

Desire: The Proper Home of Aristotle's Voluntary
ULRA 2020 Reflective Essay
13 April 2020

This project is one that has been brewing in my mind since I first studied Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* under Dr. Erin Stackle in spring of 2019. It has been my first deep immersion into the world of philosophical research and higher-level philosophy in general, and through it I have fallen deeply in love with the actual work involved in *doing* philosophy and participating in an active conversation.

When I first wrote on the topic of Aristotelian voluntariness, it was as a way of trying to puzzle through some confusing claims Aristotle articulates but does not explain in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Out of the essay I wrote for that class, this project has grown from a wandering exploration of Aristotelian voluntariness to a bold stand beyond existing interpretational literature. Though my position has evolved quite a bit, it is satisfying to trace its evolution from my first attempt.

Over the course of my project, I think I have faced a few challenges that undergraduate researchers do not often encounter. First, the project deals with and ties together several fairly significant positions that Aristotle takes in seemingly unrelated works, second, the interpretation I have adopted is not wholly supported by any extant literature, and, finally, I have been working for the past several weeks from my home in Arizona, without physical access to the library's resources due to the measures that are being taken to combat the spread of COVID-19.

Though I originally thought my paper was about Aristotle's discussion of voluntary action in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, it has grown from those first stages to encompass Aristotle's other ethical works, his scientific and metaphysical works, and his psychological works. Aristotle's philosophy, as I have discovered over the course of this project, comprises a beautiful, astoundingly unified system. In the time I have spent with the primary texts for this project, the library's access to Past Masters' and Loeb Classical Library's databases, and the open source Perseus database (all of which provide Aristotle's works in English and Greek) have been crucial to my research. Much of the meat of my project deals with Aristotle's specific terminology, so I needed to start becoming familiar with the Greek terms and the various ways translators have interpreted them.

In terms of the research I have done for this project, this understanding of the nature of Aristotle's system has driven me to research not only one topic in Aristotle, but several: causality, desire, action, character, and finally voluntariness, to name a few. Fortunately, I am not the only one who has started to see the significance of these connections. I have been able to follow certain interpreters' work and citations into my explorations of most areas (though not all). I am finding the citation practices in philosophical literature quite helpful—especially when someone leaves in a footnote “for a contrary position, see xxxx, 1996.” When that was not an option, I'd simply perform an “or” search with terms set to the relevant Greek term as well as common English translations. But I certainly found following others' citations to consistently turn out the most important and highest quality results.

At first, I would try to follow citations using the library's OneSearch, but transitioned to using PhilPapers after being introduced to it by librarian Justice Alexander and shown how to use it most effectively by our new Philosophy and Theology librarian, Alexis Weiss. The expansive database of PhilPapers and the ability to access more library resources online and through ILLiad has kept me up to my teeth in research materials even through this disconnected time of social-distancing. I have found that the library reacted incredibly swiftly and comprehensively, and I have not seen much of an interruption in my access to resources. I think that I now understand just how valuable a service like ILLiad is for getting access to articles not already in our databases.

How better to end than with a note about EndNote? I'm sure that I have not yet scratched the surface of its power, but I am deeply grateful that LMU's library provides EndNote to help organize and maintain a bibliography.