

The Long and Short of It
Dominic Scott: *Levels of Argument. A Comparative Study of Plato's Republic and Aristotle's
Nicomachean Ethics*
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Dominic Scott's *Levels of Argument* examines Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* from a comparative methodological perspective. Both authors are 'highly self-conscious about method', notes Scott. His aim is to determine how they conceptualize ethics and practical philosophy as disciplines, and what level of precision (*akribeia*) they consider appropriate when one undertakes theoretical enquiries for practical purposes. Both Plato and Aristotle base their ethics on claims about human nature and the nature of reality, but does practical inquiry require a rigorous and systematic investigation into metaphysics, epistemology, and psychology, or can practical philosophy reach its objective with a less precise grasp of the underlying principles in these areas? 'In other words', asks Scott, 'does practical philosophy have to be as rigorous as those disciplines that investigate the assumptions on which it is based?' (p. 2). These methodological questions have received extensive attention from Aristotle scholars over the past decades (treatments include Irwin (1980; 1981; 1988; 2000); MacIntyre (1981); Nussbaum (1986); Roche (1988); Whiting (1988); Reeve (1992); Anagnostopoulos (1994); McDowell (1995); Bostock (2000); Achtenberg (2002); Shields (2007); Zingano (2007)). What is distinctive about Scott's approach is his comparative perspective: the book discerningly elucidates the meta-ethical assumptions underwriting Plato and Aristotle's inquiries into virtue and happiness, and reveals points of affinity that have hitherto been underexplored. Through the sharp lens of Scott's incisive study, the works are brought into alignment and their methodological structures exposed.

The result of Scott's analysis may seem surprising, not least for those who take Aristotle's famous parricide at *EN* I 6 to mark a methodological as well as a metaphysical break with Plato. However, Scott sees similarities.

Though Aristotle eschews both Platonic metaphysics and the ideal of meta-ethical precision, Scott thinks his method in the *Nicomachean Ethics* owes much to the method that Plato actually adopts in the *Republic*. This is not because Plato's ambitions for ethical theory are not higher than Aristotle's – Plato clearly thinks a foundational study of the form of the good and a precise account of the nature of the soul (*Rep.* X 611 b-12a) is required to yield a definitive defense of justice. Such 'precise inquiry', exposing the metaphysical bedrock on which political theories rest, will reveal the soul's 'true nature' by means of 'logical argument' (611c) and will anchor all explanations in an understanding of the good itself. But Plato does not in fact pursue this 'longer route' in the *Republic*, argues Scott – it is gestured at, but not pursued. Instead, Plato settles for a lesser standard of argument, which leads via the 'shorter route' announced at 435c-d to a 'decent' argument that is satisfactory (*hikanôs*, 435d) for Socrates' audience. The psychological theory and the explication of the virtues produced by the shorter route is imprecise, in that it rests on unproven assumptions and empirical observations. While Plato underlines that a precise answer to Glaucon's challenge requires that we make the full ascent and grasp the 'unhypothetical first principle of everything', the actual method followed in the *Republic* is not this lofty dialectic approach, which would anchor our understanding of individual virtues and rules of conduct in the form of the good, but rather a pedestrian approach that derives a defense of justice from unexamined theoretical suppositions, in the manner prescribed by the method of hypothesis in the *Meno*. Plato's defense of justice is thus tailored to an audience that lacks the enlightened *noêsis* of his future guardians. It is, Scott says, practical philosophy conducted entirely from inside the cave (albeit with a restricted glimpse outside the cave when Socrates presents the sun, line, and cave analogies in books V-VII).

This brings Plato's 'non-ideal' method into line with the method Aristotle recommends in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Though Aristotle thinks the equivalent of a 'longer road' is possible, based on his own, distinctive brand of metaphysics, Scott holds that Aristotle rejects it in his famous methodological remarks (*EN* I 3 1094b11-27; I 4 1095a30-b8; 1098a33-b8; II 2 1103b34-1104a10; I 13 1102a23-32; see also VII 1 1145b2-7) as a distraction. Given the practical objective of political science, it is superfluous to search for a precise definition of the soul or to linger on metaphysical principles. Just as carpenters don't need to study the right angle with the precision of a geometrician,

someone aiming to make people good need not study metaphysics and psychology with the precision of a metaphysician or a psychologist.

