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# Theoria, Theos, and Therapeia in Aristotle's Ethical Endings

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**Theoria, Theos and Therapeia in Aristotle's Ethical Endings**  
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*Presented to the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy*  
*With the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association*  
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For many years now the interpretation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* has been beset with controversy concerning its penultimate chapters, where it clearly emerges that Aristotle endorses as the best life a career devoted as much as humanly possible to *theoria* or intellectual contemplation. When we reach the final act of this ethical drama, we have a veritable “divine intervention” in the form of an appeal to the *energeia* (activity) of divine *theoria* (contemplation), an activity analogized to that of our own *nous* (intellect, understanding, thinking faculty), whose proper employment will constitute complete, perfect (*teleia*) *eudaimonia* (happiness, well-being?) for us humans (1177b24-5). Furthermore, we are immediately informed, somewhat surprisingly, that such a life would be superior to the human level. For someone will live it not insofar as he is a human being, but insofar as he has some divine element in him (*theion ti en hautō*). And the activity of this divine element is as much superior to the activity in accord with the rest of virtue (*ten allen areten*) as this element is superior to the compound (*tou sunthetou*). Hence, if understanding (*ho nous*) is something divine in comparison with a human being, so also will life in accord with understanding be divine in comparison with human life. We ought not to follow the makers of proverbs and ‘Think human, since you are human’, or ‘Think mortal, since you are mortal’. Rather, as far as we can (*eph’ hoson endechetai*), we ought to be pro-immortal (*athanatizein*), and go to all lengths to live a life in accord with our supreme element (*zen kata to kratiston ton en auto*); for, however much this element may lack in bulk, by much more it surpasses everything in power and value (1177b26-1178a2, tr. Irwin).

Now, if we have gotten this far, having begun with the first book’s repeated emphasis on the search for the *human good* (*to anthropon agathon* - most notably in the formal definition of *eudaimonia* offered as the conclusion of the celebrated function [*ergon*] argument at 1098a16; cf. 1094b7 and 1104a14-15), patiently pursuing the long discussion of the moral virtues, justice, scientific and practical reasoning, pleasure, friendship, etc., we might at least be brought up short by this peremptory appeal to rise above mere mortal concerns and to *athanatizein* – “to immortalize as much as possible”. The problem posed by the apparently extreme version of “intellectualism” defended in Book 10.6-8, when compared with the earlier books of this work is, of course, hardly new, although it seems that of late there has been a gathering consensus that the so-called “dominant-end” reading of it is correct.<sup>1</sup> I can’t go into all the difficulties brought up for this reading by the “inclusivists” who want to interpret the *NE* as a whole as providing for both intellectual and moral virtues in a comprehensive vision of a “mixed-life” that will feature proper pleasures as well as sufficient external goods (e.g. wealth, good looks, friends) to enable someone to flourish. Instead, I wish to highlight the deep connection urged at the end of the *NE* between the best sort of human activity, that of thinking or contemplating, and the only activity worthy of Aristotle’s “philosopher-god”, to borrow Richard Norman’s useful label<sup>2</sup>, especially as that divine *energeia* is described in *Metaphysics* Lambda, cc. 7,9. Now, whatever the independent merits of its philosophical theology, it seems to me that any strong parallel between human and divine thinking drawn

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<sup>1</sup> The vocabulary of ‘dominant-end’ and ‘inclusive’ as applied to different interpretations of the final end in Aristotle’s ethics was introduced by W.F.R. Hardie in 1965 in his article originally published in *Philosophy*, v. XL, pp. 277-295. It was reprinted in Julius Moravcsik’s inaugural edition in the distinguished series published by Doubleday Anchor whose general editor is Amelie Rorty. See *Aristotle: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. J.M.E. Moravcsik (Anchor Books, 1967) pp. 297-322. This article is still very useful, as are the first and last chapters of his *Aristotle’s Ethical Theory* (Oxford, 1968) and in a second edition (1980) with “appended notes”. Subsequent discussion of the problem posed by Hardie has continued ever since and one continues to find partisans on all sides of the question.

<sup>2</sup> “Aristotle’s Philosopher-God”, *Phronesis* 14 (1969), pp. 63-74; this essay was re-printed in *Articles on Aristotle 4. Psychology & Aesthetics*, ed. Barnes, Schofield and Sorabji (Duckworth, 1979), 93-102. Further references to this article will be incorporated into the text, with the first number indicating its page in the original and the second keyed to the reprinted version.

along Lambda's lines, at least as traditionally understood<sup>3</sup>, will be, at best, an unwarranted intrusion into the otherwise humanistic ethics so long appreciated by lovers of Aristotle.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the strong, intuitive contrast between human and divine happiness<sup>5</sup> could not be highlighted any more graphically than Aristotle himself does at *NE* 10.8.1178b8 ff. when he mockingly observes that it would be absurd to attribute just, brave, generous, and temperate actions to the gods; in short, "anything that concerns actions appears trivial and unworthy of the gods" (b17-18). Indeed! The gods surely don't "muck about" with worldly concerns and yet most of the preceding course of lectures had pre-occupied itself with just such mundane matters in outlining and filling in many of the details of the human good. And, when we do go to *Metaphysics* Lambda 9, we are presented there with a picture of God's thought as focused obsessively on Itself as a "sort of heavenly Narcissus" who finds nothing better to opine than Its own perfect Self, settling "into a posture of permanent self-admiration" (Norman, p. 63 [93]). While many scholars object to this characterization, Jacques Brunschwig, offers a "disarmingly simple" solution to the "age-old 'Narcissus' debate:

"The moral of this story (or novel) is ironic and paradoxical. In the big quarrel about *noesis noeseos* between those who stick to the letter of  $\Lambda$  9 and those who want to give a philosophically respectable face to Aristotle's theology, everybody is right and everybody is wrong.  $\Lambda$  9 is indeed pro-Narcissus, but it is not Aristotle's last word on the matter. It is a kind of thought-experiment, carried with an almost mechanical rigidity to the final step of its dialectical and 'empty' logic. After Aristotle, *noesis noeseos* had a glorious history. Maybe for him, it was only a brilliant and short-lived improvisation".<sup>6</sup>

His interpretation is controversial and its discussion would take us too far into the dense thickets of the most obscure parts of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* but it is worth bringing out at least the following from Brunschwig's interpretation. He may be thought to employ a "top-down" strategy insofar as he seeks to articulate the consequences of beginning with a "Perfection Principle" (PP) about divine intellect (*nous*) as the basis of the main argument of ch.9. The PP assumes "that the divine intellect, and more generally the divine being, has a maximal *value*" (p. 277). With the PP as his guide, Brunschwig sees the dialectical method at work in the chapter as "'diaporetic' rather than simply 'aporetic'", a remark I interpret as indicating that the author intends to make a thorough examination of a puzzle (*diaporein*) instead of a more perfunctory treatment. He says that "Aristotle draws up the inventory of all possible answers" and follows this observation with his own solution, which here amounts to seeing the highest divine activity as "thought thinking itself" since its own divine existence is the highest and most worthy in the universe. If we take this Narcissus view of the divine, however, and, having read this conception into the end of the *NE*, try to extrapolate from human thinking, to abstract from "all forms of human cognition from perception to action to thought" (324), *what's God got to do with it, do with it, do with it ...?* Why should we strive to immortalize, to not think human thoughts if the theological reference as tracked down in Lambda is supposed to offer the distilled essence of contemplation as we humans have

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<sup>3</sup> A vigorous critique of the traditional finding of a philosophical theology in Aristotle can be found in Richard Bodeus' *Aristotle and the Theology of the Living Immortals* (tr. Jan Garret [SUNY Press, 2000]. Bodeus thinks that Aristotle accepted as part of the *endoxa* or "reputable opinions" very popular ideas about the gods, their gifts to us and concern for us, all of which is far removed from the Unmoved Mover "Narcissus God".

