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### Review of *The 'Eudemian Ethics' on the Voluntary, Friendship, and Luck: The Sixth S.V. Keeling Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* by Fiona Leigh

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# Bryn Mawr Classical Review

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**Fiona Leigh (ed.), *The 'Eudemean Ethics' on the Voluntary, Friendship, and Luck: The Sixth S.V. Keeling Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy. Philosophia Antiqua, 132. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012. Pp. xxix, 197. ISBN 9789004225367. \$144.00.***

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## Preview

The Sixth S.V. Keeling Colloquium was organized by Robert Heinaman and held in 2006 at University College London (“2005” on page xxiv appears to be a slip). In 2009, Brill published papers from the Seventh Keeling Colloquium (*Particulars in Greek Philosophy*, ed. R. W. Sharples), and it is not clear why this collection from the earlier colloquium did not appear until 2012. Whatever may have delayed the book, its arrival is most welcome. The essays contained here will surely stimulate interest in the *Eudemean Ethics* (hereafter “*EE*”), which has recently been translated and published in complete form for the first time *twice*, as it were, by Anthony Kenny in 2011 (Oxford) and by Brad Inwood and Raphael Woolf in 2013 (Cambridge). In the volume under review, each of the five essays targets an important but relatively circumscribed issue, and together they should convince anyone of the desirability of fresh and serious investigation of the *EE*.

To varying degrees, these essays explore differences between Aristotle’s Eudemean and Nicomachean texts, and they do so primarily “from the bottom up”, i.e. on the basis of close textual analysis rather than on the basis of claims that a distinctive or integrated “Eudemean” project somehow leads Aristotle to positions that differ from what we find in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter “*NE*”). Indeed, apart from a quick sketch in the introduction (by Fiona Leigh and Brad Inwood), there is little effort toward a comprehensive view of *EE*, and certainly the essays do not pretend to “cover” the whole text. Instead, we have one essay on the voluntary, one on good will in friendship, two on self-sufficiency and friendship, and one on good fortune in relation to excellence and happiness. The two essays on self-sufficiency are periodically engaged with one another, but otherwise the papers show no signs of belonging to the same colloquium. They are published without the professional responses that were provided at the colloquium.

The center of gravity in this volume is established by the two essays treating self-sufficiency and friendship: “With Mirrors or Without? Self-Perception in *Eudemean Ethics* VII.12”, by Mary Margaret McCabe, and “The Pleasure of Thinking Together: Prolegomenon to a Complete Reading of *EE* VII.12”, by Jennifer Whiting. Each provides a detailed reading of Aristotle’s *aporia* concerning whether the self-sufficient human being will have friends. Whereas McCabe sees Aristotle asserting “man’s failure to be self-sufficient” (53) and emphasizing the joint activity of friendship as properly human, in distinction from the best divine life (64), Whiting argues that such a reading removes rather than solves the *aporia* because it makes a friend necessary for achieving

one's end. According to Whiting, the self-sufficient agent takes pleasure in the "experiences and actions of her friend", and this pleasure (rather than any genuine *need*) explains why she wants to live and act with friends. Yet this does not become a friendship on account of pleasure (*dia hêdonên*) because the pleasure in question is the pleasure proper to virtue (81). In a later passage, Whiting seems to reformulate her view: these are friends primarily on account of virtue but *also* on account of pleasure (99-100). It is fascinating to follow two opposed, careful readings of this troubled and troublesome text.

To return for a moment to McCabe's essay: she understands Aristotle to be making a teleological argument according to which human fulfillment lies in a kind of self-awareness attainable only in common with a friend. The requisite self-perception is not simply the "natural and immediate accompaniment of first-order perceiving" (68); that happens without effort. Nor is this self-perception achieved merely by observing a friend in actuality and as analogous to oneself; that might be the picture given in *NE*. According to McCabe, in *EE* Aristotle gives a more radical view of individual insufficiency to attain the human end. "God may be alone, but we are not: instead, in the best case, we actualise together with our friends" (64). Only in friendship, in "genuinely joint activity" (70), is it possible to perceive the self precisely as perceiving in a peculiar sense: not as a private awareness one friend achieves in parallel with another, but as a joint, reflective perception in a self that is somehow composed of both friends (73).

Whiting offers an alternative interpretation of the same text. In fact, she sees herself as undertaking two interdependent tasks: "that of establishing what text to read and that of making sense of this portion of the text as a whole" (82). Whiting reads *EE* VII.12 as a partial response to the *Philebus* and as best understood in light of *Metaphysics* XII, chapters 7 and 9, and Aristotle's doctrine from *De Anima* according to which "perceiving some object involves in some sense becoming *like* the object" (141 n. 110, Whiting's italics). The connection with *De Anima* is central but less fully developed than is the connection with *Metaphysics*. Whiting offers a division of the text and proceeds through it sequentially, discussing textual variants, providing a translation, and defending her interpretation. Once she begins parsing the text, it is no longer possible to read this as an ordinary essay; one must *study* it closely to follow her thorough consideration of an array of textual and interpretive possibilities. The result is demanding, but not quite bewildering. And there is no reason to blame Whiting for the complexity here; her paper is remarkable for its clarity. Nevertheless, it probably would have been helpful to present the text and translation in their entirety (whether at the beginning or in an appendix). At least this would facilitate comprehension when Whiting discusses one passage in relation to one or more other passages, which, as things stand, requires frequent flipping, now forward and now backward, to identify the texts in question.