Aristotle, then, takes political science to presuppose the rough and ready arguments of the short road, rather than the foundational inquiries of the longer road, since its aim is to produce good order in citizens and states, and since we can succeed in this objective without becoming theoretical psychologists, theologians, or expert metaphysicians. An approximate grasp will do. The *Republic* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* both address future legislators and their advisors, and both concern virtue and happiness. Having dismissed the search for the 'good itself' as a dead end in I 6, Aristotle identifies his subject matter as the 'human good', of which political science is the 'most architectonic science'. It determines which other sciences should be studied in the state, and at what length. Plato's main concern is whether justice controls happiness – Aristotle seemingly casts a wider net, in that he seeks to work out definitions of the whole catalog of virtues outlined at *EN* II 7. However, Aristotle thinks that justice *qua* lawfulness is the whole of virtue, the legislator will need to know what justice in general is. Both works, then, are inquiries into the nature of justice, and both defend the just life as happier than the unjust life. The question is how one best studies these topics given the aims of the inquiry: to produce just citizens and just states.

The book is split neatly down the middle, with one half devoted to each philosopher. By comparing the two works side by side, and rubbing them together like Socrates' fire-sticks, Scott lets their methodologies light up.

In part I, Scott examines Plato's method in the *Republic*, and concludes that despite his attempt to ground his defense of the just life in a theory of forms, the metaphysical theory developed in the middle books (V-VII) plays a minimal role in Socrates' actual response to Glaucon's challenge. Chapter 1 considers the 'shorter route' to a defense of justice in *Republic* II-IV; chapter 2 defends the adequacy of the shorter route, while chapter 3 examines the longer route, which would have covered 'the most important subject' (435c). In its place, Socrates gives us the sun, line and cave analogies, which by his own admission is merely an approximation. In chapter 4, Scott considers the role of metaphysics in the survey of the four degenerate constitutions and souls, as well as in arguments about pleasure (*Rep.* VIII-IX). In chapter 5, 'The Cave Allegory and the Structure of the *Republic*', Scott hones in on Plato's description of the precise and less precise methods of argument not just as 'routes' (*hodoi*), but as circuits or round-trips (*perihodoi*, 504b2).

This talk of a methodological 'circuits' is common to Plato and Aristotle. The Platonic circuit tracks the education and practice of the future guardians: After reaching knowledge of the form of the good at age fifty, the philosopher kings will understand the nature of the virtues and will be ready to make decisions about particulars. This includes knowing which laws and conventions (*nomima*) to preserve and which to introduce into the ideal state. 'But why exactly is this a circuit?' asks Scott. 'In what way does one come back to the point of departure?' The answer, suggests Scott, 'lies in the fact that the guardians of the ideal state will have been brought up in the correct laws and conventions' (p. ***). They start out with true beliefs about the correctness of their *nomima*, dyed into their souls through their upbringing in childhood and youth. At the age of twenty, they embark upon their mathematical studies, before turning to dialectic at thirty. Only by the age of fifty will they have grasped the nature of the good, which constitutes the summit of their ascent. Now that they understand the nature of the good, they can give a precise explanation of the nature of the forms of the virtues. Their *noêsis* allows them to descend to the much more specific level, 'where they will appreciate the correctness of the *nomima* with which they started, and hence be able to 'guard and preserve' them (484d1-2). It is this final point that constitutes a return, claims Scott, and which 'justifies the description of the whole route as a circuit' (pp. 84-5).

Scott observes that since *both* the long *and* the short routes are described by Plato as circuits, we should expect to find a similar structure (ascent to the universal and descent to the particular) in Socrates' 'imprecise' defense of justice, which reaches its apex in the description of justice as psychological harmony at the end of book IV. In other words, not just the educational journey of the future guardians, but Socrates' actual defense of justice, contains an upward journey towards a principle, and a downward journey that defends the beliefs with which the inquiry started and explains why they were correct.

It is not obvious, however, where, if anywhere, Plato completes the ‘descent’ that defends the account of justice as *oikeiopraxis* – each part in the state and soul doing its own work – by showing how justice thus understood leads to the preservation of just behavior which promotes the common good. Scott frames the issue in light of Sachs’ famous question: Why would a Platonically just person abstain from conventionally unjust acts? Why would we never ‘catch him red-handed’, traveling down the same road as the unjust man? Scott accuses those who offer answers grounded in the metaphysics of the central books of ‘rationally reconstructing’ Plato’s defense in book IV by ‘taking arguments and claims made by Socrates for one purpose and reassembling them for another’ (p.60). Rejecting both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ versions of such reconstructions, Scott holds that the key elements of Plato’s answer, though provisional, are already present in books II-IV. We here get a ‘first draft’ of the psychological explanation that is completed in the analysis of deficient constitutions and souls in books VIII-IX. Plato’s solution to Sachs’ problem starts from the state-soul parallel, says Scott. The appetites of the individual who resembles the just city will have been trained from youth through a mixture of gymnastics and music that makes them harmonious and measured, so that, through his upbringing, he will abstain from *pleonexia*. In both, unnecessary desires are restrained by reason. This anticipates the distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires that Socrates draws in book VIII, and the attribution of lawless unnecessary desires to the tyrant in book IX. This psychological solution is ‘in a certain sense’ self-sufficient: it can stand on its own feet as a plausible way of demonstrating the value of justice’ (p. 41) without reference to the metaphysics of the central books. Plato argues, in essence, that a Platonically just soul will be dominated by necessary and lawful desires rather than unnecessary and lawless ones, and that this will ensure that he promotes the common good in the way required of future guardians.