<sup>4</sup> Secular humanists will enjoy an apt observation made in 1867 by a contributor to the *Westminster Review* (v. 87, p. 44): "Let a man once read through the *Ethics* with ordinary intelligence and he can never afterwards countenance the stupid belief in the necessary dependence of morality upon revelation". I came upon this (beloved) quote in Frank Turner's fascinating survey *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (Yale University Press, 1981), p. 357. Of course, to be fair, Aristotle is not appealing to revelation but many of his most fervent later admirers (e.g. Aquinas) would have few qualms in doing so, helping to explain in part the long tradition of commentary that resonates with, rather than resists, the *Nicomachean* appeal to godlike activity.

<sup>5</sup> In yet another disclaimer, I want to beg off here any discussion of whether we should adopt the traditional translation of *eudaimonia* by the English "happiness" or try to defend some other proposal, such as "well-being" or "human flourishing". Such worries, as important as they are in other critical contexts, will be shelved in favor of a simple transliteration of Aristotle's Greek. The very etymology of the key word, of course, immediately raises quasi-theistic concerns but I assume that by Aristotle's time ethicists agreed with Heraclitus that a man's character, and not any divinity, was his *daimon*.

<sup>6</sup> "*Metaphysics*  $\Lambda$  9: A Short-Lived Thought-Experiment?", *Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda: Symposium Aristotelicum*, ed. Frede and Charles (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 275-306. The quote in the text is the last paragraph on p. 306.

come to know and love it and ascribe to God in the very highest degree? Aryeh Kosman, whose interpretation disagrees with Brunschwig<sup>7</sup>, does see many points of contact between human and divine activities; his case is helped by the fact that ch. 7, which he sees as continuous with 9, does see many points of contact between human and divine activities, going so far as to describe God as “being always in that good state in which we sometimes are” (1072b25). This should compel our wonder, we are told. And Aristotle adds: “And God *is* in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God’s essential activity is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this *is* God” (1072b26-30, Ross/Barnes).

This reflects, of course, a traditional style of anthropomorphic theologizing, with special emphasis on the pleasure of thinking, it is true, but fairly clearly an example of what I see as a “bottom-up” strategy. That is, we are to think of thought thinking itself as the most perfect kind of *noesis*, with the most perfect object, providing the most complete pleasure imaginable. My concern about this familiar move remains, however. For, what, after all, does the appeal to god at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> book of the *NE* really add to the appreciation abundantly in evidence in the previous 9 1/2 books of human life and activity in all its richness? Perhaps it would be inspiring to some students, functioning somewhat as the Myth of Er at the end of Plato’s *Republic*, but it really does seem to change the subject rather drastically. Why is the human good to be measured by the admittedly unreachable perfection of divine *Nous*? It is certainly true that such a proposal is a *Platonic* one. David Sedley quotes a passage from the *Laws* (716c4-6), which he sees as an “unmistakable paraphrase of the [earlier] *Theaetetus*: ‘It will be god who, par excellence, is the measure of all things for us, rather than a man, as some people claim’.”<sup>8</sup> But, if we go the other way, with Brunschwig perhaps, and take due note of the conception of divine *Nous* as Narcissistically Self-obsessed, perpetually thinking only itself, an approach stoutly resisted by Kosman, my question again arises. What has the self-absorbed activity of such a perfect being have to do with anything humans *can* or *should* aspire to? For, it is very hard to resist thoughts about the ending of the *NE* such as those offered by Sedley in a fascinating comparative study of Plato and Aristotle on the theme of *homoiosis theoi kata to dunaton* – “becoming like god so far as is possible”<sup>9</sup>. Sedley treats this theme from the *Timaeus* as behind Aristotle’s injunction to “immortalize as much as possible”, which captures “the flavor of the Platonic passage” at the same time that it departs from its own “immediate Aristotelian context”. He adds: “it is far from obvious why human contemplative activity, performed only intermittently and within the confines of a human lifespan, should be thought to achieve even a whiff of immortality. On the face of it, it achieves resemblance to god in respect of god’s characteristic activity, but precisely not in respect of his immortality” (p. 336). To which I might add that, if the Narcissus picture is accurate, an even greater gap yawns between us and god, since we contemplate a multiplicity of things and truths, while god knows only one, admittedly highest, object, viz. itself. Sedley’s diagnosis is that Aristotle is here strongly influenced by Plato’s pre-eminence, going so far as to suggest that, given Aristotle’s marginal political status as a Macedonian metic enthralled by his entry into the Athenian Academy, he was inspired to adopt Plato’s understanding of the cosmos “which located in the activities of the pure intellect the highest and most godlike human achievement, outclassing even the exercise of civic virtue. That Aristotle adopted this view as his own and even constructed his own ethics and cosmology

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<sup>7</sup> Kosman’s paper is noteworthy not only for its sharp variance from Brunschwig’s in the same volume but also for his confident finding of a “similar strategy” in *Lambda* and the *NE*, one that places our highest activity in contemplation where our “highest happiness” is to be found and that (pure) thinking is what god does. See his chapter in *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Lambda*, edd. Frede and Charles (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 311.

<sup>8</sup> *The Midwife of Platonism: Text and Subtext in Plato’s Theaetetus* (Oxford, 2004) p. 81.

<sup>9</sup> There are two extant versions of this paper to my knowledge. What Sedley calls the “main core” of the later version of 1999 first appeared in the proceedings of the fourth Symposium Platonicum published in 1997: “‘Becoming Like God’ in The *Timaeus* and Aristotle”, *Interpreting The Timaeus-Critias*, edd. T. Calvo and L. Brisson (Akademia Verlag, 1997), pp. 327-339. The reprinted version is entitled “The Ideal of Godlikeness” and appears in Gail Fine’s *Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul* (Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 309-328. The last paragraph of the original raises, to my mind, such an interesting biographical suggestion about the origin of Aristotle’s pre-occupation with *homoiosis* that I cannot resist quoting it in the text and thus will make specific page references only to the earlier version.

around it should not, given the circumstances of his own life, altogether surprise us” (pp. 338-9)<sup>10</sup>. *Not a surprise, perhaps, but a philosophical disappointment, it could be argued, and a plausible case could be made that it represents a “Platonic lapse”, a veritable “deus ex Platonica” if you will, no matter how familiar and even inspiring to theistically inclined philosophers then and now.*

