"The Eye Of The Soul": *Phronesis* And The Aesthetics Of Organizing

Esther Eidinow
University of Nottingham

Rafael Ramirez
University of Oxford

Abstract
This paper first examines Aristotle's original conceptualization of *phronesis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, arguing that it includes an important, implicit aesthetic aspect which is often overlooked in modern social science; second, it finds links between this conception of *phronesis* and current approaches in organizational scholarship, strengthening the case for, and the applicability of, organizational aesthetics.

"The Eye Of The Soul": *Phronesis* And The Aesthetics Of Organizing

Introduction

This paper examines the discussion of *phronesis* in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*), specifically the section of that work (Book 6) which has become the focus of Bent Flyvberg's proposals in *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again*.[1] Flyvbjerg takes Aristotelian *phronesis* as the basis for his development of "phronetic planning research", a method that aims "to clarify values, interests, and power relations as a basis for *praxis"* in policy and planning.[2] In his discussion "Empowering Aristotle" he focuses in particular on the thinking of Michel Foucault on power, in order to develop "a more adequate and contemporary conception of *phronesis"*.[3]

In this paper we raise another dimension of Aristotle's approach that might usefully be considered alongside Flyvbjerg's proposed process of phronetic research in the study of organizational phenomena: the role of aesthetics in *phronesis*. Like Flyvbjerg, we too are concerned with the process of deliberation, and the end results of that deliberation. In his case, this involves "elucidating ... what is desirable according to diverse sets of values and interests".[4] However, we are also concerned with the aesthetic sense of recognition involved in that process — how do we know what is desirable?

Drawing on Aristotle's texts, we pursue the idea that *phronesis* must be considered through aesthetics as much as it is through ethics, which is Flyvbjerg's core argument in *Making Social Science Matter*, and that the two are related. This builds on Aristotle's implications that sight is somehow central to right deliberation, and that right deliberation is informed by moral virtue. From this perspective, we suggest that phronetic scholarship, concerned as it is with organizational deliberation and values, must also be understood as a scholarship of aesthetics — notably when applied to studying organizational phenomena, including the role of leadership. Thus, this paper seeks to initiate a discussion about the ways in which Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* may relate to questions of aesthetics, and how, in turn, this discussion may inform the current paradigm of organizational planning.

This approach draws on arguments in the current scholarship concerned with certain types of deliberation conducted within organizations: Van der Heijden has suggested that enhancing the quality of "strategic conversations" is essential to the future success of the businesses pursued by private and public organizations. He considers that engaging in these conversations is an art that is enabled by scenario planning.[5] Building on van der Heijden's views, Ramirez argued that aesthetic considerations are one way to establish the effectiveness of scenario planning, particularly in terms of how, in the context of an organization, they contribute to clarifying issues that would otherwise remain misunderstood, ambiguous, and/or confused.[6]

---

[1] Flyvbjerg 2001. The three books v-vii of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) are also the three books iv-vi of the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*), a work thought to be earlier in date*.* It has been argued that the version in the *NE* represents a revision of material from the *EE* for a new course of lectures (see Kenny 1978:1-50 and Rowe 1971).

[2] Flyvbjerg 2004a: 289. His reading of *phronesis* appears to have been the most influential in terms of impacting organization research (to the extent that it even has its own Wikipedia entry: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phronetic_social_science.) However, the aim of this paper is not to evaluate Flyvbjerg's approach to Aristotle and *phronesis*; for a brief but thorough overview of this, see Eikeland 2008, pp. 43 ff. Other authors (Halverson, 2004; Nonaka and Toyama, 2007) have also explored the links between *phronesis* and organizational phenomena, and these are also discussed below.

[3] Flyvbjerg 2001: 110.

[4] Flyvbjerg 2001: 167.

[5] Van der Heijden 1998 (2nd ed. 2005).

[6] Ramirez 2008 and 2010.

This article is organized as follows. We first review Aristotle's description of *phronesis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This involves setting out Aristotle's understanding of *eudaimonia* or "happiness", and the system of virtues in which *phronesis* plays a leading role, enabling us not only to "live well" but also to participate in, and especially lead, a community. Next, we examine how, according to Aristotle, individuals might develop *phronesis*, and the role played by the "eye of the soul", which together with virtue allows individuals to use their experience to see what is the right decision and how to get there. It is worth pointing out that our description of Aristotle's arguments will necessarily be brief, aiming to highlight key points and arguments, rather than aiming to provide a definitive philosophical exposition.[7]

We then link our account of Aristotle's ideas with current approaches in organizational scholarship, in particular organizational aesthetics. We conclude by reconsidering *phronesis* not only as an ethical construct — as was done in *Making Social Science Matter* — but as one that links ethics with aesthetics. In turn, this raises questions about how organizations are appreciated and experienced, how their strategic deliberations are conducted, and about the nature of and skills involved in organizational leadership.

Understanding the soul

Before turning to the concept of *phronesis*, we will lay out the larger context of its discussion in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*).[8] In this first section we examine the idea of "happiness" and the highly practical and political ethical system that Aristotle describes. In the process, we want to draw attention to the role and meaning of the virtues in Aristotle's system. We note that, in our reading of *Making Social Science Matter*, Flyvbjerg, although he discusses *phronesis* as "a sense of the ethically practical", emphasizes the processes of rational or practical judgment involved in *phronesis*, and its relationship to the other intellectual virtues, and forms of knowledge. He provides less information about how Aristotle understood *phronesis* to be linked to concepts of what is good, how an individual knows what is good, and therefore how, in specific situations, *phronesis* operates in relation to what Aristotle called the moral virtues.[9]

But *phronesis* is a virtue — a disposition of excellence that intrinsically involves choice[10] — and crucially part of a larger ethical system. The description of this system that Aristotle offers looks both into and out from the individual: comprising both the composition and workings of the human soul, and the role of the individual in a community.[11] Thus, *phronesis* is a virtue that operates both within a "soul system", at the level of the individual, and as part of a political scheme, at the level of the community. Both dimensions are important for understanding what *phronesis* is and how it works.

We turn to the context of Aristotle's observations about *phronesis* — the larger context of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. We begin (and will end) with what it means to be "happy".

---

[7] There may also be some inconsistencies in the argument: it has been argued (Burnyeat 2004: 179) that Aristotle kept some treatises with him and continued to edit them.

[8] All translations taken from Rackham 1961.

[9] For example, Flyvbjerg (2001: 57) "*Phronesis* requires an interaction between the general and the concrete; it requires consideration, judgment, and choice."