Scott’s analysis at this point seems persuasive. However, it is worth asking whether Socrates would consider an explication of the jumbled *nomima* of his interlocutors a requirement of the shorter road. While the future guardians will have been brought up in good habits, the same cannot be assumed for your average Joe (or Coriscus, as it were). Now, Plato takes great care to have Socrates praise the outstanding characters of his brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus. But even so, it is not a requirement that Socrates be able to show that a person with a Platonically just soul will always or even typically act in conventionally just ways. Plato’s account is revisionist, not just by prioritizing an agent-based over an act-based perspective, and so the ‘downward’ movement of the short circuit will not necessarily return us to the conventional starting point. It is perhaps not so surprising, then, that the outline of the shorter circuit is less clearly drawn and requires more excavation on Scott’s part than tracing the trajectory of the long circuit.

We may also balk at the description of the shorter route as ‘non-theoretical’ or ‘non-metaphysical’. To modern ears, the argument in books II –IV clearly seems to rely on metaphysical assumptions, such as the Unitarian Assumption (VI 435a6-9) and the Principle of Contraries (**). However, Scott underlines that these principles remain suppositions – Socrates argues *from* them, not *to* them. And at no point in books II-IV, argues Scott, does Plato appeal to the existence of forms in his defense of justice. The argument which culminates with Socrates’ description of justice as ‘some kind of (*tis*) health’ (444d12) is metaphysically innocent as far as the theory of forms is concerned. The only real appeal to forms that Scott discerns outside of the central books appears in the second pleasure argument in book IX, which Scott describes as ‘a brief, temporary, and somewhat disorienting glimpse outside the cave’ (p. 96)). Plato’s reference in III (402b9-c8) to the ‘forms’ of temperance, courage, generosity and magnificence that the guardians must know refer to immanent characters; these are types or modes intermediate between sensible individuals and forms. Any other reference to forms is extraneous to the main argument of the *Republic*.

Why, exactly, does Socrates fail to make more than a fleeting reference to the theory of forms in his reply to Glaucon’s challenge? Scott thinks Socrates’ modest approach is borne of necessity: ‘his interlocutors lack the mathematical and metaphysical background to complete the longer circuit in its entirety’. They may be able to follow what Scott calls a ‘middle route’, which ‘follows the basic pattern of the shorter route’, while taking a ‘glimpse of the metaphysical perspective associated with the longer route’. This ‘mezzanine level argument’ ‘borrows certain claims that only someone actually taking the longer route in its entirety would be in a position to master’ (p. 57). Scott’s explanation leaves open the possibility that Socrates could have followed the longer route, had Glaucon and Adeimantus been up to the task. He is holding back insights that he would have shared, had he been speaking to an enlightened audience. I find this unpersuasive. While it is true that the brothers, whatever their virtues, are not yet enlightened guardians, neither is Socrates. In the *Meno*, the

hypothetical method is introduced in the face of Socrates' disavowals of knowledge, and in the *Republic*, Socrates disavows knowledge not just at the end of book I (as Scott duly observes), but also at the critical juncture at the start of the discussion of the 'offspring' of the form of the good at 506c: 'Do you think that it is right to talk about things that one does not know as if one knows them?' In the Glaucon passage at the end of book X, he likewise underlines his ignorance of the soul as it is in its pure state. If Socrates in fact conceals knowledge he possesses for the sake of his audience, then Thrasymachus was right in book I to charge him with 'his usual irony' (337a). But there is no reason to suppose that Socrates is being coy when he declares that he lacks knowledge of the good. On this interpretation, the *Republic* is a less dogmatic work than critics often allow – like the 'transitional' dialogues identified by developmentalists, it displays an agnostic Socrates who waves his hand at the forms, stating roughly and in outline what they are *like*, without giving a definition of their essence.

