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Dedication

To all my teachers, past and present.

οὕτω δ' ἔοικε καὶ τοῖς φιλοσοφίας κοινωνήσασιν· οὐ γὰρ πρὸς χρήμαθ' ἡ ἀξία μετρεῖται, τιμὴ τ' ἰσόρροπος οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο, ἀλλ' ἴσως ἰκανόν, καθάπερ καὶ πρὸς θεοὺς καὶ πρὸς γοεῖς, τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον. (*NE* 1164^b2-6)

Humanity and Divinity in Aristotle's Ethics

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Aristotle wrote two major ethical works, the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) and *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*), and the relationship between the two has long been a matter of scholarly controversy. To further complicate things, three chapters are printed verbatim in the middle of both works: *NE* V-VII = *EE* IV-VI. Without knowing where these so-called 'Common Books' properly belong, we cannot know even what constitutes the text of the *NE* or *EE*, let alone the relationships between them. The nearly universal consensus is that the Common Books were written as part of the early *EE*, then revised or replaced for the later *NE*, at which point the later version supplanted the *EE* originals even in the *EE* manuscripts. I argue here that this is likely incorrect: the Common Books do not belong in the *NE* at all. The *NE* defends a view where persons are identified with a single part of the soul that (i) is the seat of both theoretical and practical wisdom, and (ii) is divine in a way that makes human happiness the same kind of activity as the gods' activity. The Common Books reject both these positions, as does the *EE*. This suggests that the Common Books are philosophically inconsistent with the *NE*; it is therefore probable the Common Books were neither written as a part of the *NE* nor revised for inclusion in it. I conclude by defending the results and methodology of this project from various objections, and show how the undisputed *NE* can still form a complete treatise even without the Common Books.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) comes down to us as a ten book treatise. His *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*) is transmitted in eight books. But three of these books are the same in both texts: in some manuscripts the text corresponding to *NE* V-VII is printed as *EE* IV-VI, while other *EE* manuscripts omit the text of these books but note that they should occur between *EE* I-III and VII-VIII.¹ In other words, *NE* V-VII = *EE* IV-VI; we can follow Kenny (1978) as referring to these three books as the *AE*.² This raises an important question: where do these so-called "Common Books" belong? Are they originally *NE* books later inserted in the *EE* to fill a gap? Are they originally *EE* books included in a later revision of the text that became the *NE*? Do they properly belong only to one text, or to both?

This question is not one only of historical interest. The answer will also have important philosophical consequences. To cite one prominent example, Jaeger (1948) argued that the *NE* was both later and more sophisticated than the *EE* based mostly on the assumption that the *AE* belonged only in the former. Rowe (1971) argues that Aristotle comes to more sophisticated conception of the intellectual virtues on the basis of how *phronesis* is discussed in the undisputed *EE* books versus the *AE* and *NE*. In these and other cases, our interpretations depend on assumptions we make about how the various books of Aristotle's ethical works are related to one another; changing these assumptions will have

¹ See Harlfinger (1971) for a discussion of the *EE* manuscript transmission; the common books are discussed at pp. 38-50.

² Though note that Kenny refers to the individual books as *AE* A, B, C, while for consistency with the undisputed books I will label them as *AE* I, II, III.

significant effects on our interpretations. In short, we cannot give a proper philosophical analysis of Aristotle's ethics until we know what constitutes each of Aristotle's *Ethics*.³

§1.1 – THE PROBLEM OF THE COMMON BOOKS

Though relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to the *EE* on its own terms, there has been a significant amount of discussion devoted to placing the *AE* in Aristotle's ethical corpus. C.J. Rowe gives a helpful overview of the history of the issue to 1970, so I will focus primarily on more recent treatment.⁴ Roughly speaking, there are four interpretive options for thinking about the relationship between the *AE*, *EE*, and *NE*.⁵ The first is defended by Jaeger (1948), who argues that the *AE* belonged only to the *NE*, mainly on the basis of a more primitive conception of *phronesis* he finds in the *EE* compared to the *AE* and *NE*, and suggests that the *AE* was inserted into the *EE* by some later editors.⁶ Jaeger has comparatively little to say on this topic, including only a single footnote on the issue, but his view is nonetheless a common one. If the *EE* is earlier, as he argues at length, and the *AE* and *NE* were written together, then the *AE* would not have been part of the *EE* when it was written (though it is possible that the *EE* included parallels to the *AE* that have

³ To complicate matters further, there are three other ethical treatises in the Aristotelian corpus, the *Protrepticus*, *Magna Moralia*, and *Virtues and Vices*. While the latter is likely spurious (though see Simpson (2013b) and 2014b) for an argument to the contrary), the first is, I believe, by Aristotle himself, while the second is most likely written by a student of Aristotle's (though Cooper (1973) and Simpson (2014a) argue it is genuine). The first gives insight into Aristotle's early ethical thought, while the second closely follows the *EE* in many places, but makes a few significant change.

⁴ Rowe (1971), pp. 79-89. See also Jost (2014a).

⁵ One option I will not consider here is that the *EE* is not Aristotelian, but rather the work of his student Eudemos. It is nearly universally held that the *EE* was written by Aristotle, even by those, like Jaeger or to some degree Rowe, who have a low opinion of the *EE*'s merit compared to the *NE*.

⁶ Jaeger (1948), p. 258 n.1. This view is followed, at least implicitly, by Lloyd (1968), who cites the *EE* only once (p. 296) in a book on the development of Aristotle's thought, yet discusses the *Protrepticus* at length.

been lost). This approach is implicitly supported, if not endorsed, by the trend of publishing only the undisputed books of the *EE* together, which was only reversed very recently by Kenny's (2011) translation, quickly followed by Inwood & Woolf (2013) and Simpson (2013).

The second option is defended by Rowe (1971), and it is the closest thing to a received view on the topic in contemporary Aristotelian scholarship, at least among those who take a position in the first place.⁷ Rowe follows Jaeger in thinking that the *EE* is earlier and less sophisticated than the *NE*, though he does note, rightly, that Jaeger's own arguments are inconclusive and occasionally question-begging.⁸ But Rowe thinks that, properly understood, the *AE* belong in both the *NE* and *EE*. They belong in both places because the *AE* as we have it is a hodge-podge of texts, some of which were in the process of being revised. Briefly, Aristotle decided to revise the *EE* in a way that resulted in a new work, but it was not clear that this would be the result. The *AE* as we have it is a collection of (a) excerpts from the original middle *EE* books, which Aristotle transplanted in the *AE* with little change, (b) revised texts drawing on the middle *EE* books but changing their content, and (c) new material written as part of the *NE*. Which option applies can only be decided on a case by case basis, looking closely at relevant portions of the text, but Rowe's tentative conclusion is that (i) The first half of *AE* I either is the *EE* analogue, or closely

⁷ For example, this view is endorsed in Cooper (1981)'s review of Kenny (1978), and by Rist (1989), pp. 186-88, and implicitly endorsed, at least in practice, by the many scholars who ignore the *EE*, or use it only to support a reading of the *NE*.

⁸ See Rowe (1971), pp. 73-76. Cf. Kenny (1978), pp. 161-62.

follows it, while the second half is new,⁹ (ii) *AE* II is wholly original to the *NE*¹⁰, (iii) the *AE* III treatment of incontinence is also made up of a first half that corresponds to the *EE* original and a second half that is new¹¹, and (iv) the *AE* III treatment of pleasure is, if not wholly an *EE* excerpt, then closely based on it.¹² On this view, the *AE* deserves to be treated primarily as part of the *NE*, but with sections that closely correspond to the parallel *EE* originals. Hence, with care, we can use parts of the *AE* as part of the *EE* as well.

Our third option is a slightly more sanguine version of the second. The *AE*, on this view, can be read equally well as a part of both the *NE* and *EE* with little hesitation.¹³ The most plausible explanation for the duplication of the *AE* in both texts (though not the only possible explanation) is that Aristotle wrote the *AE* as part of one of the ethical texts, and was happy enough with the result to copy it in the second. This could be the case either if the *EE* and *NE* were complementary works aimed at different audiences, as Simpson thinks, or if, as is widely held, the *NE* were written to replace the *EE*.¹⁴

The fourth option has been defended at length by Kenny (1978) and revisited in Kenny (1992).¹⁵ This option is that the *AE* was originally written for the *EE* and not the *NE*. Kenny's argument for this comes in two stages: (1) there is a wealth of philological

⁹ Rowe (1971), p. 107.

¹⁰ Rowe (1971), p. 114.

¹¹ Rowe (1971), p. 97.

¹² Rowe (1971), p. 108.

¹³ This view is endorsed by two of the recent full translations of the *EE*, Inwood & Woolf (2013) and Simpson (2013).

¹⁴ Simpson (2013), pp. x-xiii. This option could also apply if the *NE* preceded the *EE*, though I know of no one who holds this combination of views.

¹⁵ Though this option is the least popular of the four, it does have its adherents. Monan (1968), pp. 37-59 and 149-56 independently suggested a similar view to Kenny's, and Jost (1983) and Jost (2014a) are sympathetic, and I have made some gestures in this direction in Green (2010).

and philosophical evidence, from the ancient commentaries and stylometric patterns to specific points of ethical doctrine, that the *AE* is closer to the *EE* than the *NE*, and (2) the *EE* and *AE* both show evidence of being written late in Aristotle's life, and so likely after the *NE*, though exactly how much later is unclear.¹⁶ If the *AE* were originally part of the *EE*, and the *EE* was later than the *NE*, then the *AE* couldn't have been meant for the *NE*.¹⁷

§1.2 – OUTLINE AND METHODOLOGY

I think Kenny's fourth option is the correct one, and my central aim here is to defend it. But I want to approach the issue in a different way than Kenny did. Kenny's methodology for addressing the proper home of the *AE* has been unconvincing to most scholars, for several reasons. First, his stylometric analysis of patterns of diction has been subjected to criticism, both as being poorly executed and as being insufficient to secure Kenny's preferred conclusions even if it were carried out well.¹⁸ Not to mention, this kind of analysis is not very philosophically engaging, and it is primarily philosophers who are my intended audience. Second, Kenny's main philosophical focus is on *phronesis* and the

¹⁶ See Kenny (1992), pp. 113-15 on this important qualification regarding the chronology. Many of the responses to Kenny (1978) seem to think that, if the *EE* is later than the *NE*, then the *NE* must be relegated to Aristotle's earliest writings. This reading makes Kenny's view an inverse of Jaeger's, who did in fact argue that the *EE* was a very early, immature work, while the *NE* was Aristotle's late *magnum opus*. But this doesn't follow. If Kenny is right and the *EE* is late, it is still possible that the *NE* could have been written in the middle of Aristotle's career, or indeed shortly before the *EE*.

¹⁷ It is noteworthy that Rowe (1983) came to accept Kenny's treatment of the *AE*'s original home, and so rejected his own view in Rowe (1971); see Rowe (1983), p. 74 n. 107 in particular. But Rowe continued to hold that the *NE* was a later reworking of the *EE* material. It is not clear whether Rowe thinks the later *NE* revision would include the *AE* or an equivalent, or instead whether the later *NE* would only include the undisputed books.

¹⁸ See Charles (1980), p. 225, Cooper (1981), pp. 385-87, Kirwan (1980), Sherman & Presser (1981), pp. 381-82. Cooper (1981), pp. Irwin (1980b) pp. 339-342 also criticizes Kenny's treatment, or sometimes lack of treatment, of the ancient sources. See also Rowe (1983), pp. 4-6 for a critique of some of the specifics of Kenny's approach that is nonetheless broadly sympathetic with the methodology.

conception of *eudaimonia*. Kenny argues that the *AE* does not unambiguously follow the *NE* in endorsing an intellectualist conception of happiness, instead appearing to follow the *EE*'s inclusivist conception.¹⁹ But there are disputes across the board here, and so Kenny's argument will only be convincing to those who already agree with him on related matters. In particular, it is not clear whether *NE* I and X themselves agree on *eudaimonia*: at the very least, the apparently intellectualist argument of *NE* X.7-8 is surprising given the focus on non-intellectualist matters in the preceding books, and the *AE* appears to be of a piece with the early *NE* books on that score.²⁰ Kenny's focus on *phronesis* is largely given in response to Jaeger and Rowe, both of whom base their treatment of the *EE* on its alleged failure to distinction between theoretical and practical wisdom.²¹ But, as I'll argue in §3.7, I think the evidence on *phronesis* in the ethical works is wholly inconclusive: there is no major difference between the *NE* and *EE* here. Third, even a partial reliance on chronology to make an argument about the *AE* seems insurmountably controversial, given the paucity of evidence and the subjectivity of evaluating it. It is preferable to avoid these complications if we can.

While I agree with Kenny's conclusions for the most part, I think we need a better way of securing them. So in what follows I propose to approach the topic from a different angle. In §2 I will discuss the overall theory of the *NE* in detail, arguing that the *NE* does in fact endorse an intellectualist conception of *eudaimonia*, because of the fundamental

¹⁹ Kenny (1978) pp. 190-214 and Kenny (1992), *passim*.

²⁰ Charles (1980), p. 325, Cooper (1981), pp. 383-85, Irwin (1980b), pp. 343-44, Sherman & Presser (1981), pp. 382-84.

²¹ Kenny (1978), pp. 161-189, responding to Jaeger (1948) pp. 234-246 and Rowe (1971), pp. 63-76.

role Aristotle gives to *nous* as the divine part of the soul. In the next two chapters I will argue that the *AE* is philosophically inconsistent with the *NE* on these matters. In §3 I show that the *AE* rejects the *NE*'s more simplistic conception of the soul, and in §4 that the *AE* and *NE* disagree about the relationship between humanity and divinity and the importance of the latter to ethical theory and practice. In both cases the *AE* and *EE* are in complete agreement. In §5 I argue that we cannot avoid the inconsistency between the *AE* and *NE* by removing or downplaying *NE* X.7-8, where Aristotle discusses *nous* and divinity in the most detail. Instead, I propose that the undisputed *NE* books, including X.7-8, constitute a complete treatise even without the *AE*. Finally, in §6 I briefly consider what this inquiry suggests about the relationship between the *NE* and the *EE/AE* together.

I've already suggested that the primary difference between my approach and Kenny's will be one of methodology. There is another methodological remark worth making before beginning our investigation in earnest, concerning what can count as legitimate evidence for the proper home of the *AE*. There is an understandable tendency in Aristotle scholarship to cast a wide net in looking for help in interpreting controversial or ambiguous passages.²² For example, in trying to make sense of Aristotle's view of the soul in the *NE*, it is natural to turn to *De Anima*, where Aristotle talks about the soul in the most detail, or the *Posterior Analytics*, where Aristotle talks about the operation of our cognitive faculties, for guidance. Likewise, in examining Aristotle's conception of divinity, *Physics* VIII and *Metaphysics* Λ where Aristotle discusses God as the Unmoved Mover are

²² I take C.D.C. Reeve's work to be a paradigm of this approach. See Reeve (2013) and Reeve (2012) in particular.

important sources. But in the context of trying to determine how the ethical texts relate to one another, bringing in material from other works would be illicit. This is because there is no guarantee that the views Aristotle express in these other works are the same as those expressed in one or more of the ethical texts. If, for instance, the *AE* and the *NE* appear to disagree on the properties of *nous*, then it is likely that *De Anima* would agree with only one of them, not both. So turning to *De Anima* to make sense of the *NE* could cause us to distort what the *NE* says on its own, in turn leading us to an incorrect view of its relationship to other works.

In what follows I will take a different approach. I will look carefully at the *NE* and *AE* independently, relying neither on external works or the other ethical texts. This will result in a reading of the *NE* that may surprise scholars of Aristotle's ethics who are accustomed to reading all ten of the *NE/AE* books as a unit. If we interpret the undisputed *NE* text with an eye toward what we know is coming in the *AE*, we will risk missing important differences that set the two apart. This also means that I will say almost nothing about the relevant parts of other works in the Aristotelian corpus, and when I do refer to these texts it will never be in a way that makes my argument depend on them. This procedure will make this project lamentably incomplete in various ways, but this is a small price to pay to avoid distorting our reading of Aristotle's ethical works.

One could respond here that we should presume consistency within an author's work unless it can be shown not to obtain, since this is what the principle of charity requires. And of course this is correct to a point. But there are two kinds of charity, philosophical and textual. We do not want to burden Aristotle with an avoidable

inconsistency. But nor do we want to distort his views by conflating or ignoring differences. If there are two passages that appear to be inconsistent, or two arguments that support inconsistent conclusions, then it is I think more charitable to conclude that Aristotle endorses different views and different places, at which point we can ask why he might do this, rather than conclude that he meant something other than what he said. If nothing else, the approach I take here can highlight unexpected tensions within Aristotle's ethical works. Even if they are ultimately resolvable, it still shows that the assumptions we tend to make about the *NE* and *EE* need to be given more explicit attention and a more thorough defense. So even those who are inclined toward a more universalist approach to Aristotle rather than a developmental one can profit by investigating Aristotle in a less ecumenical way.

Chapter 2: Eudaimonia in the Nicomachean Ethics

We will begin our inquiry into the proper home of the *AE* by bracketing these books and looking only at the undisputed *NE* on its own terms. After examining Aristotle's own methodological comments, we will look at each of Aristotle's seven criteria for *eudaimonia* in detail. Having secured the most plausible reading of each, we will then observe how Aristotle applies these criteria to the three leading candidates for the chief good: pleasure, moral virtue, and contemplation. Only the last succeeds in meeting the criteria, and so only the last has a claim to constituting *eudaimonia*. We will also see that Aristotle's discussion of *nous* and divinity are central, both for establishing the seven criteria and for showing that only contemplation meets them.

§2.1 – INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Before delving into the *NE* in detail, I want to make a few quick remarks about how the inquiry will proceed. First, I want to reiterate a methodological comment made in the last chapter. Because the question at issue is whether the *AE* belongs in the *NE*, we have to be careful about which texts we examine, and how we deploy them, when investigating this question. Appealing to points made only in the *AE* in order to explicate the *NE*, for instance, would be question-begging. To a lesser degree, so would appealing to external texts to fill in a gap here: if the *NE* and *AE* do in fact disagree, then an external work may agree with only one (or neither) of our texts.

The reason this needs to be stated explicitly (and repeatedly) is because the *AE* are centrally taken to be the core of the *NE* view, and not only because they are printed as the middle books. In particular, *AE* II's discussion of the intellectual virtues, and *AE* III's

discussion of continence and incontinence, are some of Aristotle's best and most lasting contributions to the history of ethical theory. The view of the *NE* I will advance in this chapter will, by necessity, not include these discussions, because the inclusion of the *AE* in the *NE* must be earned rather than assumed.

§2.2 – THE SCIENCE OF THE CHIEF GOOD

Aristotle begins his inquiry of ethics in the *NE* with a conceptual statement about the nature of the relationship between certain activities and the good: “Every *technē* and every inquiry, and likewise [every] action and choice appears to be directed toward some good. It is therefore well declared that the good is that toward which each thing is directed” (1094^a1-3). In the next line Aristotle identifies each of these goods as a *telos* or end (1094^a4), and argues that some activities are their own ends and others aim at some further product (ἔργα, 1094^a4-5). This leads Aristotle to argue for a hierarchical arrangement of these activities and ends: some activities produce or do things for the sake of some further activity, e.g. bridle-making produces bridles which equestrians can use for their own activities, which are themselves deployed by generals in military action. This hierarchy suggests the possibility of what Aristotle labels an architectonic science, a single science whose *telos* is the ultimate aim of all other activities (1094^a14-16).

This framework naturally raises two questions: What is this science, and what is its object? The first question is easier to answer; in fact, its answer is already suggested by Aristotle's observation that the lower-level pursuit of bridle-making is ultimately governed by military strategy. *Politikē*, Aristotle argues, is the architectonic science, because it governs all lower pursuits, even strategy (1094^a27-^b3). The term *politikē*, like its English

equivalent ‘politics’, has the connotation of a public enterprise only, but Aristotle suggests that it is inappropriate to draw a private/public distinction: while Aristotle thinks it is “nobler and more divine” to achieve the good for a people or a city than for an individual alone (1094^b7-10), there is nonetheless a single good pursued in both these cases.²³ And so Aristotle concludes the chapter by stating “The [present] inquiry aims at these, being a version of *politikē*” (πολιτική τις, 1094^b9-10).²⁴

So given that we are engaging in *politikē*, what exactly are we looking for? Since *politikē* is an architectonic science, it is natural to think that its object is an architectonic *telos*. Such a *telos* would be the end of all other subordinate aims, just as *politikē* is the science to which all other pursuits are subordinate. And this is exactly the target Aristotle sets for our inquiry:

If there is some *telos* of actions which we want for itself, but we want others for it, and we do not choose each thing for something else (for if so then it would go on to infinity, such that desire would be empty and vain), then it is clear that the good, indeed the chief good (καὶ τὸ ἄριστον), would be this. (1094^a18-22)

An obvious worry at this point is whether there is such a thing, i.e. a single end toward which all our pursuits are directed. Indeed, several commentators have worried that Aristotle has argued fallaciously on just this score, inferring “there is exactly one aim of every pursuit” from “each pursuit has an aim” when he argues that “Every *technē* and every inquiry, and likewise [every] action and choice appears to be directed toward some good.

²³ The connection between the public and private good is discussed in more detail in *NE* X.9 and in the *Politics* which this chapter introduces. We’ll return to it in §2.6.3.

²⁴ See Irwin (1988), pp.352-59, Schofield (2006). For the connection between the *Ethics* and *Politics*, see Kamtekar (2014).

It is therefore well declared that the good is that toward which each thing is directed” (1094^a1-3).²⁵ But we can read Aristotle more charitably than this. Rather than taking the existence of a single architectonic *telos* as proven at this early stage, we can instead extract a more defensible argument from his remarks in these chapters.²⁶

First, the crux of Aristotle’s observation about the hierarchical structure between pursuits is that some higher-level pursuits govern multiple lower-level pursuits. For instance, bridle-making and “however many others” (ὅσαι ἄλλαι, 1094^a11) are subordinate to equestrianism, which is subordinate to strategy along with “all the others” (καὶ πᾶσα, 1094^a12), and this holds in other cases as well (ἄλλαι ὑφ’ ἐτέρας, 1094^a13-14). This organizing structure, however, is not enough to prevent our desires from being “empty and vain”, because those governing ends could themselves be subordinate to still-higher ends, and those to even higher still, and so on. But since our desires aren’t empty and vain, there must be at least one end which we want for itself, not for the sake of something further.²⁷ Yet the fact that higher-level pursuits collect several lower-level pursuits within them suggests that the same relationship might hold between these higher-level pursuits and a single architectonic end.²⁸

²⁵ This argument is read as a fallacy by Ackrill (1974), pp. 25-6; citations to others who do the same are found in Wedin (1981) p. 243 n 1. See also the commentaries of Bostock (2000), Broadie & Rowe (2002), and Reeve (2014) *ad loc.*

²⁶ Reeve (2012), pp. 227-34 follows a similar, but not identical, strategy to what follows.

²⁷ But there may yet be more than one, an option Aristotle is clearly open to (1094^a18-22, 1097^a23-4, 1097^a28-30), and therefore does not take himself to have disproven. Cf. Wedin (1981), p. 252.

²⁸ How does this reading explain Aristotle’s remark that “it is well declared (καλῶς ἀπερήναντο) that the good is that toward which each thing is directed” (1094^a2-3). The right response, I think, is to reading this claim with a restricted scope. Aristotle is not saying “The good is the single thing at which each thing is directed”, but rather “What it is to be good is to a *telos*, something at which a pursuit aims”. πᾶντ’ at 1094a3 should therefore be read distributively, not collectively. This reading is corroborated by the intro to NE I.7, where Aristotle summarizes the discussion by saying “Let us return again to the good we are

If this is the case, then there would be a master architectonic science over all the mid-level architectonic sciences like strategy.²⁹ Aristotle himself puts things in this conditional form: the architectonic end *would* be (δόξειε δ' ἄν, 1094^a26) the object of the architectonic science, if there is one.³⁰ And Aristotle gives an independent argument there is in fact a single architectonic science, *politikē*, based on its relationship to other pursuits. *Politikē* appears to be just such a science because it governs every other kind of pursuit, from what we study to how we deploy our military and our economic resources (1094^a27-^b6). If there is a single science of this nature, then presumably there would be single corresponding architectonic *telos*.³¹

But even if Aristotle succeeds in showing *that* there is an architectonic *telos*, we still don't know what it is, other than it is labelled as “the chief good”. In arguing that *politikē* is the architectonic science, Aristotle identifies its object as “the human good” (τὰνθρώπινον ἀγαθόν, 1094^b7), but this does not yet tell us much either. Aristotle addresses this issue in more detail in *NE* I.4-5. He first adds that *politikē* aims at “the highest of all achievable goods” (τὸ πάντων ἀκρότατον τῶν πρακτῶν ἀγαθῶν, 1095^a15). While

looking for (τὸ ζητούμενον ἀγαθόν), what it is. It is apparently different in different acts and arts...what is the good (ἀγαθόν) of each?” (1097a15-18). Here Aristotle uses a single subject with a third-singular verb to say both (i) we are looking for the good and (ii) each aim has its own good. He then says that the aim of *politikē* will be the aim of all pursuits if there is a single such aim, but that if there is more than one such aim then they will be the achievable good (1097s21-24). This shows that Aristotle is comfortable using the term “the good” for particular aims, and that he does not yet think he has proven there is exactly one architectonic end. Cf. Burger (2008), pp. 14.

²⁹ Note the plural at 1094^a14 at the qualification “most authoritative and most architectonic science” (τῆς κυριωτάτης καὶ μάλιστα ἀρχιτεκτονικῆς) at 1094^a26-27.

³⁰ This is a consistent feature of the discussion: “Εἰ δὴ τι τέλος ἐστὶ...” (1094^a18), “εἰ δ' οὕτω...” (1094^a23-5), “δόξειε δ' ἄν...” (1094^a26), “τοῦτ' ἄν εἴη ...” (1094^b6-7). Cf. Kraut (1989), pp. 205-207, 217-220; Wedin (1981), p. 250.

³¹ Cf. Irwin (1988), p. 359, Reeve (2012) pp. 227-230.

“highest” here is an obvious allusion to the chief good’s architectonic status, the fact that the chief good is achievable is new information, and points toward a way of homing in on the nature of the chief good. Aristotle observes that nearly everyone agrees in name, that the chief good is called ‘*eudaimonia*’ or happiness and is identified with “living well and doing well” (τὸ δ’ εὖ ζῆν καὶ τὸ εὖ πράττειν, 11095^a17-20).³² But people differ in their conception of the chief good: some identify it with pleasure or wealth or honor (1195^a23) or health (1095^a24).³³ This way of putting it introduces two distinct ways of thinking about the chief good: it is a kind of life or way of living, or is it a more concrete entity, like a possession or state?

The answer, based on Aristotle’s discussion in *NE* I.5, is apparently ‘both’. That is, Aristotle is ultimately concerned with a kind of good, but he infers what the candidate goods are by means of the lives that people live (1095^b15). He identifies several contenders for the chief good based on how people organize their lives. The three main contenders are the hedonistic life, the political life, and the contemplative life. Proponents of the hedonistic life live “not unreasonably” (οὐκ ἀλόγως, 1095^b15) as if the chief good is pleasure, apparently on the grounds that people of power and means choose this life (1095^b21). Yet Aristotle describes the hedonistic life as “the completely slavish masses (πολλοὶ παντελῶς ἀνδραποδώδεις) appear to choose the life of beasts (βοσκημάτων βίον)”

³² That there is nearly unanimous consensus that the chief good should be identified as *eudaimonia* is yet another argument in favor of there being a single chief good. Given Aristotle’s *endoxic* method (discussed below), it would be surprising if everyone thought that there is a single chief good but were wrong about this. This doesn’t tell us *what* the chief good is, but it does suggest that there is one. Cf. Broadie (1991), pp. 29-30

³³ One more candidate is the ‘good in itself’ associated with philosophers (1095^s26-28) and critiquing at length in *NE* I.6

(1095^b19-20). Despite this rough treatment, Aristotle sees something important about the role of pleasure in the good life, which is enough to keep it in contention as a candidate for the chief good.³⁴

The second candidate for the chief good is honor, the apparent object of the political life (1095^b22-23). But Aristotle quickly notes that honor is too superficial and too variable to be a plausible candidate (1095^b23-28) and so revises the political life to be organized around moral virtue instead (1095^b28-31).³⁵ Finally, the third candidate is contemplation, but Aristotle tells us nothing about the contemplative life save that it will be discussed later (1096^s4-5).

In the remaining chapters of the *NE* Aristotle sets out several criteria we can use to discern which of these three candidates best qualifies as the chief good. We'll discuss these criteria in §2.3. But before moving on, there is a residual question to be addressed: why are pleasure, moral virtue, and contemplation considered the leading candidates? The answer lies in Aristotle's celebrated *endoxic method*, of starting from the "most numerous and reputable" opinions (1095^a28-30).³⁶ Aristotle argues

One must begin from what is familiar (τῶν γνωρίμων), but these are twofold: Some [are familiar] to us, others [are familiar] as such (ἀπλῶς).

³⁴ We will discuss pleasure in more detail in §2.3.5 and §2.4. For now, we can observe the contrast between how pleasure is treated versus the money-making life, which is not mentioned among the three candidates at 1095^b17-19 and is quickly dismissed at 1096^a5-9.

³⁵ A quick note on translation: in the early chapters of the *NE*, it is fairly clear that when Aristotle refers to ἀρετή he is thinking about moral virtue in particular. But when he begins discussing his own view in *NE* I.7 and following, he uses ἀρετή in a broader sense, meaning simply 'excellence' (see, e.g. of animals and instruments, 1106^a15-24, or of the body 1102^a16-17, 1114^a28-29). So I will reserve the term 'virtue' for the moral virtues, and 'excellence' for other uses of ἀρετή.

³⁶ See, *inter alia*, Barnes (1980), Nussbaum (1982), Owen (1961), Reeve (1998), Roche (1988a), White (1992), pp. 22-45.. But more recent work has, rightly in my view, begun to question exactly how pervasive or exact this methodology is actually applied in Aristotle. See Cooper (1999), Devereux (2015), Frede (2012), Karbowski (2015), Salmieri (2009), Zingano (2007).

Presumably then we must begin with what is most familiar to us. Therefore it is necessary for one to be raised with good habits in order to attend sufficiently to lectures about about noble and just things and of *politikē* in general. For the fact (τὸ ὄτι) is a starting point (ἀρχή), and if this is sufficiently apparent then one will not need the explanation (τοῦ διότι) in addition. (1095^b2-7)³⁷

Aristotle says more about the source of these starting points at the conclusion of *NE* I.7:

The fact is primary and a starting point. We observe some of these starting points by induction, some by perception, some by a kind of habituation, and others in other ways. We must try to go through each in a natural way, and we must be serious (σπουδαστέον) in how they would be correctly determined. For they have a great influence on what comes after. For the start (ἡ ἀρχή) seems to be more than half of the whole. (1098^b2-7).

In the case of the chief good, what is familiar to us include the common opinions and behaviors of our peers: “We must investigate [*eudaimonia*] not only in terms of the conclusion and the argument from which they result, but also from the things said about it. For all facts are in harmony with the truth, while the truth is quickly discordant with the false” (1098^b9-12). Hence pleasure is made a viable candidate for the chief good by its endorsement from the many and the well-off (1095^b21), honor and moral virtue by the “sophisticated and active” (χαρίεντες καὶ πρακτικοί, 1095^b22), and contemplation, apparently, by the wise (though this is not made explicit).

Unfortunately, though, collecting these starting points will only get us so far in identifying the chief good. As is already apparent, there are diverging reputable opinions on the nature of the chief good. And this disagreement occurs not only between groups of people (the many versus the wise, say), but even within individuals: the same person

³⁷ See Bostock (2000), pp. 219-226, Joachim (1951), pp. 26-28, and Karbowski (2015), pp. 123-29 for more on this passage and its implications.

identifies the chief good as health when ill, wealth when poor, and so on (1095^a23-25). The fact that many people take an obvious non-starter as the good (e.g. wealth or honor or certain kinds of pleasure) make these starting points even more suspect. And Aristotle's disagreement with Plato in *NE* I.6 show that even the wise are not in agreement with one another.

There are two reasons why *politikē* is subject to such extensive disagreement. The first is already present in the remarks just quoted: a proper understanding of ethical truths requires the right upbringing. Hence Aristotle argues that the young (in age or spirit) are not the proper audience for lectures in *politikē*, because they lack the knowledge and experience and the temperament to understand ethical inquiry (1095^a2-11). Most people, apparently, lack the proper upbringing. Second, the subject matter itself is unstable.

Aristotle argues

Precision is not to be sought in the same way in every discussion, just as it is not [sought in every] craft. Noble and just acts, which *politikē* investigates, involve numerous variation and irregularity. (1094^b12-16)

Given that the same things can be beneficial to one person but harmful to another (1094^b16-19), it is no surprise that common opinions exhibit a variation that mirrors their objects.³⁸

This imprecision in the subject of *politikē* prompts Aristotle to argue that the content of *politikē* should be similarly inexact. Hence he argues that

We must accept when speaking about these sorts of things and what follows from them to point out the truth roughly and in outline (*παχυλῶς καὶ τύπῳ*), and when speaking about what is true only for the most part and what follows from them, to make conclusions of the same sort. (1094^b19-22).

³⁸ On which see Joachim (1951), pp. 22-26.

The warning that we can only expect an ethical theory “in outline” is repeated throughout the rest of *NE* I (1094^a25, 1098^a20-29, 1101^a27) as well as subsequent books.³⁹

There are two relevant implications to draw from Aristotle’s remarks on the starting points and imprecision of ethical inquiry. The first is that we should not be surprised if Aristotle’s ultimate conclusions about the chief good and its corresponding life are counter-intuitive. Despite starting with common views, there is no guarantee we will end there. As Aristotle notes, the many, “aware of their own ignorance, marvel at those who say great things about [*eudaimonia*]” (1095^a25-26).⁴⁰ Second, we should not expect that Aristotle’s ultimate answer to what the chief good is will be particularly detailed. To look for a comprehensive account of the chief good would be to make a methodological mistake in a work of *politikē*. So if it should turn out that Aristotle’s defense of a particular candidate as the chief good is incomplete and unexpected, we should remember that we have been warned to expect just such a result.

There is one more issue to resolve before moving on to the criteria themselves, and this is what exactly the criteria are meant to apply to. In searching for the chief good, Aristotle at different points mentions a particular good (e.g. pleasure or moral virtue), a kind of life (e.g. the contemplative life), a kind of person (Sardanapallus or Priam), and the general concept of *eudaimonia* (e.g. that which is trivially described as ‘faring well’). It isn’t obvious which of these, if any, is Aristotle’s main target, and which we choose could

³⁹ This is a constant refrain beyond *NE* I: see 1104^a1, 1107^b14, 1113^a13, 1114^b2, 1176^a31, 1179^a34). The term also appears once in the *AE* (1129^a11), but not in the undisputed *EE*. See Anagnostopoulos (1994) and Nielseon (2015) for in-depth examinations of precision in Aristotle’s ethics.

⁴⁰ Moreover, as Natali (2007), pp. 371-72 argues, Aristotle tends to introduce ideas in inconspicuous ways in the early chapters of the *NE* so as not to put off his readers too early. Cf. Grant (1866), p. 395.

have serious ramifications for how we understand what Aristotle takes himself to be doing. In particular, Aristotle seems to focus most on the idea of certain kind of lives, namely the hedonistic life, political life, and pleasurable life. He introduces these as the main candidates in *NE* I.5, and evaluates them as lives in *NE* X.6-8. This suggests that kinds of life are the primary focus of Aristotle's investigation. But this appearance is misleading, as Broadie convincingly argues:

It is necessary now, for the sake of clarity, to register the fact that Aristotle's discussion swings between the notion of the supreme good as *a certain sort of life*, and the notion of it as *some element within a life* which may dominate that life in the logical sense of typifying it.... The difference between the kinds of life surveyed in the preceding discussion lies, rather, in the centrality of one or another of those narrower goods.... The central good of a life is the one which, if that life were rightly regarded as happy, would be the source of its being a happy life. Thus in any life that is not haphazard, but has a centre, what occupies the position of 'central good' is that which the subject (by his actions) affirms to be what would make his life happy and him a happy person.⁴¹

There is an obvious practical element here, where the chief good serves as a kind of anchor or target around which a life is structured (cf. 1094^a18-24). But there is also a metaphysical relation, a dependence between the various senses of 'happy' or 'happiness':

Thus the happiness (1) of the happy *person* (the abstract quality of his being happy) logically depends on his having a happy life. On the other hand, 'happiness' can also mean (2) a happy life (which is something concrete), as when we wish happiness to a newly wedded pair. But these are not the only meanings of the word. It can also connote (3) the abstract quality of happiness which all particular happy *lives* have in common. Now happiness in this third sense (the happiness of a happy life) logically depends on a life's containing as central the specific narrow good which above all others ought to be central, whatever the nature of that good may be. That good is the source or principle whereby the happy life and the happy person are happy. And Aristotle, on logical and metaphysical grounds inherited from

⁴¹ Broadie (1991), p. 26. See also Lawrence (2005), Lear (2009), pp. 394-95.

Plato, equates the primary significate of a term 'T' with the source, in those things which are commonly described as 'T', of their deserving the description. Hence for him 'happiness' strictly signifies (4) the good that is central to the happy life. Similarly when he speaks of 'the supreme good' or 'the highest end'. These phrases may sometimes refer to the best sort of life, but in his usage they generally refer to the good which is the inner focus of the best life.⁴²

In other words, when we are looking for the chief good, we are looking to see whether a particular good like pleasure or honor can satisfy the criteria for *eudaimonia* and therefore play the foundational role that Broadie outlines here.⁴³ By getting a clear grasp on these criteria, we can thereby discover the essence of what happiness is, and therefore discover which of the candidate goods has the best claim to be the chief good.⁴⁴

§2.3 – THE *NE*'S FORMAL CRITERIA FOR *EUDAIMONIA*

We learn from the *NE*'s proem that the object of our investigation is “the highest of all practical goods” (1095^a16-17) and that everyone calls this chief good ‘*eudaimonia*’ and thinks of it as living or faring well, despite disagreeing about its precise nature (1095^a18-22). To resolve this disagreement, we need to know more about what properties the chief good has; we can use these criteria to evaluate the three leading candidates.⁴⁵ There are, I think, seven criteria to be found in *NE* I.7-8 and I.12. Some of these are rather straightforward, but others have been the subject of long-running controversy, and still others have barely been acknowledged at all. Getting a clear view on the precise number and content of these criteria will be of critical important not only for understanding the

⁴² Broadie (1991), p. 27. See also Broadie (2007a), pp. 162-64 and Broadie (2007b), pp. 174-181 for more on the metaphysical and normative priority of the chief good.

⁴³ See Broadie (2007a) for a more detailed look at the highest good as occupying a functional role.

⁴⁴ Devereux (1981), pp. 256-57

⁴⁵ Cf. Irwin (1988), p. 361.

NE's final position on happiness, but also for seeing how the various books of the *NE* fit (or don't fit) together.

§2.3.1 – Finality

The first criterion for happiness discussed by Aristotle is, unfortunately, rather controversial. So before even giving it a name, we'll have to look quite closely at Aristotle's discussion and the arguments favoring either side of the debate. The term Aristotle uses is, *teleion*, is ambiguous between two understandings: 'final' and 'complete'.⁴⁶ There are wide-ranging implications for Aristotle's theory of happiness depending on which conception he has in mind, so getting clear on this issue is of paramount importance. The title of this section makes clear which position I take in this debate; I will spend the rest of this section earning it.

The importance of ends or *telē* is evident from the first lines of the *NE*: we are told that a *telos* is the aim of a given pursuit, and that there are two different kinds of *telē*, activities and products (1094^a2-5).⁴⁷ Here Aristotle says that products are better than the activities that produce them (1094^a5-6), but in I.7 we are told that we choose "wealth,

⁴⁶ Translators will occasionally use another term like Kenny (1992)'s "supreme" or Kraut (1989)'s "perfect". 'Supreme' I take to be equivalent to 'final', so I won't discuss it further here. 'Perfect' is a slightly more complicated case. If it is meant to be neutral between 'final' and 'complete', then it only obscures the concept Aristotle is after, which is not helpful for our purposes (though is a fine aim for a translator more generally). 'Perfect' can also have its own meaning, something like 'having reached a fully good state'. *Teleion* is used as a participle with this meaning at 1103^a25, and possibly also 1095^b32 and 1097^a30. But it is pretty clear that this is not the way Aristotle means it in our passage in I.7; roughly speaking, we may do a better or worse job pursuing an end, but an end itself cannot be perfected. Moreover, a perfect life would be a maximally good life, and we know that *eudaimonia* is at least partially resistant to misfortune (1100^b33-01^a8). Cf. White (1990) p. 108. And in any case, the way that a life would reach a fully good state would either by (i) reaching its final end, or (ii) having all choiceworthy goods, so substantively speaking 'perfect' is not a real alternative to 'final' and 'complete'.

⁴⁷ Reeve (1992), p. 116.

flutes, and instruments in general” for the sake of some further activity (1097^a26-28, cf. 1096^a5-9), which is also suggested by where Aristotle places produced objects in the hierarchy of ends in *NE* I.1. So we shouldn’t misunderstand Aristotle by thinking that products are better than activities in general.⁴⁸ Rather, the best activities will aim at nothing beyond themselves.⁴⁹

In broad terms, the discussion of being *teleion* runs as follows. Aristotle argues that, if A is pursued for the sake of B, then B is better than A (1094^a14-15). He alternatively labels B in these cases “better” (βελτίω, 1094^a5-6) or “more choiceworthy” (αίρετότερα, 1094^a15) on the grounds that we choose A not for its own sake, but rather because it is instrumental to getting B; that is, we choose A (merely) for the sake of B (1094^a20, 1097^a26).⁵⁰ But things are in fact more complicated than this: in addition to the things we choose for their own sakes, and the things we choose for the sake of something else, there is a third category of things that we choose *both* for their own sakes *and* for the sake of something further: Aristotle gives the examples of “honor and pleasure and *nous* and every excellence” (1097^b1-4).⁵¹ But Aristotle argues that the chief good, *eudaimonia*, will be better than the members of this category, since we choose these things for the sake of happiness in addition to choosing them for their own sakes (1097^b5-8).⁵²

⁴⁸ Cf. Richardson (1992) p. 331-32.

⁴⁹ Surprisingly, Aristotle doesn’t quite make this point explicit in *NE* I. But it is suggested at 1094^a16-17 and it emerges from Aristotle’s discussion of what is τέλειόν in *NE* I.7, as we’ll see.

⁵⁰ See Kraut (1989) p. 229 for a defense of this “merely” qualification. See also Lear (2004) p. 9.

⁵¹ I’ll return to this passage below.

⁵² One important issue I will not be able to address in what follows is the extent to which agents conceive of their choices as directed toward a single *telos*, i.e. whether agents have a “Grand End” that they consciously pursue via all their subordinate pursuits. See Devereux (1988), Meyer (2011), N.P. White (1981), N.P. White (1988), S. White (1988)

With this background in hand, we can look at Aristotle's discussion more closely, and therefore decide how to understand what it means to be *teleion*. Aristotle writes:

Since there are apparently many *telē*, and we choose some of these for the sake of something else (τινα δι' ἕτερον) (e.g. wealth, flutes, and instruments in general), it is clear that they are not all *teleion*. But the chief good appears to be something *teleion*. such that if there is only one *teleion* thing, this would be the object of our search, and if there are many, [then it would be] the most *teleion* of these (εἰ δὲ πλείω, τὸ τελειότατον τούτων). We say that (i) what is to be pursued for its own sake (τὸ καθ' αὐτὸ) is more *teleion* than what is pursued for something else (δι' ἕτερον), and (ii) what is never chosen for another thing (τὸ μηδέποτε δι' ἄλλο) is [more *teleion*] than the things chosen both for themselves and for its own sake, and (iii) that is *teleion* without qualification is what is always chosen for its own sake and never for another thing (μηδέποτε δι' ἄλλο). (1097^a25-34)

There are two features to notice about this discussion of what is *teleion*. First, Aristotle leaves it open how many *teleion*-without-qualification ends there are: there could be only one, or there could be more than one, in which case it is not immediately clear which would be more *teleion*. Knowing whether there is more than one *teleion* end will require looking at ends in detail; the issue cannot be settled *a priori*.⁵³ If there is more than one, then these ends can be compared according to how *teleion* they are.

This leads to the second feature, the degree to which a *telos* can be *teleion*. At the bottom of the scale are what we can call *heterotelic* ends, which are pursued only for something else (δι' ἕτερον). Higher on the scale are ends pursued for the sake of something else, but not merely this. These ends, which we can call *allotelic* ends, are pursued for the sake of another thing (δι' ἄλλο), but also for their own sake. And finally, highest on the scale are those ends that are only pursued for their own sakes (τὸ καθ' αὐτὸ or δι' αὐτὸ)

⁵³ Cf Wedin (1981), p. 254. We'll return to this issue shortly.

and not for the sake of anything further; call these *autotelic* ends. Autotelic ends are, as a category, more choiceworthy than allotelic ends, which are themselves more valuable than heterotelic ends. Though all these ends can be compared on the same scale, and are therefore all *teleion* to some degree, they do not all equally reveal the nature of what it is to be *teleion*. Rather, it is only autotelic ends that Aristotle gives the appellation ‘*teleion* without qualification’. But, to repeat, there could be more than one *telos* that is *teleion* without qualification, in which case *eudaimonia* will be whichever of these is most *teleion*, i.e. most choiceworthy of all the ends pursued for their own sake.⁵⁴

One might be puzzled here about why autotelic ends are preferable to allotelic ends. It is quite natural to think that there are two sources of value, intrinsic and extrinsic, and therefore that allotelic ends would tend to be more valuable than either heterotelic or autotelic ends because it has the values of both kinds.⁵⁵ But of course Aristotle thinks autotelic ends are more valuable than allotelic ends, and so must be thinking along different lines. What Aristotle has in mind, I think, is that heterotelic and allotelic ends are both dependent on something else for their value, while autotelic ends are not. In other words, the fact that the value of an end can vary depending on how it is related to other ends makes that end less *teleion* than an end whose value is invariable in this way. This means that the way we identify what is *teleion* is through a test that is effectively negative: an end is *teleion*

⁵⁴ Hence Ackrill (1974), p. 21 errs in taking ‘*ἅπλως δὴ τέλειον*’ to be equivalent to ‘*τελειότατον*’. See also Hardie (1979), p. 40.

⁵⁵ This is presumably the reason Plato endorses this view in the *Republic* and the *Philebus*.

to the extent that its value is not dependent on something external to it, and to be *teleion* without qualification is to have value in a way that is in no way dependent on another end.⁵⁶ That Aristotle is concerned with finding ends that are *teleion* without qualification is clear from how he uses the same terminology to describe *eudaimonia* in the next paragraph, noting that “we choose it always for the sake of itself and never for the sake of another thing” (1097^b1) and “No one chooses *eudaimonia* for the sake of these nor in general for the sake of another thing” (1097^b5-6).⁵⁷

These passages, however, only secure the conclusion that *eudaimonia* is *teleion* without qualification, and while they suggest that *eudaimonia* is most *teleion*, they don't quite tell us exactly what the nature of being *teleion* is. As I mentioned above, there is a dispute about whether *teleion* here should be understood as ‘final’ or as ‘complete’. The argument in favor of the ‘final’ reading, which I favor, is straightforward: finality is a matter of something being chosen for its own sake rather than for something else, and this is exactly how Aristotle explains what he means by *teleion*.⁵⁸ This point holds even at the

⁵⁶ Cf. Kraut (1989), pp. 191-92. Richardson (1992) gives an alternative reading, that finality should be understood in terms of regulating our activities rather than as a source of value. This allows him to give a fairly sophisticated analysis of being *teleion*. This account essentially combines finality and completeness: virtue, pleasure, and honor are allotelic, since they are instrumental to contemplation, and so contemplation is more final than these. Contemplation is pursued for the sake of *eudaimonia*, but constitutively rather than instrumentally, and it regulates the pursuit of lower ends. I think something like this view is not far from the truth. But (i) I am wary to commit Aristotle to an equivocation on being *teleion* in a single line of argument (his broader flexibility with the term notwithstanding), and (ii) if it turns out that only a single candidate life's activity counts as *teleion*, then I don't see the added value of making it separate from and for the sake of *eudaimonia* rather than just directly constituting it. That is, Richardson posits an extra level of ends grounded in a constitution relation rather than letting contemplation and *eudaimonia* occupy the same level.

⁵⁷ The verbal parallels between these lines and the description of what is *teleion* without qualification are quite close, e.g. “τὸ καθ' αὐτὸ αἰρετὸν ἀεὶ καὶ μηδέποτε δι' ἄλλο” vs. “αἰρούμεθα ἀεὶ δι' αὐτὴν καὶ οὐδέποτε δι' ἄλλο” and “ἀπλῶς δὴ τέλειον” and “οὐδ' ὄλωσ δι' ἄλλο”.

⁵⁸ This assessment is apparently shared by Broadie (1991), who calls the ‘complete’ translation is done “misleadingly” (p. 55 n.24) but otherwise says little about finality to defend this reading.

etymological level: *teleion* is an adjective generated from *telos*, and most literally means something like “end-y”.⁵⁹ And since, as we’ve seen, an end is the good aimed at by some pursuit and Aristotle has been concerned from the outset at determining whether there is an end at which all things aim, it is quite natural to understand Aristotle’s description of what it is to be *teleion* along these lines, i.e. to take it at face value as ‘final’.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, many scholars interpret *teleion* in a different way. They understand it to mean ‘complete’, i.e. ‘including all autotelic ends’.⁶¹ So, for example, Ackrill argues that the “best breakfast without qualification” is one of “bacon, eggs, and tomatoes” rather than a breakfast containing only a subset of these, and hence the breakfast we would most choose for its own sake.⁶² In general, any set of goods will be better (i.e. more choiceworthy and hence more *teleion*) than any proper subset, and conversely any combination of goods can be made better by adding another.⁶³ A second way of thinking about the same point is to start with the idea that *eudaimonia* is the only thing chosen only for its own sake (based on Aristotle’s description at 1097^a34-^b6), and that any other good thing chosen for its own sake would also be chosen as a component of a good life. The result would be that any particular first order good would be allotelic, being chosen both for its own sake and for

⁵⁹ Bostock (2000), p. 13 n.18, Lear (2004) p. 8, Kenny (1992), p. 16, Pakaluk (2005), pp. 68-70, Richardson (1992), p. 332.

⁶⁰ *Teleion* is so translated by Broadie (1991), Brown’s (2009) revision of Ross, Gauthier & Jolif (1959), Lear (2004), and Ostwald (1962). Grant (1866) uses the judiciously neutral ‘the nature of an end’, and Pakaluk (2005) uses ‘ultimate’ but explicates it in terms of finality.

⁶¹ See Ackrill (1974), Bostock (2000), Broadie & Rowe (2002), Cooper (1987) Irwin (1985) and (1988), Keyt (1983), Reeve (2014b). Curzer (1990) uses ‘complete’ as a translation, but treats *teleion* in terms of finality instead, as do Crisp (2000) and Reeve (1992).

⁶² Ackrill (1974) p. 21. I would be remiss not to point out that Ackrill makes a substantive error in addition to misreading Aristotle: breakfast tacos are clearly the best breakfast without qualification.

⁶³ Ackrill (1974), pp. 20-24, Bostock (2000), pp. 13-14, Keyt (1983) pp. 365-66 (though note that Keyt keeps the ‘final’ translation, and just understands finality to mean what I’m here calling completeness).

eudaimonia, and therefore *eudaimonia* is more *teleion* than any other good because it is the only thing in the category of autotelic goods.⁶⁴ Because the most *teleion* thing on this view includes all other *teleion* things as either instruments or parts, the view’s proponents understand *teleion* to be ‘complete’.⁶⁵

This way of thinking about how to be *teleion* is, I think, unconvincing. Given the strong *prima facie* plausibility of taking *teleion* at face value as ‘final’, opponents of this reading will have to make a particularly strong case to the contrary. But once we look more closely at the particular reasons why one might prefer the ‘complete’ reading, we will see that they are unconvincing: ‘complete’ is a possible translation of *teleion* in some cases, but not here.

Let’s begin on this point, the possible translations of *teleion*. The term can indeed mean ‘complete’, and is almost certainly used this way in the *NE*. For instance, at 1098^a18 Aristotle argues that *eudaimonia* must occur within a “complete life” (ἐν βίῳ τελείῳ), and expands on this thought a few pages later when arguing that “again, one could not become *eudaimōn* in a short time (ἐν ὀλίγῳ χρόνῳ), but as was said, in a time of a certain length and complete (ἐν πολλῷ τινὶ καὶ τελείῳ)” (1101^a11-13, cf. 1100^a3-8).⁶⁶ Several scholars have appealed to this use of *teleion* and others as evidence that it is used the same way in 1097^b28-^b6.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Irwin (1988), p. 362, Reeve (2014b), p. 22-23.

⁶⁵ This reading is closely aligned with an overall inclusivist interpretation of the *NE*, where *eudaimonia* will be a combination of the contemplative and practical lives. So in what follows I will occasionally refer to inclusivists and the inclusivist position when discussing completeness.

⁶⁶ The first passage also describes excellence as *teleion*, but what the term means in reference to excellence is more complicated and deserves to be addressed on its own. We will return to this topic in §2.3.3.

⁶⁷ Irwin (1988), p. 605 n. 30 gives a particular explicit example.

This argument, unfortunately, won't do the job. It is a familiar fact that Aristotle is can be distressingly inconsistent in his use of technical terminology, even in those contexts where precision really matters. This is especially true with ambiguous terms like *teleion*, the multiple conceptions of which Aristotle outlines in *Metaphysics* Δ.16. There the term is given several senses: 'complete', 'perfect', 'finished' or 'completed', or 'final'.⁶⁸ And the term is certainly used multivocally in the *NE*.⁶⁹ I concede that it is difficult to see how time could be *teleion* in any other way than complete: time is certainly not chosen for its own sake, and it is not clear how time as such could be improved let alone perfected. But life, on the other hand, can be described as 'final', insofar as *eudaimonia* is a kind of life and *eudaimonia* is what we choose only for its own sake,⁷⁰ and excellence can be understandably described as 'final', 'complete' or 'perfect'. If *teleion* does not univocally mean 'complete', then we cannot infer that it must have this meaning when used to describe ends.⁷¹ So we cannot appeal to consistent diction on Aristotle's part to ground the 'complete' reading of *teleion*.

⁶⁸ We have to be careful about how we appeal to other texts to make sense of the *NE*, given that our ultimate aim is to determine the relationship between the undisputed *NE*, the common books, and the *EE*. For the same reason, we cannot straightforwardly appeal to the *EE*'s use of *teleion* as 'complete', e.g. at 1219^a36-39, 1219^b6-7 and 1249^a16. But the *EE* is ambiguous too: *teleion* means 'perfect' at 1237^a6-7 and 1237^a29-30, and 'final' at 1227^b33, 1239^b27-28, and 1245^b3-4.

⁶⁹ Cf. Cooper (1987), p. 199, Hardie (1979), p. 39, Richardson (1992), p. 332, Roche (1988b), p. 109.

⁷⁰ See also Lear (2004) p. 30 n. 43

⁷¹ Heinemann (1988) pp. 37-39 goes farther, arguing that the assumption that *teleion* must be read used univocally counts against the inclusivist reading, since he thinks it clearly must mean 'final' in our passage, and therefore will be the same elsewhere. While I'm sympathetic to his reading of our present passage, I think the best way to interpret his argument is that both sides should reject the assumption that *teleion* is used univocally in *NE* I.7 rather than either side using this assumption to ground an effectively question-begging argument that their reading is the right one. Kraut (1989) p. 67 n. 46 argues instead that the only possible consistent translation is 'perfect', but he suggests this is because 'perfect' is itself variable enough to capture distinct meanings.

Another initial problem with the ‘complete’ reading is that it either assumes or entails a position that Aristotle does not hold, namely that in principle there could be only one member in the category of autotelic ends. The reason commentators think Aristotle would assume a single autotelic end is that otherwise he would have left no way to compare autotelic ends in their finality, which would leave unspecified how to tell what is most *teleion*.⁷² But it is fairly clear from the text that Aristotle makes no such commitment. He writes that we are searching for a single *teleion* end *if* there is only one, and if more than one then we are searching for the most *teleion* among these (1097^a28-30, cf. 1097^a22-24).

It would make no sense for Aristotle to put things this way if it were taking for granted that there is a single thing we’re looking for.⁷³ It is true that there is a puzzle of how to tell which of several autotelic goods would be the most *teleion*, since Aristotle defines being more/less *teleion* as a relation between categories rather than between members within a category. But this is ultimately not a problem for Aristotle. For one, the chief good that we’re looking for will meet several other criteria, and they can be used to tell us which autotelic goods would be the chief good. Moreover, Aristotle gives us the resources to compare ends within telic categories. One option is that one autotelic end is simply more objectively valuable than other, better or more choiceworthy as such.⁷⁴ Another option is that some autotelic ends have more hetero- or allotelic ends directed

⁷² Irwin (1988), p. 261,

⁷³ Cf. Kenny (1992), p. 17-18, Kraut (1989), pp. 227-28, Lear (2004), pp. 27-9.

⁷⁴ Cf. Reeve (1992), pp. 116-17.

toward them. It doesn't matter for our purposes precisely which method Aristotle goes with, so long as at least one is viable.

The fact that the 'complete' reading entails a single autotelic good is also difficult to square with Aristotle's approach. It is, I think, only slightly less odd for Aristotle to repeat the option 'if there is more than one' unaware that his results will preclude this than it is to give this option assuming from the outset that it is not viable. Aristotle seems genuinely open to there being more than one autotelic end, and presumably he wouldn't be if he were looking for a complete end and aware of what the implications of a complete end would be for his inquiry. But that is exactly what the 'complete' reading entails: we can know from the outset that, however many first-order ends there are, there will be a single second-order end that contains them.⁷⁵ It's possible that Aristotle was unaware of these implications, but this is an uncharitable reading we should avoid if we can.⁷⁶

Moreover, the way Aristotle phrases things suggests that the most *teleion* end he is looking for a first-order end rather than a second-order end: "if many, then the most *teleion* of these" (εἰ δὲ πλείω, τὸ τελειότατον τούτων) suggests picking out one of several ends in the same category, not picking the member of one category over the members of another.⁷⁷ So while the 'complete' reading requires that there is a guaranteed single most *teleion* end in virtue of its being a different sort than others, the text allows for there to be multiple

⁷⁵ The term "second-order" comes from Hardie (1965), p. 279. See Cooper (1975), pp. 96-99 for a more thorough explication.

⁷⁶ Hardie (1965) does think that Aristotle was unaware of what he was doing, i.e. saying one thing but being committed to another.

