and study it as exactly as possible. Hence they cannot establish here on earth conventions about what is fine or just or good, when they need to be established, or guard and preserve them, once they have been established.**
> No, by god, there isn't much difference between them.
> Should we, then, make these blind people our guardians or rather those who know each thing that is and who are not inferior to the others, either in experience or in any other part of virtue?
> It would be absurd to choose anyone but the ones who have knowledge, if indeed they're not inferior in these ways, for the respect in which they are superior is pretty well the most important (lit. greatest) one (σχεδόν τι τῷ μεγίστῳ).
> Then shouldn't we explain how it is possible for people to come to have those both these sorts of qualities (κἀκεῖνα καὶ ταῦτα)?
> Certainly.

[89] Cf. *Statesman* 305c6ff.

> Then, as we said at the beginning of this discussion, it is necessary to understand first the nature of the ones who are going to come to have both sorts, for I think that, if we can reach adequate agreement about that, we'll also agree that the same people can have both qualities and that no one but they should be leaders in cities.
> (Transl. Reeve—*Rep* VI 484c6-485a8)

Guardians must have two kinds of qualities (*kakeina kai tauta*): *epistēmē* of the Forms and experience (*empeiria*) and the other parts of virtue.[90] This text offers a framework for understanding how *epistēmē* relates to the guardianship of the city: the Forms are to be used as a model or standard, which the guardians use to guide their establishment of customs (*nomima*) about the fine, just, and good.[91]

Socrates elaborates on the analogy with painters in the same book. He claims that once people recognize the truth of their claims about real philosophers, they will accept their claim that the city will never be happy (*eudaimonein*) unless painters who use the divine model sketch it (εἰ μὴ αὐτὴν διαγράψειαν οἱ τῷ θείῳ παραδείγματι χρώμενοι ζωγράφοι; VI. 500e3-4).[92] Adeimantus asks Socrates to clarify the kind of sketch he has in mind. In response, Socrates explains that the painters must first take the city and human characters (ἤθη) and wipe it clean. Then, they would sketch the outline of the constitution (*politeia*):

> Ἔπειτα οἶμαι ἀπεργαζόμενοι πυκνὰ ἂν ἑκατέρωσ' ἀποβλέποιεν, πρός τε τὸ φύσει δίκαιον καὶ καλὸν καὶ σῶφρον καὶ πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα, καὶ πρὸς ἐκεῖν' αὖ τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐμποιοῖεν, συμμειγνύντες τε καὶ κεραννύντες ἐκ τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων τὸ ἀνδρείκελον, ἀπ' ἐκείνου τεκμαιρόμενοι, ὃ δὴ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἐκάλεσεν ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐγγιγνόμενον θεοειδές τε καὶ θεοείκελον. (VI.501b1-7)
>
> Then, I think, they would frequently (*pukna*) look in either direction (*hekaterōs*) when they are doing their work (*apergazesthai*), both (*te*) toward the just by nature and the

[90] Adam also takes this reading of *kakeina* (Adam p.3)
[91] My argument runs via an intuition that knowing what justice, goodness, etc. are will help guide decisions. I don't spell out how exactly the modeling works. Part of the project would require an understanding of the ways in which intelligibles and perceptibles differ. The task is beyond the scope of this paper. As a starting point for the difference between the two, see A. Nehamas, "Plato on the Imperfection of the Sensible World," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1975): 105-117
[92] Sedley and Schwab both offer helpful discussions of models.

> beautiful and moderate and all such things and (*kai*) toward those things in turn (*au*) which they are producing (*empoiein*) in humans, mixing as well as blending a human-likeness (*andreikelon*) from the pursuits/practices[93], estimating from that, which Homer also called, when it appeared in humans, the divine form and also divine-likeness (*theoeides te kai theoeikelon*).

Socrates continues that the painter will erase one thing and draw in another until they've made humans who are as god-loved as possible. It is in this way, Socrates claims, that those who are resistant to putting these people in charge will appreciate that this sort of person would be a "painter of constitutions." The philosopher-guardian looks back and forth between the forms of justice, beauty, moderation, and the like, and what they put into humans—the various *epitēdeumata* of the city.[94]

At the end of book VII's discussion of the education of the guardians, Plato again claims that the Form of the Good will be used as a standard or model for arranging the city (cf. *Rep.* VI 500d4-9; 501b1-7). The key passage comes after Socrates details ten years of requisite mathematical training for guardians, followed by five years of dialectical training (539d):

> It doesn't matter. Make it five. And after that (sc. five years of dialectic), you must make them go down into the cave again, and compel them to take command in matters of war and occupy the other offices suitable for young people, so that they won't be inferior to the others in experience (μηδ' ἐμπειρίᾳ ὑστερῶσι τῶν ἄλλων). But in these, too, they must be tested to see whether they'll remain steadfast when they're pulled this way and that or shift their ground.
> How much time do you allow for that?
> Fifteen years. Then, at the age of fifty, those who've survived the tests and been successful both in practical matters and in the sciences (πάντῃἐν ἔργοις τε καὶ ἐπιστήμαις) must be led to the goal and compelled to lift up the radiant light of their souls to what itself provides light for everything. **And once they've seen the good itself, they**

[93] Adam, 42 and Appendix in App.V

[94] One might wonder why Plato here talks about the forms, on the one hand, and individual characters, on the other. How should we square this with the other passages, in which the philosopher looks to forms, on the one hand, and the city as a whole, on the other? Further, does this suggest that it's individual characters, rather than the whole city, over which wisdom is set? The answer is that, since individuals comprise the city, this is one way the philosopher acts on the city as a whole. Further, we should recognize that Socrates is here aiming to persuade those who are skeptical of philosopher rulers, and is likely emphasizing the way in which it is beneficial for them that philosophers rule.

> **must each in turn put the city, its citizens, and themselves in order, using it as their model (παραδείγματι)**... (VII. 539e1-540a9, translation Reeve)

This passage shows that the education of the guardian is aimed at giving them the capacity to govern the city well. This education consists not only in training to see the good, but also to gain experience in practical matters. Once the guardian is capable of grasping both the Form of the Good and has the requisite experience with the perceptible realm, she will be able to put the city and its constituents in order by reference to the Forms.[95]

Plato sometimes makes claims which might suggest that what wisdom does is guarding (*phulattein*), ruling (*krattein/archēin*), or knowing (*epistasthai*).[96] For instance, the guardians guard against the city being too rich or too poor (4.421e8), too big or too small (4.423c), and that they must guard the education of the city against innovation in music, poetry, and physical training that is contrary to the established order (4.424b). Further, philosophers, those who alone have wisdom, are called complete guardians (4.428c11-d10). That *ruling* is what wisdom does also has textual support. Plato argues that reason is suited to rule because it is wise:

> Is it fitting, then, for the rational part **to rule (ἄρχειν)**, since it is wise and has forethought over the whole soul, and for the spirited part to be obedient and an ally of it? (4.441e4-6; cf 4.442c5-8)

That *knowing* (*epistasthai*) is what *sophia* does is suggested by Plato's repeated claim that *sophia* is an *epistēmē* and by the emphasis that the philosopher rulers have *epistēmē* of the Forms (428c11-d10; 428e7-429a3; 443c9-444a2).

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[95] One might be temped to adopt an alternative interpretation, on which the practical training is not itself part of the skill of guardianship, but rather just a means to arriving at the Form of the Good. Plato's repeated focus on the sensible domain of guardianship, however, makes this reading unattractive. Sedley draws from the Ship of State analogy to argue that the Forms serve as a guide for the guardians, in just the way navigators look to the stars for guidance.

[96] Or caring, but medicine also cares (*therapeuein*) for the souls and bodies of those who are naturally good (*Rep* 3.410a)

What should we say about these alternatives for what *sophia* does or accomplishes? Knowing cannot be what wisdom accomplishes which distinguishes it from other powers. There is a loose and a strict sense of *epistasthai.* The loose sense is the sense in which *geōrgikē epistēmē, tektonikē epistēmē,* and the other skills described in IV are also said to know. Different skills must accomplish different things, so if *sophia* knows in this sense, then *sophia*—guardianship knowledge—wouldn't be distinguished from those skills. Plato clearly means to distinguish wisdom from the others, so we can rule this one out. The strict sense of knowing is what *epistēmē* of the Forms accomplishes (*Rep.* V). I've already argued in chapter one that *sophia* and *epistēmē* of the Forms are non-identical, and since they are different powers, they should accomplish different things. As I'll argue, *epistēmē* of the Forms does play some role in wisdom's judging, but it would be incorrect to think of it as what wisdom (properly speaking) accomplishes.

While guarding is promising as one of the things wisdom accomplishes, it also cannot distinguish wisdom from the other powers. This is because wisdom is the virtue and power that belongs to the rational part of the soul and *not* the spirited part, but both the rational and spirited parts of the soul guard:

> Ἆρ' οὖν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, καὶ τοὺς ἔξωθεν πολεμίους τούτω ἂν κάλλιστα **φυλαττοίτην ὑπὲρ ἁπάσης τῆς ψυχῆς τε καὶ τοῦ σώματος, τὸ μὲν βουλευόμενον, τὸ δὲ προπολεμοῦν,** ἐπόμενον [δὲ] τῷ ἄρχοντι καὶ τῇ ἀνδρείᾳ ἐπιτελοῦν τὰ βουλευθέντα;
>
> "Then," I said, "wouldn't these two (τούτω) guard (φυλαττοίτην) the whole soul and the body as well as possible against external enemies—the one, judging, and the other, defending, following the one ruling, and through its courage, bringing about (*epitelein*) the things judged?" (4.442b5-9)

This passage is instructive. Plato here claims that reason guards when it is judging and spirit guards when it is defending. It is true that both the virtuous rational and spirited soul parts guard,

but the former does it by judging and the latter by defending. My proposal, then, is this. Wisdom does many things – it guards, rules, cares, and so on, but it does these things *when it is judging* and *by judging.* In this way, judging is primary to the other things that wisdom does. An analogy might be useful. Reasoning, we would say, is something our rational soul part does. But the rational part of the soul does not *only* do that—we also use our rational parts to tell jokes, do mathematics, and the like, and we do these *via* reasoning. What the rational part does, properly speaking*,* is reason, and it is *via* reasoning that it does all the other things. Similarly, what wisdom does is it judges by reference to the Forms, and it does the others by judging by reference to the Forms.

A final point: wisdom, like the *technai* or *archai*, is concerned with how the objects over which it is set will be best. I'll develop this point more in the next section, which focuses on the object of wisdom, but I'll give two reasons to favor the view here. In Socrates's search for wisdom in book IV—as is now familiar—he notes: "then a city which judges how these things would be best (βουλευομένη ὡς ἂν ἔχοι βέλτιστα) should not be called wise because of the knowledge on behalf of (ὑπὲρ) the wooden implements." (IV.428c2-3). He then goes through other candidates—what about a city which judges *how bronze items would be best*? One that judges *how the production of plants would be best*? He concludes that we're looking for some knowledge which judges over the whole city, in what way it associates best with itself and with others (ὅντινα τρόπον αὐτή τε πρὸς αὑτὴν καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἄλλας πόλεις ἄριστα ὁμιλοῖ; IV.428c11-d3). It's the city that has good judgment as to *how the whole city would be best—in what way it associates best with itself and with others*—that is wise. The second reason to favor this view comes in Plato's discussion of wisdom in the soul, where Plato references wisdom as *phronēsis*

te kai phulakē. This suggests that wisdom has two irreducible components: *phronēsis,* which is cognitive, and *phulakē,* guarding, which is focused on what's best for its object.

There are three main takeaways from this section. First, what wisdom does or accomplishes is judging by reference to the Forms as a standard (*paradeigma*). It also rules, guards, and cares for the city and soul as a whole, but it does this by judging by reference to the Forms about the city and soul. Second, wisdom judges by reference to the Forms about *how its object would be best.* Finally, we now have a better understanding of how *epistēmē* of the Forms is distinguished from wisdom. Wisdom is not identical to, but is partly constituted by *epistēmē.* When wisdom makes a judgment, it judges by reference to the Forms as a standard. This referencing partly consists in a cognitive grasp of the Forms, and this cognitive grasp of the Forms just is *epistēmē* (knowledge). Further, wisdom, unlike *epistēmē,* and rather like *techne/archē* is a power that judges how its object will be best.

III. What wisdom is set over

The next task is to determine the object of wisdom, i.e. what wisdom makes judgments about. In *Rep.* IV's discussion of wisdom, Socrates searchēs for the kind of knowledge (*epistēmē*) wisdom is through the object of this knowledge. The emphasis on the object of the knowledge is marked in the text. Socrates begins by asking, "is it because of the knowledge of the carpenters that the city should be called wise and judicious?" (428b12-13). Glaucon answers that the city is not called wise, but instead called skilled-in-carpentry (*tektonikē*) because of the knowledge of the carpenters. Socrates then rephrases the answer to highlight the object, "then a city which judges how these things (sc. objects of the skill of carpentry) would be best (βουλευομένη ὡς ἂν ἔχοι βέλτιστα) should not be called wise because of the knowledge on behalf of (ὑπὲρ) the wooden things." (428c2-3). Wisdom, then, is not knowledge on behalf of

(*huper*) the wooden things—it is not the knowledge which judges how wooden things would be best—but how the city as a whole would fare best:

> **IV. 428c11-d10**
> So, is there some knowledge in the (city) just now founded by us, in some of its citizens, which does not judge some one thing among the things in the city, but on behalf of (ὑπὲρ) it as a whole, in what way it would associate best both with itself and with other cities? (428c11-d10)
> There is.
> What is it? And what is it in?
> It is guardianship (knowledge) (ἡ φυλακική) and it is in those rulers which we now called complete guardians.
> Then because of this knowledge (διὰ ταύτην οὖν τὴν ἐπιστήμην), what will you call the city?
> Judicious, he said, and truly wise. (εὔβουλον, ἔφη, καὶ τῷ ὄντι σοφήν.)

The city as a whole, then, is the object of wisdom.

Plato usually marks the object of a power with *epi* + dative or with a genitive. Notice, however, that in the passage I cited, Plato says wisdom judges *huper* (rather than *epi*) the city. One might worry that this somehow tells against the city and soul as a whole being the proper object of wisdom. We can set this worry aside for the following reasons. First, Plato is inconsistent with this language even in the *Rep*. I discussion of shepherding and ruling, but it is clear in context that he conceives of both as powers which are set over their objects. Second, Plato at least sometimes uses *huper* to mark a power's object: in *Rep* IV, Plato says carpentry knowledge is *huper* wooden implements. Plato would certainly characterize *tektonikē technē* or *epistēmē* as a power, just as shepherding in book I was a power, and he would identify the object of carpentry as wooden implements. Similarly, Plato's claim that wisdom is *huper* the city as a whole identifies the city as the object of the power, wisdom. One reason Plato uses *huper* instead of *epi* might be to emphasize that the object over which a power is set is *benefitted* by the

power—the power puts the object in a better state—so that the power can be said to act *on behalf of* its objects.

That wisdom is a power that benefits the city and is concerned with how the city will be best was foreshadowed in book III. There, Socrates claims that the rulers of the city must be the best of the guardians. These are the people who are practically wise (*phronimoi*) and capable (*dunatoi*) and, further, who care for the city (Οὐκοῦν φρονίμους τε εἰς τοῦτο δεῖ ὑπάρχειν καὶ δυνατοὺς καὶ ἔτι κηδεμόνας τῆς πόλεως; 412c12-13). They believe that what is best for the city is also best for them, and they work to benefit (*sumpherein*) the city (III.412d ff.). Further, they are firm in their belief (*doxa*), even under compulsion or spells to abandon it, that they must do what is best for the city (δόξαν τὴν τοῦ ποιεῖν δεῖν ἃ τῇ πόλει βέλτιστα) (III.412e5-8). I take this discussion to show not only that wisdom is set over the city as a whole, but also that what wisdom does is judge by reference to the Forms (as we established in section II) *how the city as a whole would be best.*

Applied to the city soul analogy, the object of the wisdom of the soul is the soul as a whole, as is clear from the following texts:

> **441e4-6**
> Οὐκοῦν τῷ μὲν λογιστικῷ ἄρχειν προσήκει, σοφῷ ὄντι καὶ ἔχοντι τὴν ὑπὲρ ἁπάσης τῆς ψυχῆς προμήθειαν, τῷ δὲ θυμοειδεῖ ὑπηκόῳ εἶναι καὶ συμμάχῳ τούτου;
>
> Is it fitting, then, for the rational part to rule, since it is wise and has forethought on behalf of the whole soul, and for the spirited part to be obedient and an ally of it?
>
> **442b5-9**
> Ἆρ' οὖν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, καὶ τοὺς ἔξωθεν πολεμίους τούτω ἂν κάλλιστα φυλαττοίτην ὑπὲρ ἁπάσης τῆς ψυχῆς τε καὶ τοῦ σώματος, τὸ μὲν βουλευόμενον, τὸ δὲ προπολεμοῦν, ἑπόμενον [δὲ] τῷ ἄρχοντι καὶ τῇ ἀνδρείᾳ ἐπιτελοῦν τὰ βουλευθέντα;
>
> "Then," I said, "wouldn't these (τούτω) guard on behalf of (*huper*) the whole soul and the body as well as possible against external enemies—the one, judging, and the other,

defending/fighting, following the ruler, and through its courage, completing the things judged?"

442c5-8
Σοφὸν δέ γε ἐκείνῳ τῷ σμικρῷ μέρει, τῷ ὃ ἦρχέν τ' ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ταῦτα παρήγγελλεν, ἔχον αὖ κἀκεῖνο ἐπιστήμην ἐν αὐτῷ τὴν τοῦ συμφέροντος ἑκάστῳ τε καὶ ὅλῳ τῷ κοινῷ σφῶν αὐτῶν τριῶν ὄντων.

And (we will call him) wise because of that small part which both rules in him and gives these orders, having again also that knowledge in him of what is advantageous for each of them, being three, and the whole in common.

Just as the city's wisdom determines how it can associate best with itself and other cities, the soul's wisdom can determine how it associates best internally and externally (against external enemies, in 442b5-9).

The upshot of this discussion is that wisdom is set over the whole, not the part. The wisdom of a soul is set over the whole soul; the wisdom of a city is set over the whole city. It is noteworthy that wisdom fits the structure I set out in section I for *technai/archai*:[97] if *x* is a *technē/archē*, then there is some object *y* over which *x* is set, and *x* provides what is best for or benefits *y.* This does not automatically mean that wisdom is a kind of *technē*—it is plausible that *technai* are a subclass of a broader class of powers which do what is best for their objects. Further, wisdom is different from shepherding, farming, and the like, in that it is partly constituted by *epistēmē* of the Forms, so if it is a *technē*, it is an elevated sort. There is, though, good reason to think that wisdom is an *archē.* [98] A satisfactory treatment of the relationship between *sophia, technē,* and *archē* is beyond the scope of this paper. However, that wisdom fits

[97] See also: *Resp.* V 459 c9-d1: guardians use falsehoods for the benefit of those they rule (ἐπ' ὠφελίᾳ τῶν ἀρχομένων)
[98] Cf. Lane. See, e.g. *Resp.* V 463b6-b9: "Τί δ' οἱ ἄρχοντες ἀλλήλους;" "Συνάρχοντας," ἔφη. "Τί δ' οἱ ἡμέτεροι;" "Συμφύλακας."

this structure does help to explain why Plato uses *technai* throughout to help guide our understanding of wisdom.

I'll conclude with two final notes about the object of *sophia*. First, Plato sometimes uses language extremely similar to the *epi* + *tattein* language when discussing *sophia.* In IV, he characterizes wisdom as the knowledge that is in charge of just actions (σοφίαν δὲ τὴν ἐπιστατοῦσαν ταύτῃ τῇ πράξει ἐπιστήμην (443c9-444a2). The question, then, is whether just actions are the objects of *sophia*. My view is that wisdom is in a way in charge of (*epistatein*) just actions, but it would be misleading to say that just actions are the objects of wisdom. Insofar as just actions produce justice in the soul and pertain to the soul's interactions with other people, they are to do with the soul's association with itself and others (443e, just action preserves this inner harmony; comparison to health in 444cd). Wisdom is concerned with making good judgments about the soul's associations with itself and others, and so it is concerned with and controls just actions.

Next come two related questions: first, if wisdom is partly constituted by *epistēmē*, does wisdom have the Forms, and not just the city or soul, as its object? Second, and relatedly, why should we think that *epistēmē* partly constitutes wisdom, rather than holding that it is merely necessary for, but does not partly constitute, wisdom? Shepherding and the other *technai* will be helpful here. Shepherding only has sheep—not the principles or generalizations about sheep—as its object. Similarly, I'm inclined to say, wisdom has only the city/soul as its object, even though it makes use of the Forms. As for the second question, when a carpenter uses her skill of carpentry and judges by reference to some standard of goodness for wooden objects, her grasp of this standard partly constitutes her skill of carpentry and her judgment. Similarly, the guardian's

knowledge of the Forms—her standard of judgment—partly constitutes her skill in guardianship (*phulakike epistēmē, i.e. sophia*).

IV.

We now have a definition: wisdom is the power to judge well, by referencing the Forms as a standard, about the city and soul as a whole, how it would be best. This distinguishes wisdom from knowledge—it judges, rather than knows, and its objects are (or at least include) the city and soul. It also distinguishes wisdom from belief (*doxa*), because beliefs do not need to be formed by reference to the Forms. Wisdom is different from the crafts of carpentry, farming, and the like for the same reason—those kinds of expertise do not require knowledge of the Forms, but wisdom is also, in crucial ways, similar to these crafts. Like shepherding, farming, and carpentry, wisdom is a kind of judiciousness. It judges by reference to some standard how the objects in its domain can be best. Scholars have noticed the importance of the *technai* as models for understanding the virtues, but have not appreciated this way in which wisdom and the *technai* are alike.

The account meets the satisfaction conditions I set out above. First, it explains why *epistēmē* is necessary for wisdom: wisdom uses the Forms as a standard for judging how the city or soul would be best. Second, Plato claims putting wise rulers in charge is the quickest way of bringing about the closest approximation to the ideal city, and that wisdom's role in bringing this city about is why philosophers must rule. This is because only those who are wise are capable of using the Forms as a standard so that, by looking back and forth and—to use Plato's own simile, erasing some parts, adding others, like a painter—only they are capable of making the city as good as it can be. Just as doctors who have the best standards for judging sick bodies are

uniquely qualified and will be more effective at doing so, guardians who have the best standards for judging about the body and soul will uniquely qualified and more effective at making the city better. We also are in a position to address Annas's worry, that Plato fails to justify why wisdom is so difficult to accomplish that only a few people have it and can thereby rule. Wisdom is extraordinarily difficult to accomplish because it uses the Forms as a standard for judgment, and so requires grasp of the Forms.