Having defended his novel and provocative reading of the *Republic*, Scott in the second half of the book turns to Aristotle, and his famous methodological remarks about precision. Having helpfully distinguished between what he calls 'practical' and 'theoretical' precision – the first of which concerns normative theory's inability to articulate context-independent precepts that a political scientist could apply mechanically, Scott concentrates on theoretical imprecision. This does not concern the application of normative principles, but rather the meta-ethical and metaphysical presuppositions of the principles that Aristotle uncovers in the *Nicomachean Ethics* – specifically, the principles he alludes to in his project of spelling out the content of the happy life. This project takes up the whole of the *Ethics*, and requires an elucidation of the virtues, of the grounds of praiseworthiness and blameworthiness, and the nature of pleasure and friendship, among other topics. As Scott reads him, Aristotle denies that political science requires an extensive understanding of the metaphysical, psychological, epistemological or theological principles undergirding the definitions he outlines. Though it is possible to give a precise explication of the principles behind e.g. the function argument and the division of the soul, would-be experts in political science need not master them to succeed. Consequently, those who seek support for ethical claims in the *Metaphysics*, *Physics* or *De Anima*, ignore Aristotle's warnings about precision – they fail to respect Aristotle's conception of ethics as an imprecise science. This is not to deny that a distinctively Aristotelian 'longer road' is possible, Scott argues, but it is a distraction for students of political science: 'In complete contrast to Socrates in *Republic* 504b-e, [Aristotle] does not think that achieving such precision would do anything to enhance one's ability to make correct decisions in the practical arena' (p. 140).

Scott here rejects positions defended by Irwin, Bostock, Whiting and Shields, who maintain that Aristotle bases his theory of the *Nicomachean Ethics* on those developed in his other works, and that mastering these works is necessary for the political scientist. It is not exactly clear, however, what Scott's own position is meant to be. It is one thing to say, as Scott does, that the exact study of psychology does not 'belong to' political science, and quite another to claim that political science can get along just fine without a precise study of e.g. psychology. As Scott later allows, psychology could be foundational for ethics without being part of it as a discipline, just as cell biology is distinct from oncology, but still foundational for it.

The question, then, is whether Aristotle believes that the 'longer' route', via the more foundational disciplines, is an appropriate route to travel for the intended readers of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Here, Scott maintains that we should distinguish sharply between rational reconstructions and explications of Aristotle's own recommendations. Whom does Aristotle warn against excessive theoretical precision and why? Pace Scott, one might object that Aristotle needn't be cautioning philosophers against studying psychology or metaphysics as part of their overall curriculum, but only against incorporating the precise study of psychology or metaphysics into the study of ethics, as Plato attempts in the *Republic*. That 'integrated' approach would indeed result in digressions 'crowding out' the main issues (*ta parerga tôn ergôn pleiō ginētai*, *EN* I 7 1098a33), and so dividing up the inquiries into separate lecture courses is the way to go (I trust I'm not the only reader of Plato to lose track of the intersecting paths both on first and second approach, despite Socrates' busy signposting). By contrast, Scott takes Aristotle to argue that ethics and politics can be studied successfully without more than a quick glance at the underlying metaphysical and psychological theories. This is not simply because its objective is practical rather than theoretical – Aristotle thinks that a theoretical treatise into the human good will aid the lawgiver – but because the extra-ethical theoretical requirements for political prudence are limited. While arguing that Aristotle's audience consists of 'philosophers familiar with these more exact areas of inquiry' (p. 140), Scott envisions Aristotle cautioning them that they must 'put their usual desire for precision on hold and orient themselves in a more practical direction' (p.140) when they study political

science as future advisors to legislators. But if they have already studied the *De Anima*, *Posterior Analytics*, and *Physics* before turning to practical philosophy, as some of Aristotle's allusions would suggest, it seems quaint to say that they put their usual desire for theoretical precision 'on hold'. Scott's interpretation would have made better sense had he thought the *EN* was aimed at the legislators themselves rather than their tutors – though even here, Aristotle says that politicians must 'study the soul' just as a better sort of eye doctor must study the whole body and not just the eyes alone (*EN* 1102a17-19; 23-4; cf. *Pol.* 1333a37; see Shields (2015)).

In attributing to Aristotle the view that it is *possible* to find further explanations for the principles of political science, but *superfluous* given its practical nature, Scott allows that those who read the *Nicomachean Ethics* may learn something valuable by reconstructing the theoretical underpinnings of Aristotle's ethics. Few scholars nowadays read the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a 'mirror for princes' – whether to produce virtuous legislators or to avoid tutoring a future George Osborne or Boris Johnson. Aristotle may even think that we *should* aim for precision, just as students in the Lyceum were expected to complete a full course of study, comprising all branches of inquiry. What they cannot do is to study foundational sciences in detail as part of a lecture course on ethics. In other words, the Oxbridge-approach where the *Republic* and *Nicomachean Ethics* is studied by students with no grounding in their respective metaphysics or epistemology, may be at best superficial, and at worst pernicious, a kind of dabbling that can't do justice to the strength of Aristotle's position, while leaving students ill equipped to defend Aristotle's views against e.g. relativist or anti-naturalist critics. If Aristotle accepts the reading that Scott proposes, he arguably underestimates the normative implications of accepting the right metaethical theory – realists and conventionalists tend to adopt different normative principles. Unlike Scott, I take Aristotle to hold that the 'long route' would also benefit Aristotle's ideal legislator: though the purpose of ethics is to become good, we're more likely to succeed if we know what the human good is, and since the good for any living organism is relative to its nature, the study of ethics presupposes the study of psychology. His warnings about precision tell us to put aside questions about foundations, since these cannot be treated adequately in a lecture course on ethics. And in any case, they are covered at length elsewhere.

