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ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION OF MEGALOPSYCHIA

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ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION OF MEGALOPSYCHIA

by

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INTRODUCTION

Aristotle's conception of μεγαλοψυχία, as he sets it forth in his Nicomachean Ethics, Book 4 chapter 3, has had from the earliest commentators up to the present a number of significantly different interpretations.[1]

This is initially surprising. When we study this chapter, we find that Aristotle describes the megalopsychos in vivid terms. He comes alive as a robust, dynamic human being, perhaps, even, Aristotle's conception of the ideal man. We can almost feel his breath, hear his deep voice, see the unhurried movement of his body.

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[1]Hereafter referred to as 4.3. μεγαλοψυχία I shall transliterate to "megalopsychia," understood literally as "greatness of soul." μεγαλόψυχος I shall transliterate to "megalopsychos," understood literally as "great of soul." I shall use "megalopsychos" primarily to designate "the man who is great of soul," although I shall also use it as a predicate adjective as in "The man is megalopsychos," that is, "The man is great of soul." The context will make my usage clear. When necessary to distinguish a citation of one version of Aristotle's ethics from the other

But the portrait is deceptively simple. The concrete descriptions are straightforward, but which of them, if any, does Aristotle regard as fundamental? By which characteristic does he intend to capture the essence of the megalopsychos, marking him off from all men of lesser stature? What is that characteristic which, once named, explains all the others?

"Megalopsychia seems to be concerned with great things," Aristotle tells us. "What sort of great things, is the first question we must try to answer."[1] Exactly. But nowhere does Aristotle give an exact answer. At the opening of 4.3 he says: δοκεῖ δὴ μεγαλόψυχος εἶναι ὁ μεγάλων αὑτὸν ἀξιῶν ἄξιος ὤν, "Now the

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version, I shall use the customary EN for the Nicomachean, EE for the Eudemian.

[1]W. D. Ross, gen. ed., The Works of Aristotle Translated into English, 12 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1910-52), EN 1123a 33-34. All subsequent references to Aristotle's writing will be to the Oxford edition, unless otherwise indicated. The only difference will be that I use the transliterations, "megalopsychia" and "megalopsychos." For other works cited in this study I shall also, when applicable, use these transliterations.

man is thought to be megalopsychos who thinks himself worthy of great things, being worthy of them."[1] At the end of 4.3 he concludes: "Megalopsychia, then, is concerned with honor on the grand scale, as has been said."[2]

In between, Aristotle elaborates at a number of places the concern of the megalopsychos with honor.[3] This has led commentators to conclude that the megalopsychos is basically concerned with externally bestowed honor, a conclusion that has three versions: a) the megalopsychos is basically concerned with external honor and this clearly and simply is that of which he thinks himself worthy, b) the megalopsychos is basically concerned with external honor, and thus with the great moral action by which he will earn that honor, c) the megalopsychos is basically concerned with external

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[1] 1123b 1. [2] 1125a 35.

[3] 1123b 15-23, 35; 1124a 4-13, 16-19, 22-27; 1124b 7, 23-25; 1125a 29-35.

honor and thus with living that type of life which to Aristotle is most worthy of honor: the life of theoria.

All three interpretations agree that megalopsychia is concerned basically with externally bestowed honor. However, there exists a basic divergence over whether the megalopsychos is a man of moral action or a man of contemplation. Using Aristotle's terms, there is a basic divergence over whether the megalopsychos is a practikos or a theoretikos.

My thesis is that Aristotle describes the megalopsychos as a man basically concerned with enhancing the nobility of his soul through a life of moral action. This means that the megalopsychos is: a) a practikos and b) that he is basically concerned--not with externally bestowed honor--but with his internal sense of honor.

The crucial point is that the megalopsychos is primarily concerned with his inner nobility, not with externally bestowed honor. Surface appearances seem to contradict this;

they seem to depict a man basically concerned with fame, or at least with his good reputation. Thus commentators are likely to see the megalopsychos as a "stuffed shirt,"[1] as "intolerable,"[2] or as a "prig with the conceit and bad manners of a prig."[3] For Ross the picture as a whole is an "unpleasing one; it is an anticipation of the Stoic sage without his self-abasement before the ideal of duty."[4]

There are exceptions, of course. Grant, for instance, states that "nothing can be more subtle or felicitous than many of [Aristotle's]

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[1]W. T. Jones, The Classical Mind (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), p. 272.

[2]J. A. Stewart, Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), 1:335 (hereafter cited as Stewart, Notes).

[3]An unnamed Oxford lecturer cited by W. F. R. Hardie, Aristotle's Ethical Theory (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 119.

[4]Sir David Ross, Aristotle, rev. 5th ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1949), p. 208.

observations" on megalopsychia.[1] But on the whole 4.3 has received a bad press, so much so that one commentator remarks: "For anything that could properly be called a rigorous defense--or even a sympathetic explication, I have looked in vain."[2]

Ross inadvertently accounts for at least part of this bad press. There is indeed no "self-abasement before the ideal of duty" in Aristotle's megalopsychos. On the contrary, self-abasement is for Aristotle one of the vices opposed to megalopsychia, namely, micropsychia or smallness of soul. Russell looks at 4.3 and "shudders to think what a vain man would be like,"[3] implying that Aristotle is portraying a self-inflated man. Others share Russell's estimate. The concern of the megalopsychos "with

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[1]Sir Alexander Grant, The Ethics of Aristotle, 2 vols., 4th ed. (London: n.p., 1884), 2:72.

[2]F. A. Seddon, Jr., "Megalopsychia: A Suggestion," The Personalist, LVI 1 (Winter 1975), p. 31 (hereafter cited as Seddon, "A Suggestion").

[3]Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975), p. 198.

his own greatness," says one, "has something overweening about it for, aiming at divine honors, he is divinely jealous of his superiority."[1]

Another commentator expresses a similar idea. As she puts it, the megalopsychos

> ... acts honorably and nobly ... not in order that the good may be affirmed, but in order that he may maintain unimpaired his superiority over his fellowmen; he is the ...[man]... who is always one up on his fellowmen, who knows all the ploys and gambits for keeping himself securely, unassailably, in this agreeable position of superiority.[2]

"Aristotle does not see fair," claims another. "The dice are loaded in favour of

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[1]H. V. Jaffa, Thomism and Aristotelianism. A Study of the Commentary by Thomas Aquinas on the Nicomachean Ethics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 140-141.

[2]Dorothea Krook, Three Traditions of Moral Thought (Cambridge: n.p., 1959), p. 51. Cited by Walter J. Bartling, "Megalopsychia: An Interpretation of Aristotle's Ethical Ideal" (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1963), p. 57 (hereafter cited as Bartling, "Megalopsychia").

magnanimous virtue, but the implications of magnanimous evil are also there." He then goes on to call the megalopsychos a "strange incubus."[1]

Such evaluations as these, however, see less than "fair." They assume that the megalopsychos is primarily concerned with fame, and thus they all too easily conflate megalopsychia and self-inflation.[2] Aristotle, however, clearly contrasts them and any suggestion that he conflates them would require argument. Instead, the conflation is apparently inferred from the

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[1]Robert Payne, Hubris: A Study of Pride (New York: Harper & Brothers, Harper Torchbooks, 1960), p. 35. Rev. ed. of The Wanton Nymph: A Study of Pride (London: William Heinemann, 1951).

[2]I use "self-inflation" rather than the often-used "vanity" to render the Greek concept χαῦνος. "Vanity" often denotes the attempt to gain the esteem of other people for one's physical appearance, and this use appears at the end of 4.3 at 1125a 30. But this is only one denotation of chaunos for Aristotle. Among others that are plain in 4.3, it would also encompass his reference to hubris at 1124a 28. Therefore a wider expression is needed.

assumption that the megalopsychos is primarily concerned with fame. I intend to challenge this assumption in what follows.

Other commentators have adopted a softer line. They find Aristotle's portrait of the megalopsychos unappealing, but rather than condemn it outright, they prefer to think that Aristotle was not being serious. For one commentator 4.3 "seems a caricature,"[1] for another Aristotle is being humorous,[2] for another satirical.[3] Burnet sees "much quiet humor" and claims that the picture is "surely half-ironical."[4] But these judgments, as well as the hostile ones, are understandable only on the assumption that Aristotle is giving us a man basically con-

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[1]G. R. G. Mure, Aristotle (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 155. Cited by Seddon, "A Suggestion," p. 31.

[2]H. H. Joachim, Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 125. Cited by Seddon, p. 31.

[3]J. H. Randall, Jr., Aristotle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 249.

[4]J. Burnet, The Ethics of Aristotle (London: n.p., 1900), p. 179.

cerned with externally bestowed honor. On this assumption, we have seen, Aristotle's megalopsychos is either monstrous or preposterous. These estimates are equally implausible. And the assumption they rest on, I shall argue, is also implausible.

The conflation of megalopsychia and self-inflation is not the only one to which megalopsychia falls victim. It is also conflated with Aristotle's virtue of universal justice.[1] "This form of justice," Aristotle tells us, "is complete virtue in its fullest sense, because it is the actual exercise of complete virtue. It is complete because he who possesses it can exercise his virtue not only in himself but toward his neighbor also."[2] And he adds that

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[1]This virtue is distinct from "particular" justice, to be discussed below in chapter 1. The "universal"-"particular" terminology I adopt from Ross, Aristotle, p. 209.

[2]EN 5.1 1129b 30-1130a 1.

"justice in this sense, then, is not part of virtue but virtue entire."[1]

Jaeger refers to megalopsychia in the same terms. "It is initially surprising," he states in one of his works, "for us to find that megalopsychia is considered as a virtue. And it is also notable that Aristotle does not believe it to be an independent virtue like the others, but one which presupposes them and is 'in a way an ornament to them.'"[2] Now this statement seems misplaced. Commentators such as Ross inform us that "in later Greek, justice tends to be identical with the whole of righteousness."[3] Jaeger's statement, then, might apply to universal justice, but not to megalopsychia.

As if to fend off Jaeger in advance, Aristotle says that the megalopsychos "is an

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[1] 1130a 9.

[2] Werner Jaeger, Paideia: the Ideals of Greek Culture, trans. Gilbert Highet, 2d ed., 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943-44), 1:62 (hereafter cited as Jaeger, Paideia).

[3] Aristotle, p. 209.

extreme in respect of the greatness of his claims, but a mean in respect of the rightness of them; for he claims what is in accordance with his merits, while the others [the self-inflated and the micropsychoi] go to excess or fall short."[1] Clearly Aristotle sees the megalopsychos as striking a mean between two extremes, a basic aspect of any virtue for Aristotle.

In his earlier Eudemian Ethics Aristotle likewise believed that megalopsychia is an independent virtue: "Each of the virtues seems to make men megalopsychos in regard to the things with which that virtue is concerned .... But nevertheless there is a single virtue of megalopsychia side by side with the other virtues, so that the possessor of this virtue must be termed megalopsychos in a special sense."[2]

Contrary to Jaeger, then, Aristotle did

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[1] 1123b 3-13. See also 1125a 17-34.

[2] 3.5 1232b 24-27. Trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971).

believe megalopsychia to be "an independent virtue like the others." Of course, it remains to be seen whether he is justified in his belief. And to see that he is, we first must recognize that for Aristotle the megalopsychos is a man whose basic concern is to enhance the nobility of his soul through a life of moral action.

CHAPTER I

ARISTOTLE'S MEGALOPSYCHOS
HIS BASIC CONCERN

Aristotle introduces the megalopsychos as a man who "thinks himself worthy of great things, being worthy of them."

Clearly implied is that the megalopsychos is a morally responsible agent, both in his own view and in Aristotle's. We need to pause on this since it involves a theory of agency not generally held today.

When Aristotle enunciates his theory of responsibility in EN 3.5, he tells us that "if ... we cannot refer actions to moving principles other than those in ourselves, the acts whose moving principles are in us must themselves also be in our power and voluntary."[1] Now this idea of moving principles that are in us and within our voluntary power is part of a conception of causality that includes the possibility of

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[1] 1113b 19-21. See also 1112a 30, b 32.

self-moving entities. Aristotle extensively analyzes self-motion and the physical basis for it elsewhere.[1] All we need to observe here is that Aristotle bases his ethics of personal responsibility on that conception. Immediately after his statement about moving principles that are in us, he makes the connection:

> Witness seems to be borne to this both by individuals in their private capacity and legislators themselves; for these punish and take vengeance on those who do wicked acts (unless they have acted under compulsion or as a result of ignorance for which they are not themselves responsible), while they honor those who do noble acts, as though they meant to encourage the latter and deter the former .... Indeed, we punish a man for his very ignorance, if he is thought responsible for the ignorance, as when penalities are doubled in the case of drunkenness; for the moving principle is in the man himself, since he had the power of not getting drunk and his getting drunk was the cause of his ignorance. And we punish those who are ignorant of anything in the laws that they ought to know and that is not difficult, and so too in the case of anything else that they are thought to be ignorant of through care-

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[1] Most notably in Physics 8.5, On the Soul 3.10, and On the Motion of Animals. To my knowledge there has been no sustained analysis of Aristotle's conception of self-motion. Some of its enormous complexities are spelled out by David Furley in a brief paper entitled "Self-Movers," Symposium Aristotelicum, 1975.

> lessness; we assume that it is in their power not to be ignorant, since they have the power of taking care.[1]

Thus for Aristotle a man clearly is responsible for the type of character he develops. Even those who take no care about the kind of person they become are still responsible for becoming men of that kind.

> Men make themselves responsible for being unjust or self-indulgent, in the one case by cheating and in the other by spending their time in drinking bouts and the like; for it is activities exercised on particular objects that make the corresponding character. This is plain from the case of people training for any contest or action; they practice the activity the whole time. Now not to know that it is from the exercise of activities on particular objects that states of character are produced is the mark of a thoroughly senseless person.[2]

Aristotle's theory of moral responsibility is implied in everything he says about the megalopsychos. This becomes especially significant since I am arguing the thesis that Aristotle's megalopsychos is a man basically concerned to enhance the nobility of his soul

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[1] 1113b 22-26, b 30-1114a 3.

[2] 1114a 4-11.

through a life of moral action. Indeed, almost all descriptions of him in 4.3 indicate that he is a man practicing moral virtues elsewhere treated in the Nicomachean Ethics. Let us explore this.

In his first concrete description of the megalopsychos, Aristotle tells us that "it would be most unbecoming for the megalopsychos to fly from danger, swinging his arms by his sides."[1] He is obviously alluding to the virtue of ἀνδρεία, courage. In 5.1 he informs us that "the law bids us do ... the acts of a brave man (e.g. not to desert our post nor take to flight nor throw away our arms)."[2] In 5.2 he characterizes the courageous man as one who stands by his comrades in battle.[3] Aristotle neatly implies that all such manifestations of courage are lacking in any man who swings his arms by his side to escape danger. Such a man is not megalopsychos.

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[1] 1123b 32.

[2] 1129b 19-20. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations are from the Nicomachean Ethics.

[3] 1130a 30.

He cautions, however, that the megalopsychos "does not run into trifling dangers, nor is he fond of danger, because he honors few things."[1] This means the megalopsychos is not guilty of recklessness, the vice opposed to courage by excess of confidence.[2] He will, however, "face great dangers, and when he is in danger he is unsparing of his life, knowing that there are conditions on which life is not worth having."[3] In 9.8 Aristotle indicates that such conditions are those that would leave one's friends or country at the mercy of an enemy. Faced with such conditions the megalopsychos, as a good man, would be ready to fight to the death.[4] As Aristotle puts it in 3.7, he is "as dauntless as man may be."[5]

With his courage, the megalopsychos simultaneously exhibits the virtue of πραότης good temper. He is clearly not guilty of

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[1] 1124b 7.

[2] See 3.7, esp. 1115b 28-1116a 10.

[3] 1124b 8-9. [4] 1169a 19. [5] 1115b 11.

apathy, the vice opposed to good temper by deficiency of spirit. The apathetic person is one who is not pained by things, who is not likely to defend himself, and who slavishly endures insult to himself and to his friends.[1] One does not find these qualities in the "dauntless" man.

Nor does the megalopsychos err by excess of spirit. He is neither vindictive nor mindful of petty wrongs. It is not his part "to have a long memory, especially for wrongs," says Aristotle in 4.3, "but rather to overlook them."[2] In 4.5 this is a mark of the good-tempered man, the man who "is not revengeful, but rather tends to make allowances."[3] Thus we are not surprised that the megalopsychos is neither an evil speaker (not even about his enemies), nor a gossip, "for he will speak neither about himself nor about another, since he cares not to be praised nor for others to be blamed."[4] These

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[1] 4.5 1126a 3-8. [2] 1125a 4-5.
[3] 1126a 2. [4] 1125a 5-6, 8.

are marks of the good-tempered man, the man Aristotle defines in 4.5 as one "who is angry at the right things and with the right people, and, further, as he ought, when he ought, and as long as he ought."[1]

By good temper, the megalopsychos also exhibits φιλία, friendliness, the virtue of 4.6 that involves putting up with and resenting the right things and in the right way.[2] Friendliness, Aristotle says, also involves a more general and positive attitude: the rendering to each person or class of people what is befitting.[3] The megalopsychos manifests this attitude in being "dignified toward people who enjoy high position, but unassuming toward those of the middle class."[4] Toward the weak the megalopsychos practices the virtue of ἐλευθεριότης, generosity. He is the sort of man, Aristotle points out, who will give help readily, asking nothing for himself or, if he

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[1] 1125b 32-33. [2] 4.6 1126b 18-19.
[3] 1124b 19-22. [4] 1124b 19.

does receive a benefit, he will confer greater benefits in return.[1]

He is "unable to make his life revolve round another, unless it be a friend, for this is slavish, and for this reason all flatterers are servile, and people lacking in self-respect are flatterers."[2] These people, Aristotle states in 4.3, are dishonest because they place more importance on what people will think than on the truth.[3] But Aristotle emphasizes the ἀληθευόντης, the truthfulness of the megalopsychos. He "despises justly (since he thinks truly) .... He [is] also open in his hate and in his love (for to conceal one's feelings, i.e. to care less for truth than for what people will think, is a coward's part), and he is contemptuous, and ... given to telling the truth, except when he speaks in irony to the vulgar."[4] Aristotle has already alluded to truthfulness

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[1] 1124b 10-12, 18.

