The conception of ethical theory that underlies the approaches here considered belongs to a Socratic–Aristotelian tradition in moral philosophy. This tradition can be said to consist in a methodological stance—derived from a, possibly non-constructive, methodology classically attributed to Socrates (the method of elenchus) and further developed by Aristotle into the more constructive endoxic method—and a commitment to a form of naturalism (derived primarily from Aristotle that we therefore can label Aristotelian naturalism). The methodological stance and the naturalist commitment constitute perennial themes within western moral philosophy—ranging from ancient ethics to present-day analytic moral philosophy—that helps us to demarcate this tradition, our focal point of inquiry.

While not all eudaimonists—in short those holding a position in substantive ethical theory according to which the telos (final end), or summum bonum (highest good), of human life and conduct is eudaimonia (happiness) and that the achievement of this goal is closely linked to the acquisition and exercise of moral virtue(s)—need accept either the naturalist commitment or the methodological stance the major systems, such as Epicureanism, Stoicism and Aristotelianism, developed in the Hellenistic era do.¹

A central element of the methodological stance is traceable to what is commonly² referred to as the Socratic elenchus (argument of refutation; cross-examining; to shame; to refute; to prove): Socrates’ method of argument in a number of dialogues which, partly for this reason of methodological consistency, are usually grouped together as Plato’s ‘Socratic’, ‘early’, or ‘elenctic’, dialogues (where Plato is taken to recreate the method and doctrines of the historical Socrates).

¹ Plato is traditionally read as rejecting both the naturalist commitment and the methodological stance while retaining the basic tenets of eudaimonism, for instance.
² Gregory Vlastos (in “The Socratic Elenchus”, Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy Vol. 1: 27-58; 71-74, reprinted as “The Socratic Elenchus: method is all” in Vlastos, Gregory, Socratic Studies, Cambridge University Press 1994:1-29n7) cites George Grote (1865) as the first to use the term as a label for Socrates’ method (closely followed by Lewis Campbell in 1867 and Henry Sidgwick in 1872 (in “the Sophists”, Journal of Philology Vol. 4:288-307)), however the term was first introduced to a Modern-day English speaking audience in 1941 via the first edition of Richard Robinson’s Plato’s Earlier Dialectic (Cornell University Press, 1941), the second edition of which had a huge influence on the scholarly community upon its release in Britain in 1953. The cementation of the term was made definite by Vlastos’ seminal 1983 paper.
⁴ The term lacks an established etymology, but Lesher, James, H., "Parmenidean Elenchos": 19-28 makes a compelling case for a semantic slide from (i) “shame” and “disgrace” commonly associated with failure with regards to military (or semi-military) valour to (ii) the tests by means of which shame is incurred (with a range of contests and tests other than (quasi-)military ones) such as the testing of a poet’s works by public opinion. (iv) By mid 5th century the term (and its cognates) signify a test for a thing’s (true) nature or person’s mettle (vi) In, what we would call, a philosophical context after this point the focus is narrowed to (cross-) examination of a person’s words for truth or falsity.
Even though it is far from clear how we are to properly understand Socratic elenchus, Gregory Vlastos' account of what he calls “standard elenchus,” essentially a process wherein an interlocutor is asked to state a thesis (p)—usually a definition of an ethical concept—and Socrates goes on to show how its negation (~p) follows from further propositions (q, r) asserted by Socrates that the interlocutor (and Socrates, for the most part) assents to and that, thus, the conjunction (p ∨ q ∨ r) is false, can serve as a point of departure.

At this point interpretations divide between those who argue that the elenchus ends here (all that has been show is that {p ∨ q ∨ r} is inconsistent) and those who argue that the elenchus continues and establishes one of the conjuncts (usually, though not always, p) as false due to the fact that the others enjoy some special status (they are prima facie plausible, instances of endoxa, believed by Socrates, etc.).

