

12-1-1988

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### Recommended Citation

Glannon, Walter (1988) "Virtue and Luck in Aristotle's Ethics," *University of Dayton Review*. Vol. 19: No. 3, Article 4.

Available at: <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/udr/vol19/iss3/4>

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# VIRTUE AND LUCK IN ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS

Glannon, Virtue and Luck in Aristotle's Ethics

Walter Glannon

Like his predecessor Socrates and his successors the Stoics, Aristotle wants to hold that virtue is a state of character immune to good and bad fortune. Yet he is aware of the implausibility in the thesis that virtue alone is sufficient for happiness. In some passages, he concedes that such goods of fortune as noble birth, wealth, and beauty are necessary, not in order to be virtuous, but only as instruments to enable an already established virtuous disposition to continue in the unimpeded exercise of good action for a happy life overall.<sup>1</sup> Although *eutuchia* may play a role in maintaining a good state of character, presumably being or becoming virtuous is not subject to luck. But elsewhere Aristotle acknowledges that natural and social contingencies infect the formation of character and consequently our ability to flourish. This suggests that virtue and happiness are functions of constitutive and situational forms of luck.<sup>2</sup> I shall demonstrate that Aristotle's admission of such contingencies undermines what he endeavors to show throughout his ethical writings, namely, that no one can be virtuous through luck or chance.

In advancing arguments for the view that virtue is a measure of luck, I shall draw upon three distinctions. First, the acquisition or formation of a virtuous temperament is not to be confused with the exercise of virtue, though one follows from the other insofar as good acts ordinarily proceed from a developed inclination to act in a certain way. A virtuous *hexis* is an immanent internal state resulting from these formative and active elements. But the innate and acquired factors from which a virtuous disposition forms are for the most part beyond our control. And in some cases the performance of a good act is motivated by circumstances in which the agent merely happens to find himself. Thus the formation of an excellent disposition is largely the product of constitutive luck, whereas the exercise of virtue seems to depend on situational luck. A third distinction hinges on the degree to which our tendency to perform good actions is shaped by factors in one's social environment. These factors strongly *incline* one to act in certain ways; they do not *determine* the course of action. Moreover, for our purposes we are concerned only with the class of actions which lends itself to moral evaluation. As a result, we avoid a mechanistic view of the self and thereby safeguard the notion of choice essential to human agency.

## I

Aristotle establishes the link between virtue and happiness in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There he defines *eudaimonia* as activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, which is a state of character concerned with choice (NE 1106b36–1107a2). He admits that external goods (*ta ektos agatha*) such as friends, wealth, and good birth are necessary in addition to virtue in order for one to flourish (NE 1009a32–b8). Luck therefore seems to be a factor in the determination of both *aretē* and *eudaimonia* to the extent that external goods happen to us independently of our agency, given that whatever happens to us as opposed to what we bring about is a feature of luck. It is tempting to assign a dominant role to luck or fortune as regards securing a life

of fulfillment apropos of what Aristotle says in the *Magnum Moralia*.<sup>2</sup> The majority think that the happy must be the fortunate life, or not apart from good fortune, and perhaps they are right in thinking so. For it is not possible to be happy without external goods, over which fortune is supreme" (*MM* 1206b30–35). In another work, however, he contends that living well does not depend on fortune but on good actions themselves (*energeiai kat' aretēn*, *NE* 1100b8 ff.). This agent-centered view is reinforced by claims in both the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE* 1215a13–19) and the *Politics* (*Pol.* 1323b24–26) that happiness is in one's own character and actions. Still, Aristotle repudiates the idea that virtue by itself suffices for happiness, since one cannot continue to exercise virtue without the requisite external materials. Or more to the point: "The happy man needs the goods of the body and external goods, i.e., those of fortune, viz., in order that he may not be impeded in these ways" (*NE* 1153b17–18). Although a virtuous *hexis* may not be sufficient for happiness, as in the case of Priam, it is nevertheless necessary to that end. Yet how can the luck associated with the good man's external materials be accommodated by virtue without superseding it as the primary element for *eudaimonia*?

