



A. W. Price, *Virtue and Reason in Plato and Aristotle*

Virtue and Reason in Plato and Aristotle by Price, A. W.

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in behavioral economics, a diverse range of new rational actor models is emerging, often with more unorthodox utility functions, including altruistic preferences, group identity, image concerns, and so forth, and with agents that operate under uncertainty, have limited memory, or are not perfect Bayesians. Nevertheless, most of these models are rational actor models because they make the basic assumptions that agents behave as if they were maximizing their utility, given certain constraints. Abandoning all the theoretical and empirical advances made in the modeling of rational actors would be throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

Framing Democracy asks important questions about the impact of framing effects on democratic theory. It offers an insightful review of the existing framing literature and a useful taxonomy of theories of democracy. I am less convinced that Kelly succeeds in applying the framing literature in the context of democracy. The evidence available does not allow us to draw many substantial conclusions about the outcomes of democratic processes, leading to speculations that are occasionally rather far-fetched. This notwithstanding, closer attention to the behavioral sciences is likely to transform democratic theory, opening up new avenues of research. In that regard, Kelly's book points us in the right direction.

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Price, A. W. *Virtue and Reason in Plato and Aristotle*.
Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011. Pp. 356. \$85.00 (cloth).

This is not a book that the typical user will read from cover to cover. It weighs in on a very large number of issues concerning the two core notions in the ethics of Plato and Aristotle—virtue and happiness—with an emphasis on topics in practical reasoning (which connects these two notions) and its breakdown (*acrasia*). In its scope, philosophical independence, and—alas—the strains it places on the reader, it bears comparison with Sarah Broadie's magisterial *Ethics with Aristotle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), although Price's tone is considerably lighter and his exposition more compact than Broadie's. In alternating chapters on parallel topics in Plato and Aristotle, Price moves seamlessly between detailed textual scrutiny, flights of philosophical logic, and sustained engagement with scholarly opinion, both views he endorses and those he rejects. The result is alternately provocative, delightful, and maddening in its tendency to defer a clear statement of the issue at stake in a complicated stretch of argument until it is over. Peppered with elegant and memorable phrases, such as the remark that Aristotle's advocacy of the contemplative life is "demanding, not demented" (202), it is informed by a salutary and explicit recognition of the principle that the plausibility of a philosophical position is a distinct issue from whether it is Aristotle's.

If it is possible to identify the core thesis of so wide-ranging a discussion, it is that Aristotle is a faithful heir to Plato and that a proper appreciation of his moral psychology reveals him to be a cognitivist about emotions and a contextualist and anti-Humean about practical reasoning. The latter thesis is the burden of Price's sixth chapter (chap. C2), and concerns some of the most hotly contested issues

in recent discussions of Aristotle's ethics. That chapter will be the focus of the rest of this review.

Questions about practical reasoning are central to the interpretation of Aristotle's ethics because Aristotle takes the virtues of character to involve *phronesis* (practical wisdom), which is excellence at the sort of reasoning that issues in action (*praxis*). We may call this kind of reasoning practical. Aristotle demarcates it both from theoretical and from technical reasoning. Like the latter, and distinct from the former, it is deliberative—that is, it is reasoning in the light of (*pros*) a goal. What distinguishes practical from technical reasoning, however, is disputed among interpreters of Aristotle. In *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*) VI 5 we are told that technical reasoning proceeds from a particular (*kata meros*) goal—for example, health in the case of the doctor and shoes in the case of the cobbler—whereas the *phronimos* (the person of practical wisdom) has 'living well in general' as his goal. Now Aristotle notes in *EN* I 4 that 'living well' and 'doing well' are synonyms for 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*). Thus he takes practical wisdom to be a matter of deliberating with a view to happiness. Since, however, 'happiness' has distracting connotations for many contemporary readers, I will frame the debate in terms of 'living well'.