Plato is, to borrow a terminology from Arius Didymus, at least poluphōnos (of many voices) if not poludoxos (of many opinions or doctrines). Whatever position one is compelled to take with regards to the “Socratic problem”, Plato’s usage of the dialogue form, the ordering of the dialogues, and other issues—all of which makes problematic the attribution of a systematic ethical theory to either Socrates or Plato—it would appear that cross-examinations (elenchē) classically attributed to Socrates questioned common conceptions of the fundamental values of human life and everyday notions such as ‘virtue’ in a way that necessitated a widening of the scope of inquiry. This widening of scope led to the inclusion of not only scrutiny of common opinion and socio-political conditions of morality but also its metaphysical, epistemological and logical grounding leading to the development of explicit systematic ethical theory. This development, in turn, necessitated the formulation of more constructive dialectical methodological approaches such as Plato’s Maieutics. This scrutiny of common opinion carried

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5 The Platonic dialogues give varying accounts and presentations of this central element (that is never baptized by either Socrates or Plato) and seem lacking in explicit meta-philosophical discussion. See Vlastos, Gregory, “The Socratic Elenchus”, Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 79 No. 11, 711-714: 712. Even if Vlastos is here perhaps stretching the rational reconstruction somewhat in attributing to the historical Socrates (and Plato) a clear distinction between ethical inquiry, meta-ethics and meta-philosophical theorizing even though passages such as Apology 19b, Sophistical refutations 1837 and Metaphysics 9871 hints at something akin to such a distinction.)

6 Vlastos, Gregory, “The Socratic Elenchus”. See also Frede, Michael, “Plato’s Arguments and the Dialogue Form.” Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy. Supplementary volume. Methods of Interpreting Plato and his Dialogues where it is argued that Vlastos’ forth step is incompatible with the apherontic nature of the early dialogues.

7 Here the Socratic elenchus differs from its earlier predecessor the Zenonian paradox, in which the refutands are unasserted counterfactuals and instances of reductio ad absurdum. A common element to both methodologies, under the assumption that Zeno targets common beliefs rather than some technical Pythagorean stance (as argued, most influentially, by Tannery, P., ‘Le Concept Scientifique du continu: Zenon d’Elee et Georg Cantor’, Revue Philosophique de la France et de l’Etranger, 20(1885): 385, and more recently by Matson, W. I., ‘Zeno Moves!’ in A. Preus (ed.), Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy VI: Before Plato, State University of New York Press, 2001), is a drive towards the re-evaluation of commonly voiced opinions.

8 Euthyphro 792-4 provides a notable exception.

9 Ex. Charmides 1602-1614: p: self-control (apophronē) is a sense of shame (aidōs)(1602-5); (q) self-control is fine (kalon) and good (16013); (r) Homer was right to say that a sense of shame is not always a good thing (1612-4).

10 Main problems for this “non-constructivist” group are (i) to account for passages (such as Gorgias 479c, 505e, 509a, Crito 46b-c, Charmides 166d, 165b) where Socrates apparently takes his elenchus to have constructive results. (ii) How is Socrates able to defend positive convictions granted that the elenchus constitutes his sole philosophical method? (iii) How is the distinction between eristic (debate seen as a form of pastime without any aim for truth) and elenchus to be maintained?

11 The main problem for the constructivist is, of course, to make sense of Socrates’ famous disavowal of knowledge.

12 Arius Didymus Introduction to Ethics (if he is indeed the author), preserved in Stobaeus Eclogae 2.

13 It is possible to tell a story similar to the Aristotelian one we are currently concerned with about the development of this Platonic-ironic branch of the western philosophical tradition that would presumably trace the roots of the maieutic method to Pythagorean doctrines concerned with cleansing (catharsis) and reminiscence (that develop into Plato’s technical usage of recollection (anamnesis) and practices, rites and poetry of Ancient Orphism and include thinkers such as Kierkegaard (who, in his master’s thesis The Concept of Irony, argues that Socratic midwifery is only possible as an element within, or at least in constant conjunction with Socratic irony),
over to Aristotle’s philosophical method, where an extensive review of pre-existing opinions on a given subject precedes Aristotle’s statement of his own view.