Finally, one might raise a concern as to whether wisdom is sufficiently unified to be a single power. It is not clear what the success conditions for a power's being unified would be, or whether Plato himself would, in this context, be concerned with whether wisdom is a hybrid power or a conjunctive power (a power formed by two separate powers). I have argued that wisdom is a kind of judiciousness, and all kinds of judiciousness have a certain structure—they judge *x* by reference to *y*, where *y* is the standard for judgment. In the case of wisdom, the *x* (city, soul) is perceptible and the *y* (Forms) is intelligible, but it is not clear that this difference in objects by itself jeopardizes the unity of a power. After all, even in the case of medical crafts, which certainly is unified, what is used as standards (generalizations about medicine) differ vastly from the object of judgment (*this* particular body), even if both are in the domain of perceptibles.

This definition of wisdom has important implications. Wisdom requires both *epistēmē* of the Forms and an understanding of the city/soul, which must be gained through experience (*Rep.* VI 485a1-2). This experience partly constitutes the guardian's wisdom, whereas it does not at all constitute *epistēmē* of the Forms. Moreover, just as the shepherd's knowledge of shepherding-principles does not exhaust shepherding expertise, the guardian's knowledge of the Forms does not exhaust guardianship-expertise (i.e. wisdom). That guardianship expertise requires

experience as well as knowledge of Forms is philosophically attractive in just the way that it's attractive to think surgical-expertise requires experience in surgery plus knowledge of medical principles.

The result is that wisdom turns out to be highly contingent, in that a guardian who is wise in one context might not be wise in another. This is because, in addition to knowing the Forms, one also needs to know about the contingent matters of the city. For this reason, Plato requires that guardians-in-training "take command in matters of war and occupy the other offices suitable for young people, so that they won't be inferior to the others in experience (μηδ' ἐμπειρίᾳ ὑστερῶσι τῶν ἄλλων" (*Rep.* VII 539e1-540a9). Though unorthodox, this is an attractive result. One can be an excellent leader of one city by knowing all of the particulars of the social world of that city and by having an excellent grasp of justice, goodness, and the like, but do a terrible job leading a city with entirely different rules and norms. There is, however, a crucial respect in which wisdom is context *independent*. Wisdom's judgments always use the Forms as standards, and since the Forms are unchanging from place to place, once one has knowledge of them, one will always have a necessary component of wisdom. The Form, Justice, is the same everywhere, but what justice looks like in the perceptible world—just states of affairs, actions, people—will depend on the circumstances.

Implication two: Plato calls the discussion in *Rep.* V-VII a digression (VIII 543c). Scholars disagree on the implications of this claim and, more broadly, on the status of V-VII in the *Republic*—some go so far as to suggest that it was a later addition, or that it was written at a later point in time.[99] My reading recommends a re-interpretation of the narrative of *Rep.* IV-VII,

[99] Irwin 256; Ludlam, *Plato's Rep as a Philosophical Drama on Doing Well* 13; Jowett lxvii: "This leads him into a tiresome digression..." ; Dorter, *The Transformation of Plato's Republic* 254; Mitchell and Lucas, *An Engagement with Plato's Republic: A Companion to the Republic* 168.

at least as far as wisdom is concerned. V-VII is undoubtedly a literary digression, but, with respect to wisdom, it is not a philosophical one. In book IV, Plato introduces wisdom as one of the four virtues of the city and soul. He establishes wisdom as a kind of judiciousness about the sensible realm, but leaves available a role for *epistēmē* of the Forms. In particular, just as the judiciousness of the farmer consists in judging about the crops on the basis of generalizations about farming, the judiciousness of the guardian will consist in judging how the city will be best on the basis of some general principles—for a domain as vast as the city, the best candidate principles will be the Forms.

In *Rep.* V, Plato emphasizes that until philosophers rule as guardians or guardians philosophize adequately—that is, until political power and philosophy come together—the city will suffer endlessly. Here, Plato adds to his book IV discussion of wisdom by explicitly identifying and characterizing the power to philosophize. To adequately characterize this power, Plato must discuss the Forms. He identifies the philosopher's power as knowledge (*epistēmē*) of the Forms and claims that since philosophers have this power, philosophers are best suited to rule. This is not to say that knowledge of the Forms *exhausts* the capacity that makes someone an excellent ruler—and Plato repeatedly emphasizes the mastery over sensibles so that we do not lose sight of this point—but since knowledge of the Forms is partly constitutive of wisdom, the virtue of a guardian, those who have it will be better suited to rule than those who do not, provided that they are not inferior in experience (*empeireia*) or virtue. In VI-VII, Plato discusses the natures of philosophers to defend it against commonly-held negative attitudes toward them (charges of uselessness, etc.), describes the education of the guardians, and builds in training in both the Forms and perceptible matters. In the course of this discussion, he explains how the Forms can shed light on the grasp of perceptibles.

In VIII, Plato again mentions wisdom, reflecting the developments of IV-VII:

> Now, the people you have educated to be leaders in your city, even though they are wise (σοφοί), still won't, through calculation together with sense perception (λογισμῷ μετ' αἰσθήσεως), hit upon the fertility and barrenness of the human species, but it will escape them, and so they will at some time beget children when they ought not to do so. (*Rep.* VIII 546a7-b3; transl. Reeve)

That wisdom is closely connected with both calculation and sense perception here is exactly what we should expect if we take book IV's claims about wisdom together with V-VII's developments. Given that, on my reading, *Rep.* V-VII is continuous with the discussion of *Rep.* IV, and *Rep.* VIII reflects the developments of V-VII, we should revisit and restrict the extent to which we take V-VII to be a digression

Implication three: this account recommends a revision of our understanding of Plato's place in the competition for wisdom. The standard interpretation, endorsed by Reeve, Irwin, Cooper, Wolfsdorf, Kerferd, and others, identifies wisdom with *epistēmē* of the Forms, making it highly theoretical. The work of wisdom, on the standard account, is to contemplate intelligibles. This is not the view of the *Republic*—the work of wisdom is rather to judge well about perceptibles, using knowledge of the Forms as a standard.

Chapter 3: Wisdom in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

0. Introduction

In *NE* VI.1, Aristotle divides the rational soul part into two: with the *epistēmonikon*, we study beings whose principles do not admit of being otherwise; with the *logistikon* (or the *doxastikon*),[100] we study beings which do admit of being otherwise (*NE* 6.1, 1139a6-12).[101] *Phronēsis* is an excellence (*aretē*) of the *logistikon* and *sophia* is an excellence of the *epistēmonikon.*

The term 'wisdom' (*sophia*) denotes excellence or mastery over an epistemic domain. To say that a particular kind of knowledge is wisdom is to assign to it the status as the best epistemic accomplishment. In offering his account of wisdom*,* then, Aristotle is not engaging in a merely terminological exercise, but is instead making a substantive commitment as to what constitutes the best cognitive achievement for a human being. This commitment has great ethical and political significance, since the best human life is characterized by the exercise of wisdom, and since the title, wisdom, conferred significant sociocultural power and authority.[102]

[100] B. Morison and H. Lorenz, "Aristotle's Empiricist Theory of Doxastic Knowledge," ["Empiricist"] *Phronesis* 64(4):1-34

[101] This translation is in agreement with Broadie and Rowe, Morison and Lorenz; Aristotle justifies this division with the principle that different parts of the soul possess knowledge (*gnōsis*) by being similar and fitted to their objects. If two objects are different, then the parts of the soul which grasp them must also be different

[102] Kurke argues that Aristotle's appropriation of *sophia* for theoretical intellect and as the "consummate philosophical faculty" must be understood as moves in a longstanding competition for wisdom: "I would contend that what motivates this is power: that even Aristotle's seemingly disinterested philosophical treatises are engaged in a deadly serious contestation for what is perceived to be one of the culture's highest goods. *Sophia* is still in this period and later the bearer of tremendous cultural and political prestige and authority—a form of "symbolic capital" to which all participants in the cultural field want to be able to lay claim." (Kurke 120)

Aristotle defines wisdom as immediate insight (*nous*) and scientific understanding (*epistēmē*) into the most honorable things (*NE* 6.7, 1141a18-20).[103] To understand the definition of *sophia*, we must understand its constituent states, *nous* and *epistēmē*, along with its domain. We can take the following uncontroversial understanding of *nous* and *epistēmē* as a starting point. *Nous* grasps particular principles and axioms which are necessarily true, and these principles are neither explained nor derived (on pain of regress). *Epistēmē* is the state by which one constructs arguments which are both deductively valid and whose contains premises which explain the truth of its conclusion. *Epistēmē* uses the axioms supplied by *nous* as a starting point to arrive at the theorems of a science. Since these theorems are derived from principles which are necessarily true, the theorems are themselves necessarily true. One who has *epistēmē* will be able to grasp these theorems as necessarily true and also understand why they hold true.

The domain of wisdom is more controversial. On one interpretation, wisdom is just the combination of *nous* and *epistēmē*. On another, it is *nous* and *epistēmē* not about just anything—for instance, not about the subject matter of astronomy or biology—but about the most honorable things. Since this chapter focuses on the *NE,* and since it is clear that in the *NE*, the domain is restricted to the most honorable things, I'll simply assume the domain restriction.[104]

To know this much about wisdom still leaves a key question unanswered. Why does Aristotle think that *epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things defines wisdom? Why does he—and why should anyone—think that this kind of knowledge is the best intellectual accomplishment? Contrary to the views of his predecessors, wisdom according to Aristotle is highly theoretical (as

[103] This translation involves punctuating the text differently from the way Bywater has it: ὥστ' εἴη ἂν ἡ σοφία νοῦς καὶ ἐπιστήμη, ὥσπερ κεφαλὴν ἔχουσα ἐπιστήμη τῶν τιμιωτάτων—we should add a comma between *epistēmē* and *tōn timiōtatōn.*

[104] Ross remarks, "Sophia can be used in a wider sense (e.g. in the *Ethics* it includes mathematics and physics, 1141a23, b1)" in W.D. Ross *Aristotle's Metaphysics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford, 1924): 124

opposed to practical). But one could reasonably hold that the best intellectual accomplishment is instead understanding of political science or a kind of judiciousness about the social world (e.g. knowledge of what the best course of action is in any given circumstance). Aristotle's definition of wisdom is also highly restrictive in its subject matter. Since it is only of the most honorable things, theoretical *epistēmai* like physics and mathematics do not count as wisdom, at least in the strict sense. One might agree with Aristotle that wisdom is *epistēmē* and *nous* but think that it is *of* a broader or different range of items. Much of the secondary literature on wisdom in Aristotle has focused on the connection between wisdom and the good life, but the literature has been far less systematic in specifying what wisdom is and why it is the best kind of knowledge. This chapter offers such a treatment.

I aim to show that Aristotle does not merely stipulate a definition of *sophia* in the *NE* but gives an argument for it. The argument relies on a broader epistemological commitment to a hierarchy of intellectual accomplishments organized according to two metrics: the exactness (*akribeia*) of the intellectual accomplishment and the excellence of the subject matter it grasps. According to this hierarchy, only one kind of knowledge will come out on top: *sophia*, which is *epistēmē* together with *nous* of the most honorable things. Thus, only this kind of knowledge deserves to be called wisdom.

The attractiveness of Aristotle's account of wisdom and, as a result, the convincingness of his privileging of *theoria* in the best human life will depend in large part on the attractiveness of these two metrics for ranking knowledge. To see this, suppose we were to adopt utility in the practical domain as the standard for ranking different kinds of knowledge. The best kind of knowledge would be the one that is most useful, and political science or practical wisdom—contenders that Aristotle deliberately rules out as deserving of the title—would have better claim

to wisdom than Aristotle's own candidate. In fact, the *Republic*'s conception would be preferable to Aristotle's if this were the metric. Once we understand the role of these epistemic metrics in Aristotle's argument for wisdom, we will be in a position to better understand where and why Plato and Aristotle diverge in their definitions of wisdom. The picture that emerges will also be of general philosophical interest. It is an important question what standards or metrics we use (or should use) in deciding what kinds of knowledge are of the greatest epistemic and ethical value. One of Aristotle's contributions to epistemology is to offer a candidate answer.

I. The Argument for *Sophia* as *Epistēmē* and *Nous* of the Most Honorable Things

Aristotle's argument for his conception of wisdom is compressed:

Τὴν δὲ σοφίαν ἔν τε ταῖς τέχναις τοῖς ἀκριβεστάτοις τὰς τέχνας ἀποδίδομεν, οἷον Φειδίαν λιθουργὸν σοφὸν καὶ Πολύκλειτον ἀνδριαντοποιόν, ἐνταῦθα μὲν οὖν οὐθὲν ἄλλο σημαίνοντες τὴν σοφίαν ἢ ὅτι ἀρετὴ τέχνης ἐστίν· εἶναι δέ τινας σοφοὺς οἰόμεθα ὅλως οὐ κατὰ μέρος οὐδ' ἄλλο τι σοφούς, ὥσπερ Ὅμηρός φησιν ἐν τῷ Μαργίτῃ τὸν δ' οὔτ' ἄρ σκαπτῆρα θεοὶ θέσαν οὔτ' ἀροτῆρα οὔτ' ἄλλως τι σοφόν. ὥστε δῆλον ὅτι ἀκριβεστάτη ἂν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν εἴη ἡ σοφία. δεῖ ἄρα τὸν σοφὸν μὴ μόνον τὰ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχῶν εἰδέναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς ἀληθεύειν. ὥστ' εἴη ἂν ἡ σοφία νοῦς καὶ ἐπιστήμη, ὥσπερ κεφαλὴν ἔχουσα ἐπιστήμη τῶν τιμιωτάτων.

We ascribe wisdom in crafts to those who are most exact (*akribestatos*) with respect to crafts—for example, (we call) Pheidias a wise marble-sculptor and Polycleitus a (wise) bronze-sculptor—here then,[105] wisdom signals nothing other than what is the virtue/excellence of a craft. But we think some are wise in general (*holōs*), not in part (*kata meros*) and not wise in some other way, just as Homer says in the *Margites*: the gods did not make him a digger, nor a plougher, nor wise in some other way. Therefore, it is clear that wisdom is the most exact among the kinds of scientific understanding (*epistēmai*).[106] The wise person, then, must know not only what is from the principles, but also arrive at truth about the principles. Therefore, wisdom is *nous* and *epistēmē*—*epistēmē* having its head, as it were—of the most honorable things. (*NE* 6.7*,* 1141a9-20)

[105] *Men oun* can either indicate "summing up and rounding off" or be purely transitional (Denniston 473-4). 'Then' is nice because it can have a transitional meaning or an inferential meaning. I read it as transitional.

[106] *Epistēmē* read in the restrictive sense, since the passage immediately follows the strict definition of *epistēmē* and the definition that immediately follows relies on the strict sense.

Aristotle's aim is to give a convincing account of wisdom from linguistic practices surrounding the concept. In ordinary usage, he claims, wisdom is closely tied to exactness (*akribeia*) and excellence (*aretē*). He remarks that people often use wisdom in a qualified way, such as when we call Pheidias and Polycleitus wise. In these cases of qualified *sophia*, the person is not simply wise, and it is always appropriate to ask, 'wise in what?' to learn the way in which they are wise. Pheidias, for instance, is wise in marble-sculpting and Polycleitus in bronze-sculpting. However, we also accept that some people are wise in general (*holōs*), where the question, "wise in what?" would be inappropriate.[107] As evidence for the idea of unqualified wisdom, Aristotle cites the *Margites*'s description of someone who isn't a wise *digger* or *plougher* or wise in some other (qualified) way. As many have noted, Aristotle quotes the text misleadingly and the passage in context does not suggest an unqualified use of *sophia*.[108] This indicates that Aristotle is attentive to the pressure to connect his account with established conceptions of wisdom.

From these observations—and the inference here will be a focus of the remainder of section—Aristotle arrives at the view that wisdom is the most exact among the kinds of knowledge, and then at the intermediate conclusion that the wise person must know the principles and what's derived from them. Finally, he concludes with the definition of wisdom: wisdom is *epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things.

Our task now is to understand how the pre-theoretical intuitions about wisdom, that wisdom is connected to exactness and excellence, and that there is a specific and general understanding of wisdom, leads us to Aristotle's definition. Before I offer my own reconstruction, I want to rule out one interpretation of the passage up to 1141a17, ending with

[107] Billings argues that this is a Socratic innovation. Thanks to Hendrik Lorenz for suggesting this way of forming the point about qualified and unqualified *sophia*
[108] Kerferd 1976, 24-5; cf. Kurke 117; Bollack 1968, 551

"therefore, it is clear that wisdom is the most exact among the kinds of scientific understanding (*epistēmai*)." The reading is from Reeve's *Aristotle on Practical Wisdom*, one of few detailed treatments of this step in the argument:[109]

> The thought seems to be this. Rigor [*akribeia*] in a craft pertaining to a particular area is the wisdom that, because it just is the virtue of the craft in question, also pertains to this area; so a wisdom pertaining to things as a whole (understanding *holōs* in the same way as at 5/40a28, 30) must be the virtue or excellence of a body of knowledge pertaining to things as a whole. Hence everyone supposes that the wise man has scientific knowledge "of all things (*panta*)," not because he has it of each particular one (*Met.* I 2 982a8-10) but because "wisdom deals with the primary causes and starting-points of all of them (*Met*. I 1 981b27-29).[110]

According to Reeve, Aristotle's argument is as follows. Rigor in craft is wisdom in craft, because wisdom is the virtue of the craft in question. The argument is valid if we supply on Reeve's behalf: rigor in craft is the virtue of the craft in question. By analogy, wisdom pertaining to things as a whole is the virtue of a body of knowledge pertaining to things as a whole. "Knowledge pertaining to things as a whole" is ambiguous, but Reeve seems to understand it in terms of the *Metaphysics* A claim that the wise person in a way has knowledge of all things, in virtue of having the primary causes and starting-points of all things. Thus, wisdom pertaining to things as a whole is the virtue of the body of knowledge which grasps the primary causes and starting-points of all things.

One problem with Reeve's construal is that we can infer directly from this conclusion – that wisdom is the virtue of the body of knowledge which grasps the primary causes and starting points of all things – to the conclusion that the wise person must know the truth about principles. But Aristotle himself relies on an intermediate conclusion: "therefore, it is clear that wisdom is the most *akribēs* among the kinds of scientific understanding (*epistēmai*)." It is a disadvantage of

[109] Broadie, 53, 371; Kurke 114-124
[110] Reeve, 172-3

Reeve's interpretation that it renders this intermediate conclusion unnecessary. Although Reeve does offer a short discussion of *akribeia* to help us understand this intermediate conclusion, he does not explain how it follows from the argument as he's reconstructed it.

This is one aspect of a deeper problem with Reeve's reconstruction. Aristotle emphasizes *akribeia* throughout and clearly takes it to do a good deal of argumentative work, but on Reeve's reading, the concept does no work. In fact, if we look more closely at the passage from Reeve, we see that *akribeia* drops out of the argument early on, when we move from *akribeia* in craft being wisdom in craft to 'wisdom pertaining to things as a whole is the virtue of the body of knowledge pertaining to things as a whole'. It drops out because Reeve treats *akribeia* as synonymous or interchangeable with the excellence of a body of knowledge.[111] But, as Reeve himself realizes, this cannot be the sense of *akribeia* Aristotle relies on later on in the passage, when we move from wisdom's being the most *akribēs* to it grasping principles and what comes from them. Thus, Reeve concludes that Aristotle begins with a "loose and popular" notion of *akribeia,* then shifts to a more technical account of *akribeia* later on (173). This is an unattractive result: a strength of Aristotle's argument is that he develops his account of wisdom from a commonly-held intuition that it is connected to exactness. The argument loses intuitive force if his definition were to rely not on this common understanding of exactness, but instead his own highly specific notion.

It is worth pausing to see why Reeve's interpretation faces pressure to attribute to Aristotle a shift, without signal, from one sense of *akribeia* to another. Reeve supposes at the

[111] Gauthier and Jolif do the same. They take Aristotle to be establish that wisdom is the most perfect (their translation of *akribestatē*) science, i.e. the architectonic or master-science. Their translation: "par consequent, il est evident que la maîtrise qu'est la philosophie sera la plus parfait des sciences." (Vol II.2 p.491) Here, *akribeia* is taken as synonymous with perfection or mastery, rather than what makes a science perfect or architechtonic.

outset that *akribeia* is synonymous with 'epistemic virtue or excellence', but this cannot be the understanding of *akribeia* throughout. Aristotle's stated conclusion of the craft analogy is that wisdom is the most exact among the kinds of scientific understanding. If *akribeia* and epistemic excellence are synonymous, then Aristotle's conclusion would be that wisdom is the most epistemically excellent among the kinds of scientific understanding.[112] It is of course true, according to Aristotle, that wisdom is the most excellent in the epistemic domain, but this is not the conclusion of the argument. It is implausible that Aristotle would argue *via sophia's* association with *akribeia* that *sophia* is the most excellent, because the ordinary usage of *sophia* in the period was already an excellence-signaling term—and a more marked term of excellence than *akribeia*. Further, it would be strange if Aristotle were to spend the bulk of the argument establishing that wisdom is the most excellent—a fairly uncontroversial idea—only to move immediately to the highly controversial claim that wisdom requires knowing the principles and what's derived from them. More plausibly, he takes for granted that *sophia* is most excellent, and argues *via akribeia* that wisdom requires knowing the principles.

My interpretation will contain three points of disagreement with Reeve. First, Reeve claims that *akribeia* in a domain *is* wisdom in that domain. I disagree, and I also reject the more general idea that Aristotle uses *akribeia* synonymously with 'excellence of a body of knowledge' anywhere in the argument. Instead, I'll argue that *sophia* signals the highest epistemic excellence, and *sophia* holds on the basis of *akribeia* (*kata akribeian*). *Akribeia* in a domain

[112] The passage would be read as follows. When Aristotle claims that we ascribe 'wisdom' to the person who is *akribestatos* in their craft, the point is that we ascribe 'wisdom' to the person who is epistemically most excellent with respect to their craft. On this reading, when Aristotle gives the examples of Pheidias and Polycleitus and remarks, "ἐνταῦθα μὲν οὖν οὐθὲν ἄλλο σημαίνοντες τὴν σοφίαν ἢ ὅτι ἀρετὴ τέχνης ἐστίν" the *men oun* should be read in the 'summing up and rounding off' sense, as Denniston puts it. It indicates a complete summary of what we have established so far, which is that *sophia* signifies excellence of a craft, and it is this point that the craft analogy seeks to establish.

explains wisdom in that domain; it isn't identical to it. As Broadie puts it, "The adjective '*sophos*' was ordinarily used in connection with a particular expertise or subject, to ascribe virtuosity in that area. It was predicated on the basis of the *precision* (*akribeia*) of someone's work."[113] In section II, I'll offer a fuller and more determinate characterization of *akribeia*. Second, according to Reeve, Aristotle here argues that wisdom "pertains to things as a whole" and Reeve glosses this as wisdom in a way having knowledge of all things "by dealing with the primary causes and starting points of all of them." I don't think Aristotle is committed to this view here (though he does argue for it in the *Metaphysics*). The distinction between general and particular wisdom is not that general wisdom in a way knows everything, while particular wisdom only knows part of everything. Rather, it is that particular wisdom is the most exact *among some sub-domain of knowledge*, whereas general wisdom is the most exact *among the entire domain of knowledge*. Finally, on Reeve's interpretation, it is unclear what (if any) work *akribeia* does in the argument. My reading makes *akribeia* central. The point of the craft analogy is to establish that wisdom is most exact among the kinds of scientific understanding, and exactness will be crucial for arriving at Aristotle's next claim, that wisdom must be about the principles and what's derived from them.