According to one school of interpretation that has come under attack in recent decades, the *phronimos* has a substantial conception of what living well consists in, and deliberation is a matter of applying it to the particular circumstances in which one acts—in much the same way that, in Aristotle's textbook example of deliberation, the medical doctor has an understanding of what health consists in and deliberates about how to bring it about in a patient. Against this, John McDowell ("The Role of Eudaimonia in Aristotle's Ethics," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. A. O. Rorty [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980], 359–76) and more recently Sarah Broadie (in *Ethics with Aristotle*) have insisted that Aristotle's *phronimos* has no such "grand end" (Broadie's phrase) in view. Price throws his lot in with Broadie and offers his own proposal as an elucidation of hers, which he combines with an extremely helpful analysis of the relation between Broadie's and McDowell's positions, arguing that the difference is one of emphasis rather than substance. In this Price's contribution to the debate is a valuable addition to Richard Kraut's enormously lucid clarification of Broadie's position ("In Defense of the Grand End," *Ethics* 103 [1993]: 361–74), although I shall argue that Price does not succeed in making a convincing case for that position.

Following Broadie, Price maintains that deliberation with a view to living well always happens in conjunction with deliberation about how to realize a much more restricted and determinate end—for example, to repay a debt. In what we may call "textbook" or "explicit" deliberation, the *phronimos* considers what it would take to realize this end in her specific circumstances; thus she may determine, for example, that going to the bank and making a withdrawal will do the trick. Having arrived at this conclusion, however, Price insists, the *phronimos* does not necessarily go ahead and act on it, for she will evaluate the specific means she has identified in the light of other values or ends that she has. For example, making the requisite withdrawal from the bank might leave no money for food, in which case (other things being equal) a good parent will postpone the repayment rather than have her children go hungry. The goal of the explicit deliberation (repaying the

debt) is thus provisional and will be retained only if the means for implementing it survive this evaluative scrutiny. Price claims that this latter kind of scrutiny is what deliberating with a view to 'living well' consists in, for Aristotle. We may call it 'indirect' or 'implicit' deliberation—in that the deliberator does not explicitly ask "what shall I do in order to live well?" yet consistently tracks that goal in evaluating her options.

Price takes this to be the sort of deliberation that goes wrong in Aristotle's example of the adulterer in *EN VI 9*: the adulterer deliberates explicitly in the light of a provisional goal (say, sexual gratification); textbook deliberation identifies seducing his married neighbor as a way of achieving this end, and the evaluative reasoning proceeding in tandem with this explicit deliberation fails to flag this option as unacceptable (193, 205, 222). While I am skeptical that this is the moral Aristotle intends us to draw in that chapter (since the adulterer is offered as an example of a deliberator whose goal is deficient, not his reasoning), I think better textual support for Price comes from *EN VI 13*, where Aristotle argues that worthwhile goals do not suffice for virtue of character if they are not accompanied by *phronesis*. Here he invokes the so-called natural virtues. These are dispositions to pursue ends that, unlike the adulterer's, are generally worthwhile but are not accompanied by the ability to discern when it is inappropriate to act on them; for example, the naturally temperate person may exercise self-restraint when aggressive action is called for.

In any case, the proposal that deliberating about living well proceeds indirectly in the way that Price describes makes excellent sense of Aristotle's comments about the virtuous person's characteristic motivation: that she acts "for the sake of the *kalon*," where the *kalon* is what is fine or admirable. (I argue for a similar proposal in "Living for the Sake of an Ultimate End," in *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: A Critical Guide*, ed. Jon Miller [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 47–65). Since Aristotle argues that virtuous actions are what living well consists in (*EN I 7*), it makes sense to suppose that, for Aristotle, deliberation about living well consists in deliberating about how to pursue more determinate ends such as repaying one's debts, while at the same time filtering the specific options one identifies according to whether they would be *kalon*. (Thus McDowell attributes to Aristotle the view that a person's conception of happiness is expressed in his judgments about what is *kalon*.)

Price presents this analysis of deliberation about living well as an alternative to the so-called Grand End view (205). However, it is in fact perfectly consistent with the Grand End view. Surely one may accept that deliberation about living well proceeds indirectly and still maintain that the *phronimos* has a substantive conception of living well (or of the *kalon*) in the light of which she evaluates particular courses of action as acceptable or unacceptable. What is wrong with saying that, in the earlier example, the *phronimos* has a conception of living well on which both keeping one's contracts and caring for one's children are important and worthwhile, but the latter more important than the former?