Central to the scholarly discussion concerning Aristotle’s general philosophical method as it applies to moral philosophy is the following oft quoted passage from the Nicomachean Ethics:

As in the other cases\(^{14}\) we must set out the appearances\(^{15}\) (phainomena), and first of all go through the puzzles\(^{16}\) (diapro\(\varepsilon)s\(\varepsilon\)antas). In this way we must prove the common beliefs (ta endoxa) about these ways of being affected – ideally, all the common beliefs, but if not all, most of them, and the most important (kurion). For if the objections are solved, and the common beliefs (endoxa) are left, it will be an adequate proof.\(^{17}\)

Aristotle’s method appeals to endoxa (common opinions; the reputable views)\(^{18}\), and thus assumes that substantial philosophical theorizing can proceed directly from some kind of ‘data’ gathered by our, in principle, and for the most part, dependable, cognitive and perceptual faculties. The degree to which Aristotle sees himself as committed to retaining the endoxa and phainomena he initially sets out from is a matter of debate but it is clear that a given set of endoxa will oftentimes generate inconsistencies (often as a direct consequence of the phenomena generating aporiai) that warrants re-interpretation, possible (partial) rejection, and systematization in order to generate a revised coherent subset of the most (or most important) of the original endoxa.

The endoxic method thus differs sharply from foundationalist approaches, such as the one championed by for instance Descartes, which seeks to provide a firm foundation for philosophy and science by employment of methodological doubt.

The methodological stance and the naturalist commitment are connected; for the phenomena that are taken as the starting point of the inquiry of the methodological stance are taken to be natural phenomena: it makes more sense to adopt a methodology based on common opinion and pre-philosophical intuition if one thinks that the ultimate ground at which ethical inquiry aims is to be found inside the realm of the natural rather than in some metaphysically distinct third realm.

The adherence to the naturalist commitment excludes approaches to ethical theory that takes moral philosophy to be fundamentally autonomous from inquiry into nature and/or attempts to ground ethics in some alternative metaphysical realm distinct from both the mental and the physical, including constructivist approaches that take the basis for this construct to be an

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\(^{14}\) Note that Irwin, unlike e.g. Ross, here renders e\(\pi\)\(\tau\)s\(\alpha\)\(i\)\(a\)\(i\) as “in the other cases” rather than “in all other cases” as the word “all” is not explicit. This particular exegetical problem (which, as Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness. 478n1 argues, might seem settled in favour of the inclusion of ‘all’ due to the remarks in APr. 46\(\varepsilon\)17-22 which makes explicit the crucial role of phainomena for any techne or epitome) need not concern us here since the present project is confined to ethical theory.

\(^{15}\) Just as the translation ‘observed facts’ used in the original Ross text (prior to J. O. Urmson’s revision, which uses ‘phenomena’) carries realist connotations, ‘appearances’ invite to a constructivist or anti-realist reading of Aristotle’s position. In an attempt to remain non-committed I will henceforth use the more neutral, if cumbersome, ‘phenomena’.

\(^{16}\) Aristotle here uses dia\(pr\(\acute{o}\)\(\kappa\)\(\varepsilon\)\(s\)\(\tau\)\(a\)\(\nu\)\(s\)\(a\)\(t\)a, that is, “to raise puzzles” (aporiai) thus providing a link to what he sees as the fundamental drive towards philosophical inquiry. Cf. Met. 982\(\varphi\)12.

\(^{17}\) NE1145\(\varphi\)1-7.

