

ARISTOTLE'S EUDAIMONIA AND TWO CONCEPTIONS OF HAPPINESS

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Abstract

Are you happy? This question is asked of people by friends, parents and psychiatrists alike. What happiness consists of for each person seems, at first glance, to be entirely subjective in that it is up to each individual person to define what the happy-making ingredients of her life are.

This dissertation centrally involves an interpretation of Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, often translated as 'happiness'. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is an inquiry into the chief good for human beings, and according to Aristotle everyone agrees that this chief good is 'happiness', however there is major disagreement about what 'happiness' consists of.

What follows critically interprets Aristotle's *eudaimonia* through a close reading of his arguments. Once Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is explicated, it is used to question the supposedly subjective conception of happiness that the happiness literature argues is pervasive. Finally, Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is defended as a theory of well-being against a charge of *perfectionism*. It is argued that Aristotle's *eudaimonia* commits its adherents to maximising virtuous activity at all times, that is, to perfect themselves. It is this interpretation of Aristotle that seeks to undermine *eudaimonia* as a plausible theory of well-being, and I end this dissertation by providing a response to the objection from perfectionism.

This project attempts, fundamentally, to show that Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is not simply an intellectual curiosity: studying *eudaimonia* can help change the way we live our lives, and for the better.

I, George Grech, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 40000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2007 and as a candidate for the degree of MPhil 06/2008]; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between [2008] and [2009].

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To my friends and our shared memories.

For Dawn, my partner in happiness.

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Chapter I: Aristotle's *Eudaimonia*

I.I Introduction

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*¹ (*EN*) opens with an inquiry into the human good. Since every sort of project one undertakes seeks a particular good, the good *simpliciter* will be what all human endeavours ultimately aim toward.² Referring to a number of practices such as bridle-making, Aristotle argues that there are activities which are undertaken solely for the sake of something else, since such activities are done for the sake of an end (e.g. horsemanship) which is over and above bridle-making; the end of horsemanship is more desirable than the end of bridle-making because bridle-making is pursued solely for the sake of horsemanship.³ It is a final activity, or the product of such an activity, which Aristotle seeks in order to give an account of what the human good consists of.⁴

Subordinate ends, those ends pursued for the sake of something else, as bridle-making is pursued for horsemanship, are less desirable than sovereign ends, those ends for which the subordinate ends are chosen.⁵ The most sovereign expertise is that of the politician; political expertise contains the ends of other expertises, as political expertise chooses what ends the city should pursue, and also chooses which, and to what extent, each group of people should learn and practise each expertise.⁶ Because it is the most sovereign and least subordinate, the end of political expertise must be the human good as it makes use of, and itself contains, the other expertises in the city.⁷ Aristotle calls this chief good--

¹ Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans: Christopher Rowe. Commentary: Sarah Broadie. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

² Aristotle's argument supports the conditional conclusion: "If then, there is some end in our practical projects that we wish for because of itself..." (*EN* I.2 1094a18-19). Since any individual undertaking seems to aim at some particular good, *if there is* a good sought only for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else (the good *simpliciter*), it will be known as the good "which all things seek" (*EN* I.1 1094a3). The good *simpliciter* is the subject matter of *EN*.

³ *EN* I.1 1094a4-7.

⁴ *EN* I.1 1094a9-16.

⁵ *EN* I.1 1094a15-18.

⁶ *EN* I.2 1094a27-b3.

⁷ *EN* I.2 1094b4-8.

that which is not sought for the sake of anything else⁸, "*eudaimonia*"⁹, but notes that there is a dispute over what *eudaimonia* consists in.¹⁰

Aristotle argues that *eudaimonia* can be understood by looking at the characteristic function of human beings: doing well as a human seems to reside¹¹ in the characteristic function of humans.¹² The good for human beings is "the activity of the soul in accordance with excellence and if there are more excellences than one, in accordance with the best and most complete."¹³ Aristotle adds in the following sentence that "furthermore it [the good use of the function] will be this [*eudaimonia*] in a complete life."¹⁴ At this stage Aristotle has accomplished his initial goal: to sketch an outline of *eudaimonia*, and to fill in the details later.¹⁵ There are many arguments which Aristotle must, and does, provide in order to fill in the details, but the sketch he provides from the beginning of Book One of the *EN* to the end of its seventh chapter is enough to create interpretive problems.

Aristotle's function argument (FA) raises a problem in that the function (*ergon*) of humans must be what is (*idion*),¹⁶ our distinguishing feature.¹⁷ The FA arrives at the conclusion that the function of human beings is a practical life of rational activity, as the

⁸ *EN* I.7 1097a29-b22.

⁹ *Eudaimonia* is often rendered as 'happiness' in translations. To avoid problems which can crop up (e.g. Cooper (2000), pg. 89, fn. 1) with such translations, I use the term *eudaimonia* to refer to Aristotle's chief human good. This will keep *eudaimonia* and 'happiness' distinct until I turn to compare the two in Chapter Three.

¹⁰ *EN* I.4 1095a19-26.

¹¹ 'Reside' means 'to be located' here. What doing well means, for a human, is located in an analysis of his characteristic function.

¹² *EN* I.7 1097b28.

¹³ *EN* I.7 1098a16-18.

¹⁴ *EN* I.7 1098a19-20 – insertions mine.

¹⁵ *EN* I.7 1098a21-22.

¹⁶ *Idion* is rendered as "peculiar to" in Rowe (2002, 1098a1) and in Kraut (1979, pg 467). *Idion* is understood here to be a test for a "distinguishing feature of" humans; the feature of humans that distinguishes us from other species (Liddell & Scott (1968, pg. 818, IV): "...but also, *distinguishing feature* in a relative sense...Arist. *Top.*128b25"). Aristotle's argument from 1097a32-b8 considers different candidates for the distinguishing feature of humans. *Idion* first appears in the *EN* at I.7 1098a1: "we are looking for what is peculiar to human beings."

¹⁷ The FA is an argument that identifies *eudaimonia* (happiness) using an account of the human function as a basis. Detailed discussion of the FA occurs in Section 1.2.1.

capacity for and activity of reason simply *is* the characteristic work in which humans engage in. A human who is functioning well is one whose activities are in accordance with reason, and accompanied by their respective excellences.^{18 19} In *EN* Book X.7, Aristotle argues that the activity in accordance with the best and most complete excellence, *sophia*,²⁰ is contemplation.²¹ However, there is a problem in understanding contemplation to be part of the characteristic work in which humans engage, for the activity of the gods is also one of reflection, and human reflective activity is valuable –more valuable than any other activity available to us– in its affinity to the activity of the gods.²² If the conclusion of the FA is meant to identify the *human* function, and thus what it means for us to do well, can Aristotle claim that this reflective activity of ours²³ is the distinguishing feature of human beings, while being similar to the activity that the gods engage in continuously?²⁴ As Ackrill²⁵ notes:

Aristotle has clearly stated that the principle of the *ergon* argument is that one must ask what powers and activities are peculiar to and distinctive of man. He has answered by referring to man's power of thought; and that this is what distinguishes man from lower animals is standard doctrine. But no argument has been adduced to suggest that one type of thought is any more distinctive of man than another. In fact practical reason, so far from being in any way less distinctive of man than theoretical, is really more so; for man shares with Aristotle's god the activity of *theōria*.²⁶

Aristotle, having identified the human good with the use of reason in accordance with the excellences, appears to be diverging from what is *idion* to us when he argues in *EN* Book X

¹⁸ *EN* I.7 1098a15-16. *Aretē* rendered as 'excellence' in Rowe (2002), as 'virtue' in Ross (1925). I treat 'excellence' and 'virtue' interchangeably.

¹⁹ The notion of proper excellence will be examined in I.2: The Function Argument.

²⁰ *Sophia*: intellectual accomplishment.

²¹ *EN* X.7 1177a19.

²² *EN* X.8 1178b23-28.

²³ Our activity is god-like, but not god-given. It comes from some process of learning or training, and practice (*EN* I.9 1099b14-19).

²⁴ Richard Kraut questions the FA in this way: "Does it (the FA) entail that our happiness does not consist in contemplation? After all, we share this activity with Aristotle's god, and so it is not in any straightforward way peculiar to us" (Kraut, Richard. 'The Peculiar Function of Human Beings'. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* IX, No. 3, 1979. Insertion mine.)

²⁵ Ackrill, J.L. "Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1974, reprinted in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed., A. O. Rorty, Berkeley 1980.

²⁶ Ackrill (1974, pg. 352, Insertion mine).

that the highest good for humans is located specifically in the excellent use of our theoretical faculties. How can the distinguishing characteristic of human beings be reflective activity if this does not distinguish between humans and gods? Aristotle argues that an activity which is similar²⁷ to the activity of the gods is the best activity that humans can engage in, but since this reflective activity shares an affinity with the activity of the gods it cannot be the proper conclusion of the function argument. The conclusion of the function argument is the first problem I will discuss, because the distinguishing characteristic of human beings must first be correctly ascertained in order to understand what it means for a human to be functioning well according to Aristotle.

In *EN* Book X Aristotle returns to the FA and argues that man is an intelligence²⁸ most of all: intelligence is our distinguishing characteristic.²⁹ A reading which emphasizes this passage concludes that Aristotle has finally given his full answer to the question of what *eudaimonia* consists in: "Happiness (*eudaimonia*) consists in just one good: this is the virtuous exercise of the theoretical part of reason, that is, the activity called *theōria*.³⁰ Every other good (including the ethical virtues) is desirable for the sake of this one activity."³¹ Theoretical activity is thus the activity in accordance with the 'best and most complete' excellence and *eudaimonia* is fully achieved in activity in accordance with this, and only this, excellence. If *eudaimonia* were to consist solely in theoretical activity, there would be a difficulty in reconciling this claim with the conclusion of the FA where Aristotle first states that the human good is the activity of the soul in accordance with excellence (i.e., excellence in general). When Aristotle states that "if there are more excellences than one, [activity of the soul] in accordance with the best and the most complete" in Book I is he setting the

²⁷ Aristotle refers to the relationship between human and divine contemplation as the human version bearing "some kind of semblance of this sort of activity" (X.8 1178b28).

²⁸ "And each of us would seem actually to *be* this, given that each is his authoritative and better element." (*EN* X.7 1178a3-4).

²⁹ *EN* X.7 1178a4-7.

³⁰ *Theōria* will be examined in detail in Chapter Two. For present purposes, it will suffice to have *theōria* understood as an activity in which one brings to mind the knowledge he already has; it is a reflective activity where one is reflecting on the objects of theoretical wisdom (X.7 1177a24-27).

³¹ Kraut, Richard. *Aristotle on the Human Good*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1989. Page 5, insertions mine.

stage for the arguments he provides in Book X?³² It seems as if Aristotle is providing two accounts of *eudaimonia*, and a tension arises in interpretations between those which understand *eudaimonia* simply as good *theōria*, and those which understand *eudaimonia* to refer to a life filled with excellent activity in general.

Richard Kraut's *Aristotle on the Human Good* interprets the role of theoretical and practical excellent activity in a life in a remarkably clear way: "A life can contain ethical activity without giving primacy to that activity—that is, without being a life in accordance with ethical virtue."³³ On Kraut's view, there is no upper limit to the positive contribution that contemplation can give to one's life.³⁴ What follows from this, however, is that if I give up a certain amount of contemplative activity in order to act in accordance with practical excellence, I will be worse off than I would otherwise have been had I spent my time contemplating. To argue that one is worse off for acting in accordance with practical excellence as opposed to theoretical excellence does not sit well with some of the claims that Aristotle himself makes in Book X, for example: "In so far as he is a human being, and shares his life with others, he [the person engaged in reflective activity] *chooses* to do the deeds that accord with excellence, and so he will *need* such things [resources] for the purposes of living a human life."³⁵ A *eudaimon* will choose to act according to practical excellence, and when he does, is he worse off for it? When one engages in practically excellent activities is he missing out on what he could have had if he led a hermit-like existence where he contemplated as much as possible and thus engaged in the activity that the gods engage in continually? Understanding what Aristotle means by 'complete excellence' is thus an important step towards defining *eudaimonia*.

Aristotle, in the sentence which follows the reference to the excellence which is 'the best and most complete', completes his definition of *eudaimonia* with the requirement that, whatever 'complete excellence' is, acting in accordance with it will only become *eudaimonia*

³² *EN* I.7 1098a16-18, insertions mine.

³³ *Ibid*, page 25.

³⁴ *Ibid*, pages 40-1. Kraut notes Aristotle's conclusion that "to those who have more of reflection more happiness belongs" (*EN* X.8 1178b30-31). He uses this passage and others to support his view that Aristotle is committed to "the thesis that more contemplation is *always* better than less" (Kraut, 1989. P. 39, emphasis mine).

³⁵ *EN* X.8 1178b5-8, emphasis and insertions mine.

in a complete life.³⁶ When Aristotle says that "...a single swallow does not make spring, nor does a single day; in the same way, neither does a single day, or a short time, make a man blessed and happy [*eudaimon*]" is he implying that a 'complete' life simply refers to the length of a life filled with excellent activity?³⁷ On one reading *eudaimonia* is understood as excellent activity together with a life long enough for this excellent activity to become *eudaimonia*.³⁸ Furthermore, on this reading external goods are necessary only insofar as they promote excellent activity. On another reading 'in a complete life' refers to the length of life *and* the need for external goods in addition to excellent activity. One cannot become *eudaimon* instantaneously by acting in ways which are accompanied by excellence, nor can one become *eudaimon* simply by engaging in excellent activity. It is not just excellent activity that *eudaimonia* consists in: friends, health, honour and more are needed. *Eudaimonia* is an ideal life which Aristotle will describe in the remainder of *EN*. But what precisely does a complete life consist in, for Aristotle?

I have referred to four areas of inquiry in Aristotle in this introduction, and interpretations of each of these areas will provide an account of what Aristotle's *eudaimonia* consists in. In this chapter, I will first lay out the FA and explain what the conclusion of the FA means in terms of understanding what the human good is for Aristotle. I will then devote the rest of this chapter to the role that *idion* occupies in Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia*. I will argue that the good *theōria* that humans engage in is the distinguishing characteristic of human beings, for although Aristotle's gods engage in *theōria*, human beings are the only species that have physical limitations and also engage in contemplation. I will turn to the questions I have outlined regarding 'the best and most complete' excellence and 'in a complete life' in the second chapter. The first two chapters of this dissertation are dedicated entirely to understanding exactly what Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is.

³⁶ *EN* I.7 1098a18-19.

³⁷ *EN* I.7 1098a19-20, insertion mine.

³⁸ Brown, Eric. 'Wishing for Fortune, Choosing Activity: Aristotle on External Goods and Happiness'. *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 21 (2005): 57-81.

III The Function of Human Beings

The function of human beings consists of two aspects. The first is the FA itself: the procedure by which Aristotle arrives at the conclusion that humans *do* have a typifying activity. The second is the *idion* test, which ultimately selects what is peculiar to human beings: to live an active life in accordance with reason. I explicate each aspect in turn.

III.I The Function Argument

Aristotle argues in Book I Chapter 7 of *EN* that for those who have a characteristic function or activity, doing well seems to reside in that function.³⁹ Aristotle turns to examine human functioning as Plato does in the *Republic*. Aristotle argues that what it means for one to do well, say as a flute-player, is for this person to exercise his characteristic activity well: the good of a flute player resides in playing the flute well. Plato argues in a similar way that the good of an art gives us a particular good, not a general one. For example, a doctor who practices medicine well gives us good health, and a ship's captain who is an expert at navigation, safety at sea.⁴⁰ What is common to both Aristotle and Plato is that they first examine particular goods; what it means for a human being to do well as a doctor, or a captain of a ship. But Aristotle wonders if a man, as a human being, has his own function. If so, the function that is common to mankind would be where 'doing well as a man' would be located: "So does a carpenter or a shoemaker have certain functions and activities, while a human being has none, and is by nature a do-nothing?"⁴¹ This is a rhetorical question, for Aristotle has already connected the good for a particular sort of human (experts in various crafts) with the ends towards which these people typically aim. The examples of the carpenter and the shoemaker are used by Aristotle to explain what having a characteristic function entails. Having established what it means to have a characteristic function, Aristotle turns to the question of what that function is for human beings, "if indeed there is some function that belongs to [them]."⁴²

³⁹ *EN* I.7 1097b25-28.

⁴⁰ Plato. *Complete Works*. 'The Republic' Trans: G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve in Cooper, 1997. Hackett Publishing. *Republic* I. 346a4-5.

⁴¹ *EN* I.7 1097b28-30.

⁴² *EN* I.7 1097b28.

Aristotle then turns to examine the parts of a human being: human eyes have a characteristic function (seeing), just as human feet and hands do. Aristotle's search for the human function is one which arrives at its conclusion by rejecting candidates which are not peculiar to humans. If there is a distinguishing feature of human beings, it cannot simply be the function of living, because plants do so as well. Aristotle looks at different things humans do: eat, grow, live, perceive and notes that plants and animals engage in this sort of behaviour as well.⁴³ So these things, though humans do grow, live, perceive, etc. cannot be the distinguishing feature of human beings. While it is good for a human being to be eating the right kind of food and getting a good amount of sleep, these are not activities which are peculiar to a human being; a dog's eating well is good for him. So the good for human beings, being located in what the peculiar function of human beings is, cannot be something which is shared by plants or animals. It would be absurd to reach a conclusion regarding the characteristic function of humans that was shared with many other forms of life such as oxen, horses and plants, for that would imply that there is no end at which humans characteristically aim which sets us apart from these organisms.

Aristotle finally turns to the sort of life which appears to be distinctively human, and this is a life that possesses reason, where possessing reason refers both to the ability to be obedient to reason and the ability to use reason to think for oneself. We are obedient to reason when we take advice from our parents, e.g., when we are advised to study hard and to spend less time watching television. So in one sense our 'possessing reason' means that we are receptive to the advice of other people, and Aristotle argues that this can be seen given our custom for reprimanding or encouraging others.⁴⁴ In the other sense of 'possessing reason', we are thinking creatures: we observe and interact with the world around us and use our capacity for reason in an ongoing basis. The human function, our distinguishing characteristic, is thus to lead an active life in which actions are in accordance with reason. Being active in the way Aristotle describes here⁴⁵ is to be active in a distinctively human way. This faculty for reasoning is what allows humans to *seek* the good

⁴³ *EN* I.7 1098a1-4.

⁴⁴ *EN* I.13 1102b35-1103a1.

⁴⁵ *EN* I.7 1098a7 for the reference to the "active life".

which animals and plants do not have a share in, namely, *eudaimonia*.⁴⁶ The function of human beings is not the “excellent use of reason”; it is to live and act accompanied by reason.⁴⁷ Reasoning actively is the distinguishing characteristic of humans. We *are* as human as we can be when we engage in the active use of our capacity for reason, and the excellent use of this characteristic function is what allows us to potentially become *eudaimones*.

The FA is the way in which Aristotle arrives at the conclusion of what the function of human beings is. Consider what the structure of the FA would look like on interpretations which read the conclusion of the FA as the ‘excellent use of reason’:

- i) Human beings have a characteristic function,⁴⁸ and
- ii) Since for any being that has a characteristic function, doing well is understood to reside in that function,⁴⁹ then
- iii) The characteristic function of human beings is to reason excellently.⁵⁰

Reading the FA in this way is what motivates the identification of man’s good simply with man’s function.⁵¹ This is analogous to arguing that since the function of a knife is to cut, an

⁴⁶ EN I.7 1097b27-1098a19 & X.8 1178b28-29.

⁴⁷ It is not clear to me that there is a substantive difference between “in accordance with reason” and “not apart from reason” in Aristotle’s account. Broadie suggests that “accompanied by reason” can accurately cover both phrases, even if they refer to different parts of the soul (Broadie, 2002 p. 277).

⁴⁸ EN I.7 1098a8.

⁴⁹ EN I.7 1097b27-28.

⁵⁰ Gomez-Lobo, Alfonso. ‘The Ergon Inference’. *Phronesis*, Vol. XXXIV/2. 1989. Gomez-Lobo argues that this is an incorrect interpretation of the *ergon* argument: “Virtually all commentators I have consulted fail to realize that what Aristotle requires in the context, as a first step, is a neutral, purely descriptive specification of the *ergon* of man” (Gomez-Lobo, 1989. P. 176). I agree with Gomez-Lobo, as the FA arrives at a descriptive conclusion about what the function of human beings is and doing this *well* involves a separate step.

⁵¹ Kraut 1979, p.467 “...our function consists in the *excellent* use of reason” (emphasis mine). See also Ackrill (1974), “Consideration of man’s *ergon* (specific function or characteristic work) leads Aristotle to the thesis that *eudaimonia*, man’s highest good, is an active life of ‘the element that has a rational principle” (p. 351). Ackrill here identifies *eudaimonia* directly with the function of man, where it should be identified with the qualified exercise of the function: carrying out the function well. Kraut identifies our function with *eudaimonia* (by identifying the function of human beings directly with its excellent use). Cooper (1975) appears to understand the FA in the way I described: “a thing’s excellence is the essential condition of its performing *well* its *ergon*” (p. 145, emphasis mine). A knife’s sharpness is the essential condition by which it cuts well. Correspondingly, it is the excellences which are the essential condition by which human beings carry out an active life, well.

excellent knife is simply one that cuts. But even dull knives can cut, e.g. a butter knife can cut a tomato. It will be a lengthy and tiresome process to complete, but this knife will cut the tomato. However, we identify a good knife, rather, with one that is sharp and cuts *well*. This is a separate evaluative step from the descriptive step which states that the function of a knife is one of cutting. A knife that is very sharp will be an excellent knife, for it cuts very well. The knife's function (to cut), is carried out well when it is accompanied by its proper excellence (sharpness).⁵² But what does this mean for humans? Firstly, to identify the function of human beings directly with the *excellent* use of reason is an incorrect reading when looking at what Aristotle actually says during the FA itself:

If the function of a human being is activity of soul in accordance with reason, or not apart from reason, and the function, we say, of a given sort of practitioner and a good practitioner of that sort is generically the same, as for example in the case of a cithara-player and a good cithara-player, and this is so without qualification in all cases, when a difference in respect of excellence is added to the function (for what belongs to the citharist is to play the cithara, to the good citharist to play it well)—if all this is so, and a human being's function we posit as being a kind of life, and this life as being activity of soul and actions accompanied by reason, and it belongs to a good man to perform these well and finely, and each thing is completed well when it possesses its proper excellence: if all this is so, the human good turns out to be activity of the soul in accordance with excellence (and if there are more excellences than one, in accordance with the best and most complete)⁵³

Using the lengthy passage quoted above, I interpret the FA in the following way:

- i) Mankind's function is an active life in accordance with reason, and
- ii) A cithara player and a good cithara player have generically the same function (playing the cithara), and
- iii) When one looks at differences in excellence one can ascertain whether or not a function is being carried out well. So, since

⁵² Is it arbitrary to conclude that the 'proper excellence' of a knife is its sharpness? Imagine using a butter knife to cut a tomato. It will cut the tomato with the proper application of force. But its dull edge will also spill the pulp over the cutting board, and mangle the texture of the tomato. Cutting a tomato is necessary but not sufficient for cutting it well. The act of cutting a tomato well (i.e. in distinct slices without mangling the texture) is carried out by an instrument that is capable of carrying out this function (a knife, or any instrument designed for slicing), and carrying it out well (a sharp one). Accurately distinguishing the excellence of the knife would likely require an in depth analysis of the difference between slicing, cutting, mashing or squashing a given tomato, which although interesting is not the point of the current thesis. It does not appear arbitrary to me in any way to conclude that the excellence of a knife is its sharpness, for many knives cut, but the sharp ones are the ones which do so *well*. A good member of the class of instruments which can cut is one which cuts well, and it will cut well if it is sharp.