In chapter 9, Scott considers a methodological passage in *EN* I 4, where Aristotle describes his own inquiry with reference to a puzzle Plato 'used to raise':

'We must notice, however, the difference between arguments from principles (*archai*) and arguments towards principles. For indeed Plato was right to be puzzled about this, when he used to ask if [the argument] set out from the principles or led toward them – just as on a race course the path may go from the starting point to the far end, or back again. For we should certainly begin from things known, but things are known in two ways; for some are known to us, some known without qualification. Presumably, then, we ought to begin from things known to us' (*EN* I 4 1094b32-1095a6)

To appreciate Aristotle's race-course analogy, recall that the track of a Greek stadium leads in a reclining U-shape from the starting point to the far end, and back again. Aristotle compares the first leg leading up to the mid-point to the movement *towards* first principles, and the leg leading back down to the movement *from* first principles.

Aristotle maintains that we 'need to have been brought up in good habits' if we are to be adequate students of fine and just things, and of political questions more generally. 'For', he says, 'we begin from the [belief] that [something is true]; if this is apparent enough to us, we can begin without also knowing why [it is true]'. Only someone who is well brought up has the beginnings, or can easily acquire them. Someone who hasn't been brought up in good habits, and who lacks the ability to acquire the starting points by himself, should listen to the advice of others: for he who 'neither grasps it himself nor takes to heart what he hears from another is a useless man' (*EN* I 4, 1095b10). The aim of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is to articulate the views from which we must start, and to use them as step-stones in the definition of the human good. The movement from 'the that' (*to hoti*, the beliefs with which we start) to the first principle (*archê*), namely the account of *eudaimonia*, allows us to return to our starting points and to explain why our beliefs are (mostly) right, and, in cases where a mistake has been revealed, why people were prone to error. The first principle thus provides 'the because' (*to dihoti*), or justification, of things better known to us – the assumptions from which the inquiry starts. If Scott is right, Aristotle's nod to Plato is not a coincidence. This 'ascent and descent'-structure also marks the trajectory of Socrates and his interlocutors in *Republic* II-X, as Socrates suggests at *Rep.* 510b-c and 533c-d, when he outlines the dialectical mode of inquiry.

Scott now asks: If Aristotle shares Plato's commitment to the upward and downward journey of inquiry, where in the *Nicomachean Ethics* does he make the descent to show that the first principles uncovered in his definition (*horismos*) of happiness and virtue can explain the opinions from which the journey towards first principles started? Though Aristotle 'envisages' his inquiry taking both journeys, in fact, argues Scott, 'almost all' of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is exhausted by one of the journeys described in the race-course analogy (p 173), namely the specification of the components of *eudaimonia*. He never gets around to explaining the intuitions. Scott bases this assessment on an intuition that I don't share. Had Aristotle intended to make the reverse journey in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, argues Scott, 'we should expect to find a clearly marked point in the work where he has completed his account of the principle and then starts to move in the reverse direction. I can find no such point, and no signposts to suggest such an interpretation' (p 175). We should therefore stop trying to make the work cover both the upward and downward journeys. Scott considers, but ultimately rejects the proposal that the *Politics* might be the sequel that completes the downward journey, for reasons that are interesting in their own right. However, I think Scott overlooks an alternative to the 'marked point' assumption, if he assumes that Aristotle, like Plato, divides his work into books, some wholly devoted to the ascent, and others wholly to the descent.

In recent work, Daniel Harkin has discerned a pattern in Aristotle's discussion of individual virtues where Aristotle starts by giving an account of the domain of the virtue (its '*peri ho*'); in the next phase, he identifies the common denominators in the *endoxa*, and gives a mixture of explanatory and merely generalizing '*hôs epi to polu*' statements, which helps him arrive at a determinate account of the virtue – the definition. Reversing the dialectic, in the final phase he then proceeds from the definition to a corrective discussion of the *endoxa*. This pattern is repeated in Aristotle's discussion of courage, generosity and temperance, claims Harkin; even the otherwise puzzling discussion of magnanimity follows the same route. Had Scott considered the possibility of a circuit internal to the discussion of each virtue, he might not have come up empty-handed. If this is the right approach in general, we should expect to find the same pattern in Aristotle's discussion of happiness in book I, as indeed we do, and also in his discussions of friendship and pleasure.