My basic complaint so far, then, is that it’s not at all obvious that maximizing the theoretical activity of our most divine element does full justice to the richly textured environment provided by the first 9 1/2 books of the *NE*, which seemed to call for focused development of the full range of our human potential, combining moral and intellectual virtues along with provision for adequate supplies of external goods. The older language of the seemingly endless debate about whether or not the *NE* settles for an inclusive or dominant-end conception of *eudaimonia* has been redescribed - in Michael Pakaluk’s new terminology - as the choice between Collection and Selection. Pakaluk sees an almost deliberately sustained ambiguity at the heart of the *NE* in his recent introduction to that work.<sup>11</sup> He concludes his book by saying that both options are embraced in the end, but in an order that is unsatisfying since it does not adequately provide the reasons why contemplation’s credentials for top prize “do not carry over and explain, with complete persuasiveness, why the activities of the other virtues are counted as happiness at all” (p. 329). For, it has been frequently observed that *even if* the *NE* were to be judged in the end – with Richardson Lear<sup>12</sup>, *et al.* – as selectionist in picking out contemplative *energeia* (*theoria*) as *primary happiness* with the life of that other (i.e. moral) virtue only secondarily *eudaimon*, the same could hardly be said for the *EE*; or, so it would appear...

But, when we get to the *EE*’s last chapter, god pops up again and this time even more obviously as *the object* of our contemplation and service although without all the “bells and whistles” about how superior *theoria* is to *praxis* or any explicit claims that our *nous* is our best part, linking us to the divine. This sudden appearance of god at the end, however, clearly reminds Kenny of the old Catechism answer to the biggest of why questions. Q: “Why did God make you?” A: “...to know him, love him and serve him in this life, and be happy with him forever in the next”. Kenny went on to remark that the *EE* account, “seems, when decoded, to be remarkably similar: the key to virtue is to know, love and serve God; and that knowledge, love, and service constitute happiness in this life, whether it be mortal or immortal”.<sup>13</sup>

My question, however, is that when we compare the *NE* & *EE* endings with “god-talk” in mind, what differences/similarities show up? How significant are they? If Kenny’s thought here is correct, my earlier reservation about hauling in a *deus ex machina* in the more famous ethical drama, would seem only compounded by the divine entry in the other. So, were I to continue to refer to the *NE* final portrait as a “Platonic lapse”, the *EE* would seem to be still drunk on his great teacher’s brew, just as Werner Jaeger famously held when he declared the *EE* an *Urethik*, dating from an early, “Platonizing” stage, recapitulating the even earlier *Protrepticus* in its understanding of the important concept of *phronesis* or wisdom. Jaeger interprets this, “like Plato”, as “the philosophical faculty that beholds the highest real

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<sup>10</sup> Sedley’s recent chapter on Aristotle’s “global teleology” marks “Paid” to the promissory note quoted above in my text about the extent of cosmological inheritance. See pp. 167-204 of *Creationism and its Critics in Antiquity* (University of California Press, 2007). At a SAGP session in October of 2008 I presented some doubts about Sedley’s in a paper entitled “Just how Platonist is Aristotelian Teleology? Does Sedley overdo it?” I believe he does.

<sup>11</sup> *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). He introduces this new terminology on p. 9 and employs it in the last chapter. The book as a whole is highly recommended, and not just for those beginning to study the *Ethics*.

<sup>12</sup> Her recent *Happy Lives and the Highest Good: An Essay on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (Princeton, 2004) is both a fresh and very inviting treatment of the familiar debate between selectionists and collectionists aiming to show how the life of the political *phronimos* “approximates” in its secondary way the life led by the philosopher with devotion to the highest activity of contemplation. In her introduction (p. 5) she states that “Aristotle’s philosophical analysis of what makes that happy life happy is, I believe, quite different in the two works” [*NE/EE*]; in particular and most especially in the *EE* she notes (parenthetically) that “even though theoretical virtue holds a special place in the good life, Aristotle thinks that happiness includes moral as well as theoretical virtuous activity”. This seems exactly right to Cooper (her teacher), Kenny, myself, and others.

<sup>13</sup> “The Nicomachean Conception of Happiness”, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* (1991), supp. vol., p. 80.

value, God, in transcendental contemplation, and makes this the standard of will and action”<sup>14</sup>. For Jaeger the “central notion is still God” in the *EE* and [as in the (most agree) early *Protrepticus*] only one aim in life is recognized, viz. “to escape from the sensible and earthly world to God” (p. 240). Jaeger thought that the *EE* reflected the *Prot.* very closely and set out a number of parallel passages that were meant to show that the treatise as we have it is in some ways a re-writing of the youthful, exoteric or popular work.

However influential Jaeger’s picture has proved, in our day we need not take these supposed connections to have been firmly established. As long ago as J. Donald Monan’s 1968 *Moral Knowledge and its Methodology in Aristotle*<sup>15</sup> the opposition to Jaeger’s take on the *EE* vis à vis the *NE* was consolidated, if not vindicated. Fr. Monan’s “Jaeger-Kritik”, while not as well-known as some, is very valuable still, especially considering that it was penned by a Jesuit priest very familiar with Scholastic terminology who nonetheless resisted what he terms “the picture of a ‘theonomic’ morality” based on a superficial reading of *EE* VIII.3. *Contra* Jaeger, Monan maintained: “The perfection of man himself remains intrinsic to him. This being true, it is questionable whether the tag ‘theonomous morality’ is not a misnomer when applied to the *EE*, carrying overtones as it does of a Christian’s view of God’s transcendence that was completely foreign to Aristotle”. For Monan, then, Aristotle’s philosophy should not be seen as containing “a creationism and a theory of a union with God through love” but rather “must logically remain to some extent a type of humanism” (p. 45). He grants that the dispute may appear at first glance to be a merely verbal, terminological one, but he provides ample evidence that substantive issues about the very nature of moral knowledge are at stake in the debate and goes on to deploy some of the moves made earlier by D.J. Allan and Rene Gauthier to good effect. And, when he comes to our target text – *EE* 1249b6-25) - Monan (p.124) warns the unwary not to conclude that Aristotle has abandoned the unified picture of total virtue so carefully cultivated in the earlier portions of the *EE* when the key notion of service and contemplation of God (*ton theon therapeuein kai theorein*) is understood as Jaeger saw it, i.e. as the “ultimate test of virtue’s worth”. This crucial step is of “maximum importance” he says and requires detailed analysis. The last 30 lines of the *EE*’s last book – as it has come down to us<sup>16</sup> - *might* be confusing, we are told, especially since they appear to suggest that its author has departed from his earlier view of human happiness as consisting “in a synthesis of [all?] the particular virtues working in unison”. Note the clearly collectionist sound of Monan’s phrasing here; it will be crucial to interpret this last section of the *EE* so as to preserve its inclusivism, especially by contrast with the selectionist, intellectualist *NE*. One key goal of this paper is to flesh out the *EE*’s inclusivism so as to vindicate Cooper’s characterization of “the *Eudemian* theory” as holding that “the person who flourishes actively displays *an excellent developed moral personality* and an *excellent developed intellectual personality*”<sup>17</sup>(my emphasis).