Drawing attention to the prefix *pros-* ('in addition') at *NE* 1099a31, John Cooper proposes a solution to the problem by arguing that for Aristotle the goods of fortune contribute to *eudaimonia* "by the effects that they have on the good person's *further* activity."<sup>3</sup> By Cooper's lights, external goods are not merely supplements to virtue but rather integral to one's ability to continue living a fully virtuous life. External goods attend but do not generate a virtuous disposition. This accords with the passage at *NE* 1153, provided that it is the activity of the person who is *already* virtuous which Aristotle has in mind when discussing what may not be impeded. T.H. Irwin, similarly, addresses himself to the issue of the composite fabric of happiness in Aristotle's ethics by highlighting the asymmetry between virtue and external goods, the former being the dominant factor in a happy life.<sup>4</sup> Both interpretations assume an already established virtuous state, only the continuation of which is subject to external materials. The upshot appears to be a happy one. Requiring materials outside the agent for the continued exercise of *aretē* is more plausible than the Socratic exclusion of external goods in the relation between virtue and happiness. Furthermore, the asymmetry between virtue and external goods seems to secure the primacy of human action that is entailed by virtue. This is consonant with Aristotle's contention that actions determine the quality of life.

Nevertheless, by focusing on the continued exercise of virtue, Cooper and Irwin ignore how the disposition presupposed by that activity is acquired or formed in the first place. On the assumption that the aptitude for, training in, and exercise of good activity and thought derive from external goods that happen to us through no effort of our own, we see that not only happiness but also virtue itself results largely from antecedent conditions beyond our control. Instead of demonstrating that the good person manifests his virtue by making the best use of the materials (*ta huparchonta*, *NE* 1101a2) or opportunities (*exousiai*, *NE* 1178a33) available, Aristotle suggests more strongly that the very availability of these elements, which is a contingent matter, is what shapes a good character. Virtue is not something inborn; rather, it requires an adequate supply of the goods that provide opportunities for proper action over time before it can become established as a state. Assigning a dominant role to *ta ekstos agatha* over *energeiai kat' aretēn* places the provenance of character outside the agent, which is radically at odds with the Aristotelian principle that we cannot



refer our actions to origins (*archai*) other than those in us (*NE* 1113b19–20). But by admitting that virtue depends to a certain degree on means external to individuals, Aristotle unwittingly shifts the causal force in a good life away from the controlling agent and thereby imports luck into both practical and contemplative lives.

## II

In his treatment of the paradox of habituation at *NE* 1105a18–21, Aristotle asks how one can become virtuous by doing virtuous actions if, to do so, one must first be virtuous. This question is germane to the distinction between *hexis* and *energeia*, or the issue of priority concerning a state and an activity. The answer perhaps lies in construing a virtuous state as an immanent internal result that is separate from but not over and above the many actions that give rise to it.<sup>5</sup> This is not to endorse the Megarian view that powers have no existence except when they are actualized. For as Aristotle points out (*Meta.* 1046b29), a virtuous disposition is a potentiality irreducible to single actual instances. Nor does it result from activity alone, but also involves a learned inclination to act in a manner characteristic of the *hexis*. Aristotle must have these psychological and practical components in mind when he claims that a state of excellence is acquired rather than innate.

How does one acquire virtue? Aristotle divides the intellectual and moral virtues according to the teaching and habituation whence they derive (*NE* 1103a14–18). In the case of moral virtue, though, both teaching and habituation should be taken as antecedent causes of excellence, and Aristotle suggests as much in his discussion of moral education.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, teaching would seem to weigh more heavily in the formation of character, since one first needs the proper upbringing in order to understand how good activity conduces to happiness, and accordingly how best to practice it to that end. Provided that excessive interpretive latitude is not taken in extending 'good birth' beyond the strictly biological to include upbringing, moral education should be considered as an external good that shapes one's conception of virtue.

Aristotle says that "one should have been well brought up on good habits if one is going to listen adequately to lectures about things noble and just" (*NE* 1095b12–13). He further underscores the connection between moral education and good habits in contending "it makes no small difference whether one is brought up in these or those habits from childhood but a very great difference; or rather, all the difference" (*NE* 1103b23–24). Through this type of training, one gains knowledge of what counts as just, courageous, and temperate activity. It enables the student to internalize values and thereby become disposed to act in ways reflective of the best life envisioned by his parents and teachers. The impetus for practical deliberation, choice, and consequently action is internal to the agent in that it is part of his subjective valuational system. And owing to the relation of motivation to action, one cannot dissociate oneself from such a system, lest his status as an agent be undermined.<sup>7</sup> Yet, by implication, internalized values result from a process of assimilation whose source is outside the agent—viz., his parents and teachers. So a decisive factor in the development of an excellent disposition is influence external to the agent during the formative stages of his character.