[10] The ancient Greek for disposition is *hexis*: an alternative translation is "state", but, as Annas (1993: 50) points out "*hexis* answers better to our word 'disposition' that to 'state': a virtue like courage is a disposition because it is a condition because of which I am do disposed as to act in brave ways…"

[11] He offers the comfort that the politician need only study it as far as it is useful: "to pursue the subject in further detail would doubtless be more laborious than is necessary for his purpose" (*NE* 1102 26-28). His argument turns on the role and goal of happiness, what it is (realizing complete goodness in action) and having sufficient material goods (*NE* 1101a14-17).

Happiness: living well

First, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is an exploration of what it means, and what it takes, to try to be "happy". At first sight, this seems very hedonistic for an ethical treatise, but we must be cautious. The Greek term in question is *eudaimonia*: although "happiness" is the usual translation, it is a little misleading. We understand happiness to be a feeling. In contrast, although it might involve feelings of pleasure and contentment, *eudaimonia* is not a feeling; it refers, rather, to a state. This might sound quite a passive experience, but this is not the case. Not only is *eudaimonia* about character, and "being", it also comprises activity, or "doing"; so, as Aristotle says, "living well and acting well are the same as *eudaimonia*" (*NE* 1095a19-20).[12] Moreover, it is not a very stable state: the term "*eudaimonia*" alludes literally to a benign divine presence in one's life — but as everyone knows, the Greek gods could be marvellously fickle, so there is a substantial element of chance or luck involved (*NE* 1153b16-21).[13] Other possible translations for this term include "being successful" or "flourishing", but since these all add elements that are not quite accurate, we will continue to use the conventional "happiness".

Aristotle contends that "happiness" is what we all can agree to call the "highest human good" (1095a14-20). Although at first sight this seems highly metaphysical, even Platonic, in fact Aristotle does not want us to contemplate perfection (and he is quite explicit in his criticism of Plato's form of the Good as being incoherent and impractical, *NE* 1096b32-1097a14).[14] As its vulnerability to luck implies, Aristotle's conception of the good is not a distant, perfect transcendental Form, but is intended to offer some insights into the link between character, choice and action, in the context of the real world.

Second, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is concerned with the processes of deliberation that we use to face everyday dilemmas and disagreements, and to make the best choices in all circumstances. The philosopher himself acknowledges how hard it is to define "the good": he starts his inquiry with the statement that "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good" (*NE* 1094a-1-3), and describes how people have different ideas of what it might be ("pleasure or wealth or honour") and how changes in people's own circumstances also shift their opinions (*NE* 1095a22-5).

He reaches his own definition by exploring practical, everyday experiences, and examining what ultimately motivates the decisions and, importantly, the actions that individuals take (*NE* 1098a3-20). His process is to look for the good that is the final end, the one that is chosen entirely for itself, and which motivates the selection of other goals (*NE* 1097a19, 1097a31 1102a2-4).[15] The answer is, as we have seen, "happiness" — and by making comparisons with craftsmen, and even with parts of the body, Aristotle locates this final good, this "happiness" in the "function" of man. By this he means not just living (after all, animals and plants do that), but the active exercise of rationality.[16] And not only is it active, it must be long-running (*NE* 1098a18-20) — "one swallow does not make spring, nor does one fine day; and similarly one day or a brief period of happiness does not make a man supremely blessed and happy."

---

[12] Emphasised by Nussbaum 2001.
[13] See discussion Lear 2009: 393. Nussbaum (2001: 318-372) examines the dependency of the good life on external circumstances and resources, and its vulnerability to uncontrolled events; indeed, she argues that the fragile nature of human life is essential to Aristotle's conception of living well.
[14] Although by the end of the treatise, we find that the perfectly final happiness is in fact theoretical contemplation (see *NE* 117b24).
[15] In making this argument we agree with Lear (2009); other scholars have argued for an inclusivist approach based on the *Eudaimonian Ethics* (1219a35-9); however, even in that work it is the most final virtue.
[16] The ancient Greek term for "function" here is *ergon*.

As he continues with his discussion of happiness and the good, we also learn something more about the ideal context for acquiring it — that is, happiness arises from being part of, and being active in, a social life and a political community.[17] We might expect this to involve the freedom to exercise our own individuality; for Aristotle, it seems to have meant something far more constrained. From his treatise the *Politics*, we learn that the kind of moral virtue that male citizens can experience and exercise is very different from that of slaves or women, or those who live where it is cold, or Asians, or even some Greeks (*Politics* 1260a12-13 and 1327b23-26; with Roberts 2009: 560).[18] Such a detail, although obviously relevant to a historical analysis of Aristotle's writing, also prompts useful questions about how we perceive what is "good", and how our context and culture may shape our ethical judgments.

Finally, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is explicitly, a political thesis (*NE* 1094b11). As the discussion so far suggests, for Aristotle, man (that is, the Greek citizen) is by nature political (*NE* 1097b11). But his happiness is not only happiness for himself but "for parents, children, wife, and in general for friends and fellow citizens" (*NE* 1097b6-11).[19] Aristotle starts from the idea that the Greek city is a social unity, and its members share a common interest[20]: this treatise, concerned as it is with these central themes of "happiness" and "the good", is an examination of the exercise and experience of what is needed for social and political participation.[21] We can extend this by looking to his discussion, in the *Politics*, on what it means to exercise civic virtue and be a good citizen. There it becomes apparent that this has to be tailored to the kind of city in which, and type of constitution under which, one lives: being a good citizen appears to be chiefly a matter of obedience.[22]

This introduces the question of what, in Aristotle's opinion, is necessary for political leadership: from the *NE* we learn that knowledge of the good is the object of politics, which lays down the laws, and organizes the details of citizen-life (*NE* 1094a20-28) — and it is the statesman who "makes a special study of goodness, since his aim is to make the citizens good and law-abiding men." (*NE* 1102a7-9) This leads, in turn, to their happiness. (Aristotle singles out the Athenian statesman Perikles as an expert in taking care of the family and the state, because he understands not only his own good, but that of others, *NE* 1140b7-11.)[23]

This gives us the nature, context and function of *eudaimonia* — but where does it originate? In Aristotle's view it arises from the exercise of virtues, and of one virtue in particular: *phronesis.* We turn to the virtues next. [24]

Virtues: rational and irrational

According to Aristotle, the soul comprises two parts — one rational, which is concerned with the exercise of reason (logos), and the other non-rational, which is concerned with desire (*NE* 1102a28-1103a11).[25] Thus, this system encompasses both processes of thinking, which involve reason and deliberation, and activities that are related to emotions and actions. To each of these parts of the soul belong sets of virtues: the