However the attack on Jaeger’s views comes out, when we ourselves examine the *EE*’s last chapter–fragmentary as it is—it is clear that God as *the object of contemplation and service* makes a dramatic appearance here that will strike most readers as reminiscent of the final act of the better known drama. In a recent article, for example, Gabriel Richardson Lear parenthetically remarks that “it is worth

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<sup>14</sup> Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development*, tr. Richard Robinson (Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 239.

<sup>15</sup> Oxford University Press. This book as a whole should be better known than it is although a few (e.g. Kenny, Broadie, Decarie) have taken it into account. Its style is, perhaps, not “analytic” enough for some philosophical tastes but Monan’s book is very comprehensive in its critique of the “Jaeger-Meister” orthodoxy still apparent even today although the *EE* itself has enjoyed a much more friendly reception since 1968 and is often cited by scholars who would have in effect passed it by without the Allan/Kenny “revolution” and fellow-travelers. Father Monan was another pioneer here.

<sup>16</sup> This book seems both incomplete and sketchy and also disconnected from the previous one that dealt with friendship, viz. VII. Woods notes that “the first sentence [of VIII] does not follow on...nor does it introduce a new topic” (p. 158). For these reasons, the last 3 chapters have often been numbered as cc. 13-15 of VII (e.g. Bekker, Barnes) and not a new book (e.g. Susemihl, Walzer/Mingay, Woods). That VIII’s last chapter does not represent a genuine “conclusion of the whole work” has been argued, perhaps most extensively, by Artur von Fragstein; see his *Studien zur Ethik* (Gruener Verlag, 1974), pp. 391 ff. A very concise, judicious and accessible account of these chapters can be found in fn. 48 of Cooper’s *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 135-6.

<sup>17</sup> [1975], p. 134. It is worth noting also Cooper’s critique of Jaeger’s view as “an over-blown interpretation” that won’t “withstand confrontation with the text itself” (p. 136).

remembering the conclusion of the *EE*: truly good people [*kaloi k'agathoi*] make the contemplation of god the target [*skopos*] of all their practical choices” at 1249b16-25, omitting any mention of its almost equal billing for service [*therapeuein*] at b20.<sup>18</sup> Since the exact understanding of what the *EE* is saying about the joint project of contemplating and serving the god will be a main pre-occupation below, we should note that it is by no means uncommon to read the last 30 lines of the *EE* in the glare of the bright light shone on *theoria* in *NE* X.6-8. But, I ask: “What if we don’t do this and try instead to read it without assuming any detailed congruence with the *NE*, as Gabriel Richardson Lear et al. seem to require?”

In this connection, I would urge that we think of the life of the *philosophos*<sup>19</sup> as it was initially described in *EE* I as having a “dominant end” of its own, viz. speculative contemplation of truth on the model of the pre-Socratic Anaxagoras, who seems here to stand in for an otherworldly sort of apprehension of the heavens and the order of the universe to the exclusion of more earthly concerns (1215b6-14, 1216a10-14). For such a philosopher *episteme* or “scientific knowledge” alone is deemed to make life worth living all by itself and, bearing in mind also the strong criticism of Socratic intellectualism at 1216b 4 ff., recalled at VIII.2.1246b32-6<sup>20</sup>, this exclusively intellectualized form of life appears definitely one-sided, although it surely embodies one of the most attractive of the reputable opinions, drawn from the wisest of the wise, perhaps, but for all that *not necessarily* the *EE*’s “final answer”.

Well, when we do go to the last book for the answer it becomes encapsulated in the noun he self-consciously introduces at 1248b10-11, viz. *kalokagathia* (‘nobility-and-goodness’ but simply ‘nobility’ in the Loeb translation). Sir Anthony Kenny sees in this concept “the union of all excellence in an all-round virtue – a notion quite lacking in the *NE*” but clearly picked up by Arius Didymus, who describes it as “perfect or complete virtue” (*teleia arete*), “a synthesis of all the moral virtues” which “makes expedient goods into noble goods and chooses noble things for their own sake”<sup>21</sup>. What this innovation comes to at the end of the *EE* is disputed but it can be seen as an attempt to combine into one compact formula or concept his inclusivist conception of *eudaimonia* as the combination of all the moral virtues into a life blessed with sufficient external goods to make it a satisfying as well as ennobling one. To capture linguistically this joining of the fine and noble (*kalon*) with “things not fine by nature, but good by nature” (*ta phusei agatha*- 1249a7) he dusts off an old word and uses it for his own purposes: “to the fine-and-good man, the same things are both beneficial and fine” (1249a10-11). This raises a point that the *hoi polloi* don’t seem to appreciate since they cannot see how the familiar external goods such as wealth and power and noble birth are, as it were, “transmogrified” by the *kalokagathos* whose life is one of *eudaimonia* understood as a complete life of virtue adorned with external goods of sufficient quality and quantity to make it well worth living by those who can appreciate the argument of the *EE* as a whole and put it into practice. Thus, the *EE* should be read as consistently inclusivist or collectionist and, when asked to choose between reading both the *NE* and *EE* as either both exclusivist or both inclusivist, I would for my part opt for a view that has the two works defending different positions on this crucial issue. It is true that, with Kenny<sup>22</sup> and some others, I find the inclusivism of the *EE* preferable

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<sup>18</sup> “Aristotle on Moral Virtue and the Fine” in Richard Kraut’s *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (2006) p. 122.

<sup>19</sup> In both ethical works Aristotle compares the famous 3 lives of the pleasure-seeker, politician and philosopher or knowledge-seeker, as candidates for the best possible life and seems to favor the 3<sup>rd</sup> over the others in the *NE* but perhaps not so clearly in the *EE*. The dominant end of the pleasure-seeker would be pleasure, especially of the physical variety, while that of the politician would be civic virtue bringing honor.

<sup>20</sup> Here it is worth noting that Aristotle says Socrates was correct in thinking that nothing stronger than *phronesis* can be found in the ethical sphere; he clearly adds that “when Socrates said this of knowledge [*episteme*] he was wrong. For *phronesis* is an excellence [*arete*] and not a species of *episteme*, but another kind of cognition...” (1246b34-6).

<sup>21</sup> *The Aristotelian Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 20. *Aristotle’s Theory of the Will* appeared a year later. His “trilogy” will be abbreviated ‘TAE’, ‘ATW’ & ‘APL’.

<sup>22</sup> The third part of Kenny’s “*EE* trilogy”, *Aristotle on the Perfect Life* (Oxford University Press, 1992) discusses how an exclusivist of “dominant-end” reading of the *NE* has been steadily gaining ground of late and he traces, both here and elsewhere, for example, John Cooper’s return to that reading in his later work as well as the interpretation offered by Gabriel Richardson Lear; see her *Happy Lives and the Highest Good: An Essay on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 2004). Kenny also adds further arguments to his own longstanding defense of an inclusivist reading of the *EE*.