One could say that the difference between the virtue of temperance and continence (stated at *NE* 1151b34–1152a4) is at least in part a function of varying degrees of

moral education. An individual's rational value and irrational desire in the temperate person reflects a greater degree of internalization of reasons regarding the possible negative consequences of lascivious behavior, for example, or of having an inordinate taste for alcohol. For the virtuous individual, the internalization of reasons instilled in him by elders is complete insofar as he has no motivation to pursue any course of action which might conflict with his valuational system. On this score, excessive sexual indulgence and being inebriated do not register as goods for him, and thus there is no tension within him between reason and desire.<sup>8</sup> The conflict within the continent person, on the other hand, may result from weak, or an inadequate supply of reasons received from others concerning the long-term costs to him for readily capitulating to desire. This is something which his rational side is aware of, for the most part. Yet irrational desire and emotion can be sources of motivation, and at times possible courses of action which proceed from these two parts of the soul *do* register as goods for the agent. Hence the internal conflict. Such tension might have been avoided if there had been more or stronger reasons against objects of irrational desire from teachers during character development. Still, it is not necessary but only contingent that the student has his actual parents and teachers. Therefore the fact that the virtuous person has a more strongly developed valuational system than the continent one may be attributed to chance. It is merely one aspect of constitutive luck and how it contributes to virtue.

The example perhaps suggests that learning is involuntary, which would leave no room for the notion of the individual as a 'controlling origin' (*EE* 1221b21-22) in the educative process. Now, Aristotle's discussion of voluntariness turns on the issue of moral responsibility, and he cites the involuntary conditions of outside force and ignorance as exculpating factors regarding accountability for outcomes in which the agent is implicated (*NE* 1109b35-1110a3). On the surface, this does not appear to be relevant to the matter of educating children and adolescents. But the more general definition of the involuntary individual as one who makes no contribution to the events that happen to him is apt for our purposes. Apart from the platitude that the student must respond favorably to his teachers in order to learn anything, it must be shown that he makes a significant contribution to the development of his own valuational system in order to assert that he exercises control over his moral formation. This would have to be demonstrated against the assumption that children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to external influence, or that their internal valuational system is relatively ill-formed at such an early stage in life.

In some passages, Aristotle implicitly assumes that the student can contribute to the formation of his character, offering no persuasive arguments in support of the idea. This leads David Furley to raise the question as to why Aristotle never "asks himself why the discipline of parents and teachers is not to be taken as an external cause of man's dispositions."<sup>9</sup> Responding on Aristotle's behalf, Richard Sorabji maintains that the child must minimally comply with or refuse to follow the instruction.<sup>10</sup> Yet suspicion is cast on Sorabji's point in the light of Aristotle's own doubts about whether the student has a disposition mature enough to comply in the right way before he has successfully completed his training. Or more precisely: "A young man is not a proper hearer of lectures (on political science); for he is inexperienced in the actions that occur in life, but its discussions start from these and are about these; and further, since he tends to follow his passions, his study will be vain and unprofitable" (*NE* 1095a2-5). This evaluation is corroborated by the negative character assess-



ment of youth in the Glannon, Virtue and Luck in Aristotle's Ethics scarcely that of one capable of a synoptic conception of the good over a complete lifetime.<sup>11</sup> On this count, anything the student might do prior to the necessary training and experience could not contribute significantly to the foundation for a good state of character, owing to the lack of a proper temperament before being educated. I think that this vindicates Furley's point. In addition, it underscores the extent to which the moral training we acquire shapes our disposition and, in a sense, the actual circumstances in which we find ourselves.

These arguments do not imply that the self is a mechanical causal product of external factors. As stated earlier, only the class of actions subject to moral evaluation are in question here. Furthermore, moral training strongly inclines one to deliberate in a certain way; it does not determine the particular choice of action, which lies within the agent. Still, given the plasticity of youth during character development, features of the social environment bear rather heavily on one's perception of those choices. Thus there is some correlation between external influence and the agent's moral outlook. This cannot be explained away by the denial at *NE* III 5 that we can blame external factors and the impressions they make on us for the manner in which we have developed.

