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ARISTOTLE'S VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE AS A BASIS FOR ETHICAL THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examines Aristotle's ethical theory with primary reference to the *Nicomachean Ethics* (EN). It argues that the EN is intended not to improve its audience ethically, but rather to give it the political tools to pass on its already good life.

The EN does this by articulating the goodness of that life and thus allowing the audience to enter effectively into ethical discussions. These form part of the process of passing on the good life by way of legislation in the polis and by more informal methods in institutions such as the household.

The thesis examines in particular the accounts of practical reason, pleasure and the ergon argument in the EN, and seeks to understand them in this context. It argues that by allowing the audience to improve the transmission of its values over the generations and by allowing its members to articulate the value of so doing, it moves the audience's life closer to divine perfection.

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Abbreviations of the titles of Aristotle's works used in this thesis

Cat	Categories
DA	On the soul
DC	On the heavens
EE	Eudemian Ethics
EN	Nicomachean Ethics
Meta	Metaphysics
PA	Parts of animals
Pol	Politics
Rhet	Rhetoric
Top	Topics

Other works are referred to in the thesis by their full titles.

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to trace a plausible philosophical argument through the EN which will suggest an overall structure to the work.

The main argument of this thesis is that the EN is intended to help the audience describe their existing virtuous life and thereby to pass it on to following generations. A central feature of the good life which is thus articulated is that it aims to imitate the divine activity which is eternal. Human beings draw close to such eternal activity when they pass on generation after generation their way of life, and do such passing on conscious of the aim of eternal survival.

Chapters one and two argue that any account of the EN's purpose which suggests that the audience is not already virtuous is wrong. In chapter three, I argue that the aim of the EN is to impart to the audience the skill of being able to articulate their own already virtuous life, thus enabling them to pass on that life.

Much of the EN is concerned with describing particular virtues; and the point of such description is clear given my account of the purpose of the work. Many of the other issues dealt with, however, are not so self-evidently related to the claimed purpose of the EN: the remaining chapters of this thesis are devoted to

considering a number of such issues and shewing how they may be related to the articulation of the virtuous life.

Chapters four, five and six argue that human action is typified by the pursuit of a future goal. For the virtuous, that goal is eudaimonia which is argued to be the reflexion on a good life from the perspective of the end of that life.

Chapters seven and eight argue that it is characteristic of the virtuous not only to act for a future end, but also to enjoy the goodness of that end in the present by taking immediate pleasure in the pursuit of a future goal.

The final three chapters, dealing with the ergon argument, attempt to express the reasons for these two features of the virtuous agent's life. They are explained as imitating the divine activity which is eternal and also pleasurable. By articulating the fullness of the good life, the EN not only allows the audience to be more effective in passing on that life, but also by making their own lives more self conscious, make them approach more nearly the divine activity. Since the eternal aspect of the divine activity is imitated by the eternal passing on of human life through the generations, the purpose of the EN -which I have argued to be the improvement of the means of passing on through greater articulateness- is itself justified as being an improved imitation of the divine.

The above argument is intended to have both exegetical and general philosophical plausibility. In setting out and defending the argument, I have made a number of methodological assumptions which I shall now address.

I have concentrated on the EN within the *corpus* and attempted to produce an account which provides a unified account of that work. In so doing, however, I have sought to emphasize the consistency and plausibility of the account rather than to concentrate on difficult passages for my interpretation. I offer two justifications for this sort of approach. Firstly, any account which is going to justice to the EN is going to be philosophically complex: there are accordingly sufficient difficulties in the initial setting out of any plausible account to keep a commentator occupied in the first instance without attempting to do justice to every difficulty within the text. Secondly, whatever view is taken of the creation of the EN, it seems unlikely to be a work which has been completed and fully formed by Aristotle to be internally consistent: at the least, if an internal consistency does exist, it is not immediately apparent. (Although little hangs on this as far as the present thesis is concerned, my own view is that the EN is likely to be a series of edited lecture notes, and it is as a course of lectures that I shall style the EN throughout the thesis.) An emphasis on difficulties at the beginning of an interpretation is likely to distort that interpretation: only once a general line of thought has been advanced can those difficult passages be reread in a new

light in order to see whether difficulties disappear on reinterpretation. That said, I hope to have firmly anchored my arguments on a close and extensive reading of the EN.

With respect to the rest of the *corpus*, similar considerations apply. It is clear that complete internal consistency does not exist. I have accordingly used the *corpus* outwith the EN rather as a quarry for the interpretation of the EN than as a test for that interpretation. Again, however, I would hope to have anchored my interpretation within the *corpus* so that it possesses considerable plausibility as exegesis. As far the EE is concerned, I have taken no firm view on the relation of that work to the EN and certainly none on their respective merits as works of moral philosophy. That said, there are places within the thesis where I have noted an apparent difference between the arguments of the EE and the EN, and others where I have pointed to evidence within the EE to back my interpretations.

One overarching methodological assumption has been Aristotle's pragmatic tendencies within the EN. I have assumed this firstly because I believe it to be a generally plausible philosophical position: a philosophical theory should be judged at least in part by what it sets out to do and how well it performs that task. Moreover, when seeking to understand arguments, an understanding of what purposes those arguments are intended to serve is often useful to comprehension. As has been suggested (Baker and Hacker 1984), the model of geology and its examination

of rocks is not applicable to philosophy; philosophical evidence does not exist entirely untouched by the theory which is brought to interpret it. Secondly, such pragmatism is explicitly adopted by Aristotle in the EN. Particularly in his examination of phainomena and legomena, Aristotle does not approach and set out the evidence without a view to what he is trying to prove. A striking example of this is the adoption of a bipartite psychology in the EN when he takes an analysis of the soul which he knows and admits to be theoretically inadequate because, broadly, it will 'do' (EN I 13 1102a23-32). Unless we know or make some attempt to descry what Aristotle is trying to argue in the EN as a whole, we are accordingly likely to misread the evidence of the stones he has used to build his edifice: torn from their place in the overall context, they will be unrecognizable and uninterpretable. It is perhaps a lesson that modern philosophers need to ponder carefully: the plausibility and force of philosophical arguments lie far more in their overall coherence than in some presumed absolute truth of the component parts.

It is for this reason that in the first three chapters I attempt to discern the context within which the arguments of the EN must be read. I argue that only by taking seriously Aristotle's claim that the EN is a political work can it be understood. Moral philosophers, because they are no longer expected to have much practical influence, rarely ask themselves what they are trying to do besides the imparting of knowledge in a context of academic

assessment and awards prior to the entering of the young into the fully adult world. We cannot assume such a background to ancient philosophy. For Aristotle, I argue that he is trying to produce political effects: his aim is not to change the ethics of his audience, but rather to allow them to act effectively as politicians in the creation of the conditions for the good life. To do this, they have to be able to articulate the values by which they already live.

No modern philosophical work can close its introduction without an explanation of its author's use of gender specific language. Such explanations are often a mix of defiance, apology and defence. I shall merely state the facts: that I use male and female examples randomly and without any conscious pattern or intention other than to ensure that, overall, my thesis, Aristotle and philosophy are not taken to be applicable or of interest to only one sex. Although Aristotle does believe deep and important differences exist between the sexes, his views on this matter do not enter into this thesis and I have accordingly ignored them.

A word of explanation is required about the title of this thesis which might otherwise be regarded as an example of *lucus a non lucendo*. I argue in this thesis that the EN can be understood and, indeed, is better understood when it is not regarded as being in thrall to a view of nature from which teleological facts can be read off: that argument takes the form of shewing how it

can be understood otherwise. That does not alter the fact that in places I have argued that Aristotle assumes certain brute facts about human nature, an important example being that human beings characteristically act for temporally distant goals. In these assumptions or, more strictly, observations, Aristotle is doing nothing other than ordinary people or psychologists do every day; and, in the same way, these observations are open to be rejected. That Aristotle almost certainly viewed these observations as being underpinned by a general teleology of nature is irrelevant for present purposes, since the existence of such a teleology would have to be demonstrated by its fertility of explanation in individual cases. The ethical life of human beings is one such individual case; and the plausibility of the teleological claims in this individual case will have and have always had to be tested on their own merits.

Finally, I would like to thank William Charlton and Rosalind Hursthouse for help over the years which has gone far beyond their duties as supervisors. This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Karen, without whose support it would not exist, and to our children, Conrad and Oscar.

Edinburgh

June 1998

Stephen Watt

Chapter one

The purpose of the EN

1.00: Introduction

In chapters one to three of this thesis, I consider what is the intention of the lectures forming the EN. My aim in so doing will be to provide a context in which the contents of the EN can be examined and interpreted.

In chapters one and two, I address two questions: in what sense is the audience of the EN good already; and in what sense are its members to be improved? My answers to these questions will be given in chapter three and will be that the audience are already fully virtuous or morally good, but need to improve their ability to articulate that goodness.

In chapter one, I consider perhaps the most obvious solution to these questions: that the audience has been well brought up, but needs to be made more virtuous because it is still immature. I conclude that the audience in fact needs to be already mature and virtuous in order to benefit from the lectures and that, accordingly, this solution fails.

2.00: The EN is intended to improve its audience

What is Aristotle's purpose in giving the lectures which make up the EN? The obvious reply to this question is that his purpose is to make his audience morally better. As Barnes puts it:

The [sc Nicomachean] Ethics hopes to make us into good men; having read it, we shall be better able to pursue the highest human good, and to help others in the same pursuit.'

Such a view appears to be supported explicitly by several passages in the EN:

As then our present study, unlike the other branches of philosophy, is not for the sake of theôria (for we are not investigating the nature of virtue for the sake of knowing what it is, but in order that we may become good, without which result our investigation would be of no use), we have consequently to carry our enquiry into the region of conduct and to ask how we should act. (EN II 2 1103b26-30)

*..for the purpose [sc of the work] isn't gnôsis but praxis.
(EN I 3 1095a5-6)*

to those who guide their desires and actions by reason, knowing about such things may be of great value. (ibid. 1095a10-11)

2.01: The threatened paradox: improving a good audience

Although the EN is in some sense clearly intended to improve its audience, there are difficulties in understanding this to mean a moral improvement.

The first difficulty is that Aristotle appears to believe that the audience is in some sense already good and not in need of improvement. For instance, he states that the young are not fit to be students of his course because they have no experience of life and conduct and that

..it is these that supply the premisses and subject matter of this branch of philosophy. (EN I 3 1095a3-4)

This entails that he thinks his actual audience do have experience of life and conduct. Moreover, that experience must have resulted in their being good, because bad people cannot benefit from ethical reasoning:

For it is the nature of the many to be amenable to fear but not to a sense of honour, and to abstain from evil not

because of its baseness but because of the penalties it entails...What reasoning can then reform the natures of men like these? To dislodge by argument habits long firmly rooted in their characters is difficult if not impossible. (EN X 8 1179b11-18)

The second and related difficulty is that it is very hard to see how anything Aristotle says in the EN could morally improve the audience. He admits throughout that his conclusions and arguments are only generally true and require the insight of the good agent actually to be applied to conduct.² Given the actual contents of the EN, this doesn't seem to mean so much that there will be exceptions to any general rules propounded, but rather that the contents of the EN are pitched at a fairly high and abstract level: there is little casuistry in the EN. The difference is important. To say that the rule, 'Always return what you owe', is generally true might mean that it's perfectly clear how to apply the rule, it's just that in a minority of cases, by applying it, you'll perform the wrong action, say, by returning money to a drug addict who'll use it to buy drugs. Aristotle's generality appears of a different type. Unless you already possess goodness, it's not so much that you'll go wrong by applying a rule rigidly, it's rather that you'll not be able to apply your knowledge to conduct at all, remaining instead trapped in the world of the ethical boudoir, content with fine words rather than fine actions:

But the mass of mankind, instead of doing virtuous acts, have recourse to discussing virtue, and fancy that they are pursuing philosophy and that this will make them good men...

(EN II 4 1105b12-14)

This point shouldn't be misunderstood. It isn't that the EN can't be of some use to bad people. If, from the Aristotelian point of view, someone is of a very bad character, he could learn some general points from reading the EN. He could learn that he will need to resist some bodily pleasures; that he needs to be prepared to die in battle; that he needs friends whom he should associate with, not for financial gain or enjoyment, but because of their virtue; and that the highest activity of a human being lies in the area of theoretical reason. Now, Aristotle is clearly sceptical about whether just learning that the good life has this sort of general orientation rather than, say, fast cars and fast women is going to have much of an effect on a bad agent's conduct. But, for the sake of argument, say it did. This would be irrelevant to our understanding of Aristotle's purpose in writing the EN; for, as we have seen, the sort of audience at whom the lectures were directed appears to be at least fairly good already, certainly good enough not to be able to benefit from these broad lessons in how to orientate your life.

Accordingly, we appear to face the paradox that, in order to benefit from the EN, the audience must already be morally good;

but, if they are already morally good, they have no need of the EN.

3.00: Towards a solution: the inapplicability of 'morality'

Since Anscombe's essay, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', there has been a suspicion among some analytical philosophers that any notion of 'moral reasoning' as being a species of practical reasoning with its own principles and conclusions separate from other types of practical reasoning may be incoherent.³

Aristotle begins the EN by apparently defining his subject matter as the whole of practical reasoning (EN I 1 1094a1-3). So until it is shewn otherwise, we have no reason to consider that the EN is only interested in a particular type of practical reasoning rather than practical reasoning in general. If the EN is intended to remove a deficiency in its audience, there is accordingly no reason in advance of any argument to restrict that deficiency to a 'moral' deficiency: it could be intended to remove any deficiency in the agent which prevented her from achieving some good. And in advance of any argument, that good could be anything from tying a bootlace to achieving eternal salvation.

None of this should be taken as arguing that Aristotle ends up being interested in all types of practical reasoning: he isn't, for example, interested in that form of practical reasoning which

is concerned with technai and poiésais rather than praxeis (EN VI 4 1140a1-23); and he is centrally concerned with practical reasoning which leads to eudaimonia (EN I 2 1094a18-26). But the boundaries of his interest will be something for us to argue to rather than something we are entitled to assume from the outset.

On this basis and in the abstract, there now seems nothing paradoxical in the audience's being good and at the same time being deficient in some particular area: no one is good at everything a human being can benefit from being good at. Whether there is in fact a paradox will accordingly depend on what sort of action it is argued that the EN sets out to improve.

3.01: Towards a solution: the maturity of the audience

We have already seen that Aristotle considers his ethical lectures to be unsuited to the young (ho neos) because the young have no experience of life and conduct, and are also led by their feelings (EN I 3 1094b27-1095a6). Moreover, this unsuitability extends to the immature of any age (ibid. 1095a6-9).

Now, although this restriction on the maturity of the audience is clearly going to exclude the very emotionally uncontrolled and the very inexperienced, given that the EN is an exercise in education, it would be extremely strange if the audience, in some sense, were not to be more immature than their teacher. The

normal case of education, whether at school or university, is of the older teaching the younger. Moreover, the Greek word for education -paideia- suggests that it is restricted to children (paides).⁴

But does Aristotle regard the lectures of the EN as paideia? In his discussion in Pol VII 15 1336b35-40, Aristotle restricts the term paideia to periods of training up to the age of twenty-one. Furthermore, nowhere in the EN does Aristotle suggest that the lectures form part of paideia, but rather seems to require that his audience has benefited from a satisfactory paideia before they attend.⁵

That Aristotle doesn't apply paideia to the contents of the EN wouldn't be important if this was a purely verbal matter; but I suggest that it in fact reflects a substantive point. Paideia, for Aristotle, always has a certain passiveness about it: it is something you have done to you rather than something you do yourself. It is imposed through inflicting pleasure and pain (EN X 1 1172a19-21; cf Pol VIII 4 1339a28-29). It is given by someone who is your superior (EN VIII 12 1162a4-7; X 9 1180b3-8). Moreover, whatever the student does in paideia is done, not for its own sake, but for the sake of being able to perform a different, adult, action. Thus, of the four customary subjects of education noted by Aristotle (Pol VIII 2 1337b24-25), three - reading and writing; drawing; and gymnastics- are self-evidently pursued for the sake of adult practices with which they are not

identical. Although the status of the fourth -mousikê- is left ambiguous, it can be plausibly argued that it too is learned, not for its own sake, but for the sake of its influence on virtue (ibid. 1338a13-30).⁶

The passiveness of paideia is to be contrasted with the development of virtue and technai, which are only attained by actually doing the virtuous actions themselves (EN II 1 1103a32-b2).⁷

Now, this suggests that there are two developmental stages: one, where an individual has to do childish things in order to get into a position to perform adult actions; and an adult stage where, although the actions to be learned may initially be done through gritted teeth and done badly, they are nevertheless from the very beginning still actually done. So on the one hand, we have the children playing in sand pits and paddling pools to develop hand-eye coordination and the ability to cooperate with their fellows; and on the other, we have the apprentice signwriter spending three days on a job an experienced craftsman could have done in an hour. Just as we would see no contradiction between the claim that someone was well educated, but still required training to perform a certain task, so Aristotle would see no contradiction between the claim that someone was pepaideumenos, but still required further mathêsis .

If the EN is a form of teaching but isn't paideia, this suggests that, whatever action the EN is trying to get the audience to perform, it is itself an instance of that action. Clearly, this can only be some sort of high-level practical reasoning. We are accordingly left with the conclusion that the EN is intended to help an audience which has already undergone paideia engage in high-level practical reasoning.

4.00: A proposed solution: The EN as a training in reasoning

The sort of picture that is beginning to come into focus may remind us of the *Republic* 537b-c:

Socrates: '...a select group of the twenty-year olds will receive promotion above the rest, and will be required to consolidate the subjects they were taught unsystematically as children until they gain an overview of the relationships these subjects have to one another and to reality.'

Glaucon: 'Yes, it's only when this has occurred that one's learning has a secure foundation.'

Socrates: 'And it's also the main way of testing whether or not someone is naturally suited for dialectic, since the ability to take an overview is the distinguishing mark of a dialectician.'

This similarity may be reinforced when we bear in mind that the EN is widely taken to be an example of dialectic, and is, certainly, an overview of practical reasoning.⁹

So perhaps the sort of audience we are looking at in the EN is composed of youths of about twenty years of age, who have been well brought up, but who haven't really had to get any theoretical and rational rigour into their opinions about life. Accordingly, although their instincts are sound, they'll probably have a mishmash of notions picked up from sophists, tradition, Platonism and whatever, none of which have been thought through with any consistency: in fact, rather like a modern undergraduate class in moral philosophy. But the audience's saving grace is that they want to be good, are eager to learn, and that they are aware of their own immaturity and feel shame when they do go wrong.⁹

Now the attractions of such a view are obvious. Firstly, it seems plausible that there is a stage in the development of good people when, as youths, they are full of enthusiasm and good intentions, but are rather underdeveloped in the rational control needed to be fully good. Secondly, it fits in rather nicely with the Western practice of beginning Higher Education at around the age of eighteen, suggesting that around that age, there is a need to change from the passive all-round education (*paideia*) of the school pupil, to the more participatory, active and more narrowly intellectual training of the university. Both these points

suggest that, if the general account given in this section does reflect Aristotle's view of his task in the EN, it is likely to be a view that fits in well with a commonsense view of human nature.

4.01: Criticism (I): the intended audience is older than twenty

The sort of picture proposed, as noted, depends partly for its plausibility on what we imagine the typical psychological state of an adolescent to be - a state that might be described as 'puppydom'. So if it could be argued that the EN is in fact addressed not to an audience of youths but rather of adults, the picture as an explanation of the purpose of the EN would accordingly become less persuasive.

As already cited, Aristotle specifically excludes the immature from the audience of the EN (EN I 3 1094b27-1095a13). Although this covers both immaturity through lack of age and immaturity in character, given the general biological bias of Aristotle's thought, he tends to think of human agents as having a characteristic life cycle and as having certain typical attributes at specific stages of that cycle.¹⁰ Accordingly, although some individuals will remain immature when they are no longer chronologically young, and, conversely, some that are young will possess a maturity in advance of their years, *hōs epi*

to polu, the immature in years will tend to be identical with the immature in character.

In Pol VII 14 1335a28-29, in order to avoid the unfortunate consequences of marriage among the young, the ideal age of marriage for men is set at around the age of thirty-seven. Later, he remarks that mental prime is reached at fifty (1335b32-5). In Rhet B 14 1390b9-11, the mature are distinguished from the young, and the age of bodily maturity set between the ages of thirty and thirty-five, and mental maturity set at forty-nine.

Apart from these specific statements in the *corpus*, the *Politics* suggests the splitting of the citizenry of the ideal city into the young and the old, with the young being ruled and acting as the military arm of the state, and with the old acting as rulers (Pol VII 8 1328b29-1329a17; *ibid* 13 1332b35-38). Although Aristotle puts no specific ages on this division, some hints may be gleaned from the Athenian constitution where citizens were liable to military service between the ages of twenty to sixty, service in juries was restricted to citizens over the age of thirty, and appointment as an arbitrator in cases over the value of ten drachmae was restricted to those over the age of sixty.''
Since Aristotle makes no effort to criticize existing constitutions specifically on the ground of failure to allocate the tasks of citizenship to the appropriate age group, this would suggest that the mature and politically governing class of

Aristotle's ideal city are unlikely to be younger than thirty, and probably nearer sixty.

Turning to the *Republic*, although a rigorous intellectual training will begin for the Guardians at about the age of twenty, this will be in the mathematical sciences, and the study of dialectic will only begin at the age of thirty (535a-541b). Since Aristotle explicitly distinguishes the subject matter of exact sciences such as mathematics from that of the EN (EN I 3 1094b19-28), before going on to shew that the young are unsuited for the latter (ibid 1094b27-1095a11), this suggests that he might follow Plato in distinguishing the aptitude of those under thirty for mathematics, from the aptitude of those over thirty for the dialectic of the EN.

None of this is, of course, conclusive evidence that Aristotle is thinking of an audience over the age of thirty. It is, however, strong circumstantial evidence that, instead of thinking of the paradigm student as being around twenty, we would do better to consider whether he is more likely to have been older than thirty.¹² Now, if this were to be the case, then the model of the EN's purpose as being the rational training of puppydom is less plausible; for, whatever the case may be in respect of twenty year olds, it is implausible to argue that thirty year olds, particularly those who have been engaged in ten years of active military service, are going to be puppies, full of heady enthusiasms. Instead of thinking of Aristotle's audience as being

a collection of Rupert Brookes, eager to rush off in 1914 and serve a noble cause dimly understood, we might do better to think of them as rather analogous to the troops returning home in 1918, grimly determined to change society.

4.02: Textual evidence apparently against a mature audience

A piece of possible textual evidence that Aristotle may have been directing his lectures at the young can be found at EN X 9 1179b7-10, where Aristotle indicates that arguments (logoi) can stimulate and encourage well-born youths.¹³ Certainly, this could be taken as meaning that the EN itself could stimulate such youths. On the other hand, since the EN doesn't contain every species of practical argument, and, in particular, does not contain detailed casuistry, the passage can be read as making the general point that you can argue with someone who is properly educated about what they should do, while you can't argue with someone who isn't. Now, up to a point, a properly brought up two year old is open to persuasion by argument - 'If you eat your dinner, you can have Teddy' - but from the general assertion that argument plays a part in the bringing up of the young, nothing follows about the role of high level argument such as that contained in the EN.

For the sake of argument, however, say that the logoi referred to are the arguments of the EN. The words used in the passage -

stimulate and encourage (protrepsasthai and parormésai) seem inappropriate if they are to be regarded as intended to describe the main purpose of the EN. Both words seem to suggest the inception of a process of education and not the process of education itself. For example, an elementary class in philosophy may encourage a student to be a philosopher by lighting an enthusiasm for the subject; watching television courtroom dramas may stimulate an interest in becoming an advocate. In neither case, however, is the stimulation or the encouragement the same as the teaching which is required to fulfil the desire which has arisen as a result of the encouragement. Many people may be fired with enthusiasm for philosophy or law; to pursue that enthusiasm requires more than attending those lectures or watching those programmes which were the occasions for that enthusiasm; and it is quite likely that the majority of enthusiasts will not achieve the ambition on which their hearts have been set. But just as a trial may enthuse a law student without the purpose of a trial being that stimulation of enthusiasm, so may the EN stimulate noble youths without the purpose of the lectures being the inspiring of that enthusiasm. The test is surely whether or not suggesting the purpose of the lectures is the inspiring of enthusiasm adequately explains the richness of argument and detailed analysis which the EN contains. I would suggest that it is difficult (though admittedly not impossible) so to think, just as it would be difficult (though again not impossible) to understand the detailed workings of the courtroom as having the purpose of arousing the interest of prospective lawyers. In both

cases there seems so much that is dry and difficult, so much that is simply in excess of the requirements of stimulating the young, that the identification of the purpose of the observed processes as stimulation seems ill-founded.

In sum, the evidence of this passage does not count against the identification of the audience as mature. Firstly, it may not refer to the arguments of the EN specifically but may be making a far more general point. Secondly, even if it is referring to the EN, the improvement caused by the lectures might be only accidental to their true purpose. In either case, there is nothing to undermine the hypothesis that the audience have an age in excess of thirty.

4.03: Criticism (II): intellectual and emotional development proceed apace

Putting aside the direct textual and circumstantial evidence that the audience is mature as set out above, can the claim that the audience needs to develop the rational control of its actions by attending the lectures forming the EN be made sense of in Aristotelian terms?

In non-Aristotelian terms, there doesn't seem to be too much of a problem. Taking again the picture of puppydom, we are used to drawing a distinction between an agent's fundamentally good

nature, and his lack of training or intellectual rigour: 'He has a good heart,' might go up the cry, as he flounders around making a mess of his own and others' lives. Now, of course, if this were a permanent condition, one where the agent always did the wrong thing however much he wanted to be good, it might be more difficult to be so forgiving: good natured muddleheadedness often ends up, perhaps rightly, being reclassified as self absorbed carelessness. But we can put this hard case aside: whatever sense we attach to puppydom, it is normally going to be a temporary condition which the agent grows out of.

To put this sort of picture in Aristotelian terms, we can use as a basis Aristotle's division of the soul into an affective part amenable to reason and reason itself (EN I 13 1102a26-1103a10).¹⁴ To each part, there is attached a different kind of virtue: to the affective part, the virtues of character; to the rational part, the intellectual virtues (ibid 1103a3-10). In broad, our claim will be that the audience have developed their virtues of character, but have, as yet, only imperfect intellectual virtues, a deficiency to be remedied by the EN.¹⁵

As this claim stands, it is too strong. Aristotle makes clear that virtue in the true sense (hē kuria aretē) cannot exist without phronēsis, the intellectual virtue of practical reason (EN VI 13 1144b14-17).¹⁶ So the original claim has to be amended to the claim that, although the audience have only imperfect intellectual virtues, and, consequently, strictly speaking, also

only possess the virtues of character in an imperfect way, broadly speaking, their virtues of character are in good order.

This claim has to be interpreted carefully in order to remain Aristotelian and the difficulty rests in how to separate the two types of virtue so that one type can be broadly in good order whilst the other isn't. I now turn to consider how this separation might be achieved.

4.04: Separating virtues of character from intellectual virtues: the 'blind obedience' model

Aristotle talks of the affective part of the soul being obedient to reason in the way that a child is obedient to its parents (EN I 13 1102b28-1103a21). One way of interpreting this model would be that the child has become so docile that it will do *anything* the parent tells it to without question. The plausibility of this interpretation is enhanced by its standing in the tradition of Plato, who argues, for example, in the *Republic* (588b-592b) that the affective part of the soul should be tamed like a wild animal or ruled like slave.

The model assumes that there is a rigid and real difference between the rational and affective part of the soul analogous to the difference between two people or an animal and a person. The slave doesn't obey his master's instructions because he thinks it

good to obey them: he obeys them because he is afraid of being beaten. He doesn't need to identify the reasons for the instructions before he obeys them: all he needs to do is to identify them as coming from his master.

In the case of the instructions from reason, the analogy, if applicable, would require that why the affections obeyed the instructions from reason wouldn't be that the instructions were reasonable- ie had a rational quality- but rather that they came from the reasoning part of the soul. This would entail that there was some extrinsic property of the rational part of the soul -its location or appearance, say- which would enable the affective part of the soul to recognize the rational part of the soul as something separate from it in the way that a slave recognizes its master's instructions, not because they are jolly good instructions, but because they come, say, from the man carrying the stick and wearing the hat.

The problem with this for the Aristotelian is that the parts of the soul referred to by Aristotle aren't really separate physical or spatially located parts, but rather more capacities distinguishable in thought but not in reality.¹⁷ This being so, it is hard to see how the rational part could have any extrinsic properties since the quality of being rational exhausts its nature.

Hence, the blind obedience model would have to be revised into an obedience model where the affective part of the soul has not simply been beaten into a mindless acquiescence to the dictates of reason, but rather, in some as yet vague sense, seeks to follow the orders of reason. not blindly as a broken slave, but as a willing employee might seek to carry out the orders of an employer. When we turn to Aristotle's discussion of slavery in the *Politics*, we do indeed find that he is fully aware of the need for a slave to exercise an active and intelligent obedience in the performance of his master's orders (Pol I 2 1255b16-40). Moreover, the rule of the soul over the body -a despotikên archên- is explicitly contrasted with the rule of the reason over the appetites -an archên politikên kai basilikên (Pol I 2 1254b4-6).¹⁹ All this suggests a model where the affections cooperate with reason, a suggestion supported when we return to EN I 13 1102b25-1103a3 and note that the language used perhaps indicates respect and reasoned acquiescence rather than the blind obedience originally claimed.

4.05: Separating the virtues of character from the intellectual virtues: the 'co-operation' model

EN VII 6 1149a25-b2 talks of spirit (thumos) rushing off like a hasty servant before he has heard the order properly, or barking like a dog at a knock at the door before he knows whether it is a

friend or enemy trying to get in. Burnyeat glosses this passage as follows:

As in Plato, the overeager dog in us is concerned with what is noble and just, with honor and self-esteem, without taking thought for the consequences or the wider view.¹⁹

This appears to be a promising model for the state of the audience: a state of puppydom, full of vim and vigour, yet lacking something in the way of commonsense. Nonetheless, Plato can't be the exact model for Aristotle's solution. Plato's model of the division of the soul is a *substantial* one: he believes that the three parts of the soul are equivalent to three different individuals. Aristotle, on the other hand, as we have seen, regards the divisions within the soul as conceptual rather than real differences.²⁰

Putting aside Plato's substantial division of the soul, we could try a broad division based on the different ends or reasons pursued. We know, the argument might go, that Aristotle claims that the virtues of character set the ends of action whilst the intellectual virtue of phronēsis sets the means to those ends (EN VI 12 1144a6-9). Puppydom is the state of getting the end right - nobility- but getting the wider picture or means wrong.²¹ Clearly, any such account would need to provide a detailed account of terms such as 'means' or a 'wider picture' before it could be finally accepted. But in broad, such an account, quite

apart from any textual plausibility, seems psychologically persuasive: youth is perhaps full of principles, pursued without any awareness of the consequences and costs of the means used to put those principles into effect. It moreover suggests a link with psychoanalytic theory and Aristotle's theory of akrasia: if akrasia and puppydom are both states of failure of rational control over the affections, akrasia might be identifiable as a case of arrested development.²²

It is worth emphasizing how plausible and familiar such a picture is. Especially since the development of a discrete and ill-disciplined youth culture in the fifties, we almost expect noble youths to be full of a high-principled anger for a time, before settling down to the trimming and compromise of the mature life. It is, moreover, akin to Plato's view in *Laws* 653 that there is a stage

when pleasure, and friendship, and pain, and hatred, are rightly implanted in souls not yet capable of understanding the nature of them, and who find them, after they have attained reason, to be in harmony with her. This harmony of the soul, taken as a whole, is virtue; but the particular training in respect of pleasure and pain, which leads you always to hate what you ought to hate, and love what you ought to love from the beginning of life to the end, may be separated off; and in my view, will be rightly called education.

But is this picture in fact Aristotelian? We have already seen that the virtues of character without the intellectual virtues aren't properly virtues. This prompts a question: we know why possessing the pseudo-virtues of character isn't like possessing the full virtues of character -they lack some element of rational direction and control. But why are the pseudo-virtues sufficiently like the full virtues even to be considered as pseudo-virtues? Why do we want to say more than simply that they are on the way to becoming virtues without being there yet?

4.06: Pseudo-virtue as being goodness without deliberation

One strategy for defining the putative state of pseudo-virtue is that it is a state where the agent's immediate response to a good or an evil is in good order, but where the agent's character isn't such as to allow him to subject that immediate response to the rational test of deliberation or reflection.²³ Such a strategy fits in well with EN VII 6 1149a25-b2 and Burnyeat's gloss cited above: youth is hasty, maturity more reflective.

Now a problem with this strategy is that it seems to assume that the difference between the fully virtuous and the pseudo-virtuous agent is a matter of an additional reaction: both agents initially have the same reaction, say, the same emotional response of fear; but the fully virtuous agent then has the further reaction of reflecting on that fear. Although this is

undoubtedly the case in some instances, surely more common is the case where it is precisely the initial reaction which is the crucial difference between the virtuous and other agents. (This is supported by EN III 8 1117a17-22). The account suggests for example that the initial reaction couldn't be just that period of reflection and deliberation which the virtuous agent undertakes, the pseudo-virtuous agent instead rushing off without thought, although this is an obvious interpretation of EN VII 6 1149a25-b2. Different agents surely not only have different ultimate reactions, but also, and perhaps centrally, different initial reactions.

Moreover, deliberation can itself be a sign of immaturity: hesitating, as with Hamlet, can be a failing. As Aristotle notes, fear makes people deliberate (Rhet B 5 1383a6-8); and since the courageous agent will not fear on as many occasions as the non-courageous agent (eg EN III 7 1115b10-11), he will accordingly deliberate less than at least some types of non-virtuous character.

The obvious conclusion to draw from this is that the virtue of the fully virtuous agent will not be measured by whether he performs more (or less) reflection than the non fully virtuous agent, but rather whether he performs the appropriate amount: as always, the measure is what the fully virtuous agent does (EN III 6 1106b36-1107a2). Getting the amount of deliberation right isn't therefore just a bolt on extra that can be developed after, say,

the age of eighteen, but rather an essential part of getting the response right. The imperfectly virtuous get the amount of deliberation that the phronimos would perform wrong: standardly, the young may be too hasty and thus perform too little; but like Hamlet, on occasions they will also be too hesitant and go wrong in that way.

Aristotle doesn't clearly address the question of the existence of pseudo-virtues, but he does acknowledge the possibility of an inborn natural virtue without a developed virtue of phronêsis (EN VI 13 1144b1ff). In doing so, he seems to be making two related points. Firstly, all human beings normally possess the capacity for virtue just as they all normally possess the capacity for learning a language (ibid 1144-6; cf EN II 1 1103a23-26). Secondly, just as in the case of physical aptitudes, different individuals will have different natural capacities to achieve virtue (EN VI 13 1144b10-14). Putting aside the first point, let us consider the second. That someone, as it were, starts off the race with an advantage, means nothing in the absence of phronêsis: indeed, an agent with a natural disposition to virtue, in the absence of practical wisdom might well prove more dangerous than someone with only a normal capacity for virtue. Taking the hint from Aristotle's example (ibid), we might point to fanaticism as a realization of a high natural capacity for virtue without phronêsis. A rational agent with a high natural capacity for virtue, but little phronêsis isn't good *qua* virtue but bad *qua* reason, he is just very bad.

Now, if Aristotle did acknowledge a state of pseudo virtue²⁴, his view of it would have to be the same as his view of natural virtue: it might be on its way to becoming something good, but as a state viewed in its own right, it might be very bad indeed. And if we try to imagine the sort of student suggested by the picture of puppydom as a state of lacking reflection, he does seem rather unsuited to Aristotle's classes: if he is on fire with the love of the noble, he might be unlikely to sit still long enough to complete the fairly dry lecture course that is the EN. In fact, he seems rather more likely to be precisely that sort of undisciplined student excluded by EN I 3 1095a4-11.

Consider, for example, the case of the soldier. Greek poleis of Aristotle's period have been described as being permanently on a war footing.²⁵ The state of active military service is assumed by Aristotle to be a normal part of the young man's role, even in his ideal city state (Pol VII 8 1329a2ff), and bravery in battle is the central case of courage (EN III 6 1115a28-35). Accordingly, the virtuous man would seem to need to be a good soldier.

Could someone be a good soldier without reflecting and deliberating? Clearly not. You can't be a good soldier without getting the amount of reflection right: too much and you falter, too little and you rush off to destruction. Imperfect soldiers will perhaps tend to go wrong in both ways, lurching from one extreme to another. Deliberation isn't, therefore, something

separate from the activity of soldiering, but rather something which is essential to that activity and which must be learned as part of that activity in order for it to be effectively performed.

I conclude, therefore, that pseudo-virtue can't exist as a state, good in its own right, if it is taken to be a state which lacks reflexion. A state which is unreflective is, taken in its own right, a bad state: it may be of such a nature that it is able to progress to a state of virtue; but of itself, it gets things wrong and produces vicious actions. It accordingly seems an extremely unsuitable state for the audience of the EN and this suggests that, if Aristotle did acknowledge the existence of a state of pseudo-virtue among the young, his audience would need to have grown out of it before being fit for his lectures.

5.00: The EN as learning by doing

The foregoing reflexions on pseudo-virtue suggest that, even if pseudo-virtue can exist, it is not a suitable state for learning from the EN.

I argued above (§3.01) that the EN was not itself paideia because paideia was passive and was confined to the immature: adult learning involved the active participation of the learner. The reflexions on pseudo-virtue reinforce this conclusion in that, in

order to be able to perform any complex task such as soldiering well, the agent needs already to have developed practical reason.

Putting aside Aristotle for a moment, the suggestion that human beings mature and become adult through learning to perform some complex and long term task is a familiar and plausible modern claim: thus it is widely mooted that young men are socialized through the disciplines of paid employment and that, in the absence of such employment, they do not become properly functioning adults. The point here is not that paid employment is itself a necessary part of the good adult life, but rather that it is one of the possible schools of virtue. It should be noted that military service might be argued to be particularly well suited to such an educational function: since the incentives for performing well and disincentives for performing badly are on the whole immediately apprehensible by even the least virtuous - plunder and medals among the incentives; death and beatings among the disincentives- soldiering is a very suitable means of instilling virtue into even the most unpromising material.

So if the audience are old in terms of years and have already performed military service, they are, broadly speaking anyway, practically rational; and in a state where they can go on to learn how to do moral philosophy. This leaves the question of why they should want to do moral philosophy and it is to this question that I shall turn in the following chapter.

It might be objected, however, that by emphasizing that the audience is to learn to do moral philosophy by actually doing some by way of following the EN, I am overlooking the distinction that Aristotle makes between the way that intellectual virtues and virtues of character are acquired. EN II 1 1103a14ff seems to make it clear that intellectual virtues -including phronesis owe their existence predominantly to being taught, whilst virtues of character are qualities that owe their existence predominantly to practice and training.²⁶ So, the objection would go, it is no more necessary that the point of teaching moral philosophy is that the adult can do moral philosophy than it was the point of teaching classics that adults should be Greek scholars: in each case, the aim is to produce qualities of mind -the intellectual virtues- *through* the teaching of something else.

In order to answer this objection, a distinction needs to be drawn. In one sense, the aim of teaching someone, say, classics is always to get her to be a classicist: this would be the case even if the ultimate point of being a sixth form classicist was to be an adult colonial administrator. And in some cases, there is no ultimate and ulterior motive: the point of teaching someone French is very often simply that she should learn French. So even if a hard distinction were drawn between the learning by doing of the virtues of character and the teaching of the intellectual virtues, this would not deny that the point of the EN was simply to do moral philosophy: it would only mean that it couldn't be assumed that this was the ultimate point. Here I can only appeal

to general plausibility. The depth and breadth of the EN seems to me more easily explicable on the assumption that the lectures are intended to produce, put roughly, permanent philosophers rather than philosophers who will grow out of it. Moreover, whatever the precise conclusions of the EN, it is clear that in general the life of philosophy is an important feature of good living. For such reasons, if a hard distinction is to be drawn between the learning by doing of the virtues of character, and the learning by being taught of the intellectual virtues, I would suggest that it remains the most plausible explanation that the point of the EN is to produce, in the broad sense, moral philosophers. At the least, I take it that such an explanation has a high degree of plausibility as a heuristic device. In any case, since the EN does tend to produce moral philosophers, the burden of proof is on those who would suggest that this is a purely temporary aim.

On the other hand, there is no reason to postulate such a hard and fast distinction between the ways in which ethical and intellectual virtues are learned. Zagzebski²⁷ argues that both are acquired through habituation. Sorabji²⁸ emphasizes the intellectual aspect of habituation. We might as a consequence judge that evidence of EN II 1 1103a14ff is too weak to postulate an absolute distinction in Aristotle's philosophy where none in fact exists. The passage could be ignored on the basis that it is an isolated and inconsistent view or perhaps that it is written primarily with theoretical rather than practical reason in mind. But even if the passage is to be accepted as making an absolute

distinction between, for present purposes, phronésis and the virtues of character, it would not follow that broadly intellectual qualities were not learned by doing. When a modern talks of intellectual virtue, the temptation, particularly among those influenced in a general way by Aristotle, is to produce a list of intellectual virtues analogous to the ethical virtues. Zagzebski, for example, lists among others the following: sensitivity to detail; open-mindedness; adaptability of intellect.²⁹ But this contrasts with what Aristotle actually gives as intellectual virtues: sophia or sunesis; phronésis (EN I 13 1103a4-7). In general in the EN, Aristotle notes only two intellectual virtues, distinguished by being the virtues of the two different parts of the rational soul: namely, practical and theoretical rationality (EN VI 11 1143b14-17). So whatever Aristotle might mean by asserting that phronésis isn't learned by doing, this certainly wouldn't entail that the intellectual quality imparted by the EN isn't learned by doing. Indeed, if we are to say that the EN teaches moral philosophy, it becomes increasingly implausible to deny that in this case learning is doing: philosophy of all academic subjects is the one where the ability to do it well is produced by constant practice rather than by, say, the acquisition of facts.

For whatever reason, therefore, I take it that the aim of the EN is to impart broadly speaking the ability to perform moral philosophy. On this assumption, it becomes again clear that the audience do not need the EN to live a good life. Only if

discussing conduct philosophically is always part of virtuous action could the EN be intended to be a remedy for lack of virtue. It is a very odd idea, a very Platonic idea, that only by being a philosopher can one attain virtue in any sphere. If you go back to my earlier claim that Aristotle is initially concerned with all practical reasoning and not just with a specific type of practical reasoning called morality, while it is plausible to claim that a certain intelligence and practical wisdom is essential whatever you put your hand to, it is highly implausible, in the absence of a Platonic metaphysics, to claim that you need to be any sort of philosopher to excel in most forms of practical reasoning.

6.00: Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter against the assumption that the purpose of the EN is to improve its audience morally. Instead, I have argued that the audience is already morally good and thus already possesses the virtue of phronésis. It follows from this that whatever improvement is intended to be produced by the EN must be at least akin to what the EN itself is, that is, broadly, a work of ethical philosophy.

In the following chapter, I consider what might be the practical point of being able to philosophize in this way.

Notes to chapter one

1. Barnes 1976 p26. It should be noted that I am not drawing a distinction between moral goodness and virtuousness. But see note 3 below.

2. Eg EN I 3 1094b11-27; II 2 1103b34-1104a11; II 6 1106b36-1107a2; II 9 1109b20-23.

3. For Anscombe, see eg pp26-44 in Crisp & Slote 1997. Anscombe's own position would seem to be that some modern philosophy helps itself to ways of reasoning which make no sense in the absence of belief in a God who acts as a supreme legislator for mankind. (Cf MacIntyre 1985 esp ch 4; J Haldane, pp92-4 *MacIntyre's Thomistic Revival: What Next?* in Horton & Mendus 1994; M Johnston, pp85-6, *Objectivity refigured: Pragmatism without Verificationism*, in Haldane & Wright 1993.

The claim that Judaeo-Christian morality is essentially act and rule based while Greek ethics is essentially agent and virtue based is perhaps dubious (cf Annas 1981 pp157-9 and Dover 1974 p252). However, if the modern conception underlying the word 'morality' is widely held to be incoherent, it is prudent to avoid the use of the word in explaining Aristotle, simply to avoid explanation *obscurum per obscurius*.

4. I owe this point to D S Depew, p373, 'Politics, Music and Contemplation,' in Keyt & Miller 1991. Depew's thesis is that Aristotle never regards *paideia* as applicable to adults: among the quotations cited in support of this thesis, Depew fails to notice that Pol VII 14 1333b3-5 specifically refers to the need for *paideia* by both children and other ages (*allas hēlikias*). Nevertheless, as will be seen, I regard his thesis as substantially true.

5. Index in Bywater 1890 ad verbum.

6. *Mousikē* as an end in itself is suggested by Pol VIII 3 1338a13-30. That actually *performing mousikē* is only a means for the young to gain the ability to *judge*, as an audience, others' performances is stated at 1340b20-39. Accordingly, whatever the point of adult *mousikē* -ie judging performances- childhood *mousikē* -ie performances themselves- is a means not an end. For more detailed discussion, see: Lord 1982 and D S Depew (op cit).

7. But cf EN II 1 1103a13-16:

..intellectual virtue is for the most part produced and increased by instruction [ek didaskalias]...whereas ethical virtue is the product of habit.

The contrast here, however, is not between acquiring virtues on the one hand by being taught and on the other hand by doing: this is shewn by 1103b9-13 where it is stated that *technai* such as

building require a teacher (*didaxôn*), even though it has immediately before been stated that *technai* are acquired by actual performance (1103a31-32). The actual contrast being made is, I suggest, between those virtues and skills which tend to require and to be helped by the explanation and commentary of a teacher on a tyro's performances, and those which tend to be acquired by simple imitation. As is usual in Aristotle, the distinction need not be absolute, but might rather relate to poles of a continuum. (See §5.00 of this chapter for a further discussion.)

8. For the EN as dialectic, see Irwin 1988 (eg p8); cf Jaffa 1952, esp ch IV.

9. This is the position of M Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to be Good', pp69-92 (see esp pp78-9), in Rorty 1980.

10. cf Rhet B 12 1388b30-1390b13.

11. See Webster 1978. Cf Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution*, ch XLIIff.

12. cf Aeschines 1 11 where the decade between forty and fifty is described as the most *sôphrôn* age. (Cited in Dover 1974 p103).

13. Interpreted thus by Burnyeat, op. cit., p75.

14. The bipartite division of the soul is, in fact, rather a tripartite division into vegetable, affective and rational. However, since the vegetative part of the soul is of no consequence to the purpose of the EN, it can be ignored for present purposes. (See Gauthier & Jolif 1958 ad 1103a1-3.)

15. The general picture is supported by Burnyeat, op. cit. esp pp79-80; and Sorabji in 'Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue' (eg p217) also in Rorty 1980. Both of these would insist on the adjustment to the claim made in noting that virtue without intellect is, in some sense, only a sham or pseudo-virtue.

16. Note, however, that Pol VIII 5 1340a15, Rhet B 12 1389a33-35 and EN II 1 1103a23-26 may suggest that virtue without reason remains entitled to the name 'virtue'.

17. See EN I 13 1102a28-32. Cf DA III 9 432a19-b7; Gauthier & Jolif 1958 ad 1102a28-32; Bechler 1995 p211, n19.

18. Despotic rule is a tyranny (Pol III 5 1279b16-19). A tyranny is a monarchical government in the interest of the ruler as contrasted to kingship which aims at what is best for the common advantage (Pol III 5 1279a25-1279b10. Cf EN VIII 10 1160b22-1161a19).

19. Burnyeat, op. cit. p84. (This reference to Plato is to the *Republic*, esp 440d.) Burnyeat specifically uses this passage as a model for the state of the audience of the EN.

20. For a discussion of Plato's and Aristotle's different approaches to the division of the soul, see Ando 1958. cf Fortenbaugh 1975 pp23-44.

21. Eg Burnyeat, op. cit. pp86ff.

22. The identification of akrasia as a case of arrested development is made by Burnyeat, op. cit., at p85. The link with psychoanalysis, particularly Freudian psychoanalysis, can only be at a very general level, ie both Freud and, allegedly, Aristotle identify going wrong as typically a matter of getting stuck at an earlier stage of normal development. Freud's own theory, as I understand it, is less a matter of a global immaturity, such as would be the case in akrasia, but rather a fixation of specific impulses at an inappropriate stage of maturity (see eg lecture 23 in Freud).