[2] 1124b 34-1125a 2.

[3] 1124b 28.

[4] 1124b 6, 27-31.

when he introduces the megalopsychos as the man "who thinks himself worthy of great things, being worthy of them." In 4.7 Aristotle describes truthfulness as the state of character of one who "calls a thing by its own name .... owning to what he has, and neither more nor less.[1] This is an application of his general theory of truth as found in Metaphysics Gamma: "To say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true."[2]

It also accords with Aristotle's treatment of δικαιοσύνη, justice, in EN 5.[3] In 5.2 and 5.3 he treats justice as the distribution of honor and wealth among the citizens in proportion to their merit, estimated on the standard of virtue. Justice in this sense is manifest in the megalopsychos's concern with honor. "He claims what is in accordance with his merits," says Aristotle, "while the others go to excess or fall short."[4] And "even apart from argument

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[1] 1127a 24-25. [2] 1011b 27.

[3] I am dealing with "particular" justice now.

[4] 1123b 14.

it is with honor that megalopsychoi appear to be concerned, for it is honor that they chiefly claim, but in accordance with their deserts."[1] Thus the megalopsychos will "utterly despise" dishonor, "since in his case it cannot be just."[2]

Aristotle succinctly captures the megalopsychos's attitude toward honor when he says: "Honors and dishonors .... are the objects with respect to which the megalopsychos is as he should be."[3] This is the virtue of right ambition, the state of character, says Aristotle in 4.4, of one who desires and aims at honor in the right way and from the right sources.[4] The megalopsychos is such a person. He does not seek honor from upper class status, power, or wealth. Nor will he seek honor from insincere people or on trifling grounds. On the contrary, Aristotle tells us, "it is characteristic of the megalopsychos not to aim at the things commonly held in honor, or the things in which others excel, to

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[1] 1123b 22-23. [2] 1124a 12.

[3] 1123b 22. [4] 1125b 8-9.

delay and to hold back except where great honor or a great work is at stake, and to be a man of few deeds, but of great and notable ones."[1]

Thus far we have seen the megalopsychos practicing seven moral virtues: courage, good temper, friendliness, generosity, truthfulness, justice, and right ambition. He emerges as a robust, complex, colorful human being, a man who is ready to die for his country or friend, yet easily overlooks petty offenses; a man who is open in his hate and in his love, yet is not an evil-speaker; a man who is quick to give himself credit for noble works, yet is unassuming toward humble people. Yet with all his facets, the megalopsychos is a completely integrated person, devoid of conflicting impulses. The various parts of his soul are in harmony.

The three remaining moral virtues of the Nicomachean Ethics, magnificence, ready wit, and temperance, are not as clearly manifested by

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[1] 1124a 27-b 26 passim. I substitute "to delay," which is the literal rendering of the Greek, in place of the liberal, and negative, "to be sluggish" of the Oxford translation.

the megalopsychos. However, when Aristotle asks early in 4.3 to what end the megalopsychos would do base or disgraceful acts, he probably has σωφροσύνη, temperence, in mind.[1] Surely "base acts" include gluttony, drunkenness, and sexual excesses--all of which are the subject of Aristotle's discourse on temperance in 3.10.[2] And in 4.8 Aristotle regards being witty, εὐτραπελοι, as a special case of being friendly, so we may presume that the megalopsychos's friendliness involves wittiness as well.[3]

The only moral qualities of the Nicomachean Ethics really missing from Aristotle's account of the megalopsychos are the qualities of the man ready to spend large sums fittingly, the magnificent man of 4.2, the μεγαλοπρεπὴς. The nearest Aristotle comes to endowing the megalopsychos with the qualities of the magnificent man is in pointing out that "he is one to possess beautiful and profitless things rather than profitable and useful ones."[4]

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[1] 1123b 32. [2] Esp. 1118a 32.
[3] 1128b 7. [4] 1125a 12.

But this is meant to illustrate the self-sufficiency of the megalopsychos. "This is more proper," Aristotle continues, "to a character that suffices to itself." As such, the passage is not really an allusion to the magnificent man. In fact quite the contrary would seem to be the case. For one thing, the practice of magnificence depends on the possession of great wealth. For another, even a person of modest means, or less, might possess "beautiful and profitless things."

The absence of magnificence is significant, not only because it is the only moral virtue whose qualities are missing in 4.3, but because Aristotle insists that the megalopsychos has achieved greatness in <u>all</u> the virtues. But here we need to remember Aristotle's later admonition in 10.8 that "we must not think that the man who is to be happy will need many things .... Even with moderate advantages one can act virtuously .... and it is enough that we should have so much as that, for the life of the man who is active in accordance with virtue will be happy."[1] No

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[1] 1179a 1-2, 5-9, 12.

doubt, then, Aristotle intends his lecture on magnificence solely for those like his student Alexander who have the means to practice it. The other virtues by contrast do not presuppose wealth; they are intended for everyone. As Aristotle says in 4.3, "those who without virtue have such goods [as upper class status, power, and wealth] are neither justified in making great claims nor entitled to the name of megalopsychos, for these things imply perfect virtue."[1]

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Aristotle leaves no doubt, therefore, that the megalopsychos is a man who exemplifies the moral virtues of his Nicomachean Ethics. Indeed, as demonstrated, nearly all his descriptions point to this.[2] But the key question remains: What is this man's basic concern? Whatever it is we should expect it to be a great one. Aristotle alerts us to this when he begins 4.3 by saying that "megalopsychia seems even from

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[1] 1124a 27-28.

[2] To my knowledge, the above is the first detailed demonstration of this.

its name to be concerned with great things." He concludes 4.3 by saying that "megalopsychia, then, is concerned with honor on the grand scale, as has been said." We seem, then, to have good reason to conclude that honor, externally bestowed, is the basic concern of 4.3, and hence of the megalopsychos himself.

There are problems with such a conclusion however. Most notable is the fact that οὐδὲ δὴ περὶ τιμὴν οὕτως ἔχει, ὡς μέγιστον ὄν, "indeed, not even honor does he [the megalopsychos] hold as being the greatest thing."[1] He will be μετρίως ἡσθήσεται, "moderately pleased," at "great honors conferred by good men,"[2] but this we would expect from a man who practices the virtue of right ambition. And if receiving such honors were a basic concern, we would expect him to be more than just "moderately pleased." As Grant notes, Aristotle ostensibly "fixes external honor as the object with which

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[1] 1124a 16. My translation.

[2] 1124a 5-6.

megalopsychia deals, "but then afterwards sets it above all external honor."[1]

Because the megalopsychos possesses "a character that suffices to itself," Aristotle has told us, he is "one who will possess beautiful and profitless things rather than profitable and useful ones." This is the quality of the man who asks for nothing or scarcely anything, but gives help readily. This is the quality of the man who does not "aim at the things commonly held in honor, or the things in which others excel," the man who cares not to be praised, who is "unable to make his life revolve round another, unless it be a friend, for this is slavish." This is the man who can regard the honor his fellow man gives him as a definite and valid good, but not enough to be a basic concern. He is too self-sufficient to hold any external good as a very great thing, "not even honor" which is the greatest of such goods.

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[1] Ethics of Aristotle, 1:74.

Jaeger, tracing the evolution of the concept of honor in Greek culture, writes that "the Homeric man estimated his own worth exclusively by the standards of the society to which he belonged. He was a creature of his class: he measured his own arete by the opinion which others held of him .... Homer and the aristocracy of his time believed that the denial of honor due was the greatest of human tragedies." But later philosophy, Jaeger tells us, "bade man obey an inner standard: it taught him to regard honor as the external image of his own inner value, reflected in the criticism of his fellows."[1]

It is not that the earlier attitude toward honor was non-existent in the fourth century B.C. Early in the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle observes that "men seem to pursue honor in order that they may be assured of their goodness."[2] But this is not Aristotle's view; rather he bids man to regard honor as the "external image of his inner value." Megalopsychia

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[1] Paideia, 1:9. [2] 1.5 1095b 27.

is impossible, he tells us, without kalokagathia, a concept best rendered by "moral nobility," "noble goodness," or "honorable goodness."[1] Thus, when the megalopsychos accepts honor, it is for a goodness and self-worth already achieved; it would be uncharacteristic of him to seek a sense of self-worth from external honor. This would constitute an inversion. As Aristotle remarks in his Politics 7.1, man does not "acquire or preserve virtue by the help of external goods [such as honor], but external goods by the help of virtue.[2]

The fact that the megalopsychos possesses kalokagathia elucidates two otherwise conflicting claims of Aristotle in 4.3: a) "it is especially with honors and dishonors ... that the megalopsychos is concerned,"[3] and b) "not even honor does he hold as being the greatest thing." The first refers to the

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[1] 1124a 3. "Moral nobility" is H. Rackham's rendering in his translation of the Nicomachean Ethics for the Loeb Classical Library.

[2] 1323b 1.

[3] I substitute "especially" for the Oxford "chiefly," as the better rendering of μάλιστα.

megalopsychos's proper and specific concern with the greatest of external goods, honor. The second tells us that, for the megalopsychos, honor is not the greatest of goods in general. The "especial" concern of the megalopsychos with external honor is simply that it not be given too much importance. I have found this nowhere better expressed than in the following:

> ... Megalopsychia can scarcely be said to be concerned with honor at all, still less with the other external goods. Why, then, does Aristotle begin by suggesting that it is? The megalopsychos is concerned with external goods only in so far as he has a right attitude towards them; and this is surely only a consequence of his megalopsychia, not megalopsychia itself. That is, his lack of concern with external goods stems from his awareness of the superior value of his own goodness; and it is that awareness, not his attitude towards other goods as such, which makes him megalopsychos.[1]

If, then, the megalopsychos is not basically concerned with the greatest of external goods, honor, with what is he basically concerned? How are we to fill the gap left by Aristotle's claim that "not even honor does he hold as being the greatest thing"? Granted

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[1] C. J. Rowe, The Eudemian and Nicomachean Ethics: A Study in the Development of Aristotle's Thought (n.p.: The Cambridge Philological Society, 1971), p. 50 (hereafter cited as Rowe, Development of Aristotle's Thought).

that he "thinks himself worthy of great things, being worthy of them," what great things?

A clue to Aristotle's answer can be seen at the end of 4.3 where he speaks of those who are small of soul. "Each class of people aims at what corresponds to its worth," he says, and the basic failure of those who are micropsychos is that they "stand back even from noble actions and undertakings deeming themselves unworthy, and from external goods no less."[1] What this implies is that the "great things" at the beginning of 4.3 refers to great actions. We can infer the same from Aristotle's criticism of the self-inflated man. They are "fools and ignorant of themselves," Aristotle says, "and that manifestly, for, not being worthy of them, they attempt honorable undertakings, and then are found out."[2]

That the good man concerns himself with noble undertakings is Aristotle's emphasis throughout the Nicomachean Ethics. He repeatedly stresses that the end of virtue is

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[1] 1125a 26-27. [2] 1125a 28-29.

not external honor, but the good and the noble.[1] For no one is this more true than for the person great in all the virtues, the megalopsychos. Thus, as a courageous man, Aristotle indicates in 3.7, the megalopsychos would face fearful things "as he ought and as the rule directs, for the sake of the noble, τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα, for this is the end of virtue." Later, in 4.1, Aristotle repeats that "virtuous actions are noble and done for the sake of the noble." In 9.8, he identifies the good man as one who "chooses nobility before all else"; in 1.8 he says that "the man who does not rejoice in noble actions is not even good."[2]

The evidence is clear: The megalopsychos is a man basically concerned with great actions performed for the sake of the noble. But my thesis is that he performs these actions to enhance the nobility of his own soul. To see that this further inference is justified we need

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[1] For some examples: 3.7 1115b 14, 22-23, 3.12 1119b 17, 4.1 1120a 23, 4.2 1122b 6.

[2] 1169a 33, 1099a 18.

again to go outside of 4.3.

In 2.1 Aristotle tells us that "states of character arise out of like activities."[1] Noble actions, then, produce nobility of soul, and great noble action great nobility of soul. Aristotle makes clear that this is a personal concern of the megalopsychos in 9.8 in his essay on the love that a good man has for himself. He says:

> ... if a man were always anxious that he himself, above all things, should act justly, temperately, or in accordance with any other of the virtues, and in general were always to try to secure for himself the honorable course, no one will call such a man a lover of self or blame him.
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> But such a man would seem more than the other a lover of self; at all events he assigns to himself the things that are noblest and best.[2]

It is no surprise, then, that Aristotle reminds us in 10.7 that "from practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action."[3] This provides the third element of my thesis. The megalopsychos is basically

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[1] 1103b 22. See also 3.5 1114a 9-11.

[2] 1168b 25-30. Emphasis added.

[3] 1177b 2-3. In contrast to contemplation which is loved "for its own sake."

concerned with: 1) great actions, 2) for the sake of the nobility, 3) of his own soul. That is, the megalopsychos is a man whose basic concern is to enhance the nobility of his soul through a life of moral action. His basic concern is not externally bestowed honor, but the nobility of his soul and the inner sense of honor which is its concomitant. This is the person in Aristotle's theory of friendship who is "his own best friend" and loves "himself best." This is the man who takes "delight in his achievements" and who knows "no regrets."[1] Three times in 4.3 this is the man "to whom nothing is great."[2]

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We now have a vantage point from which to return to the question: Is Aristotle justified in his belief that megalopsychia is an independent virtue? Jaeger, we saw, denies megalopsychia independent status as a virtue because it presupposes the other virtues and is

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[1] 9.8 1168b 8-9, 9.4 1166a 25, 29.

[2] 1123b 33, 1125a 3, 15.

in some sense an ornament to them. "Megalopsychia seems to be a sort of crown of the virtues," Aristotle affirms, "for it makes them greater, and it is not found without them."[1] It is necessary, therefore, to reconcile the above interpretation of the megalopsychos with this well-known passage.

I want to begin by pointing out that Aristotle makes two distinct points in the "crown" statement: megalopsychia is not found without the other virtues, and megalopsychia makes the other virtues greater. The meaning of the first is clear. We saw that megalopsychia is not possible without kalokagathia, without greatness in all the virtues.

But the meaning of the second is just as clear. Megalopsychia "makes the other virtues greater" precisely because the primary concern of the megalopsychos is to enhance the nobility of his soul through moral action. Those who deny the independent status of megalopsychia

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[1] 1124a 1.

focus on the crown passage's first point and neglect the second. But so narrow a focus is justified only on the mistaken notion that the megalopsychos is primarily concerned with externally bestowed honor. According to that notion, megalopsychia is seen as a "virtue" after the fact; the megalopsychos has achieved greatness in all the virtues, and now his primary concern is to get from his fellow man the honor he deserves. Not only does this view do violence to 4.3, it fails to square with Aristotle's general view of the good life.

Happiness, Aristotle repeatedly stresses, is an activity. As such, the megalopsychos's happiness does not leave him inclined to rest on his laurels. Yes, he delights in his achievements and he knows no regrets. But life for Aristotle is dynamic, and an individual's life is always in movement. Spiritually, there is no standing still: one either advances or one falls back. Aristotle is quite clear about this. He tells us that virtues "tend, and by their own nature, to the doing of the acts by which they

are produced."[1] And again: It is more characteristic of virtue "to do what is noble than not to do what is base."[2] Aristotle makes clear, in his many descriptions of the megalopsychos carrying into action the moral virtues of his Nicomachean Ethics, that for no man are these statements more true.

Far from undercutting megalopsychia's independent status as a virtue, then, the "crown" passage underscores it: It is because he possesses the other moral excellences that the megalopsychos has the self-respect to "think himself worthy" of further great action, the action that will further enhance the nobility of his soul. This is the essence of megalopsychia.

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[1] 3.5 1114b 28. [2] 4.1 1120a 13.

CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF MEGALOPSYCHIA IN ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS

Ostensibly, 4.3 sets forth a man basically concerned with externally bestowed honor. It opens stating that the megalopsychos "thinks himself worthy of great things," it closes stating that "megalopsychia, then, is concerned with honor on the grand scale, as has been said." An open and shut case--it seems. Yet it completely misses the essence and the spirit of Aristotle's megalopsychos. Any interpretation that starts from the premise that the megalopsychos is primarily concerned with externally bestowed honor will fail to capture his essence.

It will also fail to see the relationship of megalopsychia to the rest of Aristotle's ethical thinking. Important here is what one makes of the relationship between EN 4.3 and 4.4, the chapter that deals with

right ambition. This is the virtue, Aristotle tells us, "which would appear to be related to megalopsychia as generosity is to magnificence. For neither of these has anything to do with the grand scale, but both dispose us as is right with regard to middling and unimportant objects."[1] Even more important is the fact that 4.4, this chapter on right ambition, does not appear in the earlier Eudemian Ethics. What is the relationship of EN 4.3 and EN 4.4, and why is a separate chapter on right ambition absent in the earlier version of Aristotle's ethics? How one answers these questions have major implications for a wider question: What is the relation of 4.3 to the rest of Aristotle's ethical thinking?

There is no better demonstration of this than in the work on magnanimity by the contemporary French philosopher, René Gauthier. In his monumental work by that title,[2] and in his later

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[1] 4.4 1125b 2-7.

[2] Magnanimité. L'ideal de la grandeur dans la philosophie paienne et dans la theologie cretienne (Paris: Bibliotheque Thomiste, XXVIII, 1951), hereafter cited as Gauthier, Magnanimité.

commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics,[1] Gauthier explicitly addresses these questions. In light of the sheer comprehensiveness of his work, no study of megalopsychia would be complete without a mention of him. This is especially so in my case since his interpretation of Aristotle's megalopsychos stands in profound opposition to mine. Gauthier assumes that the object of megalopsychia is great honor, and develops the view that the megalopsychos is a theoretikos. He bases his case to a large extent on what he takes to be the relationship of EN 4.3 and 4.4, and on what he sees as the reason for the absence of 4.4 in the Eudemian Ethics.

