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**REVIEW ARTICLE — COOPER ON ANCIENT ETHICS**

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**John M. Cooper**, *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), xvi + 588 pp., £16.95, ISBN 0 691 05875 X (pbk).

This book usefully collects twenty-three essays of which two are previously unpublished while the others are reprinted or slightly revised. They are devoted exclusively to ethics, with seven articles on Socrates and Plato, twelve on Aristotle and four on Hellenistic Philosophy. With so much scholarly work being published on ancient philosophy during the last couple of decades, one sometimes wonders how much of it will still be read one hundred years from now. Will it disappear from view in the way in which, for example, so much published in nineteenth century German periodicals is now largely ignored? The writings of John Cooper probably have a better chance than most of still being read at the end of the present century. These essays are characterised by clarity, philosophical rigour, and thorough knowledge of the texts and secondary literature. They present reasonable and stimulating interpretations of the texts that deserve the closest consideration. Altogether they represent what should be an enduring contribution to the study of ancient philosophy.

While, as I said, the writing is usually lucid, it occasionally expands into needless verbosity. Consider the following sentence: ‘this knowledge is *necessarily* a single, comprehensive theory of human nature and human life, unattainable except when a permanent, *unshakable* shift takes place in *the state of* one’s mind — in one’s *overall* grasp of the value of everything that *actually* is of value for a human being’ (p. 97, my italics). As far as I can see, all of the italicised words and phrases in this sentence could have been omitted without losing anything of importance. Likewise, Cooper has a penchant for using pairs of synonyms or near synonyms as adjectives when one would be quite enough, as in ‘permanent, unshakable’ above.

On another point of language, I find it very puzzling that Cooper (or anybody) translates Aristotle’s use of ‘*theoria*’ as ‘study.’ He says at one point that, for Aristotle, the happiness of the gods consists in ‘excellent contemplative study’ (233), thereby bringing out how inappropriate the translation is. Does Aristotle’s god *study*? I think not.

The translation is also unsatisfactory for the *theoria* of human beings. To study is to labour to acquire knowledge, not, as Aristotle uses it, to think of what you already know for its own sake. A student studying for an

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examination or a scholar who is said to be studying the French Revolution or mathematics studies in order to attain knowledge. If a scholar retires and gives up his scholarly work in mathematics he may well be able to think of what he has come to know, but we no longer say that he is *studying* mathematics.

Granted, a student can study by reviewing what she already knows well enough, but even in this case one studies for the purpose of reinforcing one's knowledge, and so in order to achieve an end distinct from the studying. Even if there are cases where a person studies merely for the sake of studying and not for the sake of acquiring knowledge or deciding whether to accept a proposal, it is still different from what Aristotle means by '*theoria*.' To think of what one already knows with no further cognitive end in view — the referent of '*theoria*' for human beings (1177b19–20, for example) — is not to study. For Aristotle, the highest level of intellectual attainment for a person is not a movement towards the possession of a potentiality, a quality, but the contemplation of what is already known, the actualization of potential knowledge. It is not a movement towards some further goal, as study *is* a movement towards a further goal, even if the person engaged in studying does not do it for the sake of that goal.

In the remainder of this review I will discuss some points of interpretation on which I am not convinced by Cooper's arguments for his position, paying special attention to his paper 'Contemplation and Happiness in Aristotle: A Reconsideration' which revises the account of Aristotle's views on happiness found in his well known book, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*.

## I

Cooper correctly points out that ancient ethical theories devoted themselves to the examination of moral psychology and virtues of character much more than contemporary ethics. But he exaggerates his case. He says (x):

Ethics meant more than, indeed something different from, rules of behavior. Ethics was good character and what that entailed . . . Ethical theory was the philosophical study of the best way to *be*, rather than any principles for what to do in particular circumstances or in relation to recurrent temptations . . . Ancient moral philosophy . . . investigated the human person first and foremost. It studies the specific capacities and powers, the different interests and desires, that human beings by nature develop or are born with, and how one ought to limit, arrange, and organize those for the best. [my italics]

When applied to Aristotle (as Cooper does in his paper 'Remarks on Aristotle's Moral Psychology') this is misleading. Cooper says that Aristotle sees 'moral theory [as] based on the virtues, rather than on moral rules or other principles of behavior' (237). Of course, Aristotle does study virtues and vices of character, but it is false to say that this is something completely different from the discussion of rules of behaviour. Aristotle's general explanation

of a virtue of character is that it is a mean *because* it aims at what is intermediate in passion *and action* (1107a3–6, 1109a20–24). Virtue of character (in general) is explained in terms of a certain kind of behaviour. So with regard to the question of what a virtue is, it is the behaviour that is basic, not the virtue. That is, as always with Aristotle, it is the actuality (behaviour) that is basic, not the potentiality (virtue) which is explained in terms of that actuality (*Meta.* 1049b12–17; *De Anima* 415a14–20; *NE* 1122b1, 1140a2–5; *Protrepticus* B83).

Likewise, when Aristotle explains specific virtues, he does so by describing how those with the virtue feel *and act*, which also specifies how people *ought* to act. Some of these descriptions may not yield *rules* of action, but some of them do. And the fact that such rules will have a degree of vagueness and require adjustment to particular cases does not mean that they are not rules. Aristotle's discussion of potentially conflicting rules of behaviour in *NE* IX.2 shows that their existence is compatible with need to take particular circumstances into account.

Again, Cooper's assertion that, for Aristotle, ethics deals with 'the best way to *be*, rather than any principles for what to do in particular circumstances' draws a false contrast. For Aristotle, *being* for a human being is primarily a matter of *doing* and *acting* in certain ways, that is, of actualities, and only secondarily a matter of having certain qualities such as virtues and vices of character which are merely potentialities. Cooper correctly says that for Aristotle, ethics 'studies the specific capacities and powers' of human beings, but, again, a capacity or power must be explained in terms of the activity for which it is the capacity or power. Which in the case of virtues and vices of character means that, as capacities or potentialities, they must be explained in terms of the kinds of passions and behavior that actualize them. It is the kind of behaviour that is explanatorily basic. This is not true for what is nowadays called 'virtue ethics.'

## II

Sometimes Cooper finesses his interpretation into inconsistency or unclarity. I will mention two examples from his papers on Plato.

A. In his paper 'The Psychology of Justice in Plato' Cooper tries to explain both why the philosophers in Plato's *Republic* agree to rule and why they do so with reluctance. There is a well known problem in the *Republic* arising from the fact that Plato apparently wants to maintain the following three propositions:

- i It always benefits one to be just, i.e., in effect, justice is good in itself and injustice is evil in itself.
- ii Ruling is an intrinsic evil.
- iii For the philosophers, ruling is doing what is just.

(ii) is required, Plato thinks, because when those in control of the government of a city love to rule and regard it as a good, the inevitable result is disunity for the city arising from competition for political power. But if (ii) is true, then it appears that by ruling, by doing what is just, the philosophers secure an evil for themselves rather than a benefit, thus contradicting (i).

While many have tried to resolve the problem by arguing that Plato does not accept (ii), Cooper, at least initially, rejects (i). Plato identifies the good with rational order. The philosophers, Cooper explains, have as their ultimate goal not their own good, but the realization of good in the world as a whole. As a philosopher-king, what matters most to me is not that *I* should instantiate the good as much as possible, but that the world as a whole should instantiate the good as much as possible. In agreeing to rule, the philosophers act rationally because they choose to act so as to instantiate the good in the world as a whole to the greatest degree possible, thereby achieving their ultimate goal. The philosopher ‘recognizes a single criterion of choice: what, given the circumstances, will be most likely to maximize the total amount of rational order in the world as a whole?’ (145).