Matters become more problematic with the question of innateness. What is innate for Aristotle is the capacity to acquire a virtuous disposition through training and habituation. In other words, the means through which we acquire the right temperament follow in turn from our natural mental aptitude to receive virtue (*NE* 1103a23–26). Here the genetic or biological variety of constitutive luck is especially prominent, since intellectual capacity is part of our natural endowment, and "nature's part evidently does not depend on us, but as a result of some divine cause is present in those who are truly fortunate" (*NE* 1179b21–22). The contingency of this intellectual endowment is highlighted by the fact that some of us are not so fortunate. At one point, Aristotle holds that psychical affective qualities, such as irascibility and madness, may be present from birth (*Cat.* 9b33–10a4). In extreme cases, to be sure, possession of such qualities can make it difficult or even impossible for one to understand the significance of virtue and its relation to happiness. What comes to mind apropos of this is the case of the mentally retarded, who may not be sufficiently endowed to reap the benefits of a moral education. Analogously, Aristotle's natural slaves have limited prospects for a flourishing life because they are incapable of rational deliberation (*Pol.* 1232a32–34). The genetic bad luck that befalls these types of individuals constrains their potential for realizing fulfilling lives. Moreover, given Aristotle's failure to provide an adequate subjective account of happiness, there is no way to compensate for the distance between objective ideals of virtue and happiness and the actual limited mental capacities of slaves and the retarded.<sup>12</sup> Yet we could envisage a rational, happy individual in a similarly unfortunate set of circumstances if his genetic endowment were different.

If one's ability to respond to moral education in some way depends on how fortune shapes our intellect, then serious questions arise with respect to the conception of virtue as something completely within the agent's control. The agent's choice of virtuous action is a manifestation of an acquired temperament, which in turn derives from the capacity to assimilate values. Given the flavor of transitivity in the way that aptitude, education, and virtuous choice are related, and the possibility that the first of these three elements may be deficient in us due to biological misfortune, we see

at bottom how virtue may be vulnerable to luck.

More obvious instances of external goods that we possess rather than generate on our own are wealth and beauty. Though of the same genus of constitutive luck as the intelligence and education that allow for rational deliberation, the species of money and good looks delimit the range of alternatives for choosing between moderate and excessive action. These goods are essential for the exercise of virtue, since it is the choices they provide which render 'virtue' meaningful. For example, a destitute man could not be a good candidate for liberality, because he does not have the money to spend on himself or others. Liberality presupposes an adequate supply of financial resources, which can come from an inheritance or else the combination of innate intelligence and the right training to develop the financial acumen that generates the availability of funds to use as he so chooses. Furthermore, an ugly individual is unlikely to have the opportunity to regularly select between restraint or moderation and indulgence in sexuality, which would be the case if he were more attractively endowed. Thus the fortune of good looks bears significantly on temperance. Returning to education, being trained by elders to cultivate truthfulness, as well as ready wit and other social graces, can lead to more friendships than in the case of someone deprived of such training. This is important in the light of Aristotle's designation of *philia* as the greatest of external goods (*NE* 1169b3–10). On the intellectualist account of *eudaimonia*, both the contemplative man and the politician need leisure in order to engage in theoretical activity (*Pol.* 1329a1–2). But leisure requires an adequate supply of material resources, and thus the virtue of contemplation is akin to the practical virtue of liberality insofar as both presuppose money as an external good.

In examples of virtues such as temperance, the right circumstances must present themselves to the agent in order for the exercise to take place. Nevertheless, being properly equipped with acquired goods is what makes the choice possible. The range of possible choices supervenes on the amount of material baggage we carry. Yet one virtue in which situational contingencies figure more prominently than their constitutive relatives is courage. At *NE* 1110a8–19, Aristotle tells of the helmsman who jettisons his cargo during a storm to save his own life and the lives of his crew. The gist of the example is that the helmsman's act of throwing goods overboard is mixed; it is voluntary and involuntary at the same time. But the fact remains that he could not have acted courageously in saving his crew if the storm had not occurred. Not unrelated to this is Aristotle's admission that success in strategy and navigation is often the outcome of chance (*EE* 1247a5–6). All of these practical and theoretical activities depend on external goods or circumstances beyond the agent's control, which demonstrates that virtue results from constitutive and situational forms of luck.