---

[17] Nussbaum 2001: 348-9.
[18] Roberts 2009: 555-565.
[19] As interpreted by Roberts1989: 189.
[20] See MacIntyre: 97-8 on the conceptual political frameworks assumed by Plato and Aristotle.
[21] As Roberts (2009) observes, when read in combination with the description of virtues in Aristotle's *Politics* we gain a fuller picture of the different kind of virtues necessary for ruling and being ruled, and the need for a good citizen to have both (since he would hold office at least once in a lifetime); see esp. *Pol*. 1277b13-21.
[22] Roberts 2009: 561-563.
[23] Although from the *Politics* we learn that how an individual leads his community will depend on his character — and may well change his character; see *Politics* 1315b8-10.
[24] What counts as a voluntary action is not examined in this paper — see Heinaman 2009.
[25] The distinction between automatic and more deliberative thinking has had substantial influence since. For an up-to-date version see Kahneman 2011.

intellectual virtues belong to the rational part of the soul, and the moral virtues to the non-rational part, which encompasses emotions, desire, impulses. *Phronesis* is an intellectual virtue along with knowledge, skill, wisdom and intelligence.[26] Meanwhile, among the moral virtues we find self-control, liberality, and justice.[27]

A virtue allows the thing to which it belongs to perform its function well and to be good. Aristotle supports this with a visual metaphor — just as having good eyes, for example, means having good sight (*NE* 1106a14-19). There is a risk from this description that we understand a virtue as simply a state of being, but it is more active than that: a crucial part of having a virtue is that it involves choice.[28] In addition, this faculty for making choices is something that develops. Indeed, it can be trained: we may have moral virtues as a matter of character or habit (*ethos*), but we learn these virtues by practicing them[29]; similarly, the intellectual virtues, including *phronesis*, are achieved through and by instruction and experience (*NE* 1103a14-26). Virtues only become true virtues when they are brought to maturity through implementation (*NE* 1144a23-27), this leads to action, and the whole process is what defines us as human (*NE* 1098a3-4).[30]

But as we discover, the nature of the virtues, and the relationships between them, are somewhat more complicated than the initial division of the soul implies — and this is because of the emphasis that Aristotle places on the virtue of *phronesis*.

Phronesis: means and ends

Phronesis can be translated as "prudence", but again this translation needs to be treated with caution, suggesting elements of thrift that were acquired in later periods of history.[31] For Aristotle, the leading aspect of *phronesis* is its role in decision-making: in Book 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* we are told that a person with *phronesis* is an expert at deliberating for the purpose of living well (1140a28) and doing well (1140b7).

It does this by helping to locate the "correct account" of a moral virtue. This refers to an aspect of Aristotle's theory known as the "doctrine of the mean": we do not have space to examine this fully here, but it essentially depicts each of the moral virtues as occupying a middle ground between an excess or lack of a particular emotion or action — and it is, as this suggests, quite problematic.[32] Relevant to this discussion is the role that *phronesis* plays in this process by enabling individuals in a given situation to aim for "the mean" (*NE* 1138b33-4).[33] In the end, Aristotle summarizes this exploration of virtue and decision-making as follows: "it is about having the right feelings at the right time on the right occasion towards the right people for the right purpose and in the right

---

[26] These are all ways in which the mind achieves truth, in affirmation or denial (*NE* 1139b). These virtues have received extensive discussion elsewhere — among them Flyvbjerg's own thorough and capable summary — and so a systematic characterization of each of them does not form the basis for this article.

[27] These are translations of *sophrosune*, *eleutheriotes*, and *dike*, respectively.

[28] On choice: (*NE* 1105b19-1106a14). Here we find what may appear to be a contradiction: the moral virtues are for Aristotle part of the non-rational soul. However, the virtues are states or dispositions that are related to, or characterized by decisions (*hexis proairetike*; *NE* 1106b36) and a decision must be "decided on" (*prohaireisthai*) in order to be virtuous (*NE* 1105a31-32). Decisions are made with right *logos* (*NE* 1144b26-27), and so this suggests that in fact moral virtue must belong to the rational part of the soul. Moss 2011 resolves this dilemma by proposing that Aristotle's argument in fact indicates that *prohairetic* simply means that it "makes decisions correct" (cf. *NE* 1144a86-9), see also Rist 2002.

[29] However, repetition can also be destructive: "it is by taking part in transactions with our fellow-men that some become just and others unjust" (*NE* 1103b14-16).

[30] See Lawrence 2004: 421.

[31] See discussion MacIntyre 1998: 74.

[32] For example, courage is a middle ground between being a coward (giving way to the emotions roused by danger) and being foolhardy (not giving way enough), see for further discussion MacIntyre 1998: 64-68, who provides a good overview of the problems with this theory. Description of the moral virtues actually takes up much of the treatise (Books 2-5), while the intellectual virtues are dealt with in Book 6.

[33] The text identifies the need for a "correct account" and its "determinant", and it is the further subdivision of the soul that allows Aristotle to distinguish between the activity of *phronesis* in identifying the correct account, and then the further virtue that supplies the *horos* or "determinant" of the correct account.

manner" (*NE* 1106b21-23). But this still leaves open the question of how the mean is identified in the first place, and to understand this, and how this overall process works, we have to turn to another virtue — wisdom (comprising intelligence and scientific knowledge), and a further set of divisions of the soul.

This fresh division splits each existing part into two further parts. First, the non-rational aspect of the soul comprises i) a "vegetative" part with no rational element, and ii) another appetitive part, which has a connection to the rational part of the soul (and can therefore be influenced by rational deliberation). In turn, the intellectual aspect of the soul is divided between what Aristotle calls the "calculating" or "deliberative" part, and what is "scientific" (*NE* 1139a 25-30). The first part includes the practical virtue of *phronesis*; the other contains wisdom.

Aristotle is quite clear that of the virtues, wisdom is much the most important, since it takes us to knowledge that is "rare, marvellous, difficult and even superhuman" (*NE* 1141b). This is the realm of what is unchanging, learned through scientific knowledge, but truly appreciated and understood by intelligence. The need to contemplate the unchanging realm is reminiscent of Socratic views of virtue, but in Aristotle's version there is a clear and important difference: in order to live in the world, in order to gain happiness, both wisdom and *phronesis* are needed.

In this system, it is not possible to be good without *phronesis* and impossible to exercise *phronesis* without true virtue: "virtue ensures the rightness of the end one aims at, *phronesis* ensures the rightness of the means one adopts to gain that end" (*NE* 1144a6-9). But this is not just a division of means and end: the "starting point" that *phronesis* employs in terms of reasoning is the end that is proposed, which is determined by virtue (*NE* 1151a15-18). This confluence of end and beginning, both informed by virtue, both employed by phronetic reasoning is compared by Aristotle to the hypotheses of mathematics, which are reached by reasoning, but recognized by virtue that is natural or acquired by training.