Despite the fact that the philosophers achieve their ultimate goal by choosing to rule, they agree to rule with reluctance because they thereby choose a life that is worse than another available to them. The best life would consist in exhibiting rational order in their *own* lives to the highest degree possible by devoting themselves to intellectual work. ‘Hence if the degree of the philosopher’s *eudaimonia* is judged by comparison with this ideal, Plato’s philosophers will settle for a less flourishing existence than they might have had’ (147). Thus, in this case, justice does not pay and (i) does not hold. The philosophers would be better off by refusing to rule and devoting themselves exclusively to contemplation. That is why they agree to rule with reluctance.

So on the one hand we have the philosophers’ guiding rule of action, their ultimate end: always act so as to maximize the good — rational order — in the world as a whole. On the other hand, we have the best life, *eudaimonia*, for a human being: ‘no other life could be so good as this one,’ viz. the life devoted to contemplation alone which would allow an individual to exemplify rational order in his *own* life to the highest possible degree (147). When it comes to the philosophers’ decision to rule, *eudaimonia* and the ultimate end part company.

But then, immediately after this explanation of the philosophers’ reluctance to rule, Cooper takes it back by saying that the philosophers who choose ‘to spend some of the time in the cave,’ i.e. who agree to rule, ‘would be the happiest and most flourishing men there ever in fact can be’ (147). ‘If the degree of one’s *eudaimonia* is measured by how close one comes to realizing one’s ultimate end,’ viz. promoting rational order in the world as a whole (as opposed to promoting rational order in one’s own life), a philosopher who

chose contemplation alone ‘would be less *eudaimon* than he would have been by living the mixed political and intellectual life’ (147).

Well, it cannot be both. Cooper first divorces the ultimate end of the philosophers from their own *eudaimonia*, and then explains their *eudaimonia* in terms of achieving their ultimate end. Either (a) *eudaimonia* is determined by the degree to which one exhibits rational order in one’s own life, or (b) *eudaimonia* is determined by the degree to which one promotes rational order in the world as a whole (the ultimate end). In order to explain the philosophers’ reluctance to rule, Cooper first assumes (a), but then he immediately takes it back and posits (b). Apart from the resulting unclarity as to what exactly it is that Cooper wants to say, the adoption of (b) destroys his prior explanation of the philosophers’ reluctance to rule. If the mixed life is indeed ‘the happiest and most flourishing’ available to a human being, why should the philosophers, who *know* what the best life is, be reluctant to choose that mixed life which is now said to be both their ultimate end and what is best for themselves?

This will not be explained by saying that the philosophers’ *reason* for choosing to rule is to achieve their ultimate end of promoting rational order in the world as whole, and that the attainment of their own *eudaimonia* is never a reason why they behave as they do. Suppose I know that doing x will achieve my own happiness. If I nevertheless do x with reluctance, we hardly have a satisfactory explanation of why I reluctantly do x by saying that the aim of achieving my own happiness is not any part of the reason why I do x.

B. Another example of unclarity can be found in Cooper’s interesting essay ‘Greek Philosophers on Euthanasia and Suicide’ when (517–20) he discusses *Republic* 406–7.<sup>2</sup> Plato has been understood to say that anyone who is unable to perform their assigned work that contributes to the wellbeing of the city as a whole should be allowed to die. Cooper begins by saying that Plato argues that the question of whether those who are sick should receive medical treatment depends on whether, if treated, they will be able to continue the work they engaged in prior to their illness. This suggests the principle that for any citizen A of Plato’s ideal city:

1. A should receive treatment only if such treatment will lead to A’s resumption of the productive work that he does for the city.

Further, Socrates approves of the practice of the Asclepiads who refused to treat people who would require prolonged care. A life that involved constant care would not be worth living and would contribute nothing to the benefit of the city as a whole. Hence, such a life would not be a good thing either for the individual or for the polis.

<sup>2</sup> I am not sure why Cooper pays no attention to *Eudemian Ethics* 1215b15–1216a10 in his discussion of Aristotle. Although the passage does not refer explicitly to suicide, it does discuss situations in which the question arises as to whether existence is preferable to non-existence.

The patient Socrates describes has to abandon permanently those activities in which at once his own good in large part consists and the good of others is advanced, and *that is what Socrates thinks justifies saying that such a person's life is of no benefit either to himself or to others* (519, my italics).

So:

2. If A must abandon his work, his life is of *no* benefit to himself or to others.

And if, as Cooper says, Plato's position is one of 'requiring' the death of such a person, primarily on the grounds that such a life is of no benefit to A, and secondarily on the grounds that such a life is of no benefit to the polis (519), we can say that

3. If A must abandon his work, the polis requires that A be allowed to die because, primarily, (i) A's life is of no benefit to A, and, secondarily, (ii) A's life is of no benefit to the polis.

If this is correct, it entails that the *whole* of A's good, the only benefit A derives from life, is either his work or dependent on his work. Otherwise, the loss of that work would not entail that A's life was of *no* benefit to A.

But then there is a minor modification to (3). Cooper goes on to suggest that A's inability to perform his original job after treatment is not, after all, a sufficient reason for allowing A to die. If after treatment A is incapable of performing his earlier job but can find *some* productive form of work, A should receive treatment. What Plato really objects to are treatments that deprive the patient 'of *any* productive life at all. That is because . . . the patient, in order to prolong his life, has to devote most of his time that might have been available for productive activity . . . to staying alive' (519). This suggests a slight adjustment of (3) to:

4. If (after treatment) A must abandon his work and is unable to perform any other job, the polis requires that A be allowed to die because (i) A's life is of no benefit to A, and (ii) is of no benefit to the polis.

Constant self-care excludes productive work and yields a life that is not worth living. Hence, if after treatment someone could only stay alive by devoting all of their time to tending their body, then that would not be a life worth living and such a person should be allowed to die. Only disorders which can be dealt with by shorter forms of treatment should be treated at all.

But it turns out that (4) is not quite right either because, Cooper says, 'even if it might seem quite certain . . . that a given patient would not in fact succeed in finding *anything* useful to do, nothing in Socrates' remarks suggests that' such a person should be refused treatment and be allowed to die (519, my italics).

Now we are left wondering what Cooper meant to say before. At the top of the page (519), when principle 3 was in play, he had said:

From the point of view of his own theory of the human good, Plato is not guilty of heartlessly requiring the death of people who are no longer, through no fault of their own, useful to society: the requirement [that they die] is imposed equally, in fact primarily, for the good of the sick person himself.

How is this compatible with what we are now told, that those whose lives are no longer useful to society or themselves are *not* required to die?

If, as we are now told, those who are unable to make any contribution to the good of the city are to be allowed to live as long as they do not have to devote all their time to management of their disorder, what is the principle that decides who lives and dies? It would appear that we are now at:

5. If anyone with some bodily disorder can go on living only if they must devote all of their time to the management of their disorder, they should be allowed to die.

This will allow, as Cooper now says, the unproductive person to go on living provided that that person does not have to devote all available time to treatment of his illness. But Cooper does not explain the rationale for (5) and it contradicts his earlier statement that a life that cannot be devoted to work is of ‘no’ benefit to the individual as well as the state, and that that is what justifies the *requirement* that such people die.

But even (5) turns out to be too strong since we are told next that nothing that Plato says need be thought to apply to the elderly who have retired from work (520):

In Plato’s republic, such persons, of whatever class, are due honor and respect, and retain their place in the community as members of the household (or its equivalent for guardians and rulers) valued for their past services and for their experience. The intrusive regimes that would undermine the lives of persons of other ages and social roles would not necessarily do so for these members of the community.