⁵³ *EN* I.7 1098a8-1098a18.

- iv) The human function is a kind of active life where actions are accompanied by reason,
- v) And a man who does this well does so when his actions are accompanied by their respective excellences, then
- vi) The good human being is one who leads an active life where his actions are accompanied by reason (he is carrying out his function) *and* his actions possess their respective excellences.

The use of the human function is thus a necessary but not a sufficient condition for *eudaimonia*. Humans must⁵⁴ and do have a distinguishing characteristic which typifies us: a rational capacity, and our function consists in acting in accordance with this capacity. However, this function is generically the same for all humans, and differences with respect to excellence are needed in order to understand what it means for a human to do well. Just as a bad flute player and a good flute player make the same generic sounds (i.e. flute sounds) whilst playing the flute, the person who plays the flute well is the one we say is doing well as a flute player. For Aristotle, the use of reason is necessary as a generic function, but the difference in excellence is what must be looked at in order to differentiate between a human being functioning *per se* and a human that is functioning *well*. With this in mind, Aristotle provides an evaluative criterion by which to understand the good of human beings. The good human will be human in that his actions are accompanied by reason and good in that his actions are in accordance with the relevant excellence(s): "each thing is completed well when it possesses its proper excellence."⁵⁵ The goodness of a human's actions supervenes on the actions being excellent, not simply on a human's acting. Of course, it is not as easy a task to understand the excellence of a human as it is for a knife. A knife's excellence is sharpness, but can every possible human action be evaluated by a single excellence? For present purposes, it will suffice to have shown that Aristotle's FA is meant simply to provide a description of what human function is. The analysis with respect to excellence is separate from the FA; an evaluation which looks at an action and seeks to see whether or not *this* action is courageous, cowardly or foolhardy.⁵⁶ But even if the FA provides a descriptive conclusion and the evaluation of excellence occurs at a stage separate from the descriptive stage, the description of the distinguishing characteristic of humans

⁵⁴ Else there would be nothing over and above sustenance (the life of oxen) that we aim towards.

⁵⁵ *EN* I.7 1098a15-16.

⁵⁶ Courage is treated explicitly by Aristotle in *EN* III.6 – III.9.

appears to be controversial: as was said earlier, how can what is *idion* to man, man's distinguishing characteristic, also be an activity of the gods?

III.II The Idion test

When Aristotle examines the excellences in *EN* Book I, he refers to them as 'human excellences', because it is the good of human beings that he is inquiring about.⁵⁷ *Eudaimonia* consists in rational activity in accordance with "complete excellence."⁵⁸ He goes on in the same chapter to include intellectual accomplishment as a *human* excellence; an intellectual one.⁵⁹ By the end of *EN* Book I, Aristotle has mentioned theoretical excellence, and furthermore counted it amongst human excellences. So from the onset, theoretical excellence is part of the distinguishing feature of human beings, and theoretical activity is a part of the human good, *eudaimonia*. In I.7 of *EN*, Aristotle leaves the best and most complete excellence unspecified. In Book X of *EN* Aristotle argues that reflective activity is the highest activity available to us, and it remains to be seen how this activity is a satisfactory conclusion of the FA, if it cannot pass the *idion* test.⁶⁰

The *idion* test begins when Aristotle states that doing well, for those who have a characteristic function or activity, seems to reside in their function. This is the case for humans, then, if there is "some function that *belongs* to him [them]."⁶¹ Though '*idion*' itself is rendered as 'peculiar to' and occurs in the text at a later point,⁶² the *idion* test consists in Aristotle's search for a function that 'belongs' to mankind. Noting the possessive emphasis on the phrase 'belongs to' is Aristotle implying at this point that the *ergon* which belongs to man must be an activity which is uniquely his? Nothing in the text explicitly supports this. At this point in the text we can be sure only that Aristotle is looking for an activity which properly characterizes mankind and captures what mankind *is*. This characteristic activity will be the typifying work or activity that belongs to man because of what he is. This activity might turn out to be absolutely peculiar to man; however this requirement is not part of

⁵⁷ *EN* I.13 1102a15-16.

⁵⁸ *EN* I.13 1102a5.

⁵⁹ *EN* I.13 1103a6.

⁶⁰ *EN* X.7 1177a20-21.

⁶¹ *EN* I.7 1097b29, emphasis and insertion mine.

⁶² *EN* I.7 1098a1.

Aristotle's selection process. The occurrence of the phrase 'belonging to' here is not sufficient to read Aristotle as looking for something which is absolutely peculiar to man. For it is clear that if x belongs to y, it does not necessarily follow that x cannot also belong to z; x 'belonging to' y does not entail x 'belonging solely to' y. So it seems that what Aristotle is seeking need not be absolutely peculiar to humans.

Aristotle begins his search by looking at different sorts of human beings (e.g., flute players) before moving to the parts of the body (e.g., eye, foot), but when he finally turns to candidates for the human function he ends up rejecting living, nutrition, growing and perception. He rejects being alive as the human function by arguing that this is 'shared by plants too'⁶³ and he rejects perception because this 'too is evidently shared, by horses, oxen, and every other animal.'⁶⁴ It seems plausible, emphasizing the way in which Aristotle rejects the characteristics, to read the *idion* test, in its search for the distinguishing characteristic of human beings, to be searching for what is peculiar to man where 'peculiar to' means what no other organism shares in. On this reading it is implicit in Aristotle's argument that what is peculiar to humans is so absolutely; what is peculiar to humans must not be shared by any other living creature. Yet it is precisely on this reading of Aristotle that the problem of 'peculiar to' is generated. If what is *idion* to us must be absolutely peculiar to us, then our distinguishing characteristic must be something which nothing else shares. Yet if this is the case, it is argued that Aristotle would not be able to conclude that theoretical activity is part of the human function, as his gods reflect as well.

A possible solution at this point would be to argue that there is a difference in kind between human and divine contemplation. This allows human contemplation to be peculiar to humans and divine contemplation to be peculiar to the gods. Read thus, there would be no problem in humans and gods engaging in the same activity.⁶⁵ Aristotle argues that the

⁶³ EN I.7 1097b34

⁶⁴ EN I.7 1098a3-4

⁶⁵ Kraut, 1979, p. 472-473. Kraut argues that there is a difference in kind between human and divine contemplation, but does not use this as his preferred response to the *idion* problem, as he believes this difference in kind puts Aristotle in a philosophically awkward position. I treat his claim that Aristotle is arguing for a difference in kind between divine and human contemplation here, and his proposed solution to the problem later in this section.

gods are thought to be alive, and if alive then in activity.⁶⁶ It would be strange to ascribe to the gods practical activities such as monetary transactions, as the activity of the gods is superior in its blessedness, and practical activities simply do not seem to be what gods engage in, being blessed and *eudaimon* to the highest degree.⁶⁷ Since the gods are thought to be alive, in activity, blessed and *eudaimon* to the highest degree, they must lead lives which contain no practical doings as such activities are unworthy⁶⁸ of the gods. The only productive activity left is one of reflection and this is what the gods engage in.⁶⁹ A human life is blessedly *eudaimon* in that, to some extent, there belongs to the human life "some kind of semblance of this sort of activity."⁷⁰ However, Aristotle does not provide a detailed account of the differences between human reflective activity and that of the gods. On one hand Aristotle shows that there is a difference in the duration of the reflective activity in that "...the life of gods is blessedly happy [eudaimon] throughout..."⁷¹ It is impossible for us to always be in that state because the gods exist eternally and we are mortals.⁷² The gods engage in this blessed activity on a continual basis, and so are blessedly *eudaimon* constantly. Kraut argues further that there is more than a difference in duration between human and divine reflective activity according to Aristotle. He argues that there is a difference in kind between human and divine reflective activity using the following:

If, then, god is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better this compels it yet more. And god *is* in a better state.⁷³

⁶⁶ *EN* X.8 1178b19-20.

⁶⁷ *EN* X.8 1178b9-16.

⁶⁸ *EN* X.8 1178b17-19. I do not take Aristotle here to be undermining the value of practical activities for human beings. I read him as making a point regarding that these practical activities (e.g. being courageous) mean very little to the gods. What could a god need courage and moderation for? Aristotle's god does not have "bad appetites" (X.8 1178b17) so it is clear why Aristotle would see practical activities as being unworthy of the gods. The gods lead the most blessed and *eudaimon* existence, and from such a position practical activities must appear petty.

⁶⁹ *EN* X.8 1178b19-22.

⁷⁰ *EN* X.8 1178b27.

⁷¹ *EN* X.8 1178b26-7.

⁷² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. Trans: Ross, W. D. (1948). XII.7-9.

⁷³ *Metaphysics* XII.7 1072b23-26.

In the quoted sections from *EN X.8* and the *Metaphysics* Aristotle's argument clearly shows that there is a temporal difference between human and godly reflective activity, and Kraut,⁷⁴ using the *Metaphysics*, attempts to further show via a conditional:

- i) If gods are *always* in that good state that we are sometimes in, our wonder is compelled (emphasis mine), and
- ii) If gods are in a better state, then our wonder is compelled even more.
- iii) And gods are in a better state.
- iv) But since gods are always in the same state,
- v) Then gods are always in a better state than we are in (iii and iv).
- vi) Since gods are always in a better state, which is one of constant reflective activity, there must be a difference in kind between human and divine reflective activity. If humans could engage in the same kind of reflective activity that gods engage in, then we would sometimes be in the same state as gods. Since we are never in the same state as gods, we cannot be engaging in the same activity as God.⁷⁵

The activity of the gods is "most good and eternal."⁷⁶ So gods are always in the best state: an activity of pure, self-reflective thought. Though reflective activity in itself is what deals with what is best in itself (reflective activity *per se*), it is reflective activity "in the fullest sense with that which is best in the fullest sense" which the gods engage in.⁷⁷ Human beings can thus engage in reflective activity, but of a sort that is neither the same in duration nor in kind as what the gods engage in; the purest form of reflective activity.

However, if the differences in both kind and duration were true, Aristotle would be hard-pressed to draw any sort of relationship between human and godly reflective activity at all. He would not be able to argue that this reflective activity is the best activity for us, even though it is so vastly different from the activity of the gods, *because* it would be so different from the activity of the gods. The differences between the respective reflective

⁷⁴ Kraut himself does not develop the argument except to declare after quoting from the *Metaphysics* that "it is clear that the difference between divine and human contemplation does not consist solely in the former's greater duration; a difference in kind also exists" (Kraut, 1979, p. 473). I attempt to develop an argument for what Kraut believes to be obvious from the relevant passage from the *Metaphysics*.

⁷⁵ Unfortunately, why Kraut believes that this difference must result in a difference in kind is not stated in his paper. I attempted here to construct what Kraut might have said to argue for the difference in kind between human and divine contemplation.

⁷⁶ *Metaphysics* XII.7 1072b28.

⁷⁷ *Metaphysics* XII.7 1072b18-20.

activities would undermine the value that human contemplative activity is supposed to derive from the activity of the gods: if the differences held, the activities would not be similar enough for human reflective activity to be valued in its affinity to that of the gods.

In fact it is rather implausible to read Aristotle as arguing for a difference in kind between human and divine reflective activity. Kraut grounds his view that there is a difference in kind between human and divine reflective activity in the way argued above: he reads the *Metaphysics* as advocating this difference in kind.⁷⁸ Since Kraut believes that Aristotle is arguing that his gods are permanently in a better state than we are ever in, it is inferred that no activity we engage in can match that of the gods, otherwise we would be in that same state, at least for small periods of time. So the activities are different both in duration and kind on Kraut's view. However, that our reflective activity does not match that being engaged in by the gods does not necessarily entail a difference in kind.

Kraut's argument in support of the difference in kind is simply incompatible with what Aristotle actually argues earlier in *Metaphysics* XII. Aristotle's gods are eternal, most good and alive (so in activity).⁷⁹ From this Aristotle concludes that gods live a life that is continuous and eternal; these are the properties of divine life. However, the gods are not *always in* a better state than ours. Though Kraut rightly points out that Aristotle believes the gods to be in a better state overall than that of humans, that is, a divine life is better than a human life, he is wrong to conclude that this means that humans are never, even temporarily, in a state which shares a strong affinity with that state in which the Gods are in constantly. Aristotle has already qualified the difference between the human and divine life earlier, because the gods enjoy a life "...such as *the best* which we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time⁸⁰ (for [God] is ever in this state, which we cannot be)..."⁸¹ Aristotle thinks that humans, when they engage in this reflective activity, are engaging in the best possible

⁷⁸ I wish to clear up a point regarding Kraut's position. Kraut does argue that there is a difference in kind between human and divine contemplation, however he does not believe that we should use this difference to conclude that "although contemplation *simpliciter* is not peculiar to man, human contemplation is." His solution to the problem of the *idion* test is one of relative peculiarity, which I discuss in the following pages.

⁷⁹ *Metaphysics* XII 1072b27-30.

⁸⁰ Aristotle notes that we can only enjoy this sort of a life as humans for very short periods of time, though we should try to enjoy this reflective activity "...even if it is small in bulk" (*EN* X.7 1178a2).

⁸¹ *Metaphysics* XII.7 1072b13-15, emphasis and insertion mine.

activity.⁸² But the entirety of the divine life consists in eternal reflective activity, so the life of the gods is something which we can only assimilate to given that we are humans.⁸³

Note that when Aristotle is comparing human and divine lives he is referring to the eternal, continuous activity of the gods as the very life of the gods.⁸⁴ The continuity of divine reflective activity is dependent on the nature of the gods: they do not *need* to engage in practical activities, so their reflective activity continues unimpeded. That it is eternal activity is also derived from the gods being eternal themselves and engaging in this, and only this, activity. The reflective activity of the gods is more pure than ours is because the gods are not distracted or taken away from the activity by anything else, but humans often are. The human function is to lead the active life of what possesses reason, and since this life necessarily includes practical actions, we cannot lead an existence which consists entirely of contemplation. Furthermore it is difficult to imagine a *eudaimon* human life that consisted solely in reflective activity, and Aristotle himself argues that simply in virtue of being human, a life of reflective activity would require other goods such as nourishment and bodily health.⁸⁵ Humans cannot lead the lives that the gods do because as humans, we have other concerns which preoccupy us including political and private concerns: other activities which are also governed by excellences. The gods and humans both engage in reflective activity, but humans contemplate in a different context: as mortal beings who can engage in reflective activity sometimes, but not as frequently as the gods do.

It is the eternal continuity of the activity of the gods which causes Aristotle to distinguish between the lives that humans and gods lead. Because we are mortal, we cannot lead the same lives as Aristotle's gods. However, insofar as we are capable of this reflective activity we can assimilate to the life of Aristotle's gods who delight in what, in humans, has the greatest affinity to their existence: the use of intelligence in the life of an intellectually accomplished person. Even though humans cannot engage in reflective activity as frequently and continuously as the gods, humans do engage in a reflective activity

⁸² The details of Aristotle's argument for *why* theoretical activity is considered the best one will be provided in Chapter Two.

⁸³ *EN* X.8 1177b35.

⁸⁴ *Metaphysics* XII.7 1072b28-30.

⁸⁵ *EN* X.8 1178b33-35.

which shares a strong affinity with the activity of the gods. It is this affinity between the two activities that is the reason why Aristotle draws a comparison between the two in the first place, and furthermore is the reason why there cannot be a difference in kind between human and divine reflective activity. A difference in duration and kind between the two activities would mean that a human would be rightly sceptical about the affinity (and therefore value) his contemplation derives from the activity of the gods.

Kraut argues that two different kinds of reflective activity could provide a solution to the problem of whether or not reflective activity is in fact *idion* to man. One could use the difference in kind to argue that human contemplation is the distinguishing feature of humans because it is different from a) what any lower species engages in, as no other species contemplates (absolutely different) and b) similar enough to the activity of the gods for it to be more blessed than any other excellence we can engage in, yet different enough from the activity of the gods such that it is still a peculiarly human activity. Human reflective activity is peculiar to humans, not reflective activity *per se*.⁸⁶

Though Kraut does argue that there is a difference in kind between human and divine reflective activity according to Aristotle, he believes that if Aristotle were to actually posit specifically human theoretical activity as the distinguishing feature of human beings, then he would be in an awkward philosophical position: he would be confining humans to exercising only their peculiar function.⁸⁷ If human beings were able to overcome human limitations and engage in the very same reflective activity that the gods engage in, Aristotle would not be able to advise humans to pursue that, for divine reflective activity is not *idion* to humans.⁸⁸

However, Aristotle understood human beings as having certain limitations in virtue of being human, such as being mortal.⁸⁹ If those limitations changed, it would mean that we are not human as Aristotle understands anymore and therefore our function would change. Presumably one of the human limitations we would have to overcome in order to engage in

⁸⁶ Kraut (1979, pg 473).

⁸⁷ Kraut (1979, p. 473).

⁸⁸ Kraut (1979, p. 473).

⁸⁹ I am not sure how one could suppose that this is possible, but that is a separate issue.

precisely their continuous reflective activity would be mortality. If there were immortal humans,⁹⁰ their function would be peculiar to immortal humans: and if they could engage in the activity of the gods as they do, they would no longer *be* human. Aristotle understands human functioning to be what is particular to humans. Were humans to become god-like in nature (i.e. partake in eternal life) they would no longer be human, and the *idion* test would run relative to what is peculiar to this human-god hybrid. But as was argued earlier, there is no difference in kind between human and divine reflective activity. In what sense, then, is reflective activity peculiar to humans?

One possible response to this question, which Kraut brings forth, is to seek to qualify the *idion* test more precisely. For what the *idion* test looks for on this view is not the distinguishing feature of human beings which distinguishes us absolutely from all other life forms, but rather what distinguishes us from “all lower form[s] of life, i.e. animals and plants.”⁹¹ It does not, however, clarify the relation that humans and gods share in the activity of contemplation. In response, Richard Kraut uses a second form of peculiarity⁹² in order to provide a solution to the problem of both gods and men sharing in *theōria*: relative peculiarity. This form of peculiarity does not require that what is *idion* to us to be unique to us, it simply requires rather that what is *idion* to us is peculiar to us relative to plants and animals. Against this reading is that nowhere in the relevant passage in *EN* I.7 has Aristotle said this. However, he also does not say there that what is *idion* to us needs to separate us from every other life form: he does not explicitly qualify here what form of peculiarity he is using.

Is Aristotle in *EN* I.7 looking for something which is relatively peculiar to us? It would be *ad hoc* to interpret Aristotle as employing the *idion* test simply in order to separate us

⁹⁰ Human beings, obviously, are mortal. The point here is that in order to overcome our human limitations and enjoy “precisely that kind of contemplation which Aristotle’s god enjoys” would require us to become immortal (i.e., to do the impossible for *humans*).

⁹¹ Kraut, 1979, p. 476.

⁹² Kraut draws a distinction between absolute and relative peculiarity from Aristotle’s *Topics* I.5. In *Topics*, Aristotle argues that learning grammar is absolutely (*haplōs*) peculiar to humans, because we are the only organisms that can do this. He argues that bipedness is relatively (*pros ti*) peculiar to humans when compared with horses and dogs, because among these animals only man is a biped. Since Aristotle does not qualify *idion* as either *pros ti* or *haplōs* in I.7 of *EN*, Kraut suggests that we interpret the peculiarity in question to be relative. Kraut, 1979. P. 475.

from lower life forms, seeking what is peculiar to us only relative to plants and animals and then to group us together with the gods⁹³ in *EN X* when it turns out that our best excellence is something which the gods share in as well. I argue this interpretation of relative peculiarity to be *ad hoc* precisely because Aristotle does not qualify his use of *idion* to simply be searching for a way to separate human beings from lower life forms. Reading Aristotle's 'peculiar to' as a relative form of peculiarity is to interpret Aristotle as employing a test that only works to separate us from plants and animals, where he proposes candidates for the peculiar human function in *EN I.7*, and then to reject those candidates whenever they are shared in part with plants and animals, but drop the test entirely and accept an activity when it turns out that the gods engage in this activity as well.

Aristotle need not be committed to this relative peculiarity because the *idion* test is not working in the negative sense – simply to reject candidates for *eudaimonia*. It is working in the positive sense: to figure out, given what human beings *are*, what the distinguishing function is in virtue of being a human. Candidates are proposed by looking at various human functions (sleeping etc), but these are rejected because they are the typifying activities of plants and animals. If Aristotle is seeking what is relatively peculiar to human beings, then the *idion* test only works to distinguish us from lower species and in this sense it is not really an *idion* test: it only seeks to separate us from lesser animals. However, if what Aristotle is seeking is absolutely peculiar to human beings, then the *idion* test truly seeks the typifying work of *humans*, then the reflective activity of the gods cannot be what is peculiar to us, or so it has seemed thus far.

The *idion* test seeks what is absolutely peculiar to humans, and to understand the *idion* test in this way we must look at how precisely Aristotle understands humans in *EN* Book X. Each species on Aristotle's view is best understood by its authoritative and better element.⁹⁴ Aristotle understands what a creature is by looking at what that creature is at its best. Plants simply live, oxen graze and perceive, and so on. These are the typifying activities of the respective species. Humans are alive, and they eat and perceive as animals do. But this is not the better element of humans: the element which Aristotle argues is

⁹³ Kraut, 1979, p. 476.

⁹⁴ *EN X.7* 1178a3-4.

authoritative in humans is our intelligence. Our intelligence is what Aristotle understands man to be most of all.⁹⁵ It is because humans are intelligent that we are able to sometimes engage in the reflective activity that the gods engage in continually.

Kraut interprets Aristotle as arguing that beings with the same type of soul are grouped together for the purposes of understanding their characteristic activities, and thus men and gods are grouped together for their rational faculties.⁹⁶ This grouping allows reflective activity to be relatively peculiar to man: peculiar relative to plants and animals. By interpreting Aristotle's *idion* test to be seeking only what is relatively peculiar to humans, Kraut need not worry that reflective activity cannot be absolutely peculiar to man because gods engage in this activity as well. Relative peculiarity allows, on Kraut's view, human beings and gods to engage in reflective activity that is different in kind and duration, but still generically what is called reflective activity: the gods simply do it much better than we can.