In turn, virtue is determined by the right principle, which is, in turn, determined by *phronesis* (*NE* 1144b21-26). This is because the possession of *phronesis* ensures that the moral virtues can be exercised correctly, enabling what Aristotle calls "virtue in the true sense" (*NE* 1144b12-14). Indeed, *phronesis* does not only allow us to see what ought to be done, it also provides a mandate for action (*NE* 1143a8-9). So, in summary, *phronesis* is exercised in the moment, and involves bringing virtue and deliberation together in that moment, in order to act correctly. As noted above, (*NE* 1106b21-23): "it is about having the right feelings at the right time on the right occasion towards the right people for the right purpose and in the right manner." [34]

This very practical aspect takes us again to politics, through two, related routes. The first is that of the context in which people exercise *phronesis*: although *phronesis* is commonly regarded as particularly relevant to decisions about oneself (*NE* 1140b6-8 and 1141b30-31), Aristotle points out that any personal decisions are dependent on our circumstances, that is, the household and the state, and the ways in which they are managed (which is also dependent on deliberations that are, in turn, both forms of *phronesis*). [35]

This leads, in turn, to expertise: Aristotle notes that there are specialized forms of *phronesis* that emerge in political settings, including that which deals with individual

---

[34] The process involved may be a form of "practical syllogism": see further, Gottlieb 2006.
[35] In this understanding of the presence of power in Aristotle's text we take a different approach to Flyvbjerg 2001: 3, who argues that Aristotle "never elaborated his conception of *phronesis* to include explicit considerations of power".

events, and that which is employed in creating legislation (*NE* 1141b23-37).[36] And he defines these types further, highlighting the need for *phronesis* that is concerned with good judgment or justice. As noted above, the only named example of a person with *phronesis* that Aristotle provides is the Athenian general Perikles, famous both for his political acumen, and his rise to and hold on power. Indeed, Aristotle notes that men like him are deemed prudent because "they possess a faculty of discerning what things are good for themselves and for mankind: and that is our conception of an expert in domestic economy and political science" (*NE* 1140b7-11).[37]

This brings us, then, to the "faculty of discerning" in question — the Greek is *theorein*, which means "to see" — and the ways in which *phronesis* can be developed and how it works. And it is with these aspects of Aristotle's description of *phronesis*, that the link between this virtue, and what we think of as aesthetics begins to emerge.

The eye of the soul

Acquisition: experience and understanding

In explaining how *phronesis* is gained, Aristotle draws attention not to knowledge but to experience, arguing that "the unproved assertions and opinions of experienced and elderly people, or of prudent men, are as much deserving of attention as those which they support by proof; for experience has given them an eye for things, and so they see correctly" (*NE* 1143b11-17).[38] He gives us some idea of what this general category of experience provides, listing a number of qualities that are part of the practice of *phronesis*, including deliberative excellence, understanding (of things that may be in doubt and that need deliberation), and judgment (*NE* 1142a32-1143a24).[39]

As Aristotle observes, these are all part of the same thing: they are terms used of people "who are old enough to show consideration and intelligence" (*NE* 1143a25-1143b6). We have already mentioned the role of intelligence in understanding first principles above, and it is clearly a crucial part of the "faculty of discerning" — but how does it work?

This is where we believe we see a role for aesthetics in Aristotle's description of *phronesis*. In discussing the exercise of *phronesis*, Aristotle compares the process of perception involved to the kind of intuition that is used in mathematics. He says it is "the sort of *aesthesis* whereby we perceive that the ultimate figure in mathematics is a triangle, for there, too, there will be a stop." (*NE* 1142a24-31) What this means is debatable: first, there is the puzzle of the meaning of *aesthesis*. This can be translated as "sensation", or "perception", and here we will use the term "sense" for convenience. However, as Deborah Modrak argues, *aesthesis* has the potential for a much broader meaning than this suggests.[40]

In this comparison, Aristotle could be describing something like the process of perception that takes place when we recognize a shape (as one of the individual senses), but he

---

[36] For individual events, *politike phronesis*, while for making legislation you need *nomothetike phronesis*.

[37] Adler 2011 has argued as much regarding leadership in complex circumstances. Self (1979, esp. p. 135) observes how Aristotle's description of *phronesis* aligns with his observations about the art of rhetoric in his treatise the *Rhetoric*. As she notes, the art of rhetoric is an essential characteristic of a ruler.

[38] Flyvberg (2004b: 288) quotes *NE* 1141b8-27 and draws the conclusion that "knowledge of the rules is inferior to knowledge of real cases" equating it to the use of case studies at Harvard Business School. In our view the parallel is not quite right, since Aristotle is emphasizing actual experience, in contrast to abstract knowledge, even with case studies.

[39] "Deliberative excellence" translates *euboulia*,"understanding" translates *sunesis*, and "judgment" *gnome*.

[40] See Modrak 2009. Aristotle identifies five individual senses (color, sound, flavor, odor and tactile qualities), and also tries to account for their working together by describing what he calls the common sense (which perceives motion, rest, number, figure and size), and by describing incidental sense (when common and individual senses work together). The perceptual capacity of the soul includes not only these senses, but also the capacity to imagine, remember or dream.

specifies that it is not this. Rather he seems to be describing a sense that enables us to recognize the limits of analysis (the triangle is the simplest mathematical figure).[41] Yet even this is not quite right, since the sense involved in the triangle example is more like sight.

Despite these difficulties, we learn a number of things about *phronesis* from the comparison: for example, that it is not like scientific knowledge, because it is not about inference or deduction.[42] Instead it is more like a process of recognition or acknowledgement.[43] Help with trying to understand this intuition more clearly may perhaps be found in Aristotle's use of imagery relating to sight.

Operation: sense and sight

The imagery of sight and seeing runs consistently throughout Aristotle's explanation of the relationship between intelligence and *phronesis*, understanding and judgment.[44]

He compares intelligence to sight: "as sight is good in the body, so intelligence is good in the soul, and similarly another thing in something else." (*NE* 1096b27-30) And, again, as he comes to the end of his description of the virtues (*NE* 1141b1-17), he describes the important role of intelligence with relation to the virtues, comparing the effect of its loss to a man without sight, who might fall because he cannot see. In the case of those people whom he thought had accumulated sufficient experience to be said to possess *phronesis*, he explains (*NE* 1143b14) that "experience has given them an eye for things, so that they see correctly." Elsewhere he argues that the virtuous person "sees the truth" in each kind of thing or situation, and discusses the idea that we think things are good that seem good to us (*NE* 1113a23-33). Finally, he links good deliberation and virtue with the eye (*NE* 1144a29-30) "that eye of the soul … cannot acquire the quality of *phronesis* without possessing virtue."[45]

This gives some idea of the interdependence between virtue, *phronesis* and right seeing. Without virtue, *phronesis* is simply "cleverness" (*deinotes*), which gets a person to the particular end they have in mind. Without *phronesis* there is no action to take towards virtue; while the eye of the soul enables us to "see" our right end and the way towards it, but could not operate without virtue.