23. Fortenbaugh 1975 for example argues that the distinction between the two parts of the soul is that the emotional response is immediate whilst the deliberative response takes time for reflection. In general, it appears a flaw in Fortenbaugh's account that he helps himself to the distinction between an immediate emotional response and a delayed reflective response without addressing what, if anything, makes a response emotional rather than deliberative besides its immediacy. It would seem for instance that deliberation is itself a response which is immediate but non-emotional.

24. Sorabji (op. cit. pp211-212) is doubtful but seems to tend to the view that Aristotle did not. I am finally uncertain whether or not Aristotle could have acknowledged such a state, although I tend to the view that he could not. Although it is possible that intellectual and affectional development could proceed at different rates at different times -this is hinted at in Pol VIII 4 1338b38-1339a10- I think it rather implausible that any state resembling akrasia would be the normal precursor of virtue either in fact or as a matter of Aristotelian exegesis. But even were it the case that Aristotle did recognize the state of pseudo-virtue as an actual one, this would not affect my arguments to the effect that this could not be the state of the audience to the EN. Cf Fortenbaugh 1975 p52 n1. See also McDowell in Whiting & Engstrom, p30:

As I insisted, Aristotle does not see the product of habituation into the excellences of character as a collection of mindless behavioural tendencies. The result of habituation is a motivational tendency but one with a conceptual and hence rational aspect. People with a properly formed character have learned to see certain actions as worth undertaking on the ground that they are noble; they have

acquired that reason-giving concept in a way that is inextricably bound up with acquiring the propensity to be motivated by thoughts in which it is applied.

25. Dover 1974 p159. Cf p161 where Dover discusses the effects of the permanent threat of war on the assessment of character.

26. See Zagzebski 1996 p149. As noted in note 7 above, I would argue that the teaching/habituation distinction is not, in any case, an absolute one.

27. Zagzebski 1996 pp150-158.

28. Sorabji (op. cit.) p216.

29. Zagzebski 1996 p114.

Chapter two

The purpose of philosophizing

1.00: Introduction

A number of conclusions have emerged from the above discussions which need to be summarized before we can take the analysis further. Firstly, we need to think of the intended audience of these lectures as being of an age greater than thirty and having had experience of military service. We are accordingly not concerned with ill-disciplined youths who have had no experience of life but plenty of high motives, but rather with men who are mature, virtuous in a common-or-garden sense of the word, but who are unable to philosophize about that virtuousness. Secondly, we perhaps need to think of the deficiency in the audience's life which the EN is supposed to remedy as being not a global one which affects all their practical activities, but rather one which affects only a limited and specific type of action. There may be no reason to think that the audience will be improved in every aspect of their common-or-garden virtue: the soldier, for example, will not become a better soldier by attending the lectures. I have argued that type of action to be improved is likely to be what the EN itself is, ie philosophizing. Accordingly, we now need to investigate why philosophizing about practical matters might be thought to be a good thing.

In this chapter, I examine a number of strategies to supply a solution to the problem of how an already fully good audience might yet be said to be improved by the lectures. One strategy is to claim that the EN sets out to reorient the lives of the audience either towards eupraxia or towards theôria. I shall criticize such a strategy on the ground that it conflicts with the conclusion that the audience is already fully good. Another strategy is to argue that the aim of the EN is to maintain the goodness of the audience rather than to improve it. This will be criticized on the ground that such a strategy again fails fully to acknowledge the existing goodness of the audience and, moreover, is a considerable weakening of what the EN actually proclaims itself to be doing.

2.00: Knowing reasons

The first chapter of the *Metaphysics* distinguishes between the man of experience, who knows what to do but not the reasons for doing it, and the man of wisdom (sophia), who knows 'the why and the cause' (to dioti kai ten aitian) (Meta I 1 981a29-30). Gaining a philosophical understanding of practical matters will accordingly give the agent an understanding of the reasons which explain and justify his actions.

That the EN might be setting out to provide the reasons for actions would set that work in the tradition of the *Republic*

which can be seen as a criticism of the unreasoning performance of conventionally required actions.² But we need to ask what is so good about knowing reasons; for Aristotle seems to make it clear that the man of experience is certainly no less and often more effective than the man of wisdom (Meta I 1 981a12-15; cf EN VI 7 1141b21-22).³

We might, very broadly, make an initial distinction between two sorts of answer to this question. Firstly, and despite Aristotle's apparent contradiction, we might insist that the man of wisdom -or, at least, the man of wisdom and experience- is more effective than the man of experience alone. We would then be left to explain both how this is possible and also how we are to understand Aristotle's apparent contradiction of this view. Secondly, we might accept Aristotle's statement at face value and, instead of arguing that the man of wisdom is more effective than the man of experience, argue instead that, although the effects of his actions are unchanged, he feels differently about them.

Taking the latter point, it is rather easy to understand how seeing your life as making up a coherent rational whole might be rather more pleasant than just seeing it as one damn thing after another: loosely, you would feel rather better about yourself. Whilst acknowledging this aspect of the solution, I shall, for present purposes, ignore it. My chief reason for doing so is that it is very hard to see how such a change in an agent's

understanding of her life wouldn't produce some changes in her actions and their effects. Again, and still talking at a very general level, the injunction of pop-psychology to feel better about yourself is supposed to produce some changes in your life: to make you more assertive, less self-destructive and so on. So if seeing the reasons for your actions were to change the way you felt about your life, it is hard to see how this change of view wouldn't ultimately be cashed into a change in actions and effectiveness. Moreover, although in the discussion in EN VI 12 1143b18-1145a6, Aristotle notes that the faculty of reason would be desirable even if it produced no effects (EN VI 12 1144a1-3), he goes on to claim that both theoretical and, of especial importance for current purposes, practical reason do in fact produce effects (EN VI 12 1144a6-9).⁴

I accordingly turn to the former alternative and how understanding the reasons for your actions might make you a more effective agent.

3.00: Effectiveness and understanding reasons

Practical reason (phronêsis) is said to ensure that an agent finds the correct means to his end (EN VI 12 1144a7-9). I have argued in the previous chapter that Aristotle's audience cannot be regarded as being devoid of the powers of practical reasoning and, equally, they cannot be regarded as being completely devoid

of understanding the means to effect their ends: a doctor who had no idea how to realize his ends just wouldn't be a doctor.

So the claim must be that knowledge of reasons increases the ability of an agent to give effect to his ends. Now the understanding of this version of the claim can't be, in any straightforward sense, that knowing why, say, cuts heal better when cleaned and covered with a plaster will make you better able to heal cuts: knowing that cleaning and covering is required is sufficient to provide the best treatment. In most of our everyday life, it seems simply false to claim that our actions would achieve better effects if we knew more about the reasons behind what is conventionally accepted as the appropriate action. And if we assume, reasonably enough, that we can, in a lifetime, only amass so much knowledge, knowing *why* something happens will reduce the amount of knowing *that* an agent can do: pursuing knowledge of reasons has a cost in terms of lost opportunities to pursue other, perhaps more practically significant knowledge *that*.

Let us assume that for any agent, there will be an optimum balance between knowing why and knowing that, where the advantages of pursuing further knowledge why will be outweighed by the costs of lost knowledge that. On what grounds could we suggest that the state of a given agent wasn't at that optimum balance? In particular, given our present attempt to discern the

purpose of the EN, on what grounds could we say that an agent might need to increase her knowledge why?

4.00: Reorientating lives

One way of understanding the EN is to regard it as advocating the life of eupraxia, of practical virtue. Another way is to understand it as shewing that the life of theôria is the best life, while the life of practical virtue, although good, is not the best (EN X 7 1177a12-1179a32).

Taking eupraxia first, this possibility can be understood in two ways. Firstly, it may be the claim that the good life consists *solely* in the goods of practical virtue and not in the goods of theoretical virtue. Wilkes seems to countenance such a possibility when she makes the basis for the goodness of a life

that the best man is the man who exercises his rational capacities to their fullest extent to gain for himself the best life possible.⁵

Secondly, it may be the claim that the good life consists in some mixture of a number of different goods.

I shall have more to say about Wilkes' distinction between a good life *simpliciter* and a good life for a human being in my

discussion of the ergon argument in chapter eleven of this thesis. For the moment, however, it is sufficient to note that the two interpretations of eupraxia are not identical. Whilst the second possibility is compatible with the goodness of being a holy fool, of losing a life to save it (Luke 9, 24), of passiveness or reliance on serendipity, the first is not.⁶ In essence, the claim that goodness, of whatever sort, must be attained by the exercise of rational powers does restrict the ends which may be regarded as goods: to plan to exercise theôria as part of a life of eupraxia is perhaps possible because theôria could be an element in a life of practical reason; to plan to be a holy fool is self defeating because it would destroy that life.

That the audience might be reoriented towards the life of eupraxia as practical virtue entails that the contents of Book X, clearly in some sense advocating a life dominated by theôria, are disregarded. Wilkes for example regards the arguments of that book in favour of theôria as simply wrong. Throughout this thesis, I shall be operating with the methodological assumption that any account which rejects a portion of the EN as incompatible with the rest is to be less favoured than an account which interprets the EN as a broadly coherent whole. On this ground, such an interpretation of eupraxia must be rejected.⁷

The other interpretation -eupraxia as inclusivism- cannot be so immediately dismissed. In order to be compatible with Book X, it

would have to be understood as claiming that the audience is currently undervaluing theôria and must be reoriented towards a greater appreciation of its value. Such a view, I shall argue, is subject to the same weaknesses as the claim that the audience would be better to adopt a life of pure theôria and, for present purposes, I shall argue against these two possibilities of a reorientation towards theôria as either the dominant best end or as one -currently undervalued- end among many together.

The suggestion is, therefore, that Aristotle's' audience are practically virtuous, but not living the best sort of life because of an absence of theôria; and that, accordingly, the purpose of the EN is to take the good and make them into the best by reorientating their lives from practical concerns to those of theôria.^e

Such a solution to the problem of the EN's purpose has the immense advantage of resting on one of the few aspects of the EN that is beyond question if the work is to be taken as a whole: Aristotle clearly thought theôria was better than practical virtue, even if the details and practical implications of this view are less clear. There is good prima facie reason for saying, therefore, that reorientating a life from practical virtue to theôria would be an improvement in that life. Moreover, the existing state of the audience would be explained as being good (practically virtuous) but not the best it could be (living the life of theôria). It also places the EN once again firmly within

the tradition of a certain understanding of the *Republic*, which regards that work as being concerned with the education of Glaucon, the education of the political man away from the pursuit of honour and towards the pursuit of truth.⁹

A major difficulty with this view is that it makes the point of most of the EN problematic. Of the ten books of the EN, Books II to V are wholly concerned with the practical, ethical virtues; and of the rest, only Books I and X can readily be understood as advancing the claims of the theoretical life in preference to the practical. Although it might be possible to explain this apparent imbalance away -as perhaps a starting point in common-sense practical ethics away from which Aristotle progresses during the course of the work¹⁰- the more straightforward explanation is that a large number of the audience -or, perhaps more exactly, a large part of each member of the audience- remains concerned with common-sense practical ethics even after he has achieved whatever enlightenment the EN is intended to provide. This suggests that any reorientation of lives intended by the EN is far less radical than that which may be intended by the *Republic*.

That lack of radical change is not, in itself, conclusive proof that the EN is not concerned with reorientation towards theôria. Aristotle might, after all, be concerned to make only a fairly minor reorientation of most people's lives, say, to allow an acknowledgment of the importance of theôria in a society which had previously been completely oblivious of or even actively

hostile to it. One difficulty with this view is that it still does not easily explain why so much of the EM is devoted to an apparently common-sense and practical ethics: even if it is accepted that, say, Book X serves to encourage theôria, what part do, in particular, Books II to V play in this reorientation? Moreover, can the switch from practical concerns to a concern for theôria be characterized so that it may be regarded as non-radical?

4.01: Reorientating the use of leisure

One solution which has at least *prima facie* plausibility is that the reorientation in question is one which is limited to the use of leisure. The city-state, a society unused to the material circumstances which allow leisure has, willy-nilly, created just those circumstances. It is therefore faced with what to do with that leisure. Some uses -what might be loosely covered by hedonism- will corrupt the broadly military structures which led to the existence of leisure in the first place and without which it could not survive. Simply ignoring leisure, and translating society into a permanently armed camp, might also corrupt existing structures in the way that, say, soldiers who do not regularly fight real wars, will either lose their ability to fight or will turn that ability to inappropriate uses such as revolution.¹¹ Only the acknowledgment of the need to fill leisure with theôria will avoid the corruption of the existing state.¹²

Now this fits in rather well with the picture just presented of the likely audience of the EN. If the audience are battle-hardened men over the age of thirty, it seems highly plausible that they may find it rather difficult to occupy their leisure or, indeed, to recognize that leisure has any part to play in the good life. Clearly such people, hard nosed men of affairs, do exist, and there is no reason to understand anything in Aristotle as denying the existence of such a character. So the account does have an initial psychological plausibility.

More importantly, the underlying strategy of the approach is coherent. The general problem is, roughly speaking, to account for the fact that the audience is already good, whilst at the same time acknowledging that the EN is intended to improve its members. Since leisure is, we might say, ethically ring-fenced, any changes in its use could be entertained without affecting the non-leisured life and its goodness.¹³

There are two issues that the development of this sort of account must address. Firstly, it must shew how the current values of the audience's leisured lives fall short of perfection by failing to acknowledge the primacy of theôria, whilst remaining broadly good. Secondly, it must say something about how the concept of leisure is ethically ringfenced, how the reasons for leisured action are related to non-leisured action.

Beginning with the first issue, two possibilities suggest themselves. Firstly, the practical objects of the audience's interest are perfectly correct and proper, it's just that, as men of affairs, they take an exclusive interest in them when they should be taking an interest in practical matters which is subject to and is tested by the claims of theôria. Alternatively, although the objects in which the practical person is interested are inappropriate, his way of approaching them displays an attitude -a broadly *theoretical* attitude- which when reorientated towards more noble objects, will allow the life of theôria.

4.02: An inappropriate interest in appropriate objects

On whatever understanding we have of the role of theôria in Aristotle's good life, it doesn't completely purge the goodness from practical ends such as honour. If we understand theôria as being the sole constituent of the wholly good life, then goods such as honour will still have goodness as means to the end of theôria. If, alternatively, we understand theôria as only one good, albeit perhaps the most important, in a life of other autonomous goods, goods such as honour will possess goodness in their own right, even if that goodness may, in some sense, be at least conditioned by the supreme good of theôria.¹⁴

Given the doctrine of the mean (EN II 6 1106a26-1107a27), it seems that we can go wrong in two ways in pursuing goods such as

honour: we can pursue them too much or too little (cf EN IV 4 1127b17-20). Since the hypothesis is that we are dealing with an audience of practical men, the danger will not be that they will pursue honours too little. Accordingly, we must assume that the audience are pursuing practical goods such as honour too much, and that the EN is intended to remedy this excess of interest by shewing the audience the reasons for pursuing such goods in the correct, less single minded way.

I have already mentioned that there is more than one understanding of the role played by the activity of theôria in the good life. At one extreme, there will be the view that the goodness of any good must be explained by its relationship to theôria, whether as an external cause, an instance, or by similitude. At the other, although the goodness of any good will not be explained by the goodness of theôria, the fact that theôria is the best good must at least affect the ranking of those other goods in some way. I shall style the former view the 'strong account', and the latter view the 'weak account'.

The effect of learning about the importance of theôria on the strong account is reasonably clear: the whole of the agent's understanding of the goodness of all her goods is liable to be changed. So let us put the strong account aside for the moment. If I can prove that, even on the weak account, the change required in any given type of practically minded audience is too great to be entertained on an Aristotelian understanding of

agency, and, accordingly, the given type of audience cannot be that to which the EN is addressed, the same consequence will apply *a fortiori* to the strong account.

A very weak example of a weak account is the following. A practically minded man attends the EN lectures. He learns that everything he thinks good is inferior to a good attainable by another theoretically minded character. He feels his place in the world to be a little more humble as a result of this discovery, but, otherwise, sticks to his last and carries on with his ethical system unchanged. Now, this increase in humility must produce some change in his actions (see also §2.00 above). He will, for example, think himself rather worse in relation to the theoretically minded and, thus, be rather more willing to sacrifice his own interests in favour of such individuals than previously either directly in his own actions, or indirectly by countenancing a political system which favoured the theoretically over the practically minded. Given Aristotle's encomia on theôria, particularly in Book X of the EN, it is hard to see how a life that contained rather a lot of theôria wouldn't be better and more divine, *ceteris paribus*, than one which did not: whatever the influence on one's own objectives, it is thus surely unavoidable that the practical man should acknowledge as his better someone like Aristotle or Plato, and so reorder his ethics that his life is regarded as less good and, consequently, able to be sacrificed, at least in part, in favour of the lives of his theoretically minded betters.

If we consider Aristotle's portrait of great souledness (megalopsuchia -EN IV 3 1123a34-1125a35), a virtue which is the crowning ornament of all virtue (ibid 1124a1-4), the radical nature of such a shift in world view becomes apparent. The great souled man is not just someone who has a proper estimation of his abilities and deserts, but rather someone who thinks himself worthy of great things and actually is worthy of them (EN IV 3 1123b1-2). Although the stage in the dialectical argument reached in Book IV suggests that the greatest good we can offer to the gods is honour, and thus the greatest good to which mankind can aspire is honour from our fellow citizens (EN IV 3 1123b17-22), by the time we reach Book X, it is clear that this provisional conclusion must be revised in favour of the view that the greatest good to which mankind can aspire is imitation of the gods through theôria and the divine favour consequent on such activity (cf EN X 8 1179a22-32).¹⁵ If a great souled man living for human honours turned up to Aristotle's lectures and took their central message on board, he would either have to revise his own objects of pursuit away from human honours to theôria, or else accept that he was not himself capable of the best and was thus not capable of being a great souled man.

What should we conclude from this? If Aristotle's audience were hard headed practical men, the discovery of the supreme worth of theôria should come as a radical shock. Either they would have completely to revise their ethical view, or they would dismiss Aristotle's arguments as just the sort of airy-fairy stuff to be

expected from a philosopher. Given the nature of the contents of the EN (see, eg, chapter one, § 2.01), the former is psychologically implausible; and the latter alternative view would lead to the EN's having no practical purpose. Given that I have already argued that the audience consists of men over the age of thirty, already schooled in the military and political life of a city state, we should by *reductio ad absurdum* conclude that the EN cannot be intended to produce a shift in the audience's worldview even of this minimal kind.

One reason why this conclusion may have appeared initially less obvious is that it is concealed by the grammar of 'valuing'. If I first value the practical goods such as honours highly, and am then led by the influence of the EN to value them less highly, it looks as though we are talking about a fairly minor quantitative change which is psychologically very plausible. That this can't be assumed simply from the persistence of 'valuing' through the change can be seen as follows. If I value a painting at £500 and later change my mind and value it at £500,000, it is not to the point for me to claim that my change of mind is fairly trivial because, even though the figures have changed, I valued the painting both before and after my change of mind. Getting the figure right is to the point, not just the fact that I put some value on the work. As we have already seen, Aristotle thinks that the characteristic way of going wrong isn't to *ignore* the value of certain goods, but rather to value them too much or too little (see this section, above).

Another way of drawing attention to the correctness of this *reductio* is through a distinction which has been made by some writers between two levels of ethical judgment.¹⁶ The general proposal is that there is a distinction to be drawn between judgments of the form 'x is good' or 'x is beautiful', and judgements of the form 'I must ϕ ' or 'I ought to ϕ '. (I shall style the former evaluations and the latter practical judgements.) Of these two levels, the practical judgments are dependent on and, in some sense, derived from the evaluations.¹⁷

Would we call a person good who made the correct evaluations but made the wrong practical judgments? We might think her better or at least more redeemable than the psychopath who failed to notice that there were needs and wants and goods that had to be taken account of in some way; but such extreme cases of ethical blindness are rare, so rare that we explain them as being the result of mental illness. The normal case of wickedness is someone who gets the balance wrong, who thinks that it would be a good thing if everyone got what they wanted, but, given the choice between himself and other people, chooses himself. In educating a child, the child is not complimented for recognizing that other children have needs and wants -and then disregarding them; she is punished if she doesn't act in certain ways in certain circumstances. Again, what counts is getting the balance right, not just noticing that there is a balance to be struck. If hard-nosed men of affairs notice that theôria is good, and practical goods are also good, but think that theôria is really

pretty trifling while practical goods are what is really important, they are displaying precisely one instance of a paradigm case of badness of character, not the initial stages of goodness.

None of this should be taken as denying that the EN might exercise an influence on the character of its audience at the margins: the audience might be excited to pursue philosophy rather more vigorously than they had in the past. But what I am arguing is that the EN can't be seen as an attempt at wholehearted conversion¹⁰: that if the EN attempts to promote the goodness of theôria, the audience must already have acknowledged that goodness in their pre-lecture lives. And being a hard nosed man of affairs who suddenly, as it were, finds himself with leisure and no idea of how to fill it, will not do as a model.

4.03: An appropriate attitude to incorrect objects

Another approach to the issue of the pre-lecture state of the audience would be to claim that, although they were interested in practical goods rather than the goods of theôria, that interest was of a theoretical kind. The suggestion would then be that the lectures build on this theoretical interest and attempt to lead it towards worthier objects.

The suggestion again has a great deal of initial plausibility. Perhaps its strongest suit is that it provides an account of why the audience would have bothered to turn up to hear Aristotle in the first place. On the account sketched in the preceding section, it remained problematic why a man of business should have been initially enticed into the Lyceum: are we perhaps to imagine that the lectures were billed as being sophistical exercises suitable for practical advantage, some such trickery concealing their true nature until the audience were safely inside? On the present suggestion, there is no difficulty in providing a plausible psychological account. Aristotle is turning his philosophical expertise to the practical world: since the audience already have a, loosely, philosophical attitude to the practical world, it isn't surprising that they want to take advantage of the opportunity to learn from him.

Quite apart from its general psychological plausibility, the approach fits in rather well with some obvious trends of thought within the *corpus*. The evolution from experience in practical matters, through learning about the reasons for acting, to the end point of a full blown theoretical interest in divine rather than mundane objects, is a progression specifically cited in the *Metaphysics* as typifying human development (see *Meta I 1* and *2*). Moreover, in the *EN*, although theoretical reason is defined by the invariability of its objects, there are gestures towards the existence of a more-than-practical interest in practical matters.¹⁹

On this account, the audience would be made up of people who have a philosophical interest in practical matters. The EN would serve to reorientate their lives by detaching this philosophical interest from the inappropriate object of practical life and reattaching it to the appropriate divine object. Now, in a culture, and over a number of generations, there is nothing implausible in such a general progression. At the level of the individual family one might consider, for example, the case of immigrants. The parents, say, have virtues of application and intelligence which they apply to building up a family fortune in business: the children have the same virtues, but, cushioned from the need to make ends meet by inherited wealth, turn those virtues to becoming art connoisseurs or scholars. What is plausible within one family is equally if not more plausible within a whole culture.

Before dealing with such an account head on, we need to note firstly that the account of the progression from practical to theoretical life in the *Metaphysics* is clearly at a general, cultural level rather than at the level of the individual. Moreover, although the EN does hint at a more than theoretical interest in practical matters, nothing is said about how such an interest might evolve into a theoretical interest in theoretical objects. So nothing in the textual evidence compels an interpretation which suggests an evolution from a theoretical interest in practical matters to a theoretical interest in

theoretical matters within an individual's life, although the text certainly does allow such an interpretation.

Accordingly, if the account is to be adopted, it must rest on its psychological plausibility. What then are we to imagine the audience of the EN to have been doing before they attended the lectures? Perhaps we should imagine an ancient analogue to the businessman who has developed a love for the intricacies of business life -pursuing paper qualifications in commercial subjects; engaging in the work of professional societies- in excess of the demands of profit-making. Can we imagine that the EN might detach his enthusiasm from, say, marketing and reattach it to, say, theology? To do so is, I suggest, to misunderstand the nature of a theoretical interest. If someone is enthusiastic about marketing, they love *marketing*: it is the object of their enthusiasm which keeps them enthusiastic. To suggest that such a condition of mind is detachable from its objects is to misunderstand it: the more the person has a non-practical interest in an object, the less likely he is to abandon that object in favour of another, because to love an object is to regard *that* object as being good.²⁰ I conclude therefore that the suggestion that the aim of the EN is to detach a theoretical interest from practical matters and reassign it to divine matters lacks psychological plausibility and, accordingly, in the absence of positive textual support, should be abandoned.

What does perhaps lend a superficial plausibility to this sort of account is that it is undoubtedly true that practical men of a studious cast of mind do reorientate their lives in retirement: thus, it is no means rare for someone in a learned profession, such as a doctor, to turn to a subject such as Classics in retirement. But this change in life doesn't necessarily represent a change in the agent's ethics or psychology: the doctor may have always regarded Classics as a fine pursuit, but one that the circumstances of her life prevented her from pursuing. Now that the circumstances have changed, she can put her interest into effect. It is worth noting here that we are probably again encouraged into a misleading train of thought by the grammar of 'valuing'. Almost everyone values, in some sense, the aspects of a good life that are proposed by serious thinkers. Thus, almost no one thinks that fine art has no value whatsoever, but many think it, say, only a fit pursuit for Sunday afternoons after the proper business of stockbroking has occupied the week. Analogously, we wouldn't say that an agent who, within a lifetime, goes from being a stockbroker and Sunday painter to a full-time and starving painter, hasn't changed: as Aristotle surely hints in his talk about ends and means in practical reason, when we talk about what a person is like, it isn't enough to remain at the level of the ends everyone acknowledges, we need details about 'what, to put it roughly, that person is prepared to do to realize those ends.'²¹

4.04: Conclusions about the reorientation of leisure

The reflections in the final paragraph in §4.03 should prompt us to return to the second issue raised in §4.01: how to distinguish the concept of leisure from non-leisure. The two interpretations discussed in §4.02 and §4.03 both, roughly, sketched the audience as hard-nosed men of business with time on their hands. Both interpretations failed because it is difficult to see how someone can really be a hard-nosed practical agent at the same time as she is a person who thinks theôria highly important. The more plausible the latter claim, the more difficult it is to see why the EN is needed: it gives only high level, general guidance; if someone truly thinks theôria important, why does she need to be reminded of this? (Does the retiring doctor need to be reminded that she can now spend time on her hobby?) The more plausible the former claim, the less likely that person is to be a fit auditor of the lectures as any change in character is too radical for the pre-lecture agent to have been regarded as good.

I do not assume that the two possibilities sketched above exhaust interpretations of the claim that the audience's leisured lives should be reorientated. But their failure indicates, I suggest, a fundamental flaw which will arise in any account based on a certain understanding of leisure. One understanding of leisure is what might be described as the 'holiday' version. This version might go that for some agents, there are certain stretches of time that are filled with work, and there are other periods of

time which aren't. So the question for agents in this fortunate position is how to fill these empty periods. Two sorts of general approach suggest themselves: either the holiday should be devoted to recuperation or some other way of making the agent more fit for the next bout of work; or it should be devoted to an activity which is different and separate from work, but which is, in some sense, compatible with the work: it doesn't, for example, render the agent physically incapable of fulfilling her tasks. Let us put aside the first possibility as suggesting a wholly foreign instrumental interpretation of Aristotle's view of theôria. The second interpretation goes on to suggest that the holiday is filled with theôria because any alternative is incompatible with the period of work.

A nuance needs to be introduced into the claim before it can be taken seriously. As it stands, it rather suggests that any old filling for leisure would do, just so long as it doesn't mess up the really important business of the working life. This obviously won't do. Whatever Aristotle does think, he doesn't think that theôria is good just because, say, it doesn't upset the digestion of a lawyer. So the claim must be amended to something like this: the fact that an agent can pursue theôria in leisure and the practical life of a citizen during the non-leisured time reveals rather than *constitutes* the goodness of theôria. If human beings couldn't find such a life workable and good, then it couldn't be good; but their finding it workable and good isn't (necessarily) the basis for its goodness.

What is wrong with the holiday concept lies in the very idea of leisure as a discrete part within a life which needs to be filled rather than an aspect of the whole life. It is a common observation that someone who enjoys his work becomes increasingly unable to distinguish between working and leisure: the two categories blur. As I shall go on to argue later in this thesis, for Aristotle, the truly virtuous agent enjoys what he must do, and has to do what he enjoys: again, there is a blurring of the distinction between the enjoyable and the necessary. Now, if we pursue this sort of thought, leisure is no longer a holiday, but rather equivalent to a lack of constraint by external circumstances. A man of leisure isn't someone who doesn't engage in hard and unpleasant tasks: he is someone who chooses to do what he does, regardless of whether it is hard and unpleasant, rather than being compelled to act by external circumstances, such as lack of food (cf EN III 1 1110a1-19). In this case, the question as to how to spend one's leisure isn't to be understood as referring to holidays, but rather to one's whole life: how to spend a life which isn't constrained by the need to make money or wage continual war, and so on.

Given this interpretation of the question, an answer which is of the same kind as an answer which might be given to the pensioner's 'How do I spend my retirement?' is misplaced. It is open to me, at the age of thirty, say, to choose how to spend my next vacation or even my retirement: that period of time hasn't happened yet and is, moreover, ethically marked off from the rest

of my life as a time for a different kind of pursuits. It isn't open to me, again at the age of thirty, to be quite so open to the question: 'How do I spend my life?' My mind, on that matter, is likely to have been largely made up. So, if the audience to the EN is mature, which I have argued it is, on the second understanding of leisure, it will be unable to contemplate a radical reorientation in its life which means, roughly, that it will go on leading the same sort of life after the lectures as it led before. The conception of leisure as an unconstrained life denies that it can be ethically ring fenced and doesn't, accordingly, allow any way out of the original paradox of a reorientation of lives when the audience is already ethically mature and good.

We need therefore to turn to the textual evidence to see whether, Aristotle can be regarded as understanding leisure under the 'holiday' conception or under the 'unconstrained life' conception. Aristotle's treatment of leisure is chiefly in two places in the *Politics* (Pol VII 13 1334a1-b5; Pol VIII 2 1337b22-1338a30). Much in both these passages can be read either way. A crucial passage for my interpretation is, however, 1337b33-1338a3, where a distinction is relied on between play (paidia) and leisure (scholê). Paidia is for the sake of inactivity or rest, for recuperating in order to return refreshed to the struggle, while scholê as hêdonê eudaimonia and to zên makariôs (1338a1-2) is rather to be characterized as activity *par excellence* (see eg EN I 7 1098a16-20). Given this distinguishing

of scholè from paidia precisely on the ground that paidia is non-work and that, accordingly, would be able to be filled with any sort of activity and would remain separate from the values of work, whilst scholè is rather everyday life stripped of its need to make compromises with necessity, and its values rather a heightening of the values of workaday life rather than something completely separate, I conclude that Aristotle's 'leisure' is to be understood as an 'unconstrained life' rather than as a 'holiday'. As a result, reorientating leisure will not provide an account which can reconcile the, as yet unresolved, paradox of changing an audience which apparently stands in no need of such reorientation.

4.05: Reorientating lives (continued)

The failure of the attempt to account for the reorientation of lives by restricting the influence of this reorientation to leisure does not, of course, entail that no account of reorientation could succeed. It does, however, heighten the problem which we have faced: how to reconcile reorientation with the pre-existent goodness of the audience. If the audience were very bad, then the general guidance of the EN would benefit them: however, Aristotle is very clear that such an audience would not heed his lectures. Even if the audience were not so much bad, not ax murderers and muggers and the like, but rather hard headed men of business, it again seems unlikely that anything Aristotle says

could sway them from their existing lives.²² The instinct of the 'leisure solution' was sound: to make reorientation more plausible by restricting its effects to a discrete part of a life. As I have argued, however, this attempted solution fails and we are thrown back to considering either how an entire life could be reorientated or how a part of a life could be separated off and the reorientation confined to that part. The burden of proof, I suggest, is now firmly with anyone who wishes to argue either version of reorientation as a purpose for the EN, and there, for the moment, I shall leave it and turn to other possible purposes.

5.00: Defending and preserving the good life

With the failure of the reorientation model, the obvious conclusion is that the EN isn't intended to change its audience at all. A solution based on this assumption might be that the goodness of the audience's practical life is under attack from the arguments of those such as the Platonists and the Sophists. To respond to such attacks, the audience must articulate its own existing unreflective life or else, Pied Piper like, be led to its destruction. Aristotle is accordingly the Burke of fourth century Athens: giving an inarticulate conservatism the intellectual tools to preserve itself. As Broadie puts it:

Aristotle says that good arguments do not make us good people, but it does not follow that bad ones might not help to make us bad. 23

The first thing to notice about this claim is that it is a dramatic weakening of what would otherwise appear to be fairly explicitly claimed in the EN: as noted in chapter one, the EN does seem to promise some sort of improvement in the audience rather than a mere damming up of threatened floodwaters.

Secondly, even though this claim is considerably weaker than that which seems actually to be made by the EN, it does in the abstract seem a not unimportant contribution to the good of the world that can be made by philosophy. But even if the claim is true in general, can it be true of the audience of the EN? Can it be true that the audience of the EN needs to engage in philosophical reflexion because it is in danger of going wrong in its ethics precisely by engaging in such reflexion? There appear two sorts of possibility. Either the audience has already been thrown into confusion by the attacks of the social critics and needs to re-establish its ethical equilibrium; or it believes itself likely to be so confused in the future and is seeking to forearm itself. The time difference between these two possibilities is in fact accidental: whether the level of ethical disintegration resulting from radical philosophies has reached its climax by the time the hapless agent reaches the haven of Aristotle's lecture room being surely a matter of chance. Both

possibilities assume that ethical reflexion on its own has the power to undo a good ethical education.

As far as the text of the EN goes, although Broadie is correct that the contention that arguments do not make us good doesn't formally entail that bad arguments don't make us bad, she almost certainly misrepresents Aristotle in expressing the matter thus. Aristotle talks of arguments having no effect on the mass of people because they pursue base rather than noble pleasures (EN X 9 1179b10-20). Since such people do not form part of the audience, and in any case, are just waiting for an excuse, whether derived from philosophy or elsewhere, to pursue their ignoble lives, we can set this category aside as irrelevant for present purposes. He also talks of arguments having the power to stimulate noble youths to virtue (1179b7-9). I have argued that this should not be read as meaning that the EN is intended to teach virtue. If I am correct in this, then could it still be the case that argument could teach vice? This seems an even stronger claim than the claim on the teaching of virtue which I have rejected; for, in the case of virtue, the arguments fit in with the previous education of the youths -they have been brought up to have a genuine love of what is noble- whilst in the case of vice, it goes against that education and the ingrained habits derived from it. Even if I am wrong in my contention that argument cannot teach virtue, Aristotle seems to hold that it can only be taught because the previous education of the youth has prepared the way for the EN: in the case of vice, previous

education would work against rather than in favour of its acceptance. (I shall have more to say in this vein shortly.)

Remaining with the text, the virtuous adult for Aristotle is before almost everything else, stable and not easily shifted, even to the point of indifference (EN I 10 1100b15-22; *ibid* 1101a6-13; IV 3 1124a12-19). The sheer inertia of virtue should therefore make it unlikely that anything, including corrupting arguments, could shift the virtuous towards vice.

Finally, there is the lack of argument in the text which is specifically addressed to the sort of challenges that conservative Greeks might fear. It is reasonable to assume that the two sorts of challenge most prevalent would be that of the radical rationality of Platonism and the ethical scepticism of the Sophists. Although there are arguments and tendencies in the EN which can be seen as responses to both these positions²⁴ the overall shape and detail of the EN do not seem particularly well suited to the task of combating these errors, and the overwhelming impression to be gained from the text is one of a philosopher in dialogue with sympathetic interlocutors rather than hostile ones.²⁵

5.01: Preserving the good: fleshing out the difficulties

None of the above points are conclusive, although together, they constitute, I suggest, strong evidence that it is unlikely that Aristotle intended the EN to provide reasons for preserving an existing good. Moving beyond the text, let us say that I have listened to a bad philosopher and he has convinced me that killing wives is a good thing. Two conditions could result: I might actually go about marrying and then killing my wives; or I might become a sort of academic Bluebeard, content to expound my bloodthirsty views in learned journals, but otherwise leading a blameless life. Now, in the first case, I am clearly a murderer and a bad man. My plea that I have been rationally convinced of the strength of the case for uxoricide is not an excuse. In most cases, the normal reaction to such a claim would be not to take it at its face value: it might be supposed that I had been led astray by the personal attractiveness or charisma of the bad philosopher rather than by the quality of his arguments. But let us say that I persist in my claim. There might be circumstances in which I would be believed. Take, for example, the persistent claims that Heidegger was an enthusiastic Nazi. Putting aside whether or not this claim is true, if he had come out and said that he was fully convinced by the programme of the Nazi party and that this support was a natural consequence of a lifetime of philosophical thought, then he might well have been reasonably believed: it might ultimately be a more reasonable hypothesis than the alternative of assuming that he had been swayed by, say,

the personal attractiveness of Hitler. But what should we conclude from the acceptance that he was actually convinced? Certainly not that he is somehow excused any crimes he committed as a consequence: if anything, it makes the crime worse, not more forgivable.

At first sight, this is hard to understand. If it is some sort of excuse that you were swept up by Hitler's personality, why should it not be a better excuse that you thought long and hard about Nazism and you came to accept it? At least the latter excuse has in its favour, it might be argued, that some effort went into the choice, that at least the intellectually convinced Nazi realized that the choice was a serious one, a moral one, rather than a matter to be settled by passing enthusiasm. And, yet, it is surely in this *seriousness* of attention that the problem with the excuse arises.

A plausible view of intellectual development is that embodied in the Scottish, indeed, most European education systems. Consider the intellectual history of a university professor, say, of French literature. She will have attended a primary school where she was taught to write connected prose, to pay attention, to work with others. Later, she will have attended a secondary school where she will have studied French and other subjects germane to the study of literature, firstly at a basic level, then at a more advanced one, sitting public examinations to test competence at each stage. Thereafter, she will have attended

university where she will have run the gamut of undergraduate and graduate studies.

What is to be drawn from all this? At each stage in her education which will lead her to her professorial chair, she has developed skills and knowledge which will be built on in the next stage. Now, if there is failure at any stage, it is not just the effectiveness of that stage which is put into question, but the success of the previous stages. If, for example, students having passed their Highers at seventeen are delivered to the universities where they all fail their degrees, then not only is the university system subject to criticism, but also the secondary school system. Analogously, if Heidegger's intellectual career led him to the point that he could be convinced that Nazism was a good thing, then it is not just the period of his life at which he accepted Nazism that becomes subject to criticism, but the career that led up to it. An education is a progression: if that progression leads to a bad ending, then it is not just the ending which is flawed but the progression towards it.

Now it might be objected that this idea of progression in intellectual education is fair enough, but that individual failure at any one stage does not throw the previous stages under suspicion. Just because someone passes an O-grade examination, does not mean that she will pass her Higher examination, does not mean that she will get a First, does not mean that she will get a

Ph D. There are a couple of points to be made here. Firstly, this objection might be understood as the claim that the failure of one person does not throw a system into doubt. This is unquestionably true: accidents do happen, and what occurs in the life of one person may just be an accident which has no repercussions for the lives of others. So it might be the case that Heidegger's (putative) Nazism has no implications for his philosophical system: it was just an accident of Heidegger's personality. But in this case, surely we have rejected his claim that he was rationally convinced: it wasn't really the intellectual qualities of Nazism that attracted him, it was the uniforms, the music, something accidental. But if we think that Heidegger became a Nazi because of what he had learned and taught up to that time, then we must question those earlier stages, just as if we are convinced that a student has failed at university because of what has been taught in his secondary school, we must question the secondary school.

Secondly, there is the type and degree of failure. It is natural to expect a petering out over a period of education, so that, for instance, someone who did well at secondary school might do moderately at undergraduate level, might do badly at post-graduate level, and there would be nothing surprising in that ultimate failure. But it is not natural to expect a radical failure at any particular stage, so that it would be odd if someone who did exceptionally well at secondary school did exceptionally badly at university level.

How does this affect the EN and its audience? Remember that the situation is supposed to be one where the audience is in danger of going wrong through the influence of bad thinkers. Remember also that unless this going wrong is of a particularly catastrophic kind, it becomes hard to understand how the broad guidance of the EN can help. Now such a situation is one where the intellectual and moral skills that the audience have learned, certainly up to the age of seventeen and, as I have argued, probably up to the age of thirty, have been insufficient to allow them to deal with these intellectual attacks, to allow them at least to smell a rat. Such a failure is a radical failure and consequently one where not just the influence of Platonists and Sophists is open to criticism, but more importantly, where the course of their education up to that time is also problematic. Consequently, we are left with a picture of an audience that has gone badly wrong by listening to the philosophers, but also one that has been going badly wrong in its previous education. Such an audience is not one that appears to be in any way good, but rather paradigmatically bad. As such, it is hard to accept that it can be Aristotle's audience and, correspondingly, it is hard to accept that preserving its goodness is the aim of the EN.

The other possibility that I suggested at the very beginning of this section was that the audience might be in danger of becoming or, indeed, might already be, academic Bluebeards as a result of the corrupting influence of bad philosophy. In such a case, they would think badly, but act (against their better judgment) well.

Such a position might well be described as one of reverse akrasia, a weakness of the will which was, however, benign, as the will (or, better, intellect) was corrupt (cf EN VII 2 1146a16-21).

Now it is clear that there are many different ways in which the conflict in the academic Bluebeard can be realized. He may, for example, just be *entertaining* the idea of uxoricide: it may have just come to him in the course of writing a paper and he is merely pursuing the thought as far as it will go. On the other hand, he may well be absolutely convinced of the truth of his arguments and be making real attempts to overcome his reluctance to murder, perhaps building up his moral strength by strangling kittens or the like. So there is once again a gamut to be run, at one end of which is the good man, momentarily puzzled by an errant thought, and, at the other, a bad man struggling to bury whatever good remains instinct in his character. As far as the academic world is concerned, the strength of conviction with which the idea is held is irrelevant: all that matters is the quality of argument. But as far as the academic's moral character is concerned, it is of the utmost importance how strongly he holds the view. If he merely entertains the idea of uxoricide, then he can remain a good man; if he is convinced by it, then he becomes bad.

It might be objected that this misses the point. A person starts by entertaining an idea; years later, she ends up by being

convinced by it. There is, in other words, a slippery slope from intellectual experimentation to corruption. Accordingly, the story might go, Aristotle's audience are on the nursery slopes of corruption because they have entertained the ideas of either Platonism or Sophistry: unless they are argued out of their notions now, then these will gradually take root and they will be transformed from academic to active Bluebeards.

It is here, I suggest, that we need to return to the ideas already brought forward in this section. Intellectual development is a progression: the thinker who entertains the 'Bluebeard theory' has an intellectual history behind him in which, if he is to be counted as good up to that point, uxoricide has played no part. He then entertains an idea which is apparently repugnant to the whole system of thought in which he has been educated. What should he do? Well, in fact, the new theory isn't completely repugnant to what may be described as received wisdom: it must at least be supported by an argument which draws on received wisdom for it to be counted as even *prima facie* possible. Accordingly, what he should do is think about the new theory carefully and perhaps find arguments against it. But what if he can't? What if he spends years and years seeking an answer to the problems posed by the new theory and he just can't prove them wrong?

Bring this flight of fancy back to earth. Note that we are talking about, in Aristotle's case, the challenge of ideas which, unlike the promotion of uxoricide, do not just affect part of a

system of thought, but which affect its very basis. If the EN with all its generalities is to be of use in countering alien behaviour, then that alien behaviour must be radically different, perhaps analogous to the challenge posed to conventional nineteenth century morality by Nietzsche. So we are to imagine, analogously, an Anglican divine with *nothing* to say against Nietzsche? That this man might spend years and years and find no reasoned arguments to put against Nietzsche's views? This might be a theoretical possibility but, in practice, it is completely impossible. Human ideas just aren't like that. What will make the divine become Zarathustra, the kalokagathos a convinced follower of Thrasymachus, is not the quality of abstract rationality of the arguments which support the new ideas, but the individual's own moral character. If the individual has a sound moral character, he will resist the new ideas: he can continue to behave with the highest standards of academic rigour and propriety in that he may take the arguments seriously, but take them seriously in trying to refute them rather in accepting them. And even if he as an individual cannot find the arguments to resist the new teachings, why should he not say, as Einstein in effect did in relation to quantum theory, that he simply could not believe it although the evidence to counter it was lacking at the time? It is irrational neither to be sceptical of one's own abilities to devise arguments, nor to doubt the abilities of one's age.

It is to be concluded from all this, I suggest, that an inability to be resistant to evil ideas, even if those evil ideas are apparently supported by good arguments, is no part of the character of the good and mature agent. Accordingly, if the audience are good and mature, and this I have argued, we must conclude that the intention of the EN cannot be to preserve the audience's goodness.²⁶

6.00: Conclusion

I argued in chapter one that there was a central problem in understanding the intention behind the EN: to reconcile the claim that the EN was intended to improve its audience with the fact that its audience needed to be already good to benefit from the lectures. In that chapter, I argued against any view which suggested that the audience were not in fact fully and maturely virtuous. I also concluded that the area of improvement must be to enable the audience to do what the EN itself was doing, namely, philosophical reasoning about ethics.

In this chapter I considered what might be the point of such philosophical reasoning. I considered the suggestion that whilst the audience might already be living good lives, they might be reoriented to better lives. This possibility I rejected on the ground that such a suggestion undermined the current goodness of the audience's lives. I then considered the suggestion that

philosophical reasoning might be necessary not to improve but to defend lives. This possibility I rejected on the ground that the ability to preserve one's own goodness was an essential part of virtue.

The major conclusion of the first two chapters is thus essentially negative: that the audience is not going to be substantially improved ethically by the ethical philosophy of the EN. Such a conclusion is endorsed by McDowell:

...moving beyond the 'that' to the 'because' might leave the 'that' undisturbed. In fact I do not believe Aristotle suggest otherwise. He proceeds as if the content of a conception of doing well is fixed once and for all, in the minds of the sort of people he assumes his audience to be, by their upbringing; as if moral development for such a person is over and done with at the point when his parents send him out into the world to make his own life. There is no suggestion that an increase in reflectiveness and explicitness will alter the substance of the conception.²⁷

This leaves the problem of how the audience can be said to be improved by learning to philosophize, and it is to a positive account of a solution to this problem that I now turn.

Notes to chapter two

1. Within the EN, Aristotle restricts the virtue of sophia to theoretical wisdom, and the virtue of phronésis to practical wisdom. Within the *corpus*, the terms are used more flexibly of both sorts of wisdom and rationality. The context of the passage in the *Metaphysics* makes it clear that sophia here covers practical rationality.
2. Eg Annas 1981, pp9-10.
3. In the passage from the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle indicates that the man of no experience but possessing theory (logon echôn) is often less effective than the man of experience alone. This does not entail that men of both experience and theory are not more effective than men of experience alone. However, nothing in Aristotle or life indicates that experience plus theory is always better than experience alone: a university professor of engineering might be more honoured (cf 981a31) than the mere practitioner, but the mere practitioner might still be better at getting certain jobs done (cf EN X 9 1180b7-28).
4. Of course, one account which emphasized the need for a change in reasons for acting without any consequent change in effectiveness would be the Kantian one: learn to act for the sake of the rightness of the action rather than any reasons external to morality. I avoid tackling Kantianism directly because, I suggest, it is now accepted -correctly so- that Kant and Aristotle are working in two ethical approaches so very different from each other, and that it follows that little light is to be expected as far as *interpretation* of Aristotle is concerned from examining a Kantian understanding of morality. (This is despite some noting of links between Kant and Aristotle in, for example, McDowell's 'Deliberation and Moral Development in Aristotle's Ethics' p19 (in Whiting & Engstrom) and Sherman 1989 *passim*). That said, a complete answer to a putative Kantian interpretation would take the lines sketched in my text: a change from obeying a hypothetical imperative to obeying the categorical imperative would normally result in a change in the sort of effects produced in the world.
5. Wilkes in Rorty 1980, p354.
6. I should emphasize that this is not to assume that such possibilities are goods: merely that their being goods is compatible with an understanding of eupraxia as inclusivism, but not with eupraxia as, roughly, prudence, thus shewing that these two interpretations of eupraxia are distinct.

