The Foundations of Aristotle's Ethics.

by

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Statement of Originality

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Abstract

This thesis is an investigation into the foundations of Aristotle’s ethics. Those foundations consist of two arguments: The Three Lives argument and the *ergon* argument. These two arguments work together, shaping the structure of the argument as a whole.

Firstly, the Three Lives argument explains why certain goods are treated in the ethics and gives the work its structure. Those goods around which the structure is built are the three goods which belong to the soul: *φρόνησις*, *ἀρετή*, *ηδονή*. Each of the Three Lives is dedicated primarily to one of these goods.

Secondly, the *ergon* argument provides the basis upon which (a) to sustain that structure and (b) to allow the parts of that structure to be able to be brought together in the conclusion.

(a) The definition of Happiness provided by the *ergon* argument is wide enough to include any of the three individual goods of the soul and to take into account the subsequent development of the argument which narrows and combines those goods of the soul into manifestations of one good (viz. *φρόνησις* or *νοῦς*).

(b) The *ergon* argument allows for the conclusion – the common element of all three goods of the soul is that each has or is an *ergon*. These seem at first to be three separate *erga*, but become reduced in the end to different manifestations of one *ergon*: the being-at-work of the *νοῦς* (or *φρόνησις* in its broad sense).

This structure is clearly discernible in the *Protrepticus*, prominently displayed in the *Eudemian Ethics*, and underlies the *Nicomachean Ethics*. As a consequence, this thesis is a successive examination of these works, focusing on the form and content of the arguments. The variation between the works will be seen to be not as fundamental as their shared basis.