Gauthier begins by calling attention to Aristotle's distinction between small and great honor. He claims that the former, in Aristotle's mind, is rendered by the masses for moral virtue,

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[1] R. A. Gauthier et J. Y. Jolif, L'Éthique à Nicomaque. Introduction, traduction et commentaire, 2d ed., 4 vols. (Louvaine: Publications universitaires, 1970; hereafter cited as Gauthier, Commentaire). Although this work appears to be a joint effort, both in translation and in commentary, all my references will be to Gauthier alone.

the latter for intellectual virtue. Aristotle, he points out, regards all in the domain of action as insignificant when measured against the life of *theoria*.[1] From this Gauthier deduces that 4.3, whose concern is great honor, is a treatise on the *theoretikos*, and that 4.4, whose concern is small honor, is a treatise on the *practikos*.

This explains, Gauthier believes, why 4.4 is absent in the *Eudemian Ethics*. Aristotle's thinking, he says, was confused at the time he wrote *EE* 3.5, the Eudemian chapter on megalopsychia. He was trying to synthesize two types of megalopsychia: the megalopsychia of the *practikos* which involves a refusal to bear insult, and the megalopsychia of the *theoretikos* which involves impassibility before the vicissitudes of fortune. As Gauthier points out, *Posterior Analytics* 2, written at the same time as the *Eudemian Ethics*, indicates that Aristotle was aware of these two common

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[1] *Magnanimité*, p. 113. He cites *EN* 10.8, 1178b 17.

significations of megalopsychia.[1] But 3.5 fails to synthesize them. As it turns out, the megalopsychos suffers from not receiving the honor he merits, and this conflicts with his supposed impassibility before ill fortune.[2] Later when Aristotle writes the Nicomachean account of megalopsychia, he follows it with a chapter on right ambition in order to avoid repeating that failure. By accounting for the megalopsychia of the _practikos_ in 4.4, he leaves 4.3 to develop exclusively the megalopsychia of the _theoretikos_.[3]

Now Gauthier's reconstruction certainly has the merit of coherence. However, the critical issue is: Is the Nicomachean megalopsychos a _theoretikos_, as Gauthier claims? Gauthier is convinced that he is. If we examine 4.3, he says, we find that the life of the megalo-

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[1] _Post. Anal._ 2.13 97b 16-25. Gauthier, _Magnanimité_, p. 114, places the time of these writings in the middle period of Aristotle's life, during his stay in Assos, 348-347.

[2] See 1232b 13.

[3] _Magnanimité_, pp. 113-114.

psychos is a life of leisure. His life involves idleness, for he is a man of few actions. He is slow to act except when great issues or great honors are at stake. We know that he delays, decides slowly, does not readily expose himself to risks, is not ambitious for high public position. In short, Gauthier declares, Il n'a rien de l'allure d'un homme d'action, "He has nothing of the style of a man of action."[1] Instead, he is slow of step, has a deep voice and level utterance, and he is not easily excited.[2] Gauthier's conclusion: Le magnanime est donc essentiellement homme de loisir, "Thus the megalopsychos is essentially a man of leisure."[3] And that implies, Gauthier says, that he is a philosopher. As he puts it: Il ne manque pas de serieuses raisons de penser qu'en fait le philosophe est bien le seul à pouvoir être magnanime, "There is no lack of serious reasons for thinking that, in fact, the

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[1]Ibid., p. 109. [2]4.3 1125a 14-15.

[3]Magnanimité, p. 109.

philosopher alone is able to be megalopsychos."[1] His life is one of few actions, and "if the megalopsychos spends his life neither producing nor taking action, for what end would he then spend it except contemplation."[2]

Aristotle does indeed tell us that the megalopsychos is "a man of few deeds, but of great and notable ones."[3] This, understandably, is one of Gauthier's major citations, and therefore it is necessary that any interpretation of the megalopsychos as a practikos accounts for it.

First of all, we need to note that Aristotle immediately precedes it with: "It is characteristic of the megalopsychos not to aim at the things commonly held in honor, or the things in which others excel; to delay and to hold back except where great honor or a great work is at stake." A few lines later

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[1] Magnanimité, p. 112, Commentaire, 2:290.

[2] Ibid. This is precisely the way Aristotle speaks of the theoretikos in 10.8 at 1178b 20.

[3] 1124b 26.

Aristotle adds that "the man who takes few things seriously is not likely to be hurried, nor the man who thinks nothing great to be excited, while a shrill voice and a rapid gait are the results of hurry and excitement."[1]

What these statements indicate is that the megalopsychos does not squander his energy on unimportant pursuits; he does not hurry after things commonly but mistakenly held in honor, such as wealth and power. Aristotle, then, describes the megalopsychos as a man of few actions to make vivid his contrast with shallow men. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Aristotle's moral virtues, excluding magnificence, are only ten in number. They are few, and they require relatively few actions for their implementation. Thus in a chapter as brief as 4.3 Aristotle is able to describe the megalopsychos implementing them all, and this includes right ambition. As a result, the separation that Gauthier imposes between 4.3 and 4.4 simply does not exist. Gauthier's

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[1] 1125a 13-16.

statement that the megalopsychos "has nothing of the style of a man of action" is clearly less than plausible.

Consistent with his view that 4.3 deals essentially with a man of leisure, is Gauthier's belief that the great things of which the megalopsychos thinks himself worthy are great honors, not great action. How does Gauthier reconcile this belief with Aristotle's criticism of the micropsychos--not for shunning great honors--but for standing back from noble action and undertakings? He answers:

> There is here a slip, un glissement, in Aristotle's thinking: the expression "to judge oneself unworthy of" has always, up to now, had exterior goods as its exclusive object (cf. especially 1123b 17): that of which the megalopsychos judges himself worthy, are exterior goods; as to great acts of virtue, the megalopsychos does not judge himself worthy of them, he should already have achieved them in order to have the right to judge himself worthy of exterior goods. In other words, great acts of virtue are a precondition of megalopsychia, whereas exterior goods are the object of them. If Aristotle remained faithful to that conception, smallness of soul would have to consist of accomplishing great acts of virtue, and in not judging oneself worthy of the exterior goods of which one is therefore worthy. On the contrary, it here consists essentially for Aristotle in not accomplishing great

> acts of virtue, because one judges oneself unworthy of them. This slip of thought comes, it appears, from an equivocation on the expression ..., "to judge oneself unworthy of": Aristotle gives to it, when he is concerned with megalopsychia, the meaning of "to think that one has a right to," whereas, when he is concerned with smallness of soul, he permits to it the meaning that the common people used: "to think that one is capable of." In other words, Aristotle did not take the trouble to conduct his treatment of vice with the same thorough effort that he gave to virtue.[1]

It is obvious why Gauthier must take such pains to establish that it is great honors, not great actions, of which the megalopsychos thinks himself worthy. If the "thinks himself worthy" passage refers to great actions, then it clearly presents a major stumbling block to Gauthier's argument that the megalopsychos is a _theoretikos_. Yet only by recognizing that this indeed _is_ Aristotle's meaning do his criticisms of the _micropsychos_ and the self-inflated in terms of deficiency and excess of action make sense. This recognition is surely preferable to Gauthier's accusation that Aristotle slipped up in his thinking.

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[1] _Commentaire_, 2:297-298.

How then are we to explain the absence of a chapter on right ambition in the Eudemian Ethics and the need for it in the Nicomachean? The answer is far more direct than Gauthier's. What is evident when we look at these two versions of megalopsychia are two markedly different attitudes toward honor. EE 3.5 makes clear that the megalopsychos's basic concern is honor. "As to the accepted objects of human interest, honor, life, wealth," says Aristotle, "he is thought to care nothing about any of them except honor; it would grieve him to be dishonored and ruled by someone unworthy, and his greatest joy is to obtain honor."[1]

Furthermore, Aristotle makes clear that this concern is specifically for the honor that accompanies such things as high office. "In reality," Aristotle says, "those offices and other good things are honorable and worthy of serious pursuit that are truly great."[2] Then,

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[1] 1232b 11-13. Rackham translation.

[2] 1232b 23.

in discussing the micropsychos, Aristotle indicates that another of these "good things" is a noble birth. "Nobody would call a man micropsychos," he says, "for not claiming to hold office and submitting to authority if he is a resident alien, but one would do so if he were of noble birth and attached great importance to office."[1]

In contrast to this is EN 4.3 where the megalopsychos is again concerned with honor, but with crucial differences: Aristotle emphasizes that the honor is bestowed for virtue, and that for the megalopsychos "not even this honor is the greatest thing." While the Nicomachean megalopsychos is "moderately pleased" at the honor he receives, the Eudemian finds his "greatest joy" in it. As one commentator concludes: "Aristotle has apparently changed his mind about the importance of external goods as such; and, as a consequence, he reaches a quite different con-

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[1] 1233a 28-30.

clusion about the nature of megalopsychia."[1] It is because of this that 4.4 makes its appearance in the Nicomachean Ethics.

> The middling and the small which are the concern of philotimia can only be external goods, i.e. to use Aristotle's own examples, power ... and wealth. These may be great of their kind, but the honor which accrues from them is small when compared with the honor with which the megalopsychos is (supposedly) concerned, that is, the honor which is accorded to virtue. Philotimia, then, is defined as the right pursuit of external goods. If this is so, we can see at once why there is no mention of the virtue of philotimia in the Eudemian Ethics; there, external goods fall within the sphere of megalopsychia itself.[2]

Gauthier, in contrast, is bound to misconstrue the actual relation of 4.4 to 4.3 if for no other reason than that he misconstrues the meaning of each chapter separately. Aristotle tells us that megalopsychia "seems even from its

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[1] Rowe, Development of Aristotle's Thought, p. 50. As Rowe points out, while the Eudemian and Nicomachean treatments of most of the moral virtues are substantially the same, megalopsychia is an important exception.

[2] Ibid., p. 51. The author uses philotimia to stand for the virtue (which I render by the traditional "right ambition"), while in the text philotimia stands for the vice. He uses it, for convenience, for the virtue, he says, because Aristotle himself has no name for it.

name to be concerned with great things." Concerning 4.4, therefore, we need to ask Gauthier: Since Aristotle expressly says that 4.4 has nothing "to do with the grand scale," how does he justify assigning to it the subject of the megalopsychia of the practikos? Aristotle has implicitly prohibited this.

Concerning 4.3 we need to ask Gauthier: Is megalopsychia an intellectual virtue, or is it a moral virtue that only the theoretikos can practice? It is difficult to pin Gauthier down on this question. "There is no lack of serious reasons," he has said, "for thinking that, in fact, the philosopher alone is able to be megalopsychos." If Gauthier is saying that only the theoretikos can be megalopsychos, and this seems to be his meaning, then he is saying that if a man is a megalopsychos, he is a theoretikos.

But, as if anticipating this implication, Gauthier, in the same place as the quotation just recalled, hedges. "Megalopsychia," he quickly adds, "is assuredly a moral virtue--

never doubt it--even if this moral virtue, by its particular nature could in fact be practiced only through the contemplative life of the philosopher."[1]

So Gauthier does give a definite answer to the above question; he explicitly states that megalopsychia is a moral virtue. But this only raises another difficulty for Gauthier. Shortly after saying that the "moral" virtue, megalopsychia, by its particular nature could be practiced only through philosophic contemplation, he says: Ni la production ni l'action ne sont le domaine du magnanime, "Neither production nor action are the province of the megalopsychos."[2] Yet somehow he is able to practice a moral virtue. This is not an isolated statement. Nineteen years earlier, Gauthier's view was the same: Il n'a rien de l'allure d'un homme d'action, "He [the megalopsychos] has nothing of the style of a man of action."[3]

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[1] Commentaire, 2:290. [2] Ibid.

[3] Magnanimité, p. 109.

But then we must ask Gauthier what sense it makes to say that megalopsychia is a moral virtue? He explicitly states that megalopsychia is a moral virtue, but leaves the megalopsychos with no means to practice it: action.

Gauthier's oscillations aside, it is possible to view his position as an attempt, via the megalopsychos, to bridge the gap produced by Aristotle's bifurcation of human life into two spheres, the intellectual and the moral. This is especially manifest in Gauthier's view that megalopsychia is a moral virtue that only the theoretikos can practice.

What if we amend Gauthier's extreme stand, however, and remove the "only"? Now we would have the position that megalopsychia is a moral virtue that the theoretikos as well as the practikos can practice. After all, Aristotle makes abundantly clear that moral virtue involves the simultaneous practice of phronesis, an intellectual virtue. Since the megalopsychos is a phronimos, why not also a theoretikos?

Before we can meaningfully answer this, however, there is a more fundamental question. Granted that the megalopsychos if a phronimos, is his basic concern with the moral life or the theoretical?

A number of recent commentators have observed that Aristotle's treatment of phronesis undergoes a significant alteration between the time he wrote the two versions of his ethics.[1] Stated briefly, the Nicomachean version limits phronesis to the moral sphere, whereas the Eudemian version permits it to encompass both the moral and intellectual spheres. And this is fully consistent with the general acceptance of the Eudemian Ethics as the earlier version, a work in which Aristotle was closer to his Platonic beginnings. The use of phronesis to denote both practical and philosophic wisdom is a well known position of Plato. It was not until the later

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[1]Among them: Bartling, "Megalopsychia," pp. 186-201; W. Jaeger, Aristotle, Fundamentals of the History of His Development, trans. (from the 1923 1st ed. in German) R. Robinson, 2d ed. (London, 1948), pp. 66-101, 232-246, cited and summarized as part of Bartling's account; Rowe, Development of Aristotle's Thought, pp. 63-72.

Nicomachean Ethics that Aristotle precisely sets phronesis apart as a technical concept referring solely to practical wisdom. The fact that the megalopsychos is a phronimos then--instead of lending support to the doctrine that the megalopsychos could as easily be a theoretikos as a practikos--suggests the opposite conclusion.

Gauthier believes that a rapproachement between megalopsychia and theoria can be found in EN 1.10. At 1100b 19, he notes, "the happy man will always do and contemplate, θεωρήσει, that which is in conformity with virtue." And "it is interesting to note," Gauthier continues, that "it is this man who, several lines later, will be called megalopsychos (1100b 32)."[1]

But we must call Gauthier's suggested rapproachement into question. Aristotle states in 6.12 that "philosophic wisdom will contemplate none of the things that will make a man happy (for it is not concerned with any coming into

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[1] Magnanimité, p. 106. In Ross's translation of this passage for the Oxford edition, this is the man who "bears with resignation many great misfortunes, not through insensibility to pain but through nobility and megalopsychia."

being)."[1] Earlier, at 6.1, Aristotle says that the part of the soul which grasps a rational principle can be divided into two parts: "one by which we contemplate the kind of things whose originative causes are invariable, and one by which we contemplate variable things."[2] Clearly the former applies to EN 10.7 and 10.8, while the latter applies to 1.10 where megalopsychia and theoria appear in the same context. Nor is this an isolated instance; in 4.2 magnificence and theoria also appear in the same context.[3] The two types of theoria, then, are not to be conflated as Gauthier does.

Does this mean, then, that the life of the megalopsychos and the life of the theoretikos are mutually exclusive? If a man is megalopsychos, does that automatically bar him from the theoretical life? Aristotle hints that it does. When he cites Anaxagoras and Thales as practi-

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[1] 1143b 19. [2] 1139a 5-8.

[3] At 1122a 34-35. "The magnificent man is like an artist; for he can see, θεωρῆσαι, what if fitting and spend large sums tastefully." Cited by Bartling, "Megalopsychia," p. 191.

tioners of the theoretical life, he says:

> This is why we say Anaxagoras, Thales and men like them have philosophic but not practical wisdom, when we see them ignorant of what is to their own advantage, and why we say that they know things that are remarkable, admirable, difficult, and divine, but useless; viz. because it is not human goods that they seek.[1]

No doubt, when Aristotle wrote this, he had in mind Plato's playful reference to Thales as the astronomer who fell into a well because his eyes were fixed on the heavens.[2] This anecdote symbolizes Aristotle's later point that practical endeavors can be impediments, ἐμπόδια, to the life of theoria.[3]

Yet, despite such considerations, how strictly would Aristotle have us keep separate the megalopsychos and the theoretikos? An answer to this involves addressing that perennial question in Aristotelian scholarship: What is the relationship between the moral and intellectual spheres in Aristotle's ethics? Does the thesis that the megalopsychos is basically

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[1] 6.7 1141b 3-8.

[2] Theaetetus 174. [3] EN 10.8 1178b 5.

concerned to enhance the nobility of his soul through a life of moral action throw any light on this wider issue? I believe that it does.

The standard view is that in a life of eudaimonia, the "flourishing" life, "intellectual values are made dominant, while moral activity is regarded as just a constantly necessary means to this dominant end."[1] On this view, which has textual support, megalopsychia would be in the service of theoria.[2] But, as the just-cited commentator observes,

> One might expect .... that in his [Aristotle's] delineation of the moral virtues some signs of this thesis would occasionally be visible, if he in fact accepted it. But such indications as there are, one way or the other seem to tell against the hypothesis that Aristotle thought a morally virtuous character necessary for the fullest possible realization of intellectual values.[3]

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[1]This formulation, although not his own view, belongs to John M. Cooper, Reason and Human Good in Aristotle (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 153 (hereafter cited as Cooper, Human Good). In what follows, I adopt Cooper's very apt rendering of "eudaimonia" by the concept "flourishing."

[2]Cooper cites EN 1.7 1098a 16-18, 1.13 1177a 12-18, 6.7 1141a 20-22, 6.12 1143b 33-35.

[3]Cooper, Human Good, p. 108. See also pp. 108-110 for Cooper's elaboration on this and on other considerations against the standard view.