⁷⁷ Cf. Wedin (1981), p. 252. I'll return to this point below.

teleion ends, the most *teleion* of which will be *teleion* in the same way as the others, just more so.⁷⁸

The inclusivist might respond by pointing to a passage they interpret as an argument from Aristotle to show that the only autotelic good will be a complete set of allotelic goods.

They see this argument in the following passage:

And *eudaimonia* seems most of all to be this sort of thing. For we choose it always for its own sake and never for another thing, but honor and pleasure and *nous* and every virtue we choose both for their own sakes (for even if nothing resulted from them we would chose them), and we choose them also for the sake of *eudaimonia*, thinking that through these we will become happy. (1097a34-b6)

τοιούτων δ' ἡ εὐδαιμονία μάλιστα εἶναι δοκεῖ· ταύτην γὰρ αἰρούμεθα ἀεὶ δι' αὐτήν καὶ οὐδέποτε δι' ἄλλο, τιμὴν δὲ καὶ ἡδονὴν καὶ νοῦν καὶ πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν αἰρούμεθα μὲν καὶ δι' αὐτά (μηθενὸς γὰρ ἀποβαίνοντος ἐλοίμεθ' ἂν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν), αἰρούμεθα δὲ καὶ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας χάριν, διὰ τούτων ὑπολαμβάνοντες εὐδαιμονήσειν.

Inclusivists read this passage as follows. There are four leading candidates for *teleion* goods, corresponding to the candidate lives outlined in *NE* I.5.⁷⁹ But each of them is chosen for the sake of *eudaimonia*, and so are allotelic rather than autotelic. The only thing left over to be autotelic is happiness itself, which is constituted by the allotelic ends through which we achieve it. And by saying “we choose”, Aristotle shows that he is endorsing this line of reasoning. Hence the conclusion that there could only be a single autotelic end

⁷⁸ Richardson (1992), pp. 344-349 goes farther, arguing against even the possibility of there being a single “convergent” end that is the aim of all other pursuits. The remaining alternative would be that *teleion*-without-qualification ends would be compared to see which is most *teleion* among them, rather than looking to see which of the purported *teleion*-without-qualification ends turn out not to be.

⁷⁹ Keyt (1983) p. 366, Kraut (1989), pp. 233-37, Lear (2004), p. 30-31.

constituted by lower-order allotelic goods is something Aristotle does accept, even if the text superficially suggests he is non-committal.

This is a powerful response on behalf of the inclusivist, but I don't think it ultimately succeeds, because the text doesn't quite say what the inclusivist thinks it says. The first sentence-and-a-half and last sentence are both straightforward: *eudaimonia* seems to be the most *teleion* without qualification thing, for we choose it for itself and never for anything else. The middle sentence is less transparent, and I believe it makes a weaker claim than the inclusivists allow. Minimally, it says that there are four allotelic goods, chosen for themselves and for *eudaimonia*. Inclusivists read the passage as saying that each of these four goods are jointly chosen together for the sake of *eudaimonia*. But the text doesn't say this, at least not explicitly. And there is an alternative reading that I think is more justified, namely that some of us choose honor for the sake of happiness, some *nous*, etc.⁸⁰ There are two clues in the text that favor this reading. First, we would expect a *καὶ* before the list of allotelic goods, or something comparable, to signal that this is an inclusive list. But we don't get this, in which case the internal *καὶ*'s can be read either disjunctively or conjunctively. Second, Aristotle says we would choose "each of them" regardless of results, which suggests "each of them individually" rather than "all of them together", and Aristotle could have easily omitted this qualification if he weren't concerned with making this implication.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Cf. Cooper (2007), pp. 125-26, White (1990), pp. 110-13.

⁸¹ The "for their own sakes" (*δι' αὐτά*, 1097^b3) can be read distributively or collectively.

This reading is also bolstered by Aristotle’s earlier discussion in *NE* I.5, where these four goods are presented as alternative candidates for the chief good which different people organize different kinds of lives around.⁸² This point is also brought out in I.4, where there are not only disagreement among people as to what the chief good is, but within individuals over time (1095^a20-25, cf. 1098^b22-28). So when Aristotle says “we”, he may only mean that choosing each of these goods is something frequent among the many and the wise, not that we all choose all of these goods together allotelically. On this reading “thinking that” (ὕπολαμβάνοντες, 1097^b5) puts a bit of distance between Aristotle and the people he describes: they think that they get happiness through these things, but maybe they’re wrong (for instance under certain conceptions of pleasure or honor).

If the list of goods Aristotle gives us here is not an inclusive list, then that’s a strike against thinking of them as a set that jointly constitutes *eudaimonia*. Another piece of textual evidence against it is the claim that we would choose these goods even if nothing “resulted” (ἀποβαίνοντος) from them. This term, in both English and Greek, suggests a distinctness you don’t get in constitution; both other instances of the term in the undisputed *NE* (1112^b9, 1127^a4) indicate a further result of an action one deliberates about.⁸³ And since we deliberate about means, not ends (1112^b11-12), and Aristotle glosses these means as “sometimes instruments, sometimes the use of them, and similarly in the remaining cases sometimes the means (δι’ οὗ) and sometimes the how or the by means of what (διὰ τίνοος)”

⁸² van Cleempert (2006), pp. 135-36.

⁸³ It is also used this way in the *AE* (1150a20), and in the *Politics* (1271^a31, ^b15, 1325^b18). In the *EE* the term occurs only once, meaning more generally “occurrences” (1215^b19).

(1112^b29-31). Nothing in this description suggests that the scope of ‘results’ involve constitutive means. If this is right, then likewise the way the allotelic goods listed in our passage bring about happiness would appear not to be constitutive.⁸⁴

So much, then, for appealing to the passage itself to ground the inclusivist reading. Another insufficient foundation is the connection between being *teleion* and being self-sufficient (αὐταρκες). Immediately after explaining that *eudaimonia* is not chosen for the sake of anything else, Aristotle writes “The same point (τὸ αὐτὸ) appears to follow also from [considerations of] self-sufficiency. For the *teleion* good appears to be self-sufficient” (1097^b6-8). Aristotle defines (τίθμεν) self-sufficiency as “that which by itself (μονοῦμενον) makes life choiceworthy and lacking nothing” (1097^b14-15). And after explaining why *eudaimonia* has this property, Aristotle concludes “*Eudaimonia*, being the end of actions, appears to be something *teleion* and self-sufficient” (1097^b20-21). There are two ways that self-sufficiency has been taken to support the ‘complete’ reading of *teleion*. One is that self-sufficiency entails an inclusive conception of *eudaimonia*, in which case *teleion* should do the same.⁸⁵ The other is that there is some kind of very close conceptual relationship between being *teleion* and being self-sufficient, e.g. identity, or mutual entailment, or co-extensiveness.⁸⁶ I think this approach misunderstands what self-

⁸⁴ This doesn’t mean that Aristotle is unaware of the role of constitution between actions; we can grant to Ackrill and others that the distinction between instrumental and constitutive relations is crucial. But this is consistent with Aristotle insisting on the instrumental relation in this passage.

⁸⁵ Bostock (2000), p. 14, Hardie (1965). p. 279, Keyt (1983), p. 366.

⁸⁶ Ackrill (1974), pp.21-23 says that completeness is “expressed again” through self-sufficiency, and that the two passages are “interlocking”. Irwin (1985) pp.4-5 simply treats “complete and self-sufficient good” as a conceptual unit, while Irwin (1988), p. 363 claims that “the account of self-sufficiency explains how he understands completeness”. Reeve (2014b), p. 23 says that “As completeness is allied with the telic structure H...so self-sufficiency s allied with completeness” (23).

sufficiency actually is in the *NE*, but to see that we need to discuss self-sufficiency on its own terms, and that will have to wait until the next section. And I'll argue below that finality is consistent with the inclusivist reading, in which case we would not be compelled to understand being *teleion* differently to secure this reading.

But first, let's look at the idea that being *teleion* and being self-sufficient share some kind of close conceptual connection such that each illuminates the other. Briefly put, self-sufficiency entails being *teleion*, but being *teleion* does not entail being self-sufficient. If *eudaimonia* is "the most desirable of all things" (1097^b16) due to its self-sufficiency, then it would be *teleion* as well, because it is not chosen for the sake of anything other thing: it couldn't be, if nothing else is as choiceworthy as it is.⁸⁷ But, conversely, something can be *teleion* without being self-sufficient: X's being chosen purely for its own sake does not guarantee that X makes life lacking in nothing, because it is possible that there is more than one *teleion* end. To secure the conclusion that being *teleion* entails being self-sufficient, we would need to add the assumption that there is exactly one *teleion* without qualification end. But, as we've seen, this is an assumption Aristotle doesn't make. If there is more than one *teleion* end, then even the most *teleion* among them might not make life worth choosing all by itself.⁸⁸ This is a point that inclusivists must grant, because they use it themselves to argue that the chief good must be a set of ends rather than any single end on the grounds that no single first-order end can by itself make a life good.

⁸⁷ Cooper (2007), pp. 126-27, Kraut (1989), p. 295 n. 24, p. 297 n. 26, Lear (2004), p. 51-53

⁸⁸ Cf. White (1990), pp. 110-14.

So, when Aristotle claims that the same point follows from considerations of self-sufficiency, he is not saying that he has two arguments for showing that happiness has the single property of containing all goods required for a good life. Rather, he is making the more restricted point that no one chooses *eudaimonia* for the sake of something else.⁸⁹ One reason this is so is because *eudaimonia* is most *teleion*, and therefore does not lead to some other, better end. Another reason is because *eudaimonia* is self-sufficient, and therefore is not chosen as part of a larger combination of good things (i.e. “by itself makes life choiceworthy and lacking nothing” (1097^b14-15) and is not counted as one good among many (1097^b16-20)). In other words, Aristotle’s “same point” is that *eudaimonia* is not part of a larger good either instrumentally or constitutively.

That inclusivists must grant that self-sufficiency and being *teleion* are distinct properties brings us to a more substantive defense of reading *teleion* as ‘complete’ rather than ‘final’. Proponents argue that Aristotle’s conception of *eudaimonia* is inclusive, and so we should therefore interpret the criteria for happiness in a way that confirm this inclusivity; otherwise Aristotle’s comments on *eudaimonia* will be inconsistent.⁹⁰ Now, there’s an element of circularity to this argument when it is used against a rival conception of what *teleion* means, but we can set this concern aside for now. This is because interpreting *teleion* as ‘final’ is in fact consistent with the inclusivist view. If this is right, then the finality reading of *teleion* is neutral between the inclusivist and exclusivist

⁸⁹ Cooper (2007), pp. 126-27.

⁹⁰ Hardie (1965), p. 279, Keyt (1983), pp. 365-66. Note that Hardie thinks that Aristotle’s view is, in fact, inconsistent: while Aristotle technically asserts a dominant-end view of *eudaimonia* in *NE* I.7 (p. 293), on Hardie’s view he shouldn’t have. See also Hardie (1979) *passim*.

interpretations of *eudaimonia*, in which case we needn't rule this reading out in order to preserve one interpretation over the other.

So, why think that finality and inclusivism are compatible? The answer is that, once we separate finality and self-sufficiency as distinct properties, we can see that self-sufficiency could do all the theoretical work of securing the conclusion that happiness is a second-order set of all allotelic goods.⁹¹ Again, I'll argue in the next section that Aristotle does not understand self-sufficiency to mean maximally complete set of good, but for sake of argument let us grant this reading to the inclusivist. If this is so, then inclusivism would be secured by self-sufficiency alone. And if that's right, then we can translate *teleion* as 'final' without threatening the inclusivist thesis: *eudaimonia* is never chosen for the sake of something else, regardless of whether it is constituted by a single good or many. In that case, finality would play a minimal role in the overall argument, showing only that the hierarchy of pursuits does not go on forever, as he had already suggested in earlier chapters. But (and here I stop making concessions to my inclusivist interlocutors for sake of argument) I think the 'complete' reading of *teleion* suffers from serious conceptual problems, and is therefore not a viable understanding of what Aristotle is up to in his discussion of ends. To see this, we'll need to look more closely at how exactly a complete end is supposed to work, and how it is related to its constituents.

The basic idea behind the 'complete' reading of *teleion* is that any set of goods {*x* & *y*} is higher in value and therefore more choiceworthy than *x* alone. This means that any

⁹¹ Whiting (1986) pp. 73-4 makes essentially the same point. See also Lear (2009), pp. 397-398, Roche (1988b), pp. 105-06

particular good x we might pursue will be no better than allotelic, because there will always be a set $\{x \ \& \ y\}$ for the sake of which x can be pursued.⁹² If any particular good can be no better than allotelic, then whatever good is autotelic cannot be particular good. But there is, Aristotle assumes, at least one autotelic good. So there must be something that isn't a particular good to fill this role. And the only other option is an inclusive set of those particular goods. And because we can run the same argument with any number of variables (e.g., for any goods x , y , and z , $\{x \ \& \ y \ \& \ z\}$ is more choiceworthy than $\{x \ \& \ y\}$ or $\{x \ \& \ z\}$ or $\{y \ \& \ z\}$), the set will be maximally inclusive.⁹³ In other words, however many allotelic ends there are, there will be an autotelic set constituted by those ends.

Most of the defenses of this line of argument in the literature are brief and *a priori*. But there is at least one textually-grounded defense: Keyt (1983) appeals to a passage in *NE* X.2 that he thinks shows that Aristotle accepts this argument himself.⁹⁴ So before looking at the argument on its own terms, we need to consider this passage. After summarizing an argument from Eudoxus purporting to show that pleasure is the chief good, Aristotle writes

This argument apparently shows that [pleasure] is one of the goods, and not more [good than] the other. For everything is more choiceworthy with another good than by itself. In fact, it was by using this sort of argument that Plato proved that the good is not pleasure. For [he showed that] the pleasurable life is more choiceworthy with wisdom than separate from it, and that if the mixture is better, then pleasure is not the good. For there is nothing to be added to it that will make the good more choiceworthy. But it is clear that nothing else would be the good, which becomes more

⁹² Keyt (1983) p. 365, Reeve (2014b), pp.22-23.

⁹³ Ackrill (1974), p.21-23, Cooper (1987) p. 199, Irwin (1988), p. 262

⁹⁴ This passage is also referenced to defend the inclusivist interpretation of self-sufficiency, which I'll discuss in the next section. See Crisp (1992), pp. 236-37, Devereux (1991), p. 250, Lawrence (1997), pp. 58-64, Reeve (1992), p. 120.

choiceworthy when another of the things good in themselves are with it (οὐδ' ἄλλο οὐδὲν τὰγαθὸν ἂν εἴη, ὃ μετὰ τινος τῶν καθ' αὐτὸ ἀγαθῶν αἰρετώτερον γίνεται). So what sort of thing is *this*, of which we can have a share? For we are searching for this sort of thing. (1172^b26-35)

Keyt reads this argument as concluding that “if two ends are each chosen for their own sake but both together are more worthy than either separately, then there is a compound end that embraces both to which each is subordinate”.⁹⁵ Some commentators have thought that Aristotle is merely reporting Plato’s argument here.⁹⁶ But I don’t think this can be right; Aristotle wouldn’t say “it is clear that” (δῆλον δ’ ὥς) about a conclusion he doesn’t agree with.⁹⁷ So there must be at least something in this passage that Aristotle finds persuasive, even if he doesn’t endorse all of it. So let’s look at the passage more closely.⁹⁸ The first thing to note is that the dialectical context of this passage is a bit odd. Aristotle notes that Eudoxus uses an argument to show that pleasure is the chief good, and then notes that Plato used the same argument to show that it wasn’t. The obvious thing to infer from this is that Aristotle thinks the argument is invalid: if it can be used to show p and $\sim p$, it must not be a very good argument.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Keyt (1983), p. 365. He also cites passages from the *Rhetoric* and *Topics*, but I will leave this to one side. Given the comparative nature of our project, we have to interpret each text on its own terms before comparing it to others. These passages are discussed by Kraut (1989), pp. 283-291 and White (1990), pp. 121-123, 136-143.

⁹⁶ Heinaman (1988), pp. 43-44, Kenny (1992), p. 26, Lear (2004) p. 68 n. 35. One virtue of this interpretation is that it neutralizes the contradiction between “For everything is more choiceworthy with another good than by itself” and “For there is nothing to be added to it that will make the good more choiceworthy”; Aristotle avoids the contradiction if he doesn’t endorse at least one of these. But, as we’ll see, I think there is a way of accepting both claims without contradiction.

⁹⁷ Cooper (2007), p. 141.

⁹⁸ See Heinaman (2002), pp. 102-122 and pp. 141-143 for a careful examination of the text and logical structure of Aristotle’s argument here.

⁹⁹ Cf. Heinaman (2002), p. 103.

Second, it would also be odd for Aristotle to completely follow Plato here. For one, he has already critiqued Plato's conception of the Good in *NE* I.6, and the final qualification "of which we can have a share" is a reminder that Plato's own conception of the Good isn't achievable by action, Aristotle's chief complaint.¹⁰⁰ And in any case the view that Plato endorses in the *Philebus* is that allotelic goods are better than autotelic goods.¹⁰¹ It would be rather odd for Aristotle to be thinking along the same lines as Plato in the argument where he is (self-consciously though not explicitly) parting ways with Plato on the very issue of the way in which the chief good is more choiceworthy.¹⁰² And we shouldn't fail to notice that Plato's use of the argument is in support of a single good, the Form of the Good, which is not an inclusive set, but rather an ontologically prior source of value. So even if Aristotle were endorsing Plato's argument, it doesn't entail that the good must be complete, even if a good life were.

Third, the arguments Aristotle uses here do not entail the inclusivist reading of *teleion*. Eudoxus's argument, as Aristotle reconstructs it, is 'If a good *y* can be improved by added *x*, and goods can only be improved by other goods, then *x* is good'. But, as he notes, this isn't enough to show that pleasure is *the* good, just *a* good.¹⁰³ Aristotle concedes that *everything* is made better when combined with a good, but that doesn't show much.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Heinaman (1988), p. 44.

¹⁰¹ See Cooper (2007), pp. 117-124 and Lear (2004) pp. 53-59 for a discussion of the *Philebus* in this context, Cooper (2007), pp. 140-43 and Lear (2004) p. 68 n. 35 discussion of Eudoxus.

¹⁰² Cooper (2007), pp. 124-25. A bit of speculation: it is somewhat odd that *NE* I.6 occurs where it does, since it interrupts the flow of *NE* I's main argument. One possible explanation for this placement is that, in critiquing Plato just about discussing the criteria for happiness, Aristotle primes the reader not to confuse Aristotle's views with Plato's.

¹⁰³ Harte (2014), p. 307, Kraut (1989), p. 280-81.

¹⁰⁴ Heinaman (2002), p. 103.

Plato's argument, as Aristotle reconstructs it, is 'If x can be improved by adding y , then x is not the good'. This argument is essentially a test to rule out candidates for the good. But there can be goods that aren't ruled out: if x isn't improved by adding y , then presumably x would be (or at least could be) the good, and that is what Aristotle is looking for.¹⁰⁵ One way x could be resistant to improvement, which inclusivists favor, is that x is already maximally inclusive of all goods, so that there isn't a good y that isn't already present in x , and hence nothing left over to add to x in the first place. But if everything can be improved by adding a good, then Aristotle seems to be ruling out the possibility of a maximally inclusive set: he is talking about cases where we can add goods, not about cases where adding is impossible.¹⁰⁶

Another more promising way of x being resistant to improvement is that x 's good is independent of y , so that adding another good doesn't affect x one way or the other. On this option we can grant that $\{x \& y\}$ would be more valuable than x alone; the question is how x is affected by y . In some cases they combine the way Eudoxus thinks pleasure and just actions combine: pleasure makes justice actions themselves better than they would be alone (i.e. x 's value increases in the presence of y).¹⁰⁷ But in other cases adding y to x wouldn't improve x 's value, regardless of what the sum value of $\{x \& y\}$ is.¹⁰⁸ In these cases x could still be the good, and it would be a first-order good, though one of a special

¹⁰⁵ Heinaman (1988), p. 44.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. White (1990), p.112-15.

¹⁰⁷ Brodie (2005), pp. 142-144, Brodie & Rowe (2002) p. 430.

¹⁰⁸ This is akin to how Aristotle thinks self-sufficiency works, properly understood. I'll return to this topic in §2.3.2.

sort.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the first option, this reading allows that you can improve the good by adding things, rather than making it a conceptual impossibility. Aristotle concedes this point not only because it appears to be a real possibility, but also because it is irrelevant to his main concern: it's a trivial truth that adding two goods can make a set with a higher value than either good independently, but that's not a threat to Aristotle's search for the good.

The inclusivist, then, can't rely on the X.2 passage for support for their interpretation of *teleion*. But they have one argumentative strategy left: even if Aristotle doesn't explicitly endorse thinking of being *teleion* in terms of being complete, this way of thinking is either entailed by the logic of how ends relate to one another, or if not entailed is at least the most charitable way of thinking about it. So let's look at the issue more generally. The general principle behind the 'complete' reading is that, for any first-order goods x and y , one can always construct a set $\{x \& y\}$ that is more choiceworthy than x or y alone. One would therefore choose x and y as constituents of the set $\{x \& y\}$, and hence x and y will be no better than allotelic, since they are chosen for the sake of the set containing them. This argument can be iterated with any number of goods and any number of intermediate sets, with the result that, for any number of goods and/or sets of goods N , $\{N\}$ will be more choiceworthy than any subset of its members. $\{N\}$ will therefore be a maximally complete good, containing all possible goods in a good life.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Which, not incidentally, is exactly how Aristotle describes the good of contemplation in X.7-8 (1178^a1-6, 1178^a22). Cf. Cooper (2007), pp. 142-43. I want to resist using these later chapters to interpret the earlier ones (for reasons that will become clear in §5.2.1), but there is, I think, less harm in interpreting X.2 in light of later chapters of the same book.

¹¹⁰ One issue I will not examine in detail here is whether the autotelic good is merely an inclusive set, or if there is some kind of ordering or structure that adds its own value (I do address the issue in §2.3.2 when discussing whether the chief good is counted together with other goods). See Broadie (1991), p. 31, Kraut

The various premises that the inclusivists rely on here are, I think, false.¹¹¹ Let's go through their argument in stages.¹¹² The first premise is that any two first-order goods can be combined. But this isn't obviously the case. It may be that at least some first-order goods conflict and so cannot be constituents of the same set. Some commentators, for instance, have interpreted Aristotle as arguing that the good life is the pursuit of contemplation above all else, because those other goods distract from or interfere with contemplation.¹¹³ Others have attempted to save Aristotle from this conclusion.¹¹⁴ I do not think this is Aristotle's actual view, but it does demonstrate the possibility that even allotelic goods conflict: *nous* and honor, say, are both choiceworthy for their own sakes, but we cannot pursue them both together. The case is easier to see with heterotelic ends: if you have only a finite amount of brass, you may be able to make a flute or a bridle, but not both.¹¹⁵

The next premise is that any combination of goods {*x* & *y*} is better than *x* or *y* alone. But this isn't always the case either: it is possible that goods can combine in a way that decreases the value of one of them, so that pursuing one of the constituents is better

(1989), p. 212 n. 10, Lear (2004) p. 40 n. 65 and pp. 42-43 for critical discussion of this issue. Inclusivists are aware that they need to say more here (see Ackrill (1974) p. 22, Irwin (1991), pp. 388-89), but they do not take a firm stand on the issue or provide enough information to evaluate the proposal (but see Crisp (1994), pp. 116-17 for criticisms of even these first steps). Cooper (1975) pp. 96-99 is a bit better on this score. Price (1981) p. 342-44 suggests that goods are related to one another holistically, but his view entails that there are no allotelic goods (which he grants), and this cannot be right as an interpretation of Aristotle.

¹¹¹ In addition to the arguments given here, see Kraut (1989), pp. 210-237 and Lear (2004), pp. 40-46 for critiques of the inclusivists's logic of ends.

¹¹² In what follows I've tried to use examples that are compatible with Aristotle's views generally and which the inclusivist can agree too. But strictly speaking this is a higher bar than I need. Since the inclusivist argument is conceptual, any *a priori* counter-examples will do the job of refuting it.

¹¹³ E.g., Bostock (2000), p. 202-3, Cooper (1975), pp. 162-65, Heinemann (1983), p. 51

¹¹⁴ Most notably Lear (2004) and Broadie (1991). Acquitting Aristotle of this interpretation is also one of the primary motivations for inclusivism.

¹¹⁵ Reeve (1992), p. 121 raises additional worries along these same lines.

than pursuing both. For example, courage is good and pleasure is good, but taking pleasure in acts of war themselves would make one's activity morally suspect (though perhaps no less courageous). If there are cases where one ought not take pleasure in one's virtuous activities, then the combination of virtue and pleasure would be worse than pursuing the virtue without the pleasure. In general terms of course the virtuous person will find her activities pleasant, but it doesn't follow that this should always be the case. So as a universal claim about how values relate, this premise is false.¹¹⁶

The next premise in the inclusivist's argument is that x is always pursued for the sake of the set $\{x \ \& \ y\}$. But there are problems if x is a member of more than one set. Suppose, for sake of argument, that there are two different, incompatible ways of being happy, the life of moral virtue and the life of contemplation. The autotelic set that each expresses will be different, by having the same goods appear at different levels of the hierarchy (e.g. virtuous activity is autotelic in the first life, allotelic in the second). In each case, pleasure is a constituent part of each set. But depending on which life you go for, you'll pursue pleasure allotelically for the sake of only one of those two autotelic sets. So in this case we have a set of which x can be a constituent, but for which x is not pursued.

Another premise is that for any good x , there will be an autotelic set that contains x ; otherwise, that set could be improved by adding x . But this isn't right. Health, for instance, is a good pursued for its own sake. But health is not, as such, as part of happiness.

¹¹⁶ Another possibility is that $\{x \ \& \ y\}$ could be no better than $\{x\}$ alone, even if y is independently valuable. For instance, suppose x and y are different copies of the same book, which we stipulate to be allotelic. Having two copies of the book would be no better than having one, even though each is valuable on their own.

Aristotle argues later in *NE* I.7 that happiness involves the human function, and the human function does not involve nutrition, growth, or perception, because these are the powers of the non-rational parts of the soul (1097^b33-98^a3; cf. 1099^b32-34, 1177^a3-5, 1178^b24-28). But health is a state of these parts of the soul, not the rational part. So, healthy will not be a constituent of *eudaimonia*; instead, it will be a precondition that makes *eudaimonia* possible (1099^b26-28). The same holds for the external goods in general (1099^a31-^b8). So it doesn't follow from *x* being a good, or even an allotelic good, that happiness is partly constituted by *x*.

One more objection. The inclusivist holds that, by definition, happiness cannot be improved. This is incorrect. In Aristotle's discussion of the impact of luck and external factors on happiness in *NE* I.9-11, Aristotle makes a distinction between being *eudaimōn* and being blessed (μακάριός), arguing that you can be the former but not the latter if one encounters a certain range of bad luck (1101^a6-8).¹¹⁷ This distinction shows that there is a state better than *eudaimonia* that can be improved by the addition of goods.¹¹⁸ Hence the inclusivist argument entails that *eudaimonia* is only an allotelic good pursued for the sake of blessedness, and this is an unacceptable conclusion.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ We will return to this topic in §2.3.4.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Heinaman (2002), pp. 122-27, Heinaman (2007) *passim*, Reeve (1992), pp. 118-19. Irwin (1985) pp. 98-100 responds to this worry, but unsuccessfully; see Annas (1988), pp. 47-48 for a response.

¹¹⁹ Note that my objection here is that, on the inclusivist's approach to the logic of the 'for-the-sake-of' relation, *eudaimonia* is pursued for the sake of blessedness. This is not the same as saying that *eudaimonia* can itself be better or worse, the better versions of which are called 'blessedness'. That is, this objection is consistent with saying, in Crisp's preferred terminology, that *eudaimonia* can be improved by adding more *eudaimonia* but not by adding more of something else (see Crisp (1994), p. 133)

We've seen, then, that the inclusivist's arguments supporting the 'complete' reading of *teleion* do not succeed in compelling this view or even in making it as plausible as the 'final' reading.¹²⁰ We can safely conclude, then, that *teleion* means 'final', and I will adopt this translation in what follows. And this means that we have our first criterion that any successful chief good must meet to qualify as *eudaimonia*:

Finality: The chief good is a final (i.e. autotelic) end. It is chosen only for its own sake, and does not depend on any further end for its value. If there is more than one autotelic end, the chief good will be the one that is most worth choosing for its own sake.

This criterion suggests that there is a single candidate for the chief good that will ultimately meet it: more than one end could be autotelic, but if this happens we will look among them to see which is most final. But it is not at all clear how we would make this comparison, since Aristotle says very little about how to compare autotelic ends to see which are more so, and the analysis of being autotelic does not lend itself to being comparative. This means that it will be difficult to refer to the finality criterion alone to determine what *eudaimonia* is. So we need to continue our investigation of the other criteria for *eudaimonia* that Aristotle advances in *NE I*.

§2.3.2 – Self-Sufficiency

Our second criterion a plausible candidate for the chief good needs to satisfy is self-sufficiency (τὸ αὐτάρκες). Luckily, we can all agree how to translate the term. But the

¹²⁰ Lear (2004) pp. 42-3 raises the further argument that this more sophisticated version of inclusivism cannot succeed in making second-order arrangements confer value on their first-order members as would be required of a final end, and therefore can't distinguish it from the simpler version we've just rejected. Richardson (1992) pp. 342-43 argues that the relationship between first-order and higher-order ends must be asymmetrical, which the inclusivist reading cannot accommodate.

details regarding precisely what it amounts to for the chief good to make life self-sufficient are controversial, so we'll once again have to go through the issue carefully.

We can start by looking in some detail at what Aristotle says about self-sufficiency.

The relevant passage is brief. Aristotle writes

The final good appears to be self-sufficient. We say self-sufficient not with respect to someone by themselves, living a solitary life, but rather with respect to someone living with parents and children and a wife and in general friends and fellow citizens, since man is by nature political¹²¹.... We stipulate that the self-sufficient is that which by itself makes life choiceworthy and lacking in nothing. And we think *eudaimonia* is this sort of thing. Moreover, it is most choiceworthy of all things not by being counted among them – if it were counted among others it is clear that it would be [made] more choiceworthy with the least of [other] goods. For the addition would make an extra amount of good, and the greater of goods is always more choiceworthy. (1098^a6-20)¹²²

τὸ γὰρ τέλειον ἀγαθὸν αὐτάρκες εἶναι δοκεῖ. τὸ δ' αὐτάρκες λέγομεν οὐκ αὐτῷ μόνῳ, τῷ ζῶντι βίον μονώτην, ἀλλὰ καὶ γονεῦσι καὶ τέκνοις καὶ γυναικὶ καὶ ὅλως τοῖς φίλοις καὶ πολίταις, ἐπειδὴ φύσει πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος....τὸ δ' αὐτάρκες τίθεμεν ὁ μονούμενον αἰρετὸν ποιεῖ τὸν βίον καὶ μηδενὸς ἐνδεᾶ· τοιοῦτον δὲ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν οἴομεθα εἶναι· ἔτι δὲ πάντων αἰρετωτάτην μὴ συναριθμουμένην—συναριθμουμένην δὲ δῆλον ὡς αἰρετωτέραν μετὰ τοῦ ἐλαχίστου τῶν ἀγαθῶν· ὑπεροχὴ γὰρ ἀγαθῶν γίνεται τὸ προστιθέμενον, ἀγαθῶν δὲ τὸ μεῖζον αἰρετώτερον ἀεί.

There are three claims present in this passage. The first is about the scope of our inquiry, i.e. what we are looking for when we investigate self-sufficiency. The second is a definition of self-sufficiency and its connection to *eudaimonia*. The third is a warning against a

¹²¹ See Steward (1982) *ad loc* and Reeve (2014a) p. 215 n. 63 for a defense of this translation. I have inserted the phrase “someone living with” in the second sentence, and this does not appear in the Greek. But it does seem to be required by the logic of the passage: children, and presumably women as well, cannot be self-sufficient or happy on Aristotle’s view.

¹²² I follow Broadie & Rowe (2002) and Ostwald (1962) for these last two sentences. I have omitted Aristotle’s forward reference to his discussion in *NE* I.9-11 about the extent to which our happiness is dependent on the fate of our friends and family, to which I will return in §2.3.4.

tempting-but-wrong with of thinking about how self-sufficiency works vis-a-vis other goods.¹²³

Let's start with Aristotle's discussion of scope, since it is the least controversial of the three claims. As even its name suggests, one might be tempted to think of self-sufficiency in terms of what make a person fully independent, i.e. that the self alone is sufficient to meet its own needs. But this isn't what Aristotle has in mind, because this is an impossible standard. Humans are by nature (φύσει) social creatures, we are told, and so it is not in our natures to able to flourish in isolation. So, the kind of self-sufficiency we are looking for will be compatible with someone living in a community.¹²⁴ Though he doesn't say more on the topic here, Aristotle is concerned to show that self-sufficiency is compatible with having friends; he devotes *NE IX.9* to just this issue, concluding that the happy person will both be self-sufficient and have friends.¹²⁵ For now, however, all that is required is to note that Aristotle is not concerned with absolute self-sufficiency, but rather only with as much self-sufficiency as our nature allows.¹²⁶

The way Aristotle phrases the point that he is concerned with self-sufficiency for social creatures reveals another important feature of his view. Self-sufficiency is a property

¹²³ Not, as some commentators have taken it, as a third condition. See Cooper (2007), p. 133.

¹²⁴ See Brown (2014), pp. 120-128 for a thorough discussion of this topic. Cf. Hardie (1965), p. 281, Kenny (1992) pp. 23-24, Kraut (1989), p. 297.

¹²⁵ See Kosmen (2014) and Stern-Gillet (1995) Ch. 6 for a fuller treatment of this issue. I've argued that Aristotle's treatment of self-sufficiency and friendship in *NE IX.9* fails in part because of the status it gives to *nous* as the true self; see Green (2015) and Green (2010). The place of *nous* in Aristotle's discussion of friendship will be important for our treatment of the self and of happiness in later sections.

¹²⁶ The gods, by contrast, are a nature that is wholly self-sufficient (Reeve (2014b), pp. 23-24). As we'll see in subsequent sections, however, this contrast is not as stark as it may seem.

of a good, not a person or a life (at least not directly).¹²⁷ He says not only that the final good is self-sufficient, but that we speak of self-sufficiency *with respect to* humans in society, rather than directly predicating self-sufficiency *of* these people. That is, Aristotle is saying that a good is self-sufficient for a person in a certain context, not that the good makes the person self-sufficient. The same point holds regarding lives. Aristotle says the self-sufficient is that which makes life choiceworthy. But this suggests that the proper subject of the description ‘self-sufficient’ is not life, for in general if A makes B C then A would not be B (otherwise B would be C directly).¹²⁸ Hence when Aristotle says “We think *eudaimonia* is this sort of thing”, he means “We think *eudaimonia* is this sort of life, a choiceworthy one” rather than “We think *eudaimonia* is a self-sufficient thing”.¹²⁹ This is not, of course, to say that ‘self-sufficient person’ or ‘self-sufficient life’ are categories mistakes, but rather only that a person or life is self-sufficient in virtue of having a certain good, and it is that good that is the object of our search.¹³⁰

So let’s look a bit more closely at how Aristotle characterizes self-sufficiency. He defines (τίθεμεν) a self-sufficient good as “that which by itself makes life choiceworthy and lacking nothing”. This sentence is ambiguous between two readings:

- (1) A good which by itself makes the life lack nothing needed to be choiceworthy

¹²⁷ Pakaluk (2005) , p. 73

¹²⁸ Cf. Crisp (1994), pp. 114-15, Lear (2004) p.51 and Stewart (1892) pp. 95-96, both of whom give slightly different arguments for the same conclusion.

¹²⁹ That is, τοιοῦτον refers to τὸν βίον (and specifically, τὸν βίον αἰρετὸν), not directly to τὸ δ’ αὐτάρκες, *contra* Bostock (2000), pp. 23-24.

¹³⁰ Cooper (2007), p. 132. The reason this is important is because some commentators think that Aristotle has a different conception of self-sufficiency in *NE X.7-8*. Roughly, it is a good that is self-sufficient in *NE I*, but a person in *NE X*. I think this is wrong, but we won’t be able to address this issue until we look at *NE X* more closely. One easy way to confront this argument would be to read the *NE X* treatment back into *NE I*, but I want to be careful not to do that here. We’ll return to this issue in §5.2.2.

(2) A good which itself lacks nothing and makes life lack nothing and so choiceworthy

The second reading favors the inclusivist interpretation, by positing a single inclusive second-order good that contains all the relevant first-order goods.¹³¹ The first reading allows for *eudaimonia* to be characterized by a single good. As in the last section, I think the inclusivist reading is wrong. But in this case I concede that their reading of 1097^b14-15 is the more natural one, at least regarding what ‘lacking nothing’ amounts to. So we’ll proceed by raising some problems with this reading, which we’ll use to motivate the alternative.

I think we have to grant that the Greek here can be plausibly read here as suggesting two effects that a self-sufficient good has on a life: (a) it makes life choiceworthy, and (b) it makes life lack nothing. In this case, the first property isn’t particularly interesting. We already know that *eudaimonia* is choiceworthy in virtue of its finality, and any life that contained all goods would be choiceworthy thereby. But lacking nothing is a more interesting property, because, as we saw in the last section, there is nothing about finality that suggests this.¹³² So what we want to know is what a life lacking nothing would look like.

If lacking nothing is a separate condition from being choiceworthy, rather than an explication or modification of it, then there is nothing in the text to restrict its scope. In this

¹³¹ Ackrill (1974), pp. 21-24, Bostock (2000), pp. 23-24, Devereux (1991), p. 248-50, Irwin (1985), pp. 4-6, Irwin (1988), pp. 362-63, Keyt (1983), p. 366, Reeve (2014b), pp. 24-25, Whiting (1986), pp. 74-75.

¹³² Of course if *teleion* meant ‘complete’ then the connection between completeness and self-sufficiency would be quite close, which explains why many inclusivists treat them together. But on this interpretation either self-sufficiency or completeness would be redundant, since they both posit the same description of the chief good (a second-order set containing all first-order ends needed for a good life).

case, we would read ‘nothing’ rather literally: the self-sufficient good contributes all of the good things in a good life.¹³³ And of course no single first-order good could do this, which motivates us to think of the good in question as a second-order set of all the relevant first-order goods. There are, broadly speaking, two problems with thinking of self-sufficiency in this way. The relevant issues are largely the same we saw with the ‘complete’ reading of *teleion* in the last section, so we can go through these problems more briefly this time.

The first problem with the inclusivist reading of self-sufficiency is it makes the standard for *eudaimonia* impossibly high: a life that literally lacks nothing is impossible, for the same reasons we saw in the last section regarding completeness.¹³⁴ So we would have to think of self-sufficiency as something weaker, like ‘having at least some of each of whatever first-order goods constitute happiness’.¹³⁵ This at the very least begins to undermine the inclusivist’s advantage of taking the passage at face value. And it is difficult to see how to explain what “the least of goods” are if goods are restricted in this way.¹³⁶

The second problem is more pressing. In short, the problem is that the self-sufficient good is supposed to make life choiceworthy by itself, i.e. in isolation. But a second-order good cannot do this. If a second-order good is a mere aggregate of first-order goods, then (i) it doesn’t do anything on its own, but rather relies on its members to make life

¹³³ See Ackrill (1974), p. 21-22, where he argues that anything that can be improved *ipso facto* “would *not* have been lacking in nothing” and that “it is unintelligible to suggest that *eudaimonia*, might be improved by addition”. Cf. Grant (1866) p.370: “The all-comprehensive and supreme good, happiness, is indeed the best, but...not as being ‘best of the lot’, but as including all the lot in itself, so that beside it there is no good left that could possibly be added to it”.

¹³⁴ Clark (1975), p. 154, Kenny (1992), pp. 24-25, Lawrence (1997), p. 39 n. 9, Price (1980), pp. 346-47, White (1990), pp. 106-104, 123-126.

¹³⁵ Irwin (1985), pp. 8-9, White (1990), pp. 124-26, 134-136.

¹³⁶ Heinaman (1988), pp. 48-49.

choiceworthy, and (ii) it cannot exist in isolation, because it is composed of other goods.¹³⁷ If a second-order good contributes some value above that of its members, then perhaps we can think of this value in isolation, but this value won't make life lack nothing, because it still needs the first-order goods for their values.¹³⁸ So while the idea that a second-order set can nominally be both a single thing and a wide range of goods is a clever one, the ontological dependence of a set on its members means that it can't quite succeed in doing the job that self-sufficiency requires under Aristotle's description.¹³⁹

A similar problem can be seen in the third claim of Aristotle's discussion of self-sufficiency, his warning about how not to think about it. This discussion explicitly deals with how goods relate to one another, so we should look at it closely before accepting the argument I gave in the preceding paragraph. Inclusivists read this passage as saying that the way a good is not counted among the others is for it to be a second-order good, on a different level than the rest. On this view, the observation that any set of goods can be improved by the smallest addition is a warning against thinking of the chief good as one good among many: we can always add goods at the first level, so the chief good must be on a different level to avoid this problem. And since a second-order set of first-order goods by hypothesis already contains all the goods of a good life, it cannot be improved by adding further goods. Moreover, if the second-order set were counted along with first-order goods, then it would be counted twice, once at the first-order level and once at the second.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Broadie (2005), pp. 141-42.

¹³⁸ Cf. Price (1980), pp. 347-48. But note that Price's solution to this problem is to make all first-order goods merely heterotelic, which I reject.

¹³⁹ See Pakaluk (2005), pp. 72-73 for some additional worries.

¹⁴⁰ Bostock (2000), p. 23, Kenny (1992) p. 25.

The problem with this reading is essentially the same as with the earlier part of the passage. We can frame the objection as a dilemma. Suppose first that the proposed second-order already contains all first-order goods and so can't be improved. If adding the smallest good can't improve the set, it would be because the set is already maximally good. But this sets the bar for human happiness far too high. We are looking for an end that is not only final and self-sufficient, but also achievable by action (1097^b20-21, cf. 1095^a15-17, 1096^b33-35, 1097^a22-24) and a maximally complete set of first order goods is not achievable by action. It is always possible to add more of a good, or a variation on a good (e.g. pleasure in a new kind of wine).¹⁴¹

So suppose instead that the inclusivist relies on the distinction between first- and second-order goods to show why addition doesn't make *eudaimonia* better. It is true that second-order sets are a different kind of thing than first-order goods, so can't be counted among them. And we can grant that, because of this difference, a first-order good can't be added at the second-order level. But this is not enough to inoculate the second-order set from improvement. This is because the second-order set inherits its value from its first-order members. So if we added a small good to the first-order set, it would automatically make the second-order set more valuable as well. Imagine we have two sets A and B, where B has all the same members as A but with one extra small good (an extra dollar, say). Which is more choiceworthy? B, presumably. This shows that a second-order set doesn't need to be counted among first-order goods to be improved by something that is so counted.

¹⁴¹ A reminder, see §2.3.1 for more discussion of this issue. Since inclusivists tend to treat finality/completeness and self-sufficiency together, it is no surprise that we find the same concerns arising for both criteria.

This will lead us back to the first problem, that the most choiceworthy second-order set of goods will have to be maximally complete.

As Lawrence (1997) argues, the issue is no better for inclusivists if we suppose a more robust way of thinking about how first- and second-order goods relate to one another.¹⁴² Rather than being a mere aggregate of first-order goods, we might think of the second-order good as what Lawrence calls an “embracing” relation, i.e. the second-order good is either chosen for the sake of lower ends, or provides a measure by which first-order goods are evaluated. This way of thinking is able to give a principled way to prevent or bracket increases in value through the addition of goods at the first-order level. But this way of doing things, Lawrence argues, requires a monistic conception of the final good, rather than a set, which is exactly what the anti-inclusivist wanted all along. Moreover, by making the value of lower goods dependent on the value of higher goods, the inclusivists weaken their initial motivation for thinking in terms of aggregatability.¹⁴³

What we need then, is a way of thinking about how goods are related to one another that avoids this problem. The way I prefer, as suggested above, is to take μηδενὸς ἐνδεᾶ as “in need of nothing” or, as Kenny suggests, “not deficient” rather than the stronger “has all things”, and to understand it as a partial explication of what it means for a life to be choiceworthy.¹⁴⁴ In other words, the self-sufficient good is that which, by itself, is sufficient for a life to lack nothing vis-à-vis its choiceworthiness; it is a life worth living in

¹⁴² Lawrence (1997), pp. 68-69.

¹⁴³ See also Heinaman (2002), pp. 122-27.

¹⁴⁴ Kenny (1992), p. 28, Lear (2004) 62.

virtue of whatever this good is, independent of other considerations.¹⁴⁵ This is not a tautology, as Bostock charges.¹⁴⁶ It is not *eudaimonia* that makes life self-sufficient, which *eudaimonia* is taken to be. Rather, it is a particular good that makes life self-sufficient, and therefore part of what makes a life *eudaimōn*.¹⁴⁷

One way of seeing how this reading works is to return to Ackrill's example that the best breakfast is one that includes all of bacon, eggs, and tomatoes.¹⁴⁸ The inclusivist is committing to saying that the best breakfast is in fact much more opulent than this, including "kippers, melon, muffins, potatoes and so on *ad nauseum*; worse, it would have to include all the eggs and bacon in the world, and so on *ad maiorem nauseum*."¹⁴⁹ In addition to making it impossible to be the best breakfast (and, from the description, the best breakfast would be rather unsatisfying), this way of thinking operates on an overly simplistic principle of "more is more". A better approach is suggested by Lear, who thinks about the choiceworthiness of each element individually. She writes

If someone asked me to rank the elements of a good breakfast, I would put coffee at the top... What foods are on the list and what ranking they receive depends on my understanding of what a good breakfast is like... A breakfast is supposed to get you going, thus it's not breakfast without coffee.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Burnet (1900), p. 33 (though Burnet goes on to read "not counted" in the way I've just argued against), Dahl (2011), pp. 74-74, Gauthier & Jolif (1959) p. 52, Reeve (1992), pp. 117-122, van Cleemput (2006), pp. 137-43. Note that I do not mean "wholly independent" here: Aristotle does promise to investigate more thoroughly the extent to which our happiness is dependent on our friends, family, and descendants in the lines before defining self-sufficiency, and returns to the topic in *NE* I.10-11

¹⁴⁶ Bostock (2000), p. 24.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Lawrence (1997), pp. 75-76. This is another reason why it is important that we see that τοιοῦτον refers to τὸν βίον rather than τὸ δ' αὐτάρκες or αἰρετὸν, and to remember that Aristotle is proposing several criteria for *eudaimonia*, so that none needs to do the job on its own.

¹⁴⁸ Ackrill (1974), p. 21.

¹⁴⁹ White (1990), p. 123.

¹⁵⁰ Lear (2004) p. 66.

She continues

Coffee is the most choiceworthy of all breakfast foods. But its superiority is not absolute, for coffee plus scrambled eggs would be better than coffee alone. This would be true for the same reason that coffee is most choiceworthy when we rank goods singly: Coffee plus eggs achieves the final end of an energizing breakfast more perfectly than does coffee alone.¹⁵¹

On the model of self-sufficiency I am recommending, coffee is self-sufficient for breakfast, because its presence is enough to make any breakfast an acceptable one (indeed, a breakfast of only coffee will do in a pinch, at least compared to any other breakfast food with no coffee). Some combinations of coffee and other breakfast foods are better than others, but that is no threat to coffee's role in essentially guaranteeing a decent repast. Other foods aren't like this: even though toast is good, the mere fact that a breakfast includes toast isn't enough for me to know if I want it. In the same way that coffee is a chief breakfast good, the chief good in life will guarantee it is a choiceworthy life, even if that life can be improved by the addition of extra goods.¹⁵²

In addition to being an acceptable rendering of the Greek, this way of reading "needing nothing" has some additional advantages. First, it better accords with the Greek way of thinking about self-sufficiency: the key to self-sufficiency, the ancients held, was not to pursue all goods, but in fact to do the opposite, to minimize one's needs so that they were more easily met.¹⁵³ So thinking in terms of a minimal threshold rather than a maximal

¹⁵¹ Lear (2004), p. 67.

¹⁵² One disanalogy: coffee is also, on my view, necessary for a good breakfast, and while the chief good will likely be necessary for a good life, it is not in virtue of its self-sufficiency that this is so. Also, coffee may be the only breakfast food that is sufficient for a decent breakfast, whereas self-sufficiency is at least in principle a property shareable by more than one good.

¹⁵³ White (1990), pp. 115-116. See also Brown (2014), pp. 115-16, Pakaluk (2005), pp. 70-71, Reeve (1992), p. 122.

conception is more in line with the history of concept of self-sufficiency. On this reading an “extra amount” (ὑπεροχῆ) is exactly what it sounds like: not simply more, but more than is required. Second, it better accords with the approach of the proceeding chapters, notably I.4-5: there are a number of competing candidates for the good that characterizes a *eudaimōn* life, and we want to know which of them is the chief good.¹⁵⁴ So it is more likely that Aristotle is thinking whether a single one of these good makes life choiceworthy on its own. And it is an open question whether more than one such good would qualify. This gives us a third advantage, that the weaker conception of ‘needing nothing’ doesn’t determine in advance that only a single thing could possible qualify as *eudaimonia*.

This interpretation avoids the inclusivist reading’s problems with how to count goods by taking “not by being counted among them” as an injunction not to think about combining goods in the first place. Aristotle’s observation that any set of goods can be improved by adding to it, and therefore there will always be the possibility of a better and more choiceworthy set, is a warning against thinking along inclusivist lines. What we should do instead, Aristotle tells us, is to think of specific goods in isolation from the others: do any of the candidates for the chief good make life choiceworthy independently of other goods? Though he doesn’t give us these details explicitly here, the question would be something like ‘Is a life of pleasure but not honor, reason, or virtue choiceworthy? What about a life of honor without the others?’, as Aristotle asks in his critique of Plato at 1096^b16-26). Whichever of these (if any) is enough to make life choiceworthy on its own

¹⁵⁴ Kenny (1992), pp. 25-26. On the idea of competition in the *NE* in general, see Crittenden (1996), though Crittenden puts it in terms of lives rather than goods as I would prefer.

will be self-sufficient, sufficient to make life choiceworthy by itself. This does not mean, however, that it is the best possible life: a life with the self-sufficient good combined with other goods would be better.¹⁵⁵ But that is no objection to a good's self-sufficiency, because Aristotle isn't concerned with maximizing particular goods. A self-sufficient good makes life choiceworthy, not *most* choiceworthy, even though *eudaimonia* is the latter.¹⁵⁶ And he tells us here, requiring *eudaimonia* to be most choiceworthy in the sense of being unimprovable is an impossible task.

Before concluding, we should stop to block a possible misunderstanding. When we say that a self-sufficient good makes life worth living in isolation, that could suggest that one could live a life pursuing only this good, e.g. a life of contemplation at the expense of friends or virtue or pleasure. It is worth noting that this is not the case. In our passage we've already seen that Aristotle explicitly restricts his discussion of self-sufficiency to someone who already has at least one external good, friends. And we are told in the next chapter that *eudaimonia* will need external goods in addition (*προσδεομένη*) to whatever constitutes it (1099^a31-^b7, cf. 1099^b27-28).¹⁵⁷ So a self-sufficient good will take place in the broader context of the external goods necessary for human life.¹⁵⁸ Again, the point is not that the

¹⁵⁵ Lear (2004) pp. 65-69, Lawrence (1997), p. 53.

¹⁵⁶ Cooper (2007), pp. 127-29, Kraut (1989), p. 299.

¹⁵⁷ "In addition", and so not as part of, contrary to the inclusivist thesis. These goods are not part of *eudaimonia*, strictly speaking, but are the preconditions that make *eudaimonia* possible. They are called "the remaining goods" (*τῶν δὲ λοιπῶν ἀγαθῶν*) at 1099^b26, and among them Aristotle contrasts those that have to be present already and those that can be used instrumentally. Cf. White (1992), pp. 110-11. Kenny (1992) p. 28 apparently misses the force of these passages, claiming that the *NE* fails to distinguish between preconditions and constituents, and is therefore less sophisticated than the *EE* and *MM*, which do.

¹⁵⁸ Note that there is a difference between 'the external goods necessary for human life' and 'the goods necessary to perform a specific activity'. For reasons that will become clear in §2.5.3, Aristotle doesn't think that the second is compatible with self-sufficiency.

chief good is all that is needed to make a life choiceworthy, but that in the context of a life with its own necessary background conditions, the chief good will make *that* life choiceworthy without requiring the help of other (non-necessary but also not chief) goods.¹⁵⁹

This point is worth dwelling on. Just as it is easy to misunderstand self-sufficiency by thinking Aristotle has in mind a good that makes life wholly good without any other goods at all (at impossibility), it is also easy to err in the other direction, by thinking that the background goods that the chief good is added to include all the goods of a good life but whichever one the chief good is. Thinking in this way would create the problem that *any* good is self-sufficient. For any set of goods $\{N\}$ and candidate chief good x , the combination of $\{(N-x) \& x\}$ would make life choiceworthy, because any good combined with the all the others would result in the same set. So we need some principled way of distinguishing between the goods that are included when a possibly self-sufficient good is added and the goods are not. We know that the necessary goods required for all lives (food and drink, shelter, companions, etc) will need to be included, because one couldn't live a human life without them.¹⁶⁰ But a life with these goods would not qualify as choiceworthy alone.

However, between necessary goods and the self-sufficient good (or goods) is an intermediate category, which Aristotle describes in *NE* I.8, 1099^a31-^b6. These include the

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Cooper (2003), pp. 138-40, Lawrence (1997), pp.57-58.

¹⁶⁰ Indeed, Aristotle suggests in *NE* I.5 that a life that has a certain kind of pleasure or honor in addition is not worth choosing, and likewise that a life of money-making (which presumably means a life pursuing more money than is needed) is unchoiceworthy.

“tools through which [we do noble actions], through friends and wealth and political power” and “good birth, good children, or beauty”.¹⁶¹ This latter category is outside the realm of choice, and in any case only make happiness less likely, so it is no threat to a happy life not to include these. The former category is more complicated. Some virtues have as the objects the necessary goods, and so will already be included. For example, temperance is directed toward food, drink, and sex, and many virtues, such as courage, friendliness, good temper, truthfulness, and wit, require companions. The rest, most notably liberality, magnificence, proper pride, and ambition, require more than this: the first pair requires wealth, the second pair political power. These objects aren’t necessary for life, and so it is possible in principle that a life could be choiceworthy without them.¹⁶² At the very least, this gives us a reasonable way to draw a line that includes some external goods but not all. The result is that a good is self-sufficient if it can by itself make a life that includes only the necessary goods choiceworthy.

This gives us enough information to formally state Aristotle’s second criterion for *eudaimonia*.

¹⁶¹ Cooper (1985) argues extensively that Aristotle’s inclusivism extends to both internal goods and external goods such as these. See Kenny (1992) pp. 39-42 for objections to Cooper’s view. See also Kraut (1989), pp. 167-82, Roche (2014).

¹⁶² Heinaman (1988), pp. 50-51. And even if *eudaimonia* requires these goods, it may require only a minimal amount; we are told for instance that “liberality resides not in the magnitude of the things given, but in the state of the giver, and this is given in accordance with his substance. So nothing prevent someone who gives less from being more liberal, if he has less to give” (1120^b7-11). This suggests that virtuous activity is compatible with a small amount of these goods, though still not fully possible without them. This would make virtuous activity at least somewhat dependent on unnecessary goods, and to that degree unable to make life choiceworthy on its own (i.e. when considered only in the context of a life with the necessary goods). This allows for self-sufficiency as *NE* I.7 understands it to come in degrees, on which see Heinaman (1988), pp. 46-7, *pace* Curzer (1990), p 423.

Self-Sufficiency: The chief good is a self-sufficient good. It is sufficient on its own to make a life containing only the necessary goods a life worth choosing.

As with the finality criterion, there is no guarantee here that there is only one self-sufficient good. It is possible that, e.g., intellect and practical virtue could each be self-sufficient, in which case it would not be clear whether *eudaimonia* would involve one, either, or both. So our investigation of the criteria for *eudaimonia* will continue.

§2.3.3 – Functional Activity

Aristotle seems to be aware of the fact that his first two criteria for *eudaimonia* go only so far in helping us identify which good is the chief good, and so begins his discussion of the next criterion by conceding that it is not very helpful to say that the best good is *eudaimonia* and that we require to say more about it (1097^b22-24). He tells us that we would be able to quickly understand more clearly what human happiness is, “if the *ergon* of man were discovered” (1097^b24-25).

The first question, obviously, is what is an *ergon*? It is often translated as ‘function’, and I will adopt this translation here, but it is not a particularly apt one. A better option, I think, is “defining capacity or activity”, but this is more a description than a translation.¹⁶³ An *ergon*, in other words, is the activity which captures the essence of the object who has

¹⁶³ Achtenberg (1991), p. 59, which also lists other suggested alternative translations. The closest English equivalent to *ergon* is ‘work’, which can be used as both a noun and a verb, on which see Baker (2015), pp. 253-54 and Gómez-Lobo (1991), p. 45. But the English ‘work’ is often awkward when used in reference to particular products (to my ear ‘work’ functions more like a mass noun than a count noun). Baker (*ibid*) suggests ‘achievement’ instead, which has the benefit of including both products and activities, but has the drawback of minimizing the gap between doing/making something and doing it well/making something good.

it.¹⁶⁴ For instance, the *ergon* of medicine is producing health (an activity directed toward a state), while the end of shipbuilding is a ship (a product). In both these cases, the *ergon* is more valuable than the activity which makes it (1094^a4-6). But this is because the *erga* of these activities are distinct from the activities themselves. In other cases, the *ergon* is the activity itself: the function of a kitharist is the activity of playing the kithara (1098^a11-12). Either way, the *ergon* of these activities define both what the activity is and what its *telos* is.¹⁶⁵ Given the tight conceptual connection we've seen between a *telos* and goodness, it should be no surprise that Aristotle looks to the concept of an *ergon* to help explicate what it means to be a good human.