Maybe this is right, and this would explain the fact that at 498b–c Plato speaks of the philosophers surviving into retirement.

But nothing in 406–7 supports it. Further, it is inadequate as a rationale for treating the elderly in a special manner. What is the relevant difference between the older A and the younger B that justifies allowing A to live and B to die? The only principle which Cooper appears to suggest is that the elderly are ‘due honor and respect, and retain their place in the community . . . valued for their past services and for their experience’ (520). But why does this principle apply to the elderly and fail to apply to the non-elderly? It is not only the elderly who have experience and have rendered past services to the city, so if the elderly are owed honour and valued for their past services and for their experience, why should not those who are not elderly also deserve honour and

be valued for their past services and experience? And, therefore, why should they not also be allowed to live?

Cooper says that the life of the non-elderly would be undermined by intrusive medical treatment while this would not necessarily be true for the elderly (520). But in both cases the situation is that we have people who cannot pursue their former (or any) line of work because of illness or injury or the incapacities of old age. In both cases, according to Cooper's statements one page before, what makes their lives worthwhile is now beyond them. If A is an elderly person in such a position and B is a younger person in such a position, how is it that medical treatment will 'undermine' the life of B but not undermine the life of A?

Once again, it is not easy to fit Cooper's remarks on the elderly with what was said previously. If, as previously asserted, one who is no longer able to perform his work has a life that is of no benefit to *himself* as well as no benefit to the polis, and hence such an individual is *benefited* by being allowed to die (519: death 'is for the good of the sick person himself'), why should the polis not be similarly willing to benefit the elderly by allowing them to die if their survival would require intrusive medical treatment?

### III

I will examine in more detail Cooper's paper 'Contemplation and Happiness: A Reconsideration,' in which he presents a different interpretation of Aristotle's account of happiness in the *Nicomachean Ethics* than he had offered in his book, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*. I will put into brackets my own comments on Cooper's argument immediately after setting out a stage of his argument.

In *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle* Cooper thought there was an inconsistency between Book I's commitment to moral virtue and Book X's commitment to contemplation, where he understood Book X to be recommending a life of intellectual study that might resort to immoral action to achieve its ultimate end. Now he argues that Aristotle's views are consistent and that Book X maintains that human happiness requires the exercise of all the virtues, moral as well as intellectual. This avoids the undesirable result of making Book X reject, without explanation, the position of Book I.

Here is Cooper's argument. At the start of *NE* X.7 Aristotle says (1177a12–17):

If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the best virtue. But this will be the activity of the best thing in us . . . the activity of this [best thing] according to its proper virtue will be complete *eudaimonia*. We have already said that this activity is contemplative. [I use Cooper's translation of '*teleia*' as 'complete' even though I think it is a mistranslation].



If this means that happiness *is* excellent theoretical thinking of some sort, Aristotle will be saying that excellent theoretical thinking is

the *whole* of what a person should aim ultimately at in his life, the sole thing such that having and engaging in it makes his life happy. Nothing else but this will make any independent contribution to the goodness of his life; in particular, moral virtue will not (220).

[The extreme intellectualist view of Book X, which identifies *eudaimonia* with contemplation alone, does not entail that Aristotle attaches merely instrumental value to virtues or other goods, or that he does not believe that they are essential to a happy life. Aristotle's explanation of 'complete' (*teleion*) good at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097a25–b6 (note especially 1097b2–4) as well as what he says about intrinsic value in many other passages makes it quite clear that even if any good other than *eudaimonia* is chosen for the sake of *eudaimonia*, where (let's suppose) *eudaimonia* is identified with contemplation alone, an intrinsic good is chosen for its own sake independently of its promotion of *eudaimonia*. So even if *eudaimonia* is contemplation alone, virtue of character and virtuous action, for example, may have the intrinsic value that Aristotle assigns them. Furthermore, Aristotle draws a clear contrast between happiness and the necessary conditions for happiness, where the latter include intrinsic goods (*NE* 1099a31–b8, 27–28). Making contemplation the sole constituent of *eudaimonia* is consistent with making virtue and virtuous actions necessary conditions for happiness and hence essential to the happy life. So Cooper's intellectualist interpretation of Book X in *Reason and Human Good* does not commit Aristotle to the inconsistency that his paper is designed to overcome, insofar as this is understood as an inconsistency between the identification of happiness with contemplation alone and the assignment of intrinsic value to virtue and virtuous actions.

Perhaps Cooper is relying on his claim (216) that Aristotle makes happiness the 'only' end for the sake of which we do everything that we do. But if this is interpreted to imply that nothing besides happiness (contemplation, on the intellectualist view) is viewed as an end, 1097a25–b6 along with many other passages show that the interpretation is wrong.

Nor do I see how Cooper's assertion of this inconsistency fits his acknowledgement of the existence of intrinsic goods which are not part of happiness elsewhere in his paper (219), or with what he says about happiness in a post-script to his paper 'Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune' (309–11). There he states that external goods such as friends are constituents of happiness insofar as they are instrumental goods which make virtuous activity possible for a person. But, he says, there are also *intrinsic* goods such as one's children which are not constituents of happiness but whose absence would destroy one's happiness. So Cooper here recognizes that something may be an intrinsic good which is essential to one's happiness without being a constituent of happiness. And it is not clear what precludes the intellectualist interpretation

of Book X similarly making virtue and virtuous activity intrinsic goods essential to happiness without being constituents of happiness.]

Cooper's reason for rejecting his own earlier reading of the sentence as identifying *eudaimonia* with contemplation alone is that the formulation is similar to statements made in Book I, and he thinks that those statements in Book I can be understood in a way that does not exclude the exercise of the moral virtues as part of happiness. After offering an interpretation of the statements in Book I Cooper will return to consider X.7, 1177a12–17 in light of that interpretation.

In I.7 at the conclusion of the function argument Aristotle says (1098a16–18):

[A] the human good turns out to be virtuous activity of soul, and

[B] if there is more than one virtue, [the human good turns out to be activity] of the best and most complete (*teleiotaten*) virtue.

Whatever this claims about happiness with regard to the relation between virtuous activity and the activity of the best virtue, it is reasonable to interpret 1177a12–17 in the same way.

What then is meant by 1098a16–18? Two clues are that (i) it is the conclusion of the function argument and therefore should follow from that argument's premises, and (ii) the conclusion is repeated elsewhere in Book I.

Taking up (ii) first, Cooper says that three statements which Aristotle makes in Book I following the function argument (1100a4–5, 1101a14–16, 1102a5–6) paraphrase the conclusion of the function argument and use the expression 'complete virtue,' where this clearly means comprehensive virtue (all the virtues) rather than the single best virtue. Therefore the conclusion of the function argument ought to be understood to affirm that happiness includes virtuous activities of all types.

[Prima facie, it is certainly reasonable to expect all the statements of the definition of happiness to make the same claim. But it is also prima facie reasonable to expect that 'complete virtue' means the same in the four statements of the thesis which use that phrase. Nor is it immediately obvious that both of these expectations cannot be satisfied by the same interpretation. But, as we'll see below, Cooper argues that 'complete virtue' in 1098a16–18 means the single best virtue, whereas 'complete virtue' in subsequent paraphrases (1100a4–5, 1101a14–16 and 1102a5–6) refers to comprehensive virtue. Perhaps the desideratum satisfied by Cooper's interpretation is more important than the desideratum satisfied by the alternative view, but the difference is not overwhelming. In Cooper's case, whereas the overall strategy of understanding 1177a12–17 with the help of his interpretation of 1098a16–18 is based in part on the presumption that the similarity of language between the two passages allows us to interpret one in terms of the other (220), he sets aside the

similarity of language between 1100a4–5, 1101a14–16 and 1102a5–6 on the one hand and 1098a16–18 on the other.