\(^{18}\) The Proper translation of ta endoxa is a matter of dispute: some believe Aristotle to include all manner of pre-existing opinions on a subject while others take him to include only a subset thereof consisting of the most reputable (such as the opinions of other philosopher). Often Aristotle uses ta endoxa to refer to these common opinions, opinions that are accepted “by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable and reputable of them” (Topics 100\(\delta\)22-23). See also Barnes, Jonathan, “Aristotle and the Methods of Ethics”, Revue Internationale de Philosophie, Vol. 34: 490-511. At any rate endoxa are, in contrast to (mere) doxa rejected by Plato as indicative of truth, opinions that Aristotle sees as tested in some way (either by prior philosophical and scientific scrutiny or by being dialectically scrutinized in the public sphere).
idealization ultimately derived from such a realm but allows for more austere constructivist approaches of a kind that abstracts away or brackets some aspects of the natural without appealing to a transcendental realm and/or idealized conceptions of rational agency.\textsuperscript{19}

The methodological stance excludes non-naturalist meta-ethical\textsuperscript{20} approaches since the (moral) language expressing the common opinions and pre-philosophical intuitions that form the starting point of enquiry needs to be (at least minimally) truth-apt and (in some way taken as) referring to the world around us for the endoxic method to get of the ground, but allows for error-theoretic, quasi-realist and functionalist approaches.

The adherence to the naturalist commitment and the methodological stance also has important implications with regards to the kind of ethical theories that tends to ensue as the upshot of analysis within this tradition, particularly with regards to the scope of these theories. While it is not necessarily so that approaches adhering the naturalist commitment and the methodological stance need to be comprehensive, or synoptic\textsuperscript{21} theories, a vast majority of them have been. A Synoptic ethical theory attempts to ground or place morality in an understanding of the cosmos and humanity’s place in it by presenting a unified philosophical system linking ethics with other areas of inquiry in order to present a framework, or world-view, for human fulfilment\textsuperscript{22} (by contrast non-synoptic ethics restricts inquiry to a confined sphere).\textsuperscript{23}


\textsuperscript{20} The label non-naturalism is plagued by the usual problems (such as determining what instances of similarity are the relevant ones) that accompany approaches trying to understand a genus via a prominent species thereof (in this case G. E. Moore’s position in Principia Ethica, which might have been misread, see Skorupski, John, “Aristotelianism and Modernity: Terence Irwin on the Development of Ethics”, European Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 20, No. 2: 312-337 in which case Moore does not subscribe to (iii) below but rather to some cognitivist antirealism). In view of this ‘meta-ethical non-naturalism’ can mean: (i) the semantic thesis that moral predicates cannot be analysed in non-normative terms; (ii) the epistemological thesis that knowledge of (some sub-set of) moral principles, value-judgments, etc. is in some way self-evident (this thesis often goes by the label ‘intuitionism’); (iii) the metaphysical thesis that moral properties, though existent, are not, are not identical to, or reducible to, natural properties. Note that as stated (ii) is not strictly speaking incompatible with the methodological stance: we could allow for a subset of the domain of moral principles etc. to be self-evident as long as the remaining members of this set are to be reached via endoxic method thus landing us in a combinatorial approach.

\textsuperscript{21} The term comes from Cottingham, John, Philosophy and the Good Life: Reason and the Passions in Greek, Cartesian and Psychoanalytic Ethics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998: 7-14.

\textsuperscript{22} That is, this approach to ethical theory denies what John Rawls has called “the independence of moral theory”, the thesis that “much of moral theory is independent from the other parts of philosophy. The theory of meaning and epistemology, metaphysics and the philosophy of mind, can often contribute very little. In fact, preoccupation with the problems that define these subjects may get in the way and block the path to advance.” (Rawls, John, “The Independence of Moral Theory”, Presidential address, Proceedings and addresses of the American Philosophical Association, Vol. 48: 5-22, 5-6). Note that, this does not commit the theories here under consideration, or other theories denying Rawls' independence thesis, to the further postulate of a hierarchical ordering of sub-disciplines of philosophy making some domain of philosophical questions methodologically prior.