Scott's analysis of Aristotle closes with an illuminating, if controversial discussion of the method outlined in the famous *endoxa*-passage in book VII 1. Scott maintains that Aristotle does not in fact follow the precepts of this method in the remainder of the ethics; the method of *endoxa* should not be assimilated to the one described in the race-course analogy, and it is not 'the' method of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Instead of seeing the three-step method in Aristotle's discussions in earlier books, Scott ****. The literature on this topic is too large to allow a responsible assessment of Scott's reading in a (relatively) brief review. However, here, as elsewhere, Scott shows himself as an astute and original reader, who has produced a pellucid and philosophically pointed account. Like most masters, Scott writes effortlessly. The fluidity of his prose betrays the complexity of the material – his ideals have been realized. *Levels of Argument* is one of the most original works of ancient philosophy to appear in a long time. Like the works it studies, it rewards reading and re-reading, and must become a standard critical work for any serious student of ancient philosophy.

nature of justice in the soul and state therefore requires a foundational study of forms, without which any metaphysics of morals will be woefully incomplete, even if it does rest on seemingly sound hypotheses about the nature of the state and the soul.

It is this incomplete account that we are actually given in the *Republic*. Socrates pulls back at the last moment, acknowledging in book VI that this ‘most important subject’ is one about which he and his interlocutors lack adequate knowledge (505a). Instead of a definition, we get the sun, line and cave images, which hints at the role of the form of the good in the *ordo essendi* and *ordo cognoscendi*, without explaining the nature of the good itself. In books II-IV, Socrates has taken ‘the shorter route’ to arrive at a description of justice in the state as *oikeiopraxis*, or each class doing its own work. He hypothesizes that justice in the state and the soul are instances of the same property, and infers, from the hypothesis of the principle of opposites and empirical observations, that justice in the soul likewise consists in each part doing its own work. Because a just soul is a healthy soul, and because having a healthy soul eclipses all other combinations of goods, the just person is necessarily happier than the unjust person regardless of what misfortunes befalls him. The road to this account of justice and its internal effects bypasses the most important subject in favor of provisional answers resting on unsecured hypotheses. As he warns Glaucon before turning from the state to the soul in book IV:

‘But you should know, Glaucon, that, in my opinion, we will never get a precise answer using our present methods of argument – although there is another longer and fuller road that does lead to such an answer. But perhaps we can get an answer that is up to the standard of our previous statements and inquiries’ (345c-d).

Socrates refers back to the distinction between the short road and the long road at the *** in book VI.

‘Do you remember when we distinguished three parts in the soul, in order to help bring out what justice, moderation, courage, and wisdom each is? (...) We said, I believe, that, in order to get the finest possible view of these matters, we would need to take a longer road that would make them plain to anyone who took it but that it was possible to give demonstrations of what they are that would be up to the standards of the previous argument. And you said that that would be satisfactory. So it seems to me

In *Nicomachean Ethics* I 4, Aristotle describes his method in terms of Plato’s distinction from *Republic* 510bc and 533c-d of arguments to and from first principles.

‘Just as on a [Greek] race course, the path may go from the starting line to the far end, or back again’ (EN I 4, 1095b1-2), one may wonder with Plato whether the inquiry proceeds to or from first principles. We should begin from things known, says Aristotle, ‘But things are known in two ways; for some are known to us, some known without qualification. Presumably, then, we ought to begin with things known to us’ (1095b2-4). These are the true beliefs that we adopt or are prepared to adopt by being brought up in fine habits. It is the role of practical inquiry to grasp the explanatory first principles, and to turn around and complete the track by using these principles to justify the starting points, which Aristotle call the *endoxa*, and which Plato calls the *nomima*. By placing the *Republic* and *Nicomachean Ethics* side by side, Scott allows their shared methodological assumptions to light up. While it would be too strong to claim that Scott adopts a unitarian assumption to guide his inquiry, the parallels he uncovers between the methodologies of their arguments are quite striking. Leading us to appreciate the Platonic roots of Aristotle’s methodology is one of many accomplishments of this ambitious and original work.

that our discussion at that time fell short of exactness, but whether or not it satisfied you is for you to say’. (504b-c).

ADD

In other words, as far as the form of the good is concerned, Elvis is in the building, Socrates hums his tunes, but the King himself never appears.

In the first part of Levels of Argument, Dominic Scott ****. Roundtrip (*perihodos*) Moving from *****.

