

Prof. Dr. Klaus Corcilius
(Tübingen)

The Teleology of the Practical in Aristotle

Abstrakt

In Aristotle's writings, 'the good to be done' (*prakton agathon*) plays various, and seemingly incompatible, roles: he calls it an end, a means to an end, a principle of action, an apparent good, a universal, a particular, a cause of action, and more. On the current interpretations in the literature, Aristotle's statement that 'practical (*prakton*)' is ambiguous between "the things for the sake of which we act" and "the things we do for their sake" expresses a type-token ambiguity between general and more concrete courses of action. I argue that this interpretation does not offer the resources to account for the variety of functions Aristotle assigns to the practical good. Based on a overlooked teleological passage in the *De Motu Animalium* and Aristotle's general account of the workings of final causes, I interpret the ambiguity of 'practical good' as between two different ways of being a *goal*, which relate, not in the way type and token do, but by teleological subordination: 'practical good', I argue, is ambiguous between *motivating value* and *valuable state of affairs to be brought about by action*. This interpretation can account for the various functions of the practical good, and it opens new perspectives on Aristotle's account of the apparent good and the teleological structure of the motivation of the celestial spheres. Most importantly, however, the *De Motu Animalium*'s discussion of practical goals offers a general teleological characterization of the sphere of the practical (*prakton*, understood as the sphere of all things doable by way of animal self-motion). Hence the title.