This is, however, a mischaracterization of Aristotle's argument. What Aristotle is in fact looking for is what is absolutely peculiar to man because *this* is what man's work is. Aristotle has spent the entirety of the *EN* engaging various questions relating to the human good: he is attempting to answer what *human eudaimonia* consists in. When Aristotle looks at plants and divides off simply 'living' from the human function, he does so for the conjunction of i) this work is peculiar to plants and ii) this is not the activity which is peculiar to humans, though we are alive. And similarly, even though we take in nutrition, grow and perceive, these are not the typifying activities of humans. Humans engage in much more than these activities, whereas plants can directly be characterized as simply 'living', for all they do is with the aim of continuing to live (e.g., adapting the growth structure to gain more exposure to the sun, taking in water and nutrients from the soil, and so on). That is, there is no further end towards which plants aim. It is not surprising that Aristotle would think that there is something over and above this, and the other candidates which he rejects as potentially characteristic of humans, for humans. What the *idion* test seeks therefore is to show what typifies humans: to find what activity, if any, all humans can be typified by.

⁹⁵ *EN* X.7 1178a7.

⁹⁶ Kraut, 1979, p. 476.

I have argued that there is no difference in kind between human and divine reflective activity and also claimed that the typifying activity of humans will be one that is absolutely peculiar to them. In the *Metaphysics* Aristotle argues that at least sometimes, humans are in the same state as that of the gods. Clearly he does not mean the same existence overall: we are mortals and have physical representations (our bodies). The state he is referring to is one of contemplation. There are times when we have enough spare time and are free enough from distraction that we can engage in contemplation: an *activity* which is precisely the same as that activity of the gods. The *idion* test thus separates us from animals (for they have physical limitations but share nothing in reflective activity), and gods (for they have no physical limitations but constantly engage in reflective activity). Humans are the only creatures which have both physical limitations and engage in reflective activity within the mortal context, so what typifies humans is an active life in accordance with the excellences, and excellent reflective activity can be part of the set of activities in accordance with excellence for it is pursued within the context of being a human being and thus does not violate the *idion* test.

I.III Conclusion

One problem with interpreting the *idion* test in this way, that it does indeed seek what is absolutely peculiar to humans, and that it is human reflective activity which is this, is that it is not human reflective activity which is most peculiar to humans. Since human reflective activity has a strong affinity to the activity of the gods, it is less a distinctive human characteristic than practical, excellent activity.⁹⁷ If the interpretation thus far works, it still has not met Ackrill's problem. What has been argued so far is that human reflective activity is the same activity of the gods, but since it is carried out within the human context the activity does not have the same duration or continuity as that of the gods, and thus does not violate the *idion* test. So if human reflective activity is the most distinguishing feature of humans, it still needs to be shown why this activity is peculiar to us to a greater extent than practical activity is. What Book X shows is that the best excellence we have available to us as humans is reflective activity. This is, as a human excellence, grouped with the rest of the excellences in *EN* Book I.⁹⁸ The *idion* test seeks the distinguishing feature of human beings,

⁹⁷ Ackrill, J.L. (1974, p. 352).

⁹⁸ *EN* I.13 1103a6-8.

and both practical and theoretical excellence pass the *idion* test. The FA's 'best and most complete' excellence does not refer exclusively to reflective activity because the conclusion of the FA is meant to indicate what *eudaimonia* consists in. For Aristotle, the self-sufficiency of *eudaimonia* does not entail that it is something pursued by oneself or "for the person living a life of isolation, but also for one's parents, children, wife, and generally those one loves, and one's fellow citizens, since man is by nature a civic being."⁹⁹ Only exercising one's intelligence would not meet the requirement of being human; a civic being. So even though the best activity available to humans is human reflection, this is not the sum total of what Aristotle's *eudaimonia* consists in. It is, however, an undeniable part of *eudaimonia*. And since *eudaimonia* consists in acting in accordance with the 'best and most complete' excellence and furthermore 'in a complete life', I shall now turn to an examination of what Aristotle means by these phrases.

⁹⁹ EN I.7 1097b9-11.

Chapter II: The Best and Most Complete Excellence in a Complete Life

II.1 Introduction

As was argued in Chapter One, the function of human beings, according to Aristotle, is to lead a practical life accompanied by reason. Understanding how to evaluate if a human is living well is a separate question. The human good, what the best life for human beings consists in, is exercising the human function well: to lead a life of activity in accordance with the excellences. But Aristotle in *EN* I.7¹⁰⁰ provides a further qualification of the human good, such that if there turns out to be more than one excellence, the human good is a life of activity in accordance with the one that is best and most complete.¹⁰¹ Aristotle's discussion in *EN* X.7-8 shows that, on his view, intelligence is the best and most complete excellence. Aristotle defines theoretical activity as the use of our intellects.¹⁰² That according to Aristotle, good reflective activity is activity in accordance with the best excellence, namely our intelligence, is undeniable.¹⁰³ Where disagreement arises, however, is in understanding the role of reflective activity with respect to the human function. When Aristotle refers to the best and most complete excellence in *EN* Book I, he may be interpreted here to be directly referring to the single excellence of intellectual accomplishment.¹⁰⁴ Yet even if we accept the claim that Aristotle does indeed argue in Book X¹⁰⁵ that there is a single excellence which is the best and most complete, we are not committed to saying that it is *this singular excellence* that Aristotle refers to in the conclusion of the function argument.

¹⁰⁰ *EN* I.7 1098a16-18.

¹⁰¹ What 'the best and most complete' represent in Aristotle's account will be turned to in II.II.

¹⁰² *EN* X.7 1177a20-21.

¹⁰³ *EN* X.7 in its entirety, but especially X.7 1177a19-21.

¹⁰⁴ Kraut, Richard. *Aristotle on the Human Good*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1989 p. 197. Kraut refers to other scholars that take "the best and most perfect virtue" to be referring directly, and only to, theoretical wisdom (in this work, intellectual accomplishment). He proceeds to argue that this view is correct.

¹⁰⁵ Kraut interprets Aristotle as arguing for a single best excellence in Book X.8: "to those who have more of reflection more happiness belongs too" (X.8 1178b30-33). See Kraut, 1989 p. 46.

This chapter begins with a discussion of reflective activity (*theōria*).¹⁰⁶ Explicating *theōria* will assist us in understanding what Aristotle means by activity in accordance with the 'best and most complete' excellence. Once *theōria* has been properly understood, how this excellent activity interacts with the rest of excellent activity will be examined. This chapter engages two critical questions regarding Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*. First, the relationship between practical and theoretical excellences will be examined. Is it the case, as Richard Kraut argues, that in the life of the philosopher every good aside from excellent *theōria*, including ethically excellent activity, is desirable solely for the sake of excellent *theōria*?¹⁰⁷ Kraut maintains that the philosopher's life has excellent *theōria* as its ultimate end. The politician's life is distinguished from the philosopher's life as having the active use of the practical virtues as its ultimate end, but is therefore less *eudaimon*.¹⁰⁸ Aristotle considers in Book X the respective lives of the philosopher and the politician. What distinguishes these two lives is the way in which each life is actively characterized. The life of the philosopher is characterized as active in the theoretical sense; reflective activity is the distinct facet of the philosopher's life. Yet ethically excellent activity is not excluded, for the philosopher chooses to do these things, i.e. things of ethical significance, because he is human; he lives and shares his life with other people.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, the politician's life is a life that is characterized by practical excellent activity alone. Kraut's argument is that the best life, according to Aristotle, is that of the philosopher, and *in that life*, ethical virtue is chosen for the sake of *theōria*.

Aristotle argues that *theōria* is the best activity that humans can engage in, and Kraut rightly puts this activity at the top of a hierarchy of goods.¹¹⁰ On Kraut's view, though,

¹⁰⁶ *Theōria* is translated as 'reflective activity', 'contemplation', or simply referred to as '*theōria*' in (Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans: Christopher Rowe. Commentary: Sarah Broadie. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), (Kraut, 1989) and (Ackrill, J.L. 'Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1974, reprinted in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed., A. O. Rorty, Berkeley 1980) respectively. Each of these represents the purely contemplative activity that Aristotle holds to be the "complete happiness [*eudaimonia*] of man" in Book X (*EN* X.7 1177b25).

¹⁰⁷ Kraut, 1989. Pg. 5.

¹⁰⁸ The life of the politician is "second happiest", and is a life in accordance with "the rest of excellence" (X.8 1178a9-10).

¹⁰⁹ *EN* X.8 1178b5-8.

¹¹⁰ Kraut, 1989. Pg. 6.

this means that ethically excellent activity is done, in the life of the philosopher, with the intent of promoting good reflective activity; the ethically excellent activities are chosen for their own sake in the life of the politician and for the sake of good *theōria* in the life of the philosopher.¹¹¹ In this chapter I shall be arguing that even though *theōria* is the best activity we can engage in, this superiority does not subordinate the practical excellent activities to it; that even though *theōria* is above practical virtues at the top of the tree which represents the life of the philosopher, this does not mean that the latter are only chosen for the sake of the former, and thus subordinated by *theōria*. The practical virtues make an independent contribution to, or have an independent place in, understanding the *eudaimonia* of the philosopher. I will argue that although it is the case that being an excellent person can help one be a better philosopher, this is not the only way in which the practical and theoretical excellences are linked in the life of the philosopher, and therefore show that Kraut's argument is not successful. My counter position will rest on pointing to passages in the *EN*, where I believe Aristotle shows that the practical excellences are chosen for their own sake by any *eudaimon* individual.¹¹² As human beings, it is these excellences that will help us interact well with each other; they play a major role in the life of a political or philosophical *eudaimon*, and make an independent contribution to the philosopher's *eudaimonia*; one which is separate from the contribution that *theōria* makes.

The second part of this chapter provides an interpretation of the relationship between goods such as pleasure and honour, and leading an active life in accordance with the excellences. Are the goods in a human life, according to Aristotle, understood to be valuable simply because they promote excellent activity? Is the quality of a life measured with respect to excellence alone, or are there other ways in which a *eudaimon* life can flourish, or falter? Section II.3 will turn to the second question: what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for a *eudaimon* life? There I will argue that virtuous activity, theoretical or practical, is not sufficient for *eudaimonia*. Since *eudaimonia* is complete,¹¹³ nothing can be added to a *eudaimon* life to make it better. This life must be complete as well, for as

¹¹¹ Kraut, 1989. Pg. 25 fn 12 and pg. 343.

¹¹² X.8 1178b6-8.

¹¹³ See fn. 115.

Aristotle says, there are goods, the lack of which will be a stain on someone's life.¹¹⁴ I will interpret Aristotle to be claiming that the lack of these goods will be sufficient to deprive someone of *eudaimonia*. These goods, on the other hand, are not sufficient for *eudaimonia*. I will argue that Aristotle's *eudaimonia* includes in it goods aside from the virtues which are needed for a human life to go well. The deprivation of these goods need not, though it may at times, diminish one's ability to act virtuously. Nevertheless, it is not the amount of virtuous activity *alone* which one's *eudaimonia* is understood by. I will argue that Aristotle's ideal for humans, *eudaimonia*,¹¹⁵ requires virtuous activity and certain other goods in a necessary conjunction.

II.II The Best and Most Complete Excellence

Thus far Aristotle's usage of the phrase 'the best and most complete' has yet to be explained in relation to his account of *eudaimonia*. It will be useful to quote relevant sections of the *EN* here, as they will be used in the upcoming sections in order to elucidate the characteristics of Aristotle's *eudaimonia*.

Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is both:

- i) Complete (C): ...most desirable of all things, it not being counted with other goods: clearly, if it *were* so counted in with the least of other goods, we would think it more desirable, for what is added becomes an extra quantity of goods, and the larger total amount of goods is *always more desirable*,¹¹⁶ and
- ii) Self-Sufficient (S): ...what in isolation makes life desirable and *lacking in nothing*, and we think *eudaimonia* is like this...¹¹⁷¹¹⁸

Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is complete, which means that nothing could be added to a *eudaimon* life to make it better, and self-sufficient, which means that it is the proper human

¹¹⁴ *EN* I.8 1099b2-6 & I.9 1099b28-29.

¹¹⁵ The life of the gods consists entirely in continuous, eternal excellent reflective activity. The gods have no need for external goods, as humans do, and thus the *eudaimonia* of the gods is of the highest degree and most complete. Philosophers can approach this type of completeness through good *theōria*, which shares an affinity with the activity of the gods, because their activity is more (S) than any other human activity (*EN* 1178b8-27).

¹¹⁶ *EN* I.7 1097b16-20.

¹¹⁷ Both Roger Crisp in 'Aristotle's Inclusivism' (1994) and J. L. Ackrill in 'Aristotle on Eudaimonia' (1974) use (S) and (C) in their inclusive interpretations of Aristotle's *eudaimonia*.

¹¹⁸ *EN* 1097b14-16, emphasis mine.

good: by itself it makes a life desirable and lacking in nothing. The emphasized portions of (C) and (S) represent what a *eudaimon* life must be. What the *eudaimon* life turns out to be must therefore satisfy (C) and (S). (C) and (S) are the two criteria that must be satisfied by an independent definition of a *eudaimon* life. A definition of the best human life (*eudaimonia*) and how this account satisfies (C) and (S) will be given in II.3.¹¹⁹ They are introduced here because when Aristotle refers to *theōria*, he argues that it is the best human activity because it is the excellent activity characterized by (C) and (S).

Richard Kraut argues that (C) and (S) together prohibit an inclusive definition of *eudaimonia*, i.e. that it includes other goods such as friendship and honour in addition to the excellences, and no particular good is incommensurably more valuable than any other.¹²⁰ Rather, Kraut claims that *eudaimonia* “consists in virtuous activity alone.”¹²¹ Kraut argues that the life of the philosopher is lived in accordance with *theōria*, because he interprets the FA’s conclusion that “if there are more excellences than one, in accordance with the best and most complete,”¹²² to be arguing that a philosopher lives a life that has *theōria* as its ultimate end. What Kraut means by an ‘ultimate end’ is that *all* of the other goods in that life are desired for the sake of *theōria*, that *theōria* is desired for itself, and that it is not desired for the sake of any other good in that life.¹²³

Kraut’s view is based upon his characterization of Aristotle’s discussion of *theōria* in *EN* Book X, one that leads him to believe that according to Aristotle all living beings can be ranked with respect to their *eudaimonia* using a single standard which ranks beings in a hierarchy to the extent in which they approximate the lives of the gods. The gods represent the highest possible *eudaimonia* because they engage in *theōria* eternally and continuously. Human beings—because they are capable of engaging in *theōria*—can be ranked amongst each other with respect to the way in which their lives represent the lives of the gods. The human life that has *theōria* as its ultimate end is that of the philosopher. So on Kraut’s view, philosophers lead lives which most resemble the life of the gods, because of the affinity that

¹¹⁹ II.3 ‘In a Complete Life’.

¹²⁰ Ackrill (1974, p. 341).

¹²¹ Kraut, 1989. p. 9.

¹²² *EN* I.7 1098a17-18.

¹²³ Kraut, 1989. Pg. 25.

their lives have with that of the gods. Philosophers are the most *eudaimon* human beings on Kraut's view, because they meet the single standard that Kraut interprets Aristotle as putting forward. Kraut calls this argument the "Argument from Divinity (AD)."¹²⁴ Kraut uses the AD to represent the standard by which the philosopher's *eudaimonia* can be understood.

Kraut interprets *theōria* to be the ultimate end in the life of the philosopher, because on his view the philosopher lives a life in accordance with the best and most complete excellence, his intellectual faculty.¹²⁵ To support this interpretation, Kraut places particular emphasis on portions of the AD, such as:

So [*eudaimonia*] too extends as far as reflection does, and to those who have more of reflection more [*eudaimonia*] belongs too, not incidentally, but in virtue of the reflection; for this is in itself to be honoured¹²⁶

Kraut argues not only that the life of the philosopher is the most *eudaimon* because it bears the highest resemblance to the lives of the gods (using the AD), but also that excellent ethical activity is chosen for the sake of promoting this single standard in the life of the philosopher. Kraut interprets Aristotle in *EN* Book X to be claiming both that excellent reflective activity is the best activity we can engage in, and also that excellent ethical activity will be done in the life of the philosopher for the sake of excellent *theōria*.

I will argue that Kraut's first claim (A), that in the life of the philosopher everything is chosen for the sake of *theōria*, is mistaken, but that his latter two (B₁), that *theōria* is desired for its own sake and (B₂) not desired for the sake of any other good, are not. I now turn to what Aristotle says about *theōria* in *EN* Book X in order to explain why he thinks that it is the best excellent activity.

II.II.I Reflective Activity

We should imagine this excellent reflective activity to be what a scientist or a philosopher engages in frequently: research. This activity is in accordance with the best excellence, because it is activity in accordance with the highest of the things in us: our

¹²⁴ Kraut, 1989. Pp. 39- 62. Referring to *EN* X.8 1178b21-32.

¹²⁵ Kraut, 1989. Pg. 25.

¹²⁶ *EN* X.8 1178b30-2.

intelligence.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the objects which are being contemplated by the philosopher are the highest kind by their nature, e.g. “the constituent parts of the universe.”¹²⁸ Contemplation is less fatiguing than other activities, for it is less dependent on external goods than any other activity we engage in, and thus we can contemplate more continuously than we can engage in other activities. One does not need much to contemplate; moderate resources and his intelligence.¹²⁹ Other excellent activities, such as those the political life is characterized by, require more resources. The intellectually accomplished person engages in the most stable and pleasant activity that we are capable of.¹³⁰ Contemplation is also more (S) than ethical activity, for one can engage in it by himself,¹³¹ whereas ethically excellent activity is done within the context of associations with other people: justice, for example, requires people to be the objects of, or participants in, the relevant actions. Contemplation also aims at no end beyond itself, and is thus loved for itself, for nothing is produced from it besides its activity. It is superior in this way to practical pursuits, for they aim to produce something beyond their engagement.

The lives of the philosopher and the politician can be contrasted with respect to the properties of *theōria*. A politician, for example, aims at securing *eudaimonia* for himself and his fellow citizens. The excellent use of political expertise is done because political activity is worthwhile in itself (the expertise, as mentioned in Chapter I, is the most sovereign of the expertises), *but* its exercise aims at securing other ends such as the *eudaimonia* of the politician's citizens. There are other activities inherent to the politician's role in politics that are required, such as attending various administrative meetings or meeting other politicians and attempting to secure their support, etc. The politician's life is not one of leisure; it is a busy life. On the other hand, the philosopher is free to contemplate, and not consumed with day-to-day political affairs. In this way, the politician's life is inferior to the life of a

¹²⁷ EN X.7 1177a20-21.

¹²⁸ EN VI.7 1141b1-5, & X.7 1177a21-22. For Aristotle, these objects are worthy of serious attention and thus their contemplation is viewed with respect to excellence; our intelligence.

¹²⁹ EN X.8 1179a6.

¹³⁰ EN X.7 1177a25-7. Especially “...of activities in accordance with excellence it is the one in accordance with intellectual accomplishment that is agreed to be *pleasantest*...” (Emphasis mine. Note the superlative use ‘most pleasant’ with respect to reflective activity).

¹³¹ Though Aristotle does allow that a philosopher will contemplate better if he works with others, this is a minimal claim, for the philosopher can still engage in contemplation by himself (see EN X.7 1177a35).

philosopher; it is more busy and concerned with human affairs, whereas the philosopher's life is leisurely. *Eudaimonia*, Aristotle argues, is thought to reside in leisure from business.¹³²

Furthermore, a human being is able to contemplate *because* of the divine element in him, and in this sense a life of contemplation is above the human plane; and since a human being is meant to be identified with his sovereign element, intelligence, it is activity in accordance with this virtue that represents the highest activity that we can engage in.¹³³ Since contemplation is something divine, having the characteristics of what is assigned to the gods, it is superior to activity in accordance with the rest of excellence.¹³⁴ I will now turn to examine Richard Kraut's three claims labelled (A) and (B) earlier.¹³⁵

As the ultimate end of the life of the philosopher, Kraut argues that a feature of reflective activity is that it is (B₂). Aristotle himself says that *theōria* is desired for itself, for it is the person who loves intellectual accomplishment and actively exercises his understanding who experiences its correlative pleasure: one which is amazingly pure and stable.¹³⁶ The pleasure involved in contemplation is not fleeting as the pleasure from food or carnal endeavours can be. Contemplative activity is calm, leisurely, and unaffected by external factors as other pleasures we experience are. A great meal gives me pleasure for the duration of its consumption, so the pleasure derived from eating is dependent on my being hungry, and requiring food. But contemplation is not so limited. The intellectually accomplished person can engage in this reflective activity even when he is by himself.¹³⁷ So contemplation is an activity which is chosen only for its own sake. It is more (C) than any other activity which we can engage in, because nothing can be added to the contemplative activity to make it better.

¹³² EN X.7 1177b5 & 1177b22-23. I understand Aristotle to be making the point that researching is more leisurely in its nature than political activity is, because the latter requires political pursuits which keep the politician very busy, whilst researching itself is a calmer and less tiring enterprise.

¹³³ EN X.7 1177b27-30.

¹³⁴ EN X.7 1177b22-30.

¹³⁵ See page 6.

¹³⁶ EN X.7 1177a25-27.

¹³⁷ EN X.7 1177a33-4.

Kraut also argues that a feature of *theōria*, as an ultimate end, is that it is (B₁). Again, this follows directly from Aristotle's description of contemplation. On Aristotle's view, nothing accrues from reflective activity besides the act of reflecting itself, and is thus more (S) than any other activity in which we can engage. On Kraut's view, the presence or absence of *theōria* in one's life is the criterion by which we evaluate one's *eudaimonia*. The intellectually accomplished person already has the tool that he needs for living the life of a philosopher and he does not need other people in order to engage in this activity. As long as the philosopher has the adequate resources for the purposes of exercising his knowledge such as health and sustenance, he will be able to lead the life of a philosopher that Kraut believes Aristotle holds in such high regard. This life of the philosopher is the best form of *eudaimonia*, the best life that a human being can live, because it is the life characterized by *theōria*. According to Kraut, it is this single criterion that Aristotle employs to ranking human lives.

One important clarification to make at this point regarding the lives of the philosopher and the politician as candidates for *eudaimonia* is to question what Aristotle would have to say about the ordinary citizens in his time. Are they all unable to be *eudaimones* unless they become politicians or philosophers? I read Aristotle as implicitly referring to ordinary citizens in his claim that *eudaimonia* is something available through learning or practice to anyone¹³⁸ who is not handicapped with respect to excellent activity.¹³⁹ Here I take Aristotle to be saying that anyone who can lead a life of excellent activity, whether this includes the opportunities for *theōria* or not, will be happy to a degree so long as that life includes activity in accordance with the excellences.

A private citizen's life that does not include participation in the political process, but rather interaction with friends and family, dealing with others well, and possessing the proper temperament, demonstrates that much of the ethical virtues can be exercised even by private citizens in their daily affairs. Kraut interprets Aristotle's claim that *eudaimonia* is something "available to many"¹⁴⁰ passage to be saying that "the male citizens of Greek cities

¹³⁸ Any male Greek citizen, that is.

¹³⁹ *EN* I.10 1099b18-20.

¹⁴⁰ *EN* I.9 1099b18.

have enough moral excellence to share in political decision making.”¹⁴¹ While it may be true that some of the citizens did take part in political proceedings, it is uncontroversial to imagine some citizens who did not take part in political proceedings but still engaged in some of activities which are in accordance with the practical excellences that are not political in nature.