‘the most

Plato and Aristotle ‘systematically base their ethics and politics on their own distinctive brands of metaphysics’ (p 5),
The shorter and longer routes

‘As the two texts stand, it is the shorter route that both philosophers actually follow – Plato because he thinks it will have to suffice, Aristotle because he thinks that there is no need to move beyond it’. (p.5)

‘Once Plato has let the genie out of the bottle, and revealed the nature of the longer route in book VI, does he actually start to follow it in the rest of the work?’ (p. 9).

Scott finds only one instance of direct appeal to the theory of forms in the Republic’s defense of justice. The third argument ‘greatest overthrow’ (GREEK).

This leaves out the sight-lovers passage which explains why Philosophers are suited to rule (what the argument proves is disputed; at the very least it is meant to show that knowledge presupposes understanding of forms, and that the lovers of sight and sounds (empiricists enamored of theatrical displays at festivals and hostile to forms) are unable to know anything at all. Here, grasping forms is held to be a requirement for just rule. This is at least the beginning of a defense of justice along the long circuit. Scott furthermore does not discuss the implications of the imitation claim that Plato makes at ***. He maintains that Plato’s attempt to show that someone with a Platonically just soul will also act justly in accordance with (most of) the conventions that his interlocutors have **** from their upbringings consists wholly in arguing that the Platonically just person will have appropriate appetites, and so no desire to overreach for the sake of satisfying excessive or base appetites. His non-necessary desires are controlled by reason, and so never lawless. There is no ‘rationally reconstruct’ Plato’s defense of justice in II-IV so that the argument invokes forms in anticipation of the argument of the central books.

PROBLEM: Sachs issue mischaracterized. Plato needn’t show that a Platonically just soul will be conventionally just! The nomima are open to revision (no retaliation, not necessary to return what one owes, which may look like pleonexia). Unlike the conventions with which the future guardians grow up the conventions that Plato’s interlocutors have internalized through their upbringing are a motley crew: no account of justice that aims to show how a just soul will conform to these conventions can have any claim to authority. Glaucon and Adeimantus may be well-born and bred, as Plato’s own brothers, but there’s no guarantee that the person whose argument Glaucon **gestalter**, namely Thrasymachus, has imbibed sound principles on his road to maturity – the evidence speaks for the opposite conclusion. And so, if the argument of the short road is ad hominem, and the argument of the short road is the only real argument the Republic actually proffers, then it is woefully inadequate as a defense of justice if this requires a ‘downward argument’ of the kind that Scott envisions. Scott’s reason for thinking that the shorter route, no less than the longer, is a circuit, is the reference to **** at **, which is a fairly slim basis for some rather hefty claims, and so we need to ask whether he is right to discern a ‘downward’ movement on the shorter route of the kind that parallels the downward movement in the argument of the longer route, and which corresponds to Aristotle’s description of Platonic method as requiring arguments to and from first principles.

He doesn’t.

Why does Socrates not attempt to give what Scott calls a ‘full-scale metaphysical defense of justice’ in the *Republic*? ‘The obvious reason is that his interlocutors lack the mathematical and metaphysical background to complete the longer circuit in its entirety. Such an argument would not be proportionate to their level of understanding’ (p. 213). In addition, he wants to reinforce his interlocutors’ commitment to justice, in a way that is ‘psychologically effective’, and ‘from this point of view, metaphysical argument seems of less use’ (p. 213). Scott notes that Socrates admits that his own grasp of forms is ‘precarious’, and his interlocutors are in an even worse state. To embark on the long circuit would be useless as well as reckless, like attempting to scale K2 in plimsolls. This is the first mention of Socrates’ epistemic state as a limitation on the type of inquiry possible in the *Republic*. Scott alludes to his disclaimers in the chapters devoted to the *Republic*, but remarkably, he never proposes that Socrates’ preference for the low road may be caused by his inability to give anything but an allegorical account of the Form of the Good. It’s not the audience’s epistemic state that recommends the short circuit; Socrates despairs of scaling the summit himself. They can take a roundtrip from basecamp to ***, but as a guide, Socrates cannot take them further because he does not know the way. He may have true opinions about forms, but he cannot give an unhypothetical account of the first principle of everything because he doesn’t know what it is. It’s thus not simply limitations in the audience or his practical aim that makes him stop short of ****. This highlights that the *Republic* is a far less dogmatic work than is usually supposed.

This is evident in the concluding analysis of the soul in book X, where Socrates *****. This is not equivalent to the story of the souls’ thousand-year journey in the Myth of Er, which Socrates prefaces with the usual distancing moves that he reserves for matters of the afterlife and *****. Instead, it’s an exact account of the soul in its pure form that he is unable to provide from his current epistemic vantage point.

Sightlovers passage left unexplored, also the imitation passage invoked by Kraut. Not part of defending justice? Selective consideration of evidence as bad as rational reconstructions that ‘take arguments and claims made by Socrates for one purpose and reassembles them for another’ (60).
Annas/ Irwin.