Aristotle is not precise on how exactly the art of "seeing" informs *phronesis* for individuals or States.[46] Nevertheless, the language of sight and seeing is clearly significant, while *aesthesis* appears key to the recognition of the good. We argue, therefore, that Aristotle's imagery of seeing and sight suggests that *phronesis*, essential for individual, group, and political deliberation, includes an essential aesthetic aspect. We now turn to seeing, sight and aesthetics.

---

[41] As Rackham 1961; see also *ad. loc.* Irwin 1999.

[42] This seems to contradict Flyvbjerg's suggested process of inquiry into the object of *phronesis*, which roots any such insights in a process of dialogue around a set of four questions, a process, which, he argues, ensures that no one view is privileged (see Flyvbjerg 2004b: 406-409). Aristotle's characterization of *phronesis* could be said to do almost the opposite, emphasizing an individual's experience and perception, remaining tacit, and depending on an instinctive recognition of virtue.

[43] Nussbaum 2001: 305.

[44] Moss (2011: 252-259) argues for a non-cognitive perceptual capacity, emphasizing the imagery of sight, but also other perceptual metaphors.

[45] The "eye of the soul" is found in Plato *Republic* 533C, and appears to be *nous*; for Plato it allows an individual to view the realm of the immutable, whereas for Aristotle it enables the individual to view the contingent realm correctly; see also *Republic* 519B, *Syposium* 219A, *Sophist* 254A. These references to sight and seeing may also link to Aristotle's theories of the connections between understanding and sensory experience in other treatises; see discussion by Caston 2009.

[46] Halverson (2004: 92) observes that the eye of the soul seems to be a metaphor for manifesting *phronesis*, as in "having an eye" to size up a given situation.

The appreciation of "what is fine"

These explanations about the roles of experience and seeing in the acquisition and exercise of *phronesis* lead to a final observation about its links with aesthetics, in terms of Aristotle's argument about the enjoyment of "what is fine".

From early on in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle describes the end goal of action not only in terms of what is good but in terms of "what is fine". Aristotle never says directly what he means by this; nevertheless he tells us quite a lot about it, and we can fill some more. The Greek is *to kalon* which can also be translated into what is "noble" or "beautiful". The quality in question fits into a particular set of aristocratic values in ancient Greek culture, which can help us to approach its meaning here; moreover, it is a quality that Aristotle discusses in other treatises.

First of all, it seems that "what is fine" is not the same as "the good", although it is connected, since it is the aim of every virtuous action, (*NE* 1115b12): for example, when there are two possible ways of bringing about the appropriate end, a person who has *phronesis* will choose the one that is most fine (*NE* 1112b16-17). The key aspect of this choice appears to turn on the connection between the exercise of virtue and the experience of pleasure. Aristotle makes it very clear that virtuous actions must be in themselves pleasant (*NE* 1099a10-11 and 15-23). He does this from the beginning of the *NE*, although explicit discussion of pleasure and pain does not occur until Books VII and X.

As we know, gaining *phronesis* depends on experience and training.[47] Most people never achieve this; instead, they simply pursue their own private experiences of pleasure and pain. Aristotle compares those who are satisfied with this kind of pleasure to cattle, which provides some indication of the cultural values that influenced him. In comparison, those who are trained to appreciate the life of active virtue achieve what is "essentially pleasant": a combination of experiences of the right kind, of what is "fine", creates the love of it — and this nurtures the virtues.[48] If a person does not experience the pleasure of what is fine in a good action, then he cannot be called virtuous (*NE* 1099a16-20). In sum, it appears that "what is fine" is the sensory side of an action that embodies "the good": doing what is fine engenders pleasure in the doer.

A final point: for Aristotle, the individual who achieves the greatest commitment to what is fine is "the great-souled man", who encapsulates a particular ancient Greek ideal of behavior that conflicts in many ways with modern notions of what marks ethically admirable behaviour.[49] For example, Aristotle makes clear that doing what is fine also has a public aspect — it must be visible, even showy, so that it can be both praised by others and contemplated by oneself.[50] It not only demonstrates the character of the individual, it also elicits praise from others.[51] It appears that "what is fine" is not only a social good, in the sense that it overlaps with the ultimate end, it is also a personal good, of benefit to the individual himself (*NE* 1168a-1169b, with Lear 2006: 127-131). The virtuous person takes action not only for its own sake, but in order to contemplate that action (*NE* 1169a20-25).[52] So, in a number of perhaps unexpected ways,

---

[47] To appreciate politics in general, a young man has to be well trained in his habits (see *NE* 1095a2-11 and b4-8, 14-22).
[48] See Achtenberg 2002.
[49] See MacIntyre (1998: 79) who describes him: "This appalling picture of the crown of the virtuous life".
[50] Lear 2006: 122-3.
[51] Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1366b34-1367a17.
[52] Flyvbjerg (2001: 55) notes that Foucault talks about ethics in relation to "an aesthetics of existence", explaining this as "the relationship you have to *yourself* when you act"; Flyvbjerg argues that in contrast Aristotle in discussing *phronesis* is mainly talking about ethics in relation to social and political praxis, "that is

experiencing "what is fine" is an important part of what makes a person happy — and a crucial element in the exercise of *phronesis*.[53]

Seeing, organizational aesthetics, and phronesis

When we turn to the use of *phronesis* and *phronetic* deliberation in the present, we believe that this element of "seeing right", and the sense of pleasure that it turns on, is just as important as it was for Aristotle. Indeed, if we ignore the aesthetic aspect of *phronesis*, we overlook crucial elements of its operation, and potential for development.

The *Nicomachean Ethics* suggests that this "seeing right" involved in *phronesis*, is important to deliberation and virtuous thinking, both for individuals and for larger organizations (as noted above, it mentions States). We argue that *phronesis* in this aesthetic sense is important to how we experience organizations and to the process of deliberation in strategic planning across different kinds of organizations such as teams, military units, ministries, companies, or NGOs. Recent research in the discipline of organizational planning and organizing supports this approach.

The importance of form

Before turning to the explicit and aesthetic role of *phronesis* in organizational planning, it is important to establish how aesthetics have already shaped and informed recent thinking about organizations.

It is impossible to conceive of or experience organization without alluding to form, something which Ramirez first introduced and Taylor and Hansen developed further.[54] The very language of organization and organizing gives this away: organizations are expected to per-form, people are form-ed in them and in-formed, wear uni-forms, have form-al reporting relations and engage in in-formal practices, etc. Ramirez has built on the work of Ernst Cassirer and Suzanne Langer who suggested aesthetic understanding is about the direct sensory experience of form, and not expressible in the discursive symbols used in e.g. language.[55] This has led him to suggest that it is the experience of form itself that enables us to apprehend organizational phenomena and describe it after the experience with terms such as "beautiful" (for example, the "beautiful game" in soccer) or "repulsive".