7. It would, in any case, be subject to the sort of criticism I level against any reorientation account: broadly, that the possibility of reorientation entails an existing failure on the part of the audience.
8. Cf Broadie 1991, esp pp391-398.
9. Cf Wilson 1984 ppxii-xiii.
10. A view expounded in Jaffa 1952.
11. More subtly: the leisured cult of military life -militarism- is different from and more corrupt than a military life pursued out of necessity.
12. Broadie 1991, pp419-427.
13. By ethical ring fencing, I simply wish to make the fairly uncontroversial point that what someone does and is like in his spare time isn't necessarily connected with what he does or is like in his working time -leisure is, for the modern, a Saturnalia which has gained in frequency what it has lost in riot.
14. The distinction between happiness as consisting in one good ('dominant end') or in several ('inclusive end') is discussed widely in the literature. See for example: J L Ackrill, *Aristotle on eudaimonia*, in Rorty 1980. Cf Kraut 1989, p8 n13.
15. Cf Jaffa 1952, ch vi, pp116-141.
16. See eg Wiggins 1991 and Hurley 1989.
17. Of the two philosophers referred to in note 16 above, Wiggins treats evaluations as objective, whilst practical judgements are subjective; Hurley, on the other hand, argues for the objectivity of both.
18. Cf Annas 1993 who argues that ancient ethical theories always begin from the individual's reflexion on her own life (p11) and effect a reordering of that life, although Annas notes that Aristotle is rather conservative in the amount of reordering required (p440). Such a perspective is inevitable given Annas' methodology which is to attempt to descry a pattern within ancient theories, since Hellenistic theories undoubtedly do attempt to effect such conversions (cf p58).
19. Eg the quality of sunêsis (EN VI 10 1142b34-1143a18).
20. EN VIII 2 1155b23-27.
21. No one criticized Gauguin for being a Sunday painter; many criticized him for becoming a full-time artist.

22. The baleful influence of the word 'morality' and, to a lesser extent, 'ethics' is felt here. If the problem was stated so that it was a question of how the audience's *character* rather than its morals or ethics might be changed, the implausibility of the EN's effecting a change from practicality to theory would become more obvious.
23. Broadie 1991, p24. Broadie goes on to argue that the articulation of the pre-reflective culture leads to its reorientation towards *theôria*, a conclusion which I would reject on the ground that articulation will reveal that the culture is already orientated towards *theôria*.
24. Eg: against Platonism: the attack on the theory of ideas in Book I (EN I 6 1096a11-1097a14); the lauding of the practical life as truly albeit imperfectly good (EN X 8 1178a9-10); against Sophistry: the need to distinguish the apparent from the truly good (EN VII 12 1152b25-33; the respect due to age and experience as opposed to argument (EN VI 11 1143b11-14).
25. Cf Broadie 1991 p387:

.... *the practical lessons of the Ethics* are mostly such that, to begin to make a direct difference, they need only to be brought to the reflective attention of the persons in Aristotle's audience.

But bringing something to relective attention isn't an argument, especially if it is a matter of an opponent who begins from a position sharply opposed to your own.

26. The discussions of this section are obviously connected with Aristotle's claim in Book VI of the EN that *phronêsis* and the ethical virtues are intimately linked. There is further discussion of this linkage will in chapter one of this thesis.
27. McDowell in Whiting & Engstrom, p31. He goes on to note that it might be consistent with 'the spirit of Aristotelian ethics' to suppose that reflexion can bring forward moral development. I am somewhat less convinced; and, in any case, what is in point for present purposes is the interpretation of the text, which McDowell acknowledges precludes such a possibility.

Chapter three

The political aim of the EN

1.00: Introduction

The arguments of the previous chapters are intended to support the view that, whatever the marginal effects of the EN -and here we must, as always, remember that we are going to be talking *hōs epi ta polu-* the character of the audience, what they are like, isn't going to be changed by the lectures. There is going to be no reorientation of their lives, since they are already mature and good. Moreover, there is no need for them to be afraid of their own corruption, because of the stability of their good character.

If the aim of the EN is to make the audience more effective, better at doing something, then matters cannot be left there. What are the audience to be made better at? The answer here must be, broadly, moral philosophy since that is what the EN itself is (see chapter one §5.00). But what then is the point of this? A full and final answer to this will be given only in chapters nine to eleven of this thesis, where it will be argued that the point is to make the audience's existence more divine. For the moment, however, the answer is that the point of philosophizing is broadly political and that the audience are to be made better at politics: that after all is what Aristotle claims

to be concerned with (EN I 2 1094b10-11). If we add to this the rider that politics is primarily concerned with making *others* good (EN X 9 1180b23-28), we can see that the general problems with reconciling the fairly broad guidance of the EN with the pre-existent goodness of the audience need no longer arise; for it is other people who are neither good nor mature who are to receive the benefit of the EN.

In this chapter, I shall consider this suggestion of political intention in the EN more closely. I shall argue that the polis is a relationship of friendship between citizens and particularly between ordinary citizens and the authorities as phronimoi. In order to pass on that structure intact to the next generation, what has remained implicit in the relationship has to be made explicit. Part of this making explicit is getting to articulate the character and mind of the phronimos. It is to this task that the EN is devoted and in the following chapters I shall turn to consider the content of this new understanding of the phronimos as revealed in the EN.

2.00: Understanding the EN politically

The understanding of the EN as being concerned with, broadly, political rather than moral improvement has considerable scholarly support.' The preceding chapters are intended to give it fresh plausibility by indicating the difficulties that result from any

attempt to argue that the aim of the EN is to effect any sort of improvement in character in the audience.

The more specific claim that the EN is intended to provide the potential legislator with the skills to create the good polis is also not new. Such a claim would seem able to provide at least a general explanation as to how it is possible for the the EN to improve an already virtuous audience: however virtuous someone is, it does not follow that she possesses all possible skills. Bodéus for example argues that the *Politics* is intended to put into effect the teaching on eudaimonia advanced in the EN; the aim of the EN is accordingly to give the legislator an account of that happiness at which he is aiming.² As Vander Waerdt points out, however, an account of the relationship between the EN and the *Politics* which assumes a simple means-end relationship between the two has to explain why the good life as sketched in the *Politics* appears rather different from that indicated in the EN; and why the means to that good life appear, at the least, difficult to relate to the putative end as shewn in the EN.³

Vander Waerdt's own solution to this problem is to argue that the legislator has two purposes: firstly, to preserve the existing polis and its values; and secondly to steer those values towards the perfectly good life as set out in the EN.⁴ In the *Politics* as we have it, the discussion which would reconcile the account of the individual's eudaimonia in the EN with the accounts of the life of the

best city and the sort of laws which would be required by such a city, as well as the accounts of actual cities -all of which are indeed to be found in some form in our *Politics*- is simply missing. The account in the EN stands in need of completion and correction by these missing sections before it could be fully practically relevant.

I shall not attempt a detailed refutation of Vander Waerdt's approach here. I take it as a reasonable methodological assumption, however, that it is always preferable to attempt to understand a work as it exists without making perhaps tendentious assumptions about lost sections. If the *Politics* and the EN can be accounted for in roughly their existing shape, that account would at least have the advantage of making fewer assumptions about textual transmission. It is such an account that I shall now attempt to provide.

2.01: Understanding the phronimos

If we are talking about the EN being concerned with the formation of political craftsmen⁵ rather than with the audience's own ethical improvement, what might we expect to find in its contents? Not, on any account, a simple recipe book where clearcut means are set out for the achievement of clearcut ends. Firstly, Aristotle is a pioneer and is aware of this fact (eg EN I 7 1098a20-26). Not only are there no absolutely agreed on aims, but there have been very few attempts

consciously to deliberate on the means to achieving political and moral ends; and where these attempts have been made, they have been misdirected towards the end of martial prowess (EN X 9 1180a24-29; Pol VII 2 1324b5-9). So any work on the political craft cannot take for granted the existence of a received body of conclusions: that is something that must be worked towards rather than received. Secondly, there is Aristotle's view on the nature of politics: since it deals with the world of the variable and imprecise, its conclusions must be correspondingly variable and imprecise (EN I 3 1094b11-1095a6; VI 4 1140a1-2; *ibid* 1140b13).

Such considerations have led many scholars to regard the EN as being a work of dialectic.⁶ The *Topics* contrasts demonstrative and dialectical reasoning thus:

Reasoning is demonstration [apodeixis] when it proceeds from premises which are true and primary... Reasoning is dialectical which reasons from generally accepted opinions. (Top 100a25-30)

Moreover, as the *Topics* makes clear later, there is always a certain *ad hominem* cast to dialectical reasoning:

As far as the choice of ground goes, the philosopher and the dialectician are making a similar inquiry, but the subsequent arrangement of material and the framing of questions are the

peculiar province of the dialectician; for such a proceeding always involves a relation with another party. On the other hand, the philosopher and individual seeker does not care if, though the premisses by means of which his reasoning proceeds are true and familiar, the answerer refuses to admit them.. (Top 155b10-13)

Now it is certainly true that something unfortunate has happened in the history of the transmission of what were presumably lectures into manuscript and in their subsequent history up until the present day: the difficulties regarding the common books and the connexion between our text of the *Politics* and that of the EN indicate that much.⁷ But even apart from these accidents of transmission, there would remain sufficient reason, in the state of knowledge of the audience to whom the lectures were addressed, or in the difficulties of the subject matter worked upon, to explain a certain sprawlingness and lack of system in the EN. Indeed, part of the effectiveness and influence of the EN must be attributable to a certain lack of cohesion, in the same way that part of Shakespeare's influence is attributable to a certain unclassical breadth, or that contemporary fiction can provide ethical guidance in ways that more systematic philosophical treatments cannot.

2.02: The phronimos

A putative lack of system in the EN is mirrored in the claim that the principle (logos) which governs virtue is as the phronimos would determine it (EN II 6 1106b36-1107a2). Although this remark in itself does not rule out the further articulation of the principles or reasons used by the phronimos -indeed Aristotle seems to regard laws as such an articulation (eg Pol III 11 1287a32)- when coupled with the claim that moral judgment is a form of aisthêsis (EN II 9 1109b21-23), this does seem to suggest that any further articulation of ethical reasoning beyond the bald claim that what is reasonable is what seems to be the case to the phronimos is always going seriously to underdetermine the phronimos' own process of judgment.

Now whether or not the EN is itself a work of phronêsis, it does appear to be intended in some sense to help us understand the phronimos better: if this were not the case, it would for example be difficult to understand the articulation of the various virtues throughout Books II and VI, which appear precisely to attempt to develop what has previously been attributed to the simple aisthêsis of the phronimos. Given the practical purpose of the EN, the only reason for so doing must be to make the audience phronimoi, or at least more like phronimoi. But why? Since I have argued that the audience are already virtuous, it cannot be to make them ethically better.

In the *Politics*, Aristotle notes that phronésis is the only virtue which is peculiar to rulers rather than the ruled (Pol III 2 1277b25-29). This connexion between phronésis and political power is noted elsewhere. For example, in EN VI 5 1140a24-25, Aristotle approaches a definition of phronésis by considering what people we describe as phronimoi. In the ensuing discussion, Aristotle moves from an initial attempt to define the phronimos as being good at deliberating about his own life (1140a26-27) to the definition of the phronimos as being skilled at deliberating about what is good for human beings in general (1140b9-10; cf 1140b4-6, 1140b20-21). The phronimos thus defined is then described by Aristotle as being identical not with the good man *simpliciter*, but rather with the expert in household management or politics, the specific example being the politician, Pericles (1140b7-11).

Now, I have already relied on the claim that phronésis and ethical virtue are interdependent, so that no one can be completely virtuous without possessing phronésis nor completely phronimos without being ethically virtuous. If the thesis is to be defended that, in some way, the EN is intended to give the audience a skill (using this word in a broad, non-technical sense) so that they can be rulers and, hence, lawgivers -since rulers must be legislators (Pol III 10 1286a21-22)- that skill cannot be phronésis simpliciter on pain of admitting that the audience do not yet possess that virtue and, hence, are not virtuous. On the other hand, if the skill to be produced by the EN

isn't phronésis, this suggests that the audience are already phronimoi and, hence, in no need of a series of lectures helping them to become such.

I shall offer here a number of possible solutions to this apparent paradox without making a final decision between them. It may indeed be the case that no one solution should be expected.

2.03: What skill is produced by the EN?

One solution would be to claim that while the audience are already phronimoi, that is, expert practical reasoners, this does not entail that this expertise cannot be improved on. Aristotle notes that the term 'doctor' is used both of the ordinary practitioner, the master of the craft (ho architektonikos) and the cultivated amateur, all of whose voices have a certain authority (Pol III 6 1282a5-7). Analogously, although we call experts in politics and household management phronimoi, because they can discern the human good (EN VI 5 1140b9-11), it seems unlikely that Aristotle means that all phronimoi are equally adept in all situations. Pericles, for example, whilst noted as a phronimos (ibid 1140b8), was notorious for having brought up his children badly (Protagoras (319d-320b): this would appear to be a situation where expertise in politics was not matched by expertise in household management. Such a distinction within

phronésis would appear in any case consonant with common sense. It might be the case, therefore, that although the audience are phronimoi adept at some aspects of phronésis, they are not adept at politics; and it is with phronésis in this area that the EN is concerned.

An alternative solution would be to claim that possession of phronésis is not synonymous with being a phronimos. Aristotle is concerned in EN VI 5 1140a24ff to elucidate the concept of phronésis by analyzing the presumably more accessible concept of the phronimos. Now while it certainly must be the case that the phronimos possesses, as a necessary condition of so being, phronésis, it does not follow that the possession of phronésis is sufficient to establish someone as a phronimos, any more than it is the case in English that the possession of wisdom by a woman is sufficient to establish her as a 'wise woman'. (In an example from Aristotle, which is perhaps analogously counterintuitive, he states that not all participants in a relationship of philia are necessarily philoí (EE VII 4 1239a4-5)). In this case, it would be possible for the audience to possess phronésis without those further qualities which would make them phronimoi. And since, as I have already noted, the concept of the phronimos is closely associated with politics, those additional qualities would be broadly political ones. So here the solution would be that the EN was intended to make an audience who possessed phronésis, into, or at least more like, phronimoi.

Finally, in the *Politics*, Aristotle notes that it is just to obey someone who is our superior not only in virtue but also in practical capacity for the highest actions (kreittôn kat' aretên kai kata dunamin tèn praktikên tòn aristôn Pol VII 3 1325b10-12). This suggests a distinction between a practical political ability and the possession of complete virtue, so that someone who possessed the latter might not possess the former. So here the solution would be that the EN was addressed to an audience who possessed complete virtue but not this additional practical capacity for politics.

The differences between the three solutions suggested may well ultimately be just a matter of vocabulary. The substantive point would be that Aristotle allows a distinction to be made between the person of complete virtue and practical wisdom, and the person who is politically expert. Accordingly, it would be possible for the audience to be suffering from an inability or ineffectiveness politically without being imperfectly virtuous. However, it is important to note that one solution which might appear an obvious candidate won't actually do. This is to claim that, as phronêsis is very clearly stated not be a craft (technê EN VI 5 1140b1-2) whilst politics is said to be a master craft (architektonikos eg EN I 2 1094a26-28) and the EN to be politics (ibid 1094b10-1112), it follows that the EN, being technê, is not a work of phronêsis. This putative solution won't do for two sorts of reason. Firstly, having perhaps hinted that politics is a craft (as above and eg EN I 1 1094a1), Aristotle, as far as I

have been able to find, is very careful never actually to use the word technê to describe it. Apart from the etymologically related architektonikos, Aristotle rejects technê in favour of words such as epistêmê or dunamis (EN I 1094a26) in his Book I discussion. In the Book X discussion, Aristotle confines himself to the etymologically related nomothetikos (eg EN X 9 1180b29). So unless it is to be taken that etymology alone is to establish the argument, it cannot be assumed that the EN is a work of technê. Aristotle, in any case, seems clear that politikê is part of phronêsis (EN VI 8 1141b23-26; cf EE I 8 1218b1-16).

The first sort of reason why the claim that the EN is technê and hence not phronêsis won't do is accordingly textual. But, it might be objected, isn't Aristotle here simply being fairly -and not uncharacteristically- loose in his use of terms? Technê is distinguished from phronêsis as being a poiêsis, where the end is separate from the act of making that end, as opposed to being praxis where the end is the act itself (EN VI 5 1140b6-7). Isn't this precisely the case with politics, where the good of the end can be separated from the goodness of the action which brought it about? Without being too precise at this point, it is perfectly plain that politicians are judged by standards of effectiveness which, at the least, reduce the role of good intentions in the political as opposed to the private actions of an individual. Hence, modern politics is still full of questions about the relationship between private

immorality and political effectiveness that, whatever their resolution, indicate a widespread intuition that might seem to class politics as a techné. So whatever Aristotle's text, the claim might go, shouldn't he just have said that politics is a techné?

Such an argument brings in the second sort of reason why the earlier claim won't do. I shall argue that what is intended to be produced by the EN is a greater articulateness about the good, virtuous life that is currently lived by the audience, and, as part of this articulateness, a greater ability to articulate the reasons for that life. Such an articulateness is, broadly, a skill, in that it will facilitate the passing on of that life. (I shall say something about this shortly.) But, unlike the techné proper, it does not leave the agent's view of her own life entirely untouched. Accordingly, it is not just about the producing of separate results: roughly, the articulateness has a value in itself quite apart from its effectiveness.

2.04: The effectiveness of articulateness

Before passing on to what I take to be the more interesting and difficult argument about the changes wrought in the agent herself by a greater ability to articulate the reasons for her actions, I must say a little to justify the claim that being able to articulate the reasons

for one's actions is liable to increase one's effectiveness in passing on one's way of life.

In passing, it has first to be noted that the EN stands in some sort of relation to the *Politics*. I say 'some sort', for the difficulties concerning the precise relationship are well known and, like most of the many textual problems that concern the *corpus*, probably ultimately insoluble.⁹ I shall assume that the EN was intended to be the first part of a two part series of lectures, the latter half concerned more explicitly with matters concerning the polis and mirroring, very broadly, the sort of subject matter contained in the extant *Politics*. I note again my methodological assumption that any exegesis which can explain the current shape of the EN without making radical assumptions about the differences between the extant and the intended second 'political' volume of the lecture course must be *prima facie* preferable (§2.00 above).

Continuing with the above reflexions, a solution to the status of the EN might be sought by considering that whatever else the *Politics* is, it is clearly an account of laws, even though those laws are concerned almost exclusively with what Hart describes as secondary rules setting up the institutions of a state, rather than the primary rules (eg the Decalogue) which are the more usual concern of moral philosophy.⁹ But we know, both from common sense and Aristotle, that lawmaking isn't and couldn't possibly be the only way to influence other people to the

good. Passing on a good way of life to one's children or friends could never be solely a matter of laying down good rules for the conduct of a household: it must always consist in part of a more informal conversation about ethics.¹⁰

The effectiveness of articulateness is not, however, confined solely to the private sphere of influence. I have already noted in the previous chapter that the *Metaphysics* (I 1) closely associates the master craftsman with the ability to teach and understand reasons. One explanation for this association is that the master craftsman - h_o archi-tektôn with its root in archê 'I rule'- is not so much an extremely good craftsman, but rather a master of craftsmen, someone who is responsible for giving orders to and leading other craftsmen. Such a position requires an ability to articulate what other craftsmen may simply be able to perform without being able to describe, let alone explain. A leader in a democracy such as Athens would need above all else the ability to engage successfully in debate, to be able not only to understand what is good for human beings, but to put that understanding into convincing words. Since Aristotle analyzes effective rhetoric as being primarily rhetoric which is the most rationally rather than emotionally convincing (Rhet A 1 1354a1-30), a successful politician would be the man who was really extremely skilled in understanding and articulating human goods. Accordingly, even to be an effective nomothetikos, the ability to talk and argue informally about reasons and goods would be essential: it is one skill

to frame laws to embody and encourage goods; it is another skill to be able to persuade others to pass those laws.

I shall say more later in the thesis about the effectiveness of articulateness in a specific case (see chapter nine on the ergon argument). In general, however, I do not take it to be controversial that the ability to articulate the reasons for one's actions may help to persuade others to adopt those reasons and those actions. I shall accordingly turn to the other part of my suggestion: that increased articulateness in some sense alters the agent's own life.

2.05: Articulating one's own life

I have argued in earlier chapters that the audience are fully virtuous. So in improving the articulateness of their own reasons for action, I cannot be arguing that this makes the audience any more virtuous. On the other hand, the fact of articulateness, in order to sustain a substantive difference between a technê and what I take to be the praxis of phronêsis and hence of the EN, cannot be a trivial matter: it must, roughly, make some important difference in the lives of the audience.

I shall argue in the final chapter of this thesis that the difference it makes is one of happiness. By achieving a greater understanding of

their lives in a wider context, the audience, even those immersed in the political life of the polis, live a life closer to the divine activity of theôria. They are accordingly happier, even if they are not more -although certainly no less- virtuous.

Putting that part of my thesis aside for the moment, therefore, I need to be able to argue that by learning to articulate the reasons for their own actions, the audience are not changing their lives or their reasons by becoming more virtuous.

2.06: The bald claim

It is important to note that in common unphilosophical talk, the view that an agent's actions can embody beliefs that the agent herself is not conscious of holding is widespread. To take one case from common sense, what is wrong with a hypocrite is that she says one thing and does another. Sometimes hypocrisy is deliberate. Very often it is not -which is why the accusation of hypocrisy can be so stinging: if true, it carries the additional shame that others know more about the faults in your own life than you yourself know. (Compare the shame of the innocent party in an adulterous relationship who discovers not only his partner's infidelity but also that all his friends knew of the affair before he did.) Moreover, such a case of unintended hypocrisy doesn't leave the hypocrite accused of being a split personality': it

is normally no answer to the charge of hypocrisy to say, 'Well, at least I said the right thing.'² If the charge is correct, the hypocrite stands convicted not of getting it half right, but of *really* believing what was embodied in her actions.

In common, unphilosophical talk, therefore, we have no problem in accepting the intuition that human beings' actions can reveal beliefs of which they are unaware, that actions speak louder than words. Such a view also appears to be present in Aristotle. Non-human animals, although they lack speech and reason, act in ways that can be described as a pursuit of the good (eg EN X 2 1172b9-15) even though they are not aware of the good as such (Pol I 1 1253a9-18). The link between what is thought and said and actions is asserted in *De anima* where Aristotle specifically notes at the least an analogy between thinking and acting (DA III 7 431a8-16). Human agents' beliefs, moreover, are more securely judged by their actions than by what they say (EN X 2 1172b15-18).

The bald claim that human beings' actions embody beliefs about goods of which they may not themselves be conscious accordingly has, I take it, a high degree of initial plausibility. The remaining chapters of my thesis will depend, fundamentally, on the notion that the audience are trying to pass on their lives to the next generation. Since the actions which make up those lives are aimed at certain goods (EN I 1 1094a1-3), a consciousness and ability to articulate

those goods will help them in this task. The bald claim simply notes that human beings quite normally act for reasons of which they may not be conscious and that, as a consequence, there is no *prima facie* reason to think that there is anything wrong with someone who acts without full consciousness of her reasons, nor, on the other hand, anything particularly good about anyone who is so conscious: it is actions that really matter. (The final chapter of the thesis will indicate why full consciousness might be better, but that is a position to be argued for rather than itself having *prima facie* plausibility.)

2.07: The authority of the phronimos

Although the bald claim will, on its own, substantiate much of the following thesis, it might be felt, on its own, to be rather unsatisfactory. One of the most attractive parts of Aristotle's ethics is generally supposed to be the integration of the psychologically and the morally persuasive so that the 'is-ought' or 'fact-value' gaps which exist in post-Humean ethics do not arise. But if the goods for which we act are not actually present in the conscious mind of the agent, an explanation is owed as to how they can still be psychologically effective.

The beginnings of such an explanation might be sought in a general strategy which attempted to locate the consciousness of the reasons upon which the agent is acting in the mind of the observer. Thus, in animal behaviour, the justification for anthropomorphism is based in part on the consciousness of the human observer: we may not be using lion language, but we are using a language that comes naturally to us to describe lion behaviour. Analogously, the human observers of the hypocrite's actions are using human language in a perfectly normal way to describe what they see. The trouble with this sort of strategy for Aristotle is if we take the audience to represent, roughly speaking, the pinnacle of phronésis, in moving beyond the sort of language that they naturally use to describe their own and others' actions, we are moving beyond language that *anyone* currently uses. So unlike the case of the animals and the hypocrite where the situation is one of a perfectly familiar language being applied to a partly alien situation, the EN would be an example of developing a partly new language to describe a perfectly familiar situation. This leaves two possibilities: either we accept that the audience of the EN are the pinnacle of phronésis, in which case we have to accept that they are attempting to develop a new language to describe their own existing actions; or else we accept that there are others who are, again roughly, more adept in phronésis than they are, and whose language they are trying to adopt. Since the latter is the simpler solution -it is the situation in the behaviour of the animals and of the hypocrite- it is the one I shall pursue.

Although adopting the model of an existing describer avoids, let us say, problems of intelligibility about the reasons for and the descriptions offered of the audience's actions, it leaves open the problem of authority and psychological effectiveness. Why should I regard someone else's descriptions of my actions as having anything to do with me? And why in fact should they have any effect on my life? I shall ignore here the question of animal behaviour which, as a result of the animal's complete lack of language, raises particularly difficult issues here, and turn instead back to the hypocrite. Why the hypocrite may ultimately accept the observer's description of his actions is, simply, because he acknowledges that how his actions are described isn't just up to him: that description of actions is, roughly, objective. Even though individual hypocrites may reject particular accusations and may even reject much of the authority of an outside observer - 'Who do you think you are, telling me what I think?!' - a general point remains that there is no absolute bar on an observer getting my reasons for an action right, whilst I get them wrong. What I shall now argue is that this authority for attributing descriptions is variously attributed to other people: that what a stranger may have no right to do, an intimate may well be expected to do. I accordingly turn to Aristotle's account of friendship.

2.08: Being friends with the phronimos

Aristotle places politics firmly in the context of philia. Philia is said to be the bond of the state (eoike de kai tas poleis sunechein hē philia EN VIII 1 1155a22-23). Homonia, which is philia politikē (EE VII 7 1241a32-33; EN IX 6 1167b2-4), is a primary goal of statesmen (EN VIII 1 1155a22-28). Moreover, justice is intertwined with philia:

Therefore to seek the proper way of associating with a friend is to seek for a particular kind of justice. In fact the whole of justice in general is in relation to a friend... (EE VII 10 1242a19-21; cf EN VIII 9 1160a7-8).

On the other hand, philia politikē is pre-eminently a friendship based upon mutual advantage, a friendship of utility (EE VII 10 1242a6-7). This would suggest that such friendship isn't the primary form of friendship, which is that based on virtue rather than utility (EN VIII 4 1157a25-36). Moreover, philia is to be restricted to a fairly few people lest it be spread too thinly (EN IX 10 1171a8-13).

Prima facie reasons accordingly exist within the account for understanding philia politikē either as a fairly fundamental aspect of philia proper, or else as a marginal case included only for completeness. In view of the lack of any obvious quality of friendship existing between members of the modern nation state, it is tempting to

assume that the latter interpretation is the correct one. I shall, however, argue instead for the centrality of philia politiké.

The common Aristotelian distinction between what seems good to a particular person and what is absolutely good (to hautôi agathon; and to haplôs agathon) is noted in the EE account; and it is then stated that it is the aim of politiké to bring these two into line by way of pleasure: that the absolutely good or to kalon should become pleasant to the agent and thus good to him (EE VII 2 1236b32-1237a9). Philia is then defined as the state which constitutes and itself causes the reciprocal choice of good things on the ground that they are good and pleasant (délon hoti kai holôs hê philia hê prôtê antiproairesis tôn haplôs agathôn kai hêdeôn hoti agatha kai hêdea; esti d'autê hê philia hexis aph' hês hê toiautê proairesis (EE VII 2 1237a31-34)). Such a claim is of course not easy to interpret, but I would suggest that some light is thrown on it by the claims that friends are the only people who prefer human beings to things (EE VII 2 1237b30-34; 1238a16-19), and that Aristotle should here be understood as advocating an agent-centred approach to ethics rather than an act-centred one.

A shift in the paradigm of ethical theories from an act-centred approach to an agent-centred one has been the central demand of modern virtue ethicists.¹³ However, besides the pragmatic justification that virtue ethics tends to be able to provide answers

to problems intractable under other systems, it is difficult to see why a concentration on characteristics of agents should be more central to our concerns than a concentration on their actions: to put the point crudely, it is my neighbour's beating me over the head with a baseball bat that does the damage, and it is as often as not of very little concern to me whether this is the result of an isolated incident out of character, or one which is the result of the entrenched vice of anger. We now have some sort of answer to this kind of objection. In any close friendship, what is finally loved is the other person. Although there is clearly some sense in which the friendship depends on certain characteristics of the partners, in any deep, long-standing friendship, the commitment given is to another person, and remains in great part open ended as to what that commitment entails: one ends up loving what a person does because it is that person's action.

In love, one discovers a new type of reason for acting. As Aristotle puts it:

...if one wishes to make men not act unjustly, it is enough to make them friends, for true friends do not wrong one another. (EE VII 1 1234b8-30)

Or, as St Augustine of Hippo argued:

..for it is not in vain that the apostle says: 'Adam was not deceived but the woman was deceived:' but it shews that the woman did think that the serpent's words were true, but Adam only would not break company with his partner, were it in sin, and so sinned wittingly... (City of God Book XIV c.11)

Now this sharing of another's actions, although perhaps at its most acute in a relationship such as a marriage, of course extends to other forms of relationship which would be covered by philia. At one pole, there is Adam's sin: not sharing his partner's reasons for acting -he doesn't think any good will come of eating the apple- but preferring to keep company with his wife rather than with God. At the other pole, two^o partners may just happen to share the same reasons: in the friendship of utility, for example, it is a pre-existent common purpose which forms the friendship, rather than the other way around. The friendship of the good lies somewhere inbetween. One stops seeing another's reasons as her reasons and not yours, and instead begins to share a life:

Therefore a man ought also to share his friend's consciousness of his existence [sunaisthanesthai ara dei kai tou philou hoti estin] and this is attained by their living together and by conversing and communicating their thoughts to each other; for

this is the meaning of living together as applied to human beings, it does not mean merely feeding in the same place, as it does when applied to cattle. (EN IX 9 1170b10-14)

There are various shades between the poles. Near Adam there is the friend who keeps company with another's actions, not really understanding what is going on, but trusting in the friend's having a good reason. Near the friendship of utility pole, there is the friend who would act in such a way regardless of her friend's actions, but finds her individual choice reinforced and given an additional motive by the friendship.

Running through all this is a distinction, hinted at in Aristotle but clearer in Aquinas, between seeing a good and seeing a good as a good.⁴ The group solidarity of friendship, when the friends are good, can allow people to respond to goods without seeing them as goods: they simply do what their friends do because that is what friendship is like. By taking pleasure in doing the same things as their friends, they learn to act for the sake of goods of which they are not conscious but of which they can become conscious:

Thus the friendship of inferior people is evil, for they take part together in inferior pursuits and by becoming like each other are made positively evil. But the friendship of the good is good, and grows with their intercourse. And they seem actually to

become better by putting their friendship into practice, and because they correct each other's faults, for each takes the impress from the other of those traits in him that give him pleasure -whence the saying: 'Noble deeds from noble men'. (EN IX 12 1172a8-14)

2.09: The phronimos as leader

In friendship, people can learn to act for goods and learn ultimately to see goods as goods which they otherwise could not. But, as Aristotle points out, philia extends beyond the relationship of equals. Thus, philia can exist in positions of inequality, even if it cannot be said that the participants in that unequal relationship are actually friends (EE VII 4 1239a4-5). So a ruler should be loved, even if it would be absurd for him to love in return (EE VII 3 1238b26-30). (And even perhaps if it smacks a little of the 'love that's born of fear' (Browning: Bishop Blougram's Apology).)

I have already noted that the sort of person Aristotle appears to have in mind for the phronimos is a political leader such as Pericles. Whether the phronimos is taken simply as someone with political authority, or perhaps more broadly as someone with moral authority, by being in a relationship of philia with that phronimos, I can be brought to respond to goods by dint of my friendship that I could not

otherwise respond to, and which I cannot yet see as goods. It is thus I suggest that we should understand how I can act for reasons which are my own, and yet of which I am not conscious. As members of a relationship of philia, the phronimos and I share a life and the goods of that life. But whilst he sees them as goods and can articulate them, I merely respond to them through the authority of the phronimos.

It may be objected here that this overlooks what I have already noted: that philia can only extend to a few people. It is therefore quite impossible for philia to explain how more than a handful of people can share the same goods, and thus will not serve as an explanation of how, say, a city the size of Athens could share those goods.

There are a number of possible responses to such an objection. Firstly, although we are certainly talking about more than a handful of people, we need not be talking about a society the size of Athens: the only people who have to share the reasons of the phronimos are Aristotle's audience, presumably a much smaller number. Whatever their precise relationship within the Lyceum, the members of the audience would, presumably, be able to share the fellow-feeling that exists within a small college; and thus be more open to sharing the influence of relatively few phronimoi. Secondly, as noted particularly by Hegel, ethical influence through ground level institutions such as the family, can serve to open individual's lives to the influence of the state.¹⁵ Put crudely, if each family has someone who possesses authority within

it, who in turn respects others' authority, who in turn respect others' authority, and so on, there is no reason why this network of authorities shouldn't knit even a very large society such as the polis into a fairly homogeneous whole. This may be what Aristotle hints at when referring to the partnerships of the state (EE VII 9 1241b24-5). Finally, although Aristotle certainly emphasizes the difficulty of having large numbers of friends, he does not always rule it out completely (eg EE VII 12 1245b19-25). And certainly, he does not rule out an unreciprocated love given by many to a particular person. When we turn from Aristotle to the modern world, the existence of patriotism, and the moral authority and affection which is given to very distant figures such as the Pope or pop stars, should again provide an understanding of how philia can allow our lives to embody goods which we are not ourselves conscious of or able to articulate.

3.00: Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the difficulty of resolving the paradox of how the EN can both improve the audience whilst requiring the audience to be perfectly good in order to appreciate it can be resolved by the suggestion that the EN is intended to provide the audience with the skills to make others good: ie political skills.

I have argued, in general, that it is possible for human agents to act for the sake of goods of which they are not conscious and which they cannot articulate. This claim may be found plausible in itself without further justification. Alternatively, it may be explained by noting that we sometimes act under the moral or political authority of others. Accordingly, being in a relationship of philia with them, we share a life, and hence can act for the sake of goods of which we are not aware, but of which our leaders are.

In the rest of this thesis, I examine some aspects of the articulation of the good life as set out in the EN.

Notes to chapter three

1. For example: Bodéus 1982, Trépanier 1963, Cashdollar 1973, Vander Waerdt 1985.
2. Bodéus' position is summarized thus by Vander Waerdt, p77:
The account of legislation and forms of regime provided in the Politics...is intended to enable the statesman to put the teaching on human eudaimonia advanced in the Nicomachean Ethics into effect.
3. Cf Vander Waerdt, p79:
..[The] assumption that the EN and Politics in their extant form represent a unified exposition of Aristotle's teaching on political science requires reconsideration. The Politics as we have it: (a) quotes the EE not the EN; (b) it diverges significantly from the investigation announced in EN X 9; and (c) it is incomplete: it lacks Aristotle's promised 'discourses on the regimes'...One cannot grasp the structure and intention of Aristotle's work without understanding these facts.
4. *ibid* p87.
5. Cf EN I 1 1094a24-28.
6. Eg Irwin 1988; Jaffa 1952.
7. See eg Vander Waerdt, pp79-80 for a summary of the debate regarding the relationship between the EN and the *Politics*. Kenny 1978 provides a controversial discussion of the relationship between the EE and the EN including the common books.
8. See n7 above.
9. See Hart 1972, esp ch5.
10. EN X 9 1180a29ff indicates the legislative science is useful for family life. It is useful, however, not in the direct way of enforcing obedience as in the state, but rather in the indirect way of providing an articulated framework of principles.
11. Unlike for example akrasia where the agent is in a sense divided.
12. Normally, but not always. It was Chesterton, I believe, who said: 'God forbid that I should preach what I practise.' One of the reasons why politicians and the clergy may be particularly subject to charges of hypocrisy is that they have a duty to

articulate the truth even where they cannot themselves practise it.

13. Eg Statman 1997, pp7ff.

14. *We can perceive good things with our sense but not goodness as such; only our minds can grasp that. Yet it is goodness as such that draws the will. So goodness of will in depending on its object depends on mind. Good as good, as attracting, appeals to our will rather than our mind but only because it first appeals to our mind as true. The will can only be drawn to what reason perceives to be good. STh Ia IIae q19 a3.*

This is to be contrasted with animals who are drawn to goods by instinct and not because of an awareness that they are goods:

Reasoning creatures are perfectly aware of goals: aware of what is in fact their goal, but also aware of the notion of goal as such and the way their activity is adapted to it; whereas other animals are aware only of what their goal is by sense-perception and instinctive judgment. ibid q6 a2. (Both translations from McDermott 1989.)

Aristotle remarks in Pol I 2 1253a10-18 that it is a unique property of human beings to have an aisthêsis of good and bad, whereas animals only have an aisthêsis of pain and pleasure which allows them to respond to good and bad.

15. Primarily in the *Philosophy of Right*.

Chapter four

Prohairesis (I)

1.00: Introduction

In the previous three chapters I have argued that the intention of the EN is to give the audience the political skill to produce good people. The EN emphasizes not the content of the laws which are the primary means of producing good people at the level of the polis, but rather the content of that informal debate which surrounds the business of legislation, both in the creation of legislation, its adoption, and in the more intimate social circles such as the household which for much of the time are outwith the immediate influence of law.

That political skill is given by being able to articulate the goods at which the audience's actions already aim. This entails that actions have an articulable structure which the audience can learn to articulate, but which they have not yet articulated (see §1.01 below).

In chapters four to six, I argue firstly that the notion of a prohairesis is an account of the articulable structure of a typical action rather than something separate which precedes and causes an

action. I argue that the articulable structure takes the form of acting for the sake of a future end, that end being eudaimonia.

It should be noted that I am not claiming that the articulable structure and importance of the prohairesis is exhausted by its being aimed at a future end, but only that this feature is a central one, in particular, for an understanding of the EM as a whole.

1.01: Further introductory remarks

As noted, above, my aim in the remainder of this thesis is to describe the life which is already lived by the virtuous. That the audience already live a virtuous life but cannot articulate that life may be understood in two ways. Firstly, as argued in §2.06 of the previous chapter, that a life can be lived without being yet articulated may be accepted as a matter of common sense. In this case, the audience will be trying to understand their own life, but precisely in what way that life is already their own, yet unarticulated, will be left unexplained. However, since Aristotle works by presenting the normal or paradigmatic case, we can expect to be dealing with actions and characters which are in some sense taken to be paradigmatic of humanity.

The second way of dealing with the claim that the audience already lead a virtuous life but cannot articulate that life was outlined in §2.07ff of the previous chapter. There I argued that the audience, by standing in a relationship of *philia* with a *phronimos*, already shared his life. Since *phronimoi* tend to be political leaders and hence fairly articulate about the good life (§§2.01-2.04 previous chapter), the sense in which the articulate and the inarticulate already share a life is made somewhat clearer. In this case, the EN will be trying to move the inarticulate audience towards the articulateness of the *phronimos*. Again, however, given Aristotle's general pattern of explanation, we can expect to be dealing with paradigms of action and character.'

Given either understanding of the EN, much of its contents is immediately explicable. Books II to V, insofar as they merely articulate the content of the virtues, fit into this account fairly easily. I shall therefore be concentrating in this thesis on those aspects of the EN which appear less straightforwardly explicable on this model, in particular, those aspects concerning practical reason, pleasure and the *ergon* argument.

2.00: Desire

I begin my argument with a consideration of the role of desire in Aristotle's philosophy of action. My aim in this part of the argument will be to shew that Aristotle's prohairesis is a description under which an action is performed and, hence, an articulable structure of that action, rather than, say, a preceding event.

For present purposes, there are two sorts of desire (orexis) with which we are concerned in human action: epithumiai, which are directed at pleasure (EN III 1 1111a32; 2 1111b17); and prohaireseis, which are choices of means to an end (EN III 2 1111b26-29; EE II 10 1226a11-13).²

Before turning to Aristotle's account, we need to consider why he might be interested in desires. Given the concern of the EN with actions, we know that the explanation must have to do with their connexion with actions. But more needs to be said than this.

One reason might be that he had noticed whilst introspecting the furniture of his mind that there is present a class of events styled 'desires' and, moreover, noticed that these cause actions. A desire, therefore, might be an internal event which begins the causal chain which extends beyond the body and results in another event in the world.

Another reason might be that, knowing actions exist, he wanted to describe them and classify them. He accordingly made use of the concepts of 'folk psychology', among which was, for example, desire. On this basis, there is no reason immediately to assume that desires are events: the ontology of folk psychology will be too indistinct for this to be immediately ascertainable. Whether desires are causally initiating events will, accordingly, be a result of analysis rather than an assumption. Desires might, after all, prove to be a construction to suit Aristotle's or his society's pragmatic purposes, rather than actual events.

In the EN, as we have seen, Aristotle is interested in actions and their improvement. If he becomes interested in desires, it is because and to the extent that desires are related to action: it is for this reason that we hear very little about that species of desire relatively unrelated to action -the wish (boulésis) (EN III 2 111b19-26). We need accordingly to keep the action very much in the forefront of our minds; for this is the focus of Aristotle's interest. And only to the extent that a desire is related to this focus need we consider it important.

Now the desire on which the virtuous acts is a prohairesis which is defined at EE II 11 1227b36 as a choice of something for some object, ie having the general structure of ϕ ing for x. Now, the position suggested by *De Anima* III 7, is that an action, say, of pursuit and

the prohairesis are different in essence, but are nevertheless the same thing. In what sense, therefore, can they be said to be the same thing? One possibility would be if the prohairesis was the action under a description of the form 'ϕ for the sake of x', where 'ϕ' is a means and 'x' the end. For the moment, I am content to let 'ϕ' and 'x' represent any means and end. Later, I shall argue that 'x' is a future end, and, for the virtuous, that end is eudaimonia situated at the end of the agent's own life. Given that a prohairesis is of this form, can we go on to identify it with the action?³

2.01: Choice as action

Let's consider this as a textual point firstly. The strongest evidence against such an identification within the EN would appear to be at EN VI 2 1139a31-33, where prohairesis is said to be the efficient cause (hothen hē kinēsis) of the action. On the Humean reading of efficient causation, this would require a prohairesis to be a separate event preceding the action. Although such a Humean cause might be one possible reading of this claim, Aristotle's notion of efficient causality is far more generous than Hume's, taking in efficient causes which are neither events nor which precede in time their effects.⁴

If we turn to the positive evidence within the EN in favour of such an identification, we note at II 5 1106a3-4 that the virtues are

identified with prohairesis. Although Aristotle immediately adds to the identification '...or [the virtues are] not without prohairesis' (ibid), it is not enough here to say, with Gauthier and Jolif, for example, that this comment should be regarded as correcting the preceding identification⁵: such a reading is less a correction than a denial. If the identification is taken at face value, then a prohairesis becomes a hexis, a disposition rather than an event (EN II 5 1106a10-12).

This remark is perhaps illuminated by *Metaphysics* IX 5 1048a1-24 where, having noted that rational potentialities can produce opposite results, Aristotle concludes that something must explain the fact that only one result is in fact aimed at, and attributes this to desire or choice (proxis & prohairesis (1048a10-11; cf EN V 1 1129a11-17). What explains the fact that, say, if I am challenged to a duel, then I will fight, is that I have a prohairesis so to do: a prohairesis is that feature of my character which accounts for my acting in a given manner.⁶

Now, when we turn to the word hexis, we note firstly that it is a quality which is particularly deeply entrenched (Cat 8 b27-8); and, secondly, that by dint of being a diathesis or disposition (Meta V 20 1022b10-12), is an arrangement of something which is complex in the sense of having parts (ibid 1022b1-3).⁷ The fact of the prohairesis

being deeply entrenched is met by its forming part of the agent's character. What then of its being a diathesis?

Substances lie at the heart of Aristotle's ontology (Meta VII 1 1028a25-b7). Aristotle consequently appears doubtful of the reality of definitions with anything else other than substances as subject (Meta VII 5 1031a1-14). If this tendency were to be found in his practical philosophy, we might expect to find that individual human beings as substances were the archai of their actions, and that any attribution of responsibility for actions to non-substantial aspects of individuals -such as desires- would only be approximately or imperfectly true. And indeed, the point that the individual human being is the arché of her actions is stressed in the EN. (EN VI 2 1139b5; EE II 6 1222b15-1223a20). Pursuing this line of argument, we might point to the fact that what sort of character a person has will affect what sort of actions she will perform: given the (not unreasonable) Aristotelian view that human beings are a combination of reasoning and non-reasoning parts (eg EN I 13 1102a26-28), we would want to say, broadly, that it is the character of these two parts and of the relationship between the two that determines the action (cf EN VI 2 1139a31-b5). It is in this sense that a prohairesis might be regarded as a diathesis.

Returning to the text, we find at EN III 3 1113a9-12, that after we have deliberated, we first judge, then desire: if the prohairesis is

separate from the action, then there is a judging, a choosing, then an action -which seems a rather luxuriant ontology and one, in its separation of the putatively mental events of judging and choosing, which is rather difficult to interpret. Moreover, at EN X 1 1172a25-6, choosing is contrasted with the action of fleeing, which suggests that choosing itself is identical with the action of pursuit:

For they choose [proairountai] pleasant things, and they flee painful ones.

All this would seem to suggest that a prohairesis might be the realization of the character of an agent in an action or, to put it another way, a way of understanding an action as being, one might say, done under a description stamped with the character of the agent. In the same way that to say that an utterance expressed a meaning might either be a harmless way of talking about understanding an utterance without any commitment to the separate existence of a meaning, or a misleading reification of that understanding, so talking about a prohairesis might either be a harmless way of talking about understanding an action, or else a misleading reification of that understanding: in each case, there is just the utterance or the action and our understanding it, with no intervening *tertium quid*.

2.02: Objection: the objective reality of action descriptions

I have suggested that the prohairesis may be action understood as being done under a particular form of description. A broad objection to this line would be that it suggests an element of subjectivity in describing action, in that the final authority on any action description will be the agent herself. This would lead to different agents describing differently what, to an observer, appears to be the same sort of action; or even to different descriptions given by the same agent on different occasions.

Such uncertainty in action descriptions would run counter to Charles' detailed account of Aristotle's philosophy of action, where he argues that the EN preserves the ontological system developed in the *Physics*⁹, and that this ontology requires that action descriptions are to be determined by the content of

*the best theory to explain the organism, its internal structure, and its goals.*⁹

Although Charles notes that Aristotle did not fully develop such a theory for human agents¹⁰ he does argue that Aristotle developed such a theory in sufficient detail to underpin the account of agency and intentional action contained in the EN.¹¹

Putting aside Aristotle for the moment, it would be rather odd for just one theoretical account to underpin everything we would want to say about human agency. We might expect various accounts within the separate disciplines of biology, chemistry, anthropology, psychology, politics, sociology, law and theology with different focuses and different explanations for different questions. Since Aristotle makes clear that he does hold fairly strong views about the integrity and separateness of various disciplines (eg EN I 3 1094b11-14), it would be surprising if there were just one theory of the human organism and its actions. Secondly, given Aristotle's remarks on the variability of human affairs (ibid 1094b14-27), it would be surprising if any one theory of human agency were capable of exact formulation in the way to which Charles seems to aspire.²

Additionally, as Charles notes³, any plausible theory of human action must place considerable reliance on the agent's own intentionality and own descriptions of his goals. Moreover, it is too simple to say that it is only the agent's own intentionality which determines the description under which he acts: as I have argued in the previous chapter, he may well accept the authority of other individuals and bodies in determining the descriptions of his actions. In her essay, 'Under a description', Anscombe defends this term of art against the following objection:

*Animals that have no language can have intentions too: how then, it is asked, can it be right to say that an intention is always 'under a description'? Again I found the objection puzzling: another non-reason. But I suppose that one who offers it must be taking "it was intentional under this description, not that" to imply that the first description is in some sense written into something inside the agent.'*⁴

Anscombe rightly rejects the suggestion that descriptions are in any sense written into the agent. But for human beings, there is more that must be said; for what is intentional for human beings is related to how the agent thinks of her action. In the case of animals, there is no question of the agent doing the describing itself. In the case of human agents, there is. But that this is a possibility doesn't mean that acting 'under a description' is always equivalent to 'what the agent thinks she is doing' -even if it sometimes is. We do acknowledge the right of others to define or debate how our own actions are to be described; and it is in this interaction between the authority of the agent to describe her own actions and the authority of others that much of the interest and richness of the term 'under a description' exists.