I gather that the problem with this proposal, according to Price (206–9), is that practical principles like those just invoked (pay your debts, care for your children) are true only "for the most part" in Aristotle's view, while he follows Broadie in assuming that the conception of living well involved in having a Grand End must be exhaustive and comprehensive—a "blueprint" for living (200–201;

Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 198). Accordingly, Price counts as evidence against the Grand End view Aristotle's failure to come anywhere close to specifying an exhaustive, comprehensive conception of happiness such that it can be applied to concrete situations without deliberation (201–4, against Kraut, "In Defense of the Grand End," 364–66). His motivation here is a sound one: to preserve the status of deliberation as a regular and ongoing feature of the exercise of practical wisdom (cf. Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 239, 251–54). As Aristotle insists, the *phronimos* grasps the particulars of situations, and his excellence consists in figuring out how to act in those circumstances. *Deliberation* is called for to figure out what to do in situations where it is unclear how to proceed (*EN* III 3 1112b2–9; cf. VI 5, 1140a28–30). Thus, Price maintains, the *phronimos* must exercise judgment in order for his practical principles to be genuinely action-guiding (187, 209; cf. 174–80).

It is perfectly reasonable of Price to insist, on Aristotle's behalf, that grasping a set of principles about acting well does not do away with the need to exercise judgment when deciding what to do. But why suppose that a substantive conception of living well, one that is sufficiently contentful and robust to guide one's deliberations, must be expressed in exceptionless principles that can be applied to any concrete situation without the exercise of judgment? Surely the doctor who deliberates with a view to health does not have an understanding of health so complete and exhaustive that no exercise of judgment is required about how to treat particular patients.

Here a second set of concerns, which Price shares with McDowell, is relevant. The worry is that in cases of technical deliberation, for example in medicine, the doctor's conception of health (however imprecise and incomplete it may be) is based on reasoning that is entirely independent of desire. It tells the doctor what to do, provided he wants to cure the patient. If we suppose that the *phronimos's* conception of living well is like the doctor's conception of health, then we must suppose that the conception of living well that the former deploys is likewise desire-independent. On Broadie's version of this worry, the Grand End view attributes to the *phronimos* a kind of specialized philosophical knowledge about living well that is distinct from the values one learns in a good upbringing. To give a rough caricature of the picture that McDowell and Broadie are concerned to resist: Aristotle thinks that we have a natural and ineliminable desire for happiness and that it is the job of reason to figure out what human happiness consists in (e.g., by doing psychology or metaphysics or natural philosophy). The *phronimos* so conceived has not just a working understanding of what is fine (*kalon*) that is expressed in his trained patterns of affective response, but a philosophical theory of living well that can be justified from a standpoint independent of desire (200–201).

The underlying issue here, very much to the foreground in Price's discussion, is a dispute among the interpreters of Aristotle about how to defend Aristotle's anti-Humean credentials. That Aristotle must reject Hume's dictum that reason can only serve, not offer direction to, desire is, as Price notes, clear from his fundamental analysis of virtue of character as a condition in which the affective part of the soul follows reason (*EN* I 13). The problem is to how to reconcile this part of Aristotle's view with his regular indication that desire sets the ends of practical deliberations (*EN* 1139a31–b4; cf. 1144a7–9, 20–22). One strategy for doing this, which is tarred with the label "Grand End" view, accepts the Humean distinction between desire and reason but seeks to show that desire is dependent on reason.

It proposes that although the desire for happiness is not subject to rational justification, its object is highly indeterminate, and that it is within the competence of reason, quite independently of desire, to figure out what happiness consists in; thereby reason provides direction to desire. The Grand End view is supposed to be the unrealistic picture of practical reasoning that results from a doomed attempt to reject Humean practical rationality while still accepting Humean psychology.

The more thoroughgoing anti-Humean strategy favored by McDowell is to reject the Humean distinction between desire and reason: in practical contexts, at any rate, these are inextricably linked, neither separable from the other—witness Aristotle's insistence that excellence of the "desiderative" part of the soul involves practical wisdom, and vice versa. While Price endorses this general strategy, he finds fault with McDowell's specific proposal that deliberation about happiness, as Aristotle understands it, is a nondiscursive determination in a concrete situation of what would count, in that situation, as living well. Deliberation so conceived, Price worries, would involve no reasoning (*sullogismos*) at all, and thus it would be open to skepticism about its cognitive status, while deliberation for Aristotle is a kind of *sullogismos*. Since the indirect variety of deliberation that Price identifies (in elucidation of Broadie) is a recognizable kind of discursive thinking, he proposes it as a better candidate than McDowell's for the deliberation about ends that distinguishes Aristotelian from Humean practical reasoning (218–20).