There are many opportunities in a Greek citizen's life for the exercise of ethical virtue which are not political in nature. Aristotle also notes that “private individuals seem to perform decent actions no less, or even more, than those with political power.”¹⁴² These decent actions are clearly not necessarily political, and Aristotle notes that a person will be happy if he is active in accordance with excellence.¹⁴³ So the private citizen may be *eudaimon* to a degree as well, and Aristotle does not explicitly qualify the *eudaimonia* of the private citizen in any way as promoting the philosopher's good *theōria*.¹⁴⁴

Kraut makes one final claim about *theōria* as the ultimate end of the life of a philosopher. He claims that “all other ends in that life are desired for its sake.”¹⁴⁵ This for-the-sake-of relation recalls Aristotle's discussion of subordinate ends in *EN* Book I, where he argues that if X is chosen for the sake of Y, it follows that X is less desirable than Y. As bridle-making is chosen for the sake of horsemanship, the former is less desirable than the latter, having been chosen for its sake.¹⁴⁶ If Kraut is right in his claim about *theōria*, then in the philosopher's life *all* of the other ends in that life must be *subordinate to*, and thus chosen for the sake of, reflective activity.¹⁴⁷ Amongst the set of things chosen for the sake of reflective activity will be the ethically excellent activities. It is this claim about *theōria*, that is nowhere explicitly supported by Aristotle, that is open to interpretive controversy.

¹⁴¹ Kraut, 1989. Pg. 110, fn. 44.

¹⁴² *EN* X.8 1179a5-6.

¹⁴³ *EN* X.8 1179a9.

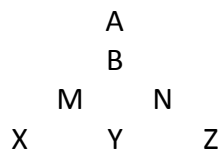
¹⁴⁴ Whether or not the private citizen can be characterized as acting at times for the sake of the philosopher's good *theoria* will be examined below, when the “for the sake of” relation is turned to.

¹⁴⁵ Kraut, 1989. P. 25.

¹⁴⁶ *EN* I.1 1094a15-17.

¹⁴⁷ This follows only if X's being chosen for the sake of Y is the only way for X to be subordinate to Y. I choose to leave aside different notions of subordination in Aristotle during this dissertation: the topic deserves its own treatment.

Before turning to Kraut's hierarchy of goods in the philosopher's life, it is important to note that Kraut does not argue that ethically virtuous activity is chosen by non-philosophers *only* for the sake of reflective activity. He interprets Aristotle as saying that ethically virtuous activity is valuable for its own sake, being constitutive of the second best life humans can engage in: the life of the politician. He also, however, says that ethical activity is valuable because it promotes reflective activity, and in this way it is subordinate to reflective activity in the life of the philosopher as depicted usefully on the diagram below:



A: Reflective activity

B: Ethical activity

M, N: Other goods that are desirable in themselves (e.g. honour)

X, Y, Z: Other goods that are conditionally desirable (e.g. wealth)¹⁴⁸

On Kraut's view, each good that is on a lower row is instrumental to goods which are higher up on the tree.¹⁴⁹ Since ethical activity is lower on the tree than reflective activity, this means that it is both inferior and subordinate to reflective activity: "All goods are to be located in a hierarchy constructed out of the for-the-sake-of relation, and since theoretical activity alone is desirable for the sake of nothing further, the ethical virtues must be desirable in part because they promote the philosophical life."¹⁵⁰ Kraut is here describing the role of the ethical virtues *in* the philosopher's life. It must be understood that in the life of the philosopher, the ethical virtues take on a purely instrumental role according to Kraut: "In the philosophical life, one's ultimate aim is the exercise of theoretical wisdom, and one is best off if one exercises other virtues *to the extent that they contribute to this highest goal.*"¹⁵¹ In other words, the ethical virtues are chosen for the sake of their contribution to excellent *theōria*. It is in the life of the politician that the ethical virtues are chosen both for their own sake, and for the sake of promoting good *theōria* in philosophers, such as in the

¹⁴⁸ The diagram is taken from Kraut, 1989, p.6.

¹⁴⁹ The role that goods in the bottom two rows play in the life of a *eudaimon* will be turned to in II.III on a complete life.

¹⁵⁰ Kraut, 1989 p. 179.

¹⁵¹ Kraut, 1989 p. 343, emphasis mine.

case of a politician who sets up universities where such contemplative activity can flourish. I now turn to Kraut's account of how ethical virtues promote the philosophical life.

Since bridle-making is chosen for the sake of horsemanship, it is the expert rider that provides the standard for how the bridle should be made: the bridle-maker serves the expert rider.¹⁵² The rider also provides the reason for which the bridle is made: without the need or desire to ride horses we would not need bridles. Bridle-making is undertaken solely for the sake of riding horses.¹⁵³ This is similar to, but not exactly how, Kraut characterizes the relationship between the practical and the theoretical virtues in the life of the philosopher. Kraut characterizes the for-the-sake-of relation as, at least in part, a causal one. The substantive difference in the relationship between bridle-making and riders, when compared to the relationship between the ethical and theoretical virtues, is that in the former the bridles are valued solely for the sake of riding a horse. On Kraut's view, the ethical virtues are valued both for their own sake *and* for the sake of promoting reflective activity in the philosopher's life. Even if we could not engage in the reflective activity of the gods, we would still choose the ethical virtues, for they are what allow us to be well-functioning, that is *good*, human beings. The philosopher will want to possess the excellences, for he could not *be* a philosopher if he did not have, for example, temperance. If a philosopher is too concerned with physical pleasures and would rather cook and eat lavish dinners¹⁵⁴ than study, he will find himself unable to properly engage in philosophy. Similarly, if the philosopher does not have enough concern for eating and drinking, this person will become malnourished.¹⁵⁵ Kraut's argument here characterizes the ethically deficient person as someone who would be unable to engage properly in reflective activity. It should be noted that being a philosopher is one way, according to Aristotle, of being a well-functioning human. The central difficulty I have with Kraut's position is his characterisation of a *eudaimon* philosopher's decision to act in accordance with the ethical virtues.

¹⁵² Kraut, 1989 p. 201.

¹⁵³ It is possible that the bridle-maker also values bridle-making for its own sake. Whether or not bridles are only instrumentally valuable does not change the characterization of Kraut's interpretation of the link between the practical and theoretical virtues in Aristotle's *EN*.

¹⁵⁴ Characterizing Aristotle's reference to "those who enjoy smells of perfumes or tasty dishes" at *EN* III.10 1118a13.

¹⁵⁵ Kraut, 1989, p. 179-180.

The causal relationship Kraut argues for between the practical and theoretical virtues is one which is meant to support the notion that since the practical virtues appear to be necessary prerequisites for engaging in reflective activity, then they must be chosen for its sake. However, this does not appear to be what Aristotle is saying when he refers to the excellences. The person who lacks temperance is a person who fails to lead either the life of a politician or a philosopher. In the life of the philosopher it is true that one cannot be a philosopher without a well-developed character, but it does not follow from this that one chooses to cultivate, or act in accordance with the rest of excellence (the excellences aside from reflective activity) only for-the-sake-of promoting more reflective activity. If someone is not temperate, he will be distracted by physical pleasures which will undermine his *eudaimonia per se*. He has not developed himself in such a way that he can control himself, and Aristotle's inquiry is useless for those who lack self-control.¹⁵⁶ The lack of practical virtue does not just undermine the attempt at a philosophical life: it undermines *eudaimonia* entirely, political or philosophical. Showing that practical virtues are necessary in order to lead the life of the philosopher does not show that the philosopher chooses the practical virtues for the sake of excellent *theōria*. Any *eudaimon* will need to exercise the practical virtues in order to be a good person.

If philosophers do not choose ethically excellent activity solely for the sake of excellent *theōria*, as Kraut argues, an interpretation of why the philosopher chooses ethically excellent activity at all must be provided. On my reading, the ethically excellent activities are necessary prerequisites for every private, political, or philosophical *eudaimon*. The private citizen chooses to act in accordance with practical excellences because this is how, as was mentioned earlier, he interacts well with other human beings. The politician chooses excellent practical activities for their own sake, as pursuing and maintaining the good of a city is both fine and godlike.¹⁵⁷ But when Aristotle says that the politician's activity "aims beyond the business of politics itself—at getting power, or honours, or indeed happiness for himself and his fellow citizens, this being distinct from the exercise of political expertise, and something we clearly do seek as something distinct"¹⁵⁸ in Book X, it might be

¹⁵⁶ EN I.3 1095a9-10.

¹⁵⁷ I am wary about using 'fine' here, as I do not have the space to go into a good discussion about what "for the sake of the fine" means. EN I.2 1094b9-11.

¹⁵⁸ EN X.7 1177b13-16.

thought that here Aristotle is contradicting what he said earlier, and now that political activity is chosen both for its own sake and for the sake of what it produces.

Yet the virtues are chosen for themselves,¹⁵⁹ and the practical excellences can be used actively to produce something beyond the mere engagement in the activities themselves. The life of a politician contains many opportunities for exercising the practical excellences, but the life of a politician also carries with it constraints of role: all of the responsibilities which the politicians engage in for particular goals, say attending *this* meeting to pass *that* law, becomes part of the daily life of the politician. That political activities aim at producing something beyond the activities itself does not undermine Aristotle's claim that the practically excellent activities are chosen for their own sake. A good man chooses to enter into politics for one kind of reason: that political activity is one of the best ways to be a well-functioning human being. He carries out the tasks associated with becoming a politician for another reason: for the sake of continuing in his job as a politician, for example.

The life of the philosopher, however, is characterized by good *theōria*. When an opportunity for ethical activity presents itself to the philosopher, is the philosopher annoyed by this distraction from his work? After all, good reflective activity shares an affinity with the activity of the gods, and these human concerns for justice and courage could plausibly require a philosopher who may otherwise reflect unimpeded, to take the time to interact with his fellow citizens. The way Aristotle describes mankind throughout the *EN* suggests that he saw men as anything but philosophical hermits. When Aristotle describes his notion of (S) in *EN* I.7 he notes that the complete good for a human will be (S), and not just for him, but rather "for one's parents, children, wife, and generally those one loves, and one's fellow citizens, since man is *by nature a civic being*."¹⁶⁰ The emphasis here is on human interaction *per se*, from one's friends¹⁶¹ and loved ones to other people in the city, such as one's neighbours. If a philosopher is researching at home and hears a disturbance at his friend's

¹⁵⁹ *EN* X.6 1176b7-8.

¹⁶⁰ *EN* I.7 1097b9-11.

¹⁶¹ Aristotle's treatment of friendship in *EN* Books XIII and IX have themselves spawned a vast literature. For the sake of this example I will use Aristotle's notion of excellent friends, which is friendship between people who are close to each other in terms of their excellence. X being excellent friends with Y requires that both are good people, and they wish good things for their friends; for the sake of their friends (*EN* VIII.3 1156b7-12).

house next door, should he ignore that occurrence and continue with his contemplating?¹⁶² Nothing in the *EN* suggests that Aristotle would give such primacy to contemplation; a primacy where one *should* choose reflective activity over an opportunity for the exercise of the practical virtues. In fact the philosopher, as a human being who lives with other people “chooses to do the deeds that accord with excellence”¹⁶³ where ‘excellence’ here clearly refers to ethically excellent activities, for the philosopher already engages in reflective activity; in this passage Aristotle is describing his choosing to engage in activities that are in accordance with the rest of excellence.

The philosopher, even though he engages in a divine-like reflective activity, is still a human being. And insofar as he is a human being, he will be presented with opportunities to act well in a practical way. His doing well in these circumstances cannot plausibly be characterized as a mere means to an end: returning to his research. Characterizing practical excellent activities in this way puts an insufficient stress on how Aristotle envisions humans, as interacting amongst each other. If a philosopher takes the time to help his neighbour because he wants to get back to philosophizing, he will be treating at least some of the excellences as a means to help him return to his researching. Characterizing the ethical virtues in a philosopher's life as instrumental puts far too much of an intellectual strain on Aristotle's account of what the philosophers are: in essence, human beings who are fortunate enough to have the means to engage in this divine like contemplation; but human beings, nevertheless.

Considering again the example of the philosopher who hears a disturbance at his friend's house, what would the philosopher do? On my reading, he would go to help his friend, because the good person on Aristotle's account “does many things for the sake of friends and fatherland, even dying for it if need be...”¹⁶⁴ because this is what a *eudaimon*

¹⁶² This example may have a number of answers which depend on the type of disturbance. Imagine, in this scenario, that the philosopher's neighbour is a very good friend who is normally quiet and calm. He hears his friend crying out for help, mid-philosophical sentence.

¹⁶³ *EN* X.8 1178b6-7.

¹⁶⁴ *EN* IX.8 1169a21-22. This quote in isolation may be seen as an argument against egoism, but that is not the point of this quote here. I quote this passage to show that in Aristotle there exist other regarding considerations, sometimes very strong ones (in the case of a soldier defending his state against an invasion), and these are amongst human beings. The role of human interaction in Aristotle's account must be emphasized in order to argue against the intellectualization of the ethical virtues as means to good reflective activity.

does when confronted with situations wherein the practical excellences may be exercised. Philosophers are human beings, too, and it is human nature to “live with others”¹⁶⁵ according to Aristotle.

I have tried to show that the ethically excellent activity makes an independent contribution to one's *eudaimonia*. Both the private citizen and the politician are capable of achieving *eudaimonia* according to Aristotle, even though this *eudaimonia* will not be of as high a grade as that of the philosopher. But the philosopher's *eudaimonia* does not consist entirely in good *theōria*, as a human being he will have the opportunity to act in accordance with all of excellence, not just his intelligence by himself as a hermit. So, when Aristotle refers to the human good as activity in accordance with the best and most complete excellence in *EN* I.7, he is allowing that there be a highest form of *eudaimonia*; but that there is a best and most complete excellence does not remove the other excellences from their *eudaimonia*-constituting status. Even the philosopher, who engages in the best activity that human beings can engage in, will exercise the practical virtues in his dealings with other human beings because this is what a *good* human being does, whether or not this will contribute to his good *theōria* at some point in the future.

The discussion about *eudaimonia* so far has been confined to the role that the ethical virtues play in a *eudaimon* life. Acting in accordance with the excellences is the good of human beings, but this is only the case in a complete life. I now turn to what Aristotle means when he qualifies an active life in accordance with the excellences with this phrase.

II.III In a Complete Life

One way to read Aristotle's “in a complete life”¹⁶⁶ is simply as a reference to *time*.¹⁶⁷ The sentence which follows CL reads “For a single swallow does not make spring, nor does a single day; in the same way, neither does a single day, or a short time, make a man blessed and happy.”¹⁶⁸ Aristotle's definition of (C) occurs just before he turns to the question of what the human good consists in via the FA in *EN* I.7, and (C) requires that the human good,

¹⁶⁵ *EN* IX.9 1169b19.

¹⁶⁶ I will use ‘CL’ to denote ‘in a complete life’, to prevent awkward phrasing and repetition.

¹⁶⁷ Brown, 2006. Pg. 3.

¹⁶⁸ *EN* I.7 1098a19-21.

eudaimonia, be the most desirable of all things.¹⁶⁹ If Aristotle were solely referring to time at CL, a complete life would be understood as nothing over and above a long life of excellent activity. This interpretation is strange, in that Aristotle would be understood as having introduced the notion of *eudaimonia* being complete, and then when positing CL at the end of an argument which is meant to explain what the human good is, 'complete' in CL would refer to nothing over and above a temporal emphasis. Having just defined (C), it is not plausible that the use of "complete" in CL would there be used so narrowly. In Aristotle's time dying before one's prime was quite common, and so CL would refer to *at least* time because deaths of this sort were a common way for a person, otherwise perfectly qualified for *eudaimonia*, to fail in becoming *eudaimon*.

There are a number of interpretations of Aristotle which put forward that *eudaimonia* "just is virtuous activity",¹⁷⁰ and it will be argued in this section that Aristotle's notion of a complete life includes more than excellent activity in a long life. When Aristotle mentions CL, he is referring both to the length of a life and to the role of other goods in the *eudaimon*'s life. The following will argue that, though excellent activity is a necessary prerequisite for *eudaimonia*, it is not sufficient for *eudaimonia*.¹⁷¹ Views which hold that virtuous activity is sufficient for *eudaimonia* give insufficient weight to the passages that Aristotle uses to describe the *eudaimon* as a human being; someone whose life is in accordance with complete excellence and also a *civic* life.

It will be useful to divide the interpretations regarding the role of external goods in a *eudaimon*'s life into two groups:

- i) Dominant View (DV): *Eudaimonia* consists in one supremely valuable component: virtuous activity. One's *eudaimonia* is understood as nothing over and above the

¹⁶⁹ EN I.7 1097b16.

¹⁷⁰ Brown, 2006, page 4: "Once one realizes that [*eudaimonia*] just is virtuous activity..." & Kraut, 1989, pg 278-9 claims that "...*eudaimonia* increases or diminishes only to the extent that the level of our virtuous activity is raised or lowered." & Crisp, 1994, page 119: "*eudaimonia*...is not improvable, since *excellent activities themselves include or involve all intrinsic goods*." These are examples of the view which interprets *eudaimonia* as nothing over and above virtuous activity itself, whether or not that activity includes the intrinsic goods as in Crisp's case.

¹⁷¹ Though one who acts in accordance with complete excellence may not be *eudaimon*, he will never be miserable, a state Aristotle saves for the wretched: "...the [*eudaimon*] will never become miserable, though neither will he be blessed if he meets with fortunes like Priam's" (EN I.10 1101a6-8).

virtuous activity contained in the life. More virtuous in a life means that this life is more *eudaimon*.¹⁷²

- ii) Inclusivist View (IV): *Eudaimonia* consists in a number of ends that are *roughly* equal, that is, no end is *incommensurably* more valuable than any other end. One's *eudaimonia* can be affected by events in that life, and not simply because these events cause changes in the amount of virtuous activity done in the life. The amount of virtuous activity contained in a life is not the only variable used in understanding one's *eudaimonia*, though it is the most important.¹⁷³

An adherent of IV need not think that the *only* role external goods play in a *eudaimon* life is one of providing an independent contribution to one's *eudaimonia*; that is, that they are all intrinsically valuable. There are two roles that external goods have according to Aristotle. On one hand, external goods are used as tools by the *eudaimon*. Good fortune is used by the *eudaimon* in a fine and worthwhile manner,¹⁷⁴ the *eudaimon* accomplishes things through having friends, political power or wealth: these being of instrumental use to the *eudaimon*. Of the goods available to the *eudaimon*, some "contribute to it by being useful tools."¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, external goods also have the role of making a contribution to one's *eudaimonia* without directly promoting the *eudaimon's* excellent activity. Some goods are "necessary to happiness"¹⁷⁶ and act in a *eudaimon* life "such as to add lustre to [the] life."¹⁷⁷ The claims that Aristotle makes regarding external goods in these passages suggests that he thought external goods can be useful to the *eudaimon* in a purely instrumental fashion, so as to promote more virtuous activity, or as independent intrinsic goods such as pleasure, which make the *eudaimon's* life good, that is, better than it would be without pleasure.

Kraut argues against the possibility of there being any intrinsically valuable external goods in a *eudaimon* life by looking at the way such goods are treated in *EN* I.5.¹⁷⁸ There, Kraut argues, Aristotle is seeking a single good with which to identify happiness, and he

¹⁷² Kraut, 1989, pg 278. I will focus on Kraut's DV for the remainder of this chapter.

¹⁷³ Ackrill, 1980. P. 341.

¹⁷⁴ *EN* I.10 1100b27-28.

¹⁷⁵ *EN* I.9 1099b28-29.

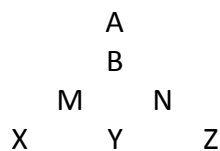
¹⁷⁶ *EN* I.9 1099b28.

¹⁷⁷ *EN* I.10 1099b27-28.

¹⁷⁸ Kraut, 1989. Pp. 225-7.

rejects the lives which have pleasure, wealth or virtue as their single end. On Kraut's view, if Aristotle had IV in mind when he was examining the candidates for the end of the *eudaimon* life, he would not need to examine any single good such as pleasure or wealth independently: Aristotle could do away with any single-end view of the good with the same argument, that is, that since there are multiple goods which are intrinsically valuable, any single-good conception of the good will fail. Aristotle does not do this, on Kraut's view, because he is looking for a single end at the top of the for-the-sake-of relation (the top of the tree), and with respect to this single end all other goods will be subordinated on Kraut's view. The difference between IV and DV is one in which Aristotle's for-the-sake-of relation is understood differently.

Let us look again at Kraut's understanding of the for-the-sake-of relation in the life of the philosopher:



A: Reflective activity

B: Ethical activity

M, N: Other goods that are desirable in themselves (e.g. honour)

X, Y, Z: Other goods that are conditionally desirable (e.g. wealth)¹⁷⁹

Every good on the tree, below A, is chosen for-the-sake-of A, except B, M and N which are desirable both for their own sake and for the sake of A. On Kraut's view "when one thing is desired or desirable for the sake of a second, there must be something about the second that helps us understand why wanting the first is appropriate."¹⁸⁰ Since on Kraut's view, the parts on the tree bear a causal relationship which aims towards A, that is they can be understood as directly promoting or in the pursuit of A, the for-the-sake-of relationship works because each part can be understood as promoting the ultimate end, good *theōria*. The relationship between all the goods on the tree that are lower than A, and A itself, is one in which the lower goods are chosen, at least in part, because they promote good *theōria*.

¹⁷⁹ The diagram is taken from Kraut, 1989, p.6.

¹⁸⁰ Kraut, 1989. P. 212.

Kraut finds the for-the-sake-of relations in IV to be “mysterious.”¹⁸¹ He is here referring to Ackrill’s interpretation of Aristotle’s for-the-sake-of relation. The passage which is central to understanding Aristotle’s for-the-sake-of relation is the following:

“It makes no difference—as in the case of the sorts of knowledge mentioned—whether the ends of the actions are the activities themselves, or some other thing over and above these.”¹⁸²

On Ackrill’s view, this passage is best understood as one where Aristotle is mentioning two sorts of subordination. The first sort of subordination is one wherein the subordinate activity produces a product which the superior activity uses. For example, a *eudaimon* needs a certain level of wealth in order to be magnanimous.¹⁸³ This is the type of subordination that Kraut envisions all goods lower than A, on his tree, to partake in. Ackrill however interprets ‘whether the ends of the actions are the *activities themselves*’ as referring to a case where the subordinate activity “has no such end apart from itself but is its own end.”¹⁸⁴ He provides an example of part-to-whole regarding golf and having a good holiday:

One does not putt *in order to* play golf as one buys a club in order to play golf; and this distinction matches that between activities that do not and those that do produce a product. It will be ‘because you wanted to play golf that you are putting, and ‘for the sake’ of a good holiday that you are playing golf; but this is because putting and golfing are *constituents of or ingredients in* golfing and having a good holiday respectively, not because they are necessary preliminaries. Putting is playing golf (though not all that playing golf is), and golfing (in a somewhat different way) *is* having a good holiday (though not all that having a good holiday is).