In assuming that it is a theory of the organism that is sought, Charles is almost certainly misdirecting our attention: in many cases, what we want is a theory of the individual agent or of a character

type, rather than of the human organism. How those theories are developed may depend on the pragmatic aims of the theorizers, whether the agent himself, the polis within which he lives, or indeed, the species as a whole. Which of these levels of explanation -the individual, the character or the species- is relevant to the pragmatic purpose of the EN will only be demonstrated by the richness of the explanations of the text produced by the assumptions made. None of this necessarily results in subjectivism. Charles is therefore correct in taking the description to be determined by theory, or, perhaps more precisely, theory like reasoning; he is, however, incorrect in his attempt to link that theorizing purely to the organism rather than, say, character and in his assumption that there can only be one theory for human action.

In what follows, I shall be arguing that what we have as the central focus of much of the EN is a theory of a certain character type -the virtuous agent- and how he regards his actions. I shall argue that he regards them under two descriptions: the first, prohairetic description, which is of the action under the description of a means directed at a temporally separate end; and the second, of the action as an activity and pleasurable, which supervenes on the prohairetic description.

3.00: Choice aims at a future end

Having argued that the prohairesis is to be understood as being identical with an action performed under a particular description, I shall now argue that this description is normally of the form of a means to a future end.

I shall argue this in two ways. In this chapter, I shall argue that the virtuous agent normally acts for the sake of eudaimonia, and that eudaimonia is to be understood here as being a future state at the end of a life.

As paradigm of human agency, the virtuous agent's life illuminates the lives of those who are not completely virtuous. Accordingly, in chapter five, I shall shew how human agency in general is informed by acting for a future goal. Taken together, I shall conclude that these arguments suggest that Aristotle understands human actions as being hōs epi ta polu performed under a description articulable as being of a structure of a means for a future end.

3.01: The virtuous agent aims at the future

Aristotle holds that all prohairesis aim at a good (EN I 1 1094a1-2). He then postulates that there is a supreme good for which we perform all other goods and of which a knowledge is extremely important for practical purposes (EN I 2 1094a16-26). This suggests, if the virtuous agent is someone who is getting his practical reasoning right, that he has and is using a knowledge of the supreme good to guide his life. Since the supreme good is eudaimonia, this entails that the prohairesis of the virtuous agent are for the sake of eudaimonia (cf EN I 7 1097b20-21).

Accordingly, if I am going to argue that the virtuous agent typically acts for the sake of a future goal, I need to explain how eudaimonia can be taken as a future goal. The two main current interpretations of eudaimonia are that it consists in the maximization of a number of different but compossible goods -inclusivism- or that it consists in the maximization of one particular type of good (theôria) -the 'dominant end' theory.⁵ On both these readings, it is difficult to see how eudaimonia could generally be a temporally separate end. On the inclusivist account, the doing of, say, a courageous action would be an immediate realization of eudaimonia. On the dominant end account, although many more actions would be directed to the bringing about of theôria in the future, and thus directed at a temporally separate end, the temporal discreteness of the end would only be an

accidental feature of actions: for the virtuous agent who had attained the circumstances to practise theôria freely, most of his actions -ie his actions of theôria- would be immediate realizations of his end.

For present purposes, I shall not have to decide which conception of eudaimonia is correct. I shall instead argue that, whatever the good or goods which have to be realized in a happy life, those goods have to be contemplated and reflected on from the perspective of a completed life in order to make that life happy and thus realize the good of happiness: as a life is only complete at its end, it follows that for most of a life, that good lies in the future and is thus a temporally separate good.

The primary source for this interpretation is the discussion in EN I 9 1100a4-1101b9. Prompted by Solon's reflection that it was only at the end of a life that its happiness should be judged, Aristotle worries at the problem, apparently finally concluding that we should pronounce

..those of the living who possess and will go on possessing the good things..to be blessed (EN I 10 1101a19-21)

Now, for any agent who wants to be happy, it accordingly follows that she should always strive to preserve her good things until her death; for however good the life during most of its duration, if it ends badly, like Priam's, it will be an unhappy life (EN I 9 1100a5-9).

The oddity of this claim is not usually noted. Whatever their view of the goods to be realized in a life, inclusivist or dominant end, commentators regard the advice Aristotle is giving to an agent as: Maximize the goods in a life.¹⁶ But Aristotle seems to be privileging the end of a life. To see this, assume that Priam's life, goods all added up and evils subtracted, contains n goods. We now introduce King Mairp of Yort whose life is exactly like Priam's except that instead of starting well and ending badly, Mairp's life ends well and starts badly. Another difference is that Mairp's life contains only $n-1$ goods. Now, Aristotle seems to suggest that Mairp's life might be nevertheless be happier than Priam's because Mairp ends well and Priam ends badly. Unless such a view is tenable, I will have to drop my claim that eudaimonia always requires an agent to look to his future; for in most cases, the agent will be able to settle back into his ethical armchair in middle-age, content in the knowledge that, however awful the future, the deposit of his previous goods is likely to provide sufficient capital to cover any contingencies¹⁷.

It might be objected here that I have overlooked Aristotle's conclusion to the discussion of the effects of misfortunes on eudaimonia:

the happy man [ho eudaimôn] can never become miserable; though it is true he will not be blessed [makarios] if he encounters the misfortunes of a Priam. (EN I 10 1101a6-8)

Aristotle has commenced his disussion, so the objection might go, by stating the commonplace opinion that Priam's misfortunes overturned his eudaimonia; he has completed it, having improved on that commonplace, by distinguishing between being a makarios -which Priam certainly wasn't- and a eudaimôn which, despite his losses, he remained.

This objection, despite its initial plausibility, is almost certainly misplaced. Immediately following the supposed revised conclusion about Priam's eudaimonia, Aristotle restates his claim that eudaimonia can indeed be lost by many severe disasters (ibid 1101a8-13). Unless it is argued that Priam's misfortunes were not of the highest, which, from the textual context and, indeed, the nature of the misfortunes appears unlikely, it remains that Priam would no longer be makarios or eudaimôn. Moreover, throughout the argument, Aristotle seems to use makarios, eudaimôn and their cognates interchangeably (see esp. the discussion 1100a14-b11). I therefore conclude that Aristotle is not contrasting here the state of the makarios and of the eudaimôn but rather varying his use for the sake of style.¹⁸

Given all this, what point is Aristotle making? The clear central point is that the happy man is unlikely to be shaken out of his happiness. As to the marginal case of Priam, I think he is clear that this does constitute a counterexample, but only by its extreme nature: as a marginal case it does not detract from the central point. The

debate is left slightly inconclusive, just as the question on the happiness of the dead which follows it is also left inconclusive in its details, even if the central point that the dead are normally safe from post-mortem influences is certain (EN I 11 1101a22-b9).

Turning back to the main argument, can we make sense of the position that a life is judged primarily by its end?

One possibility is just to take Aristotle's teleological tendencies as a brute given. Now, if Aristotle does regard the end as in some way definitive of the period of growth leading up to that end, it shouldn't be a surprise that he regards the end of a life as in some way definitive of that life. In this thesis, however, I resist using teleology as a basis for argument unless that teleology can be cashed into the currency of moral philosophy. Teleological patterns may underlie human life; but if they do, they will have to be demonstrated and justified from the phainomena of moral discourse. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Aristotle's emphasis on teleology does tend to make the attribution to him of the view that the eudaimonia of a life depends on its end rather than on the sum of its goodness rather more plausible.

Putting aside Aristotle for a moment, it does seem to be true that we regard the end of a life as rather more important than its beginning in judging its success or failure. Indeed, it is very much the

stereotype of a good life that it begins badly and that success is achieved out of and despite early adversities: Dickens' life is thus made even more successful because of his childhood poverty and hardship. The explanation for this might appear to be that a life is assessed as a good story is assessed; and that unless there is a change of fortune, the story lacks interest, and unless, for a good man, that change is from evil circumstances to good, the story dispirits us.¹⁹ The suggestion that the goodness of a life is to be judged by the standards of narrative has become a frequent one in modern philosophy.²⁰ But is it a good suggestion? Reflexion on Dickens' life might suggest not: a reversal of fortune might make a life more interesting, but it hardly makes it better -the best life might be one that neither ends badly nor begins badly, but which is of a dull, unexciting, constant goodness.

So the simple thesis that what makes a good life is the same as what makes a good biography won't hold absolutely. But there is perhaps this connexion between the two, in that both are works of imagination exercised on actual events to create a unity. A biography which is just one damn thing after another isn't a good biography; and a life which is just one damn thing after another isn't a good life. Both lack thereby an inner unity:

A plot does not possess unity, as some people suggest, merely because it is about one man. Many things, countless things indeed, may happen to one man, and some of them will not contribute to any kind of unity; and similarly he may carry out many actions from which no single unified action will emerge.

Poetics VIII 1451a15-19

To create a unity in a life, the material must firstly possess an underlying unity. If Aristotle's ethical advice is followed, it will, because the agent's actions will be aimed at one object (EN I 2 1094a22-24; EE I 2 1214b6-14). But just as no biography could ever attain a unity just by reading off the facts of a life without any imaginative input, so no agent could ever regard her life as a unity without imaginative input, particularly in respect of the exercise of recollection, which, unlike memory, is an active, deliberate performance on the part of the agent.²¹

Precisely what goes to make a unity of life isn't completely spelled out by Aristotle, nor should we expect it to be. His remarks in the *Poetics* might suggest however that it should shew a purpose or purposes which were sufficiently simple to be comprehended as a unity in any reflexion on that life. In *Poetics* VII 1450b22ff, he talks of the need for simplicity of structure if the spectator is to comprehend a plot; whilst in XV, he goes on to say that good character (êthos) is manifested in a good prohairesis (1454a16-17). Coupled with EN I 2

1094a22-24, this suggests that unity of life consists in having a clear and constant purpose throughout one's life. But to possess a unity, it would seem that a life must be understood by the agent as having a unity not only in that an agent has to exercise imagination both prospectively in setting an objective, but also in that she must exercise imagination retrospectively in understanding her past.²² That this is an essential -and overlooked- aspect of the happy life is suggested by Aristotle's point that happiness is essentially an imitation of the divine life (EN X 7 1177b26-1178a2). But God, for Aristotle, thinks about thought (Meta XII 9 1074b33-5). Assume that the best life is that of theoretical reason rather than practical reason or the mixed life. The divine life, as lived by humankind, won't then be just the contemplation of good objects, but also the contemplation of the life devoted to the contemplation of noble objects, the contemplation of that life as an imaginative unity. Indeed, whatever the good life is found to consist in, it will consist not just in the performance of the good activities, but the imaginative working of them up into a unified life.²³

Such an interpretation has a number of advantages. Firstly -and most importantly for present purposes- it explains why happiness exists in the future for most of an agent's life: to contemplate a life, it needs to have actually been achieved in reality, not merely lived out in thought. Secondly, it may make Aristotle's praise of theoria more comprehensible. By placing an emphasis on the imaginative working up

of a life into a unity and the contemplation of that unity, the life of theôria seems more achievable. If, for example, theôria just consists in the contemplation of a system of achieved truths, this entails that Aristotle believed that, at some stage in the future, complete and final systems of knowledge would exist. This makes Aristotle seem both rather naive and a bit of a scholastic. But if he is emphasizing the scholar's thought about his thoughts, his -put crudely- post retirement reflection on a life devoted to the service of truth and beauty, Aristotle's position seems to combine realism -ie such lives are actually lived and livable- with that divine stability and timelessness which does not seem attainable during the actual contemplation of goods: even if human beings are unable to stick at one thing for long, the pride of a scholar in a life well lived does seem a state of mind which could exist stably (cf EN VII 14 1154b20-31); and also one which seems, in a sense, to exist outwith time rather than be reducible to clockable thoughts (cf Meta XII 9 1075a7-11).²⁴

3.02: Objection to the goodness of reflecting on one's own life

It might be objected at this point that reflection on one's own life at its end sounds like a terribly smug way of going on, that whatever else may be objected to in my account, its morality is rather suspect.

There are two main answers to this objection. Firstly, there is the admission that smugness is present in Aristotle's view of goodness. The megalopsuchos has been described as a prig with the conceit and bad manners of a prig; and Ross remarks on the self-absorption of Aristotle's ethics.²⁵ So whatever the ethical dubiousness of my account, its smugness might be taken as a confirmation of its consistency with the rest of Aristotle's ethic rather than a criticism.

Secondly, I think the smugness of such reflexion can be overestimated. Just as the contemplator of divine objects surely does best when he concentrates on the objects rather than himself, so the contemplator of a life, even one's own, surely does best when he concentrates on the events rather than on his contemplation of them. In this case, can the contemplator really be said to be smug? Smugness seems to imply a satisfaction in one's current state: 'If I hadn't worked so hard, I wouldn't be the fine fellow I am now!'. Reflexion on a life, even reflexion that it has been good, needn't refer to the current state of the beholder. And in this light, it is less the smugness of the self-satisfied, but simply a fact about age: at the end of one's life, you look back on your life. That isn't an option, something to be indulged in only by the self-satisfied, but rather a fact about what it is to be near death.²⁶

4.00: Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter for two points. Firstly, that actions are to be understood as possessing an articulable structure; and secondly, that this structure is to be understood as being for the sake of a future end, which, in the case of the virtuous agent is eudaimonia.

In the next chapter, I shall adduce further arguments in favour of the view that human actions are typified by a structure articulable as aiming for a future good. In so doing, I intend to support two conclusions: firstly, that the prohairesis structure is not of marginal interest but is central to an understanding of human life; and, secondly, that this structure is typified by aiming at a future end.

Notes to chapter four

1. In general, I shall assume the latter strategy to be the correct interpretation of the EN, although little of substance in this thesis will rest on this assumption. The claims of political leaders such as Pericles to be phronimoi and thus articulate about the good life has to be amended in the light of their failure to articulate fully the divine vocation of humanity (see chapter nine, esp §§2.00ff.)
2. I shall assume, for the moment, that this refers to the means to achieving a temporally separate end. This assumption will be tested later.
3. Broadie 1991, p180 regards the structure of the prohairesis ('for the sake of x') as being naturally applicable to the action, although she does not identify prohairesis and action, and offers little argument for this extension.
4. See Sorabji 1980, pp42-44.
5. Gauthier & Jolif 1958, ad loc.
6. Cf DA 433a31-32 where orexis is said to be a dunamis.
7. For a full discussion of hexis, see Hutchinson 1986 ch 2.
8. Charles 1984, pp57ff.
9. *ibid*, p70.
10. *ibid*, p68 and p70n.
11. *ibid*, p62.
12. *ibid*, p62.
13. *ibid*, p68.
14. Anscombe, p209 (Vol II of the Collected Essays).
15. Hardie, 'The Final Good in Aristotle's Ethics' in Moravcsik 1968, pp297-322. Cf Kraut 1989, p8.
16. Eg Kraut 1989, p9; Engberg-Pedersen 1983, p47; J A Ackrill, 'Aristotle on Eudaimonia', in Rorty 1980, pp32-33. Note that these commentators are aware that, given human life always involves some competition between goods, the advice to maximize goods cannot be applied mechanically. However, no commentator of whom I am aware acknowledges that Aristotle seems to suggest

that a life which ends well, but which, overall, contains less goods than a life which ends badly, might be the happier life.

17. In case it is objected that there is always the theoretical possibility that the future evil will outweigh the past, consider the following: 'It is always a theoretical possibility that my savings will be insufficient to meet my needs in old age, but it's a pretty remote one; and, 'There's always the real possibility that, however easy my life up till now, my death will be a cruel one.' If eudaimonia is more like the first example, what you have done to date *may* compensate for the future. If eudaimonia is more like the second, the goodness or badness of the end is a separate matter from and cannot be compensated by the goodness of the previous life. I shall argue that the position of eudaimonia is more like the second example.
18. The interchangeability of makarios and eudaimôn is also argued by Nussbaum 1986, pp318-72. Kenny's objection (Kenny 1992, p35) that the identification of makarios and eudaimôn makes nonsense of Aristotle's discussion of the fragility of happiness seems misplaced: what is poignant is that a bad end can destroy happiness, in the same way that a sin at the end of life can destroy its holiness. There appears a similar fragility, perhaps resulting from similar causes, in claims of knowledge. Annas 1993 p420 confirms that there is only a stylistic variation between the two words, but notes Antiochus as having probably construed the variation as a substantive distinction in the discussion in 1100b22-1101a8.

An alternative explanation might be that the makarios is distinguished from the eudaimôn only by being beyond the reach of changes of fortune and not by any other quality of the happiness (cf Liddell & Scott on makar: '...the dead were esp. called makares, the blessed as being beyond the reach of pain). The difference between eudaimonia and makaria would then be one accidental to the strivings of the agent: if, by chance, you are beyond change, you are makarios; otherwise, you are eudaimôn. The aim of action would remain eudaimônia (EN I 4 1095a17-20) although one might hope that this will prove to be makaria.

19. Cf *Poetics*, XIII 1453a12ff: Aristotle's interest in tragedy which excites fear and pity causes him to pass quickly over the change of fortune of a good man in favour of the change of fortune of the evil or normal man.
20. See eg MacIntyre 1985, ch 15. Cf Annas 1993 p346.
21. *De Memoria*, eg 453a9-14.

22. And also prospectively in imagining how that life will look retrospectively: the young man dreaming of the contemplation of a life from the standpoint of a success not yet achieved. Thus the virtuous agent will bring the goodness of the end of his life into the present by taking pleasure in that end (chapters seven and eight).
23. The relationship between the divine activity and virtue is discussed in chapter eleven.

An objection to the line of argument in this section is that contemplation of a life would not be *theôria* in Aristotle's sense, because the contents of a life are variable matters (EN VI 4 1140a1-2) whilst *theôria* is contemplation of the invariable (EN X 7 1177a12-21; VI 6 1140b31-1141a20). At this stage, I would only make the general point that the word *theôria* and its cognates in EN as a whole are used to cover much more than contemplation of the eternal (cf Kraut 1989, pp15-16 n2). This of course may be due to an ambiguity in the use of the word: I shall later argue that it in fact reflects a continuity in the practical life and the life of *theôria* (see chapter eleven).

24. Cf Aquinas: 'The intellectual soul is created on the confines of eternity and time.' (Summa contra gentiles, I iii c lxi, quoted Underhill 1995, p65).
25. Both cited Hardie 1980, p119.
26. Another way of dealing with this sort of objection might be to emphasize the impersonality of the required reflexion. That the reflexion is on an agent's complete life doesn't entail that it has to be performed by the agent herself. This might suggest that the reflexion be carried out by one's fellow citizens, in turn suggesting links with the concept of *fama* in Classical thought and with my arguments concerning the social character of deliberation in chapter six.

Chapter five

Prohairesis (II)

1.00: Introduction

In this chapter, I continue to argue that the prohairesis structure is typically for the sake of a future end, and that this structure is central to human action. I concentrate not on the claim that action is directed towards the finish of a life as in the case of the virtuous agent (see previous chapter), but rather on other ways in which action for the future typifies normal human action.

2.00: Action as means to a temporally separate end

Given the means-end structure of the prohairesis, it might not be found surprising that acting for a future end is central to Aristotle's account of action. As soon as means and end are separated and this model used as the paradigm of action, it might be said, it stands to reason that some time is going to elapse before an end is obtained. Accordingly the end is going to be standardly a future one.

I shall more to say in the next section about Aristotle's adoption of a paradigm of productive actions to account for phronêsis. But given

that he does standardly have such a paradigm in mind, a future end is always likely to be central to his account. If, say, he had adopted a paradigm of play for his account, the question of a future end for action would be more problematic.

Aristotle certainly believes that it is distinctive of human beings to possess a sense of the future. For example, even where he suggests that some animals may have a sense of the future, he links the possession of this ability with phronêsis:

..even some of the lower animals are said to be phronima, namely those which display a capacity for foresight [dunamin pronoêtikên]. (EN VI 7 1141a25-28; cf 1139b5-9. See also disussion chapter ten §4.00.)

And he is widely recognized to have used a craft paradigm for practical reason:

For him [ie Aristotle] as for Socrates and Plato, the craftsman is a favourite paradigm of practical rationality.¹

Nevertheless, the foregoing general explanation might be doubted. Following Greenwood², we might adopt the distinction between constitutive means and productive means: if Aristotle regarded constitutive means as eligible to form part of the prohairesis, then

it would not have to be the case that the end of the prohairesis was temporally separate from the means.

It would be fair to say that the textual evidence for Aristotle's making a distinction between the two types of means is minimal. Allan's claims to detect the distinction in *De motu animalium* 701a9ff are criticized by Wiggins³, and, in general, it appears that Aristotle remains oblivious to the distinction in his account of practical reasoning. But it would be enough if some of the central cases envisaged by Aristotle were in fact cases of constitutive means; for this would suggest that my analysis of the paradigm human action as directed to a temporally separate end would be difficult to sustain.

2.01: Negative argument: the EN doesn't associate constitutive means with the prohairesis

It is necessary first of all to confine our examination of this point to the EN. Although Aristotle's account of animal -including human animal- movement remains broadly the same throughout the corpus, there are differences of detail and the structure of the prohairesis is one such point of detail. (Whether the differences are simply the result of differences of emphasis, or whether they result from substantive differences, perhaps as a consequence of intellectual development over Aristotle's career, is a matter I shall not consider

in this thesis.) To take the passage from *De motu animalium* cited above, at least one of the examples cannot be directly interpreted as being for the sake of a temporally separate good:

For example, whenever someone thinks that every man should take walks, and that he is a man, at once he takes a walk. (De Motu Animalium: 7 701a14-15)

So at first sight, here is a counterexample to my account. However, 701a35ff should put us on notice that we are not in precisely the same world as that of the EN; for there it is said that the sources of action are appetite (epithumia), spiritedness (thumos) and wish (boulêsis). Not only is there no mention of prohairesis, but the claim that wish initiates action seems contradicted by EN III 2 1111b19-30. Moreover, as given, the example is bizarre: what sense can be made of a man who suddenly thinks that every man should take walks, and immediately goes off and walks? To save such an agent from the clutches of the alienist, the example needs a context. And to give the context is likely to beg the question about what sort of good the agent is aiming at.

Turning to the EN, the paradigm for rational action is *predominantly* that of a productive means to an end. Even in those cases where rule-case reasoning is apparently in point, I suggest that if it is asked for what good the action is being performed, on any plausible account,

that good must be future.⁴ The explanation for this is simple: only an example where the action could be understood as good in itself -say, as in play or, perhaps, virtuous action- could a present good be plausibly attributed. Since Aristotle doesn't adduce such examples, he must standardly have action for a future good in mind, and, hence, productive means rather than constitutive means reasoning. It might be objected, however, that this misses the point. Firstly, the objection would go, it is necessary to distinguish between constitutive means reasoning and rule-case reasoning: although the latter reasoning may be a subclass of the former, constituent means reasoning is far wider than simply rule-case reasoning. Secondly, given the first point, if Aristotle didn't include constituent means reasoning as part of his account of deliberation, then his account is simply wrong: practical reasoning in most cases just isn't the sorting out of means to a temporally separate end.⁵

My response to this objection is to admit at once that deliberation is wider than the sort of productive reasoning which involves reasoning about the means to a fixed, separate end. I shall say something more about the intimacy and interdependence of means and end later in this chapter. But, as is argued extensively by Sarah Broadie, Aristotle's examples of reasoning in the *EN* and, *a fortiori*, the structure of the *prohairesis* itself, are not accounts of the process of deliberation, but rather the articulated results of that process.⁶ Nor should it be assumed that the point of such articulation is to provide a sort of

decision procedure by which to assess the goodness or badness of the reasoning. Given all this, the admission that practical reasoning is more extensive than productive reasoning does not necessarily conflict with my view, which is that the product of that reasoning can be articulated as a piece of productive reasoning, where the end is temporally separate from the means. This is the explanation, I would claim, for the considerable textual evidence that Aristotle's interest is primarily centred on models of action which are for a temporally separate end (eg EN III 1 1111a5-6; 1118a18-19; III 3 1112b32-3), actions which are thus productive rather than constitutive means. Even were it to be argued that some of Aristotle's examples in the EN were, contrary to my arguments, best understood as examples of constitutive means reasoning, this evident bias towards a productive means model would still require explanation. As always, we are talking *hês epi to polu* and some exceptions to the general case would not necessarily constitute a refutation.⁷

3.00: Marginal cases: actions not preceded by deliberation

At first sight, it might well seem that *prohairesis* only represent a relatively small subset of voluntary (*hekôn*) actions since *prohairesis* are preceded by deliberation (EN III 2 1112a15) and nothing done immediately (*exaiphnês*) is done according to choice (*kata proairesin*) (EN III 2 1111b9-10; cf EE II 7 1224a2-4). Since, clearly,

those actions which are immediately preceded by a period of deliberation are indeed a very limited subset of anything we might understand as voluntary actions, it would seem to follow that prohairetic actions are also a limited subset. Accordingly, whatever might be said of the prohairetic structure would have only marginal importance for understanding human actions.

I intend to shew how actions understood under the description of prohaireseis are the prime example of actions which are stamped with the character of the agent. Although I can afford to be agnostic over whether or not prohairetic actions form a very limited subset of voluntary action, if they do form such a subset, it will be essential to shew how those actions which realize the character of the agent and which are not preceded by deliberation -and, which accordingly, on this hypothesis, are not prohairetic- are illuminated by those actions which are prohairetic. In sum, either prohairetic actions are the statistically normal case of virtuous voluntary actions, or else the prohairetic structure of means for the sake of an end illuminates statistically normal actions.

I begin by addressing the question of actions done exaiphnés (eg EN III 2 1111b9-10). If this just meant 'done without an immediately preceding period of the agent's conscious deliberation', then it would represent the statistically normal case of voluntary actions. I am going to suggest that we instead regard this category as one extreme

of a continuum of voluntary actions, at one end of which stand actions done exaiphnés, and at the other end of which stands action done after a very long and careful period of deliberation such as the phronimos' pursuit of eudaimonia. In the following chapter, I shall also argue that deliberation by other individuals in the past of a culture can count for Aristotle as deliberation, and thus contend that the number of truly undeliberated actions is relatively small. In any case, being a prohairesis would thus be a matter of degree: the paradigm of the prohairesis has a great deal to say about the heavily deliberated actions but rather less to say about actions done exaiphnés. The model still has something to say about actions done exphainés, however, and it is what it does have to say in this marginal area that I shall now try to expound.

There are actions we do suddenly, which are perfectly reasonable actions in the circumstances, but which are self-evidently not statistically normal: of this sort are jumping out of the way of a car; grabbing a child away from danger, holding up one's hands to avert a blow -what might be called colloquially 'knee-jerk responses' or 'reflex actions'. Such actions are voluntary and it is an extremely good thing that we have them: anyone who didn't have the reflex of avoiding cars wouldn't last very long. But they nevertheless aren't typical actions: prereflectively, we might want to say that they aren't fully under our control, that we do them without thinking, that they are somewhat mechanical and inflexible and, thus, in some

circumstances, can be dangerous. (The sort of thing I'm thinking of here is the putatively correct advice that, when attacked by a bear, the best thing to do is to suppress one's flight reflex and to play dead.)

If actions done exaiphnês are such 'reflex' actions, then the fact that they are not done kata prohairesin would have little consequence for the statistically normal case of voluntary action. But even here, there is an articulable structure of acting for a future end. Such knee-jerk responses, after all, serve purposes, purposes which, moreover, the human agent, unlike the animal, is conscious of as separate from the action, even if, in the case of 'reflex' actions, this consciousness may only arrive after the event. (Could a 'reflex' action still be an action, rather than a true reflex like the knee jerking when struck, if there couldn't be an explanation of what future end the agent had been trying to achieve?)

The acting for a future end structure latent in sudden actions illuminates some comments of Aristotle on the comparative disgracefulness of akrasia in anger and akrasia in epithumiai (EN VII 6 1149a24-b3).

Now it appears that anger does to some extent bear reason, but bears it wrong, just as hasty servants hurry out of the room before they have heard the whole of what you are saying, and so

mistake your order, and as watch-dogs bark at a mere knock at the door, without waiting to see if it is a friend. Similarly anger, owing to the heat and swiftness of its nature, hears, but does not hear the order given, and rushes off to take vengeance.

(1149a25-32)

What Aristotle seems to be driving at here is that angry actions, just like 'knee-jerk responses', can be misplaced. The *prohairesis* which anger, in a sense, mimics, is that, say, fighting someone is for the sake of avenging an insult: there's nothing wrong in itself in such a means-end reflection -fighting someone can sometimes avenge an insult- it is merely that now is not the right time for it. *Epithumiai*, on the other hand, operate on another plane entirely, the world of childish immediate gratification, heedless of ends. It is in this sense that

..anger follows reason in a manner, but epithumia does not.

(1149b1-2)

In retrospect, the angry man can provide a sort of explanation and justification for his behaviour: 'I thought he had insulted me so I hit him to pay him back', just as the hasty servant can provide a sort of explanation and justification: 'I thought you told me to get the paper so I rushed out of the room'. In both cases, it is not that the end is wrong or that the means adopted to that end is wrong, but rather that

anger or haste has made one mistake the situation. The akratic in epithumiai however cannot offer such an explanation or justification, but only an apology. The continuum of action of the virtuous man -the paradigm man- even at the pole of actions done exaiphnés, thus remains interpretable in terms of the acting for a future end structure.

4.00: The intimacy between means and end in the prohairesis

I have argued above that the putative prohairetic structure of means for the sake of a future end can illuminate human action including even the marginal case of actions done exaiphnés. But is there anything more to the notion of a prohairesis beyond the claim that human actions are characteristically done for the sake of future ends? If there isn't, why develop the notion of a prohairesis, which I have analyzed as a description under which an action is performed, which describes the action, not just as means, nor as end, but as means to an end? Why not just say that the reason or motivation for an action characteristically derives from an end?

To understand the force of this possibility, consider Nagel's analysis of desires. He distinguishes between unmotivated desires -such as the desire to drink- which arise of their own accord, and motivated desires which arise from the force of reasons: thus, I desire to lay

in drink for my round the world voyage because I reason that will be thirsty in the future. As Nagel puts it:

Hunger is produced by lack of food, but is not motivated thereby. A desire to shop for groceries, after discovering nothing appetizing in the refrigerator, is on the other hand motivated by hunger.³

Now, in Aristotelian terms, hunger is an epithumia (EN III 11 1118b8-11): as such, it is a pathos, something which happens to someone rather than something which an agent does (EN II 5 1105b19-23; EE II 2 1220b12-14). So the Aristotelian gloss on 'unmotivated' would be that the desire just pops into an agent's mind unbidden. For an Aristotelian, the really interesting question is: what does the agent do about this pathos?

The point is that there is nothing that follows on naturally or immediately from this pathos. If I am hungry, I still have to devote some thought to what I am going to do about it. It might be objected here that there is the following case: I see a piece of cake and am overcome with such a desire for it that I just can't stop myself from snatching it. Now it can't be denied that there are cases like this but they seem to fall under what Aristotle describes as bestiality (EN VII 1 1145a15-17; 6 1149b26-1150a8): the complete heedlessness of the propriety of acting on the epithumia seems to belong to a morbid

character rather than to a sane one. Indeed, the only examples of this sort of behaviour in adults that readily spring to mind are all criminal: it is, for example, the sort of irresistible urge that rapists might plead. And as in most cases of rape, it is rather unbelievable as an explanation of behaviour precisely because it is so inhuman. Aristotle's understanding of animal movement is as a quasi-mechanical response to a stimulus: it is precisely because the response of a normal adult isn't quasi-mechanical that desire as epithumia is inadequate to explain paradigmatic human behaviour.

So if we keep a very firm Aristotelian concentration on the action itself rather than any background to it, what Aristotle would seem to be saying is that human actions typically take account of what is to be achieved in the future: that, in Nagel's terms, all actions are motivated. The conclusion that human actions are normally for the sake of a future event is sufficient for the purposes of this thesis, and my arguments in future chapters will build on this interpretation. I think, however, Aristotle may be saying rather more than this in his emphasis on the prohairesis as the paradigmatic description of action; and we can approach this strand by looking again at Nagel's account.

4.01: The intimacy between means and end (continued)

Nagel argues that if you have a reason to pursue an end, you thereby have a reason to pursue the means:

We may say that if being thirsty provides a reason to drink, then it also provides a reason for what enables one to drink. That can be regarded as the consequence of a perfectly general property of reasons for action: they transmit their influence over the relation between ends and means.⁹

A related view is espoused by Charles in his discussion of means-end reasoning in Aristotle. His argument goes essentially as follows. If I desire an end 'e' and I believe that if a means 'm' exists, then 'e' will occur, I will desire 'm'. Thus, if I desire a republic, and I believe this will occur if the Queen dies, I desire that the Queen dies. Charles explains the transmission of desire from end to means by characterizing desire as a mode of accepting a proposition with its own rules of inference separate from the rules of deductive reasoning which apply only to that mode of accepting propositions which is thinking them:

If desire is a mode of accepting these propositions...the propositions thus accepted stand connected in a way which

*explains how the conclusion is validly inferred from the premisses.*¹⁰

Thus, Nagel's general claim that reasons 'transmit their influence over the relation between end and means' is glossed for Aristotle as the claim that accepting propositions in the mode of desire is characterized by *sui generis* rules of inference which allow the validity of means-end reasoning.

It is important to notice what Charles is *not* arguing here. Charles adopts a common distinction made between two forms of Aristotelian practical reasoning: the means-end type referred to above and the rule-case type where *ta pros ta telé* is understood to refer to *instances* of the rule. It is sometimes thought that there is a general problem in applying the rules of deductive logic to practical reasoning. This can't be Charles' claim here, however, for he accepts the deductive validity of rule-case practical reasoning.¹¹ So his problem is not with practical reasoning in general but purely with the specific 'means-end' form of it.

It is very hard in general to know what to make of a claim that practical reasoning of any sort makes use of a *sui generis* pattern of inference and I would want to resist any suggestion that what we are dealing with in practical reasoning is anything else other than a particular application of common-or-garden logic.¹² But for present

purposes, my objection is rather to the idea that, however it occurs, the goodness of a means simply follows from the goodness of the end and the effectiveness of the means to that end; for by stopping at this simple idea of transmission, howsoever glossed, we lose sight of a crucial aspect of practical reasoning, namely, that the goodness or badness of the means, in itself, will affect not only the means-end calculation -I may not desire a means if it is really shabby- but also our perception of the goodness of the end.

It is undoubtedly characteristic of human beings according to Aristotle to use means-end calculation which indeed implies the transmission of goodness from end to means. But to stop there would undoubtedly be vicious: to murder someone to obtain money for a good purpose might be effective, but it is not virtuous. Just because Aristotle says that deinotês -the ability to find effective means- is a praiseworthy ability when devoted to good ends (EN VI 12 1144a23-28), this doesn't mean that the virtuous man will always pursue effectiveness regardless of all other considerations. If 'z' represents the means described independently of its being a means to the end, 'x' the end and 'y' the prohairesis of 'z-for-the-sake-of-x', the virtuous agent will be good at balancing the claims of the following considerations:

- 1) How effective is ϕ as a means to x ?
- 2) How good is x ?
- 3) How good is ϕ ?

His affirmation of ' y as good' will depend on and itself condition his assessment and balancing of those three considerations. For example, if the only ways I can obtain great riches involve distorting my life -say, by trampling on friends; ignoring family etc- this really had better affect my view of great riches as a good: although there is some sense in saying that, though the end is good, the means to it are unacceptable, we end up living in a phantasy if we hold tight to the belief that the end is good if there isn't and couldn't be any good way to obtain it. To take two of Aristotle's own examples, professional soldiers and sailors face dangers that would daunt others because they possess the means by dint of their skill and experience to deal with them (EN III 8 1116b3-15; EE III 1 1230a4-14): this is one way in which the means affects perception of the end, even, in such cases, changing the perception of what the end is. (Cf: 'The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,/ Is not to fancy what were fair in life/ Provided it could be, -but, finding first/ What may be, then find how to make it fair/ Up to our means -a very different thing!' (Browning: Bishop Blougram's Apology.))

It is this balancing of considerations that is reflected in the description of the action as prohairesis and in the finding of that

prohairesis good. And it must be emphasized: there isn't a bare action and a cluster of descriptions around it. What an action is is inseparable from the description under which it is performed; and the description or descriptions under which it is performed are a substantive question for the agent, not a merely arbitrary choice: thus, someone who does not regard herself as acting under the description of a prohairesis or who acts under the wrong sort of prohairesis is acting differently from someone who effects the same changes in the world but who acts virtuously. Consider, for example, the case of the characters in the film *the Seven Samurai*. One fights in order to obtain great wealth -the wrong prohairesis. One fights because that is just the sort of purposeless fighting that samurai do -not a prohairesis at all. The virtuous samurai -and perhaps it is the realization of this which forms the heart of the film- uses his fighting skills to allow the peasants to continue a life essentially foreign to his own -the correct prohairesis.

It might be objected to all this that there is no point in worrying about how the agent herself understands her actions: all that is important is the effects in the world that they produce. So, the objection might continue, the complexities of Aristotle's account of action have no practical purpose and can be dispensed with. But Aristotle's analysis does at least have a pragmatic point: unless the agent has the correct understanding of her actions, in the long run, she will go wrong and produce the wrong effects.'³ Professional

soldiers, apparently courageous for most of the time, differ in motive from the truly courageous, and, accordingly, will in some circumstances break when the truly courageous will stand (EN III 8 1116b15-23). The point in discriminating descriptions under which the agent acts is that, in the long run, different effects will result.'⁴

The intimacy of means and end in the prohairesis is of marginal importance to the main argument of this thesis. Part of its importance is simply in gesturing at some of the other aspects of Aristotle's account of practical reason which are not to be covered here. On the other hand, in addressing the balancing between the goodness of the means and the goodness of the end which inform the goodness of the prohairesis, I have introduced some of the issues to which I will return in chapters seven and eight, where I discuss the virtuous agent's enjoyment of her virtuous actions.

5.00: Conclusion

I have again argued in this chapter for the claim that the prohairesis description of an action is for a future end. As a subsidiary matter, I have suggested that the intimacy of means and end within the prohairesis reveals an important feature of human rationality: that

the goodness of a future end and the goodness of the present means to that end are not completely separable.

In the following chapter, my intention is further to defend the centrality of the prohairetic description to human action. Aristotle defines the prohairesis as being preceded by deliberation; and I attempt to shew how this quality of deliberation, which might otherwise be thought to limit the prohairesis to a very small class of actions, in fact illuminates a central feature of human culture.

Notes to chapter five

1. Broadie 1991, p181.
2. Greenwood 1909, pp46-7.
3. In Rorty 1980, pp229-230.
4. Charles 1984 lists five examples of 'rule-case' reasoning in the EN (p262). I take these in turn.

1142a20-23: *Again, in deliberation there is a double possibility of error: you may go wrong either in your general principle or in your particular fact: for instance, either in asserting that all heavy water is unwholesome, or that the particular water in question is heavy.*

Comment: that practical reasoning may involve general facts and particular facts is certain. But this example says nothing about actions and accordingly says nothing about constitutive means reasoning and the temporal discreteness of goods.

1144a29-34: *For deductive inferences about matters of conduct always have a major premiss of the form 'Since the End or Supreme Good is so and so' (whatever it may be, since we may take it as anything we like for the sake of the argument).....*

Comment: it is not clear that this example necessarily concerns constitutive means reasoning or, indeed, rule-case reasoning at all.

1147a5-7: *..for example, he [ie the agent] may know and be conscious of the knowledge that dry food is good for every man and that he himself is a man...*

Comment: as 1142a20-23 above.

1147a29-30: *For example, given the premisses 'All sweet things ought to be tasted' and 'Yonder thing is sweet' -a particular instance of the general class-, you are bound, if able and not prevented, immediately to taste the thing.*

Comment: the action suggested by this reasoning results in an end (eating) temporally discrete from the means to that end (reaching out to take it).

1147a31-34: When therefore there is present in the mind on the one hand a universal judgment saying 'All sweet things are pleasant,' and a minor premiss 'Yonder thing is sweet' (and it is this minor premiss that is active), and when desire [*epithumia*] is present at the same time, then, though the former universal judgment says 'Avoid that thing,' the desire leads you to it..

Comment: as 1147a29-30 above.

Of all these examples, only 1147a29-30 and 1147a31-34 appear in any way likely to prove counterexamples to the claim that Aristotle is exclusively interested in productive rather than constitutive means. Even here, the emphasis is doing something to bring something else in the future about. I accordingly hold that at least the weaker and sufficiently strong claim that Aristotle is *predominantly* interested in productive means is proved.

5. This, I take it, would be an objection made in the spirit of Wiggins', 'Deliberation & Practical Reason', pp221-240 Rorty 1980.

6. Broadie 1991 chapter 4, pp179-265. Cf p232:

..since the application of the decision can itself be analyzed into 'premisses'... its is easy to slip into the error of confusing the process of deliberation with the decision in which it results.

7. Annas 1993 p91-4 argues that the model of practical reasoning especially in Book III of the EN reflects the pattern of the learner aiming at putting into effect a fixed end, whilst, especially in Book VI, Aristotle operates with a model of the mature agent being immediately sensitive to what should be done. (Aristotle also has some confused views about the role of rule-case reasoning in a mature person's thought.) Annas summarizes the position in ancient ethics as follows (p108):

In general, we can see that there is no one favoured paradigm of moral reasoning; for all the schools it is more important to stress the differences between the beginner and the fully virtuous..

My view is that, whatever the differences between tyro and expert in *how* they reason, what they are reasoning *for* is the future, and paradigmatically for how their lives end; and it is this articulable aim, whatever differences may exist between different reasoners, which normally unites human agents.

8. Nagel 'Desires, Prudential Motives, and the Present', pp154-5 in Raz 1978.

9. *ibid* p158.
10. Charles 1984 p263.
11. *ibid* pp262-3.
12. For a defence of this sort of position, see G E M Anscombe, *On Practical Inference* in Hursthouse, Lawrence and Quinn.
13. To avoid any possibility of misconstrual, it must be emphasized here that this understanding isn't itself an interior, purely introspectible act: what an agent understands herself to be doing is a public matter, answerable by the agent herself as primary, but not final or sole witness. (See chapter four, §2.02.)
14. The point made at EN III 9 1117b17-19 that soldiers who have no goods to lose other than life itself might face greater dangers than those who are more courageous but have do possess goods is a correction to the claim that the truly courageous will always resist greater dangers than agents who only possess a variety of sham-courage. It is not, however, a counterexample to my claim that discriminating descriptions under which the agent acts has as its point discriminating long run effects; the truly courageous will act differently from the sham courage shewn by the destitute; that, on occasions, we might prefer to have those with sham courage fighting for us does not alter the fact that, in the ideal state, we would prefer to have the truly courageous as citizens.

Chapter six

Prohairesis (III)

1.00: Introduction

In the previous two chapters I have argued that the prohairesis is the articulable structure of an action and that this structure makes reference to a future end.

In order to suggest that Aristotle's analysis of the prohairesis thus understood lies at the heart of his analysis of human action, I have to explain how another feature of the prohairesis -that it is preceded by deliberation- can be a central feature of human action. I shall do this by arguing that the deliberation referred to is not necessarily that of the individual herself, but may simply be that performed by previous generations of her culture. My aim in this chapter is therefore to provide further evidence in favour of the view that the prohairesis typifies human action and that an understanding of it is thus extremely important in articulating the audience's existing life.

2.00: Learning to act under a description

Before presenting my account of the deliberation which precedes the prohairesis, I shall make a few general remarks regarding the process by which we learn to act under any sort of description.

I have argued that Aristotle believes that actions hôs epi to polu possess an articulable structure. The prohairesis structure takes the general form of ' ϕ for the sake of x' where ' ϕ ' is an action under a description which does not refer to the end, and where 'x' is a temporally separate end.

So how do we learn to act under such a description? A child, when it learns to act, learns *pari passu* to describe her actions. Sometimes it is through a running commentary on actions initiated by the child: 'That's right, you pick up bunny and give him a pat. Yes, he likes having his ears stroked.' Sometimes it is the parent who initiates the actions on which he comments: 'Now, off we go to bed, yes, that's the way. Let's put on our shoes and socks, there we go.' Sometimes it is by learning to obey an order: 'Don't put that coin in your mouth!' which produces an effect, initially, as the baby jumps at the sudden noise, latterly, as the child learns that what she is doing is putting a coin in her mouth and that she shouldn't.

Actions are accordingly learnt with their descriptions: unlike the world of objects -and even here we would have to make the point carefully- where there is some sense in saying that the object is encountered first and then the description. In the world of action, learning to act is inseparable from learning to describe those actions: for a child to learn to act rather than just move in the simple manner of a baby, she has to learn to become conscious of what she is doing, and that means learning to act under a description.

For a child to learn to see his actions as being under a description is to learn to bring his behaviour under his own control. But to be able to describe his own actions, he has to learn to see himself through adult eyes: what the child may think of as being great fun may be seen by his parents as a violent assault on a younger brother. Getting the description right in childhood is a matter for much of the time of getting the same description as those adults in authority over you. It is important to see that the agent is never in the position of a radical translator: just as the child doesn't start out with a complete set of actions which he then learns to describe, equally, he doesn't start out with his own set of descriptions which he then has to translate into the language of the adult world. His learning to act, learning to act under a description and learning to act under the description others would give of his actions are inseparably linked.

2.01: Learning to act under a description (cont.): learning to act for reasons

Having argued that learning to act and learning to act under a description are inseparably linked, I now turn to those descriptions which are offered as reasons for acting. (Here I use the term 'reason' in a wide non-technical sense to cover any description for an action which would be offered as a justification to others for its performance.)

Learning to act under a description isn't just a matter of reading off descriptions from a manual. Apart from the very earliest stages of childhood and the very simplest actions, how we describe our actions and what we do is a matter for dispute. And this isn't just an accidental feature of modern liberal democracies: although the great variety and apparent deeply unresolvable nature of the disputes might be characteristic of a particular type of society, no society can exist without some conflict and disagreement. And given that we are particularly concerned with that large, complex and litigious form of social organization which was the Greek city state, we have no reason to believe that Aristotle expected that conflict and competing demands could be eliminated from social organization.

If human beings are to work together with other human beings, they need to be able to agree, to some extent, on what they are doing.

Sometimes this agreement will be spontaneous. This will be particularly the case with families and friends where, living together over a long period, they have come to share an understanding of their actions. But in larger groups, spontaneous agreement will be lacking, and agreement will have to be obtained by discussion. To obtain agreement, actions will have to be characterized by descriptions which act as reasons ie descriptions which are persuasive to the other members of the group. For a group to exist, it needs ways of resolving conflict or disagreement without dissolving itself: the possession of a common language of reasons fulfils part of this function by placing boundaries on the dispute and guiding the gaze of the disputants towards the same direction.

So part of a child's learning to act is learning where the grey areas are, where there is a possibility of different views on what he is doing. Getting it right here isn't a matter of coming up with a uniquely correct description, but rather of using the right words to talk about what one is doing -'pursuing freedom and democracy' say, rather than 'pursuing my own enrichment at the expense of the country'- of staying within the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour -eg disapproving of sex outwith marriage but not screaming abuse at anyone who indulges- and of looking to the right authorities to provide guidance and the correct characterization and descriptions of courses of action -asking and even delegating the power of deciding an action's description to, say, schoolteachers or priests or parents

or friends, all of whom may be regarded as legitimate authorities even when they disagree, but ignoring the advice of pederasts, criminals and bullies.

In the light of these general remarks, I now return to Aristotle.

3.00: Action involves preceding deliberation

Aristotle suggests that a prohairesis must be preceded by deliberation (EN III 2 1112a15-17). It seems to follow that only a very few actions can be prohairesis because only a very few actions are deliberated on consciously before they are performed.

If we want to argue that most actions either are prohairesis or are closely related to prohairesis, this presents us with a problem. One solution is to simply insist that for every agent there is a temporally extended process of deliberation immediately preceding most actions.' The objection to such an account is, bluntly, that it is untrue. Accordingly, unless we are to attribute a patently false theory to Aristotle, this interpretation is unacceptable. The commonest approach is to deny that Aristotle actually means that there is a process of deliberation preceding every action that is necessarily temporally extended, but instead to take him as meaning that there is a logical order in deliberation and the prohairesis that can be, if

required, set out over time.² Although this would be a less philosophically objectionable position, it does tend to sit ill with the textual evidence within the discussions in Books III and VI of the EN, where a process taking place in time is suggested: thus, deliberation is described as a seeking and a calculating (ἡ δὲ βουλευόμενος ζήτηι καὶ λογίζεται EN VI 9 1142b1-2).