But we should note that Aristotle doesn't simply assume that the human good is the human *ergon*, as some commentators have suggested.¹⁶⁶ Aristotle is careful to phrase things in a subtler way:

Just as for a flute-player and a sculptor and every other craftsman, and indeed generally for anything that has some *ergon* and activity, the good and welfare seem to be in the *ergon*. It would appear to be this way also for humans, if indeed there is some *ergon* for them. (1197^b25-28)

There are two things to note here. First, Aristotle doesn't immediately assume that humans even have an *ergon* in the first place; this is a position he will argue for later. Second, Aristotle does not say here that the good *is* the *ergon*, but rather that the good can be found *in* the *ergon*. Likewise, he says later that the *ergon* of a thing and the *ergon* of doing it well is the same in kind (τὸ δ' αὐτό...τῷ γένει, 1098^a8), not that they are identical. So while the

¹⁶⁴ Clark (1975), pp. 16-17

¹⁶⁵ Barney (2008), pp. 300-04, Baker (2015), pp. 245-51, Lear (2004), pp. 22-23, Reeve (1992), pp. 123-4

¹⁶⁶ Bostock (2000), pp. 26-29, Glassen (1957), Wilkes (1978), pp. 555-57. Pakaluk (2005), p. 80 gives a more sympathetic reconstruction along the same lines.

conceptual relationship between the human *ergon* and human happiness is quite close, it is not so close as to suggest that Aristotle confused the good for man and the good man.¹⁶⁷

Our first question, then, is why we should think that humans have an *ergon* at all. Aristotle gives two arguments to defend this position.¹⁶⁸ He first is inductive.¹⁶⁹ Aristotle first introduces the notion of an *ergon* in terms of craftsmen (1097^b25-6), and we see a few lines later that bodily organs also have functions (1097^a30-32). In the same vein, animals can be excellent (1106^a19), and Aristotle discusses plants and animals in trying to differentiate the human *ergon*, all of which suggests that these living things also have *erga* of their own. Seeing all this, Aristotle asks why we should think humans don't have a function when so many other (and, tacitly, lesser) kinds of things do (1097^b28-33). The second argument (which, admittedly, Aristotle leaves implicit) involves the nature of activities and their *telē*.¹⁷⁰ As just mentioned, an *ergon* is closely related to the *telos* of some activity. And we know from earlier chapters that humans have a *telos*, human happiness conceived as the end of the architectonic science of *politikē*. This means that

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Gómez-Lobo (1991), pp. 49-53, White (1992), p. 148.

¹⁶⁸ Barney (2008), pp. 304-309 and Reeve (2014b) p. 25 interpret Aristotle's argument for a human *ergon* in a different way, suggesting that a general human *ergon* is a necessary precondition for the *erga* of human body parts and human activities. This seems to me to commit Aristotle to the fallacy of composition, and to do so unnecessarily since a simple inductive argument gets Aristotle what he wants (and also seems to more naturally fit the text). Bostock (2000), pp. 15-16 claims that Aristotle "makes little attempt to argue" that man has an *ergon*, despite canvassing Aristotle's induction from *technai* and biology.

¹⁶⁹ Cooper (1975), p. 70, Roche (1988a), pp. 178-79. Barney (2008) pp. 295-7 argues against seeing Aristotle's argument as inductive, largely because the induction is so weak as to make this interpretation uncharitable. Cf. Bostock (2000), p. 16.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Barney (2008), pp. 304-09, Broadie (1991), p. 35.

humans will also have an *ergon*: whatever activity it is that characterizes human happiness.¹⁷¹

So if humans do have an *ergon*, the next question is what that *ergon* is. I've already suggested that it's an activity, and given that we know *eudaimonia* is also final, the human *ergon* will be an activity done for its own sake rather than for some further end. But what kind of activity? The answer is suggested in Aristotle's use of the phrase "the good and welfare" (τὰγαθὸν εἶναι καὶ τὸ εὖ, 1097^b27). Aristotle reported earlier that *eudaimonia* is widely held to be a matter of "living well and acting well" (τὸ δ' εὖ ζῆν καὶ τὸ εὖ πράττειν, 1095^a19, cf. 1098^b21-22). So welfare, i.e. faring well or living well, will be the kind of activity we're looking for.¹⁷² And this is precisely what Aristotle does. Immediately after finishing his inductive argument and asking what the human *ergon* would be, he launches into a quick survey of the ways living things live. Plants live a life characterized by nutrition and growth (τὴν τε θρεπτικὴν καὶ τὴν ἀυξητικὴν ζωὴν), while animals live a life characterized by perception (αἰσθητικὴ) and, though unstated here, movement (1097^b34-98^a3).¹⁷³ These ways of living are determined by the parts of the soul these organisms have, as Aristotle confirms when he concludes that "the *ergon* of man is activity of the soul done rationally or not without reason" (1098^a7-8).¹⁷⁴ He later puts the point explicitly: "we

¹⁷¹ Reeve (1992), p. 124 suggests a third argument hinted at by Aristotle's rhetorical questions, that an entity without an *ergon* would be inactive, but humans are not inactive. Barney (2008), pp. 304-309 and Pakaluk (2005), p. 76 suggest that humans would need a function *qua* human before they could learn a more specific function *qua* craftsman.

¹⁷² Lawrence (2001), pp. 454-58

¹⁷³ Keyt (1983), p. 366.

¹⁷⁴ Purinton (1998), pp. 266-271. See also Irwin (1989), pp. 363-64, though I don't assume as Irwin does that the *NE* relies on the view of *De Anima* here (compare Gómez-Lobo (1991), p. 54). It is just as plausible that the *NE*'s view is a predecessor to *DA*.

define the *ergon* of man as a kind of life, and define this as the activity of soul and action with reason” (1098^a12-14).

This contrast between humans and other organisms is motivated by a somewhat controversial principle. Aristotle tells us that “Life as such appears to be common even to plants, but we are searching for what is *idion*” (1097^b33-34). I leave *idion* untranslated here because there is a debate about exactly what it means. The two options are, roughly, ‘unique’ and ‘characteristic’. Under the first option, the human *ergon* must be something that only humans have, hence anything shared by plants, animals, or gods will be ruled out.¹⁷⁵ Under the second option, the human *ergon* will be something that captures the essence of human nature, something distinctive of humanity, but which is in principle found in other creatures.¹⁷⁶ The first option entails that contemplation cannot be the human *ergon*, because contemplation is an ability shared with the gods. This would mean that the human *ergon* must be practical activity, i.e. the life of moral virtue, because gods do not engage in this kind of activity (1178^b10-22).¹⁷⁷ The second option, by contrast, does not have such immediate consequences, but rather leaves the question of what the human function would be open pending further investigation into human nature.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Bostock (2000), pp. 17-18, Keyt (1983), p. 367, Lawrence (2001), pp. 458-59, Reeve (1992), pp. 126-27.

¹⁷⁶ Broadie (1991), p. 35, Hardie (1956), p. 280, Irwin (1980), p. 49, Irwin (1989), p. 364, Kraut (1989), p. 313-317, Shields (2015), pp. 247-49. Kraut (1979), pp. 474-77 suggests a more complicated view involving relative peculiarity, which allows Aristotle to distinguish us from plants and animals without commenting on our similarity to gods.

¹⁷⁷ Achtenberg (1991), p. 65, Ackrill (1974), p. 27, Clark (1975), pp. 21-24, Korsgaard (1986a), *passim*, Pakaluk (2005), p. 78, Roche (1988a), p. 183 n. 14, White (1992) p. 152 n. 26, Wilkes (1978), pp. 557-59.

¹⁷⁸ It is also worth noting that the problems commentators have seen with making contemplation the human *ergon* depends on there being a stark difference between humans and gods. As we’ll see in later sections, this is a questionable assumption.

The second option is, I think, the better of the two. In part this is for the reason I just gave. The early chapters of the *NE* appear to leave open what good(s) will satisfy the criteria they outline, so we should prefer ways of reading these criteria which accommodate this method. And in particular, reading *idion* as ‘unique’ requires us to see in the early chapters of the *NE* a distinction that Aristotle doesn’t explicitly make, between theoretical and practical wisdom.¹⁷⁹ All Aristotle says here is that the human *ergon* is the activity of the part (singular) of the soul that has reason (τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος, 1098^a3-4); more frequently in this context he doesn’t refer to parts of the soul at all, but rather activities with (or at least not without) reason (1098^a7-8, ^a13-14).¹⁸⁰

In addition, the ‘unique’ reading of *ergon* is both too weak and too strong.¹⁸¹ It is too weak because there are many things that only humans can do that would not qualify as our *ergon* as Aristotle understands it. For instance, only humans engage in various *technai* like bridle-making or sculpture. And only humans stand upright (which allows for many of our other unique traits, like flexible hands) or laugh.¹⁸² But none of these activities are even contenders for human happiness.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Indeed, as I’ll argue in a later chapter, a firm contrast between two kinds of reason in different parts of the soul is alien to the undisputed *NE*, occurring only in the *AE* and the *EE*.

¹⁸⁰ See Stewart (1892), p.100-101 for the right interpretation and importance of “not without reason”, *viz.* describing the activity of the the reason-obeying part of the soul. We’ll return to this issue in §4.

¹⁸¹ Curzer (1990), p. 426, Shields (2015), pp. 244-46, Whiting (1988), pp. 36-38.

¹⁸² On which see Lennox (1995). Cf. Broadie (1991), p. 36, Kraut (1989) pp. 317-18, Reeve (1992), p. 126, White (1992), p. 150 n. 20.

¹⁸³ This argument, combined with Aristotle’s rejection nutrition/growth and perception/motion as parts of the human *ergon*, shows that Wilkes (1978), p. 557 goes wrong in requiring that the human *ergon* must involve the entire soul, rather than just its most essential part.

On the other hand, the ‘unique’ reading is too strong because it entails that most creatures don’t have an *ergon*. Plants cannot have a function on this view, because the activity that characterizes their kind of life (nutrition and growth) are activities that animals do as well. And the activities of perception and movement that characterize animal life are also shared by humans.¹⁸⁴ Coming from the other direction, the gods do not have a characteristic activity either, because humans are also capable of contemplation.¹⁸⁵ This rules out *erga* for any creatures other than humans, though it leaves the possibility that humans have moral action as an *ergon*. Proponents might not think this is an enormous cost in terms of interpreting Aristotle’s ethical theory, but it does commit Aristotle to a contradiction, since he later defines animal life in terms of perception in *NE* IX.9 (1170^a16-17) along the same lines he used in I.7, and says in X.5 that each animal has a proper pleasure corresponding to its *ergon* (1176^a3-6).¹⁸⁶ A view that doesn’t commit Aristotle to such an error is preferable.

So let us understand the human *ergon* as rational psychic activity. We haven’t yet been told what exactly makes something rational, or what the nature of the human soul is

¹⁸⁴ The same argument can be applied within genera: even if we think the way plants grow is different from the way animals grow, different species of plants will share more specific ways of growing and hence these ways will not be their *erga*.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Curzer (1990), p. 427, Keyt (1983), p. 367, Kraut (1979), *passim*.

¹⁸⁶ And there’s some reason to worry that the same consideration will rule out some aspects of moral virtue from the human *ergon*, along the lines suggested by Nagel (1974), pp. 9-10. The moral virtues are excellences of the non-rational part of the soul which animals share with humans (1117^b24), and Aristotle makes frequent comparisons between humans and animals regarding temperance (1118^a16-26, 1118^b1-4); see Achtenberg (1991), pp. 66-70. Moreover, though animals are not capable of choice, they are capable of voluntary action (1111^b9), suggesting that voluntary action cannot be part of our *ergon*; this might rule out even choice if choice is a way of acting voluntarily or if voluntary action is a necessary precondition for choice. It is also notable that when Aristotle argues that other animals aren’t happy, he appeals to the fact that they have no share of contemplation (1178^b24-28).

beyond the fact that it has a rational part. Aristotle's full discussion of these topics occurs later in the *NE*, but he does tell us here that there are two parts of the soul that have a share in reason, each in a different way.¹⁸⁷ One of these is able to obey the commands of reason (τὸ μὲν ὡς ἐπιπειθὲς λόγῳ), while the other actually possesses reason and thinks (τὸ δ' ὡς [λόγον] ἔχον καὶ διανοούμενον, 1098^a4-5).¹⁸⁸ It is presumably the latter whose activity constitutes the human *ergon*.¹⁸⁹ As for its activity, we are told very little here: it is alternatively referred to as activity (ἐνέργεια, 1098^a5-6, 1098^a7-8, 1098^a13-14) and as something practical (πρακτική, 1098^a3-4, πράξεις 1098^a13-14), but we are given little detail here about what kind of activity Aristotle has in mind.¹⁹⁰

There is, however, one more important feature of the human *ergon* that Aristotle does give us, namely the relationship between the human *ergon* and what is good in it. In what serves as a recapitulation of the entire argument, Aristotle writes

We say the *ergon* of is the same in kind for this and a good this, just as it is for a kitharist and a good kitharist, and this holds without qualification in every case, with the extra amount that added to the *ergon* being according to its excellence. For the *ergon* of a kitharist is to play the kithara, and for a good one to play well. If (1) this is so, and (2) we define the *ergon* for

¹⁸⁷ It is a controversial how literally we can take the idea of parts of the soul in Aristotle. I will justify this way of reading Aristotle in §4.

¹⁸⁸ See Korsgaard (1986a) for a detailed discussion of what the *ergon* argument tells us about how these two parts could be related. Stewart (1892), *ad loc.* follows Grant (1866) *ad loc.*, in suggesting that this line is an interpolation based on the discussion of the soul in *NE* I.13. Burnet (1900), *ad loc.* also thinks the line is an interpolation, on the grounds that the language is late. We will discuss the parts of the soul in more detail in §2.5.1 and §3.

¹⁸⁹ Pace Bostock (2000), p. 19, who reads 1098^a4-5 as an allusion to *NE* I.13's discussion of the soul, and concludes that the human *ergon* involves both the actively reasoning part and the passively responding-to-reason part. But this is unlikely, because Aristotle calls the part of the soul that obeys reason rational non-rational (ἄλογος) in I.13 (1102^b13). See also Pakaluk (2005), p. 79 on the importance of the active/passage distinction in this passage, and Nagel (1974), pp.8-9 and Roche (1988a), pp. 179-82 for related thoughts on the same topic.

¹⁹⁰ See Bostock (2000), p. 19 and Broadie & Rowe (2002), p. 276 on the fact that ἐνέργεια and πρακτική or πράξεις are not distinguished in this passage.

humans as a kind of life, and (3) this as the activity and action of the soul with reason, then (4) the *ergon* of a good man will be these activities done well and nobly, and (5) each will be done well according to its corresponding excellence. If this is so, then the human good will be activity of the soul in accordance with excellence, and if there are many excellences, then according to the best and most *teleion* (εἰ δὲ πλείους αἱ ἀρεταί, κατὰ τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ τελειοτάτην). (1098^a8-18)¹⁹¹

Aristotle's argument here is fairly straightforward: if x has the *ergon* ϕ , a good x will be an x that ϕ 's well. The difference between ϕ 'ing and ϕ 'ing well is what excellence contributes to ϕ 'ing. So, if the human *ergon* is rational psychic activity, then a good person will be one that engages in this activity excellently, i.e. according to the relevant excellence. The chief good, then, being found in the performance of the human *ergon*, will be a kind of activity of the soul in accordance with excellence.

This formulation, however, leaves us with another puzzle: what does Aristotle mean by 'the best and most *teleion* excellence'? As we saw in §2.3.1, the Greek *teleion* can be understood in many ways, and it is controversial which of these best applies to the present passage. Not surprisingly, inclusivists have pressed for a consistent reading across the board, and so interpret 'most *teleion* excellence' as 'most complete excellence', i.e. the second-order excellence of possessing all first-order excellences.¹⁹² But it also makes sense to think of excellence as 'final', i.e. most choiceworthy, or as 'perfect', i.e. in the best state.

¹⁹¹ A reminder: Aristotle shifts between using ἀρετή to refer to moral virtue and particular, and to excellences more generally. Here he is using it in the more general sense: since Aristotle isn't asserting even that there are multiple excellences, he can't mean to refer to a specific kind of excellence here. Cf. Burnet

¹⁹² Ackrill (1974), pp. 26-29, Bostock (2000), pp. 24-25, Keyt (1983), pp. 367-68, Price (1980) pp. 340-42, Reeve (1992), pp. 129-131, Roche (1988a), pp. 184-191, Stewart (1892), *ad loc*, Whiting (1986), pp. 76-77.

So we'll once again have to delve into the details regarding how best to interpret Aristotle here.¹⁹³

The first point to raise is one we saw in our discussion of finality in §2.3.1: Aristotle uses the word *teleion* in a variety of ways, so we can't infer what the most *teleion* excellence is directly from other uses.¹⁹⁴ So even if Aristotle meant 'most complete end' earlier, it wouldn't follow that he means 'most complete excellence' here. And as we've seen, it doesn't make sense to read *teleion* as 'complete' in the earlier argument anyway, so that passage won't help bolster the inclusivist's case here. A more promising bit of support for the inclusivist's case is the sentence immediately following the phrase 'best and most *teleion* excellence', where Aristotle adds that the human good must occur "in a *teleion* life" (1098^a18). As I conceded earlier, it does make sense to think of a life as 'complete', and it would be a bit strained for Aristotle to use *teleion* in two different ways in a single line of text. We will discuss what a complete life amounts to in the next section. For now, we can simply note that the inclusivist's argument is, at best conditional: if a *teleion* life is a complete life, then that's some support for thinking a most *teleion* excellence is the most complete excellence.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ There is also the question of what it exactly it means to be 'in accordance with' (κατὰ) the most *teleion* excellence. See Walker (2011) for a discussion of this issue.

¹⁹⁴ See Purinton (1998), pp. 287-291 for this point specifically in the context of the *ergon* argument.

¹⁹⁵ Inclusivists also tend to appeal to more explicit claims in the *EE* that support thinking of complete excellence as a composite of other excellences. This is stated fairly clearly in *EE* II.1, 1219^a39, and strongly suggested by Aristotle's discussion of *kalokagathia* in *EE* VIII.3 and of general justice in *AE* A.1. See Ackrill (1974), pp. 27, Price (1980) p. 341, Reeve (1992), pp. 128-29, Roche (1988a), p. 185, Whiting (1986), p. 76 n. 16. Bostock (2000) p. 24 cites the *EE* but rightly acknowledges that Aristotle does not necessarily have the same view in both treatises. As I've mentioned, we can't presuppose that the *NE*, *EE*, and *AE* agree on this score. (But see Purinton (1998), pp. 274-275 for an argument that we should presuppose this, though not that Purinton does not think that the *EE*'s view does not entail an inclusivist reading of the *NE*).

But this advantage to the inclusivist is quickly neutralized by textual considerations favoring the other side. As several commentators have noted, the sentence “if there are many excellences, then [the human good will be activity of the soul in accordance with] best and most *teleion* excellence” is most naturally read as picking out a single, first-order excellence from among that number, rather than positing a new kind of excellence over and above them.¹⁹⁶ Aristotle could have easily said “in accordance with all of them” if this is what he intended.¹⁹⁷ Or, he could have given us some indication that there is a second-order super-excellence constituted by every first-order excellence, a kind of excellence he has said nothing about heretofore.¹⁹⁸

Ackrill cites two other passages as textual support for the ‘complete’ reading of *teleion* excellence, but neither actually do provide support. The first comes in *NE* I.9, where Aristotle writes “as we have said, we need both *teleion* excellence and a *teleion* life” to be happy (1100^a4-5). This is a clear reference back to the conclusion of the *ergon* argument, and it again mentions what is plausibly read as a complete life. But this provides no extra support for reading ‘complete excellence’ here or in I.7, because (i) it is merely repeating what was already said, without adding any new information, and (ii) the claim occurs in an argument for why a *teleion* life is needed, and doesn’t say anything about *teleion* excellence. The second passage is in I.13, which starts by announcing “since *eudaimonia* is a kind of psychic activity in accordance with *teleion* excellence, we need to investigate

¹⁹⁶ Cooper (1987), p. 200, Curzer (1990), pp. 253, Devereux (1991), p. 251, Donini (2014), pp. 10-12, Lisi (2014), pp. 245-56, Purinton (1998), p. 266, Roche (1988b), pp. 107.

¹⁹⁷ Kraut (1989), p. 242.

¹⁹⁸ As Kenny (1992), p. 30 points out, the inclusivist’s reading commits Aristotle to switching between two different senses of ‘excellence’, as something like a mass noun and as a count noun.

excellence” (1102^a5-6). Aristotle goes on to do just that. But again, this provides no extra support for the ‘complete’ reading, because it does provide any additional details. If anything, the chapter counts against the ‘complete’ reading: the chapter says nothing about a second-order master excellence, and instead concludes by distinguishing kind of excellences in a way that contrasts them rather than combines them. So the most we can conclude from these passages is that Aristotle uses the phrase ‘*teleion* excellence’ repeatedly (and hopefully consistently); they tell us little about the content of this idea.¹⁹⁹

A second problem with the notion of a second-order “most complete” excellence is that reading it this way is inconsistent with the inclusivist’s approach to the most complete end. As Roche points out, there is an inconsistency between the way Aristotle treats excellence in the finality argument and the *ergon* argument on the inclusivist reading.²⁰⁰ In this finality argument “every excellence” is labeled as allotelic rather than autotelic (1097^b1-5), and the inclusivist uses this point to argue that the only thing left to be autotelic is *eudaimonia* understood as a complete set of first-order goods. But if every excellence is allotelic, then no excellence can be autotelic instead, and so not complete on the inclusivist’s reading.²⁰¹ The inclusivist could respond by reading the finality passage in a different way, where Aristotle is merely describing what other people think or do rather than reporting his own view, but doing so would rob them of their strongest argument in favor of the ‘complete’ reading.

¹⁹⁹ And as Reeve (1992), pp. 129-30 suggests, there are some conceptual problems with the idea of a second-order inclusive excellence anyway, given other commitments of the *NE*.

²⁰⁰ Roche (1988b), p. 109. Roche directs his objection against Cooper specifically, but the point can be applied more broadly.

²⁰¹ Reeve (1992) pp. 129-30 raises other similar considerations.

So what does ‘best and most *teleion* excellence’ mean here, if not referring to a second-order inclusive set? The short answer is that we can’t tell. There are two roughly equally plausible options, each of which is supported by, but not required by, the text to this point. Which we take depends on whether we think the meaning of ‘most *teleion* excellence’ is determined by the earlier discussion of *teleion* ends. If so, then the *ergon* argument will conclude with the most final excellence, i.e. the most choiceworthy excellence for the sake of which other allotelic excellences are pursued.²⁰² If not, then the most *teleion* excellence will be the most perfect excellence, the excellence which best exemplifies the capacities of the rational part of the soul.²⁰³ Both sides will support themselves with the same points, namely that (i) each is a reasonable way to gloss ‘best’ following an epexegetic καὶ, and (ii) Aristotle doesn’t give further specification of what it is to be the most *teleion* excellence. The ‘final’ option will point out that, absent a qualification, we should expect Aristotle to mean the same thing by *teleion* in the finality and *ergon* arguments. The ‘perfect’ option will note that Aristotle could have easily specified this if he meant it, and that Aristotle is already changing his conception of being *teleion* relative to the entities he discusses (ends, excellences, lives). It is also possible that Aristotle doesn’t clarify because he thinks the best excellence will be both final and perfect.

²⁰² Cooper (1987), pp. 199-200, Devereux (1981), p. 253, Kraut (1989), pp. 241-44, Lear (2004), pp.44-45, Nagel (1974), pp.10-12, Reeve (1992) pp. 130-31, Wilkes (1978), pp. 558-572. Curzer (1990), pp. 430-31 goes further, identifying ‘best’ with self-sufficiency and ‘most *teleion*’ with finality.

²⁰³ Achtenberg (1991), *passim*, Baker (2015), pp. 259-263, Barney (2008), pp. 309-18 (though she doesn’t discuss this passage specifically), Broadie (1991), p. 39, Kenny (1992), pp. 86-87, Purinton (1998), pp. 291-296,

I think it is appropriate, given this impasse, to accept that we can't know more specifically exactly what Aristotle had in mind here. This is the appropriate response not only because of the dialectical tie, but also because of the way the *ergon* argument straddles being a formal criteria for *eudaimonia* and a substantive property. To know which excellence or excellences express the human *ergon*, we have to know more about the specifics of the human soul: how many parts it has, what they do, and so on.²⁰⁴ We do not have enough of this information yet at this point in the *NE*, and so can't know what kind of activity we're looking for.²⁰⁵ So neutrality is both epistemically responsible and contextually encouraged.²⁰⁶

This might make us wonder what work the *ergon* is doing, especially if it is merely recapitulating that the chief good is final and self-sufficient. The answer, I think, is that the *ergon* argument specifies the *kind* of good that we are looking for.²⁰⁷ We've been told how the chief good is related to our pursuits (it is autotelic) and to our lives (it is self-sufficient), but not what sort of thing the chief good is. The *ergon* argument gives us more detail: the

²⁰⁴ Joachim (1951), pp. 51-52, Purinton (1998), pp. 264-271.

²⁰⁵ Broadie (1991), p. 39, Broadie & Rowe (2002), p. 277, Bostock (2000), p. 25, Cooper (1991), pp. 201-23, Gómez-Lobo (1991), p. 46, 54, Kenny (1992), p. 17, 86-87, Kraut (1989), p. 244, pp. 322-27, Lawrence (2001), pp. 448-51, McDowell (1980), p. 366, Roche (1988b), p. 109, White (1992), p. 147-48, Whiting (1986), p. 77.

²⁰⁶ This point helps us respond to Roche (1988a)'s argument that the *ergon* argument should be read inclusively because the premises of the *ergon* argument don't entail that contemplation is the best excellence. Roche is right that there is no entailment, but wrong that the intellectualist reading requires it. Conversely, Roche argues that the inclusivist position is entailed by the premises of the *ergon* argument, but to show this he appeals mainly to a more substantive discussion of the soul in *NE* I.13. If the *ergon* argument needs to be supplemented with more detail about the parts of the soul and their powers, then it doesn't by itself entail the inclusivist reading either. But this is a good thing: at this point in the argument we should not yet expect a definitive answer to what *eudaimonia* is.

²⁰⁷ Lawrence (2001), pp. 454-58, Pakaluk (2005) p. 74, Roche (1988a), pp. 179-80.

chief good will be virtuous psychic activity, rather than, say, a possession like wealth or honor.

With all this in mind, we can now formally state the third of Aristotle's criteria for eudaimonia;

Functional Activity: The chief good is the excellent expression of the human function, i.e. psychic activity of the rational part of the soul according to that part's best excellence.

This criterion begins to narrow our search: we are looking for a particular kind of good (a excellence of the soul), and for the single excellence that best exemplifies that good. But there are several additional criteria remaining.

§2.3.4 – Stability

Immediately after telling us that the chief good is activity according to the most *teleion* excellence of the soul, Aristotle adds another consideration for finding the chief good:

And furthermore, [the chief good occurs] in a complete life. For one sparrow does not make a spring, nor one day. Likewise neither a single day nor a short time makes for a blessed and *eudaimōn* life. (1098^a18-20)

Aristotle gives us no more information here to determine what exactly he means by a 'complete life', instead closes out the chapter by reiterating that he is only drawing a sketch of the chief good and that we cannot expect too much precision from ethical inquiry.

But Aristotle does pick up this thread in *NE* I.9-11, when he discusses the relationship between happiness and fortune.²⁰⁸ He cites two reasons why happiness

²⁰⁸ In what follows I will use 'fortune', 'chance', and 'luck' interchangeably; all three will refer to events outside an agent's control, and not purely random events. See White (1992), pp. 83-87 for a primer on Aristotle's thinking on this topic.

requires a complete life. First, young people are not sufficiently developed to be able to engage in the activities necessary for happiness (1100^a2-4, cf.1095^a2-8). But this consideration is not very important compared to the second²⁰⁹: life is subject to the vagaries of fortune, and this can impact whether or not a life is *eudaimōn*:

For [being happy] requires, as we have said, both *teleion* excellence and a *teleion* life. For many changes and all manner of random events happen throughout a life, and it is possible for the greatest misfortunes to befall the most thriving person in old age, the way it is said about Priam in the stories of Troy. But the person experiencing this sort of fate and ending wretchedly no one would call happy. (1100^a4-9)

Aristotle goes on in the next few chapters to work through a possible dilemma. Happiness does appear to be affected by factors outside human control. Yet happiness is an achievable aim of human action, and so should be dependent on our choices and character rather than fate.²¹⁰ The way Aristotle resolves this dilemma will reveal another criterion of the chief good.

Aristotle starts off this discussion by stating fairly bluntly what he takes the right view to be regarding the contingency of human happiness:

[Happiness] would also be widely accessible (*πολύκοινων*). For it would be possible for everyone not maimed with respect to excellence to become happy through study and care (*μαθήσεως καὶ ἐπιμελείας*). And if being this way is better than if happiness depends on chance, it is reasonable for it to be so, since things according to nature develop in this way, for instance

²⁰⁹ On which see Pakaluk (2005), p. 83 and White (1992), pp. 99-108. I'm inclined to think that a *teleion* life is best understood as a perfect life, not in the sense of being unimprovable, but in the sense of having reached its ultimate state. This does require a certain kind of completeness, namely a requisite amount of time to develop and exercise our rational faculties. But this doesn't mean that a *teleion* life is complete in the way that inclusivists say the chief good is: a perfect life is marred for failing to include time it could have had. As several commentators have pointed out, it is hard to square the notion of a life that is fully inclusive with Aristotle's treatment of the possibility that happiness can be lost, on which see Annas (1999), p. 47, Kenny (1992), pp. 34-36, Roche (2014), p. 55.

²¹⁰ Kenny (1992), pp. 32-33, White (1992), pp. 79-82, 116-21.

being as fine as possible, and likewise things according to craft and every cause, and most of all things according to excellence. But it would be quite out of tune to entrust the greatest and finest thing to chance. (1099^b18-25)²¹¹

In this passage, Aristotle makes fairly clear that (i) happiness depends on excellence (excellent activity of the soul he reminds us at 1099^b26), and (ii) that this is a more natural (in his robust sense) explanation of human happiness than to leave it up to chance.²¹² And he is willing to endorse a fairly strong version of this thesis, appealing to “the assumption that *eudaimonia* is something stable (μόνιμόν) and in no way easily changeable (μηδαμῶς εὐμετάβολον)” (1100^b2-3).

The problem comes in Aristotle’s next observation, which brings out two different (kinds of) components of happiness:

The object of our search is clear also from the definition. For it was said that it is a kind of activity of the soul in accordance with some sort of excellence. And of the remaining goods, some are necessary as preconditions (τὰ μὲν ὑπάρχειν ἀναγκαῖον), others are coworkers and naturally instrumentally useful (τὰ δὲ συνεργὰ καὶ χρήσιμα πέφυκεν ὀργανικῶς. (1099^b25-28)

This passage is important because it shows that happiness is in fact dependent on two different kinds of goods, internal and external. And the latter are subject to fortune in a way that the former are not. This allows for the possibility that even a virtuous person could lose, or be prevented from attaining, happiness due to forces outside their control, which would make *eudaimonia* dependent on chance in just the way Aristotle objected to previously.

²¹¹ This passage follows a quick discussion of whether happiness is god-given or not, which we will discuss in §2.3.7.

²¹² See Nussbaum (1986), pp. 322-327 for a discussion of the important role activity (contrasted with states or dispositions) plays in happiness’s relationship to fortune.

To see how Aristotle resolves this tension, we can begin with virtuous activity (which, we should remember, as not yet been specified as any particular kind of psychic excellence). Aristotle's considered view, is as follows:

Nothing involving human *erga* is steadfast (βεβαιότης) the way what involves activities in accordance with excellence is. For they seem to be more stable even than instances of knowledge. And of these the more honorable ones are more stable (μονιμώτεροι) because the blessed engage in them throughout their lives most and most continuously (μάλιστα καὶ συνεχέστατα); it is apparently this which explains why we don't forget about these things once we have them. And so the object of our search will be present in the *eudaimōn* life, and it will be this way throughout life. For [the happy person] acts and contemplates things according to excellence always or more than anything else, and in every case and in every way he will bear chance events nobly and harmoniously, insofar as he is truly good and "foursquare beyond reproach". (1100^b12-20)

In this dense passage, Aristotle weaves together several important concepts. The same activity that fulfills the human function when done well is also stable and steadfast, which allows the good person to live well throughout life by engaging in virtuous psychic activity often (or perhaps intensely) and continuously. This makes the good person resistant to the vagaries of fortune, and so allows them to handle bad luck well. There is therefore a tight connection between functionality and stability, which may explain why Aristotle mentions that *eudaimonia* requires a complete life immediately after concluding the *ergon* argument.

The stability of excellent psychic activity sets a threshold for a good person's happiness. Aristotle argues,

If activities are determinative of life, just as we said, then no one among blessed people would become wretched. For he would never do hateful or contemptible things. For we think the truly good and sound-minded (ἔμφορνα) person bears all misfortunes with dignity (εὐσχημόνως) and always does noble things from available conditions (ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων)...And if this is so, the happy person would never become

wretched, though perhaps [he could become] not truly blessed, if he should meet with Priamic misfortunes. (1100^b35-01^a8)

This passage argues that there is a lower-bound to the effects that misfortune can have on a good person.²¹³ Bad luck can demote a good person from blessedness to happiness, but they cannot be made unhappy once they attain it.²¹⁴ Hence even in cases where misfortune “chafe and scour” (θλίβει καὶ λυμαίνεται, 1100^b28) blessedness, Aristotle thinks that “nobility shines through in these cases the same way, since one can bear many and great misfortunes contentedly, not with pain, but rather with nobility and magnanimity” (1100^b30-33).²¹⁵

This passages makes Aristotle appear to come down firmly on one side of the debate over whether happiness is susceptible to misfortune. But in the next paragraph Aristotle begins to complicate the picture again:

Nor is the happy person “many-colored and changeable” (ποικίλος γε καὶ εὐμετάβολος). For he is not moved from his happiness easily, nor by whatever misfortunes happen to befall him, but rather only by many and great ones. And he would not return back to being happy from these things in a short time, but rather if he does (ἀλλ’ εἴπερ), it will be in a long and complete time during which he comes to possess great and noble things. (1101^a8-13)

What is interesting about this passage is that it introduces the possibility that some misfortunes are too much even for the happy person to bear. While the “if he does” doesn’t

²¹³ Irwin (1985), p 100. Kraut (1989), pp. 260-62

²¹⁴ Kenny (1992), pp. 34-35. Nussbaum (1986), pp. 334-40 argues that Aristotle does not in fact endorse this position, based on 1101^a8-13 and passages from outside *NE I*. But I cannot see a plausible alternative to taking the text at face value here; for instance, it does not appear that Aristotle is proposing a view he doesn’t endorse himself. So while it would be ideal to completely dissolve the dilemma by having Aristotle give up one horn, this does not appear to be Aristotle’s approach.

²¹⁵ Cf. Heinaman (2002), pp. 134-35.

quite entail the sense “if he does at all”, it certainly has that feel, and most translators have rendered it accordingly.²¹⁶ If this is right, then a happy person could be so marred by misfortune that they cease to be happy.

So read, it appears that Aristotle has not resolved the tension between the stability of happiness and the power of fortune, but rather only reiterated the dilemma.²¹⁷ But I think Aristotle’s view is subtler than this, and has the resources to accept both of these positions without contradicting himself. To see this, we need to distinguish between the kinds of goods that happiness contains and how the effects of fortune differ between them.

Immediately after the passage quoted above, Aristotle asks the rhetorical question, “What then prevents us from calling happy someone active with respect to *teleion* excellence and sufficiently furnished (ικανῶς κεχορηγημένον) with external goods not for a random period of time, but rather for a *teleion* life?” (1101^a14-16).²¹⁸ This question highlights two distinct factors that contribute to happiness, virtuous psychic activity and sufficient external goods, a distinction also made at 1099^b25-28 when Aristotle began the discussion and earlier in *NE* I:

Faring well or ill (τὸ εὖ ἢ κακῶς) does not depend on these [chance events], but a human life has need of them in addition (προσδεῖται), just as we said. But activities in accordance with excellence are determinative (κύρια) of *eudaimonia*, and the opposite [activities are determinative] of the opposite [state]. (1100^b8-11)

²¹⁶ E.g., Broadie & Rowe (2002), Brown & Ross (2009), Reeve (2014a), Ostwald (1962).

²¹⁷ Annas (1988) suggests that reiterating the dilemma may be the best we can hope for on any plausible view.

²¹⁸ A rhetorical question about the happy person, not a definition of happiness. Cf. Brown (2012), p. 228, Cashen (2012), p. 7.

The category of external goods is itself comprised of two types, preconditions and instruments.²¹⁹ Aristotle goes out of his way to describe the stability of virtuous activity, but he has said little about the role of external goods. However, it is clear that Aristotle is concerned with these goods throughout his discussion of fortune. He is particularly interested in the most important external good, friends, to which he devotes nearly all of *NE* I.11²²⁰; he also mentions honor (1100^a20) and makes an analogy to craftsmen that suggests the instrumental goods (1100^b35-01^a6). And just before broaching the topic in *NE* I.9, Aristotle concludes by I.8 by asserting that happiness needs “the tools through which [we do noble actions], through friends and wealth and political power; and lacking some goods will disfigure blessedness, for instance good birth, good children, or beauty” (1099^a31-^b3).²²¹ These external goods are not stable in the way that psychic excellence is. This allows for a distinction in the way that different components are part of a happy life.

The idea, roughly, is that happiness is resistant to fortune because its chief component, psychic excellence, is an internal good that cannot be lost once attained.²²² But

²¹⁹ Annas (1988), p. 42, Botros (1987), pp. 112-113, Crip (1994), pp. 120-125, Heinaman (2007), p. 247, Irwin (1985), p. 95, Kenny (1992), p. 41, Roche (2014) p. 39. There is some disagreement among scholars, though; Irwin takes what I’ve labelled ‘preconditions’ to be constituents of happiness instead, for the inclusivist reasons I discussed in §2.31-2, and Roche suggests a third category of external goods, resources. Cooper (1985) pp. 183-195 does not recognize this as an independent category, and instead makes all external goods relevant to happiness via their impact on virtuous action. See Annas (1988), pp. 43-45 and Irwin (1985) p. 96 n. 12 for arguments against Cooper’s position. Cashen (2012) pp. 5-6 argues that Kraut’s monistic view (which I endorse) is liable to the same criticism, but I think Cashen conflates (i) which goods constitute happiness (only virtuous activity) with (ii) which goods value. Kraut’s view, and mine, allows for external goods to be intrinsically valuable without being a part of happiness themselves (though they are related to the good that does constitute happiness).

²²⁰ On which see Nussbaum (1986), pp. 345-372.

²²¹ See Cooper (1985), pp. 178-180 and White (1992), pp. 111-16 for more detail on these goods.

²²² For more on how virtuous activities are determinative (κύρια) of happiness, see Irwin (1985), pp. 102-03, Kraut (1989), pp. 262-64, Roche (2014), pp. 41-42, White (1992) pp. 122-136.

happiness is not wholly immune to fortune, because happiness also requires external goods, which are not wholly dependent on the agent.²²³ When it comes to the preconditions for happiness, people are particularly susceptible to misfortune: some goods are completely outside our control, like physical appearance or family status (1099^b4).²²⁴ In between these two poles are goods which are somewhat within the agent's control, but not fully; these will be the instruments and materials used for excellent activity.²²⁵ For as we saw at the end of the last section, one cannot be liberal without money, or courageous without a military to join and a home to defend. But psychic excellence, being an internal good rather than external, is within our control.²²⁶

This distinction allows us to understand why Aristotle says that happiness can and cannot be lost.²²⁷ Happiness conceived as its main component, the chief good, cannot be lost.²²⁸ But happiness conceived as its main component plus whatever other conditions are necessary for it can be lost, because of those other conditions.²²⁹ And it allows us to get a

²²³ Kraut (1989), pp. 257-60, White (1992), p. 71

²²⁴ On which see Cashen (2012), pp. 13-16.

²²⁵ See Kraut (1989), pp. 253-55, Nussbaum (1986), pp. 327-29.

²²⁶ The argument at 1099^b18-25 cited above is one argument for this position. That psychic excellence is within our power is more fully defended in *NE* III.5, but it is implicit in Aristotle's discussion in I.9-11, on which see Brown (2006), pp. 238-44 and pp. 249-54. See also Heinaman (2002), pp. 136-37.

²²⁷ This approach has the advantage of being neutral on whether Aristotle thinks of blessedness and happiness as significantly different kinds of states. Nussbaum (1986), pp. 330-333 and Roche (2014) pp. 45, 58-59 argue that there is no substantive difference between the two. Broadie (1991), p. 287, Cashen (2012), pp. 8-10, Kenny (1992), pp. 34-36 argue to the contrary: blessedness is a better state than happiness. I think Nussbaum and Roche are right, but it is preferable not to need to rest my argument on this point. We will revisit the issue in §2.3.7 and §2.5.

²²⁸ Irwin (1985), p. 106. See also Broadie (1991), pp. 52-54, Clark (1975), p. 157.

²²⁹ Note that this strategy is not available on the inclusivist reading. For them, happiness is by definition a composite of psychic excellence and external goods, and so the external goods cannot be appropriately distinguished from happiness itself. Heinamann (2007) pp. 249-50 raises a distinct but related argument, that inclusivists cannot explain why small misfortunes don't threaten happiness but large misfortunes do.

better grasp on what it means for the chief good to be stable: it is something which makes life resistant to misfortune not only because of the sort of thing it is (psychic excellence and its corresponding activity), but also because of how it is related to the other goods on which happiness depends.²³⁰ Briefly put, a life will be more stable to the extent that it is less dependent on the goods of fortune.

This gives us the information we need to formulate Aristotle's fourth criterion for *eudaimonia*.

Stability: The chief good is stable. It makes a good life resistant to misfortune, and it enables its possessor to become and remain happy throughout life.

As we've seen, this criterion is closely related to the self-sufficiency and functionality criteria: it shares with the former a focus on external goods, and it builds upon the latter's identification of the human function with excellent psychic activity. This allows us to begin to have a more substantive conception of what *eudaimonia* is like. But we have three more criteria to investigate before we can fully see the nature of happiness.

§2.3.5 – Honor, Pleasure, and Divinity

The first four criteria for *eudaimonia* we've discussed have all been both central to most scholar's treatment of the *NE* and, not unrelatedly, rather controversial. The last three criteria, by contrast, have received relatively little attention. But because the feature both in Aristotle's introduction to the inquiry in *NE* I and in his final evaluation of candidates for *eudaimonia* in *NE* X, they are worth attending to.²³¹

²³⁰ Note, 'Resistant', not 'invulnerable'. Cf. White (1992), pp. 98-99.

²³¹ Contrary to Grant (1866)'s assessment that *NE* I.12 "appears of little ethical interest, to have no important scientific bearing, in short, to degenerate into a sort of triling" (*ad loc*).

Our fifth criterion involves the precise way in which *eudaimonia* is the subject of our approval, and it is the subject of *NE* I.12. Aristotle starts the chapter by asking whether *eudaimonia* is “among the things that are praised (τῶν ἐπαινετῶν) or rather, among the things that are honored (τῶν τιμίῳν)” (1101^b10-11).²³² The difference between praise and honor may not strike us as immediately apparent. Thankfully, Aristotle immediately clarifies what he means:

Everything praised seems to be praised for having a certain quality and being disposed in a certain way.²³³ For we praise the just person and the brave person, and the good person in general, and indeed moral virtue in general, because of their actions and deeds, and [we praise] the strong man, and fast man, and each of the others for being of a certain quality and for how they are disposed toward something good and worthy. (1101^b14-18)²³⁴

The implication of this way of thinking of praise is immediate: If praise is given to something in virtue of something else, there must be something better which is not praised²³⁵:

If praise is of these sorts of things, it is clear that it is not praise that is of the best things, but rather something grander and better, just as it seems. For we called ‘blessed’ and ‘happy’ both the gods and the most divine of men. And likewise for good things. For no one praises *eudaimonia* the way they do justice, but rather call it ‘blessed’ on the grounds that it is something more divine and better. (1101^b21-27)

εἰ δ’ ἐστὶν ὁ ἔπαινος τῶν τοιούτων, δῆλον ὅτι τῶν ἀρίστων οὐκ ἔστιν ἔπαινος, ἀλλὰ μεῖζόν τι καὶ βέλτιον, καθάπερ καὶ φαίνεται· τούς τε γὰρ θεοὺς μακαρίζομεν καὶ εὐδαιμονίζομεν καὶ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τοὺς θειοτάτους

²³² This topic is address more fully in the *Magna Moralia*, and in a different way in the *Topics*; see Stewart (1892), *ad loc.*

²³³ See Broadie & Rowe (2002), *ad loc.*

²³⁴ Aristotle goes on to make the same claim about praise of the gods, to which we’ll return below.

²³⁵ Aristotle also distinguishes praise, given to moral virtues, from *encomia*, given to particular actions (1101^b32-34). The implication is that *encomia* are lower on the scale than praise: praise is given to a virtue, while an *encomium* is given to individual manifestations of it. Regardless, it is fairly clear that *encomia* and honor are different, and that honor is higher.

[μακαρίζομεν]. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν· οὐδεὶς γὰρ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ἐπαινεῖ καθάπερ τὸ δίκαιον, ἀλλ' ὡς θειότερόν τι καὶ βέλτιον μακαρίζει.

Aristotle identifies this higher kind of approval as honor, concluding “It is clear from what has been said that *eudaimonia* is among the honorable and *teleion* things” (τῶν τιμίων καὶ τελείων, 1101^b35-^a1) and “something honorable and divine” (τίμιόν τι καὶ θεῖον, 1102^a4).²³⁶

Aristotle’s argument for a state higher than praise was apparently inherited from Eudoxus, who Aristotle approvingly cites as using the same argument to show that god and pleasure are better than other goods (1101^b27-31). This brings us to the sixth criterion for *eudaimonia*, pleasantness.

Though Aristotle does not, of course, agree with Eudoxus’s conclusion that pleasure is the chief good, he does agree with Eudoxus that pleasure is *a* good and, more importantly, that the chief good is pleasant.²³⁷ This may be surprising, given Aristotle’s dismissive rejection of the hedonistic life as “a bestial life” (1095^b20). But even in this passage Aristotle is careful to note that the view that pleasure is the good is widely held (1095^b21-22, cf. 1095^a20-24, 1095^b14-16), and therefore worth serious investigation, to the point that the hedonistic life is one of the three main candidates for the good life (1095^b17-19, cf. 1098^b22-25).²³⁸ But just as the life of honor is revised into the life of

²³⁶ Between these lines Aristotle argues that *eudaimonia* is an ἀρχή and therefore an αἴτιος of good things, in virtue of its being that for the sake of which we do everything else (ταύτης γὰρ χάριν τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα πάντες πράττομεν, 1102^a2-3). This suggests that we should understand ‘*teleion*’ here as ‘final’, i.e. autotelic.

²³⁷ Cf. Broadie (2003b), pp. 26-27, *pace* Weiss (1979), p. 217 n. 12. Recall also our discussion of Eudoxus in §2.3.1.

²³⁸ Cf. White (1992), p. 23.

practical virtue in *NE* I. 5, the hedonistic life could be revised to something more promising. Aristotle suggests such a revision in *NE* X.1-6, which we will not be able to examine until later.

In the meantime, we can note that pleasure is at least an allotelic good; it isn't clear from the context whether Aristotle is endorsing or merely describing the fact that people choose pleasure for the sake of something else, but he does seem certain that pleasure is worth choosing for its own sake (1096^b18-24, 1097^b1-5).²³⁹ And so even if pleasure isn't itself the good, we at least know that *eudaimonia* will include pleasure in some way (1098^b22-25, 1099^a21-28).²⁴⁰

Aristotle goes into his greatest detail about the role of pleasure in the good life in *NE* I.8, a chapter which is meant to confirm the criteria Aristotle has argued for but which also provides some new information. Aristotle argues

The life of [happy people] is also pleasant in itself. For to be pleased is one [of the faculties] of the soul, and there is for each person a pleasure relative to which he is called a lover-of-this-sort, for example a horse is pleasant to the horse-lover, and spectacles to the spectacle-lover. In the same manner, justice acts are pleasant to the justice-lover, and in general virtuous acts to the virtue-lover. Now for the many pleasures conflict because they are not the sort that are pleasant by nature, but for the noble-lover what is pleasant is pleasant by nature, and these sorts of pleasures are activities in accordance with excellence, just as these are pleasures to them and in themselves. And, the life of these people needs no pleasure in addition as a kind of adornment, but rather has pleasure in itself. (1099^a7-16)

There are three particularly important points in this passage. First, the pleasure Aristotle is interested in is a good of the soul rather than a physical or external good. This means it is

²³⁹ Weiss (19790, p. 216.

²⁴⁰ White (1992), pp. 74-75

more valuable than those goods (1098^b12-16), and it also suggests a way to revise the hedonistic life to make it more plausible, by focusing on the right kind of pleasure. It also suggests that *eudaimonia*'s pleasure is less susceptible to fortune than external goods are.²⁴¹ Second, this kind of pleasure is involved with virtuous activity (αἱ κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεις), which suggests that it is the pleasure corresponding to our functional activity, which was described in the same terms.²⁴² Hence pleasure is a natural concomitant of this activity (cf. 1099^a21), and not an additional good to be pursued alongside it. Third, this kind of pleasure is naturally and objectively pleasant, which means that, on Aristotle's approach, the relevant activity might not be one that everyone finds pleasant; noble-lovers love what is naturally pleasant, but the many might not.²⁴³ At the very least, this leaves open the possibility that the kind of pleasant activity Aristotle has in mind is not one obviously associated with pleasure-seeking.²⁴⁴

Aristotle concludes his discussion of honor in *NE* I.12 in an interesting way. He says that the object of honor is something "more divine and better" (θειότερόν τι καὶ βέλτιον, 1101^b27) and that *qua archē* of good things is "something honorable and divine" (τίμιόν τι καὶ θεῖον, 1102^a3-4). This way of putting things reveals our seventh and final criterion for *eudaimonia*, divinity.

²⁴¹ Though see White (1992) p. 134.

²⁴² Cf. Broadie (2003b), pp. 24-26, Taylor (2003), pp. 11-13, Wienman (2007), pp. 105-08, White (1992), p. 148. Recall that we do not know what exactly that activity involves yet. Though Aristotle's language here is clearly practical and involving the moral virtues, these are merely examples. Their import should not be exaggerated.

²⁴³ On this issue in general, see Annas (1980). Though she doesn't discuss the relevant *NE* I passages in any detail, her approach is "common to both [*AE* C and *NE* X] and independent of the differences between them" (p. 285), and so can be applied here without danger of conflating possible differences between the undisputed *NE* and Common Books.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Broadie & Rowe (2002), p. 281.

It is no surprise that divinity is a property of *eudaimonia*, given that term itself has divine connotations from its etymology of having a good (*eu*) spirit (*daimōn*). Aristotle introduces the idea that *eudaimonia* is divine early on, before he has even told us that *eudaimonia* is the object of our inquiry in the *NE*. After setting our target as the end of the architectonic science, *politikē*, Aristotle describes this end as follows

This same *telos* encompasses all the others, and so this would be the human good. And even if this is the same for an individual and for the city, to secure and preserve this for the city seems better and more final. For while it is welcome [to do this] for a single individual, it is nobler and more divine (κάλλιον δὲ καὶ θεϊότερον) [to do it] for a people and a city. (1094^b6-10)

As in the passages about honor, Aristotle connects divinity not just to goodness, but also to finality.²⁴⁵ The idea that the chief good is more divine in virtue of its being more final is stated more explicitly in the passage mentioned above where Aristotle argues that “we all do every remaining thing for the sake of this (ταύτης γὰρ χάριν τὰ λοιπὰ πάντα πάντες πράττομεν), and we postulate that the *archē* and cause of goods (τὸ αἴτιον τῶν ἀγαθῶν) to be something honorable and divine” (1102^a2-3).

The idea the divinity bears a hierarchical relationship to other things is also suggested by the role divinity plays in Aristotle’s argument distinguishing praise from honor. As we saw above, Aristotle distinguishes praise from honor on the grounds that (i) praise is given to something relative to a certain standard, while (ii) honor is given to

²⁴⁵ Kraut (1989), p. 346-47 misses the force of this connection, interpreting Aristotle instead to mean that accomplishing the good for a city is better because it a larger group and a bigger accomplishment, suggesting that it is both more beneficial and more difficult (see also p. 93 n. 21). But given the architectonic status of *politikē*, it is more natural to take *τελειότερον* literally: achieving the good for an individual is done in service of achieving good for the polity. Aristotle addresses these issues in *Pol.* VII.13-15.

something which is above that standard and sets it. Hence it is absurd to praise the gods, since this involves judging them by human standards rather than treating them as above it (1101^b18-23). Hence we should not merely praise the gods, nor god-life men, but rather call them blessed and happy (1101^b23-25). The same applies to *eudaimonia* itself: it is better and more divine even than justice, and so should be honored rather than praised (1101^b25-27), a point about divinity which even Eudoxus got right (1101^b27-30).

In making this point, Aristotle frequently uses the term ‘call blessed’ (μακαρίζει) in addition to referring to *eudaimonia*. The concept of blessedness is frequently associated with divinity, in this passage and elsewhere (1099^b14-18). This association is strong enough that when Aristotle calls happy people blessed in virtue of the stability of the chief good, he is led to clarify that he means that these people are “blessed humans” (μακαρίους δ’ ἀνθρώπους), i.e. blessed as far as humanity allows. And Aristotle also repeatedly connects blessedness and happiness as well, to the point that some scholars take the terms to be synonymous in the *NE*.²⁴⁶ To the extent that *eudaimonia* is blessed and blessed things are divine, *eudaimonia* will be divine as well.²⁴⁷

Finally, Aristotle argues that *eudaimonia* is divine in terms of its source. Aristotle is a bit cagey on whether *eudaimonia* is literally god-given (1099^b9-14), and rightly so since this could endanger his central commitment that happiness is within our power. But

²⁴⁶ To give some uncontroversial examples just in *NE* I, see 1098^a17-20, 1099^b1-3, 1100^a14-18, 1101^b1-5. See Nussbaum (1986), pp. 330-333 and Roche (2014) pp. 45, 58-59 for a more in-depth argument on this point. As I mentioned in the last section, I think this is largely right, but Aristotle *may* be using ‘blessed’ and ‘happy’ to pick out different states in his discussion of the chief good’s stability. For the argument that the terms are not synonymous, see Broadie (1991), p. 287, Cashen (2012), pp. 8-10, and Kenny (1992), pp. 34-36.

²⁴⁷ Cf. Hare (2006), pp. 31-34.

he nevertheless asserts that (i) it makes sense that *eudaimonia* could be god-given, since it is best (1099^b12-13), and (ii) “even if it is not god-given, but rather is acquired through excellence and study or training, it is nevertheless among the most divine things” (1099^b14-18).

These passages tell us that *eudaimonia* is the divine, but they don’t quite tell us what being divine entails. Unfortunately, *NE* I is rather vague on this score. We are told that *eudaimonia* is divine in virtue of its being best (1099^b13, ^b16-18, 1101^b26-27), so when Aristotle calls something divine this is partially an evaluative concept. Indeed, divinity sets the standard for evaluation of non-divine things (1101^b30-31), which suggests that divinity is at the top of the scale rather than on a different one. There is one other clue in *NE* I for what Aristotle thinks about divinity. In his critique of Platonism in *NE* I.6, Aristotle argues that good is a predicate that applies across categories, and therefore is not a unity. What matters for our purposes is that Aristotle gives two specific examples of goods in the category of substance: God and *nous* (1096^a24).²⁴⁸ Unfortunately, this is not very clarifying, because Aristotle mentions *nous* only twice more in *NE* I. One of these we have already seen, when Aristotle gives his list of allotelic goods when discussing finality (1098^b1-4). The other is also in I.6, where Aristotle suggests (but does not quite assert) that goods are related by analogy; in any case, he tells us that “as sight is in the body, so *nous*

²⁴⁸ The implication here is that *nous* is itself divine; see Ackrill (1972), p. 23, Broadie (1991) p. 54 n. 21. Bostock (2000), p. 30 n. 50 calls *nous* an “unexpected example” of substance, and suggests that Aristotle mentions it because *nous* is the best part of the soul, and the soul is the substance of man. I think something along these lines must be right, though I would hesitate to project the full view of *De Anima* and *Metaphysics* here as Bostock does. Ackrill (1972), pp. 21-22 suggests instead (rightly, in my view) that we need only look to the *Categories* to see Aristotle’s point. See also Grant (1986) *ad loc* and Steward (1892) *ad loc*.

is in the soul” (1096^b28-29). There is little we can conclude with certainty from these passages. Aristotle’s remarks on substance suggest that *qua* substance the goodness of divinity will be ontologically prior to goodness in other categories.²⁴⁹ And his analogy with sight suggest that *nous* plays an important role in psychic activity.²⁵⁰ But beyond that we can only speculate at this stage.

Though the reasons that *eudaimonia* is honorable, pleasant, and divine are related, we should nevertheless make sure not to conflate them. So we will have three more distinct criteria for *eudaimonia*:

Honor: The chief good is the subject of honor rather than mere praise.

Pleasure: The chief good is pleasant. It involves pleasure of the soul associated with excellent psychic activity, and is pleasant naturally and in itself.

Divinity: The chief good is divine. It is best and sets the standards for moral evaluation.

This completes our list of Aristotle’s seven criteria for *eudaimonia*. But before moving on to apply these criteria, it is worth discussing how they are related.

§2.3.6 – Evaluating and Applying the Criteria

Though *NE* I.8 does not occur at the end of the book, it can serve as a concluding summary for Aristotle’s inquiry into the criteria for happiness.²⁵¹ In this chapter Aristotle judges his discussion of the chief good against the opinions of the many and the wise, on the grounds that “all the facts harmonize (συνῴδει) with the truth, while the truth is quickly

²⁴⁹ Broadie (1991), pp. 28-29, Pakaluk (2005), p. 64.

²⁵⁰ Stewart (1892) p. 88 suggests that sight is good because it contributes to the welfare of the body, and likewise *nous* contributes to the welfare of the soul.

²⁵¹ Cf. Lawrence (2001), pp. 463-65

discordant with what is false” (1098^b11-12). In addition to the argument that the good life is pleasant, which we’ve already seen, Aristotle makes three major points in this chapter.

First, the chief good is an internal good, i.e. a good of the soul. Here Aristotle makes a three-part division between fully external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul (1098^b12-14), arguing that “we say the goods concerning the soul are authoritative (κυριώτατα) and most truly good (μάλιστα ἀγαθά), and we stipulate that psychic actions and activities (τὰς δὲ πράξεις καὶ τὰς ἐνεργείας τὰς ψυχικὰς) concern the soul” (1098^b14-16; cf 1098^b18-20). The reason we are concerned with activity of the soul is because activity is better than a mere possession or state (1098^b31-99^a3); in Aristotle’s memorable phrasing, it is not the best who win the Olympic games, but those who actually compete, and likewise those who act rightly who get what is good in life (1099^a3-7). This confirms that we should be looking for an internal good, along the lines of the Stability criterion, and not just an internal good, but psychic activity, as the Functional Activity and Pleasantness criteria tell us.