One might especially expect this of Aristotle somewhere in 4.3 where he spells out the ingredients of his moral ideal in such minute detail. But he does not.

However, by citing Aristotle's treatise on friendship in arguing my interpretation of 4.3, it might appear that I have put the megalopsychos into the service of theoria. The megalopsychos, as a good man, I have pointed out, will always "seek for himself the things that are noblest and best." Now this occurs in a context where Aristotle identifies the person with nous. He writes:

> He therefore who loves and indulges the dominant part of himself is a lover of self in the fullest degree ... the terms 'self-restrained' and 'unrestrained' denote being restrained or not by one's intellect, νοῦς, and thus imply that the intellect is the man himself. Also it is our reasoned acts that are felt to be in the fullest sense our own acts, voluntary acts. It therefore is clear that a man is or is chiefly the dominant part of himself, and that a good man values this part of himself most.[1]

Does this not make a concern for the activity of his mind the ultimate concern of the megalopsychos?

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[1] 9.8 1168b 33-1169a 3, Rackham translation.

And if so, does this not tell against the strict separation of the megalospychos and *theoretikos* at which we have seen Aristotle so strongly hint?

To decide the first question we need to go back to the cited passage in which Aristotle identifies the good man with his mind. In doing so, we discover that Aristotle is actually referring to the mind as employed in a *moral* context.

> As his ... identification of a person with his mind shows, he is thinking of a person as identical with that in him which properly ought to decide what he is to do and which controls and guides his inclinations and desires in their job of moving his limbs and generating actions--in short, with his practical reason. The mind which is in control in the self-controlled man and out of control in the incontinent is the practical reason, whose virtue, *phronesis*, is said in the sixth book to consist in issuing *commands* (1143a 8).[1]

Thus, Aristotle's identification of the good man with his mind, in such a context, does not provide a ground for making theoretical pursuit

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[1]Cooper, *Human Good*, p. 172. He also cites, p. 172, n. 24, two other passages, 9.4 1166a 10-23 and 6.2 1139a 29-31, that corroborate his analysis. It is only in Book 10, Cooper points out, that Aristotle identifies the person with theoretical mind. Cooper makes much of this fact in the position he ultimately arrives at con-

the ultimate concern of the megalopsychos.

This of course would not rule out all such concern. Men such as Pericles, Solon, Socrates, granting that they are megalopsychoi, were no doubt concerned to advance, each in his capacity as statesman (or gadfly), theoretical pursuits.[1] From this perspective, we can readily see certain megalopsychoi serving as "political" bridges between the moral and intellectual spheres. It is here that those passages in which Aristotle seems to regard moral activity as just the constantly necessary precondition of theoretical activity might find their application.

Aristotle makes clear, however, that on the private level of the human individual the moral life flourishes quite independently of the theoretical. "In a secondary degree," he states, "the life in accordance with the other

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cerning the relationship between the moral and intellectual spheres in Aristotle's ethics. See pp. 155-180.

[1] Bartling, "Megalopsychia," p. 192, points this out in connection with Pericles.

kind of virtue [the moral] is happy, for the activities in accordance with this befit our human estate."[1] Where does the megalopsychos's basic concern, enhancing the nobility of his soul through moral action, fit into this type of life? It fits in as just that, a basic concern. His ultimate concern remains secondary-degree-eudaimonia, or moral flourishing, while nobility of soul is a basic ingredient. Indeed, given Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia, it is the basic ingredient of the morally flourishing life.

To what extent, then, might intellectual activity be a part of that life? If we look to 4.3, we can recall that the megalopsychos is a man of "few actions." Although this does not permit Gauthier's extreme inference, it does leave open the possibility that the megalopsychos would engage in theoretical activity should time permit. Likewise for the theoretikos; we have no reason to suppose that he would not involve himself in moral pursuits. As Aristotle

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[1] 10.8 1178a 8-9.

stresses, in so far as he is human, he cannot avoid them.[1] At issue, as one commentator sensibly puts it,

> is not whether a given philosopher may, under unusual circumstances, exchange roles with the man of supreme practical accomplishments. The question, rather, is what actions, however infrequent, are within the range of the normal and the expected for the ideal type of the theoretikos bios as described in Book X of the Nicomachean Ethics.[2]

The theoretikos, he goes on to say, "is and remains an ethical being. His minimal participation in the ethikai aretai, however, does not win him the title of megalopsychos. The megalopsychos, on the other hand, could theoretically encroach on the domain of the bios theoretikos without necessarily becoming a full-fledged philosophos."[3]

Aristotle, then, sets forth two ideal types in his Nicomachean Ethics: the theoretikos of 10.7 and the megalopsychos of 4.3. Although we will not, in Aristotle's view, find them embodied, as types, in the same person, they might

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[1] 10.8 1178a 26-27.

[2] Bartling, "Megalopsychia," p. 161.

[3] Ibid., p. 215.

nevertheless partially engage in each other's characteristic activities, given the right circumstances. But 4.3 does not support the standard view that Aristotle sees moral activity as "just s constantly necessary means to intellectual activity." Aristotle clearly grants the morally flourishing life, as exemplified by the megalopsychos, a separate status.

Of course, Aristotle stresses that such a life is of less worth than the theoretically flourishing life. But I want to stress that what we make of this difference, looking at the Nicomachean Ethics as a whole, is profoundly affected by what we make of Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia. If 4.3 gives us a man who is basically concerned with externally bestowed honor, which is the prevailing view, then Aristotle's megalopsychos is profoundly inferior to his theoretikos. But if the megalopsychos is a man basically concerned, not with externally bestowed honor, but with the nobility of his soul, his self-respect, then his contrast with the theoretikos is strikingly lessened. In

short, I am urging that Aristotle's theory of moral good, as idealized and concretized in the person of his megalopsychos, has far greater importance in Aristotle's mind than the usual interpretations of 4.3 are able to admit.

Quite aside from this, however, it is not the content of 4.3, the <u>type</u> of actions, or activity, being described that is so important, as the fact that these actions, and the type of life to which they add up, are gauged to enhance one's nobility of soul, one's sense of honor--in short, one's self-respect. Aristotle's distinct achievement in 4.3 is that he identified the meaning and championed the importance of moral enthusiasm. For Aristotle, there is more to the good life than simply avoiding evil. As he puts it: "It is more characteristic of virtue to do what is noble than not to do what is base." For no virtue does he emphasize this more than for the virtue of megalopsychia.

CHAPTER III

ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION OF MEGALOPSYCHIA AFTER ARISTOTLE

For those acquainted with 4.3's notorious bad press, it comes as no surprise that Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia has had a negligible impact on later ethical thought.

"Magnanimity," the present day descendent of "megalopsychia," confirms this. Basically, all that "magnanimity" retains of Aristotle's "megalopsychia" is the generosity of mind to forgive and forget an injury.

What has happened to Aristotle's lofty conception of megalopsychia? Why has its influence been so negligible? Why does it, even today, receive a bad press?

This chapter will propose and explore three basic reasons. First, megalopsychia has been widely misunderstood. Second, those who did understand it, profoundly altered Aristotle's meaning. Third, megalopsychia, as an ideal,

calls for a moral elite. Each of these reasons has taken its toll. Nevertheless, Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia, we shall see, continues its existence under a different name.

Of the misunderstandings, the fundamental one, I have repeatedly emphasized, is the idea that Aristotle's megalopsychos is a man primarily concerned with externally bestowed honor. Because of this idea he has been labeled a "stuffed shirt," a conceited, bad-mannered "prig," a man "divinely jealous of his superiority," concerned always to be "one up on his fellow man." He has been found "unpleasing" because he does not abase himself "before the ideal of duty," even "intolerable." He has even been seen as a "strange incubus," enough to make one "shudder."[1]

Such comments betray a superficial understanding of Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia. The superficiality lies in the failure to see beyond the surface appearances of Book 4 chapter 3 of the Nicomachean

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[1]Above, pp. 5-8.

Ethics, appearances that seem to make external honor the basic concern of the megalopsychos. The many problems with this interpretation have been detailed already, and in its place I have argued that the megalopsychos's basic concern is to enhance the nobility of his soul through a life of moral action. That is, his concern is not with externally bestowed honor but with his sense of inner honor.

The failure to recognaize this is a fundamental misunderstanding underlying three others. One of them is that Aristotle is not really serious in his portrait of the megalopsychos. Another quite different misunderstanding is that he is presenting the ideal man of the life of theoria, the theoretikos. Finally, it leads to the view that megalopsychia is not a separate virtue.

According to the first of these, 4.3 is a piece of humor, with the second it is irrelevant to the moral life, and with the third it is insignificant. Since these views are by no means uncommon, it is understandable that

Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia has had no real impact on later ethical thinking. Therefore, to better ensure the recognition it deserves, it is necessary to examine each of these misunderstandings.

The charge that Aristotle was not really serious in 4.3 has had a number of versions. Some commentators see it as a caricature, others as a piece of humor. Still others see it as satirical or half-ironical. To understand these notions we need to ask: About what, or, better, about whom, was Aristotle being humorous or half-ironical? Whom was he caricaturing or satirizing? One commentator provides a clue when he says 4.3 reveals "that Aristotle had an undue admiration for the upper-middle-class gentlemen of his day."[1] Another is even more explicit. Aristotle's treatment of moral virtue, he declares, "presents a lively and often amusing account of the qualities admired

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[1]Abraham Edel, Aristotle (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1967), p. 137.

or disliked by cultivated Greeks of Aristotle's time."[1]

We can infer from such statements, it appears, that, if there is an object of caricature or satire in 4.3, then it is the cultivated upper class of Aristotle's day. This notion is the more easily adopted, of course, by those who see the megalopsychos as basically concerned with external honor. For them the megalopsychos belongs to that class of men who, as Aristotle puts it, "seem to pursue honor in order that they may be assured of their goodness."[2] When, on that basis, these same men make a claim to greatness of soul, they become preposterous. And when they affect the deep voice, level utterances, and unhurried steps of the man of 4.3, they become all the more ridiculous and pompous.

To repeat, however, Aristotle's megalopsychos could impress a commentator this way

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[1]Ross, Aristotle, p. 202.

[2]1.5 1095b 27. Above, p. 30.

only were he first to misconstrue him as basically concerned with externally bestowed honor. But Aristotle, as we have already seen, clearly states that "those who without virtue have such goods [as those of the upper class: power, wealth and position] are neither justified in making great claims nor entitled to the name of megalopsychos." And when he speaks of the megalopsychos's deep voice, level utterances and unhurried steps, he is contrasting him with the man who, undoubtedly like many of the upper class, dissipates himself and his resources on shallow pursuits. "The man who takes few things seriously," Aristotle suggests, "is not likely to be hurried, nor the man who thinks nothing great to be excited, while a shrill voice and a rapid gait are the results of hurry and excitement."[1]

Thus, even were it true that Aristotle is describing an upper class virtue, it certainly is less than clear that he is caricaturing or satirizing the practitioner of that virtue.

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[1] 1125a 14-16.

He emphasizes that goodness is the ground for megalopsychia, not upper class status, power, wealth or any other external good. But it does not even seem true that Aristotle is describing an upper class virtue. We have already seen that the qualities of the magnificent man are, among all the virtuous qualities described by Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics, the only ones that are not made a necessary part of the megalopsychos's personality.[1] We must conclude, therefore, that the notion that 4.3 is in some way a piece of humor, specifically humor directed at the upper class of Aristotle's time, cannot be taken seriously.

Implied by the claim that Aristotle is concerned with upper class virtues is an allied misconception. This is the notion that he was not original in his treatment of megalopsychia. However, if an accepted conception of megalopsychia were available to Aristotle, it seems that he was not aware of it. Scholars agree that Aristotle's logical works were earlier than his

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[1]Above, pp. 25-27.

Nicomachean Ethics. Both the Posterior Analytics and the Rhetoric suggest that an accepted conception of megalopsychia did not exist in Aristotle's day. In the Analytics Aristotle cites two significations of megalopsychia: refusal to bear insult, and impassibility in the face of ill fortune. In the Rhetoric Aristotle cites another: "magnificence."[1] One further signification also existed in Aristotle's time: the ability to bear an offense with composure. We find this in a fragment of Democritus, in the last years of the 5th century and the first years of the 4th.[2]

None of these qualities, however, is in the end adopted by Aristotle as definitive of megalopsychia. We must conclude, then, that the suggestion that Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia is not original, is less than plausible. Before Aristotle could have borrowed an accepted conception of megalopsychia,

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[1] 1.9 1366b 15-19.

[2] DK, fr. 46. Cited by Gauthier, Magnanimité, p. 18. I shall elaborate on these four significations of megalopsychia in the next chapter.

an accepted conception had to exist. It clearly seems that one did not.

Here, however, is where one of Gauthier's insights becomes relevant. According to him, the formula, "to think oneself worthy of great things, being worthy of them," was a popular formula in Aristotle's day, not in connection with megalopsychia, but simply as a formula.[1] Furthermore, Gauthier says, the "great things" phrase seems to have referred to great actions.[2]

Even more important in this context is that the megalopsychos, in his basic concern to enhance the nobility of his soul, seems to be heeding Socrates's famous exhortation: "I spend all my time going about trying to persuade you, young and old, to make your first and chief concern not for your bodies nor for your possessions, but for the highest welfare of

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[1] Magnanimité, p. 75. Gauthier points out that it was used by Demosthenes in For the Crown, 53, 297.

[2] Magnanimité, pp. 76-78. But not for Aristotle, Gauthier claims. In Gauthier's view, Aristotle "profoundly transformed" this popular meaning.

your souls."[1]

We have therefore two central elements of 4.3, the "thinks himself worthy" passage, and the concern of the megalopsychos with the nobility of his soul, neither element originated by Aristotle himself. But what was original with Aristotle is that he made these elements part of the meaning of megalopsychia. Aristotle's crucial contribution is that it is the megalopsychos whose basic concern is with enhancing the nobility of his soul.

Between the writing of the two versions of his ethics, Aristotle radically altered his conception of megalopsychia. As we saw, the Eudemian megalopsychos is not concerned with honor bestowed for virtue, but rather with the honor that accompanies the possession of great external goods. Thus, there is no doubt that Aristotle changed his mind about the importance of external goods as such after he wrote his Eudemian Ethics. It would be most surprising

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[1] Apology, 30b. Trans. Hugh Tredennick in The Last Days of Socrates (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1959).

to find that this was a result of a change in the accepted meaning of megalopsychia during this time frame. Such cultural changes require more time than that which elapsed between the writing of the Eudemian and the Nicomachean texts. They also require the influence of a thinker with Aristotle's influence. We know of no such thinker. We must conclude then that Aristotle himself was the originator of the conception, that special amalgam of elements, that comes down to us in 4.3

Unlike those commentators who think that Aristotle was not really being serious (or original) in his presentation of megalopsychia, there are those such as Gauthier who think him so serious (and original) as to propose that he is actually presenting the theoretikos. As already mentioned, this misunderstanding, just as easily as the first, renders Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia ethically irrelevant. It requires, as we saw with Gauthier, that the "great things" of which the megalopsychos thinks himself worthy be taken to refer to great honor, and not as the text demands to great actions.

It thereby perpetuates the mistaken notion that the megalopsychos is a man basically concerned with externally bestowed honor, a concern that, not surprisingly, has failed to capture the attention of moral philosophers after Aristotle.

Furthermore, it leaves Aristotle's treatment of the moral realm without an ideal. This is a significant loss indeed for, as pointed out, on the interpretation that Aristotle's megalopsychos is a man whose basic concern is to enhance the nobility of his soul through moral action, the value of the flourishing moral life has far greater importance in Aristotle's ethics than the usual interpretations of 4.3 are able to grant. As a result, its potential for elucidating Aristotle's ethical thinking is drastically diminished. Again we witness the sad result of thinking that Aristotle's megalopsychos is a man motivated by the desire for externally bestowed honor.

Another manifestation of this notion is the view that Aristotle's "megalopsychia" is not really a separate virtue but merely a sum of the

other virtues. This view holds that megalopsychia is simply a reward for excellences already practiced, and, as in the two preceding views, the great things of which the megalopsychos thinks himself worthy are still honors, albeit honors bestowed by his fellow man for excellences of character. Recalling Jaeger here, "Aristotle does not believe megalopsychia to be an independent virtue like the others, but one which presupposes them and is 'in a way an ornament to them.'" We saw above the problems with taking this narrow perspective on megalopsychia.[1] The point here is that such a perspective, when adopted by commentators on 4.3, effectively reduces megalopsychia to insignificance. It denies that megalopsychia has an independent province of its own. One achieves the other excellences and megalopsychia automatically results. It is not an active, ongoing, positive character trait like the other virtues. That this renders megalopsychia insignificant needs no further evidence than the fact that

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[1] Pp. 36-39.

universal justice, the virtue that Jaeger confuses with megalopsychia on this point,[1] has had no place in subsequent ethical thinking.

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Despite all the misunderstandings to which 4.3 has been subjected, however, Aristotle's vision of a man basically concerned to enhance the nobility of his soul through a life of moral action has never been entirely obscured. For no two philosophers was this more the case than for Thomas Aquinas, probably the most influential of Christian thinkers, and, later, for Friedrich Nietzsche, the great spokesman of the antichrist. The interesting thing about Aquinas and Nietzsche is that these, the two thinkers who probably best understood the meaning and the spirit of 4.3, even to the point of openly admiring it, nevertheless cannot, in retrospect, be regarded as champions of Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia.

Aquinas's interpretation of 4.3 concurs, basically, with that set forth above.

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[1] Above, pp. 10-11.

Actually, his account is not really an interpretation at all, but rather a presentation of what he apparently takes to be quite obvious. For instance, in his Summa Theologica it appears obvious to Aquinas that the megalopsychos is a man of action. "A man is called megalopsychos," he says, "chiefly because he has the spirit for some great act."[1] And in his Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics, he states: "A person seems to be megalopsychos who thinks himself worthy of great things, viz., that he may perform great deeds and that great things should happen to him when in fact he is worthy."[2] He no doubt has in mind Aristotle's criticism of micropsychia where Aristotle makes clear the action orientation of the megalopsychos. In Aquinas's words, "The small-souled person is one who refuses to

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[1]Second part of the second part, question 129, article 1, reply, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1932). Hereafter, unless indicated otherwise, all citations from the Summa Theologica will be from the second part of the second part, and will be in the form S.T. 129, 1, reply.