Cooper asserts that in 1100a4–5, 1101a14–16 and 1102a5–6, ‘Aristotle says clearly that according to his theory happiness is activity of *complete* virtue [that is, all of the virtues including moral virtues] . . . there is little doubt that that . . . is what he intends’ (221).

Cooper makes two points to justify his confidence that 1100a4–5, 1101a14–16 and 1102a5–6 must be understood to be saying that *eudaimonia* is the activity of *all* of the virtues (221, n. 7). First, he refers to 1099a17–20 and 1100b19–20 as passages which describe virtuous activities of all types as included within happiness. 1099a17–20 says that the good man must take pleasure in virtuous actions and 1100b19–20 says that the happy man will act and contemplate ‘the things according to virtue’ (*ta kat’ areten*). But even if the happy man must be morally good and take pleasure in virtuous actions it does not follow that the exercise of *all* the virtues *is* happiness rather than being a necessary condition for happiness.

I think that Cooper’s interpretation of 1100b19–20 is eminently reasonable, especially when read in its context. But I do not believe that he has said anything that must convince any reasonable intellectualist.

To justify his view of the three passages Cooper also states that 1098b22–1099b8 aims

to argue that *his* [Aristotle’s] theory makes *all* the features that different previous thinkers have identified one by one as essential to happiness, essential to it: virtue, *phronesis*, *sophia*, pleasure, external prosperity. So his theory of happiness was intended to make the exercise of *sophia*, the virtues of character, and practical wisdom . . . all elements in the activity that . . . happiness is (221, n. 7).

But even if Aristotle intends to make all of these factors essential to happiness, this statement on its own proves nothing more than that all the virtues are necessary conditions for happiness, and that entails neither that these virtues nor that the exercise of these virtues are constituents of happiness. Indeed, in the passage I quote Cooper appears to concede that something may be essential to happiness without constituting it since, while he says that virtue, *phronesis* and *sophia* are essential to happiness, it is only the *exercise* of virtue, *phronesis* and *sophia* that is said to constitute happiness.

Furthermore, if the statements in Book I which Cooper alludes to (1099a17–20, 1100b19–20) support the assertion that Aristotle’s claims that happiness is the exercise of ‘complete virtue’ at 1100a4–5, 1101a14–16 and 1102a5–6 mean that happiness is the exercise of all the virtues, why do those passages not also show that 1098a16–18’s claim that happiness is the exercise of ‘the most complete virtue’ means that happiness is the exercise of all the virtues? No basis has been provided for distinguishing one of these passages (1098a16–18) from the other three (1100a4–5, 1101a14–16, 1102a5–6), and

taking 1099a17–20 and 1100b19–20 as providing evidence on how to interpret the use of ‘complete virtue’ in three passages but not in the other.

Cooper will correctly say that it is reasonable to take the three paraphrases as restating the whole conclusion of the function argument. But the reasonableness of this is reduced when combined with Cooper’s view (see below) that the conclusion of the function argument, which the paraphrases are supposed to reproduce, does not explicitly *say* but merely *implies* that happiness is the exercise of all the virtues.

As we will see next, Cooper argues that ‘most complete virtue’ in 1098a16–18 refers to the single best virtue. But as we’ll also see, two of those arguments equally support the assertion that the reference to ‘complete virtue’ in 1100a4–5, 1101a14–16 and 1102a5–6 refers to the single best virtue.]

The phrase ‘most complete virtue’ also occurs in the conclusion of the function argument itself. But Cooper thinks it must be understood differently from its use in the three paraphrases. Cooper rejects the view of Ackrill and Keyt according to which ‘most complete virtue’ in 1098a16–18 refers to the combination of *all* the virtues. Against this proposal, Cooper argues as follows: First, this construal of ‘best and most complete virtue’ is unnatural. Second, Aristotle had previously explained (1097a25–b6) that by ‘most complete end’ he means ‘chosen always for itself alone and never for the sake of anything else’ (223). So the most complete virtue is that virtue which is chosen for itself alone and not for anything further. Book X will explain that wisdom satisfies this criterion, and therefore ‘the most complete virtue’ is wisdom, and ‘there seems no possibility for doubt . . . that it is this comparison which he is anticipating’ in 1098a16–18 (223). Third, in the fourth paraphrase of the conclusion of the function argument at 1099a29–31 Aristotle asserts that he had identified happiness with ‘the best activities or with one of these, the best one’. Unless this refers back to 1098a16–18, there is nothing for it to refer back to.

In particular, if by the best and most complete virtue [in 1098a16–18] he means the sum–total of all the virtues . . . then nowhere in his account of happiness has Aristotle previously [to 1099a29–31] said a word about the best single activity and its role in happiness (224).

Therefore, the activity according to ‘the most complete virtue’ at 1098a16–18 must, given Aristotle’s view that wisdom is the best virtue, refer to the exercise of wisdom.

[With regard to Cooper’s first argument, while it may be true that the interpretation of Ackrill and Keyt gives an unnatural construction to the phrase ‘best and most complete virtue,’ that point, if correct, also applies to Cooper’s own understanding of ‘complete virtue’ at 1100a4–5, 1101a14–16 and 1102a5–6. As we saw, Cooper claims that in these passages, as opposed to 1098a16–18, ‘complete virtue’ refers *not* to a single virtue (wisdom, as Book X will reveal) but to the sum total of *all* the virtues. So if the unnaturalness of the Ackrill-Keyt understanding of ‘most complete virtue’ at 1098a16–18 is a

good point against their interpretation, it is also a good point against Cooper's understanding of 'complete virtue' at 1100a4–5, 1101a14–16 and 1102a5–6.

Cooper's second argument also boomerangs against his own interpretation of 1100a4–5, 1101a14–16 and 1102a5–6: if this is a good argument for taking 'most complete virtue' at 1098a16–18 to refer to a single virtue (wisdom), it is also a good argument for construing 'complete virtue' at 1100a4–5, 1101a14–16 and 1102a5–6 as referring to a single virtue (wisdom) rather than all the virtues. Cooper says nothing to distinguish 1098a16–18 from the other three passages in a way that would justify the claim that Aristotle's explanation of 'most complete' at 1097a25–b6 shows what he means by 'most complete' virtue at 1098a16–18 but does not show what he means by 'complete' virtue at 1100a4–5, 1101a14–16 and 1102a5–6.

Further, 1097a25–b6 offers an explanation not of 'most complete' but of 'most complete *end*.' It is not obvious that an explanation of 'most complete end' can be used to explain what is meant by 'most complete *virtue*' in 1098a16–18 to yield the conclusion that the latter is wisdom.

Further, even if it can be so used, wisdom, like any virtue, state and potentiality, should be chosen for the sake of the activity which 'actualizes' it (*NE* 1101b10–16; *EE* 1218b37–1219a18; *Meta.* 1051a4–15). So it is not true that wisdom is not 'chosen also for further goods it brings us' (223). Cooper claims (223) that Book X (1177b1–4, 12–18) affirms that 'wisdom *is* chosen for its own sake alone, and not . . . chosen also for further goods it bring us.' But this is false. 1177b is not discussing intellectual virtue but intellectual *activity*. Although modern commentators on Aristotle's ethics habitually fudge this distinction between potentiality (virtue) and actuality (thinking and action), Aristotle regards it as of the utmost importance. 1177b argues that contemplation rather than morally virtuous action is the primary form of happiness. The potentialities that are intellectual virtue and virtue of character are long gone as candidates for happiness. Early in Book I the *Nicomachean Ethics* dismissed any claim on their part to be happiness (1095b29–1096a2, 1098b31–1099a7, 1101b10–12, I.12, 1169b28–31, 1173a14–15, 1176a33–35). Of course, Cooper is free to argue that wisdom is not chosen for the sake of any other virtue while other virtues are chosen for the sake of wisdom, and hence wisdom is the most 'complete' *virtue*, and that is all that matters to him here. But it is not at all obvious that *all* virtues of character are chosen for the sake of wisdom. Still, he might abandon the claim that wisdom is not chosen for the sake of anything else and still argue that it is the virtue 'chosen most for its own sake and least for the sake of other good things' (227).