Aristotle's argument for his account of wisdom begins with an analogy to crafts. Wisdom in a craft has two features: (1) it belongs to those who are the most exact in a domain of craft, and (2) it signifies excellence in that domain. For example, wisdom in marble-sculpting belongs to Pheidias, who is the most exact with respect to marble-sculpting. Aristotle gives the example of Polycleitus immediately after, dropping the *sophos* and emphasizing *andriantopoion* to indicate the qualified way in which he is wise (οἷον Φειδίαν λιθουργὸν σοφὸν καὶ Πολύκλειτον

[113] Broadie sometimes uses weaker language: "As well as being characterized by precision, intellectual accomplishment deals with sublime objects." (Broadie 53)

ἀνδριαντοποιόν). In general: wisdom in a qualified domain (e.g. a craft, a particular craft) belongs to those who are most exact with respect to that qualified domain.

Some people are wise sculptors, diggers, farmers, and so on, but we do sometimes call people wise without specifying a noun such as *andriantopoion* to specify the respect in which they are wise. They are "wise in general (*holōs*), not in part (*kata meros*) and not (*oude*) in some other way." Note, we should take the *oude* here epexegetically, so that Aristotle is contrasting general wisdom with just one other kind, *sophia kata meros.* The quote from the *Margites* lists only examples of particular wisdom, and Aristotle does not go on to discuss a third kind of wisdom.[114]

How should we understand the difference between those who are generally wise and those who are wise in part? My proposal is that those who are wise in part are the people who are the most exact in a particular domain of knowledge. By contrast, those who are wise in general are the most exact in the entire domain of knowledge. Pheidias is the most exact in marble-sculpting because his knowledge of marble-sculpting outranks all others' knowledge of marble-sculpting in exactness. The person who is most exact in the entire domain of knowledge is the person with the knowledge that is the most exact *among* all kinds of knowledge.

Notice that on this interpretation, no matter how exact Pheidias becomes in marble sculpting, he cannot have unqualified wisdom. Pheidias is as exact as one can be in the domain of marble-sculpting, but because of the limitations of marble-sculpting, he still lacks the most exact knowledge a human being can possess—marble-sculpting simply is not the kind of domain

[114] The examples from Homer are all cases of particular wisdom (*allōs ti* read as, for instance, a carpenter, bronzeworker, etc.). If one rejects the epexegetic reading, then Aristotle contrasts general wisdom with particular wisdom, which is his focus here, and a third, looser sort of wisdom, which he does not discuss and in which he's disinterested for present purposes. This third sort of wisdom might be loose, colloquial uses of '*sophos*'.

that admits of the most exact knowledge. Furthermore, on this reading, it is not the case that those who are wise in general are wise in every respect. The wise person does not have marble-sculpting wisdom and will not outrank Pheidias in *marble sculpting* exactness. This is a feature of the view; after all, Aristotle establishes Pheidias as the most exact in that field. Finally, there is no indication that Aristotle relies on the claim that the wise person in a way knows everything (contra Reeve).

Aristotle sometimes puts his point in terms of the wise *person*: wisdom belongs to those who are most exact in the entire domain of knowledge. But "exactness" is a feature of cognitive states, so what the claim amounts to is: the person who has wisdom has the state which is most exact in the entire domain of knowledge. And of course, the real object of interest is not the wise person, but wisdom itself: wisdom is the most exact in (hear: among) the entire domain of knowledge. And this is just what Aristotle concludes: "therefore (*ara*), it is clear that wisdom is the most exact among the kinds of scientific understanding." Scientific understanding is more exact than all other kinds of knowledge, and among this subclass of highly exact kinds of knowledge, the one that comes out on top will be wisdom.

When Aristotle claims that wisdom is the most exact among the kinds of scientific understanding, he is not suggesting that wisdom *means* or *is identical to* maximal exactness among *epistēmai*, nor is he relying on the idea that exactness means epistemic virtue. The relationship between wisdom, exactness, and epistemic excellence is rather as follows. Wisdom is a term of high praise in an epistemic domain, and Aristotle himself remarks that in craft, *sophia* signals nothing other than excellence (*aretē*) in craft. This term of praise, wisdom, holds of someone *in virtue of* or *on the basis of* the exactness (*kata akribeian*) of their knowledge.

The clearest evidence for the view comes from a principle articulated at the start of *De Anima*:

Τῶν καλῶν καὶ τιμίων τὴν εἴδησιν ὑπολαμβάνοντες, μᾶλλον δ' ἑτέραν ἑτέρας ἢ κατ' ἀκρίβειαν ἢ τῷ βελτιόνων τε καὶ θαυμασιωτέρων εἶναι, δι' ἀμφότερα ταῦτα τὴν περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ἱστορίαν εὐλόγως ἂν ἐν πρώτοις τιθείημεν.

Holding that knowledge is among the fine and honorable things, but that one may be more so than another either on the basis of exactness or by being of better as well as more marvelous things, because of both of these, we could reasonably put the investigation of the soul among those (kinds of knowledge) which are first. (*DA* I, 402a1-4)

Here, Aristotle establishes that one kind of knowledge (*eidēsis*) can be finer and more honorable than another either on the basis of its exactness or by having better objects. These are two distinct standards for ranking kinds of knowledge (marked by the ἢ…ἢ).[115] The more exact a kind of knowledge is, and/or the better its objects are, the finer and more honorable that knowledge. If some knowledge is finest and most honorable, and so deserving of the name *sophia*—and Aristotle does say that *sophia* is the most honorable kind of knowledge (A.2, 983a4-11, Λ.9, 1075b20-21)—then it will be so on the basis of its being the most exact and by being of the best things. My suggestion is that Aristotle's argument in *NE* 6.7 relies on this principle. Wisdom isn't identical to exactness; it's explained by it.

From the claim that wisdom is the most exact among the kinds of knowledge, Aristotle concludes that the wise person must know both what is from the principles and the truth about principles. Aristotle then concludes to the definition of wisdom: "therefore, wisdom is *nous* and *epistēmē*—*epistēmē* having its head, as it were—of the most honorable things." How these inferences hold will become clearer at the end of section III.

[115] Smyth 2856 for inclusive reading. I'm grateful to Melissa Lane for pressing me to clarify my thoughts on this passage.

The importance of exactness should be clear from the structure of the argument as I've reconstructed it. The key move in Aristotle's argument for wisdom is to notice a close connection in ordinary language between wisdom and *akribeia*. Given this connection, a promising strategy for determining which kind of knowledge counts as wisdom is to identify the one that is most exact. Our next task is to understand more clearly what exactness is.

II. *Akribeia*

The characterization of *akribeia* that I'll present is relatively complicated, so I'll start with a short overview of the full-fledged notion before explaining how this conception emerges from the text. The central idea will be that *akribeia* is a standard for ranking different kinds of knowledge, characterized by[116] (1) stability, understood in terms of proneness to exceptions,[117] and (2) fundamentality in the explanatory order of things.[118]

As a translation of *akribēs*, I somewhat prefer 'exact' over 'precise' and prefer either over 'rigorous' or 'perfect.'[119] In English, 'exact' means perfect, consummate, or finished, but

[116] My view is that Aristotle conceives of *akribeia* as characterized by stability and fundamentality—the stronger claim that it *consists in* stability and fundamentality and the weaker claim that it is '*cashed out*' in terms of stability and fundamentality are also plausible and attractive. But for Aristotle's argument, a strict biconditional between exactness, on the one hand, and stability and fundamentality, on the other would suffice. Many thanks to Jessica Moss for pressing me on this point.

[117] Greenwood agrees with this aspect of *akribeia*: "From its general use, and from the analogy of the sculptor in this passage, it may be said, I think, to include the three notions of accuracy, completeness, and stability [*ametapeistos*]." Exact knowledge is unwavering in the face of persuasion and the exact objects are unchanging. L.H.G. Greenwood, *Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics Book Six with Essays, Notes, and Translation* (Cambridge 1909):35

[118] Reeve, citing *An. Post*. I.27, also argues that the more *akribēs* version of a science is the one that is most explanatory and that one science is more *akribēs* than another if it demonstrates facts that the latter uses as starting points. (Reeve 175)

[119] 'Exact' is also Irwin's preferred translation. Broadie notes that precision (her preferred translation) "implies a completely thorough and penetrating grasp of the subject matter, which will therefore include intelligent grasp of its starting points" (Broadie and Rowe 371). I find this characterization accurate and helpful, but go with 'exact' because of its broader range of meanings. Reeve's considered view is to translate *akribeia* as 'rigor' because of the association between *akribeia* with demonstration from starting points. He notes, though, that its connection to abstraction suggests "exactness" or "precision" as

my preference for this translation stems from the wide range of meanings it can take when the adjective is used to describe different domains. Of laws, rules, order, and procedure, 'exact' can mean admitting of no deviation; of knowledge, it can mean rigorous or accurate; of a person, rigorous or strictly correct; of a calculation, precise as opposed to approximate; of methods, instrument, or a language, it can mean certain and precise.[120] We speak of 'the exact sciences', which are those which admit of absolute precision in their results, and mathematics is a paradigm case.[121] Finally, its definitional connection to rigor and its etymological relation to *exacting*—requiring or being disposed to great exertion or sacrifice—suggests a kind of demanding-ness.[122]

This range of meanings captures the key uses of *akribēs* in Aristotle corpus as well. Broadie glosses *akribeia* as "finished perfection, rigour, exactness, exquisite attention to detail. Opposite qualities: sketchiness, clutter, irrelevance, crudeness. 'Precision' in a work of art or performance manifests a penetrating sensitivity to the medium and subject matter."[123]

Aristotle uses the adjective *akribēs* when discussing a range of topics, including: kinds of knowledge (*epistēmai, technai*), epistemic grasp (*hupolēpsis, dianoia*), perception (*DA* 421a7-13), definition (*Rhet.* I.10, 1369b31-32), and measure (*Met.* X.1 1052b35-1053a2; *De Mundo* 397a8-11).[124]

Exactness is a feature of both objects and cognitive states (e.g. *epistēmē*, mathematical knowledge, *doxa*). The most exact objects will be (1) stable, in that they will be necessarily true

translations, and in crafts, "refinement" or "finish" or "sophistication" is best. (Reeve 175) Gauthier and Jolif prefer "parfaite" for *the* NE 6.7 occurrence of the adjective; Greenwood also translates 'perfect,' but clarifies that it includes the notions of 'exact,' 'complete,' and 'stable.' I find 'rigorous' and 'perfect' both too general and vague as translations.

[120] Oxford English Dictionary.

[121] Aristotle uses mathematics as a paradigmatically exact science in *De Caelo* 306a23-30

[122] Oxford English Dictionary

[123] Broadie 53

[124] The etymology is puzzling. Beekes 56 citing Tichy *MSS* 36 (1977):151-172 claims *akribēs* is derived from *akris* (mountain top) and *bēnai* (to go).

and hold of necessity, and (2) the most fundamental in the explanatory order of things (they will explain all other truths and will themselves lack an explanation). The Principle of Non-Contradiction is highly exact; it is necessarily true, admits of no exceptions, and explains many other facts.

The exactness of an object determines the exactness of the knowledge of the object and the exactness of the science or discipline which studies it. For example, since the objects of arithmetic are highly exact, arithmetic understanding and the science or discipline, arithmetic, are also highly exact. Compared to arithmetic, biology is inexact, because whereas arithmetic studies subjects without matter, biology studies those which do have matter and so admit of change. While the theorems of biology, like all theorems of any science, are true of necessity, the truths they express about the subjects of biology admit of exception. Biology is therefore more exception-prone than mathematics. Consider a theorem of biology, that humans have 32 adult teeth. Like any theorem of a science, this fact is necessarily true—human beings by nature have 32 teeth. However, whereas facts in arithmetic always hold (1 is never even; 1 + 1 is always 2, etc.), there are adult humans with more or fewer than 32 teeth (teeth, since they are material things, are vulnerable to loss due to, say, force).[125] This is just to say: facts about biology are true by nature, but some facts do not actualize on some occasions because of interferences with the operation of nature. Arithmetic and biology both have theorems which are necessarily true, but since some truths of biology hold only for the most part, biology is less exact. Arithmetic is also more explanatorily fundamental than biology. Some facts about biology are explained by arithmetic, but the reverse does not hold. Marble-sculpting is even less exact than biology: its

[125] *Met.* a 995a14ff: we should demand the exact-argumentation (ἀκρῑβολογία) of mathematics only in cases where the object of study has no matter. They would be inappropriate even for physics, which has objects of study which have matter.

starting-points are not necessarily true, and the generalizations of marble-sculpting (e.g. such-and-such technique produces a straight line) admits of exceptions. Further, the explanations of marble-sculpting are explained by many other facts (facts of mathematics, physics), but they themselves do not explain very many downstream facts.

The picture of *akribeia* I defend relies on four claims.

Claim 1: Exactness is an epistemic standard or metric for ranking different kinds of knowledge. *NE* 6.7 establishes that wisdom is most exact among the kinds of scientific understanding (*epistēmai*). To explain this claim, I need only to show that exactness is a standard for ranking a specific sub-class of knowledge – *epistēmai* – and that, according to this standard, wisdom comes out on top. Claim 1 is stronger: exactness is a standard not only for ranking different kinds of scientific understanding but also for ranking different kinds of knowledge broadly construed to include crafts (*technai*). Exactness is therefore a general epistemic standard. It should not only rank theology above physics, but also physics above housebuilding and housebuilding above rhetoric.

For this stronger claim, it is important that all of these kinds of knowledge can be compared according to the same standard, exactness, without a shift in meaning (contra Reeve). It is noteworthy that there is Platonic precedent for treating *akribeia* as a general epistemic standard. In the *Philebus,* dialectic, arithmetic, housebuilding, and music are ranked according to the same standards, one of which is *akribeia.* Barnes suggests reading Aristotle's most explicit discussion of *akribeia* in the *Posterior Analytics* with the *Philebus* in mind, Ross references the same text of the *Philebus* in understanding a reference to the most exact *epistēmai* in *Met* A 982a25 and it's highly plausible, given the interconnectedness of these three texts, that the *Philebus* discussion is relevant to the notion of *akribeia* in the *NE* as well.

Claim 2. Exactness is characterized by stability, understood in terms of how prone something is to exceptions.

Claim 3. Exactness is characterized by fundamentality in the explanatory order of things. Broadie's understanding of *akribeia* as deeply penetrating gets at this point.

Notice that stability and fundamentality admit of degrees, and so does exactness. Objects, knowledge, or sciences can admit of more or fewer exceptions and they can be higher or lower in the explanatory order of things; thus, they can be more or less exact.

Claim 4: The degree of exactness of some subject matter determines the appropriateness of demonstrations and deliberations about it. Objects of theoretical understanding meet a threshold of exactness that makes demonstration appropriate and deliberation inappropriate. Matters of ethical and craft knowledge fail to meet this threshold. The *in*exactness of these truths make demonstrations inappropriate (ethics, for instance, employs practical syllogisms), and deliberation about them is fitting.

So much for overview. The key texts for these claims are from the *Nicomachean Ethics* I.3, *Posterior Analytics* I.27, and *Metaphysics* A.2. It seems clearly legitimate to read these works together and even that Aristotle intends for them to be read together—Aristotle explicitly references the *Analytics* in *NE* VI.3. In *Metaphysics* A 981a25, Aristotle cites the *Ethics* and clearly has in mind *NE* VI. *Metaphysics* A is also closely connected with *NE* VI.7 in content, in that both are prominently concerned with *sophia*. Other texts in the corpus support the view I'm proposing, but I'll cite them only as corroborating evidence.

Here are the four claims again, with an indication of which texts support each claim. Curved brackets indicate central texts for my purposes; square brackets indicate related texts, some of which serve as corroborating evidence:

Claim 1: Exactness is an epistemic metric for ranking not only different kinds of scientific understanding (*An. Post.* I.27; *Met.* a.995a14-17) but, in general, different kinds of knowledge. (*NE* I.3, 1094b11-27).

Claim 2: Exactness is characterized by stability, understood in terms of how prone something is to exceptions (*NE* I.3 1094b11-27).

Claim 3: Exactness is characterized by fundamentality in the explanatory order of things (*An. Post.* I.27, 87a31-37; *Met.* A.2, 982a25ff) [cf. *Met.* M.3, 1078a9-15].

Part of the picture in Claims 2 and 3 is that exactness admits of degrees. (*NE* I.3 1094b11-27; I.7 1098a25ff).

Claim 4: The degree of exactness of a subject matter determines the appropriateness of demonstrations and deliberations about it (*NE* I.3, 1094b11-27; *NE* III.3 1112a34ff). [cf. *An. Post.* II.19 99b26-34, *An. Post.* I.24 86a13-21; *Rh.* I 10, 1356a4-8; *Met* a.995a6ff]

Text 1: *NE* I.3 1094b11-27

Our discussion will be adequate if we make things perspicuous enough to accord with the subject matter (εἰ κατὰ τὴν ὑποκειμένην ὕλην διασαφηθείη); for we would not seek the same degree of exactness in all sorts of arguments alike (τὸ γὰρ ἀκριβὲς οὐχ ὁμοίως ἐν ἅπασι τοῖς λόγοις ἐπιζητητέον), any more than in the products of different crafts. Now, fine and just things, which political science examines, have great difference and variability so as to seem to rest on convention only, not on nature (πολλὴν ἔχει διαφορὰν καὶ πλάνην, ὥστε δοκεῖν νόμῳ μόνον εἶναι, φύσει δὲ μή). But goods also have some variance of this sort (τοιαύτην δέ τινα πλάνην ἔχει καὶ τἀγαθὰ, because they result in harm to many people—for some have been destroyed because of their wealth, others because of their bravery. And so, since we are speaking about such things and from such things, we shall be satisfied to show (ἐνδείκνυσθαι) the truth roughly and in outline (παχυλῶς καὶ τύπῳ); since we are speaking about things that hold for the most part (ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ) and from these sorts of things, we shall be satisfied to draw conclusions (συμπεραίνεσθαι) of the same sort. Each of our claims, then, ought to be accepted in the same way. For the educated person seeks exactness (τἀκριβὲς) in relation to each kind (καθ' ἕκαστον γένος) to the extent that the nature of the matter (τοῦ πράγματος) allows; for apparently it is just as mistaken to demand demonstrations from a rhetorician as to accept persuasive arguments form a mathematician. (NE I.3, 1094b11-27; transl. Irwin, with modifications; cf. I.7 1098a25ff)

We don't seek the same degree of exactness in arguments about theoretical sciences, crafts, and political science, because the exactness appropriate for, say, numbers differs from that appropriate for, say, morality. Aristotle establishes that the exactness of these arguments depends on the extent to which its objects have difference (*diaphora*) and variability (*planē*) and he suggests that the exactness of objects depends on their difference and variability. Aristotle then glosses difference and variability by whether the truths hold for the most part (*hōs epi to polu*) or whether they are universal. The passage indicates that exactness depends at least in part on whether truths hold universally or for the most part.

Some subjects, like numbers, are completely invariable, so the appropriate method of arguing for their truths are demonstrations, which start from necessary principles and arrive at theorems which are necessarily true. Persuasive arguments of the sort the rhetorician gives would be inappropriate for proving e.g. that the interior angle-sum of a triangle is two right angles. By contrast, the subject matter of rhetoric and political science differ and vary, in that their starting points and conclusions hold for the most part. Wealth is generally good, but not good in all circumstances, e.g. wealth is not good for a morally base person who uses it toward harmful ends. Since these truths don't come from principles which hold of necessity,[126] we should instead aim to give arguments that are rough and 'in outline' and to offer conclusions that hold only for the most part. In rhetoric, we use persuasive arguments; in political science, practical syllogisms.

The passage supports Claim 1, that exactness is a general epistemic metric for ranking different kinds of knowledge. Aristotle comfortably transitions between speaking of exactness in the *epistēmai* (e.g. mathematics), in products of *technē* (*ta dēmiourgoumena*) and in ethics and politics. The passage strongly suggests that he is using the same sense of exactness throughout.

[126] I mean to be agnostic as to whether ethics has principles

Although the objects in these domains differ in their nature, they can be ranked according to their exactness, because they too admit of some degree of invariability in getting things right and in their explanatory power.

It also supports Claim 2, that exactness is characterized by stability, understood in terms of how prone something is to exceptions, as well as the idea implicit in Claims 2 and 3 that exactness admits of degrees. I take it that the latter point is uncontroversial: many commentators simply translate the *homoiōs* in 1094b13 as 'to the same degree' (τὸ γὰρ ἀκριβὲς οὐχ ὁμοίως ἐν ἅπασι τοῖς λόγοις ἐπιζητητέον). Aristotle characterizes the degree of exactness here as the degree of difference and variance, which is in turn explicated by the extent to which the objects hold only for the most part. Thus, *akribeia* is characterized at least in part by how prone to exceptions the truths are—whether the truths are universal or hold only for the most part. The most exact kinds of knowledge deal with truths which are necessary and universal.

This passage also supports Claim 4: the degree of exactness of a subject matter determines the appropriateness of demonstrations and deliberations about it. Inexact objects (like the fine, good, just) make demonstrations inappropriate means of reasoning about them; exact objects (like the objects of mathematics) require demonstration and less exact arguments are inappropriate.

Support for the point about deliberation comes when Aristotle establishes that the more exact a science is, the more certain it is—the less it admits of doubt—and the less appropriate deliberation becomes: "There is no deliberation about the sciences (*epistēmai*) that are exact and self-sufficient (ἀκριβεῖς καὶ αὐτάρκεις), for instance, about letters, since we do not doubt how to write them" (*NE* 3.3 1112a34ff.). Other texts support the idea that *akribeia* is to be contrasted with being in doubt: "for we trust good people (τοῖς ἐπιεικέσι) more and more quickly about all

things generally, and certainly (παντελῶς) in those matters where there is no exactness, but rather where there is room for doubt (τὸ ἀμφιδοξεῖν)."[127] (*Rhetoric* I.10, 1356a4-8; cf. [*Problems* 951b33-952a1], *Topics* 2.4, 111a8-13).