[2]Lecture 8, article 736, trans. C. I. Litzinger, O.P. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1964). Hereafter such citations will be in the form Commentary 8.736.

strive after great accomplishments and aims at certain petty undertakings when he is truly capable of what is great."[1] Aquinas does not argue these points. For him it is merely a matter of looking at the text of 4.3 and citing them.

To Aquinas it is also obvious that the megalopsychos is not really concerned with external honor but rather with the internal stature of his soul. As Aquinas expresses it, "There is nothing great for him among the things that can happen externally, because his whole life is busy with internal goods, which are truly great."[2]

Aquinas leaves no doubt that he admires Aristotle's megalopsychos. Nevertheless, he regards megalopsychia as a pagan virtue, needing baptism in the waters of Christian doctrine. This he does by attmepting to reconcile megalopsychia with humility.

Aquinas attempts this reconciliation from a number of perspectives. First, in terms of action: "Humility restrains the appetite from

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[1] Commentary. 8.740. [2] Ibid. 10.777.

aiming at great things against right reason: while megalopsychia urges the mind to great things in accord with right reason. Hence it is clear that megalopsychia is not opposed to humility: indeed they concur in this, that each is according to right reason."[1]

Second, Aquinas relates megalopsychia and humility in terms of emotions: "For just as it belongs to megalopsychia to urge the mind to great things against despair, so it belongs to humility to withdraw the mind from the inordinate desire of great things against presumption."[2]

Third, he demonstrates the need for a two fold virtue of megalopsychia and humility by appeal to man's nature:

> Now it has been stated above (I.-II., Q. LXI., A. 2) that for those appetitive movements which are a kind of impulse toward an object, there is need of a moderating and restraining moral virtue, while for those which are a kind of recoil, there is need, on the part of the appetite, of a moral virtue to strengthen it and urge it on. Wherefore a twofold virtue is necessary with regard to the difficult good.[3]

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[1] S.T. 161, 1, reply. [2] 162, 1, reply.
[3] 161, 1, reply.

Finally, Aquinas explains the need for both megalopsychia and humility from the perspective of his world view. "The reason why Christ chiefly proposed humility to us," he writes, "was because it especially removes the obstacle to man's spiritual welfare consisting in man's aiming at heavenly and spiritual things, in which he is hindered by striving to become great in earthly things."[1]

Humility in all these citations is understood by Aquinas as a virtue guarding against presumption, the Greek concept of hubris. But there is more to humility for him than this. Humility also means self-abasement. "In so far as it is a virtue," he writes, it "conveys the notion of a praiseworthy self-abasement to the lowest place."[2] And if we investigate further, we find that self-abasement is what Aquinas regards as the main meaning of humility. "Humility," he says, "regards chiefly the subjection of man to God, for Whose sake he humbles himself by subjecting

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[1] 161, 5, reply. [2] 161, 1, reply.

himself to others."[1]

Also significant for Aquinas's reconciliation of megalopsychia and humility is the fact that, of the two virtues, humility in his view is by far the more important. In so far as it is the "foundation of the spiritual edifice," humility is the greatest virtue. He explains: "By way of removing obstacles .... humility holds the first place, inasmuch as it expels pride, which God resisteth, and makes man submissive and ever open to receive the influx of Divine grace. Hence it is written (James IV 6): God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."[2]

The megalopsychos, Aquinas believes, needs to realize that his greatness is not his own achievement but a gift from God.

> In man there is a quality of greatness possessed by God's gift, and a characteristic defect which comes from the weakness

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[1] Ibid. Aquinas intensifies the aspect of self-abasement in his conception of humility in accepting Benedict's "Twelve Degrees of Humility" (see 161, 6, reply), Anselm's "Seven Degrees of Humility" (see 161, 6, reply), and Bernard's "Twelve Degrees of Humility" (see 162, 4, reply).

[2] 161, 5, reply.

> of his nature. Megalopsychia therefore makes a man esteem himself worthy of great things through contemplating the gifts which he has from God. For example, if he has great virtue of mind, megalopsychia makes him strive to attain perfection in virtuous works; and similarly in the employment of any other good, for example, knowledge or fortunate circumstances. But humility makes a man belittle himself by contemplating his own particular weakness.[1]

Because of this inherent weakness, man can accomplish nothing without God's grace. He cannot even prepare himself for the gift of grace without God's help. He has to receive grace to prepare his soul to receive grace. This doctrine of intense determinism Aquinas takes to the point of predestination, although he still talks of "free" choice.

> ... The predestined must necessarily be saved, yet by a conditional necessity, which does not do away with the liberty of choice ....
>
> Man's turning to God is by free choice; and thus man is bidden to turn himself to God. But free choice can be turned to God only when God turns it .... It is the part of man to prepare his soul, since he does this by his free choice. And yet he does not do this without the help of God moving him .... Even the good movement of free choice, whereby anyone is prepared for receiving the gift of grace, is an act of free choice moved by God ....

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[1] 129, 3, reply.

Man's preparation for grace is from God, as mover, and from free choice, as moved.[1]

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Although Nietzsche nowhere makes direct reference to 4.3, there is no lack of references in his work to the expression "greatness of soul." "Gracefulness," he tells us in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "is part of the graciousness of the great-souled."[2] In Beyond Good and Evil he recalls that "in the age of Socrates .... irony may have been required for greatness of soul."[3]

More important than these, however, is Nietzsche's connection of greatness of soul and love for the truth in The Antichrist. He

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[1] S.T. Part one: 23, 3, reply; part one of the second part: 109, 6, reply; 112, 2, reply; 112, 3, reply. Cited by W. T. Jones, The Medieval Mind (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), p. 283.

[2] Part 2, sect. 13. Trans. Walter Kaufmann, The Portable Nietzsche (New York: Viking Press, Penguin Books, 1968). Hereafter, such citations will be in the form: Zarathustra 2.13.

[3] Part 6, sect. 212. (Cf. EN 4.3 1124b 30.) Trans. Walter Kaufmann, Beyond Good and Evil (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1966). Hereafter such citations will be in the form: Beyond Good 6.212.

writes: "At every step one has to wrestle for truth; one has to surrender for it almost everything to which the heart, to which our love, our trust in life, cling otherwise. That requires greatness of soul: the service of truth is the hardest service. What does it mean, after all, to have integrity in matters of the spirit."[1] With this we recall that Aristotle introduces the megalopsychos in terms of his truthfulness, as a man "who thinks himself worthy of great things, being worthy of them."

In The Will to Power Nietzsche states that "greatness of soul cannot be separated from greatness of mind. For it involves independence; and without greatness of mind this should not be permitted, as it causes mischief."[2]

But the passage that best indicates that

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[1]Sect. 50. Trans. Walter Kaufmann, The Portable Nietzsche.

[2]Sect. 984. Cited by Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 384 (hereafter cited as Kaufmann, Nietzsche).

Nietzsche has captured the spirit of 4.3 is not one in which he explicitly uses the phrase "greatness of soul." It is a passage in which he describes the "noble man": "It is some fundamental certainty which a noble soul has about itself, something which is not to be sought, is not to be found, and perhaps, also, is not to be lost .... The noble soul has reverence for itself."[1] It is almost as if Nietzsche had Aristotle's description of the self-love of the good man before him. "Such a man," we saw, "would seem more than the other a lover of self; at all events he assigns to himself the things that are noblest and best."

Kaufmann remarks that "Aristotle's conception [of megalopsychia] apparently made a tremendous impression on Nietzsche." According to Kaufmann, "many of the provocative ideas he [Aristotle] expresses so unprovocatively and dryly [in 4.3] are fashioned into polemical arrows in Nietzsche's works, especially in

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[1] Beyond Good 9.287. Emphasis is in the original.

Zarathustra."[1] Kaufman undoubtedly has in mind such intense exhortations as: "By my love and hope I beseech you: do not throw away the hero in your soul! Hold holy your highest hope! ... Thus spoke Zarathustra."[2] And: "You shall always be the first and excel all others: your jealous soul shall love no one, unless it be the friend--that made the soul of the Greek quiver: thus he walked the path of his greatness."[3]

Polemical arrows of a kind relevant to a discussion of Aristotle's "megalopsychia" also abound in Beyond Good and Evil, as when Nietzsche declares: "At the risk of displeasing innocent ears I propose: egoism belongs to the nature of a noble soul."[4] And again when he flings into the face of a Christian culture the idea that "the feelings of devotion, self-sacrifice for one's neighbor, the whole morality of self-denial must be questioned mercilessly and

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[1] Nietzsche, pp. 382, 384.

[2] Zarathustra 1.8 [3] Ibid., 1.15.

[4] 9.265.

taken to court."[1]

Nietzsche would have the noble soul question the doctrine of grace as well.

> The noble soul gives as it takes, from that passionate and irritable instinct of repayment that lies in its depth. The concept "grace" has no meaning or good odor inter pares [among equals]; there may be a sublime way of letting presents from above happen to one, as it were, and to drink them up thirstily like drops--but for this art and gesture the noble soul has no aptitude. Its egoism hinders it: quite generally it does not like to look "up"--but either ahead, horizontally and slowly, or down: it knows itself to be at a height.[2]

But just as with Aquinas, Nietzsche's kinship with Aristotle over megalopsychia breaks down at a certain point. We find, for example, when we explore further the egoism of Nietzsche's "noble soul," that it involves more taking than giving. In Nietzsche's view, the noble soul possesses an

> ... unshakable faith that to a being such as "we are" other beings must be subordinate by nature and have to sacrifice themselves. The noble soul accepts this fact of its egoism without any question mark, also with-

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[1] Zarathustra 2.33.

[2] Beyond Good 9.265. Emphasis is in the original.

> out any feeling that it might contain hardness, constraint, or caprice, rather as something that may be founded in the primordial law of things: if it sought a name for this fact it would say, "it is justice itself."[1]

For those bothered by the exploitation that this passage sanctions, Nietzsche offers this justification. "'Exploitation' does not," he states, "belong to a corrupt or imperfect and primitive society: it belongs to the essence of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will to life."[2]

Here we start to move into Nietzsche's metaphysics, and what we shall find is that, although Nietzsche rejects Aquinas's doctrine of grace, his metaphysics is every bit as deterministic as Aquinas's. For instance, when Nietzsche accounts for the origin of the noble soul, one of his formulations is:

> The order of castes, the supreme, the dominant law, is merely the sanction of a natural order, a natural lawfulness of the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] 9.259. For Nietzsche's "will to power" doctrine see Kaufmann, Nietzsche, pp. 178-333.

> first rank, over which no arbitrariness, no "modern idea" has any power. In every healthy society there are three types which condition each other and gravitate differently physiologically; each has its own hygiene, its own field of work, its own sense of perfection and mastery. Nature .... disinguishes the pre-eminently strong in muscle and temperament, and those, the third type, who excel neither in one respect nor in the other, the mediocre ones--the last as the great majority, the first as the elite.[1]

The members of this elite say of themselves "Imperfection .... is beneath us." It is not that they seek to rule over others or to exploit them. As Nietzsche puts it, "They rule not because they want to but because they are; they are not free to be second." And their exalted status "does not preclude their being the most cheerful and the kindliest" of men.[2]

Yet, any good they do, any virtue they practice, is no more their own achievement than for Aquinas's "predestined elect."

> For every high world one must be born; or to speak more clearly, one must be cultivated for it: a right to philosophy--taking that word in its great sense--one has only by

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[1] The Antichrist, sect. 57. As Kaufmann observes in his Nietzsche, p. 396 n. 8, Plato "exerted a decisive influence on Nietzsche's thought."

[2] Ibid.

> virtue of one's origins; one's ancestors, one's "blood" decide here, too. Many gererations must have labored to prepare the origin of the philosopher; every one of his virtues must have been acquired, nurtured, inherited, and digested singly, and not only the bold, light, delicate gain and course of his thoughts but above all the readiness for great responsibilities, the loftiness of glances that dominate and look down, feeling separated from the crowd and its duties and virtues, the affable protection and defense of whatever is misunderstood and slandered, whether it be god or devil, the pleasure and exercise of the great justice, the art of command, the width of the will, the slow eye that rarely admires, rarely looks up, rarely loves--[1]

Nietzsche's view of human nature is as intensely deterministic as Aquinas's. All one has to do is replace Aquinas's "divine grace" with Nietzsche's "origins, ancestors and blood." "It is simply not possible," states Nietzsche, "that a human being should not have the qualities and preferences of his parents and ancestors in his body, whatever appearances may suggest to the contrary."[2]

Can there be such a phenomenon, then, as moral nobility, as envisioned by Aristotle? Nietzsche answers: "There is only nobility by birth and blood .... Where there is talk of

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[1] Beyond Good 6.213. [2] Ibid., 9.264.

'aristocrats of the spirit', there is usually no lack of reasons for keeping something secret .... For spirit alone does not make noble, rather something is required to make noble the spirit. What is required? Blood."[1] Here "blood" operates for Nietzsche the way "grace" does for Aquinas. For Aquinas, free will moves man to choose God's path, but it is God's grace that moves this "free" will. For Nietzsche, spirit moves the noble man, but it is blood that moves the spirit.

Both Aquinas and Nietzsche understand Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia in theory, but disagree with Aristotle over what is needed for the embodiment of that conception in an actual person. Aquinas produces a metaphysics in which any good a man performs, any excellence he achieves, is, ultimately, a result of God's grace. He speaks of free will but it turns out to be a will exercised as a result of grace. Thus, a man's worth is no

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[1]The Will to Power sect. 942. Cited by Kaufmann, Nietzsche, p. 305.

longer a product of his own moral achievement. Where Aristotle says the megalopsychos "thinks himself worthy of great things, being worthy of them," Aquinas says megalopsychia "makes a man esteem himself worthy of great things through contemplating the gifts he has from God."

The profound difference between Aristotle and Aquinas is further reflected in Aquinas's attempt to reconcile megalopsychia and humility. His attempt is clever, and even successful, so long as he limits the meaning of humility to the withdrawing of "the mind from the inordinate desire of great things against presumption." Here he presents humility as a proper self-estimate, and hence a necessary safeguard against <u>hubris</u>. But when Aquinas is not attempting to reconcile humility and megalopsychia, he reveals what he takes to be the chief meaning of humility: self-abasement. As such, humility stands in profound opposition to megalopsychia; it is the very characteristic that Aristotle identifies with <u>micropsychia</u>.

In contrast to Aquinas, one of the leitmotifs of Nietzsche's opposition to

Christianity is his contempt for humility. As he correctly observes, it is a contempt that any Greek would share:

> The Chinese have a proverb that mothers even teach children: siao-sin--"make your heart small! This is the characteristic fundamental propensity in late civilizations: I do not doubt that an ancient Greek would recognize in us Europeans of today, too, such self-diminution; this alone would suffice for us to "offend his taste."--[1]

Thus, we do not find Nietzsche's noble man attempting smallness of soul, as did Aquinas's. Rather he adopts the other vice Aristotle opposes to megalopsychia: self-inflation. For Nietzsche the noble soul "knows itself to be at a height," has an unshakable faith that to a being such as he is "other beings must be subordinate and ... sacrifice themselves," and says that imperfection is beneath him. Even apart from Nietzsche's metaphysics these passages clearly smack of what Aristotle would call self-inflation. When considered in light of Nietzsche's view that the person they laud is a product--not of his own efforts--but of a "natural order," and of

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[1] Beyond Good 9.267.

"ancestors" and of "blood," then they begin to border on blatant pomposity.[1]

Both Aquinas and Nietzsche grasped the meaning and spirit of 4.3, but elaborated and embellished it, each in his own way. In so doing, each of them abandoned the mean struck by he who "thinks himself worthy of great things, being worthy of them." Each was pushed away from this mean by a metaphysics and view of human nature profoundly opposed to Aristotle's. One ended up advocating self-inflation, the other micropsychia. One advocated a caste of superior beings sanctioned by the natural order of things, the other an elite corp of predestined elect also sanctioned by the natural order of things. Both altered Aristotle's vision of a moral elite, of what Nietzsche refers to with derision as

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[1]Nietzsche himself was guilty of this, most clearly in Ecce Homo. As Kaufmann observes in his Nietzsche, p. 117: "To be sure, in Ecce Homo Nietzsche attempts what might be called a deliberate self-mythologization; some of his statements obviously make no claim to literal correctness; and poetic license is in places extended beyond all boundaries of reason and good taste."

an "aristocracy of the spirit."

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Nietzsche is not alone in finding this conception offensive. By its very nature, Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia sets up a standard for the few. This brings us to the third reason for its negligible influence in later ethical thinking.

"It is hard to be truly megalopsychos," Aristotle admits, "for it is impossible without kalokagathia." It thus stands as a reproach to those who do not measure up to its demands. Sometimes they will sink to calling that good an evil. One recent philosopher alludes to this phenomenon as follows:

> Pride is immanent in the prance of health and of intelligence, as in the employment of any talent or skill. More, the exercise of a natural faculty can be censured as a piece of insolence: the mere enjoyment of the body or the mind takes you across the limits of what someone, rightly or wrongly, considers your proper sphere. To kick up your heels in exuberance is to fling sand in somebody's eyes. To wear bright clothes in the vicinity of a funeral is to offend the mourners--who may resent the very existence of a healthy person as an insult to the dead .... Living is an affirmation and can be taken as an affront.[1]

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[1]Arnold Isenberg, "Natural Pride and

An even more explicit description of this phenomenon is found in Nietzsche, despite his derision of "an aristocracy of the spirit." His horror that the good should be hated surfaces repeatedly in his writings. A typical statement is this:

> Your silent pride always runs counter to their bad taste; they are jubilant if for once you are modest enough to be vain .... Before you they feel small, and their baseness glimmers and glows in invisible revenge .... Indeed, my friend, you are the bad conscience of your neighbors: for they are unworthy of you. They hate you, therefore, and would like to suck your blood .... Flee, my friend, into your solitude and where the air is raw and strong! It is not your lot to shoo flies.[1]

These are strong statements; some will call them overstatements. Nevertheless, Nietzsche puts his finger on an actual fact: there exists a class of people who, when they encounter a noble individual, experience him as a reproach. And some of these people will call him evil. Nietzsche warns against them:

> "You still feel noble, and the others too feel your nobility, though they bear

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Natural Shame," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research (September 1949): 1-24.