On Ackrill’s view there are two ways in which to understand Aristotle’s for-the-sake-of relation. Some goods will be for-the-sake-of virtuous activity precisely in the way in which Kraut understands the relation, and some goods will be valued for their own sake, as *constituents of eudaimonia*. Yet what an adherent of IV must do at this point is to find a good (or goods) which on Aristotle’s view would be chosen *not* because they contribute to excellent activity, but rather to *eudaimonia*, being independent contributors to *eudaimonia*. The most powerful passage which supports this view is the following, where Aristotle has just referred to the class of goods which are purely instrumental to *eudaimonia*:

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 212.

¹⁸² *EN* I.I 1094a16-7.

¹⁸³ Aristotle discusses open-handedness in *EN* IV.1.

¹⁸⁴ Ackrill, 1980, p. 342-343.

...then again, there are some things the lack of which is like a stain on [eudaimonia], things like good birth, being blessed in one's children, beauty: for the person who is extremely ugly, or of low birth, or on his own without children is someone we would be not altogether inclined to call happy, and even less inclined, presumably, if someone had totally depraved children or friends, or ones who were good but dead.¹⁸⁵

Clearly Aristotle is not referring to these goods in an instrumental fashion, as he has just finished referring to such goods. He has turned to consider the second role of external goods as necessary goods in a *eudaimon* life and is, on my reading, stating what he thought was obvious. This is why the point is not repeated over and over again in later sections of the *EN*, for he is stating what he thinks anyone who is not insensitive to suffering would feel. If my children grow up to be wretched junkies, on Kraut's view the *only* way in which my *eudaimonia* is affected by this occurrence would be that having children like this would diminish my virtuous activity. This could be characterized as my spending hours worrying about their current physical state as opposed to continuing with my philosophizing or exercising any of the practical virtues.

However, Aristotle himself discusses this possibility when he says that bad fortunes "bring on pains, and obstruct many sorts of activities."¹⁸⁶ I read Aristotle as referring to two sorts of misfortunes here. One type brings on a pain so great that *eudaimonia* is simply not possible for some time, such as in a tragic death. The other may be physical impairment, or the loss of financial resources: faculties which enable a *eudaimon* to accomplish virtuous activities. In this passage Aristotle provides a consideration of what may happen in a *eudaimon* life. Aristotle thinks that even in tragic circumstances the good person will "bear repeated and great misfortunes calmly, not because he is *insensitive* to them..."¹⁸⁷ The *eudaimon* is someone who acts according to the excellences, but he also has the appropriate emotional response to tragic situations. This emotional response is to "bear what fortune brings him with good grace"¹⁸⁸ but to act gracefully in the face of strokes of fortune or misfortune does not commit Aristotle to claiming that the *eudaimon* is not a feeling human being. The deprivation of certain goods can thus be characterized as being an emotional blow to that of the *eudaimon*. Imagine a *eudaimon* politician who hears during his busy day

¹⁸⁵ *EN* I.8 1099b2-7.

¹⁸⁶ *EN* I.10 1099b29-30.

¹⁸⁷ *EN* I.10 1100b32.

¹⁸⁸ *EN* I.10 1100a1-2.

that one of his good friends was killed in a battle. The immediate emotional response is one of sorrow, even for the *eudaimon*. Can he be characterized as quitting his job, or perhaps taking time off from work in order to mourn his son? It is appropriate to have the right measure of practical rationality and emotional maturity, and it is this mix that Aristotle admits, and Kraut recognizes,¹⁸⁹ to be one which admits of imprecision.

II.IV Conclusion

The first two chapters of this dissertation represent my attempt to explicate what Aristotle's *eudaimonia* consists in. I have argued that Aristotle's *eudaimonia* consists of more than virtuous activity, and characterized multiple *eudaimon* lives ranging from that of the private citizen to Aristotle's ideal *eudaimon*, the philosopher. Yet even in the philosopher's life, more than virtuous activity is needed for *eudaimonia*. It has been important to interpret Aristotle's *eudaimonia* for the following two chapters will first attempt to characterize *eudaimonia* as a sense of our conception of 'happiness', and then to defend *eudaimonia* as a plausible theory of well-being.

¹⁸⁹ Kraut, 1989. Pg. 30, fn. 16.

Chapter III: The 'Happiness' of Aristotle's *Eudaimon*

III.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, the term '*eudaimonia*' was used instead of rendering it into English expressions such as 'happiness'¹⁹⁰ or 'flourishing'¹⁹¹ in order to treat the concept of *eudaimonia* independently from problems which arise in its translation. Translations of Aristotle's *EN* often use 'happiness' as the English correlate of '*eudaimonia*', which gives rise to the question as to whether or not, and if so in what sense, Aristotle's *eudaimon* is a happy person. Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is what he argues to be the highest good for human beings and the previous chapters have provided an account of what the concept of *eudaimonia* consists of. This chapter examines the *eudaimon* himself. Is the *eudaimon* happy or flourishing as we might understand the terms today? Or rather, does Aristotle have a notion in mind that there is no English word for? If the *eudaimon* can be characterized as a happy person, Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* need not be one which is merely theoretical: its content may guide us in understanding what the happy life for humans, even now, is. Aristotle's inquiry into philosophical ethics is practical: it is meant to result in an answer which can help us live better lives, for "...the end is not knowing things but *doing* them."¹⁹²

Yet an immediate problem arises with respect to the term 'happiness'. The usage of the term threatens to undermine philosophical inquiry before it gets under way: dogs are said to be happy when they play, as are children whilst eating ice cream. The term according to Cooper "tends to be taken as referring exclusively to a subjective psychological state, and indeed one that is often temporary and recurrent."¹⁹³ By 'subjective' Cooper means that whatever it is that makes *me* happy is what *my* happiness consists of: as long as I take myself to be happy, then I am happy. On this view, all that 'happiness' refers to is the psychological state that "happy people" share: the pleasant sensation which accompanies

¹⁹⁰ Rowe, 2002.

¹⁹¹ Cooper, 1975.

¹⁹² *EN* I.3 1095a5-6. Emphasis mine.

¹⁹³ Cooper, 1975. P. 89. I agree with Cooper that the term tends to be understood this way, at least in English, but I shall argue that this is not the only way to understand 'happiness'.

the belief that *my* important desires are being met. So the fulfilment of the desire of a dog to bury his bone in the backyard produces what we refer to as a 'happy dog': he buries the bone and wags his tail. Similarly, when we refer to a 'happy man' we could refer simply to the fact that *his* desires are being met,¹⁹⁴ whatever they are.

If Cooper is right about what 'happiness' refers to, it is clear that Aristotle's *eudaimonia* should not be translated in this way. If 'happiness' refers to nothing over and above a subjective psychological state, then *eudaimonia* has very little to do with 'happiness', for *eudaimonia* is not a mental state: it constitutes what the good life for human beings is according to Aristotle. Richard Kraut notes that "Aristotle never uses *eudaimonia* in this way,"¹⁹⁵ that is, to call someone *eudaimon* simply because *he* feels that way about his life. Yet the question remains as to whether or not the *eudaimon* differs from those we consider to be in a happy frame of mind.

Richard Kraut takes up the question of whether or not the *eudaimon* is a happy person and argues that the *eudaimon* is in fact happy.¹⁹⁶ Kraut characterizes the *eudaimon* as a person who is in the very same psychological state as a happy person because the *eudaimon* "is very glad to be alive; he judges that on balance his deepest desires are being satisfied and that the circumstances of his life are turning out well."¹⁹⁷ Kraut recognizes a meaning of 'happiness' which differs from Cooper's¹⁹⁸, in that more than just the psychological state is required: Kraut understands one's happiness as residing in the judgement that he is meeting the standards *he* imposes on his life.¹⁹⁹ He argues, however,

¹⁹⁴ Or at least that he believes his desires are being met.

¹⁹⁵ Kraut, 1979. P. 180.

¹⁹⁶ Kraut, 1979.

¹⁹⁷ Kraut, 1979. P. 170.

¹⁹⁸ Kraut also recognises a meaning of happiness as Cooper understands but argues that it is a half-truth. On Kraut's view, if P were utterly deceived about the circumstances by which he understands himself to be happy, he is *happy* but we are reluctant to say that he is *leading a happy life*, for to conclude that P is leading a happy life would be to imply that P "attaches some significant value to the situation in which he is deceived." (Kraut, 1979. P. 180).

¹⁹⁹ Kraut, 1979. P. 180.

that as a conception of happiness *eudaimonia* ought to be rejected, for the standard which needs to be met in order to be *eudaimon* is too stringent.²⁰⁰

Kraut characterizes *eudaimonia* as an *objective* conception of happiness. An objective conception of happiness according to Kraut is one in which “people should not be considered happy unless they are coming reasonably close to living the best life they are capable of.”²⁰¹ An objective conception of happiness provides an ideal standard, and it is in meeting *this* and only this standard that happiness is understood. A conception of happiness being objective and not subjective is not sufficient for it to be stringent.²⁰² It is the *content* of Aristotle's objective conception of happiness that represents what he believed to be the ideal life for human beings. The ideal life is what any objectivist theory argues for, and Aristotle's *EN* is an example of such a theory: the complete life of excellent activity is what the best life consists of, thus far referred to as *eudaimonia*.

Any objectivist conception of happiness is considered stringent by Kraut in part because it is not up to *you* to determine the standard you must meet to be happy. Even if someone meets the standard that *he* sets for his life, if he does not fulfil the requirements of the objectivist theory, he will not be and should not be considered a happy person. Kraut interprets *eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness where the standard for happiness “is fixed by your nature, and your job is to discover it.”²⁰³ Kraut is here referring to Aristotle's FA and interpreting the ideal *eudaimon* life to be that of the philosopher.²⁰⁴ There are two conceptions of happiness on Kraut's view. One is subjective and available to anyone who is satisfying his desires or wants. The other is objective and exemplified by Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, where happiness is only available to those who fulfil the relevant criteria of the *eudaimon* standard.

²⁰⁰ ‘Stringent’ is Kraut's general objection to *eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness. The objections are characterized in more detail below.

²⁰¹ Kraut, 1979. P. 180-1.

²⁰² Consider an objective conception of happiness that consists of one single criterion, breathing. Almost any living person meets this standard, so it is not properly characterized as stringent. Yet, it is objective in that one must breathe in order to be understood as, and rightly feel happy.

²⁰³ Kraut, 1979. P. 181. By ‘your nature’ Kraut is referring to ‘your nature as a human being’, and thus identifying the fulfilment of the human function with what Aristotle's *eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness requires.

²⁰⁴ See Chapters One and Two.

On Kraut's view, if *eudaimonia* were to be used as the standard for understanding happiness many people would not be considered happy, including villains and children, because they have not developed themselves to lead active lives in accordance with complete excellence. Kraut's objections to using *eudaimonia* as *the* conception of happiness can be understood in two ways:

- i) (IH) *Eudaimonia* is an inhumane conception of happiness: If someone is permanently handicapped, he cannot attain *eudaimonia*. Therefore handicapped people should not be satisfied with their lives as they do not live up to the *eudaimon* standard,²⁰⁵ and should neither be, nor deemed, happy.²⁰⁶ *Eudaimonia* does not take into account one's limitations: it represents the ideal standard for any human being.²⁰⁷ On Kraut's view, the objectivist who holds *eudaimonia* to be the correct conception of happiness will see a large gap between the life a handicapped person leads and the life of the philosopher, and this objectivist will be committed to telling the handicapped person, even in the case where he is doing the best he can, that he should be unhappy²⁰⁸ with his life given how distant it is from the ideal of *eudaimonia*.²⁰⁹ *Eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness is inhumane according to Kraut because it does not take one's capabilities into account: no circumstance changes the *eudaimon* standard, such that if you cannot reach *eudaimonia*, even through no fault of your own, you cannot be happy.
- ii) (NH) *Eudaimonia* is too narrow a conception of happiness: According to Kraut, in the *EN* there is one best life proposed: that of the philosopher.²¹⁰ There are two ways in which Kraut believes *eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness is too narrow.

²⁰⁵ According to Kraut, this follows because he interprets Aristotle to be saying one is called *eudaimon* only "if that person comes fairly close to the ideal life for *all* human beings." Kraut interprets Aristotle as providing one ideal life--that of the philosopher— and that *eudaimonia* can only be achieved by coming reasonably close to this ideal. Kraut, 1979. P. 196.

²⁰⁶ There are two points that Kraut is making with these objections: i) That 'happiness' is not a good translation of *eudaimonia*, and ii) even though the *eudaimon* can be understood as happy, *eudaimonia* should be rejected as a conception of happiness because of IH and NH. Kraut, 1979. P. 194.

²⁰⁷ Kraut, 1979. P. 182.

²⁰⁸ The phrase "unhappy with his life" suggests that the person in question is miserable. I will pursue this implication in further detail in III.II.I where I argue that not being *eudaimon* does not entail one is miserable, for Aristotle himself says that a miserable existence is reserved for those who "do what is hateful and vile" (*EN* I.X 1100b35).

²⁰⁹ Kraut uses 'inhumane' in this context, regarding an objectivist who "would persuade him (a handicapped person) to be unhappy with his life." Kraut, 1979. P. 183-4 & 194. He thinks that the *eudaimon*, valuing Aristotle's standard for the good life as he does, will not think a handicapped person is *right* in feeling happy with his situation in life because he is so incapable (Kraut thinks), of being *eudaimon*.

²¹⁰ "The *Nicomachean Ethics* argues that there is just one life that is best for everyone—the philosophical life—but objectivists can disagree" (Kraut, 1979. P. 181). Kraut later claims that the best life being that of the philosopher "seems much too narrow, so let us leave this aside and consider Aristotle's claim that the best life must make an excellent use of reason" (Kraut, 1979. P. 191). Kraut argues that even this broader interpretation of Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is too narrow.

The first is with respect to the excellent use of reason. Kraut argues that someone might make poor use of his reasoning abilities but, using his other talents and abilities, still come reasonably close to the ideal life for *him*.²¹¹ So *eudaimonia* is too narrow in the sense that it is only through excellent reasoning that one can be happy. Secondly, Kraut argues that Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia* calls for temperance with respect to physical pleasures, and courage on the battlefield amongst other things. Kraut argues that there "is no reason to believe that a person fully realizes his capacities only if he adopts Aristotle's attitudes towards physical pleasure and the use of force."²¹² Kraut sees *eudaimonia* as a narrow conception of happiness because it is through being virtuous *as Aristotle understands the virtues* that happiness is achieved.²¹³

If *eudaimonia* is understood as the definition for what it is to be a happy person, then *eudaimonia* is the standard that must be reached by every person in order to be happy. Aristotle's understanding of the function of human beings is what supports his conception of *eudaimonia*. The Aristotelian *eudaimon* lives, on Kraut's view, according to a fixed, narrow standard. On Kraut's view *eudaimonia* requires one to be living a life which is as close as possible to Aristotle's conception of the ideal life, if we were to judge happiness using *eudaimonia* as the standard we would not be able to judge many of the people we now consider happy as actually *being* happy.²¹⁴ Children, for example, would not be understood as happy, for they are only referred to as *eudaimon* on Aristotle's view with respect to their good prospects in the future.²¹⁵ Since Kraut believes that there is a sharp disagreement between the standard we use to evaluate whether or not a person is happy and Aristotle's standard, that we should reject *eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness.²¹⁶ It is the substance of the disagreement that Kraut finds problematic: he characterizes *eudaimonia* as a stringent standard that many people are excluded from for a number of reasons. On Kraut's view, if we were to use Aristotle's *eudaimon* standard to understand

²¹¹ Kraut, 1979. P. 191. Kraut argues that Aristotle "does not give any convincing reason for believing that this cannot happen." Kraut does not himself provide an example where this is realistically possible. I try to develop such an example in (III.III)

²¹² Kraut, 1979. P. 191.

²¹³ This objection can be understood as questioning the link between virtuous activities *per se* and happiness, or as questioning Aristotle's definition of what virtuous activities are. I explore both options in III.II.II.

²¹⁴ I use 'we' here to refer to Kraut's understanding of the modern usage of the term 'happiness' or its cognates (Kraut, 1979. P. 167). I will argue later in III.II that it is not clear that some of the people Kraut takes to be happy *are* happy in a substantive sense (any sense over and above H₁).

²¹⁵ EN I.9 1100a3-4.

²¹⁶ Kraut, 1979. P. 167.

whether or not we are leading happy lives, then we would have to radically change the way we live if we wanted to be happy. If we adopted Aristotle's *eudaimonia* as our conception of happiness, many of us would become discontented where we are now contented with our lives, because on Kraut's view many of the people we now consider happy are not *eudaimones*. These people would cease to believe they are happy, and need to "make radical changes in [their] lives" in order to become *eudaimones*.²¹⁷

Kraut sees *eudaimonia* as a standard for happiness, but one which is very different from our modern standard as shown by his NH and IH objections. It is because of NH and IH that Kraut argues for the rejection of *eudaimonia* as the conception of happiness. With these differences in mind, one might question an adherent of *eudaimonia* as Callicles did Socrates:

Tell me, Socrates, are we to take you as being in earnest now, or joking? For if you *are* in earnest, and these things you're saying are really true, *won't this human life of ours be turned upside down*, and won't everything we do evidently be the opposite of what we should do?²¹⁸

Kraut is posing the same sort of question to Aristotle that Callicles asked of Socrates, and Kraut is arguing that there is no reason for us to adopt Aristotle's conception of happiness because *eudaimonia* is a standard which differs sharply from the way we understand happiness today. If Kraut's characterization of Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is accurate, then NH and IH show that the standard we use to understand happiness and the standard Aristotle uses are almost entirely different: they are two separate conceptions of happiness.

However, IH and NH do not sit well with what Aristotle says about *eudaimonia* as something "available to many; for it will be possible for it to belong, through some kind of learning or practice, to anyone not handicapped in relation to excellence."²¹⁹ In section III.II.I I will argue that Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is not inhumane as a conception of happiness as Kraut believes, using the interpretation of *eudaimonia* that has been argued for in Chapters One and Two. *Eudaimonia* is something which many people can obtain, though

²¹⁷ Kraut, 1979. P. 184.

²¹⁸ Plato. *Complete Works*. 'Gorgias' Trans: Donald J. Zeyl in Cooper, 1997. Hackett Publishing. 481b6-c4, emphasis mine.

²¹⁹ EN 1099b18-20.

not in as widespread a fashion as 'happiness' is *used* today.²²⁰ In the cases where Kraut argues that *eudaimonia* cannot be achieved due to case-specific limitations, I will argue that there is a correspondence between those who Aristotle thinks cannot achieve *eudaimonia* and those who we, even today, would be *reluctant to say are leading happy lives*. In section III.II.II I will argue that *eudaimonia* is not NH as Kraut believes, because as *eudaimonia* has been understood thus far, there are many other lives aside from the philosophical life (or those which closely relate to this life) that Aristotle's theory allows to be *eudaimon* as well, though to a lesser degree.

Aristotle's *eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness is similar to the way 'happiness' is thought of in certain contexts *today*. In philosophical literature, for example as a translation of *eudaimonia*, 'happiness' is used in the sense of 'well-being'. This sense of happiness evaluates more than the presence or absence of the relevant mental states associated with 'being happy'.²²¹ Aristotle's *eudaimon* is happy to be leading his life, but this happiness requires more than the psychological states that we attribute to happy people. If this is correct, then understanding the *eudaimon* as a 'happy person' can be done using a different sense of 'happiness' than the one which refers exclusively to the psychological state.

From the previous chapters it should be clear that happy psychological states are not sufficient for *eudaimonia*. However, whether or not the happy psychological state is necessary for *eudaimonia* needs to be addressed. Can we characterize *eudaimones* as smiley-faced persons? There are times when a *eudaimon* will be happy-minded and also times when the *eudaimon* will not (e.g. facing a charge on the battlefield). It is not necessary that being *eudaimon* requires a happy mental state which recurs frequently, though the mental state plausibly occurs at times in the *eudaimon* life. In other words, one can be *eudaimon* without being in a persistent, smiley-faced happy psychological state, even if this psychological state occurs at times. *Eudaimonia* does not result from many

²²⁰ I am here referring to the two senses in which 'happiness' is used today, which I detail below.

²²¹ Haybron, 2008. P. 34. Here Haybron divides theories of well-being into 5 different categories, all of which are answering the question of what it means for a life to be going well on the whole. My point is that there is a sense in which asking the question "Are you happy?" refers to more than the presence of the psychological state. It can be seen as asking "On the whole, is your life going well?"

occurrences of smiley-faced moments above a certain threshold over a lifetime. It results from, rather, on believing that one's life is going well on the whole *because* it is lived in accordance with the standard that Aristotle sets in *EN*.

However, there is a sense in which the *eudaimon* is happy, so it will be useful to draw a distinction between senses of 'happiness':

- i) Happiness₁ (H₁): Nothing over and above a type of feeling: "some people feel happy when helping old ladies across streets; others feel happy when torturing puppies: happiness comes down to whatever you happen to like."²²²
- ii) Happiness₂ (H₂): What it means for one's life to go well on the whole. "A theory of "happiness" in this "well-being" sense is a theory of *value*; a theory of what ultimately benefits a person."²²³ This sort of happiness involves living up to *one's own* standard, and living up to one's own standard is necessary *and* sufficient for happiness in this sense. Kraut notes the subjectivism in modern conceptions of happiness.²²⁴ One is happy in the case where he meets "the standards *he* imposes" on his life.²²⁵
- iii) Aristotelian Happiness (AH): Happy through satisfying the conditions for *eudaimonia*.

There are times in a *eudaimon* life where he may indeed feel H₁ however the *eudaimon* will necessarily be H₂ because he lives up to a standard that he recognizes as valuable, and sees no significant goods as lacking in his life. More specifically, the *eudaimon* leads the life that is in accordance with the standard of Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. Kraut usefully describes the *eudaimon* as someone who is *fully satisfied with his life*. So the *eudaimon* is happy in a specific sense of H₂ because he believes that his life is going well on the whole: he is meeting the standard for happiness, but that standard is set by Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. AH is thus a special case of H₂. III.II will argue that H₂ and AH are more similar than Kraut believes.

Section III.III will turn to the question of why *this* objective conception of happiness (AH), namely *eudaimonia*, is the good for human beings. From Chapters 1 and 2 we can see

²²² Annas, 2004. P. 2. This conception is termed as 'extreme subjectivism' in Kraut, 1979. P. 178.

²²³ Haybron, 2008. P. 5.

²²⁴ Kraut refers to this conception of happiness as 'subjectivist', for the standard which is used in judging your happiness is up to *you*. Kraut, 1979.

²²⁵ One might wonder at this point if it is possible to have too low a standard for H₂. Kraut does not address this question, but considering that he does not believe it strange to call villains happy, I understand him to be claiming that the evaluation of the standard is entirely up to the agent in question, and that there is no such thing as 'too low a standard' for being H₂.

that Aristotle was looking for the ideal human life, and this ideal human life was not one “in accordance with H_1 ”; the *eudaimon* life is lived in accordance with what *eudaimonia* consists in. The scope of III.III is not to argue that *eudaimonia* is the unique response to the question of what the ideal human life is, but rather to argue that the possession and exercise of the virtues is an essential part of H_2 . That is, no one would understand an agent X as H_2 in the case where X displayed “a profound lack of humanity” even if fully satisfied with his life.²²⁶ Section III.III.I will begin with a discussion of precisely why Aristotle thinks that children cannot be AH--and therefore not H_2 --except in reference to their future prospects. I will argue that children are not H_2 on Aristotle's view *or* on our view: children are neither *eudaimon* nor leading happy lives, though we do recognize their experiencing instances of H_1 and with respect to H_1 we can understand the happiness of children. III.III.II will turn to the question of whether or not one could be H_2 without the virtues. The problem with drawing a relationship between *eudaimonia* and happiness is the thought that “happiness may be successfully pursued through evil action.”²²⁷ I shall argue that H_1 is the maximum attainable happiness that villains can attain, and furthermore that H_2 and AH are not as dissimilar as Kraut believes.