But, second, the good life also requires external goods, either as instruments or as preconditions for this excellent activity. This has led some people to (wrongly) identify happiness with good luck or with virtue (1099^b7-8). Though that is not what happiness *is*, it is what happiness requires: *eudaimonia* needs these external goods “in addition” (προσδεῖσθαι, 1099^b6-7) to the good that constitutes happiness itself, just as the Self-Sufficiency and Stability criteria state.

Finally, third, the chief good is final and therefore self-sufficient, in that it is best. Aristotle asserts that *eudaimonia* is “best and most noble and most pleasant” (1099^a24-25),

and criticizes the inscription on the shrine at Delos for severing these traits (1099^a25-28). Aristotle holds instead that these things are always all present together in the best activities, and concludes that “these, or the single best one of them (μίαν τούτων τὴν ἀρίστην), we say is *eudaimonia*” (1099^a29-31). This passage makes clear that we are looking for a single good among many, whichever activity of the soul is the best one.²⁵² This confirms what the Finality criterion holds, that the chief good is the single best of several candidates. This good is our *telos* (1098^b18-19). And while Aristotle doesn’t explicitly mention being autotelic in this passage, he does say that it is effectively analytic that the chief good is “living well and faring well” (1098^b20-22), a point which entered earlier in the *NE* when Aristotle identified the aim of *politikē* and the highest of all achievable goods as living well and faring well (1095^a15-20).

Absent from *NE* I.8’s discussion, however, is any mention of honor or divinity. This is not an insurmountable problem, since I.8 does occur before Aristotle truly discusses these criteria in I.12. But since I.8 anticipates I.12’s discussion of pleasure, and since I am arguing that divinity is of fundamental importance in how Aristotle searches for the chief good, I have the burden of proof to explain why divinity at least is absent here. After all, if divinity is as important as I believe it is, we would expect Aristotle to say more about it in *NE* I than he in fact does.

²⁵² Devereux (1981), p. 253, Kenny (1992), p. 30, Kraut (1989), p. 243, Purinton (1998), pp. 277-279, Roche (1988a).

The proper response, I think, is that divinity is for Aristotle the fundamental property of the chief good, and so is implicit in all the other criteria.²⁵³ The chief good's divinity is associated with finality at 1094^b6-10, 1099^b12-13 (*qua* the best thing), and 1102^a2-3. Aristotle does not explicitly associate finality with self-sufficiency, but it is a platitude for Aristotle and others that God is the most self-sufficient being, hence Aristotle's careful qualification when he discusses self-sufficiency that he means self-sufficient as far as our humanity allows; since divinity sets the standard for evaluation, we should interpret this to mean something like "the chief good is what makes life choiceworthy when we abstract away from our limited natures, and therefore think of humans as more like the gods".²⁵⁴ The most difficult criterion to square with divinity is functional activity. But as we saw in §2.3.3, functional activity need not be unique to humans: whatever is isn't shared with plants and animals, but it may be shared with gods, since our functional activity stems from the reason-having part of the soul and gods are also rational. Indeed, Aristotle's pairing of God and *nous* in *NE* I.6 suggests that he is thinking in these terms.²⁵⁵ Divinity and stability are more closely aligned: in starting *NE* I.9 Aristotle considers the possibility that happiness is if not god-given then at least the most divine thing, and the divine connotations of the term 'blessed' are present throughout

²⁵³ Cf. Lawrence (1997), pp. 53-55,

²⁵⁴ It is notable that when Aristotle returns to this issue in *NE* IX.9, his final position is that the good person needs friends because the good life lacks nothing of value and a friend, *qua* another self, is valuable the way the self is. But this position threatens to conflate human and divine happiness: God needs no one but himself, while humans need another instance of themselves. The result of grounding a friend's value in the value of oneself is that the friend becomes unable to add anything of value beyond what the good person already has in themselves, and so the good person is like God in this respect after all. I defend this view in Green (2015).

²⁵⁵ Cf. Wilkes (1978), pp. 566-68

his discussion of happiness and fortune. Honor, as we saw in the last section, is conceived directly in terms of the divine, for divinity sets the standards by which some things are honored and others merely praised.²⁵⁶ And Aristotle approvingly cites Eudoxus for maintaining these distinction when observing that God and the good, which Eudoxus took to be pleasure, are beyond praise. The kind of pleasure Aristotle is interested in involves excellent activity, hinting back to our functional activity and therefore, possibly, to *nous*.

All of this is admittedly vague and a bit speculative, so for now I will only suggest the foundational role of divinity as an intriguing possibility to be revisited after our examination of its relationship to the chief good has been concluded. We shouldn't be surprised if Aristotle does not fully flesh out his views at the outset; after all, as we saw in §2.2, he warns us repeatedly in *NE* I that his account will be "roughly and in outline". We can revisit the issue once we have seen Aristotle's full discussion of happiness in the *NE*. For now, we can rest content with the observations that divinity bears an interesting relationship to at least some of our criteria, and more importantly, that we have a solid grasp of what those seven criteria are.

Now that we are comfortable that we are on the right track, we can apply these criteria to our three candidates for the chief good. As we saw in *NE* I.5, Aristotle assumes that people reveal their conception of the chief good through the kinds of lives that they lead, and so infers the candidates for the chief good from these lives (1096^a6-7).²⁵⁷ There

²⁵⁶ Cf. Hare (2006), p. 18, 27-31, Long (2011), p. 106.

²⁵⁷ Broadie (1991), pp. 26-27. See also Charles (2014), *passim*, Cooper (1987), pp. 195-96, Lawrence (2005), Lear (2009), pp. 394-95, Price (2014), pp. 28-29.

are three main contenders, the hedonistic life, the political life, and the contemplative life.²⁵⁸ In the following sections, then, we will see how well each of the three candidates for the chief good, pleasure, moral virtue, and contemplation, satisfy the seven criteria for *eudaimonia*.

§2.4 – PLEASURE AND *EUDAIMONIA*

It is fairly clear from the way Aristotle treats pleasure that he does not take pleasure very seriously as a candidate for the chief good.²⁵⁹ When he first introduces the hedonistic life in *NE* I.5, he refers to it as a “bestial life” (βοσκημάτων βίον, 1095^b20), which has led many commentators to think that the life of pleasure is a non-starter, like the money-making life.²⁶⁰ But he immediately adds that pleasure has endoxic support for being the chief good (1095^b21-22, cf. 1095^a20-24, 1095^b14-16), which apparently compels Aristotle to investigate this candidate beyond his agreement that, whatever the chief good is, engaging in that good will be pleasant.²⁶¹ And his hinting at different kinds of pleasure in *NE* I.5 and I.12 suggest that the hedonistic life can be revised into something more plausible, as the life of honor is revised to the political life. Hence Aristotle does, in fact,

²⁵⁸ Thinking about lives as determined by goods, rather than taking lives primary, allows us to avoid the thorny debate about what exactly a βίος is in Aristotle; cf. Lear (2004) pp. 177-181. For a discussion of βίος in the ethical works, see Bostock (2000), pp. 206-08, Cooper (1975), pp. 159-60, Keyt (1983), pp. 372-74, Keyt (1989) *passim*, Kraut (1989), pp. 17-19, Reeve (1992), pp. 149-52, Roche (1989), pp. 112-13.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Harte (2014), pp. 288-89.

²⁶⁰ Frede (2006), pp. 265-66 is a clear case of this trend.

²⁶¹ Cf. White (1992), pp. 22-28.

evaluate pleasure as a candidate for the chief good, with a certain kind of life directed toward it, in *NE* X.6.²⁶²

But of course we can't investigate whether pleasure is the chief good before we know what pleasure is, and this is exactly what Aristotle discusses in *NE* X.1-5, to which we now turn.²⁶³

§2.4.1 – Pleasure

Aristotle's definition of pleasure is that it is a complete and whole form that accompanies and completes activity.²⁶⁴ Let us address these two components of the definition separately. For the first, Aristotle argues

Sight seems to be complete (τελεία) at any given moment. For it lacks nothing which, in coming into being later, completes (τελειώσει) its form (τὸ εἶδος). And pleasure too is apparently of this sort. For it is a kind of whole, and at no time would one find a pleasure whose form would be completed if it occurs for a longer time. (1174^a14-19)

²⁶² Cf. Kraut (1989), pp. 18-19, Pakaluk (2005), pp. 319-20. In what follows I will elide a number of important issues in Aristotle's treatment of pleasure. For a more comprehensive treatment, see Frede (2006), Harte (2014), Pakaluk (2005), Rudebusch (2009), Shields (2011), Wienman (2007).

²⁶³ A reminder: Since we are only exploring the undisputed *NE* books at this stage, I will confine my discussion of Aristotle's treatment of pleasure to his account in *NE* X.1-6. There is a separate treatment of pleasure in *AE* III.11-14, while the undisputed *EE* contains no discrete discussion of pleasure. Many commentators have taken the *NE* account and *EE* accounts to be incompatible, or at least to mark distinct intellectual stages and therefore not belong in the same work; see Barnes (1997), Bostock (2000), Fustugière (1936), Grant (1866), Wolfsdorf (2013). These authors endorse the conventional view that the *NE* is later than the *EE*; Gosling & Taylor (1982) argue that the two books are compatible in substance but differ in intellectual context in a way that suggests that *AE* III is later than *NE* X. Webb (1977) goes further in arguing that the *AE* VII account belongs to the *NE*, while the *NE* X account is an earlier and separate essay. Others think they are merely addressing different questions, and so can be made to cohere in the same work; see Broadie (1991), Owen (1971/2), Pakaluk (2005), pp. 314, Rorty (1974), Shields (2011), Stewart (1892), Taylor (2003), Warren (2009).

²⁶⁴ See Gosling & Taylor (1982), pp. 246-47 for a defense of taking *teleion* here as 'complete' or 'perfect' rather than 'final'.

It is on the basis of this observation that Aristotle goes on to argue that pleasure is not a kind of movement (κίνησις), that pleasure is instantaneous and therefore doesn't take time to exist or to come into being (1174^a19-^b14).²⁶⁵

But pleasure is not only complete in itself; it also completes its corresponding activities.²⁶⁶ Aristotle argues that any sense acts perfectly when it is in good condition vis-à-vis its most beautiful objects (1174^b14-18), and therefore that the best activity will be of the best conditions organ or faculty with respect to its best objects (1174^b18-20). He then infers

This activity would be most complete and pleasant. For while there is pleasure with respect to every perception, and likewise thought and contemplation (διάνοιαν καὶ θεωρίαν), the most complete perception will be most pleasant. And the pleasure completes the activity. (1174^b19-23)

Aristotle goes on to clarify that pleasure completes an activity not by finishing it as a permanent state (the way, e.g. a building stands as the completion of the act of building), but rather, in Aristotle's famously cryptic words, "as a *telos* supervening (ἐπιγινόμενόν) on something, for example as the bloom of youth does on one in his prime (τοῖς ἀκμαίοις ἢ ὄρα)" (1174^b33).²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ This does not entail that pleasure cannot extend through time, only that it fully exists whenever it exists, rather than come into being gradually or in stages. See Broadie (1991) p. 343 and Shields (2011), pp. 200-02 for an explanation of this point.

²⁶⁶ See Bostock (1988), pp. 258-260 and Harte (2014), pp. 303-07 for a discussion of these two senses of 'complete'.

²⁶⁷ On which see Bostock (2000), pp. 156-59, Gauthier & Jolif (1959), *ad loc*, Gosling (1972/3), p. 26, Gosling & Taylor (1982), p. 212, Hadreas (1997) *passim*, Pakaluk (2005), p. 312 n. 17, Shields (2011), pp. 204-07, Urmson (1968), pp. 323-24.

But if pleasure can accompany a variety of activities, we have to decide which kind of activity would be the one that corresponds to the pleasure competing to be the chief good. As Aristotle argues

Given that activities differ with respect to the appropriateness and badness (ἐπιεικεία καὶ φαυλότητι), and that some of them are to be chosen, some are to be avoided, and some neither, pleasure will be the same way. For there is a proper (οἰκεία) pleasure for each activity. The pleasure proper to a worthwhile (σπουδαία) activity is appropriate, and to a bad one is wretched. (1175^b24-28)

But not only is there a proper pleasure to each activity, there is also a proper pleasure for a given species.²⁶⁸ We are told that “There seems to be a proper pleasure for each of the animals, just as there is an *ergon*. For the pleasure corresponds to the [functional] activity” (1176^a3-5).²⁶⁹ So we are once again directed to consider what man’s functional activity would be, for

Whether there is one or many activities of the perfect (τελείου) and blessed man, the pleasures that complete these are said in the strict sense (κυρίως) to be the pleasures of man, and the remaining will be so secondarily or even lower, as will be the activities. (1176^a26-29)

What we need to do, then, is find this kind of activity and its corresponding pleasure.

Unfortunately, Aristotle does not give us an argument on behalf of the hedonist to determine which kind of activity would be the one best suited to be completed by the chief good. Indeed, he seems open to an ecumenical answer here, given that he frequently discusses a pleasurable life in terms of whatever activity each person finds amusing, e.g. a

²⁶⁸ See Broadie (1991), pp. 321-24, Moss (2012), pp. 30-32.

²⁶⁹ See Gosling (1973), pp. 31-32, Pakaluk (2005), pp. 312-13.

musical life for musicians (1175^a12-15, 1175^b3-5, 1175^b17-20, 1176^a10-12).²⁷⁰ This may be why, after summarizing the terms of the inquiry at the outset of *NE* X.6, he follows the many in conceiving of the hedonistic life as a life directed toward “the pleasures of amusement” (τῶν παιδιῶν, 1176^b9), noting that “Many of those deemed happy take refuge in these sorts of pastimes” (1176^b12-13).²⁷¹ Though he does not restrict amusement to physical enjoyment, the fact that this is the sort of pleasure many go for suggests that it is a paradigm pleasure of amusement (1176^b19-21, 1177^a6-9).²⁷²

The rest of Aristotle’s discussion in *NE* X.6 examines how well amusement satisfies the criteria for *eudaimonia*, and we will follow suit in the next section.

§2.4.2 – Pleasure and the Criteria for *Eudaimonia*

Aristotle’s explicit discussion of how well pleasure satisfies the criteria for the chief good is relatively brief, occupying about one Bekker page of text. But he makes several remarks throughout his discussion of pleasure in *NE* X that we can use to flesh out his treatment of the topic. To help organize things, we will apply the criteria in the order set out in *NE* I rather than the order in which Aristotle raises the relevant points about pleasure.

We can begin with finality. The chief good is an autotelic good, a good that is sought for its own sake and never for the sake of anything else. Aristotle reports that it is thought to be so (1176^b9-10), but we need to look at the issue more closely. Aristotle takes an argument of Eudoxus, which we discussed in §2.3.1, to show that at least some pleasures

²⁷⁰ Cf. Harte (2014), pp. 307-08.

²⁷¹ Cf. Bostock (2000), pp. 191-92, Gurtler (2003), pp. 816, 822, Key (1983), pp. 374-75.

²⁷² On which see Annas (1980) pp. 289-90, Urmson (1968), pp. 326-329, 332-33.

are chosen for their own sakes (1172^b26-27). And Aristotle also agrees with Eudoxus that pleasure is shown to be good by the fact that all creatures, rational and irrational alike, pursue pleasure (1172^b35-73^a6).²⁷³ But, based on the distinctions from the last section, this doesn't mean that *all* pleasures are worth choosing for their own sakes, though some of them are (1174^a8-11). These pleasures will be the ones chosen by the good person (1176^b24-27). So the question is whether amusement is sought for its own sake by good people, and whether it is sought for the sake of anything else. Aristotle suggests that amusement certainly does not meet the latter condition, and perhaps not the former either:

Eudaimonia, therefore, is not found in amusement. For it would be odd for amusement to be the end, and to labor and suffer through all one's life for the sake of amusement.... To devote serious attention and toil for the sake of amusement seems foolish and quite childish. But to amuse oneself for the sake of serious attention, as Anarchsis says, seems to be right; for amusement is apparently rest, and since it is impossible to toil continuously we have need of rest. But rest is not an end; for it occurs for the sake of activity. (1176^b29-77^a1; cf. 1177^a3-11).

So, at the very least, amusement is not autotelic, because it is chosen for the sake of some further activity. And it may not even be allotelic, if the good person chooses it solely for its instrumental benefits and not for its own sake.²⁷⁴

Aristotle's declaration that happiness isn't found in amusement may be enough to give up on amusement as a candidate for the chief good. But we shouldn't abandon the discussion so quickly, because we don't yet know how the other candidates will fare. So we should examine amusement in light of all seven criteria.

²⁷³ On which see Broadie (2003b), pp. 26-27, Broadie (1991), pp. 346-48, Gosling & Taylor (1982), pp. 255-83, Warren (2009), pp. 252-65, Weiss (1979), p. 215.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Broadie (1991), pp. 419-20, Korsgaard (1986b), pp. 492-93.

The next criterion is self-sufficiency: the chief good can, all by itself, make life worth living (in the context of having the requisite external goods necessary for any human life). Aristotle's remarks quoted above suggest that pleasure is not self-sufficient: if it is foolish and childish to pursue work for the sake of amusement, then presumably amusement isn't the sort of thing to make life worth choosing. He makes an even stronger claim in an earlier chapter:

And no one would choose to live having the mind (*διάνοιαν*) of a child throughout life, even while taking as much pleasure as possible in their amusements, nor would they enjoy doing one of the most disgraceful deeds while never having to suffer the consequences. (1174^a1-4).

If a life of amusement without intellect or virtue is a life no one would choose, then amusement cannot be self-sufficient.²⁷⁵ The same conclusion is suggested by Aristotle's comparison of Eudoxus and Plato in *NE* X.2. There are some complications about what exactly Aristotle is endorsing in this passage (which we discussed in §2.3.1), but one thing is clear: Aristotle agrees with Plato against Eudoxus that pleasure can be improved by the addition of another intrinsic good, while the chief good that we're still searching for cannot (1172^b32-35).²⁷⁶

After self-sufficiency comes functional activity. As we saw in the last section, there will be a proper pleasure associated with our functional activity, and happiness will enjoy

²⁷⁵ Cf. Broadie (1991), p. 318.

²⁷⁶ The way Aristotle phrases things here is important. Though he cites Plato as arguing that the pleasant *life* is better when wisdom is included in it, what Aristotle asserts in his own voice is that *the chief good* can't be improved by the addition of another thing. But pleasure can, in itself, be made better by the addition of another good, because there are different kinds of pleasure and some are better than others. So, for instance, the pleasure taken in a virtuous action, or in contemplation, is better *qua* pleasure than the pleasure taken in amusement. This is a different claim than saying that the combination of, e.g., pleasure and wisdom is better than either pleasure or wisdom separately.

that kind of pleasure. But this doesn't mean that proper pleasure comes from the enjoyment of amusement. The first thing to note is that it isn't clear whether pleasure is itself an activity at all, or rather a distinct but necessary concomitant of certain activities. But since Aristotle seems to be on the fence about this himself (1175^a16-21, 1175^b30-35) we can grant for the sake of argument that pleasure and activity are so closely related metaphysically as to make no difference on this score.²⁷⁷ But even so, it won't be our functional activity. This is suggested already by Aristotle's dismissal of amusement as a life fit for a child rather than a fully-developed adult. He confirms as much in the last few lines of *NE* X.6, arguing

We say that worthwhile things (τὰ σπουδαῖα) are better than laughable things and things done with amusement, and that the activity of the better part [of the soul] (τοῦ βελτίονος...μορίου) and better man is always more worthwhile. But the activity of the better is already best (κρείττων) and more conducive to happiness (εὐδαιμονικωτέρα). But any random person, even a slave, can enjoy bodily pleasures no less than the best person (ἀρίστου). But no one gives a share of happy to a slave, unless the also give [him a share of human] life. (1177^a3-11)

The implication here is that slaves aren't given a share of human life, strictly speaking, and therefore not a share of human happiness either.²⁷⁸ But if slaves don't really have a human life, then they won't engage in whatever the human functional activity is. But slaves can participate in amusing activities, including but presumably not limited to bodily pleasures.

²⁷⁷ See Bostock (2000), pp. 149-Bostock (1988), *passim*, Broadie (1991), pp. 339-46, Gosling (1972/3), pp. 18-19, 24-29, Gosling & Taylor (1982), pp. 217-22, 301-17, Owen (1971/2) *passim*, Pakaluk (2005), pp. 313-14, Rorty (1974), *passim*, Shields (2011), pp. 208-09, Urmson (1968), pp. 325-26 for more on this issue.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Broadie (1991), pp. 326-27, 354-55. Because Aristotle thinks all creatures, rational and irrational, pursue pleasure, he would see no reason to grant the slave human rationality in order to explain his behavior (cf. 1161^b1-6, where Aristotle argues that slaves are living tools, despite being human in a weak sense). See also Frede (2006), pp. 264-66.

Hence amusing activities are not our functional activities, and therefore the chief good won't be the pleasure of amusement.

The next criterion is stability: the chief good makes life resistant to fortune and allows for happiness to extend throughout life. The failure of amusement to meet the finality and self-sufficiency criteria hints that amusement isn't stable either. Insofar as we engage in amusements in order to engage in some other activity, amusement won't be the sort of thing we will want to do throughout life, nor would constant amusement make a life happy. There are also independent considerations to raise against the stability of amusement. Recall that Aristotle distinguishes between three categories of goods: goods of the soul, goods of the body, and external goods, with psychic goods being the best of the three (1098^b12-16).²⁷⁹ Goods of the soul are also the most stable, because they are most within our power and least subject to the vagaries of fortune. But amusement is not like this, especially to the extent that amusement is taken in physical pleasure.²⁸⁰ Aristotle even suggests that amusement interferes with our possession of other external goods, like health and property (1176^b10-11). And the way Aristotle characterizes the life of amusement, where we labor and toil and suffer, suggests that this life requires significant effort to maintain, and would therefore be especially prone to misfortune.²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ Bostock (1988) pp. 270-272 argues that all bodily pleasures are pleasures of perception, which complicates the soul/body distinction somewhat. But we can retain this distinction by following Aristotle (1174^b14-75^a2) focusing on the sense organ corresponding to the various perceptive faculties. See also Moss (2012), pp. 30-47, Urmson (1968), pp. 327-31.

²⁸⁰ Broadie (1991), p. 317, White (1992), pp.133-35, 159.

²⁸¹ Aristotle also argues that we cannot feel pleasure continuously (1175^a3-5), which is relevant because in outlining stability he says that the blessed engage in stable activity most often and most continuously throughout their lives (1100^b15-16) and he cites the ability to contemplate more continuously than we can do anything else as a point in favor of it's being the chief good (1177^a21-22). It is notable that, while our

Our fifth criterion is honorability: the chief good is honored rather than merely praised. Aristotle does say that in his argument that good people don't work for the sake of amusement that that which is valuable (τίμια) to the good person is truly valuable (1176^a24-25), arguing that even children think that the best things are what are honored among themselves (τὰ παρ' αὐτοῖς τιμώμενα, 1176^a22). And indeed Aristotle cited Euxodus on just this point when defending this criterion (1101^b27-28). But children are contrasted with good people as the authority on what is honorable, so their opinion is not great evidence; nor, apparently, is Eudoxus, whom Aristotle is happy to cite for the form of an argument, but not its content.²⁸² Hence Aristotle says that the pleasures corresponding to noble appetites are praiseworthy (ἐπαινεταί, 1175^b29), and therefore not honorable, and that a friend is praised for encouraging our good while a flatterer who makes us feel pleasure is not even praised, but reproached (1173^b33-74^a1). And of course, since amusement is called silly and childish, we can safely infer that it is not honorable.

The next criterion is pleasantness. This ought to be trivially satisfied, since pleasure should be pleasant if anything is. But even here amusement struggles to meet the criteria for the chief good. For as we have seen, true pleasures are the pleasures that the good person enjoys.²⁸³ In explaining the criterion of pleasantness Aristotle argues

To the noble-lover what is pleasant is pleasant by nature, and these sorts of pleasures are activities in accordance with excellence, just as these are pleasures to them and in themselves. And, the life of these people needs no pleasure in addition as a kind of adornment, but rather has pleasure in itself. (1099^a13-16)

inability to contemplate continuously is blamed on factors external to contemplation, our inability to be pleased continuously is blamed on the pleasurable activities themselves (1175^s5-10).

²⁸² On which see Gosling & Taylor (1982), pp. 255-283.

²⁸³ See Gosling (1972/3), pp. 31-34, Gosling & Taylor (1982), pp. 332-44, Taylor (2003), pp. 10-12, Taylor (1983), pp. 98-106.

This kind of intrinsic pleasure by nature sounds very different from the way Aristotle has described good people's opinion about amusement.²⁸⁴ Indeed, in first line of argument against amusement is that what is good to the good person is what is truly good, and that for the good person this is virtuous activity (1176^b24-27) and that “therefore (ἄρα) *eudaimonia* is not found in amusement” (1176^b27-28), for the reasons discussed above. And finally, because the pleasantness of the chief good depends on its being the pleasure of our functional activity, amusement doesn't meet this in virtue of its not being that activity.

This brings us to our final criterion, divinity. Aristotle says nothing about divinity in *NE* X.1-6, and given amusement's track record so far it is a safe bet that it fails to meet this criterion as well. However, Aristotle makes two remarks that suggest implicit arguments against amusement being divine which we can use to bolster this supposition. First, in a general sense divinity sets the standards for our praise and honor, and as we've seen, amusement is childish rather than honorable. If amusement is not good enough to merit honor, then *a fortiori* it is not divine. Second, when explaining why we cannot feel pleasure continuously, Aristotle notes that “all human things (ἄνθρώπεια) are unable to be active continuously” (1175^s4-5). This way of putting it suggests a contrast between humans and gods, such that the latter are able to be active continuously.²⁸⁵ This position is confirmed in *NE* X.7-8, where we are told that contemplation is a continuous activity

²⁸⁴ See Annas (1980) *passim*, Brodie (1991), pp. 355-63, and Pakaluk (2005), pp. 293-96 on natural pleasantness and its relationship to goodness.

²⁸⁵ Cf. Gurtler (2003), pp. 809-10.

(1177^a21-22) and that this is the only activity the gods engage in (1178^b8-21).²⁸⁶ Because amusement is an activity performed to fill a human deficiency (1176^b34-35), amusement will be a human thing rather than a divine thing. Aristotle hasn't told us yet what it is to be divine, but his mention of the better part of the soul at 1177^a4-5 is an allusion to what we will find out in *NE* X.7-8, that the better part of our soul is divine *nous*.²⁸⁷ So even though we don't yet know very much about what divinity entails, we know enough to conclude that amusement doesn't qualify as divine.

Our conclusion, then, is overdetermined: the chief good is not amusement. This kind of pleasure fails to satisfy fully any of the criteria for *eudaimonia*, and therefore is not a good candidate for the good toward which a *eudaimōn* life is organized. This does not show, however, that pleasure is not *a* good, nor that the chief good, whatever it turns out to be, is not pleasant;²⁸⁸ Aristotle is consistent in affirming both these positions. Nor does it show that the good life is an unpleasurable life: amusement will be involved, but it will not be that for the sake of which we act.²⁸⁹

But it does show that the many are incorrect in their assessment of what the good life involves: despite its *endoxic* credentials, the hedonistic life is not the best life. We can now turn to the practical life, to see if it fares any better.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Broadie (1991), pp. 349-50, Rudebusch (2009), pp. 414-15.

²⁸⁷ See Gosling & Taylor (1982), pp. 247-50.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Broadie (1991), pp. 324-26.

²⁸⁹ On which see Owens (1981).

§2.5 – MORAL VIRTUE

The second of the three candidates for the chief good is moral virtue. Aristotle has relatively little to say about moral virtue in *NE* I, save that it is something that the wise value (1095^b28-30, 1098^b22-25), and that virtue is valuable chiefly in its deployment rather than in mere possession (1095^b31-96^a2, 1098^b31-99^a7). However, moral virtue is one of the two species of psychic excellence (1103^a3-10) and the criteria of functional activity and pleasantness are defined in terms of activity in accordance with psychic excellence, so getting clear on the nature of moral virtue will obviously be a central task in investigating *eudaimonia*.

Aristotle's approach to moral virtue in the *NE* begins with a discussion of the soul in I.13, then the nature of virtue in II.1-9, and *NE* III.1-5 follows up with a treatment of voluntary action and choice (i.e. the activity in virtuous activity). The remaining chapters of *NE* III-IV and VII-IX deal with the individual virtues. The details of Aristotle's view on the individual virtues will not be of particular importance for us, so we will focus primarily on Aristotle's discussion of virtue in general in *NE* II-III. Aristotle defines moral virtue as follows:

Therefore virtue is a *prohairesis*, lying in a mean relative to us, being determined by reason and that by the *phronimos* would determine it. It is a mean between two vices, one according to excess, the other according to deficiency. (1106^b36-07^a3).

Ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετικὴ, ἐν μεσότητι οὕσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὠρισμένη λόγῳ καὶ ᾧ ἂν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν. μεσότης δὲ δύο κακιῶν, τῆς μὲν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν τῆς δὲ κατ' ἔλλειψιν.

In what follows, we will address these components of the definition of moral virtue in turn.

§2.5.1 – The Parts and Powers of the Soul

We can begin with the first term in Aristotle’s definition of virtue: moral virtue is a *hexis* or state, in particular a *hexis* of the soul. Aristotle defends this point using an argument from elimination. He tells us “Since there are three things that occur in the soul, feelings (*πάθη*), capacities (*δυνάμεις*), and *hexeis*, virtue would be one of these” (1105^b19-21). Aristotle gives one argument against virtue being either a feeling or a capacity, and plus a second and third argument targeting each individually. The first argument is that we are praised for virtue and blamed for vice, but we are not praised for our feelings (1105^b28-06^a2) nor for our capacities (1106^a6-9). Moreover, virtue and vice involve *prohairesis* or choice, while feelings do not, so virtue isn’t a feeling (1106^a2-6). And capacities are something we have by nature, but Aristotle has already argued, in *NE* II.1, that virtues are not something we have by nature, so virtues can’t be capacities (1106^a9-10). The remaining option is that a virtue is a *hexis*.²⁹⁰

The more interesting question, however, is not whether virtue is a *hexis*, but rather what it is that virtue is a *hexis* of.²⁹¹ We’ve just seen that it is a *hexis* of the soul, and this prompts us to look more closely at the details of Aristotle’s view of the soul, outlined in *NE* I.13. Aristotle argues that the student of *politikē* must study the soul, just as the ophthalmologist must know something about the entire body (1102^a18-23). But, using the same analogy, the ophthalmologist doesn’t need to know *everything* about the whole body,

²⁹⁰ See Pakaluk (2005), pp. 106-108 for a nice discussion of what a *hexis* is.

²⁹¹ Bostock (2000), pp. 36-38 argues that there is an implicit premise in Aristotle’s argument that feelings, capacities, and *hexeis* are three options *in the quasi-rational part of the soul*, specifically. I’m not certain that we must read Aristotle this way, but I think it is a plausible and charitable interpretation nonetheless. Cf. Taylor (2006), pp. 97-99.

but rather only enough to be able to understand how to treat the eye. Likewise, the student of *politikē* needs to study the soul only to the extent necessary to understand human virtue and human happiness (1102^a12-15)²⁹²; further precision, Aristotle tells us, is unnecessary (1102^a25-26), hearkening back to his early warning that the *NE* would only provide an ethical theory in outline.

Aristotle practices what he preaches, basing his treatment of the soul on earlier “exoteric works” (ἐν τοῖς ἐξωτερικοῖς λόγοις, 1102^a26-27) that were likely written for public consumption, more like Plato’s dialogues than Aristotle’s more technical treatises.²⁹³ He distinguishes between two parts of the soul, one non-rational and one rational (τὸ μὲν ἄλογον αὐτῆς εἶναι, τὸ δὲ λόγον ἔχον, 1102^a27-28).²⁹⁴ But Aristotle soon argues that there is a third part of the soul, one which is itself non-rational but which “has a share of reason, in a way” (1102^b13-15; cf. 1098^a4-5).²⁹⁵ His argument for this part is

²⁹² This remark that we are studying human virtue and human happiness deserves some scrutiny. Aristotle clarifies, “By ‘human virtue’ we mean not the virtue of the body but rather of the soul. And we say that *eudaimonia* is activity of the soul” (1102^a16-17). This distinction between somatic and psychic excellences suggests that the contrast Aristotle has in mind when he specifies “human virtue” is between humans and other animals (That is, rather than a contrast between humans and gods). This suggestion is corroborated by the way Aristotle distinguishes between the parts of the soul later in the chapter, where he excludes one part of the soul from ethical consideration on the grounds that “the excellence of this part seems to be something common and not [uniquely] human” (κοινή τις ἀρετὴ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρωπίνη φαίνεται, 1102^b3; cf. 1102^b11-12).

²⁹³ For suggestions about what these works may have been, see Fortenbaugh (2002), p. 29 n. 1. My own view, though it is merely speculation, is that Aristotle is referring to the *Protrepticus*; B23, B24, and B26, for example, all perfectly match the view Aristotle lays out in *NE* I.13. See Rees (1960), pp. 195-97.

²⁹⁴ Aristotle mentions in passing that it doesn’t matter for his purposes whether the parts of the soul are separable (1102^a28-32), which may make us hesitant to discuss the soul in terms of parts. But Aristotle continues to do so, and is in fact committed to a non-trivial conception of psychic parthood. I will defend this reading in §3.2.

²⁹⁵ Fortenbaugh (2002), pp. 26-30 argues that Aristotle’s ethical and political works use a different framework from the biological works, such that the use of a bipartiate model of the soul always corresponds to the normative realm and a tripartite model to the descriptive. This leads Fortenbaugh to argue that, when Aristotle makes the tripartite distinction in *NE* I.13, he has briefly switched into the biological mode, and will switch back as the chapter progresses (pp. 27-28). I cannot see how this can possibly be right. It is true that Aristotle tends to focus on two parts of the soul in the *NE*, but this is

reminiscent of Plato’s argument for the spirited part of the soul in *Republic* IV, that there is a force in the soul that can sometimes resist reason, sometimes obey it (1102^b16-28).²⁹⁶ Aristotle concludes that there are in fact two non-rational elements of the soul, the nutritive part (τὸ φυτικόν), which has no share of reason at all (οὐδαμῶς κοινωνεῖ λόγου), and the appetitive or desiderative part (τὸ δ’ ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ὄλως ὀρεκτικόν), which “has a share in a way, in that it able to listen to and obey it” (μετέχει πως, ἧ κατήκοόν ἐστιν αὐτοῦ καὶ πειθαρχικόν, 1102^b29-31).²⁹⁷ But Aristotle quickly qualifies that it can make sense to think of this middle part as rational, in which case there would be two reason-having parts of the soul (1103^a1-2). But this doesn’t mean there are four parts: rather, Aristotle is conceding that the middle part of the soul can be thought of as rational or as non-rational.²⁹⁸ Given this part of the soul’s intermediate nature, we can refer to it as the *quasi-rational* part of the soul, complementing the non-rational and rational parts.

Since Aristotle is concerned primarily with the rational and quasi-rational parts of the soul in the *NE*, we will follow suit. We have two questions before us: (1) Which part

because, as he explicitly tells us, the lowest part has no share in human excellence or human happiness, and is therefore irrelevant for his purposes. And since *NE* I.13 sets the foundation for the rest of the work, by (i) giving the details necessary to understand what our functional activity is, and (ii) giving the psychological distinctions necessary to justify treating moral and intellectual virtue separately, the whole of this chapter is thoroughly ethical. So in Aristotle bipartition and tripartition are not separate models: the former is merely a simpler version of the latter, used when theoretical precision about the nature of the soul is unnecessary.

I do think Fortenbaugh is right, however, to see heavy Platonic influence on Aristotle’s way of thinking about the soul; he simply goes too far in seeing disagreement between Plato and Aristotle where I think the *NE* is rather strongly Platonic (arguments against the Forms in *NE* I.6 notwithstanding). I think Rees (1960), for example, has a much more plausible treatment of Platonic influence on Aristotle’s psychological theorizing.

²⁹⁶ See Price (1995), pp. 104-111.

²⁹⁷ On which see Broadie (1991), pp. 62-67.

²⁹⁸ On which see Grönroos (2007), pp. 254-58, Moss (forthcoming), §III. See also Fortenbaugh (2006), pp. 61-67, though we cannot take for granted that the *NE* presupposes and postdates the doctrine of *De Anima*, as Fortenbaugh does. Cooper (1975), pp. 175-80 relies heavily on this assumption.

of the soul is moral virtue a *hexis* of? (2) What does it mean for virtue to be a *prohairesis* *hexis*? Answering the second question will help us get clear on the first.

Aristotle uses an argument from elimination in *NE* III.3 to discern what *prohairesis* is, just as he did to determine that virtue is a *hexis*. He concludes by defining *prohairesis* as “deliberative desire of the things up to us” (βουλευτική ὄρεξις τῶν ἐφ’ ἡμῖν, 1113^a10-11). This is a two-stage process, as Aristotle immediately clarifies: “For after judging based on our deliberation, we desire in accordance with that deliberation” (ἐκ τοῦ βουλευσασθαι γὰρ κρίναντες ὀρεγόμεθα κατὰ τὴν βούλευσιν, 1113^a11-12). This distinction between the rational and non-rational parts is important for Aristotle; for instance, he uses it to show that *prohairesis* is distinct from appetite (1111^b14-18). So we should look a bit more closely at both stages.²⁹⁹

Let’s start with the activity of the rational part of the soul. We know that Aristotle is thinking of *prohairesis* in terms of the rational part of the soul, because he tells us that *prohairesis* “involves reason and thought” (μετὰ λόγου καὶ διανοίας, 1112^a15-16) which is how Aristotle earlier identifies the rational part (1098^a4-5). Though this part is capable of both theoretical and practical reason, Aristotle’s focus when discussing moral virtue is practical.³⁰⁰ The rational part “exhorts correctly and toward the best things” (ὀρθῶς γὰρ καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ βέλτιστα παρακαλεῖ, 1102^b15-16). It is the *archē* of motion (ἡ ἀρχὴ τοῦ κινεῖν,

²⁹⁹ Note, by “stages” I mean only ‘conceptual aspects of a process’. I don’t mean to commit myself to any substantive claims about the temporal order of the aspects of *prohairesis*. There is perhaps some reason to think that *prohairesis* requires time, since Aristotle asserts that actions done of a sudden are not chosen (1111^b9-10). But all we need to worry about here is that *prohairesis* as two conceptual stages, one based on the activity of the rational part of the soul, one on the activity of the quasi-rational part.

³⁰⁰ Broadie (1991), pp. 68-72, 78-82.

1110^a15, cf. 1111^a23-25, 1112^b28). It, along with nature, necessity, and chance, is a cause (αἰτία) of change in the world (1112^a32-33). Indeed, Aristotle goes so far as to identify “*nous* and everything stemming from man” (πᾶν τὸ δι’ ἀνθρώπου) as a cause, and refers back to this passage later in saying that “man is an *arche* of things achievable by action” (ἄνθρωπος εἶναι ἀρχὴ τῶν πράξεων, 1112^b31-2).³⁰¹ The same thought occurs again when Aristotle explains that deliberation must have a stopping point, arguing that a chain of reasoning ends in *archē* and the “ruling element” (τὸ ἡγούμενον) in oneself (1113^a5-6).

The quasi-rational part of the soul also has two powers. First, it is the seat of appetite and desire, which is how Aristotle refers to it to distinguish it from the nutritive part of the soul *qua* non-rational (1102^b29-31).³⁰² Appetite is able to drive action by itself, as we see both in the cases of children and animals, who lack a (developed) rational part of the soul but can still act voluntarily (1111^b8-13), and in the case of humans acting irrationally (1111^a34-^b3). But, since human virtue involves both the rational and quasi-rational parts of the soul together, we are more interested in the quasi-rational part of the soul’s relation to the rational part. As we’ve seen, the quasi-rational part has the ability to listen to and obey reason (1102^b29-31). Aristotle clarifies that when he says that the quasi-rational soul might have a part of reason (1103^a1-2), what he means is the way one takes account of one’s father and one’s friends (1102^b31-33, 1103^a3) as opposed to the way one understands

³⁰¹ Aristotle is also comfortable associating *nous* with action in addition to contemplation by his use of the phrase “a sensible person” (ὁ νοῦν ἔχων), which he uses to mark appropriate instances of deliberation and action (1110^a9-12, 1112^a19-21, 1115^b7-9).

³⁰² Aristotle does not appear to see any important difference between kinds of desire in the *NE*. As Cooper (1988), p. 30 notes, the *NE* is unlike almost every other work on psychology in Aristotle in that it does not explicitly distinguish appetite, spirit, wish, etc.

mathematics (1102^b33-34).³⁰³ In the virtuous person, reason and appetite speak in unison (1102^b28). But even here Aristotle wants to reserve a full-fledged conception of rationality just to the rational part, which he says has reason “in the strict sense and in itself” (τὸ μὲν κυρίως καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ, 1103^a2).

This pairing allows us to see what it means where Aristotle says that *prohairesis* involves both a rational judgment and a corresponding desire. A desire in accordance with deliberation will be a desire that agrees with the conclusion of the deliberation, the way that a child obeys the command of a parent or a population carries out the command of their king (1113^a7-9). Aristotle stresses the point when discussing the relationship between appetite and reason in the temperate person, arguing that “just as a child should live according to the commands of their tutors, so too should the appetitive part (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν) live according to reason. Therefore it is necessary for the appetitive part of the temperate person to harmonize (συμφωνεῖν) with reason” (1119^b13-16).³⁰⁴ It is the sort of joint activity by both reason-having parts of the soul that constitutes *prohairesis* and therefore action in general.

Based on the distinction between these two parts of the soul, Aristotle posits two different kinds of virtues (1103^a3-4). The first, corresponding to the quasi-rational part of the soul, will be the moral virtues, while the second will correspond to the intellectual

³⁰³ This is not a practical/theoretical distinction, much as it may look like one. The contrast instead is between understanding *what* versus understanding *why*; see Grönroos (2007), pp. 258-60, Moss (2014), pp. 219-224.

³⁰⁴ On which see Cooper (1988), pp. 32-35, Price (1995), pp. 119-32.

virtues (1103^a4-10).³⁰⁵ This position is explicitly confirmed in later chapters, where courage and temperance are both identified as virtues of the non-rational (i.e. quasi-rational) part of the soul (1117^b23-24).³⁰⁶ So when Aristotle defines moral virtue as a *prohairesis hexis*, what he means is that virtue is a state of the quasi-rational part of the soul that has feelings and desires in accordance with the judgments of the rational part of the soul.³⁰⁷

The role of feeling and desire in moral virtue brings us to the third component of moral virtue's definition: moral virtue is a *hexis* that lies in a mean, relative to us, between the vices of excess and deficiency. Virtue is a mean or middle state in three ways: (1) it lies between two others states, both of which are extremes, (2) it involves the right kinds and amount of feeling or emotion, in particular pleasure and pain, and (3) it aims at the right amount of the relevant external good. In each case, the 'mean relative to us' is an important qualification: Aristotle has in mind a middle state not in terms of being precisely intermediate, but rather of being neither too much or too little which can vary in numerous ways (1106^a29-^b7).

³⁰⁵ See Bostock (2000), pp. 34-36, Burger (2008), pp. 41-43, Fortenbaugh (2002), pp. 69-75, Lear (2004), p. 162, Moss (2012), pp. 164-69, Moss (forthcoming) §II, Pakaluk (2011), pp. 33-37 on this point.

³⁰⁶ The Greek here reads τῶν ἀλόγων μερῶν, "non-rational parts" in the plural. Two options here. The first is that the plural here only reflects a subdivision of the quasi-rational part of the soul: one deals with a particular emotion (fear) while the other deal with a particular kind of pleasure (somatic). The second option is that "non-rational parts" refers to the properly non-rational and quasi-rational parts. For a deeper look at this issue, see Deslauriers (2001). For our purposes either option amounts to the same thing: the moral virtues are not excellences of the strictly rational part. Taylor (2006), pp. 193-94 argues that this represents a form of Platonism that Aristotle rejects, and so reads Aristotle as merely reporting popular opinion here. But it would be odd for Aristotle to report popular opinion and then immediately follow it with a "as has been said" sentence reporting his own view.

³⁰⁷ See Garver (1989) for a more detailed look at this claim.

The first way that virtue is a mean is simplest: each virtue exists on a continuum of character traits, where the excess and the deficient on that scale will be the vices, and the middle state will be the virtue (1107^a2-7, 1108^b11-18).³⁰⁸ Aristotle illustrates this principle by several examples in *NE* II.7: courage is the mean state between cowardice and recklessness, temperance the mean state between self-indulgence and insensibility, liberality the mean between prodigality and stinginess, and so on.

Though virtues are not themselves feelings, they centrally involve feelings, in particular pleasure and pain. Indeed, pleasure and pain are so important to moral virtue that Aristotle concludes that “the whole matter (τὴν πᾶσαν πραγματείαν) is necessarily about them” (1105^a5-6; cf. 1104^b8-9, ^b13-18, 1105^a10-12). Pleasure and pain provide the foundation for the many more specific feelings that virtue involves, such as appetite, anger, fear, envy, joy, friendship, etc. (1105^b21-23).³⁰⁹ Each virtue will have its own feeling with which it is especially concerned, e.g. courage with fear and temperance with bodily pleasure (1104^b3-8, 1107^a33-^b6). Pleasure and pain are also the central mechanism by which we develop our character traits (1104^b13-16). And perhaps most importantly, pleasure and pain are a sign of good character, since the good person feels pleasure in their virtuous actions (1104^b3-13).

These virtuous actions themselves fall in a mean in terms of their consequences, in that they aim to promote the right amount of a particular good in an appropriate way.

³⁰⁸ For a defense of the position that the relevant *hexeis* lies in a mean, see Brown (2014), Gottlieb (2009), pp. 19-37, and Hursthouse (2006). See also Bostock (2000), pp. 38-45, Broadie (1991), pp. 95-103, Curzer (1996), and Taylor (2006), pp. 104-06, 110-12.

³⁰⁹ On the role of emotions in Aristotle’s ethics, see Cooper (1996), Fortenbaugh (2002), pp. 9-22, Sherman (1997), pp. 24-98.

Aristotle specifies that virtuous actions involve not just *what* the virtuous agent would do, but *how* they would do them. The ‘how’ mainly involves the feelings the agent has when acting (1105^b5-12, 1106^b16-21). This includes not only the amount of feeling, but also numerous other factors like the feeling at the right time, at the right objects and people, with the right motives, and so on (1106^b18-24). The ‘what’ will involve the same features, but in terms of execution rather than feeling, because virtue is concerned with both feeling and action (1104^b13-16, 1106^b16-18, 1108^b16-19, 1109^a20-4). Hence there will be an excess, defect, and mean for particular actions along these various dimensions, and virtuous actions aim for the mean (1106^b24-28). Aristotle stresses both of these points most clearly when discussing liberality: “The liberal person will give for the sake of the noble, and rightly; for he will give to the people he should, and as much as he should, and when he should, and will give rightly in as many other respects that accompany rightness. And he will do these with pleasure or without pain” (1120^a23-27). Aristotle goes on in the rest of the chapter (*NE* IV.1) to specify what sort of considerations most matter in liberal actions: where the money comes from, to whom it is given, how much should be given, etc.

This emphasis on how virtuous action is done brings us to the fourth and final part of Aristotle’s definition of virtue: the mean is “determined by reason and what determination the *phronimos* would give”. The basic idea here is something we’ve already seen in Aristotle’s discussion of pleasure: the good person is the measure of what is truly pleasant (1099^a13-16, 1176^b24-27), and likewise the good person is the measure of what is virtuous. In comparing the truly good with the apparent good, Aristotle argues

The good person judges each thing correctly, and in each case the truth is apparent to him (ὁ σπουδαῖος γὰρ ἕκαστα κρίνει ὀρθῶς, καὶ ἐν ἑκάστοις τᾷληθές αὐτῷ φαίνεται.). For things are good and pleasant according to each particular *hexis*, and a good person perhaps differs most in that in each case the truth is visible to them, as he is a standard and measure (κανὼν καὶ μέτρον) of them. (1113^a29-34)

This is a sentiment Aristotle repeats throughout the corpus (e.g. cf. 1166^a12-13, 1176^a17-19).³¹⁰ The obvious question, then, is what exactly the good person judges, that is, what boundaries are set by reason to mark the mean off from its corresponding extremes. Unfortunately, Aristotle thinks that *politikē* cannot provide the answers to such questions. As we saw in §2.2, *politikē* is an imprecise science, and can only provide a theory in outline. Partly this is because the audience needs to know only so much to be effective citizens and legislators. But it is also partly because the subject matter itself is not determinate. (1103^b35-04^a5). Aristotle says instead that “those acting must in every case examine what is appropriate (τὰ πρὸς τὸν καιρὸν), just as it is for medicine and navigation” (1104^a8-10).

This analysis may be a bit surprising, since Aristotle tells us that only a few lines before “Let it be assumed that to act according to right reason (τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον) is common”, and that he will later discuss what right reason is and how it is related to the virtues (1103^b31-4). But Aristotle’s comments in the rest of the chapter suggest that “right reason” is not going to take the form of general principles of moral action, but rather the judgements of the good person.³¹¹ This may be way he gives little detail about right or wrong in specific cases, and instead extensively discusses how to become virtuous (e.g. in

³¹⁰ See Taylor (2006), pp. 161-63.

³¹¹ See also Broadie (1991), pp. 71-74.

most of *NE* II.1-4). Aristotle also goes out of his way to argue against simple ways of determining the mean (e.g. picking the strictly intermediate, 1106^a26-^b7), and instead stresses the many ways in which this task is difficult, for example in arguing in *NE* II.8 that in some cases the mean and one of the extremes are hard to distinguish and that the mean for any given virtue will vary in closeness to the extremes when compared to another virtue. Aristotle concludes his discussion of virtue in general in *NE* II.9 by stressing that “Therefore to be good is difficult work (διὸ καὶ ἔργον ἐστὶ σπουδαῖον εἶναι). For it is difficult to find the mean in each case, for instance it is not for everyone to find the center of a circle, but for he who knows” (1109^a24-26; cf. 1126^a31-^b10). Aristotle responds to this worry in the rest of the chapter not by giving a rough approximation of a formula for determining the mean, but instead by giving advice for how to aim for the mean given that we don’t know precisely where it is.³¹²

In the remaining books of the *NE*, Aristotle discusses a number of virtues in detail, in particular friendship (*NE* VIII-IX), courage (*NE* III.6-9) and temperance (*NE* III.10-12), but also a number of other virtues (roughly nine in addition). But the details of these virtues need not concern us here, especially given the variability that occurs among and between them. So instead we can skip ahead to *NE* X.6-8 and Aristotle’s evaluation of moral virtue’s candidacy of the chief good via the seven criteria for *eudaimonia*, referring back to discussion of the particular virtues to fill in details as necessary.

³¹² On which see, *inter alia*, Burnyeat (1980), Kosman (1980) and Lawrence (2011). We will return to right reason and the imprecision of ethics in §5.

§2.5.2 – Moral Virtue and the Criteria for *Eudaimonia*

We saw in §2.2 that there are three leading candidates for the chief good: pleasure, moral virtue, and contemplation. Pleasure has already been eliminated from the competition. We can now look to moral virtue, to see how well it meets the seven criteria for *eudaimonia*.

Before we begin, we need to fend off a bad argument in favor of moral virtue as *eudaimonia*. Aristotle frequently refers to *eudaimonia* as a life of virtue (ἀρετή, e.g. 1177^a1-2), and he frequently refers to ‘virtue’ without the qualification ‘moral’. This might lead us to think that when Aristotle says *eudaimonia* is a life of virtue, he means moral virtue. But this would be a mistake, for two reasons. First, the term ‘virtue’ can be quite broad, referring for example to the excellences of animals or instruments (1106^a15-24), the sort of thing which has been explicitly excluded from an investigation of *eudaimonia*. Second, even when referring exclusively to humans, there are two kinds of virtues, moral and intellectual (1103^a3-10). So we cannot infer directly from claims about *eudaimonia* being virtuous that it is a life of moral virtue in particular. We will therefore have to look more closely at each criterion for happiness.

The first criterion for *eudaimonia* is finality. This criterion, recall, was characterized as follows:

Finality: The chief good is a final (i.e. autotelic) end. It is chosen only for its own sake, and does not depend on any further end for its value. If there is more than one autotelic end, the chief good will be the one that is most worth choosing for its own sake.

So, our first question is whether virtuous activity is autotelic or only allotelic (i.e. chosen both for itself and for the sake of something else), and if it is autotelic, if it is more final than other autotelic goods.

Given that Aristotle has said little about how to determine which of multiple autotelic goods is most final, we can be grateful that we do not need to decide this issue. This is because moral virtue is not autotelic at all, but rather only allotelic. Aristotle gives a lengthy argument for this position:

This activity alone appears to be appreciated (*ἀγαπᾶσθαι*) for its own sake. For while nothing results from contemplation apart from itself, beside the action [itself] we secure more or less from the actions (*ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν πρακτικῶν ἢ πλεῖον ἢ ἔλαττον περιποιούμεθα παρὰ τὴν πρᾶξιν*). And *eudaimonia* seems to be found in leisure. For we do unpleasurably things in order that we may have leisure, and we make war in order to acquire peace. So the activity of the practical virtues is found in political or military affairs, and actions involving these things appear to be unpleasurably, and military actions are completely (for no one chooses to make war for the sake of war...), and the activity of the statesman is also unpleasurably, and in addition to itself political action secures power and honor and indeed happiness for himself and his fellow citizens, which is different from the political activity, and which we clearly seek as being something different (*ἐτέραν οὐσαν τῆς πολιτικῆς, ἣν καὶ ζητοῦμεν δῆλον ὡς ἐτέραν οὐσαν*). (1177^b1-15)³¹³

Aristotle's argument here is surprisingly stark: there is only one autotelic good, and it is not moral activity. This is because all moral activity is at least partially valued for whatever

³¹³ The Greek here reflects claims that are a bit stronger than I think Aristotle really means. When Aristotle says that only contemplation is appreciated for its own sake, it suggests that everything else is merely heterotelic rather than autotelic. The same is suggested when he says a few lines later that military and political activities "are pursued for some [further] end and are not chosen for their own sakes" (*τέλους τινὸς ἐφίενται καὶ οὐ δι' αὐτὰς αἰρεταί εἰσιν*, 1177^b18). But in both cases, we can read Aristotle in more a consistent and charitable way. Because he is only concerned with the difference between allotelic and autotelic ends here, Aristotle can drop some qualifications in order to highlight the relevant differences. What we would mean, then, is 'only contemplation is appreciated *only* for its own sake' and 'military and political activity are not chosen *only* for their own sakes'. We should recall that Aristotle does not explicitly give the relevant qualifications every time he discusses finality in *NE* I.7, so dropping them here is not out of character. Cf. Ericksen (1976), pp. 105-08.

external goods it aims at beyond itself.³¹⁴ Military action may be intrinsically valuable insofar as it is courageous and therefore exhibits a human excellence vis-à-vis fear and the protection of one's family and friends. But precisely because it aims at the protection of one's family and friends, this kind of activity has a further end beyond itself.³¹⁵ It is therefore chosen both for itself and for something else. Political activity will have the same features: we choose it both for its own sake (Aristotle does not specify the relevant virtue, but ambition or friendship are reasonable candidates), and we also choose it for the sake of power or honor. And, apparently, we choose these virtues for the sake of *eudaimonia* itself, not as a constituent, but as a further end.³¹⁶ Aristotle's conclusion is emphatic: on whatever

³¹⁴ I think Bostock (2000) misreads Aristotle's argument here. He interprets Aristotle as arguing that virtuous actions benefit the agent and benefit others, while contemplation has only one source of value, and that this view commits Aristotle to a kind of consequentialism where virtue is only valuable insofar as it promotes contemplation (pp. 193-94; cf. Reeve (2012), pp. 236-38, in an unfortunate devolution from his view cited below). But Aristotle's point here is not that virtue is instrumentally valuable for contemplating; rather, Aristotle argues that virtues aim for the possession of some external good beyond themselves, and *that* makes them allotelic. As for the point that we choose moral activity for the sake of *eudaimonia*, it is important to remember our distinction from §2.2 between different ways of thinking of *eudaimonia*. Aristotle uses the term to refer both to the chief good and to the life organized by the pursuit of the chief good. What Aristotle means here is that we choose morally virtuous action in order to make a leisurely life possible, and that this life can then be directed toward the chief good. That is, there is a subtle but important difference between 'we choose moral virtue in order to make possible the good life, whatever it is' and 'we choose moral virtue as instrumentally valuable for contemplation'. See Kraut (1989), pp. 35-39, Reeve (1992), pp. 183-84 for more on this topic.

³¹⁵ See Whiting (2002a) for a thorough discussion of this issue, though note that she brackets considerations of how the issue is affected by Aristotle's endorsement of intellectualism in *NE* X.6-8 (p. 282). See also Nightingale (2004), pp. 211-216 for a helpful discussion of the proper translation of *περαιοιούμεθα* and its theoretical implications of 'producing' versus simply 'aiming'. This should remind us of Aristotle's remark in *NE* I.1 that, when an activity has a product beyond itself, the product is more valuable than the activity (1094^a4-6).

³¹⁶ To revisit a point from §2.3.1, this does not mean that every instance of choosing something for the sake of something else is instrumental. But it does appear to be what Aristotle has in mind here: we choose war in order to bring about peace, not as a constituent of peace, and likewise we choose political action to bring about happiness rather than as a constituent.

grounds we choose virtuous activity, we choose it as something distinct from *eudaimonia*.³¹⁷

One may worry here that Aristotle's argument is insufficient, since it has only canvassed two moral virtues, and two which have corresponding external goods that are easily seen to be external to the activity itself. But Aristotle has a response to this worry³¹⁸. He points out that moral and political activity "excel in nobility and grandness" compared to the other virtues (κάλλει καὶ μεγέθει προέχουσιν, 1177^b16-17). So if the best two virtues are allotelic, then the remaining virtues will fare no better. Moreover, the other moral virtues each have their own external good that they correspond to: physical pleasure for temperance, friends for the social virtues like friendship or wit, money for liberality and magnificence, honor for pride and ambition, and so on.³¹⁹ So even if Aristotle doesn't specify the relevant external end for each virtue, we know that there will be one. It follows that moral virtue is not autotelic, and therefore fails to meet the finality criterion.

Our next criterion for *eudaimonia* is self-sufficiency, which we defined in the following way:

Self-Sufficiency: The chief good is a self-sufficient good. It is sufficient on its own to make a life containing only the necessary goods a life worth choosing.

³¹⁷ Virtuous actions are said to be thought to be autotelic at 1176^b6-9, but since (i) Aristotle says the same thing about amusement in the next line (1176^b9-10), which we know ends up being incorrect, and (ii) Aristotle repeatedly argues the opposite in *NE* X.7-8, we must read these lines as merely reporting a view rather than expressing Aristotle's own. Cf. Bostock (2000), p. 191.

³¹⁸ See also Lear (2004), pp. 184-88.