Aware of the inequality in the random distribution of external goods, Aristotle proposes (at *NE* X 9) that civic institutions, especially laws, may function as an equalizing force with respect to people's opportunities for moral progress. Laws presumably can redress the balance for those who fare poorly in the natural and social lotteries.<sup>13</sup> By reflecting Aristotle's theory of proportionate equality, whereby each citizen is awarded responsibilities and benefits in proportion to his deserts, laws can ensure that all will be beneficiaries of primary goods. And justice for Aristotle is to be understood precisely in terms of proportionate equality. But the link between a fair balance of satisfaction at the level of primary goods and the good life is tenuous



at best. The problem is one of reconciling the prudential aims of the individual with the good of the social community. What makes the individual's life go best overall is the ability to freely choose among courses of action which will enable him to flourish, that is, to live the best life of which he is capable. As we have seen, this depends partly on acquiring a proper disposition through moral education. However, Aristotle maintains that generally families and teachers are not sufficient to the task, and therefore the responsibility for instilling the right values in the young should be left to the law. The rationale is that placing education under control of the law prevents conflict between individual values and those of the community. Yet to enforce virtuous behavior by law, on the assumption that most people obey necessity rather than argument and punishments instead of an understanding of the noble (*NE* 1180a1–5), undermines the notion of choice that is supposed to be essential for virtue.

Even if institutional enforcement of virtuous behavior were not a contradiction of terms, it still would not follow that every citizen would have an equal opportunity to flourish. Social justice based on the principle of proportionate equality is one thing, individual attainment of *eudaimonia* is quite another. And beyond the level of primary goods, Aristotle cannot provide a mechanism to alter the inequality in the distribution of external materials the use of which leads to happiness. Indeed, his conception of perfect virtue and the good life requires a reasonable amount of wealth and leisure and is necessarily restricted to a small proportion of the population (*Pol.* 1279a39–b2). This reinforces rather than reconciles the difference between individual and communal aims. Moreover, in the absence of an adequate subjective conception of happiness in Aristotle's program, it is external goods more so than our attitude toward them which allow prudential aims to be realized. Far from striking a balance between virtue and what are presumed to be only auxiliary materials, Aristotle in effect implies that these materials are what make a good disposition.

In spite of the considerations, Aristotle assumes that virtues such as justice and temperance are neither products of nor vulnerable to luck or chance (*Pol.* 1323b24–29). But his admission of fortune into the way goods are given and acquired allows us to derive a contradiction from this assumption. Granted that innate and acquired goods are external in the sense that they happen to us through no effort of our own, and given all of the points marshaled thus far, we can construct the following argument:

- 1) Being virtuous presupposes the regular exercise of virtuous activity.
- 2) The exercise of virtue depends on innate and acquired external goods, as well as the right circumstances, which provide alternatives for choosing between virtuous and vicious activity.
- 3) To the extent that external goods happen to us rather than result from what we bring about, it is through luck that we have them.
- 4) All external goods happen to us.
- 5) It is through luck that we have external goods. (from 3, 4)
- 6) It is through luck that we exercise virtue. (from 2, 5)
- 7) It is through luck that we are virtuous. (from 1, 6)



The conclusion in (7) which completes the *reductio* follows from Aristotle's acknowledgment of natural and social contingencies in his ethical and political writings.

### III

Contingency is not a topic restricted to Aristotle's views on ethics. He upholds it at *De Interpretatione* 9 in rejecting the supposition that future events happen of necessity, which would make the notion of responsibility lose its point. The contingency of outcomes confers meaning on the idea of an agent deliberating about and choosing between alternative courses of action. Presumably, the doctrine of future contingency allays fears about the incompatibility of moral responsibility and determinism. For in the absence of necessitated causes, the agent can be thought of as being sufficiently in control of his actions for others to impute praise or blame to him.<sup>14</sup> As articulated in Book III of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and Book II of the *Eudemian Ethics*, we are responsible only for voluntary actions. These require that the origin of the act be internal to the agent (*archē en hēmin*), which makes it within one's power to do or refrain from doing. Knowledge of the facts of the circumstances in which one acts completes the conditions for voluntariness.