[1] Zarathustra 1.12.

> you a grudge and send you evil glances. Know that the noble man stands in everybody's way. The noble man stands in the way of the good too: and even if they call him one of the good, they thus want to do away with him. The noble man wants to create something new and a new virtue. The good want the old, and that the old be preserved.
>
> "But by my love and hope I beseech you: do no throw away the hero in your soul! Hold holy your highest hope!"
>
> Thus spoke Zarathustra.[1]

Nietzsche thus makes clear how 4.3's call for a moral elite stands as another reason for its negligible influence in later ethics. Despite his major divergences from Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia, he superbly captures, in certain passages, the spirit and the meaning of Aristotle's "megalopsychia."

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Today's conception of "magnanimity" has a far narrower meaning. Webster's Third International Dictionary indicates two denotations: 1) "a loftiness of spirit enabling one to sustain danger and trouble with tranquility, firmness, and courage," 2) "a nobility

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[1] Zarathustra 1.8. The applicability of all this to the character of Socrates leaps to mind.

of feeling that is superior to meanness, pettiness, or jealousy and that disdains revenge or retaliation: generosity of mind." Thus we see the influence of 4.3, but without the essence. The action orientation is gone, the concern with nobility of soul, and most of the excellences that these imply. It would seem that Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia, for all practical purposes, is lost. It seems that the misunderstandings, the fact that it never had a true champion, and the fact that it calls for a moral elite, have cast it into oblivion.

Recently, however, certain commentators and translators, realizing that "magnanimity" no longer carries the meaning of Aristotle's "megalopsychia," have started to use other expressions. Ross in his Aristotle refers to megalopsychia as "proper pride or self-respect,"[1] and his translation of 4.3 renders it by "pride." Rackham, in a note to his translation of 4.3, observes that "megalopsychia" today means "lofty pride and self-esteem rather than mag-

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[1] P. 208.

nanimity or high-mindedness (in the modern sense of the word)."[1] Ostwald, in a note to his translation of 4.3, prefers "high-mindedness" because "the connotations of megalopsychia are much wider than the modern meaning of 'magnanimity', [and thus] 'high-mindedness' seems better suited to rendering the pride and confident self-respect inherent in the concept."[2]

Edel in his Aristotle directly translates megalopsychia as "pride."[3] Seddon in his article refers to "Aristotle's image of the great-souled man, the man of proper pride."[4] Grant in his commentary on 4.3 states that "loftiness of spirit is the highest form of self-respect."[5]

Thus, Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia has been given a new lease on life. Despite all the misunderstanding and bad press and distortion, the self-respect inherent in

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[1]Loeb Classical Library, p. 213, note b.

[2]Library of Liberal Arts (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1962), p. 93, n. 18.

[3]P. 137. [4]"A Suggestion," p. 31.

[5]The Ethics of Aristotle, 2:72.

Aristotle's "megalopsychia" is coming to be recognized, quite correctly, as central and is being designanted as such.

What is significant is that the megalopsychos is being viewed as possessing a positive quality: self-respect. This does not mean that the above-cited commentators have given 4.3 an unqualified endorsement. Ross, for instance, speaks of the "self-respect" of the megalopsychos in one paragraph and in the next decries his lack of "self-abasement before the ideal of duty." Undoubtedly, Ross would feel more at home with Aquinas's attempted reconciliation of megalopsychia and humility.

Ross's ambivalence is symptomatic of the mixed attitude toward pride that prevails today. Although pride is generally no longer regarded as an unmitigated evil, it is usually felt necessary to qualify pride, when recognized as a positive, as proper pride.

Therefore, if Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia is to have a future via the concept of pride, two conditions must be ful-

filled. First, a certain consensus must be reached over the meaning of pride. There is no such consensus today. Second, Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia must be recognized as capturing that meaning. This means that a certain consensus must also be reached over the meaning of 4.3. There is no such consensus today.

Nevertheless, there exists a feeling that pride is somehow a positive human quality. "Pride is immanent in the prance of health and of intelligence." And what does a sense of moral health lead to, we can imagine Aristotle asking, if not to a self-respectful pride? Drawing a positive perspective on pride, therefore, brings out what seems to be its essential ingredient: self-respect. Herein lies the essence of Aristotle's megalopsychos. This is what the above mentioned commentators seem to be glimpsing in rendering megalopsychia by "proper pride," or "self-respect."

In doing so, however, they have raised a number of complex philosophic issues. For

example:

> If we conceive that pride can be, not arrogance as compensation for uncertainty [about one's self-value], but a quality of honor and self-respect, we come closer to a central, inescapable question: How can an individual reach his full stature without committing the sin of pride, attempting to reach beyond man's limitations? Or, conversely, how is it possible for an individual to acknowledge the universe as greater than himself and to humble himself before it without denying self-respect and abasing himself as mean and insignificant?[1]

Answers to such questions require clear definitions of pride and humility. If pride involves self-respect, and humility involves self-abasement, then these two concepts are antithetic. The operative word is "if." At issue is the definer's view of the universe and his view of human nature--complex issues each of them.

From the field of psychoanalysis we can find a further issue well stated:

> Freud assumes that both normal self-esteem and self-aggrandizement are narcissistic phenomena, the difference being merely one of quantity. In my opinion this failure to distinguish clearly between the two attitudes toward the self befogs the issue. The difference between self-

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[1]Helen Merrell Lynd, On Shame and the

> esteem and self-inflation is not quantitative but qualitative. True self-esteem rests on qualities which a person actually possesses, while self-inflation implies presenting to the self and to others qualities or achievements for which there is no adequate foundation. If the other conditions are present, narcissistic trends may arise if self-esteem and other qualities pertaining to the individual's spontaneous self are smothered. Hence self-esteem[1] and self-inflation are mutually exclusive.

The issue here is epistemological. How does one know, as a practicing or aspiring megalopsychos, that one is acting out of self-respect, and not self-inflation? Is the just-quoted author right in her diagnosis? Is the difference between self-respect and self-inflation one of quality, not quantity? Are self-respect and self-inflation really essentially different, as she claims they are? These are some of the issues that are raised by the commentators who equate Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia with pride and self-

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Search for Identity (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1958), p. 254.

[1]Karen Horney, M.D., New Ways in Psychoanalysis (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1939), p. 99.

respect.

Ironically, philosophers themselves have to some extent befogged these issues in advance. For instance, when we take the three concepts of self-abasement, self-respect, and self-inflation, and consider them in light of the views of Aquinas and Nietzsche, the crucial distinctions that Aristotle so clearly makes in 4.3 become obscured. For Aquinas, as we have seen, the distinction between self-respect (megalopsychia) and self-abasement is blurred. For Nietzsche, the distinction between self-respect and self-inflation is blurred. Whether or not Aquinas and Nietzsche are themselves directly responsible for today's confusion over these concepts, they are typical of the types of philosophic influences that are at work.

Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia, properly understood, along the lines of this inquiry, has a very real role in clearing up today's confusion. It has been given a mandate for this by those commentators who render it by the concepts of pride and self-respect. And

it has received an inadvertent invitation for this by the psychologist who so recently laments: "We are as much in the dark as ever about the origins of pride."[1] This darkness might one day be dispelled by Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia.

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[1]James C. Diggory, Self-Evaluation: Concepts and Studies (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1969), p. 114.

CHAPTER IV

MEGALOPSYCHIA AS SELF-RESPECT
FURTHER IMPLICATIONS

In the foregoing chapters, I have advanced an interpretation of Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia radically different from prevailing views.

The most persistent of these prevailing views, I have indicated, regards Aristotle's portrait of the megalopsychos in 4.3 as sketching a man primarily concerned to receive externally bestowed honor. This, I have repeatedly insisted, is a notion not only mistaken by itself, but casts into a wrong light anything else that one might say about the content of EN 4.3 and its implications for Aristotle's ethical thinking.

In the first chapter of this study I presented my interpretation of 4.3, and in the second I outlined some of its implications for Aristotle's general ethical thinking. Then in the chapter just completed I drew a historical

perspective on megalopsychia and attempted to account for its negligible influence in later ethical thought.

My interpretation urges that, contrary to surface appearances, the concern of Aristotle's megalopsychos is basically to enhance the nobility of his soul through a life of moral action. That is, the megalopsychos's concern is not with external honor, honor externally bestowed by his fellow man, but rather with his inner sense of honor. Aristotle's distinct achievement, I have stressed, is that he has championed the importance of proper pride or self-respect in human existence and intimately linked it to one's moral stature.

A few pages above, I indicated the widespread tendency of recent commentators to take at least some cognizance of the element of self-respect inherent in Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia.[1] In this final chapter I want to develop further implications of this for our understanding of Aristotle's general ethics and,

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[1] Pp. 103-106.

to a lesser extent, for our understanding of certain contemporary political thinkers.

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I have already touched upon the fact that in Aristotle's day an accepted conception of megalopsychia did not exist.[1] As Gauthier points out in Magnanimité, technical terms of philosophy are usually vague and subject to fluctuation prior to the philosopher's definition.[2] This was very much the case with megalopsychia in the 4th century B.C. Gauthier spells out four distinct significations that existed then: 1) bearing an offense with composure, 2) great generosity or magnificence, 3) refusal to tolerate insult, and 4) impassibility before the vicissitudes of fortune. The first of these, megalopsychia as the ability to bear an offense with composure, we find in Democritus, in the last years of the 5th century and the first years of the 4th. "Megalopsychia,"

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[1] Above, pp. 43-44, 75.

[2] In the next few paragraphs I shall be drawing on Gauthier's lucid account of megalopsychia in Greek culture before and during Aristotle's time.

Democritus states, "consists in enduring tactlessness with composure."[1]

The second signification, that megalopsychia is great generosity, or magnificence, we find in Demosthenes. According to Gauthier, Demosthenes thought that megalopsychia was "manifested in the splendor of a sumptuous reception or welcome."[2] In Aristotle's time, Gauthier continues, megalopsychia and megaloprepeia were used interchangeably. For evidence he calls our attention to Rhetoric 1.9 where the definitions Aristotle gives of these two virtues are "distinguishable only by barely perceptible nuances."[3]

The third signification, megalopsychia as

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[1] DK, fr. 46.

[2] Magnanimité, p. 19, nn. 1, 2, 3.

[3] Magnanimité, p. 20. This is not quite so. The nuances are more than "barely perceptible." See 1366b 15-19. Nevertheless the meanings do overlap: "Megalopsychia is the virtue," Aristotle says, "that disposes us to do good to others on a large scale." Magnificence is a virtue "productive of greatness in matters involving the spending of money." Gauthier also cites the passage on megalopsychia in the Eudemian Ethics, 1232a 30-31, where Aristotle mentions the resemblance of the megalopsychos and the magnificent man.

the refusal to tolerate insult, and the fourth, megalopsychia as impassibility before the vicissitudes of fortune, we find cited by Aristotle in his Posterior Analytics:

> If we were inquiring what the essential nature of megalopsychia is, we should examine instances of men who are megalopsychos we know of to see what, as such, they have in common; such as if Alcibiades was megalopsychos, or Achilles and Ajax were megalopsychos, we should find on inquiring what they all had in common, that it was intolerance of insult; it was this which drove Alcibiades to war, Achilles to wrath, and Ajax to suicide. We should next examine other cases, Lysander, for example, or Socrates, and then if these have in common indifference alike to good and ill fortune, I take these two results and inquire what common element have equanimity amid the vicissitudes of life and impatience of dishonor. If they have none, there will be two genera of megalopsychia.[1]

Aristotle does not formulate here a definition to cover both of these significations. He is simply drawing on the word "megalopsychia" to illustrate a problem in definition. What is interesting is that in mentioning characters from Homer, Aristotle invites us, says Gauthier, to look to the Iliad and Odyssey for the original use of the concept megalopsychia.

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[1] 2.13 97b 16-25.

We find that, although Homer never used the word "megalopsychia," he did use two words nearly equivalent to it: μεγάθυμος and μεγαλήτωρ. Homer uses the first of these, "megathymos," for one example, to denote in the Iliad Achilles's courage and valor in battle. This, Gauthier suggests, finds expression in Aristotle's reference to megalopsychia as involving refusal to tolerate an insult.[1]

Homer uses "megaletor" in the Odyssey to denote Ulysses's ability to endure misfortune. This, Gauthier points out, finds expression in Aristotle's reference to megalopsychia as involving impassibility before the vicissitudes of fortune.[2]

These four significations of megalopsychia, then, clearly were current in Aristotle's time. Each of them, as we have seen in the foregoing chapters, finds a place somewhere in Aristotle's portrait of the megalopsychos in 4.3. Besides these significations, however, many other elements of 4.3 can be discovered in

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[1] Magnanimité, p. 22. [2] Ibid., p. 39.

Greek texts written between the time of Homer and Aristotle. These elements are presented by various writers as qualities, not specifically of a megalopsychos, but of the good man in general. For example, we see such elements set forth by Thucydides in his description of the quality of wise moderation:

> ... thanks to its possession, we alone do not become insolent in success and give way less than others in misfortune; we are not carried away by the pleasure of hearing ourselves cheered on to risks which our judgment condemns; nor, if annoyed, are we any the more convinced by attempts to exasperate us by accusation. We are both warlike and wise and it[1] is our sense of order that makes us so.

Such a passage clearly reminds us of Aristotle's account of the megalopsychos. He is a man who "does not run into trifling dangers, nor is he fond of danger, because he honors few things."[2] He "will be neither overjoyed by good fortune nor overpained by

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[1] Speech of Archidamus in The History of the Peloponnesian War, 1. 3. 84. Trans. Richard Crawley, rev. R. Feetham in Great Books of the Western World, Robert Maynard Hutchins, ed. in chief (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952).

[2] 1124b 8.

evil.[1] Nor will he be like those who are disdainful and insolent because they have such goods as power and wealth without having excellence of character.[2]

Later in Thucydides's History we find more excellences admired that will find expression in Aristotle's account of megalopsychia. In Pericles's funeral oration, he speaks of the qualities of the Athenian man as follows: "In generosity we are equally singular, acquiring our friends by conferring, not by receiving, favors .... And it is only the Athenians, who, fearless of consequences, confer their benefits not from calculations of expediency, but in the confidence of liberality."[3] Reading this, we recall that one of the marks of Aristotle's megalopsychos is "to ask for nothing or scarcely anything, but to give help readily."[4]

In the same speech by Pericles we are again reminded of Aristotle's megalopsychos when

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[1] 4.3 1124a 15. [2] 4.3 1124a 28.

[3] 2. 6. 43. [4] 4.3 1124b 18.

we hear that "to a man of spirit, the degradation of cowardice must be immeasurably more grievous than the unfelt death which strikes him in the midst of his strength and patriotism." From 4.3 we already know that the megalopsychos will face great dangers, and when he is in danger he is unsparing of his life, knowing that there are conditions on which life is not worth having."[1] One of these conditions, Pericles makes clear, would be to have to live with the "degradation of cowardice."

Perhaps the most striking allusion to that self-respect possessed by the man Aristotle will later call megalopsychos is made by the Athenian stranger of Plato's Laws.

> Wherefore I am right in bidding every one .... to honor his own soul, which everyone seems to honor, but no one honors as he ought; for honor is a divine good, and no evil thing is honorable; and he who thinks that he can honor the soul by word or gift, or any sort of compliance, without making her in any way better, seems to honor her, but honors her not at all .... for there is nothing of earthly birth which is more honorable than the heavenly, and he who thinks otherwise of the soul has no idea how greatly he undervalues this wonderful

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[1] 1124b 8-9.

possession.[1]

Aside from Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia, the expression "to honor one's own soul," I submit, is the closest we will come to the concept of self-respect in the Greek language.

What we need to realize in view of all such references as the above is, first, that Aristotle's great innovation, as I have indicated,[2] was to take all these qualities admired by Homer, Thucydides, Plato, and Greek thinkers generally, and ascribe them to the megalopsychos. Second, we need to realize, as I have also indicated, that the profound self-respect with which Aristotle endows his megalopsychos, is not gained by his receiving externally bestowed honor, but by developing across his lifetime his inner sense of honor through virtuous activity. The latter cannot be overstressed. The expression "to honor one's own soul," although the closest we will come to the concept of self-respect in the Greek language, has a meaning for Plato markedly

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[1] 727. Trans. Benjamin Jowett.

[2] Above, p. 77.

different from Aristotle's meaning. A little later in his Laws Plato, again through the voice of the Athenian stranger, continues:

> Of all evils the greatest is one which in the souls of most men is innate, and which a man is always excusing in himself and never correcting; I mean, what is expressed in the saying that "Every man by nature is and ought to be his own friend." Whereas the excessive love of self is in reality the source to each man of all offenses; for the lover is blinded about the beloved, so that he judges wrongly of the just, the good, and the honorable, and thinks that he ought always to prefer himself to the truth.[1]

We see in this passage conflicts to which Aristotle's megalopsychos does not fall victim. Although he is a man who is indeed "his own best friend," who takes "delight in his achievements," and who knows "no regrets,"[2] he is a man passionately dedicated to the truth, not least of all the truth about himself. That Aristotle grants to such a man the title "megalopsychos," and does so because of his earned, inner honor and not externally bestowed honor is an act of great innovation and daring. Even during Aristotle's own lifetime, Isocrates

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[1] 731-732. [2] Above, p. 36.

describes megalopsychis in quite different terms. He writes: "Men of ambition and megalopsychia not only are desirous of praise for such things [as their great deeds], but prefer a glorious death to life, zealously seeking glory rather than existence, and doing all that lies in their power to leave behind a memory of themselves that shall never die."[1] By sharp contrast, for the megalopsychos of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics "not even honor does he hold as being the greatest thing."[2]

In light of the above survey of Aristotle's predecessors and contemporaries it is easy to see why Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia might be regarded as no more than a reassertion of, as Ross puts it, "the qualities admired or disliked by cultivated Greeks of Aristotle's time."[3] Under the prevailing interpretation of 4.3, the megalopsychos's primary concern is to obtain external

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[1] Evagoras 9.3. Trans. LaRue Van Hook in the Loeb Classical Library.