III.II Eudaimonia as a conception of happiness

The characterization of the *eudaimon* as a happy person is now turned to, prior to the consideration of Kraut's objections. Kraut characterizes the happiness of a *eudaimon* from the following:

“...being alive is itself good and pleasant (and it seems to be, also from the fact that everyone desires it, and decent and blessed people most of all, since for them life is most desirable, and their vital activity is most blessed)...”²²⁸

The *eudaimon's* desire for his continued existence is derived from his perception that his life is going well: he is very glad to be alive. Here, as Kraut notes, Aristotle must be referring to the psychological condition of the *eudaimon*, who believes that his life is well worth living.²²⁹ Aristotle also argues that the person who lives a life in accordance with excellence

²²⁶ Foot, 2001. P. 91.

²²⁷ Foot, 2001. P. 82.

²²⁸ EN 1170a26-29.

²²⁹ The *eudaimon* believes *correctly*, according to Aristotle, that his life is well worth living.

as a whole will be *eudaimon*, and *this* person is pained at the thought of death because his death would be a deprivation of “goods of the greatest kind.”²³⁰ Put simply, Kraut argues that the happy life for human beings is understood through H₂ where leading a life that meets one's own standards entails that one's life is going well and that one is happy. For Aristotle, the happy life is AH: meeting one's own standards does not entail that one's life is going well, as this requires meeting the standard of *eudaimonia*. Of course, when we refer to the happiness of the *eudaimon* we must be thinking of a type of H₂, namely AH, for nowhere does Aristotle refer to *eudaimonia* as being conducive to H₁.²³¹ He instead refers to the *eudaimon* life as “living well and doing well”,²³² and neither of the two necessarily entails smiley-faced moments. They rather refer to someone who is doing well in his life on the whole. Aristotle, however, does refer to the ‘delight’ of the *eudaimon*:

The person who does not delight in fine actions does not even qualify as a person of excellence: no one would call a person just if he failed to delight in acting justly, nor open-handed if he failed to delight in open-handed actions; and similarly in other cases.²³³

Is Aristotle hinting at occurrences of H₁ whilst the *eudaimon* engages in virtuous activity? Taken alone, this passage might imply that it makes the *eudaimon* H₁ whilst being open-handed. When Aristotle discusses open-handedness in *EN* IV, he says that the person who gives money to the right people, in the right amount, and so on, will do this “with pleasure.”²³⁴ The pleasure that the *eudaimon* experiences in acting virtuously is not akin to the smiley-faced fleeting feeling one has when one is tickled.²³⁵ It is rather the pleasure of knowing that one is acting well: living up to the *eudaimon* standard. Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is a conception of happiness but not one to be confused with H₁. The *eudaimon* is H₂: he has a deep seated belief that his life is going well as a whole. He may experience instances of H₁ throughout his life but this is not what his happiness consists of. I now turn to Kraut's objections to *eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness: IH and NH.

²³⁰ See Chapter Two, II.III for my interpretation of what these goods are.

²³¹ AH is the type of H₂ representing the set of people whose standard for happiness is *eudaimonia*.

²³² *EN* I.4 1095a17-19.

²³³ *EN* 1099a17-19.

²³⁴ *EN* 1120a27. Here Aristotle also qualifies what is in accord with excellence as either pleasant or painless. For an example of ‘painless’ excellent activity, see his treatment of courage at *EN* III.9.

²³⁵ Presuming, of course, that one is ticklish.

III.II.I Is eudaimonia an inhumane conception of happiness?

Kraut characterizes *eudaimonia* as an inhumane conception of happiness because of the way he views the objectivist²³⁶—someone who adheres to an objective conception of happiness such as Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. Kraut suggests that since the objectivist believes that *eudaimonia* is the *correct* standard to be met in order to be happy, that in some situations he will see a big difference between the ways in which people lead their lives and the best lives for those people. Kraut characterizes the objectivist as perhaps wanting "to shock them (those who lead lives which are far from Aristotle's ideal life) into the realization that they are doing a terrible job with their lives. In this way, perhaps they will change for the better, and at any rate others will not be tempted to imitate them."²³⁷ The point is that the objectivist will think that *his* conception of happiness is the correct one and people would do better to adhere to his standard for evaluating and understanding happiness. What the objectivist will be trying to counter with his conception of happiness (AH) is (H2), where as Kraut notes, the subjectivist nature of (H₂) leaves it up to *you* to find out what life you should lead in order to be happy, and "from a practical standpoint, [is] the less informative theory."²³⁸ Parents have strong beliefs about what is good for their children: education, eating well, avoiding drugs, being free from bullying at school, and so on. But friends may also advise each other on what to do in given circumstances, and the point I am trying to make here is that it is not strange to recognize the trend of evaluating whether or not your life is going well, and having people who care about you advise you on what might be good for *you* even outside the parent-child relation.

Kraut recognizes that such re-evaluations of lives do take place, and that those who are convinced that they should change the way they live their lives "may thank the objectivist for making them see that they have unknowingly been leading unhappy lives."²³⁹ So it is not the notion that an objectivist can convince someone else that he is leading the wrong sort of life if he wants to be happy, and that he should change his life (even radically)

²³⁶ From here onward, an 'objectivist' refers to someone who adheres to Aristotle's *eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness.

²³⁷ Kraut, 1979. P. 183.

²³⁸ Kraut, 1979. P. 192.

²³⁹ Kraut, 1979. P. 184.

if he wants to be happy, that Kraut's objection rests on. It is rather *what* Aristotle's *eudaimonia* requires on Kraut's view that he thinks makes it too stringent a conception of happiness. Kraut's interpretation of Aristotle's *eudaimonia* puts good *theōria* at the top of a hierarchy of goods: it is the only activity chosen only for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else, and a life in accordance with this activity, the life of the philosopher, is the ideal life which Aristotle advocates in the *EN*. It should also be noted here that Aristotle recognizes this practice of giving and receiving advice in the *EN*, and according to Aristotle there is an aspect of the soul which participates in reasoning by listening to, and obeying reason: "it is the way one is reasonable when one *takes* account of advice from one's father or loved ones..."²⁴⁰ The practice of giving advice to loved ones on how to lead a good life occurred in Aristotle's time as well. So in this respect, there is nothing about the objectivist that is necessarily inhumane: he is simply trying to help those who are leading lives far away from his conception of the ideal life to recognize what the ideal life is, and to inspire and motivate those people, where change is possible, to adopt a life which is more similar to Aristotle's ideal. Yet Kraut's objection still must be addressed: what about those people who have unalterable circumstances in their lives which preclude them from, at least on Kraut's view, AH?

When Kraut uses an example of someone who is handicapped and argues that one who is handicapped cannot be *eudaimon*, he is making two points. The first is that, even in the case where the handicapped individual is making the best of his circumstances, he cannot be *eudaimon*. This point has at its core Kraut's characterization of *eudaimonia* as an unalterable ideal which does not take personal circumstances or situations, such as physical handicaps, into consideration. The second point which Kraut is making in his usage of the term 'inhumane' is that it is perverse, if change is impossible, that an objectivist's conception of happiness will be used to "persuade him (the handicapped individual) to be unhappy with his life, distant though it may be from the ideal he might have achieved."²⁴¹ Kraut's usage of 'unhappy with his life' seems to imply that the handicapped person, from the objectivist's viewpoint, ought to be miserable. Since the handicapped person is leading a life which is so far from the *eudaimon* ideal as Kraut characterizes it, he would find it difficult to be happy to

²⁴⁰ *EN* I.13 1102b31-34.

²⁴¹ Kraut, 1979. P. 194.

be alive. Kraut's position regarding the handicapped person's relation to *eudaimonia* can be summarised with an example that he provides himself:

Now, just as the dedicated singer would find it hard to live with the public recognition that he sings poorly, so a person who wants to see some good in his being alive will find it hard to do so if *he and others judge that his life can never be well lived.*²⁴²

Kraut's characterization of the objectivist as someone who would want to change the viewpoint of a subjectivist who believed he was leading a happy life leads him to conclude that if the objectivist is successful in his endeavour, then the subjectivist will cease to believe that he *is* leading a happy life. And if the objectivist does this to a handicapped person, by pointing out just how distant the handicapped person's life is from the *eudaimon* ideal, then the objectivist appears to be doing something inhumane: he is telling someone who is incapable of changing his life for the better because of a permanent handicap that his life is not going as well as it could otherwise have gone, and therefore that the handicapped person should be unhappy with his life. It should be noted here that Aristotle is not committed to the assumption that Kraut makes in his characterisation of the objectivist: there is nothing in the *EN* which suggests that a *eudaimon* would engage in a conversation of the sort Kraut describes. Imagine a political *eudaimon* who hears that one of the citizens in his country was involved in a car crash which leaves him paralyzed and his wife and children dead. The *eudaimon* rightly judges that the life of the citizen is maimed: his happiness is impaired, because it is no longer ideal. However, there is nothing which commits the *eudaimon* to visit this citizen and effectively rub it in his face that he is unable to achieve the ideal anymore. Kraut seems to think that the objectivist is committed to this course of action, and I find it unlikely that Aristotle is committed to this sort of activity on the part of a *eudaimon*.

Note that Kraut uses the phrase 'unhappy', and not unsatisfied, to describe how the handicapped person would feel about his own life.²⁴³ However to call someone 'unhappy' is

²⁴² Kraut, 1979. P. 194.

²⁴³ Kraut, 1979. P. 175. Here Kraut refers to those who are "quite distant from *eudaimonia*" as "deeply dissatisfied with themselves" just in case that the individuals in question adopt *eudaimonia* as their conception of happiness. Kraut uses "happy" to describe someone who is "fully satisfied with his life" (p. 172). He uses "deeply dissatisfied with themselves" to represent those who are unhappy (p. 175). I use 'unsatisfied' to represent someone who recognizes that his life could be going better than it is, but is not *deeply* unsatisfied with his current circumstances. I may be unsatisfied with my life today, but recognize optimistically that things

to describe someone as sad, miserable, or even depressed. It is not clear why an objectivist need make the claim that one who does not meet the *eudaimon* standard is necessarily *unhappy* with his life, whatever that life may be. Aristotle does not appear to think that there is only either 'happy' or 'unhappy'. When he discusses what can happen to a good person's life if tragic events occur he does not refer to someone who meets an end such as Priam of Troy as 'unhappy'. Aristotle refers to such a person as neither miserable (unhappy) nor *eudaimon* (happy). This is because Aristotle thinks that "one's activities are what determine the quality of one's life."²⁴⁴ According to Aristotle, it is *how* you lead your life that determines whether or not you are going to be happy. There is a constant emphasis on the active life (intellectual and physical) in Aristotle's *EN* and the activities one chooses to engage in, and *how* those activities are pursued with respect to excellence are how we can understand one's happiness (AH). If someone who meets a tragic end such as Priam was not considered wretched by Aristotle, then it does not seem clear that every non-*eudaimon* individual is thus accurately characterized as wretched. So who are the people that Aristotle thinks are unhappy with their lives? Aristotle thinks that 'unhappiness', or being miserable with one's life, is reserved for those who do terrible things:

Those who have done many terrible things and are hated because of their depravity even take flight from life and do away with themselves. And the depraved seek others with whom to spend their days, but are *in flight from themselves*; for when on their own they are reminded of many odious things in the past and look forward to more of the same in the future, but in company with others they can forget. And since they have *no lovable qualities* there is nothing friendly *about their attitude to themselves*.²⁴⁵

Not only are evil people despised by others for what they do, but they are in conflict with themselves because of the evil things they have done in the past and can expect to do in the future. They are filled with regret for living evil lives, and these people wish that they would not experience pleasure by doing such evil deeds.²⁴⁶ The point of quoting this lengthy passage is to show that Aristotle certainly does *not* say that everyone who does not achieve the *eudaimon* standard is *unhappy*. Unhappiness or being miserable is saved for those

may change for the better by next week. This is neither "unhappy" (miserable) nor "happy". Perhaps this is commonly referred to as being "okay" with one's current circumstances in life, but this inquiry is outside the scope of the current discussion.

²⁴⁴ *EN* I.10 1100b33-35.

²⁴⁵ *EN* IX.4 1166b12-19.

²⁴⁶ *EN* IX.4 1166b24-25.

wretched evil people who cannot cultivate a friendly disposition towards themselves.²⁴⁷ It is only those who act in a vile way that Aristotle believes to be truly miserable. As long as someone acts well, he can at least be a good person, even if he is not capable of achieving *eudaimonia*. But what does it mean to say that although someone is not AH, he is not miserable? Is there a difference between our modern conception of happiness (H₂) and Aristotle's (AH) regarding those who are unsatisfied with their lives?

It is unclear if someone with a physical handicap would necessarily be prevented from becoming *eudaimon*. Aristotle declares that those who are handicapped *with respect to excellence*²⁴⁸ will be unable to achieve *eudaimonia*. Is a physical handicap sufficient to deprive someone of *eudaimonia*? This will depend on the handicap, and I will provide an example of such a handicap now. Consider a scientist, Albert, who has a loving family, good friends, and enjoys his daily life: it is filled with intellectual and emotional satisfaction. He treats his family and friends well; he even has some close friends with whom he can engage in good discussions. He works hard when he is at work, and converses about his research with his colleagues – all the while displaying a virtuous character. Now imagine that Albert were to wake up one day and rapidly begin to lose control of himself physically – his nerves degenerate from his feet upwards, and he is left with only the physical ability to speak and move his head a bit. This would be a serious physical handicap, but one which would not impair his mind, at least directly. Albert is *eudaimon* before the physical handicap, but does he remain one after he becomes partially paralyzed? Looking at what Aristotle considered to be stains on *eudaimonia*, it is interesting to note that Aristotle does not there list 'health'.²⁴⁹ Albert would not be able to answer the call of duty if it ever arose: he would not be able to act courageously on the battlefield. Is that sufficient to characterize him as having lost *eudaimonia*? Aristotle stresses the *active* life in his claims about *eudaimonia*, and he also argues that no one would call someone who lived an inactive life

²⁴⁷ EN IX.4 1166b26-27.

²⁴⁸ EN I.9 1099b20.

²⁴⁹ Referring to EN I.8 1099b2-8.

happy except to win a debate.²⁵⁰ Does an active life require such a realization of physical and intellectual capacities that Albert could conceivably not be *eudaimon*?²⁵¹

The response from Aristotle to this example is clear: Albert may lose *eudaimonia* in the tragic moment where he is diagnosed with this debilitating disease, yet *eudaimonia* could be regained. With support from his family and friends he may learn to deal with his disease, and continue with his research. He may engage in even more contemplation than he did before his illness and still maintain his friendships and his relationships with his partner and children.²⁵² Albert may not lose *eudaimonia* at all: as I characterized his life it is not clear that he placed a large amount of value on his physical mobility. The “good and sensible person bears what fortune brings him with good grace”²⁵³ according to Aristotle. It is this quality of the good person on Aristotle’s view which would either prevent Albert, if he is a good person, from losing *eudaimonia* at all, or else grant him the ability to achieve *eudaimonia* later, after a “complete passage of life in which he achieves great and fine things.”²⁵⁴ A *eudaimon*, someone who has a deep satisfaction that he is leading a good life on the whole, will not easily be dislodged from this position according to Aristotle. Even when tragedy befalls him, such as in the case of Albert, if he loses *eudaimonia* it is something which he will be able to achieve once more if enough time passes such that Albert can recover and live well: thinking he is living well once more.

What about Albert’s happiness? From the moment of his first symptoms until the last progression of his illness resulting in his near paralysis, we can imagine that he is not very happy at all. But this is compatible with what Aristotle says about the way in which the *eudaimon* values his life: it is *these* sorts of people who will be most pained at the *thought* of death, because on their view they would be giving up some of the greatest goods available

²⁵⁰ EN I.5 1096a2-3.

²⁵¹ Referring to EN I.5 1095b32—1096a3.

²⁵² Though presumably these relationships will change, the change may speak of the character of Albert’s friends and loved ones more than it does about *him*. One such change would be the lack of purely recreational sex with his wife, and if this were sufficient to cause her to commit adultery this may speak more of her appetites than of Albert’s deficiency.

²⁵³ EN I.10 1101a1-2.

²⁵⁴ EN I.10 1101a12-13.

to human beings.²⁵⁵ The example of Albert is meant to show that tragic events affect both 'happiness' and '*eudaimonia*' in a similar fashion, and that *eudaimonia* is not as dissimilar from conceptions of happiness today.

Perhaps the example provided does not properly capture what Richard Kraut meant by 'permanently handicapped'. Imagine instead that in addition to this physical incapacity Albert also suffered some brain damage which left him mentally disabled. He could no longer understand his research, or even recognize the people around him. In essence, he will have lost his ties with everything he cared for most, but he will be *unaware* of this loss, such is his brain damage. When we think of Albert in a wheelchair being wheeled around by a caregiver, a hollow shell of his former self, are we to think of him as happy? Perhaps Albert will have the most basic cognitive capacity – like a young child, he will smile if smiled at, and twitch in what might pass for 'enjoyment'. This combination of mental and physical handicap would be something that would deprive Albert of his *eudaimonia*. He would not be a properly functioning human being: he would not even be properly aware of the world around him, let alone be able to engage in excellent activity of any sort. As a conception of happiness, is *eudaimonia* thus inhumane? If *eudaimonia* were to be the conception of happiness we adopted, Albert would not be considered happy. However, does this judgment conflict with the current ascriptions of happiness? Would we today consider people like Albert happy, and thus reject Aristotle's *eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness? This evaluation is highly unlikely and regarding people in situations like Albert's we only need to read the debates over euthanasia: it is tough to recognize the value of such an existence, let alone describe people like Albert as happy.

I would like to suggest at this point that there is something nonsensical in describing Albert, someone with permanent mental and physical disabilities, as 'happy'. Albert's life may have been happy up to the point where his disability arose, however to describe him as a happy person while he is in such a broken down state does not speak of an analysis of Albert's current prospects. The urge to refer to those with severely crippled mental and physical faculties as 'happy' seems to analyse Albert's life prior to his current state. If a parent hears that her child who has shown such potential in her life thus far has been hit by

²⁵⁵ EN III.9 1117b10-14.

a car on the way to school at the age of 12 and rendered mentally and physically crippled for the rest of her life it seems impossible that the parent would not be stricken with grief at the loss *for her daughter* of a future that could have been *so much better*. All of her daughter's life until that point indicated a promising future, and her child's future was snatched away in this accident. Tragic circumstances like these can snatch (AH) and any plausible H₂ away, for this sort of example removes almost every possibility for leading a life in accordance with any H₂. Though the extension of 'happiness' today may immediately seem to be greater than that of '*eudaimonia*', it is not clear upon further inquiry that this is obvious.

I have tried to show with the examples in this section that the salient factor in understanding either happiness or *eudaimonia* is the functioning of the mind. Kraut's thought that a permanent handicap could deprive someone of *eudaimonia* thus seems to fall short. My point is that those people who are *eudaimon* (AH) are plausibly characterized as possessing H₂. Of course, this example has not engaged the set of people who Kraut thinks that we would consider as happy yet are *not eudaimon*. I now turn to Kraut's NH objection, which argues that *eudaimonia* should be rejected as a conception of happiness because it is too narrow: there are people who do lead happy lives who would not meet the *eudaimon* standard, at least according to Kraut. I will argue that these people might be happy in an H₁ way, but not in an H₂ way.

III.II.II Is eudaimonia a narrow conception of happiness?

When arguing for the rejection of *eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness Kraut characterizes *eudaimonia* as requiring "the excellent use of reason."²⁵⁶ Kraut sees two problems with *eudaimonia* as a conception of happiness with respect to it being narrow. The first is that Kraut thinks someone might not use his reasoning abilities very well, but still use his other abilities and talents such that he would lead an ideal life *for him*. The second problem Kraut has is with respect to what the excellent use of reason consists in:

Here Aristotle has a lot to say. Using reason in an excellent way about practical matters requires exercising the virtues as he interprets them: one must be temperate in matters of physical pleasure, rather than a sensualist or an ascetic; one must be courageous, chiefly on the battlefield, and so on...There is no reason to believe that a person fully

²⁵⁶ "The idea that the best life is philosophical seems much too narrow, so let us leave this aside and consider Aristotle's claim that the best life must make an excellent use of reason." Kraut, 1979, p. 191.

realizes his capacities *only if he adopts Aristotle's attitudes towards physical pleasure and the use of force.*²⁵⁷

This problem can be understood as either a strong or a weak claim. The weak claim is that the virtues have some role in a conception of happiness, but that Aristotle's list of the virtues should not be the only one which, if satisfied, qualifies someone as happy.²⁵⁸ The strong claim would be that the virtues simply have no place in a conception of happiness: Why should my life be understood to be going well (H₂) primarily because I am acting virtuously? Why can 'leading a happy life' not consist in spending my life as an excellent assassin? When Kraut refers to someone who does not act in accordance with the excellences (either intellectual or practical), but uses his talents to lead an ideal life *for him*, two potential avenues for happiness arise. The first would be happiness in the non-moral sense through exercising non-moral qualities. I will characterize a potentially happy non-virtuous person in the example of Gilbert, a professional athlete. The second would be the life of the assassin named Frank: someone whose happiness depends directly on his ability to kill mercilessly for profit. The remainder of this chapter addresses the strong claim, and argues that AH is not narrow as Kraut believes, because understanding happy lives even today is done centrally through evaluating the 'happy person' as a 'good' person, where good represents 'virtuous' above a certain threshold.²⁵⁹

Consider an athlete, Gilbert, who spends his college years getting by with minimal effort and is recruited by a low-tier basketball team in a professional league once he is finished. Unbeknownst to him, had he trained harder in his studies *or* in his basketball training, his life would have been substantially different: he would have enjoyed the challenges in his studies and pursued a life of research upon completing college, or in the case of his basketball training, he would have made it to a better team in the professional league: this better team would actually have a chance of beating some of the better teams in the league *if* Gilbert trained enough and created a good working synergy with his

²⁵⁷ Kraut, 1979. P. 191.

²⁵⁸ I do not address the weak claim here. To defend Aristotle's list of virtues would require far more than the space available here.

²⁵⁹ One need not be *perfectly* virtuous in order to be understood as leading a happy life, but being virtuous to a degree is what I will try to show is a necessary prerequisite for happiness. This is why children, villains or minimally virtuous people are not understood to be H₂, even today.

teammates. Instead, however, Gilbert chose a life of self-indulgence. He regularly skips practices to go have some beers at the pub, he does not push himself at the gym to keep his muscles and joints in good working order and his nutrition and sleep regimen deprive him of energy he would otherwise have had, preventing him from being a better athlete. Gilbert is not 'using his intelligence well' and he does not care to: he is simply apathetic with respect to his future career. Yet, when Gilbert meets with his friends he talks about how happy he is to be a basketball player, playing in the big leagues. Even though he loses many games and is not really trying very hard, he has *made it*. He sees himself as a success and does not wish for anything more. He is leading *his* ideal life, using his natural talent for athletics.