Another position is hinted at in a paper by Sorabji³ where he argues that the agent develops her view of the good life by, in part, using her reason to reflect upon it. This conception then influences her actions, consciously or unconsciously. This suggests that the deliberation which precedes the prohairesis is that process of coming to a view of a good life which is part of forming one's own character, and which can take place well before any action. To give a simple example, if I have thought long and hard about conjugal fidelity and come to the resolution that I will not be unfaithful to my wife, then the next time I am offered the opportunity of a one night stand, I may reject it without, at that time, having to deliberate about whether or not to accept it.

Some such account may well be part of Aristotle's understanding of deliberation and prohairesis. However, I think it right to be more sceptical than is Sorabji about the amount of deliberation that is required by an agent, even over the course of her entire life. Thus, I would not think it true, as a philosophical or exegetical matter, that

an agent necessarily has to develop a conception of the good life in that fairly explicit and philosophical way that Sorabji requires.⁴ That said, I am sure that the agent's own deliberation in the formation of her own character is part of what is to be understood by Aristotle's claim that deliberation precedes the prohairesis even if I am less convinced that this deliberation by the agent herself should be characterized in precisely the way that Sorabji suggests.

Given doubts about the plausibility of an agent's explicit and philosophical deliberation, it seems sensible to consider whether Sorabji's account of the development of character by the agent's own deliberation can be supplemented in any way. Given my account in chapter three, one way would be if the agent stood in a relationship of philia to another agent, the phronimos, who had indeed subjected his life to a fairly thoroughgoing scrutiny. Such an account would follow Sorabji's line of argument, in that the phronimos would have developed his character by dint of practical reason over the course of his life, but would gain additional plausibility in that it would be necessary to argue only that such deliberation was actually performed by a few individuals, with the relationship of philia allowing many others to share in it.

In what follows, I shall pursue a further possibility. Ando⁵ revives the Averroist speculation that the active intellect referred to in *De Anima* III 5 is single, eternal and immaterial and thus shared in by

human agents rather than being a personal mental possession such as the memory. A Hegelian twist is given to the speculation, however, by Ando's identification of active intellect with the Idealist 'objective mind', which is to say, the system of science and culture within a society.⁶ Such thoughts are likely to have analytical philosophers reaching for their guns. If such an approach were plausible, however, it might suggest that the deliberation which preceded the prohairesis was effected by the society or culture within which an agent lived rather than by the agent herself. Such a possibility has additional *prima facie* attractiveness because deliberation within a society does seem more likely to be of a high level philosophical kind than that effected by an individual. I accordingly now turn to consider whether such a line is in fact defensible.

Aristotle regards the existence of the polis as the outcome of a process of historical development. At the earliest stage of that development, human beings just live in households: as he states, human beings are pairing animals even more than they are political animals in that the family is a more fundamental form of partnership than the polis (EN VIII 7 1162a16-19). Gradually, through the grouping together of families into villages and villages into poleis, human beings move from just living to living well (Pol I 1 1252a24ff). As the basis for all such social life, there is friendship or philia (EN VIII 9 1159b25-32; *ibid* 12 1161b11-12). Philia isn't just a feeling, but involves prohairesis and virtue (EN VIII 5 1157b29-32; *ibid* 1 1155a3-5).

Aristotle accordingly believes that human beings associate because they deliberate and come to the conclusion that their life will be better if they live together in a particular form of social grouping. Thus all social groupings are formed with a view to attaining some good (Pol I 1 1252a1ff), the polis for the sake of the human good *simpliciter*, all other partnerships for some specific advantage (EN VIII 9 1160a8-30).

The Aristotelian view of history is accordingly one where the present state of any society is the result of deliberation. But the present state of a society will include its language and, more particularly, the descriptions of actions which it regards as reasons and therefore as persuasive. As Aristotle points out, it is a sharing of the language of such reasoning which allows social groupings to exist:

And why man is a political animal in a greater measure than any bee or gregarious animal is clear. For nature, as we declare, does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the animals possesses speech. The mere voice, it is true, can indicate pain and pleasure, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well (for their nature has been developed so far as to have awareness of what is painful and pleasant and to signify those things to one another), but speech is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong; for it is the special property of man in distinction from the other

animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities, and it is partnership in these things that makes a household and a city-state. (Pol I 1 1253a7-18)

Now, the weak claim that our practices of reasoning are, in some sense, historically conditioned seems certainly true. It seems undeniable that, for example, the teachings of Christianity have affected the way we think and talk about our actions and our lives, whether or not we are Christians. But the stronger claim that these practices and, indeed, our history have been the result of a process of deliberation is certainly open to criticism. An alternative view would be that we inherit a collection of shards, an inconsistent combination of fragments of traditions that were coherent in themselves, but which have broken down under the accidental circumstances of history to form an incoherent mess. This, for example, would appear to be the view of Alasdair MacIntyre.⁷

The issue seems to come to a head in the concept of a tradition. MacIntyre, for example, seems to regard a tradition as something that is essentially an intellectual system, one which may indeed, at any time, embody unstated, unreflected practices, but which will constantly reflect on itself and subject itself to rational criticism under the tests of truth. Another conception is that a tradition is a collection of inherited practices which are only reflected on to the extent that

they conflict, but then less under the tests of truth and more in the light of achieving compossibility and avoiding acute conflict.⁸ These conceptions of tradition aren't absolutely distinct: the 'inherited practice' view, for example, can't avoid all theoretical reflection on its inheritance; but they do nonetheless represent substantively different tendencies.⁹

Each of these conceptions will provide a different account of deliberation. The former 'reflective' view will equate deliberation with the search for rational coherence and truth in the inheritance. The latter 'inherited practice' view will equate deliberation with negotiation and the search for agreement rather than truth. The exegetical point at issue is this: if Aristotle understood deliberation on the reflective model, it is unlikely that the view that history is deliberated could be maintained: the present is just too intellectually incoherent and it is unlikely that much more could be said of, say, the Athenian polis. If, however, his concept of deliberation includes the inherited practice view, then, from the fact that, *ex hypothesi*, we are dealing with nations and cities that have at least sufficient unity of lives to be recognized as nations and cities, there will at least be a *prima facie* case for believing that history is a process of deliberation and, accordingly, our present practices and institutions - our objective mind- are the results of that process.

3.01: Aristotle's view of deliberation as a process of negotiation

The first point to make is that Aristotle's theory of practical reason is primarily concerned with those people who rule (Pol III 2 1277a14ff).¹⁰ The reason for this is broadly clear. A person who is not a ruler has fewer of her own actions in her power: more of what she does will be the result of external compulsion. Since we only choose (proairetai) what can be secured by our own efforts (EN III 2 1111b19-30), and, to the extent that the origin of an act is outside us, that act is not our own (EN III 1 1110b15-17), it follows that the paradigm case of proairetic action will be that of a ruler.

Aristotle seems to assume that what happens in a society is, broadly, controlled by its rulers.¹¹ For every primary human social grouping, there are people who are rulers of that grouping (Pol I 1 1252a6-23). Households and villages don't just drift into larger social groupings, but do so deliberately in order to achieve a better life (eg Pol I 1 1252b27-30). Moreover, the actual uniting of villages into a city governed by law and justice is attributable to human, indeed, individual action (Pol I 1 1253a30-31). That means for any change in a society that does not completely destroy that society (cf Pol III 1 1276a16ff), there will be a group of people or an individual to whom the change can be attributed. This would even seem to be the case for changes resulting from external forces such as, say, famine or invasion; for the response to such external forces is still, in a

diminished but nonetheless important sense, still up to the agent (EN III 1 1110a4-19).

Before developing the consequences of this assumption, let us stop to consider whether it is at all defensible. It is, certainly, the case that it is defensible for certain specific states. The United Kingdom, for example, has enjoyed a continuous development of its forms of government for nearly a thousand years. Although the 'top-down' approach of traditional historiography with its concentration on the doings and sayings of kings and parliaments has been criticized and partially supplanted by a sociological approach which abandons a concentration on the rulers of a country as an engine of change in favour of, say, the consequences of developments within the economic base, the former approach was able to account for enough at least to appear viable as a method for understanding and explaining the present state of the Kingdom. So an Aristotelian history of the United Kingdom would appear to have *prima facie* plausibility and, similarly, would appear plausible for any society with a relatively long and continuous constitutional development.

Now although Aristotle couldn't claim that every social grouping was necessarily the result of a consciously directed historical process, he could plausibly claim that any *polis* sized society which had a claim to allow human beings to lead the good life would have such a history. Imagine a Year Zero *polis*. One possibility would be the 'destructive'

Year Zero: a destruction of all that had gone before and a creation of a society *ab initio* (cf *Republic* 501c; 540e-541b). Another possibility would be the 'foundational' Year Zero: where, say, a new colony of necessity has to create a new constitution. Consider the foundational model. Although the institutional framework would be newly created, the characters of the citizens and, thus, the institutions themselves would be conditioned by history: thus, the creation of the Constitution of the United States, although a new foundation for a new society has a history largely traceable through British history. Turning to the destructive model, is it likely that any society created in this way would actually realize human happiness? Opinions might differ on this, but it is certainly at the least a highly plausible claim that a good society can only develop over the generations, and that all a destructive model could produce would be tyranny and human misery.

Aristotle would accordingly only be unable to account for those societies which have arisen *ab initio* from a destructive Year Zero past, or which tended towards such a pole. But this failure would be acceptable because the lack of historical influence would result in a thoroughly awful society: the goodness of a society would be in proportion to the extent that society's state was conditioned by its deliberated history. With respect to a society in which Aristotle had a direct interest -that of Athens- he evidently considered its constitutional history to have had sufficient influence on the

contemporary state of that city to justify devoting forty-one chapters of sixty-nine to its development in the *Athenian Constitution*.

Aristotle's notion of a historical process controlled by rulers¹² and influencing the present state of a polis does accordingly seem to have prima facie plausibility. But would the bargaining and negotiation and dealing of constitutional history be regarded by Aristotle as deliberation?

It should be noted firstly that, when discussing deliberation in the EN, Aristotle's mind immediately turns to political deliberation and the politician Pericles for paradigms (EN VI 5 1140b7-11).

Now, there is considerable debate in the literature as to whether Aristotle's conception of deliberation in the EN is a narrow seeking after means to a pre-defined end or, alternatively, a broader process of practical reasoning in which ends can be reviewed and amended.¹³ The important question for the moment, however, isn't how Aristotle thought deliberation should be modelled, but rather to what he thought that model should be applied. If Aristotle thought that political debate and discussion counted as deliberation, then, even if he thought -erroneously, perhaps- that such debate could be modelled as a deliberation of means to end, this would be irrelevant: it would remain the case that he believed deliberation accounted for constitutional change and, thus, might be said to precede prohairesis.

In fact, when we turn from the discussions of deliberation in the EN to the discussion of deliberative rhetoric in the *Rhetoric*, we find much that is immediately familiar. Firstly, we find that the same verb (bouleuomai) is used to refer to deliberation carried out by a group rather than by an individual (Rhet A 2 1357a1-7; cf EN VI 5 1140a26).¹⁴ Secondly, we find the same rather perplexing emphasis on deliberation's being addressed to means rather than ends (Rhet A 6 1362a18-20; cf EN VI 9 1142b28-33). Thirdly, deliberation is said to be aimed at eudaimonia (Rhet A 5 1360b4-9). Finally, in view of my emphasizing the importance of the human sense of future time in practical reason, it is interesting to note that the orientation of deliberation towards the future is also emphasized by Aristotle (Rhet A 3 1358b13-14).

Although Aristotle certainly emphasizes the rational, truth seeking aspects of rhetoric more than did some of his contemporaries¹⁵, rhetoric isn't just the art of presenting *logically* compelling arguments -although it involves this art- but rather the art of persuasion generally (Rhet A 2 1355b25-26), even if this persuasion relies on non-rational means such as influencing the audience through their emotions (Rhet B 1 1377b20-1378a5).

We can conclude from this that negotiation certainly would be covered by the term 'deliberation' as far as Aristotle was concerned. So if Aristotle held a fairly commonsense low view of the to-ings and fro-

ings of history, he would still be entitled to conclude that the results of the present were preceded by deliberation.

I have assumed, rather than argued, that the process of history is too messy to count as deliberation on a 'high' view which emphasizes the truth seeking aspects of deliberation: this I take to be the most plausible claim. I have just argued that, even on such a view, there is good reason to believe that Aristotle would have regarded historical process as deliberation. Say, on the other hand, that he did hold a high view of history. Two possibilities spring into mind which I shall mention, without pursuing in detail. Firstly, he could simply argue that, as a matter of fact, history had been directed by rulers consciously seeking out the truth about what they should do. Whilst I take it that such a factual claim is implausible, if found true, it would provide a very simple and direct account of the role of deliberation in the historical process. Alternatively, it might be held that, even though the conscious direction of history by rulers was not particularly high minded, being aimed at, say, their individual satisfaction rather than at human good, the effects, through some 'hidden hand' mechanism, were like the effects of a high notion of deliberation. Again in this case, although the deliberation would - unless we are to imagine some Hegelian-like 'Absolute Spirit' doing the deliberation- be 'as-if' deliberation had taken place rather than actually because it had taken place, there would still be a relatively straightforward sense in which the model of prohairesis as preceded

by deliberation would serve to illuminate our understanding of human action. Accordingly, although I would suggest that the 'low' view is the more plausible, both as an interpretation of Aristotle and as a philosophical position, either of these high views would also, and indeed more straightforwardly, justify the claim that the present is the result of deliberation.

3.02: History as determining prohaireseis

I have argued that Aristotle holds that the history of a polis is a deliberated process, in which the aims and desires of the rulers are negotiated and agreements arrived at which have affected the present state of the polis. I shall now proceed to argue that this process of deliberation determines the prohaireseis on which agents act and that, accordingly, it is this historical process of deliberation which, at least partly, explains Aristotle's contention that all prohaireseis are preceded by deliberation and that prohaireseis either represent the statistically normal case of human action or else illuminate that statistically normal case.

In a very general way, it firstly seems plausible that how an agent understands her actions is, broadly, the result of a historical process (I except the case of a destructive Year Zero society). Take a perfectly everyday example: 'I am going shopping at the supermarket to

buy chocolate'. Each of the words has an etymology which explains the changes in phonetics and semantics which led to the modern forms. The existence of commodities such as chocolate and an institution such as a supermarket are also the result of a historical process: for example, the creation of empire; the importation of cocoa for drinking; the invention of industrial processes to allow the creation of solid chocolate bars; the substitution of vegetable fats for cocoa butter - and so on. And what can be done for the trivial can be done with greater interest for ethical descriptions of action, MacIntyre's own work for example. Given that Aristotle's view of history is of it as a process directed by rulers after negotiation, it follows that how an agent understands her actions is determined by deliberation.

I now need to argue how the peculiar structure of the prohairesis which I have identified -an action done under the description of the form ' ϕ for the sake of x', where ' ϕ ' is an action described independently from the end, and where 'x' is a temporally separate end- relates to this process of social deliberation.

I have argued that the temporally separate end of a prohairesis for the virtuous agent is eudaimonia. I have further argued that eudaimonia consists in a end of life reflection on certain goods of that life, the nature of those goods being left undetermined for the moment. Now, Aristotle argues that agents generally -virtuous or not- act for the sake of eudaimonia, but that beyond this verbal agreement,

agents disagree on the substantive character of eudaimonia (EN I 4 1095a14-28).

I shall go on to argue that, by dint of the authority held by phronimoi in determining the meaning of the word eudaimonia, it follows that agents generally act for a future end. They thus act under a prohairesis description. Given that it has already been suggested that the understanding of actions is a result of a historical process, and that history, for Aristotle, is a matter of deliberation, it would follow that hôs epì to polu, actions are prohairesis preceded by deliberation.

By means of these arguments I hope to indicate a substantive philosophical position to underlie a claim that human actions are typified by a description which refers to a future end, that end being articulated as 'eudaimonia' or some equivalent in another language, and that description being the result of deliberation. By so doing, I intend to increase the acceptability of my interpretation of Aristotle's account of the prohairesis, by indicating its general philosophical plausibility.

3.03: Agreement in verbal aim

It cannot be the case that all agents act for something they call 'eudaimonia': non-Greek speakers, for example, do not. So the claim must be altered to a claim along the lines of the following: all agents act for the sake of 'eudaimonia' or an equivalent word in their native language. But to be identified as a translation of 'eudaimonia', a word would have to fulfil the same function, ie represent a unique and supreme end, on which there was verbal but not substantive agreement among agents.

Now, although the translation of 'eudaimonia' as 'happiness' has been faulted⁶, 'happiness' has the advantage over other possible translations that it actually does represent a word which has prima facie plausibility in English as a supreme and unique end: thus, the utilitarian claim that 'happiness' is the ultimate end has a plausibility lacking in a claim, say, that 'eating' is the ultimate end. So why is it that there are at least two languages which have developed words which can, albeit with some roughness of fit, fulfil this role?

I have already argued that sharing a language of reasons plays a part in establishing the unity of a society. But it might be objected that the unity required can only be established by a substantive agreement on reasons: ie, that people will not only agree on what words they

use to describe their actions and their ends, but also that what is described by those words is substantively identical. Since, *ex hypothesi*, there is only verbal agreement on 'happiness' and 'eudaimonia' as reasons, the argument goes, no substantive advance in social unity is gained by the existence of a merely verbal agreement.

On the assumption that there is a purely verbal agreement on 'eudaimonia', an assumption I shall go on to attack, there would still be a point in everyone sharing a word even if they don't share a substantive conception. Butler, for example, notes the efficacy of merely nominal relationships:

*..relations merely nominal are sought and invented...which are found sufficient to hold mankind together in little confraternities and copartnerships.'*⁷

One explanation of the efficacy of sharing verbal agreement on 'happiness' is that bringing people up to want 'happiness' is like bringing people up to follow a flag: where the flag goes, there they will follow; where the word is applied, that they will want. Nor is this word fetishism irrational. That one word exists within a society which is widely accepted as referring to the supreme good is evidence of an aspiration to agreement and same doing among the members of that society. (Consider the unity of a society which didn't even share the *aspiration* of samedoing.) Whether this aspiration can ultimately

be fulfilled will depend on whether arguments such as Aristotle's are persuasive arguments; and this persuasiveness will not depend on word fetishism.

When Aristotle begins his enquiry in the EN with the assertion that the majority of mankind agree that 'eudaimonia' is the greatest good achievable by action (EN I 4 1095a14-22), and ends by apparently concluding that 'eudaimonia' is theôria (EN X 7 1177a12-18), he is following the practice of dialectic as laid out in the *Topics* which is to take the words used by the majority of people but to ignore the way that the majority apply them (Top II 2 110a14ff); and such a method would lack a point unless words in themselves carried persuasive force.

So the claim that there is verbal agreement on the status of 'eudaimonia' as a supreme good indicates, at least, the weak claim that there is a shared commitment among the members of a polis to a common system of reasoning and to at least an element of samedoing. Although the truth of even this weak claim could be doubted, it has at least initial plausibility because a society which lacked even the aspiration -and, probably, at least some substantive agreement to boot- would seem to have lost all unity. Behind all the post-Kantian talk about universalization, there appears to lie this truth. Unless each individual or group with their own substantive conception of happiness were discontented with their being unable to share this

conception with others, they would be abandoning their claim upon the aid of other members of their society in common projects. And this claim will not easily be abandoned because to abandon it is to abandon any attempt to use the greater resources available to a polis as a whole when compared to any of its component parts.

3.04: Substantive agreement exists that the life must be a unity

An immediate point to be noted is that although at a polis wide level there is no agreement on how 'eudaimonia' is to be applied, this isn't the case with respect to the groups which make up the polis, such as families. Moreover, even at the level of the polis, there are three, and only three substantive conceptions of 'eudaimonia': the lives of pleasure, politics and contemplation (EN I 5 1095b14-19; EE I 4 1215b15). So even if nothing else could be said, there is at least a measure of agreement and, in consequence, an increase in social cohesiveness, in that only three conceptions are possible.

'Eudaimonia' appears to be what I shall describe as an essentially contestable word⁶, a word which marks an area of disagreement within a group of language users. But even so, we do have tests which allow us to say that someone is using the word correctly or not. Part of understanding the word is getting the target roughly right: we know that happiness is something to do with enjoyment and a good life, and

is not, say, a variety of cabbage (cf Rhet A 5 1360b4-1362a14). Another way in which we can assess if someone understands the word correctly is if she looks to the right sort of expert in order to develop her substantive conception. Thus, someone who thought that health was something attained by drinking lots of milk and eating plenty of red meat might still recognize a doctor as the right sort of expert to consult on health, an expert, moreover, to whom he should defer his understanding of what he was doing.

The case of expertise in eudaimonia is, of course, rather trickier than expertise in health. But one sort of ability we look for in experts on this subject is the ability to talk about the problem (cf Meta I 1). Whatever our view on abortion, for example, it is quite possible to agree that Roman Catholic moral theologians and feminist academics are able to discuss the issue well, and that, accordingly, they are experts in the subject.

It is noteworthy that, as already stated, the only person whom Aristotle identifies as a phronimos is Pericles (EN VI 5 1140b7-8), a statesman. (Aristotle's status as an expert, and accordingly, the status of all philosophers, can presumably be taken for granted!) A statesman, particularly in Classical Athens, is someone who has to have articulate views on practical judgments because he has to argue for those views: a statesman can't just go out and act without having an articulated idea of what he is about in the way that a carpenter

can; he has to issue orders and convince other people to follow them. Analogously, an architektôn, a master-craftsman in the sense that he is a master of craftsmen, is not necessarily better at performing his craft than a man of experience (Meta I 1 981a12-15) but is capable of directing others and teaching (ibid 981b7-9) because he can articulate reasons, that is, he has the ability to tell others what to do. A statesman -a practitioner of the supreme mastercraft (EN I 2 1094a26-28)- is someone who has expertise in making practical judgments, not in the sense that he necessarily makes good decisions, but rather that he is able to discuss such matters articulately.

So even if there were an infinite number of substantive conceptions of eudaimonia, Aristotle can point beyond them to those who are styled experts -the phronimoi- to whom all agents would defer.¹⁹ And from these experts -politicians and philosophers who hold their views ouk alogôs (EN I 5 1095b15)- the number of options held is narrowed down to three sorts of life. Now the really interesting point here isn't the content of those lives -the pleasure, the politics or the contemplation- but rather that the choice is narrowed down to sorts of *life*. Why? Why is the option of just living ruled out? Why does living have to be regarded as a *life* possessing, as a consequence, a unity?

It might, of course, just be the case that, accidentally, the only options that the phronimoi of Greece had considered were unified

lives. If this is the case, Aristotle would be entitled to his arguments in a way that we are not; for phronimoi known to us do allow the option of living that is not regarded as a unity.²⁰

3.05: The social usefulness of seeing life as a unity

I have already argued for the coherence of the view that life is a unity; but should one hold such a view? On what basis would we as phronimoi tell our eager followers that they should regard their lives as possessing a unity, rather than advising them to regard it as being made up of discrete parts? Here it may be helpful to note that Aristotle argues that noble actions benefit the community and not just the agent (EN IX 8 1169a6-11).

Now a socially useful reason for seeing life as a unity would be to ensure the flourishing of the state. Assume, with Aristotle, that a particularly good source of wisdom about living is to be found among old people (EN I 3 1095a2-4; VI 8 1142a5-16; VI 11 1143b11-14.) Accordingly, it would be sensible for the state to ensure that there is a constant supply of old people who are, moreover, treated with respect. To ensure their existence, children would have to be taught to regard their old age as at least as important as their youth: if they did not, it would seem unlikely that they would regularly achieve old age. And to ensure the good treatment of the old, the young would have

to believe that they too would one day be old: otherwise they would regard the treatment as unfair (cf Pol VII 8 1329a8-18). This argument can be generalized. If a state requires a constant supply of citizens of different ages, that supply can only be ensured if citizens are required to view their lives and the stages in that life as a unity.

Taking the argument beyond the text, in any pre-industrial society, the sort of skills required in the crafts and arts, fine or practical, can normally be developed only over an entire and long life. If those skills are required by the community, children must be raised and educated to see that they should live a life which builds up those skills, aiming towards a maturity both of chronological age and skill. Now, arguably, in a modern society, the socially required skills are no longer developed over a long life by cumulative experience: the best computer operators may be in their twenties; the most effective salesmen may be the young, aggressive and the most easily bent to a corporate mentality, rather than the mature, indolent and curmudgeonly. Whatever the truth of these factual claims, it is, I think, clear that the encouragement of seeing life as a unity has a pragmatic justification within certain types of society which it lacks in others; and that, accordingly, the claim that, for any given society, the seeing of life as a unity is a good is a substantive claim because it is a false claim in certain situations.

It might additionally be argued that such a unity would be insufficient to establish the particular type of unity required for a life to be that of *pleasure* or *politics* or *contemplation*. Indeed so: it remains to argue for the supreme goodness of the life of *theôria* and this I shall attempt to do in the rest of this thesis. But for present purposes, all that is required is for a life to be a temporal unity which, in order to be a good life, must also have a good end at the completion of a long time period: what that end is remains to be argued. Since, *ex hypothesi*, the universal opinion of the Greek *phronimoi* is that lives possess unity, even those agents who were not conscious of such a unity would, in deference to the experts whom they respect, assign such a unity to their lives, and, thus, regard any action which did not take account of this unity as less than paradigmatic. Moreover, since the source of the agent's understanding of her actions is that history which has been deliberated by the rulers (who are *phronimoi*), it is likely that in fact the agent will regard her actions in this light.

For Aristotle then it does seem to have been a justifiable premiss that a life would have to be a unity viewed from its end in order to have been happy. In a demythologizing mood, additional confirmation of the socially pragmatic consequences of individuals' regarding their lives as unities might be found in the fact that many religions do regard the end of life of particular importance: in the absence of

some sort of social benefit, it would seem an unlikely idea to have flourished.

4.00: Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that human actions can standardly be said to be preceded by deliberation. Accordingly, the requirement that prohaireseis be so preceded does not entail that they can only be a marginal case of human action.

We have accordingly reached the following stage of the argument. I have argued that the aim of the EN is to articulate the audience's existing good life by understanding the mind of the phronimos (chapters one to three). In chapters four, five and six, I have argued that part of the articulation of the good life is that its actions are aimed at a future goal. The understanding of the phronimos is that this future goal is the reflection on life's goods at the end of life which is eudaimonia. This understanding is consciously shared by many others, at least to the extent that they would agree on the verbal aim of eudaimonia, on that being assessable at the end of a life, and on human actions being generally aimed at the future.

Notes to chapter six

1. eg Hardie 1980, pp161-181.
2. Cf Broadie 1991 p79:

These difficulties [sc. about deliberation] have led many commentators to the view that deliberation in Aristotle really refers not to a psychological process but to the structure of reasoned explanation which is at least potentially present in the rationale of the agent's response.
3. 'Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue', in Rorty 1980.
4. Eg p209.
5. In Ando 1958.
6. op cit eg p176.
7. A constant theme of his work since MacIntyre 1985 and 1988.
8. I understand something like this distinction to be the basis of MacIntyre's defence to attacks by, say, Coleman and Haldane (in Horton & Mendus 1994, pp65-90 and pp91-107; see also MacIntyre's reply pp283-304) who claim that MacIntyre's emphasis on the historical development of a tradition is a distortion of the perennial nature of Thomism.
9. In view of MacIntyre's own movement from Canterbury to Rome, it is tempting to describe the two conceptions as Roman and Anglican respectively.
10. Cf EE I 4 1215a35-36, particularly with the reading hoi ep' exousias <ontes> tugchanontes. (See Rackham 1952, textual note ad locum.)
11. On, say, the Marxist view of history, this assumption would be assailable.
12. There is, I think, no need to take the notion of a ruler to be purely that of someone involved in the institutions of government. As I go on to emphasize the necessity for politicians to develop theory in order to argue their case, I would wish to emphasize the social influence of, say, poets and philosophers as the 'unacknowledged legislators'.

13. Proponents of the narrow view include: Hardie 1980 (eg p217); Gauthier & Jolif 1958 (eg ad 1112b11-20). The predominant opinion among modern academics appears to be that ends as well as means are discovered. Examples include: Sherman 1989 (eg p83); Broadie 1991 (eg p226); Wiggins (in Rorty 1980 pp221-240).
14. It should be noted, however, that when referring to deliberative oratory in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle often makes use of the active *sumbouleuô* (Liddell and Scott: 'to counsel') where there appears little distinction in meaning between the two words (eg 1359a35-37). Lawson-Tancred 1986 translates both indiscriminately with 'deliberation' and its derivatives.
15. Cf Lawson-Tancred 1986, p8. See eg Rhet A 1 1354a1-30.
16. Eg by Cooper 1975, pp89-90 n1; Ackrill in Rorty 1980, p24.
17. 'Fifteen Sermons' 1.10, cited in Duncan-Jones 1952, p33.
18. The idea of essentially contestable *concepts* is a philosophical commonplace (see eg Hurley 1989, pp47-8).
19. Given that some *phronimoi* may ultimately prove to be advocating vicious lives, the claim of being a *phronimos*, like the one of being *eudaimôn*, is defeasible.
20. Examples of such *phronimoi* available to the modern West include Parfit (1984) and the Buddha (see Hiriyana 1985, p76). Annas 1993 notes that:

[t]he Cyreniacs alone among ancient schools rejected the importance of one's life as a whole for one's ethical perspective. (p230)

Annas goes on to describe the Cyreniacs as the exception proving the rule that the ancients regarded the ethical perspective as essentially involving seeing life as a unity.

Chapter seven

The virtuous agent's enjoyment of prohairesis action (I)

1.00: Introduction

I have argued that the prohairesis description of action as 'for-the-sake-of-x' where 'x' is a temporally separate end and the action is preceded by deliberation can be regarded as the paradigm of human action.

In this and the following chapter eight, I intend to argue that it is characteristic of the virtuous to enjoy their prohairesis actions. I shall argue that, by enjoying an action, that action becomes performed under the description of an energeia. Accordingly, the virtuous agent characteristically acts under two sorts of description: the prohairesis description which aims at a future good; and a description which supervenes on the prohairesis description and which is both enjoyable and an energeia.

This result will pave the way for chapters nine to eleven where I shall argue that the virtuous in their actions imitate the divine in its activity, which is eternal, perfect energeia and pleasure (cf *Metaphysics* XII 7).

In this chapter, I argue that the virtuous agent normally enjoys his actions. I consider two cases where such a view might be thought to run into difficulties. Firstly, I consider those virtuous actions such as courageous actions where there appears to be a necessary involvement of pain. Secondly, I consider cases where a virtuous agent does the wrong action. In both cases, I hold that the view that virtuous agents normally enjoy their actions is able to cope with these difficult cases. In general, I note that the tendency to find actions enjoyable is reinforced when the virtuous agent considers his actions, not individually but from the perspective of a whole life: the virtuous tend to enjoy their lives even when they fail to enjoy every moment of them.

2.00: The virtuous enjoy their actions

All actions aim at goods (EN I 1 1094a1). Now, unlike animals, human beings do not just act for the sake for the good of pleasure, but also for the sake of the useful -in the sense of the means to the end- and the noble (EN II 3 1104b30-32; cf III 2 1111b16-18, VIII 2 1155b18-21). But all goods appear to human beings as pleasant (EN II 3 1105a1). This would suggest that, since actions are for the sake of a good which appears as pleasant, actions are, in some sense, for the sake of the pleasant.

The sense in which this is so is made clear elsewhere by Aristotle (EN III 1 1110b9-13):

To apply the term 'compulsory' to acts done for the sake of pleasure or for noble objects, on the plea that these exercise constraint on us from without, is to make every action compulsory. For (1) pleasure and nobility between them supply the motives of all actions whatsoever. Also (2) to act under compulsion and unwillingly is painful, but actions done for their pleasantness or nobility are done with pleasure [meth'hedonés].

(Cf EN II 3 1104b13-16)

It seems then that just as actions done for the sake of the noble are noble actions, so actions done for the sake of the pleasant are pleasant actions. In any case, it appears clear from this passage that actions are normally pleasant.

It is, however, as dangerous to rely on isolated quotations from Aristotle as it is isolated passages from scripture. We therefore need to provide further evidence that Aristotle here isn't just being a little slapdash, that what he really means is that acts done for the sake of the noble are done wholeheartedly or gladly rather than with pleasure. (Indeed, one might doubt that even acts done for the sake of pleasure are always pleasurable: in contemplating the careers of libertines such as Don Juan and Casanova, one becomes aware of the

amount of hard effort involved.) As Broadie notes when commenting on 1099a7-21, the view that the virtuous normally *enjoy* their actions appears counterintuitive:

This position plays an important role in clarifying the aim and process of moral training and in pointing up the difference between virtuous action and right action that fails to manifest virtue, whether because motivated by fear of sanctions etc. or because done in the teeth of base temptation. But outside this context the assertion is dubious. Aristotle is justified in taking it for granted so long as he means that the virtuous person takes the right course because it is right, and takes it willingly and ungrudgingly, being identified with his action. The action must reflect not only practical judgment and rational commitment, but the depth of of the individual's ethical personality. He is eager and glad to act well, because all of him is behind it. But this does not entail that what he does is pleasant in the sense in which, say, physical enjoyments are paradigmatically pleasures. A good person will do gladly many things which he finds thoroughly unpleasant, and ...not to be pained would not necessarily be to his credit, since it might show a less than virtuous insensibility if he did not mind the cost.'

The distinction between acts done wholeheartedly or gladly and those done with pleasure is not, I would suggest, as clearly marked in ordinary usage as philosophers might like to pretend. That said, there does seem to be a central difference that is usually preserved in that, if one enjoys doing something, one thereby has a reason for doing it, whilst if one does something merely gladly or wholeheartedly, no further reason is added to the reason for which one already acts.² For example, if I have a duty to take my dog for a walk, the duty is a reason for my action. If I also enjoy taking my dog for a walk, I have an additional reason for my action: this is evidenced by my still having a reason to take the dog for a walk -viz I enjoy so doing- even if I subsequently discover that I don't have a duty after all. On the other hand, if I only take my dog for a walk gladly or wholeheartedly, then if I discover I no longer have a duty to walk the dog, my reason for walking it disappears. We must accordingly see whether or not Aristotle thinks that when an action is done with pleasure, this 'with pleasure' does or does not indicate a reason. If it doesn't indicate a reason, then we may indeed suspect that Aristotle means only that noble actions are done wholeheartedly rather than enjoyably.

Consider EN II 3 1104b3-4. Here Aristotle argues that virtue is measured by the pleasure and pain which accompanies our action (tên epiginomenên hêdonên ê lupên tois ergois) and that the temperate man enjoys -is chairôn- about abstinence from bodily pleasures. This might

suggest that these locutions are being used to indicate gladness rather than enjoyment; however, later in the passage, Aristotle uses identical terms to indicate the reasons or causes -for now, the distinction needn't concern us- of our actions: pleasure (h don ) causes us to do bad actions while pain (lup ) causes us to avoid good ones; it is therefore important to like and dislike (chairein te kai lypeisthai) the proper things (1104b8-12).³

I have argued that the enjoyment of an action provides an additional reason for doing it. Accordingly, where chairein and lypeisthai indicate reasons for acting, they cannot refer to modes of acting such as 'gladly' or 'wholeheartedly': clearly, therefore, the use of words in 1104b8-12 must refer to actions being enjoyed rather than being done wholeheartedly. But if this is the case, it becomes difficult to accept that Aristotle would have used the same words to refer to different concepts only a few lines earlier: this strongly suggests either that Aristotle does not mark the distinction between wholeheartedness and pleasure, or that he is aware of the distinction and means that virtuous actions are done with pleasure and not just wholeheartedly.

Unfortunately for the former possibility, it is clear that Aristotle does appreciate the distinction between a willing or wholehearted pursuit of an end and a pleasant pursuit. In EN III 9 1117a29ff, Aristotle makes it clear that the actual exercise of the virtue of courage may involve the endurance of pain, pain moreover that is truly

painful even to the virtuous man (1117b7-16). What one might expect to be said here is that the courageous man bears these unavoidable pains willingly even if he doesn't enjoy them. In fact, Aristotle is clear that the virtuous man bears such pain *unwillingly* (*akôn* 1117b8y). Moreover, Aristotle also makes it clear that the end of the virtuous exercise of courage really is pleasant although the pleasure is obscured by the pains attendant on achieving the end (1117a35-b3).

This is a difficult claim to understand completely, but I think the gist of it is clear enough. (I shall consider the matter in more detail below.) *Qua* an action directed at a good end -say, winning a Lonsdale belt- courage is pleasant. *Qua* getting battered about, it isn't. It can be readily imagined that a boxer could enter a few hopeless fights and still enjoy them. But if the connexion between the pain of the pursuit and the achievement of victory is ever completely severed -so that the boxer knows that however hard she fights, there is never any chance of winning, that what she is engaged in is no longer validated by the good of victory, but simply a senseless pain- the action can no longer be seen as pleasurable.

Given that virtuous action is an *energeia*⁴ the end of virtuous action is present throughout the *energeia* and not just at the time it ceases (see discussion in next chapter). This would seem to imply that any attribute of the end would also be present throughout the *energeia*.

Accordingly, the exercise of courage is pleasant throughout its exercise.

I take it then Aristotle believes that hôs epi ta polu virtuous action is found pleasant by the virtuous agent.⁶

3.00: Difficulties and pleasure

I have argued that the virtuous agent finds his actions pleasant. I have also noted that the courageous agent who enjoys his acts of courage may yet experience pains as part of that courageous act.

In the previous chapters, I argued that the prohairetic action -an action done under the description of '~~for~~-for-the-sake-of-x' where 'x' is a future good- is a paradigm of human action. Accordingly, if the virtuous agent enjoys his actions he must, paradigmatically, enjoy his prohairetic actions.

In what follows, I consider what this enjoyment of the prohairetic action involves.

3.01: Pleasures of expectation and performance

I noted in considering the case of courage that although the courageous agent enjoyed the courageous action, he didn't enjoy everything about it. Thus, the boxer didn't enjoy the pains of the blows received during the bout even though he enjoyed the bout. This might suggest that the boxer's life would have been better if there had been no pains involved in the bout at all: he would then have had all the pleasure of victory without any of the pains of combat. But on reflexion, this claim ought to seem a little odd. If the best boxer's life was one where there were no pains involved, how would such a life embody the virtue of courage?

One way in which victory could be found pleasant throughout the combat and pains necessary to obtain that victory would be by expectation: I can find pleasure in the hope that I will win the contest *despite* the pains required to win. For such a person, the pains of combat really are something better done without. Consequently he is someone who, although his behaviour might resemble the virtuous, is failing to get the point of courage by failing to have a proper attitude to the work involved in obtaining the desired end.

The person who at least has the pleasure of expectation needs to be distinguished from someone who doesn't even have that pleasure in acting well. There are grim characters who just plough on regardless,

taking pleasure neither in the combat nor in the expectation of obtaining the end.

Both types are to be distinguished from the truly virtuous to whom the pleasure taken in the pursuit of the good end is not *despite* the pains involved in that pursuit, but whose pleasure rather involves an appreciation of the difficulties involved:

And mothers love their children more than fathers, because they think that the children are more their work; for people estimate work by its difficulty, and in the production of a child the mother suffers more pain. (EE VII 8 1241b7-9)

The courageous boxer enjoys his fight both because he expects to win and because of the efforts he needs to make in order to win. Although nothing in my argument hangs on this -the types set out above are recognizable even if Aristotle didn't consider them- I would tentatively identify the person motivated by the pleasure of anticipation *despite* the pains of the pursuit with Aristotle's enkratic and the person who just hangs on grimly with no pleasure at all with his karterikos. The enkratic for example is described thus:

a man exercising self-control both feels pain when he finally acts in opposition to his desire and enjoys the pleasure of

hoping (*chairei tēn ap' elpidos*) that he will be benefited later on. (EE II 8 1224b16-18)

The karterikos merely endures. His is the grim world of the final words of Beckett's *The Unnamable*:

..I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on.

For the enkratic there is light at the end of the tunnel -the pleasure of victory- whilst for the karterikos there is no final relief from the pain of struggle:

..for karterein consists in withstanding [antechein] whilst enkrateia consists in mastery [kratein], and withstanding and mastery are different, in the same way that not being defeated differs from victory. (EN VII 7 1150a33-1150b1)

Whatever the correctness of my identification of these types with the enkratic and the karterikos, it is at least clear that someone who is virtuous, whilst looking forward to the future good, need not ignore the difficulties of the task but can rather take pleasure in the difficulties. He does not, however, like the masochist, take pleasure in them just because they are painful, but because they are painful for a purpose: they are the painful means to a desirable end.⁶

3.02: Enjoying the prohairetic action

In the previous three chapters, I argued that an action performed under the prohairetic description typified human action. I also argued that this description had a structure where a means was performed for the sake of a future end.

On the basis of the analysis of pleasure in §3.01, the virtuous enjoyment of an action which had such a prohairetic structure would consist not only in the anticipatory pleasure of the future end, but might also involve taking pleasure in the difficulty and pains of the means as means to that end. A virtuous lawyer who had to work through the night in order to win her case in the morning might thus take pleasure not only in the prospect of winning the case, but also in the pain of the sleepless night *qua* means to that desirable end. The less than perfectly virtuous lawyer -of the sort tentatively identified with the *enkratic* above- works through the night, feels the anticipatory pleasure of winning the case, but simply refrains from giving into the desire to sleep rather than relishing the pain of sleeplessness for a purpose as part of her virtuous action. The still less virtuous lawyer -tentatively identified with the *karterikos*- does what she needs to do, but without any pleasure at all, either in anticipation or in performance.

If I am correct in the centrality of the action performed under the prohairetic description, the virtuous agent would accordingly enjoy such an action not necessarily by overlooking the labour involved in the means to the future end, but rather being of such a character that he enjoyed the pain of the means, not in itself as would a masochist, but *qua* means: pride in a difficult job well done.

It might be objected here that simply because an end is in the future, it does not follow that the means to achieving that end are difficult or painful. In one sense, this is certainly true. There is no *a priori* reason why pursuit of a future good should involve pains. Certainly, there are virtuous actions performed by a virtuous agent which seem to involve no pain at all: for example, being able to help someone without damaging one's own life. Moreover, as McDowell suggests⁷, the virtue of courage may sometimes entail that pains are not just overlooked, still less, as I have argued, that they are enjoyed, but rather that they are not even noticed. Thus, it may well be the perfectly courageous response to the question, say: 'Why did you rush out to save that man when they had a machine gun trained on you?' to say, 'I didn't think about the danger: I just did what I had to do.' So my claim can't be that virtue *always* involves the enjoyment of pains *qua* means. In some cases, the virtuous agent will just not notice the pains of effort while in other cases there will just be no effort involved at all. But to claim that virtue depends on never noticing pains attendant on effort is both implausible and at odds with

Aristotle's account that courage does involve pain. Accordingly, a plausible view must somehow acknowledge that pains are actually felt, but in some way distinguish the virtuous agent from the non-virtuous. In what follows, I seek to develop my general account above that the virtuous sometimes feel pains *qua* means.

3.03: The painfulness of means as typifying human action

One way of approaching this issue is by considering the nature of non-prohairesis action. Aristotle defines prohairesis as being preceded by deliberation (EN III 3 1113a9-12), and restricts deliberation to those matters which are hōs epi ta polu (ibid 1112b8-11). These include certain technai such as medicine and business. This would suggest that prohairesis action may include certain actions undertaken in crafts or arts. On the other hand, in the discussion in Book VI, prohairesis is taken as being the archē of praxis (EN VI 2 1138b30-35); and praxis is almost immediately sharply distinguished from craft or art actions (poiēseis (EN VI 4 1140a1-23)).

Whatever the precise relationship between prohairesis actions and poiēseis, there is no reason to assume that light cannot be thrown on one category by the other: indeed, as previously noted, Aristotle constantly uses a craft model for phronēsis⁹. For present purposes, the similarities are important. Crafts aim at achieving a finished

product in the future and I have argued that prohairesis actions also aim at a future good. The attitude of workers to their *poiésis* may accordingly throw light on the attitude of the virtuous to their prohairesis actions.

A slave or banausic labourer can be made to perform tasks, not, usually, in the way that a great fear can compel someone to act (EN III 1 1110a19-1110b1), but in a sort of friendship (EN VIII 11 1161b5-10), sharing a life with his master (Pol I 5 1260a39-40). Whatever defects are present in Aristotle's views on slavery, he never denies that the slave is human (Pol I 5 1259b18-21), albeit of a character apt to be ruled.

For Aristotle, all paid work is a form of slavery (Pol I 5 1260a41-1260b1; III 2 1277a37-b1). Accordingly, if we accept that human beings can find satisfaction in a (paid) job well done -which we certainly should- then unless we have reason to believe that Aristotle just overlooked this aspect of life -and I would suggest that we have no reason so to think- human beings are apt to find satisfaction even in a job which is imposed on them as slaves. Why is this? Certainly, there will often be accidental features of the job which the slave will enjoy: thus, a slave might enjoy getting out into the fresh air and doing the gardening; or he might like pleasing his master. On the other hand, there will be some jobs the accidental features of which it is just beyond human nature to enjoy: working in the silver mines

at Laurium, for example. But apart from the accidental features of these tasks, it is surely the case that it is a feature of human nature to enjoy a job, *per se*, that human beings are apt to welcome and take satisfaction in work or a challenge, just because it is work or a challenge.

This satisfaction can take two forms. One form is analogous to the pleasures of anticipation which I have suggested above as a model for understanding the *enkrateia* of ethical action: the slave enjoys the prospect of the completed work, but only endures the means leading up to the end. Another form is analogous to the virtuous agent's: one which also finds satisfaction in the means *qua* means to a satisfying end -the attitude that only values something when it is hard won:

for people estimate work by its difficulty [to gar ergon tōi chalepōi diorizousin]. EE VII 8 1241b8-9

This aspect of human nature is overlooked by those who locate the meaning of life in giving people what they want. Taylor⁹ gives Sisyphus' endless stone-rolling a meaning by making Sisyphus want to do it. But this rather obscures what it is about stone-rolling that makes it apt for this sort of role. Consider the following three versions of Sisyphus' torment: Sisyphus (1) is condemned to spend eternity staring at a stone; Sisyphus (2) is condemned to spend eternity rolling a small marble back and forth on a smooth surface

with his forefinger; Sisyphus (3) is condemned to spend eternity rolling a heavy stone up a hill which, just as it reaches the top, falls down and he has to start again (the original myth). Now, apart from developing highly esoteric forms of meditation, Sisyphus (1) is going to lack occupation. In the abstract, I suppose, there is no reason to believe that staring at a stone for an eternity is any worse than moving it from side to side for an eternity (Sisyphus (2)); but of course, we are not talking in the abstract but rather what are the empirical facts of human nature. Given that empirical emphasis, there is every reason to believe that in fact it is worse. Prisoners in solitary confinement occupy themselves by inventing tasks -that is, things which they can *complete*, even if this is just marking the completion of each day on a wall with a piece of chalk. Polar bears walk backwards and forwards in zoos. Alcoholics using Alcoholics Anonymous' method of abstinence concentrate on completing one day at a time abstaining rather than thinking about *never* drinking again. All this is important because it emphasizes that what is important here is not the labour of achieving the completion, but the temporal separation: there is really not any more effort involved in the torment of Sisyphus (2) than there is in that of Sisyphus (1); however, by dint of his life having an aptness to be regarded as a task, it would seem to be that bit more bearable.

So one thing we might want to say about the prohairetic structure of a means to a temporally separate end is that, just by virtue of the

end's being temporally separate, it takes on something of the quality of a task and is thus apt to be enjoyed. With Sisyphus (3), in addition to the simple persistence required in any action extended over time, there are real pains involved in achieving the end. These pains, provided they aren't of such an order that they become beyond human nature to endure, actually would seem to improve the life of Sisyphus (3) over that of Sisyphus (2).

For any action which is very extended over time, such as the pursuit of happiness at the end of a life, for example, Aristotle gives us reason to believe that mere persistence involves pains. In conclusion to his discussion of pleasure in Book VII, Aristotle adds that human beings never feel unmixed pleasure in an activity because of the complexity of our nature (EN VII 14 1154b20-31). This should remind us that one of the typical difficulties that human beings have to overcome in completing a labour is just sticking at it: that temporal separation of an end is, for human nature, a labour in itself. For Aristotle's audience and for most modern western workers the pain to be overcome in achieving an end isn't that of torn flesh and aching muscles, but rather that of overcoming boredom and distractions.

So what might give Sisyphus and the craftsman some satisfaction in their lives is by learning to enjoy the prospect of the completed end, and also in learning to enjoy the overcoming of the difficulties in achieving that completion. My claim here must not be misunderstood.