With regard to Cooper's third argument, while he says that at 1099a29–31 'Aristotle says that *on his theory as earlier stated*' (223, my italics) he identified happiness with either the best activities or with the best activity, Aristotle's own words do not refer back to his theory as having been previously stated. Aristotle's words are 'We say that these [the best activities] or one —

the best — of these is happiness.’ While, of course, Aristotle may be thinking of what he said previously, he does not explicitly say that he is. For all Cooper says, 1099a29–31 rather than 1098a16–18 may be the first passage in Book I where Aristotle anticipates Book X’s identification of contemplation with happiness.]

Besides the paraphrases, the other clue to understanding the claim at 1098a16–18 was that it is the conclusion of the function argument, ‘so one would expect what it says to follow from its premises, or at any rate to be related to them in such a way that one can see how on the basis of just these premises Aristotle means to recommend just this conclusion’ (221).

In the function argument which leads up to 1098a16–18 Aristotle argues that happiness must be an active exercise of our rational power, namely the use of that power as it exists when perfected by its and our specific virtue, because the good of any living thing consists in the perfected exercise of its specific nature as the kind of thing that it is. And since (1098a4–5) our rational power is complex, having several aspects and functions, the perfected exercise of our specific nature will require several activities, the activities of the virtues that perfect the several aspects and functions of our rational power.

Thus Aristotle’s argument seems to require the conclusion that happiness is activity of complete virtue, i.e. activity of *all* the specifically human virtues, the ones belonging to our rational capacities, and hence happiness includes the activity of the moral virtues (222).

[In the function argument Aristotle says that

1. *Eudaimonia* appears to be the actuality of what has a logos (1098a3–4).

And since

2. What has a logos is double (1098a5),
3. The activity (*energeia*) according to what has a logos is also double (1098a6).

So there are, according to (3), two activities of what has a logos — say, activity1 and activity2. And it is clear that (1) is compatible with the statement that activity1 and not activity2 is *eudaimonia*. Further, this fits perfectly with 1098a16–18, which first says that

A: *Eudaimonia* is activity according to virtue.

This recalls (1): *eudaimonia* is the actuality of what has a logos. Like (1), (A) is compatible with the statement that activity1 and not activity2 is *eudaimonia*. Aristotle then mentions the possibility that

4. There are several virtues,

which means (although Aristotle does not say it explicitly, it is presupposed by [B] below) that

5. There are several activities of virtue.

This recalls (2) and (3). There is more than one activity of virtue as there is more than one actuality according to logos. Aristotle then draws an inference from the assumption of the truth of (4) (and of course Aristotle believes that (4) is true):

B: If there is more than one virtue, *eudaimonia* is the activity of the best and most complete (*teleiotaten*) virtue

and therefore *not* the activity according to those virtues other than the best and most complete, if we take Aristotle's words to mean what they appear to say, as Cooper is arguing they do not. (B) (activity1 — of the best and most complete virtue — and not activity2 is *eudaimonia*) is obviously compatible with (A) and hence with (1) as well. The argument itself, then, does not suggest, as Cooper claimed, that *eudaimonia* is the exercise of all the virtues.

Remarkably, Cooper concedes as much. He first says (222) that the premises of Aristotle's argument 'most strongly suggest' 'that happiness is . . . activity of specifically human nature perfected in all its relevant aspects,' where this is understood to mean not that *each* such activity is happiness but that *all* together constitute happiness. Later (225) he says that the conclusion which strictly follows from the premises — 'human good is activity of human virtue' — does not mention a plurality of virtues or virtuous activities. 'Throughout, he has spoken of *a* work and *a* virtue for human beings as such.'

In fact, on Cooper's account it will turn out that the claim that happiness consists in activity according to *all* the virtues is made by *none* of Aristotle's statements. Rather, Cooper next argues, that proposal is merely *implied* by the last clause of 1098a16–18.]

How should we interpret 1098a16–18 as a whole? *Traditionally* it has been understood to say that

- (1) *eudaimonia* consists in virtuous activity in general, or
- (2) *eudaimonia* is the single activity of the best and most complete virtue (wisdom),

where these statements are incompatible because (1) is understood to mean that happiness is the combination of activities of all the virtues. Cooper thinks it is a mistake to construe 1098a16–18 as offering these two distinct alternatives. So construed the alternatives are incompatible, only (1) follows from the preceding argument, and if it is offering two alternatives then Aristotle's restatements of the thesis elsewhere in Book I would wobble between asserting (1) three times (1100a4–5, 1101a14–16, 1102a5–6), and asserting either (1) or (2) in another passage (1099a29–31). But as restatements of 1098a16–18, we ought to be able to understand these four passages and 1098a16–18 as making the same claim.

[Note that Cooper is here arguing only that the two clauses of 1098a16–18 as *traditionally understood* should not be seen as offering incompatible

alternatives. For he will go on to argue that both clauses should be understood differently, viz.

- (1c) happiness is activity of human virtue
- (2c) happiness is especially activity of the best and most complete human virtue.

But now suppose that someone proposed that (2) should be interpreted according to its apparent meaning, i.e. as Cooper himself interpreted it in his *Reason and Human Good*:

- (2a) happiness is activity of the best and most complete human virtue.

Cooper points out (225) that (1c) allows happiness to consist in the exercise of just a single virtue. So understood, (1c) is compatible with (2a) since (2a) entails (1c). They differ in that (1c) allows more activities of virtue to count as happiness, but it does not say or entail that. So a decision to accept (2a) would not mean the rejection of (1c). Nevertheless, they can be seen as alternatives since (1c) allows what (2a) rules out. So whatever force there may be in Cooper's objection to the traditional understanding of (1) and (2) on the basis of the claim that the traditional interpretation makes them incompatible does not apply to this plausible understanding of the two clauses of 1098a16–18. Further, it is hardly implausible to understand 1099a29–31's identification of happiness with 'the best activities or with one of these, the best one' as a repetition of 1098a16–18, or as offering alternatives.

Cooper's second argument for saying that (1) and (2) are not offered as alternatives is that (1) alone follows from the argument. But once we replace the traditional reading with Cooper's

- (1c) happiness is activity of human virtue

it can easily be seen how Aristotle could have thought that (2) follows from the argument. Let me quote 1098a16–18 again:

if that is so, (1c) happiness is activity of human virtue, and if (b) there is more than one virtue, (2) of the best and most complete (*teleiotaten*) virtue.

(b) says in effect

- (3) there are several virtues.

(1c) says *eudaimonia* is virtuous activity of soul. This follows from the function argument. (2) says that *eudaimonia* is virtuous activity of the best and most complete virtue. (2) can be understood as an alternative to (1a) since the former allows that activities of the virtues that are not the best count as *eudaimonia*. But also, (2) can easily be seen as a conclusion following from (1a) together with (3) plus the unstated but (to Aristotle) obvious assumptions:



- (4) one of the virtues is the most complete (or perfect)
- (5) the activity of the best virtue is the best activity.