Contrast the way Gilbert lives his life with what Aristotle has to say about how to deal with one's lot in life:

For we consider that the truly good and sensible person bears what fortune brings him with good grace, and *acts on each occasion in the finest way possible given the resources at the time*, just as we think that a good general uses the army he has to the best strategic advantage, and a shoemaker makes a shoe as finely as it can be made out of the hides he has been given; and similarly with all the other sorts of craftsmen.²⁶⁰

This quote occurs in a passage where Aristotle is describing what might happen to a *eudaimon* if tragic events occur. Aristotle defends the position that it is one's activities which determine the quality of that person's life, and the relevance of the above quote is to show that Aristotle thinks that good humans, whether generals or shoemakers, do the best that they can with the resources available to them at the time. Gilbert is an example of someone who is not adhering to Aristotle's standard. He gets by because of his natural athletic talent, but he is a fraction of what he could be if he applied himself in his role as an athlete. Gilbert is not evil, but he is not acting virtuously either. Gilbert represents that non-virtuous yet successful person who Kraut thinks, on my understanding, could be understood as happy.

The standard that Gilbert sets for himself is one he has met: his playing in a big league gives him a deep sense of satisfaction. Even though he is not as good as he could be if he trained harder, he does not care. The threshold by which he understands his life to be going well has been reached. I see Gilbert to be what Richard Kraut meant by someone who

²⁶⁰ EN I.10 1101a1-6.

does not use his reasoning capacities very well but still uses his natural talents to be leading *his* ideal life (what he thinks to be the ideal life). Now Kraut also thinks that an objectivist, imagine Gilbert's coach, would want to tell Gilbert how far away from his ideal life he actually is. Gilbert's coach would encourage Gilbert to eat better, sleep more, and train harder – all three criteria being crucial to the proper development of an athlete. Of course, Gilbert's coach has an interest which would cause him to encourage Gilbert in this way: the good of the team. Yet what if Gilbert's friends do so as well, even though Gilbert's playing basketball does not directly benefit them in any way? Do we not expect our close friends and family members to have a care in our development? If Gilbert's friends thought that he was falling well short of his potential and said nothing to him about that because it was sufficient that Gilbert was meeting his *own* standard, what might we say about his friends?

The issue with its just being up to Gilbert to define his own standard for leading a happy life is that there are problems with conceptions of happiness which are identified as theories of desire satisfaction.²⁶¹ On Kraut's view, it is necessary and sufficient for Gilbert to be meeting the standard that *he* values in order for *him* to be leading a happy life (H₂). The only way in which 'happiness' applies to someone like Gilbert, whose desires are defective, is in a purely sovereign way where it is *entirely* up to Gilbert as to whether or not he is leading a happy life. Gilbert is happy if he thinks he is, because he is happy if he is getting what he wants, and Gilbert is the authority on whether he is getting what he wants.²⁶² If we accept Kraut's version of happiness (H₂) we will find ourselves in the realm of H₁, where happiness is nothing over and above the smiley-faced feelings we associate with it. Kraut's H₂ is almost identical to H₁, in that Kraut's H₂ locates the occurrences of H₁ with *my* belief that *my* standard is being met. The only difference between H₁ and H₂ is the discussion of standards yet on Kraut's view this standard is nothing over and above a purely subjective standard that I set for myself. Kraut argues that H₂, as I characterize it so similar to H₁, is precisely how happiness is understood today. It is unclear that we understand someone like Gilbert as a happy person, for to do so would be to dissociate one's own standard from *any* evaluation aside from his own. A happy person on Kraut's H₂ is not happy in any sense aside

²⁶¹ Note that this is a very limited point against Kraut. Kraut himself argues against desire-satisfaction theories of the good, and even that "our nature as human beings consists in the exercise of our capacity for rational choice" in his 'Desire and the Human Good'. Kraut, 1994, p. 48.

²⁶² Annas, 2004. P. 3.

from the 'happiness' felt by someone who meets his own standard regardless of the content of this standard. Is Kraut correct in arguing that there is nothing in our modern conception of happiness (his H_2) which analyzes a person's standard and thus causes us to be reluctant in believing the person is leading a happy life?

Why shouldn't it be enough that Gilbert thinks he is leading the ideal life for *him*? As was mentioned above, there is a sense in which we think people who fall far short of their potential are simply *mistaken* that they are doing well. This is why parents scold their children for stealing cookies from the cookie jar. Children believe that their desire for a cookie *now* is all that is required in order for it to be good that they have a cookie now. But parents know many things that children do not regarding the form of a healthy diet and the effect of sugar on children.²⁶³ Knowing this, parents believe that children are mistaken in thinking that they are doing well for themselves by reaching for the cookie jar while unsupervised. The standard of the parents must be met in order for the children to be doing well in their parents' eyes, and parents discipline children in this way in the hopes that the children will learn lessons as they grow up. We have a system of scolding and advising which we use today to try to help those people we think are mistaken in their desires. On the notion of 'using one's reasoning capacities well', now, as with Aristotle²⁶⁴, there is a sense in which we encourage those near and dear to us to make the best of their situations.

The example of Gilbert is meant to show that 'the excellent use of reason' is more broad in context than Kraut believes: more broad in that people do care about how their friends develop themselves, and how their friends develop themselves is a crucial factor in understanding how happy someone is. If someone falls far short of their potential, like Gilbert does, there is a sense in which we would be sceptical that he is leading a happy life. Gilbert may simply be a case of happiness as referred to in the "as long as he is happy..." form of expression, but this is not an evaluation that Gilbert is leading a happy life. H_1 is neither sufficient for H_2 , nor AH. Simply believing that you have met your own standard for happiness cannot, as Kraut thinks, be both necessary and sufficient for being happy: we do not simply understand happiness as the meeting of one's own standard, and thus Kraut's

²⁶³ One hopes so, at least.

²⁶⁴ EN 1102b33-35.

understanding of our modern conception of happiness is missing a crucial evaluative step. The way Kraut characterizes the objectivist, as someone who would attempt to show someone that her life is far distant from the ideal she could be leading, is pervasive in modern society. We do care about someone's own standards in assessing whether or not he is happy, or at least this is the point I have been trying to make in a limited way so far in the non-moral case of Gilbert.

It is plausible to understand Gilbert's happiness as a form of H_1 : episodic bouts of happy feelings which come about when he plays a decent game of basketball or has a good night out with his friends. However, it has been argued thus far that Gilbert is neither H_2 ²⁶⁵ nor AH, in order to support the argument that AH and the modern conception of happiness, H_2 , do not refer to two entirely different sets of people: there is a convergence between Aristotle's ancient conception of happiness and our modern one. Yet one more example must be put forward in order to challenge the way Kraut thinks that happiness is treated today. On Kraut's view, as mentioned earlier, it is plausible to understand the happiness of a villain using our modern conception of happiness (H_2).²⁶⁶ I now turn to an example of Frank, a merciless assassin, and argue that he is not happy in any sense over and above H_1 .

Imagine Frank, an assassin by choice, who chooses to kill for money. He is very good at what he does, and is never caught, for he can snipe targets from great distances and disappear after the killings without a trace. Frank is proud of his skills, and sees himself as providing a valuable public service. After all, there are not many people like Frank: he is special, and as he goes about his day looking through his secret correspondence requests to kill today's target, he is in a happy frame of mind. He sips his coffee with a smile on his face, eager to go about his day and kill to earn some money.²⁶⁷ In what I have argued so far, the happy frame of mind (H_1) is not sufficient for H_2 or AH. On Kraut's view, as long as someone knows he is meeting his own standard for happiness, he can be understood as H_2 . However, on Aristotle's view, this is not enough, and obviously Frank is not meeting the *eudaimon*

²⁶⁵ At this point H_2 entails more than satisfying one's own standard. I will try to show that AH is similar to our modern conception of happiness (H_2) in what follows.

²⁶⁶ As mentioned previously, I use H_2 to refer to our modern conception of happiness, unless qualified directly as Kraut's H_2 .

²⁶⁷ Here I am thinking about Philippa Foot's 'Z' from Foot, 2001, p. 90.

standard: he leads a life of killing mercilessly for money. If this were all that could be said about Frank, then H₂ would be so different from AH because H₂ does not require one to be understood as happy in large part *because* he is a good (virtuous) person.

What AH has that Kraut's H₂ does not is an evaluative criterion. If one meets the *eudaimon* standard then this same person is also AH. However AH is Aristotle's conception of happiness, which is a life of excellent activity adequately equipped with external goods, and not marred terribly by tragic events such that *eudaimonia* is lost. Calling someone *eudaimon* is to refer specifically to Aristotle's standard which links 'happiness' with 'what is good for a human being'. H₂ in the subjective sense that Kraut understands it looks for 'what is good for this particular person.' However, I think that this characterization of modern conceptions of happiness rests on a mistake which dissociates entirely notions of 'what is good for this human being' from 'what is good for a human being' in its general form. This is not a question of lawyers being a better vocation than doctors or vice-versa, but rather better illustrated through a case like Frank's. To call Frank's life H₂ is to say that this life is good for him, that this life benefits him. Since this life benefits Frank, people ought to congratulate him on leading this life – after all, Frank is *happy*. Perhaps Frank's goals are worthy of pursuit, and we should aid him by buying him better weaponry or ammunition?

The example of Frank is meant to raise the question of whether or not we can understand as happy one who "has a profound lack of humanity."²⁶⁸ If Frank's childhood friends were to meet him at a school reunion and inquire as to what he did for a living, do we imagine that as Frank in an emotional voice told them how proud he was of, and how good he was at killing people, do we imagine further that his friends would smile and recognize Frank as a happy individual and congratulate him on the life he is leading? It is more plausible to imagine that Frank's childhood friends would rush away to call the police and inform them that the assassin who has been plaguing the city has been identified. Of course, Kraut could here still respond that whatever we have to say about Frank's life, that *he is happy*. Frank has a certain attitude towards his life: "he is very glad to be alive; he judges that on balance his deepest desires are being satisfied and that the circumstances of

²⁶⁸ Foot, 2001. P. 91.

his life are turning out well.”²⁶⁹ I have argued that it cannot be sufficient for happiness to simply judge that one satisfies his deepest desires, without analyzing what those desires are. There appears to be reluctance in claiming that someone like Frank could really be happy, and what lurks here is an association between happiness and goodness that I unfortunately do not have the space to defend in great detail. I do hope, however, that the examples I have provided at least suggest the link between happiness and goodness.²⁷⁰

I have tried to show after a lengthy introduction in this chapter that Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is neither narrow nor inhumane. It is not inhumane because those people who are precluded from *eudaimonia* on Kraut's view are also unable to properly be understood as happy. It is not narrow either, because although the different senses of 'happiness' allow it to be more extensive than '*eudaimonia*', in the cases where 'happiness' refers to 'leading a happy life', our modern conception of happiness has more in common with *eudaimonia* than might be understood at first glance. The conclusion of course is not that sometimes we are wrong to use the word 'happiness' in certain ways. Frank might very well be happy, but that just refers to his happy state of mind: it says nothing about the goodness of his life, nor does it congratulate him on a life well lived. As Foot concluded, "*happiness* is a protean concept, appearing now in one way and now in another" and 'happiness' can refer to emotional states or a happy life, or a relationship between the two senses. The final chapter of this dissertation will shift the discussion from happiness to well-being, and attempt to defend Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia* from the criticism by Haybron that one may choose "the path of greater excellence and virtue, a life that more fully exercised her capacities as a human being. But she was not securing or promoting her happiness or well-being. She was *sacrificing* it."²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Kraut, 1979. P. 170.

²⁷⁰ Foot, 2001 Ch. 6 contains an in depth discussion of the link between goodness and happiness.

²⁷¹ Haybron, 2008. P. 163.

Chapter IV: Aristotle's Perfectionism

IV.I Introduction

In Chapter Three I defended Aristotle's *eudaimonia* as happiness and argued that 'happiness' as a word in the English language has different senses, one of which is similar to Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. We must remember that Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is an answer to the question of what it means for one's life to go well on the whole: Aristotle's *EN* is a search for, and an explanation of, the chief good for human beings. With this in mind, Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia* is better characterized as a theory of well-being which, I argue, must answer the question "can *eudaimonia* provide plausible answers of what I should do to lead a life which is good for me?" This fourth and final chapter will focus on the example of Angela, introduced by Daniel Haybron²⁷² to argue that Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, being centrally understood as a life of virtuous activity, requires the *sacrifice* of one's well-being in situations where it could otherwise be secured or promoted. Aristotle's *eudaimonia* offers an outline of what the virtuous person does that runs contrary to Haybron's understanding of one's well-being, and so Haybron argues that Aristotle's *eudaimonia* should be rejected as a plausible theory of well-being.²⁷³

Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia* has been characterized as a type of *perfectionism*, where perfectionism "directs us to develop our human nature."²⁷⁴ Understanding *eudaimonia* as a type of perfectionism recalls Aristotle's FA, where a *good* human being is one who exercises his characteristic function well: by now familiar to us as the active life in accordance with the excellences. Haybron criticizes *eudaimonia* as a theory of well-being because on his view Aristotle's *eudaimonia* has "perfection as the...primary constituent of human flourishing."²⁷⁵ The problem with Aristotle's *eudaimonia* according to Haybron is that acting in accordance with the excellences involves the sacrifice of other goods which

²⁷² Haybron, 2008. P.161-3.

²⁷³ I realize that phrases such as 'good-for', 'well-being' and so on refer to a vast literature of philosophical argumentation which aid in their definition. In this chapter I will use 'X's well-being' and 'good-for X' such that the former defines the latter: a theory of well-being such as Aristotle's *eudaimonia* consists of a definition of what is good for a person. I must leave aside, due to space constraints, the question of whether or not the interpretation of *eudaimonia* that I have argued for and defended throughout this dissertation entails that the *eudaimon* I describe is an egoist. For an interesting discussion of this question see Kraut, 1989, Ch. 2.

²⁷⁴ Hurka, 1993. P. 55.

²⁷⁵ Haybron, 2008. P. 163.

count more towards our well-being than excellent activity does. In other words, one is potentially *worse-off* than she would have been otherwise if she chooses to act in accordance with Haybron's interpretation of *eudaimonia*: Haybron argues that she will be giving up goods which contribute to our well-being but not to our *eudaimonia* to an extent that makes them worthy of choice on his reading of Aristotle. In IV.II I will quote the example of Angela at length and then proceed to argue the following points against it.

I will argue that Haybron is mistaken about what Aristotle's *eudaimonia* directs Angela to do. Haybron notes that Aristotelians "who wish to secure an intuitively plausible verdict in Angela's case would have to put a lot of weight on external goods—more, it seems, than even the most extravagant interpretation of Aristotle's views could sustain."²⁷⁶ I will use the interpretation of *eudaimonia* outlined in Chapters One and Two to argue for an understanding of virtuous activity as the central constituent of one's well-being that does not require it to be the *sole* contributor, as Haybron seems to think. I will argue that Haybron's characterization of Angela gives an insufficient weight to the *human* aspect of Aristotle's account of a *eudaimon* life: a *eudaimon* life includes distinctly human goods such as friendship which Haybron's characterization of *eudaimonia* cannot accommodate. I understand Haybron's interpretation of Aristotle to be one where a *eudaimon* will at all times seek to do what "fully exercises [his] capacities, [and functions] more fully *qua* human being."²⁷⁷ Haybron's interpretation commits a *eudaimon* to maximising virtuous actions whenever possible.²⁷⁸

Aristotle does provide a broad ranking for the activities humans can engage in. In Chapters One and Two, I explained Aristotle's arguments in favour of good *theōria* as the best activity we can engage in. Lives which are lived in accordance with the rest of excellence, such as that of the politician, are still *eudaimon* on Aristotle's view. If Haybron's interpretation is right, then Aristotle is not arguing that, *ceteris paribus*, more virtuous activity is better than less. For Haybron's VM interpretation of Aristotle to be correct, Aristotle could not be making the claim that *ceteris paribus*, I should choose to engage in virtuous activity wherever possible. On Haybron's reading, I will always be better off on

²⁷⁶ Haybron, 2008. P. 163.

²⁷⁷ Haybron, 2008. P. 163.

²⁷⁸ I refer to this interpretation of Aristotle by Haybron as 'the maximisation of virtuous actions' (VM).

Aristotle's view if I choose the path which involves greater perfection; the path which involves "a greater degree of human functioning."²⁷⁹ In Angela's case, I will argue that things are anything but equal, and that we should understand Aristotle as making the claim that, *ceteris paribus*, more virtuous activity in a life is better than less. Finally, I will characterize Haybron's interpretation of Aristotle's perfectionism in a different light, where the decision-making process of the *eudaimon* takes "into account both past activities and future opportunities, as well as the centrality of each capacity to human nature."²⁸⁰ Kauppinen does not provide a defence of Aristotle's perfectionism in his paper, but rather a defence of perfectionism by providing different examples of what perfectionism may entail. I adapt one of Kauppinen's forms of perfectionism to Aristotle's *eudaimonia* in order to show that characterizing Aristotle's *eudaimon* as someone who simply maximizes his 'human capacity', as Haybron understands for all instances in his life, is overly simplistic.

Haybron's example does not just demonstrate Haybron's VM interpretation of Aristotle: it is also a claim about what we think is good for Angela. In addition to arguing that Haybron's interpretation of Aristotle is not obvious, I will argue that Haybron's intuition about what is better for Angela is not straightforward. I will provide two modified versions of Angela's case in order to cast doubt on Haybron's conclusion that Angela, if she acts as Haybron thinks she should, fares better. As I attempted to show in Chapter Three, Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is not far removed from modern notions of what is good for us. The brevity of this chapter ensures that I will be making a minimal claim on this point: that what Aristotle's *eudaimonia* asks of us, and what anyone not having read Aristotle would think she would do were she in Angela's position, involve a similar analysis. A *eudaimon* does not only think about how to fit as much virtuous activity in a day as he can, as Haybron thinks he does.

IV.II Haybron's Angela

I now quote Haybron's example of Angela at length. I will use this example to provide an explanation of what Aristotle's perfectionism entails on Haybron's view and dedicate the remainder of this chapter to the response.

²⁷⁹ Haybron, 2008. P. 162.

²⁸⁰ Kauppinen, Antti. '[Working Hard and Kicking Back: The Case for Diachronic Perfectionism](#)'. Forthcoming in *The Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*. P. 4.

Consider then the case of a high-ranking career diplomat for the UK, Angela, who is contemplating an early retirement at the age of 62: having served her country with great distinction for many years, Angela has come into a good deal of money through some canny investments and a bit of luck. She has all but decided to retire with her husband to a villa in Tuscany, and could do so very comfortably on her earnings. (They have a number of good friends in the area and it would bring her much closer to her daughter and grandchildren, who reside in Milan.) She correctly envisages that a life there would be tremendously satisfying, occupied largely with good company and food and drink, walking the countryside, and catching up on her reading. In short, kicking back and just enjoying life. It would certainly be a welcome and much-deserved respite from her demanding career in diplomacy: while rewarding in its own way, the schedule is hectic, and by now she has had enough of it. Before she can settle on her plans, however, a political crisis arises overseas and she is asked to take an important post where her considerable wisdom and skills would be of great use. It is hoped that Angela's efforts would help to avert a bloody conflict over the next several years. There are others who could do the job and her efforts could well fail, but no one could fill the role as well as her. Naturally, the assignment would be taxing and heavy on travel, and frequently involves dealing with unwholesome individuals about matters of extreme gravity, often calling for a fair measure of anger and indignation on her part. (As Aristotle observes about courage, virtue isn't always pleasant on the whole.) But the experience would not be gruelling, or even unpleasant on the whole, as she does take pleasure in doing what she does best. Moreover, it would not be *so* taxing that she cannot spend some time with family and friends, and otherwise achieve a modicum of leisure. Yet it would be far less pleasant than the alternative.

...

"She goes on to serve admirably and with a good deal of success in sustaining the peace, but another six years pass before she can take her retirement, which lasts five relatively sedentary but agreeable years before a massive stroke suddenly takes her life. (A time and manner of death that would have been the same had she not taken the job.)

...

In taking the job, Angela chose the path of greater excellence and virtue a life that more fully exercised her capacities as a human being. But she was not securing or promoting her happiness or well-being. She was *sacrificing* it. This is a problem for Aristotelian accounts of well-being, and any other views that see perfection as the sole or primary constituent of human flourishing.²⁸¹

Angela's life is an example of *eudaimonia*, for she enjoys and excels at a job which can roughly be characterized as that of Aristotle's political *eudaimon*.²⁸² She is faced with a major decision which will affect the rest of her life. Since her continued existence as a politician involves what Haybron believes to be Aristotelian perfectionism, that is that Angela develops herself as a human being to a greater extent just in case where she acts more virtuously, Angela is committed to spending her remaining years largely occupied with

²⁸¹ Haybron, 2008. P. 161-3.

²⁸² A life which involves more than virtuous activity, as I argued in Chapter Two.

her career. In choosing to continue her career, Angela becomes unable to enjoy the goods that Haybron associates with the move to Tuscany—which he identifies as making her *better off* than continuing in her job as a diplomat.²⁸³ Haybron's argument can be understood in the following way:

1. Aristotle's perfectionism says that the best option for any agent at any time is going to be the one which best uses the agent's capacities.
2. Angela's career as a diplomat uses her human capacities more than her retirement would²⁸⁴ and "involves greater perfection: it is obviously more virtuous..."²⁸⁵
3. Aristotle's perfectionism thus commits Angela to think that continuing her career is better for her than retiring (1 & 2).
4. But according to Haybron, (3) is "deeply implausible."²⁸⁶ Haybron argues that Angela would be better off retiring and relaxing after having worked so hard during her diplomatic career. Though continuing in her job is (2) on Haybron's view, Angela would be *sacrificing* her well-being in taking the job. Angela should retire and lead a relaxed life after having worked hard during her life as a diplomat.
5. Aristotle's perfectionism is not aligned with our intuitions about what is good for Angela, and thus Aristotle's perfectionism as a theory of well-being is false (3 & 4).

IV.III Angela as a Eudaimon

Haybron notes after introducing the example of Angela that though continuing her job, Angela is not "impoverished" in any of the areas in her personal life.²⁸⁷ I take this to mean that Angela's personal life as a diplomat includes goods such as friends and more above whatever threshold one could imagine that allow a *eudaimon* to quit work and focus on the home life instead. The problem according to Haybron, however, is that continuing her job as a diplomat is far less pleasant than her life kicking back in Tuscany. The question remains as to whether or not Aristotle's perfectionism truly commits Angela to continue her

²⁸³ These goods are a comfortable life lived with good friends, becoming closer to her daughter and grandchildren, good company in general, good food and drink, walks in the countryside, and catching up on her reading. I avoid the characterization of 'reading' as being related to good *theōria* in order to straightforwardly adapt Angela's retirement life to one of philosophical activity. Haybron thinks that Angela should retire because her retirement will be far more pleasant than continuing her job. If Angela thought that retiring would be good even partly because it would allow her to pursue philosophy, she would not be retiring for the same reasons that Haybron argues are the reasons *why* she should retire.