\textsuperscript{23} The distinction between synoptic and non-synoptic (ethical) theories can be understood via John Rawls’ notion of reflective equilibrium, essentially his own cashing out of the endoxic method (famously explicated by in his A Theory of Justice, Harvard University Press, 1971 but already hinted at in an earlier paper entitled “Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics”, The Philosophical Review Vol. 60, No. 2:XX). Reflective equilibrium is, essentially: a state in which our (i) considered judgements (deep-lying trusted intuitions, cf. Aristotle’s phainomena) and the (ii) principles we have adopted (cf. Aristotle’s endoxa) reaches maximum coherence reached by a process of matching in which neither (i) or (ii) are immune to revision. Rawls maintains that “the independence of moral theory” is a consequence of this view. A range of critique that essentially boiled down to the charge that Rawls in fact did make assumptions concerning the metaphysics of the person moved him to restate, or perhaps just explicate, his position into what is now called wide reflective equilibrium, which is reached in a similar fashion as narrow reflective equilibrium with the exception that (i) and (ii) now also has to cohere with a set of (iii) background theories, theories covering such fields as philosophy of mind and the metaphysics of the person. (see Rawls, John, “The Independence of Moral Theory”, in Rawls, John, Collected Papers, Harvard University Press, 1999 and Daniels, Norman, “Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics”, The Journal of Philosophy I 76, 1979.)
The distinction between synoptic and non-synoptic theories is neutral with respect to a further distinction between particularist and generalist theories of morality.24 Broadly speaking, a generalist stance to morality holds that ethical reasoning and judgement is at least partly dependent upon appeal to (universal) principles. This thought involves the formal postulate that there are certain ethical principles that hold for all cases, and a claim concerning the universal scope of these principles stating that (at least some of) the universal principles hold for (more or less all) moral agents. 25 The most extreme form of generalism is algorithmic theories that assert that morality can be completely codified into a system of rules and/or principles. Classical utilitarianism constitutes the most obvious example of a theory of this kind although Kantianism is sometimes read in a way that makes it come out as algorithmic. 26 Even the most algorithmic of theories must allow for a limited role to be played by judgements. 27 More moderate generalist approaches, that we can call framework theories, hold that although there are principles applying to moral agents, these principles does not fully codify the moral realm since an agent would still need to exercise judgement in weighting different principles against each other in times of conflict where this process of weighing is not itself regulated by any principle.

Opposed to generalist approaches stands ethical particularism. Ethical particularism is a position in meta-ethics 28 that holds that any non moral feature, 29 F (or set of features) that serve as right-making, or reason providing, or value-making in one set of circumstances need not have this function in a different set of circumstances. This, the particularist claims, is due to the fact that the moral significance of F is irreducibly context-dependent. This thesis connects with particularism’s rejection of moral rules or principles: If one thinks that the number of potentially morally relevant features of a situation is in fact infinite there seems to be no room for principles in ethics. 30

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25 This characterization builds upon O’Neill, Onora, Towards Justice and Virtue: 11.

26 Kantian ethics comes out as an algorithmic theory if we understand Kantianism as saying that we ought to test the legitimacy of any given act by simply feeding the relevant action-description (maxim narrowly interpreted) into the Formula of Universal Law and that such a procedure immediately makes it clear whether the act in question is permissible or not.

27 The algorithmic utilitarian will have to concede that agents will have to exercise their judgements when assessing quantities of the good and the algorithmic Kantian will have to admit that judgement needs to be exercised in order to determine which maxim we are considering.

28 Particularism cannot be said to be a paradigmatic metaethical theory (such as the ones concerned with the meaning of moral terms, for example) but it is nevertheless a theory that attempts to tell us something about the shape of morality without doing it in the way that standard normative theories do. Perhaps Particularism can be considered a meta-normative theory. Particularism’s relation to normative ethical theories is by no means uncomplicated but is perhaps best seen as a meta-normative position that sets strong demands on how normative theories can be formulated in order to be compatible with the meta-normative claims made by the particularist and is often assumed to have a certain affinity towards virtue ethics and standing as an alternative to rule-based approaches. This is a highly debatable connection the presumption of which is in no small part due to the stressing of “moral sensibility” found both among many writers friendly to the particularist project and a large body of virtue ethicists, a feature that perhaps need not be essential either to a particularist or a virtue theoretical understanding of morality and that might very well be shared by Kant (and certainly is by a number of neo-Kantians such as for example Barbara Herman and Onora O’Neill). It might also be the case that virtue ethics seems like the obvious candidate as far as normative theories are concerned once one has accepted the basic premises of particularism. It seems reasonable to assume that once we accept that moral thought and action need not be essentially linked to principles an obvious candidate for formulating a normative theory that is capable of giving action guidance is a normative theory that focuses on character traits rather than principles.

