

‘Does Justice Conflict with Virtue? Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* V 1’

*Abstract:* Aristotle introduces justice in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as virtue that relates to another person, and says that ‘virtue is the same as justice, but what it is to be virtue is not the same as what it is to be justice’ (1130a12). I show that the relation between virtue without qualification and justice is not that of extensional equivalence and intensional difference, nor that of reciprocity. Rather, Aristotle is making here a metaphysical claim comparable to that of the two routes realised on the Athens-Thebes road. I draw the metaphysical analogies between the two cases, and show that the point and consequence of the quoted claim is that for Aristotle, every moral action issues either from virtue without qualification or from justice, *but not from both*. I explore this position as Aristotle’s middle-ground solution to the moral dilemma of the philosopher king in Plato’s cave – between two virtuous actions, for his own sake or for the sake of the people.