The life of the slave is still a stunted life and the life of Sisyphus is a torment. The life of the craftsman, though it probably involves less painful means, is devoted to a narrow end imposed by economic need. In these ways they differ from the ethical life. But the best that human beings can and *do* do in such circumstances is to find the brute fact of a task itself a satisfaction. The very fact of a future goal can allow a sort of minimal purpose to a life, in the way that a slave's life can in fact be better than the life of purposelessness he would lead without it (Pol I 5 1254b19-20; 6 1255b4-15).

In the same way, the best any human being can do is to learn to see the pains needed in any long term task as enjoyable as means to a desirable end. Any long term pursuit of a good is going to involve persistence. We have good Aristotelian reasons -and indeed commonsense reasons- to believe that long term persistence will also involve pains. Thus, although it is undoubtedly true that virtuous actions need not involve the enjoyment of pains as means to a desirable end, it is also likely to be true that such an attitude of mind is going to be highly typical of any good life.

4.00: The virtuous attitude to getting it wrong

I have argued that taking pleasure in pains *qua* means to an end is a central case of human action, in that it typifies the virtuous agent's attitude to the efforts involved in the pursuit of a temporally distant goal. I have also argued that it typifies the attitude of those such as slaves or craftsmen who, while not virtuous, are making the best of a bad job.

✓ Aristotle specifically deals with some other categories of those who have to make the best of a bad job within his discussion of what can be broadly be described as voluntary action in the first five chapters of Book III. A crucial section here is EN III 1 1109b30-1111b3. And within that section, it is clearly stated at 1110b11-12 that those who act biai kai akontes act with pain (luperôs). How consistent is my account on the enjoyability of pains *qua* means to ends with Aristotle's account here?

An initial point here is the context in which this discussion is to be understood. As Hursthouse suggests, Aristotle's central concern here is with the virtuous agent and, in particular, with those cases where virtuous people do what appear to be vicious actions¹⁰. Aristotle goes on to deal with a number of specific cases where virtue can survive the agent's apparently acting viciously. A general point is, however, clear: if Aristotle is only talking hôs epi to polu in the EN, there is

no reason to suppose that a virtuous agent will always act virtuously. After all, we do not expect experts in any field always to get it right: Homer nods, and footballers have bad games. Much of Aristotle's discussion is concerned with actions that only appear to be vicious rather than with actions that actually are vicious; but in any case, part of being virtuous must involve the appropriate response to getting it wrong.

What should the virtuous agent do when she discovers that she has gone wrong? Again, still speaking generally, we would expect the virtuous to feel regret. This is why -another point emphasized by Hursthouse¹¹- virtue is said by Aristotle to be concerned with actions and *feelings* (EN III 1 1109b30). A little needs to be said here about why feelings of regret are expected in the virtuous. For those such as Broadie who emphasize Aristotle's concern here with the continued ethical growth of the agent, the point of praising and blaming feelings is clear: a message is sent to the agent about how he should behave in the future and what he needs to alter about his, broadly speaking, affective makeup in order so to act¹². Since I have emphasized the unchangeability of the virtuous, however, it might seem that feelings of regret are rather irrelevant: since the virtuous cannot get better, there is no point in getting the feeling correct in order to get the action correct next time.

A number of replies can be made to this sort of point. Firstly, we might take Aristotle here as being primarily, but exceptionally for the EN, concerned with feelings in the immature and thus improvable. Secondly, we might just simply insist that an ethics which is only concerned with actions rather than wider questions of character, including feelings, is just an inadequate ethics¹³. Thirdly, there may simply be a *de facto* link between the sort of person who cares enough to do the right thing and the sort of person who cares enough to feel the right thing even when nothing can be done: someone who doesn't regret a murder may be the sort of person actually to perform a murder. A final non-exclusive possibility, and one I shall now explore briefly, is to argue that there is a continuum between how we feel about an action and what that action is; so that someone who regrets an action is not just reacting to what has been done, but, to an extent, may actually be revising that action.

The technicality, 'acting under a description', does not entail that there is something which is an action and then various ways of describing that action: the point is rather that in some ways how an action is described enters into what that action is.¹⁴ Taking this broad point, if I dig the garden, I may be described as doing it with or without enjoyment. Who or what has the authority to decide the correct description?

In the case of enjoyment, the first person perspective has primary although not absolute weight. If I claim to have enjoyed digging, I'm going to be taken at my word unless evidence to the contrary exists: 'Well, if you enjoyed it so much, why did you go in so early?' But there is a further question: *when* does the agent have the authority to claim enjoyment? It might be thought the answer here is at the time, and, again, it is probably true that the agent's immediate perspective is weighty here. But there is nothing incomprehensible about the following sort of exchange: 'Are you enjoying yourself?' 'Well, actually, I'm not sure. Ask me when it's over.' Or even: 'Well, when you asked me at the time, I thought I hated the holiday. But looking back on it, I can see that I actually did enjoy it.' So a reason for getting *post factum* attitudes right as part of being virtuous is that it can affect what is actually said to have happened. The point is particularly acute in respect to long-term actions.⁵ 'Did you enjoy your career as a lawyer?' can only really be answered retrospectively: certainly, a considered retrospective answer here would carry far more weight than what may have been said on particular occasions within that career. I have already argued that the virtuous aim for happiness from the perspective of the end of a life. We can now see that a similar point applies in relation to pleasure. Whether your life was enjoyable or not will depend on an assessment made after most of the events of that life are over. Even if that assessment is a matter of imagination -you imagine at time t_0 what your life will look like from the perspective of its end at time t_n - what your *post factum* feelings

are like or are imagined to be like will affect what your life actually was like. Thus, a reason for keeping one's *post factum* feelings appropriate to circumstances is that, particularly over long term actions, what one feels retrospectively about the action may determine what that action was. The difficulty in such cases about saying *when* the pleasure was felt -only retrospectively or during the action as well?- may go some way to explaining the otherwise rather cryptic claim that pleasure may not exist in time (EN X 4 1174b7-9).'⁶

Given that, for whatever reason, the virtuous should feel appropriately after things have gone wrong, what precisely should they feel in the cases considered by Aristotle? Taking firstly vicious actions done in ignorance, the virtuous should regret the action, thus making the action akousion rather than ouch hekousion (EN III 1 1110b18ff). Then taking vicious actions done by force (biaion), again we should say that the virtuous regret the action, when we are talking of things that are by force haplôs (EN III 1 1110b1ff), that is, when we are talking about cases where we have been blown off course or bound hand and foot and carried away. And again, by feeling regret here, the virtuous person makes the action akôousion rather than ouch hekousion.⁷ Neither of these cases has any particular implications for my analysis of the enjoyment of his actions: in effect, the virtuous agent is denying these actions done biaion and akousion to be his actions at all. Certainly, the virtuous has done all that he could be expected do in the circumstances.

The really interesting cases for present purposes are those of the mixed actions. These fall into two types: those done through fear of a greater evil; and those done for the sake of a noble end (EN III 1 1110a4-5). Taking the first class, one case might be where there is a simple calculation of the least bad action, *ceteris paribus*.¹⁸ If the action in question were actually, all things considered, the least bad, the virtuous would seem, quite straightforwardly, to be required to do it. Now, if it was a pretty hard decision, with pretty nasty alternatives, it might be quite reasonable for the virtuous agent to decide he had to act in a particular way, and yet to feel pain at his action. Undoubtedly, he would feel regret at being thus compelled by, say, the meagreness of alternatives, but seeing that the action was the right one, all things considered, might not stop him from feeling regret at the action itself, and not just at the circumstances which brought him to it.¹⁹

Does this contradict my analysis that the virtuous agent takes pleasure in his actions? I don't think so. The virtuous agent who regrets the act itself and not just the necessity of the act may only encounter such cases rarely in his life. So, provided we remind ourselves that Aristotle is only ever talking *hōs epī tō polu*, such an isolated incident shouldn't be taken as destroying the general claim that the virtuous enjoy the difficulties of achieving their end. Assume, however, that this sort of necessity became a commonplace in the virtuous man's life. Take for example Aristotle's sailor who is

forced to jettison his cargo in a storm (EN III 1 1110a8-11). For someone for whom such an event was a rare experience, regret at the action and not just its circumstances might be expected. But imagine the case of a captain regularly sailing an extremely stormy route. Part of his normal duty would be to decide when to jettison cargo to save both lives and ship. Although he might continue to regret the circumstances which compelled him to throw the cargo overboard, it might also be expected that he would take pride in having developed the sort of professional expertise and character which enabled him to come regularly to the correct even if hard decision. Analogously, the general who has to weigh victory against a cost in lives might regret the circumstances which forced him to sacrifice lives, but not the decision taken: it is, after all, his job. All this seems to shew that regret at actions rather than regret at circumstances doesn't survive in the virtuous character in the long term: *hōs epi ta polu*, the virtuous man isn't pained at his actions and enjoys his competence in difficult cases.

Another case of the class of mixed actions which are done out of fear of a greater evil are those where there isn't a calculation of the least bad act, but rather where a fear just compels an action. Thus, Winston Smith in 1984 is compelled to treachery by his fear of rats, not because he calculated that treachery was the least worse option, but because the fear drove out any calculation and just forced him to act. This would appear to be the sort of action which is pardoned

because it goes beyond what human nature can stand (EW III 1 1110a23-26). But as an act which is pardoned, it is not a virtuous act or part of the normal behaviour of the virtuous agent: thus, although the virtuous agent would undoubtedly regret having given in to the fear, because it is again an exceptional case, it does not affect the general characterization of the virtuous as enjoying his difficult actions.

The second class of mixed actions mentioned above are those which are done, not out of fear of a greater evil, but for the sake of a noble end. In essence, this class would seem to fall under the same analysis as the first type of the first class: these actions might be regretted on isolated occasions, but if performed regularly by a virtuous agent, would have to be enjoyed as successful instances of virtue triumphing in difficult circumstances - 'She did the right thing'. But a particular type of this class of action should perhaps be considered in further detail here: that of so called 'dirty hands'. The sort of case envisaged here is one where, as in Sartre's play *Les mains sales*, a virtuous person commits terrorist acts in order to achieve a great and noble end. Now, one thing that can be troubling about such terrorism is its high moral tone: its pride in its own dirty hands and in its assumed ability not to be corrupted by its methods. If such violence is required, the least one might expect from a virtuous agent is regret, not just at the circumstances, but at the act itself. On my analysis, the virtuous agent will normally take pride in his difficult acts *qua* means to an end. And just such a tendency to extend the

virtuous agent's normal attitude to pains into an inappropriate area is part of what makes us suspicious of the regular terrorist: go on doing dirty hands actions, and you tend to reach some sort of state in which you begin to enjoy the dirtiness of the action and being the sort of person who can do it. If the means are really horrible, then the virtuous man has two alternatives: he stops being virtuous and becomes complacent in his bloodiness -he begins to enjoy the pains *qua* means; or he continues being virtuous and lives much of his life in pain.

This point brings in Stocker's analysis of mixed actions in which he claims that the point about mixed actions for Aristotle is that they are just those actions which, unlike the normal action where there are costs which are balanced by the goods achieved, the evils of the mixed action result in a permanent diminution in the happiness of a life; but the mixed action is nevertheless performed because the alternative would result in losing all chance of eudaimonia.²⁰ Stocker's detailed point seems dubious: to take Aristotle's own example (EN III 1 1110a4-8), why should letting one's children and parents die result in a permanent loss of eudaimonia any more than the case of performing a base act at the order of a tyrant? Each alternative 'tells against eudaimonia' to use Stocker's phrase; but while one tells against it *ex hypothesi* more, neither seems necessarily to tell against eudaimonia absolutely. But Stocker's general point seems well-placed. There are some circumstances which rule out eudaimonia however good the

character of the agent reacting to them. It might be that terrorism is the proper life in some circumstances; but the proper reaction to such a life is not pleasure but regret. It cannot a happy life, any more than the life of slave can be a happy life. (That is not to say, however, that there is not a virtuous response to finding yourself as a slave: merely that such a response will not make you happy. It may even make your life less pleasant if, as seems plausible, Aristotle's conception of virtuousness would make it impossible for the agent to give up and enjoy whatever base satisfactions the life of a slave may afford.) The life of dirty hands is a bad life, though it may be a necessary one. Equally, if unforeseen accidents keep happening to your ships, this may exclude eudaimonia: all the virtuous can do in such circumstances is to feel regret -anything else is inappropriate. But there are perhaps few things which can so destroy eudaimonia on a single occurrence: it takes repeated catastrophes or a great catastrophe at the end of a life when nothing can be done to repair or compensate for the damage to rule out eudaimonia.

The virtuous agent may therefore on occasions get it wrong and feel regret, not just at the circumstances which compelled him to an action, but at the action itself. A further point, however, is that, taken from the perspective of a whole life, the virtuous agent may take pleasure in the regret felt at a mistake: to an extent, getting it wrong may be a *felix culpa* which allows the display of appropriate feeling. Thus, someone who has badly treated, say, a brother during his

life may be glad that she felt after his death true remorse, even though the opportunity of putting things right by action has, let us assume, passed: although we are suspicious of displays of emotion after the possibility for action has passed, such suspicion may be directed rather at the possibility of a sham display rather than at the ineffectiveness of actual remorse.

Sometimes, but perhaps rarely, circumstances may be such that the whole of a life may be poisoned by regret, not just at the circumstances, but at the actions so compelled. It may well be that the appropriate feeling about some types of life is regret. Although friends and comforters may try to reason the agent out of his regret -'You did everything you could in the circumstances. Don't blame yourself'- it may be that the virtuous agent resists such blandishments, that he persists in feeling regret at a type of action even though he may acknowledge that he had no real alternative.

Aside from such extreme cases, the broader picture that is taken of a virtuous agent's actions, the more he will tend to take pleasure in them. Isolated errors may be redeemed by the pleasure felt in the fact that the appropriate feeling of regret was felt at them. Portions of life which were misdirected may be likewise redeemed by regret or by recognizing that such periods were an essential part of a growth towards virtue. In such ways, the virtuous can absorb -whilst not overlooking- the pains unavoidable in any life into the pleasure and

enjoyment of a life well lived. Accordingly, Aristotle's claim that the virtuous enjoy their actions need not be understood as a smoothing over and ignoring of the difficulties involved in any normal life, but can rather be understood as involving a certain attitude of mind to such difficulties which integrates them into the virtuous and pleasant life.

5.00: Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that the virtuous agent's actions are hôs epi to polu enjoyed. I have argued that this enjoyment may involve rather than ignore the sort of pains involved in a normal life, enjoying them *qua* means to a desirable end. In particular, the prohairetic action, as aimed at a future end, is apt to be enjoyed. This is because it is temporally extended and, thus, according to Aristotle, painful, at least in the sense of requiring efforts of persistence. For the virtuous, since it is aimed at the happiness at the end of a life, it also requires a broad picture of the agent's actions to be taken, thus making the occasional mistake, even by the virtuous, easier to integrate into the enjoyed life.

In the next chapter, I shall argue that it follows as a consequence of the virtuous agent's enjoying his virtuous actions that those actions are energeiai rather than kinêseis.

Notes to chapter seven

1. Broadie(1991) pp316-7. Broadie in fact goes on to argue that not only does Aristotle indeed hold that the virtuous perform their actions with pleasure rather than just gladly, but also that such a view is defensible. However, her final view (pp425-427) is that the perfectly virtuous agent does not enjoy her virtuous activity, but only does it gladly, and that she instead reserves her pleasure for theôria
2. I owe this characterization of the distinction to Broadie 1991, p318.
3. Cf EN VII 11 1152b1-8 where chairein is linked with hêdonê.
4. EN X 6 1176a35-b9; I 1 1094a3-18. For the view that praxeis are not energeiai see Broadie 1991 eg pp42ff, p260 n17, pp426-7. The general point that virtuous actions are energeiai in the narrow sense is supported by Charles (in Woods 1986 p120 n15), Reeve 1992 (p102) and Gauthier & Jolif 1958 (eg ad 1094a4). See chapter eight of this thesis for a more detailed discussion.
5. Jaffa in accordance with his account that the EN contains a development away from common or garden ethics regards EN III 1117b1-20 as the popular view that courage is painful and EN IX 8 1169a17-26 as the advanced view that courage is always pleasant (pp54-55). Whilst agreeing that the latter passage should be construed this way, it will be evident that I find nothing in the earlier passage which requires such correction.
6. It might be objected here that the masochist takes pleasure in pain *qua* a means to sexual arousal. Whatever the precise frame of mind of a masochist in the strict sense of a sexual pervert -and I would argue that such masochism can involve a view of pain as itself a sexual fulfilment rather than as a means- in a loose, not necessarily sexual sense, a masochist is a recognizable type who does pursue pain as itself fulfilment.
7. In 'Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?', *The Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume 52*, (1978) pp13-29.
8. Chapter five, §2.00 of this thesis. For a discussion, see eg Broadie 1991, pp190-198.
9. R Taylor 'Good and Evil', New York, MacMillan 1970. I follow Wiggins' summary of Taylor's work on pp92-5, 'Truth, Invention and the Meaning of Life' in Wiggins 1991.
10. Hursthouse 1984, p253.

11. *ibid* p252.
12. Broadie 1991 pp127-128.
13. In eg Stocker 1990.
14. See 'Under a description' in Anscombe 1981.
15. Annas(1981) p309 makes a similar point about the assessment of the pleasantness of a life in the *Republic*:

It is important that this is an argument about the pleasantness of a life; for what gives it its plausibility is the fact that the pleasantness of a whole life is not something that can obviously be authoratively settled by anyone's [eg the agent's own] say-so....

16. Ackrill (in Bambrough 1965) admits that he is not sure what fact Aristotle is pointing to when he says that enjoyment or pleasure may occur 'not in a time' (p130).
17. I follow here the analysis in Hursthouse 1984 (pp254-6).
18. To avoid misunderstanding, I am talking here of a calculation which would involve all relevant moral considerations and am not prejudging whether this would be consequentialist or deontological. If, say, the act in question was taken to be always absolutely wrong, regardless of its beneficial consequences, then it could not be the least bad action.
19. I take 'regret' here to be synonymous with pain felt with respect to a past action.
20. Stocker 1990, ch 3.

Chapter eight

The virtuous agent's enjoyment of prohairesis action (II)

1.00: Introduction

I argued in chapters four, five and six that the prohairesis which typified human action was an action done under the description of a temporally distant goal. In chapter seven, I argued that virtuous agents enjoyed their actions and attempted to explain how the virtuous agent hōs epi to polu enjoyed the prohairesis action in a number of difficult areas.

In this chapter I shall continue this analysis of the enjoyment of the prohairesis action. I argue that the virtuous agent's enjoyment of his prohairesis action constitutes the performance of that action under the description of an energeia. Whilst it is not the case every energeia is a pleasure, nor that every pleasure is an action, it is the case that the way that the virtuous take pleasure in a prohairesis action leads to that action being done under the description of an energeia.

2.00: The distinction between *energeia* and *kinésis*

Aristotle uses *energeia* in two senses. Firstly, there is that sense in which it stands opposed to *dunamis* -actuality as against potentiality.

Energeia means the existence of the thing, not in the way which we express by 'potentially' [*dunamei*]; we say that potentially, for instance, a statue of Hermes is in the block of wood and the half-line is in the whole, because it might be separated out, and even the man who is not studying we call a man of science, if he is capable of studying. Otherwise, actually [*energeiai*].

Meta IX 6 1048a30-35

A further distinction is then drawn within the concept of *energeia* between *kinésis* and *energeia*:

Of these, then, we must call the one set *kinéseis* and the other *energeiai*. For every *kinésis* is incomplete -making thin, learning, walking, building; these are *kinéseis*, and incomplete *kinéseis*. For it is not true that at the same time we are walking and have walked, or are building and have built, or are coming to be and have come to be -it is a different thing that is being moved and that has been moved, and that is moving and that has moved; but at the same time

has seen and is seeing, or is thinking and has thought. The latter, then, I call an energeia and the former a kinêsis.

ibid 1048b28-34

It is this latter narrower sense of the word that I shall be interested in for the remainder of this chapter and to which I shall be referring whenever I use the term 'energeia'. I shall, following Ackrill, use the term 'activity' to refer to the broader concept containing both energeiai and kinêseis.¹

In his classic paper on the distinction, Ackrill analyzes the texts bearing on the distinction between kinêsis and energeia and identifies a number of possible bases for that distinction. He notes that the central and philosophically useful basis for this distinction is as follows:

It is a necessary and sufficient condition for X's being an activity verb that at every moment in a period of Xing it is true to say 'he has Xed'.²

Having noticed this central basis, he considers various other bases and the examples that Aristotle gives and concludes that although Aristotle has noted an important distinction

[w]e seem...forced to conclude that there is a serious confusion in Aristotle's exposition of the energeia-kinesis distinction.³

In this chapter I shall be attempting two tasks. Firstly, I shall attempt to explain why Ackrill's central distinction -which I shall hereafter style the tense test- is important in the EN. Secondly, I shall attempt partially to resolve one of the confusions of which Aristotle stands accused by Ackrill.

2.01: Pleasure as energeia

Akrill notes of the discussion of pleasure in Book X of the EN that although it is stated that

enjoyment somehow perfects energeia (rather than that it is an energeia) it is fair to say..that he classifies enjoying on the energeia side of the energeia-kinésis distinction.⁴

This impression of an intimate link between energeia and pleasure is compounded when in the Book VII discussion, one reads:

For pleasures are not really processes [geneseis], nor are they all incidental to a process: they are energeiai, and therefore an end... (EN VII 12 1153a9-10).

Having argued in the previous chapter that the virtuous enjoy their prohairesis actions, I shall argue that at least part of what Aristotle is addressing in his treatments of pleasure is

that by enjoying their actions, the virtuous transform a kinésis into an energeia in terms of the tense test set out above.

If I try to rescue a wounded comrade in No Man's Land, my action under one description will be, say, 'I am rescuing Fred.' At any stage in the rescue, it is true that I am rescuing Fred, but it is not true that I have rescued Fred until the rescue is over. Thus, the action of this rescue would appear, on the tense test, to be a kinésis. Generalizing, it is of course unsurprising that any prohairetic action should be a kinésis since I have argued that it is aiming at a future goal: while pursuing a future goal, it is true that I am pursuing the goal whilst it is not true that I have attained the goal.

Now I have argued in the previous chapter that the virtuous enjoy their prohairetic actions. What is the description under which the virtuous would enjoy Fred's rescue? Taking up some of the analysis in the previous chapter, his enjoyment is not just a pleasure of expectation. The virtuous undoubtedly do hope that the rescue will be successful and will take pleasure in this hope. But this isn't taking pleasure in the action but in the end of the action: one might take just as much pleasure in the hope of success even if one's own efforts were not involved in that success.

As noted in the previous chapter, a virtuous agent may take pleasure in the effort directed at the future good: thus, a boxer

may take pleasure in the discipline and self-control required to train for a bout. Analogously, Fred's rescuer may enjoy the danger of the rescue, not in itself -the attitude of the masochist- but as a necessary danger for a desirable end. In this case, he might enjoy the action under the following description: 'I am engaged in a difficult and dangerous rescue'. Again, he may self-consciously regard himself as acting bravely: 'I am engaged in a brave act'. It might indeed be the case that regarding oneself as acting bravely might make us rather suspicious of the virtuousness of the action: someone who is so conscious of his own bravery in a case which demands immediate action might be regarded as rather less than virtuous. On the other hand, an action which requires a great deal of forethought and which is extended over time might demand that degree of self-consciousness in order to be performed. Thus, a wife who stays with an abusive husband for the sake of her children's welfare might need to think of it as a duty or act of self-sacrifice in order to steel her resolve.

The general point is here that although, as argued, the virtuous agent takes pleasure in her perhaps painful pursuit of a future good, there is no one description which that agent has to be able to articulate to herself in order to take that pleasure. The virtuous man does not have to think of his action as actually being virtuous and enjoy it under this description, but his enjoyment of a prohairitic action *constitutes* acting virtuously. Sometimes he will articulate the action as virtuous to himself

(cf the self-sacrificing wife above). Sometimes he will not (cf the soldier rescuing his comrade).

Returning to Fred's rescue, let us assume for the sake of this argument that Fred's rescuer is enjoying his action under the description 'I am engaged in a difficult and dangerous rescue'. At any stage in this rescue, the rescuer can truthfully say 'I have been engaged in a difficult and dangerous rescue'. Accordingly, the rescuer has been performing a prohairetic action -the rescue of Fred- which is a kinêsis, but enjoying it under a description which is an energeia.

2.02: A difficulty

The above suggested analysis provides an account of how a virtuous agent might enjoy an action which is a kinêsis under the description of an energeia. It might further be suggested that such an analysis provides an account of the nature of praxeis which begins to reconcile the apparently contradictory claims in Aristotle that virtuous actions are done for their own sake (EN II 4 1105a32ff) and for the sake of something separate from the act (EN 1111b26-30).

An obvious and important objection here however is that it all depends on the precise wording used. Thus, while the above wording in the rescue example indeed produces an enjoyed

energeia, alternative forms of wording produce enjoyed kinêseis. For example, it will not be the case that at every moment during my rescue of Fred it is true that 'I have rescued Fred'. Nonetheless, it may still be true to say that I enjoy my rescue of Fred.

This difficulty is related to one noted by Ackrill.

Suppose I have enjoyed hearing a symphony.....'I have enjoyed the symphony' is not something I can say 'with respect to any time whatever' -at the end of any sub-stretch of the total period...If called away in the middle of the symphony I could not say that I had enjoyed hearing the symphony or that I had heard the symphony (any more than the players if interrupted could say that they had played the symphony).⁵

Akrill thus concludes that Aristotle is unjustified in his blanket classification of pleasure as an energeia⁶. Charles argues on the other hand that it is always possible to redescribe actions which are processes as energeiai⁷:

Suppose that Farooq is walking up K2, and derives his enjoyment both from walking and from approaching the summit (ie from seeing each step as contributing to reaching his goal). In this case, the confirmed 'praxis-hunter' could spot the following activities [energeiai]:

Farooq's walking: his doing some exercise of his ambulatory abilities;

Farooq's seeing that his walking is leading to the end he has set for himself;

as well as the process of his walking up to the summit.⁹

Given Charles' argument, it is therefore always going to be possible to detect an energeia within what might otherwise appear to be a kinésis: thus in Ackrill's example, it would be possible to detect the energeia of hearing music within the kinésis of hearing a symphony. The crucial question, however, as Charles realizes, is what would be the motivation for so doing?⁹ It is to providing such a motivation that I shall now turn.

2.03: A tentative and partial solution

Let us consider Ackrill's example of the symphony in more detail. As Charles notes¹⁰, Aristotle seems entitled to classify hearing as an energeia rather than a kinésis since he would regard a symphony only as an incidental object of perception rather than the proper objects of perception such as, in the case of hearing, sounds (DA II 6 418a10ff; cf EN X 4 1174b26-8). Technicalities aside, there is clearly a *prima facie* case for insisting that

what one hears is sound, and that it is, roughly, by dint of so hearing, that it can be said that one hears a symphony. In the case of perception, therefore, there does appear to be sufficient *prima facie* motivation for supposing Aristotle to be entitled to claim the priority of energeiai rather than kinésis descriptions.

This leaves pleasure. What is it to say that 'I am enjoying this symphony'? For those of us with a strictly limited musical education, there may be little more than the immediate attractiveness: one is just swept up in the immediate music, with little sense of what has been before or what is yet to come. For those with a developed musical knowledge, the future unheard portion of the symphony may already exist in the imagination, the present sound being imaginatively heard as part of the whole. Broadie notes this point:

..although a passage [sc of music] is executed, heard and enjoyed in the light of what follows and what precedes, this is not at all only in order that what follows should actually follow and be enjoyed. In fact, if the work is familiar, one could be said to be enjoying what follows before it physically arrives, and this is not made false if it fails to. Hence one may find it worth while to play or listen to something even knowing that one will have to stop before the end.'

Ackrill would nevertheless insist that, if there were a bomb warning at the end of the first movement and the concert aborted, I could not truly say that 'I have enjoyed the symphony'. I am less sure about this -at the least, it seems rather to be an amplification, rather than a straightforward contradiction to say, 'I have enjoyed the symphony -at least, up till now'. But Ackrill's substantive point would remain: since it is possible truly to say, 'I am enjoying the symphony, but I can't say that I have enjoyed it until the end', Aristotle cannot apparently insist that all pleasure is energeia.

My argument is accordingly not that all enjoyment is an energeia, still less, to avoid any misunderstanding, that all energeiai, even when actions, are enjoyments. My point is simply to shew how a particular sort of pleasure regards an action as done under an energeia description; and also to suggest why this sort of pleasure, at least as far as the EN is concerned, may be Aristotle's paradigm. This will not be sufficient to justify Aristotle's general claim on energeiai; but it will be sufficient to explain the claim that pleasure is an energeia at least as far as the EN is concerned.¹²

Returning to the enjoyment of the symphony, it seems to be the case that the enjoyment of the symphony as an energeia represents a particular recognizable attitude or attitudes to the music rather than a merely artificial rewording as Charles' examples earlier may have suggested. Moving on to actions, it is certainly

possible to say, 'I enjoy walking from St Andrews to Leuchars'. Since walking from St Andrews to Leuchars is a kinésis, this suggests that the enjoyable activity here is also a kinésis. But is it? Assume that it takes from time t_1 to time t_2 to get from St Andrews to Leuchars. If I enjoy arriving at Leuchars, I get that pleasure at t_2 . I may have a pleasure of expectation at t_1 , but, as I have argued in the previous chapter, the pleasure of expectation is not the same as enjoying the activity. (You may hate the walking but still enjoy the expectation of the good of arrival.) There is, however, an attitude to walking which finds the good of walking, to borrow Ackrill's phrase, 'somehow equally and fully present throughout'³.

To be exact, there are a number of different possible descriptions under which the walk may be enjoyed equally and fully throughout, in the same way that there are, as I have argued above, a number of different descriptions under which a virtuous action may be enjoyed: the determination of the appropriate description under which the walk is enjoyed as an energeia will vary according to circumstances. One may enjoy the walk as a ramble, or as arduous exercise in which the point is to overcome one's painful desire to stop. One may take pleasure in the walk as a pilgrimage or as a meditation, as an exercise of athletic skill or as a way of shewing off to spectators. Finally -and I shall argue in chapters nine to eleven that this is of central importance in the EN- one may take pleasure in actions on earth as a mimicking of the divine movement. What unites all

these various possible ways of understanding the underlying kinésis and transforming it into an energeia is that by enjoying the activity, a good is found in every moment of the activity rather than merely in its successful completion. It is that substantive attitude of finding a present good in activities which is, I shall claim, typical of the virtuous; and the articulation of this attitude is, I am going to suggest, the point of Aristotle's account of pleasure in the EN.

We return therefore to the question as to why Aristotle would regard such an attitude as being the normal case of enjoyment. Before answering this directly we need to note that what is in question here isn't just, as Ackrill argues, a case of arguing about the facts of concepts, but rather about what concepts we are to use.

That house-building is directed to the production of a house, has a house as its aim or goal, is, surely, not put forward as a fact about the motivation of builders, but as a fact about the concept of house-building (a fact that can be expressed by the formula 'it is not true that at the same time one builds a house and has built it'). There may be logical, psychological, or ethical connections between the question whether Xing is an energeia or a kinesis and the question whether people can, do, or ought to X for its own sake. But Aristotle does not seem to advocate answering the

*latter question as the way to discover the answer to the former question.'*¹⁴

Now whilst the above may be true of Aristotle's treatment of examples such as walking, it is not absolutely clearly true of his treatment of pleasure. In the two cases where he discusses pleasure in the EN, whilst the status of pleasure as energeia is only partially made clear, its status as something good and desirable is clearly argued for.

In any case, the concept of pleasure is nowhere near so clear cut as that of housebuilding. It is simply a fact that, so far as we go by what people say about pleasure and how they use the word in everyday life, it is unclear whether Aristotle's claim that actions are enjoyed is correct or not. Some say that people only do what they enjoy doing, others do not use 'pleasure' and its cognates in this way. We should also note that Aristotle fails to draw distinctions within the hedonic area that certainly could be drawn. He regards pain as the contrary of pleasure and thus synonymous with unpleasant, whilst there is certainly a case for distinguishing these concepts.¹⁵ He regards enjoying (chairein) an activity as being synonymous with deriving pleasure from it (see EN X 5 1175b1ff; II 3 1104b3ff). Unlike Aquinas, Aristotle does not clearly distinguish spiritual pleasures from bodily pleasure (STh Ia IIae q31 a3ff). Moreover, although there is the glimmer of a distinction between doing an action with pleasure and doing an action for the sake of pleasure (see eg EN III 1

1110b11-13), he ultimately refuses to pronounce on whether we act well for the sake of pleasure or seek pleasure in order to act well:

The question whether we desire life for the sake of pleasure or pleasure for the sake of life, need not be raised for the present. In any case they appear to be inseparably united; for there is no pleasure without activity and no perfect activity without pleasure. (EN X 4 1175a18-21)

As already noted, the two main discussions of pleasure in Books VII and X of the EN appear to disagree on whether pleasure is identical to the activity which is enjoyed, or merely intimately related to it (cf EN VII 12 1153a12-15 and X 4 1174b31-33).

Finally, Aristotle himself appears to concede that at least some people do regard pleasure as a kinésis when he notes that *almost everyone* (schodon... hoi pleistoi) wants to enjoy rather than to cease to enjoy (Top VI 8 146b15-20).

So not only is the common or garden use of hedonic words subject to conceptual confusion, but Aristotle's own analysis seems confusing. But despite, or perhaps because of all this lack of analysis, the general shape of the EN suggests that pleasure performs a central function within Aristotle's account. I have argued in the previous chapter that enjoyment is the normal response to virtuous action: I accordingly owe an explanation as

to why Aristotle should be concerned to make this perhaps counterintuitive claim. Quite apart from the details of my own account of virtuous action, however, it is certainly clear that pleasure does occupy an important place in the EN. A good part of Books VII and X is devoted exclusively to the subject and I have already noted how, outwith these discussions, Aristotle constantly refers to pleasure's place as both one of only two or three possible ends of actions, and also in some way the constant end of all actions.¹⁶ The fact that a discussion of pleasure leads in to the culmination of the whole work in the examination of theôria in Book X, even allowing for the possible vagaries of ancient redaction, should give further pause for thought. In the headlong flight from the ethics of utilitarianism, it is easy to overlook this centrality.

What seems to follow from all this is that Aristotle is not simply concerned to analyze a concept named 'pleasure' which is in common-or-garden pre-philosophical use, but either to construct such a concept or to find a philosophical concept of pleasure underlying everyday use. As Annas notes, Aristotle does not always maintain his considered, philosophical view of pleasure, but sometimes slides back into the common-or-garden view that pleasure is something misleading of which we should be suspicious and even flee.¹⁷ Nevertheless, it is the central considered view at which we should be aiming.

Given that the correct measure in the EN is the virtuous man (eg EN X 5 1176a15-19; and cf chapter four, §1.01), that the aim of the EN is practical and that its concepts are intended for practical use (EN I 7 1098a26-33; cf *ibid* 13 1102a23-32), and that the prime purpose of pleasure as a concept is to aid the political philosopher (EN VII 11 1152b1-8), it is not surprising that Aristotle's prime concern with pleasure is in respect to virtuous action. On the assumption -to be justified in the following section- that the virtuous agent views his actions as realizing a good which is somehow equally and fully present throughout their performance, and since I have already argued that the point of the EN is to get inside the mind of the virtuous, Aristotle would possess a motivation for his understanding of enjoyed actions as energeiai.

2.04: The motivation of the virtuous

Even if it is accepted that Aristotle's account of pleasures as energeiai might be motivated by the attitude of the virtuous, this leaves that attitude itself as rather mysterious.

My argument throughout this thesis is that Aristotle is articulating the life of the virtuous in order to make the passing on of a virtuous way of life to future generations more likely to succeed. So the finding of a present good in the pursuit of a future good should represent a facet of the virtuous

man's character that we need to articulate. In fact, I suggest, the sort of character who has such an attitude isn't odd at all but does indeed represent a recognizable conception of the virtuous agent's attitude to life.

I shall argue in the following chapters that the virtuous agent's attitude to his actions mimics the divine activity. So one thing that we should say about the virtuous agent's attitude to his actions is that constitutes an imitation of the divine even if the virtuous might not yet be able to articulate this. The evidence for this will be given in those chapters, but it is, I take it, perfectly comprehensible that someone should wish her life to imitate God's as closely as possible.¹⁹

On a somewhat less elevated level, Aristotle's megalopsuchos, who is, in some sense, the type of the virtuous man (EN IV 3 1124a1-2)¹⁹, displays an aristocratic insouciance about the effects of his actions. Although he is concerned to win honours, to paraphrase Aristotle, he rather expects them as his due rather than as something to be grubbed around for (see esp EN IV 3 1124a4-20). It is not that the megalopsuchos is unconcerned with honour -his actions wouldn't make sense without being directed to this end. But once he has done his bit, he stops worrying about what is outwith his control.

There is nothing very strange in the notion of the virtuous agent's regarding her actions as successful, even if the end

desired is not obtained: at the least, the attitude is perfectly comprehensible. (Cf: "'But try," you urge, "the trying shall suffice:/ The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life./ Try to be Shakspeare, leave the rest to fate!"' (Browning: Bishop Blougram's Apology.)) Moreover, if, as I have argued, the motivation for the EN is political, namely, more to do with the creation of good people than the provision of a guide for those people to act once created, then it might well be the case that the best character, that is, say, the character who is most likely to produce the best results, might be one who is rather careless about things she cannot directly affect rather than neurotically concerned with events outwith her power (EN III 3 1112a18-31): effectiveness might not be dependent upon depth of concern.

In general, I understand the virtuous agent's attitude to failed prohairetic actions as Stocker sets out the matter:

Our intentions were not realized. But our values were actualized in making the effort -eg those involved in pushing ourselves to the limit, using our skills, and the like. It is their actualization that is pleasurable and this actualization is also unimpeded and perfect.²⁰

To this I would add that sometimes just the attempt at achieving an end is enough for us, say, to feel pride: if something is worth doing, it's worth failing at. But would it be possible for

an agent to have no chance of attaining the future good and yet for her to enjoy that action as directed at that good? Although nothing hangs on this for the sake of my main argument, I think it would be possible. The war hero who sacrifices himself in what he knows to be a futile mission to obtain an unobtainable goal still acts to obtain that goal and may still enjoy the pursuit of that goal and there seems nothing strange or remarkable about that. Indeed, given the political purpose of the EN, if the philosopher's concern is to produce good people rather than directly to produce good events, it seems quite plausible that only the sort of character who is capable of acting bravely in the face of futility on at least some occasions would be capable of acting bravely when there is a chance of obtaining the goal. Part of the reason for this is covered by the term 'moral luck' - the inadequacy of our ability to be able to tell what actually is futile: perhaps recklessness as judged by the standards of hard headed men of business is an essential element in courage - a persistent underestimation of the difficulties of what, taken coldly, is futile. Nevertheless there will be a limit where there is a complete severance between action and goal and where the action can no longer be truly considered to refer to the goal or be enjoyed in the light of the goal -at which point the virtuous may decline to perform it.

2.05: Is pleasure the action or the attitude to the action?

An objection to the above analysis might be that I have failed to distinguish between the feeling of pleasure itself and the action at which it is directed. Thus, whilst it may be conceded that the feeling of pleasure is itself an energeia, no where does Aristotle suggest that this alters the object -in this case the action- in which the pleasure is taken. Just as it would be absurd to suggest that taking pleasure in a chair makes the chair an energeia, so, it might be argued, it is absurd to claim that taking pleasure in a virtuous action makes a kinêsis into an energeia.

The problem with such an objection is that overlooks the fact that Aristotle denies not just that pleasure is itself a kinêsis but also that it supervenes on a kinêsis. Thus, in his discussion of pleasure felt on the occasion of a cure, he attributes the pleasure not to the becoming better (kinêsis), but rather to the energeia of something which has remained healthy (EN VII 14 1154b15-20; cf X 4 1174b9-14).

Moreover, throughout the discussion of pleasure in Book X, Aristotle talks of energeiai being enjoyed (eg EN X 4 1175a30): although, as noted, there is a broad sense of 'energeia' which covers both energeia proper and kinêsis, given the importance of the distinction in the discussion (1174a13ff), such a confusion of terms would, to say the least, be highly misleading in this

context. Consequently, it seems reasonable to understand Aristotle as referring here to energeiai in the strict sense. Since I claim to have given an account as to how and why actions which are apparent kinéseis can be performed under a description such that they are energeiai, and also to have given an account as to why this should be of focal importance in the EN, the burden of proof is accordingly on anyone who would assert that Aristotle in the EN would paradigmatically allow kinéseis to be enjoyed as kinéseis.

2.06: Hellenistic theories

Annas 1993 contrasts Aristotle's view of happiness with that espoused by both Stoics and Epicureans. Annas argues that Aristotle respects the common or garden intuition that happiness involves both virtue and external goods -such as bodily health- and thus opposes Epicurus and the Stoics:

We see clearly in Epicurus and the Stoics that happiness, though they construe it very differently, is taken to be up to us or in our power -not of course in the sense that I can here and now decide to be virtuous, but in the sense that virtue turns out to be an internal state, one which, once I achieve it, depends only on me and not on the success of my efforts in the outer world.²¹

Aristotle, on the other hand:

...finds the thesis that virtue suffices for happiness grossly counterintuitive. Hence, even if we seek virtue for its own sake -which is, after all, the point of being virtuous- we also seek it for the sake of happiness, which includes not only virtue but also other kinds of thing -bodily and external goods, and luck or fortune.²²

As I have noted in chapters four to six, the prohairesis aspect of the virtuous agent's character does depend, in part, on success: aiming at a future good, the agent can fail to achieve that good, a failure which, *ceteris paribus*, will be a cause for regret. On the other hand, I have argued in chapters seven and eight, that the virtuous tend to find a present good even in such conditions of failure. I am left with the broad position, therefore, that whilst the virtuous need not be thwarted by failure to achieve their goods, they are not immune to having their lives ruined by external circumstances.

Now, if what is sought from Aristotle is a decision procedure for good action, such a position is totally inadequate: we need an account of what sort of failure can be overlooked and what sort of failure cannot. But if what is sought is an articulation of virtuous agents' general approach to life, such a position is actually quite informative: roughly, the virtuous will tend to

make the best of a bad job, but sometimes will not succeed in so doing.

Moreover, it is arguable that the best attitude to external goods is essentially paradoxical. For example, it might be perhaps rational for an examination candidate, whilst there was an opportunity for revision, to believe that examination failure would be disastrous and thus provide herself with an incentive to work; yet, on the other hand, once there was no further opportunity to prepare, for the same candidate to believe that what was important was simply doing one's best, no matter what the result, in order to remain calm. That these beliefs are in tension does not entail that, practically, such a varying attitude mightn't be the proper one to have. Accordingly, any theoretician who attempted to articulate the virtuous attitude for the purpose of passing it on, would have to reproduce that tension in his account:

Aristotle seems to have hoped that he was articulating the core of our everyday beliefs about happiness, but unfortunately our beliefs are more in tension than he seems to realize.²³

Once again, it is important to note that, given the claims about the purpose of the EN argued for in the first three chapters of this thesis, vagueness and even paradox may in fact be an ineluctable feature of the EN; and indeed may be regarded as

making the EN more plausible as an account of the good life than theories which note distinctions and conflicts which are overlooked by the virtuous themselves.

3.00: Further observations

I have argued that, under the tense test, the virtuous act under a description such that their prohairetic actions are energeiai. But it should be noted that, in addition to the tense test, which he considers the primary basis for the distinction between kinésis and energeia, Ackrill also considers other bases and aspects of the distinction.

One such aspect, found in *Metaphysics* IX 6 1048b18-35, is discussed by Ackrill as follows:

The earlier distinction between activities which have a limit and those which have not naturally suggests the distinction between activities which are indefinitely continuable and those which are not: I cannot go on building a house once I have built it, but I can go on thinking of something though it is already true to say that I have thought of it. This is certainly one thing that Aristotle means to bring out by his present and perfect tense formulae. For after saying ' at the same time one is living and has lived well, and is happy and has been happy' he goes on: 'otherwise it would have to stop

at some time'. Thus he takes the propriety or impropriety of combining present and perfect tenses as tied to the possibility or impossibility of going on with the activity indefinitely.²⁴

Now it is clear from the above passage that we are here talking of logical rather than practical possibility: it may be a logical possibility that I go on living indefinitely, but it is not a practical one.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the desirability of the practical possibility of going on eternally has often been regarded as an aspect of human motivation. Thus Plato in the *Laws*:

..the desire of every man that he may become famous, and not live in the grave without a name, is only the love of continuance. Now mankind are coeval with all time, and are ever following, and will ever follow, the course of time; and so they are immortal, because they leave children's children behind them, and partake of immortality in the unity of generation. (Laws 721)

And Cicero:

For the aim of city's continuance should be eternity. Cicero De Republicâ, Book 3 (quoted by Augustine, City of God, Book XXII, ch vi).

Finally Augustine notes that all creatures would prefer an eternity of misery to annihilation (City of God, Book XI, ch xxvii).

Rorty claims that it is only the exercise of an essential attribute which counts as an energeia:

Showing that an action (it is of course action-types and not action-tokens that are in question) qualifies as an energeia involves showing that it is a specification of the exercise of an essential attribute (1170a16-19).²⁵

Although the EN passage referred to does not seem quite in point here, given Rorty's understanding of energeia, seeing one's actions as forming part of a life, and seeing that life as contributing to the eternal continuation of the species would all tend to contribute to the seeing of one's actions as energeiai. Since the business of the citizen is the safety and thus the continued existence of the state (Pol III 2 1276b26-29) and the goodness of the good citizen who is a ruler of the state and the goodness of the good human being *simpliciter* are identical (Pol III 2 1277a12-25), the virtuous will tend to see their actions as contributing to the eternal continuation of the

city and thus to man's essence as a political animal (Pol I 1 1253a1-5). They will thus, on this test, indeed tend to see their actions as energeiai. (Aspects of this thought will be developed in the following chapters.)

4.00: Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that, given the virtuous enjoy their actions, they perform them under the description of an energeia. Such a conclusion does not support Aristotle's apparent view that all pleasure is an energeia, but it does provide a motivation in the EN for making such a view the paradigm of pleasure.

I argued at the beginning of this thesis that the point of the EN is to make easier the transmission of the present generation's good life to the following generation. Part of what is required to effect this transmission of values is to articulate the life of the virtuous.

The argument of the previous and present chapters have been directed at laying bare one aspect of the virtuous agent's life: that he tends to direct his actions at a future end, but finds an immediate good in them rather than having to wait for the realization of that future end. In the following chapters, I take these conclusions and attempt to shew how they are linked to the

ergon argument by arguing that the virtuous agent's life, including the project of passing on that life, is to be understood as an imitation of the divine.

Notes to chapter eight

1. *Aristotle's Distinction between energeia and kinesis* by J L Ackrill, in Bambrough 1965, pp121-141. My indebtedness to this paper will be evident in the discussion.
2. *ibid* pp130-1.
3. *ibid* p135.
4. *ibid* p128.
5. *ibid* p132.
6. *ibid* p135.
7. Charles actually treats this not as a redescription but as the detection of a separate action. For the main argument of this present thesis, the question as to whether an action under the description of an energeia can be the same as an action under the description of a kinēsis or is a distinct action is irrelevant.
8. D Charles, 'Ontology and Moral Reasoning' in Woods 1986, p141.
9. *ibid* p142. Charles himself leaves the question unanswered.
10. *ibid* p141 n30.
11. Broadie 1991, p344.
12. It is not granted here that Aristotle's general position isn't justifiable, merely that the present arguments do not serve that purpose, but only the more restricted one of motivating such a view as the paradigm in the EN.
13. Ackrill *op cit* p128.
14. *ibid* p138.
15. In Ryle 1954, for example.
16. See §2.00, chapter seven.
17. Julia Annas, 'Aristotle on Pleasure and Goodness' esp pp291-292 in Rorty 1980. Annas cites (among other passages) 1080a10-12, 1104b9-12 and 1109b7-12 as taking a pre-philosophical view. She comments:

These passages do not represent a serious split in Aristotle's considered though about pleasure; they merely show how difficult it is to sustain an ethical discussion from a viewpoint that corrects common views on an important

and central matter and how easy it is to slide back into employing current terms and distinctions. p292

18. Comprehensible even if not unobjectionable. (For an attack on the goodness of imitating God, see Broadie 1991, pp402ff.)
19. The precise status of the megalopsuchos is open to doubt. Broadie 1991, p52 stresses his status as completely virtuous:

Human excellence, Aristotle holds, is incomplete without the virtue of greatness of soul: that is to say, the good man's sense of the incomparable worth of his goodness (NE IV 3; EE III 5).