*philosophically* to the exclusivism of the *NE* understood as advocating the dominant end of the theoretical life as the primary candidate for the happy life. This, of course, is quite controversial and would take much more work to defend properly.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, as Kenny stressed in concluding *TAE*, judgments of the relative philosophical merits of works such as the ethical writings attributed to Aristotle, are subject to changing fashions in our criteria for excellence as well as being “very much a function of how much a text has been read, analyzed, and meditated upon.”<sup>24</sup> Hence, it would be a mistake to let one’s (even considered) judgment that the “inclusivist eudaimonism” of the *EE* is preferable, on philosophical grounds, to the “exclusivist intellectualism” of the *NE* get in the way of our fairly interpreting their contrasting views on the role of *theoria* and *theos* in the good life. I hope I have not been guilty of this, if, of course, these texts really do offer different views on these roles. That particular assessment cannot be taken for granted but I hope to show we should entertain it in spite of the powerful “attractive force” of the much more familiar teaching of the *NE* on our reading of the *EE*. The appearance of *therapeia* as a theme in the *EE*, no matter how *sotto voce* it appears, will help to underscore the differences in ethical endings that I see, if interpreted correctly.

First of all, the very notion of complete virtue (*teleia arete*) is somewhat obscured by the often-noted ambiguity of *teleios*, literally ‘endy’ or ‘end-like’. Does it mean ‘complete’ as inclusivists or collectionists would have it, or ‘perfect’ or ‘final’, à la selectionism? Etymologically, of course, the last choice is the closest – recall that ‘*finis*’ in Latin means ‘end’ - and Cooper, for one, emphasizes this whenever he is defending a selectionist or dominant-end reading of the *NE*, as he did most strikingly, perhaps, in his 1975 book<sup>25</sup>. Kenny, on the other hand, seems to suggest that we keep all 3 English words in mind when thinking of our target passage: “*Kalokagathia* is perfect virtue. Here ‘perfect’ must mean not just complete but also final”.<sup>26</sup> An important qualification emerges just after this linguistic suggestion, though, when he asserts that *kalokagathia*, while being the most final virtue, is “**not the most final good**”

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<sup>23</sup> John Cooper, before addressing the intellectualism of the *NE* in detail in his 1975 book, clearly claimed that “[t]here is no doubt the *Eudemean* conception of human flourishing is *more plausible, because more inclusive*, than the intellectualist view” and “makes the use of the mind in reasoning and acting morally a fundamental good, coordinate with the intellectual values realized in excellent theorizing” (p. 119, my emphasis). In his later thoughts on the *EE* Cooper seeks to assimilate its account of *eudaimonia* as “the activity of all the virtues – i.e. virtue as a whole” to his revised version of the *NE*’s views. In both cases, we are told, “the happy life will be devoted to the exercise of virtue as a whole - the moral as well as the intellectual virtues, including the one for ‘contemplation’” (*Knowledge, Nature, and the Good* (Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 294-5, fn. 40). Cooper’s discussion here is a subtle and complicated attempt to overcome the old debate over inclusivism vs. intellectualism and cannot be adequately dealt with in this paper. In his reply to an earlier version of this very paper of Cooper’s, Kenny found himself in much agreement with Cooper’s account of “how contemplation may be related to the activities of the moral virtues in the life of the *Nicomachean* happy person” and welcomes this willingness to consider that in the *NE* “the human good is some single activity, a contemplative one” (p. 149). The *EE* conception, however, remains, for Kenny, inclusivist by contrast: “The perfection of the virtue of a *Eudemean kalokagathos* is both final and complete” final, because...[he] chooses not only virtuous action, but virtue itself for its own sake; complete, because *his happiness consists in the exercise of all the virtues (not just contemplation)*” (see fn. 8 on p. 149 of “Reply to John M. Cooper”, in *Plato and Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. R. Heinaman (Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>24</sup> *TAE*, p. 238. He goes on to say: “It will only be when the *EE* has been for some time as carefully and widely studied as the *NE* has been for centuries that we shall be able to make an unclouded judgment about their comparative worth”. Since the careful study of the *EE* may be said to have only just begun in the last century and a half, we may not be able to vindicate philosophical preferences for its doctrines compared to those of the *NE* for some time to come, if ever.

<sup>25</sup> In *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* (Harvard University Press, 1975), he clearly saw the *EE* as recommending a “mixed life” in which the flourishing individual is “not merely an intellectual but also an emotional being” (p. 156) while the *NE* ideal is seen as fit for “one who identifies himself wholly with one’s intellectual capacities and refuses to accept the physical and emotional capacities and needs which link one to another person as essential and fundamental to what one is...” (pp. 162-3). In 1987 he reconsidered this earlier view and opted instead for a suitably nuanced inclusivism: “‘complete happiness’ is found in excellent contemplative study, but happiness is also found in morally virtuous activity, and the best and happiest life for a human being is a life successfully and effectively led in recognition of the permanent value to a human being of the use of *perfected human reason in all its aspects and functions*” ([1999], p. 235, my emphasis). By 2003/4 Cooper had returned to a suitably nuanced “dominant-end” reading, but one that does not threaten to undermine strictly ethical requirements as the extremely rigorous intellectualism described in his 1975 book seemed to. See now his paper “Plato and Aristotle on ‘Finality’ and ‘(Self-)Sufficiency’”, in *Knowledge, Nature, and the Good: Essays on Ancient Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 270-308.

<sup>26</sup> *Aristotle on the Perfect Life* (Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 94-5.



(my emphasis); it is, rather, its *exercise* that merits that title and it “must include both contemplation and morally virtuous activity” (p. 95). In what follows I want to stretch this picture of the exercise of our full range of human potential, perhaps to the breaking point, but the exercise may test the limits of a comprehensive inclusivist picture.

One thought is that we have here a holistic, synthetic view of a life lived with all the virtues, moral and intellectual, working in harmony in the life of a *eudaimon*. It seems to me that the *EE*, by contrast with *NE*, just might be seen as reaching for an ideal unity of theory and practice, contemplation and service, in his time and place, i.e. 4<sup>th</sup> C. Athens. Before rejecting this “proto-Marxian” characterization out of hand as anachronistic on its face, allow me to at least tease out the thought, which will involve extending some familiar ideas from Aristotle’s general theory of moral virtue. This will involve linking *NE* VI [= *EE* V] with *EE* VIII.3 & disconnecting (in a sense) *the* book on *phronesis* from *NE* X.