Upshots: exactness is connected to stability, it admits of degrees, it impacts whether demonstration and deliberation are appropriate, and it is a general epistemic standard. What remains is to show that fundamentality is a key aspect of *akribeia* (Claim 3). The next text, in which Aristotle seems to specify criteria for exactness, supports this claim:

Text 2: *An. Post.* I.27, 87a31-37
Ἀκριβεστέρα δ' ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστήμης καὶ προτέρα ἥ τε τοῦ ὅτι καὶ διότι ἡ αὐτή, ἀλλὰ μὴ χωρὶς τοῦ ὅτι τῆς τοῦ διότι, καὶ ἡ μὴ καθ' ὑποκειμένου τῆς καθ' ὑποκειμένου, οἷον ἀριθμητικὴ ἁρμονικῆς, καὶ ἡ ἐξ ἐλαττόνων τῆς ἐκ προσ θέσεως, οἷον γεωμετρίας ἀριθμητική. λέγω δ' ἐκ προσθέ σεως, οἷον μονὰς οὐσία ἄθετος, στιγμὴ δὲ οὐσία θετός· ταύ την ἐκ προσθέσεως.

Understanding which is both of the that and why—the same understanding, but not (understanding) separating the that from the why—is more exact and prior compared to (another sort of) understanding, and understanding not on the basis of an underlying thing compared to understanding on the basis of an underlying thing, for example, arithmetic (understanding) compared to harmonics, and understanding from fewer things compared to understanding from additional-postulates, for example, arithmetic compared to geometry. And I mean by 'from additional-postulates,' for instance, a unit is a position-less substance, and a point is a substance with position—this is from an additional posit.

Aristotle offers three criteria for one kind of *epistēmē* being more exact and prior to another. X is more exact than Y if:

1. X grasps both *that* some truth holds together with *why* it holds, whereas Y grasps only *that* some truth holds. (cf. *An. Post.* I.13)
2. X is not <u>of</u> an underlying subject, but Y is <u>of</u> an underlying subject[128]

[127] The contrast here is between being exact and 'admitting of doubt' or 'having room for doubt' (*to amphidoxein*)
[128] This claim is difficult and not of much direct help. There are two ways of understanding the *hypokeimenon* here. The first is to take the *hypokeimenon* as meaning 'subject of predication'. This reading is preferable, given the language of *kath'hypokeimenou* (*legesthai*) (see Bonitz 798). Arithmetic is more exact than harmonics (79a4-5)[128] because some of the terms of harmonics will rely on terms of arithmetic (e.g. 'ratio'), combined with an underlying subject ('sound'), but the reverse doesn't hold. Another option is to take the *hypokeimenon* as referring to a posit which is taken from another *epistēmē*. Some *epistēmai* depend on terms defined by prior, more exact *epistēmai*. For example, harmonics relies

3. X is from fewer things, whereas Y is from additional posits.[129]

The first point is the most important for our purposes. Aristotle here claims that one *epistēmē* is more exact than another if the former is more explanatorily fundamental.[130] Optics is more exact than rainbow-science, because facts that rainbow-science takes as principles (facts which are not explained in rainbow-science), feature as theorems of the more exact science (and so are explained by that science). Rainbow-science might hold *that* certain colors appear in the rainbow, but to understand *why,* one needs the resources offered by optics, which is more exact and can make claims about, say, rays of light. Similarly, some facts about rays will not be fully explained in optics, but require the contribution of a more exact science, geometry. In cases of subordinated sciences, the principles of the one science feature as theorems of another, but Aristotle also considers cases where there is no subordination: the doctor knows *that* curved wounds heal more slowly, but not the reason why. The geometer (abstracting from curved wounds) can explain that the surface area of a curve is greater than that of the straight line that intersects two opposing points of the curve (*An. Post.* I.13, 79a13-16). It is striking that medical *technē* is an example, because it isn't an *epistēmē* (in Aristotle's technical sense). It seems, then, that Aristotle would endorse the general claim that one kind of *epistēmē* is more exact than another if the former is more explanatorily powerful. This point about explanatory fundamentality is further supported by the next text.

Text 3: *Met.* A.2, 982a25 ff.

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on terms which are defined in arithmetic (but not the other way around). One issue with this option is that the next condition seems to cover this case.

[129] We should understand this as specifying that Y is from additional posits *to X.* Aristotle cites arithmetic understanding and geometrical understanding as an example of this point. Arithmetic requires positing units. Geometry requires not only units, which are non-spatial, but also spatially extended objects, like the point (a substance with position). Geometry, then, requires posits additional to those in arithmetic, so arithmetic is *from fewer things* compared to geometry.

[130] Reeve 175

ἀκριβέσταται δὲ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν αἳ μάλιστα τῶν πρώτων εἰσίν (αἱ γὰρ ἐξ ἐλαττόνων ἀκριβέστεραι τῶν ἐκ προσθέσεως λεγομένων, οἷον ἀριθμητικὴ γεωμετρίας)· ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ διδασκαλική γε ἡ τῶν αἰτιῶν θεωρητικὴ μᾶλλον (οὗτοι γὰρ διδάσκουσιν, οἱ τὰς αἰτίας λέγοντες περὶ ἑκάστου), τὸ δ' εἰδέναι καὶ τὸ ἐπίστασθαι αὐτῶν ἕνεκα μάλισθ' ὑπάρχει τῇ τοῦ μάλιστα ἐπιστητοῦ ἐπι- στήμῃ (ὁ γὰρ τὸ ἐπίστασθαι δι' αὐτὸ αἱρούμενος τὴν μάλιστα ἐπιστήμην μάλιστα αἱρήσεται, τοιαύτη δ' ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ μάλιστα ἐπιστητοῦ), μάλιστα δ' ἐπιστητὰ τὰ πρῶτα καὶ τὰ αἴτια (διὰ γὰρ ταῦτα καὶ ἐκ τούτων τἆλλα γνωρίζεται ἀλλ' οὐ ταῦτα διὰ τῶν ὑποκειμένων), ἀρχικωτάτη δὲ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, καὶ μᾶλλον ἀρχικὴ τῆς ὑπηρετούσης, ἡ γνωρίζουσα τίνος ἕνεκέν ἐστι πρακτέον ἕκαστον· τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶ τἀγαθὸν ἑκάστου, ὅλως δὲ τὸ ἄριστον ἐν τῇ φύσει πάσῃ. ἐξ ἁπάντων οὖν τῶν εἰρη- μένων ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἐπιστήμην πίπτει τὸ ζητούμενον ὄνομα· δεῖ γὰρ ταύτην τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν καὶ αἰτιῶν εἶναι θεωρητικήν· καὶ γὰρ τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα ἓν τῶν αἰτίων ἐστίν.

The most exact among the branches of understanding (ἐπιστημῶν) are the ones which are most of all of the primary things (τῶν πρώτων) (for those which are from fewer things are more exact than those which are spoken of from additions, e.g. arithmetic is more exact than geometry), and the branch of understanding which is contemplative of the causes is also more instructive (for the people who state the causes about each thing are those who teach); knowing and understanding for their own sake belongs most of all to the branch of understanding which relates to what is most understandable (for the one who chooses to know for its own sake, will most choose what is most of all understanding, and this is the sort of understanding which is of what is most understandable. The first principles and the causes are most understandable (for it is on account of these and from these that all others are known (γνωρίζεται) but not these through the subordinate things), and the most commanding of the branches of understanding, even more commanding than what is subordinate to it, is the one which knows (ἡ γνωρίζουσα) for the sake of what each thing must be done. This is the good of each thing, and in general the best in all of nature. **From all we have said, then, the name we are investigating falls to the same branch of understanding, for this must be one that is contemplative (θεωρητικήν) the first principles and causes, for the good, i.e. that for the sake of which, is also one of the causes**.

Aristotle closely connects exactness with explanation and causes. He restates the idea in *An. Post.* I. 27 that the most exact *epistēmai* are ones whose principles are presupposed by other *epistēmai* which require the addition of more principles. For example, geometry presupposes principles of arithmetic but requires additional principles. Aristotle also notes the connection between grasping the causes and being able to teach. Lastly, he emphasizes that the first principles and causes are most understandable, because it is on account of first principles and causes that others are known. There is a sense in which all principles are first, in that they are the

most fundamental truths in their specific branch of understanding, but the *first* principles are the most fundamental principles in all of reality.

Taken together, Texts 1-3 show that exactness is a general epistemic standard, characterized by stability, i.e. the extent to which something admits of exceptions in truth, and fundamentality in the explanatory order of things. Different kinds of knowledge, understood broadly to include not only mathematics and physics, but also crafts, can be ranked according to their degree of exactness.

Text 1 and *NE* 6.7 both suggest that Aristotle is comfortable speaking of exactness in *technē* and exactness in *epistēmē* without a shift in meaning, and the *Philebus* gives us precedent for this kind of comparison. On the face of it, however, it is difficult to see how such different kinds of knowledge as, say, arithmetic and carpentry, can be ranked on the same scale. It is perhaps for this reason that Reeve suggests that Aristotle's understanding of *akribeia* in our central *NE* passage shifts:

> The notion of *akribeia* (adjective: *akribēs*; superlative: *akribestatos*) employed here [in the craft analogy] seems to be loose and popular rather than technical, but the conclusions Aristotle uses it to support seem to presuppose his own somewhat technical account of it.[131]

Reeve draws from the *An. Post.* I.27 passage (our Text 2) for the technical account, and notes that Aristotle switches from the popular account to a more technical account. While Reeve does not (explicitly) make the objection, one might accuse Aristotle of equivocating on *akribeia* in his central argument for wisdom. As I've explained, this would be a serious philosophical problem for Aristotle.

[131] Reeve, 173

In the remainder of this section, I'll show that there is no good reason to posit two different notions of *akribeia* by explaining how these different kinds of knowledge can be ranked on the same scale. I'll also explain how the idea that the *epistēmai* and *technai* are importantly different can still be captured on this picture. The key will be to see that although these different kinds of knowledge can be ranked continuously, there are thresholds of exactness that distinguish some subsets of knowledge from others (e.g. *epistēmai* from *technai*). The discussion of Claim 4 shows that Aristotle is committed to the idea of thresholds of exactness: theoretical *epistēmai* meet a threshold of exactness that makes demonstration appropriate and deliberation inappropriate; ethics and crafts fail to meet this threshold. Our task is to clarify how these thresholds are drawn.

Reeve's idea that there are two different notions of *akribeia* emerges from his discussion of *Posterior Analytics* I.27. It is easy, though, to see how this could fit into the broader notion of exactness I've sketched. In that text, Aristotle focuses on the states which constitute the most exact *subset* of all kinds of knowledge (generally-construed). The subset is *epistēmē theōrētikē*. It is true that grasping the explanations in any of these *epistēmai* is a matter of grasping demonstrations for the truths in that domain of understanding, but it does not follow from this that the only kind of explanations that exists are demonstrations—even if the only explanations of interest in *An. Post* I.27 are demonstrations. Crafts and ethics do not admit of demonstrations, but they do admit of explanations: one can explain why the marble needs to be crafted in a particular why, or why one should perform a particular (just) action.

How do we compare the exactness of an *epistēmē* with the exactness of a *technē*? Take the formula: S (an *epistēmē* or *technē*) studies X qua Y.[132] The craft, medicine, studies curves *qua*

[132] For this formula, see J. Barnes, "3. Metaphysics" in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Cambridge, 1995): 71

wounds. Geometry studies curves *qua* shapes. Both medicine and geometry study curves, but geometry is more exact. To understand how this can be the case, we must understand how the X and the Y bears on the exactness of an *epistēmē*.

The X (e.g. animal) constrains the range of what can fill the Y role. For instance, there can be a study of animal *qua* living, because there are living animals, but there is no study of animal *qua* immovable, because animals are not immovable. Although X constrains the range of Y, within the range of what can fill the Y role, there are degrees of exactness. Medicine, which studies curves *qua* wounds is relatively inexact, because the truths and explanations of curved wounds admit of exceptions. A wound of a particular degree of curvature might take, say, five days to heal in one patient, but 20 days to heal in another, and the explanation that applies in the former case may not apply to the latter. By contrast, geometry, which studies curves *qua* shapes is relatively exact. Facts and explanations about curves insofar as they are shapes are necessarily true, hold necessarily, and can be used to explain other truths.[133] Notice that the sense of exactness in comparing *technai* and *epistēmai* is exactly the same. These different kinds of knowledge are ranked relative to one another by their proneness to exceptions and their explanatory power.

What makes *epistēmai* and *technai* so different from one another that they fall on different thresholds of exactness? The difference is not merely in the objects they study. As we've seen, both geometry (an *epistēmē*) and medicine (a *technē*) study curves. The difference between geometry and medicine is in their way of studying their respective objects. The *epistēmai* focus on those aspects of objects which have starting points which are necessarily true (even if, for ones like biology, the truths hold only for the most part), and this is why arguments about them

[133] Depending on what fills the X role, it might be the case that there is no inexact way of studying it. For example, there may be no inexact way of studying the prime mover or the heavenly bodies.

must be demonstrative. By contrast, the starting points of craft knowledge are not necessarily true (and they hold for the most part). The threshold is drawn according to whether the starting points hold of necessity.

One might object that the use of exactness at the start of *NE* 6.7 is clearly a popular notion, but that the meaning of exactness I've developed, even though it applies to crafts, is still rather technical. The response is that the stability and explanatory fundamentality in exactness are actually not such technical notions. Consider again the craft analogy and compare Pheidias's knowledge of marble sculpting to his students' knowledge. Everyone would agree that Pheidias's knowledge is more stable than his students', as demonstrated by his ability to reliably produce excellent sculptures. His knowledge is also more explanatorily fundamental, because he is better able to explain why someone should do such-and-such to get the marble to look in some particular way. The explanations may not be as metaphysically deep, but they're explanations nevertheless (cf. *Met.* A.1 981a24ff.). It is his ability to give explanations that qualifies him as a teacher of marble-sculpting and, in general, all expert craftsmen must be able to give these explanations if they are to be teachers of the craft.[134]

III. The Definition of *Sophia*

We are now equipped to understand how the definition of wisdom—*epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things—comes from the claim that wisdom is most exact. Since wisdom is the most exact among the kinds of scientific understanding, and scientific understanding is the most exact subset of all kinds of knowledge, wisdom must be the most exact among all kinds of

[134] E. Hulme Kozey, *Philosophia and philotechnia: The Technē Theme in the Platonic Dialogues*, (Princeton, Ph.D. diss., Classics, 2019). I am grateful to Emily Hulme for illuminating conversations about *technē* in Plato.

knowledge. It must be the least prone to exceptions, so it must be of truths that are necessary and hold necessarily (as opposed to holding for the most part), and it must be explanatory fundamental, so it must be at the top of the explanatory hierarchy.

From the *Posterior Analytics*, we learn that the most exact knowledge must grasp both the *that* and the *why*. This explains Aristotle's inference to the claim that the wise person must know both what is derived from the principles (which is required for knowledge *that* the truths hold) and the truth about principles (which is required for knowing *why* the derived truths hold)[135]. *Epistēmē* is knowledge of what's derived from the principles and *nous* is knowledge of the truth about principles. *Sophia,* then, must be *epistēmē* and *nous.*

How do we arrive at Aristotle's definition of wisdom, that it is *epistēmē* and *nous* <u>of the most honorable things</u>? There are two routes. The first is from wisdom's being the most excellent kind of knowledge. The passage from the *De Anima* that I cited above specifies two criteria for one knowledge (*eidēsis*) being finer and more honorable than another: by being more exact and by being of better and more marvelous objects. Since wisdom is the best kind of knowledge, it must be of the best objects, and these are the most honorable things.

Another route is via wisdom's exactness. Since the most exact *epistēmē* is the least prone to exceptions in truths, wisdom should be about changeless entities. Thus, it should be about either changeless, separable beings (the objects of theology) or changeless, non-separable beings (those of mathematics). Fundamentality suggests that wisdom should be about separable beings, rather than non-separable ones, leaving only objects of theology. This class of items turns out to be the most honorable.

[135] *Nous* is of course also required for the complete explanation

The text that immediately follows the definition of wisdom suggests that Aristotle has the first of these routes in mind.

> Therefore, wisdom is *nous* and *epistēmē*—*epistēmē* having its head, as it were—of the most honorable things. For it would be strange if someone were to think that political [*epistēmē*] or *phronēsis* were the most excellent, unless the best of what is in the cosmos is human. (*NE* 6.7, 1141a18-22)

We've established that 's*ophia'* would be assigned to whatever is the most excellent epistemic accomplishment. The most excellent epistemic accomplishment must be of the best things, so wisdom must be of the best (i.e. most honorable) things. In this passage, Aristotle rules out political knowledge and practical wisdom on the grounds that humans are not the best things in the cosmos. As Broadie notes, "sublimity of subject matter and precision [*akribeia*] are not independent features of intellectual accomplishment, since the more trivial a subject matter is, the less the deserves to be treated with precision. Intellectual accomplishment is a human excellence, hence *misplaced* exactness is not intellectual accomplishment."[136]

Aristotle gives further arguments to distinguish wisdom from *phronēsis*, on the one hand, and wisdom from political science, on the other. What I want to show next is that these arguments cohere well once we see that Aristotle is using the epistemic standards just established—exactness and excellence in objects grasped by the knowledge—to distinguish *sophia* from *phronēsis.* It is implicit, given that these two standards are metrics for ranking knowledge, that *sophia* is epistemically superior to *phronēsis.*

One of Aristotle's subsequent claims is that *phronēsis* is about things open to deliberation, and what cannot be otherwise or what lacks a goal achievable in action are inappropriate objects of deliberation. Since deliberation is inappropriate for wisdom, but highly appropriate to

[136] Broadie, 53

phronēsis, the two virtues must be different. What makes deliberation inappropriate to wisdom but appropriate for *phronēsis* is the former is maximally exact, whereas the latter is inexact. Aristotle further notes that *phronēsis* is not only about universals, but also about particulars—and in fact more about the particular than about the universal. Universals are more exact than the particulars, and whereas wisdom is of the former, *phronēsis* is more of the latter.

Aristotle proceeds to argue that wisdom is not identical to political *epistēmē*, and here he invokes the principle that the best knowledge is of the best things. Political *epistēmē* studies the good for some group, and given that there are many kinds of animals, each with its own good, there are many kinds of political *epistēmē*. If wisdom and political *epistēmē* were identical, then there would also be many kinds of wisdom. But we all agree that there is just one wisdom, so wisdom and political *epistēmē* must not be identical. Aristotle imagines the response that we can privilege one kind of *epistēmē*: the one about humans, since humans are the best among animals. Aristotle notes in reply that there are beings with far more divine natures than humans, namely, the beings comprising the cosmos. If the excellence of the object were the metric for wisdom, the argument goes, then wisdom would not be about humans (as political *epistēmē* is), but about the most divine things. Wisdom, Aristotle underscores, is not about human goods (*NE* 6.7, 1141b9). In these arguments, Aristotle leverages commonly-held intuitions about wisdom—that wisdom is the most exact, and that it is the best kind of knowledge and so it is of the best things—to arrive at a controversial result.

Throughout *NE* VI, Aristotle is meticulous in distinguishing *sophia* from *politikē epistēmē, phronēsis,* and *euboulia*, and it is highly plausible that he does this in response to Plato's discussion of these states in the *Republic.* In book IV, for instance, Plato identifies *sophia* with *politikē epistēmē*, classifies *sophia* as a kind of *euboulia,* and sometimes uses *phronēsis* in place

of *sophia*. It is reasonable to think that Aristotle is targeting the account of wisdom in the *Republic* here as well, by arguing against *politikē epistēmē* and *phronēsis* being the most excellent kind of knowledge. Recall that, on the view I've developed, Plato's conception of wisdom requires knowledge of the Forms, but this knowledge is used make good judgments about human affairs. Wisdom, for Plato, is *of* perceptibles like the city and soul. Aristotle's argument rules this out.

In saying that *sophia* must be of the *most* honorable things, though, Aristotle goes beyond excluding the Platonic account. He also rules out high-level forms of knowledge like mathematics and astronomy as candidates for wisdom. This is an outcome of the domain criterion established in the *De Anima* passage—the better the objects, the better the kind of knowledge, so the *best* knowledge must be of the very best objects. It is also an outcome of the exactness criterion. There does exist a single item in the ontology that is maximally exact, and it is the unmoved prime mover, so wisdom must study this item. That wisdom must study this item, however, leaves open two options: it studies the unmoved prime mover exclusively, or it studies it primarily, among other items. Aristotle suggests the latter in the *Ethics*, but he does not explain why, perhaps because such an explanation would be more fitting for metaphysics and beyond the scope of an ethical inquiry. It suffices for our purposes, I think, to say that wisdom must be of the most honorable things, especially and primarily the unmoved mover.

IV. An objection

An objection to the picture I've developed so far is as follows. I've argued that exactness is the metric for ranking different kinds of knowledge and that wisdom is the best kind of

knowledge. But Aristotle seems to think that the most exact kind of knowledge is *nous*, rather than *nous* plus *epistēmē*.

***An.Po.* II.19, 100b5-16**
Ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν περὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ἕξεων αἷς ἀληθεύομεν αἱ μὲν ἀεὶ ἀληθεῖς εἰσιν, αἱ δὲ ἐπιδέχονται τὸ ψεῦδος, οἷον δόξα καὶ λογισμός, ἀληθῆ δ' ἀεὶ ἐπιστήμη καὶ νοῦς, καὶ οὐδὲν ἐπιστήμης ἀκριβέστερον ἄλλο γένος ἢ νοῦς, αἱ δ' ἀρχαὶ τῶν ἀποδείξεων γνωριμώ-τεραι, ἐπιστήμη δ' ἅπασα μετὰ λόγου ἐστί, τῶν ἀρχῶν ἐπι- στήμη μὲν οὐκ ἂν εἴη, ἐπεὶ δ' οὐδὲν ἀληθέστερον ἐνδέχεται εἶ-ναι ἐπιστήμης ἢ νοῦν, νοῦς ἂν εἴη τῶν ἀρχῶν, ἔκ τε τούτων σκοποῦσι καὶ ὅτι ἀποδείξεως ἀρχὴ οὐκ ἀπόδειξις, ὥστ' οὐδ' ἐπιστήμης ἐπιστήμη. εἰ οὖν μηδὲν ἄλλο παρ' ἐπιστήμην γέ-νος ἔχομεν ἀληθές, νοῦς ἂν εἴη ἐπιστήμης ἀρχή. καὶ ἡ μὲν ἀρχὴ τῆς ἀρχῆς εἴη ἄν, ἡ δὲ πᾶσα ὁμοίως ἔχει πρὸς τὸ πᾶν πρᾶγμα.

Of the states concerning thought (*dianoia*) by which we arrive at truth, some are always true, whereas others admit of falsehood—for example, belief and calculation—but understanding and immediate-insight are always (true), **and (*kai*) no other kind besides immediate-insight is more exact than understanding,** and (*de*) principles of demonstrations are more familiar, and (*de*) all understanding is with an account. So, there is no understanding of principles. And since nothing admits of being truer than understanding besides immediate-insight, immediate-insight is of principles and they investigate from these, and because a principle of demonstration is not a demonstration, so (*hōste*) no understanding is of understanding. Thus, if we have nothing else besides understanding as a true kind, immediate-insight would be the principle of understanding. And whereas the principle would be of principles, the whole holds similarly in relation to the whole thing.