The pleasure argument: the greatest overthrow. *****

The *Republic* is frequently described as a dogmatic work (in the sense that ****); however, this misses the tentative nature of Socrates’ ***. His disavowals of knowledge are not limited to the end of book I. He prefaces his sun, line and cave with ***. And he warns in his final discussion of the soul in book X that ***. Socrates is here ***.

Locating the *Republic* as a work that employs the hypothetical method and assumptions explored in the second half of the *Meno*. Transitional work. For all its apparent bravura, the metaphysical arguments in the *Republic* remain tentative. Socrates sketches an image of the form of the good, and explains how someone might be benefited from being able to fill in all the details of the sketch, but he ***** declines to do so himself.

The longer road is desirable.

Aristotle *** in *Nicomachean Ethics* I 6

Part I. *Plato’s Republic*

Chapter 1: The Shorter Route in *Republic* II-IV

Chapter 2: The Adequacy of the Shorter Route

Chapter 3: The Longer Route

Chapter 4: The Role of Metaphysics in *Republic* VIII-IX

Chapter 5: The Cave Allegory and the Structure of the *Republic*

Part II. Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*

Chapter 6 Political Science and the Longer Route

Chapter 7. The Limits of Precision

Chapter 8. Explanation in *NE* I 4 and 7
Chapter 9. Aristotle and the Race Course
Chapter 10. The 'Endoxic Method'

There's ambiguity in the main thesis of the book.

Does the EN 'draw explicitly on' conclusions reached in Aristotle's treatises on metaphysics, philosophy of nature and psychology? Do the 'standards of precision' that 'undoubtedly' apply in Aristotle's theoretical treatises also apply to the EN?? Warning not to seek as much precision in practical philosophy as we do in theoretical – does this mean that we should divide up the tasks between these, and draw on the results in the latter type of inquiry when we pursue questions that belong to the first? Division of labor model.

'Metaethical' and 'normative' precision.
These are distinct questions.

Honing in one passages in the two works where Plato and Aristotle explain and defend their method, he observes that both authors distinguish between a more precise and **** and a ****.

'This book will examine the two texts from a methodological perspective. In these works Plato and Aristotle are highly self-conscious about method. So what sort of discipline do they consider ethics, or more generally, practical philosophy to be? In particular, what level of rigour or precision is appropriate when engaging in theory for essentially practical purposes? The specific way in which I shall approach this question is as follows. It is striking, that, in their different ways, both Plato and Aristotle base their practical philosophies on claims about human psychology, our place in nature, and, more broadly still, the nature of reality. So when engaging in practical philosophy in this way, do they require a rigorous and systematic investigation into metaphysics, epistemology, and psychology? Or does it suffice to rely on a less precise grasp of our underlying assumptions in these areas? In other words, does practical philosophy have to be as rigorous as those disciplines that investigate the assumptions on which it is based?

Socrates' longer and shorter routes.

Scott: With one brief exception, Plato's defense of justice in books VIII-IX does 'not depend on the theories of books V-VII for their support and intelligibility'. 'If so, this is a remarkable fact about the methodology of the work – one that needs to be duly acknowledged and understood' (p. 3).

There is the possibility of a distinctively Aristotelian longer route to be considered (...) Now some scholars have argued that the work [*NE*] draws explicitly on conclusions reached in his treatises on metaphysics, philosophy of nature, and psychology. If so, we might be inclined to see his thought as a systematic whole, whose ethical parts fall out of theories developed in other treatises. It then becomes possible to claim that the standards of precision that undoubtedly apply to Aristotle's theoretical treatises should apply to the *NE* as well. I shall argue against that claim, however (...) I shall argue that in these passages [on levels of *akribeia*] he is explicitly warning us not to seek as much precision in practical philosophy as we should in other areas, such as metaphysics, and not to pursue the quest for explanation too far. He concedes that it would be *possible* to do so (in effect to take a longer route), but

unnecessary and even counter-productive when one's interests and purposes are practical, as they are in the *NE*.' (p. 4)

'As the two texts stand, it is the shorter route that both philosophers actually follow, Plato because he thinks it will have to suffice, Aristotle because he thinks that there is no need to go beyond it' (p. 5).

Socrates' disavowal of knowledge and the longer route

Ambiguity in Scott's position

Third stage included in the discussion of each virtue. Also in 1.8.

The brevity of this book betrays its ambition and scope. Only a ** writer like Scott could possibly cover such expanses of argument and ** in *** crystalline pages. It is a model of *** and insight. Scott's homage to his father the *** ° succeeded.

OMISSIONS from Scott's BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Moss, Aristotle on the Apparent Good

Irwin, 'Ethics as an Inexact Science'