(Cf. *EE* 1219a6–39, *NE* 1177a4–6, 12–13, *Pol.* 1323b13–18, *Topics* 116b12–22). So although

- (2) *eudaimonia* is the single activity of the best and most complete virtue (wisdom)

does not directly follow from the explicit premises of the function argument, it can be said to follow from it when the conclusion of the function argument is combined with assumptions which — to Aristotle — are obvious and which he explicitly states elsewhere, including his discussion of *eudaimonia* in the *Eudemian Ethics*. At the very least, there is no problem in seeing how (2) is related to the premises of the function argument in the manner that Cooper demands of his own interpretation, that is, how it is related to the premises ‘in such a way that one can see how on the basis of just these premises Aristotle means to recommend just this conclusion’ (221).

Cooper’s argument was that Aristotle could not wish to affirm (2) at the conclusion of the function argument because it could not be thought to follow from that argument. But it is not difficult to see how Aristotle could have thought it did follow from that argument. Of course, on the proposal outlined above (1c) and (2) are not presented as alternatives, but nothing I have said rules out someone adopting the view that they are alternatives with the choice depending on whether we can make the unstated assumptions I referred to. They can say that, while Aristotle himself accepts those assumptions, at this point where he is merely sketching his account of happiness (1098a20–22) the issue is left open, and so, at this point, (1c) and (2) are presented as alternatives still in play, both of which follow from the preceding argument, or can easily be made to follow from that argument with the addition of obvious assumptions.

Cooper’s third argument was that on the traditional interpretation the four restatements of the conclusion of the function argument would have to be understood as saying on three occasions (1100a4–5, 1101a14–16, 1102a5–6) that happiness is the activity of complete, i.e. apparently comprehensive virtue, and on another occasion (1099a29–31) saying that happiness is either the combination of the best activities or the single best activity. And ‘this is surely intolerable’ (224). But this argument rests on Cooper’s claims about the meaning of ‘complete’ in the first three passages and we have already seen that those arguments are questionable.]

Instead of (1) and (2) being offered as alternatives, Cooper thinks that here in Book I, where Aristotle is simply sketching in outline his view of *eudaimonia*,

(1) *eudaimonia* is activity of human virtue,  
and

(2) *eudaimonia* is the single activity of the single virtue of wisdom  
should be seen as expressing the same view, (1) more vaguely and (2) less  
vaguely (and without wisdom being explicitly identified as the best virtue, as  
it is in Book X).

All that strictly follows from the function argument (and what Aristotle  
actually *says*) is the vaguer formulation that

(1) *eudaimonia* is the activity of human virtue.

But although the vaguer formulation — (1) — is therefore strictly compatible  
with the statement that

(3) *eudaimonia* is the activity of a single virtue,

(3) cannot be what Aristotle intends by (1) since it would allow someone to  
achieve *eudaimonia* by merely exercising one of the lesser virtues. To rule this  
out Aristotle adds (2), saying that *eudaimonia* is especially the exercise of the  
best of the virtues. What he means to say is that *eudaimonia* is the activity of  
*all* of the virtues but *especially* the activity of the best of the virtues, an activ-  
ity which ‘completes’ the activities of the other virtues.

While 1098a16–18 ‘says’ that happiness is activity of *all* the virtues, ‘it  
says this indirectly and by implication, as following from the insistence that  
happiness requires activity of the best and most complete virtue’ (226).

[This interpretation certainly strains credibility in requiring the content of  
Aristotle’s claim about the identity of happiness to be largely conveyed by  
implication rather than explicit assertion. Likewise it requires acceptance of  
the claim that Aristotle could use ‘ $x = y$ ’ to mean ‘ $x$  [which is many other  
things] is especially  $y$ .’ It makes Aristotle out to be very clumsy in expressing  
his position on the most important issue addressed by the *Nicomachean Eth-  
ics*. (Of course, given the variety of interpretations Aristotle’s text has given  
rise to, one could say that this last point is not much of an objection to Co-  
oper’s view).

As noted above, Cooper had said that one ‘would expect [the conclusion of  
the function argument] to follow from its premises, or at any rate to be related  
to them in such a way that one can see how on the basis of just these premises  
Aristotle means to recommend just this conclusion.’ True, but surely an inter-  
pretation which allows the conclusion of the function argument to follow from  
the premises is *prima facie* more plausible than an interpretation which  
imposes the more tenuous relation described in Cooper’s second disjunct. So  
in this respect Cooper’s interpretation is at a disadvantage. Equally, any inter-  
pretation which, unlike Cooper’s, has Aristotle explicitly state the conclusion  
of the function argument is *prima facie* preferable to one that does not.

However, Cooper sometimes speaks in a way that obscures the point that  
his own interpretation does not satisfy these conditions. He says (224) that he

is proposing an interpretation where the conclusion follows ‘reasonably’ well from the premises, and where the conclusion ‘amounts’ to saying that happiness is activity of ‘the sum total of the moral and intellectual virtues.’ This does not prepare us for the outcome where the conclusion does not ‘strictly’ follow from the premises, and where the conclusion ‘amounts’ to asserting Cooper’s conclusion merely in the sense that is implied by what Aristotle explicitly says.

One point which Cooper offers as, hopefully, a minor consideration in support of his interpretation and against the rival view appeals to the fact that Aristotle says in I.7 that he is presenting a rough sketch of his account of happiness. Hence, Cooper claims, ‘one ought not to expect him to be offering a choice between clear and discrete, incompatible alternatives at this point. Rather, the alternatives ought to be related as vaguer and less vague alternatives of the same view’ (225).

Where Cooper thinks these ‘oughts’ come from I do not know. Both his view and the alternative views of 1098a16–18 mentioned above are in the same boat in that the identity of the most complete virtue is left unspecified until Book X. And that may be all the vagueness that Aristotle has in mind. If not, there is still no reasonable way to get from the claim that Aristotle is presenting his view in general terms to the conclusion *not* that Aristotle’s view, but that the propositions *contained* in the expression of his view [(1) & (2)], ought to be seen as more and less vague expressions of the same view. Equally, there is no way to derive the conclusion that they ought not to be seen as ‘clear and discrete, incompatible alternatives.’ It is consistent with (1) and (2) being more and less vague expressions of the same view that the view expressed not be vague. And it is consistent with (1) and (2) being clear, discrete and incompatible alternatives that the assertion ‘(1) or (2)’ leaves it undetermined — vague — what Aristotle is saying.]

As to why 1098a16–18 says that happiness is the activity of the most complete virtue, this is not explained until Book X. But we can use what we have from the discussion of 1098a16–18 to reinterpret the opening statement of X.7 (1177a12–17): ‘If happiness is activity of virtue, it is reasonable that it should be of the most superior virtue . . . the actuality of this [the theoretical intellect] according to its proper virtue would be complete happiness.’ Contrary to appearances, this does not *identify* happiness with a single activity — contemplation. We should understand it in light of the fact that Aristotle goes on to consider the preliminary criteria for *eudaimonia* from Book I and argues that the exercise of wisdom satisfies them better than the other kind of virtuous activity. Hence, Aristotle can conclude on this basis that contemplation is ‘complete happiness’ in the sense that it is the more perfect version of virtuous activity, something especially valuable that completes the other virtuous activities constituting *eudaimonia*. ‘Happiness especially requires the activity

of the most superior virtue' (227). This fits what was said about happiness in Book I.

The intellectual life which, Aristotle goes on to argue, contains the most superior form of happiness includes the activities of virtue of character as well as of intellect. The second best life which contains the inferior form of happiness is therefore one that does not involve the exercise of the virtues of intellect: it 'omits' theoretical study, 'being devoted only to the exercise of the moral virtues.' 'It is reasonable of Aristotle to say that this life, too, is a happy one, since it contains virtuous activities, activities of the type which constitute happiness . . .'(232).