How is organizational form apprehended? It is apprehended through the senses, primarily through seeing[56.] Of course, one can feel a meeting's interest and effectiveness and find it has become really boring by attending (with one's ear) to the rhythm of conversation[57]. Or one may feel (via one's skin) the tension others have if the boss has asked people to come together to announce the firm has gone bust, or to inform that someone is going to be fired or laid off. But even if we can touch the thickness of the carpet of the executive office to feel the importance of its occupier, or "smell" fear, it is sight that has had the predominant role among all of our senses in appreciating

---

the relationship you have to *society* when you act" (the italics in both cases are in the original). We suggest that in fact, the relationship that one has with oneself is a key part of Aristotle's thinking about *phronesis* and action.

[53] As Frede (2006: 261) notes, it disposes of the idea often found today that " 'self-overcoming' and 'self-sacrifice' are the hallmarks of a moral action, rather than its enjoyment." However, she also enumerates a number of problems with Aristotle's treatment of pleasure, including his lack of clarity on the role of ordinary pleasures and pains that do not involve a finished act, or indeed an active role, and the nature of "bad men's pleasures".

[54] Ramirez 1996; Taylor 2005.

[55] Poetry was an explicit exception, which is perhaps why it is so very difficult to translate well from one language to another. Cassirer 1964, Langer 1942; for a development see Ramirez 1991.

[56] Kavanagh 2004. A good example of a thesis developing the centrality of seeing is offered by Waddock 2010 and further commented upon by Werhane 2010.

[57] Strati 1999.

organizational form. Thus, Gagliardi focuses his analysis on organizational artefacts; Ramirez comments on the attention and resources spent on corporate architecture, design of products, as well as those of events, meeting rooms or conferences, where time and space are restricted enough for the form to be stable and apprehensible.[58]

But organizational aesthetics has over the last thirty years grown and extends well beyond experiencing and appreciating organizational form. Strati proposes that organizational aesthetics now has developed to have four main approaches: "(i) the archaeological approach, which privileges the symbolic dimension of aesthetic understanding; (ii) the empathic-logical approach, which seeks to grasp the pathos of organizational life; (iii) the aesthetic approach, which emphasizes the negotiation of organizational aesthetics; and (iv) the artistic approach, which examines flow, creativity, and playfulness".[59] Just as it has engendered multiple approaches, the sub-field of aesthetics has expanded to be applied to myriad organizational and organizing pursuits, topics and issues including how the work of mathematicians is assessed, urban policy, forest management, NASA's decision-making and personnel selection; the evaluation of physics formulae; bureaucracy; cooperation; and in helping to clarify the reasons why managers prefer certain modes of business innovation.[60] In all such cases, attending to the aesthetic aspect of organized and organizational experience and taking time to decipher and label it has produced distinctions and nuances that have helped to clarify units of analysis and their inter-relations. This, in turn, has yielded insights and created new conversations, enriching the quality of the deliberative process.

In an argument that resonates with Aristotle's views of *phronesis* and "what is fine" Ramirez suggests that attending to the aesthetic aspects in deliberative appreciation enables clarity to spring forth and sense to be made or restored.[61] When we reflect on an experience attending to the aspects that aesthetics highlight, we tend to categorize it with terms such as "ugly" or "attractive" or "appealing" or "repulsive" or "elegant" or "awkward". Reflection on this process can provide us with new and useful categories of distinction — and help to clarify and deepen understanding.

A number of scholars have investigated explicit links between artists and organizational planning and management: Chiapello investigates what artists and managers can learn from each other, Hatch *et al*. how artists condition leadership roles, and Ladkin how art can help perception in organizations, albeit emphasizing ethics more than aesthetics.[62]

Such judgments about "what is fine" similarly interact with ideas of "what is good" as demonstrated by Schlag's research concerning the way in which US judges interpret American law. He reviewed how the underlying aesthetic of each US judge shapes how each one experiences the law. A judge may, for example, consider the law as a series of pigeonholes into which cases must be made to fit; for another, the law may be imagined as a force-field in which interests are reconciled in society, and where the process of passing judgment involves reconciling such interests in ways that follow historical patterns. Schlag argues that it is each aesthetic foundation that pre-determines and frames the ethical considerations each judge deploys when passing judgments in court.[63] Reminding us of Aristotle's warnings about *phronesis* minus virtue, Kersten has warned that considering aesthetics without attending to the ethical dimensions of what is experienced, can lead to what is experienced as aesthetic being manipulated or

---

[58] Gagliardi 1990a Ramirez 1996.
[59] Strati 2010: 880.
[60] The relevant references are (in the order in which they occur in the text above) Penrose 1974, Floyd 1983, Gobster 1999, Feldman 2000, Warhurst, C. *et al*. 2000, Farmelo 2002, Fredrikson 2000, Ramirez 2005, Ramirez and Arvidsson 2005.
[61] Ramirez 2008.
[62] Chiapello 1998; Hatch, Kostera and Kozminski 2005; Ladkin 2011.
[63] The approach of Schlag 2002 is consistent with Gagliardi 1990 in that it attends to the pre-cognitive level of aesthetics (cf Strati 1999: 885-886).

manipulating, and this is something Scarry touched upon too.[64] More hopelessly, Boltanski and Chiapello propose that capitalism has already co-opted artistic critique, and this has now lost the independence it previously enjoyed.[65] Kersten invites those who consider the aesthetics of organization to be critically attentive to four ways in which aesthetics might anaesthetize: observe that what is being aesthetically appreciated is a representation of reality, not reality itself; then, appreciate that others may see as "ugly" what one sees as "beautiful"; thirdly, attend to that which may appear as beautiful might actually be re-presented to the self as ugly if it is bad and not good, or unethical; and lastly that aesthetic experience should moderate cravings. This position coincides with Guillet de Monthoux who considers that organizational aesthetics can become banal, or used for propaganda, if this critical attention is found wanting.[66]

Thus, aesthetics is a crucial part of the "art" of strategic planning or organizational deliberation and may lose its beauty if the experience is, or comes to be seen as, unethical. We believe, and hope we have illustrated above, that an aesthetic approach — having an eye for "what is fine" — was also an essential part of Aristotle's conception of *phronesis*. From both these angles, therefore, we argue that aesthetics is an aspect of *phronetic* deliberation that merits attention.