Yet Aristotle concedes that not everything that is contingent is up to us (*EE* 1226a22–25). As we have seen already, the intellectual capacity, moral education, and physical and material resources requisite for virtuous action fall under this category. Virtuous activity is a subset of action proper, which encompasses more than what can be qualified as morally good or bad. Within the set of general actions, moreover, contingency guarantees that at least some events or outcomes would not occur if agents did not act. The choice of means leading to some goal or end depends on the agent alone (*NE* 1114b16–21). But the means that make the choice possible are external to the agent, and in examples of virtue the right choice and consequently the right action would not take place if the means were not available. Deliberating about and choosing between alternatives are internal to the agent. Nevertheless, we cannot infer that a virtuous state of character results from this alone, since the opportunities for choice are circumscribed by external factors antecedent to deliberation. And it is through chance that some individuals have alternatives open to them which others may lack. One is thus free or constrained regarding the choice of moderation or excess depending on the extent to which the goods of fortune happen to him. In this way, the internal mechanism of choice is superseded by the external means that make choice possible. This attenuates the notion of virtue as an internally established state of character.

Although Aristotle's arguments for the contingency of future events may be enough to deflate determinism, the manner in which this openness makes choice possible fails to mitigate skepticism about the assumption that the origin of virtue is internal to the agent. The notion of contingency presents Aristotle with as formidable an obstacle to the view of virtue as an internally developed disposition as does determinism for deliberation and free action. Despite occupying opposite metaphysical poles, necessity and contingency have equally unsettling implications in the realm of value.

In response to the unresolved problem of luck in Aristotle's ethics, the primary aim of Stoic ethical theory is to establish the self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) of virtue for happiness by focusing on the agent's subjective view of external goods. The Stoics are concerned that the virtuous individual have the right attitude toward the materials that come his way. This can be explained via the distinction between possession (*tunchanein*) and selection (*eklegein*), and virtue is self-sufficient only insofar as the good man selects but does not seek to possess externals in exercising *aretē*.<sup>15</sup> One has reason to select as many of these materials, and the non-moral advantages they provide, as is consistent with a commitment to virtue which is strong enough to ensure that virtue always overrides these other advantages in any internal conflict. According to Epictetus, this type of reservation in the pursuit of externals not within one's power allows for a smooth flow of life (*eurhoia biou*) and consequently inner tranquility.<sup>16</sup> From the Stoic perspective, perhaps it is Aristotle's failure to distinguish selection of materials from possession of them, as well as the lack of a subjective notion like reservation in this system, which prevents him from establishing the self-sufficiency of either a practical or contemplative life of virtue.

On the surface, there may appear to be some resonance of this Stoic concern in Kant's preoccupation with the autonomy of the moral agent. The identification of the good with what is external and thus an obstacle to autonomy motivates Kant to affirm the primacy of the moral law over the idea of the good.<sup>17</sup> Yet this is fanciful given the extent to which materials that just happen to us make moral choice possible in the first place. Nor does it reflect the Stoic recognition that external goods play a role in delimiting the range of choices. With the proviso for a proper subjective attitude vis-à-vis external materials in their theory of *autarkeia*, the Stoics seem to steer a plausible middle course between Aristotelian and Kantian notions.

But it is doubtful that even the Stoic ethical view can effectively neutralize the force of luck on virtue. For a virtuous disposition proceeds from good acts, which need innate and acquired materials as well as the right circumstances. Having these at our disposal is beyond our control, quite apart from our subjective attitudes toward them. Aristotle fares no better on this score, however. Indeed, his acknowledgment of constitutive and situational contingencies deals a fatal blow to the self-sufficiency thesis. Since these forms of luck are antecedent causes of action, they place the origin of virtue outside the agent. In addition, *eudaimonia* becomes a measure of luck. Happiness is thought to be a state of the soul which accords with virtue. But if the origin of virtue is external to us, the resultant happiness over a complete lifetime cannot be within our control either. In an important sense, no man is the architect of his own fortune.<sup>18</sup>