If *nous* is what's most exact, then wisdom should just be *nous*, the objection goes.

The first thing to point out is that Aristotle clearly does not think *sophia* is *nous*. In defining wisdom, Aristotle aims to identify the virtue of the *epistēmonikon* as a whole. This virtue, wisdom, is not primarily focused on principles; rather, it focuses on the principles together with what's derived from them. *Nous*, however, grasps principles, and it grasps them *as principles* of the truths it grounds.[137] To the extent that *nous* focuses on demonstrated facts, it focuses on them as truths derived from these principles. Wisdom as presented in the *Nicomachean Ethics* grasps

[137] B. Morison, "Theoretical *Nous* in the *Posterior Analytics*" *Manuscrito: Revisa Internacional De Filosofia,* 42:4 (2019), 1-43.

the truths of the most honorable things—it doesn't have a primary focus on the *principles* of the most honorable things the way *nous* does, and so it is not identical to *nous*.[138]

It is true that *nous* ranks above *epistēmē* in exactness, and if Aristotle had claimed that wisdom is whatever cognitive capacity is most exact, then wisdom would be *nous*. Instead, Aristotle claims that wisdom is whichever knowledge is most exact among all of the branches of scientific understanding.

V. Conclusion

All would agree that we should assign the name 'wisdom' to the best kind of knowledge; more controversial is how we should decide what knowledge is best. Aristotle relies on two epistemic metrics, exactness and the excellence of the objects, to argue that *epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things is what merits the name *sophia*. Thus, the attractiveness of Aristotle's hierarchy of epistemic accomplishments—along with his conception of the best human life—will depend on the merit these two standards for measuring kinds of knowledge. Why should anyone accept these two standards?

It is clear that in defending his own account of wisdom, Aristotle primarily has two competing views in mind: the common conception and the Platonic conception. Aristotle addresses proponents of the former by starting from ordinary linguistic practices. As evidenced by talk of wisdom in crafts, people already agree that exactness is what grounds wisdom (cf. *Met.* A.2). They also already accept a notion of unqualified wisdom, and it is attractive to think that exactness explains this notion as well. Aristotle combines this idea with the intuition that the best knowledge is of the best things to arrive at his account.

[138] The honorable things are themselves principles, in the sense that they are the primary explainers of all other beings, but humans grasp truths about these things by both *epistēmē* and *nous*

What about Plato? I've argued that Plato's account of wisdom in the *Republic* is judiciousness, using Forms as a standard, about what is best for the city and soul. Given the divergence of their accounts of wisdom, one might expect them to have very different standards for the best kind of knowledge. In fact, it is plausible that Plato would agree on exactness as a metric. As I noted earlier, in the *Philebus*, Socrates and Protarchus rank different kinds of knowledge: crafts are at the bottom (with music, for instance, below building), arithmetic in between, and dialectic ranks the highest. Here, exactness (*akribeia*) is one of the criteria for ranking kinds of knowledge (*Philebus* 55 ff). In the *Republic*, the culmination of the education of the guardians in the ideal city is to grasp the Form of the Good, which has exceptionless truths and which is explanatorily fundamental—it explains why all things are good. *Epistēmē* of the Forms is such an impressive feat in part because it grasps objects that meet these two criteria.[139]

What, then, best explains their different accounts of wisdom? The key is to see that the standards for the best kind of knowledge—the one that reaches the greatest limits of our rational capacities—can, at least in principle, differ from the standards for the kind of knowledge that best contributes to the happiest human life.[140] One can coherently think that the best kind of knowledge is of abstract, necessary truths, but that the best intellectual virtue grasps concrete, contingent ones. Plato might well endorse the view that *epistēmē* of the Forms is the best kind of knowledge, but that *sophia,* which uses the Forms to make good judgments about perceptibles, is the best intellectual virtue. This move is not available to Aristotle, because Aristotle identifies the good life with the best activity of the rational part of the soul in the *ergon* argument. For

[139] See M. Burnyeat, "Plato on Why Mathematics is Good for the Soul" in T. Smiley (ed.), *Mathematics and Necessity: Essays in the History of Philosophy* (2000), 1-81 for remarks on the increase in stability as one progresses to higher forms of mathematics.
[140] I'm grateful to Hendrik Lorenz for working out this point with me.

Aristotle, the best kind of knowledge *just is* the best intellectual virtue, and it is the exercise of this virtue that is constitutive of a good life.

If this picture can be attributed to Plato and Aristotle, then the heart of their disagreement lies not so much in their epistemic criteria for ranking knowledge, nor what the best knowledge *qua knowledge* is (or is like). They can agree, for instance, that the best knowledge *qua* knowledge is of exceptionless and explanatorily foundational. Instead, their disagreement lies in how they conceive of the standards for the best intellectual *virtues* and, more generally, the role of intellectual virtues in a flourishing human life.[141]

[141] In making this suggestion, I don't mean to overstate the difference in their overall views. Aristotle is of course aware that the best human life requires more than the activity of *theoria*—one needs external goods, character virtue, etc. The point is that it is not the work of *sophia* to acquire these goods. And according to Plato, knowledge of the Forms partly constitutes wisdom, so the person with the best intellectual virtue (*sophia*) also has the best kind of knowledge (*epistēmē*). The point is that it is not the work of *epistēmē* of the Forms to make good judgments for the city and soul; it's rather the work of wisdom. In distinguishing between the best knowledge and the best intellectual virtue, I also don't mean to suggest that the former is non-normative or ethically irrelevant.

Chapter 4: Wisdom in the *Metaphysics*

The following is a much-discussed puzzle about Aristotle's conception of metaphysics. Aristotle sometimes describes metaphysics as the science of being *qua* being and other times as the science of separable, immovable beings (i.e. divine beings).[142] These two are not the same science, because the scientific propositions—the principles, theorems, and the explanatory relations—that comprise them differ. The science of being *qua* being contains some principles and theorems about all kinds of beings: separable and immovable beings, inseparable and immovable beings (mathematical beings), and inseparable and movable beings (natural beings). By contrast, the science of divine beings studies the nature or essence of divine beings as such, and since the essences of these beings do not depend on other kinds of beings, a science which investigates the essence of the divine as such should not contain any principles or theorems about other kinds of beings.[143] Why does Aristotle have two different descriptions of metaphysics, when it should be a single science?

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[142]As Ross puts it, "Aristotle has in the main two ways of stating the subject-matter of metaphysics. In one set of passages it is stated as *to on hēn on*, the whole of being, as such. This view is expressed throughout Book Γ, and occasionally elsewhere E.1025b3, K.1060b31,1061b4,26,31); it is implied also in the description of sophia as being occupied with the first causes and principles, sc. of reality as a whole (A.981b28, 982b9). But more frequently metaphysics is described as studying a certain part of reality, viz. that which is *chōriston* (exists independently) and *akinēton*, while physics studies things that are *chōrista* but not *akinēta*, and mathematics things that are *akinēta* but not *chōrista*. This view of the subject of metaphysics is expressed most clearly in E.1026a15, but is implied in such passages as K.1064b4, L1069b1, Phys 192a34, 194b14, De An. 403b15. On this view metaphysics studies not being as a whole but the highest kind of being, and when viewed in this way it may be called *theologikē* (E. 1026a19, K.1064b3). (Ross 252-3)

[143]This is true even if we accept the idea that all other beings depend on divine beings for their way of existence, as Frede argues. It is no part of the nature or essence of divine beings that they are the causes and principles of other kinds of being—otherwise some part of their essence would be contingent (it would depend on these other kinds of beings) and they would cease to be immovable. Sciences are delineated by the essences they study. Insofar as these sciences have non-identical sets of principles and theorems, it is reasonable to describe them as different sciences (even if the two are, as many have argued, unified).

There has been a wide range of approaches to resolving the puzzle, from Natorp's suggestion that we read the *Metaphysics* without some of the key texts that describe metaphysics as theology (the study of separable, unmoved beings), to Frede's approach, which, building on work by Patzig, gives a way of unifying the two different sciences.

The puzzle is important for our understanding of wisdom because the texts that give rise to it are not about 'metaphysics'—Aristotle does not use that word—but about wisdom (*sophia*).[144] The best way to put the interpretive puzzle, then, is: why does Aristotle have two competing descriptions of *wisdom*? Once we formulate the puzzle in the language of wisdom, we see that the problem arises not only in the *Metaphysics*, but also more broadly in the corpus.[145] Aristotle defines wisdom in *NE* VI as *epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things, i.e. the most divine beings: the prime mover, heavenly bodies, celestial spheres. This picture aligns nicely with, e.g., the discussion in *Metaphysics* Λ, according to which wisdom is about a subset of reality. It seems in tension, however, with the characterization of wisdom from texts in *Met.* Γ, where wisdom is described as being about all beings *qua* being. Understanding the puzzle in terms of wisdom also reveals the ethical and epistemological stakes of this puzzle: are there different kinds of wisdom? If so, which one is the virtue around which we are meant to structure our lives? And which one marks the best epistemic accomplishment for human beings?

The standard puzzle assumes that Aristotle is committed to a single science or discipline, *sophia*, and difficulties arise because it is not clear how Aristotle's descriptions can be of a single science, or even what the criteria are for two sciences to be the same. The goal of the chapter is to show that Aristotle is instead primarily interested in *sophia* as a state – in particular, a virtue –

[144] Ross's acknowledgement of this is implicit: he cites texts which are explicitly about sophia and philosophia to spell out each side of the puzzle (Ross 252-3 and elsewhere in the commentary). Benjamin Morison, citing Stephen Menn, separately drew my attention to this point.
[145] *Phys*. 192a34, 194b14; *De.An.* 403b15

not as a science or discipline,[146] and to make a case for the unity of wisdom by showing that it is a single, unified state of the human soul. On the reading I defend, wisdom is analogous to virtue and justice in that it is one state in number, but two states in being.[147] Wisdom is a single state that can be exercised in two different ways—to contemplate beings *qua* being and to contemplate divine beings—and Aristotle sometimes uses '*theologikē*' to refer to the latter activity. In this way, it is similar to virtue and justice, or *phronēsis* and *politikē epistēmē.*

I want to be clear about where standard interpreters and I are engaged in the same project and where we diverge. We are all taking up the challenge of reading these passages so that they are consistent, and we disagree about the best way to do so. Here, the root of the disagreement is about what Aristotle is investigating in these passages. On the standard understanding, Aristotle's investigating a discipline, metaphysics or wisdom. On my understanding, Aristotle's investigating wisdom, the state or virtue.

In defending this claim, I do not mean to deny the import or interest of the question standardly pursued: what science or discipline metaphysics is and whether metaphysics is a unified science. Existing solutions would address this question, and the picture I offer is silent on the issue. Similarly, existing solutions are silent on the picture I develop about states. The point I want to insist on is that Aristotle's concern in the passages typically cited to motivated the question do not primarily treat it, and in focusing on sciences, we've obscured an important contribution of the *Metaphysics*.

I. The standard puzzle

[146] Given the prevalence of *sophia* in the fourth century as an excellence-signaling state of the intellect, this is exactly what we should expect.
[147] I owe the idea that wisdom might be one in number, two in being to Hendrik Lorenz, in conversation.

The first step is to see how the standard puzzle emerges from Aristotle's claims in the *Metaphysics*. Frede's articulation of the puzzle:

> Different parts of the *Ur Metaphysik* seem to be written with different conceptions [of the project Aristotle is engaged in] in mind. The most striking example of this is the following: the first lines of *Met.* Γ (1003a21ff.) introduce the discipline as a science that considers being qua being quite generally and set it off from the particular sciences, which single out a particular part of being, particular kinds of beings, as their object of study. And the rest of *Met*. Γ, in particular *Met.* Γ 2, tries to show how there could be such a universal and yet unified, discipline. *Met.* E 1, on the other hand, introduces a discipline that is concerned with a particular subject matter, namely, with the kinds of beings that come first in the order of being. Hence, Aristotle calls the science "first philosophy" (1026a24). And, assuming for the moment that there might be divine beings prior to natural objects, he also calls the discipline "theology" (1026a19). Thus, we seem to have two radically different conceptions of the enterprise of the *Metaphysics.* According to one, we deal with what traditionally has been called "metaphysica generalis," a general study of being as such, of all there is insofar as it is, according to the other with *metaphysica specialis*, a study of a special kind of beings, supra-sensible beings.[148]

Frede, like others, presupposes that Aristotle's central project in the *Metaphysics* is to outline and make progress toward a science or discipline. This assumption is so pervasive that translators simply translate '*epistēmē*' in many of these passages as 'science' and take '*sophia*' to denote some science. It's worth noting at this stage that *epistēmē* can be understood as a psychological state—translated as 'understanding' or 'knowledge'—and even the activity of the state, and I'll argue later on that it is clearly the state or activity and not the science, that Aristotle has in mind.

A terminological point before developing the puzzle: scholars traditionally give the puzzle in terms of 'metaphysics' but as I noted earlier, the puzzle is more accurately put in terms of 'wisdom.' If we understand 'wisdom' as denoting a science, then the traditional puzzle arises, as expected. Since the aim of this section is primarily exegetical, I'll articulate the puzzle in terms of sciences, and I'll use Ross's translations of the key passages, which interpret wisdom as a science.

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[148] Frede, 83. M. Frede, "The Unity of General and Special Metaphysics," in *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minnesota, 1987): 81-95

The standard puzzle arises from four claims:

1. Wisdom is one science. (*Met*. A)
2. The science of being *qua* being is different from the science of separate, unchanging beings.
3. Wisdom is the science of being *qua* being (*Met*. Γ.1-2)
4. Wisdom is the science of separate, unchanging beings (*Met.* E.1)

There is good textual evidence for Claim 1. In *Met.* A.2, Aristotle argues that a single science meets all of the criteria we associate with wisdom.

> ἐξ ἁπάντων οὖν τῶν εἰρημένων ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἐπιστήμην πίπτει τὸ ζητούμενον ὄνομα· δεῖ γὰρ ταύτην τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν καὶ αἰτιῶν εἶναι θεωρητικήν·
>
> Judged by all the tests we have mentioned, then, the name in question falls to the same science; this must be a science that investigates the first principles and causes…(982b7-10)

Furthermore, Aristotle claims that wisdom is 'the most authoritative' (*archikotatē*, 982b5) and most honorable (*timiotatē*, 983a5) *epistēmē.* The superlatives suggest that one science will rank highest on these scales. After these remarks, A.2 concludes, "we have stated, then, what is the nature of the science we are searching for and what is the mark which our search and our whole investigation must reach" (983a21-23), suggesting the goal of the *Metaphysics* is to search for this single science.

The commitment to there being one science, wisdom, reappears in B.2, where Aristotle considers the possibility that there is a different science for each of the four causes. If this were so, then there would be a science of final causes and a different science of formal causes. The problem is that each would have claim to the name, 'wisdom'—the final cause would be most authoritative, but the formal cause would be most knowable. He asks: which of these sciences is the one that we seek? (*Met.* B.2, 996b1-25) Regardless of the answer, the question presupposes that there should not be two equally plausible candidates for the name wisdom.

Claim 2: The science of being *qua* being is different from the science of separate, unchanging beings.

Aristotle does not explain, in general, what makes two sciences different, but a straightforward way would be that the sciences in question are constituted by two different structured sets of scientific propositions. The science of divine beings, it is thought, only contains propositions about the nature and *per se* attributes of divine beings, but the science of being *qua* being is not constrained in this way. In Γ.1, Aristotle says that a science which deals with being *qua* being is different from a science which deals with a part of being.

> Ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη τις ἣ θεωρεῖ τὸ ὂν ᾗ ὂν καὶ τὰ τούτῳ ὑπάρχοντα καθ' αὑτό. αὕτη δ' ἐστὶν οὐδεμιᾷ τῶν ἐν μέρει λεγομένων ἡ αὐτή· οὐδεμία γὰρ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπισκοπεῖ καθόλου περὶ τοῦ ὄντος ᾗ ὄν, ἀλλὰ μέρος αὐτοῦ τι ἀποτεμόμεναι περὶ τούτου θεωροῦσι τὸ συμβεβηκός, οἷον αἱ μαθηματικαὶ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν. ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἀκροτάτας αἰτίας ζητοῦμεν, δῆλον ὡς φύσεώς τινος αὐτὰς ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι καθ' αὑτήν. εἰ οὖν καὶ οἱ τὰ στοιχεῖα τῶν ὄντων ζητοῦντες ταύτας τὰς ἀρχὰς ἐζήτουν, ἀνάγκη καὶ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ ὄντος εἶναι μὴ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς ἀλλ' ᾗ ὄν· διὸ καὶ ἡμῖν τοῦ ὄντος ᾗ ὂν τὰς πρώτας αἰτίας ληπτέον.
>
> There is a science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature. Now this is not the same as any of the so-called special sciences; for none of these others deals generally with being as being. They cut off a part of being and investigate the attributes of this part—this is what the mathematical sciences for instance do. Now since we are seeking the first principles and the highest causes, clearly there must be some thing to which these belong in virtue of its own nature. If then our predecessors who sought the elements of existing things were seeking these same principles, it is necessary that the elements must be elements of being not by accident but just because it is being. Therefore it is of being as being that we also must grasp the first causes. (Γ.1, 1003a21-26)

The text can, but need not, additionally be read as evidence for Claim 3: that wisdom is the science of being *qua* being. Aristotle reminds us of our discussion in A.2 (ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἀκροτάτας αἰτίας ζητοῦμεν…), where we established that wisdom contemplates the principles and the highest causes, and he now notes that these must be causes and principles *of some nature* in itself—presumably because all causes and principles are causes and principles *of something* in itself. We must identify the nature which, in itself, has causes which turn out to be

the *highest* ones. The nature we are looking for is being,[149] so wisdom is the science of the principles and highest causes of being *qua* being.

The passage suggests that wisdom is the science of being *qua* being, but it doesn't require it. The ambiguity comes from Aristotle's claim that wisdom is the science of the principles and highest causes of being *qua* being. This can be read in two ways: (1) the science is about those beings in the ontology which, because of the way reality is structured, turn out to be the first principles and causes of all beings. These are the divine beings. (2) The science is about these beings and studies them *as principles and causes* of all beings *qua* being. This requires (a) grasping these principles; (b) grasping the nature that, in itself, is what the causes and principles are of (that is, the entirety of being); and (c) understanding that these are causes and principles of that nature in itself. It is only in a science that studies all beings, i.e. the science of being *qua* being—where we see all of the principles and theorems of being *qua* being—that we can understand the principles *as principles* of being *qua* being. It is on the second option that wisdom is identified with the science of being *qua* being.

Despite the ambiguity, many take the passage to identify wisdom with the *epistēmē* of being *qua* being—Frede, for instance, cites it in the quote above. I think this is reasonable: Aristotle has not yet introduced a science of unmoved, separable beings, and given the discussion so far, it would be odd for Aristotle to be developing a different science without any indication of a change in topic. One might wonder why, if option (2) is correct, Aristotle does not simply say that wisdom is the science of being *qua* being, but instead claims that it is of *the principles and*

[149] The reasoning is: if those who sought the elements (*stoicheia*) of being were also seeking these principles—so that they're engaging in the same pursuit we are—then those elements must be of being *qua* being (any principle must be of a nature in itself, and if the nature in question is being, as these people thought, then the principles must be of being in itself—i.e. *qua* being.). And if we are engaged in the same pursuit, then we too must be after the principles of being *qua* being.

highest causes of being *qua* being. The answer is that he wants to highlight what it is about the science of being *qua* being that qualifies it as wisdom—wisdom is the science that deals with the highest causes and principles.

Other texts more directly support claim 3, that wisdom is the science of being *qua* being. For example, K.3 begins: "Since the science of the philosopher treats of being qua being universally and not of some part of it…" (*Met.* K.3, 1060b31-2). The science of the philosopher must be wisdom, so Aristotle's claim is that wisdom deals with being *qua* being universally. In K.4, Aristotle contrasts mathematics and physics with philosophy, noting that the latter contemplates beings *qua* being, whereas physics contemplates beings *qua* moving:

> ἡ δὲ φιλοσοφία περὶ τῶν ἐν μέρει μέν, ᾗ τούτων ἑκάστῳ τι συμβέβηκεν, οὐ σκοπεῖ, περὶ τὸ ὂν δέ, ᾗ ὂν τῶν τοιούτων ἕκαστον, θεωρεῖ. τὸν αὐτὸν δ' ἔχει τρόπον καὶ περὶ τὴν φυσικὴν ἐπιστήμην τῇ μαθηματικῇ· τὰ συμβεβηκότα γὰρ ἡ φυσικὴ καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς θεωρεῖ τὰς τῶν ὄντων ᾗ κινούμενα καὶ οὐχ ᾗ ὄντα (τὴν δὲ πρώτην εἰρήκαμεν ἐπιστήμην τούτων εἶναι καθ' ὅσον ὄντα τὰ ὑποκείμενά ἐστιν, ἀλλ' οὐχ ᾗ ἕτερόν τι)· διὸ καὶ ταύτην καὶ τὴν μαθηματικὴν ἐπιστήμην μέρη τῆς σοφίας εἶναι θετέον.
>
> Philosophy does not inquire about particular subjects in so far as each of them has such and such attributes, but considers each subject in relation to being qua being.—Natural science is in the same position as mathematics; for natural science studies the attributes and the principles of the things that are, qua moving and not qua being, whereas the primary science, we have said, deals with these only in so far as the underlying subjects are existent, and not in virtue of any other character. Therefore both natural science and mathematics must be regarded as parts of Wisdom. (K.4, 1061b17-33; cf. 1061b4 ff.)

Aristotle claims here that the primary science (*hē prōtē epistēmē*) contemplates being *qua* being and the final sentence indicates that this primary science is wisdom. The upshot, then, is that wisdom, the primary science, is the science of being *qua* being. Furthermore, Aristotle distinguishes this science from sciences which study only a part of being—for instance, mathematics, which studies quantities, and physics, which studies moving bodies—and he claims that physics and mathematics are a part of wisdom. Though this passage doesn't mention

theology, one might argue by analogy with physics and mathematics that theology too will be different from and a part of wisdom: theology contemplates beings *qua* immovable and inseparable, so by analogy with physics, it too should be different from and a part of wisdom.