Phronesis and aesthetics

We believe that Flyvbjerg's perspective on *phronesis*, although insightful, overlooks this crucial, aesthetic aspect. He does hint at it, for example, when he notes that "*Phronesis* is a sense or a tacit skill for doing the ethically practical", and describes how "for Aristotle, [rational humans] are moved by a sense of the proper order among the ends we pursue", but does not pursue these ideas.[67] In drawing attention to this, we are not arguing that Flyvbjerg's approach is flawed; far from it, he has usefully operationalized a process for deliberation. However, Flyvbjerg's characterization of *phronesis* pays little attention to the role of seeing, and to how aesthetic attentiveness to seeing yields distinctions and insights about the decision-making process that may improve the quality of deliberation. Omitting the aesthetic aspect of *phronesis* limits understanding of it — both how it operates and how we might develop it.

Grasping the aesthetic aspect of *phronesis* may open up other avenues for the possible cultivation and development of *phronesis*. One example is through reflection on the implicit nature of *phronesis*. Flyvbjerg above describes *phronesis* as "tacit", but again does not follow up this aspect of it. We argue that, following Cassirer and Langer, aesthetic appreciation is "tacit" in the sense that its enactment cannot be expressed through words, except awkwardly and after the fact.[68] Halverson suggests that it is embodied action that enables the study of *phronesis*. Unlike *episteme* and *techne*, which can be studied separately from the action producing them, explanation of phronetic action separate from the embodied action itself, is irrelevant. Like Gagliardi, Halverson suggests that the frozen action of the past in artefacts, and most particularly the actual use of these artefacts, makes it possible to conduct phronetic research.[69] In this sense, something of the tacit sense of *phronesis* can be apprehended through an aesthetic understanding. This idea of implicit learning through an aesthetic sense leads to another example, which involves the development of *phronesis* in and through leadership. Grint has explored the leadership–*phronesis* link explicitly, suggesting that the experienced leader exhibits *phronesis*, and that *phronesis* is a key aspect of effective leadership, particularly when it is considered as work in, and not on, organizations. The link between

---

[64] Kersten 2008, Scarry 1999.
[65] Boltanski and Chiapello 2005.
[66] Kersten 2008, Scarry 1999, Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, de Monthoux 2004.
[67] Flyvbjerg 2004: 401.
[68] Ramirez 1987.
[69] Like Gagliardi (1990), Halverson (2004) suggests that the frozen action of the past in artifacts, and most particularly the actual use of these artifacts, makes it possible to conduct phronetic research.

phronesis, aesthetics, and leadership opens up new scholarly possibilities which we hope will be explored in future work.[70]

Conclusion

We have in this paper reviewed Aristotle's writing on *phronesis* and suggested that *phronesis* — that is, wise deliberation — includes an important aesthetic aspect. We argue that this approach finds resonance with current scholarship in organizational aesthetics and is relevant to strategic deliberations conducted within organizations. For example, Van der Heijden's development of the idea of the art of "strategic conversation", and the enhancing of the quality of this conversation reflects this idea that aesthetics is an important aspect of *phronesis*. Similarly Ramirez's work on the importance of aesthetics in organizational deliberations in terms of enhancing clarity through scenario planning also brings this idea to the fore. In turn, awareness of the aesthetics of *phronesis* is important for those studying organizations and leadership, since, without this critical attention, organizational aesthetics can become banal or turned to the use of propaganda. Finally, we have suggested that acknowledging this implicit, aesthetic aspect of *phronesis* may help to develop ways of acquiring and refining it — through critical attention to embodied experience and feeling and/or by shaping approaches to leadership training.

To our knowledge these connections have not been made before. The paper thus contributes to current work on *phronesis* and its role in critical organizational experience and strategic planning by linking Aristotle's concept of *phronesis* with both the aesthetics of organization and the aesthetics of strategic planning and leadership. It is our hope that these initial insights may offer new perspectives, and help develop new avenues for research on the role and nature of *phronesis* in leadership practice and organizational planning.

References

Achtenberg, D. 2002. *Cognition of Value in Aristotle's Ethics: Promise of Enrichment, Threat of Destruction.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Adler, N. J. 2011. Leading Beautifully: The Creative Economy and Beyond. *Journal of Management Inquiry.* 20(3): 208-221.

Annas, J. 1993. *The Morality of Happiness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Boltanski, L. and Chiapello, E. 2005. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso Press.

Burnyeat, M. F. 2004. Aristotelian Revisions: The Case of "de Sensu". *Apeiron* 37(2):177-180.

Cassirer, E. 1964. *Philosophie des symbolischen Formen*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Caston, V. 2009. Phantasia and Thought' in Anagnostopoulos G. (ed.) *A Companion to Aristotle*.322-334. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Chiapello, E. 1998. *Artistes vs Managers. Le management culturel face à la critique artiste*. Paris: Métailié.

---

[70] Grint 2007. Ladkin 2008 has connected leading to beauty explicitly, calling upon aesthetics to attend to the embodiment of leadership practice — although she argued this on Platonic rather than Aristotelean grounds.

de Monthoux, G. 2004. *The Art Firm: Aesthetic Management and Metaphysical Marketing from Wagner to Wilson*. Palo Alto, CA: University of Stanford Press.

Eikeland, O., 2008. *The Ways of Aristotle: Aristotelian phrónêsis, Aristotelian philosophy of dialogue, and action research*. Bern: Peter Lang.

Farmelo, G. (ed.) 2002. *It Must Be Beautiful: Great Equations of Modern Science*. London: Granta Publications.

Feldman, S. P. 2000. Micro Matters: The Aesthetics of Power in NASA's Flight Readiness Review. *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science* 36(4): 474-490.

Floyd, C. F. 1983. Billboards, Aesthetics, and the Police Power. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 42(3): 1-26.

Flyvbjerg, B. 2001. *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Flyvbjerg, B. 2004a. Phronetic Planning Research: Theoretical and Methodological Reflections. *Planning Theory & Practice* 5: 283–306.

Flyvbjerg , B., 2004b. A Perestroikan Straw Man Answers Back: David Laitin and Phronetic Political Science. *Politics and Society* 32: 389-416.

Frede, D. 2006. Pleasure and Pain in Aristotle's Ethics in Kraut, R. (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. 255-275 Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Fredrikson, G. H. 2000. Can Bureaucracy Be Beautiful? *Public Administration Review* 60(1): 47-53.

Gagliardi, P. (ed.) 1990. *Symbols and Artifacts: Views of the Corporate Landscape* Berlin: De Gruyter.

Gobster, P. H. 1999. An Ecological Aesthetic for Forest Landscape Management. *Landscape Management* 18(1): 54-64.

Gottlieb, P. 2006. The Practical Syllogism in Kraut, R. (ed.) *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. 218-233. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Grint, K. 2007. Learning to Lead: Can Aristotle Help us Find a Road to Wisdom? *Leadership* 3: 231-246.