Annas 1993 emphasizes his exceptional virtuousness and finds an analogue in supererogation (pp115-120).

As will be evident, I take the megalopsuchos to be completely rather than exceptionally virtuous.

20. Stocker 1990, p77.
21. Annas 1993, p428.
22. *ibid*, p373.
23. *ibid*, p385.
24. Ackrill *op cit* pp122-3.
25. p382, 'The Place of Contemplation in Aristotle's NE' by A O Rorty in Rorty 1980.

Chapter nine

The ergon argument (I): the background

1.00: Introductory.

I have argued in previous chapters that the intention of the EN is to provide the audience with the ability to pass on their virtuous life to future generations.

That skill consists in the ability to articulate the good life. In previous chapters, I have argued that the virtuous agent is characterized by the enjoyment of the prohairetic description, that is, the enjoyment of an action which is performed under the description which has a structure of being aimed at a future end. When an agent enjoys his prohairetic action, he performs it under the description of an energeia.

In the following three chapters, I shall argue that the aim of the ergon argument in the EN is to be understood as part of the political project of the work as a whole. This project is to articulate the life of the virtuous so that it can be passed on more easily to following generations.

The specific part the ergon argument has to play in this project is to shew how the virtuous life imitates the divine. This imitation is of course imperfect, but exists whether the life concerned is that of theôria or of practical virtue. Such an analysis articulates the ergon, the task of the virtuous. By such an articulation, not only is the task made easier in the same indirect way that articulation of the constituent goods to be passed on in the good life (eg courage, magnanimity) makes their passing on easier, but in the direct way, that the articulation of the task of passing on human life eternally itself constitutes a contribution to the self-awareness of the task and thus to its effectiveness and divinity by making it more pleasurable. In this final self-awareness of the ergon, what has previously muddled along through private ventures is transformed into a fully self-conscious attempt to achieve eternity through the organization of the polis:

In the Spartan state alone, or almost alone, the legislator seems to have paid attention to questions of nurture and occupations; in most states such matters have been neglected, and each man lives as he pleases, Cyclops-fashion, 'to his own wife and children dealing law'. Now it is best that there should be a public and proper care for such matters; but if they are neglected by the community it would seem right for each man to help his children and friends towards excellence, and that they should be able, or at least choose, to do this. (EN X 9 1180a229-32; cf Pol VII 2 1324b5-9).

For man's ergon to be achieved, that task has to be fully self-conscious, for it is an aspect of the divine to be self-conscious (Meta XII 7 1072b20-25).

In this chapter, I attempt to put forward a plausible background for understanding Book X of the EN. I argue that it should be understood as articulating the life of a phronimos such as Pericles. Such a life has already fairly high degree of self-understanding in that it acknowledges the claims of theoretical learning and practical life: as such, it will in itself represent something of an advance in articulateness over the lives of the audience. Pericles himself typifies the tendency of the megalopsuchos to overlook the detailed work of providing for the goodness of the next generation: the discovery of such a flaw should not however upset the highly developed *amour propre* of the megalopsuchos who will perhaps regard such detail as outwith his concern.

2.00: The EN as a dialectical progression

In the first three chapters of this thesis, I argued that the audience of the EN were already fully virtuous, but lacked the political skills to pass on their good lives to future generations. I argued that the lacking skill consisted in the ability to articulate that good life and that the EN was intended

to enable the audience to gain the skills of articulacy which would allow them to explain and defend their existing good lives.

In my discussion of prohairesis, I argued that the virtuous agent acted with a view to a future good, in particular, to the end of his life (chapters four to six). At the end of the previous chapter, I argued that the virtuous, in their political aim of the continuance of the city, were aiming at eternity (§3.00). Before going any further, I shall bring some of these strands together.

2.01: Common or garden ethics, the politician, and the megalopsuchos

Jaffa argues against Aquinas' understanding of the EN as setting out a consistent theory of ethics in a logical structure, claiming that the EN instead

..may be rather like the organism, disclosing its intention and meaning through successive stages of growth, rather than through the fitting together of its parts.'

For Jaffa, the EN embodies a dialectical progression from the inadequate ethics of common or garden Greek life, towards a superior reflective understanding which amplifies and corrects the existing ethics.

My reasons for rejecting such a view of the EN are those given in the first three chapters, namely, that Jaffa's view would entail that the existing ethics held by the audience of the EN were inadequate and that they were thus not fit students of the lectures. Nevertheless, the understanding of the EN as a dialectical progression does hint at both the existence of a hierarchy of error within the ethics of the polis as a whole and at a hierarchy of adequacy of articulation among the virtuous. Although human beings normally display a tendency towards acting for a future goal, they may differ in the temporal distance of that goal. Thus, the banausic tailor of Gloucester looks towards the finishing of the Mayor's suit and the virtuous man towards the end of his life. The politician, however, who stands as phronimos to the ordinary and inarticulate virtuous as paradigm or interpreter of their good lives (see chapter three, §§2.06ff), looks towards the judgement of history. In a sense, of course, even the politician looks to how his life ends: whatever his contribution to history, he himself will be judged by his life; and, as I have argued, this will be assessed at its finish (see chapter four). However, when engaging in the assessment of his life from the perspective of its end, the politician, unlike the less virtuous or the less articulate, also looks forward to his achievements outlasting the life.

This all suggests that, even if the substantive ethics of the EN shouldn't change within the work, there might be room for a development in terms of how that substantive view is articulated.

Having noted such a possibility, I shall now use it to explore the relationship between the different parts of the EN.

2.02: Common or garden ethics, the politician and the megalopsuchos (cont.)

Criticism of the EN has long identified two apparently incompatible ideals within the work:

And even if NE 1 and NE 10 are reconcilable, the NE as a whole seems to have two different heroes: the contemplative of 1 and 10, and the great souled man of 2-4. Both characters are difficult to make palatable for twentieth-century readers.²

A similar fault line is of course also found in Book X itself in the relative merit of the theoretical life against the practical one (EN X 8 1178a9ff).

But is Aristotle advising us to spend as little time and effort on other things as possible, and to attach no importance to any practical or moral concerns or claims in comparison with the value of theoretic activity? Should we, ideally, neglect our friends and family and community, and concentrate on our private intellectual life? It is not to be supposed that Aristotle would make so eccentric a

recommendation, but it is not easy to explain how the claims of man-in-action and man-at-thought are in principle to be reconciled.³

I have already noted that the character of the megalopsuchos is such that he is unlikely to accept that his essentially active political life is any whit inferior to that of a philosopher (chapter two, §4.02). What he may be able to accept, however, is that he has not fully articulated the goodness of his own life. As Aristotle notes, politicians lack the ability to teach the political skill that they possess (EN X 9 1180b35-1181a9) and I have already noted the connexion between lack of such a teaching ability and the inability to articulate the goodness of an agent's own life (eg chapter three, §2.04). If, as argued in the first three chapters of this thesis, it is possible for an agent to be already leading a good life but to be unable to articulate the goodness of that life, it is possible that the megalopsuchos can already be leading a good life without being able to explain why it is good. In essence, then, my claim is that those parts of the EN which sound like

..the opinions of Athenian gentlemen, which Aristotle takes for granted with no proof^a

are articulating the good life on the level of the megalopsuchos. I have no wish here to be exact about whether the megalopsuchos would already be able to articulate his life in these terms or

whether even this level represents an advance in articulateness: at any rate, say, what is set out about the virtues in Books II to IV of the EN are not very far removed from what the megalopsuchos would already think and say about his life. The dialectical advance on this level towards the life of theôria of Book X should not, accordingly, shake the megalopsuchos's faith in the goodness of his life, but rather cast its existent goodness in a new light. Precisely how this is done I shall attempt to argue by a detailed consideration of the ergon argument in Book X.

In general, therefore, my claim will be that the inarticulate virtuousness of most of the audience will be made more articulate by considering how a phronimos such as Pericles talks about his life; and, further, that even the articulacy of a Pericles may fail in regard to the passing on of that life and needs to be supplemented by the descriptive work of someone like Aristotle. The provision of such additional information about the existing goodness of their own lives will not affect the *amour propre* of the megalopsuchoi of the audience, since they will regard it as a mere filling in of details (cf EN I 1 1098a20-26).

3.00: The persuasive force of the ergon argument

There are two main interpretations in the literature of what Aristotle means to accomplish by the ergon argument.⁵ Firstly,

there is the straightforward interpretation that Aristotle intends to persuade people to change their lives by offering good reasons for adopting a new way of life. The reasons offered will tend to be found desirable by all human beings because the desires of human beings will be

..manifestations of a fairly stable and universal human nature, susceptible of investigation independently of adopting one of the disputed theses about eudaimonia.⁶

Secondly, there is the view that Aristotle isn't really trying to persuade people of his view of the best life by appealing to their desires, but is simply stating what the best life is:

The life according to excellence is the best life for me, but not from the point of view of my interests especially, or even of morality, or indeed from any point of view at all. It simply is the best life for me, for it is the best life that a creature like me can live..⁷

Now the obvious objection to the first interpretation is that, judged by the standards of what people actually do desire, by advocating a life of theôria, whatever the exact nature of that proposal, Aristotle suggests an undesirable life. Moreover, an enterprise of this kind seems fatally flawed in that, by resting on what fits in with people's desires, it misses the categorical nature of the demands placed on us by morality.⁸

The second interpretation emphasizes the objective, categorical nature of the best life. Such an emphasis appears particularly appropriate to Aristotle in view of his acknowledged use of medical models in his ethical views. A sick human being needs treatment. Children need calcium to ensure correct growth of bones. All of this is quite separate from what the patient wants or thinks she requires; and the wise patient will learn to accommodate her desires to the required treatment rather than change the treatment to fit in with her desires.

The problem with the second interpretation is that it makes a virtue out of what would appear to be a vice in that, unlike the aim of the medical regimen which is to cure, at least part of the aim of any moral philosophy which aims to be practical must be to persuade. If the point of Aristotle's arguments is not to persuade and convince, or, at least, to provide the material which can persuade and convince, what is their point and how can they fulfil the practical purpose of the EN? One line here is to assert that the arguments are intended to be persuasive, but so to function, they must be read and understood against the background of Aristotle's teleological philosophy of nature.⁹. The obvious rejoinder to that is to note that, since we have no reason to regard the philosophy of nature as anything but outmoded, we have no reason to accept any conclusions based upon it.¹⁰

In what follows, I shall attempt to argue for a third position. The arguments used by Aristotle do not attempt to persuade the audience to change their lives, they only attempt to articulate the pre-existent goodness of those lives: so much I have already argued for at the beginning of this thesis.' However, a human nature will be revealed in the acceptance of these arguments and of the goods identified in the pre-reflective life of the virtuous by a wide circle of humanity, although the nature revealed in that acceptance will not figure itself as a premiss in the argument. So far as the categorical claim of morality is concerned, this will be found not in the categorical claim of being a certain sort of human being, but rather in the categorical claim of divine activity. The megalopsuchos will have found his life revealed as good under the same standards of divinity as the life of theôria, both actual politician and actual philosopher falling short in different ways from the ideal.

3.01: Explaining a life: the point of explanation

I shall be arguing then that the primary point of the argument is articulating good lives rather than, say, providing a recipe for such lives. I have already suggested at the beginning of this thesis that the point of the EN as a whole is to improve the passing on of one generation's life to the next by means other

than lawgiving. Something more now needs to be said about this framework for understanding Book X of the EN.

Imagine an accountant trying to bring up a child to inherit the family practice. She might bring him along to the office, let him come into the room while she was working, generally let him see what she did. Perhaps later, she would involve him in *doing* certain aspects of the job: adding up figures, checking the spelling in reports, working in the office during school and university holidays. But another way would be by talking about and explaining her actions, this involving responding to questions and criticism.¹² Some of the skills required in preserving the accountant's way of life are accordingly the skills of argument and analysis involved in any sort of debate. Without these, the child will be unlikely to see the sort of goods involved in the accountant's life and thus be unable and unwilling to adopt it. In fine, human beings, even when they are trying to imitate another human being, cannot do so slavishly, but need to use reasoning skills.

Taking this thought beyond the narrow range of a profession, in general, no good way of life can be passed on without seeing its point. (This is to be contrasted with bad ways of life which seem depressingly easy to pass on - child abuse, for example.) As has already been noted, the *Republic* has been understood as pointing out the inadequacy of Cephalus' unreasoned conformity.¹³ But while Cephalus at least knows enough to withdraw from the debate

to continue his daily round, his son, Polemarchus, stays to argue and be led from conclusion to conclusion, almost unresistingly, by Socrates.¹⁴ So to pass on a good way of life within those spheres of life too intimate for legislation, there must be an ability to articulate that life.¹⁵ But over and above this need for articulation within spheres lower than the polis, the skills of reasoning and debate required for lawmaking and deliberation in the political sphere will also shade into the skills of reasoning and debate required, say, in the family: it is thus that Aristotle can claim that anyone who wishes to make others good would do well to acquire the science of legislation.¹⁶ Being able to explain a life is accordingly useful for passing on that life both within private and public spheres.

3.02: Explaining a life: the incompleteness of explanation

One of the major failings which is often attributed to the ergon argument is its incompleteness. Although it is obviously intended to support some sort of life of theôria, it is unclear precisely what is to count as theôria. Again, it is unclear precisely what place the activity of theôria is to hold within the good life: is it to be the sole good, or is it to be part of a portfolio of goods?

A partial explanation of this incompleteness is the political aim of the *EN* and *Politics*. Since the implementation in the polis of

the conclusions of the argument must await, to an extent, the studies of the *Politics*, the argument is incomplete because it is unfinished. To learn that theôria is of vital importance in the good life is to learn something of importance, even if further argument about the polis in general and in particular cases will be required for that conclusion to have practical effect.

An additional explanation, however, is that the incompleteness is only apparent. To return to the example of the accountant and her child, if all that we possessed was the record of what the accountant had said to her child by way of argument and explanation, we would have only a very patchy view of her life since we would lack that experience of the details of her life which the child would possess by observation and participation. In other words, the explanations given by the accountant require the detailed experience of the life to be explained in order to be completely comprehensible and convincing. Moreover, what one child may need to have explained will not necessarily be what is required by another child: explanations will take account of the audience to which they are directed.

4.00: What is the sort of person whose life is to be explained?

I have set out above various considerations about how a certain sort of person's life could be explained and thereby passed on to another. Now, it is a major and well-known feature of the account

of goodness in the EN is that it is what it seems to be to a certain sort of individual -the phronimos.¹⁷ My argument is that it is this sort of person -the phronimos- whose life is going to be explained by the ergon argument. There is, however, this striking disanalogy between, say, an accountant and a phronimos. What an accountant does is clearly an uncontentious matter. What a phronimos does is not so clearly uncontentious. Whilst learning more about what and why an accountant acts will not alter our belief that someone is an accountant, learning more about what and why a putative phronimos acts may well alter our assessment of what it is to be a phronimos: 'Well, if that's what she does, she can't be virtuous after all!'

If a phronimos is simply someone who performs good actions and can only be identified through those good actions, there is a certain redundancy in the account: the agent can be struck out and our concentration focussed on what is really doing the work - the conception of the good action. So, if we are to pursue an agent-centred account rather than an act-centred account, we need an access to a good agent which is not wholly dependent on our understanding of good actions.¹⁸ There are a number of ways such an account might be attempted. A *genetic* account might be advanced where the agent is identified via the history of his education and upbringing. Some such strategy might, for example, explain what Plato is doing for much of the *Republic*: by sketching the history of the upbringing of the virtuous agent, he is defining the constitution of the future ideal state without

specifying how exactly it will be run by defining causally the character of those who will run it. Another account might be attempted by arguing that it is possible directly to see the goodness of an agent:

..I believe it is possible that we can see the goodness of a person in this rather direct way. She may simply exude a 'glow' of nobility or fineness of character, or as I have occasionally seen in a longtime member of a contemplative religious order, there may be an inner peace that can be perceived to be good directly..¹⁹

A third possibility is that we already know, as part of our stock of common ethical knowledge, that certain people are phronimoi. I have already suggested in chapter three one possible explanation for this: we live in a relationship of philia with certain authority figures, to whom, roughly, we defer part of the substantive ethical direction of our lives and also to whom we defer the articulation of the goods of our life. But even putting aside the details of my argument about philia and authority, it can surely be plausibly asserted as a fact that there are certain people who are moral authorities or phronimoi, even if the explanation for this fact is not given: as Aristotle points out, in ethics, to know that something is so is frequently enough without knowing why it is so.²⁰ In principle, one no more needs an account of *how* one knows that Pericles is a phronimos than one needs an account of *how* one knows that courage is facing death in

battle. Accounts will be required only if the aim is to defend such claims rather than simply to advance them. That his audience know the identity of at least some phronimoi is suggested at EN VI 5 1140a24-25, where the definition of phronésis is arrived at via an examination of people whom we call phronimoi. If the claim that Aristotle's audience know who some phronimoi are is found odd, consider the titles 'hero' or 'saint'. Most of us would be able to produce a list of those whom we call 'hero' or 'saint' without necessarily being able immediately to explain what justifies such a title.

I shall now suggest Pericles as an example of one of the phronimoi whom Aristotle's audience may have had in mind, and whose character and life we may do well to consider if we are to understand the background to the ergon argument. That Aristotle did have Pericles in mind as a paradigmatic phronimos is indicated at EN VI 4 1140b7-8.²¹

There are three aspects of Pericles' life and character that appear relevant to the audience's understanding of the EN. Firstly, there is what may be described as the non-transcendent character of Pericles practical rationality. When Pericles appears in the EN, he is commended as a phronimos because he had the ability to discern what things were good for himself and for men in general (EN VI 4 1140b9-10). This remark can usefully be compared with the assault on Pericles in Plato's *Gorgias*, where he is attacked for giving the citizens what they want rather than

telling them the truth.²² Pericles is a suitable example of the practically wise man for Aristotle precisely because Aristotle, unlike Plato, is not trying to reform his audience: Aristotle, like Pericles, is giving them what they want; but that giving of what they want involves practical wisdom in discerning and revealing unarticulated desires. It is precisely because Aristotle thinks that the ground on which Pericles was criticized by Plato is in fact the ground of his goodness as a phronimos that the choice of Pericles is noteworthy.

Secondly, there is the overriding role of rationality in Pericles' life, appearing not only in his political activities but also in his non-practical interests. Famous not only for his political success, he was also important in the development of the sophistic movement in Athens and, more generally, in the development of the arts and philosophy in the fifth century²³. His interest in science and philosophy was, moreover, not confined to what may broadly be described as the human sciences, but extended to the natural sciences as well. His intimate, Anaxagoras, whose view was that a man would choose to be born in order to study the heavens and the whole universe²⁴, was a natural scientist who not only indulged in grand cosmic speculations analogous to those of the sixth century Ionians, but also engaged in scientific observation²⁵.

A related historical point is the connexion between the repression of various philosophers and intellectuals in fifth

century Athens and political opposition to Pericles. Kerferd puts the matter thus:

There is no need to doubt that in attacking philosophers at Athens those concerned were attacking Pericles. This is simply evidence of the close involvement and patronage of Pericles in relation to the sophistic movement. But the evidence is strong indeed that there were a whole series of prosecutions brought against philosophers and others at Athens in the second half of the fifth century BC, usually on the charge of Asebia or Impiety²⁵

Of particular interest is the trial of Anaxagoras who, despite the support of his friend, Pericles, was fined for breaching the decree introduced by a religious fanatic called Diopieithes against 'those who do not acknowledge divine things or who give instruction about celestial phenomena'²⁷.

To sum up this second aspect of Pericles' life and character, he combined clear-headed calculation in politics²⁸ with an abiding interest in the non-human sciences. He is therefore peculiarly well placed as a model of a life which combines and acknowledges the claims of phronésis and theória. Now, it will become clear as my discussion progresses, that I do not think that Pericles should be regarded as the *ideal* at which the EN points -primarily because I do not think that the EN really points at an ideal life at all, but rather at an ideal activity which is only ever

partially realized in actual lives. He does however serve as an example of the sort of person whom the audience would already regard as a hero and to be imitated, a life moreover which I suggest that they are trying to understand in order to pass on to the next generation.

That final comment about passing on lives to the next generation brings out a final aspect of Pericles' life and character which I suggest forms the background to the *ergon* argument: unlike the two previous aspects which were strengths, this third aspect is a flaw. Pericles was notorious for having failed to bring up his children properly. He is said by Plato to have been unable to impart his political wisdom to them, but to have left them '..to wander at their own free will in a sort of hope that they would light upon virtue of their own accord' (*Protagoras* (319d-320b)). That the failure of politicians to make their own sons statesmen is noted in Book X (EN X 9 1181a5-9) is perhaps a further indication that it is Pericles who is on Aristotle's mind at this point.

The inability to pass on one's own virtuous life to one's children is, of course, in itself not admirable. But as we have noted (chapter eight, §2.04) the *megalopsuchos* has an aristocratic disdain for effectiveness. He might also be interpreted as having a certain emotional detachment from his children. Children owe a debt to their parents (EN IX 2 1165a20-24) whilst the *megalopsuchos*, although delighted to have people

indebted to him (EN IV 3 1124b9-18), is loath to need to repay debts including, perhaps, the debts incurred towards one's parents (ibid esp 1124b10; cf b12-15). Parenthood certainly has cost the father trouble though rather less than the mother (EN IX 7 1168a23-26), and he will in any case perhaps seek to disguise the pains of any effort involved from his children (EN IX 11 1171b5-12). All this provides the material for a recognizable if stereotypical father figure: the sort who just wants his children to grow up and be independent without any thought of their adult lives being bound up with his own. If all this is the case, the megalopsuchos may tend to regard the success or failure of his children as of no concern to him, particularly as he is only concerned with great honours and thus presumably not the trifling respect of a handful of children (EN IV 3 1125a34-35; cf EN I 2 1094b7-10): 'I only did what any parent would do -it's up to them now'.

It is therefore possible that Pericles may typify the tendency of the megalopsuchoi and thus the virtuous to be thriftless parents. Part of what Aristotle may be attempting to do in the EN and the *Politics* is to make the mundane detail of passing on virtuous lives pleasant to the megalopsuchos. Instead of regarding the detail of legislation and the school curriculum as beneath him, the rather haughty megalopsuchos may have something to learn from the perhaps more humble philosopher with whom, as Pericles and Anaxagoras, they may stand in a relationship of philia. Just as in humble lifeforms, the expert can discern that

'there are gods here too' (PA I 645a17-23), so in the mundane detail of, say, Book VIII of the *Politics*, the philosopher can point out to the megalopsuchos that here too the divine task of passing on human life through eternity is effected. I shall have more to say about the relationship between the life of politics and the life of theôria below, but it should be noted that this gentle prompting of the megalopsuchos' attention to points of educational detail shouldn't offend the megalopsuchos' sense of self-importance any more than the tax adviser's chiding of her client to fill in a tax return should offend the client's: in each case, the chiding, if anything, serves to reinforce the megalopsuchos view of himself - 'Yes, that's exactly the sort of detail I need you chaps to remind me of!'

My suggestion is therefore that Pericles is the sort of life we should have in mind to fill in the substantive detail of Book X. It is not a life which is smugly plunged into practical affairs: it already straightforwardly acknowledges the claims of theôria both in an amateur interest in the heavens and in the sponsoring of professionals such as Anaxagoras. It is a life which also acknowledges the role of reason throughout human affairs whilst remaining effective in the day to day wheeling and dealing of political life. Finally, it is a life flawed by a certain fecklessness in the detailed provision for the next generation: whilst clearly interested in building up and passing on a glorious city, there is a failure to establish the detailed structures and even the detailed attention within a family to

allow this to occur with any great probability. In a reversal of roles which has the initial appearance of paradox, the politician in this area perhaps has his mind fixed too much on the obviously important and grand, and needs the nudging of the philosopher to bring his mind down to the nitty gritty of detail and to realize this level too in its way has importance and grandeur.

4.01: Is failure to bring up children well a character flaw?

It might be objected here that the failure of Pericles to bring up his children well is a character flaw. The virtuous cannot be unable to perform their virtuous tasks: since bringing up children well is a virtuous task, the failure to do so effectively indicates a failure in virtue. A really lousy soldier just can't act with that degree of effectiveness to be even eligible to be classed as courageous; a really lousy parent just isn't effective enough to claim, 'Well, I tried'.

The most important thing to note here is that the failure to bring up children well isn't primarily a personal failure, but rather a political one: to bring children up well, one needs state not personal action (EW X 9 1180a25-32).

So the first thing to note is that, even if Pericles is personally thriftless in the education of his children, that

would only be a failure on the margins of his duty: bringing up children isn't really his job, but the polis's.

The second thing to note is that thinking one's children will acquire virtue off their own bat isn't the same as thinking that virtue doesn't matter: it is a judgment of means that, arguably, Pericles has got wrong. Now, whatever the precise relationship between means and end in practical reason -and I have suggested it may be very intimate (chapter five §4.00)- there must be room, particularly in the highly complex and variable field of politics, for getting the means wrong without losing virtue. The right end is put by Broadie thus:

..those who rear children in the moral virtues are aiming to produce a generation of autonomous moral agents capable of relaying the same values to their own children.²⁹

The 'hands-off', *laissez-faire* approach is a possible means to that end: indeed, in a properly run society, it would be the correct approach; for the family should leave well alone and allow the state primary responsibility.

In fine, if the failure to educate children is typical of the megalopsuchos -and it is, of course, only a claim of marginal importance to my thesis- such a failure need not be regarded as a failure of character.

5.00: Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the ergon argument is to be understood against the detailed background of the actual lives of phronimoi, specifically, against the life of someone such as Pericles. Without prejudging the results of my examination of the detailed ergon argument, a life such as Pericles articulates and combines, in a broad sense, the goods of theoretical learning and practical life. For the mass of the audience, to understand life as Pericles understands it is to achieve a considerable advance in articulating the good life. However, phronimoi such as Pericles are unable to pass on that good life to their children, even though the continuation of that good life in the form of the polis is their aim.

Notes to chapter nine

1. Jaffa 1952, p49.
2. Kenny 1992, p93.
3. Ackrill 1981, p140.
4. Statman 1997, p26.
5. I follow here the analyses of the debate given by McDowell in Rorty 1980 (pp368-373); and Hutchinson 1986, (pp66-72).
6. McDowell, op cit, p368.
7. Hutchinson, op cit, p68.
8. McDowell, op cit, pp368-9.
9. 'This sense of 'good'...is part of Aristotle's philosophy of nature, which recognizes goods, functions, and purposes...as part of the reality of things.' Hutchinson, op cit p68.
10. Cf Williams 1993, p53: '...we must admit that the Aristotelian assumptions which fitted together the agent's perspective and the outside view have collapsed. No one has yet found a good way of doing without those assumptions.'
11. Chapters one to three.
12. Cf the spirit of EN I 7 1098b3-7.
13. Cf Annas 1981, pp18-34.
14. *Republic* 331e-336a.
15. Chapter three.
16. EN X 9 1180b20-28.
17. EN II 6 1106b36-1107a2.
18. See Annas 1981 pp157-160.
19. Zagzebski 1996, p83.
20. EN I 4 1095b6-7.

21. Cf Gauthier & Jolif 1958, ad 1141b3-8: 'Pericles is for the Aristotle of the *Nicomachean Ethics* the paradigm [le type] of the phronimos.'
22. *Gorgias* 503c-d:
- Callicles: What! did you never hear that Themistocles was a good man, and Cimon and Miltiades and Pericles, who is just lately dead, and whom you heard yourself? Socrates: Yes, Callicles, they were good men, if, as you said at first, true virtue consists only in the satisfaction of our own desires and those of others; but if not, and if, as we were afterwards compelled to acknowledge, the satisfaction of some desires makes us better, and of others, worse, and we ought to gratify the one and not the other, and there is an art in distinguishing them -can you tell me any of these statesmen who did distinguish them? Callicles: No, indeed, I cannot.*
23. See Kerferd 1981.
24. Recorded by Aristotle EE I 4 1215b5-14.
25. Cf. pp70-1, Bowra 1971.
26. p21 Kerferd 1981.
27. p191 Bowra 1971. Quotation cited by Bowra from Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*.
28. Cf. p18 Kerferd 1981, according to which Pericles desired:
- ..to base all his actions upon reasoned judgment and rational calculation (gnômê) in preference to feelings (argê), hope or chance.*
29. Broadie 1991, p74.

Chapter ten

The ergon argument (II): rational activity as the ergon

1.00: Introduction

In the previous chapter I have argued that the ergon argument is to be understood as an attempt to articulate the life of a phronimos with a character analogous to that of Pericles rather than as an attempt independently to justify such a life.

In this chapter, I build on this general conclusion about the nature of the argument to begin to provide a detailed account of the argument itself. I argue that the point of finding the ergon is to see whether or not it will reveal a substantive unity beneath the verbal agreement on eudaimonia as an aim. Aristotle does not assume that because an activity is an ergon it will necessarily be the right sort of activity to help us understand the life of the virtuous. The activity proposed is action directed towards a future goal. This proposal fits the current articulated understanding of phronimoi such as Pericles who work towards the creation and maintenance of a polis.

2.00: Finding the substance beneath verbal agreement

In the EN, Aristotle first brings in the concept of the human ergon in the following passage:

To say however that the Supreme Good is happiness will probably appear a truism; we still require a more explicit account of what constitutes happiness. Perhaps then we may arrive at this by ascertaining what is man's function. For the goodness or efficiency of a flute-player or sculptor or craftsman of any sort, and in general of anybody who has some function [ergon] or business [praxis] to perform, is thought to reside in that function; and similarly it may be held that the good of man resides in the function of man, if he has a function.. EN I 7 1097b22-28

Two points should be noted from this passage. Firstly, Aristotle thinks that he has already proved that human beings have a Supreme Good: happiness. Everyone agrees that their actions in life may be described as being aimed at the attainment of happiness. But this is a mere verbal agreement, an agreement on how the problem may be stated rather than how it may be resolved. What they do not agree about is in what happiness consists; and it is here that the ergon argument is thought to be of help. Secondly, Aristotle does not assume that human beings have an ergon: he thinks that it is arguable that they do not.

Aristotle goes on:

Are we then to assume that, while the carpenter and the shoemaker have definite functions or businesses belonging to them, man as such has none, and is not designed by nature to fulfil any function? Must we not rather assume that, just as the eye, the hand, the foot and each of the various members of the body manifestly has a certain function of its own, so a human being also has a certain function over and above all the functions of his particular members? What then precisely can this function be? EN I 7 1097b30-33

That, apparently, is the extent of the argument for man's having an ergon. Indeed, it is hardly an argument at all, consisting as it does of two unanswered questions. The temptation is simply to answer both questions in the negative and to conclude thereafter that whatever philosophical edifice is erected, its foundations are of sand.

Now it is normally assumed that the origin of Aristotle's ergon argument is to be found at the end of the first book of the *Republic*'. Indeed, the line of argument there appears at first sight similar albeit given a fuller treatment. Both Aristotle's argument and Socrates' begin by enumerating cases where (putatively) there is no disagreement about the existence of an ergon; they both conclude by induction from these cases that the soul or man also has an ergon. However, there is at least one

important difference: in the Socratic version, the instances from which the induction is made are all items which can be used: horses, agricultural implements, parts of the body under voluntary control. In the Aristotelian version of the EE, this restriction to items that are used is repeated and, indeed, made explicit in that ergon is equated with chrêsis (EE II 1 1218b37-1219a6). In the EN, however, as well as items which can be said to be used, Aristotle also includes craftsmen and equates ergon with praxis. This difference may well be crucial and should, at least, put us on our guard against assuming that the argument of the *Republic* and of the arguably Platonizing EE is identical to that of the EN.

Now it is well known that the translation of 'ergon' as 'function' is unsatisfactory and that an alternative such as 'characteristic activity' is often preferable². Moreover, it might appear from the passage cited above from the EN that Aristotle himself is uneasy about attributing an ergon to a human being, even qua craftsman, perhaps feeling that 'business' (praxis) sits more naturally, even in Greek. There is at this point a dilemma looming. If man could be said to have a function, then, we might think, various conclusions about what he should or should not do would follow. You can use a tool wrongly, someone can put you right. Without judging the merits of the arguments in the 'ought-is' question, we can say that the attribution of 'function' to something, whether a matter of cognition or emotion, is 'action-guiding' in a fairly strong way³. But it is

precisely because the attribution of function *is* action guiding that it appears inappropriate to apply it to human beings.

If, then, we turn to 'characteristic activity' or some such expression, we are perhaps less unwilling to attribute such a quality to mankind. We might reflect that sciences exist which do make generalizations about human behaviour, such as sociology and psychology: that human beings do things which mark them out from other animals such as the use of tools and language. Now, though, the action guiding force of the expression appears diminished. If a given person does not perform the putative characteristic activity, so what? Perhaps this is just one of those exceptions which exist in respect of most generalizations. Perhaps it falsifies the generalization. In either case, it seems hard to understand what action-guiding consequences follow.

This dilemma exists for those views which regard Aristotle as seeking a definition of happiness which will alter the actions of the audience. It must therefore be strongly action-guiding. However, the more strongly action-guiding it is, the more implausible its attribution becomes.

I believe the way to avoid the dilemma is simply to grasp one of the horns. Let us accept in principle that it is possible to find one or more characteristic activities of mankind. This discovery is not, *ex hypothesi*, action-guiding. But does it need to be? Quite apart from the arguments which I adduced in chapters one

and two in favour of the view that Aristotle is not out to change his audience's values, it is important to remember where the ergon argument enters the EN. It has already been accepted that human beings want, and pursue their lives with the aim of achieving, what they *consciously and explicitly* describe to themselves as 'happiness': the opaque description of the Supreme End is the word 'eudaimonia'. Now, so far, we have merely verbal agreement. The ergon argument enters at this point to discover if there is any one thing to which this word refers. Aristotle, we have seen, accepts that it is possible that there is not. But if there is a transparent description of the reference of 'eudaimonia', if there is something at which all human beings aim, even if they are not *consciously and explicitly* aware of this, then there is a human ergon. The discovery of this ergon will make explicit what human beings already do; it will not provide them with reasons for pursuing what they do not already pursue.

The stage Aristotle has reached in the ergon argument at line 1097b33 appears to me this. Human beings pursue in their actions what they describe to themselves as 'eudaimonia'. In the case of tools or parts which are used in actions, or craftsmen or professionals who perform actions, we can make some generalizations about what those actions are like. It is therefore reasonable to assume that we might be able to make some such generalization about human actions *simpliciter*. It might prove that we cannot, in which case we are left with verbal

agreement about what people pursue but nothing else. However, we cannot know until we examine possible candidates for this position.

3.00: Why is a unique ergon sought?

The previous section might leave us with the thought that generalizations might be made about what human beings do, but Aristotle appears to believe more than this: that the generalization will either characterize all apparently different human activities as one type of activity; or that one activity will be privileged above all the others.

Now it would be possible to reach such a conclusion after considering all possible generalizations about human beings: it might just be the case that one generalization does sum up in some way all human activity. But Aristotle seems to approach the problem from the other end: he assumes that there will be only one ergon and then examines possible candidates in the light of this assumption. Now if Aristotle does make this assumption, we need to know why, because making it would seem to suggest that there is something about the ergon argument that makes it stranger than a simple search for general truths about human beings. It is also likely to put us on our guard against the generalization proposed: it appears intuitively unlikely to a modern that one attribute alone could sum up human nature and we

are likely to suspect that any unique solution would be adopted at the expense of distorting the evidence.

So what are Aristotle's arguments for the uniqueness of the ergon? Starting from the beginning of the EN, 1094a1-1095a13 deal with identifying the subject matter of the EN as the subject matter of the science of politics -whatever that is. Now, Aristotle might here be arguing from the existence of a science to the existence of a cohesive, homogeneous subject matter of that science: so the argument would go that because there is a science of politics, there would have to be some one unifying attribute of all the things studied by that science. Since Aristotle believes that the subject matter of politics is human nature, he would therefore conclude that there is a unique attribute of human nature.

Such an argument, though tempting, would appear flimsy. Some sciences indeed study what may be regarded as objects falling into natural kinds, particularly what are today described as the natural sciences. Even here, however, it is rare that one natural kind is assigned one science. Other sciences study entities which fall into socio-legal kinds, such as sociology or anthropology. Still other sciences study areas which appear related only by the historical accident of falling under the same university department: perhaps philosophy itself is an example of such a science. Now it is possible that there is something about the subject matter of any science which makes it one and only one

science. However, that is a position which appears generally implausible, the links seeming to owe more to family resemblance than a unifying attribute in many cases. Accordingly it is a position to be argued for with respect to any science, rather than an assumption which can be relied on to form the basis to further argument.

Accordingly, if we are to assume that Aristotle has any sort of reasonable argument, we cannot read EN I 1-3 1094a1-1095a13 as assuming that, because there is a science of politics, there must be a unifying attribute to the subjects studied by that science. However, it can be read as providing defeasible evidence for that conclusion. If the same people successfully study a number of subjects, finding that knowledge and skills gained in one subject help them in their studies of the others, that does suggest something about the unitary nature of the subjects. We might not want to argue that it proves that there is one common attribute of the matter of all those subjects, but we might feel that there was something looser, perhaps an affinity, between the subject matters. If we could then prove separately that, indeed, there was something in common to all the subject matters, then we would be less surprised than if, say, different types of people studied the various subjects, enjoyed them, performed successfully in them. The existence of a science is therefore evidence of the unity of subject matter in a sense, though it is a weak, scene setting sort of evidence: the sort of evidence that serves more

to direct enquiries in a certain sort of direction than to provide answers.

Quite apart from the weakness of the argument that the existence of a science implies the existence of a homogeneous subject matter, it does not in fact appear from the text that Aristotle thought that such a conclusion could be reached; for instead of concluding from the existence of the science of politics that there is some substantive unity to the subject matter of that science, he goes on to examine the various opinions held on the nature of the Supreme End for mankind, concluding that they all point to 'eudaimonia' as the description of that End, but provide no indication that this agreement is more than verbal (EN I 4-7 1095a14-1097b21)⁴. It is at this point that the ergon argument is adduced.

3.01: The explanatory power of a unique ergon

However ergon is translated, whether as 'function' or 'characteristic activity', it is more than a simple generalization about the activities of that object or creature to which it is attributed. Putting aside the question of the amount of 'action-guidance' to be found in an ergon, an ergon is an attribution generalization which, in some way, *explains* other characteristics of the subject. The function of my heart is to pump blood: identifying this function correctly allows the

muscularity of the heart, its place in the system of arteries and veins, its chambers and its rhythmical movements to be explained and put in the correct light. The profession of Dr Kildare is medicine: this explains why he spent three years in pre-clinical training studying anatomy and the effects of drugs, why he subscribes to the New England Medical Journal, why he is well off, why he is more likely to be an alcoholic and a suicide than other people. In fine, the characteristics of a token are explained by having an ergon or praxis attributed to it.

Now, it is rather beside the point at this stage to ask how the attribution of an ergon, in general, explains. There might be such a general explanation but such an explanation would only be required in the present thesis if the human ergon, once identified, could be seriously denied to be explanatory: if it does explain, then it is of little moment whether that mode of explanation is common to all function or craft attributions, or is *sui generis*. The point at issue is less *how* in general the attribution of an ergon explains, but, in each case, *whether* and *what* it explains.

Not all attributions are explanatory. What other characteristics could be deduced from the fact that I have brown hair? Very few, and of little importance. It is here, I suggest, that the difference between the Platonic version of the ergon argument and the Nicomachean version is crucial. Attributing a profession or craft to somebody is an explanation because to act effectively as

a professional or as a craftsman, the agent has to develop attitudes of mind and skills to perform the craft which then shape her entire life. Consider here the difference in explanatory power between a 'profession' and a 'job'. That someone works as a typist might tell you some things about her, but very few: it is a job which does not engage the emotions and the whole character of a person. On the other hand, the professions demand more of the character to be engaged. A typist needs, perhaps, a certain agility in her fingers. An advocate, on the other hand, needs to enjoy public speaking, have the ability to think on her feet, have a good memory, be sociable etc, perhaps most importantly to take a pride in her professional status and to identify with it.

The important thing about an ergon is, therefore, its status as explanation. But to have that status as explanation, it must tend towards the position where one attribute explains many others. The power of an explanation depends on its range and depth: the more things it explains and the more completely it explains them, the more powerful that explanation. Now, of course, most explanations fall short of the ideal; but to aim at an explanation is at least to aspire to such power, whether or not the achievement of such finality appears likely.

Aristotle brings in the notion of man's ergon in an attempt to find a substantive unity beneath the verbal agreement on the description of the Supreme End as 'eudaimonia'. If there is an

ergon, there is one or, at most, a few generalizations to be made about man's nature: to count as an ergon, the generalization must be explanatory; and to be explanatory, the generalization must explain quite a number of things about human beings.

None of this proves that man has one ergon. Aristotle has argued that there is verbal agreement that there is one thing at which all people aim: happiness. As I have argued (chapter six, §3.03) this suggests an aspiration towards co-operation within the polis. If there is some one thing which explains many of the attributes of human beings, this may throw light on the nature of happiness. But the aspiration may fail. There may be no explanatory generalizations at all. There may be several things that explain the nature of human beings. In both cases, the apparent unity underlying the agreement on the aim of happiness will prove merely verbal. It is even possible that the identification of the ergon, even if unique, will not throw any light on the Supreme End for man. It is possible that the way in which the ergon explains man does not make it a candidate for the substance underlying the word 'eudaimonia'^s. But it may do. All this can only be considered once a candidate for the human ergon is identified. This Aristotle goes on to do.

4.00: Happiness is purposeful action

If the EN is taken as a whole, then the proof that happiness is theôria appears to run along the following lines. Up to EN I 7 1097b33, we have reached the position that examination of the characteristic activity of mankind *may* throw light on whatever substance underlies the description of the Supreme End as eudaimonia. In 1097b33-1098a20, the ergon of man is identified as rational activity. We then turn to Book X. There (EN X 6 1176a30ff) it is argued that the best form of activity is contemplation (theôria) with the life of practical reason being only second best. Happiness is accordingly theôria (EN X 7 1177a12-18).

Now it should be noted that it is arguable that the only clear conclusion of the ergon argument proper is that happiness is the use of reason in action (praktikê tou logou echontos) -the purposeful activity of the rational part of man (EN I 7 1098a3-4)). That happiness is later identified with the theoretical part of rational activity is not obviously deduced from theoretical activity's being the ergon of man, although there are arguments in Book X which seem to suggest such a position as well as a possible hint of those arguments in Book I (see below). Whatever the precise scope of the ergon argument, the argument that happiness is theôria does seem to fall into two stages: the first being that rationality is happiness; the second being that

theoretical rationality is happiness; and I shall accordingly examine the argument assuming such a division.

To dignify the first part of the ergon argument -that which concludes that rationality is happiness- with the status of argument is perhaps generous. It runs thus:

What then precisely can this function be? The mere act of living appears to be shared even by plants, whereas we are looking for the function peculiar to man; we must therefore set aside the vital activity of nutrition and growth. Next in the scale will come some form of sentient life; but this too appears to be shared by horses, oxen, and animals generally. There remains therefore what may be called the practical life of the rational part of man. EN I 7 1097b33-1098a4

Now there is no argument here that nutrition and growth, sentience and rationality are the only possibilities for the ergon: this is assumed, not argued. Once it is assumed, it does follow that the only thing which characterizes human beings as human beings rather than non-human animals or plants lies in what way human beings differ from the other categories, viz, rationality. To discover the force of the ergon argument, therefore, it is necessary to look elsewhere for the identification of rationality as the distinctly human activity. Unfortunately, such a search appears vain. As Hutchinson puts it:

There are many things characteristic of man...: making fire, or killing for fun. How does Aristotle think he has a warrant for isolating this one feature, rationality? There is no direct answer to this question in the Aristotelian corpus.⁶

Hutchinson, however, goes on to suggest a solution which, in its essentials, appears correct.

Rational activity is not to be conceived either as a species of activities among other species or as a genus of activities among other genera. We ought to conceive it as a form of activity which human beings display in the course of their specific activities. It is conduct rather than animal movement; rationality is the mark which distinguishes conduct from mere behaviour. Doing things with reasons is a different sort of activity because almost any species of activity could be conceived as an instance of it...Aristotle's claim is that man's single ergon is conduct.⁷

Now, whatever else may be said about what it is for human beings to be rational, I have already argued in chapters four to six on prohairesis that action for the sake of a future goal is the paradigm of human action. For Aristotle, one of the characteristics of human rationality is foresight, either in that animals fail to have a sense of the future at all, or, if they do possess such a sense, that they possess it in some attenuated and imperfect form. Sorabji, whilst arguing that Aristotle does

credit non-human animals with forward looking capacities by way of expanding perceptual content, notes that he excludes the use of reason from such capacities. Animals are thus incapable of deliberation, hope or expectation for the future.⁹ If my earlier account of the prohairetic structure of action is correct, however, rational human beings act with at least a view to the end of their life in death. That much Aristotle's audience should already have been aware of before they reached the lectures of Book X. Moreover, the audience should already be dimly aware that their actions have ends which exist beyond their own death. The desire to pass on goods, of whatever sort to their children, the desire to live in the memories of the living, the urge to perform the monumental public works which characterized Pericles' career⁹, all these testify to the fact that human beings in the exercise of their rationality tend to aim at the distant future.

To sum up, Aristotle's audience should have felt comfortable with an understanding of rationality as typified, roughly, by planning. Throughout the corpus and the EN in particular, Aristotle relies on rational foresight and acting for the future as characteristic of human beings. So much is a given, a given, moreover, that the audience will accept and even use to define themselves. What Aristotle then has to do is to move his audience's understanding of their own lives from this acknowledgment of and even pride in rationality as a kinêsis operating to produce future effects, to an appreciation of it as an energeia imitating the divine.

5.00: Moving beyond practical rationality

The arguments directly in favour of theôria as a pursuit are located in Book X 6 1176a30-1179a32.

The first point to be noted about this argument is that it follows the discussion of pleasures which begins Book X. Nor does this placing appear simply an editorial accident since the theôria arguments follow hard on the heels of the question:

But among the pleasures considered respectable, which class of pleasures or which particular pleasure is to be deemed the distinctively human pleasure? EN X 5 1176a24-5

This suggests that we are looking for a pleasure. Now I have already remarked on the link between finding an action pleasurable and regarding it as an energeia; accordingly, putting the question in that form already suggests we are looking for an energeia, a suspicion confirmed when at 1176b6-7, it is concluded that we must be looking for an energeia in the narrow sense, that is, an activity which is desirable in itself and not as a means to something else.

That the result of our search for happiness must be an energeia is a conclusion that is connected with much of the discussion of the EN as a whole. I have already argued that enjoying one's own actions is to regard them as energeiai; and Aristotle ushers us

into the ergon argument with a discussion of pleasure. Indeed, Rorty argues that the entire discussion of pleasure and friendship spread between Books VII and X forms a whole in which we learn to regard our friends' lives and our own

*as forming a unity, itself one complex energeia.*¹⁰

Aristotle goes on to remind us directly that virtuous actions possess this quality of being desirable in themselves and not being for a discrete end (EN X 6 1176b7-9). Whatever other insight we are supposed to have gained into the life of the phronimos, we should know that phronimoi understand their actions and, more broadly, their lives as energeiai, and it is with this knowledge that we enter this part of the argument. Lines 1176a30-b9 must therefore be taken as what indeed they are claimed in the text to be: a linking of the argument in Book X to earlier passages rather than new arguments in themselves.