³¹⁹ See Curzer (2012), pp. 19-24.
Reeve (1992), pp. 167-83.

Unlike finality, for this criterion we are not looking for a unique candidate: it is possible that more than one good could make life worth choosing by itself. But, like finality, it turns out that the morally virtuous life is not self-sufficient.

Aristotle gives two arguments for this point, one in *NE* X.7 and one in X.8. The first argument reads as follows:

And the self-sufficiency we spoke about would apply most of all to contemplation. For while the wise person and the just person and all remaining people will have need of the necessities of life, once they are sufficiently equipped with these things the just person will have additional need of people to whom and with whom they can act justly, and likewise the temperate person and the brave person and each of the others, but the wise person is able to contemplate by himself, and even more so to the extent that he is wiser. Perhaps [he can contemplate] better if he has helpers, but he is most self-sufficient all the same. (1177^a27-^b1)

Aristotle's second argument is lengthier but substantively similar:

[The activity of *nous*] would appear also to have need of little external equipment, or less than moral virtue needs. For grant both a need of necessities, and to the same degree, even if the statesman works harder regarding the body and however many similar things; it would be a small difference. But regarding their activities they will differ significantly. For in the case of the liberal person there will be need of money for doing liberal deeds, and in the case of the just person also for reimbursements...and in the case of the brave person [there will be need of] power, if they are to accomplish any of their deeds in accordance with virtue, and of the temperate person [there will be need of] opportunities; for how else will it be clear that he, or any of the others, are this sort? (1178^a23-34)

Aristotle goes on to argue that both the action and the choice are important for virtue, which entails that morally virtuous activity requires the external goods in addition to the right beliefs and feelings, and indeed that the better the actions are the more external goods will be needed (1178^a34-^b3).

The first thing to note about Aristotle's argument here is a way in which moral virtue is no worse than the competition. Aristotle is insistent that any human, no matter how excellent, will fail to be fully self-sufficient in the strongest sense, because human nature requires a number of external goods to function at all. In our passages here Aristotle quickly concedes the point, but he returns to it later in *NE* X.8, arguing

Even so, in being human one will need external prosperity. For our nature is not self-sufficient with respect to contemplation, but rather needs bodily health and the presence of sustenance and the remaining services. Even so, we shouldn't think that the happy person will need many and great things, even if it is not possible to be blessed without external goods. For neither self-sufficiency nor action are found in excess, but rather one is able to do noble things without ruling land and sea; for it is possible for one to act in accordance with virtue from modest means. (1178^b33-79^a6)

This matches what we saw in establishing the self-sufficiency criterion in §2.3.2. When Aristotle discussed self-sufficiency there, he was quick to argue that self-sufficiency did not mean full independence from the need for external goods, that is, that a person can be sufficient in themselves for happiness. Rather, he was thinking of self-sufficiency in a different way, as a property of a particular good possessed by a person in the context of also possession the external goods necessary for a human life of any kind. Here in *NE* X.8 Aristotle reassures us that the need for these external goods is relatively small.

So what we need to focus on instead is whether a particular good, in this case virtuous activity, can by itself make a life equipped with the necessary external goods worth choosing. But we have to remember a distinction between necessary external goods and other kinds of goods. For instance, Aristotle mentions "good birth, good children, or beauty" (1099^b2-3) as external goods which are presumably not necessary for human life

as such. But good birth is apparently a precondition for magnificence (1122^b29-32) and magnanimity (1124^a20-26), and may in fact be a prerequisite for the proper habituation of any virtue (1179^b7-10, cf. 1095^b4-6). Good children will be necessary for being a good parent (1158^b21-23, 1163^b18-21, 1165^b13-22), a key component of friendship (1161^a15-18, 1161^b16-33) and, as we saw in §2.3.4, a bulwark against misfortune. And beauty is cited with reference to magnanimity (1123^b6-8), friendship (1167^a18-21) and possibly temperance (1178^a33), while ugliness is cited as something that is at least sometimes morally blameworthy (1114^a21-25).³²⁰ So there appear to be at least some virtues that involve external goods that are not necessary for human life as such, and insofar as moral virtues depend on these unnecessary goods, they will make moral activity not self-sufficient.

A defender of moral virtue might respond that this story is not comprehensive: other virtues involve necessary goods, and these goods will not be bracketed off when considering whether virtuous activity makes a life worth choosing on its own. Aristotle call these the “tools through which [we do noble actions], through friends and wealth and political power” (1099^a33-^b2), and it should be no surprise that in *NE* X.8 these are just the external goods that Aristotle says that the happy person needs, though in moderate

³²⁰ Cf. Botros (1987), pp. 113-118, Cashen (2012), pp. 13-17. See Cooper (1985), pp. 182-83 for the relationship between beauty and temperance. Note that when discussing magnanimity, Aristotle does not directly say that the pride person is beautiful, but only draws an analogy between beauty and pride. But given the list of things the magnanimous person takes pride in, including physical attributes like a low voice and slow gait (1125^a12-16), the implication is that it would be difficult to be magnanimous while ugly.

amounts. If this is right, then moral virtue could still be self-sufficient, so long as we focus on the right virtues.³²¹

There are three things to say in response here. First, since Aristotle says rather explicitly that moral virtue is not self-sufficient, we should prefer an interpretation that is consistent with this point. And it is worth noting that Aristotle explicitly mentions wealth and political power as the sort of goods the reliance on which prevents moral virtue from being self-sufficient.³²² Second, even if we grant that these external goods should be included in a self-sufficient life, it doesn't follow that activity directed toward these goods makes life choiceworthy. There are a few reasons for thinking that, despite being valued for its own sake, a life of moral virtue isn't choiceworthy as such. Aristotle makes several remarks that suggest (though perhaps not conclusively show) that a virtuous life isn't choiceworthy on its own. And Aristotle argues that it would be "odd" (ἄτοπον) for us to choose the life of something other than ourselves, which he takes the morally virtuous life to be (1178^a3-4), and in general Aristotle seems to think that a life without contemplation would be unchoiceworthy as such.³²³

Second, the gods, who *qua* divine set the standards for our praise and honor, do not engage in morally virtuous activity, which Aristotle says is "trivial and unworthy of the

³²¹ A different way of putting this worry is that Aristotle has shifted his conception of self-sufficiency between *NE* I and X, such that moral virtue fails the second conception but not the first. Brown (2014) and Curzer (1990) raise just this worry. There are two ways of responding to this charge: one is to show directly that the criteria are the same and are being used in the same way, the other is to apply to additional features (e.g. cross-references) to show that *NE* I and X are too closely connected to advocate different views. The bulk of this section is devoted to the first response, to which I will return in §5.2.1; I will address the second in §5.1.

³²² Friendship deserves to be discussed on its own, so I'll return to it below.

³²³ Why this is so has to do with other criteria for *eudaimonia*, in particular functional activity and divinity, which we will discuss below.

gods” (μικρὰ καὶ ἀνάξια θεῶν, 1178^b17-18). And because the value of moral virtue is at least partly dependent on external sources (because it is only allotelic), a life of this activity without those further goods (i.e. virtue alone) would not be choiceworthy. For instance, Aristotle argues that it would be “completely bloodthirsty” to go to war simply for the sake of being at war (1077^b9-12). But war is the only occasion for practicing properly courageous action (1115^a24-31). Hence courageous action which fails to secure the peace for which it aims would not be choiceworthy. The same would apply to other virtuous activity: spending lavishly without securing public good would not be magnificent, wishing people well for their own sake without it being reciprocated and living together would not be friendly, and so on. These remarks do not show that virtuous activity is never valuable, but that its value is essentially dependent on other factors, such that virtuous activity isn’t choiceworthy in strict isolation.

Third, there is a less speculative way of securing the conclusion that morally virtuous activity is not self-sufficient. Rather than questioning whether this activity would be good in isolation, we can ask whether it is even possible to have it in isolation. The answer, I think, is ‘no’, and this is precisely what Aristotle is driving at in emphasizing the dependence of morally virtuous activity on external goods. Aristotle says that the completion (τὸ δὴ τέλειον) of virtuous activity requires both choice and action (1178^a34-^b1), and that when it comes to action many more things are needed than for choice (1178^b1-3).³²⁴ This shows two things: action is a conceptual part of morally virtuous activity, and

³²⁴ On which see Ericksen (1976), pp. 149-50.

action is itself dependent on external goods. So, as Aristotle says, you cannot act justly without money to repay a debt and a creditor to pay it to, or courageous without a city to defend. But this means that virtuous activity cannot exist in isolation: it cannot make life worth living by itself, because it cannot be a part of life by itself. It requires external goods to exist at all, and the amount and kind of those goods will be more than what is required for living a human life and which are therefore automatically included in the choiceworthy life. If this is right, then we can sidestep concerns about the choiceworthiness of moral virtue in isolation from other goods, because moral virtue can't exist in isolation to be evaluated in the first place.

There is one more objection to address here. Aristotle argues in *NE* IX.9 that the self-sufficient person will have friends, and this can be read as suggesting that moral virtue and self-sufficiency are compatible after all. But in fact the opposite is true: the way Aristotle justifies friendship in a self-sufficient life is markedly different from the way virtuous actions are dependent on external goods, in a way that confirms that morally virtuous activity is not self-sufficient.

The argument of *NE* IX.9 is notoriously difficult to decipher, and there is much more to be said about it than we can do justice to here.³²⁵ For now, however, we can focus on one particularly relevant point, which is admirably argued by Whiting (2006):

Note that the conclusion of IX.9 is open to stronger and weaker interpretations. For *deēsei* can be taken either ... as expressing a hard “must” or (as I suggest) as expressing a somewhat softer “should” (as forms of *dei* are often taken in surrounding contexts). If Aristotle is following

³²⁵ I discuss this argument in detail in Green (2015), and discuss the argument's crucial premise, that the friend is another self, in Green (2010). See also Bostock (2000), pp. 179-84, Kosman (2014), Pakaluk (1998), pp. 202-317, and Stern-Gillet (1995) Ch. 6.

Socrates' lead, and seeking to establish the *possibility* of a kind of love that is based not in the subject's needs but rather in her appreciation of the object's positive qualities, then "should" may better capture his thought than does "must" or "needs." ...

The *eudaimōn* agent *should* have excellent friends, but *not* because she *needs* to. She *should* have them in the same sense in which she *should* contemplate or engage in virtuous action. Each of these activities is an *appropriate* response to ways the world is: contemplation is an appropriate response to the wonders of nature or the beauty of mathematical truth; and virtuous action is an appropriate response to (for example) the needs of others.³²⁶

In other words, the way in which the happy (and therefore self-sufficient) person will "need" friends is different from the way morally virtuous activity "needs" external goods. In the latter case, morally virtuous activity cannot exist without external goods. But the happy person, by engaging in self-love, can get the value of friendship without depending on external goods. Friends are valuable not because they contribute something the would-be happy person lacks (if this were so, the happy person wouldn't be happy in the first place, and so the puzzle wouldn't arise; cf. 1169^b8-22). Rather, they are valuable because they are further instances of a good thing; as Aristotle puts it, "If existence is choiceworthy in itself for the blessed person, being good and pleasant in its nature, and the existence of

³²⁶ Whiting (2006), pp. 297. Whiting's entire discussion is worth consulting, especially pp. 283-287 and 294-299. But I must register one point of disagreement. Whiting (along with most other commentators) reads *NE* IX.9 as suggesting that the good person cannot contemplate their own actions, and will therefore have to observe the actions of others (pp. 295-96). But Aristotle argues earlier that the good person *can* contemplate their own actions, writing "memories of what he has done are enjoyable (*epiterpeis*), and his hopes for the future are good. Also, he is well-stocked in thought with things to contemplate" (1166^a24-27). So the good person will be even less dependent on friends than Whiting thinks. But her basic point stands: the value of friends is grounded in their intrinsic value (as I would put it, *qua* other selves and therefore exhibiting the same value in living, perceiving and thinking that the good person exhibits in herself), not in the dependence the good person has on a friend to be good.

a friend is comparable (παραπλήσιον), then the friend would be among the choiceworthy things” (1170^b14-17).³²⁷

What this shows is that, while self-sufficiency does not preclude having friends, neither is friendship something that demonstrates the self-sufficiency of moral virtue. The self-sufficient will have friends, but not because their happiness-constituted activity is dependent on friends the way morally virtuous activity is dependent on external goods. Rather, friends are simply intrinsically valuable, and will therefore occupy a role more like pleasure in *eudaimonia* than in wealth or political power. This is not to say that friends cannot also play an instrumental role in morally virtuous activity, but to the extent that friends are instrumental they make morally virtuous action dependent rather than self-sufficient.³²⁸ And therefore friendship cannot serve to salvage the self-sufficiency of morally virtuous action from Aristotle’s arguments against it.

The next criterion for *eudaimonia* after self-sufficiency is functional activity, which we characterized as follows:

Functional Activity: The chief good is the excellent expression of the human function, i.e. psychic activity of the rational part of the soul according to that part’s best excellence.

³²⁷ Things are actually a bit worse for the proponent of self-sufficient moral virtue even than this. Friends are valuable because they are other selves and therefore an object of self-love, the basis of friendship (as Aristotle argues in *NE* IX.4 and IX.8). But the proper of self-love, Aristotle argues, is *nous* (1168^b34-69^a3). So the value of a friend is grounded in their *nous*. And the value of *nous* is grounded in its power of thought (1170^a13-21). So the value of a friend is ultimately grounded in intellectual activity, and therefore not morally virtuous activity. We will return to role of *nous* in Aristotle’s argument below and in §3.

³²⁸ Not to mention, since friends are to be valued for their own sakes rather than for their instrumental benefits (1166^a5-10), the instrumental value of friendship will not be *qua* friend, but rather *qua* instrument, just as the wording of 1099^a33-^b2 suggests.

To ascertain whether morally virtuous activity is our functional activity (i.e. the characteristic activity that expresses our nature), we need to determine whether moral virtue is the best activity of the rational part of the soul.

Aristotle's argument that morally virtuous activity is not our functional activity comes in two stages. First, he argues that a different activity is instead, an argument we will examine in §2.6. He concludes this argument by summarizing his view of functional activity:

What was said earlier fits [what we say] now. For what is characteristic of each thing by nature is best and most pleasant for each (τὸ γὰρ οἰκεῖον ἐκάστῳ τῇ φύσει κράτιστον καὶ ἡδιστόν ἐστιν ἐκάστῳ). And for humans this is the life in accordance with *nous*, since this is most human. Therefore this sort of life will be happiest. (1178^a4-8)

The life according to *nous* is the contemplative life, as Aristotle has argued earlier in the chapter, and is contrasted with the life of moral virtue. In particular, *nous* is most human, i.e. the thing that is most characteristic of our nature.³²⁹ So given that humans have one functional activity, and contemplation is it, our functional activity can't be moral virtue.

Aristotle's second argument is a bit more complex. Briefly, the argument is that moral virtue is the virtuous activity of the wrong part of the soul. Aristotle writes,

Activities in accordance with [moral virtue] are human (ἀνθρωπικαί). For just things and brave things and all the others we do toward one another we do in accordance with virtues, monitoring what is fitting (τὸ πρέπον) in each case of contracts and money and actions and every feeling. For all these things appear to be human (ταῦτα δ' εἶναι φαίνεται πάντα ἀνθρωπικά). And indeed some of them seem to arise from the body, and virtue of character seems in many ways to be bound to (πολλὰ συνφκειῶσθαι) to feelings. And even *phronesis* is yoked to (συνέζευκται) virtue of character, and this to *phronesis*, since the *archai* of *phronesis* are in accordance with moral

³²⁹ We will return to this point below.

virtues and rightness of the moral virtues are in accordance with *phronesis*. And these again would be joined together (συνηρημέναι) with feelings involving the compound (περὶ τὸ σύνθετον). But the virtues of the compound are human (ἄνθρωπικαί). And so too is the life and the happiness in accordance with these. (1178^a9-22)

There are two components to this argument, one of which is easily misunderstood. Aristotle calls the moral virtues human, and says that a life in accordance with these virtues would be a *eudaimōn* life. This suggests that moral virtue would be our functional activity after all, since happy human activity would quite naturally appear to be excellent functional activity. However this is not quite what Aristotle actually thinks, appearances to the contrary. We'll address this issue in the next section.

The second component to Aristotle's argument, however, we can address now. In short, moral virtues are the virtues of the quasi-rational part of the soul, not the rational part. As we saw in the last section, Aristotle explicitly identifies the moral virtues as the virtues of the irrational part of the soul (1117^b23-24), by which he means that quasi-rational part that does not have reason in the strict sense but shares in reason by its ability to listen to and obey reason's commands (1102^b29-31, 1103^a4-10). In obeying the commands of reason, the quasi-rational part of the soul (i.e. appetite) in the virtuous person desires in accordance with reason's judgments (1113^a11-12, 1119^b13-16). And since the quasi-rational part of the soul is the seat of feeling, not only desire but also pleasure and pain, the way that Aristotle discusses moral virtue in *NE* X.8 makes it quite clear that this is the part of the soul he has in mind, for instance when saying that virtue is bound to feelings, specifically the feelings of the compound, i.e. the human body and the irrational parts of

the soul.³³⁰ But this means that moral virtue is not the activity of the rational part of the soul, or at least not its best activity and therefore not its *teleion* excellence.³³¹

After functional activity we can discuss stability, the fourth criterion for *eudaimonia*. Stability is characterized as follows:

Stability: The chief good is stable. It makes a good life resistant to misfortune, and it enables its possessor to become and remain happy throughout life.

Stability, like self-sufficiency, depends on the extent to which an activity is dependent on external goods, and so we should not be surprised that moral virtue fares no better on this criterion than it did on self-sufficiency. Before we focused on the dependence that particular virtues had on the goods they promote in order to be performed at all; now, we will focus more broadly on virtue and external goods in general.

We can begin by returning to some passages we've already mentioned in discussing other criteria. Aristotle writes,

It is debated whether *prohairesis* or action is more determinative (κυριώτερον) of virtue. But it is clear that the completion (τὸ δὴ τέλειον) [of virtue] would be found in both. But with respect to actions one needs many things, and to the extent that the actions are grander and more noble, [one will need] more things. (1178^a34-^b1)

³³⁰ Cf. Stewart (1892), p. 452 (though I think Stewart errs in the preceding pages by reading 'τὸ σύνθετον' as 'the concrete entity', i.e. the compound of form and matter, rather than the more natural 'body and parts of the soul'. Though of course Aristotle does think of the body as the form of the soul, he does not defend, or from what I can tell even allude to, this view in the undisputed *NE* books. Cf. Eriksen (1976), pp. 139-47). There is an obvious response here, that *phronesis* is an intellectual virtue and therefore Aristotle is still talking about the rational part of the soul. This response relies on Aristotle's treatment of *phronesis* in *AE* II, which we cannot uncritically apply to the *NE*. Aristotle does cite *phronesis* as an intellectual virtue at 1103^a6, but this is in fact an outlier for how Aristotle treats *phronesis* in the undisputed books, and in general the issue is more complicated than one might expect. We'll discuss this point in detail in §2.5.

³³¹ What, then, does Aristotle mean when he says that moral virtue is human characterizes a human *eudaimonia*? We will answer that question in the next section. The short answer is that 'human' is ambiguous in Aristotle, and in this passage it refers to the merely human biological animal rather than the person, which is characterized instead by *nous* alone.

This passage mirrors a distinction we made when discussing stability: *eudaimonia* involves two features, one of which is resistant to fortune and one of which is not. The feature that is resistant to fortune is psychic excellence, which is internal and cannot be lost once attained. But *eudaimonia* is also dependent on external goods, which are not resistant to fortune. Since moral activity consists in moral action, moral activity will be dependent on these external goods, and indeed more dependent to the extent that the actions are virtuous. Given that virtue is defined as a *prohairetic hexis*, we might think that the fact that *prohairesis* is involved in moral action would suggest that moral virtue would be the stable part of action corresponding to the internal excellence that is resistant to fortune. But this is only half true: *prohairesis* is a part of the internal excellence of the soul, but not the part corresponding to moral virtue. *Prohairesis*, as we saw in the last section, is the judgment of the rational part of the soul (i.e. *nous*) which causes a desire in accordance with that judgment. So while it involves the quasi-rational part of the soul, strictly speaking it is a function of the rational part to choose action. This is evident even in the definition of virtue: it is a *prohairetic hexis* of the quasi-rational part of the soul, determined by the good person's reason issuing from the rational part.

Aristotle contrasts the dependence of virtuous action on external goods with the independence of contemplation, arguing that they are “hindrances” (ἐμπόδιά, 1178^b4) to this activity. This leads him to argue, in a passage we discussed above, that happiness doesn't require an excess of external goods (1179^a1-5). He stresses instead that one can act well with “moderate” means (ἀπὸ μετρίων, 1179^a5, μετρίως 1179^a10-11), citing Solon as

an authority on this point (1179^a9) just as he did when discussing stability. He does mention acting in accordance with virtue in this passage (1179^a5-6), but not in a way that helps moral virtue meet the stability criterion. For here, as elsewhere when discussing external goods, Aristotle distinguishes between constituents and preconditions. The external goods that render moral virtue unstable are preconditions of human happiness, and since they hinder what constitutes happiness, we are lucky that we do not need much of them to be happy.³³²

Our fifth criterion for *eudaimonia* after stability is honorability. This is perhaps the simplest of the seven criteria, and is formulated as follows:

Honor: The chief good is the subject of honor rather than mere praise.

It is fairly clear from the outset that moral virtue will not fare well against this criterion. For even when introducing it, Aristotle argues that we praise “we praise the just person and the brave person, and the good person in general, and indeed moral virtue in general, because of their actions and deeds” (1101^b15-16) and then concludes “If praise is of these sorts of things, it is clear that it is not praise that is of the best things, but rather something grander and better.... For no one praises *eudaimonia* the way they do justice, but rather call it ‘blessed’ on the grounds that it is something more divine and better” (1101^b21-27).

³³² One other small but relevant point worth making. In discussing stability in *NE* I.9-11, Aristotle argues that the reason why psychic excellence isn’t lost is because it isn’t forgotten, and this is because “the most honorable are the most stable because blessed people spend their life in these activities most and most continuously” (αἱ τιμιώταται μονιμώτεροι διὰ τὸ μάλιστα καὶ συνεχέστατα καταζῆν ἐν αὐταῖς τοῦς μακαρίους, 1100^b15-16). And in X.7 he argues that contemplative activity “is, moreover, the most continuous. For we are able to contemplate continuously, more than we can do any sort of action” (ἔτι δὲ συνεχεστάτη· θεωρεῖν [τε] γὰρ δυνάμεθα συνεχῶς μᾶλλον ἢ πράττειν ὅτιοῦν, 1170^a21-22). This kind of stability refers to a property of the activity itself, rather than the life characterized by that activity, but the two are connected in what Aristotle clearly takes to be an important way.

So already we see that moral virtue is not good enough to warrant honor, but only qualifies for praise instead.

Aristotle only mentions praise explicitly once in *NE* X.7-8, when he says it would be absurd to praise the gods for being temperate, since they lack bad appetites (1178^b16). And while he mentions honor several times (e.g. 1178^a1, ^b31, 1179^a27), it is always with reference to contemplation rather than moral virtue.³³³ But moral virtue is marked as (merely) praiseworthy throughout the corpus, where it is applied to courage (1117^a33-34), temperance (implied by 1175^b28-29), liberality (1119^b23-25, 1120^a16), magnanimity (1125^a6-9), proper ambition (1125^b20-21), mildness (1125^b31-33), friendliness (1126^b17-19), truthfulness (1127^a30-32, ^b6-7), friendship (1173^b31-74a1), modesty (1108^a31-34), and to virtuous activity in general (1105^b28-06^a2, 1106^b24-27, 1108^a14-16, 1109^a28-30, 1109^b30-35, 1110^a19-33, 1169^a6-8, 1169^a30-b1). So moral virtue fails this criterion for the chief good rather soundly.

Moral virtue fares a bit better with the next criterion, pleasantness. This criterion was formulated as follows:

Pleasure: The chief good is pleasant. It involves pleasure of the soul associated with excellent psychic activity, and is pleasant naturally and in itself.

³³³ We might also count 1100^b15-6, where Aristotle says the most stable activity, which the blessed spend their lives doing, is also the most honorable. This activity ends up being contemplation, though we don't know that at this point in the *NE*. Aristotle does occasionally mention honor in other contexts, but when doing so it is almost always in reporting what people in general (who don't know of Aristotle's honor/praise distinction) believe. One exception is 1102^a20, where Aristotle says *politikē* is more honored than medicine. Given that *politikē* ends up being the science of contemplation (*qua* the chief good), I think this exception is harmless.

As we saw when discussing the moral virtues in the last section, pleasure and pain are so important that Aristotle concludes that “the whole matter (τὴν πᾶσαν πραγματείαν) is necessarily about them” (1105^a5-6; cf. 1104^b8-9, ^b13-18, 1105^a10-12). In particular, correct pleasure and pain are a sign of good character, since the good person feels pleasure in their virtuous actions (1104^b3-13) and indeed that what is good to the good person is good by nature (1099^a7-11, 1113^a25-33, 1170^a14-16, 1176^a24-27). This is a point which Aristotle adumbrates when first discussing the criterion:

In the same manner, justice acts are pleasant to the justice-lover (τὰ δίκαια τῷ φιλοδικαίῳ), and in general virtuous acts to the virtue-lover (τὰ κατ’ ἀρετὴν τῷ φιλαρέτῳ). Now for the many pleasures conflict because they are not the sort that are pleasant by nature, but for the noble-lover what is pleasant is pleasant by nature, and these sorts of pleasures are activities in accordance with excellence, just as these are pleasures to them and in themselves. And, the life of these people needs no pleasure in addition as a kind of adornment, but rather has pleasure in itself. (1099^a10-16)

And the idea that virtuous activity is pleasant to the good person, and therefore pleasant by nature, is a constant refrain in the *NE*. Aristotle specifically mentions that pleasure is taken in virtuous action for liberality (1120^a26-27, 1120^b27-30, 1121^a1-4), magnificence (1122^b7-8), friendliness (1126^b30-31), wit (1128^b7-10), and friendship (1166^s24-29, 1169^b35-70^a1, 1170^a6-7).

These many remarks would lead us to expect Aristotle to concede that moral virtue is pleasant in *NE* X.7-8. But he does not do this. It may be that he wants to avoid complicating the issue by allowing moral virtue to meet one of his criteria, given that it has failed all the others. But Aristotle gives a clue when mentioning the pleasure of contemplation that suggests he may have something else in mind. He specifies that contemplation, in aiming

at nothing beyond itself it has its own proper pleasure (ἡδονὴν οἰκείαν) and increases (συνάξει) its own activity (1177^b20-21). The language here is a clear allusion to the discussion of pleasure in *NE* X.4-5, which may be all Aristotle intends. But it is notable to compare this way of putting things with a problem case for pleasant virtue, courage. Aristotle argues that courage involves pain rather than pleasure, and this is what makes it praiseworthy (1117^a32-^b13). It is on the basis of this point that Aristotle concludes that “pleasure is not present in the activity of every virtue, save to the extent that it achieves its end” (1117^b15-16).³³⁴ In a similar vein, the temperate person only pursues those pleasures that are conducive to health or do not impede health, or are not contrary to what is noble or that he can’t afford (1119^a10-18).³³⁵ In both cases, the pleasure in virtuous activity is at least partly extrinsic. If this is right, then moral virtue won’t fully satisfy the criterion: it may involve excellent psychic activity, and it may be natural insofar as it is pleasant to the good person, but it doesn’t, or doesn’t fully, have its pleasure in itself. So moral virtue will be pleasant, but not in the way that the chief good is pleasant.

This brings us to our final criterion, divinity. Recall that this criterion was formulated as follows:

Divinity: The chief good is divine. It is best and sets the standards for moral evaluation.

There are two main arguments in *NE* X.7-8 against moral virtue being divine. The first is that *eudaimonia* is the activity of the divine part of our soul, and moral virtue comes from

³³⁴ See Curzer (2012), pp. 33-42, Taylor (2006), pp. 191-93, White (1992), pp. 275-76. For an attempt to dissolve this problem, see Garver (1980).

³³⁵ On which see White (1992), pp. 170-87.

the wrong part. We saw above that moral virtue is the excellence of the quasi-rational part of the soul, the part that Aristotle takes to be (merely) human. This is contrasted with the rational part, which Aristotle takes to be divine, arguing

Whether it is *nous* or something else, which appears by nature to rule and to lead, and which takes thought (ἔννοιαν) of noble and divine things, whether it is divine in itself or the most divine thing in us, its activity according to the proper (οἰκείαν) virtue would be perfect *eudaimonia*. (1177^a13-17)

This passage makes two relevant points about divinity: *eudaimonia* involves thinking of divine objects, and it involves the activity of *nous*, the divine part of the soul. But moral virtue is not a matter of thought alone, but rather action, and so won't have the divine as its object; instead, it will focus on the various external goods that each virtue corresponds to. And moral virtue does not belong to the divine part of the soul, but to the merely human part. So moral virtue fails to be divine in both these ways.

The second main argument comes in the next chapter, where Aristotle discusses the activity of the gods. We've already mentioned this argument, but it is worth reproducing in full:

We consider the gods to be blessed and happy most of all. But what kind of actions must we attribute to them? Do you perform just acts? Or wouldn't they be manifestly absurd having business with one another (γελοῖοι φανοῦνται συναλλάττοντες) and returning deposits and as many things of that sort? Or rather courageous acts, resisting fear and risking themselves because it is noble? Or liberal acts? What would they give? For it would be odd if they had currency or something of this sort. And what would their temperate acts be? Or isn't praise of them vulgar, because they don't have base desires? In going through them all it would be manifest that the matters involving [moral] action would be trivial and unworthy of the gods. (1178^b8-18)

Aristotle's view on this matter is clear: it is absurd to think that the gods engage in moral activity. Hence moral activity is not the sort of things that divine being engage in *qua* divine. And hence it is not something we should do *qua* divine (1177^b26-34). But because the chief good is divine, the chief good will not be moral activity, and hence *eudaimonia* will not be a life characterized by this activity.

We've seen, then, that moral virtue does not do very well in its competition to be the chief good. Of the seven criteria for *eudaimonia* that Aristotle proposed, moral virtue fails six outright: moral virtue is not final, not self-sufficient, not our functional activity, not stable, not honorable, and not divine. It is not clear whether moral virtue satisfies the criterion of pleasantness: it is pleasant, but perhaps not in the way the chief good is. Yet even if we concede that it does meet this criterion, moral virtue is not a promising candidate for the chief good. It does not get last place, since it marginally beats out pleasure, but it nevertheless puts up a poor showing in this competition.

§2.5.3 – Second Nature and Secondary Happiness

In the last section I argued that moral virtue was conclusively ruled out as a contender for the chief good, since it at best ambiguously meets one of the seven criteria for *eudaimonia*, and while unambiguously failing the other six. But this interpretation of *NE* X.7-8 is subject to a serious objection, namely that Aristotle appears to call moral activity *eudaimonia* in these chapters. This issue deserves serious scrutiny.

Aristotle ends X.7 by concluding “The proper thing (τὸ γὰρ οἰκεῖον) for each is by nature best and most pleasant for each. And for a human this is the life in accordance with *nous*, since this most of all is human. Therefore this sort of life will be most *eudaimōn*”

(1178^a5-8). But in the next sentence, which begins X.8, Aristotle asserts “The life in accordance with the other virtue is so secondarily. For the activities according to it are human (ἀνθρωπικαί)” (1178^a9), on the grounds that the activity of this virtue is human in the sense that it reflects the human compound and its feelings and actions. And Aristotle ends this argument by concluding “the virtues of the compound are human (ἀνθρωπικαί). And so too is the life in accordance with them, and *eudaimonia*” (1178^a20-22). The issue here is obvious: why does Aristotle call moral virtue *eudaimonia* if it fails to meet the criteria for happiness? Or, conversely, given that Aristotle calls moral virtue *eudaimonia*, this suggests that moral virtue must meet the criteria for happiness after all.

The second option is, I think, a non-starter. We examined all seven criteria closely in the last section, and with the possible exception of pleasure Aristotle was adamant that moral virtue does not meet them. This is not just a matter of it being a close call, or of moral virtue meeting the criteria but not as well as contemplation does.³³⁶ So rather than reevaluate moral virtue’s relationship to the seven criteria, it is better to focus on the first option: why does Aristotle call moral virtue *eudaimonia* if it fails to meet the criteria for happiness?

The first thing to note is that it is not certain that Aristotle does in fact say that the life of moral virtue is happy. While we can concede that the two relevant passages are naturally read this way, both admit of an alternative reading more in line with Aristotle’s general treatment of moral virtue in *NE* X.7-8. The first passage does not specify what the

³³⁶ Admittedly, Aristotle does use comparative language throughout *NE* X.7-8. But he does not use exclusively comparative language; he also both explicitly asserts, and endorses positions which entail, that moral virtue conclusively fails most of the criteria for happiness.

relevant predicate is; most literally, it says “The one according to the other virtue is so secondarily” (Δευτέρως δ’ ὁ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετὴν, 1178^a9). The logical structure here has the form ‘*x* is most *F*, and so most *G*. *y* is secondarily __’, and either *F* or *G* could be the missing predicate in the second claim. But Aristotle explains this (γὰρ) in the next line by saying that the activities in accordance with it are human, or better “human-ish” (ἀνθρωπικαί, 1178^a10). This explanation, and the inexplicit subject “the one” both prompt us to look a few lines back where Aristotle says “for a human [what is best and most pleasant] is the life in accordance with *nous*, since this most of all is human” (1178^a6-7). This suggests that we should read “secondarily” as “secondarily human”, even though “most happy” is the closest grammatical antecedent, since Aristotle goes on to focus on the fact that there is a sense in which the life of moral virtue, grounded in the compound of the quasi-rational part of the soul and the body, is human, or at least human-ish.³³⁷

One might think that this reading still implies that the life of moral virtue is secondarily happy, since it is the life of excellence of the part of the soul that is secondarily human. And one might take the lines “the virtues of the compound are human (ἀνθρωπικαί). And so too is the life in accordance with them, and *eudaimonia*” (1178^a20-22) as confirmation of this reading. But, first, the conclusion ‘moral virtue is secondarily *eudaimōn*’ doesn’t follow from our premises. Aristotle argues that the best and most pleasant thing for each is what is proper to it by nature, and that this is a *noetic* life, since

³³⁷ Cf. Broadie & Rowe (2002), *ad loc.*, though I am willing to go even farther in this reading than they are. This is also the way ‘secondarily’ functions at 1176^a26-29, in a passage that is structurally quite similar to this one, as I’ll argue below. Note that this reading also avoids the awkwardness, pointed out by Broadie (1991), p. 429, of making sense of “secondarily happiest” as a superlative that is not actually superlative.

a human is, strictly speaking, her *nous*. The fact that a human can be thought of in another way does not entail that there is a kind of happiness corresponding to that way of thinking. For instance, humans are featherless bipeds. But this does not capture any facts about the essence of human nature. And so we cannot infer ‘a life of featherless bipedal activity is secondarily happy’ from ‘featherless bipedal activity is human’. Likewise, we cannot infer ‘a life of morally virtuous activity is secondarily happy’ from ‘morally virtuous activity is human’.

Second, the line “So too are the life according to [the virtues of the compound] and *eudaimonia* [human-ish]” doesn’t quite say that the life of moral virtue is a kind of *eudaimonia* either. For here ‘*eudaimonia*’ is the subject, and the claim is that the *eudaimonia* in accordance with moral virtue is human-ish. There is a subtle but important difference between ‘a life according to the virtues of the human compound is a kind of *eudaimonia*’ and ‘a *eudaimōn* life, lived in accordance with the virtues of the human compound, will be a human life’. The first entails that there is a second kind of *eudaimonia* beyond contemplation, while the second entails only that living a *eudaimōn* life is compatible with living a human life, properly understood. And though Aristotle apparently rejects the first reading, since he is so thorough in showing how moral virtue fails to meet the criteria for the chief good, he is concerned to show the second. For while Aristotle warned in *NE* X.7 to live a divine life as much as we can, rather than a mortal life (1177^b26-78^a2), he argues that such a life is not too much for a human, because strictly speaking the divine life *is* the human life (1178^a2-7). And in X.8, while he stresses the relative independence of contemplation over moral virtue, he concedes that even the contemplator

will need external goods and virtuous activity: “insofar as he is human (ἢ δ’ ἄνθρωπός ἐστι) and lives with many others, he will choose to act in accordance with [moral] virtue. Therefore he will have need of these sorts of things, with respect to his acting like a human (τὸ ἀνθρωπεύεσθαι)” (1178^b5-7). So the reading I am suggesting, while admittedly less natural than the alternative, is nonetheless a possible reading which better fits the surrounding philosophical context.

Yet even if Aristotle does not explicitly say that moral virtue is secondarily *eudaimōn*, we must concede that it would look that way to most readers. So let us grant for the sake of argument that Aristotle does commit himself, explicitly or implicitly, to the idea that moral virtue is secondarily happy. We are still left with the task of puzzling out exactly what this means.

The textual clues elsewhere in the *NE* are, unfortunately, few. But each of them suggests that we should not interpret “secondarily happy” as “legitimately happy, just to a lesser degree than contemplation”. The first use comes in *NE* II.9, where Aristotle argues “Since it is of the utmost difficulty to hit the mean, we must, as they say, ‘settle for second best’ and accept the lesser evil” (ἐπεὶ οὖν τοῦ μέσου τυχεῖν ἄκρως χαλεπὸν, κατὰ τὸν δεύτερον, φασί, πλοῦν τὰ ἐλάχιστα ληπτέον τῶν κακῶν, 1109^a34-35). The idiom here literally means “using the second way of sailing”, i.e. to use the oars if there is no wind. This passage offers little encouragement to the proponent of moral virtue as *eudaimonia*, since it is rather dismissive of the second option. But since Aristotle is using an idiom that he attributes to others, it may be unwise to put too much weight on this passage one way or the other.

The second use of ‘secondarily’ occurs in a discussion of friendship and justice in *NE VIII*. Here Aristotle argues “Equality in just acts is primarily according to merit and secondarily according to amount (πρώτως τὸ κατ’ ἀξίαν, τὸ δὲ κατὰ ποσὸν δευτέρως), while in acts of friendship it is primarily according to amount and secondarily according to merit” (1158^b30-33). The basic idea here is that justice requires us to emphasize differences in desert, while friendship requires us to minimize them. In discussing this passage, Pakaluk gives the helpful example of a general who gives special recognition to his bravest soldiers (according to merit), while giving an equal amount to the rest, since it would be practically impossible to give everyone precisely what they merit. But allocating by merit is nonetheless better and more conceptually central to justice: “if such a distribution *were* possible, he would favour it. In such a case, the equal distribution of honours to the bulk of men is recognized by all as a serviceable substitute for the ideal distribution.”³³⁸ But this isn’t a very promising way to think of moral virtue as *eudaimonia*, either. *Eudaimonia* is the ideal, the best thing (1177^a12-13, ^a19-22); a ‘serviceable substitute’ isn’t good enough, especially when Aristotle thinks that the contemplative life is more achievable than the morally virtuous life insofar as it is (i) more in our nature, and (ii) more stable and self-sufficient.

The third use of ‘secondarily’ occurs in the final lines of *NE X.5*, where Aristotle is completing his own view of pleasure. He writes,

Whether the activities of the perfect and blessed man (τοῦ τελείου καὶ μακαρίου ἀνδρός) are one or many, the pleasures that complete these would be called human pleasures (ἀνθρώπου ἡδοναὶ) in the strict sense

³³⁸ Pakaluk (1998), p. 95.

(κυρίως), while the remaining pleasures would be secondarily [human] or even lower (δευτέρωσ καὶ πολλοστῶς), as would be the activities. (1176^a26-29).

This passage is clearly relevant to the discussion of happiness in *NE* X.6-8, marking a primary/ secondary distinction that is a perfect parallel to what we see there. The “activities of the perfect and blessed man” are, of course, contemplation (1177^b19-25), which is identified, as we’ve seen, as not only best and most pleasant, but also most strictly human. And just like in X.8, the contrast between primary/secondary is fundamentally a contrast in how essentially human something is, rather than how much it counts as pleasure. But precisely because we know that contemplative activity will be human pleasure in the strict sense, this would once again demote virtuous activity to a lower status.

So none of the uses of ‘secondarily’ in the *NE* urge us to understand 1178^a9 as endorsing a second form of *eudaimonia* alongside contemplation, instead suggesting the opposite interpretation. But this still does not quite clarify what Aristotle means when he says that the life of moral virtue is secondarily happy (if, as we’re granting for argument’s sake, he is saying this at all). So we have to do the reconstructive work ourselves to figure out what Aristotle had in mind.

I see two plausible interpretive options, both of which could be jointly true. The first is simple and relatively straightforward: ‘secondarily *eudaimonia*’ would mean ‘second place in the competition for the chief good’.³³⁹ On this conception, the search for *eudaimonia* is a competition: whichever candidate best satisfies the most criteria for the

³³⁹ See Lear (2004), pp. 177-181, though she thinks moral virtue gives a much better showing in the competition than I think is warranted, on which more below. Cf. Grant (1866), p. 338.

chief good wins. Though we haven't examined this point on its own terms yet, we've seen enough to know that contemplation is the clear winner. Moral virtue would get second place, in virtue I suppose of its possibly meeting the pleasantness criterion. Pleasure would get third place, failing to plausibly meet even this single criterion. On this interpretation, 'moral virtue is secondarily *eudaimonia*' would not entail 'moral virtue is (a kind of) *eudaimonia*', because moral virtue does not win the competition. As the saying goes, second place is just the first loser.

The second option looks more closely at the way Aristotle thinks of paradigm cases compared to derivative cases, using a strategy suggested by Dominic Scott.³⁴⁰ Aristotle often uses the terms "primarily" (πρώτως), "strictly" (κυρίως), or "most" (μάλιστα) to pick out paradigm cases, and the place where he does most explicitly is in his discussion of friendship.³⁴¹ Aristotle's analysis of friendship using the same approach as he uses to discover the chief good. In short, Aristotle argues in *NE* IX.4 that there are five criteria for friendship: if A and B are friends, then (1) A wishes well of B for B's sake, (2) A wishes for B to continue living, for B's sake, (3) A and B spend time together, (4) A and B have similar taste, and (5) A and B grieve and rejoice at the same things (1166^a1-8). Aristotle goes on to argue that these properties are best exemplified in the good person's relation to herself, making self-love the paradigm of friendship.³⁴² The self-love relationship is most closely approximated by the relationship between two good people, insofar as the friend is

³⁴⁰ Scott (1999).

³⁴¹ Though I ultimately disagree with his conclusions, see Charles (2014) for a nice discussion of how Aristotle uses these terms in the *NE* and elsewhere.

³⁴² I discuss Aristotle's view in more detail in Green (2010). See also Bostock (2000), pp.175-179, Pakaluk (1998), pp. 162-77, 189-202.

another self and good people love themselves (1166^a29-^b2).³⁴³ Hence ‘virtue friendship’ is the paradigm case (πρώτως μὲν καὶ κυρίως, 1156^a30-31) of friendship between individuals because it also fully satisfies these five criteria (though not as fully as Aristotle thinks self-love does). But, as Aristotle argues in *NE* VIII.3, there are two other kinds of friendship, based in utility and pleasure. These forms of friendship satisfy some of the criteria: friends of these sorts will, in at least some way, (3) spend time together, (4) share some of the same tastes, and (5) grieve and rejoice at at least some of the same things. But they fail to meet the first two criteria, because partners in these sorts of friendships love the friend for their own sakes, not for the friend’s sake (1156^a10-16). Hence these friendships are only friendships incidentally (κατὰ συμβεβηκός, 1156^a16-17), in virtue of their resemblance to paradigm friendship (1156^b33-57^a3, 1157^b1-5).

Now, in one sense the comparison between moral virtue and utility/pleasure friendships is not an apt one, because utility/pleasure friendships do a much better job meeting their criteria than moral virtue does of its. For these incidental forms of friendship at least do a recognizable job satisfying more than half of their criteria, while moral virtues satisfies, at best, one of its seven. But this comparison at least helps us see the way Aristotle thinks about evaluating these by criteria. If moral virtue is secondarily *eudaimonia*, then it will be in virtue of its satisfying at least some of the relevant criteria, as compared to pleasure, which to adopt Aristotle’s terminology rates “even lower” (καὶ πολλοστῶς). But,

³⁴³ Aristotle goes on in *NE* IX.8 to argue that self-love is itself best analyzed in terms of loving one’s *nous*. We will look more closely at this argument in the next section.

again, moral virtue does not satisfy the criteria well enough to properly qualify as *eudaimonia*.³⁴⁴

One important upshot of this way of looking at *eudaimonia* in this way is that it rules out a common middle-ground approach to incorporating moral virtue into the *eudaimōn* life. This view argues that moral virtue bears some kind of relationship to contemplation that allows it to count as *eudaimonia*, though with less of a claim to the title than contemplation has. Scott, for instance, argues that humans have a dual nature, and so there will be two kinds of *eudaimonia* corresponding to these natures, with moral virtue being similar to contemplation in the way that utility/pleasure friends are similar to virtue friends.³⁴⁵ Gabriel Richardson Lear argues that the activity of moral reasoning is sufficiently similar to the activity of contemplation, such that both will count as *eudaimonia* even though contemplation is better.³⁴⁶ Brodie advances a particularly subtle

³⁴⁴ This point helps us dissolve a puzzle that has bothered several commentators. Aristotle occasionally uses a phrase that only appears in *NE* X.7-8, “perfect *eudaimonia*” (ἡ τελεία εὐδαιμονία, 1177^a17, ^b24, 1178^b7), but will also drop the “perfect” qualification. This had led commentators to wonder what the difference between perfect and non-perfect *eudaimonia* is, and one suggestion has been that perfect *eudaimonia* is contrasted with secondary *eudaimonia*, with non-perfect *eudaimonia* referring to the latter (Reeve (1992) is a paradigm case of this approach). But if there is no secondary *eudaimonia*, then there won’t be a need to explain the difference between perfect and secondary varieties. If this is right, then the only contrast we need to see between *eudaimonia* and perfect *eudaimonia* is the one Aristotle makes himself, between the activity that constitutes the chief good and that activity plus sufficient luck and external goods over a complete life (1177^b24-26).

³⁴⁵ Scott (1999), pp. 235-240. Thorsrud (2015) endorses essentially the same view, on many of the same grounds as Scott; see in particular pp. 12-20. Lawrence (1993), pp.22 also endorses this view, but focuses on lives rather than natures. Bush (2008) pp. 69-74, conversely, denies that humans are divine, properly speaking, and so argues that contemplation is not part of the human good, which he reserves for morally virtuous activity. But he allows that Aristotle also argues for a divine good, which humans can also somehow share in.

³⁴⁶ Lear (2004), pp. 88-122, 193-96. See also Charles (1999), pp. 213-222, Dahl (2011), pp. 85-88, Kraut (1989), pp. 16, 320-327, 345-247. Note that Lear’s argument relies on importing the *AE* view of the intellect into the *NE*, which is a move we cannot make at this stage, and, as I’ll argue in the next two chapters, cannot in fact make at all.

view where contemplation is the “crown of happiness”, by making best use of the leisure that is moral virtue’s aim and thereby celebrating them.³⁴⁷ What all these views have in common, however, is that they all take morally virtuous activity to count as *eudaimonia*. But this cannot be right. Even if a good can qualify as *eudaimonia* without fully satisfying all seven criteria, we would expect it to do a reasonable job meeting some of them, as utility/pleasure friendship meets at least some of the criteria for friendship. But moral virtue meets only one criterion, at best. So moral virtue is not similar enough to contemplation to count as *eudaimonia*, because it lacks the very properties that allow contemplation to meet the criteria for the chief good that moral virtue lacks.³⁴⁸

But this still leaves us with a puzzle: Why does Aristotle call moral virtue human, or human-ish, if it does not qualify as *eudaimonia*, i.e. the human good?³⁴⁹ Bostock, I think, gets the lay of the land just right: “I observe that book X does not provide arguments to show that political activity is in *any* way (a source of) *eudaimonia*, save for the claim that it involves (specifically human) virtues”.³⁵⁰ On this point, I think Scott and Thorsrud are right: there is a sense in which humans have a dual nature. Or, more accurately, the term

³⁴⁷ Broadie (1991), pp. 412-433. Long (2011), pp. 112-13 endorses Broadie’s view.

³⁴⁸ Another common interpretation, endorsed by Eriksen (1976), pp. 137-42, Reeve (1992) p. 139, pp. 153-56, is that moral virtue counts as secondary *eudaimonia* by having primary *eudaimonia* as its aim. There are two problems with this approach. First, this merely concedes that moral virtue is not final; but *eudaimonia* is final, so moral virtue cannot be *eudaimonia*. Second, this interpretation relies on a discussion of the relationship between *phronesis* and *nous* in AE II.13 (= NE VI.13). But given the questionable status of the *AE* vis-à-vis the *NE*, this strategy is illicit. As I’ll argue in the next chapter, the *AE* disagrees with the *NE* about the nature of *nous*, and so cannot be used to defend a view about how the activity of *nous* factors into the happy life in the *NE*.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Broadie (1991), pp. 403-08.

³⁵⁰ Bostock (2000) p. 201 n. 23. Bostock also mentions that his reading of *NE* I.7 suggests an inclusive interpretation of *eudaimonia*, but as we saw when discussing that chapter, this reading is unpersuasive.

‘human’ is ambiguous, because we can be conceptualized in different ways.³⁵¹ Sometimes Aristotle uses ‘human’ to refer to people in a way that is merely endoxic or non-theory-laden (1103^a1-4, 1121^b13-15, 1157^a25-26, 1171^b29-32). ‘Human’ often refers to the biological organism, counted among (1117^a5-7, 1118^b2-3, 1155^a16-21, 1176^a3-8) or contrasted with (1102^b2-6, 1102^b11-12, 1162^a16-19, 1170^b10-14) other organisms. Aristotle’s focus on biological humans leads him to conceive of humans as a compound (1178^a9-21, 1102^a27-32), a compound frequently hampered by its less valuable components (1100^b8-11, 1110^a23-27, 1111^b1-3, 1115^b7-11, 1126^a29-30, 1163^b22-27, 1167^b25-30, 1175^a1-5, 1176^a19-21, 1178^b33-35).³⁵²

Many of these passages focus on moral virtue as human, and one may worry that it would be unfair to posit more than one sense of ‘human’ rather than try to find an interpretation of Aristotle that allows a consistent usage.³⁵³ But Aristotle himself gives us a principle for doing otherwise. When defending the position that self-love is properly speaking love of *nous*, Aristotle argues “Just as the most authoritative part (τὸ κυριώτατον) seems to be the city, or any other composite (πᾶν ἄλλο σύστημα), most of all (μάλιστα εἶναι), the same holds for ‘human’ (1168^b31-33). So, just as ‘Athens’ can refer to the whole city or to the government that rules it, ‘human’ can refer both to the compound

³⁵¹ Cf. Ericksen (1976), pp. 118-19, 129-33, Kraut (1979), pp. 470-74, Moline (1983), p. 48, Reeve (2014a), p. 202, Reeve (1992), pp. 131-37, Whiting (1986), pp. 87-90, Wilkes (1978), pp. 566-69. For a discussion of a similar problem outside the *NE*, see Ward (2007), esp. pp. 91-96.

³⁵² Note that Aristotle uses different terms throughout, e.g. ἀνθρώπεια, ἀνθρωπικός, ἀνθρώπινος and ἄνθρωπος. Though there may be some weak patterns here, there are no hard and fast distinctions in how Aristotle uses the terms.

³⁵³ As, e.g. Bush (2008), pp. 70-74 worries.

of body and tripartite soul, or it can refer only to the most authoritative part of the soul that leads the compound.³⁵⁴

It should be no surprise, then, that Aristotle uses ‘human’ to refer to what is most essential about our nature, whether this is explicitly identified with *nous* (1112^a31-34, 1170^b10-13, 1177^b19-25, 1178^a4-8), or not (1097^b24-33, 1098^a5-17, 1102^a14-17, 1106^a21-24, 1112^b31-32, 1113^b17-19, 1161^b5-6, 1176^a24-29). The proper diagnosis here, I think, is that Aristotle lacks a term for ‘person’, and so uses ‘human’ instead, which would explain why, in addition to saying that *nous* is human most of all, will often say instead that *nous* is “each” most of all (1166^a16-23, 1168^b34-69^a3, 1178^a2-3).³⁵⁵ In any case, Aristotle is explicit that ‘human’ can refer both to a part and to the whole, and so we should take him literally when he calls *nous* ‘most human’, even though it is also ‘most divine’. In Aristotle’s mind, there is no conflict here: what is most essential to us is not our biological features or the lower parts of the soul, but rather reason alone. This puts moral virtue outside the realm of humanity in the strict sense, and it is therefore not the central focus of an inquiry into human nature and the human good.

§2.6 – CONTEMPLATION AND *EUDAIMONIA*

Unlike pleasure and moral virtue, Aristotle says very little about contemplation in the *NE*. Indeed, the only occasions where Aristotle mentions contemplation in its earlier

³⁵⁴ Cf. Cooper (1975), pp. 171-73, Ericksen (1976), p. 143. Bostock (2000) p. 196 apparently misses this passage, and so admits that he cannot make sense of the claim that a person is her intellect. Charles (2014), pp. 103-04 gets this passage wrong when trying to emphasize the role of the non-authoritative parts, arguing in part that self-lovers should love the parts of themselves other than *nous*, which shows that the other parts are no less important. But Aristotle specifically argues against the position that one should love the quasi-rational part of the soul in IX.8, because that is what the self-indulgent person does.

³⁵⁵ Cf. Owens (1988), pp. 707-08, pp. 714-16.

books is when he introduces it as a candidate for the chief good (1095^b17-19). But he gives no details, instead saying only that contemplation will be examined later (1096^a4-5). And while the verb for contemplation (θεωρεῖν) is used occasionally in the *NE*, it often means something less specific, like “observe” or “think about” (e.g. 1102^a23-26, 1122^b15-18, 1169^b33-70^a4).³⁵⁶ Nonetheless, Aristotle is unequivocal in *NE* X.7-8 that contemplation is the chief good. To fully grasp his arguments, however, we need to look more closely at the contemplative part of the soul and the nature of contemplative activity.

§2.6.1 – *Nous, Logos, and Theoria*

We can start by returning to Aristotle’s discussion of the soul in *NE* I.13. As we saw in §2.5.2, Aristotle posits three parts of the soul: a non-rational part that has no share in human excellence (1102^a32-^b3), a quasi-rational part that shares in reason by obeying reason’s commands (1102^b25-03^a3), and a rational part which thinks and issues those commands (1102^b14-16). It is the latter part which has reason “strictly and in itself” (κυρίως καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ, 1103^a2). Aristotle then posits two categories of virtue corresponding to these reason-having parts of the soul: moral virtues for the quasi-rational part, and for the rational part intellectual virtues (διανοητικὰς) such as *sophia*, *phronesis*, and judgment (σύνεσις) (1103^a4-6).³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ Though see Roochnik (2009) for an argument that the stricter and broader uses should not be wholly divorced from one another.

³⁵⁷ I leave *sophia* and *phronesis* untranslated for reasons that will become more apparent in §3. In Aristotle the terms typically correspond to theoretical and practical wisdom respectively, but this is not always so, as I’ll argue later. Good judgment or σύνεσις is a minor intellectual virtue in the *AE*. In the *NE* it is only used three times: the present passage, a claim that children cannot love their parents before “acquiring judgment or perception” (1161^b25-26), and a chastisement of the sophists for not realizing that even merely selecting good laws rather, than writing or understanding them, requires good judgement (1181^a17-18).

Aristotle's focus in *NE* I.13 seems to be on demarcating the quasi-rational part of the soul, since he says little about the rational part by comparison; this makes sense given that Aristotle's main goal here is establishing the foundations for discussing moral virtue in *NE* II. But Aristotle returns to the rational part of the soul when discussing voluntary action and *prohairesis* in *NE* III.1-5. In III.3 Aristotle clarifies what the objects of deliberation are, through an argument from elimination. There are four possible domains which the "sensible person" (ὁ νοῦν ἔχων) would deliberate about, corresponding to four causes of change in the world. The first three causes are nature, necessity, and chance (1112^a31-32), corresponding to things like droughts and storms, the movement of the stars, or finding treasure (1102^a23-27). But no one deliberates about these things, because they are outside our control.

The fourth cause, then, must be the one about whose domain we deliberate. Aristotle identifies this cause as "nous and everything that happens through man" (νοῦς καὶ πᾶν τὸ δι' ἀνθρώπου, 1112^a33). But we don't deliberate about everything that humans do, since there are human affairs we don't control either (1112^a28-29). It follows that we deliberate about things caused by our own *nous*, since it is the causal force within our power. This deliberation results in a decision or *prohairesis* (1112^a15, 1113^a2-5), which Aristotle identifies as "involving reason and thought" (μετὰ λόγου καὶ διανοίας, 1112^a16). Elsewhere in the discussion Aristotle describes the activity of this part of the soul as the internal *archē* of movement or action (1111^a23-24, 1112^b27-28); he identifies the agent with this part of the soul and its activity, calling it 'human' (ἄνθρωπος, 1112^b31-32) or 'each' (ἕκαστος, 1113^a4-6), which as we saw in §2.5.3 is often Aristotle's way of referring

to the person or agent. He also identifies this *archē* as the “leader” of the self (τὸ ἡγούμενον, 1113^a6).

Aristotle’s way of talking here makes it fairly clear that *nous* in *NE* III is the same as the rational part of the soul in I.13. His emphasis is almost exclusively on the rational part’s role in action, which might suggest that Aristotle thinks about rationality primarily in practical terms. But this is misleading, because *nous* in the undisputed *NE* is also the seat of theoretical reason.³⁵⁸ Aristotle hints at this position in *NE* I.6, where he pairs God and *nous* as instances of good in the category of substance (1096^a23-25),³⁵⁹ and analogizes perception and *nous* as the good-making faculties of the body and soul, respectively (1096^b29-30). Both of these passages presuppose a conception of *nous* that is not really clarified until the later books of the *NE*. In *NE* X.7-8 it is plain that *nous* is the part of the soul whose activity is contemplation:

Whether this is *nous* or something else which appears to rule and guide us by nature and to have be capable of thought about noble and divine things (ἐννοίαν ἔχειν περὶ καλῶν καὶ θείων) ...the activity of this part exercised according to its corresponding excellence would be complete happiness. That this is contemplation, has already be said. (1177^a13-18)³⁶⁰

This is not the only place where Aristotle explicitly identifies *nous* as the contemplative part (1177^a18-27, 1177^b19-20). And it is this part which Aristotle identifies with the human

³⁵⁸ This way of thinking about *nous* conflicts with the way it is treating in *AE* II. I will argue in §3 that this is a real conflict: the undisputed *NE* books have a distinct and incompatible view of rationality compared to the *AE*.