²⁸⁴ Haybron, 2008. P. 162.

²⁸⁵ Haybron, 2008. P. 162.

²⁸⁶ Haybron, 2008. P. 162.

²⁸⁷ Haybron, 2008. P. 163.

job as a diplomat, and if so whether or not this is so for the reasons that Haybron believes, having characterized Aristotle's *eudaimonia* as a perfectionist theory of well-being.

Premises 2 and 4 of Haybron's argument are what strike me as unclear. In Premise 2, Haybron claims that Angela's career is more virtuous and more fully uses her human capacities than her retirement. It is true that Aristotle believes that good *theōria* is a better activity than acting courageously on the battlefield.²⁸⁸ Yet there is a difference between claiming that, *ceteris paribus*, a philosopher aims to engage in as much good reflective activity as he can and claiming that in every circumstance a philosopher will always choose good reflective activity over other virtuous activities, say by ignoring the urgent call of a good friend who is desperate for his help in order to continue philosophising. In order for Haybron's conclusion about what Angela would choose to do as a *eudaimon* to be correct, he must be attributing to Aristotle the position that a *eudaimon* should always choose activities in accordance with the best excellence whenever the opportunity arises. The remainder of this section consists of my response to Premise 2.

Regarding Premise 4, Haybron's intuition that Angela is clearly better off if she retires is not clear. Haybron grants that Angela "fares well in either scenario" however he argues that she is clearly better off if she retires. Is it obvious that Angela is better off if she retires?²⁸⁹ Perhaps before the political crisis came about, Angela's well-being would be located in finally retiring after a long career. After the crisis comes about, perhaps it is permissible for her to retire given that Haybron characterizes her job as involving "important requests [which] come along all the time."²⁹⁰ Yet Haybron argues that Angela should retire, and that on his VM interpretation of Aristotle Angela would continue her diplomat job. In IV.IV I turn to Premise 4 and what Haybron argues Angela should do, both in terms of her well-being and her *eudaimonia*.

²⁸⁸ Chapter Two of this dissertation.

²⁸⁹ Please see <http://ethics-etc.com/2009/02/08/sweating-hard-and-hanging-out-the-case-for-diachronic-perfectionism/> for an interesting discussion both of Kauppinen's response to Haybron's example of Angela, and the example itself.

²⁹⁰ Haybron, 2008. P. 162

Regarding Premise Two, it was argued in Chapter Two that there is nothing in Aristotle calling for VM.²⁹¹ Though Aristotle himself does not entertain such cases as Angela's in the *EN*, it remains deeply implausible to attribute VM to his account of *eudaimonia*. Though *eudaimonia* is understood centrally through virtuous activity, it is not *only* virtuous activity which is needed for a life to be *eudaimon*. Yet Aristotle's perfectionism is apparently what directs Angela to choose as she does, according to Haybron, because "the Aristotelian must presumably say she *is* better off having taken the job. For by any reasonable measure, the diplomatic assignment involves greater perfection: it is obviously more virtuous, more admirable, and remains so over time."²⁹² I agree that, *ceteris paribus*, Angela as a *eudaimon* would choose to continue as a diplomat. Yet it does not follow from Aristotle's *EN* that strict principles can directly be drawn from the outline provided. If this were to be true, then consider the following example:

- i) Good *theōria* is the best activity I can engage in.
- ii) My child was hit by a car on the way home from school and though not hurt too badly, is frightened by the experience.
- iii) I *could* stop my daily philosophy a bit early today and go to him in the hospital to comfort him, but
- iv) Since VM directs me to always choose the path of action which is the most virtuous *per se*, because the most virtuous path is the one on which I function most fully *qua* human being,
- v) I should continue philosophizing because on Aristotle's view it is a better activity for me to engage in than going to help my son (From iv) and i)).
- vi) I continue my philosophy over going to comfort my son, as VM requires me to choose the path with "a greater degree of human functioning", and the most virtuous activity I can engage in is good *theōria*.

I suggest that this characterization of Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is absurd. A more plausible reading of Aristotle would understand him to be making the claim that, *ceteris paribus*, more virtuous activity is better than less. Good *theōria* is the best activity that human beings can engage in when compared with any of the other activities that humans may potentially engage in. However, it does not follow from this claim that good *theōria* is what

²⁹¹ Though in Chapter Two, my argument focused centrally on the thought that *eudaimones* could be philosophers, politicians, or private citizens against the *for-the-sake-of* relation ending in good *theōria* as Kraut thinks.

²⁹² Haybron, 2008. P. 162.

the philosopher *eudaimon* will choose over any other virtuous activity in an example where things are anything but equal such as in Angela's case. Haybron's example is meant to show that it is better for Angela's *life on the whole* if she chooses to retire instead of continuing in her job as a diplomat. Since Aristotle's claim is that, *ceteris paribus*, more of good *theōria* is better than less,²⁹³ the analysis of what Angela does as a *eudaimon* must be done with respect to the goods in a *eudaimon* life, which number more than good *theōria*.

Aristotle does not mention cases like the one of the philosopher choosing between continuing his philosophy and aiding his son. Haybron likely chose the life of a diplomat for Angela because it shares a strong affinity to the life of the politician in Aristotle's work. Aristotle notes that his inquiry in the *EN* "is not for the sake of theory...for we are not inquiring into what excellence is for the sake of knowing it, but for the sake of becoming good, since otherwise there would be no benefit in it at all."²⁹⁴ Aristotle was not seeking to provide a large set of rules which someone like Angela could think about before coming to her conclusion. The point of the *EN* is to provide a practical benefit to his audience. So, Haybron's argument does not work if it needs VM to be Aristotle's position in the *EN*, since such a position yields clearly impractical results.

It should be noted that VM is precisely what directs Angela to understand her well-being as being located in the path which Haybron believes is more virtuous. On Haybron's view, what Angela does is straightforwardly what Aristotle's *eudaimonia* directs her to do and furthermore is how she understands her well-being. Angela "accepts the assignment...without regret."²⁹⁵ Haybron's point is that although Angela fares well in either scenario, she fares much better retiring, and retiring is something which Angela *cannot* do because of his characterization of Aristotle: VM.

Perhaps there is something about Angela's case aside from VM which would cause her to refrain from retiring. The following are three aspects of Angela's case which greatly

²⁹³ As relevant to this example, engaging in greater and finer virtuous activities is better than engaging in lesser forms.

²⁹⁴ *EN* II.2 1103b26-30.

²⁹⁵ Haybron, 2008. P. 162.

affect what we think she should do, each of which I shall discuss each in turn in order to clarify why premise 4 of Haybron's argument is dubious:

- i) Her age and the time she has already spent as a diplomat.
- ii) The urgency of the diplomatic situation and her ability to help resolve it.
- iii) The comparison of pleasantness between continuing as a diplomat versus retiring to Tuscany.

These are the three variables which, on my view, greatly influence what any agent would choose if she were in Angela's position.

IV.IV Angela's Well-Being

Angela has spent a while at her job and dedicated "many years"²⁹⁶ to the service of her country. Would Aristotle say that she should live out the remainder of her days as a politician? Haybron notes that Angela is 62 years old and contemplating retiring *early*. Is early a function of her age, or is it also a function of how many years Angela has been a diplomat? Imagine that Angela became a diplomat at the age 40, and spent 22 years in the service of her country before reaching her limit.²⁹⁷ Does it seem reasonable that spending 22 years as a diplomat would satisfy Haybron's "many years" criterion *and* qualify Angela for "early" retirement? It is not clear that at 62 her retirement is *early*. The point here is that there surely exists a threshold such that beyond this threshold, Angela would be better off retiring, and before this threshold she would be better off continuing her job as a diplomat. Figuring out where this threshold lands does not seem to be an easy task, but let us imagine that Angela has spent 35 years as a diplomat, having led her busy political life since the age of 27. She has a husband and some friends, and her social situation is not impoverished as Haybron mentions, however her relationships with her family and friends are not as good as they could be.

Note that in retiring to Tuscany, Angela would become "much closer to her daughter and grandchildren."²⁹⁸ When Haybron mentions this point it is clear that he is referring to geographical proximity, however the ease with which Angela would be able to visit and be

²⁹⁶ Haybron, 2008. P. 161.

²⁹⁷ "...and by now she has had enough of it." Haybron, 2008, P. 162.

²⁹⁸ Haybron, 2008. P. 161.

visited by her family members creates the potential for having stronger relationships with them. This is why as a diplomat Angela spends only “some time with family and friends.”²⁹⁹ Would Aristotle believe that Angela is worse off, after having spent all those years in the service of her country in a demanding role, has no cause for a leisurely retirement which includes spending quality time with good friends and loved ones? Haybron does not think an interpretation of Aristotle's *eudaimonia* could direct Angela to retire, for “putting so much weight on non-moral excellence would be hard for conventional Aristotelians to sustain.”³⁰⁰

Why Haybron believes this to be the case for Aristotle is unclear. Angela has “a number of good friends in the area” where she could retire. Aristotle argues that the best friendships, ethically speaking, are friendships based on excellence. So there is certainly space for Aristotle's *eudaimon* to be concerned with his friendships, especially because when one has friendships based on the excellence of the individuals involved, with respect to each person's character, this “is not a relation that one can have towards many, and one should be content to find even a few like that.”³⁰¹ Friendship is an important good for humans in the *EN*, and this good is definitely a part of *eudaimonia*. Living in isolation is difficult for an individual according to Aristotle, and furthermore the good person naturally desires good friends.³⁰² To straightaway conclude that Aristotle would direct Angela to continue her job is to downplay the role of friendship in Aristotle's account. It seems plausible that Aristotle would think that Angela could valuably spend her time with her good friends and loved ones in retirement, having spent a great deal of her life in her political role, not be *worse off for it*. Spending time with good friends is important in the life of the *eudaimon*: good friends are hard to find. Is Angela's retirement after many busy years as a politician, to spend the remaining years of her life in the company of loved ones and good friends, *less virtuous* than continuing her job as a diplomat? Again, good *theōria* is superior

²⁹⁹ Haybron, 2008. P. 162.

³⁰⁰ Haybron, 2008. P. 163.

³⁰¹ *EN* IX.10 1171a18-20.

³⁰² I do not have space to give a proper treatment of Aristotle's account of friendship here. It is hardly controversial to allow that someone who values virtuous activity would naturally form the best (at least ethically) friendships with those who are also virtuous, and be unable to form friendships with those who are not.

to activity in accordance with the rest of excellence, but which is 'more virtuous' – the politician's activity or the warrior on the battlefield defending his city? Arguably, different capacities and different virtues are used at different times in a *eudaimon* life, but Aristotle does not provide a fine-grained measuring stick by which to measure the priority of virtuous activity in a life.

Angela's retirement life still contains virtuous activity, but what is important on Haybron's VM is that "there is no credible sense, non-moral or otherwise, in which Angela, or her activities, would exhibit more excellence on the whole if she retired."³⁰³ It is not necessary to show that retirement is *more virtuous* for it to be an option open to Angela on Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia*. It rather needs to be shown that the choice between two virtuous paths of activity, in Angela's case retirement versus continuing in her job, is not the simple choosing of whichever is likely to involve more virtuous activity: the *eudaimon* calculation is not simply VM at all times in a life, if ever. Angela as a *eudaimon* could plausibly think, before the current diplomatic crisis job is offered to her:

In my job as a diplomat I have accomplished many fine and great things over the years: I have done my best to be a good diplomat. I am getting on in age and have not spent as much time as I could have with my family and friends. Though I am not impoverished in these areas whilst working, I am not as *good* a friend or as good a mother/wife as I could have been because my job kept me so very busy. Since these important crises arise all the time and I have given so much in service to my country, I can retire to treat, and be treated well by my good friends and loved ones.

This characterization of Angela's thoughts as a *eudaimon* is meant to serve as a plausible way of understanding what a choice between two virtuous situations would involve for the *eudaimon*. Aristotle's *eudaimonia* does not guide Angela according to Haybron's VM. It rather guides Angela to act virtuously in whatever she does, whether she is a merchant, a politician, or a philosopher.

Since friendships can be ethical in nature according to Aristotle, and since as Haybron understands Aristotelian perfectionism Angela would choose to continue her job as a diplomat because it is more virtuous and so forth, I quote what I believe to be a better form of Aristotelian perfectionism than the sort Haybron has in mind as representing what the *eudaimon* would do.

³⁰³ Haybron, 2008. P. 163.

Human Nature Perfectionism (HNP): At any time *t*, the best option for an agent *A* is the one that contributes most to the realization of a balanced pattern of exercising the various human capacities to their fullest extent...over the course of a lifetime, taking into account both past activities and future opportunities, as well as the centrality of each capacity to human nature.³⁰⁴

On this form of perfectionism, Angela's best option is one she will choose whilst keeping in mind what she has done in the past, and what she will be able to do in the future. Given that Angela has spent so much time as a diplomat, and on *her view* an insufficient amount of time with her friends and loved ones (hence why retiring is seen as such a good for her by Haybron), it is entirely plausible that as a *eudaimon* she would realize that she has spent much of her life pursuing political goals, and now chooses to spend the rest of her life enjoying her friendships to the fullest degree. Kauppinen's ANP is more detailed than the section that I have quoted: HNP. However I feel that this portion best charts Aristotle's attempt at a broad outline of what the *eudaimon* chooses to do. Recall that Aristotle's *eudaimonia* involves a consideration of what a 'complete life' consists in.³⁰⁵ The advantage of HNP over Haybron's VM is that it can accommodate Angela's thoughts of how her life is going as a whole: it does not commit her solely to a calculation between two virtuous activities in isolation, as Haybron understands her choice in his example.

So far I have only dealt with one factor in Haybron's example which might cause Angela to retire, opposing his characterization of Aristotle's *eudaimonia* as VM. Having outlined the form of perfectionism (HNP) which I feel better characterizes Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, I now turn to ii) and iii).

The urgency of the political crisis plays a factor in understanding what is good for Angela. I briefly characterize three ways in which this crisis can be understood:

- i) There is a crisis that Angela is likely to resolve if she continues working *and* her replacements, if she retires, are not likely to succeed.
- ii) There is a crisis that Angela is not likely to resolve if she continues working *and* her replacements, if she retires, are likely to succeed.

³⁰⁴ Kauppinen, P. 4. Kauppinen refers to this as Animal Nature Perfectionism, as it functions with respect to "members of a biological species with specific patterns of development and decay, and natural rhythms." (P. 5). I use a shortened version of ANP here (HNP).

³⁰⁵ I discuss this in Chapter Two.

- iii) There is a crisis that Angela is likely to resolve if she continues working *and* her replacements, if she retires, are marginally less likely to succeed.

It should be noted here that it would be good for Angela in ii) to retire, for if she is not likely to resolve the crisis with her efforts than she is wasting her time: her remaining years could be better spent around her loved ones as there is no reason for her to remain in her position. My i) does not seem to properly account for Haybron's example, but it should be clear that were Angela to believe that she would likely resolve the conflict if she continued working *and yet* still leave her post, Aristotle and our ideas of what is good for Angela would coincide almost perfectly. We could plausibly conclude that Angela could not be enjoying a calm retirement in Tuscany after knowingly abandoning her special position, where her "considerable wisdom and skills would be of *great* use."³⁰⁶ She would likely feel guilty, at least on occasion, knowing that her efforts could potentially have changed everything.

The same could be said for Angela as a *eudaimon*. Even if she is not blameworthy for not knowing that her replacements would not do as good a job as she would have done in their stead, she would feel pained at the knowledge that her country's diplomatic situation has worsened and *she might have made the difference*. I mention i) and ii) briefly in order to show a correlation between what we think Angela should do for her well-being and what Aristotle's *eudaimon* Angela would do for her *eudaimonia*.

Case iii) seems to capture Haybron's example most accurately. Her replacements "could do the job, and her efforts could well fail, but no one could fill the role as well as her."³⁰⁷ Here Haybron may think that because Angela will recognize that she is the best person for the job,³⁰⁸ that Aristotle's perfectionism would direct her to continue in her job because she is such an excellent diplomat.

Yet the very same reasoning that Haybron provides to explain why Angela should not feel bad about retiring are compatible with Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, for she has sacrificed

³⁰⁶ Haybron, 2008. P. 162, emphasis mine.

³⁰⁷ Haybron, 2008. P. 162.

³⁰⁸ This must be the case. If Angela did not know that she was the best person for the job how could she plausibly feel obliged to stay on? If there were people as good as her, she could retire unless having her as an extra person would make the difference. But Haybron does not refer to her role as being carried out by a group, just by her.

much in the many years serving her country, and learned that part of her job requires one to forcibly carve out some personal space and *say no even to important requests* for they come along frequently.³⁰⁹ If Haybron's interpretation of Aristotle's *eudaimonia* is correct, Angela would never be able to retire and be considered *eudaimon*, for she would be sacrificing much virtuous activity. Since VM is not a plausible interpretation of Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, I argue that Haybron is incorrect to argue that Angela must continue with her job on Aristotle's view. The preceding arguments have attempted to show that there is nothing in Aristotle's *EN* which makes it straightforwardly obvious that Angela should continue her job. However, the question remains as to whether or not Angela should *retire* on Aristotle's view.

Haybron himself argues that Angela has "sacrificed much in service to her country", referring to her "demanding career" and her "hectic schedule"³¹⁰ prior to her being presented with the new diplomatic assignment. Yet, Haybron attempts to claim that Angela's human life with respect to personal relationships and leisure was not impoverished in her time working as a diplomat. Maintaining this conjunction is difficult without holding the position that Angela's personal life was marginally above whatever 'impoverished' means in these circumstances. For how can Angela have "sacrificed much" whilst having good friends, children, marriage, and a job which she excels at and finds rewarding while earning enough money to potentially retire in reasonably health.

Obtaining all of those goods in a single life whilst having "sacrificed much" appears impossible. The point here is that Haybron cannot construct this example in this way: for if Angela had sacrificed much, HNP would direct Angela to retire and fully enjoy her friendships and family. Yet Haybron wants to maintain that Angela has sacrificed much but not so much that enjoying the love of her friends and family in retirement would be warranted on Aristotle's account. This position is highly dubious, for it is difficult to claim

³⁰⁹ Haybron, 2008. P. 162.

³¹⁰ Haybron, 2008. P. 162. Haybron characterizes Angela's job as demanding in itself. Before the offer of the new assignment he describes the job as demanding, hectic, and involving much sacrifice. If she takes the new assignment, it will be "heavy on travel, and frequently [involve] dealing with unwholesome individuals about matters of extreme gravity, often calling for a fair measure of anger and indignation on her part." Haybron, 2008. P. 162.

that Angela should retire because she has sacrificed much in her life while maintaining that during her time at this job she enjoyed all of the goods Haybron mentions.

It is difficult to draw precise thresholds in Aristotle's account, and perhaps with good reason: precise thresholds are impossible given the complex nature of human life. If it is true that Angela has sacrificed a lot in her many years in this career, and that her replacements are not great but 'good enough' to have a good chance of negotiating well, Haybron and Aristotle would agree that Angela should retire. However from the list of goods that Haybron lists Angela as having in her life as a diplomat, and from her status as the best person from the job, she could also plausibly be characterized as needing to stay in this job by both Haybron and Aristotle, for the pleasant nature of retiring, though good, is not necessarily enough to outweigh the sense of accomplishment that Angela would feel at maintaining the peace for more years.

It should be noted here that *accomplishment* does play a motivational role in a *eudaimon* life. Consider the accomplishment of a courageous person:

But the courageous person is as unshakeable as a human being can be. So he will be afraid of those sorts of things too, but he will withstand them in the way one should, and following the correct prescription, for the sake of achieving what is fine; for this is what excellence aims at.³¹¹

Excellent activities aim at achieving what is 'fine' or 'noble' according to Aristotle: "Actions in accordance with excellence are fine and for the sake of the fine."³¹² Aristotle notes that achieving and *preserving* the good for a nation is "finer and more godlike"³¹³ than achieving it for one person. Doing something *fine* for Aristotle, as I characterise from these quotes, is associated with doing what is appropriate in a given circumstance. It also can be understood as doing something outstanding, perhaps for one's nation in battle or the political forum. This is one factor in Aristotle's *eudaimonia* which may provide Angela with a motivation to continue in her job: she may, being particularly well suited to this political crisis, be the one most likely to achieve something outstanding in its nobility. Yet, against even this, is the thought that perhaps she has been achieving these great and fine things for

³¹¹ EN III.7 1115b11-13.

³¹² EN IV.I 1120a23-24. Unfortunately, I cannot go into detail about what 'for the sake of the fine' means, and here I am providing a characterization of how 'the fine' might motivate Angela.

³¹³ EN I.2 1094b11.

many years. Is there no point in which a political *eudaimon* can relax and retire from public service? Must Angela continue as a diplomat until she is physically or mentally unable to skilfully. Even with considerations of acting 'for the sake of the fine', Aristotle is providing a further detail for understanding the value of virtuous activity. This does not necessarily commit him to the view, as Haybron understands him, of guiding Angela towards a position that maximises the fine quality of her activity in the political arena.

Which path is more likely to be a greater contributor to Angela's well-being? The response to this must depend on which Angela would value more: a relaxing retirement in which she will potentially hear that negotiations failed, and wonder if she might have made the difference,³¹⁴ or instead in trying her best to accomplish a difficult political negotiation. Haybron does not provide us with Angela's preference in this regard, so there does not appear to be a clear response as to what Angela should do for her well-being.

Haybron claims that the retired life will be more pleasant for Angela than continuing in her job as a diplomat. On his view Angela "would clearly have been better off taking the early retirement. It would be much more pleasant, she would be substantially happier, and she would be pursuing the sorts of activities that most appeal to her and, at least at this stage of her life, bring her the greatest satisfaction."³¹⁵ This seems plausible if we agree that Angela has done enough work in her life to earn herself the break from her stressful and demanding job *and* that she is not abandoning her position, for as was argued earlier, she may plausibly be miserable in her retirement if negotiations failed and a war broke out: she may believe that she could have made the difference. If HNP is a good characterization of what a *eudaimon* would choose, and Angela is a *eudaimon*, then it would be up to Angela to weigh the three factors mentioned against each other. If she concluded that she had spent enough time working and accomplishing great and fine things, and that the immediacy of the crisis was not such that it would outweigh the pleasantness of her retired life, then she would retire. Yet it is up to Angela to decide what will best promote her well-being, and I have tried to use this idea to align what we think Angela *should* do with what we think Aristotle's *eudaimon* would do. As I argued in Chapter Three, there is a sense in which what

³¹⁴ And potentially not care, as she has contributed so much in her life towards the cause and thinks that she is justified in retiring.

³¹⁵ Haybron, 2008. P. 162.

we think we should do in many different spheres is strikingly similar to what a *eudaimon* could be characterized as choosing to do: Aristotle's *eudaimonia* requires more than a maximisation of virtuous activity and can be understood even today as a sense of happiness and a plausible theory of well-being.

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