Since I believe that Kenny has shown that the most likely original environment for the common books is supplied by the undoubted *Eudemian* and not the distinctively *Nicomachean* books, I will proceed on this assumption, trusting in the results of chi-squared testing, philological sifting and sniffing, and all that battery of arguments to be found in his Aristotelian trilogy.<sup>27</sup> The position I have in mind would be that in *NE* X he quite clearly privileges theoretical thought/activity over the practical varieties, seeing proficiency at the latter as (at best) featuring a secondary kind of *eudaimonia* whereas in the *EE* both *theoria* & *praxis* stay (or become?) united in the idea of contemplation and service of god as someone to be imitated as a final cause and neither “an imperative ruler” (1249b14) nor a beneficiary of our actions given the clear statement that “god needs nothing (b15). This would, of course, still be bringing in a *deus* but not in the *NE*’s way, where we are told to rise above our natures by becoming as godlike as possible, nor as Jaeger would have it, either, by calling for any “theonomic morality”, with some god laying down the law. In the final chapter of the *EE* the thought seems to be, rather, that we should serve the god in both ways and discipline ourselves to heed the irrational part as little as possible, but still work with it and not against it. We cannot act as though psychic resistance to rational prompting didn’t exist, even as we should remember that the best standard (*horos*) for action is “to perceive the irrational part of the soul, as such, as little as possible” (1249b21-3). Note the contrast with the *NE* where we were told to strive to become immortal and make our *nous* or our true selves the goal of our most important *energeia*. Here, by contrast, in the *EE* we are still composite beings, rational animals with irrational tendencies that need careful monitoring, not haughty neglect in favor of a radical intellectualism that is so reminiscent of Plato’s “strong programme”. Furthermore, it still seems to me, as it did to Kenny, that the last chapter of the *EE* should be seen as providing an answer to the question left hanging back in the common book on *phronesis* about how, exactly, to specify what the *orthos logos* or correct account, correct reason (?) amounts to. At 1138b33-35 Aristotle had sought to get beyond the truism that we should do only what the *orthos logos* prescribes, comparing this to being told to follow a doctor’s advice without being any the wiser about what specific remedies are recommended: “Hence in relation to the dispositions of the soul too what we need is not merely to have said this and said something true; we need also to have determined what ‘the correct prescription’ (*orthos logos*) is, and what the determining mark (*horos*) of this is” (Rowe, tr.). By this (common) book’s end (ch. 13) we are still left more or less where we had started in ch. 1, with no clearer account of the *orthos logos*. This nagging question of the precise nature of the *horos* is, arguably, taken up in much the same terms as *EE* V left it, if we follow Kenny’s interpretation, first advanced most fully in his 1978 book. [There is not space to enter into this discussion here].

To get on, what I need next is to argue that, not only do we get a unity of theory and practice at the very end of the *EE* but, in “clear and profound” contrast with the *NE* finale, we are still being treated to an “inclusive, organic view of happiness ...and [not] the dominant, intellectualist one of the *NE*” [*TAE*, p. 208]; to repeat, as Kenny says, the contrast is “clear and profound” and may withstand the apparent threat to the inclusivist interpretation posed by 1249a21-b23. Recalling Kenny’s reaction to this final page

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<sup>27</sup> TAE, ATW, APL.

of the *EE*, I confess I don't see it that way, as "Catechismic", as it were. For one thing, it won't be the case that our activities are for the sake of the reward of eternal happiness in a heaven, or even because we were made to know, love and serve God in this life if that is understood as doing what we've been commanded to do or were designed to do by a loving creator. As the *EE* makes very clear, *God gives no commands and has no need of our good works or even our rapt attention*. Rather, as Kenny himself says (at *APL*, p. 99) god "is not a *raison d'être* whose good is being aimed at but a good whose attainment is the *raison d'être* of *phronesis*' commands". A few pages earlier (91 ff.), he had reminded us that what moral virtue requires of each of us varies from individual to individual: "the right number of brave actions, for instance, will be greater for the politician than it will be for the theorizer". And we are told that *EE* II's notion of *eudaimonia* as "the exercise of perfect [in the sense of 'complete'] life in accord with perfect virtue" is the "virtue which is a whole of parts", which would include both the intellectual and emotional parts of the soul (pp. 93-4). If this is so, how can we synthesize our various capacities so as to achieve the "whole of virtue", a unity of theoretical and practical wisdom?

William Butler Yeats once wrote a poem entitled "The Choice".

The intellect of man is forced to choose  
Perfection of the life, or of the work,  
And if it take the second must refuse  
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.  
When all that story's finished, what's the news?  
In luck or out the toil has left its mark:  
That old perplexity an empty purse,  
Or the day's vanity, the night's remorse.

The poet is obviously reflecting in a mood of regret that it is very hard to both be a virtuous person and do the work you're called to do, in his case the "accustomed toil" of his "craft of verse". As we sometimes say, ruefully, "you can't have it all"! Still, Aristotle, as I interpret him in the *EE*, surely wants us to shoot for having it all – the full exercise of our talents and potential in the multifarious and diverse ways that flourishing human beings, at their best, exhibit excellence, both intellectual and moral. We are all familiar with the notion of "the mean relative to us" from Aristotle's general theory of *arete* as a mean and this clearly allows for a considerable degree of individual variability in action/feeling/choice. How variable? Well, let's see. Clearly some people are more attractive than others, perhaps more sensual, too. They will have more to worry about in the temperance area when it comes to sexual matters. They should follow the counsel given by the Trojan elders on the walls of Troy, recalled at *NE* 2.9.1109b1ff:

"But we must also consider the things towards which we as individuals are particularly prone. For we each have different natural tendencies, and we can find out what they are by the pain and pleasure that occur in us. And we should drag ourselves in the opposite direction, because we shall arrive at the mean by holding far off from where we would miss the mark, just as people do when straightening warped pieces of wood. In everything, we should be on our guard especially against the pleasant – pleasure, that is – because we are not impartial judges of it. So we should adopt the same attitude to it as the elders did toward Helen, and utter their words<sup>28</sup> in everything we do; for by dismissing pleasure in this way, we shall miss the mark to a lesser degree." (1109b1-12, Crisp tr.)

Now, as far as I can see, there is no reason to think that the *EE* *departs from* the *NE* on this bit of advice although my case might be strengthened were I to find a similar passage in the undoubted *EE*. The basic notion of "the mean relative to us" occurs in both works, of course, and appears to amount to much

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<sup>28</sup> "They sounded like cicadas in dry summer/" and "watching Helen as she climbed the stair/ in undertones they said to one another": "We cannot rage at her...A goddess the woman is to look at...but still, /still, even so, being all that she is, let her go in the ships/ and take her scourge from us and from our children." (*Iliad* III.151-160, Fitzgerald tr.)

the same view, however we elaborate it. All real human beings are “warped pieces of wood,” some bent one way, some another. Learning to compensate, then, for our own peculiar foibles and unique dispositions is an important part of Aristotelian self-knowledge, at least as far as our moral lives go. A passage from *EE* II.8 that could be read as highlighting individual variability and exhibiting a certain psychological penetration concerns the pressure of one’s own inner compulsions:

A man would appear to be acting under compulsion and involuntarily more when he does so to avoid suffering a severe pain than when he does so to avoid a slight one, and, in general, more when he does so to avoid pain than when he does so to get enjoyment. *For what is in one’s power, on which the whole issue turns, is what one’s nature is able to withstand (to gar eph’hauto, eis ho anagetai holon, tout’ estin ho he autou phusis hoia te pherein) And what it [= one’s individual nature?] is not able to withstand, and is not within the scope of one’s natural inclination or reasoning, is not in one’s power.*” (Woods tr., 1225a22-27, my emphasis.)

It is worth noting that in his commentary Woods skips over this passage, with no entry between his note on a21 and the next one on a30; see p. 135, 2<sup>nd</sup>. ed.).