³⁵⁹ See Hare (2006), pp. 20-27, Long (2011), pp. 101-02, Menn (1992), p. 546, 551-55.

³⁶⁰ One might worry that this this statement is not quite unequivocal, since Aristotle waivers on whether it is “*nous* or something else” which fills this role. But this worry is unjustified, because (i) Aristotle explicitly refers to the contemplative part as *nous* in the rest of his discussion, and (ii) as I’ll argue in §3.2.1, when Aristotle says he is ambivalent about whether it is X or Y, he is invariably committed to its being one of these options in particular, suggesting that his hesitation is mainly verbal rather than substantive. See Eriksen (1976), pp. 71-73 for a thorough discussion of this point.

person (1178^a2-7). Consequently, *nous* will be the locus of evaluation for determining whether contemplation is the chief good, even though Aristotle also ascribes practical capacities to it.³⁶¹

The fact that *nous* (i) is what a person most essentially is, and (ii) is capable of both theoretical and practical reason, is also a crucial premise in Aristotle's discussion of friendship, so it is worth looking at *NE IX* to get more information about Aristotle's view of *nous* and contemplation. As we saw in §2.5.3, self-love is the foundation for Aristotle's view of friendship, since friends are other selves. So it is important for Aristotle to get clear on what exactly the self is. His answer is that the self is *nous*: "the element which thinks (τὸ νοοῦν) would appear to be each person most of all" (1166^a22-23). And in the passage where Aristotle argues that the person can be identified with its most authoritative part, just as a city can be identified with its government, Aristotle identifies this part as *nous* (1168^b35), harking back to its being called the 'leader' in III.3³⁶². Aristotle goes so far as to identify the activity of human life with the activity of thought, in the same way that animal life is identified with the activity of perception (1170^a16-21).³⁶³ But, critically, in the same contexts where Aristotle identifies the self with *nous*, he also identifies it with the part that issues practical commands (1168^b34-69^a3, 1169^a15-18). So, in *NE IX* just as in

³⁶¹ Cf. Eriksen (1976), p. 73, Long (2011), p. 110.

³⁶² Cf. Scott (1999), pp. 228-30.

³⁶³ Note that Aristotle identifies human life as the activity of *both* perception and thought here (αἰσθήσεως ἢ νοήσεως, 1170^a17; τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι ἢ νοεῖν 1170^a19). Given the importance of *nous* in his argument, ἢ here must mean 'both', not 'either'. This argument is notoriously convoluted, so I can't do the work necessary to fully defend my reading here, but I take the inclusion of both perception and thought to reflect humanity's dual nature, as I described in §2.5.3. *Qua* human animal, our essential activity is perceptive (and therefore, given the connection between perception and movement, also desiderative and locomotive). *Qua* divine person, our essential activity is cognitive.

NE I-III, Aristotle conceives of the rational part of the soul as a single part, *nous*, capable of both theoretical and practical reasoning.³⁶⁴

But even though *nous* is capable of more than one kind of activity, Aristotle thinks that its best activity is contemplation (1177^a12-18, 1177^b19-20). And so, before investigating how well contemplation satisfies the criteria for *eudaimonia*, we need to know more about what exactly contemplation is.³⁶⁵ Unfortunately, Aristotle does not make this task easy for us, claiming that “[the virtue] of *nous* has been separated. For let only this much be said about it; to be any more precise is a greater task than what is set before us (διακριβῶσαι γὰρ μεῖζον τοῦ προκειμένου ἐστίν)” (1178^a22-23).³⁶⁶ Nonetheless, we can construct the rough outlines of Aristotle’s view of contemplation in the *NE* from his various remarks on it scattered throughout the work.

³⁶⁴ This is not, as Kraut (1989), pp. 189-90 worries, either a conflict or an oversimplification. Aristotle is committed to there being a single part of the soul capable of both kinds of reasoning. I will defend this claim more thoroughly in §3. For now, we can simply note that (i) Aristotle explicitly and repeatedly identifies the person with her *nous*, and (ii) explicitly and repeatedly attributes both theoretical and practical reason to *nous*, and (iii) never in the undisputed books makes an explicit distinction within the rational part, as he does in the *AE* and *EE*. Cf. Price (2014), pp. 45-47 and Thorsrud (2015), p. 4, though I think Thorsrud later goes wrong in giving *AE* II prime of place, and then interpreting *NE* IX-X in light of it, rather than taking *NE* IX-X on their own terms.

³⁶⁵ See Nightingale (2004) for an overview of contemplation in Greek thought in general, and Ch. 5 for an overview of contemplation in the Aristotelian corpus.

³⁶⁶ Cf. Ericksen (1976), p. 82, 129-32. The first line here reads “ἡ δὲ τοῦ νοῦ”, and the closest antecedent for the article is the “ἡ εὐδαιμονία” which immediately proceeds it. And while it does not make a major interpretive difference, I do not think that εὐδαιμονία is the correct antecedent, because Aristotle spends these two chapters talking in detail about the happiness of the contemplative life. So I think the preferable reading is for the article to pick up “αἱ ἀρεταὶ” from the sentence prior. This fits well with (but does not depend on) the reading of these lines I defended in §2.5.3, where the thought is ‘the virtues of the compound, and the life and happiness according to these virtues, are (merely) human’. The next thought would be the parallel ‘the virtue of *nous* (as opposed to the compound) is separate.’ But I do not think anything hangs on making “ἡ εὐδαιμονία” the subject here instead.

In *NE* I-IV, Aristotle makes three relevant remarks about contemplation.³⁶⁷ First, he says that we get cognitive access to first principles (τῶν ἀρχῶν ... θεωροῦνται) through a variety of means, including induction, perception, habituation, and unnamed others (1098^b3-4); these procedures will not themselves count as instances of contemplation, but it is likely important that the object of the verb is ‘first principles’. Second, the happy person will “always or most of all do and contemplate things according to excellence” (πράξει καὶ θεωρήσει τὰ κατ’ ἀρετήν, 1100^b19-20).³⁶⁸ This line suggests (i) that Aristotle had in mind fairly early in the work that contemplation will play an important role in happiness, and (ii) that the objects of contemplation are themselves excellent, or at least are accessed excellently. Third, Aristotle contrasts theoretical with practical knowledge, arguing that *politikē*, including the *NE* itself, aims at the latter (1102^a23-62). This at least gives us a contrast class: learning how to become good is not itself an instance of theoretical knowledge, but learning what something is (in this case, virtue) is an instance of theoretical knowledge.³⁶⁹

Aristotle also says something important about contemplation in his discussion of friendship. In his argument justifying the presence of friends in the happy person’s life in

³⁶⁷ There is one further remark that is not relevant: when Aristotle says we “contemplate” works of art (1122^b15-18), he means merely ‘observe’. See Burnet (1900), *ad loc.*

³⁶⁸ Given what we know is coming in *NE* X, there is some reason to read the καὶ here as epexegetic, especially in light of the claim just before that the excellent activity Aristotle has in mind are “more stable even than instances of knowledge” (τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, 1100^b14). In *NE* X.7-8, Aristotle argues both that contemplation is the most stable activity we are capable of, and that we do it more often and more continuously than anything else; we will examine this argument in the next section.

³⁶⁹ I take Aristotle’s earlier remark that the politician must “study” (θεωρητέον) the soul only to the degree of precision necessary for practical purposes (1102^a23-26), to be one of Aristotle’s looser uses of the terms; otherwise, it would directly contradict the present passage.

NE IX.9, Aristotle operates by first establishing the value of the self's activity, and then extends this value to the friend *qua* other self. In making this argument, Aristotle writes,

Living (τὸ δὲ ζῆν) is defined for animals as the power of perception, and in humans as perception and thought (νοήσεως). The power is grounded (ἀνάγεται) in the activity, and the determinative element (τὸ δὲ κύριον) is in the activity. Therefore living in the strict sense is (εἶναι κυρίως) the activity of perception or thought (τὸ...νοεῖν). And living is among the things good and pleasant in themselves (καθ' αὐτὸ)... But if living is itself good and pleasant ... and the seer perceives that he sees and the hearer that he hears and the walker that he walks, and in all other cases likewise there is a kind of perception that we are active (τι τὸ αἰσθανόμενον ὅτι ἐνεργοῦμεν), such that when we perceive, [we perceive] that we perceive, and when we think, [we perceive] that we think (κἂν νοῶμεν, ὅτι νοοῦμεν), and if [to perceive] that we perceive or think, is [to perceive] that we exist (for to exist was [defined as] perception or thought), and if perceiving that one is living is among the things that are pleasant in themselves (for life is good by nature, and the perception of what is good present in oneself is pleasant), then living will be especially choiceworthy for the good person, because existence is good and pleasant to him.) (1170^a16-^b4)

Now, as I mentioned when we first encountered this passage, the precise details of how this argument is meant to work are controversial. But for our purposes, we only need to focus on the reflexivity of thought in the argument: when one thinks (i.e. when one's *nous* is active), then one is aware of one's thinking, and of one's existence in thinking.³⁷⁰ This point helps explain an otherwise underappreciated point in the *NE*'s treatment of friendship: Aristotle argues that “the good person is well-stocked in thought with things to contemplate” (θεωρημάτων δ' εὐπορεῖ τῆ διανοίᾳ, 1166^a26-27) in virtue of his own past,

³⁷⁰ Though both focus mainly on the parallel *EE* argument, see McCabe (2012), pp. 49-53 and Whiting (2012), pp. 115 n 62 for comments on this passage. With the exception of the role of the ‘friend is another self’ premise, which Whiting rightly notes is not operative in the *EE*, the *NE* and *EE* treatments are roughly the same. See also Pakaluk (1998), pp. 208-15.

present, and future good behavior (1166^a23-26).³⁷¹ Therefore, even though a friend is useful for providing objects of thought for the good person (1155^a16, 1169^b33-70^a4), the good person has these in himself in virtue of the reflexivity of thought.³⁷²

Aristotle also makes some important remarks on contemplation when discussing pleasure. In arguing that pleasure completes activities, Aristotle writes that

Since every perception is an activity with respect to a perceptible (τὸ αἰσθητὸν), and is perfectly active (τελείως) when it is in a good condition (τῆς εὖ διακειμένης) with respect to the best object (τὸ κάλλιστον) of those of which it is a perception... then the activity of the most well-conditioned (τοῦ ἄριστα διακειμένου) perception toward the greatest (τὸ κράτιστον) of its objects will be the best in each case. (1174^b14-19)

These perceptions are also the most pleasant, and the pleasures of “thought and contemplation” (διάνοιαν καὶ θεωρίαν, 1174^b21), especially so, because “the most perfected perception is most pleasant (ἡδίστη δ’ ἡ τελειοτάτη), and the most perfected is the pleasure of a well-disposed faculty (ἡ τοῦ εὖ ἔχοντος) toward the most valuable (τὸ σπουδαιότατον) of its objects” (1174^b21-23). This suggests that the objects of contemplation are the best possible things to think about. But we haven’t yet been told what these are.

The answer comes, finally, in *NE* X.7-8. *Nous*, the seat of contemplation, is “capable of thought about noble and divine things” (ἔννοιαν ἔχειν περὶ καλῶν καὶ θείων, 1177^a15). These are “the greatest...of knowable objects, about which *nous* is” (κράτιστη...

³⁷¹ An important caveat: when Aristotle uses “θεωρεῖν” with reference to worthy actions, he means it in the weaker sense of ‘observation’, rather than ‘contemplation’ in a strict sense. But the reflexivity of thought will be present in both cases.

³⁷² See Green (2015) for a defense of this claim in *NE* IX, and Walker (2010) pp. 221-225 for a more thorough treatment of the mechanics of this process. Cf. Burnet (1900), p. 464, Ericksen (1976), pp. 134-36.

τῶν γνωστῶν, περὶ ἃ ὁ νοῦς, 1177^a19-21). Given that noetic activity is reflexive, aims at no end beyond itself (1177^b20), and is about divine objects, it is reasonable to think that Aristotle is endorsing the view that the gods only think about themselves. But I don't think this is quite right, because Aristotle also mentions that the gods enjoy and welcome what is most like them in humans, and that is *nous*, so that the wisest people are also the most loved by the gods (1179^a24-31).³⁷³ So it appears instead that divine entities think about divine entities, but possibly other divine entities than themselves. This will presumably include the *archai* mentioned at 1098^b3-4, as well as the eternal things (τῶν αἰδίῳν, 1112^a21) that Aristotle argues are the objects of belief instead (1111^b30-34).³⁷⁴

Though we may wish that Aristotle had told us more about what is effectively the most central concept of the *NE*, his various remarks throughout the work are enough to reconstruct a working theory of contemplation. It is the activity of *nous*, the rational part of the soul. It is reflexive, and self-directed rather than aiming at an external end. It has as its objects the best, most valuable possible objects of knowledge, which are divine entities. And, it is itself divine activity, both in the sense that it is the object of the divine part of the soul and because it is the activity the gods engage in. This should suffice to see how well contemplation meets the seven criteria for the chief good.

³⁷³ Though Aristotle connects contemplation with *philosophia* as a practice and *sophia* as its virtue (1177^a23-16), he uses both terms relatively rarely, and not in a way that helps us determine what contemplation is.

³⁷⁴ See Broadie (1991), p. 400, Ericksen (1976), pp. 83-86, 91-92, though note Aristotle's argument against the Pythagoreans in *NE* I.6 that eternity is not good as such (1096^b3-5).

§2.6.2 – Contemplation and the Criteria for *Eudaimonia*

Given that the other two contenders for the chief good have failed to meet the relevant criteria, one readily suspects that contemplation will win the competition. But even so, it is worth looking at how it fares against the criteria for happiness, both to get a better understanding of Aristotle’s view, and to better understand how that view is expressed throughout the *NE* as a treatise.

We can begin where Aristotle’s list of criteria began, with finality. Recall that we characterized this criterion as follows:

Finality: The chief good is a final (i.e. autotelic) end. It is chosen only for its own sake, and does not depend on any further end for its value. If there is more than one autotelic end, the chief good will be the one that is most worth choosing for its own sake.

If contemplation meets this criterion, it will have to be autotelic. Since the other contenders for the chief good failed to meet this criterion, we do not have to worry about whether contemplation is more final than another autotelic end, because there are no others.

Aristotle makes it quite clear that contemplation is, indeed, autotelic. In fact, it is the only activity that is autotelic: “It would seem that this alone (αὐτῇ μόνῃ) is appreciated for its own sake. For nothing results from it besides contemplation” (1177^b1-2). It is said a few lines later to “aim at no end but itself” (1177^b20). Moreover, Aristotle calls contemplative activity “best” (κρατίστη, 1177^a19; ἄμεινον, 1178^a3) and says that it “excels in value” (σπουδῆ τε διαφέρειν 1177^b19; cf. 1178^a1-2), suggesting it is at the top of a chain of pursuits rather than in the middle.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁵ Lear (2004), pp. 183-84.

This tells us *that* contemplation is final, but it doesn't explain why. Though we have to argue on Aristotle's behalf here, I think a plausible explanation is found in the reflexivity of thought, as discussed in *NE* IX.9. Because contemplation can take account of itself, it needn't aim at anything further for its own value. It is also worth noting that contemplation, like sight and pleasure (1174^a14-16), is complete at any moment; Aristotle does not say this explicitly in the *NE*, but it seems quite likely given his claim "as sight is in the body, so *nous* is in the soul" (1096^b29; cf. the discussion of reflexivity at 1170^a16-^b4)³⁷⁶ and his remarks that the activity of thought is purer than sight, which is itself superior to the other senses (1175^b36-76^a3).³⁷⁷

In any case, Aristotle is quite explicit that contemplation is final. He is also explicit that contemplation meets the next criterion:

Self-Sufficiency: The chief good is a self-sufficient good. It is sufficient on its own to make a life containing only the necessary goods a life worth choosing.

The test for self-sufficiency, recall, is whether an activity can be added into a life that has the requisite external goods necessary for human life and thereby, by itself, make that life choiceworthy.

Aristotle is explicit that contemplation is a self-sufficient good (1177^b21-25). His argument for this position occurs in both *NE* X.7 and X.8, and is largely the same in both instances.

The self-sufficiency we discussed would seem to apply most to contemplation. For the wise person and the just person and the rest have need of the necessities with respect to life...but the wise person even by

³⁷⁶ Cf. Ericksen (1976), pp. 77-78, Nightingale (2004), pp. 216-18.

³⁷⁷ Roochnik (2009), pp. 79-81.

himself (καὶ καθ' αὐτὸν) is able to contemplate, and more [able] to the extent that he is wiser. Perhaps he is better [able to contemplate] if he has helpers, but he is nonetheless most self-sufficient. (1177^a27-^b1)

It would appear that [the activity of *nous*] has need of external equipment to a small degree (ἐπὶ μικρὸν), or at least less than [the activity] of moral virtue. For grant both a need of necessities, and to the same degree, even if the statesman works harder regarding the body and however many similar things; it would be a small difference. But regarding their activities they will differ significantly.... But for the person engaging in contemplation there will be need of none of these sorts of things, at least with respect to the activity, but rather they are, so to speak, even a hindrance with respect to contemplation. But insofar as he is human and lives together with many others, he will choose to do things in accordance with [moral] virtue. Therefore he will have need of this sorts of things with respect to his human-ing (πρὸς τὸ ἀνθρωπεύεσθαι). (1178^a23-^b7)

The first point to note about Aristotle's arguments here is the now familiar refrain that Aristotle distinguishes between constituents and preconditions for an activity. Any human life, no matter the activities it engages in, will require certain external goods: a life without food for instance, is a starved life, and therefore not a life at all. Goods of this sort will be built into any human life, and so can be bracketed off when considering whether a particular good is self-sufficient. But there is another category of external goods, which are partial constituents of the activity. Liberal action, for instance, involves money as a part: the activity *is* the giving and taking of money in a certain way. Because morally virtuous activity involves these goods as constituents, the goods must be included in a life that involves these activities. But this means that virtuous activity cannot make a life worth choosing on its own, because the activity cannot exist alone; it can only occur in the presence of the requisite external goods. Contemplation, however, is not like this. It is possible to engage in contemplation by oneself (καὶ καθ' αὐτὸν), because contemplation

doesn't need external goods to operate.³⁷⁸ Aristotle is careful to mark this distinction between the activity itself (πρὸς γε τὴν ἐνέργειαν) and the human life in which the activity occurs (πρὸς τὸ ἀνθρωπεύεσθαι).³⁷⁹ So, because contemplation is not dependent on (unnecessary) external goods, it can occur without them (i.e. 'on its own'), and so can be added to a human life with the requisite necessities to make that life worth choosing without relying on anything else.

This shows that contemplation *can* make life choiceworthy on its own, but it doesn't quite show that it *does*. That is, contemplation has the right kind of independence to play the role of self-sufficiency, but we haven't seen an argument that it actually does play that role. But Aristotle has an argument for this conclusion, which we've already seen. Aristotle argues that the gods engage in contemplation but not moral virtue (1178^b8-21). But gods live (1178^b18-19), and are the most happy and blessed of all entities (1178^b21-23). Hence the gods have a life that is choiceworthy, but which consists in contemplation alone. Therefore contemplation on its own can make a life worth choosing, and so contemplation is a self-sufficient good.

If this is so, why then does Aristotle also say "Our nature is not self-sufficient with respect to contemplation" (οὐ γὰρ αὐτάρκης ἡ φύσις πρὸς τὸ θεωρεῖν, 1179^b33-34)? The

³⁷⁸ Cf. Burnet (1900), p. 462, Ericksen (1976), pp. 148-949.

³⁷⁹ This distinction is critical, and missing it has led several commentators astray. When Aristotle says that contemplation needs external goods less than moral virtue does, he is not thereby making self-sufficiency a matter of degree, such that there is a linear relation between amount of goods needed and degree of self-sufficiency. Rather, there are two distinct ways of needing external goods, and only one applies to contemplation. This means that it is also wrong to say that Aristotle concedes that no good is really self-sufficient, because all humans need some external goods. This reading fails to distinguish, as Aristotle does, activities, lives, and agents.

answer involves humanity's dual nature, as discussed in §2.5.3. Humans can be described in (at least) two ways, one referring to our essence (*nous*), the other referring to the biological compound. Here Aristotle is referring to the insufficiency of the compound, as the context makes clear. For it is "in being human" that we need external goods (*ἀνθρώπων ὄντι*, 1178^b33). And Aristotle specifies the goods we need as "bodily health and the presence of sustenance and the remaining services" (1178^b34-45), which are the goods of the human compound, the sort necessary for human life and so included in any conception of self-sufficiency, rather than the external goods necessary for virtuous activity but not life.³⁸⁰ And in any case, Aristotle's claim here is that our nature is not self-sufficient for contemplation, not that contemplation is not self-sufficient for *eudaimonia*. This way of putting it does not reflect sloppiness in the administration of this criterion on Aristotle's part.³⁸¹ Rather, it shows that he is aware of the distinctions between the chief good, the good life, and the happy person, despite their close conceptual connections.

The next criterion after self-sufficiency is functional activity. This criterion was formulated as follows:

Functional Activity: The chief good is the excellent expression of the human function, i.e. psychic activity of the rational part of the soul according to that part's best excellence.

Aristotle alludes to this criterion the moment he begins discussing the contemplative life, arguing "If *eudaimonia* is activity in accordance with excellence, it is reasonable that it is

³⁸⁰ Cf. Ericksen (1976), pp. 100-05, Kraut (1989), pp. 186-89. Aristotle does go on to discuss how we need little of the second kind of external goods for virtuous action. We will address this point in the next section.

³⁸¹ As Curzer (1990) argues and Brown (2014) suggests.

according to the greatest one (κατὰ τὴν κρατίστην). For this would be the activity of the best [part of the soul]” (1177^a12-13).³⁸² He identifies this part with *nous* in the next lines, concluding “The activity of this part in according with its proper virtue (τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρετὴν) would be perfect *eudaimonia*. That this activity is contemplation, has been said” (1177^a16-18).³⁸³ So we have here clear textual evidence that Aristotle is thinking of contemplation as our functional activity: it is the excellent expression of the best excellence of the best part of the soul.³⁸⁴

Moreover, Aristotle argues that contemplative activity is our characteristic activity, the activity of what we most truly are.³⁸⁵ As we saw in §2.5.3, Aristotle frequently identifies the human person with her *nous*, in- and outside of *NE* X.7-8 (e.g., 1166^a16-23, 1168^b34-69^a3). But it is in these chapters that we get some of the most explicit discussions of this point. Aristotle argues that we must

Do everything with respect to the life according to the best of the things in us. For even if it is small in bulk it far surpasses everything else in power and honor. And it would indeed appear to be each person, since it is authoritative and best (τὸ κύριον καὶ ἄμεινον). Therefore it would be odd

³⁸² Bostock (2000), p. 195, Lear (2004), pp. 182-83. See also van Cleempert (2006), pp. 143-154, who argues that the function argument in *NE* I.7 is written specifically to set up contemplation as what meets it.

³⁸³ The phrase ἡ τελεία εὐδαιμονία only appears in *NE* X, here and at 1177^b24 and 1178^b7. Many commentators have been led to believe that *eudaimonia* and perfect *eudaimonia* must be different things, based largely on a purported contrast with secondary *eudaimonia*. But, as we saw in §2.5.3, Aristotle does not endorse the idea of a second kind of *eudaimonia* contrasted with contemplation. So there is no need to understand ‘perfect happiness’ as a different kind of happiness from unqualified *eudaimonia*. If anything (as the second usage suggests), perfect happiness refers to contemplative activity in a complete life, i.e. a life with sufficient external goods unmarred by misfortune. But the activity which makes this life a happy life is just contemplation, as the first and third usages of ‘perfect happiness’ rather directly state. Cf. Cooper (1987), pp. 205-08, though Cooper goes wrong by conceding too much to the proponent of secondary *eudaimonia*.

³⁸⁴ To use Baker (2015)’s terminology, contemplation is not just a product we make or an activity we perform, but an achievement, specifically the best achievement of our best capacities. See Baker (2015), pp. 259-60.

³⁸⁵ Cooper (1975), pp. 168-77, Ericksen (1976), pp. 118-20, Lear (2004), pp. 192-93.

(ἄτοπον) if one did not choose one's own life, but rather that of another.
(1177^b33-78^a4)

Aristotle concludes, “For what is proper (τὸ γὰρ οἰκεῖον) to each by nature is best and most pleasant for each. And for humans this is the life in accordance with *nous*, since this a human is most of all this” (1178^a5-7). Hence contemplation is not only our best activity, it is also the activity that most realizes our essential nature.³⁸⁶

The fact that contemplation is our characteristic activity is also seen by comparison with other organisms. Recall that, in establishing this criterion in *NE* I.7, Aristotle identified the characteristic part of the soul by first excluding what was common to plants and animals. In X.8 Aristotle argues that contemplation is our functional activity by making an inference in the other direction:

Evidence for this is that the rest of the animals do not partake of *eudaimonia*, being completely deprived of this sort of activity. For the entirety of life is blessed to the gods, and to humans to the extent that they are capable of a similar sort of activity. But none of the other animals are happy, since they in no way have a share in contemplation. (1178^a24-28)

This confirms our earlier interpretation that our functional activity is characteristic rather than unique, because it is part of Aristotle's argument that this activity is something shared with the gods rather than something held by humans alone. Hence contemplation is our functional activity, because it is both the characteristic activity of us (i.e., of the best part of the human), and moreover the best activity this part is capable of.

³⁸⁶ In Barney's terms, that is, contemplation satisfies both the architectonic and realization readings of the function argument, which she rightly argues are complementary; see Barney (2008), p. 318.

The fourth criterion for *eudaimonia* is stability, which will require us to return again to the topic of external goods:

Stability: The chief good is stable. It makes a good life resistant to misfortune, and it enables its possessor to become and remain happy throughout life.

As we saw in §2.5.3, moral virtue fails this criterion because of its dependence on external goods. Because contemplation is not dependent on these goods in the same way, it is more resistant to fortune, and therefore more stable.

In discussing stability in *NE* I.9-11, Aristotle argues that the reason why psychic excellence is not lost is because it isn't forgotten, and this is because "the most honorable [activities] are the most stable because blessed people spend their life in these activities most and most continuously" (αἱ τιμιώταται μονιμώτεροι διὰ τὸ μάλιστα καὶ συνεχέστατα καταζῆν ἐν αὐταῖς τοὺς μακαρίους, 1100^b15-16). Early in his defense of contemplation in X.7, Aristotle revisits this point: "[Contemplative activity] is, moreover, the most continuous. For we are able to contemplate continuously, more than we can do any sort of action" (ἔτι δὲ συνεχεστάτη· θεωρεῖν [τε] γὰρ δυνάμεθα συνεχῶς μᾶλλον ἢ πράττειν ὄτιοῦν, 1177^a21-22). The reason that contemplation is the most continuous of our activities is because it is autotelic and reflexive: it aims only at itself, and can have itself as its object, so it can occur even when misfortune strikes, e.g. by leaving one deprived of the wealth needed for liberal or magnificent actions.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁷ See also Ericksen (1976), pp. 93-96, Kraut (1989), pp. 68 n. 48, Monan (1968), pp. 130-32, Roochnik (2009), pp. 79-81. One might worry here about Aristotle's argument in *NE* X.4 that "All human things are incapable of continuous activity" (πάντα γὰρ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια ἀδυνατεῖ συνεχῶς ἐνεργεῖν, 1175^a4-5); cf. Moline (1983), p. 42. But again, this is because of the weak biological element in us, not *nous*. In short, our

Aristotle has another argument for the stability of contemplation, one which gives a role to an otherwise mysterious and unsatisfying passage.³⁸⁸ The final lines of *NE* X.8 give an argument that the activity of *nous* is most loved by the gods (1179^a22-24, ^a30), on the grounds that, if the gods are concerned with human affairs, then they would care about what is most akin to them (1179^a24-27), and that the gods would therefore “do well by in return” (ἀντευποιεῖν) to those who engage in the activity the gods most care about (1179^a27-29). This argument parallels Aristotle’s introduction to the topic of stability in *NE* I.9. Aristotle is ultimately ambivalent about whether or not *eudaimonia* is god-given, on the grounds that it is a topic for another inquiry (1099^b13-14), but he is willing to say that if anything is god-given the most reasonable candidate would be happiness, since happiness is the best thing (1099^b11-13). The implication, then, is that the gods will look out for those who engage in contemplation, which would make this activity resistant to fortune in a different way.³⁸⁹ Internally, contemplation is resistant to fortune because it can operate without the goods that fortune affects; externally, contemplation is resistant to fortune because the gods will ward off misfortune from happening in the first place on account of their appreciation in us engaging in the favorite activity.

biological element can interfere with the activity of *nous*, given that *nous* is part of a compound including this element; I will expand on this point in the next section.

³⁸⁸ Broadie (2003a) is one of the few places to take Aristotle’s argument here seriously. See also Broadie & Rowe (2002), pp. 447-450, Stewart (1892), p. 457. Commentators have been puzzled about how to make this remark square with the wholly self-attuned God of *Metaphysics* Λ (e.g. Bostock (2000), pp. 197-200). But we shouldn’t assume from the outset that the view of the *NE* is the same view; as I’ll argue in §4, Aristotle holds different views of divinity between the *NE* and *AE* and *EE*, so it would be no surprise if the *NE* view doesn’t match the *Metaphysics*

³⁸⁹ Cf. Long (2011), pp. 105-16.

The fact that the gods love contemplation brings us to the next criterion, honor, which we formulated as follows:

Honor: The chief good is the subject of honor rather than mere praise.

Aristotle tells us in *NE* I.12 that the best things merit something better than praise, of the sort we give to the gods and to blessed and happy (and therefore godlike) humans (1101^b21-25). Since contemplation is the best activity, and also what divine entities engage in, it is the sort of thing that will merit honor rather than mere praise. And this is exactly what Aristotle tells us. For *nous*, though small in bulk, “far surpasses everything else in power and honor” (1178^a1-2), and “[Contemplation] is honorable in itself” (1178^b31), which is why the gods “welcome and honor this most of all” (1179^a27-28).

Our sixth criterion regards pleasure, which, recall, is the one criterion that the other two candidates for the chief good came close to meeting. This criterion was formulated as follows:

Pleasure: The chief good is pleasant. It involves pleasure of the soul associated with excellent psychic activity, and is pleasant naturally and in itself.

Given that contemplation is our functional activity, it is the right sort of activity to meet the pleasantness criterion as well, since both criteria pick out excellent psychic activity that bear an important relationship to our natures.

And indeed, Aristotle thinks that contemplation meets this criterion fully. Early in his defense of contemplation as the chief good, he writes

And we think it necessary for pleasure to be intermingled with *eudaimonia*, and it is commonly held (ὁμολογουμένως) that the most pleasant of activities in accordance with virtue is activity in accordance with wisdom

(κατὰ τὴν σοφίαν). At any rate, philosophy seems to possess pleasure marvelous in its purity and steadfastness, and it is reasonable for those who know to spend their time more pleasantly than those who are still searching. (1177^a22-27).³⁹⁰

He adds that contemplation “has its proper pleasure (τὴν ἡδονὴν οἰκείαν) (and this augments (συνάξει) the activity” (1177^b20-21) and “What is proper (τὸ γὰρ οἰκεῖον) to each by nature is best and most pleasant for each. And for humans this is the life in accordance with *nous*” (1178^a5-7).

These comments on pleasure are more assertions than arguments. This is because they rely on arguments made elsewhere. For instance, the remarks about noetic activity being good and pleasant by nature expresses the conclusion of Aristotle’s argument about noetic activity in *NE IX.9* we examined in the last section, where thought’s awareness of thought is good and pleasant by nature, and so especially good and pleasant for the good person. The idea that contemplation is a proper pleasure of man picks up discussion of the same topic in *NE X.6*, where Aristotle argues both that specific activities have their own proper pleasures (1175^b24-28), and that each species has its own proper pleasure as well (1176^a3-5), corresponding to its functional activity. Of the latter Aristotle concludes, “Whether there is one or many activities of the perfect (τελείου) and blessed man, the

³⁹⁰ This last line is often rendered as something like “those who know spend their time more pleasantly than those who inquire”; it is so translated by Brown & Ross (2009), Crisp (2000), Ostwald (1962), and Reeve (2014a). This is certainly a plausible reading, and if it is right it implies something else about contemplation, namely that it is a restricted kind of intellectual activity, such that, e.g., the process of carrying out a deduction would not qualify, but meditating on the conclusion would. But I think the passage admits a weaker reading which does a better job of providing the kind of evidence Aristotle wants here. On this reading, “Those whose know” will refer to philosophers, who have first-hand acquaintance with the pleasures of contemplation, and will therefore serve as good judges of its value. “Those who are still searching” would refer to non-philosophers, who are still looking for the chief good because they haven’t engaged in philosophy yet. So read, Aristotle is thinking of something like the competent judges in Mill’s *Utilitarianism*, which is exactly the sort of argument Aristotle makes at 1176^b18-21.

pleasures that complete these are said in the strict sense (κυρίως) to be the pleasures of man, and the remaining will be so secondarily or even lower, as will be the activities” (1176^a26-29).

The pleasure of contemplation also involves the objects of contemplation; Aristotle tells us “thought and contemplation” (διάνοιαν καὶ θεωρίαν, 1174^b21) are especially pleasant, because “the most complete perception is most pleasant (ἡδίστη δ’ ἡ τελειοτάτη), and the most complete is the pleasure of a well-disposed faculty (ἡ τοῦ εὖ ἔχοντος) toward the most valuable (τὸ σπουδαιότατον) of its objects” (1174^b21-23). So unlike the pleasures of amusement, which don’t correspond to functional activities and aren’t pleasant to the good person, or moral virtue, which is pleasant to the good person, but with qualifications and caveats, contemplation fully satisfies the pleasantness criterion.³⁹¹

This brings us to our last criterion, divinity. Though we have already had occasion to mention divinity when discussing the other criteria, we have not yet seen how important divinity is to the status of contemplation in the *NE*.

Divinity: The chief good is divine. It is best and sets the standards for moral evaluation.

As we’ll see, contemplation meets this criterion, and it is in fact one of the most important components for Aristotle’s defense of contemplation as the chief good.³⁹² What is less obvious, however, is that divinity not only provides a criterion of its own, but also provides the foundation for the other criteria as well.

³⁹¹ See also Ericksen (1976), pp. 96-99, Gurtler (2003), pp. 814-830.

³⁹² One small piece of evidence for this: Aristotle spends almost as much space discussing the divinity of contemplation (c. 54 lines) as he does the other six criteria combined (c. 56 lines).

We can start where Aristotle does, in the very first lines of *NE* X.7. After repeating the claim that *eudaimonia* will be activity in accordance with the highest virtue, Aristotle argues

Whether this is *nous* or something else which appears to rule and guide us by nature, and to have be capable of thought about noble and divine things, whether it is itself divine or the most divine thing in us, this activity exercised according to its corresponding excellence would be complete happiness. (1177^a13-17)

εἴτε δὴ νοῦς τοῦτο εἴτε ἄλλο τι, ὃ δὴ κατὰ φύσιν δοκεῖ ἄρχειν καὶ ἡγεῖσθαι καὶ ἔννοιαν ἔχειν περὶ καλῶν καὶ θείων, εἴτε θεῖον ὄν καὶ αὐτὸ εἴτε τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν τὸ θειότατον, ἢ τούτου ἐνέργεια κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρετὴν εἴη ἂν ἡ τελεία εὐδαιμονία.

This passage provides two different ways that contemplation is divine. First, contemplation has the divine as its object. Second, contemplation is the activity of the divine part of the soul.

As we saw in the last section, Aristotle says relatively little about the first of these points. We are told that the objects of *nous* include the greatest of knowable objects (1177^a19-21), and that the gods, who only engage in contemplation, pay attention to mortals who themselves contemplate (1179^a24-31). Aristotle mentions *archai* and eternal things earlier in the *NE* (1098^b3-4, 1111^b30-34), so these presumably count as well. And of course, because the activity of *nous* is reflexive, *nous* will have itself as an object.³⁹³ Though we would like to know more about this topic, it is not in doubt that the objects of contemplation are ‘noble and divine’, so this will have to suffice.

³⁹³ See Owens (1988) and Walker (2010), pp. 226-235 for more on this issue.

Aristotle is more forthcoming about the second way that contemplation is divine: Contemplation is the activity of *nous*, and *nous* is the divine part of the soul. Aristotle is slightly ambivalent about this in the passage quoted above, but is more direct later:

But such a life would be too much for a human (κρείττων ἢ κατ' ἄνθρωπον). For it is not insofar as one is human that one will live in this way, but rather insofar as there is something divine in him. And this will excel [the value of] the compound to the same extent that the activity of this [part excels the value of] the activity according to the other virtue. And if *nous* is divine compared to what is human, the life in accordance with this will also be divine compared to a human life. But it is not the case that one should, as some enjoin, think human things, being human, or mortal things, being mortal. Rather, one should act immortally (ἀθανατίζειν) as much as possible and do everything with respect to the life according to the best of the things in us. (1177^b26-34)

This argument would make no sense if we weren't actually divine to some significant degree.³⁹⁴ As Aristotle mentions a few lines later, in a passage we've seen before, *nous* is us, and the noetic life is our life, and so if we are to live this kind of life, then we must be divine.

There is one more way that the contemplation is divine: it is the kind of activity that the gods engage in themselves, i.e. the activity of divine entities.³⁹⁵ We've already seen that the gods don't engage in morally virtuous activity. But that doesn't mean they don't engage in another kind of activity. As Aristotle argues

Everyone thinks that the gods live and are active...But if we subtract from a living thing action, and still more production, what remains save contemplation? Consequently the activity of god, which exceeds in blessedness, would be contemplative, and of human activities the one most akin to this would be happiest. (1178^b18-23)

³⁹⁴ Ericksen (1976), pp. 1253-59, Reeve (2012), pp. 211-16. See Reeve (2014c) for a close reading of this passage, and Sedley (1999), pp.324-28 for a discussion of the Platonic antecedents of this line of thought.

³⁹⁵ On which see Broadie (1991), pp. 408-12, Kraut (1989), pp. 64-67.

He adds shortly after that “Life is entirely blessed for the gods, and for humans, to the extent that a certain likeness (ὁμοίωμα τι) of this sort of activity is present” (1178^b25-27). And as we’ve seen, Aristotle also argues that the gods care about “what is best and most akin to them (and this would be *nous*)” (1179^a26-27) and so look out for those who engage in the activity of *nous*, which is most present in the wise person.

In summary, then, divinity plays a major role in Aristotle’s argument that contemplation is the chief good. Contemplation is divine in three ways:

- 1) The objects of contemplation are divine (i.e. immortal, unchanging, and best);
- 2) Contemplation is human characteristic (i.e. functional) activity insofar as humans are identified with their divine *nous*;
- 3) Happiness will be whatever activity humans and gods share, and that activity is contemplation.

But in addition, divinity also plays an important role in explaining why contemplation meets the other criteria for *eudaimonia*.³⁹⁶ Contemplation is final because it is autotelic, and it is autotelic in part because (i) it is best, and therefore doesn’t need to aim at anything further, and (ii) it can take itself as its object, and so aim at itself rather than something else.³⁹⁷ Because humans have a divine part of the soul that is somehow separate from the biological human compound (1178^s22), we can focus on the operation of the divine part,

³⁹⁶ Cf. Broadie (1991), pp. 401-08.

³⁹⁷ Cf. Lear (2004), pp. 189-90. Though Aristotle talks in terms of perception and *nous* together when discussing reflexivity, this makes contemplation different from perception in at least one important way. Perception always involves self-perception, but this is always in addition to the external object of perception that it is directed toward. Contemplation can also have external objects, and when it does it will operate in the same way. But contemplation can involve *nous* thinking about *nous*, or the divine thinking about the divine, in a way that perception cannot.

which is self-sufficient, abstracted away from the mortal part which is not.³⁹⁸ The same distinction helps us see why contemplation is stable, despite the instability of the human compound. Because we are essentially divine, our functional activity will be the characteristic activity of divine beings, which is contemplation. Because divinity sets the standard for honor and praise, our divine activity will also be honorable; recall Aristotle's approving citation of Eudoxus on this point in *NE* I.12. Divinity is also associated with a certain kind of pleasure; the gods are thought to live pleasant lives, and Aristotle even hints that the reason irrational creatures pursue pleasure is because something divine is guiding them.³⁹⁹

We have seen, then, that the project of the *NE* is a success. There is a chief good, a good which satisfies all seven criteria for *eudaimonia* as outlined in *NE* I.7-12. This means that our desires are not "empty and vain" (1094^a21) and that *politikē* has a proper object: contemplation.

§2.6.3 – Contemplation and the Happy Life

That contemplation is the proper object of *politikē* may be a surprising conclusion. When introducing the topic of *politikē* in *NE* I.2, Aristotle says something about it that should puzzle us when we read it again with *NE* X in mind:

This same *telos* encompasses all the others, and so this would be the human good. And even if this is the same for an individual and for the city, to secure and preserve this for the city seems better and more final (μειζόν γε καὶ τελειότερον). For while it is welcome (ἀγαπητὸν) [to do this] for a single

³⁹⁸ See also Ericksen (1976), pp. 100-101.

³⁹⁹ The description Aristotle gives here is "κρείττον ἢ καθ' αὐτά" (1173^a4-5), the same terminology he uses when arguing against the view that the divine is "too much for a human" (κρείττων ἢ κατ' ἄνθρωπον, 1177^b26-27).

individual, it is nobler and more divine (κάλλιον δὲ καὶ θεϊότερον) [to do it] for a people and a city. (1094^b6-10)⁴⁰⁰

When Aristotle says it is more divine to bring about the chief good for a city than for an individual, he is at least to some degree using ‘more divine’ in a broadly evaluative sense, rather than in the more restricted sense we saw in *NE* X.7-8.⁴⁰¹ Nonetheless, *NE* doesn’t end with X.7-8; rather, Aristotle writes one more chapter, where the important of political activity comes back into consideration:

Surely, for the person who wishes to make people better through his care, whether many people or few, he must undertake to become capable of legislation, if it through laws that men become good. Of course the task of putting whatever is before one into a good condition is not for any random person, but rather for someone in particular, the one who knows, just as in medicine and the remaining arts about which care and *phronesis* are concerned. So mustn’t one investigate how and from where one become a legislator? Or doesn’t it, as in the other cases, come from statesmen? For it appears to be a part of *politikē*. (1180^b23-31)

τάχα δὲ καὶ τῷ βουλομένῳ δι’ ἐπιμελείας βελτίους ποιεῖν, εἴτε πολλοὺς εἴτ’ ὀλίγους, νομοθετικῶ πειρατέον γενέσθαι, εἰ διὰ νόμων ἀγαθοὶ γενοίμεθ’ ἄν. ὄντινα γὰρ οὖν καὶ τὸν προτεθέντα διαθεῖναι καλῶς οὐκ ἔστι τοῦ τυχόντος ἄλλ’ εἴπερ τινός, τοῦ εἰδότος, ὥσπερ ἐπ’ ἰατρικῆς καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ὧν ἔστιν ἐπιμελεία τις καὶ φρόνησις. ἄρ’ οὖν μετὰ τοῦτο ἐπισκεπτέον πόθεν ἢ πῶς νομοθετικὸς γένοιτ’ ἄν τις; ἢ καθάπερ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων, παρὰ τῶν πολιτικῶν; μῦριον γὰρ ἐδόκει τῆς πολιτικῆς εἶναι.

Aristotle clearly thinks that *politikē* involves more than contemplation, if only because it must guide all its subservient sciences. And so we’re left with a puzzle, especially given the attention and detail he lavishes on moral activity before rejecting it as a contender for

⁴⁰⁰ Cf Moline (1983), pp. 41-42.

⁴⁰¹ Kraut (1989), pp. 346-47 argues that Aristotle is also using ‘human good’ in a broader sense, given that he has said nothing about his own view of what the human good is, and so Aristotle’s claim here “requires refinement” and so shouldn’t be taken literally. Conversely, Ericksen (1976), pp. 174-82 argues that the tension between politics and philosophy in Aristotle’s ethical thought is pervasive and ineliminable. These points may be right, but I think we can do better.

the chief good: how does contemplation fit into Aristotle's broader conception of a good human life?⁴⁰²

In reading the two passages quoted above, it is natural to wonder whether Aristotle has shifted to a broader conception of human happiness, and therefore of *politikē*, than the one he defends in *NE* X.7-8. After all, if the chief good is contemplation, why would *eudaimonia* and its science be so concerned with practical matters? This brings back to the forefront an issue we discussed at length in §2.3, whether or not Aristotle endorses an inclusivist conception of *eudaimonia*, where contemplation is but one part of a complete set of goods, or rather he prefers an intellectualist conception instead.

As I argued in §2.3, the inclusivist conception is inconsistent with the way Aristotle establishes the criteria for *eudaimonia*, and is therefore unmotivated by the text (plausible though the view may be in the abstract). Having now looked at Aristotle's application of these criteria to the candidates for the chief good, we can see that inclusivism is unmotivated here too. Neither pleasure nor morally virtuous activity qualifies as the chief good, so there is no need to think of *eudaimonia* in a way that accommodates more than one chief good. And the way Aristotle discusses the chief good makes it clear that he thinks of it as a single thing:

So as far as contemplation extends, so too does *eudaimonia*, and to those for whom contemplating belongs more, so too does being happy, not incidentally but rather in accordance with their contemplation. For this is honorable in itself. Therefore *eudaimonia* would be a kind of contemplation. (1178^b 28-32)

⁴⁰² Despite the apparently explicit transition from the *Ethics* to the *Politics* in the last lines of *NE* X.9, the relationship between these two treatises is not straightforward. See Adkins (1984), Kamtekar (2014), Schofield (2006) for an overview of this issue.

ἐφ’ ὅσον δὴ διατείνει ἡ θεωρία, καὶ ἡ εὐδαιμονία, καὶ οἷς μᾶλλον ὑπάρχει
τὸ θεωρεῖν, καὶ εὐδαιμονεῖν, οὐ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν θεωρίαν·
αὕτη γὰρ καθ’ αὐτὴν τιμία. ὥστ’ εἴη ἂν ἡ εὐδαιμονία θεωρία τις.

Here *eudaimonia* is identified with contemplation, which is *the* chief good.⁴⁰³ And this is exactly what we should expect, for, as we saw in §2.3, all along Aristotle indicates that *eudaimonia* is a single thing, the single best virtue of the single best activity of the single best part of the soul (1098^a17-18, 1099^a29-31, 1177^a12-13).

But what, then, of the qualification that immediately follows the passage just quoted, that we also need external goods? Or, what of Aristotle’s concession that “the happy person will choose to act in accordance with [moral] virtue” (1178^b4-5) and that “the life of being active in accordance with [moral] virtue will be happy” (1179^a8-9)? We have already seen part of the answer to this question: here Aristotle is talking only about us *qua* biological compound, which had needs that are not shared by our essential selves (i.e. *nous*). But there is more to be said. Aristotle does think that the happy life will include moral virtue. But this is not because moral virtue is a part of happiness, strictly speaking. Even the language Aristotle uses here shows that he gives moral virtue a reduced role. A life is happy, we are told, to the extent that it is contemplative. And this is not an incidental feature of *eudaimonia*, but rather an intrinsic one (οὐ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν θεωρίαν, 1178^b29-30).⁴⁰⁴ The implication is that other, non-contemplative features of the happy life are incidental. Aristotle flags exactly this by identifying our essential nature with *nous*, and referring to our needs for external goods and our choice of moral virtue only *qua*

⁴⁰³ Ericksen (1976), pp. 160-61.

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. Kraut (1989), pp. 23-27.

human compound (ἧ δ' ἄνθρωπός ἐστι καὶ ... δεῖσεται οὖν τῶν τοιούτων πρὸς τὸ ἀνθρωπεύεσθαι, 1178^b5-7; ἀνθρώπῳ ὄντι, 1178^b33).

Aristotle gives us a model for thinking about the way moral virtue fits into the happy life by the way he describes our need for external goods in *NE* I8. As we saw in §2.3, Aristotle distinguishes two ways that external goods can feature in our happiness (1099^a31-^b8, 1099^b26-28). Some are necessary parts of our activities, while others are preconditions. The latter category can itself be divided into two categories, the goods necessary for any human life (food, friends, etc.) and the goods like good birth or physical beauty which put the “luster” on happiness. It turns out that, since contemplation as such requires no external goods for its operation, no external good will be a constituent of happiness, strictly speaking, nor will it be a constituent of the activity which itself constitutes happiness. All external goods, then, will be preconditions instead, goods that are necessary to provide the conditions necessary for contemplation to operate.

If this is right, and external goods are all the objects toward which the moral virtues are directed and which they use in their activities, then we would also expect moral virtue to be a precondition for *eudaimonia* rather than a constituent.⁴⁰⁵ This is just the role Aristotle gives to amusement (1176^b32-77^a1), since we engage in it as a separate activity from contemplation in order to help us rest to contemplate more. The same apparently holds for virtuous activity, since it aims at the leisure we need for contemplation (1177^b4-15). This makes sense because, despite the stability and steadfastness of contemplation, it

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Keyt (1983), p. 379.

can still be impeded by external goods (or bads), both because they are distracting (1178^b3-5, cf. 1175^a4-10, 1175^b1-24) and because our body needs them to function properly (1178^b33-35).⁴⁰⁶

The role of the body should remind us of another important distinction Aristotle makes, when discussing the parts of the soul in *NE* I.13. When contrasting the non-rational part of the soul against the rational and quasi-rational parts of the soul, Aristotle says that “the excellence of this part seems to be common and is not [specifically] human (ἀνθρωπίνη)” (1102^b1-2), and so concludes that the nutritive part “has by nature no share of human excellence (τῆς ἀνθρωπικῆς ἀρετῆς)” (1102^b12). But this doesn’t mean that this part of the soul is completely irrelevant to human happiness: without health and a well-functioning body, we can’t be happy. The same goes for activity of this part of the soul, e.g. respiration: a human who cannot breathe cannot engage in the activity that constitutes happiness, but this does not make breathing itself a part of that activity. Hence the excellence of this part of the soul will be a precondition of happiness, but not a constituent. And the relationship the quasi-rational part of the soul has to the rational part is analogous to the relationship between the non- and quasi-rational parts. The moral virtues do not have a share of true human excellence, because the moral virtues don’t belong to the rational part of the soul, just as nutritive excellence doesn’t belong to the rational part. But the well-functioning of the quasi-rational part will provide the conditions for proper rational excellence, just as the well-functioning of the non-rational part provides the conditions for

⁴⁰⁶ See Tuozzo (1995) for a fuller defense of this position.

moral excellence (e.g. temperance depends on the right relationship between taste, nutrition, and health).

What this means, then, is that the happy person will engage in regular morally virtuous activity, as a precondition for being able to engage in contemplation.⁴⁰⁷ And this means that virtuous activity on behalf of the contemplator is compatible with an intellectualist conception of the chief good, because a good life will include activities that are not themselves part of the chief good. Some of these activities, like courage, liberality, or magnificence, will focus primarily on external conditions, i.e. bringing about the leisure time and security in which to engage in contemplation. Others, like temperance or good temper, will deal with internal conditions, i.e. habituating the lower parts of the soul to obey reason's commands rather than pursue the wrong kinds of pleasures at the expense of contemplation.⁴⁰⁸ Some might even contribute directly to contemplation; Aristotle mentions friendship in particular as an aid to contemplating (1177^a34; cf. 1169^b33-70^a4). And some, e.g. ambition or justice, may be directed at bringing about contemplation in other people, by operating at the political level rather than the individual level.

⁴⁰⁷ See Walker (forthcoming) for a discussion of how variable and complex that contemplative life can be.

⁴⁰⁸ Commentators who argue that moral activity is instrumentally valuable for contemplation (e.g. Kraut (1989), Tuozzo (1995)) tend to miss this feature, by focusing too much on the direct instrumentality of, e.g. courage securing a peaceful city that allows for contemplative leisure. This leaves them open to the objection that the directly instrumental view is implausible; see Lear (2004), pp. 196-200. Lear briefly considers the emotionally regulative role of moral virtue, but objects that continence would be just as good as virtue for the contemplator's purpose. But this is incorrect. A continent soul requires constant commanding by the rational part to resist the quasi-rational part's inappropriate desires. But in the virtuous soul the quasi-rational part explicit command is not necessary, because it already agrees with rational part. This is analogous to Aristotle's claim that people hate men who oppose their impulses, but not laws (1180^a23-25). The law sets a background policy to which citizens can adapt, while individuals must command the citizen on each occasion. Likewise, in the virtuous soul the quasi-rational part doesn't need to be commanded on each occasion, because it is well-trained to want to pursue what is right. This is not the case for the continent person. So even if both engage in the same behaviors, the continent person will need more internal regulation than the virtuous person, and this regulation is itself a hindrance to contemplation.

To see how this last option is possible, we need to look more closely at what Aristotle says about politics in *NE* X.9. His focus is not primarily on legislation as such. Instead, he is mostly concerned with how people can become good, reiterating his claim from *NE* II.2 that *politikē* is primarily a practical science (1179^a35-^b4; cf. 1103^b26-33). And, while Aristotle does allow that some people can become good through study (1099^b18-20, 1179^b7-10), as Aristotle laments, for the most part people do not become good by argument. The many are dominated by passion rather than reason, and so will not listen to the true account of the chief good, and wouldn't put this account into practice if they did (1179^b10-18, ^b26-29; cf. 1095^a4-9). And even people of noble character have to be properly habituated in order to be able to appreciate these arguments in the first place (1179^b7-9, ^b23-26; cf. 1095^s2-4). And if argumentation won't do the job here, then we need to turn to another force. Aristotle suggests the law as a way to properly habituate people to become good (1179^b31-80^a5). The reasons why Aristotle thinks law can succeed where argumentation fails are particularly interesting for our purposes. Aristotle argues

These things can happen for those who live in accordance with a kind of *nous* and right order, if this has strength. Now, the paternal command does not have the force or compulsion [to do this], nor in general does a single man, unless he is a king or some such person. But the law does have compulsive power, being a rule resulting from a kind of *phronesis* and *nous*. (1180^a17-22)

ταῦτα δὲ γίνονται ἂν βιουμένοις κατὰ τινα νοῦν καὶ τάξιν ὀρθήν, ἔχουσιν ἰσχύν· ἢ μὲν οὖν πατρικὴ πρόσταξις οὐκ ἔχει τὸ ἰσχυρὸν οὐδὲ [δὴ] τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, οὐδὲ δὴ ὅλως ἢ ἐνὸς ἀνδρός, μὴ βασιλέως ὄντος ἢ τινος τοιούτου· ὁ δὲ νόμος ἀναγκαστικὴν ἔχει δύναμιν, λόγος ὢν ἀπὸ τινος φρονήσεως καὶ νοῦ.

This passage talks about *nous* in precisely the same terms that were used to describe the rational part of the soul in *NE* I.13, down to the metaphor of paternal command (1102^b31-32). But the way Aristotle continues the discussion shows this is not solely a metaphor: the way the law functions in a community is the same way that a father operates in a family (1180^a24-^b6). This suggests that when Aristotle describes *nous* in the individual soul as ‘authoritative’ he means it in a fairly literal way: *nous* is the executive seat of the soul, just like a father is in the household or the government is in a city (τὸ κυριώτατον, 1168^b31-33; cf. 1098^a4-8, 1177^a13-15, 1177^b33-78^a4).⁴⁰⁹ This means that the wise person can, using their own *nous*, write laws that serve as a surrogate *nous* for others, ruling the quasi-rational part of their souls the same way that the wise person’s *nous* rules his own (1113^a5-6, 1119^b7-15, 1177^a14-15).⁴¹⁰ For some people, the result will be good habituation, such that their own *nous* can take over and rule their soul without the law’s compulsion. For most, though, the law will be a permanent source of rule of the soul.⁴¹¹

What this shows, then, is that legislation can be used to bring about contemplation in at least some others both internally and externally. It is reasonably easy to see how laws can help secure the external conditions needed for contemplation, by directing the military, governing the economy, and so on.⁴¹² And by providing for the right kind of moral

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Charles (2014), p. 105.

⁴¹⁰ This point enervates the tension Ericksen (1976), p. 179-82 sees in the role of the philosopher and the legislator. Ericksen relies on the *AE* to make legislation purely an activity of the practically rational part of the soul rather than *nous*. But Aristotle does not make this distinction in the *NE*, rather attributing legislation to *nous* and using *nous* and *phronesis* together in a way that marks no distinction.

⁴¹¹ See Miller (2013) for a discussion of this issue in the *Politics*.

⁴¹² Cf. Lisi (2014), pp. 260-66. See also Depew (1991) for a discussion of how this might happen in the *Politics*, though note that Depew reads the *Politics* as endorsing an inclusivist conception of happiness on the grounds that the *Politics* refers to the more inclusivist *EE* rather than the *NE*. I agree with Depew that

habituation among citizens, legislation can serve as a proxy for *nous* to condition the soul to be in the sort of state that is harmonious with reason and therefore not disruptive to it. This view of law brings the *NE* back to where it first began: the chief good, as the architectonic good, is the *telos* of the architectonic science, *politikē*, which guides the activities of all the lower pursuits in the city.⁴¹³

If this is right, then the *NE* allows for *nous* to engage in a significant amount of non-contemplative activity. But this brings us back to where we began this section: why doesn't this view commit Aristotle to thinking that *eudaimonia* consists in more than just contemplation? We are now in a position to fully answer this question. Now that that we've seen the important political role that *nous* can play in human life, we can see that *nous* is capable of more than just contemplation. Aristotle allows that a single part of the soul may have more than one activity (1098^a15-16, 1102^a33-^b2, 1177^a12-13), and therefore more than one excellence corresponding to that part. And so we can think of legislative or political excellence as a lesser kind of noetic activity. This would not make political activity a kind of *eudaimonia*, because this activity fails to meet the relevant criteria.⁴¹⁴ But it is a way of saving the phenomena, as it were, by giving political activity an important role in human flourishing. The *NE* is primarily concerned with becoming good, not just knowing

the *EE* is inclusivist in a way that the *NE* is not, but the relationship between the *Politics* and *EE* is too complex to enter into here.

⁴¹³ See Lockwood (2014) for a more thorough discussion of the "ring compositional" elements of the *NE*.

⁴¹⁴ Pace Dahl (2011), who rightly sees that contemplation and moral virtue are both rational excellences, but does not take sufficiently seriously Aristotle's claims that (i) *eudaimonia* is be the best virtuous activity of the best part, not just any virtuous activity of the best part (see Lawrence (1993), pp. 17-18 for a good treatment of this issue), and (ii) even if we granted that moral virtue met the functional activity criterion, it would still fail the others.

what it is, though of course we have to know what it is first. Being good, we have learned, is a matter of engaging in contemplation; becoming good is a matter of political activity.⁴¹⁵

§2.7 – CONCLUSION

NE I sets up the project of identifying the criteria that any plausible candidate for the chief good must meet, and introduces three candidates for this appellation. Of them, only contemplation succeeds in meeting these criteria, and so only contemplation can count as a constituent of *eudaimonia*. This is in large part because of the divine properties of contemplation and the part of the soul that exhibits it, *nous*. As we will see in the next two chapters, the way the undisputed *NE* books treat *nous* and divinity in their inquiry into *eudaimonia* will have important consequences for determining if the *AE* belong with them.