Guillen, M. 1997. Scientific Management's Lost Aesthetic: Architecture, Organization and the Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical. *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 42(4): 682-716.

Halverson, R. 2004. Accessing, Documenting, and Communicating Practical Wisdom: The Phronesis of School Leadership Practice. *American Journal of Education* 111: 90-121.

Hatch, M.J., Kostera, M. and Kozminski, A. K. 2005. *The Three Faces of Leadership: Manager, Artist, Priest*. London: Blackwell.

Heinaman R. 2009. Voluntary, Involuntary and Choice. In Anagnostopoulos G. (ed.) *A Companion to Aristotle.* 483-497. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Irwin, T. 1999. *Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics, trans. with Introduction, Notes and Glossary*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Kahneman, D. 2011. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. London: Penguin Books.

Kavanagh, D. 2004. Ocularcentrism and its Others: A Framework for Metatheoretical Analysis. *Organization Studies* 25(3): 445-464.

Kenny, A. 1978. *The Aristotelian Ethics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Kersten, A. 2008. When Craving Becomes Bad: a Critical Conception of Ethics and Aesthetics in Organizations. *Culture and Organization* 14: 187-202.

Ladkin, D. 2008. Leading Beautifully: How Mastery, Congruency and Purpose Create the Aesthetic of Embodied Leadership Practice. *The Leadership Quarterly* 19: 31-41.

Ladkin, D. 2011. The Art of Perceiving Correctly: What Artists can Teach Us About Moral Perception. *Tamara Journal of Critical Organizational Inquiry* 9(3-4): 91-101.

Langer, S. 1942. *Philosophy in a New Key*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.

Lawrence, G. 2004. Human Good and Human Function. In Kraut, R. (ed.) *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. 37-75. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Lear, G. R., 2009. Happiness and the Structure of Ends. In Anagnostopoulos G., *A Companion to Aristotle*. 387-403. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

MacIntyre, A. 1998. *A Short History of Ethics: A History of Moral Philosophy from the Homeric Age to the Twentieth Century*. Notre Dame: Routledge.

Modrak, D. 2009. Sensation and Desire. In Anagnostopoulos, G. (ed.) *A Companion to Aristotle*. 310-321. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Moss, J. 2011. "Virtue makes the Goal Right": Virtue and *Phronesis* in Aristotle's Ethics. *Phronesis.* 56: 204-261.

Nonaka, I. and Toyama, R. 2007. Strategic Management as Distributed Practical Wisdom (*phronesis*). *Industrial and Corporate Change*. 16: 371-394.

Nussbaum, M. 2001. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Penrose, R. 1974. The Role of Aesthetics in Pure and Applied Mathematical Research. *The Institute of Mathematics and Its Applications.* 10: 266-271.

Rackham H. 1961. *Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Ramirez, R. 1987. Towards an Aesthetic Theory of Organization. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Pennsylvania.

Ramirez R. 1991. *The Beauty of Social Organization*. Munich: Accedo.

Ramirez, R. 1996. Wrapping Form and Organisational Beauty. *Organisation* 3(2): 233-242.

Ramirez, R. 2005. The Aesthetics of Cooperation. *European Management Review* 2(1): 28-35.

Ramirez, R. 2008. Scenarios that Provide Clarity in Addressing Turbulence. In Ramirez, R., Selsky J. W, and Van der Heijden, K. (eds.) *Business Planning in Turbulent Times: New Methods for Applying Scenarios*. London: Earthscan.

Ramirez, R. and Arvidsson, N. 2005. The Aesthetics of Business Innovation: an Exploratory Distinction of Two Archetypes. *Innovation: Management, Policy, and Practice*. 7(4): 373-388.

Rist, J. 2002. *Real Ethics: Reconsidering the Foundations of Morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roberts, J. 1989. Political Animals in the Nicomachean Ethics. *Phronesis*. 34: 185-204.

Roberts, J. 2009. Excellences of the Citizen and of the Individual. In Anagnostopoulos G. (ed.) *A Companion to Aristotle*. 555-565. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell .

Rowe, C. 1971. *The Eudemian Ethics and Nicomachean Ethics: A Study in the Development of Aristotle's Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society.

Scarry E. 1999. *On Beauty and Being Just*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Schlag, P. 2002. The Aesthetics of American Law. *Harvard Law Review*. 115: 1061-65.

Self, L. S. 1979. Rhetoric and *Phronesis*: The Aristotelian Ideal. *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 12(2): 130-145.

Strati, A. 1999. *Organization and Aesthetics*. London: Sage.

Strati, A. 2010. Aesthetic Understanding of Work and Organizational Life: Approaches and Research Developments. *Sociology Compass* 4(10): 880–893.

Taylor, S.S. and Hansen H. 2005. Finding Form: Looking at the Field of Organizational Aesthetics. *Journal of Management Studies* 42(6): 1210–31.

Van der Heijden, K. 1998. *Scenarios: The Art of Strategic Conversation*. London: John Wiley and Sons.

Waddock, S. 2010. Finding Wisdom Within: The Role of Seeing and Reflective Practice in Developing Moral Imagination, Aesthetic Sensibility and Systems Understanding. *Journal of Business Ethics and Education*. 7: 177-196.

Warhurst, C. et al. 2000. Aesthetic Labour in Interactive Service Work: Some Case Study Evidence from the "New" Glasgow. *The Service Industries Journal* 20(3): 1-18.

Werhane, P. H. 2010. The Centrality of "Seeing As" and a Question about "Truth" – A Response to Sandra Waddock. *Journal of Business Ethics and Education* 7: 197-200.

About the Author(s)

Esther Eidinow is a Lecturer in Ancient Greek History at the University of Nottingham. Before entering academia, she worked as a writer and editor, specialising in crafting scenarios for strategy, with a wide range of organizations. Her publications include

articles on scenario-writing and on ancient Greek culture, especially magic and religion; her books include *Oracles, Curses and Risk Among the Ancient Greeks* (OUP, 2007) and *Luck, Fate and Fortune: Antiquity and its Legacy* (IB Tauris, 2011).

Rafael Ramirez wrote the first doctoral dissertation on organizational aesthetics (at Wharton, the University of Pennsylvania), defended in 1987. His PhD supervisors were Michel Crozier and C West Churchman, who had suggested in his book *The Systems Approach and its Enemies* aesthetics to be an enemy of the systems approach, with whom Rafael disagreed. A book version of that effort, *The Beauty of Social Organization*, published at the suggestion of and with the help of Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, followed; as have a dozen other papers on organizational aesthetics. Rafael is now Director of the Oxford Scenarios Programme and Fellow in Strategy at Green-Templeton College and the Said Business School at the University of Oxford.