To be sure, the discursive thinking that Price identifies as deliberation about ends is not a deductive argument. Nor does it appeal to desire-independent principles. Thus Price's interpretation of Aristotelian practical reasoning is no better than McDowell's or Broadie's at leaving room for a justification, independent of what one cares about, for the *phronimos*'s practical judgments—an explanation, for example, of why, in the present circumstances one should make a late payment on a loan rather than send one's children to bed hungry, but in some other conceivable circumstances, this would not be the right way to resolve the conflicting values. Such an aspiration, however, is precisely what Price's version of the anti-Humean strategy eschews.

Is it fair, however, to attribute such an aspiration to the Grand End view? One might stipulate that this is what the Grand End view involves, or suppose that such a grand aspiration is implied by the label. But if one is using the label simply to designate the position under examination here—that the *phronimos* has a substantive conception of living well in light of which she deliberates about what to do—then the label is highly misleading. How grand does a substantive conception of happiness need to be in order to function as the goal of deliberation? It might be less tendentious to label the interpretive view in question the "Substantive End" view, where an end is substantive if the deliberator's conception of it is sufficiently contentful to guide her deliberations. Even if the doctor's conception of health is an expression of specialized expertise, and is justifiable in desire-independent terms, the issue of the provenance and justification of that conception is a separate question from whether that conception is sufficiently contentful to guide one's deliberations. It is precisely in this respect that the Substantive End view proposes that the *phronimos*'s deliberations are like the doctor's. While some proponents of the Substantive End view may be sympathetic to the Grand Aspiration of grounding happiness in desire-independent terms (e.g., T. H. Irwin, "The Metaphysical and Psychological Basis of Aristotle's Ethics" in Rorty, *Essays*,

35–53), it is highly dubious to claim that any substantive conception of happiness must be so grounded.

It seems that the debate about the *phronimos's* conception of happiness has conflated a number of distinct and separable issues:

1. whether the Aristotelian practical deliberator has a conception of living well that is sufficiently contentful to guide his deliberations.
2. whether those deliberations explicitly invoke living well as a goal and seek ways of implementing it.
3. whether that conception is comprehensive and exhaustive enough to be applied without the exercise of judgment.
4. whether that conception is grounded in philosophical, or desire-independent, reasoning.

While Price and Broadie are right to answer no to the second and third questions, and even if Price is right to agree with McDowell and Broadie that the answer to the fourth is also no, this does not entail that the answer to the first question is also no. That is, Price and Broadie have a plausible proposal about how to construe the structure of deliberation about happiness, as Aristotle conceives it: that it is indirect and implicit and proceeds in tandem with explicit deliberation. They are furthermore right to insist, on Aristotle's behalf, that practical reasoning involves judgment and discernment, the lively and expert application of intellect to the particulars of the situation. But it is perfectly consistent with these positions that the practical deliberator has a substantive conception of living well that informs her deliberations—even if that conception is imprecise, evolving, and requires judgment to be applied to particular situations. In this respect, Aristotelian practical reasoning would be no different from technical deliberation.

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Philpott, Daniel. *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. 352. \$29.95 (cloth).

The central question taken up in Daniel Philpott's book *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation* is: "What does justice consist of in the wake of its massive despoliation?" (3). Such despoliation occurs in contexts of widespread and characteristically systematic violations of human rights, such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, or systematic torture. Philpott's central claim is that justice demands political reconciliation, the restoration of right relationships. *Just and Unjust Peace* makes an original contribution to the literature in moral and political philosophy concerned with the appropriate way to respond to wrongdoing. Philpott provides a compelling case for thinking of justice as right order and for equating right order with right relationships. Philpott's account thus challenges theorists interested in the morality of reckoning with past wrongs to rethink the meaning of justice and its relationship with other moral values, such as reconciliation. Moreover, Philpott offers an unapologetically religious perspective on justice, a perspective