Aristotle closes his discussion of happiness by comparing the contemplative happiness of the gods with human happiness, saying that 'human life is happy to the extent that there is something in it resembling the divine activity of contemplation' (234). As rational activity, morally virtuous actions bear a kinship to divine contemplation and, because of that, they too count as happiness.

[It is hard to see how the secondarily happy life can be happy at all on Cooper's interpretation if, as he said before (225), it is particularly outrageous to suggest that 'someone will count as having achieved the human good just because he has acquired and exercised the lesser virtues, without having the highest and best'; and if the activities of *all* the virtues are needed for happiness; and if, as he says, the activity of contemplation is *especially* needed for happiness.

A similar difficulty is raised by Cooper's statement that (235) 'morally virtuous activities . . . only count as a (kind of) *eudaimonia* because of some connection in which they stand to the activities of contemplative study in which the happy person also engages.' This asserts that what matters is not some *general* connection between contemplation (in general) and morally virtuous activities that makes it true that the secondarily happy man is happy because of his morally virtuous activities. *His* morally virtuous activities only count as *eudaimonia* because '*they*' — *his* activities — are connected to *his* activities of contemplation. But if, as Cooper said, the secondarily happy man engages in no theoretical study, and hence his morally virtuous actions stand in no relation to any theoretical contemplation he also engages in, how can he be happy at all?

Perhaps Cooper would reply that he answers the question (235) when he explains that, despite the passage I quoted above, the connection between contemplation and virtuous action that matters is the general connection. He says:

Given the common character of both these types of activities [contemplative and morally virtuous] as expressions of the perfection of human reason, then, Aristotle seems to be saying: if one of them because of its kinship to the divine activity counts as happiness, so does the other. On this view, the whole perfection of human reason, in each and every one of its aspects, gives us a share in that wonderful good . . . Because we *can* contemplate, the

other uses of our minds, when they express virtues proper to us as human beings, also . . . give us a share in happiness.

But if the kinship of virtuous activity to the activity of the gods explains why morally virtuous action in an individual who does not engage in contemplation counts as happiness, it explains why ‘each’ activity which expresses the perfection of human reason counts as happiness. For each of them has some kinship to the divine activity. And this appears to produce a result which conflicts with Cooper’s explanation of the conclusion of the function argument at 1098a16–18.

Recall that Cooper maintained that the second clause of that sentence is added in order to make sure that the reader does not think that ‘someone will count as having achieved the human good just because he has acquired and exercised the lesser virtues, without having the highest and best,’ or that someone will ‘count as having achieved happiness by exercising only one or some of these virtues . . .’ (225). But now, if the fact that an activity bears some kinship to the divine activity makes it the case that it counts as happiness, it must also be true that, on its own, a single activity expressing one of the lesser virtues counts as happiness since it does indeed bear the necessary kinship to the divine activity. And this was what was supposed to be ruled out by the second clause of 1098a16–18. Further, whereas we had been told (225) that Aristotle aims to rule out the possibility that someone can attain happiness ‘by exercising only . . . some of the virtues,’ and Cooper emphasizes that happiness requires that one exercise *all* of the virtues, we are now told that it is possible to attain happiness by exercising *only* some of these virtues.

The same point applies to Cooper’s explanation of the secondarily happy life quoted above: ‘It is reasonable of Aristotle to say that this life, too, is a happy one, *since* [my italics] it contains virtuous activities, activities of the type which constitute happiness . . . (232)’. If the fact that a life contains virtuous activities of the type which constitute happiness suffices to make it a happy life, then people who exhibit only some of the lesser virtues must also count as happy since their lives contain virtuous activities of the type which constitute happiness. Likewise, the exercise of some but not all virtues now counts as happiness whereas that was what 1098a16–18 was supposed to have denied.

Cooper’s aim in this paper is to offer an interpretation of Aristotle’s accounts of happiness in Books I and X which makes them cohere with one another. But whereas the conclusion of Book I’s function argument, on his interpretation, claims that *all* virtuous activities and *especially* contemplative activity is necessary for happiness, his interpretation of Book X now denies that contemplation or all virtuous activities are necessary for happiness.

Furthermore, if Cooper’s explanations (on 232 and 235) of why the virtuous man who does not engage in contemplation is nevertheless happy is assumed to be correct, why do these explanations not also show that the

non-virtuous contemplative man is happy? If the fact that a life devoid of contemplation contains virtuous activities suffices to make it a happy life (232), the man who engages in contemplation but not virtuous activities should also be happy. If the kinship of one's rational activities to the activities of the gods makes one's life happy, since human contemplation — 'complete happiness' — bears a greater resemblance than morally virtuous actions to divine contemplation, human contemplation divorced from morally virtuous actions has a stronger claim to count as happiness than morally virtuous actions divorced from contemplation. So if, as Cooper holds, morally virtuous actions on their own count as happiness for the reasons he has stated, it is even clearer that contemplation on its own counts as happiness. The explanation of the happiness of the unintellectual morally virtuous man appears to commit Aristotle to what Cooper hoped to avoid: the happiness of the immoral contemplative man and inconsistency with the earlier part of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The issue of the secondarily happy life is connected to some unclarity in Cooper's use of the term 'eudaimonia' as well as his use of it to refer to the entire combination of virtuous activities. He cannot avoid the above problem about whether all or some virtuous activities are needed for happiness in the following way: by saying that the point of 1098a16–18 was to say that *complete* happiness is comprised of the activities of all the virtues and does not exist when only the activities of the lesser virtues are present; while in Book X, similarity to divine activity explains why any activity counts as (simply) happiness. For he has argued that by 'complete happiness' Aristotle means not the sum of all kinds of virtuous activities — intellectual and moral — but contemplation alone as opposed to morally virtuous activity (227–29). And there is no other phrase such as 'primary happiness' that Aristotle ever uses such that Cooper could hope to distinguish its meaning from the meaning he (Cooper) gives to 'complete happiness,' and claim that 1098a16–18 is talking about primary happiness (meaning all virtuous activities) rather than complete happiness (contemplation) or happiness (which can be exemplified by the non-intellectual but virtuous man).

The difficulty arises in part from Cooper's fluctuating use of 'happiness' to refer sometimes to a whole composed of elements that are activities, and at other times to refer to the elements (activities) comprising the whole. For example, he speaks of the morally virtuous activities in a life, i.e. the *elements* of a whole, as *eudaimonia*.<sup>3</sup> But according to the function argument, Cooper

<sup>3</sup> 234: '... a certain activity, or certain activities, in that life are entitled to be called "happiness" ... divine and human contemplation are the only things that are entitled to be described without qualification as *eudaimonia*.' 235: 'Aristotle's claim seems rather to be that those very morally virtuous activities ... only count as a (kind of) *eudaimonia* because of some connection in which they stand to the activities of contemplative study in which the happy person also engages. These latter, by contrast, get their title to the name *eudaimonia* directly... it is the happiness of the human contemplative activities that makes morally virtuous activities also instances of happiness... if one of [these types

had said, happiness is a *combination* of activities, not a single one: ‘. . . in describing the activities that make up happiness . . . Aristotle makes it clear that he thinks of virtuous activities of all types — moral as well as intellectual — as included within happiness, that is, as all of them constituents of it’ (221; cf. 225, 226, 229). If happiness includes, is made up of, is constituted by, virtuous activities of all types, then none of those elements that make up happiness can *be* happiness.<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, earlier Cooper said that happiness is ‘a comprehensive end, including other goods somehow in it’ (223). A comprehensive end including goods in itself cannot at the same time be an element in such a comprehensive end. So what is it that ‘by its presence in a person’s life, makes him and his life a happy one’ (228; cf. 233, n. 17)? *All* kinds of virtuous activities taken together or *each* kind of virtuous activity? These are incompatible alternatives. Cooper’s explanation of 1098a16–18 was that all are needed whereas now, on Cooper’s reading of Book X, it turns out that not all are needed.