This seems to reflect the same sort of concern we just saw in the Homeric passage about the conflicted Trojan elders, if we take it as getting down to the level of individual variability and not just human nature in general. Clearly, individuals differ in what they can stand in the way of temptation or threats; Jack Bauer’s resistance to torture will be stronger than most of those he works for! If the “whole issue” turns on what is or isn’t in one’s own unique set of powers and dispositions, on what we as individuals can or can’t resist, given the concrete particular circumstances we face, then the *EE* can be read as “agent-relative”, just as the *NE* is so often interpreted. Paula Gottlieb, for example, in her just published *The Virtues of Aristotle’s Ethics*, effectively counters Lesley Brown’s “novel reading” of the Milo example in Brown’s attempt to show that “the mean for us” just means “relative to us as human beings” and not anything so individualized as I have been stressing. In rebuttal Gottlieb points out that the type of knowledge the *phronimos* needs “is *not just general knowledge about what is good or bad for human beings*, as in the definition of practical wisdom, *but also self-knowledge*”; and this sort of *phronesis* is “not a matter of having too much or too little self-knowledge. Rather in order to take advantage of the right things, the good person must *neither underestimate or overestimate his own abilities and worth*” (my emphases).<sup>29</sup> If I am particularly susceptible to temptations of the flesh I should not overestimate my will-power to resist by carelessly putting myself into those “occasions of sin”, as the nuns used to remind me and my mates. The same goes for the risk-takers in dangerous situations, the kind-hearted poor when urged to send money in to worthy causes seen on TV, and so on down the long list of daily decisions the virtuous must make in trying to hit the ethical target squarely. We need not only to assess the situational requirements but our own temperaments and proclivities, all of which is to chime in with a would-be aging rapper’s version of Aristotle: “it is hard out there for the good, trying to do what we should, knowing that we could...”

Having insisted on differences in moral personality thus far, the leap imagined here is to go farther in the individual variability line than other commentators, to jump from *moral* to *intellectual personality* in Cooper’s happy phrasing. In doing so, I will be going way out on a limb where few may wish to follow, but, here goes. Fairly obviously, people differ in their ability to think, to theorize, to take delight in the life of the mind and so on; if we can adapt what Aristotle says for moral virtue to intellectual virtue, i.e. that what is right for an individual is relative in some respects to individual facts about that person, we might be able to relativize intellectual activity also. There won’t be a mean, to be sure, for our intellectual activity in the sense of not too much metaphysics, nor too little biology or

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<sup>29</sup> Paula Gottlieb, *The Virtue of Aristotle’s Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 35. This passage (in its immediate context) is directed at Michael Woods’ remarks about a passage from book 2 of the *EE*, viz. 1221a6-8 but, since it appears near the end of her first chapter which deals critically *inter alia* with Brown’s position I take it as safe to assume that its message would be part of her reply to Brown.

psychology, just enough logic, but maybe an attempt to hit the target as specified by individuals who have developed their intellectual abilities in particular directions. Some, who have wide breadth of knowledge and a talent for synthesizing various perspectives and have strongly developed inter-disciplinary interests, might well come to realize that they should accept these facts about themselves, make the most of the self-knowledge they have gained and not try to go deeper in certain very specific directions. They will try to make the most of their talents, as Aristotle reminds us of the good cobbler who works with the leather he has to make the best possible shoe (*NE* 1101a4-5). We, for our part, will recognize psychological constraints as well as environmental ones. Sometimes it is very important as well as freeing to realize that one will never master statistics, say, no matter how desirable, nor develop a taste for poetry comparable to that of the “art and scope” Shakespeare the sonneteer notices and admires. Others, with highly developed skills in specialized areas, might devote themselves to perfecting such skills by detailed work. I can easily imagine a scholar who has had the good fortune to study paleography with one of those German masters of the art; she can read medieval manuscripts with ease, has a flair for codicology and Lachmann-like stemmatology, knows her water-marks and the various hands of Cardinal Bessarion’s scribes. Such an expert would be ill-advised, I think, to put these rare talents aside in an effort to produce conventional literary analysis of a familiar and well-perused classical text. On the other hand, one might have such skills and use them on texts that some might feel are too trivial for consummate treatment by a great scholar.

Something like this last charge has been leveled at A.E. Housman for devoting such loving attention to preparing a critical edition of Manilius the Stoic’s astrological poem in 5 volumes, even if the Roman writer’s words might be “as sweet as Ovid and more majestic”<sup>30</sup>. A textual critic as gifted as Housman could be expected to have shed much needed light on more significant works; the *EE* itself comes readily to my mind!<sup>31</sup> From this perspective, decisions such as Housman’s *might have been wrong for him*, given his talents and tastes, strengths and weaknesses. He may not have aimed high enough, or it could be argued that he chose easier targets than he might have. With Milo the wrestler in mind, we might wonder whether meatier subjects would have been both more nourishing for him while others could *only set their intellectual set-points lower*.

One clear difficulty in the final remarks of *EE* VIII.3 concerns what precise meaning to attribute to ‘*therapeuein*’ at 1249b20 where it is allied with ‘*theorein*’.<sup>32</sup> Kenny couldn’t see any other way to take it but in the sense of *service to the god*, as it is featured near the end of Plato’s *Euthyphro* (12e-15b) where Socrates presses the beleaguered Euthyphro to explain what he means by *therapeia ton theon* (= service of the gods). Hence, he interprets the passage at the end of the *EE* in the light of this Platonic parallel [cf. *TAE*, p. 102]. On his understanding we have both theory and practice, both done under the

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<sup>30</sup> Scaliger’s verdict, said to be gaining favor lately according to *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Hornblower and Spawforth (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 918].

<sup>31</sup> Barnes, concluding his review of the OCT, complains that the Walzer/Mingay text, while destined to be the standard for decades to come, “all in all is a disappointment.... Recent scholarship has made painfully little progress. WM’s text is, on average, no better and no worse than S[usemihl]’s old Teubner. And as for the *app. crit.*, ‘*slipshod*’ is a generous description” (“An OCT of the *EE*”, *The Classical Review*, v. 42 [1992], pp. 27-31). It is a pity that the OCT’s long delayed appearance in 1991 held Dieter Harlfinger back from undertaking an edition of his own that would have demonstrated that German paleographic expertise celebrated in my text above. Indeed, it was he who identified for me a marginal gloss in a manuscript as having been written by a particular scribe on Bessarion’s team. On my last day at the “Aristoteles-Archiv” Dieter gave me a copy of his *Griechische Kodikologie und Textuerberlieferung* (Darmstadt, 1980) as a going-away present. If only I could make full use of this 700 page collection that he edited of many of the “greatest hits” of the last century’s great paleographers, I might be more sure than I am of the justice of the remarks in the text about what a great scholar should or shouldn’t try to do.