Lines 1176b9-1177a11 consider and reject the view that happiness consists in amusements. The arguments in favour of this rejection are based on common sense, what people who are held reasonable judges commonly believe. Princes believe that amusements are the Supreme Good; but princes are not very good models because they do not use reason and are commonly thought to be worthless (1176b9-29). Quite apart from the badness of princes as models, common opinion is that happiness consists in serious things rather than frivolous (lines 1176b29-1177a11). Given this fairly

short dismissal of amusement, it may be found surprising that Aristotle even raises the possibility of its constituting happiness. Amusement, however, is an important rival to *theôria* for the title of happiness because of its paradigmatic status as a pleasure desirable only for its own sake. For Plato in the *Laws* 803b-e, a passage Aristotle almost certainly has in mind¹¹, human beings should accept their status as playthings of God and join in with the divine game. Finnis accepts Plato's analysis:

For if we simply said that we act for the sake of God, we would suggest that God somehow needs us, needs creation, the success of creation, the achieving of the creative purpose. But [God] needs and lacks nothing...So if we ask why God creates, no answer is available other than the one implicitly given by Plato: play -a free but patterned expression of life and activity, meaningful but with no further point. Hence, even one who goes beyond Plato to accept that man is called to a friendship of devotion to God will grant that such friendship takes the form of sharing, in a limited way, in the divine play.¹²

Now there is something bizarre about both Plato's and Finnis' analyses. What we want, *ex hypothesi*, to say about God's action is that it is for its own sake -that it has no extraneous purpose. What we end up by saying is that God plays, which suggests that God acts like the baser sort of human being (cf EN I 6 1176b16-28); that he is recuperating (ibid 1176b28-1177a1);

and that he is being frivolous (ibid 1177a1-11). It is no answer here to say that paidia in Plato's sense is 'practically synonymous' with paideia ('the most serious thing' for men *Laws* 803d5-7) and has 'nothing to do with Aristotle's notion of play'.¹³ That theology requires a certain extension of the words of human action is certain (cf *Summa Theologiae* Ia pars q13 a6), but given that, why choose 'play' rather than other actions done for their own sake? As Aristotle points out, if we want actions done for their own sake, we need look no further than actions done kat' aretên (ibid 1177a1-2), which are free from extraneous purpose but also free from the unfortunate connotations of paidia.

Moreover, as I argued above, when seeking the human ergon, Aristotle entertains the thought that the ergon discovered might prove unsuitable as a way of understanding the life of the virtuous. If the ergon were discovered to be that human beings were God's toys, such an ergon might indeed prove unacceptable. Just as Ivan Karamazov rejects God whilst believing in him, so the proud megalopsuchos would seem likely to reject his status as plaything, even if he were convinced that this was the human ergon. Such a rejection might make virtuous life ineluctably tragic, but just as it might be the right thing for an enslaved virtuous agent to be miserable rather than base, so it might be the right thing for a virtuous human being who discovers his status as a divine plaything to refuse to co-operate with his master.

So if we are looking for a way of describing the action of God, we would do better to begin in the area of virtuous actions rather than play. And at this stage, although Aristotle is about to point us in the direction of theôria, this must suggest a life in accordance with practical virtue rather than theoretical virtue since it is hai kat' aretên praxeis that Aristotle has just held up as the paradigm of actions performed for their own sake in contrast to paidia (ibid 1176b7-9).

6.00: Conclusion

In this chapter I have begun the detailed examination of the ergon argument against the background assumption that it is intended to articulate the mind of the phronimos. I have argued that Aristotle has begun with the assumption that human beings are creatures who act for the sake of future ends, an assumption which is already articulated by phronimoi such as Pericles.

In the following chapter, I shall argue that Aristotle's aim is to move such men to an understanding that their planned actions are being done under the description of an energeia, such an understanding existing already imperfectly by dint of being unarticulated, but relying on articulation to be perfectly realized. This understanding depends on the awareness of the connexion of theôria with their actions.

Notes to chapter ten

1. Eg Hutchinson 1986, p41.
2. Cf eg A W H Adkins, 'Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*', in Keyt & Miller 1991.
3. I borrow the term 'action-guiding' from P Foot, 'Moral Beliefs', in Foot 1967.
4. In a sense, the existence of a science does imply the unity of its subject-matter: the subject-matter of, say, communication studies possesses the attribute 'that-studied-by-communication-studies'. The interesting question is whether this merely verbal unity reflects an underlying, substantive unity. Thus, the subject matter of the science of politics can be unified under the description 'that studied under the science of politics' and, *a fortiori*, 'the science of human nature'. The question remains, however, as to whether this verbal unity does or does not reflect a substantive unity.
5. This possibility explains, I suggest, the apparent hesitation in identifying eudaimonia and ergon in EN I 7 1097b22-25.

I think this possibility of an ergon which fails to fit the concept of happiness is related to the distinction drawn by Kathleen Wilkes between 'the good man' and 'the good for man'. (K Wilkes, 'The Good Man and the Good for Man' pp341-357, in Rorty 1980. I shall have more to say on this distinction below.

6. p59 Hutchinson 1986.
7. *ibid.*
8. Sorabji (1993) esp pp54-55. The passages cited are: HA 1 1 488b24-6; DA 3 11 434a5-12; and PA 3 6 669a19-21.
9. Cf Harvey 1937: 'Pericles is also famous for the great public works constructed at Athens under his direction, notably the Parthenon and the Propylaea...and the additional "Long Wall" between Athens and the Piraeus.' p313
10. p390 Rorty 1980.
11. See Gauthier & Jolif 1958, pp867ff.
12. Finnis 1980, p409.
13. Lord 1982, p55n.

Chapter eleven

The ergon argument (III): imitating the divine

1.00: Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I have argued that the ergon argument is to be understood as articulating the life of the virtuous, as articulated by the phronimos. As argued at the end of the previous chapter, eudaimonia might still be expected by the audience to be practically virtuous activity. In this chapter, the ergon argument is followed as it takes the audience from such an understanding to an understanding of eudaimonia as theôria.

I argue that Aristotle views the phronimos as imitating the divine. Although in principle the life of theôria is the life of perfect happiness, whilst the life of virtue is only secondarily happy (EN X 7 1178a4ff), the actual lives available to human beings fall far short of the divine model. In some ways, the politician's life may be more divine than that of the philosopher by being closer to the divine paradigm of theôria. In any case, the EN, by making the politician more aware of and more able to articulate his divine ergon makes his life closer to the divine model.

2.00: Happiness as theôria

It is only in lines 1177a12ff that we find arguments that appear to be independently supportive of the view that theôria is happiness. There are two points that are worth making at the start of this discussion. Firstly, it must be remembered that Aristotle does not appear to regard the results of these arguments -ie that the life of theôria is the best life- as conclusive. He ends the discussion thus:

Such arguments then carry some degree of conviction; but it is by the practical experience of life and conduct that the truth is really tested, since it is there that the final decision lies. We must therefore examine the conclusions we have advanced by bringing them to the test of the facts of life. If they are in harmony with the facts, we may accept them; if found to disagree, we must deem them mere theories.

EN X 8 1179a17-22'

Now on my interpretation of the argument, Aristotle is here, quite reasonably, gesturing back towards the ultimate subject matter: the good man and his life. Aristotle has been putting forward thought-provoking views: stirred in our preconceptions, we have been sent back to look at good men's lives again in a new light.

An alternative view is that Aristotle believes he has deduced the best life for man from a *a priori* reflection on his nature:

Once happiness itself had been viewed as intrinsically relative to man's distinctive nature, then philosophical psychology had to enter with its normative contribution as to what is distinctive of that nature. Thus in the positive steps [sc of the argument] the terms of comparison are not a posteriori opinions, but the candidate 'contemplation' and the a priori demands of human nature itself.²

What an advocate of such a view has to answer is why, if Aristotle is engaged in *deduction* from *a priori* premisses, does he believe that his arguments are inconclusive?³

Secondly, as far as I am aware, no modern commentator is convinced by Aristotle that theôria as some variety of philosophic *contemplation* is a viable or even attractive lifestyle⁴. Aristotle's conclusions are normally thinned down to a justification of intellectual life in general or simply rejected as false. For many commentators, such views are unproblematic: Aristotle has simply produced bad arguments which either do not prove anything or prove less than he thinks. I, however, have argued that Aristotle is gesturing primarily at the actual lives of actual men: if Aristotle is mistaken in his conclusions, he has not just made an error in a highly complex philosophical argument, a not uncommon fate, but has mistaken the

motivations and actions of people whom he came across daily. It is, of course, not impossible that this is the case; but for someone of Aristotle's genius, such a profound misreading of everyday life would be unexpected. As a result, any account which I produce of the good life must be more attractive and more commonplace than those normally proposed by commentators.

These points having been made, in this chapter I shall turn to the text to examine precisely what sort of life Aristotle is advocating.

3.00: What is the life of theôria?

The arguments in 1177a12-1179a17 seem, broadly, to fall into two types. The first type might loosely be described as prudential: that, if you pursue a life of contemplation rather than a life of action, you are more likely to be happy in a fairly commonsense understanding of the word. Thus, contemplation requires fewer material resources (1178a23-24) and can be carried on for longer periods without fatigue (1177b21-22). The second type do appear at first sight to be based on *a priori* truths about human nature. Thus, contemplation is the activity of our highest part (1177a19-21).

Now the prudential arguments provide a fairly straightforward insight into the phronimos' life. No one in Aristotle's audience

is going to be surprised to hear that actions which are less tiring and less costly in use of resources are *ceteris paribus* desirable: that said, the reasons, although relatively unexceptionable, still need to be brought to the audience's attention in order that they may be articulated in the passing on of their lives.

There may, on the other hand, seem something rather shabby about such considerations to the rather high minded *megalopsuchos*. Perhaps there is an echo here of *Republic* Book VI 496a-c, where it is noted that the best a philosopher can do in the world as presently ordered is to withdraw from public life, even though this withdrawal is not absolutely the best life for a philosopher, that best life being to take an active public role in a state properly organized on rational principles. Plato notes that such philosophical valetudinarianism can be motivated by a *megalê psuchê* despising the petty politics of the city (496b). This might suggest that characters better suited to an active political role are, in the current way of things, diverted into a life of pure philosophy. In the Plato's best city, the prudential motives favouring the purely philosophical life would not apply. Although some prudential motives will still favour the philosophical life from Aristotle's point of view since *praxis* always requires resources (EN X 8 1177a34-1178b7), the cost in effort results in a pay-off in terms of the greater nobility of the action (ibid). So while more effort will always be required to live a practical rather than a philosophical life, in a well

managed polis, that greater effort might only serve to increase the nobility of the practical life.

The prudential arguments in favour of theôria may, therefore, be less compelling the more well organized a polis is, their persuasiveness lasting only as long as the polis remains such as to render all political effort almost futile. With the nature arguments, the position is less straightforward.

Aristotle has argued throughout the EN that virtuous activity is characterized by a sort of self-sufficiency: broadly, that it is done for its own sake (eg EN II 4 1105a32ff). Given that Aristotle is trying to articulate the life of the virtuous, if we are talking about the activity which is most sufficient, least performed for the sake of other things, there may well be a corresponding lack of reasons for pursuing it to give to someone who doesn't immediately grasp its goodness: whatever else may be said about it, to capture its place as seen by the phronimos, it has to be described as a categorical demand.

Turning to the apparently *a priori* arguments from human nature, at EN X 7 1177a13-18, it is stated rather than argued that the activity of the highest part of us will be happiness, and it is suggested that it has previously been argued that this activity is theôria. Now as Rackham points out (note ad locum) it has not in fact been previously argued that the activity is theôria, only that sophia is the highest of the virtues.⁵ Since that argument

about sophia is contained in Book VI -one of the common books usually attributed to the EE- we must also be on our guard against assuming that the arguments in Book VI are precisely the arguments that Aristotle would have used at the time of the EN. This warning notwithstanding, let us turn to Book VI.

The term wisdom [sophia] is employed in the arts to denote those men who are the most perfect masters of their art...In this use then wisdom merely signifies artistic excellence. But we also think that some people are wise in general and not in one department..Hence it is clear that wisdom must be the most perfect of the modes of knowledge. The wise man therefore must not only know the conclusions that follow from his first principles, but also have a true conception of those principles themselves. Hence wisdom must be a combination of Intelligence and Scientific Knowledge: it must be a consummated knowledge of the most exalted objects.

(EN VI 7 1141a9-20)

Now there is really very little here to justify the claim that intellect is the highest thing in us and theôria the best activity of intellect. But if the arguments in Books VI and X are taken rather as revealing the self-understanding of the phronimos, they become more comprehensible. Phronimoi such as Pericles regard the intellect as the finest thing there is, something which has a categorical claim on them. Their lives are

structured and informed by this commitment to intellect, intellect which is exercised moreover on the most important and exalted things.

What had been said so far might be sufficient to explain the self-understanding of the phronimos biographically in the same way that saying W G Grace thought cricket the finest thing might explain his life. But this makes it rather like a life-style choice: some people like the intellect, some people like gardening. For the phronimos, the value of the intellect is not a categorical demand just for him, but also for the whole of humanity. This wider perspective is given in the relationship between the phronimos' life and God's.

4.00: Imitating God

I have already indicated in my discussion of Aristotle's dismissal of paidia as a candidate for happiness that, in arguing against Plato, he already has in mind an understanding of humanity's ergon which, in some sense, brings God into the picture. We left that discussion with the conclusion that, if we were looking for an action that was self-sufficient and predicable of God, we would do better to look in the direction of practical virtue rather than play. What I did not address at that time was why we should think God of any relevance to the ergon argument at all.

In *Metaphysics* XII 7, Aristotle argues about the nature of God. Here, if anywhere, Aristotle is perhaps open to the charge of relying on an outdated or more accurately a simply false metaphysics based on final causality. Alternatively, it may just be noted that the arguments appear somewhat hasty:

These arguments are perhaps unsatisfactory to the extent that they proceed by too straight and narrow a path from the order of the world to an ordering intelligence.⁶

More generally, it is unlikely that any argument which involves the existence of God is going to achieve widespread acceptance among modern philosophers.

All this noted, what Aristotle actually needs for the EN's arguments to be valid does not seem to involve the existence of God but rather the *conception* of God. If God were to exist, what would he be like? Why, for example, couldn't God be like Mrs Jones who lives just down the road and, apart from an overriding interest in cats, lives an unremarkable sort of life? Broadly, the answer is that whatever God is, he is going to be supremely good and deserving of worship, and Mrs Jones, however estimable, just isn't going to fit the bill.

Now, among the differences between the ergon argument as given in the EE and the version in the EN, it is notable that, at least in some texts, the EE consistently refers to a contemplation of God

while the EN refers to a contemplation of divine things.⁷ Such a difference may indicate a substantive difference between the two works: that there is a knowledge of divine things does not entail or rely on the existence of God, any more than a knowledge of hellish things entails or relies on the existence of hell. It is also a somewhat wider term than what strictly belongs to God (understood as Aristotle's Prime Mover) since it will include what is commonly thought of as belonging to gods or what is analogous to the properties of God. Moreover what is divine allows of degrees unlike the properties of God which, presumably, he either does or does not possess. Thus, Aristotle has no hesitation in describing the securing of the good of a nation or polis as more divine (theioteson) than securing the good of one person (EN I 2 1094b10), even though Aristotle's God in the *Metaphysics* is clearly not in the business of founding cities.

All this suggests that, even if Aristotle's God as the Prime Mover is rejected, the argument of the EN at least should be relatively unaffected. But though the analysis of what is divine is thus separated from strict theology, divine as an epithet locates that goodness as something which has a categorical call on us as human beings: to regard something as divine is to both say that it is supremely good and also that, like God, it has a call on our attention and indeed our worship.

This analysis suggests an approach to the problem put forward in Kathleen Wilkes' paper, 'The Good Man and the Good for Man'.⁸

Wilkes distinguishes between what a good man does, and what it is good for him to do. Broadly, the thought behind the paper is that, given the identification of the function of an object or animal, that may tell you what a good such-and-such will do. But that says nothing about what it is good *for* that such-and-such to do. It may be the function of a bomb to explode; yet the explosion of the bomb will result in its own destruction. It may be the function of a dairy cow to produce as much milk as possible; yet that production may result in deformities and an early death for the cow. Wilkes then applies this distinction to Aristotle's claims about rationality and concludes that while practical rationality is indeed good for man, the same cannot be said of theoretic rationality:

..his argument that the better a man is at practical reasoning, the better a life he will lead, is of great importance; and its importance is enhanced if we extend the scope of phronesis, as we legitimately may, to include human problem-solving intelligence in general⁹.

Wilkes' point appears to be this. Assuming something like Aristotle's hierarchy of souls for a moment, we can see that practical reasoning is both promoted by and itself promotes the good performance of the sensitive and vegetative souls: by planning, the human being obtains food and sensual pleasure; sensual pleasure and food ensure that the human being has the correct resources to reason correctly. Now theoretical reason

doesn't obviously fit in to this virtuous circle: satisfaction of the need to know seems to stand alone and to have no connexion with the other, lower needs of the human being. Even if it were argued, say, that developing the virtues of theoretical reason served to strengthen the virtues required for practical reason, such an argument is less straightforwardly self-evident than is the virtuous circle of practical reason and the vegetative and sensitive souls; it might for example be the case that exercising theoretical reason diverted resources from the exercise of practical reason leading to its attenuation. Accordingly, Wilkes appears to be correct in arguing that, whatever the relationship of theoretical reason to the rest of the soul, that relationship is not evidently one of being good for man as a whole.

That Wilkes is right here is, I suggest, acknowledged by Aristotle. The happiness consequent on theôria is not an accidental concomitant, but is inherent in the activity (EN X 8 1178b28-32). The life of theôria is more than human and will only be obtained by that part of the human being which is divine (EN X 7 1177b26-1178a4). On any reading, this does suggest that the theoretical intellect and its activity stand outwith the virtuous circle of the rest of the soul. But isn't this just true? To deny that, broadly understood, a devotion to divine things has always stood at least partially against the rest of human life would appear futile: to be divine just is to transcend humanity whilst at the same time retaining a call on its attentions. Now Wilkes might think the belief in divine things to be simply an error,

and perhaps she would be right. But that is something which requires argument and, moreover, is something which is unrelated to our present task which is, so I have argued, to understand the lives and self-understanding of people who have acknowledged such a more than human vocation. That phronimoi do acknowledge a divine claim on their lives, that there are some activities which transcend humanity and, perhaps, make other activities seem rather shabby in comparison is, at the least, a recognizable and comprehensible world-view and is, I suggest, precisely what is being articulated here.¹⁰

5.00: What does God do?

In *Metaphysics* XII 7, God's activity is of continuous duration, lasts for ever, is pleasure, and that activity is God thinking about his own thinking.

Now we know that human beings cannot be exactly like God. Aristotle for example states that man's composite nature causes him to desire variety:

For there is not only an activity of motion but also an activity of immobility, and there is essentially a truer pleasure in rest than in motion. But change in all things is sweet, as the poet says, owing to some badness in us; since just as a changeable man is bad, so also is a nature that

needs change; for it is not simple nor good. EN VII 14

1154b26-31

Thus, of the qualities of the God's activity mentioned above, we know immediately that human beings cannot attain the eternity of God's activity, and very probably neither the complete identity with pleasure, nor the continuous duration. Insofar as human beings are going to imitate God's activity, we know certainly that they are only going to be able to do so imperfectly.

This is important because it suggests an approach to the 'dominant' versus 'inclusive' end debate on the nature of happiness. Perfect happiness is God's activity: since we can never achieve this, anything we can achieve is going to be measured on a scale of being more or less divine. Nevertheless, although not achievable, the aim of perfect happiness is not irrelevant to the phronimos: it is the target towards which he aims his entire life.

Now, as there is not a single measure of the quality of the divine activity, so there is not a single measure by which the closeness of any activity to that perfect activity can be judged. That said, there are two main candidates for the imitation of the divine: the activity of theôria and those activities kata tēn allēn aretēn (EN X 8 1178a9-10).

6.00: Practical virtue as happiness

I have already noted that the rejection of play as a suitable analogue of divine activity seems to leave hai kat' aretên praxeis of 1176b7-8 as the favoured candidate for happiness. Since most of the preceding nine Books have also concentrated on the practical life, the expectation that the good life consists in practical virtue can only be stronger in the audience's mind.

Aristotle seems very rapidly to remove this expectation in EN X 7 1177a12-18 where he seems to advance activity in accordance with theoretical reason as happiness. But on a closer reading, this conclusion is somewhat less obvious. We are referred to the activity of that part which seems to rule and direct (archein kai hêgeisthai) (1177a14-15). Memories of Book I would naturally lead the audience to think here of the supreme architectonic science of politics (EN I 1 1094a6-28), a tendency which might be reinforced proleptically by the discussion of law which is soon to commence (EN X 9 1179a33ff). The dominant part of the agent (to hêgoumenon) is described earlier as that part which chooses (to proairoumenon) (EN III 3 1113a5).¹¹ The general impression that we are dealing here with the practical life is only reinforced by Aristotle's vagueness with respect to the status of the dominant part, refusing to be precise about whether or not it is nous; and thus suggesting a link with the life of phronêsis which is shortly to be declared not purely to be that of nous (EN X 1178a16-23). Theôria as has already been noted can be used of

the objects of practical as well as theoretical reason (eg EN VI 1139a7; IX 9 1169b33). The description of the objects of knowledge as being noble and divine (ennoian echein peri kalon kai theion) again does nothing to remove the suggestion that the field of concern is the practical life: to kalon is of course the motivation of the virtuous (cf EN I 3 1094b14-15; III 8 1116b30-31) and I have already noted that political action is described as divine at EN I 2 1094b10.¹²

Aristotle goes on to suggest that the gods -and thus not the Prime Mover of the *Metaphysics*- cannot worthily be conceived of as performing virtuous actions (EN X 8 1178b8-18). There is however apparently no difficulty in conceiving of them as taking an interest in human lives (ibid 1179a24-32).¹³ Accordingly, it would seem to follow that there would be no difficulty in understanding how human beings who take an interest in human affairs could be acting divinely. Thus political philosophers and politicians in a more relective mode might both be regarded as acting divinely.

7.00: Mimicking the divine

I argued above that the result of the ergon argument might prove wanting if it failed to explain, in some sense, human beings' lives.

One way in which the activity of contemplating informs human lives is through the desire to understand. *Metaphysics I* indicates that science arises from natural curiosity: 'All men by nature desire to know'¹⁴. Originally, this curiosity was aimed at useful invention; but, over time, some arts and sciences were developed which did not 'aim at giving pleasure or at the necessities of life'. These pure arts were valued more highly than the practical ones¹⁵.

That curiosity informs much of human endeavour, that it explains what human beings are like, might be readily accepted. What remains unclear is how the desire to understand and the imitation of the divine are related; for it must be remembered that what appears to be aimed at is success in intellectual pursuits rather than the pursuit itself. As Wilkes puts it:

Perhaps, though, Aristotle does not mean [by theôria]..the endeavour to come to grips with and disentangle knots of a certain sort. In 10.7 the element of discovery is excluded from the activity of theoria: "it is to be expected that those who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who inquire" (1177a26-27). He cannot mean that knowing is a way of passing time, for it obviously is not. Theoria must rather be something that follows on the solution of a problem, or on the discovery of a satisfactory theory, after research has shown how things must be or how they must hang together -a contemplation of something at last fully grasped

and understood. And one can indeed grant that after a difficult piece of work -intellectual, practical, or technical- has been brought to a satisfactory conclusion, one can sit back and look with pleasure and approbation on the results achieved; and there may be a quasi-aesthetic delight in the very thought of the structure of the double helix, the design of a jet engine, or a philosophical theory.¹⁶

Such an account is all very well, but this still, it might be objected, fails to explain why theôria as contemplation of achieved truth is connected to the desire to understand. It seems to be rather missing the point about understanding to suggest that its purpose is just contemplation of the solution. As Wilkes puts it, once we have achieved understanding, there may be a moment of contemplative satisfaction.

But such contemplation is not sustained indefinitely, and presumably we do not think it should be: this is not the end at which inquiry is directed. All research is intended to produce some answer, theory or solution; but the point and pleasure of the work does not derive from the passive post factum contemplation of the results achieved but rather in the work itself and the discoveries.¹⁷

Now, the point of any research is to know: to achieve that point, there has to be both a truth obtained, and that truth has to be known. As Wilkes has already admitted in the previous passage,

that moment of discovery does seem to fit Aristotle's conception of the highest form of theôria. That this moment is fleeting would not, in itself, be either an objection to the validity of the interpretation of Aristotle or to Aristotle's view itself, for Aristotle recognizes that the highest moments of happiness are indeed fleeting and outwith the normal run of things:

Such a life as this however will be higher than the human level: not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something within him that is divine... EN X

7 1177b26-28

But even beyond the moment of initial discovery, the building up and possession of human knowledge is the point of all academic activity; and it is in this sense that the contemplation of truths explains the desire to understand, which in turn explains much of human life. That some or other researcher finds satisfaction in, say, the accidental features of the pursuit of truth is irrelevant: the phronimos has his eyes firmly focussed on humanity's possession of truth and, without this focus, academic studies become perverted. It is, moreover, by taking pleasure in this essence of academic studies that the phronimos brings the good of the future attainment of truth into his present life.

So this is one way in which theôria shapes human beings: by way of the desire to understand. And since truths are more

successfully comprehended in some areas rather than others, so some areas of intellectual endeavour are more divine than others. When Aristotle suggests a division between two parts of the rational soul -the scientific faculty (to epistemonikon) and the deliberative faculty (to logistikon) (EN VI 1 1139a5-15), the virtue or excellence of the deliberative part being phronêsis and that of the scientific part sophia- that division is based on the *determinacy* of the object of reasoning, phronêsis dealing with those areas which are indeterminate, sophia with those areas which are invariable and of the 'most exalted nature' [tôn tiniôtatôn tēi phusei] (EN VI 7 1141b2-3). If we take the final form of any science to be a deductive system^e, then we can say that while it might (just) be possible to set out a science concerning human life in the form of deductions from premisses, it would be intellectually unsatisfactory both in that the premisses would only hold for the most part and, presumably, the science would require an almost infinitely large number and variety of premisses to get anywhere near an understanding of human life. Other sciences, for example, astronomy, would require fewer premisses and these would be universally true: this is because, according to Aristotle, the heavens are an area where 'the ordered and the defined is far more apparent...than about us' (PA I 1 641 b18).

Theôria however explains more than the desire to understand. I have already argued that the end at which a prohairesis is aimed is the contemplation of a life from the perspective of its

finish. On a grander scale, the actions of a legislator are directed at the creation of the good polis, a polis which, I have argued, will be able to sustain itself rather than enter into the decline which is necessarily consequent upon a failure to pass on the lives of the present generation. The ethical life of human beings will then have become as eternal as the physical existence of the species already is, the eternal recurrence of each generation's life mirroring, as far as is humanly possible, the eternal circular motion caused by the Prime Mover (Meta XII 7 1072b9-10). The legislator's life is accordingly structured by the same aspiration towards a time of perfect divine imitation as the researcher's. Indeed, without the political circumstances aimed at by the legislator and required to ensure the progress and maintenance of human science, the researcher's aim of *theôria* is unachievable. That human beings will never be divine is certain. That we will never achieve the perfectly established city or perfectly achieved science is likely, even though, in Aristotelian terms, that achievement is not absolutely impossible. But it is the aspiration towards such states which explains the motivation and the life of the *phronimos* and thus of the sort of human life we are trying to pass on to our children. Moreover, because the *phronimos* as a *megalopsuchos* is highly aware of himself and his status (EN IV 3 1123a34ff), he takes pride and reflects on his actions and his aims, retrospectively but also prospectively, and also on the virtuous actions of his friends (EN IX 9 1169b33-1170a1). He thus imitates the self-reflective activity of God and, by taking present pleasure in a

future good, transforms what is otherwise a fairly thankless sacrifice for the benefit of the morrow, into an activity which realizes a present good.'⁹ It is in this sense that it is the explanatory ergon which we have been seeking. It is moreover the same task in which both the philosopher and the legislator and the man of ordinary practical reason are engaged, albeit at different levels of divinity.

8.00: Solution to the dilemma of the Republic

At a number of points in this thesis, I have noted the points of contact between the *Republic* and the EN. A further and fundamental point should be noted here.

In Book IV of the *Republic*, Adeimantus makes the objection to Socrates that the Guardians of the ideal city will not themselves be very happy. Socrates replies that, even if the Guardians themselves were unhappy, what he is interested in is the happiness of the city as a whole, and not the happiness of any of its component parts (420b-d).

Now, while Adeimantus claims that the Guardians will be unhappy in that they have abandoned the trappings of wealth and power, there is the more fundamental point that the Guardians have been forced to turn their minds away from contemplation of the Forms towards the workaday and rather shabby business of running a

city. What about such a life makes the Guardians happy? Are we just forced to concede that, in Wilkes' terms, the Guardians' life is good, but not good for them?

Aristotle's answer to this can now be seen. The political life of Aristotle's equivalents to the Guardians does not deny contemplation of the divine, but is instead devoted to it. The life of politicians ensures, firstly, that contemplation exists, even if politicians themselves cannot contemplate. Moreover, the goodness of what they can contemplate -their own role in the city and the benefits produced by their actions- is dependent on seeing themselves as part of the divine process and is devoted to the divine. The life of philosophy, as it is actually lived, on the other hand, is less about contemplation than about research and enquiry; and may be less aware of its place in the divine scheme. Thus while, abstractly, the philosopher's direct contemplation of the divine must be a life happier than that of the politician who contemplates, as it were, indirectly through the lives of those he has allowed to exist, in practice, the life of the actual politician is not so obviously further from the goods of theôria than the life of the actual philosopher.

9.00: Further remarks

The EN is a practical work. But of any practical work, it must be asked: What good is it setting out to achieve? I have argued that

it is setting out to improve the transmission of the good life from generation to generation by articulating the unarticulated values of the virtuous. Such articulation serves both as a prolegomenon to the science of legislation proper, dealt with in the *Politics* or, more exactly, in its missing analogue, and also as an immediate contribution to the informal debates which precede legislation in the public arena, and which take its place in private arenas such as the family.

As I have frequently stated, since the EN is not out to provide a textbook of case-morality, there is very little point in attempting to draw from it rules about how the virtuous agent decides precisely how to live out his ergon. In particular, there is the difficulty in resolving the claims of the best life of theôria and the second best life of practical virtue. Questions will arise both at the political level and at the individual level about whether, say, to look after the sick or to devote time to contemplation of mathematical truths.²⁰ The balances that the virtuous have struck at the level of the polis are broached in the *Politics*; the balances that are struck at the individual level are a matter, perhaps, for biography or drama. But the sharpness of the proposed dilemma is blunted if, firstly, it is noted how far even the most divine activity accomplished by humans is from that of Aristotle's God himself; and, secondly, if it is noted how even the practical life is part of the same vocation to imitate the divine as the theoretical life. The priggishness of the megalopsuchos is merely an unfavourable

description of his extreme self-awareness and consciousness of his status. Unlike, perhaps, the Christian ideal which emphasizes the immediate unregarding act of charity, the megalopsuchos is engaged in the reflection on his life and that of his friends, polis and species which is both an imitation of the divine and the condition for its being articulated and thus realized in the eternal recurrence through successive generations of the achieved good polis. The legislator perhaps does not reflect so much on the detail of the truth of the divinest objects in the universe. But he cannot avoid reflecting on them to the extent that he must be aware that part of his vocation is to carry them on through the generations. And he is perhaps more aware of the great divine pattern of human history than is, say, the retired Cambridge mathematician immersed in his subject. Both fail dismally when judged against the absolute standard of the Prime Mover. Yet both are embodiments of that divine vocation.²¹

It is thus that human nature enters Aristotle's ethical theory: human beings characteristically are pulled towards imitation of the Prime Mover. In a sense, all of nature is regarded as Aristotle as imitating the divine. In a complex series of analogies in *De caelo*, Aristotle compares the various actions of the celestial bodies to that of the Prime Mover, and also the actions of various living creatures to the actions of the celestial bodies (DC II 12 292a10-25). While human beings need to perform a great variety of actions in order to obtain happiness -and are thus correspondingly unlikely to obtain success (ibid

291a25-30)- they at least, unlike the lower animals, can actually attain it (ibid 292b5-20). Part of the reason for this is perhaps that human beings have a direct perception of good and evil whilst the lower animals have to make do with perceptions of pleasure and pain (Pol I 1 1253a10-28). Human beings can thus identify the divine as their good and try to aim at it directly.²²

To recognize this vocation to an imitation of the divine by the philosophical reflection of the EN is both to improve the quality of that theōria by making it more self-aware, and to help realize it over the generations of humankind by ensuring that what is learned in one generation is not lost to the next. Pace some commentators, Aristotle's ethics is accordingly not dependent on an outdated metaphysics, but rather on a perfectly straightforward description of human motivation. Whether this description is in fact itself outdated or in some sense false is, of course, another matter.

10.00: Conclusion

This thesis has fallen into three parts. The first part -chapters one to three- has argued for the political purpose of the EN. That political purpose is to articulate the lives of the virtuous so that those lives can be more easily passed on to future generations.

The second part -chapters four to eight- took an aspect of the EN that would appear difficult to reconcile with such a purpose. While Aristotle's discussion of the virtues might well be useful in describing how the present generation lived, of what possible use could his account of pleasure and prohairesis be? I argued that both his account of prohairesis and his account of pleasure revealed substantive attitudes of the virtuous: that they acted with a view to assessing their lives from the standpoint of their ends; and that by taking pleasure in the pursuit of such an aim, they turned the ineluctable pains of struggle and pursuit into a present good.

The third part -chapters nine to eleven- reconciled the account of the second part of the thesis with the ergon argument. The megalopsuchos although in fact imitating the divine like the rest of creation fails to articulate that imitation: he is thus not yet fully self-reflective. Between the philosopher and the politically minded megalopsuchos there exists, as between Pericles and Anaxagoras, a relationship of philia, such that the normally proud megalopsuchos acknowledges the authority of the philosopher to describe nature and the place of human beings therein. From the philosopher, the politician learns that he too imitates the divine. By such a revelation, his actions become more divine in that they become more completely self-reflective. Additionally, by becoming more articulate, the prime task of the politician which is to ensure the eternity of the species becomes more easily effected since, as argued in the first part of the

thesis, articulation eases the passing on of ways of life to future generations. In this way too, by making the politician's actions more longlasting, the philosopher's work in the EN increases the divinity of the politician's life.

Notes to chapter eleven

1. I assume that EN X 8 1179a22-32 is likely to be misplaced due to editorial error and that, accordingly, 1179a17-22 conclude the argument. (cf Rackham 1934, ad loc.)
2. Monan 1968, p110. Monan's view that the EN contains an *a priori* justification of *theôria* should be contrasted with his view that the EE contains an *a posteriori* justification:

For the kalon and contemplation are not proved to be goods [sc in the Eudemian Ethics]; Aristotle's methodic analysis of the confused judgments which assert them to be does no more than reflectively point to those objective values as the ones which motivate moral judgements, in the hope that his hearers will intuitively see them as values in the context of their own affective experience. (ibid, p145)

Pace Monan, I do not believe that there is a contrast in method between the EE and the EN although there may well be a difference in the purpose of the two works and in the conclusions drawn. The above quotation from Monan seems to me a reasonable summary of the EN, although I would not accept Monan's use of the language of cognitivism (eg 'objective'; 'intuitive'; 'affective') as being either helpful or correct in this context.

3. Annas 1993 argues that, in ancient ethics generally, nature does not play an evidential role absolutely independent from the resulting ethical theory:

The best model for this kind of increased understanding is a holistic one: we appeal from ethics to nature, but to understand nature properly we have to bring some ethical understanding to bear, so that we clarify the two concepts together. (p217)

And again:

We have some intuitive independent grasp of human nature; but the bigger the role nature plays in an ethical theory, the more it is shaped by ethical considerations from the theory itself. (ibid)

4. Clark 1975 in drawing parallels between *theôria* and Eastern philosophies may be an exception to this.
5. Cf Broadie 1991, p436:

It refers either to a lost passage or to another work or to passages in EN VI (1141a18-22; 33-b2; 1143b33-34; 1145a6-11) which imply the inferiority of practical to theoretic intellect (or of the former's objects to the latter's).

6. p393, Finnis 1980.
7. Cf EE VIII 3 1249b16-23 and EN X 7 1177a12-20. EN uses God at 1178b21-22, but this is an argument additional to and confirmative of the main argument which is based on how we conceive gods (tois theous gar malista hupeilêphamen makarious kai eudaimonas einai 1178b8-9) thus suggesting an analysis of popular views rather than a commitment to their existence. (I follow here the Rackham text of both the EN and the EE. Walzer & Mingay 1991 gives to theion rather than theos in the EE, noting to theion as an alternative. Whatever the precise text of the EE, the EN's does not seem to offer a similar variation. Accordingly, putting aside the textual difficulties of the EE, the use of to theion in the EN remains noteworthy.
8. In Rorty 1980, pp341-357.
9. *ibid*, p354.
10. Cf chapter eight, §2.04.
11. But contrast EE VIII 3 1249b6-23 where it is made clear that the dominant part in the EE argument does not issue orders but is the best part (cf Kenny 1992, pp95-6; Broadie 1991, p386).
12. Cf Pol VII 3 1325b16ff where theória is argued to be praktikos.
13. That the gods cannot be conceived of as acting virtuously does not mean that they cannot be conceived of as acting. Quite apart from the doings of the gods in Classical literature, the Prime Mover is a cause (Meta XII 7 1072b10-11). Moreover, the virtues of the EN do not seem to include the sort of empire building and city founding traditionally ascribed to a semi-divine person and being effected at the time by Macedonian expansion. By such standards, even the megalopsuchos seems a bit of a village Hampden.
14. Meta I 1 980a1.
15. Meta I 1 981b13-25.
16. Wilkes, *op cit*, p353.
17. Wilkes, *op cit*, p353.
18. A possible understanding of the account in the *Posterior Analytics*. See Sorabji 1980 ch 3, and Reeve 1992 for a discussion of this area. A modern perspective on the question of the scientific unsatisfactoriness of sociology and related disciplines is provided in MacIntyre 1985, pp88-108.

19. Thus avoiding Kant's criticism of the aim of historical progress:

What remains disconcerting about all this is firstly, that the earlier generations seem to perform their laborious tasks only for the sake of the later ones, so as to prepare from them a further stage from which they can raise still higher the structure intended by nature, and secondly, that only the later generations will in fact have the good fortune to inhabit the building on which a whole series of their forefathers (admittedly, without any conscious intention) had worked without themselves being able to share in the happiness they were preparing.

From Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose' (1784) quoted Finnis 1980, pp373-4.

20. cf Kraut 1989, p10-11 and *passim*.

21. Kraut 1989 (eg pp58-9) takes the broad point that both the practitioner of practical wisdom and *theôria* engage in a godlike activity, although his detailed explanation of the similarity differs from mine.

22. Cf Broadie 1991, p405:

In them [ie other, non-human species] the individual relates directly to its good (its because it individually seeks it) but only indirectly to divine eternity by its membership in a species always instantiated.

Chapter twelve

Happiness

1.00: Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have argued that the main purpose of the EN is to articulate the life of the virtuous agent in order to allow that life to be passed on to future generations. In chapters four to six, I argued that the virtuous typically aimed at a future end. In chapters seven and eight, I argued that the virtuous took pleasure in that pursuit of a future end and found a present good in that pursuit. In chapters nine to eleven, I argued that the virtuous agent, by holding these two attitudes, imperfectly imitates the divine, whether in a philosophical life or in a life of political virtue.

In this chapter, I bring together the various conclusions reached in the course of this thesis to deal directly with the question: What is eudaimonia? (All page references in this chapter refer to the present thesis unless indicated otherwise.)

2.00: Eudaimonia

In *Metaphysics* XII, God's energeia is described as being pleasure (1072b17), most good and eternal (1072b27). God's life is such as the best life (diagôge) human beings experience for short periods (1072b15).

All of nature in a sense imitates this divine life but only human beings can aim directly at it and indeed, as noted in the *Metaphysics* passage cited, in part achieve it (pp349-350). The perfect happiness is accordingly God's, and human beings are happy insofar as their activities approach that perfection:

It follows, then, that the activity [energeia] of God, which is supremely happy, must be a form of contemplation; and therefore among human activities that which is most akin [suggenestátē] to God's will be the happiest. (EN X 8 1178b21-23; cf ibid 1178b25-27; see pp337-8).

3.00: Being akin to God's activity

Human eudaimonia will accordingly fall short of perfect, divine eudaimonia. One way in which human eudaimonia seems likely to fall short of divine eudaimonia is in duration:

Nothing however can continue to give us pleasure always, because our nature is not simple, but contains a second element (which is what makes us perishable beings)....Hence God enjoys a single simple pleasure perpetually...But change in all things is sweet, as the poet says, owing to some badness in us.... (EN VII 14 1154b20-29; cf Meta XII 1072b15).

Given that God's activity is contemplation, this perhaps suggests that human eudaimonia is achieved in brief moments, say, in the satisfaction immediately consequent on understanding a scientific truth after a long period of research (cf p343). But whatever the precise occasion of eudaimonia, human beings will only achieve it in brief, godlike flashes.

Such an understanding of eudaimonia as transitory seems, however, in tension with a view maintained throughout the EN which is that human eudaimonia essentially involves a whole lifetime:

...it follows that it is the energeia of the intellect that constitutes complete human happiness -provided it be granted a complete span of life, for nothing that belongs to happiness can be incomplete. (EN X 7 1177b23-26; cf 7 1098a18-20)

As said, the two views appear in tension. On one view, if I am engaging in scientific research which will lead to discovery of a truth and that brief moment of satisfaction as I contemplate that truth, I am not happy but I am preparing for happiness. I will, in even the most fortunate human life, be spending most of the time preparing for happiness rather than actually achieving it. On the other view, it is only that complete lifetime which can be described as happy.

Let's style that happiness which can only be achieved for short moments 'T-happiness' for 'transitory happiness'; and that happiness which can only be achieved over a lifetime as 'L-happiness' for 'lifetime happiness'. Now a simple solution here is to say that T-happiness and L-happiness are completely different things and that Aristotle, throughout most of the EN, just happens to be interested in L-happiness rather than T-happiness. Putting aside any considerations as to what might be the possible motivation for such a concentration on L-happiness, in terms of explanatory neatness, it would certainly be preferable to point to some substantive links between the two concepts.

One possible route would be to suggest a sort of utilitarian calculus: L-happiness is achieved by maximizing T-happiness. Now my reasons for not pursuing this line of enquiry rest partly on the usual problems associated with such calculi -for example, is maximization of T-happiness to be assessed solely in terms of duration or is its quality somehow to be flung into the balance?- and partly on the absence of any such maximizing suggestions in the text. It remains, however, a possible -although in my view an unpromising- avenue of enquiry.

My own reconciliation of the two conceptions depends rather on identifying links between the two conceptions of human eudaimonia and the paradigm of divine eudaimonia. My view is rather that T-happiness tends to spread its goodness beyond the simple

'Eureka!' moment by, for example, the agent's looking forward to that moment or, from the perspective of that moment, looking back on the kinêsis which led up to it and transforming it into an energeia throughout which a good is constantly found present. L-happiness is simply an extreme case of such spreading, where an entire life is lit up by the goodness aimed at on its completion.

3.01: Planning for happiness

In chapters four to six of this thesis, I argued that human beings characteristically aim at a future goal (cf pp127-8). Primarily, that goal is eudaimonia understood as satisfied reflexion on a life from the perspective of the end of that life. Put crudely, the virtuous agent strives throughout her life to be in a position, after retirement, to look back on it and appreciate its worth (see esp. chapter four, *passim*). Generally, however, human action is characterized by having a future goal (see esp. chapter five, *passim*).

Now, in the case of T-happiness, it is something that has to be worked for. The philosopher or natural scientist has to pursue the truth before she can contemplate it. Thus, T-happiness as an aim is indeed characterizable as a future goal. In some forms of T-happiness -the natural scientist's 'Eureka!' moment for example- the object of contemplation is the discovered truth itself. But I have argued that theôria both as word and concept in Aristotle extends beyond the simple contemplation of the most

divine objects to include reflexion on action involved with such objects, such action including virtuous action (see eg p154 n23; pp339-340). One such form of T-happiness would be the reflexion on one's life at the end of one's life. Even in the 'Eureka!' moment of scientific discovery, it is surely normally the case that what is contemplated with satisfaction is not just the discovered truth itself, but also the process which led up to that discovery: 'I've been racking my brains to see how to test Hieron's crown and now I've got it!' It is therefore at least plausible that human beings never -or perhaps only extremely rarely- achieve contemplation of divine objects which does not involve some reflexion on the actions which produced that contemplation.

Those forms of T-happiness which go beyond the mere contemplation of divine objects and involve reflexion on action are related to the perfect divine happiness in a number of ways. Firstly, they remain, more or less directly, related to and dependent on divine objects. The case of, say, the astronomer is clear; but I have argued that even the politician's aim is directed at the divine (pp346-349). Secondly, like God's activity, it involves thought about thought (p148). Thirdly, insofar as it involves reflexion on the process leading up to the moment of T-happiness, it tends to transform retrospectively what was a kinésis of struggling to obtain a future good into an energeia of a worthwhile project.

So now let us consider the two latter qualities: thinking about thinking; and transformation from kinêsis to energeia. In each case, it will be seen that within these broad categories, there are numerous possible realizations which may not be directly comparable without the aisthêsis of the phronimos. Accordingly, whilst it will be possible to say why a particular human activity is related to the divine activity, it will normally be difficult to compare how near two different human activities are to that divine paradigm.

3.02: Thinking about thinking

As already noted, God's life is the life whose perfection we only approach. And that life is a thinking on thinking (Meta XII 9 1074b33-35). Although Aristotle goes on to note that, even for human beings, thinking about thinking is a normal aspect of science, whether practical or theoretical (1074b38-1075a5), the precise realization of this 'thinking on thinking' in the sphere of human action is open to various possibilities and complexities. Firstly, as I have stressed before in this thesis, acting under a description itself involves thought: what an action is is not completely separable from how it is thought of (see eg p138 and p232). So there is the complexity of the interaction of thought and object at the level of what constitutes action. Secondly, moving beyond that level, there are the multifarious contexts and perspectives in which a particular action can be placed and thought about. The lifting of an arm can

be part of a mesh of descriptions under which the action is performed, one of which may be 'lifting an arm' and another of which may be 'bringing an end to tyranny'. Thirdly, there is the temporal perspective. One may remember an action. Thus, the virtuous agent looking back on her life, remembers the actions which brought her to her eudaimonia. One may look forward to an action. Thus, the scientist can look forward to getting and contemplating the results even while setting up his bunsen burner. Finally, one may remember looking forward to an action or look forward to remembering. So, for example, the retired agent may look back on the hopes of his youth, or the youth may look forward to his post-retirement contemplation.

There are accordingly many different ways in which human thinking about thinking can approach or fall short of the divine perfection where the thinking and what is thought are identical. And this is quite apart from the additional complexities which are involved when one adds that the objects of human thinking need not be one's own actions (EN IX 9 1169b33-35) and indeed, are not primarily actions at all but rather objects of the most exalted type (EN VI 7 1141b2-3; cf p344 of this thesis).

3.03: Pleasure and energeia

The divine activity is energeia and pleasure (see S2.00 above). In chapters seven and eight, I argued that the virtuous tend to see their prohairesis actions -aimed at a future good and thus

kinéseis- as also embodying immediately present goods, and so transform the kinéseis into energeiai by enjoying them.

Even in the 'Eureka!' moment of scientific discovery, there may well normally be an admixture of reflexion, not on the truths discovered but on the kinésis which is the work which was involved in making that discovery (see §3.01 above). As noted in §3.02, retrospective reflexion can transform the description of an action. Thus, what may have been experienced at the time as a dull senseless grind may be seen afterwards, whether by the agent herself or by others, as a glorious hard quest for truth which was ultimately to prove successful. More complexly, the experience of the dull grind may be transformed into pleasure at the time by say, a daydream of the satisfaction to be won at the successful conclusion.

The virtuous agent aims at eudaimonia at the completion of his life (chapter four); but on the one hand by taking pleasure in the prospect of such a finish and, on the other hand, having reached that finish, by taking pleasure in the pursuit which achieved it, he extends the T-happiness of post retirement contemplation into the L-happiness of a lifetime.

It should be noted here that the failure to achieve the good aimed at does not in general entail that the pursuit of that good is deprived of its goodness (pp260-263). In particular, even if an agent doesn't achieve the post-retirement T-happiness he has

been aiming at -say, because he drops dead of a heart attack before his plans reach fruition- that wouldn't necessarily mean that his life lacked L-happiness.

4.00: Conclusion

In fine, human eudaimonia struggles to imitate the divine energeia; but as noted in EN X 7 1177b26-27:

Such a life as this however will be higher than the human level...

Human eudaimonia approaches and falls short of the divine energeia on many different levels. It is a goal at the end of a life, but by taking pleasure in the pursuit of that goal, its goodness can be enjoyed in the present. Failure of plans need not destroy claims to eudaimonia, but may in some circumstances. Aristotle's account of eudaimonia does not give us a recipe for achieving it; but it does allow us to say a little more about it, particularly its relationship to the divine, and thus aids our ability to pass it on to future generations.

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(See also under texts.)

Quotations from Aristotle in the thesis are taken from the above -predominantly, but not exclusively, from the Loeb editions- with occasional revisions by me. Accordingly, while credit for the translations belongs to the original translators, responsibility for any inaccuracies remains mine.

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