29 The term “moral features” is here used in order to leave it open whether these features are concerned with value or with deontic status.

30 The principles rejected by the particularist are those that assume a unforfeitable or indefeasible supervenience
It should be noted that while the family of positions here considered under the unifying label of *eudaimonism* are teleological in the sense that they all see the fundamental aim of human conduct as connected to an ultimate end (*telos, summum bonum*) identified as happiness (*endaimonia*) and naturalist in the sense that they hold that when we venture into an investigation concerning the nature and attainment of this *summum bonum* we are aided by an investigation into our own human nature and our place in the natural world eudaimonist synoptic approaches are not by necessity committed to any form of teleology in the classical sense of being *pan-axial* and thus at odds with (post-)Baconian and (post-)Darwinian cosmology. Grounding human fulfilment in terms of harmonization with an overarching order of cosmic Nature, providence, or final causes are but alternatives here, the systems presented by Epicurus, Descartes, and Spinoza are synoptic in the here required sense while not attempting to locate value within the structure of the universe as a whole.\(^{31}\)

Our interpretations of the key notions of *endoxa* and *phainomenon* have repercussions for how these dialectical starting points delineate philosophical theory within the Socratic-Aristotelian tradition with regards to issues such as realism vs. anti-realism, synoptic vs. non-synoptic theory, and the possibility of ethical particularism.

Martha Nussbaum has argued that we are to understand *phainomenon* in a way that makes Aristotle out to be a kind of Putnamian internal realist—i.e. holding some version of the view that the question “what objects do the world consist of” is a question that it only makes sense to ask *within a theory of description*, and that “[t]ruth, in an internalist view, is some sort of (idealized) rational acceptability […] and not correspondence with mind-independent or discourse-independent ‘states of affairs’”\(^{32}\) —in which case it would seem natural to pursue a synoptic approach that is open to the possibility of particularism.

If we instead side with G. E. L. Owen\(^ {33}\) and take Aristotle to use the word ‘*phainomena*’ equivocally, sometimes denoting empirical observations (in the context of the scientific works) and sometimes the common conceptions (*endoxa*) on the subject at hand we end up with two distinct methods in Aristotle: one scientific and one dialectical. The postulation of two separate methods grants plausibility to a non-synoptic approach while it remains neutral towards both the realist vs. anti-realist debate and the debate over ethical particularism.

A third option is the interpretation championed by Irwin\(^ {34}\), which holds that Aristotle’s methodology aims not only at a systematisation of common opinions (pure dialectic in Irwin’s terminology) but at first principles (*archai*). This, Irwin maintains, is possible due to the effect that this “strong dialectic” proceeds from an appropriately selected subset of *endoxa*, which can arrive at knowledge of first principles. Irwin’s interpretation thus seemingly excludes the possibility of particularism (since there are first principles in ethics) and makes ethics out to be “an autonomous discipline, in so far as its basic principles are independent of disputes in natural science and the rest of philosophy.”\(^ {35}\)

It is crucial to note that this is not mere exegetical squabbling since the possibilities of interpreting the endoxic method in different ways (depending on our understanding of


\(^{34}\) Irwin, Terence, *The Development of Ethics*, and Idem, *Aristotle’s First Principles*.

\(^{35}\) Irwin, Terence, *The Development of Ethics* I:119.
phainomena) opens interesting possibilities for philosophical investigations subscribing to the method and have consequences for our understanding of the ensuing naturalism. This gives us a notion of phainomena that is indeed ambiguous between different philosophically interesting readings and thus in need of further specification, but it is neither vacuous nor unimportant.