⁴¹⁵ Cf. Frede (2013), *passim*, Reeve (1992), p. 189, Steward (1892), pp. 459-60, Striker (2006), pp. 140-141.

Chapter 3 – Studying the Soul in Aristotle’s Ethics

Aristotle understands *politikē* as the science of the human good, and he understands the human good as a certain activity of the human soul, in part because to be human is to possess a certain kind of soul capable of that activity. So it should not be surprising that a full understanding of Aristotle’s ethical thought will require some understanding of Aristotle’s view of the human soul. We have already looked extensively at the soul in the *NE*, and in particular at the role of *nous* in the *NE*’s argument that the only good that meets the seven criteria for *eudaimonia* is contemplation. In doing so, however, we looked only at the undisputed *NE* books, I-IV and VIII-IX. This led us to a much different view than most scholars of Aristotle’s ethics, who tend to give pride of place to *AE* II-III in determining the *NE*’s view of the soul, since these *AE* books discuss the soul explicitly in great detail. This approach has tended to generate interpretations of the *NE* where *NE* X is read in light of the *AE*, which has often required that Aristotle’s argument in X.7-8 not be taken at face value; as we’ll see in §5.2.1, some scholars have even argued that X.7-8 is only an accidental part of the *NE*, in large part because it seems to conflict with the *AE*. We will deal with the relationship between *NE* X and the other undisputed *NE* books in §5.2.1. In this chapter we will focus instead on Aristotle’s treatment of the soul in the *AE* II, to see how well it fits with the *NE* view. Because the *AE* appears in both the *NE* and *EE*, we cannot assume that it belongs in any particular place; rather, the *AE* has to earn its inclusion in one (or both) of these treatises, by being shown to be compatible in doctrine with the undisputed texts.

I will argue here that the *AE* shows substantive conflicts with the *NE* in its conception of the parts and powers of the soul, and in particular the rational part. The *NE* holds that there is a single rational part, *nous*, which is capable of both commanding the quasi-rational part of the soul and of contemplation. The *AE* argues that there are two rational parts, only one of which can command and only one of which can contemplate. Hence the *AE* and the *NE* disagree not only on the number of parts of the soul, but the respective powers of each. This difference, I will argue, follows from a prior disagreement on what principles to use to demarcate parts of the soul. Given the foundational role of *nous* in the *NE*, this difference with the *AE* is no mere oversight or difference in emphasis: rather, it is strong evidence that the *AE* does not belong in the *NE*. The *AE*, on the other hand, agrees completely with the *EE* view. This suggests that the *AE* was originally written for the *EE*, and that neither was the *AE* revised to fit into the *NE*, nor was the *NE* written to take the *AE* view into account.

§3.1 – THE SOUL AND ITS PARTS

I want to begin, however, with a point on which the *NE*, *AE*, and *EE* all agree: the way to approach the topic of human flourishing is through an investigation of the parts of the soul and the relations between them. We should start by clarifying what Aristotle means by parts of the soul, and indeed whether such talk is sufficiently accurate. The English word ‘part’ has connotations of separability and independence which the Greek μέρος and μέρος don’t always have, as evidenced by the many senses canvassed in *Metaph.* Δ.25 (I will use ‘part’ in a way that keeps these connotations, using terms like ‘aspect’ or ‘factor’

instead when I mean to be more neutral). There is some reason to hesitate in taking part-talk too seriously, for Aristotle himself seems ambivalent:

Some things about [the soul] have been discussed sufficiently in the exoteric works, and we should make use of them. For example, that there is a non-rational part (τὸ μὲν ἄλογον) of it, and a rational part (τὸ δὲ λόγον ἔχον). Whether these are divided (διώρισται) like the parts of the body and the divisible (τὸ μεριστόν) in general, or whether the two parts are divided in account but naturally inseparable (ἀχώριστα πεφυκότα) like the convex and concave parts of a circumference, makes no difference for present purposes. (1102^a26-32)

In a parallel passage in the *EE*, Aristotle makes essentially the same claim, but with some interesting differences:

It makes no difference whether the soul is partitioned (μεριστή) or not partitioned (ἀμερής), since it has the different powers (δυνάμεις) we discussed, just as the convex and concave parts in a curve are completely inseparable (ἀδιαχώριστον), and the straight and the white. For indeed the straight is not white, except incidentally and not in its own being (οὐσία τῆ αὐτοῦ). (1219^b32-36)

In both these passages Aristotle expresses some ambivalence over whether the soul has parts or not, and if so in what way. Consequently, one might worry that a reading of Aristotle's moral psychology which puts too much weight on psychic parthood would be a distorted reading, if Aristotle himself would not fully affirm that the soul has parts in a strong sense. The reading that I will defend in this chapter does put significant weight on the notion of psychic parthood in Aristotle: my reading will require a conception of parthood substantive enough to distinguish between 'one part with two powers' and 'two parts with one power each'. So before laying out this reading of Aristotle I need to defend the notion of parthood it presumes.

The first thing to note about these passages is that Aristotle's ambivalence should cut both ways. If it makes no difference whether we say souls have parts or not, then a reading of Aristotle that relies on psychic parts is just as good as one that does not; in Aristotle's eyes either theory would be equivalent for the purposes of ethical inquiry.⁴¹⁶ Aristotle's position seems even stronger in the *EE*: there's already a second way of differentiating the soul, so whether we talk about just powers, or parts and powers together, the soul will be internally individuated either way.⁴¹⁷ So an objection to committing Aristotle to psychic parts is less conservative than it might first appear: the objection is only worth raising if it turns out that Aristotle is wrong to be indifferent on this point, such that the soul cannot be partitioned in the way he seems to tolerate.

Secondly, Aristotle has a regular habit of being misleadingly noncommittal about matters of the soul, especially when it comes to *nous*. There are at least two other passages where Aristotle feigns ambivalence on an issue, and then goes on to show that he in fact has a clear commitment. The most obvious example comes at the very beginning of Aristotle's final discussion of *eudaimonia*, where he says that it is the activity of our best part "whether this is *nous* or something else" (1177^a13-14). But Aristotle clearly thinks that *nous* is the best thing in us, and he talks about *eudaimonia* in terms of *nous* in the remaining chapters. The effect here is not "I'm not sure what the best thing in us is, so I'll leave it open", but rather "I know exactly what I mean, but if you want to call it something

⁴¹⁶ Cf. Grönroos (2007), p. 254 n. 8.

⁴¹⁷ This difference between the *NE* and *EE* passages expresses, I believe, the larger methodological differences between the two works, to be discussed below. To preview: the *NE* is unconcerned with going into more detail than necessary for the purposes of educating the politician, while the *EE* is more willing to engage in philosophical analysis for its own sake.

else, fine”. A slightly more controversial example is Aristotle’s discussion of self-love in *NE IX*. When he introduces the topic in IX.4, Aristotle says “Whether there is friendship toward oneself or not, let us set aside for the present. It would seem that there is friendship in this way, insofar as one is two or more, based on what has been said and that the excess of friendship is analogous to one’s relationship toward oneself” (1166^a33-66^b2). But Aristotle goes on to detail exactly how the good person is friend to herself in IX.8, and grounds the value of friendship in self-love in IX.12, so it is pretty clear that Aristotle does in fact endorse the premise that literal self-love is possible. Given this pattern, we might begin to wonder whether expressed ambivalence on Aristotle’s part starts to look like positive evidence *for* the very thing he purports to be ambivalent about.⁴¹⁸ In any case, this ambivalence is no evidence against understanding the parts of the soul in a fairly robust way.

A further source of evidence against the worry that Aristotle does not truly endorse psychic parthood is his own way of discussing the soul. Talk of parts of the soul is ubiquitous in the corpus, and there is every reason to think Aristotle means this literally. For instance, Aristotle will explicitly label parts of the soul as “parts of the soul”, as he does when he calls *sophrosune* and courage “the virtues of the non-rational parts” (τῶν ἀλόγων μερῶν αὐται εἶναι αἱ ἀρεταί, 1117^b24). This pattern is even more explicit in the *AE*:

For the reason-having part of the soul (τὸ λόγον ἔχον μέρος τῆς ψυχῆς) stands in this ratio toward the non-rational part (τὸ ἄλογον). (1138^b8-9)

⁴¹⁸ Corcilius & Gregoric (2010) p. 82 document the same pattern in *De Anima* and elsewhere.

We said earlier that there are two parts of the soul (δύ' εἶναι μέρη τῆς ψυχῆς), the reason-having part and the non-rational part (τό τε λόγον ἔχον καὶ τὸ ἄλογον). Now the same distinction needs to be made about the reason-having part. (AE 1139^a3-6)

For regarding things different in kind each of the parts of the soul (τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς μορίων ἕτερον) will be naturally different in kind with respect to them. (1139^a8-10)

The calculative part is one part of the reason-having part. (τὸ λογιστικὸν ἐστὶν ἓν τι μέρος τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος, 1139^a14-15)

The function of both the intellectual parts is truth. (ἀμφοτέρων δὴ τῶν νοητικῶν μορίων ἀλήθεια τὸ ἔργον, 1138^b12)

Since there are two parts of the reason-having part of the soul (δυσὶν δ' ὄντων μεροῖν τῆς ψυχῆς τῶν λόγον ἔχόντων), it must be the virtue of one of them, the doxastic part (τοῦ δοξαστικοῦ). (1140^b25-26)

So what *phronesis* and *sophia* is, and about what each is concerned, and that each is a virtue of a different part of the soul (ἄλλου τῆς ψυχῆς μορίου), we have said. (1143^b14-17)

There is not such a virtue for the fourth part of the soul, the nutritive. (τοῦ δὲ τετάρτου μορίου τῆς ψυχῆς οὐκ ἔστιν ἀρετὴ τοιαύτη, τοῦ θρεπτικοῦ, 1144^a10-11)

In addition, many parts of the soul have their own names which suggest discrete units rather than mere aspects or faculties. The biggest division is between the reason-having and non-rational parts (τὸ λόγον ἔχον and τὸ ἄλογον); the neuter singular with the article here is most easily read as “the thing that is/does ___”. The same applies for smaller subdivisions of the soul. Aristotle frequently refers to these parts by the appellation τὸ ___-ικόν, including in some of the passages above. Aristotle refers to τὸ φυτικόν (1102^a32, ^b29, EE 1219^b37), τὸ θρεπτικόν (1102^b11, AE 1144^a10, EE 1219^b21-23), τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν (1102^b30, 1119^b14-15), τὸ ὀρεκτικόν (1102^b30, EE 1219^b23), τὸ λογιστικόν (AE 1139^a12-14, EE 1246^b19-23),

τὸ ἐπιστημονικὸν (*AE* 1139^a12, 1147^b13), τὸ διανοητικὸν (1166^a17, *AE* 1131^b27, 1139^b29-30), and τῶν νοητικῶν μορίων (*AE* 1139^b12). In addition, the *EE* has τὸ αἰσθητικὸν (1219^b23), τὸ βουλευτικὸν (1226^b25) and τὸ θεωρητικὸν (1226^b26, 1249^b13).⁴¹⁹ While the –ική suffix will often denote an activity or faculty (e.g. πολιτική, θεωρητική), using the singular neuter is more suggestive of the thing that exercises a faculty, i.e. the part. If Aristotle had wanted to focus only on the faculty instead, he could have used any number of feminine nouns, like δύναμις or ἐνέργεια, but he chose not to.⁴²⁰ Hence the conclusion that Aristotle means “parts of the soul” literally is defensible on syntactic grounds as well.

This point about –ική vs. –ικὸν suffixes, however, brings to the fore the motivation that I think underlies the challenge to taking psychic parthood literally. Roughly speaking, there are two related motivations: (1) *ceteris paribus* we shouldn’t commit Aristotle to more metaphysical claims than is necessary, and it is more parsimonious to remain at the level of psychic faculties rather than parts, (ii) in the ethical works and elsewhere Aristotle tends to give priority to activities rather than the doers of those activities; what I have been referring to as psychic parts are defined in terms of what they do rather than their activities defined in terms of the entity that does them. One might even worry that psychic parts are inconsistent with Aristotle’s treatment of this issue in *De Anima*, where he not only objects

⁴¹⁹ It is worth noting that the *EE* and *AE* are far more willing to talk about parts of the soul than the *NE* is, both in terms of the *to –ikon* formulation and in their uses of μέρος/μόριον τῆς ψυχῆς. Given this pattern, we might worry that the *NE* does not quite have the same view of the soul that the *EE* does, and therefore that a strong parthood reading doesn’t fit the *NE* as well as it does the *EE*. But this is a self-defeating objection to raise against the argument of this chapter: if the *AE* and the *EE* show one pattern that reflects a different model of the soul than what the *NE* uses, then that is evidence that the *AE* belongs in the *EE* rather than the *NE*. But the reason to object to a strong parthood reading of the *NE* is that on this reading the *NE* and *AE* is inconsistent.

⁴²⁰ Corcilius (2015), p. 48.

to some ways of partitioning the soul (III.9).⁴²¹ But as I'll argue, it is difficult for these worries to get traction with the *NE*, given Aristotle's own words on the topic.

First, regarding Aristotle's objections to Platonic psychic partition, I will simply follow Johansen in rejecting this reading of *De Anima*.⁴²² The problem that Aristotle sees in Plato is that the psychic faculties Aristotle takes as distinct appear across the parts of Plato's soul: for example, in the *Republic* it appears that all three parts have the capacity for belief, desire, calculation, etc. In other words, Aristotle's complaint is *how* the partition is carried out, not *that* a partition is carried out; in this respect Aristotle's criticism of Plato is rather similar to his complaints about biological taxonomy in the *Parts of Animals* I.2-4 before engaging in his own taxonomical enterprise.

As for the worry about psychic parthood in the *NE* conflicting with the *De Anima*, I can make both a methodological and a substantive rejoinder. The methodological response is that we should be hesitant to insist that *De Anima* must be compatible with the *NE* at this stage in our inquiry. While of course consistency between texts is one criterion of good interpretation, it is not the only one, and it can sometimes be trumped by other considerations. It may very well be that Aristotle changed his mind between the *NE* and *De Anima* on this topic.⁴²³ The substantive response is that Aristotle is more than willing to use the same kind of language of psychic parts in *De Anima*, as well as in the biological

⁴²¹ Who exactly Aristotle is objecting to is unclear. See Johansen (2012), pp 49, Vander Waerdt (1987).

⁴²² Johansen (2014), pp 42-44, Johansen (2012), pp. 47-53. See also Corcilius (2015), pp. 46-48, Corcilius & Gregoric (2010), pp. 106-08. Fortenbaugh (2002), pp. 31-37 makes the same observation, but uses it to argue for a different conception of the soul in Aristotle than the one I defend here.

⁴²³ That said, I will occasionally refer to *De Anima* in what follows, not as a way to defend a reading of the ethical works directly, but rather only to show that there are close parallels to this reading elsewhere that illustrate that a reading is possible.

works, that he uses in the *NE*. *De Anima* frequently uses μέρος and μόριον in reference to the soul (413^a3-10, 413^b7, ^b14 ^b21, ^b27, 424^a33, 429^a10. 432^a19-28, ^b2, ^b18), and refers to these parts using the same – κὸν language as the ethical works (there are 18 instances of τὸ θεραπευτικὸν, two of ἐπιθυμητικὸν, 12 of τὸ ὀρεκτικὸν, 36 of τὸ αἰσθητικὸν, two of τὸ βουλευτικὸν, four of τὸ λογιστικὸν, three of τὸ διανοητικὸν, and two of τὸ ἐπιστημονικὸν). So at least on linguistic grounds whatever view Aristotle takes about the parts of the soul in *De Anima* should be compatible with the *NE* in broad strokes: even if they disagree about the nature of psychic parts, they do agree that the soul can be helpfully analyzed as parts.⁴²⁴

There is one more worry to consider, which we can use to transition to a fuller discussion of what psychic parthood amounts to. This worry is suggested by the *EE*'s remarks above, where Aristotle observes that the soul already has different powers or faculties (δυνάμεις), and so it doesn't matter whether we speak of psychic parts as well. This might suggest that Aristotle's psychology makes part-talk reducible to, or a loose equivalent of, talk of psychic faculties.⁴²⁵ And if this is right, then the possibility of one psychic part with two powers would be ruled out from the beginning.

This worry, however, is unmotivated. For Aristotle himself differentiates psychic parts and psychic faculties throughout the *NE*. Here are a few examples:

So it appears that the virtue of this [power (δύναμις)] is something common and not human. For it seems that in sleep this part (τὸ μόριον τοῦτο) is most active, and this power as well (καὶ ἡ δύναμις αὕτη). (1102^b2-5)

⁴²⁴ Cf. Moss (forthcoming), §I.

⁴²⁵ This view is defended by Barnes (1971/2), p. 105, Polansky (2007), p. 8, and Sorabji (1974), p. 64 among others.

The non-rational part (τὸ ἄλογον) appears to be twofold. For the nutritive part (τὸ μὲν γὰρ φυτικὸν) has no share of reason in any way, but the appetitive and in general desiderative part (τὸ δ' ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ὄλως ὀρεκτικὸν) has a share in a way, in that it is able to hear and obey it. (1102^b28-31)

We say that serious things are better than foolish things and what accompanies amusement, and in all cases the more serious activity is of the better part and better person (τοῦ βελτίονος ἀεὶ καὶ μορίου καὶ ἀνθρώπου σπουδαιοτέραν τὴν ἐνέργειαν), (1177^a3-5)

In each of these passages, Aristotle speaks in terms of the powers *of* parts, rather than in terms of parts *as* powers.⁴²⁶ If Aristotle took ‘part’ to mean simply ‘faculty’, then he would not consistently speak as he does in these and other passages.⁴²⁷

These considerations should be sufficient, I think, to justify taking part-talk at face value in Aristotle. But it is not yet clear what talk of psychic parts amounts to, since Aristotle himself suggests different ways of thinking about how to differentiate between the parts.⁴²⁸ Aristotle gives us three different examples for how to think about how the parts of the soul are separable, and they each have different ramifications for thinking about *nous* in the ethical works.

Aristotle’s first example of separability is the relationship between the concave and convex sides of a curved line or surface. In the *EE* he says these are “not fully separable” (ἀδιαχώριστον), but we shouldn’t read this description too strongly, since in both works

⁴²⁶ Woods (1992) p. 94 sees the same pattern in the *EE*, arguing that parts are prior to powers because it is the structure of the former than explain the latter. See Corcilius & Gregoric (2010), pp. 83-85 for complementary arguments for the same position regarding *De Anima*.

⁴²⁷ See Corcilius (2015), pp. 32-49 for a more in-depth treatment of Aristotle on psychic faculties. See especially pp. 35-38.

⁴²⁸ See Johansen (2012), pp. 53-62 and Whiting (2002), pp. 143-146 for a helpful discussion of kinds of separability vis-à-vis the soul in the *De Anima* and related works, which I have followed to the extent that I can in explicating the ethical works without illicitly importing ideas from these works.

they appear as an example of separability. What Aristotle seems to mean is that one can only separate these parts in thought: any curved line will, by necessity, have two sides, and so one cannot have a convex side without the concave side or vice versa.⁴²⁹ The *NE*'s description of this example calls the concave and convex separable “in account” (τῷ λόγῳ), but I do not think that this means ‘separable in definition’, as this phrase is sometimes used to indicate.⁴³⁰ This is because concavity and convexity are not separable in definition: each are mutually entailing properties of the same curve, and so the definition of each will appeal to the other, either directly (e.g. ‘the part of the curve that is x rather than y’) or indirectly (e.g. ‘the x part of a curve’ where ‘curve’ is itself defined as ‘a line with convex and concave parts’). Rather, it appears only that we can mentally abstract one part from the other, though in reality they are two features of the same object. One way to think about this is in terms of dependence: the concave and convex are mutually dependent both in terms of types and of tokens, since in general and in any particular case no line can have a convex side without a concave side and vice versa. If this is all Aristotle means by parts, then it will be difficult to draw very strong distinctions between parts of the soul, and in particular between the two rational parts that we will see in the *AE*, since we can think of theoretical and practical reason separately regardless of whether they are actually separable.

⁴²⁹ Cf. *De Caelo* 270^b34-71^a2, *Physics* 222^b2=3

⁴³⁰ The line is read the way I am suggesting by Charles (2015) p. 80 n. 21. Corcilius & Gregoric (2010) p. 100 distinguish between ‘separability in account’ and ‘difference in account’; the former would correspond to separability in definition, the latter to separability in thought. They rightly note that difference in account does not entail parthood, while separability in account does (p. 102).

A stronger sense of separability is found in the relationship between the whiteness and straightness of a line, Aristotle's second example from the *EE*. In this case, the two properties we are interested in are only token-dependent, but not type-dependent: a particular line needs a straight place for the white to appear, and a color for the line to be drawn in, but in general whiteness can occur without straightness and vice versa.⁴³¹ In other words, this line may be white, but the essence of straightness (οὐσία τῆ αὐτοῦ) does not contain or depend on whiteness, and so the relationship between straightness and whiteness is only incidental (κατὰ συμβεβηκός). It is this case which I take to be a better example of separability in definition. On this conception of separability, it is possible for there to be a substantive distinction between parts and powers: even if theoretical reason and practical reason occur in the same soul, they would be distinct parts in virtue of being type-independent.⁴³²

A still stronger sense of separability holds between the parts of the body, which Aristotle takes to also hold for "everything separable" (πᾶν τὸ μεριστόν).⁴³³ But we have to treat this example with caution: Aristotle famously argues elsewhere that even body parts are not separable in the sense of being physically detachable. The finger of a dead body, for example, is only homonymously a finger, not a finger in a true sense (*Metaph.*

⁴³¹ I assume Aristotle is talking here of a physically drawn line, e.g. on a chalkboard. Abstract, mathematical lines, after all, are not spatial, and therefore do not have a color.

⁴³² See Corcilius & Gregoric (2010), pp. 109-11 for a discussion of 'parts' of the soul that fail to be separable in definition, e.g. the locative. They also give the desiderative part as an example, since it is not separable in definition from the perceptive part in *De Anima*. It is interesting that, in the *NE*, at least, the perceptive part is not mentioned, and the part of the soul that characterizes animals is the desiderative part instead. The *EE* does mention the perceptive part (1219^b23), though this may simply be a feature of its being more ecumenical about referring to parts of the soul more broadly.

⁴³³ I assume here that Aristotle is talking about animal bodies, and not bodies in general, since not all physical masses have parts.

1035^b22-25).⁴³⁴ A safer interpretation is that there is a kind of asymmetrical token-dependence between body parts, where a finger isn't a finger unless it is part of a body, but a body can remain a body despite losing a finger.⁴³⁵ More importantly, the individual parts of the body are not token-dependent on each other, even if each is dependent on the body which these parts jointly constitute. That is, the definition of a finger makes no reference to the eye, and vice versa, and a body can have one but not the other, either in the token sense (e.g. when an individual loses a digit) or in a type sense (e.g. when a species has eyes but not fingers). We can call this kind of separability 'separability in place', since these kinds of parts are physically separate in the sense of occupying different places in addition to being distinct in thought and definition. In this case too it is possible for theoretical and practical reason to belong to distinct parts, for example if some creatures have one but not the other.⁴³⁶

We've seen so far that Aristotle does speak in terms of parts of the soul, and that there are various ways to understand what this means. If parts are only separable in thought, then the interpretation of the rational part(s) of the soul I will advance later is not feasible; but it is a possible interpretation if the parts of the soul are separate in definition, separability in place, or full separability. In what remains of this sub-section I will argue that Aristotle thinks the parts of the soul are separable in these stronger ways.

⁴³⁴ Cf. Whiting (2002), pp. 144-46.

⁴³⁵ Corcilius & Gregoric (2010) pp.115-18.

⁴³⁶ There is also a sense of full separability, stronger still than separability in place, where two parts are wholly independent of one another (see Whiting (2002), pp. 143-45 for a discussion of the difference between this sense and the others). Since the parts of the soul are all parts of the same whole, I will put discussion of this sense of separability to one side; this will also allow us to avoid the quagmire of the ways in which *nous* is possibly separate from the rest of the soul in this full sense.

We can start with separability in definition. Aristotle is explicit in the *EE* that this conception of separability is sufficient to distinguish parts of the soul: if parts are defined in terms of their powers, then the parts will themselves be distinct.⁴³⁷ And Aristotle does talk about parts of the soul in terms of their powers. For instance, we've seen in the *NE* that the non-rational part is defined in terms of the faculties of nutrition and growth, while the quasi-rational part is distinguished from the rational part by the latter's ability to give commands rather than just follow them. So separability in definition is all we need for the possibility that there are two rational parts of the soul with distinct powers.⁴³⁸

Nonetheless, it is worth looking to see whether the parts of the soul are separable in a stronger sense than this. This is because separability in definition alone makes it difficult to distinguish the relationship between parts and powers: if two rational faculties are separate in definition, it is compatible both with their belonging to a single part, or to corresponding distinct parts. Stronger conceptions of separability can help clarify which of these holds in particular cases.

So let us continue the investigation by looking at whether parts of the soul are separable in place. For at least at the level of biological kinds, some parts of the soul are

⁴³⁷ Cf. Grönroos (2007), pp. 254-56.

⁴³⁸ Price (1995), p. 114 worries that separability in definition is insufficient to distinguish parts, since, e.g. perception and reason are distinct in definition, yet both require imagination, and so it isn't clear how to partition them. I think this objection can be met by being more careful about distinguishing parts from faculties. See Johansen (2014), pp. 45-51 and Johansen (2012), pp. 53-62 for a more thorough treatment of this issue, and a defense of the position that separability in definition is sufficient to establish psychic parthood. See Moss (2012) for a discussion of imagination in general.

not coextensive, because some organisms have some parts of the soul but not others.⁴³⁹

Aristotle writes

Of the non-rational part, one element seems common and vegetative, by which I mean it is the cause of nutrition and growth. For one would postulate this power of the soul in all growing things and in embryos, and this same power also in grown creatures.” (1102^a32-^b2)

This part of the soul, the nutritive, is common to all creatures. But this is not the case for other parts of the soul. Aristotle continues “It appears there is another element (φύσις) of the soul that is irrational, yet in a way shares in reason” (1102^b13), the quasi-rational part of the soul we detailed in §2.5.1. Based on the difference between the non-rational and quasi-rational parts of the soul, Aristotle argues

The non-rational part (τὸ ἄλογον) appears to be twofold. For the nutritive part (τὸ μὲν γὰρ φυτικὸν) has no share of reason in any way, but the appetitive and in general desiderative part (τὸ δ’ ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ὅλως ὀρεκτικὸν) has a share in a way, in that it is able to hear and obey it.” (1102^b28-31)

This matters, of course, because not all creatures have the quasi-rational part of the soul, let alone the rational part. Aristotle does not make this point explicitly here, but he does make it earlier, in I.7:

Life appears to be common even to plants, but we are searching for something characteristic [of humans]. Therefore we should cordon off the life of nutrition and growth. One would next speak of the perceptive life, but it too appears common to horses and cattle and all animals. What remains is a kind of practical life of what has reason. Of this, one part is rational in the sense of being obedient to reason, the other in the sense of having reason and thinking. And since we speak of this in two ways one should count the life according to activity; for this appears to be the more authoritative way of speaking. (1097^b33-98^a7)

⁴³⁹ Johansen (2012), pp. 56-59.

Though Aristotle begins this passage by speaking of modes of life rather than parts of the soul, the unremarked transition from the former to the latter at 1098^{a3} makes clear that Aristotle thinks of lives and souls as sharing a tight conceptual connection; roughly, the life an organism lives is determined by the kind of soul it has.⁴⁴⁰ All organisms share one part, the nutritive, but this is the only part plants have and so the part that manifests its characteristic activity. For non-human animals, it is the perceptive part of the soul that engages in characteristic activity, even though the nutritive part is also operative. For humans, it is the rational part. That some organisms have one part, some two, and some three, shows that these parts of the soul are not coextensive, and are therefore actual parts rather than mere aspects.

In addition, there is some reason to think that the parts of the soul are not coextensive even within the human species. Though we must be careful in appealing to other texts at this juncture, it is worth at least noting that in the *Politics*, which Aristotle suggests in X.9 is meant to follow the *NE*, Aristotle argues that

For in this [the soul] there is by nature a ruling part (τὸ μὲν ἄρχον) and a ruled part (τὸ δ' ἀρχόμενον), of which we say there different virtues, namely of the reason-having part and the non-rational part. It is clear that the same holds now for the other cases, just as most cases of ruling and being ruled are by nature. For in different ways the free person rules the slave and the male the female and the man the child, and in all cases the parts of the soul (τὰ μέρη τῆς ψυχῆς) are present, but present in different ways. For the slave wholly lacks the deliberative part (τὸ βουλευτικόν), while the female has it, but it is unauthoritative (ἄκυρον), and the child has it, but it is undeveloped (ἀτελής). (*Pol.* 1260^{a5-14})

⁴⁴⁰ Corcilius & Gregoric (2010), pp.86-87, 103-105. See pp. 90-95 for a careful discussion of the nuances of separability in place in the psychological works.

The language used here is reminiscent of what we see in the *NE* (note the rational/non-rational bipartition), but it is even more explicit that (i) the soul has parts, and (ii) some biological humans can lack some of these parts. Aristotle hints at the same line of thought in the *AE*, where he says that “These states [natural virtues] are naturally present in children and animals, but without *nous* they appear to be harmful” (1144^b8-9). Likewise, the *NE* refers to slaves as “living tools” (ἔμψυχον ὄργανον, 1161^b4), presumably because their souls lack the ruling part. But because slaves are at least biologically human (1177^a6-9), this suggests that in the *NE* it is possible for the ruling part of the soul to be absent in certain people.

Our conclusion, then, should be that Aristotle endorses talking about parts of the soul in a fairly literal way. The vegetative and desiderative parts of the soul, for example, are not like the convex and concave sides of a lens, but rather like the index finger and thumb: they are discrete entities with distinct functions, which can at least exist independently in the sense that some animals have thumbs and some do not. In particular, *nous* can exist without the other parts of the soul, at least for the gods, and the other parts of the soul can exist without the rational part(s) in animals (including, presumably, some humans). On this much, at least, the *NE*, *AE*, and *EE* all agree. But as we’ll see in what follows, their agreement is short-lived. When it comes to the specific way the parts of the soul are distinguished in these works, the *NE* does not agree with the *AE*: the former posits only three parts of the soul, with the rational part capable of theoretical and practical reason, while the *AE* posits four psychic parts, with one corresponding to each of the two rational faculties. Or so I shall argue in the remainder of this chapter.

§3.2 – THE SCIENCE OF THE SOUL

When Aristotle transitions from discussing the formal properties of the chief good to studying the nature of the soul in *NE* I.13, he begins with some methodological remarks. He first argues that, because their subject is the human good, and this involves the virtues of the human soul, the student of *politikē* must study the soul (1102^a5-12). Just as the ophthalmologist must study the whole body, not just the eye, the politician must study the soul, in order to understand its workings (1102^a14-17).⁴⁴¹ But he then makes the following qualification:

It is incumbent on the politician to study (θεωρητέον) the soul, but to study it for the sake of these things, and only to the extent that is sufficient for what is being investigated. For acquiring more precision is presumably too troublesome (τὸ γὰρ ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐξακριβοῦν ἐργωδέστερον) than our purposes require. (1102^a23-26)

The idea that psychology is undertaken for the sake of promoting the chief good should be no surprise; after all, *politikē* uses every science and determines who should study it and to what degree (1094^a26-b7).⁴⁴² And the idea that we should not seek an inappropriate amount of precision in carrying out the investigation into the human good is a common theme in the *NE*. As we saw in §2.2, Aristotle frequently tells us that he will only give us a theory in outline. There are two reasons Aristotle cites for settling for less precision. One is that

⁴⁴¹ Though Aristotle does not say so explicitly, the comparison between ophthalmologist and politicians brings to mind the analogy made in I.6, that sight is to the body as *nous* is the soul (1096^b29). The politician's object, ultimately, is the excellent functioning of *nous*, since this is the chief good. But bringing about this chief good, as we saw in §2.6.3, requires the politician to understand other matters as well, including the operation of the lower parts of the soul necessary for bodily health, pleasure, and virtue.

⁴⁴² See Shields (2015), pp. 232-36.

that is all the subject matter allows; the other is that this is all the precision that is required for our purposes.⁴⁴³

Consequently, when Aristotle gives his theory of the soul in *NE* I.13, he is willing to rest on a view expounded elsewhere, in an “exoteric work” (1102^a26-28). He posits a tripartite model of the soul, with non-, quasi-, and rational parts. And, most importantly for our purposes, Aristotle shows little interest in subdividing these parts, or worrying too much about which faculties correspond to them. For instance, he attributes the powers of nutrition and growth to the same part of the soul, which he alternately calls the “nutritive part” (τὸ θρεπτικὸν, 1102^b11) and the “vegetative part” (τὸ φυτικὸν, 1102^b29, 1102^a32-3) in addition to the non-rational part. Aristotle argues that it is “more reasonable” (εὐλογώτερον) to attribute to a single part of the soul both these powers, in embryos, toddlers, and adults, (1102^a33-^b2), rather than distinguish between what causes nutrition and what causes growth, even though adults stop growing and therefore stop using one power of the soul while still using the other. Aristotle is similarly ecumenical with the quasi-rational part of the soul, calling it the “appetite and in general desiderative part” (τὸ δ’ ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ ὅλως ὀρεκτικὸν, 1102^b30) and attributing to it the range of feelings and emotions that fall under the rubric of *πάθη* in *NE* II.5. Consequently, the quasi-rational part of the soul, though unified in its pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain, can take as its object any number of kinds of entities, from feelings like fear or pride, to objects like wealth or food, to other people (i.e. friends), to abstract goods like honor. And as we saw

⁴⁴³ 1094^a25, 1094^b19-22, 1098^a20-29, 1101^a27, 1104^a1, 1107^b14, 1113^a13, 1114^b2, 1176^a31, 1179^a34

in §2.5-6, Aristotle treats the rational part of the soul as both what commands the quasi-rational part and what engages in contemplation. Throughout the *NE*, Aristotle's approach is a consistent one of refraining from subdividing the parts of the soul and a willingness to attribute multiple powers to each.

But in addition to distinctions Aristotle could make but does not, there is another notable absence in the *NE*'s treatment of the soul. It says almost nothing about the details of how the soul's various faculties operate. This is understandable for the non-rational part, since Aristotle excludes it from the discussion has not being part of human happiness. But it is rather surprising with regard to the other two parts. As we saw in §2.6.1, Aristotle says very little about how exactly contemplation is supposed to work, or what exactly its objects are, despite its prominence in his account of the good life. One might think that Aristotle is more forthcoming about the quasi-rational part of the soul, but on reflection I think this is not the case either. Beyond the differences between feelings, capacities, and *hexeis* in *NE* II.5, and a similar argument distinguishing appetite, wish, and belief in III.2, Aristotle focuses primarily on behavior, and in particular how to judge the mean and distinguish it from its corresponding two extremes, than he does about the soul itself.⁴⁴⁴ And even in the two chapters just mentioned, Aristotle only says enough to motivate an argument from elimination; his argument often takes the form 'x is *F*, but y is not *F*, so x is not y' or worse,

⁴⁴⁴ This is not to say that the soul and its activities aren't conceptually important, or that they are not implicit in his view, but rather only that Aristotle does not feel the need to spend significant attention on them on their own terms. See Shields (2015), pp. 236-40. But it is easy to make too much of this point. Shields, for instance, goes on to argue that Aristotle's discussion of the human function in *NE* I.7 relies on a sophisticated antecedent psychological theory (pp. 241-49). But I do not think this is right: Aristotle appeals to commonly held beliefs to establish that humans have a function, and only once this is done does he begin to say anything specific about the human soul.

‘*x* is said/thought to be *F*, but no one says/thinks *y* is *F*, so *x* is not *y*’. An argument of this style does not tell us very much about its objects, beyond showing that two things are not identical.

In general, then, the *NE* is reluctant to make distinctions about the parts and powers of the soul, even when such distinctions are easily seen, and it is reluctant to go into more detail than is needed to make its point. I should stress that this is not a contingent stylistic fact about the *NE*. Rather, Aristotle explicitly tells us that it would be *inappropriate* to go into more detail than necessary to describe the soul, in line with his general methodological commitment to brevity and imprecision in the *NE*.⁴⁴⁵

The *AE*, by contrast, does not share these features. There is, we can concede, a single instance of Aristotle mentioning an account ‘in outline’, in *AE* I.1 at 1129^a11. But here Aristotle stipulates something in outline, namely what justice is as a character trait, and builds a rather detailed and sophisticated account on the basis of this outline; he does not, as he does in the *NE*, give his own account only in outline. Given the interest that a student of *politikē* would have in justice, it is understandable that Aristotle would go into more detail about justice than about the other virtues.⁴⁴⁶ But even if this departure from the *NE*’s announced method is easily explainable, it is still a departure.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ Cf. Joachim (1951), p. 288.

⁴⁴⁶ That said, the discussion of voluntary injustice and self-directed injustice in *AE* I.9 and I.11 are, though interesting, not particularly germane to the politician’s craft. Moreover, the *EE* discussion of friendship, which I argue rejects the *NE*’s self-love-centered approach, appeals explicitly to the *AE* I.11 discussion to show problems for the notion of self-love. As I argue in Green (2010), the *NE*’s treatment of self-love has conceptual problems that the *EE* avoids, because the *EE* has a more sophisticated conception of how the parts of the soul work together. As we’ll see in the rest of this chapter, this is true of the *AE* and *EE*’s treatment of the soul generally.

⁴⁴⁷ One other methodological remark in the *AE* is at the beginning of the treatment of pleasure in *AE* III.11, where Aristotle tells us it is a job for the philosopher of *politikē* to study pleasure and pain (θεωρῆσαι τοῦ

We cannot so easily say the same, however, about the other books of the *AE*. With the possible exception of pleasure, which if anything is treated too quickly, *AE* II-III go into far more detail than is necessary about the soul and its workings. This is not to say that all, or even most, of what is discussed there is irrelevant for a politician. Indeed, since *politikē* is the architectonic science, strictly speaking everything is under its purview. But that does not mean an ethical text has to discuss all of it, or in very much detail, any more than it would have to include discussion of bridle-making or military strategy just because these sciences are also under the purview of *politikē*.

In particular, Aristotle's treatment of the intellectual virtues is much more detailed than we would expect from Aristotle's prohibition against unnecessary precision. We can justifiably ask whether the politician needs to know the difference between *nous*, *sophia*, and *epistēmē*, though given how little Aristotle says about contemplation in the *NE*, perhaps this level of detail is welcome.⁴⁴⁸ This is more difficult to see with regard to the minor intellectual virtues in *AE* II.9-11; since Aristotle admits that these virtues are all coextensive (1143^a25-31), there doesn't seem to be any practical point for the politician to need to know the conceptual distinctions between them. Likewise, the attention given to sophistic objections and puzzles in *AE* I.9 and 11, II.12-13, and effectively the entire

τὴν πολιτικὴν φιλοσοφοῦντος), given their role in virtue and vice and in happiness in general (1152^b1-8). This way of thinking, especially with the mention on the architectonic end at 1152^b2, fits quite naturally in the *NE*. But it also fits the *EE*, which also considers *politikē* to be an architectonic science (1218^b9-14). And in any case the *AE* treatment of pleasure is held to belong to the *EE* even by most proponents of the view that the *AE* is chiefly a vehicle for *NE* doctrine. There is also, of course, the issue of the endoxic method in *AE* III.1, but this discussion of methodology approaches things from a different angle than the one we are interested in here.

⁴⁴⁸ Though notably Aristotle does not make use of these distinctions in *NE* X, instead treating *sophia* as the virtue of *nous* rather than a separate faculty. We will return to this topic below.

discussion of continence and incontinence in *AE* III.1-10 would be appropriate for the philosopher or the dialectician, but not necessary for the politician.

Again, this point here is not that the issues discussed in the *AE* are irrelevant to ethics, or of no interest to philosophers. Rather, the point is simply that Aristotle's repeated injunctions against unnecessary precision leads us to make a prediction about the level of detail we should expect in a work that makes these injunctions.⁴⁴⁹ The *AE* does not, I submit, comport with this prediction. This is not, of course, incontrovertible proof against the *AE*'s inclusion in the *NE*. But it does provide *prima facie* justification for looking for further proof.

Beyond the general level of specificity in the discussion of the *AE*, there is one place in particular where Aristotle recommends a methodological principle that contradicts what we see in the *NE*. As we saw above, the *NE* is fine in general with ascribing multiple powers and multiple proper objects to one part of the soul. In *AE* II.1, however, Aristotle deploys a more precise principle:

For with respect to things different in kind (τὰ τῷ γένει ἕτερα), the parts of the soul will likewise be different by nature in accordance with the genus of each (ἕτερον τῷ γένει τὸ πρὸς ἑκάτερον), provided that it is in virtue of a certain similarity and kinship (ὁμοιότητά τινα καὶ οἰκειότητα) that knowledge (ἡ γνῶσις) is present in them. (1139^a8-11)

In other words, here Aristotle uses a principle for distinguishing the intellectual parts of the soul beyond what he recommended in the *NE*. In the *NE* it was more reasonable to be conservative in splitting parts and powers of the soul, doing so only when they were either

⁴⁴⁹ This does not mean, however, that Aristotle fully succeeds in giving a precise account of the human soul in *AE* II, only that he takes himself to be making such an attempt. See Grantwood (1909), pp. 145-66.

not co-extensive (as, e.g. the nutritive part can exist without the rational part), or when parts conflict with each other (as the rational and quasi-rational parts do). But in the *AE* Aristotle suggests that the *NE*'s conservatism is not more reasonable, and instead endorses a principle where there will be as many parts of the soul and corresponding powers as there are naturally different kinds of objects.⁴⁵⁰ This way of dividing the soul is in principle more precise, because it could distinguish between coextensive parts or parts that don't conflict.

The increase in precision in the *AE* over the *NE* on this score allows us to make some distinctions that we have not yet explicitly announced. Since one major issue is the way parts and powers are related to each other, it is worth clarifying some terminology. Hereafter I will use 'part' to refer to the psychic subject which does or undergoes some activity, (i.e. the μέρος). I will use both 'power' and 'faculty' to refer to the capacity which the part has (the δυνάμις). I will use 'activity' to refer to the actualization of that capacity, (the ἐνέργεια). Finally, I will use 'state' to refer to the quality of the part vis-à-vis this capacity (the ἕξις). Recall that the virtues are all states of the soul, and so discussion of the intellectual virtues will be a discussion of the states of the relevant parts with reference to the activity of their capacities. As we'll see, Aristotle frequently uses the same term to refer

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. Grant (1866), pp. 148-49, Stewart (1892), v.2 pp. 11-15. Pakaluk (2005), p. 218 gives a helpful reconstruction of the (largely implicit) argument for this principle, and Lear (2004), pp. 95-103 provides a thorough discussion of the subtleties and possible complications of this principle. See Corcilius & Gregoric (2010) p. 109-10 and Johansen (2012), pp. 93-115 for a discussion of this principle as it is applied in *De Anima*.

to more than one of these categories, but it will nonetheless be helpful to be a bit more precise than he was.⁴⁵¹

§3.3 – *NOUS* IN THE *NE*

We've seen so far that the *NE* and the *AE* agree in thinking of the soul in terms of parts with different faculties, but disagree in general about how finely to distinguish these parts. And while we've discussed the *NE*'s view of the soul in some detail in §2.5 and §2.6, it is worth revisiting the issue to defend the interpretation I gave there and discuss some of its implications. What we will see as the discussion progresses is that Aristotle endorses a tripartite model of the soul in the *NE*, one where *nous* is capable of both contemplation and commanding the quasi-rational part. Moreover, due to the way he argues about the self in *NE* IX-X, and the uses to which he puts this view, Aristotle is committed to *nous* being a single part of the soul with two faculties rather than two parts.

So let us review the *NE*'s position on the soul. In *NE* I.13, Aristotle posits three parts of the soul: the non-rational, quasi-rational, and rational. The first he glosses as the nutritive and vegetative, the second as the appetitive and desiderative. Though Aristotle says that both the non-rational part and the rational part are double (διττόν, 1102^b28-29, 1103^a1-3), he does not believe that there are four parts, but rather only three, since the second non-rational part and the second rational part are the same.⁴⁵² Likewise, when Aristotle refers to courage and temperance as the virtues of the non-rational parts, plural

⁴⁵¹ Cf. Hankinson (2011), pp. 33-37.

⁴⁵² Moreover, Aristotle shows some ambivalence toward calling the quasi-rational part rational, saying instead "If it is necessary (εἰ δὲ χρῆ) to say that this part has reason, then the reason-having part will be (ἕσται) double" (1103^a1-2). It is not clear whether Aristotle thinks it is necessary to do this, and the syntax of this conditional is neutral on the veracity of the antecedent.

(τῶν ἀλόγων μερῶν, 1117^b23-24), this does not commit Aristotle to there being two quasi-rational parts of the soul, instead reflecting only a way of talking about different feelings (fear versus bodily pleasure) or, more likely perhaps, an interaction between the non-rational and quasi-rational parts.⁴⁵³

More importantly, Aristotle never makes an explicit distinction between two different rational parts of the soul in the undisputed *NE*; the only passage that suggests two rational parts is the one mentioned above (1103^a3), where it is immediately qualified that one of the two reason-having parts is the quasi-rational soul that does not possess reason in a strict sense, but rather only shares in it in virtue of being able to follow reason's commands, as one would obey the commands of a father. A few lines earlier Aristotle had contrasted two ways that one could share in reason in this sense, clarifying that the quasi-rational part of the soul shares in reason by being able to hear and obey, appealing to the phrase "taking account" (ἔχειν λόγον) of one's father or friends as linguistic evidence for this position, contrasted with the different way which one could "take account" of mathematics (1102^b29-33). This passage does suggest that there are two ways of having reason in the strict sense, but it does not entail that there must be two different corresponding parts of the soul; rather, the implication here is that the rational part of the soul has it in both ways while the quasi-rational part merely shares in reason in just one. When Aristotle distinguishes the two categories of psychic excellences, moral and

⁴⁵³ See Deslauriers (2002) for a discussion of how to distinguish the moral virtues in general, and Bostock (2000), pp. 34-36, Fortenbaugh (2002), pp. 69-75, Lear (2004), p. 162, Moss (forthcoming) §II, and Pakaluk (2011), pp. 33-37 for a discussion of this passage in particular. In the terminology we've introduced in this chapter, the different moral virtues correspond to parts of the soul that are different in thought, but not to parts in any stronger sense.

intellectual, in the following lines, he makes no distinctions between the intellectual virtues to suggest that they belong to a different part than the moral virtue, listing *sophia*, *phronesis* and good judgment as all virtues of the single rational part discussed in *NE* I.13.⁴⁵⁴ So, in the undisputed *NE*'s most explicit discussion of the parts of the soul, Aristotle appeals to different powers to distinguish between three parts of the soul, and despite mentioning a distinction between theoretical and practical reason here (1102^b31-33) he does not say anything to posit distinctions within the rational part.

The evidence that Aristotle thought of the rational part of the soul as a single part goes beyond his failure to explicitly say otherwise. The rational part of the soul is *nous*, and Aristotle ascribes both practical rationality and theoretical rationality to this part of the soul, often ascribing both to *nous* in the same discussion. Since we have already discussed these passages on their own terms in §2.5.1 and §2.6.1, here I will focus on how the ascriptions of theoretical reason and practical reason to *nous* are related. There are two contexts in particular where Aristotle both affirms and commits himself to thinking of *nous* as a single faculty, both of which use the notion of *nous* as the person as a crucial premise in Aristotle's arguments.

The first of these contexts is the discussion of self-love in *NE* IX. As we saw in §2.5.3, Aristotle makes self-love the basis of friendship, and extends friendship to others

⁴⁵⁴ Though we should hesitate to put too much weight on the inclusion of *phronesis* in this passage; as I will argue in §3.7, Aristotle's treatment of *phronesis* in the *NE* is inconsistent and therefore inconclusive as to his final view on the topic. I should also note that the corresponding *EE* passage (1220^a4-12) has its own oddities. It does not mention *phronesis* when listing the intellectual virtues contrasted with examples of moral virtues, but it does ascribe *sophia* and good judgment to the part of the soul that commands the quasi-rational part (1220^a8-10). We will return to the *EE*'s treatment of the parts of the soul below.

by thinking of them as other selves. So the self is a foundational concept of his treatment of friendship in general. And Aristotle argues repeatedly that the self is *nous*, which makes *nous* both the subject and object of the good person's self-love, as Aristotle argues in IX.4 and IX.8, and the basis for what makes other friends valuable, as Aristotle argues in IX.9. But, critically, when discussing *nous* in these chapters, Aristotle describes it in both theoretical and practical terms. Aristotle tells us that the good person "gratifies his thinking element (τοῦ γὰρ διανοητικοῦ), which each person seems to really be" (1166^a16-17). He later asserts that "the element which thinks (τὸ νοοῦν) would appear to be each person most of all" (1166^a22-23), and goes on to discuss the memories and hopes of this part (1166^a24-26), concluding that such a person is "well-stocked in thought with things to contemplate" (θεωρημάτων δ' εὐπορεῖ τῇ διανοίᾳ, 1166^a25-26). Moreover, Aristotle's argument that the good person will have friends is, roughly, that there is a certain value intrinsic to the activity of the self which a friend, as other self, will share; this value arises from the intrinsic goodness and pleasantness of the self's essential activity, which Aristotle repeatedly identifies as the activity of *nous* (1170^a16-^b4).

This way of talking about *nous* is clearly theoretical. But, when clarifying his good version of self-love from the more idiomatic conception of self-love as selfishness, Aristotle again identifies the self with *nous*, this time distinguishing good from bad self-love on the basis of whether "nous is in charge or not, since this is what each person is" (τῷ κρατεῖν τὸν νοῦν ἢ μή, ὡς τούτου ἐκάστου ὄντος, 1168^b35), calling this the "most authoritative part" (τῷ κυριωτάτῳ, 1168^b30-33). Aristotle adds that what belongs to each person most of all is that which is "most of all done with reason" (τὰ μετὰ λόγου μάλιστα.

1169^a1).⁴⁵⁵ Aristotle expands on this point by arguing that, for the good person, “*Nous* in every case chooses what is best for himself, and the good person is obedient (ὁ δ’ ἐπιεικῆς πειθαρχεῖ) to *nous*” (1169^a15-18). The language here is emphatically practical, and minus the explicit identification with *nous* as the rational part, it is very similar to the language used in *NE* I.13 (1102^b14-16).

The first thing to notice here is that Aristotle is quite comfortable (i) identifying the self with the rational part of the soul, which is itself explicated as *nous*, and (ii) describing *nous* in both theoretical and practical terms in the very same contexts.⁴⁵⁶ Now, if Aristotle were concerned to differentiate theoretical reason from practical reason, we would expect him to have put things in a different way so as not to muddle this distinction. This would apply *a fortiori* if we thought that the *NE* discussion of friendship were meant to be read after the *AE* books which do make this distinction. So, again, the hypothesis that the *NE* recognizes two distinct rational parts of the soul would lead us to predict something other than what we find in *NE* IX. This is some evidence that Aristotle in fact does not recognize this distinction in the *NE*, though we could perhaps explain away this evidence by simply accusing Aristotle of sloppiness instead.

However, these same passages give us a second piece of evidence that Aristotle thinks there is only one rational part of the soul in the *NE*, one which is not so easily

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Joachim (1951), pp. 256-57, Scott (1999), pp. 228-30.

⁴⁵⁶ It is worth pointing out that there is a pattern of how *nous* is described within the chapters of *NE* IX. Aristotle describes *nous* in theoretical terms in IX.4 and IX.9, and in practical terms in IX.8. But given that self-love is the topic of all three chapters, and that they are clearly all pursuing a single project, this pattern is a weak foundation on which to try to argue for a distinction between theoretical and practical *nous* in book IX.

ignored. The way Aristotle deploys the notion of *nous* as self in *NE IX* requires that it be a single part of the soul, because the self is itself a singular thing. There are two ways to think about this point. One is that there is an essential reflexivity in self-love: *nous*, the best part of the soul, loves *nous* because it is best, and the pleasure and goodness of self-love result from *nous* being aware of itself as it is thinking. In the first case, *nous* has to love itself because self-love is the paradigm and standard of friendship, and in particular the friendship of character that holds between people of equally good moral character which Aristotle expounds in VIII.3.⁴⁵⁷ If self-love is to serve as the paradigm form of friendship, then this must itself be a good kind of friendship, which holds between the best parts of the soul just as virtue friendship holds between the best people. But Aristotle is emphatic that *nous* is itself the best part. So *nous* must love *nous*.

In the second case, the pleasure and goodness of noetic activity is an intrinsic feature of this activity itself, and so must result of *nous* being aware of itself rather than *nous* observing or being observed by something else. Neither of these cases of reflexivity can do the job Aristotle needs them to do in his overall theory if there are two kinds of *nous* that have to operate in relation to one another.

The second way to think about the role of the self in Aristotle's theory of friendship has to do with the way it grounds other kinds of friendship. Friendship is an extension of self-love, because friends are, in Aristotle's terminology, "another self" (*allos autos*). This is not simply a metaphor, but rather a critical, and literal, piece of Aristotle's larger

⁴⁵⁷ For self-love as the paradigm, see Annas (1977) and (1988). See also Kahn (1981), Kraut (1989), Price (1989), and Rogers (1994). For self-love as the standard, see Pakaluk (1998).

project.⁴⁵⁸ A friend is a friend because one feels the same way about that person as one does about oneself, a feeling made possible because of the similarity between the two objects of one's affection. Aristotle also cites the extension of self-love to others to explain filial affection: children are part of the selves of parents (1161^b21, 28) and brothers are the same self physically separated (1161^b33). But in order for self-love to play this explanatory role, it has to be doing something slightly different from what it explains; to argue 'A is able to bear a relation to *B* because *A* bears it to *C* and *B* is like *C*' won't do the job, because this way of thinking only pushes the question back to how *A* can bear that relation to *C*.

What Aristotle does instead is argue 'A bears a relation to itself in certain ways, and *B* is another *A*'. This latter explanation will be more powerful because it is the same relation and same kind of object in both cases. But if there are two kinds of *nous*, then self-love will occur between two different parts of the soul, either in the sense that there are two selves to love, or that the two rational parts love one another. The first option is incoherent, because one cannot have two selves. The second option has the problematic explanatory form we've just described. So in order to make self-love the basis for other forms of friendship, Aristotle has to make self-love a relationship that the self holds toward itself, and hence the self must be a single thing. And therefore, because the self is *nous*, *nous* must be a single thing.

The second context in which Aristotle commits himself to the position that there is only one *nous* is in his argument that contemplation is *eudaimonia* in *NE* X. As in his

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. Bostock (2000), esp. p. 176; Hardie (1980), p. 324; Kahn (1981), p. 34; Kenny (1992), pp.46-51; Osborne (2009), p. 1, Stern-Gillet (1995), pp.14-15, and *contra* Pakaluk (1998), p. 172-73.

discussion of friendship, Aristotle describes *nous* in both theoretical and practical terms. As we saw in §2.6.1, the best kind of pleasure, the sort that the chief good will involve, is pleasure that completes the best activity directed toward the best objects (1174^b14-23), and the best such pleasures are those of “thought and contemplation” (ἡδίστη δ’ ἡ τελειοτάτη, 1174^b21). It is *nous* which has access to these objects (1177^a19-21). And for the reasons outlined in §2.6.2, Aristotle concludes that “the activity of *nous*, being contemplative, seems to excel in worth” (1177^b19-20). Moreover, as we saw when discussing the functional activity criterion, *nous* is identified as the (single) best thing in us, and, as in *NE* IX, as what we most essentially are (1177^b33-78^a4, 1178^a5-7), in which case we should lead a contemplative life.

What is more surprising, perhaps, is that Aristotle discusses *nous* in practical terms in these same passages. For *nous* is not only the best part of the soul, but the authoritative part (τὸ κύριον, 1178^a3; κράτιστον, 1178^a5-6).⁴⁵⁹ And *nous* can, through law, play a role in regulating the quasi-rational part of the soul in others, insofar as the law is “a kind of *nous* and right order” (1180^a17-18) and insofar as law is “compulsive power, being a rule resulting from a kind of *phronesis* and *nous*” (1180^a21-22). Aristotle specifies that the way law operates in a city is the same way that a father operates in a family (1180^a24-^b6), and here Aristotle uses the same expression he used to establish the rational part of the soul in *NE* I.13. The role of *nous* as law here should also remind us of the principle discussed above that we can identify the self with its most authoritative part, just as we do in the city.

⁴⁵⁹ These terms can sometimes mean simply ‘most essential’ or ‘most determinative’, but in context they appear to have more practical connotations here. Cf. Charles (2014), p. 105.

The combined theoretical and practical aspects of *nous* are in full display when Aristotle reintroduces contemplation as a candidate for the chief good at the beginning of *NE X.7*:

If *eudaimonia* is activity in accordance with excellence, it is reasonable that it is according to the greatest one (κατὰ τὴν κρατίστην). For this would be the activity of the best [part of the soul]. Whether this is *nous* or something else which appears to rule and guide us by nature and to have be capable of thought about noble and divine things, whether it is itself divine or rather the most divine of the things in us, the activity of this part exercised according to its corresponding excellence would be complete happiness. That this is contemplation, has already be said. (1177^a13-18)

Here Aristotle describes the same single best part of the soul, *nous*, as both what contemplates and thinks about divine objects, and as what by nature rules and guides us. These two descriptions occur back to back in a single line of text (ἄρχειν καὶ ἠγεῖσθαι καὶ ἔννοιαν ἔχειν, 1177^a15-16). The groundwork for this combination of powers in *nous* is laid early on. Aristotle says that *nous* is to the soul as sight is to the body (1096^b28-29), which suggests intellectual activity, in *NE I.6*, and mentions the *archai* and eternal things (1098^b3-4, 1111^b30-34) which are the objects of *nous* in *I.7* and *III.3*, in addition to suggesting that having reason can mean both giving commands like a father and understanding things like a mathematician. And as we saw in §2.5.1, the reason-having part of the soul is practical in these earlier books as well; the role of commanding the quasi-rational part of the soul is expanded in Aristotle's discussion of *prohairesis*, which Aristotle says "involves reason and thought" (μετὰ λόγου καὶ διανοίας, 1112^a15-16). It is identified as the *archē* of motion in the soul (1110^a15, cf. 1111^a23-25, 1112^b28, 1112^b31-2) and, explicitly as *nous*, as one of the four causes of change in the world (1112^a32-33). It is in the same discussion of action

that Aristotle calls this part of the soul the “guiding element” (τὸ ἡγούμενον) in oneself (1113^a5-6).