Claim 4: Wisdom is the science of separate, unchanging beings. The final step to developing the puzzle is to show that Aristotle sometimes describes wisdom as the science of a part of being–in particular, the unmoved, separable beings. Many passages suggest this, but the paradigmatic one is from E.1:

> ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἡ φυσικὴ θεωρητική ἐστι, φανερὸν ἐκ τούτων· ἀλλ' ἔστι καὶ ἡ μαθηματικὴ θεωρητική· ἀλλ' εἰ ἀκινήτων καὶ χωριστῶν ἐστί, νῦν ἄδηλον, ὅτι μέντοι ἔνια μαθήματα ᾗ ἀκίνητα καὶ ᾗ χωριστὰ θεωρεῖ, δῆλον. εἰ δέ τί ἐστιν ἀΐδιον καὶ ἀκίνητον καὶ χωριστόν, φανερὸν ὅτι θεωρητικῆς τὸ γνῶναι, οὐ μέντοι φυσικῆς γε (περὶ κινητῶν γάρ τινων ἡ φυσική) οὐδὲ μαθηματικῆς, ἀλλὰ προτέρας ἀμφοῖν. ἡ μὲν γὰρ φυσικὴ περὶ χωριστὰ μὲν ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀκίνητα, τῆς δὲ μαθηματικῆς ἔνια περὶ ἀκίνητα μὲν οὐ χωριστὰ δὲ ἴσως ἀλλ' ὡς ἐν ὕλῃ· ἡ δὲ πρώτη καὶ περὶ χωριστὰ καὶ ἀκίνητα. ἀνάγκη δὲ πάντα μὲν τὰ αἴτια ἀΐδια εἶναι, μάλιστα δὲ ταῦτα· ταῦτα γὰρ αἴτια τοῖς φανεροῖς τῶν θείων.
>
> That natural science, then, is theoretical, is plain from these considerations. Mathematics also is theoretical; but whether its objects are immovable and separable from matter, is not at present clear; it is clear, however, that it considers some mathematical objects qua immovable and qua separable from matter. But if there is something which is eternal and immovable and separable, clearly the knowledge of it belongs to a theoretical science,—not, however, to natural science (for natural science deals with certain movable things) nor to mathematics, but to a science prior to both. For natural science deals with things which are inseparable from matter but not immovable, and some parts of mathematics deal with things which are immovable, but probably not separable, but embodied in matter; while the primary[150] science deals with things which are both separable and immovable. Now all causes must be eternal, but especially these; for they are the causes of so much of the divine as appears to us. (E.1, 1026a6-18)

Aristotle identifies three theoretical sciences: (1) natural science, which deals with inseparable, movable beings, (2) mathematics, which deals with inseparable (except in thought), immovable beings, and (3) the primary science (*hē prōtē epistēmē*), which deals with separable, immovable

[150] Ross translates 'first' here, but to keep it consistent with his translation of the K.4 passage, I changed it to 'primary'

beings. He goes on to call the third 'theology' and he claims that this is the most honorable science, because it concerns the most honorable kind of being (τὴν τιμιωτάτην δεῖ περὶ τὸ τιμιώτατον γένος εἶναι; 1026a18ff).

We now have the two competing characterizations of wisdom: the science of being *qua* being and the science of separable, immovable beings. Furthermore, these sciences are different, since the former studies all of being, and the latter studies only a part of it. *Met.* A pressures us to establish a single *sophia*, or if there is more than one, to say which is *sophia* in the strict sense.

There is a further difficulty. In K.4, Aristotle says that mathematics and natural philosophy are *parts* of wisdom—understood as science of being *qua* being—because mathematics and natural philosophy study only a part of being. There, the science of being *qua* being is 'the primary science'. In this E.1 passage, Aristotle suggests that theology, mathematics, and natural philosophy are on a par insofar as they are about some part of being, and theology is 'the primary science'. Wisdom understood as theology now looks to be a *part* of wisdom as the science of being *qua* being, and both are called 'the primary science'.

The problem is that it is not clear how science A can be *part* of science B, but for A and B to still be *the same* science. In fact, it is not even clear what makes one *science* count as a part of another. The most straightforward way is for one science to contain all of the propositions of another, but not the other way around. Suppose zoology contains all of the propositions (the principle, theorems, and explanatory relations) concerning all animals, and arachnology contains just that subset of the propositions which deals with spiders. The latter would be a part of the former. But now it is difficult to see how two sciences which relate in this way could be the same science—zoology and arachnology, for instance, are not the same science. Similarly, theology does not look to be the same as the science of being *qua* being.

Two further oddities: first, as Frede notes, Aristotle himself doesn't seem bothered by the tension. At the end of E.1, he asks whether primary philosophy (i.e. wisdom) is universal or whether it is concerned with a particular nature (e.g. immovable, inseparable being), and remarks briefly that the science of separable, unmoved beings is universal because it is primary. Any solution to the puzzle should explain why Aristotle doesn't find it puzzling. Second, as Ross notes, although Aristotle characterizes wisdom as a science of the whole of being *qua* being, elsewhere—in the *Posterior Analytics*—he casts doubt on the possibility of a science of all beings.

So much for the texts commonly cited to motivate the puzzle. One might be tempted by the following solution: Aristotle never states that theology deals *only* with divine beings, so one could read these texts as different descriptions of the same science. Γ describes wisdom as the science of being *qua* being, but one could also reasonably call this science 'the science of divine beings' or theology, both because it is the only science that studies divine beings, and because 'divine beings' singles out the objects at which the science is directed—as Frede notes, the being of all beings must be explained in terms of the being of divine beings, so they are all directed toward these beings. Aristotle has good reason to call it a science of divine beings. His goal is to determine which science is wisdom, and one of the criteria for wisdom is that it must be of the divine, both in that it studies divine beings and that it (wisdom) is what divine beings have most of all.

The difficulty with this solution is that even if Aristotle doesn't explicitly say that theology deals only with divine beings, we have reason to think that there is such a science. Γ.2 articulates a principle according to which for every kind, there is a single *epistēmē.*

Γ.2 1003b19-22

> ἅπαντος δὲ γένους καὶ αἴσθησις μία ἑνὸς καὶ ἐπιστήμη, οἷον γραμματικὴ μία οὖσα πάσας θεωρεῖ τὰς φωνάς· διὸ καὶ τοῦ ὄντος ᾗ ὂν ὅσα εἴδη θεωρῆσαι μιᾶς ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμης τῷ γένει, τά τε εἴδη τῶν εἰδῶν.
>
> Of each single kind, there is a single sense (*aisthēsis*) and a single *epistēmē*. For example, grammatical (*epistēmē*), which is one, contemplates all utterances. That is also why it belongs to one *epistēmē* in kind to contemplate however many species of being *qua* being, and it belongs to the species of *epistēmē* to contemplate the species.

Separable, unmovable beings are a kind of being, so there should be an *epistēmē* of it. This leaves us with two different sciences, and if Aristotle does endorse two different sciences, then it seems attractive to take these texts as describing the two sciences, and the puzzle re-emerges. More can be said about this strategy, but since I do not think the text is best read as describing a science or discipline, I will not pursue the project here.

II. The Solution

My solution takes as a starting point that in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle's primary concern is not with wisdom as a science, but with wisdom as a state of the soul, the activity of which is contemplation (*theōria*).[151] Psychological states and sciences are of different metaphysical sorts, and since Aristotle's focus is on the former, the kind of unity we need to establish is one that holds of states. I'll defend this starting point in the next section; for now, I'll take it for granted and show how it can help us resolve the puzzle. To recast the four claims of the puzzle:

1. There is one state, wisdom.
2. The state which contemplates being *qua* being is different from the state which contemplates separate, unchanging beings.
3. Wisdom is the state which contemplates being *qua* being.

[151] In making this claim, I'm relying on a distinction between wisdom as a state and virtue of the soul and wisdom as a set of propositions which constitute an Aristotelian science. We are familiar with this ambiguity in Aristotle's use of *epistēmē*—we sometimes translate '*epistēmē*' as 'scientific understanding' to emphasize *epistēmē* as a state of the soul, other times as 'science' to emphasize that we're discussing the set of propositions, and Aristotle often means for both senses of *epistēmē* to be in play. Aristotle operates with the same ambiguity when discussing *sophia* (Aristotle, in speaking of *sophia* in the *Metaphysics* does sometimes call it an *epistēmē*).

4. Wisdom is the state which contemplates separate, unchanging beings.

The solution is to qualify claim 2. The state which contemplates being *qua* being and the state which contemplates separate, unchanging beings are not two different states, but two descriptions of the same state—or even the same state, but different in being or definition.

The idea that a state can have two different *descriptions* is relatively straightforward. Consider the state, patience. One can describe patience as the state which disposes someone to be patient to everyone, or as the state which disposes someone to be patient to other people, but we do not thereby have two different states. Intuitively these two are two descriptions of a single state. Similarly, wisdom is a single state of the soul, but we can describe wisdom as the state which disposes us to contemplate divine beings or as the state which disposes us to contemplate all beings *qua* being.

This solution is similar to the one I offered at the end of the previous section, so we might try the same method of reviving the puzzle. We can use the Γ.2 passage: separable, unmovable beings are one kind, so there should be a state of understanding (*epistēmē*) that grasps them, and this is different from the one that grasps all beings *qua* being. The thought that the text presents two descriptions of a single state therefore runs into a similar problem as the one above—given that divine beings are a class, there should be an *epistēmē* of that class, and given that all beings form a class of some kind, there should be a single *epistēmē* of them too. And since there are two *epistēmai* here, it seems reasonable to read those texts as describing them.

The proposal I want to make is that Aristotle conceives of wisdom as one state in number, but two states in being. This reading, unlike the one which focuses on descriptions, respects the idea that there are two beings or essences of *sophia* in the metaphysical picture. In general, Aristotle does think that there can be two definitions of a state that is one in number. In *NE* V,

Aristotle claims that general justice and complete virtue are the same state, but different in their being:

> τί δὲ διαφέρει ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη αὕτη, δῆλον ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων· ἔστι μὲν γὰρ ἡ αὐτή, τὸ δ' εἶναι οὐ τὸ αὐτό, ἀλλ' ᾗ μὲν πρὸς ἕτερον, δικαιοσύνη, ᾗ δὲ τοιάδε ἕξις ἁπλῶς, ἀρετή.
>
> How virtue and this sort of justice differs is clear from what has been said: for it is the same, but its being is not the same. Rather, insofar as it is toward another (*pros heteron*), it is justice, but insofar as it is a sort of state without qualification, (it is) virtue. (*NE* V.1, 1130a10-13)[152]

In *NE* VI, Aristotle claims that political science and practical wisdom are the same state, but their being is not the same: "Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ καὶ ἡ φρόνησις ἡ αὐτὴ μὲν ἕξις, τὸ μέντοι εἶναι οὐ ταὐτὸν αὐταῖς" (*NE* VI.8, 1141b23-24). In *Met.* A, Aristotle references the *NE* VI discussion of *technē*, *epistēmē,* and other states (981b25), so it's reasonable to think that the key aspects of the moral psychology employed in the *NE* apply to the *Metaphysics.*

The idea of two states which are one in number, two in being is notoriously difficult, and a full theory is beyond the scope of this chapter. My aim here is to develop a sketch of the concept, to explain how it works in the case of justice and virtue, and then to use this as a model for understanding wisdom. I think the idea that two states can be one state in number but two states in being stems from two commitments that can be attributed to Aristotle:

1. Non-proliferation of psychological states: one does not posit a new state if it does not do new explanatory work.[153]
2. States are defined by their activities (*DA* II.4).

[152] From this point onward, translations are my own.
[153] This is suggested by *DA* III.1, 425a14ff.

On this picture, there could be a single psychological state which can be exercised in two ways. Since it has two activities,[154] and since states are defined by their activities, there will be two *definitions* of that single state.

How can any state be one state in number, but two states in being? [155] Here is an example to illustrate the concept. Consider the ability to be kind (in general) and the ability to be kind to others. One wants to say that they are the same state, and the idea that they are the same state is explanatorily powerful. If someone were to ask, "what ability does she have that makes her act kindly toward her friends?" one would answer either, "the ability to be kind" or "the ability to be kind to others." Nobody would answer, "the ability to be kind and also the ability to be kind to others," because they are just the same ability. Answering with either kindness or kindness to others does all the explanatory work required to answer the question, in that it points to the single state of the soul that's responsible for the behavior.

Notice, however, that not every act of kindness is an act of kindness toward others (one could be kind to oneself). Since Aristotle thinks that each state is defined by reference to its activity (e.g. kindness is the state which disposes us to act kindly), he is committed to there being two definitions of the state.

Is there one state, kindness, or two states? It depends on what we are counting. If we're counting definitions or essences, then there are two states (kindness is two in being). If we're counting states as they manifest in the human soul, because the ability to be kind in general and the ability to be kind to others are always realized as the same state, there is just one state.

We might now ask, under what conditions would two states in being count as one state? Certain phenomena are best explained by a single state, even though there are two distinct

[154] I am reading *chrēsis* of states and *energeia* of states as interchangeable
[155] I'm grateful to Benjamin Morison for encouraging me to offer more clarity on this.

definitions of that state, so the presence of a single state does explanatory work. In cases where this level of explanation is required, we should expect there to be a single state. When the presence of a psychological state would do no new explanatory work, there is no additional state.

This is the kind of picture that motivates Aristotle's claims about justice and virtue. Aristotle claims that justice and virtue are the same state, but they can be exercised in two ways. He sometimes uses 'justice' to refer to the state and other times to the exercise (*chrēsis*) of the state. The *chrēsis*, justice, is a part of the *chrēsis*, virtue, because one always exercises justice in relation to others, whereas exercises of virtue need not involve others (one could exercise virtue in relation to oneself). It is an important part of the picture that the state has a privileged class of objects that they are exercised in relation to. For the state, justice/virtue, the privileged class is other people, and the paradigmatic exercises of justice/virtue will be other-directed. For this reason, Aristotle says that justice is virtue most of all, because it is the complete exercise of virtue.

Some aspects of the picture generalize. First, in general, Aristotle resists adding new states of the soul to his moral psychology if the added state does no new explanatory work. Second, states typically have a privileged class of objects in relation to which they are paradigmatically exercised. And typically, if one has the state the exercise of which is directed toward this privileged class of objects, then one has the state in general. Third, Aristotle sometimes uses the same name for the state and for the exercise of the state. Lastly, Aristotle sometimes calls the same state by two names (e.g. *dikaiosunē* and *aretē*, *politikē epistēmē* and *phronēsis*), because of the difference in their activities (*chrēseis*) and the corresponding difference in their definitions.

My proposal is that just as virtue and justice are the same state, so too the state that studies being *qua* being and the state that studies divine beings are the same state. This state is wisdom,

although Aristotle sometimes calls the latter *theologikē epistēmē*. In achieving the former, one achieves the latter: the state which enables one to contemplate all beings *qua* being also enables one to contemplate divine beings *qua* being. There's also good reason to think that in developing the state which contemplates divine beings, we also develop the state which contemplates all beings *qua* being. Divine beings are the most difficult to grasp and human beings are plausibly incapable of grasping them directly. Instead, we contemplate the metaphysics of what exists around us and work our way up to grasping divine beings *as* causes and principles of these beings. It is an important part of the picture that in contemplating about gods, we are exercising the state which enables us to contemplate about the being of everything (and vice versa).

There are further parallels. The single state, virtue/justice, is paradigmatically exercised in relation to other people, even though the state can be exercised in relation to oneself. Similarly, we might think, wisdom is paradigmatically exercised in relation to divine beings—this would explain why Aristotle sometimes calls wisdom the knowledge of the most honorable beings (e.g. *NE* 6.7)—but it can also be legitimately exercised so as to contemplate the being of all beings. Conceived of as activities, we can say that theology is part of wisdom: theology is the exercise of the state in relation to some beings (divine beings), but wisdom is the exercise of the state in relation to all beings.

When we understood wisdom as a science in section I, the science of divine beings and the science of being *qua* being were genuinely in competition for being wisdom, because they could not be the same science. We now have a way of saying these are two definitions of the same state of the soul.[156]

[156] In the absence of individuation conditions for disciplines, it is an open question whether one could say that the two *sciences* are one in number, two in being. But, as we'll see, it is states that Aristotle's interested in.

III. Wisdom as a state

In the previous section, I took for granted that Aristotle's primary concern in the *Metaphysics* is with wisdom as a state of the soul, rather than as a science or discipline. This move is crucial for making available the picture that I've presented, on which wisdom is a single state which can be exercised in two ways: contemplating (*theōrein*) divine beings and contemplating all beings *qua* being. I'll now defend this starting point. There are many occurrences of '*epistēmē*' throughout the *Metaphysics*, and if one reads the entire text attending to the possibility of translating *epistēmē* as 'understanding' or 'knowledge' (the state) instead of 'science' one will see that the reading of *sophia* as a state is often readily available. In the discussion, I'll focus on the passages typically used to generate the puzzle.

This section has two parts. The first is a fairly systematic exegesis of key parts of *Met.* A.1-2. This level of detail is warranted because it is here that Aristotle establishes the subject matter and success criteria for the remainder of the discussion. As we will see, Aristotle identifies the topic of our inquiry as wisdom conceived of as a state or virtue of the soul. There is therefore reason to think that a primary concern of the remainder of the *Metaphysics*—or at least the texts which are grouped with book A—is with wisdom as a state. In the second section, I'll return to the passages cited in section I to generate the traditional puzzle. I'll argue that in some of these passages, Aristotle is certainly thinking of wisdom as a state, so that in reading *epistēmē* there as a science or discipline, others have misunderstood them, and in the others, the text is at least compatible with understanding wisdom as a state.

A. *Met.* A.1-2

A.1-2 establishes the agenda for the remainder of the *Metaphysics* by identifying the kind of knowledge (*epistēmē*) we are looking for and the success conditions for the investigation. His

procedure is strikingly similar to the one in *NE* VI.7. The *NE* argument for wisdom begins with a survey of pre-theoretical intuitions: wisdom is closely connected to exactness and excellence, and we think there is a general and a specific kind of wisdom. These intuitions gave rise to two criteria for wisdom, that it is the most exact and it is about the best thing. From these criteria, we arrived at the definition that wisdom is *epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things. The *Metaphysics* too begins by surveying *endoxa* about various intellectual states, before focusing on wisdom, the best intellectual (presumably) state. Importantly, the *endoxa* in the *NE* are included among the ones presented in the *Metaphysics.* The methodological similarities, the overlap in success conditions, and the fact that Aristotle back-references *NE* VI in *Met.* A generate interpretive pressure to read *Met.* A's discussion of wisdom as an inquiry into the same state, wisdom, described in *NE* VI.

A.1 is decisively concerned with wisdom as a state of understanding, rather than as a science. At the end of the chapter, Aristotle notes: "All suppose that what is called wisdom concerns the first causes and the principles" (…ὅτι τὴν ὀνομαζομένην σοφίαν περὶ τὰ πρῶτα αἴτια καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς ὑπολαμβάνουσι πάντες). This is why people regard the experienced person as wiser than one with just perception, the craftsman wiser than the experienced person, and the master-craftsman more than the handy-craftsman. In general, the theoretical kinds of knowledge are wiser than the productive kinds. He concludes that wisdom is knowledge (*epistēmē*) concerning certain principles and causes (ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἡ σοφία περί τινας ἀρχὰς καὶ αἰτίας ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη, δῆλον) (981b25-982a1).

The *endoxa* Aristotle surveys are about knowledge and wise people, not sciences or disciplines, and the aim here is to identify the kind of knowledge (the state or virtue) that wise people have. Further, he discusses wisdom alongside *technē* and *epistēmē* and even references

the discussion in *NE* VI about them[157]—*NE* VI listed these as states of the soul. The evidence is so strong that, for this chapter, translators diverge from their default translation of '*epistēmē*' as 'science' and use 'knowledge'. Ross, for instances, translates 'knowledge' throughout A.1 and even the start of A.2: "since we are seeking this knowledge, we must inquire of what kind are the causes and the principles, the knowledge of which is wisdom." But he tends to prefer 'science' whenever possible, so that he offers the following for the end of A.2: "we have stated, then, what is the nature of the science we are searching for…" Aristotle is talking about the same subject, though, so we should translate *epistēmē* consistently as a state of knowledge throughout, and understand wisdom here as a kind of knowledge.

A.1 therefore establishes that we are looking for a state, wisdom, which is knowledge about certain principles and causes; A.2 identifies which causes and principles the knowledge of which counts as wisdom. Aristotle begins by listing the following common views about the wise person:

1. The wise person knows all things without having knowledge of each of them individually.
2. The wise person can learn what is difficult.
3. In every kind of knowledge (*epistēmē*), the person who is more exact and more capable of teaching (*akribesteron kai ton didaskalikōteron*) the causes is wiser.[158]
4. Knowledge that is desirable in itself, i.e. for the sake of knowing, is more of the nature of wisdom than knowledge which is desirable because of its results.
5. The wise person must order, not be ordered, and must not obey, but be obeyed.

He then uses these common views to establish success criteria for our account of wisdom:

1. Wisdom must be universal, in that it must enable someone to, in a way, know everything.
2. The most universal things are the hardest to know, because they are farthest from perception.

[157] *Met.* A.1
[158] (3) contains two criteria, but they're connected. Exactness makes someone more capable of teaching the causes

3. The most exact kinds of knowledge are the ones which are about the primary things, so the wise person's knowledge must grasp what is primary.[159]
   Knowledge that is contemplative (*theōretikē*) about the causes is more teachable, and those who teach are the ones who can tell us the causes of each thing. So, wisdom must grasp the causes.
4. Knowing and understanding (τὸ δ' εἰδέναι καὶ τὸ ἐπίστασθαι) for their own sake is found most of all in knowledge of what is most knowable. So, wisdom must be knowledge of what is most knowable. Aristotle explains that the first principles and causes are most knowable—it is because of these and from these that other things are known, and not the other way around. So, wisdom must be knowledge of the first principles and causes.
5. The kind of knowledge that is most suited to ruling (ἀρχικωτάτη) over the subordinate kinds of knowledge is the one that knows that for the sake of which each thing must be done, and this is the good of each (thing), and in general what is best in all of nature.[160]

In setting out the success criteria of the inquiry, Aristotle is not focused on wisdom as a *discipline* or *science,* but on wisdom as the state and activity of the state that the wise person has, as well as how it compares to other states.

After listing these criteria, Aristotle makes a claim that generates substantial textual pressure to read the different descriptions of wisdom that we get later on in the *Metaphysics* as a single state:

> ἐξ ἁπάντων οὖν τῶν εἰρημένων ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἐπιστήμην πίπτει τὸ ζητούμενον ὄνομα· δεῖ γὰρ ταύτην τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν καὶ αἰτιῶν εἶναι θεωρητικήν· καὶ γὰρ τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα ἓν τῶν αἰτίων ἐστίν.
>
> From all that we have said, the name we are inquiring into (τὸ ζητούμενον ὄνομα) falls to the same *epistēmē*, for this must be [the *epistēmē* that is] such-as-to-study the primary principles and causes, for the good, i.e. that for the sake of which, is one of the causes. (982b7-10)

[159] Aristotle explains: "for those which are from fewer things are more exact than those spoken of from addition—e.g. arithmetic more than geometry." (ἀκριβέσταται δὲ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν αἳ μάλιστα τῶν πρώτων εἰσίν (αἱ γὰρ ἐξ ἐλαττόνων ἀκριβέστεραι τῶν ἐκ προσθέσεως λεγομένων, οἷον ἀριθμητικὴ γεωμετρίας)) – cf. *An.Post*. 1.27

[160] In the fifth criterion, the view that Aristotle aims to capture—that the wise person must order and be obeyed—suggests a practical conception of wisdom. Aristotle rejects the idea that wisdom deals with action and, in recasting the view as a criterion for his own account, takes a metaphorical reading of 'obeying' and 'ruling'.