[2] Above, p. 28. [3] Above, pp. 71-72.

honor. As Isocrates puts it, the megalopsychos zealously seeks "glory rather than existence" and does all that lies in his power to leave behind a memory of himself "that shall never die." Clearly this is the megalopsychos of the prevailing interpretation of 4.3.

Besides being mistaken in itself, this interpretation fails to recognize the development of Aristotle's thinking on megalopsychia during the time that elapsed between the writing of the two versions of his ethics. This development, I have pointed out, is most strikingly manifested in the megalopsychos's attitude toward honor.[1] The Eudemian megalopsychos, who finds his "greatest joy" in receiving honor, is the megalopsychos of Isocrates. However, the Nicomachean megalopsychos is only "moderately pleased" at the honor he receives and holds that not even this honor is the "greatest thing." The contrast is exceedingly sharp.

The thesis that Aristotle's mature conception of megalopsychia involves a man whose

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[1] Above, pp. 50-52.

basic concern is self-respect, and not the fame or glory received from without, has a number of further implications as well as the one just treated. As I have indicated in the previous chapter, it firmly establishes that Aristotle was indeed serious in his portrait of the megalopsychos. Now this is contrary to the thinking of many scholars who think Aristotle is satirizing, or in some other way being humorous about the cultured, upper-class gentlemen of his day. The man in 4.3, described in such detail by Aristotle, could indeed come across as pompous and ridiculous were his basic concern really fame and glory. But once it is established that his true concern is an earned self-respect, the portrait must be seen in an entirely different light.[1]

A further implication is that it cuts the ground out from under a thinker such as Gauthier. Those of his persuasion all too easily go from the premise that the megalopsychos's basic concern is great honor to the

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[1]Above, pp. 71-74.

conclusion that he must therefore primarily engage in that most honorable of human activities: theoria. Gauthier, we have seen, elaborates a meticulously detailed general interpretation of Aristotle's ethics and intellectual development based on this starting point. His case was not entirely without plausibility.[1] Yet, once establish that the Nicomachean megalopsychos is not really concerned about external honor, and any temptation to follow Gauthier in his attempt to fit the texts to his starting assumption is gone. The motivation no longer exists.

This brings us to what I have stated is a major implication of the thesis that Aristotle's megalopsychos is primarily concerned with self-respect and not external honor. It is precisely this: it enables us to draw an entirely different perspective on Aristotle's notorious bifurcation of human activity into the moral and the theoretical. As is well known, the problems inherent in this bifurcation have

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[1] Above, pp. 41-44.

plagued scholars for centuries, not least of which is the question of how much overlap would Aristotle permit between the two types of activity when we look at an individual person.[1] A typical statement is the following recent one:

> A man must put his emotional and impulsive life in order, so that in the ensuing calm he may pursue his theorizing more readily; but once this is accomplished there seems to be no reason why he should prefer any given moral claim--say that of defending his friends' interests, expected even by traditional standards of arete--to his desire to philosophize.[2]

Now my position is that when we consider the terms in which Aristotle couches his bifurcation,[3] there can be no way of closing it to the satisfaction of even a majority of scholars. One cannot, I would submit, expect to bridge the gap produced by an invalid dichotomy. But the major implication of this study's thesis for our understanding of Aristotle's ethics as a whole, the different perspective it provides us, is that the impossibility of

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[1]For my position on this question see above, pp. 58-66, with my summary on pp. 65-66.

[2]Arthur W. H. Adkins, Merit and Responsibility (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 346.

[3]See, for example, p. 59, above. Aristotle,

satisfactorily bridging the gap really does not matter. Consider the situation faced by scholars who accept the prevailing interpretation of 4.3. In the Nicomachean Ethics we have two types of life described: the theoretical life, "useless" because it does not advance "human goods,"[1] and the moral life, crowned by a virtue that involves, basically, concern with fame or glory. The ill repute which the latter has enjoyed has been thoroughly documented in the foregoing.[2]

If, however, the basic concern of the megalopsychos is to enhance the nobility of his soul through a life of moral action, and not simply to glorify himself in the eyes of others, then, I would insist, the moral side of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics should assume a far greater importance than it has hitherto enjoyed. In fact, I would urge that it is the moral life described by Aristotle, as idealized

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in the passage I there cite, clearly concedes Adkins's point.

[1]Above, p. 59. [2]Pp. 5-8, 69.

and concretized in the person of the megalopsychos, that deserves the greatest amount of attention. The greatest achievement of Aristotle's ethics is that he championed self-respect and made real the meaning of moral enthusiasm. It is herein, as I shall later point out, that lies the greatest relevance of Aristotle's ethics to modern thought. But first there are further implications of this result for our understanding of Aristotle's ethical thinking.

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At a number of points in the above chapters I have argued for the independent status of megalopsychia as a virtue against those commentators who would deny to it that status.[1] More might be said on this question, however, this time from the standpoint of megalopsychia's relationship to Aristotle's general theory of virtue. How well does megalopsychia fit into this theory?

Aristotle defines virtue as "a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean,

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[1]Pp. 11-13, 36-39, 79-81.

that is, the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it."[1] Stating this more concisely, moral virtue is a state of character disposing us to choose, with the aid of phronesis, the mean relative to us in action or in emotion.

We can readily see that megalopsychia, just as any of the other moral virtues, is subsumed by this definition. While the self-inflated man pursues great courses of action to which he does not measure up, or simply pretends to be worthy of such action, and the micropsychos fails to pursue those great courses to which he could measure up, the megalopsychos, by contrast, chooses the mean between the self-inflated and the micropsychos, namely, those great actions that correspond to his worth.

However, aside from this, there are pronounced differences between megalopsychia and the other moral virtues. One of the obvious points of difference is that megalopsychia is the only

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[1] EN 2.6 1107a 1-3.

virtue that involves a self-estimate. As we know, the megalopsychos "thinks himself worthy of great things, being worthy of them." We also know that megalopsychia involves practicing and continuing to practice all the moral virtues; that it involves the megalopsychos in a self-estimate is underscored by the fact that the "thinks himself worthy" statement requires that he apply three other virtues to himself. For instance, the megalopsychos applies the virtue of particular justice to himself,[1] claiming what is "in accordance with his merits." And since, as Aristotle says, there is no honor from others "that is worthy of perfect virtue,"[2] it becomes all the more necessary, if justice is to be done, for the megalopsychos to make real to himself, through his own power of self-reflection, the sense of honor which should be his for his practice of all the other excellences.

Thus, the megalopsychos is also involved in applying the virtue of friendliness to

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[1] Above, pp. 22-23. [2] 4.3 1124a 8.

himself. Friendliness means rendering to each person or class of people what is befitting, and, as we have seen, the megalopsychos is a a good man, and, again through his power of self-reflection, will be "his own best friend."[1]

Finally, all this clearly involves the megalopsychos in applying the virtue of truthfulness to himself. In applying the virtues of justice and friendliness to himself and arriving at the awareness that he deserves great things, he is merely "owning to what he has, and neither more nor less." This is how Aristotle has characterized truthfulness.[2] Therefore the fact that megalopsychia involves a self-estimate, and does so on three counts, makes clear one way in which it differs from the other moral virtues.

Another point of difference between megalopsychia and the other moral virtues is the fact that Aristotle describes the virtue of megalopsychia exclusively in terms of the practitioner of the virtue, the megalopsychos. Indeed, one of Aristotle's opening remarks in 4.3

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[1]Above, pp. 20, 36. [2]Above, p. 22.

is that "it makes no difference whether we consider the state of character or the man characterized by it." The point here is not that Aristotle did not describe, say, the courageous man rather than courage itself. In fact he did. The point is rather that for no virtue is this approach so sustained as it is in 4.3--so much so that Aristotle feels constrained to remark on it. We might ask, then, why Aristotle adopts this approach.

We can observe first of all that the approach is quite natural. If we look to EN 3.6, we find that Aristotle easily passes back and forth between descriptions of the virtue courage and descriptions of the courageous man. In fact, so easily does he do this that it does not even attract our attention. The reason why it is so natural to do this is obviously because moral virtue so intimately involves action. Moral virtue, we know, is a state of character, but one that disposes us to choose the mean in action or in emotion.

Aside from this, however, it is not

inappropriate to see Aristotle's emphasis in 4.3 on a man in action as a conscious rhetorical device on his part. From a literary standpoint, a word portrait has greater and more colorful impact by depicting the man in action. To abstract the virtue away from the man practicing it, is dry by contrast.

However, perhaps Aristotle's literary style in 4.3 signals a more interesting fact. Could it be that the style he adopts is a result of the fact that he had a definite person in mind as a model megalopsychos? Adkins believes this to be the case. "That such men exist," he says of Aristotle's megalopsychos, "is evident from the manner in which they are spoken of."[1] Another commentator draws a different conclusion. "Probably Aristotle traced different manifestations of the great-souled element in different people," he says, "and ... combined them."[2] Others prefer to think that Aristotle had a single concrete in mind, such as Alexander the

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[1] Merit and Responsibility, p. 353.

[2] Grant, Ethics of Aristotle, 1:72.

Great[1] or Achilles.[2]

Others, still, do not believe that Aristotle intends to portray a real man in 4.3. For one example:

> It is impossible to determine how far Aristotle was guided in his delineation of the megalopsychos by reference to particular individuals known to him. There certainly seem to be touches in the work suggested by such a reference; but it may be said, I think, that the work loses, rather than gains, by these attempts at realism, and that the impression which they convey, that we have before us a real and possible man, who, as described, would be intolerable, is unfortunate, and has contributed to the misunderstanding of the significance of megalopsychia in Aristotle's Ethical System. The measured movements, and the deep voice, make us think of a real man: but, after all, they are only the buskins and mask of an ideal character.[3]

I think, however, that on this point the following is closer to the truth:

> I do not believe that Aristotle could have written what may be termed an "impossible dream" type ethical system--in this respect he remains eminently practical and deserves the appellation "empiricist," although, even in this limited context, the word must be quarantined by a quoting device. One has only to peruse his examination of the

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[1]According to Stewart, Notes 1:336, this was Hegel's view.

[2]Jaeger, Paideia, 1:420, n. 24.

[3]Stewart, Notes, 1:335-336.

> Platonic theory of the Good where he says " ... clearly it could not be achieved by man; but we are now seeking something attainable." (1096b 33-4) Nor have I been able to locate any passage where, after detailing a particular virtue, Aristotle proclaims it to be unattainable. This whole motif is Christian rather than Aristotelian.[1]

The question remains, then, did Aristotle have a definite person in mind when he wrote 4.3. A plausible case can be made for the candidacy of Socrates as the following brings out:

> ... There are numerous features in the Nicomachean delineation of the megalopsychos which are reminiscent of the traditional picture of Socrates. He is indifferent to fortune (1124a 13-16); he is aware of his own deserts (Socrates--Pl., Apol. 36b-e--claimed he deserved to be feasted at the public expense); he was indifferent to danger, and did not think his life a thing to be preserved at all costs (b 6-9); he was not deferential to benefactors (cf. his attitude to Archelaus, Rhet. II, 1398a 24), nor was he deferential to the celebrated .... He was given to outspokenness, though at the same time well known for his irony .... One may add that the picture in Plato's Symposium (220-221) of Socrates at the battle of Delium is consonant with 1123b 31. Socrates was, above all, the classic exemplar of the principles of self knowledge and self-sufficiency.[2]

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[1] Seddon, "A Suggestion," p. 35.

[2] D. A. Rees, "'Magnanimity' in the Eudemian and Nicomachean Ethics," Symposium Aristotelicum 21-29, (August 1969): p. 242. For other thinkers on these points, Rees cites

There is no question of a correspondence between character traits exemplified by Socrates and character traits exemplified by Aristotle's megalopsychos. Here we can recall Socrates's courthouse statement: "I spend all my time going about trying to persuade you, young and old, to make your first and chief concern not for your bodies nor for your possessions, but for the highest welfare of your souls."[1]

On the basis of such traits as the above, F. Seddon argues that Socrates is indeed an exemplar of megalopsychia. Furthermore, since Aristotle himself embodies these same traits, he sees 4.3 as a composite picture of Socrates and Aristotle.[2] Seddon bolsters his case for Aristotle's candidacy by reference to the end of the Sophistical Refutations where Aristotle,

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on p. 241, n. 25, Th. Deman, Le temoignage d'Aristotle sur Socrates (Paris: n.p., 1942), p. 55, and he cites on p. 242, n. 26, E. Wolff, Plato's Apologie (Berlin: n.p., 1929), esp. pp. 49-51.

[1]Above, pp. 76-77.

[2]Seddon develops his case in "A Suggestion," pp. 32-36.

summoning our appreciation and warm thanks for his logical works, demonstrates that he thinks himself worthy of great things.[1]

I would add in support of this the fact that 4.3 seems to have a personal ring to it, as of a man introspecting. The intimacy of such details as being "open in his hate and in his love," of being "unable to make his life revolve round another, unless it be a friend; for this is slavish," and so many others, strongly suggests that Aristotle recognized himself as an embodiment of megalopsychia.[2]

Thus we have a further implication of the thesis that the megalopsychos's basic concern is to enhance his self-respect. If the contrasting view were true, that Aristotle's megalopsychos is basically concerned with external honor, then we might readily conclude that Alexander the Great is indeed the person Aristotle

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[1]And is indeed worthy of them, Seddon suggests, p. 36 of his article, when we consider the magnitude of the achievement which is Aristotle's Organon.

[2]Without, of course, any of the self-inflation that runs through Nietzsche's Ecce

had in mind when he wrote 4.3. If on the other hand the thesis of this study is correct, then it could not be such men as Alexander that ememplify Aristotle's megalopsychos. Rather is it plausible that Socrates or Aristotle himself stood as the model for the portrait sketch in 4.3.

This in turn suggests a further implication. If it is indeed men such as Socrates and Aristotle who embody the megalopsychos of 4.3, then they would have to stand as an embarassment to those commentators who see the megalopsychos as "intolerable," a conceited bad-mannered "prig," a "strange incubus," enough to make one "shudder."

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So far, then, I have outlined two points of difference between megalopsychia and the other moral virtues in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. First, megalopsychia involves a self-estimate that none of the other virtues requires, and second, Aristotle presents megalopsychia, the virtue, exclusively in terms of the megalopsychos, the practitioner of the virtue.

Homo. See above, p. 99, n. 1.

There exists, however, a far more important difference between megalopsychia and the other moral virtues. There is an extreme difference in scope. Megalopsychia, as we have seen, is manifested only through the achieving and the continued practice of all the other moral virtues. In this respect, megalopsychia is the same as *phronesis*. "With the presence of the one quality, *phronesis*," Aristotle tells us, "will be given all the virtues."[1] Thus both megalopsychia and *phronesis* involve the *whole* moral life. While all the other moral virtues are specific, megalopsychia and *phronesis* might, for the sake of contrast, be regarded as *general* virtues.

Considering megalopsychia and *phronesis* by themselves, however, and the fact that they embrace, each of them, the *whole* moral life, we must note that they do so from different perspectives. This difference can be stated in a number of ways. Most obviously, they have different functions. *Phronesis* provides the

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[1] *EN* 6.13 1145a 1-2.

means to the other virtues, namely the faculty of wisely choosing the intermediate between extremes. Without this faculty, virtue, in Aristotle's view, is not possible; it is built into his very definition of virtue. Thus we can note that phronesis is more fundamental than megalopsychia since megalopsychia itself is not possible without the exercise of phronesis.

Nevertheless, I would suggest that the function of megalopsychia is equally if not more important than phronesis. Megalopsychia provides the enthusiasm, by providing the reason, the motivation, for practicisng all the other excellences. Megalopsychia upholds as one's highest moral value the nobility of one's own soul, one's self-respect. Megalopsychia and phronesis, therefore, while coextensive, are not identical.

This might be thought to raise a problem. If, as was just said, megalopsychia provides the motivation for practicing the other excellences, and if megalopsychia is not possible without these excellences, then how is it formed. Aristotle no doubt would point out that the

potential megalopsychos has to start somewhere. One is not born megalopsychos. And we know from Aristotle's theory of moral responsibility, the crucial element of which is his theory of agency,[1] that in Aristotle's view a person makes himself megalopsychos. If one were to ask how this takes place, then we can recall Aristotle's observation that "not to know that it is from the exercise of activities on particular objects that states of character are produced is the mark of a thoroughly senseless person."[2] This, of course, does not mean that states of character, whether megalopsychia or some other, are developed all at once. Aristotle tells us, for example, that, concerning justice and the other virtues, "we plainly say that people of a certain character are so more or less, and act more or less in accordance with these virtues."[3] Aristotle is here pointing out that a person develops in degrees or stages a disposition to act in a

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[1] Above, pp. 14-16.

[2] EN 3.5 1114a 9-11.

[3] EN 10.3 1173a 18-20.

certain way until, after a period of time, it becomes a second-nature way of acting.[1] There is no reason for us to suppose that Aristotle would not say this of megalopsychia as well. In fact, we have evidence that he does. Although he tells us in the Nicomachean Ethics that "he who is worthy of little and thinks himself worthy of little is temperate but not megalopsychos,"[2] he also tells us in the Eudemian Ethics that the temperate man might become megalopsychos.[3]

In children Aristotle believes that we see the beginning of the virtuous life in their sense of shame. He defines shame as "a kind of fear of dishonor," consequent on bad actions, specifically voluntary bad actions.[4] It is more like a feeling than a state of character because in a sense, as in fear of death, it is a bodily condition. As evidence, Aristotle points out

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[1]This, of course, is not meant as an exhaustive account of Aristotle's position on the development of virtue. It omits, for instance, the role of education and the role of pleasure. However, it does highlight what I take to be certain key elements.