<sup>32</sup> Unless we are to read the ‘*kai*’ at 1249b20 as epexegetic, as Verdenius suggests we should. In rightly questioning Dirlmeier’s attempt to read ‘god’ out of the passage in favor of ‘*nous*’ (‘reason’, ‘intellect’, the divine in us), Verdenius claims that Aristotle here “uses a popular phrase (*theon therapeuein*) and adds his own definition (explanatory *kai*)” (see his “Human reason and God in the Eudemian Ethics”, the final article in *Untersuchungen zur Eudemischen Ethik*, Moraux and Harlfinger (edd) (Berlin: De Gruyter & Co., 1971), p. 294. I myself don’t see how the activity of contemplation, “valued higher than the practice of virtue” according to Verdenius himself on this very page, could be Aristotle’s simple addition to the popular notion of serving a god by offering sacrifices, providing liturgies, etc.. So, I don’t see that that the *kai* = ‘i.e.’ in this passage, as, of course, it often does in Aristotle’s usage.

*archonship* of God, as it were. On Kenny’s reading, then, the *EE* is collectionist or inclusivist and picks up both *theoria* and *therapeia* under the rubric of *kalokagathia* – nobility and goodness.<sup>33</sup> To redeploy my dramatic conceit, *theoria* plays a similar role in the final act of the *EE* to that of *NE* X.6-8, only now with a supporting role from the moral virtue side of a complete and flourishing life. This is a very reasonable proposal and one may well wonder why it won’t suffice. Before an adequate reply to Kenny’s “Catechismic” interpretation can be mounted, however, it is important to take note of a striking difference between the “air-time”, as it were, given to *theoria* in the final acts of the two works; for, as Sarah Broadie has observed, the *EE* treatment is “low key and laconic to a degree compared with the lengthy fervour of *NE* X.7-8”<sup>34</sup>. This fact alone suggests an important difference and, as noted by Christopher Bobonich, “both the *Protrepticus* and the *NE* give a considerably more prominent role to contemplation” than does the *EE*<sup>35</sup>. As for the proper interpretation of ‘*therapeia*’ and its cognate verb in our text we should note that at *Metaphysics* 981a20-4 Aristotle suggests that the man of experience has the better of one who knows the universal but not the particulars: this latter sort “will often fail in his treatment (*therapeia*); for it is rather the particular” (not the universal) that is treatable (*therapeuton*). This use of both the noun and verbal adjective is much closer to the one I want than ‘service of the god’ would have it. Since the practical life will go well only when we are experienced and up close and personal with the particulars, it is striking that ‘therapy’ is used in its medical sense of ‘treatment’ in the *Metaphysics* passage; for our purposes, however, it must be widened to include all “*phronetic*” activity. The *NE*, in fact, at X.1178b35 is helpful here since it mentions the familiar need for external goods even for the philosopher, who, “being a man will also need external well-being (*euemerias*), since man’s nature is not self-sufficient for the activity of contemplation, but he must also have bodily health and a supply of food and other requirements (*ten loipen therapeian huparchein*)”<sup>36</sup>. So, the *EE* passage could just be read along the same lines, an indication of the need for tending to quotidian needs for the theorizer to succeed in his endeavor, with the proviso that in so tending we pay attention to irrational needs as little as possible. This would be a kind of deflationary reading of ‘*therapeuein*’ and not the richly evocative ‘cultivation’ or ‘care’ that can be found in the biological writings of both Aristotle<sup>37</sup> and Theophrastus<sup>38</sup>. Still, even in the *NE* chapter there are signs of the more expansive use of ‘*therapeuon*’ at 1179a23: “the man who pursues intellectual activity, and who *cultivates his intellect* [*touton = nous*] and keeps that in the best condition, seems to be also the man most beloved of the gods” (Rackham, slightly altered; Ross & Crisp also use ‘cultivate’ while Irwin has ‘takes care of understanding’).

The possibly useful take-away here is that ‘*therapeia* and its cognates need not mean ‘service’ as in the *Euthyphro*. It could be translated quite generally as ‘attendance upon’ as the Loeb has it in the sense of those with requisite of knowledge of horses, dogs, etc. attend upon the needs of their charges. Since the gods don’t need us, remember, we can’t attend upon them in this way. But, we can if we are *spoudaioi* – morally serious about our lives – attend to our own human natures as individually variable as they are and with whatever self-understanding we have been able to muster and do the right things, hit the moral targets as regularly as we can, all the time allowing for variation in the specific circumstances. So, my

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<sup>33</sup> Perhaps Kenny’s fullest discussion of this understanding of *teleia arete* in the ending of the *EE* can be found in *APL*, pp. 93-102.

<sup>34</sup> Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, p. 377.

<sup>35</sup> Kraut (ed.), p. 25c. Bobonich adds that the received chronology *Prot.->EE->NE* would “seem to have Aristotle changing his mind twice”. That is, if we follow Jaeger et al. we have the first (exoteric) work celebrating *theoria* only to tone it down in the *EE* and then ramp it up again in the *NE*. This is, indeed, awkward, and a problem for Jaegerians. In this paper I take no stand on chronological questions and won’t play the “dating game”.

<sup>36</sup> Irwin translates this as ‘the other services provided’. Crisp has ‘other care’, which is closer to what I need but still could be taken in the deflationary way of the text.

<sup>37</sup> See Bonitz’s entries for the noun and verb at *Index Aristotelicus* 325b41-61.

<sup>38</sup> In the latter’s botanical works ‘*therapeia*’ and its cognates are regularly used for the cultivation of plants. An example of this usage in the case of animals occurs in Aristotle’s *Historia Animalium* V.545b32 where we are informed that the ewe will bear offspring up to eleven years of age “if she be carefully tended”. Another example occurs at 760a3 in the *Generation of Animals* where bee-keepers are described as “those occupied with the tendance of these creatures”. Bonitz’s Index should be consulted for more references.

final thought is that *theoria* has an important role to play in the *Eudemian* drama, but, unlike its place in the *NE*, we have a supporting actor whose role, since we are just human, after all, is that of exhibiting the consummate virtuosity of the fully formed *phronimos*. We surely contemplate the universe and perhaps even the Unmoved Mover but we don't try to rise above our human natures but manage all of this as best we can. *Ton theion therapeuein*, then, "servicing the god" turns out to be *attending* as faithfully and carefully as we can to our own moral development, improving our performance – "self-cultivation", if you will – but always trying to do this better as well as striving to know theoretically what we can if we are so inclined and this, too, to the best of our own unique abilities. The ethical ideal, then, at the end of the *EE* is in all respects an inclusive one, a well-rounded one, and will be uniquely realized in each individual case depending on an agent's appreciation of her or his talents and temperament, and life-long work on "self-improvement".<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Various earlier bits of this paper have been presented to audiences at the 2005 Pacific Division Meeting of the *American Philosophical Association*, the 2006 meeting of the *American Catholic Philosophical Association*, at Denison University in November, 2008 and to the Taft Faculty Fellows of the University of Cincinnati in December, 2009. I am especially indebted to the Faculty Board of the Charles Phelps Taft Center for a year-long fellowship which freed me from teaching for 2008/2009 as well as timely earlier support for research over the years. I also wish to acknowledge valuable comments made by Corinne Gartner in San Francisco and Sir Anthony Kenny on several occasions. Fred Miller and Julia Annas have also been especially supportive of my efforts to crack the *EE* puzzles but none of the above should be held accountable for my provisional results.