Aristotle follows the claim that a single state of knowledge (*epistēmē*) satisfies all five criteria and merits the name '*sophia*' with two explanatory clauses (γὰρ). The first *gar*-clause gives the knowledge that meets all five conditions: this is one which is contemplative (*theōrētikē*) of the first causes and principles. The second *gar*-clause ("for the good…") relates specifically to the fifth criterion, presumably because it is not immediately clear how the *epistēmē* which is contemplative of the first principles and causes can satisfy this criterion.[161] Wisdom must be the most suited to rule because it grasps the goal, i.e. the good, of each thing. Wisdom is the *epistēmē* that disposes someone to contemplate the gods, and in contemplating the gods, we theorize about the beings in the ontology which are in fact the goal (i.e. the good) of each thing. Aristotle makes explicit here that the good, i.e. goal, is a cause, and we are meant to understand that it is a primary cause.

Aristotle next gives more features of wisdom and emphasizes throughout that the state is unique. In arguing that wisdom is contemplative (*theōrētikē*) and not productive (*poiētikē*), he claims:

> δῆλον οὖν ὡς δι' οὐδεμίαν αὐτὴν ζητοῦμεν χρείαν ἑτέραν, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἄνθρωπος, φαμέν, ἐλεύθερος ὁ αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα καὶ μὴ ἄλλου ὤν, οὕτω καὶ αὐτὴν ὡς μόνην οὖσαν ἐλευθέραν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν· μόνη γὰρ αὕτη αὐτῆς ἕνεκέν ἐστιν.
>
> It's clear, then, that we seek it for no other use/advantage, but as we say, a person is free who is, for the sake of himself and nobody else, in this way too, we seek this as the only one among the *epistēmai* that is free, for it alone is for its own sake. (A.2 982a24-28)

[161] Importantly, in claiming that wisdom is the *epistēmē* that is most suited-to-ruling (*archikōtatē*) in the fifth criterion, Aristotle isn't saying that wisdom is the knowledge that makes a wise person suited to rule. Aristotle notes explicitly that wisdom is not practically useful. Aristotle uses *archikos*-language in NE 8.11, 1161a18 to describe the father as ruler over the sons, ancestors over descendants, and a king over subjects—the father is ruler over sons and ancestors over descendants because the former are causes of the latter.

Aristotle is explicit that wisdom is the *only* knowledge that is free, militating against there being two competing accounts of wisdom. The next feature he turns to is the divineness of wisdom, and in this context too, he suggests there's only one:

> **A.2, 983a4-11**
> …οὔτε τῆς τοιαύτης ἄλλην χρὴ νομίζειν τιμιωτέραν. ἡ γὰρ θειοτάτη καὶ τιμιωτάτη· τοιαύτη δὲ διχῶς ἂν εἴη μόνη· ἥν τε γὰρ μάλιστ' ἂν ὁ θεὸς ἔχοι, θεία τῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἐστί, κἂν εἴ τις τῶν θείων εἴη. μόνη δ' αὕτη τούτων ἀμφοτέρων τετύχηκεν· ὅ τε γὰρ θεὸς δοκεῖ τῶν αἰτίων πᾶσιν εἶναι καὶ ἀρχή τις, καὶ τὴν τοιαύτην ἢ μόνος ἢ μάλιστ' ἂν ἔχοι ὁ θεός. ἀναγκαιότεραι μὲν οὖν πᾶσαι ταύτης, ἀμείνων δ' οὐδεμία.
>
> …Nor should another *epistēmē* be thought more honorable than this sort. For the most divine *epistēmē* is also most honorable. But this sort of *epistēmē* alone is in two ways most divine. For that which the god most of all would have is divine among the *epistēmai*, and also if some *epistēmē* is *of the divine* [it would be divine among the *epistēmai*]. But this (*epistēmē*) alone meets both of these. For god seems to everyone to be among the causes and a principle, and also god has this sort of *epistēmē* either alone or most of all. All *epistēmai* are more necessary than this one, but none is better.

Wisdom is characterized here as the most honorable, the most divine, and the best; these superlatives all imply uniqueness.

The passage is noteworthy for three further reasons. First, Aristotle conceives of knowledge (and so, given the context, wisdom) here not only as a state, but also as an activity of the state. This knowledge is what god has (*echein*) most of all, and god does not have any states. God has—more precisely, god *is*—wisdom in actuality. This shift from the state to the activity occurs elsewhere in Aristotle (e.g. justice and virtue *NE* V) and is to be expected, given that Aristotle thinks that, in general, activities are prior to states (*D.A.* II.4). It should come as no surprise that Aristotle would shift from states to activities when discussing *epistēmē*; in *An. Post.* I.2, *epistēmē* is defined in relation to its activity, demonstrating. Moreover, in *NE* VI, *epistēmē* is

described as a state that is suited to a certain kind of activity: a state that issues in a demonstration (*hexis apodeiktikē*).[162]

The second noteworthy feature of the passage is that Aristotle's language shifts from talk of a particular knowledge, to a particular sort of knowledge (*toiautē*), raising questions about how divine knowledge and human knowledge compare. It is plausible that Aristotle generalizes the referent to a *sort* of knowledge because god and humans don't have the same exact knowledge, but they do have the same kind of knowledge. It's plausible that, for human beings, the state, *sophia*, cannot directly and exclusively grasps divine beings as such (without also grasping divine beings as first principles and causes). The gods have divine *sophia*, which is a state that is capable of directly and exclusively grasping divine beings as such. Gods don't contemplate themselves as being first principles and causes of all other things.

Lastly, Aristotle describes two ways in which this sort of *epistēmē* is most divine: that it is *of the divine* and that it is the kind of knowledge that god would most of all have. The latter claim is interesting. The knowledge that god most of all would have surely contemplates the divine exclusively—the Prime Mover exclusively contemplates itself, not all beings. Any picture that posits two different kinds of wisdom (one general, which contemplates all beings, and one particular, which contemplates only divine beings), it seems, would have to say that special wisdom, which only deals with divine beings, has better claim to the title, *sophia*, than *epistēmē* of being *qua* being. On the picture I defend, there is only one state, wisdom, which can be exercised so as to contemplate all beings (*qua* being) or to contemplate divine beings. God does

[162] H. Lorenz, "Virtue of Character in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics,*" Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy 37 (2009),177-212. "In general, Greek adjectives derived from verbs and ending in *-ikos* or *-tikos* indicate that someone or something is capable of doing something or suited to doing something. This suggests that a *hexis prohairetikē* is a state that makes one capable of or suited to making decisions, or rather capable of and suited to making decisions of one kind or quality or another." (196ff.)

not have this state, but it has (and is) the activity of contemplating divine beings. In this way, it has wisdom most of all.

> After some remarks about the acquisition of wisdom, Aristotle concludes:
>
> τίς μὲν οὖν ἡ φύσις τῆς ἐπιστήμης τῆς ζητουμένης, εἴρηται, καὶ τίς ὁ σκοπὸς οὗ δεῖ τυγχάνειν τὴν ζήτησιν καὶ τὴν ὅλην μέθοδον.
>
> We have said what the nature of the *epistēmē* we are seeking is and what the mark is which the inquiry (*zētēsis*) and the whole investigation must hit upon. (*Met.* A 983a21-23)

The nature of the knowledge we are seeking, i.e. wisdom, is that it is an *epistēmē theōrētikē* of the first principles and causes, and the task of the *Metaphysics* is to identify this state. This rules out the possibility that there are two different kinds of knowledge, each of which is to be called 'wisdom', and it leaves us with two options. The first is that these two kinds of knowledge are not the same, and only one merits the name, wisdom. The alternative, which I favor, is that both the study of divine things as such and the study of all things *qua* being can be characterized as *epistēmē theōrētikē* about the first principles and causes, and they are the same knowledge.

B. The Problem Texts: Γ.1, K.4, E.1

The remaining task is to show that the key passages which motivate the puzzle also focus on or are compatible with understanding *sophia* as a state, and that the solution I've offered resolves the problems raised by these texts.

Text 1: Γ.1, 1003a21-33

Ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη τις ἣ θεωρεῖ τὸ ὂν ᾗ ὂν καὶ τὰ τούτῳ ὑπάρχοντα καθ' αὑτό. αὕτη δ' ἐστὶν οὐδεμιᾷ τῶν ἐν μέρει λεγομένων ἡ αὐτή· οὐδεμία γὰρ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπισκοπεῖ καθόλου περὶ τοῦ ὄντος ᾗ ὄν, ἀλλὰ μέρος αὐτοῦ τι ἀποτεμόμεναι περὶ τούτου θεωροῦσι τὸ συμβεβηκός, οἷον αἱ μαθηματικαὶ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν. ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἀκρο- τάτας αἰτίας ζητοῦμεν, δῆλον ὡς φύσεώς τινος αὐτὰς ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι καθ' αὑτήν. εἰ οὖν καὶ οἱ τὰ στοιχεῖα τῶν ὄντων ζητοῦντες

ταύτας τὰς ἀρχὰς ἐζήτουν, ἀνάγκη καὶ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ ὄντος εἶναι μὴ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς ἀλλ' ᾗ ὄν· διὸ καὶ ἡμῖν τοῦ ὄντος ᾗ ὂν τὰς πρώτας αἰτίας ληπτέον.

There is some *epistēmē* that contemplates being *qua* being and the things which belong to this in itself. And this is not the same as any of the so-called particular (ἐν μέρει) *epistēmai*, for none of the others investigates generally/universally about being *qua* being, but, cutting off some part of it, they contemplate the features of this, for instance, the mathematical *epistēmai*.[163] Since we are seeking the principles and the highest causes, clearly they must be of some nature in itself. If, then, those seeking the elements of being were also seeking these principles, the elements must be of being not accidentally but *qua* being. This is why it is we too must take up the first causes of being *qua* being.

Earlier, we read the passage as differentiating the science that contemplates being *qua* being from the science that contemplates only a part of being. Theology is a science that investigates only a part of being in that the propositions that comprise it only concern divine beings. Therefore, the two must be different sciences, and this was a problem given that they should be the same.

The alternative reading of the passage is as follows. There is a state of understanding (*epistēmē*) which has as its activity contemplating (*theōrein*) being *qua* being. It is reasonable to think, though Aristotle does not say so here, that this same state can be exercised so as to contemplate the being of a *part* of being, such as divine beings (at least *qua* being). If I have the state of understanding that enables me to grasp, for instance, the greenness of *everything*, then it is by exercising this same state in relation to a particular subset of things that I can grasp, e.g. the greenness of plants. The exercise of the state in relation to a subset of things does not give rise to a new state. This is just to say: the *epistēmē* that contemplates being *qua* being is the same state as the *epistēmē* that contemplates divine beings *qua* being.

Aristotle contrasts this state, the *epistēmē* of being *qua* being, with another kind of state, which does not investigate being *qua* being, but only some part of being. This makes good sense:

[163] *Sophia* also can be exercised so as to contemplate some part of being, it doesn't exclusively do this.

a state that investigates all beings is different from a state that *does not* investigate all beings, but *only* some beings. "Particular (*en merei*) understanding" describes kinds of understanding that *only* investigate some part of being (e.g. arithmetic, geometry). Understood in this way, the passage does not entail that the *epistēmē* of being *qua* being is different from the *epistēmē* of divine beings. The *epistēmē* of divine beings is *not* a kind of "particular understanding" of the sort described above, because this state does not *only* investigate a part of being. This state is identical to knowledge of being *qua* being, and so it can be exercised so as to investigate all beings. This passage is therefore consistent with my proposal.

Text 2: K.4, 1061b17-33 (cf. Γ.3)
ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ ὁ μαθηματικὸς χρῆται τοῖς κοινοῖς ἰδίως, καὶ τὰς τούτων ἀρχὰς ἂν εἴη θεωρῆσαι τῆς πρώτης φιλοσοφίας. ὅτι γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν ἴσων ἴσων ἀφαιρεθέντων ἴσα τὰ λειπόμενα, κοινὸν μέν ἐστιν ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν ποσῶν, ἡ μαθηματικὴ δ' ἀπολαβοῦσα περί τι μέρος τῆς οἰκείας ὕλης ποιεῖται τὴν θεωρίαν, οἷον περὶ γραμμὰς ἢ γωνίας ἢ ἀριθμοὺς ἢ τῶν λοιπῶν τι ποσῶν, οὐχ ᾗ δ' ὄντα ἀλλ' ᾗ συνεχὲς αὐτῶν ἕκαστον ἐφ' ἓν ἢ δύο ἢ τρία· ἡ δὲ φιλοσοφία περὶ τῶν ἐν μέρει μέν, ᾗ τούτων ἑκάστῳ τι συμβέβηκεν, οὐ σκοπεῖ, περὶ τὸ ὂν δέ, ᾗ ὂν τῶν τοιούτων ἕκαστον, θεωρεῖ. τὸν αὐτὸν δ' ἔχει τρόπον καὶ περὶ τὴν φυσικὴν ἐπιστήμην τῇ μαθηματικῇ· τὰ συμβεβηκότα γὰρ ἡ φυσικὴ καὶ τὰς ἀρχὰς θεωρεῖ τὰς τῶν ὄντων ᾗ κινούμενα καὶ οὐχ ᾗ ὄντα (τὴν δὲ πρώτην εἰρήκαμεν ἐπιστήμην τούτων εἶναι καθ' ὅσον ὄντα τὰ ὑποκείμενά ἐστιν, ἀλλ' οὐχ ᾗ ἕτερόν τι)· διὸ καὶ ταύτην καὶ τὴν μαθηματικὴν ἐπιστήμην μέρη τῆς σοφίας εἶναι θετέον.

Since even the mathematician uses common (propositions) in a particular way, it would belong to primary philosophy to also contemplate the principles of these. For it is common to all quantities that when equals are taken from equals, what remain are equals, but mathematical *epistēmē,* engages in contemplation concerning some part of its own subject matter, having taken that off, e.g. concerning lines or angles or numbers or some of the remaining qualities, not insofar as they are, but insofar as each of them is continuous in one or two or three (directions). But philosophy[164] does not investigate about particular things, insofar as some (feature) is found in each of them, but it investigates being insofar as each of these sorts of things is. It is the same in the case of natural *epistēmē* as it is with mathematical *epistēmē*, for natural *epistēmē* contemplates the features and principles of being insofar as they move and not insofar as they are, whereas we have said that the primary *epistēmē* is of these things inasmuch as the underlying things are beings, but not *insofar as* they are something else. This is why both this and mathematical *epistēmē* must be taken to be parts of wisdom.

[164] Hendrik Lorenz noted to me the significance of this switch from *prōtē philosophia* to *philosophia*. It supports a reading on which *philosophia* in the primary sense of the term will be the one captured by *prōtē philosophia.*

Earlier, we used this text as evidence for the view that wisdom is the science of being *qua* being. We also noted a problem that arises from the passage: that according to this line of argumentation, theology would turn out to be different from and a part of wisdom.

The passage is a response to a question raised in K.1, where Aristotle asks whether it belongs to one *epistēmē* or several to contemplate (*theōrēsai*) the common principles (K.1, 1059a23-4). If one, why should it belong to wisdom, rather than another *epistēmē*? And if it belongs to several, to which does it belong? Aristotle answers that it belongs to one *epistēmē,* namely, primary philosophy. Primary philosophy uses the common principles without limiting their application to some part of reality. Geometry, by contrast, takes these principles, which are in fact applicable to all of reality, and applies them only to a subclass of reality (continuous quantities).

The text is clearly focused on wisdom as a state. The reference to the mathematician—the individual—indicates that Aristotle is here concerned with the understanding the individual has, rather than the scientific discipline, mathematics. It is the way the mathematician uses these principles—he uses them particularly—that indicates that contemplating these principles belongs not to mathematical understanding, but to primary philosophy. That the focus is on the state is further supported by the preceding discussion, where he answers the question about wisdom by talking about the philosopher, moving between the philosopher and the *epistēmē* (presumably the state that the philosopher has) (K.3).

One might raise the following objection to my reading of wisdom as a unified state. Aristotle notes, "philosophy does not investigate particular things insofar as some (feature) is found in each of them, but it investigates being, insofar as each of these sorts of things is." On the view I favor, philosophy *does* investigate particular things—it investigates divine beings as such (it *also*

investigates being *qua* being). It seems, then, that Aristotle is straightforwardly denying the picture I sketch.

The response is that Aristotle is here focused on the state, wisdom, only insofar as it contemplates being *qua* being. It is only by focusing on this aspect of the state that he can show how mathematical and physical understanding differ from wisdom—they cannot be exercised so as to contemplate all of being. He does not mean, however, to indicate that wisdom cannot be exercised so as to contemplate divine beings as such. The language is confusing, but we see this kind of move elsewhere: Aristotle describes justice as being *pros heteron* in order to focus on that aspect of the state, virtue (which is the same state as justice) that deals with other people. In doing so, he does not mean to deny that the state, virtue/justice, can also be exercised in relation to oneself.

The second problem (for any attempt at unifying wisdom) stems from the final claim: "this is why both this [natural *epistēmē*] and mathematical *epistēmē* must be taken to be parts of wisdom." The objection is that *physikē epistēmē* seems to be a part of wisdom because it investigates beings *qua* having certain features (*qua* moving) and not *qua* being. Theology, it seems, also investigates beings *qua* having certain features (separable, unmoving). It would seem, then, that theology is different from and part of primary philosophy (the understanding of being *qua* being).

There are two options for resolving the problem. The first comes from Ross: it is to read *sophia* not as picking up primary philosophy, but instead as wisdom in a wide sense, so that it includes mathematics, physics, and the *epistēmē* which contemplates being *qua* being.[165] The idea, then, is that natural philosophy is a part of *sophia* in this general sense. Notice that this

[165] Ross 315. It's not clear whether Ross means to offer two solutions, especially since the solutions conflict, and if so, which of the two he would endorse.

interpretation does not require thinking that *sophia* in the general sense corresponds to state (or for Ross, a science) which has the kind of unity required for it to be a whole.

Ross offers a second solution, and while this interpretation is unpromising, I think it gives rise to a viable second option. Recall that for Ross, *sophia* here is a science, not a state. He writes:

> Because mathematics and physics do not study their objects *qua* being but *qua* continuous or *qua* moving, they are merely branches of wisdom; wisdom proper is the more comprehensive science which studies being as such. This answers to the corresponding statement in Γ. 1005b1 ἔστι δὲ σοφία τις καὶ ἡ φυσική, ἀλλ' οὐ πρώτη.[166]

Ross glosses 'parts' as *branches* of sciences. Wisdom is the science of being *qua* being, and mathematics and physics are branches of the science. There are two problems with the reading. First, it is counterintuitive to think of geometry as a branch of metaphysics. It would be less odd if Aristotle meant by geometry something like 'the science of geometrical objects *qua* being'– we can see how this might be a branch of metaphysics (the metaphysics of geometrical objects, as it were), but this is clearly not the sense Aristotle has in mind here. More problematically, the picture would entail that all of the sciences (all of the branches of mathematics and physics) are branches of one single science, wisdom, conceived of as the science of being *qua* being, and Aristotle rejects this view.[167]

We should not adopt Ross's interpretation as stated, but here is a similar strategy that works well. Start by understanding *sophia* as a state, and consider again the Γ.2 passage cited earlier:

> **Γ.2 1003b19-22**
> ἅπαντος δὲ γένους καὶ αἴσθησις μία ἑνὸς καὶ ἐπιστήμη, οἷον γραμματικὴ μία οὖσα πάσας θεωρεῖ τὰς φωνάς· διὸ καὶ τοῦ ὄντος ᾗ ὂν ὅσα εἴδη θεωρῆσαι μιᾶς ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμης τῷ γένει, τά τε εἴδη τῶν εἰδῶν.

[166] Ross 314-15
[167] Aristotle ascribes the view to Plato in the *Posterior Analytics* and rejects it.

> Of each single kind, there is a single sense (*aisthēsis*) and a single *epistēmē*. For example, grammatical (*epistēmē*), which is one, contemplates all utterances. That is also why it belongs to one *epistēmē* in kind to contemplate however many species of being as being,[168] and it belongs to the species of *epistēmē* to contemplate the species.

Aristotle holds that each of the five senses deals with a species of sense-objects (sight, for example, with visible beings). But there is also a genus, sense (*aisthēsis*), that deals with all perceptible things. This genus is unified but compared to the special senses (e.g. sight), its unity is relatively weak—it is one in kind. By analogy, there is a single state,[169] *epistēmē*, which grasps all beings. This state only has generic unity. But there are also species of this genus—*mathēmatikē, physikē, theologikē epistēmē*, which grasp species of being. In our K.4 passage, *sophia* does not refer to *theologikē epistēmē* (which, on my view, is identical to the *epistēmē* of being *qua* being). Instead, *prōtē philosophia*, which is *sophia* in the primary sense, refers to *theologikē epistēmē*, and *sophia* in this final sentence refers to a more weakly unified state: the generically unified *epistēmē* which corresponds to all truths in all of reality.

Option 1 held that physics was a part of (a general sense of) *sophia* without committing to *sophia* being a whole or a kind. This option holds that physics is a part of *sophia*, understood as a proper kind. It differs from Ross's suggestion in two ways: first, *sophia* here is not the *epistēmē* of being *qua* being, but a generic *epistēmē.* Second, it is not a science, but a state. We need not think that this state, which exhibits generic unity, corresponds to a *science* which deals with all truths—by denying this further claim, we can avoid the undesirable result that stems from Ross's proposal, on which all the sciences belong to one superordinate science.

Text 3: E.1, 1026a6-18

[168] Understand the ὂν predicatively, rather than completely. As a gloss: however many species of being insofar as they are (what they are).
[169] The comparison with *aisthēsis* strongly suggests that it is a state

ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἡ φυσικὴ θεωρητική ἐστι, φανερὸν ἐκ τούτων· ἀλλ' ἔστι καὶ ἡ μαθηματικὴ θεωρητική· ἀλλ' εἰ ἀκινήτων καὶ χωριστῶν ἐστί, νῦν ἄδηλον, ὅτι μέντοι ἔνια μαθήματα ᾗ ἀκίνητα καὶ ᾗ χωριστὰ θεωρεῖ, δῆλον. εἰ δέ τί ἐστιν ἀΐδιον καὶ ἀκίνητον καὶ χωριστόν, φανερὸν ὅτι θεωρητικῆς τὸ γνῶναι, οὐ μέντοι φυσικῆς γε (περὶ κινητῶν γάρ τινων ἡ φυσική) οὐδὲ μαθηματικῆς, ἀλλὰ προτέρας ἀμφοῖν. ἡ μὲν γὰρ φυσικὴ περὶ χωριστὰ μὲν ἀλλ' οὐκ ἀκίνητα, τῆς δὲ μαθηματικῆς ἔνια περὶ ἀκίνητα μὲν οὐ χωριστὰ δὲ ἴσως ἀλλ' ὡς ἐν ὕλῃ· ἡ δὲ πρώτη καὶ περὶ χωριστὰ καὶ ἀκίνητα. ἀνάγκη δὲ πάντα μὲν τὰ αἴτια ἀΐδια εἶναι, μάλιστα δὲ ταῦτα· ταῦτα γὰρ αἴτια τοῖς φανεροῖς τῶν θείων.