[2]1123b 6. [3]1233a 25.

[4]EN 4.9 1128b 12, 22, 28.

that just as people who fear death turn pale, so do those who feel disgraced blush.[1] However, the key point is that the sense of shame is not becoming to every age, but only to youth. Aristotle explains that young people, because they live by feeling and therefore commit many errors, need a sense of shame to restrain them, while an older person would not be praised for being prone to the sense of disgrace. This is because, as Aristotle puts it, "we think he should not do anything that need cause this sense."[2]

What we need to note here is that the young person's sense of shame is the beginning of a sense of self-respect. As Aristotle observes, a child cannot be megalopsychos.[3] Yet by his sense of shame, his fear of dishonoring himself, he possesses a precondition for the development of megalopsychia as an adult. It is only a precondition because a sense of shame, in Aristotle's view, does not constitute a virtue. As he em-

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[1] 1128b 13-14. [2] 1128b 19-20.

[3] See, for one example, EN 1.9 1100a 1-3.

phasizes in 4.1, it is more characteristic of virtue "to do what is noble than not to do what is base."[1] As I have already pointed out, for no man is this more the case than for the megalopsychos.[2]

We might now ask a further question, namely: Why should a person aspire to megalopsychia as an adult? Presumably Aristotle would answer that we have three basic choices. One can live a shameless existence, marked by all kinds of base acts, thereby dishonoring his soul. Clearly this path is not desirable. One can also, Aristotle has indicated, live a temperate existence. Such a person lives a life guided by the desire to avoid base actions. He does not perform noble actions but neither does he commit base ones. Or, Aristotle believes, one can live the excellent life, characterized by the performance of noble actions. This is the type of life that will lead to the title "megalopsychos," the life that Aristotle would insist that all men ought to seek, though he implies

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[1]Above, p. 39. [2]Above, p. 67.

few will achieve it.[1]

Why should one seek to attain it? Precisely because, Aristotle's basic answer would be, this is what it means to flourish as a human being. The shameless person, or even the temperate person, has settled for less than a fully human existence. For Aristotle, to live a full human existence is to flourish fully. By no one is this better demonstrated than by the megalopsychos.

An error sometimes made is to think that Aristotle means by "eudaimonia" some kind of mental state such as happiness, rather than the ongoing activity of flourishing.[2] This makes it impossible to appreciate the role of megalopsychia in Aristotle's ethics. On this view,

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[1] See above, pp. 100-102.

[2] See, for one example, H. A. Prichard, "The Meaning of ἀγαθόνin the Ethics of Aristotle," Philosophy 10 (January 1935). Reprinted in J. M. E. Moravcsik, ed., Aristotle: A Collection of Critical Essays (University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), pp. 241-260. Prichard admits quite openly, pp. 259-260, that he thinks Aristotle a psychological hedonist who holds that all deliberate (as distinct from impulsive) human acts, ultimately, are motivated by the desire to become happy.

megalopsychia is simply another virtue practiced in order to reach the ultimate state of happiness. Thus it fails to realize that megalopsychia, as Aristotle's moral ideal, is the basic ingredient of the ongoing activity of moral flourishing. As I have demonstrated, one does not achieve megalopsychia and then sit back and rest on one's laurels. Megalopsychia is intensely action oriented. It not only requires the achievement of all the other moral excellences, it demands their continued practice. And this continued practice of all the moral virtues is precisely what Aristotle regards as full moral flourishing as a human being.

The implication of the thesis that megalopsychia is self-respect is that, for Aristotle, one cannot fully flourish as a human being without self-respect. One's inner sense of honor, one's self-respect, therefore, represents in Aristotle's eyes a primary human good. Without it one does not fully function as a human being.

A major source of resistance to Aristotle's

conception of megalopsychia, however one interprets 4.3, is that it involves an intense selfishness. For the prevailing interpretation this is of course manifest. What could be more selfish than to have as a basic concern receiving honor from one's fellow man? And is not this one mark of an excessively proud individual?

The interpretation I have set forth, while markedly different from the prevailing view, retains the megalopsychos's selfishness. To be concerned with the nobility of one's soul via concern with one's moral goodness, while clearly more laudable than obsession with external honor, is no less selfish. After all, the megalopsychos is "his own best friend" and loves "himself best." He dares to take "delight in his achievements" and knows "no regrets." As we have seen, such traits have displeased more than one commentator. Furthermore, all are marks of the man of pride and pride has long been held in varying degrees of disrepute.

We find a forceful statement of this in

Rousseau. He writes:

> Pride must not be confused with self-love: for they differ both in themselves and in their effects. Self-love is a natural feeling which leads every animal to look to its own preservation, and which, guided in man by reason and modified by compassion, creates humanity and virtue. Pride is a purely relative and factitious feeling, which arises in the state of society, leads each individual to make more of himself than of any other, causes all the mutual damage men inflict one on another, and is the real source of the "sense of honor."[1]

For Rousseau, as we can see, pride is synonymous with self-inflation. What is interesting is that he advocates self-love, if properly understood. But Rousseau was followed by Nietzsche in whom self-love takes on a radically different meaning. Nietzsche implicitly equates selfish egoism with arrogant superiority. His "noble" egoist has an "unshakable faith" that "other beings must be subordinate by nature and have to sacrifice themselves." He is a person whose will to life sanctions the exploitation of lesser beings for his own ends.[2] In light of thinkers such

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[1] A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, trans. G. D. H. Cole, n. 2 to The First Part in Great Books of the Western World.

[2] Above, pp. 92-93.

as Nietzsche, the cultural bias against self-ishness, and the concept of a proper pride, becomes understandable.

However, the issue of selfishness, of proper pride, is more complex than this, as is indicated by the following:

> When a man is described as selfish what is meant primarily is that he is moved to act, more often and more strongly than most men, by desires which are selfish. The word 'selfish' is also applied to a disposition so to plan one's life as to give a larger place than is usual or right to the gratif-ication of selfish desires. But what is it for a desire to be selfish? Professor Broad, in his essay 'Egoism as a theory of human motives' (in Ethics and the History of Philosophy), makes an important distinction between two main kinds of 'self-regarding' desires. There are first desires which are 'self-confined', which a man could have even if he were alone in the world, e.g. de-sires for certain experiences, the desire to preserve his own life, the desire to feel respect for himself. Secondly there are self-regarding desires which nevertheless presuppose that a man is not alone in the world, e.g. desires to own property, to assert or display oneself, to inspire af-fection. Broad further points out that de-sires which are 'other-regarding' may also be 'self-referential', e.g. desires for the welfare of one's own family, friends, school, college, club, nation ....
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> ... Usually 'selfish' refers to the prominence of self-regarding motives, and different kinds of selfishness correspond to different self-regarding desires. The word, being pejorative, is more readily applied to the less reputable of the self-regarding

desires.[1]

This last sentence most clearly refers to "selfishness" when used in connection with Nietzsche. But "selfishness" when used in connection with Aristotle's megalopsychos assumes an entirely different meaning. We need to observe, in reference to the above quotation, that, indeed, Aristotle's megalopsychos exhibits desires that are "self-confined," that he would have even were he alone in the world: desire to "preserve his own life," and "the desire to feel respect for himself" (this most surely). But we need also to observe that his desire for self-respect is, in Aristotle's view, largely met by fulfilling those other desires that presuppose a great concern for his fellow man. Thus he gives help readily, even to the point of dying for country or friend should that be required of him. Hardie's point is clear: a man can be selfish without being a Nietzsche. The megalopsychos of 4.3 exemplifies an Aristotelian selfishness or pride, and this, we must conclude, is profoundly different from

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[1]W. F. R. Hardie, "The Final Good in Aristotle's Ethics," Philosophy 15 (1965). Re-

Nietzschean selfishness. It is the "noble" soul exemplifying Nietzschean selfishness that should cause commentators to "shudder." The same response should not be evoked by Aristotle's megalopsychos, at least not if one understands what he represents.

The selfishness inherent in Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia or self-respect, therefore, need give no cause for hesitation. We can see, by contrasting Aristotle and Nietzsche on the issue of selfishness, that, as Hardie claims, there are indeed two types of self-regarding desires. It is to the Aristotelian type that certain contemporary thinkers are implicitly referring when they advance self-respect as a primary human good. And it is to this modern regard for self-respect and Aristotle's relevance to it that I wish to devote the remaining pages of this study.

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The most vocal contemporary advocate of

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printed in Moravcsik, ed., Aristotle: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 297-322. For this citation, pp. 311-312.

self-respect as a basic human good is without question Rawls. Writing in his well known Theory of Justice he says:

> ... perhaps the most important primary good is that of self-respect .... We may define self-respect (or self-esteem) as having two aspects. First of all, as we noted earlier, it includes a person's sense of his own value, his secure conviction that his conception of his good, his plan of life, is worth carrying out. And second, self-respect implies a confidence in one's ability, so far as it is within one's power, to fulfill one's intentions. When we feel that our plans are of little value, we cannot pursue them with pleasure or take delight in their execution. Nor plagued by failure and self-doubt can we continue in our endeavors. It is clear then why self-respect is a primary good. Without it nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them. All desire and activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism.[1]

There can be no doubt that Aristotle's megalopsychos meets the two aspects of self-respect Rawls sets forth. To think himself "worthy of great things, being worthy of them," this characterization alone, requires that the megalopsychos have a real "sense of his own value," and a confidence in his ability to ful-

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[1]John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 440 (hereafter cited as Rawls, Justice).

fill his intentions. As we have seen, he is his "own best friend," and "loves himself best," and is a man who "knows no regrets."

As I have pointed out, self-respect, in Aristotle's account, is a virtue extremely broad in scope, so broad that I would classify it a general virtue. Again, on this, there is a correspondence between Rawls's conception of self-respect and Aristotle's. This is illustrated by Rawls's statement that "self-respect is not so much a part of any rational plan of life as the sense that one's plan is worth carrying out."[1] Implicit here is Aristotle's message in 4.3 that self-respect gives to a person that sense of worthiness that will lead him to pursue other desired human qualities within his "plan of life."

But the points of correspondence between Aristotle and Rawls on the subject of self-respect go no further than these. When we view Rawls's conception in the philosophic framework within which he writes, we can see profound

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[1] Justice, p. 178.

differences between it and Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia.

As I have pointed out, Aristotle's megalopsychos exhibits an intense, though benevolent selfishness or pride. This, I have shown, rests upon his recognition of his moral worth. "He thinks himself worthy of great things, being worthy of them," a clear-cut indication that the megalopsychos recognizes his moral stature. Now Rawls's self-respecting man would have to be quite a different sort of person. "The idea of rewarding desert is impractical," declares Rawls. "And certainly to the extent that the precept of need is emphasized, moral worth is ignored .... we may assume that everyone is of equal moral worth."[1] For Rawls the notion of moral desert is irrelevant to the issue of self-respect. He writes:

> The precept which seems intuitively to come closest to rewarding moral desert is that of distribution according to effort, or perhaps better, conscientious effort .... however, it seems clear that the effort a person is willing to make is influenced by his natural abilities and skills and

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[1] Justice, p. 312.

> the alternatives open to him. The better endowed are more likely, other things equal, to strive conscientiously, and there seems to be no way to discount for their greater good fortune.[1]

Rawls then, in extreme contrast to Aristotle, divorces self-respect from one's moral stature.[2] Where then, we need to ask, does self-respect come from in Rawls's eyes? Rawls's answer is that it comes from other people--in two ways. "A desirable feature of a conception of justice," he writes, "is that it should publicly express men's respect for one another. In this way they insure a sense of their own value."[3] Thus Rawls makes it clear that our self-respect depends on the good opinion of others. As he elsewhere puts it, "our self-respect normally depends upon the respect

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[1] Justice, p. 312.

[2] For Aristotle's account of moral responsibity, see above, pp. 14-16.

[3] Justice, p. 179. We see here how Rawls connects the concept of self-respect and the subject of his book, justice. What he says about self-respect, however, stands or falls quite independently of his conception of justice.

of others."[1] And "unless our endeavors are appreciated by our associates it is impossible for us to maintain the conviction that they are worthwhile."[2] Thus we see one way in which we gain self-respect from others is simply by being esteemed by them.

A second way, Rawls thinks, is by receiving from them those objective goods, such as opportunity, income, and the good things in life generally, that will give us social stature.[3] As Rawls expresses this point, "a person's lesser position as measured by the index of objective primary goods may be so great as to wound his self-respect."[4]

Thus the split between self-respect and one's moral stature is an extreme one for Rawls, and it is precisely on this point, and its ramifications, that Aristotle's conception of megalopsychia is relevant. Aristotle would want

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[1] Justice, p. 178. [2] Ibid., p. 441.

[3] See pp. 310 and 315, among other places in Justice.

[4] Justice, p. 534.

to know, as would we, the following: Even if a person could gain self-respect by receiving the esteem of others, on what grounds would this esteem be granted, if moral stature is irrelevant. Rawls, we have seen, assumes, in laying out the social conditions upon which self-respect rests, "that everyone is of equal moral worth."[1] Thus self-respect is not a function of moral worth to Rawls. After all, one program of his theory of justice is to set forth the social conditions that provide for the fair distribution of the most important of primary goods, self-respect. And if self-respect were a function of moral worth, such a distribution would not even arise as a problem; if everyone were of equal moral worth, then everyone would have equal self-respect.

This of course is where those objective goods, such as opportunity, income, and the good things in life generally, come into play. These, Rawls tells us, when deficient, will wound one's self-respect. Thus one person (or

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[1]Above, p. 154.

society) can directly bolster another's self-respect by imparting to him a greater share in such goods.

Again, however, certain observations Aristotle makes in connection with his conception of megalopsychia become relevant. As we have already see, Aristotle thinks it uncharacteristic of the self-respecting man to seek a sense of self-worth from external goods. He suggests that this would be an inversion. As he has so aptly stated it, man does not "acquire or preserve virtue by the help of external goods, but external goods by the help of virtue."[1]

But more than this is Aristotle's further observation--and again the sharpness of his perception is impressive--that the mere possession of external goods, whether it be the esteem of others, or those other goods cited by Rawls, does not lead to self-respect anyway. On the contrary, Aristotle points out in 4.3, unaccompanied by virtue, they only make a person "disdainful and insolent."[2] And these are marks--

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[1] Above, p. 31. [2] 1124a 29.

not of a self-respecting person--but of the self-inflated person.

We might ask at this point why it is that Rawls divorces self-respect from one's moral stature. Relevant to getting at an answer are the following remarks concerning Rawls's account of self-respect:

> What strikes us immediately about this account, especially if we have comparable Greek views in mind is its insistence on the subjectivity of these phenomena. Shame is a feeling or emotion, self-respect a sense of worth, a feeling of capacity, an inner conviction. According to this account, apparently, a position that is not felt as shameful is not so. And if you feel your life-plan to be a worthy one, and feel confident that you can carry it out, that appears sufficient to make you a person of self-respect. Rawls thus implicitly denies that the objective (or intersubjective) value of my pursuits and the truth of my beliefs about them are at all relevant to the issue of self-respect and shame.[1]

Here we have an explanation of Rawls's

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[1]Martha Nussbaum, "Shame, Separateness, and Political Unity: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato," in A. Rorty, ed., Mind and the Good (University of California Press, forthcoming). Emphasis in the original. Nussbaum, a colleague of Rawls at Harvard, reminds us in a note to the above passage that "the bulk of Greek literature .... ascribes great importance to the sense of shame, attacks the vice of shamelessness, and connects the avoidance of shame with excellence of character and action in accordance with shared norms."

separation of self-respect from one's moral stature. The subjectivity of Rawls's account of the value of a life plan explains the ease with which he can assume that "everyone is of equal moral worth." And for reasons already given this makes moral stature irrelevant to self-respect.[1]

This is where Aristotle's conception of self-respect becomes most relevant to a thinker such as Rawls. Aristotle's conception suggests that Rawls fails to distinguish between a genuine self-respect and a mere felt or pseudo-self-respect. As he has emphasized in 4.3, men become disdainful and insolent when, without virtue, they have external goods. Aristotle <u>does</u> recognize that men pursue honor in order to be assured of their own goodness.[2] But the whole implication of his conception of megalopsychia is that it is only a man who is not really good who will seek a sense of self-worth by pursuing external honor. In contrast is the emphasis of Aristotle's con-

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[1]Above, p. 157. [2]See above, p. 30.

ception of megalopsychia in 4.3, that the basic concern of the truly self-respecting man is not great honor or, as Rawls expresses it, respect from others. Not even this, we have seen Aristotle insist, is, for the self-respecting person, the greatest of goods.

Nussbaum, in contrasting Rawls's notion of self-respect with the general conception held by Greek thinkers, remarks that in the Greek mind

> self-respect ... appears to be closely bound up with character, and with the excellences of both character and intellect .... The activities of the self-respecting man, to be worthy rather than merely lucky, must be chosen for good reasons, in awareness of their value ... self-respect seems, then less like a feeling identified subjectively then like a disposition to both act and feel in certain appropriate ways.[1]

For no Greek thinker are these remarks more true than for Aristotle. His crucial contribution to any later theorizing concerning self-respect is that he was the first to so clearly distinguish self-inflation, self-respect, and self-abasement, and connect self-respect to one's moral stature. He was the first to

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[1] "Shame, Separateness, and Political Unity: Aristotle's Criticism of Plato."

give us a detailed portrait of what a person with genuine self-respect might be like.

For such a vision and for conveying it to us in the vivid terms of a flourishing human being, I submit, we owe Aristotle the same tribute he sought at the end of another of his works, our admiration and--our warm thanks.

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