As Cooper says (233, n. 17), Aristotle’s description of the unintellectual morally virtuous man as happy must be derivative on a use of ‘happiness’ that applies to the activities that such a person engages in. So we need some explanation of this prior use which Cooper does not provide and which does not seem to be available. It cannot be ‘happiness’ as explained by Cooper since that is composed of all virtuous activities and the life of the unintellectual morally virtuous man lacks intellectual activities. Nor can this prior use of ‘happiness’ be identified with something like ‘secondary happiness’ used to refer to morally virtuous activities alone as ‘complete happiness’ is applied to contemplation alone.<sup>5</sup> For Cooper, to say that contemplation is ‘complete [of activity] because of its kinship to the divine activity counts as happiness, so does the other.’ But on the same pages Cooper says that ‘virtuous activities of all types . . . are entitled . . . to be counted as *elements in our eudaimonia*’ (234, my italics), and the human good [viz. happiness] is ‘a *combination* of all the activities in which these [rational] functions . . . express themselves . . .’ (235, my italics). And both uses are found in the first sentence on p. 235: ‘Aristotle’s claim seems rather to be that those very morally virtuous activities, which *do* constitute a human being’s *eudaimonia* [combination of activities], only count as a (kind of) *eudaimonia* [element in a combination] because of some connection in which they stand to the activities of contemplative study in which the happy person also engages.’

<sup>4</sup> In Cooper’s interpretation of the beginning of X.7 he offers an explanation of what Aristotle means by saying that ‘the activity of the most complete virtue, philosophical wisdom, *is* itself happiness’ (227). He says that Aristotle means that contemplation is especially needed for happiness. But what I am now asking is: what does *Cooper* mean in saying that a morally virtuous action counts as happiness? He clearly cannot offer the same explanation here as he does of Aristotle’s apparent assertion of identity between contemplation and happiness at the start of X.7. On p. 226 Cooper recognizes the incompatibility between saying that happiness is a single virtuous activity and saying that it is that activity together with all other virtuous activities.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. (235): ‘According to this derivation, “complete happiness” is found in excellent contemplative study, but happiness is also found in morally virtuous activity.’

happiness' means that it most fully satisfies the preliminary criteria for happiness — pleasantness, etc. (227–29). But on this use people can exemplify complete happiness without exemplifying happiness<sup>6</sup> and therefore without being happy because, for example, although they engage in contemplation, they are not morally virtuous or have suffered severe misfortune.<sup>7</sup>

We might try to say correspondingly that morally virtuous activities are 'secondary happiness' because they satisfy the preliminary criteria to a lesser degree than contemplation. But as the possession of 'complete happiness' does not suffice for happiness, even more clearly the fact that the morally virtuous man exhibits 'secondary happiness' cannot by itself suffice for happiness or a happy man.

Cooper gets into difficulty because there is, in fact, no use of '*eudaimonia*' in the *Nicomachean Ethics* corresponding to his use in which it refers to a complex or combination of activities. It is curious to see how Cooper pushes this idea on to the text. Consider again 1098a16–18. It has two clauses: [A] the human good turns out to be virtuous activity of soul, and [B] if there is more than one virtue, [the human good turns out to be activity] of the best and most complete (*teleiōtaten*) virtue. Cooper paraphrases this (225):

[A] happiness is virtuous human activity, and [B] if there [is] more than one human virtue, *happiness is activity of all of them*, including most particularly activity of the best among the virtues.

Of course, nothing in Aristotle's statement corresponds to the italicized statement. How then does Cooper justify its introduction? This he says is required by 'the general tenor of the argument . . . Aristotle obviously means to imply that happiness should involve *all* of a human being's natural works being done in according with the virtue appropriate to each . . .' (225). But even if we accept this vague appeal to the argument's 'general tenor', Cooper's statement does not justify the assertion that happiness is 'activity of complete virtue, of the sum total of the moral and intellectual virtues' (224). For it is possible that all of A's 'natural works' should be done according to the appropriate virtue, without it being true that A exercises *every* virtue during his life.

<sup>6</sup> Thus, Cooper describes 'complete happiness' — contemplation — as an '*element in our happiness*' (233, my italics).

<sup>7</sup> Near the end of his paper (234), Cooper says that human contemplation on its own can 'be described without qualification as [not complete *eudaimonia* but] *eudaimonia*.' He does not explain what '*eudaimonia*' is supposed to mean here. Previously he had said (229) that 'complete happiness' refers only to 'one of the constituents of happiness and not happiness as a whole,' and thought that he needed to explain away Aristotle's statement (at 1178b32) that contemplation is (simply) happiness. He goes on to say (235) that contemplation is called '*eudaimonia*' 'directly, because of [its] intrinsic character.' But Aristotle believes that activities count as happiness only when certain distinct necessary conditions of happiness are satisfied. For example the non-happy immoral contemplator (along with many other possible cases) shows that it is not true that the intrinsic character of contemplation suffices to make it a case of happiness.



And it is far from obvious that anything that Aristotle says in the function argument or anywhere else in the *Nicomachean Ethics* entails that the happy man must exercise *every* virtue at some time in his life. For example, it is hardly obvious that Aristotle thinks that someone who devotes their life to intellectual work and achieves happiness must, in Aristotle's opinion, at some time in their life have exercised the virtue of courage in a battle or some other dangerous situation.

Nor does the assumption that in order to be happy 'all of a human being's natural works [must be] done in according with the virtue . . . appropriate to each' justify the assertion that happiness *is* the complex which is the activities of all the virtues rather than the activities themselves. We have seen that Aristotle calls contemplation primary *eudaimonia* and morally virtuous activity a secondary kind of *eudaimonia*. But there is no use of 'eudaimonia' to be found in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where it refers to the complex of virtuous activities. Since 'eudaimonia' can refer to either intellectual activity or virtuous action, *eudaimonia* is a kind of genus even if, like *soul*, it is not a proper genus. The definition of happiness at the conclusion of the function argument should allow both kinds of activity to count as happiness, just as a definition of *animal* should allow both a dog and a cat to count as animals. That is easily achieved. 1098a16–18's first clause says that happiness is activity of human virtue. Well, contemplation is activity of intellectual virtue and moral action is activity of human virtue. Hence, both count as *eudaimonia* (as long as certain further conditions hold, as Aristotle will go on to make clear). Book X explains that the first is perfect *eudaimonia* and the second is a secondary form of *eudaimonia*.

In conclusion, then, I believe that Cooper has failed in his project (218) of offering an interpretation of Aristotle's views of happiness in *Nicomachean Ethics* which would not make Book X inconsistent with the rest of the *Nicomachean Ethics* by allowing that a successful thinker could be happy without being morally virtuous; and would not construe Aristotle as taking back in Book X, without explanation, what he had said in the earlier part of the work. For two reasons: (1) Cooper has Book I emphasize that all kinds of virtuous activities, and especially contemplation, are necessary for happiness, whereas his understanding of Book X denies that all activities, including contemplation, are necessary for happiness; and (2) Cooper's explanation of Book X's position on the happiness of the non-intellectual virtuous man entails that the non-virtuous intellectual man can also be happy.]

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