The brief outline of the Aristotelian method provided above seems to leave it open to charges of seeming tediousness, conservatism, and lack of ambition that comes associated with a methodology primarily concerned with salvaging pre-philosophical intuitions thus threatening to invite abrupt philosophical dismissal.

The charge that Aristotle’s concern with endoxa generates a philosophical theory that is by and large a descriptive enterprise actualizes the more general question of whether philosophy as such ought to be descriptive or revisionist. The history of philosophy provides us with prominent voices on both sides of the divide. David Lewis embraces a rather starch descriptive stance:

> One comes to philosophy already endowed with a stock of opinions. It is not the business of philosophy either to undermine or to justify these pre-existing opinions, to any great extent, but only to discover ways of expanding them into an orderly system.

Henry Sidgwick gives voice to the opposite, revisionist, view:

> For we conceive it as the aim of a philosopher, as such, to do somewhat more than define and formulate the common moral opinions of mankind. His function is to tell men what they ought to think, rather than what they do think: he is expected to transcend Common Sense in his premises, and is allowed a certain divergence from Common Sense in his conclusions. It is true that the limits of this deviation are firmly, though indefinitely, fixed: the truth of a philosopher’s premises will always be tested by the acceptability of his conclusions […] we should expect that the history of Moral Philosophy […] would be a history of attempts to enunciate, in full breadth and clearness, those primary intuitions of Reason, by the scientific application of which the common moral thought of mankind may be at once systematized and corrected.

Sidgwick is aware of his debt to Aristotle at this point. After detailing how he, in a step-by-step fashion, came to embrace intuitionism by influences from Mill, Butler, and, Kant he asserts:

> In this state of mind I had to read Aristotle again; and a light seemed to dawn upon me as to the meaning and drift of his procedure – especially in Books ii., iii., iv. of the Ethics – (cf. History of Ethics, chap. li § 9, p. 58, read to end of section).

> What he gave us there was the Common Sense Morality of Greece, reduced to consistency by careful comparison: given not as something external to him but as what ‘we’ – he and others – think, ascertained by reflection. And was not this really the Socratic induction, elicited by interrogation?

> Might I not imitate this: do the same for our morality here and now, in the same manner of impartial reflection on current opinion?

Regardless of exegetical issues concerned with Aristotle’s position—which seems to me to lay somewhere in between starch descriptivism and radical revisionism—it should be clear from the

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36 This distinction originates with P. F. Strawson’s Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics, Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1959.

37 Strawson asserts: "Revisionary metaphysics is at the service of descriptive metaphysics. Perhaps no actual metaphysician has ever been, both in intention and effect, wholly the one thing or the other. But we can distinguish broadly: Descartes, Leibniz, Berkeley are revisionary, Aristotle and Kant descriptive." (Strawson, P. F., Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics, Methuen, 1959: 9).

38 Lewis, David, Counterfactuals, Harvard University Press, 1977: 88. This sentiment can be carried even further, to the point where even expansion into an “orderly system” seems unwarranted. Nietzsche writes: One should own up in all strictness to what is still necessary here for a long time to come, to what alone is justified so far: to collect material, to conceptualize and arrange a vast realm of subtle feelings of value and differences of value which are alive, grow, beget, and perish – and perhaps attempts to present vividly some of the more frequent and recurring forms of such living crystallizations – all to prepare a typology of morals (BGE §186).


above that there is nothing in the endoxic methodology as such that settles the question of revisionism vs. descriptivism. 42

41 I do not wish to argue this point here as nothing in what follows hinges on this purely exegetical point.

42 Neither does the endoxic method imply conservatism in a political sense: One need only consider F. H. Bradley's careful treatment of "the vulgar notion of responsibility" in his Ethical Studies to see just how revisionist an endoxic stance can get with regards to metaphysics while showing how independent this metaphysical question is from that of political conservatism. The eudaimonist positions here considered occupy a number of positions on this divide also: Aristotle can be charged with political conservatism whereas Stoic and Epicurean stances exemplifies a sort of political liberalism, broadly construed.