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- 1 At NE 1099a31–b8, Aristotle seems to assign different functions to two kinds of external goods. Friends, wealth, and political power are necessary as instruments for *eudaimonia*. On the other hand, the absence of goods like noble birth can detract from happiness. Nevertheless, all of the external goods mentioned here provide the formal conditions for all the forms of virtue leading to happiness. So the distinction made by Aristotle is not really crucial to how external goods generally bear on virtue. Furthermore, I restrict the notion of a flourishing life here to the ‘happy’ man (*eudaimon*), ignoring the ‘blessed’ man (*makarion*), since someone cannot be considered blessed until his life is complete.
- 2 My interpretation of ‘luck’ (*tuchē*) accords with that of Martha Nussbaum, which is just what happens to the agent, as opposed to what he does or makes. She takes this to be a general notion for Greek ethical thought in *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 3 ff. Thomas Nagel and Bernard Williams also deal with the role of luck in morality, though they focus primarily on how it functions in the outcomes of actions and how they are evaluated. See Nagel’s ‘Moral Luck,’ in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 24–38, and Williams’ paper of the same title in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 20–39. The discussion of constitutive and situational luck in this paper owes much to Anthony Kenny’s ‘Aristotle on Moral Luck,’ in *The Heritage of Wisdom* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), pp. 1–15.
- 3 ‘Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune,’ *Philosophical Review*, 94 (1985), p. 184.
- 4 ‘Permanent Happiness: Aristotle and Solon,’ *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, III (1985), pp. 89–124. See also Irwin’s ‘Stoic and Aristotelian Conceptions of Happiness,’ in *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics*, Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 205–244.
- 5 See David Charles, ‘Aristotle: Ontology and Moral Reasoning,’ *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, IV (1986), pp. 119–144.
- 6 See W.F.R. Hardie, *Aristotle’s Ethical Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 94–110, for discussion of the roles played by teaching and habituation in the development of a virtuous character. See also M.F. Burnyeat, ‘Aristotle on Learning to be Good,’ in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, Amelie Oxenbergr Rorty, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 69–92, and Nussbaum *op. cit.*, p. 318 ff. I take teaching and learning for Aristotle to be intuitive more so than technically epistemic notions. This avoids the pessimism of Socrates at *Meno* 89d6–96c10 and *Protagoras* 319e1–320b6 concerning the teachability of virtue, which is to be understood as a form of knowledge.
- 7 This formulation owes much to the ideas of Gary Watson in ‘Free Agency,’ *Journal of Philosophy*, 72 (1975), pp. 205–220.
- 8 In ‘The Role of *Eudaimonia* in Aristotle’s Ethics,’ in Rorty, *op. cit.*, John McDowell holds that when there is a rational requirement of excellence, a missed chance of pleasure is no loss at all, since there is no reason to pursue it (pp. 359–376). See also McDowell’s ‘Virtue and Reason,’ *The Monist*, 62 (1979), pp. 331–350.
- 9 *Two Studies in the Greek Atomists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 194.
- 10 *Necessity, Cause, and Blame: Perspectives on Aristotle’s Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 266–267.
- 11 Cf. Sorabji, *ibid.*, p. 267.

- <sup>12</sup> Richard Kraut discusses Aristotle's views on luck in the light of Aristotle's views in 'Two Conceptions of Happiness,' *Philosophical Review*, 87 (1979), pp. 167–197.
- <sup>13</sup> Much of the terminology here is from John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), especially pp. 17–21.
- <sup>14</sup> See Sorabji, *op. cit.*, pp. 227–256. Also, Anthony Kenny, *Aristotle's Theory of the Will* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 3–49.
- <sup>15</sup> See A.A. Long, 'Aristotle's Legacy to Stoic Ethics,' *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 15 (1968), pp. 72–85.
- <sup>16</sup> Epictetus, *Discourses*, 3.24.23–4 and 85 ff. See Brad Inwood's explication of these passages in *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 105–126. Irwin outlines the main Stoic argument in 'Stoic and Aristotelian Conceptions of Happiness,' especially p. 225.
- <sup>17</sup> *Critique of Practical Reason*, L.W. Beck, trans. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), Part I, Book I, Chapter 2.
- <sup>18</sup> I am grateful to Thomas Tymoczko and an anonymous reader for helpful criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper.