It is clear that *physikē epistēmē* is contemplative from these. *Mathematikē* is also theoretical, but whether it is of immovable and separable things is unclear now. However, it is clear that it contemplates some objects of study[170] as[171] immovable and as separable. But if something is eternal and immovable and separable, it is evident that to know it belongs to a contemplative *epistēmē*, not, however, to *physikē epistēmē* (for *physikē* is about some movable things), nor *matēmatikē*, but to one prior to both. For *physikē* concerns separable beings, but not immovable, and some parts of *mathematikē epistēmē* concerns what is immovable, though perhaps not separable but in matter. But the primary *epistēmē* concerns what is both separable and immovable. All causes must be eternal, but these most of all, for these are the causes of the divine as they appear.

This passage is often cited as evidence that Aristotle conceives of wisdom as the science of unmoved, separable beings. This passage can now be straightforwardly understood in light of the picture I've sketched—it describes the state, wisdom, emphasizing that it is concerned with separable, immovable beings. These beings are 'most of all' eternal because (1) they, as causes, are themselves eternal, and (2) they are the causes of eternal beings. Given the picture I've sketched, it should come as no surprise that Aristotle sometimes identifies the *epistēmē* of being *qua* being as the primary *epistēmē,* and here identifies the *epistēmē* of separable, immovable beings as primary *epistēmē* – these two are just the same state.

The final passage I'll discuss is the one thought to be Aristotle's own response to the question:

E.1, 1026a23-32
ἀπορήσειε γὰρ ἄν τις πότερόν ποθ' ἡ πρώτη φιλοσοφία καθόλου ἐστὶν ἢ περί τι γένος καὶ φύσιν τινὰ μίαν (οὐ γὰρ ὁ αὐτὸς τρόπος οὐδ' ἐν ταῖς μαθηματικαῖς, ἀλλ' ἡ μὲν γεωμετρία καὶ

[170] i.e. mathematicals
[171] Understand the ᾗ as: "as if they were")

ἀστρολογία περί τινα φύσιν εἰσίν, ἡ δὲ καθόλου πασῶν κοινή)· εἰ μὲν οὖν μὴ ἔστι τις ἑτέρα οὐσία παρὰ τὰς φύσει συνεστηκυίας, ἡ φυσικὴ ἂν εἴη πρώτη ἐπιστήμη· εἰ δ' ἔστι τις οὐσία ἀκίνητος, αὕτη προτέρα καὶ φιλοσοφία πρώτη, καὶ καθόλου οὕτως ὅτι πρώτη· καὶ περὶ τοῦ ὄντος ᾗ ὂν ταύτης ἂν εἴη θεωρῆσαι, καὶ τί ἐστι καὶ τὰ ὑπάρχοντα ᾗ ὄν.

For one might raise the puzzle whether primary philosophy is universal or concerns a particular genus, i.e. one particular nature. (For the same does not even apply in the case of the mathematical (*epistēmai*). Geometry and astronomy is concerned with a particular nature, but the universal one is common in all.) Well then, if there is not any substance other than those which have been composed by nature, then natural *epistēmē* would be primary. But if there is some substance which is immovable, this would be prior and primary philosophy, and universal in this way, because it is primary. And it would belong to this to contemplate about being *qua* being, both what it is and what belongs to it *qua* being.

Earlier, I noted that Aristotle sometimes uses language like "primary understanding" (*prōtē epistēmē*) to describe both theology and the understanding of being *qua* being, and this should come as no surprise, given that they are the same state. Aristotle here raises a puzzle that deals with this problem: is primary philosophy universal or particular?

Aristotle's first step is to identify which philosophy is primary. Primary philosophy must contemplate the primary substances. Therefore, if natural beings were the primary substances, then natural philosophy would be primary philosophy. We know that natural beings aren't primary—separable, immovable beings are—but here Aristotle only makes a conditional claim: if there is some immovable substance, then those beings would be primary, and the understanding of these objects would be primary philosophy. Then, Aristotle indicates that primary philosophy is different from mathematics. Whereas in the case of mathematics, we think that one kind of mathematics deals with all mathematical beings, and another kind deals with particular kinds, in the case of primary philosophy, the same thing is both universal and particular, and has both universal and particular objects. Primary philosophy contemplates a particular kind of substances (the primary ones), but it also contemplates being *qua* being. How

can primary philosophy contemplate both particular kinds of being and all beings *qua* being? Aristotle's answer is brief: it is universal because it is primary.

The interpretation I've proposed explains how this can be the case. Primary philosophy grasps the primary substances, a particular domain of being, which are the causes and principles of all beings. To grasp the primary substance, one must also grasp them *as* causes and principles of all beings *qua* being. As I noted, human beings do not immediately understand primary beings (they are farthest from perception, the most difficult to grasp, as we saw in A.2), and it's reasonable to think that one needs to work their way up from contemplating the causes and principles of other kinds of beings. This grasp is universal. On the interpretation I've offered, universal primary philosophy (the understanding of being *qua* being) and particular primary philosophy (the understanding of primary beings) are the same accomplished state: primary philosophy or *sophia.*

IV. Conclusion

The central project Aristotle is engaged in is therefore not to show what a finished discipline, metaphysics, would look like—as many have noted, he does not accomplish this goal. Instead, he explains what the state or virtue, wisdom, is—and in more clearly specifying what wisdom is, he makes progress toward efforts to attain it—how there could be such a state, and what activities correspond to the state. Determining what sciences or disciplines wisdom is concerned with would illuminate our understanding of the state, but on the view I'm proposing, it is not required.

An upshot of this interpretation is that the *NE* and the *Metaphysics* focus on the same conception of wisdom. This is an attractive result, given that both texts began with some of the same success criteria for any definition of wisdom. Wisdom in both is conceived of as a single

virtue of the human soul, which can be exercised so as to contemplate divine beings or to contemplate all beings *qua* being.

It is now also clear that the characterization of wisdom in the *NE*, on which wisdom is *epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable beings, is a reasonable one. Is the only state that can be exercised so as to contemplate divine beings, and even when it contemplates being *qua* being, it contemplates them by reference to divine beings. Moreover, the contemplation of being *qua* being is the activity of the very state that contemplates divine beings. The *Metaphysics* offers a metaphysically richer conception of wisdom than the *NE*, but this too seems appropriate—the full conception of wisdom requires a discussion of contemplation of all beings *qua* being and how they relate to other activities of contemplation, and this would have been inappropriate for ethics, a relatively inexact domain of study.

Conclusion

Disagreements about *sophia* in the fifth and fourth century were no mere terminological disputes. In proposing accounts of *sophia*, Plato and Aristotle were participants in two contests. One stretches back to the archaic period and is a battle over the prestige, authority, and power that *sophia* confers. This debate was partly epistemic; it was over what counts as the highest, most esteemed intellectual accomplishment and the grounds for ranking one intellectual accomplishment above another. It was also political, over what authority and power wisdom ought to confer, whether wisdom needs to be tied to some cultural activity or societal work, what responsibilities wise people have to our political communities, and how political communities can help individuals realize this ability. At the individual level, it was about how we ought to structure our own lives—why we should structure our lives around an intellectual goal, rather than the many other kinds of goods available to humans, and then which intellectual pursuits we should live by. At the same time, Plato and Aristotle were engaged in a contemporary battle over whether *sophia* merited any prestige and authority at all, what kind of authority, if any, it should confer, which kinds of *sophia* were real and which deceptive, and how we can come to identify true *sophia*.

The picture that emerges from this dissertation opposes the standard view that Plato and Aristotle have roughly the same conception of wisdom, where it is the power to understand certain abstract, metaphysically basic entities. By taking wisdom to be identical to *epistēmē* of the Forms, the traditional reading misunderstands wisdom in the *Republic* and obscures the extent to which Aristotle innovated on that conception. In the first chapter, I gave textual and philosophical reasons for rejecting the identity of *sophia* and *epistēmē* of the Forms in the *Republic*. Wisdom consists partly in studying the Forms, but it is ultimately tasked for making

judgments about the spatiotemporal realm. In chapter two, I argued that wisdom is the power to issue good judgments, by reference to the Forms, about the city and soul as a whole. The *Republic*'s conception of wisdom is therefore not, as many have supposed, ultimately directed upward at the Forms, but downward at perceptibles.

Aristotle, by contrast, conceived of wisdom as being directed at divine beings and not at all about the contingent truths of our social worlds. In the third chapter, I showed that *NE* 6.7 contains not only an account of wisdom—*epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things—but an argument for it. Given the importance of wisdom in Aristotle's cultural context and given how radically he departs from the traditional notion, this is exactly what we should expect.[172] Aristotle's argument is more sophisticated than has been supposed. It establishes two criteria for ranking different kinds of knowledge: exactness (*akribeia*) and the excellence of the object the knowledge deals with. *Epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things is what scores highest on these metrics, and since wisdom is the name for the best intellectual state, wisdom is *epistēmē* and *nous* of the most honorable things.

In the fourth chapter, I resolved a textual puzzle in the *Metaphysics.* Aristotle claims that there is only one *sophia* in the proper or primary sense, but he gives two apparently conflicting characterizations of it: (1) the science that contemplates being qua being and (2) the science that contemplates divine beings. I argued, first, that Aristotle is concerned with wisdom as a state, rather than as a science or discipline. Given the background conception of *sophia* at the time, we should find this unsurprising—one would more readily hear *sophia* as a state or virtue than as a

[172] Kurke also endorses this picture: "even Aristotle's seemingly disinterested philosophical treatises are engaged in a deadly serious contestation for what is perceived to be one of the culture's highest goods. *Sophia* is still in this period and later the bearer of tremendous cultural and political prestige and authority—a form of 'symbolic capital' to which all participants in the cultural field want to be able to lay claim" (Kurke 120).

discipline. I then resolve the puzzle by arguing that wisdom is a single state that can be exercised in two ways: to contemplate divine beings as such, and to contemplate all beings *qua* being. This conception of wisdom is the same as the one in the *NE*, so Aristotle has, throughout a single conception of *sophia.*

We are now in a position to assess where Plato and Aristotle preserved tradition and where they innovated in their accounts. We can also better appreciate the issues on which they were allied as well as where they diverged.

Epistemic Authority

Part of the contest for wisdom had to do with epistemic authority. Wisdom was a term which marked the supreme intellectual accomplishment. As Kurke notes, it was 'the "bringing to light" of that which is normally hidden or invisible to human senses in any of a number of different domains' (Kurke 101). As such, it distinguished some people as having access to knowledge that others did not. Plato and Aristotle faced resistance to the idea that wisdom (as they conceived of it) should bestow epistemic authority and, given the prevalence of concerns over false and deceptive forms of wisdom, skepticism as to whether we could identify those who were wise.[173]

Plato and Aristotle agreed that wisdom should confer a significant amount of intellectual or epistemic authority and embraced the idea that wisdom gave those who possessed it the ability to understand what others could not access. For Plato, those who are wise are exceptional because they use Forms, what is normally inaccessible to ordinary senses, to illuminate human affairs and guide judgments about the realm of perceptibles. In this way, the wise person's knowledge of the Forms brings to light possibilities and verdicts that are inaccessible to those who lack such

[173] Billings 163; cf. Peterson 2011 (cf. *Apology* 18b-c). See also Plato's concern to distinguish true philosophers from contenders in *Rep.* V and the *Statesman.*

knowledge. For Aristotle, wisdom is straightforwardly about what is normally invisible to human senses, because it deals with the divine.

The picture I've presented enables us to ask further questions. Both Plato and Aristotle privilege *sophia* over other epistemic virtues (e.g. *epistēmē*, *phronēsis*, *technē*), but it is not clear whether they privilege it for the same reason. For this point, we need a distinction I introduced in chapter 3 between the highest intellectual state—the capacity that allows one to perform cognitive activities that reach the limits of our potential for rational thought—and the highest intellectual virtue—the rational capacity that best contributes to a good life (a life of *eudaimonia*). The best intellectual state need not be the best intellectual *virtue.* Plato might well think that the highest intellectual state is *epistēmē* of the Forms. *Sophia*, however, is an intellectual *virtue,* and so it must be the rational capacity that best contributes to a good life. Since a good life is the flourishing of the whole person (the embodied soul), not just her rational part, and since people operate in the realm of perceptibles, the best intellectual virtue must also be directed at perceptibles. On Plato's picture, then, the work (*ergon*) of the virtue of the best part of the soul is directed at the good of the whole soul.

By contrast, Aristotle assigns *sophia* to what he takes to be the best intellectual state—the disposition to engage in the best activity that a human being's faculty of reason can perform. *Eudaimonia* is a life of the (complete) activity of our best rational capacity, which he argues is *sophia*. According to Aristotle, the exercise of *sophia,* the virtue of the best part, is good for the whole soul (it is what *eudaimonia* consists in), but the work of *sophia* is not to benefit the whole; if anything, the work of the whole soul is at least significantly aimed at facilitating the activity of the best part.

My interpretation brings to light a further question. Plato and Aristotle both agree that wisdom is the virtue of the best part of the soul, but they do not partition the soul in the same way (Aristotle subdivides reason). How did they arrive at different conceptions of the best part of the soul? The issue is difficult and deserves a fuller treatment than I can give here, but a promising starting point is as follows: Aristotle and Plato differ in their basis for partitioning the soul. According to Aristotle, if there are different kinds of objects, then there will be different activities suited to those objects, and so different capacities that give rise to the activity, and finally different parts of the soul that possess these capacities. Necessary truths are different objects from contingent truths, so the *epistēmonikon* must be a different part of the soul than the *logistikon* (or *doxastikon*). Plato might well agree with Aristotle that there are different kinds of objects (e.g. intelligibles, perceptibles), different activities suited to them, and different capacities that give rise to the activity (*epistēmē*, *doxa*), but, unlike Aristotle, he does not partition the soul on this basis. Rather, for Plato, the basis for partitioning the soul is the possibility of desiderative conflict. Plato argues that the desire for reason is for all learning (*mathēmata*), suggesting that even if perceptibles and intelligibles are two different kinds of objects, the soul cannot form desires for these objects so as to generate the kind of desire-conflict pair that would require partitioning reason. In a slogan, Aristotle takes a metaphysics or object-first approach for partitioning souls, whereas Plato takes a moral-psychology first approach.

Social and Cultural Authority

Both Plato and Aristotle recognize that they owe answers about the social role of *sophia*. On this aspect of *sophia*, I want to focus on two points in particular. The first is whether they think wisdom needed to be recognized in and through one particular social role, so that a wise person

is always wise in a particular domain—poetry, theater, carpentry, politics, and so on—or whether they could be wise in general (or simply a wise thinker). Second, I'm interested in whether they thought of wisdom as being about matters of the sociocultural world around us, or whether its subject matter was completely disconnected from culture.

Let's begin with the first. Billings argues that the Socratic conception of *sophia* departed from traditional idea that wisdom is recognized through some particular cultural activity. According to Socrates, "the *sophōtatos* turns out to be the one who thinks the best, not the one whose activity is the best."[174] If Billings is correct, then Socrates and Aristotle disagree: Aristotle sides with the traditional view in thinking that the activity of wisdom is a particular cultural activity—for Aristotle, it is *theōria* and the work of a philosopher.

Plato's picture lies between Socrates's and Aristotle's, but not in a straightforward way. A remarkable feature of the *Republic*'s conception of wisdom is that it captures two intuitions that look to be in tension: the traditional idea that wisdom must be attached to a particular role, and the Socratic view that wisdom is free from any particular role. The key is to distinguish between the wisdom of a city and the wisdom of an individual. What makes an individual wise is that she makes good judgments about her whole soul. For an individual to be wise, then, there is no particular role (civic or otherwise) that she needs to be occupying—she can exercise good judgment about her own soul whether she is a guardian or whether she is unemployed. For a city to be wise, however, there must be people in it occupying the role of guardians and making good judgments to benefit the city as a whole. If an individual wants to bring about wisdom in her city, then she does need to be occupying a certain role; at least in an ideal city, she must work as a guardian. An upshot of this view is that one can be wise without being a wise ruler, because one

[174] Billings, 163

can exercise good judgment on behalf of her own whole soul without being equipped to exercise judgment on behalf of the city in which she lives (say, either because the city is so corrupt that she cannot take power or because she lacks requisite grasp of civic particulars).[175] It is important to recognize, though, that this person's wisdom would not bring about the city's wisdom.

The second point of comparison about the social role of *sophia* is the subject matter of wisdom. The Socratic conception did not attach wisdom to a *particular* cultural role in the city, but wisdom is still integrated and concerned with the social world of the city. In this way, the Socratic conception of wisdom adhered to the traditions before him. For Aristotle, however, the subject matter of wisdom is completely removed from history, culture, or anything in the contingent world. The *sophōtatos* is the person who is disposed to exercise the very best faculty of human reason in the best way, by engaging in contemplation of the most exact sort about the best kinds of objects. This contemplation deals exclusively with truths that hold of necessity—it is as far removed as possible from the spatiotemporal realm. Plato again fits between the two: the work of wisdom (in either the individual or the city) is to make judgments, factoring in contingent matters such as time, place, other people, the extent to which the decision departs from tradition, and the like. But wisdom also partly consists in knowledge of the Forms, and to that extent deals with non-contingent, changeless entities. In fact, it is plausibly this aspect of the *Republic*'s conception of wisdom that Aristotle preserves and develops in his own account, while isolating it from the practical aspects.

It is easy to see how the *Republic*'s conception of wisdom would have conferred significant political and social authority. According to Plato, the purpose of wisdom is to allow human

[175] Contra Williams's suggestion that a city is F iff its men are F—this principle does not hold for *sophia* (109-110). B.A.O. Williams, "The Analogy of City and Soul in Plato's *Republic,*" in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*, (Oxford 1999):255-264

beings to do as well as possible in navigating the perceptible realm. Those who are wise have privileged access to the Forms, which is extremely difficult to attain, as well as the ability to use this knowledge to guide their judgment. Thus, wise people have the special ability to reliably make excellent decisions for the benefit of an individual or political community. Aristotle rejects this view. It is no part of the work or purpose of wisdom to guide judgments or actions in the social or political realm; the work of wisdom is to contemplate metaphysically basic, necessary truths. Moreover, it is highly plausible that on Aristotle's view, the best wisdom is not even necessary for *phronēsis* and *politikē epistēmē*.[176] Wisdom might still be helpful in two ways: wisdom is the *aim* of moral action—*phronēsis* is directed toward a life of *sophia*—and it's possible that understanding the explanatory order of things can guide particular ethical and political decisions.

Religious Authority

The authority of *sophia* came in part from its association with the divine, both in its source and in its subject matter (Kurke 98). Plato and Aristotle both took seriously this connection and preserved a role for the divine in their conceptions of wisdom. Plato notes that the philosopher, because she consorts with what is divine (*to theion*) and well-ordered (*to kosmion*), will herself imitate it and become well-ordered and divine to whatever extent is possible for a human being. This person would excel at instilling these features into a political community or into other individuals, because she uses a divine model (*to theion paradeigma*) (*Resp.* VI 500c9-e4). Though wisdom is ultimately directed at perceptibles, the model one uses to guide judgments about cities and souls is a divine one, and the wise person's wisdom consists in part in her

[176] This claim is controversial. See B. Morison and H. Lorenz ["Empiricist"]

knowledge of divine, well-ordered beings (the Forms). Her acquaintance with and imitation of the Forms makes her as divine as is possible for a human being. Aristotle connects wisdom to the divine in two straightforward ways: wisdom is of the divine and it is what gods have most of all, because god simply is the activity of contemplating itself (*Met.* A). Aristotle establishes that *sophia* is the divine element of a person, so that someone who lives a life of contemplation (i.e. a life exercising *sophia*) lives a superior life, and a life that is as divine as is possible for a human being (*NE* X.7 1177b27-1178a2).

The picture that emerges might be surprising. Popular narratives tend to conceive of Plato's philosophy as more ethereal and Aristotle's as more grounded—consider, for instance, the depiction of Plato as pointing upward, at the Forms, and Aristotle as pointing downward, at the concrete particulars in Raphael's *The School of Athens* fresco.[177] At least with respect to wisdom, Plato is more concrete in two ways. First, Plato's conception of wisdom is about the changing, perceptible world and its purpose is to benefit our lives and our political communities. That the wise person must be suitably acquainted with the social world around us means that a wise guardian of one city might not be a wise guardian of another (if the two cities are sufficiently different), a wise person might not be a wise guardian of a city (say, if she does not know anything about politics), and a person who is wise in one context might cease to be wise in relation to a completely different context. Aristotle, by contrast, operates with a resolutely other-worldly conception of wisdom, on which it deals with imperceptible, unchanging, and divine beings. A wise person will be wise whatever her immediate context and whatever her grasp of the social world.

[177] Thanks to Hendrik Lorenz and Gabriel Shapiro for independently pointing this out to me.

The second way that Plato is more grounded is that, although Plato and Aristotle are both sensitive to *endoxa* concerning wisdom, Plato's conception better captures them. Plato preserves the idea that wisdom is embedded in cultural activity (even if wisdom in an individual isn't confined to a *specific* cultural activity). Moreover, like the accounts of wisdom before him, Plato reserved the name *sophia* and the prestige that came with it for a virtue that is ultimately practical. By contrast, Aristotle conceives of wisdom as theoretical, sharply distinguished from the practical and assigned the prestige and status connected to the title to a theoretical kind of knowledge. While this picture is not wholly removed from tradition, as he is careful to point out, it is a farther departure from earlier conceptions than Plato's.

What traditional interpretations of the story have missed is that the disconnect between the best human state (*sophia*) and the realm of action (*praxis*) was Aristotle's innovation; for Plato, the two were intertwined. If theoretical kinds of knowledge are nowadays valued over practical kinds—for instance, if we now think of knowledge of metaphysics and logic as more rigorous or ranked above that of ethics or social and political philosophy—then Aristotle has won. Even if we agree with Plato that the goal of philosophy is to train students to attain the highest kinds of knowledge, if we see this knowledge as wholly disconnected from practical wisdom or moral understanding, then Plato would still have definitively lost. In reflecting on which of their views about wisdom we as individuals and as members of various intellectual communities have inherited and what views – theirs or otherwise – we might have overlooked, we would do well to attend carefully to their motivations and justifications. And whatever positions we arrive at on wisdom and intellectual rankings, it is important to appreciate, as Plato and Aristotle did, that there is significant power, prestige, and authority at stake, and to consider the perspective of and

implications for those who are excluded from the kinds of intellectual pursuits some claim are most valuable.

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