Whiting's essay tips the scales at nearly eighty pages and will likely become a reference point for future scholarship on Aristotle's view of friendship. It certainly deserves that sort of prominence because of her patient analysis of conjectural readings and alternative interpretations. It is not quite clear to what she considers this a "prolegomenon": although she does leave some questions open, there is little that is tentative about her reading. Her textual reconstruction, translation, and interpretation form an impressive and valuable scholarly achievement. On more than one occasion in the Cambridge edition of *EE*, Inwood and Woolf note their indebtedness to discussions with her. Still, it would be unfortunate if her essay were to eclipse McCabe's, which presents an interpretation of "self-perception" that, even if it remains somewhat obscure, is more intriguing than the view of friendship to be found in Whiting's reading. On McCabe's view, union with a friend is utterly unlike anything else, but Whiting has an individualistic view of *koinônia* (135) and speaks of friends as "common objects of

human perceiving and knowing” (124; cf. 89), as if a friend were little more than one of the pleasant objects lying in one’s field of awareness. McCabe displays greater sensitivity to the phenomena that led Aristotle to devote so much attention to friendship, and it would have been nice to see McCabe’s essay expanded to eighty pages as well.

Christopher Rowe’s essay, “Aristotle’s *Eudemian Ethics* on Loving People and Things”, concentrates on good will (*eunoia*), which he understands (following Sarah Broadie’s analysis of good will in *NE*) to have two possible senses. In the wide sense, good will involves “wishing good for another for his own sake” in the sense that one wishes what is genuinely good for someone, as distinct from merely wishing that the person be able to serve some advantage for oneself. In the narrow sense, good will involves “wishing good for another for his own sake” in the sense that one has this good will on account of who this person is and not due to some incidental feature of the person. The latter sense is clearly found in *EE*, and is proper to the primary form of friendship. Rowe’s concern is to establish that in *EE* also, despite some indications to the contrary, Aristotle understands good will in the broader sense as integral to each of the three canonical senses of friendship. The key text is found in *EE* VII.7, in relation to which Rowe develops the distinction between loving the useful and pleasant things attainable from others and actually having good will for a person who is useful or pleasant. He then goes on to investigate how Aristotle understands it to be possible for one person to love another on account of that other person’s excellence, which brings him to a brief consideration of the same themes occupying McCabe and Whiting.

The first essay in this book is “The *Eudemian Ethics* on the ‘Voluntary,’” by David Charles, who contrasts Aristotle’s analysis of *to hekousion* in *EE* with what we find in *NE* and with what is meant in ordinary English by *voluntary*. He argues that, according to the doctrine in *NE*, the term *hekousion* should not be translated as “voluntary” because Aristotle extends his term more widely (including actions performed under coercion) than is customary with the English term. Accordingly, Charles uses asterisks around the word *voluntary* (like so: \*voluntary\*) in order to indicate when he uses it as Aristotle uses *hekousion* in the two texts (a device that is not followed with perfect consistency: see 11). According to Charles, in *EE* “nature” figures prominently while “choice” is absent, but the reverse is true in *NE*. He works out the details of Aristotle’s two treatments, arguing that in *EE* the agent or the agent’s nature is conceived as “the sole and complete controller” of those actions that qualify as \*voluntary\*, whereas in *NE* agents have more limited control over their \*voluntary\* actions. Charles also tries to negotiate the differences between *EE* and *NE* on this score by reference to chapter eight of the common book *NE* V.

Friedemann Buddensiek’s essay, “Does Good Fortune Matter? *Eudemian Ethics* on *Eutuchia*”, is the most difficult essay to summarize and evaluate. Aristotle’s text in *EE* VIII.2 could be described as dialectical, but also as evasive or even cryptic, and Buddensiek is willing to introduce features for which he finds no textual warrant. Buddensiek takes certain theses from the text as fixed points of reference (good fortune is non-rational, good fortune is somehow natural, those with good fortune have impulses that lead to success, and so on) and works through the logical possibilities for piecing together “what Aristotle may have thought” (179) about the relationship between good fortune and happiness. According to Buddensiek, good fortune *does* matter “insofar as it makes it easier to obtain some of those external goods that are required for *eudaimonia*” (160). Good fortune is consistent with and even conducive of happiness, but it is not essential for it. He articulates a sense of good fortune that is rooted in the nature of the individual, independent of gods and luck, but still we have no reason to think good fortune is closely connected with natural excellence although it is closely connected with virtuous actions (176–80).

A few words on the nuts and bolts of publication: There are almost no typographical errors (none of any apparent consequence), except in the essay by David Charles, where numerous mistakes, all of which seem insignificant, give the impression of unusual carelessness. A bibliography accompanies each essay, and there is a general index and a very helpful index of passages cited.

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