So, again, Aristotle is more than happy to describe the same part of the soul, whether it is called *nous* or the rational part more broadly, as having both theoretical and practical powers. And as in the case of self-love, the singularity of *nous* is entailed by his argumentative strategy in addition to following from the plain meaning of the text. The easiest way to see this is to focus on the function argument. The functional activity criterion identifies the chief good as the best characteristic activity of the best part of the soul, and Aristotle argues that this part is *nous*. But he does not think it is simply the best part, but also our most essential part, that which we really are. But one can only most essentially be one thing. And that thing is *nous*. So there cannot be two different kinds of *nous* to play this role in Aristotle’s argument.⁴⁶⁰

Another way to think about the same point is to approach it in terms of substance rather than essence. Aristotle explicitly identifies *nous*, along with God, as what is good in the category of substance (1096^a24-25), which presumably imports the framework of the *Categories*.⁴⁶¹ And we know from the *Categories* that substances (or at least the primary

⁴⁶⁰ A corollary argument: If there were two kinds of *nous*, and a person essentially was each of them, then there would be two corresponding functional activities. One of these would correspond to theoretical reason and contemplative activity, the other presumably to practical reason and therefore the practical activity. But Aristotle argues that practical activity is not our functional activity, from which it follows that there is not a distinct part of the soul to which that activity would correspond. If there is only one *nous* capable of both, however, there is no problem, because theoretical rationality would still be the best activity of this part, and would therefore qualify as our functional activity, while practical rationality would be a less-than-best capacity of the same part.

⁴⁶¹ As I’ve mentioned previously, we have to be careful in referring to other works so as not to beg any questions about the place of the ethical works in the Aristotelian corpus. But the *Categories* is almost universally held to be one of Aristotle’s earliest works (though perhaps one that Aristotle revisited and

substances that *nous qua* human would count as) are individuals, i.e. singular entities (3^b10-23). Hence when Aristotle says that each person is her *nous*, he must mean this is a kind of identity claim (i.e. ‘each person is reductively identical to her *nous*’ or ‘when we refer to a person and to her *nous*, we refer to a numerically singular thing’). And one person cannot be identified with two different parts of the soul in this way, because otherwise one would be identical to two different substances, and that cannot be.⁴⁶² So when Aristotle says “Each person is essentially her *nous*, which is theoretical” and “Each person is essentially her *nous*, which is practical”, he must mean “There is a single thing, *nous*, which each person essentially is, and that single thing is both theoretical and practical”.

Given the way Aristotle treats the rational part of the soul in the *NE*, I submit that the right conclusion to draw is that he thought of *nous* as a single part of the soul throughout the treatise, one part with both theoretical and practical powers. It is not just that Aristotle failed to make such a distinction, but that he is committed, on multiple grounds, to denying the distinction. It is, perhaps, possible to understand theoretical and practical reason as separable in thought, but Aristotle says nothing to affirm even this, and commits himself to denying separability in any stronger sense in the *NE*.

revised), in which case it could plausibly be in the background of almost any other Aristotelian work without any developmental consequences.

⁴⁶² I set to one side the complications Aristotle discusses in the *Categories* regarding primary and secondary substances. In short, the claims ‘*A* is a human’ and ‘*A* is an animal’ are compatible, because they refer to different ways of being a substance. To say that someone is, essentially, the substance of theoretical *nous* and the substance of practical *nous* would be more like saying ‘*A* is a human’ and ‘*A* is a horse’, i.e. like identifying a person with two substances at the same ontological level. This is obviously unacceptable in a way that the man/animal claim is not.

§3.4 – *NOUS AND PHRONESIS IN THE AE*

Now that we've discussed the *NE*, we can compare it to the view found in the *AE*, focusing primarily on its discussion of the intellectual virtues in *AE* II. Since we have not discussed the *AE* in any detail, we will begin with a summary of its doctrine. I will then argue that the *AE* clearly distinguishes theoretical and practical reason, and attributes each to a different part of the soul. If this is right, then the *AE* and *NE* use incompatible models of the soul.

But before surveying *AE* II, it is worth looking at the Aristotle's introductory remarks in its first chapter. Aristotle begins with some remarks motivating a discussion about the *orthos logos*, or right reason, which features in the definition of moral virtue in *NE* II.6 and *EE* II.2 and II.6.⁴⁶³ But Aristotle quickly brackets this issue and restarts the discussion with the following remarks:

Having divided the virtues of the soul, we say that some are virtues of character, others virtues of intellect. Since we have now canvassed the character virtues, let us speak in the same way about the rest, after first speaking about the soul. For earlier it was said that there are two parts of the soul (δύ' εἶναι μέρη τῆς ψυχῆς, τό τε λόγον ἔχον καὶ τὸ ἄλογον), one rational and one non-rational. Now we should divide the rational part in the same manner. (1138^b35-39^a6)

This passage clearly calls to mind the discussion of the soul in *NE* I.13, where Aristotle does in fact divide the soul into rational and irrational parts and accordingly posits two kinds of virtue. But this does not entail that this passage is referring to the *NE* discussion. For the *EE* does precisely the same thing in II.1, distinguishing between two kinds of virtue,

⁴⁶³ We will discuss this passage, and its relationship to the *NE* and/or *EE*, in §5.1.3.

moral and intellectual, and attributing them explicitly to the quasi-rational and rational parts, respectively (1220^a4-12).⁴⁶⁴ On this point at least the *NE* and *EE* are rather similar, and so this *AE* back reference could apply equally well to either.

On, then, to the details of the *AE* view of the parts of the soul and their corresponding virtues. Aristotle continues immediately after the passage just quoted as follows:

Let there be two rational parts, one by means of which we contemplate the sorts of things whose *archai* are not capable of being otherwise, and one by which [we contemplate the sorts of things whose *archai*] are so capable. For with respect to things different in kind (τὰ τῷ γένει ἕτερα), the parts of the soul will likewise be different by nature in accordance with the genus of each (ἕτερον τῷ γένει τὸ πρὸς ἑκάτερον), since it is in virtue of a certain similarity and kinship (ὁμοιότητά τινα καὶ οἰκειότητα) that knowledge (ἡ γνῶσις) is present in them. (1139^a6-11)⁴⁶⁵

This passage makes two key moves. First, it posits two distinct properly rational parts of the soul, just as Aristotle had posited the rational and quasi-rational parts in whichever earlier books properly precedes the *AE*. Second, and more importantly, it gives us the principle we discussed in §3.2 to explain why and how the division between properly rational parts is made. Different kinds of objects have different properties, and the parts of

⁴⁶⁴ Grant (1866), *ad loc*, mistakes the referent here, instead taking this passage to refer to 1219^b26-36, where Aristotle refers to the rational and quasi-rational parts. The passage Grant has in mind is important, but should be combined with the later one.

⁴⁶⁵ I have translated this passage to maintain a parallel between the two rational parts: they both, *qua* rational, grasp *archai*, but the kind of *archai* they grasp are different. This translation is more charitable to the proponent of an *NE/AE* similarity. But the passage can be read in another way, where theoretical reason grasps *archai* but practical reason grasps particulars (i.e. the things themselves that change), which would only exacerbate the difference between the two faculties. See Greenwood (1909), pp. 22-24 for a defense of the latter reading. Reeve (2013), p. 103 suggests that the two readings are ultimately equivalent, since the *archai* of changing things would themselves change.

the soul that cognitively access these objects must be similar to their corresponding objects.⁴⁶⁶

Aristotle continues this passage by naming each of these two parts, and reiterating the fact that the difference between them is grounded in their objects:

Let us call these the *epistēmonikon* and the *logistikon*. For deliberation and calculation (λογίζεσθαι) are the same; no one deliberates about the things that cannot be otherwise. So the *logistikon* is one part of the rational part [of the soul] (ἐν τι μέρος τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος). We must therefore get a grasp of the best state of each of these [parts]. For this is the virtue of each, the virtue corresponding to its proper function (πρὸς τὸ ἔργον τὸ οἰκεῖον). (1139^a11-17)

So we have two different intellectual parts of the soul, which do different kinds of work based on different kinds of objects and therefore have different virtues.⁴⁶⁷

To see more how the two intellectual parts of the soul differ, we need to examine each in more detail. Aristotle tells us that “Let those by which the soul gets the truth by means of affirmation and denial be five in number; these are *technē*, *epistēme*, *phronesis*, *sophia*, *nous*” (1139^b15-17). Of these, *technē* and *phronesis* belong to the *logistikon*, because the *logistikon* is the part of the soul that deals with the contingent, and both production and action involve making changes in the world in line with what is possible but not yet actual.

Aristotle defines *phronesis* as “a true state (ἔξιτιν...ἀληθῆ) accompanied by reason concerning practical human goods” (1140^b20-21, cf. 1140^b4-6). In particular, Aristotle has in mind what is good for humans in general rather than in a specific domain (1140^a25-28),

⁴⁶⁶ We see the same priority of objects in determining faculties in *De Anima*, on which see Johansen (2012), pp. 94-115.

⁴⁶⁷ See Greenwood (1909), pp. 171-173 for a discussion of why these particular names for the rational parts are used here.

and what is the right kinds of object for deliberation (1140^a26, 1140^a30-^b1), namely what is to be done (1140^b15-16, 1141^b9-12). He concludes his discussion by claiming “There being two parts of the rational parts of the soul (δυσὶν δ’ ὄντων μεροῖν τῆς ψυχῆς τῶν λόγον ἐχόντων), it is the virtue of one of them, of the doxastic part (τοῦ δοξαστικοῦ). For opinion (δόξα) is about what is able to be otherwise, and so is *phronesis*” (1140^b25-28). In summary, then, the *logistikon* is a part of the soul which engages in an activity, deliberation resulting in action, resulting in a state the excellence of which is called *phronesis*.⁴⁶⁸

The powers and excellences of the second rational part of the soul, the *epistēmonikon*, has three powers rather than two. But they operate in tandem, insofar as the *epistēmonikon*’s main virtue, *sophia*, depends on the operation of its other two powers. The first of these powers is *epistēmē* or knowledge, the objects of which are necessary and so eternal (1139^b20-24). We reach knowledge of these objects through deduction (συλλογισμὸς), hence Aristotle defines *epistēmē* as “a demonstrative state (ἐξίς ἀποδεικτική)” of conclusions derived from necessary universal premises (ἐκ τῶν καθόλου), and refers us to the *Posterior Analytics* for more detail on this process (1139^b28-33).⁴⁶⁹

But of course in order to reason from necessary principles we need cognitive access to them. This comes from another faculty, *nous*. But Aristotle says relatively little about this faculty, arguing only that it must be distinct from *epistēmē* and giving an argument

⁴⁶⁸ Aristotle at one point says there is not a virtue of *phronesis* (1140^b22), but presumably this means that since *phronesis* is already a virtue, there cannot be a second virtue of doing it well. As we’ll see, the practice of referring to a state and its excellent activity with the same name is a common feature of the *AE*.

⁴⁶⁹ In a later chapter he gives the more complete definition “judgment (ὑπόληψις) concerning what is from the universal and exists from necessity, the principles of demonstrations (ἀρχαὶ τῶν ἀποδεικτῶν)” (1140^b31-32) and adding that it “is accompanied by reason (1140^b33).

from elimination that it could not be any of the other four intellectual virtues (1140^b35-41^a7).⁴⁷⁰ He concludes that “*nous* is of *archai*” (1141^a7-8). However, in his discussion of *epistēmē* he distinguishes induction from deduction, arguing that “induction (ἡ ἐπαγωγή) is a start (ἀρχή) and is of the universal, while deduction is of what is from the universal” (1139^b28-29).⁴⁷¹ So we can fill in the gaps here and conjecture that *nous* is a sort of quasi-perceptual state of the *epistēmonikon*, with the power of intuiting the *archai* that serve as first principles for deductions, and the virtue of this state is *nous*.⁴⁷²

The combination of *epistēmē* and *nous* results in *sophia* or theoretical wisdom.

After distinguishing more colloquial uses of the term, Aristotle tells us that

It is clear that of kinds of knowledge *sophia* is so most strictly (ἀκριβεστάτη ἂν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν εἴη ἡ σοφία). Therefore the wise man must not only have knowledge of what follows from principles, but also have the truth regarding the principles. So *sophia* would be *nous* plus *epistēmē*, *epistēmē* capped off, as it were, by the most honorable objects. (1141^a16-20)

He reiterates later that “From what has been said it is clear that *sophia* is both *epistēmē* and *nous* of the objects more honorable by nature” (1141^b2-3), an example of which is the celestial bodies (1141^b1-2).

In the remaining discussion of *AE II* Aristotle focuses on *sophia* and *phronesis*, while the other three intellectual virtues drop out of the picture. But this is sensible: *sophia*

⁴⁷⁰ Cf. Greenwood (1909), pp. 28, Reeve (2013), pp. 132-41.

⁴⁷¹ Greenwood (1909), pp. 180-181 recommends reading ἀρχῆς instead of ἀρχή, which would remove this gap.

⁴⁷² See Hankinson (2011), pp. 39-58 for an attempt to fill in the details of how *nous* succeeds in getting a grasp of its objects. There is one slight complication in that *nous* is called the power by which we “get the truth and are never deceived” (οἷς ἀληθεύομεν καὶ μηδέποτε διαψευδόμεθα)” (1141^a3-4). This suggests that *nous* may be like *phronesis* in that its exercise is intrinsically excellent and therefore cannot be done well or ill. And, like *phronesis*, Aristotle uses the term ‘*nous*’ to refer both to a state and to its excellence activity. See Grantwood (1909), pp. 145-66 for a thorough discussion of the looseness of Aristotle’s terminology in *AE II*.

by definition includes *nous* and *epistēmē*, and *technē* is production for the sake of something that contributes to the human good (1140^b6-7; cf. *NE* 1094^a1-22, *EE* 1218^b10-24), and therefore falls under the domain of *phronesis*.⁴⁷³

The distinctions between *phronesis* and *sophia*, and consequently between the *logistikon* and *epistēmonikon*, may be obscured by a feature of Aristotle's diction that we haven't seen yet, one which is worth addressing directly. We have already seen *nous* used in the strict sense in the *AE*, to refer to the inductive faculty of the *epistēmonikon* which grasps the first principles of demonstrations. But Aristotle applies the term *nous* to the *logistikon* and its activity as well, in a way that means something different.⁴⁷⁴

As we saw above, both rational parts of the soul grasp *archai* or principles, though principles of different kinds of objects. It is in the same vein that we are told that truth and falsity “is the work of every thinking part (παντὸς διανοητικοῦ)” (1139^a28-29), and “the work of both of the intellectual parts (τῶν νοητικῶν μορίων) is truth. And so the states in accordance with which each gets the truth, these will be the virtues of both” (1139^b12-13).⁴⁷⁵ There are three powers by which the soul can get at the truth: perception, desire (ὄρεξις) and *nous* (1139^b17-18). It is *nous* in particular that is relevant to both, hence the label “intellectual parts”. Aristotle also refers to *nous* as a faculty in both theoretical and practical contexts, most notably when arguing that “*nous* is of the last things (τῶν ἐσχάτων) in both directions” (1143^a35-^b5).⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷³ Cf. Pakaluk (2005), p. 207, Reeve (2013), p. 127.

⁴⁷⁴ See also Bostock (2000), pp. 91-93, Greenwood (1909), pp. 70-72, Kenny (1978), pp. 169-73.

⁴⁷⁵ See Broadie (1991), pp. 219-225, Reeve (2013), pp. 114-120 on this point.

⁴⁷⁶ I must admit that I find this passage inscrutable. See Bostock (2000), pp. 91-93, Broadie (1998) *passim*, and Kenny (1978), pp. 170-72 for different approaches to explaining it.

But the nature and operation of *nous* differs between the two parts, as does the kind of truth involved. Aristotle distinguishes between two kinds of truth, theoretical and practical: “What affirmation and denial are in thought (ἐν διανοίᾳ), in desire this is pursuit and avoidance.” (1139^a21-2; cf. 1139^b15-17). This is an analogy, not an identity claim. The difference between these kinds of truth is based in their role in action; in practical truth “it is necessary for the reason to be true (τόν τε λόγον ἀληθῆ) and the desire correct (τὴν ὄρεξιν ὀρθήν), if the *prohairesis* is to be good (σπουδαία), and the one asserts, the other pursues the same things” (1139^a23-26). Aristotle continues

This thought (ἡ διάνοια) and truth is practical. But the good and bad state of thought that is theoretical (θεωρητικῆς) and not practical or productive is truth and falsity (for this is the work of every intellectual part (παντὸς διανοητικοῦ)). But of practical thought the good state is truth in agreement with right desire. (1139^a26-31)

Though Aristotle isn't quite as explicit in connecting the dots as we might like, the view here seems to be that practical truth is truth about what is good and so choiceworthy. And the intellectual aspects of choice are what leads Aristotle to talk about both practical and theoretical reason under the same label, *nous*: Aristotle tells us that “*prohairesis* is not possible without *nous* and thought (διανοίας) nor without an ethical state” (1139^a33-4) and “*prohairesis* is desiderative *nous* or intellectual desire” (ἡ ὀρεκτικὸς νοῦς ἢ προαίρεσις ἢ ὄρεξις διανοητική 1139^b4-5).

Yet despite this similarity in nomenclature, Aristotle makes it clear that theoretical reason and practical reason are distinct faculties corresponding to distinct parts of the

soul.⁴⁷⁷ Aristotle not only gives different names to the two intellectual parts of the soul, the *epistēmonikon* and *logistikon*, he also attributes different powers to them. Immediately after the contrast between theoretical and practical reason quoted above, Aristotle writes “Thought (διάνοια) as such moves nothing, but thought that is for the sake of something and practical does” (1139^a35-36, cf. 1143^b18-20).⁴⁷⁸ The fact that one kind of thought (practical) moves the soul while another kind (theoretical) cannot underlies Aristotle’s earlier distinction that *prohairesis* is “the efficient cause, not the final” (1139^a31-32).⁴⁷⁹ Aristotle confirms this distinction at the conclusion of *AE* II when he argues that these two faculties are interdependent:

[*phronesis*] is not authoritative over *sophia* nor the better part of us, just as medicine is not authoritative over health. For [*phronesis*] does not make use of it, but rather sees that it comes into being. Therefore [*phronesis*] gives commands for the sake of it, but not to it. (1145^a6-9)

This point is worth dwelling on. Aristotle attributes two distinct causal roles to theoretical and practical reason, respectively. Theoretical reason, the activity in accordance with the virtues of the *epistēmonikon*, is the final cause of the soul, but it is explicitly said not to be the efficient cause: it is that for the sake of which commands are given to the lower parts of the soul, but it cannot issue such commands itself. Practical reason, the activity in accordance with the virtue of the *logistikon*, is the opposite: it can give commands, and is therefore an efficient cause of movement in the soul, but the *logistikon* is not the final

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Pakaluk (2005), pp. 222-225. For more on Aristotle’s tendency to use ‘*nous*’ in distinct ways, including in this passage, see Hankinson (2011), pp. 32-34. The fact that the *AE*, *EE* and the psychological works are all similarly lax about the use of *nous* compared to the *NE* is, I think, a bit of supporting evidence that the *NE* is the outlier here.

⁴⁷⁸ See Reeve (2013), pp. 121-24, 168-71.

⁴⁷⁹ See Reeve (2013), pp. 121-24, 264.

cause.⁴⁸⁰ This shows that each part requires the other: if each part can play one causal role but not another, then they must work together in order for rational control of the soul to be possible. Hence the two parts of the soul have to be distinct, because (i) each has a power the other lacks, and (ii) each cannot operate alone, but instead requires the other for its activity.⁴⁸¹

There is one other feature of the *AE*'s discussion of parts of the soul worth mentioning before we move on. Toward the end of the book, when Aristotle is explaining the value of the intellectual virtues and their role in the happy life, he notes in passing that “Of the fourth part of the soul, the nutritive part (τοῦ δὲ τετάρτου μορίου τῆς ψυχῆ... τοῦ θρεπτικοῦ), there is no such virtue, it has nothing to do with acting or not acting” (1144^a9-11). This line is worth noting because it explicitly confirms that Aristotle thinks there are four parts of the soul, two rational and two non-rational. The two rational parts are the *epistemonikon* and *logistikon*, which we will discuss shortly. The two non-rational parts will be the nutritive part (which Aristotle speaks of in similarly dismissive terms at *NE* 1102^a2-3 and *EE* 1119^b36-39) and the desiderative part; while the latter is not explicitly identified in these terms in the *AE*, it is referred to as a part of the soul in both the *NE* and *EE*, and desire is discussed throughout *AE* II.2.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸⁰ The fact that each rational part requires the other should be enough to blunt the objection of Bostock (2000), pp. 77-79 that theoretical and practical reason can often work together. Interestingly enough, Bostock's reading is much more amenable to the *NE*'s view of *nous* than the *AE*'s view, despite his acknowledgements that in order to raise his criticisms he has to abandon the letter of Aristotle's theory of rationality.

⁴⁸¹ In addition, Aristotle is concerned to show that the domains of these two faculties are distinct. In addition to the passages to that effect that we've already seen, Aristotle that theoretical reason has cognitive access to the divine, while practical reason does not. We will discuss this issue in the next chapter.

⁴⁸² Cf. Reeve (2013), pp. 246-47.

This last point is a simple version of what also follows from a broader consideration of the *AE*'s discussion of the intellectual virtues: the *AE* uses a different model of the soul than the *NE* does. The *AE* explicitly asserts that there are *four* parts of the soul, not three as the *NE* holds. The reason that the *AE* posits an extra part of the soul is because the *AE* distinguishes between the theoretical and practical parts of the soul in a way that the *NE* could not do: the *AE* makes the two rational parts of the soul separate in definition at least, while the *NE* can allow for no more than separation in thought.⁴⁸³ The *AE*, in other words, is committed to a distinction between the two rational parts of the soul, based on its principle that different kinds of objects entail different psychic parts with different corresponding faculties. This leads Aristotle to posit an interdependent relationship between the two rational parts, where each has a power the other lacks and both work in tandem in the soul. Though much more could be said about the details of the *AE* view of the parts of the soul, we have seen enough to conclude that the *AE* model of the soul is different from, and incompatible with, the *NE* model.

§3.5 – *NOUS* IN THE *EE*

We've seen so far that the *NE* and *AE* have incompatible models of the soul, and in particular of the nature of *nous*. But this doesn't quite entail that the *AE* does not belong in

⁴⁸³ I have not discussed separation in place here, since this brings with it complicated issues regarding the soul's relationship to the body in Aristotle. But there are a few observations worth noting. First, we saw above that the rational part of the soul exists in some species but not others, and that both theoretical intellect and practical intellect can be undeveloped, if not absent entirely, even within humans. That is alone some reason to think that these parts of the soul are both separable in place, even from one another. Moreover, the relationship between the two intellectual parts is akin to the relationship between the parts of the body. For example, when an animal's eyes see food it needs the legs to move the animal to the food, and likewise the legs need the eyes to give directions on where to go. So while the rational parts may not be strictly speaking separable in place, they are close enough to warrant thinking of them in similar terms.

the *NE*, because it could be that the *AE* fits the *EE* even worse. So we need to look briefly at the *EE*'s treatment of the soul. But, we will see that this worry is ungrounded: the *AE* and *EE* fit one another perfectly.

Before looking at the *EE* on the soul, however, it is worth taking a quick look at the *EE*'s methodological comments. We saw above that the *NE* argues against unnecessary precision in its account, settling for what is needed for the politician's purposes rather than striving for full philosophical accuracy or comprehensiveness. The *AE*, by contrast, goes into much more detail about the workings of the soul than we would expect given the *NE*'s approach. The *EE*, I submit, is much more similar to the *AE* than the *NE*. For instance, the *EE* does not contain a single instance of the *NE*'s repeated claim to give an account only 'in outline'. Instead, Aristotle is interested in both theoretical and practical knowledge, as he makes clear almost immediately:

Since there are many topics of study about which there are puzzles about each matter and each nature and which need an investigation, some extend to knowledge alone, while others are about acquisition and doing things. Therefore, to the extent that the inquiry admits of philosophy alone, we must in due course say what is appropriate in the inquiry. But the primary thing to be investigated is in what the good life consists and how to acquire it. (1214^a8-15)

Aristotle follows this up with a later claim that is diametrically opposed to the *NE*. While the *NE* says that ethicists only need to investigate the facts, not the explanations (1097^b32-98^a3),⁴⁸⁴ the *EE* says the opposite:

Accounts differ regarding each inquiry, some speaking philosophically and others unphilosophically. Hence one should not consider this sort of study (θεωρίαν) superfluous even for political matters, through which not only

⁴⁸⁴ See Karbowski (2015a) on this topic.

does the fact (τὸ τί) become apparent, but also the explanation (τὸ διὰ τί).
For this sort of inquiry about each thing is philosophical. (1216^b35-39)⁴⁸⁵

These remarks exemplify a methodological difference between the *NE* and *EE*; the latter is much more willing to do philosophy for its own sake as it proceeds, while the latter, ironically, tends to subsume philosophical inquiry to the ends of the politician.⁴⁸⁶ Though the *AE* does not contain similarly explicit methodological remarks, its procedure is more in line with the *EE*'s pronouncements on method than with the *NE*'s.

On, then, to the content of the *EE*'s treatment of the intellectual parts of the soul. The first thing to acknowledge is that the *EE* and *NE* share a number of similar views about the soul, especially in the first few books of each work. As we saw in §3.2 above, the *EE* agrees with the *NE* and *AE* about discussing the soul in terms of parts: in fact the *EE* and *AE* go beyond the *NE* in how frequently Aristotle describes the soul in these terms. The *EE* also agrees with the *NE*, at least initially, by dividing the soul into three parts, non-rational, quasi-rational, and rational. Aristotle argues “Since we are searching for human excellence, let us posit two parts of the soul that share in reason, but which do not both share in reason in the same way. Rather, it is the nature of one to command, of the other to listen and be persuaded” (1219^b27-31). Aristotle goes on to clarify that

It is necessary, if one is human, that calculation (λογισμὸν) be present as an *archē*, but calculation is the *archē* not of calculation but of desire and of emotions, therefore it is necessary that one have these parts. And just as good health is constituted by the excellences of each part, to so too is the excellence of the soul when complete. (1219^b39-20^a4)

⁴⁸⁵ Retaining, with Inwood & Wolf (2013), the MSS's φιλόσοφον against the OCT's φιλόσοφου at ^b39.

⁴⁸⁶ On the methodology of the *EE* in general, see Allan (1961), Jost (1991), Monan (1968), pp. 116-48, and Moravcsik (1996). A more recent, and I think more satisfactory, treatment, can be found in Karbowski (2015b) and Karbowski (2015c).

This passage parallels the *NE*'s tendency in its initial comments on the soul to talk about reason as practical rather than theoretical. The *EE* also follows the *NE* in attributing intellectual (διανοητική) virtue to the reason-having part (singular) of the soul, and moral virtue to the quasi-rational part, on the grounds that the reason-having part commands and the quasi-rational part obeys (1220^a4-12).

If this were all we had to go on, we might conclude that the *EE* is no different than the *NE* in its model of the soul, and therefore no better a home for the *AE*. But there are other points in the *EE* that paint a different picture. A few chapters after the passage just quoted above, Aristotle returns to the distinction between intellectual and moral virtue. Here he argues that “the work [of the intellectual virtues] is truth, either about how something is, or about its generation” (1221^b29-30). Aristotle’s concern here and in surrounding chapters is with the moral virtues, so this is all he says about the intellectual virtues at this point. But it is telling that he distinguishes between two kinds of truth and so two kinds of intellectual virtue, which perfectly matches the distinction made in *AE* II.1. A distinction between theoretical and practical parts of the soul is also hinted at in *EE* II.11. Aristotle uses the distinction between theoretical and practical sciences to draw a distinction between thought and action. He argues that just as hypotheses are the *archai* of theoretical activities, the goal is the *archē* of practical activity, and concludes “the *telos* is the *archē* of thought (νοήσεως), and the completion of thought [is the *archē*] of the action” (1227^b32-33). This is not, admittedly, conclusive evidence that Aristotle makes action and thought belong to different parts of the soul, but it does show that he takes thought and

action to be separate, interdependent processes. Moreover, this is one of the few places in the early *EE* books where Aristotle mentions *nous* in any capacity.⁴⁸⁷

But just as in the *NE*, our best evidence for the *EE*'s view comes in its final books. The first thing to notice is a conspicuous absence: the position that each person is her *nous* is completely absent from the *EE*, even though it plays such a prominent role in the *NE*.⁴⁸⁸ This is true both in Aristotle's discussion of friendship in *EE* VII, and of happiness and related issues in *EE* VIII. When Aristotle does talk about *nous* in *EE* VIII, he does so in a way that makes clear that his conception of *nous* is not the same as the *NE*'s conception. The first relevant passage occurs in *EE* VIII.2, where Aristotle argues

The thing we are searching for is this: what the *archē* of motion in the soul is. And this is clear. Just as God [is the *archē* of motion] in the whole, so too [is God the *archē* of motion] even there [in the soul]. For the divine in us in a way moves everything. But reason (*λόγος*) is not the *archē* of reason, but rather, something superior to it is. And what could be superior over knowledge and *nous*, save God? For virtue is the tool of *nous*. (1248^a24-29)⁴⁸⁹

It is worth comparing this passage to an earlier one, from *EE* II.6:

Among *archai* some of these sorts, from which movements first originate, we call authoritative (*κύρια*), most appropriately those [*archai*] of the things which cannot be otherwise, which is the same way God rules. And in unmoving *archai*, for example in mathematics, it is not authoritative, though it is called this by analogy.... But a human is an *archē* of a kind of movement; for action is movement. (1220^b20-29)

⁴⁸⁷ The only other instance where Aristotle uses *nous* in any technical sense is at 1217^b29-31, where he makes the point familiar from the *NE* that good occurs across categories, saying that God and *nous* are examples of good in the category of substance.

⁴⁸⁸ Monan (1968) p. 128- notices this point, but does not follow it out, lamenting that the differences between Aristotle's two conceptions of *nous* and its role in the soul between the *NE* and *EE* "cannot be followed out within the narrow limits of this volume" (p. 133).

⁴⁸⁹ Reading, with Spengal, ἐκείνη rather than ἐκείνω at 1248^a26. We will discuss this difficult passage in more detail in the next chapter.

What exactly the VIII.2 passage amounts to, and indeed whether it is something Aristotle is endorsing or merely considering for the sake of argument, is not at all clear, despite Aristotle's assurances to the contrary. We will return to this passage in the next chapter, so for now I will only note that the way that God moves things is not as an efficient cause, but as a final cause.

This reading is corroborated in the next chapter of *EE* VIII. The passage I have in mind begins with an explicit back-reference to *AE* II.1, so it should be no surprise that the substance of this chapter matches the substance of the *AE*. Aristotle begins by reminding us that the good person should have a limit for the pursuit of external goods, and while 'as reason prescribes' is an accurate description of this limit, it is not an illustrative description (1249^a21-^b6). His answer is that one must live in accordance with one's superior element, the same way that a slave lives in accordance with his master (1249^b6-9). He continues

Since a human is by nature composed from a ruling part and a ruled part (ἄρχοντος καὶ ἀρχομένου), each should live with reference to the *archē* of himself. But this is twofold: For the *archē* of medicine is one way, the *archē* of health another. For the former is for the sake of the latter. Things are this way regarding the contemplative part of the soul (τὸ θεωρητικόν). For God does not rule by issuing commands, but rather is that for the sake of which *phronesis* commands. (1249^b9-15).

Again, this is a complex passage which I'll discuss in more detail in later sections. What is relevant at present is that Aristotle makes a division of labor in the soul between final and efficient causes: *phronesis* (i.e. the activity and virtue of the *logistikon*) commands the rest of the soul for the sake of the contemplative part, which does not itself issue commands.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁹⁰ Majithia (2005) pp. 375-82 argues that the *EE* does not distinguish theoretical from practical reason here, and therefore cannot be relying on the *AE* II distinction between the *logistikon* and *epistēmonikon*. But Majithia's argument is unpersuasive. First, he apparently misses the reference to *AE* II that begins the

Though the diction here is a bit different from *AE* II (e.g., using θεωρητικόν instead of *epistēmonikon* or *nous*), the doctrine is the same; in particular, this passage is strongly reminiscent of *AE* II.13 where Aristotle says that *phronesis* commands the soul for the sake of *sophia*.⁴⁹¹

We see, then, that the *EE* and *AE* are in agreement, against the *NE*, regarding the number and powers of the parts of the soul. Like the *AE*, the *EE* posits two distinct rational parts of the soul, each of which has its own power and each of which depends on the other for its operation. The intellectual part of the soul is the final cause, and the practical part is the efficient cause, just as *AE* II argues. We can therefore conclude that the *AE* is compatible with the *EE*, and so most likely belongs with it.

§3.6 – *PHRONESIS* IN THE *NE* AND *EE*

We have one more issue to discuss before leaving the topic of intellectual parts of the soul in the *NE*, *AE*, and *EE*. As I discussed in §1.1, most comparative studies of the relationship between these books focus on the role of *phronesis*. So it is worth saying something about this virtue and its role in Aristotle’s ethical texts.

To give a quick restatement, a standard argument goes as follows. The *AE* is the most sophisticated and detailed treatment of *phronesis* in Aristotle’s ethics, so it sets the standard by which the *NE* and *EE* treatments are judged. The *NE*, this argument goes, is much more sophisticated than the *EE*, because the *EE* uses a muddled, Platonic conception

chapter. He also does not respect Aristotle’s distinction between two senses of ‘rule’: the fact that we are told that *phronesis* is the ruling power of the soul in one respect does not entail that it is so in the other.

⁴⁹¹ See Broadie (2010), pp. 21-24. See also Broadie (1991), p. 386, Kenny (1978), pp. 173-80, Whiting (1996), pp. 185-86.

of *phronesis* that does not distinguish between theoretical and practical wisdom.⁴⁹² This argument is meant to simultaneously provide evidence that (i) the *AE* belongs with the *NE* rather than the *EE*, and (ii) the *EE* is likely earlier given its Platonic emphasis and relative lack of sophistication.

This argument has been rightly rejected by Kenny and others on the grounds that it is circular.⁴⁹³ Its proponents tend to first assume that the *AE* treatment is *Nicomachean*, and then argue that the *NE* is better than the *EE* because the *AE* is more sophisticated than the *EE*. This is most apparent in Jaeger's treatment. Rowe is more careful, but nevertheless agrees with Jaeger that the *EE* conflates theoretical and practical wisdom under the term *phronesis*, while the *NE* distinguishes them as *nous* and *phronesis* respectively.⁴⁹⁴ But even in Rowe's treatment the evidence for this claim comes primarily from the *AE*: the difference is that Rowe gives independent arguments that this is where the *AE* belongs. Nevertheless, the argument essentially pits the *AE* against the *EE*. This is not instructive: we should take as given that the *AE* is the most sophisticated treatment of *phronesis*, but this only shows that *both* the undisputed *NE* and the undisputed *EE* will not meet this standard.

What I would like to do instead is step back and examine the undisputed *NE* and *EE* books independently of the *AE*. Doing so, I will argue, reveals that the standard view of *phronesis* in the ethical works is not plausible. The treatment of *phronesis* in the

⁴⁹² This view was proposed by Jaeger (1948), pp. 228-246. It is followed, in one form or another, by Hardie (1968), pp. 7-8, Reeve (2013), pp. 21-24.

⁴⁹³ Kenny (1978), pp. 160-89. See also Cooper (1975), pp. 72-76.

⁴⁹⁴ Rowe (1971), pp. 63-76.

undisputed *NE* is no better than what the standard view attributes to the *EE*, while the undisputed *EE* is in fact more sophisticated than the *NE* even before we examine the *AE*. But a large part of that sophistication involves making the very same distinction the *AE* makes. This provides further evidence that the *AE* belongs in the *EE* but not the *NE*. We can start with *phronesis* in the undisputed *NE* books. We begin by noticing how infrequently the term appears in the *NE*: outside a few idiomatic uses of *phronein* and cognates, there are only a few instances of *phronesis* in the undisputed books, and many of these endoxic.⁴⁹⁵ There are, at most, eight passages that might reflect Aristotle's own thoughts on the matter:

- 1) For to some happiness is excellence, to some *phronesis*, but to others a kind of wisdom (σοφία), and still others these or some of them accompanied by pleasure or not without pleasure. (1098^b23-25)
- 2) Excellence is distinguished according to the same distinction. For we say of these that some are intellectual (διανοητικὰς) others habitual, wisdom (σοφίαν) and good judgment (σύνεσιν) and *phronesis* being intellectual, liberality and temperance habitual. For when we talk about someone's character we do not say that they are wise (σοφὸς) or good judges (συνετὸς), but rather that they are good-natured or temperate. But we praise the wise person according to his disposition, and of dispositions we call the praiseworthy ones excellences. (1103^a3-8)
- 3) Excellence, then, is a *prohairesis* state, in a mean relative to us, being determined by reason and in the way the *phronimos* would determine it. (1106^b36-07^a2)
- 4) And one wishes himself to live and be preserved, and especially this element by which he thinks. (1166^a17-19)
- 5) For if irrational creatures (τὰ ἀνόητα) desire them, we would say one thing, but if intelligent creatures (τὰ φρόνιμα) do, what would we say? (1173^a2-4)
- 6) But it is not the case that one should, as some enjoin, think (φρονεῖν) human things, being human, or mortal things, being mortal. Rather, one should act

⁴⁹⁵ Passages which I think pretty clearly do not reflect anything substantive about Aristotle's own thoughts about *phronesis* include 1095^b28-30, 1096^b16-18, 1121^b1-2, 1126^b13-15, 1126^b25-28, 1172^b28-32, and 1180^b25-28.

immortally (ἀθανατίζειν) as much as possible and do everything with respect to the life according to the best of the things in us. (1177^b31-34)

7) And even *phronesis* is yoked to (συνέζευκται) virtue of character, and this to *phronesis*, since the *archai* of *phronesis* are in accordance with moral virtues and rightness of the moral virtues are in accordance with *phronesis*. And these again would be joined together (συνηρημέναι) with feelings involving the compound (περὶ τὸ σύνθετον). But the virtues of the compound are human (ἀνθρωπικαί). And so too is the life and the happiness in accordance with these. But the happiness of *nous* has been separated. (1178^a16-22)

8) But the law does have compulsive power, being a rule (λόγος) resulting from a kind of *phronesis* and *nous*. (1180^a21-22)

We are looking for evidence that the *NE* distinguishes between theoretical and practical wisdom, and associates *phronesis* with the latter alone. We can separate these passages into two categories, those that provide evidence for this distinction and those that provide evidence against it.

The passages which appear to suggest that the *NE* does distinguish *phronesis* as its own intellectual capacity, distinct from theoretical reason, are (1), (2), (3), (6), and (7). But this evidence is weaker than it first appears. Though (1) distinguishes *phronesis* from *sophia*, it is a report of other people's views, and it is not clear whether Aristotle is using his own terminology or adopting it from others (cf. 1172^b28-32, where Aristotle is clearly following Plato's diction is arguing that a life of *phronesis* and pleasure is better than pleasure alone). As we saw in §3.4-5 above, the way Aristotle conceives of the *phronimos* and his relation to right reason and virtue in *NE* II does not match the way he treats the topic in *AE* II, so (3) is not helpful evidence for showing that the *NE* and *AE* agree on *phronesis*. Though (6) contains an implicit contrast between *phronein* and *theōrein*, like (1) is also couched in terms of what people other than Aristotle endorse.

This leaves us with (2) and (7). But even these passages are less helpful than they seem for arguing that the *NE* presents a sophisticated version of *phronesis* that parallels the *AE*. (7) associates *phronesis* with moral virtue rather than contemplation, and so suggests that *phronesis* is a different kind of faculty. The problem is that it makes too much of a contrast: by associating *phronesis* with moral virtue rather than intellectual virtue, and with the human compound rather than with the separate intellectual part of the soul, *NE* X.8 puts *phronesis* in the wrong place and makes it an excellence of the wrong part of the soul. That is, *phronesis* in this passage appears to be a virtue of the quasi-rational part of the soul, rather than the rational part as *AE* II would have it. We might try to resist this reading by emphasizing that *phronesis* is associated with the moral virtues while downplaying the connection between *phronesis* and the human compound understood separately from *nous*.

I do not think this is a plausible reading: we can grant that the form of Aristotle's argument here is 'A is linked with B, and B with C' rather than 'A is linked with B and C', but even so the linking relation is presumably transitive, and so the first formulation would entail the second. But even if we did restrict ourselves to saying that *phronesis* is associated only with moral virtue, this wouldn't help, because this reading of (7) would make it a simple restatement of (3), which is in tension with the *AE* in other ways (we'll address this point directly in §5.1.2).

This brings us to (2), which, unlike the other passages we've examined so far, provides exactly the kind of evidence sought after by proponents of the view that the *NE* has a clear and sophisticated conception of *phronesis* as practical wisdom. In this passage Aristotle both separates *phronesis* from *sophia*, and also clearly makes *phronesis* an

intellectual virtue rather than a virtue of habit. But there are nonetheless a few oddities about this passage. First, as we saw in §2.3.5, the *NE* holds that happiness is the subject of honor rather than praise, and that happiness is solely constituted by noetic activity. The virtue of noetic activity is *sophia*, and so *sophia* should be the subject of honor rather than praise. Yet (2) says the opposite, that *sophia* is the subject of praise. Second, it is worth registering that *phronesis* drops out of the passage immediately after it is mentioned: only *sophia* and good judgment are repeated as the passage continues. While it would go too far to suggest that *phronesis* is an interpolation in the passage, we can note that *phronesis* is not at the front of Aristotle's mind in the argument.⁴⁹⁶ We should also note that we are not told exactly what *sophia* or good judgment means in this passage, so the fact that both *phronesis* and *sophia* are used does not immediately entail that Aristotle conceives of them as well-defined separate states. And third, (2) is in tension with (7), since (7) associates *phronesis* with habitual rather than intellectual excellences.⁴⁹⁷ None of this is enough to fully undermine the status of (2) as evidence for the *NE*'s conception of *phronesis* as a clearly defined faculty of practical reason alone, but it does show that the evidence for this case is much less conclusive than its proponents tend to believe.

On the other side of the ledger, passages (4), (5), and (8) suggest that Aristotle does not have as clear a conception of *phronesis* in the *NE* as he does in the *AE*. (4) may appear

⁴⁹⁶ It is also worth noting that the *EE* contains a very close parallel of this passage (1220^a4-12), which also uses *sophia* and *sunesis* as examples of intellectual virtues, though the example of a contrasting moral virtue is justice rather than liberality or temperance. *Phronesis* is not mentioned in the *EE* passage.

⁴⁹⁷ This might provide further motivation to give a weaker reading of (8) that doesn't link *phronesis* to the compound rather than the intellect, but since the *NE* disagrees with the *AE* on the relationship between *phronesis* and virtue this move is of only limited help in making the case that the *NE*'s conception of *phronesis* is comparable to the *AE*.

to be merely another ambiguous instance of *phronein*, but I think this dismissal would be too quick. As we saw in the last section, the *NE* treats *nous* as a single psychic faculty with both theoretical and practical powers, a position which serves as a crucial premise for other arguments. (4) is one instance of this pattern: the element by which one thinks is *nous*, and the passage occurs early in an argument (extending from *NE* IX.4 to IX.8) that the true self-lover loves her true self, which is both the theoretical element and the element that the continent person obeys. So the element by which one thinks in passage (4) is one which is capable of both theoretical and practical reason, and hence *phronein* in this passage should be read as encompassing both.

Passage (5) occurs as part of an objection to the view that something can be pursued by all yet not be a good. Aristotle is making this objection *in propria persona*, against those who argue that pleasure is not a good. (5) is meant to provide evidence that all creatures pursue pleasure. What is relevant for our purposes is that Aristotle contrasts τὰ ἀνόητα and τὰ φρόνιμα, where we might expect to see, if not a consistent use of either *nous* or *phronesis* on both sides, then at least something more inclusive like the rational/non-rational contrast familiar from the *NE*'s early books. But instead Aristotle is comfortable contrasting two terms which, on the standard view, would commit him to comparing unreflective creatures with practical reasoners. But of course this is not the contrast Aristotle is actually making in the passage: τὰ φρόνιμα picks out human beings, and τὰ ἀνόητα picks out non-human animals. Or, perhaps τὰ φρόνιμα includes the gods as well; they are not mentioned in this chapter (or indeed anywhere in *NE* X's discussion of pleasure), but as we saw in §2.6.2 the pleasure of the gods' lives plays a role in Aristotle's

argument that the contemplative life is *eudaimonia*. If this is the case, then the case for Aristotle making a firm distinction between *phronesis* and contemplative in the undisputed *NE* books is even weaker.

Our final piece of textual evidence comes from *NE* X.9, where Aristotle transitions from ethics to politics. As with (5), we discussed passage (8) above when showing how Aristotle treats *nous* as a single faculty with both theoretical and practical powers. Apparently Aristotle views the rule of law in a similar way. Now, Aristotle says “a kind of *phronesis* and *nous*”, which presumably means that he does not want to fully equate the power of law with the power of the human soul. But it is nevertheless illustrative that Aristotle is comfortable treating *phronesis* and *nous* as basically interchangeable, despite having just argued that the proper activity of *nous* is contemplation in the preceding chapters of *NE* X. One might think that Aristotle would resist associating law with *nous*, yet this resistance runs counter to Aristotle’s argumentative strategy of arguing that the self, *nous*, is both theoretical and practical. In the developed and well-habituated human one’s own *nous* plays both these roles, and in humans not yet in this state law plays them instead. So once again Aristotle does not draw the stark contrast between *phronesis* and *nous* that we would expect on the standard view, and moreover fails to draw it in a place where we would especially expect it.

To sum up, then, the *NE* gives us one passage where *phronesis* and *nous* are explicitly and unambiguously contrasted, and even this passage does not provide unambiguous evidence for the standard reading of the *NE* on *phronesis*. There are three passages, however, where Aristotle either fails to make a contrast we would expect on the

standard view, or actively associated *phronesis* with theoretical rather than practical wisdom. This evidence alone cannot conclusively prove that the standard reading is wrong. But it does show that it rests on far shakier foundations than is typically thought. The balance of internal evidence in the *NE* counts against the view, not for it. And even bracketing for the moment the amount and strength of evidence on either side, the mere fact that there is conflicting evidence itself undermines the standard view. In some ways it is even worse for the view if Aristotle writes even putatively contradictory statements, as this suggests that he either (i) has not yet worked out his full view, or (ii) is willing to use psychological terms in technically inaccurate ways. So the standard view looks rather unmotivated. Whether we take a strong reading of the *NE* (that the balance of evidence shows that Aristotle positively conflated *nous* and *phronesis*) or a weaker reading (there is inconclusive evidence on both sides), the standard view attributes a more sophisticated psychological theory to the undisputed *NE* than the text itself can support.

But of course the standard view is at least partially a comparative thesis: the *NE* is a better home for the *AE* than the *EE* is, because the *NE* is more sophisticated than the *EE* about *phronesis*. So even if the standard view oversells the *NE*, it is still possible that the *EE* could be even worse. So we need to look closely at the *EE* as well. As we'll see, the *EE* has a much stronger case for distinguishing between *phronesis* and *sophia* than the *NE* does.

We can start by noting that the *EE* mentions *phronesis* much more frequently than the *NE* does. Though the undisputed *NE* books are roughly twice the length of the undisputed *EE* (about 120 and 70 Bekker pages, respectively), the *EE* contains more than

double the passages with relevant uses of *phronesis*: I count 15 instances. The lion's share of these passages closely associated *phronesis* with moral virtue. For instance, I.8 states that *phronesis* has as its object the good as attainable by human action (1218^b11-16); it is this passage that refers forward to *AE* II.6's divisions between *phronesis* and *politikē*. *EE* III.7 tells us that *phronesis* is what turns natural virtue into virtue proper (1234^a27-34). Several passages in *EE* VIII.2 contend that *phronesis* must accompany the virtues of the irrational parts of the soul in order for someone to regularly act rightly, in contrast to the lucky or the god-favored (1246^b32-36, 1247^a13-17).⁴⁹⁸

Most importantly, however, *EE* VIII.3 follows *AE* II in giving *phronesis* and *nous* distinct powers: *nous*, called here the *theōrētikon*, is the final but not efficient cause of motion in the soul, while *phronesis* is efficient but not final cause (1249^b9-19). So at least when Aristotle is tying the various threads of the *EE* together to give his conclusion for how to pursue the good, he is careful to distinguish *phronesis* from the contemplative part of the soul. This conclusion follows several other passages in *EE* VIII where Aristotle argues that *phronesis* is practical rather than theoretical.⁴⁹⁹ VIII.1 gives an argument against Socrates' position that *phronesis* is a kind of knowledge, concluding "For [*phronesis*] is a virtue and not knowledge (*epistēmē*); it is rather a different kind of cognition (γνώσεως)" (1246^b35-36).

⁴⁹⁸ See also 1221^a12, 1232^a35-38, 1236^a3-5, 1246^b4-7, 1246^b16-25, 1246^b37-47^a3, 1247^a28-31, 1248^a34-37. See Cooper (1975), p. 72 n. 99.

⁴⁹⁹ See Monan (1968), pp. 138-142 for a discussion of these passages.

Why, then, do scholars accuse the *EE* of failing to make the distinction that it clearly makes in its final chapters? The answer is likely that they have put undue focus on the *EE*'s earliest chapters.⁵⁰⁰ In *EE* I Aristotle takes the same basic approach that he uses in the *NE*, arguing that there are three kinds of lives that are plausible candidates for *eudaimonia*, the philosophical life, the political life, and the hedonistic life, that correspond to the goods of wisdom, virtue, and pleasure. The problem is that Aristotle uses *phronesis* for 'wisdom', and connects it to the philosophical life rather than the political (1214^a30-^b5, 1215^a32-^b5, 1216^a18-20, 1218^b32-35).

Does this indicate a confusion on Aristotle's account, or at least a tendency to use *phronesis* to cover two distinct concepts? I think not. Most of these occurrences of *phronesis* in the *EE*'s early books are endoxic, just as they were in the *NE*.⁵⁰¹ For instance, Aristotle writes "Some say (οἱ μὲν ... φασιν) the greatest good is *phronesis*, others say (οἱ δὲ) virtue, and others (οἱ δὲ) pleasure" (1214^a32-33). A later passage refers back to this one, arguing

Since in the beginning we stipulated three things as related to *eudaimonia*, saying earlier that these are the greatest goods for humans, virtue and *phronesis* and pleasure, we see also that there are three lives which everyone who are in a position to choose live, the political, the philosophical, and the hedonistic. (1215^a32-^b1)

⁵⁰⁰ Rowe (1971), for instance, spends more than six pages discussing the handful of endoxic references in the early chapters of *EE* I, and a bit more than one page on *EE* VIII.3 (which, as I argued above, he in any case misinterprets).

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Broadie (1991), p. 374 and p. 433 n.7, Monan (1968), p. 138.

Though Aristotle is happy to follow others in this approach to *eudaimonia*, it is one he is adopting rather than building from scratch, and therefore one which need not fully match his preferred formulations. This passage continues

Of these the philosopher wishes for *phronesis* and contemplation of the truth, the politician for noble actions (these are done from virtue), and the hedonist for bodily pleasure. And therefore some call a different person happy, just as we said earlier. (1215^b1-6)

Aristotle goes on to describe the views of Anaxagoras rather than himself, confirming that this passage is endoxic rather than dogmatic.

The same applies later, when Aristotle writes that, while some people want to live the luxurious life of Sardanapallus, “others would neither choose *phronesis* nor the bodily pleasures over actions done from virtue” (1216^a19-21). Aristotle quickly dismisses the hedonistic life from serious consideration, but concludes that virtue and *phronesis* are considered parts of the good life by “everyone who is worthy of study among men” (1216^a38-^b2). This leaves one more passage where Aristotle appears to equate *phronesis* with the philosophical life rather than the political, in *EE* II.1 where he makes a new start by stipulating that he is concerned with goods internal to the soul, and that “*Phronesis* and virtue and pleasure are in the soul, and of these either some or all appear to all to be the *telos*” (1218^b34-36). Not only is this passage also endoxic, it also states that it is drawing its distinction between internal and external goods from a discussion “in the exoteric works” (1218^b34), which adds another wrinkle to this passage’s evidentiary status.

The treatment of *phronesis* in the *EE*, then, does not match the way the text is treated by the standard view.⁵⁰² The later books of the *EE* clearly distinguish *phronesis* as a practical faculty rather than a theoretical one, in passages which not only mirror the *AE* treatment but actually refer back to them. The early books of the *EE* do consistently use *phronesis* to refer to theoretical wisdom rather than practical wisdom, but in every case Aristotle's usage occurs in the context of describing what the many and the wise think. Aristotle does not reject this way of talking, so we cannot quite show that he is attentive to his later conception of *phronesis* in the early books. But nor can we conclude that his usage here reflects his own preferences. Aristotle may be happy to follow others without correcting them, or even endorse most of what they say, without committing himself to agreeing on technical matters or philosophical vocabulary. And even if we grant to the standard view that we should expect Aristotle to be more careful in these early books of the *EE*, we can nevertheless respond that Aristotle's received view occurs in the *EE*'s last book.

What can we conclude from this investigation? The one thing that should be uncontroversial is that the differences between the *NE* and *EE* are not nearly as stark as the standard view suggests. Both texts have some passages which might suggest Aristotle does not separate *phronesis* from theoretical wisdom, and some passages that suggest he does. This at the very least neutralizes the argument that the *AE* clearly belongs with the *NE* on the grounds that the latter has the better and more similar account of *phronesis*. Once we

⁵⁰² Cf. Kenny (1978), pp. 164-66, 181-89.

evaluate the evidence on a case-by-case basis, however, we see that on balance the *EE* does a better job on *phronesis* than the *NE* does. The *NE* has at best one passage that gives clear evidence the Aristotle himself thinks that *phronesis* and *sophia* are different faculties, and several passages that suggest the opposite. The *EE* has several passages that show that Aristotle distinguishes *phronesis* from theoretical wisdom, and all the passages that appear to conflate them appear in the context of what others think. At the end of the day, then, I think the safe thing to conclude is that, *pace* the standard view, we cannot determine the proper home of the *AE* based solely on the treatment of *phronesis* in the undisputed books. We can, however, add the treatment of *phronesis* to the list of places where the *EE* and the *AE* correspond more closely than the *AE* and *NE* do. *Phronesis* will not settle the issue, but we can use it as part of a cumulative case, a case which so far at least as been consistent in pairing the *AE* with the *EE*.

§3.7 – CONCLUSION

We've seen that the *AE* and *EE* agree with one another against the *NE* on the parts of the soul and their powers. The *NE* only posits three parts of the soul, attributing both theoretical and practical reason to a single rational part; this rational unity plays an important role in the argument of the *NE*. The *AE* and *EE*, by contrast, posit four parts, distinguishing between two rational parts for theoretical and practical reason respectively. Moreover, while the conception of *phronesis* is sometimes unclear in the undisputed books of both the *EE* and *NE*, the *EE* tends to be closer to the *AE* in its treatment of this faculty and its virtue. This evidence strongly suggests that the *AE* does not belong in the *NE*, because they disagree on a foundational matter of ethical doctrine. If the *AE* and *NE* are

part of the same work, then that work is fundamentally inconsistent. It is more plausible that the *AE* belongs to the *EE* alone, with which it agrees quite closely on this matter. As we'll see in the next chapter, the subject of rationality is not the only place where this pattern emerges.

Chapter 4 – Humanity and Divinity in Aristotle’s Ethics

The importance of divinity in Aristotle’s discussion of happiness in the undisputed *NE* books is manifest, from his early claim in *NE* I.2 that achieving the human good for a people or state is divine, to his final remarks in *NE* X.8 that the gods will look out for those who honor what is most like them. Turning to the *AE* and the *EE*, we find a much more muted approach to this issue; aside from some important and controversial remarks in the last chapters of *EE* VIII, divinity plays a smaller role in Aristotle’s arguments regarding the human good.

I will argue in this chapter that the differences between the *NE* versus the *AE* and *EE* on the subject of divinity are not mere matters of emphasis. The *NE* makes divinity a foundational concept in Aristotle’s analysis of the chief good, in particular by assimilating the categories of humanity and divinity. The *AE* and *EE*, on the other hand, contrast humanity and divinity, and understand human happiness as something humans achieve *qua* human, not *qua* divine. Though divinity still has a role to play in explaining human happiness, it is a much more constrained role than we see in the *NE*. This means that, once again, the *AE* and *EE* agree with one another against the *NE* on a central point of ethical doctrine, providing another place where it looks like neither the *NE* nor *AE* were written to be compatible with the other.

§4.1 – DIVINITY IN THE *NE*

We can begin by quickly revisiting the *NE*’s position on the role of divinity in *eudaimonia*. We saw in §2.3.5 that divinity was one of the seven criteria for *eudaimonia* laid out in *NE* I, and in §2.3.6 that divinity is the basis for the other criteria. In Aristotle’s

mind it is essentially *a priori* that divine things are the best, and since the best things are final (because, in being best, there is no further good for them to aim at), divine things will be final. The gods are paradigm instances of self-sufficiency, since they need nothing but themselves to live well; the connection between self-sufficiency and the gods is so tight that it can cause confusion, such that Aristotle has to distinguish the ways humans and gods are self-sufficient when discussing friendship in *NE IX*. Functional activity is in principle something we share with gods but not animals, something we later learn is also true in fact. Stability is divine because happiness is a god-protected if not god-given thing, to the extent that the happy person can, with luck (i.e. divine assistance) be not just happy but blessed, with the divine connotations the term carries. Divinity sets the standard by which we distinguish honor from mere praise, and the pleasure that accompanies happiness will involve our divine functional activity. So in the *NE* divinity is not just *a* criterion for happiness, but in many ways the most fundamental criterion.

This way of thinking is brought to bear in Aristotle's defense of contemplation as the chief good in *NE X* as well. Contemplation is itself divine, in three ways:

- 1) The objects of contemplation are divine (i.e. immortal, unchanging, and best);
- 2) Contemplation is human characteristic (i.e. functional) activity insofar as humans are identified with their divine *nous*;
- 3) Happiness will be whatever activity humans and gods share, and that activity is contemplation.

The divinity of contemplation also helps explain how it meets the other criteria. Because divine activity is the best activity, and so directed at itself, it is final, and this kind of activity is contemplative. The superlative and self-directed features of divine activity also explain

contemplation's self-sufficiency, since this activity can make life choiceworthy alone, and can be part of a life without depending on unnecessary external goods. Part of the soul is divine, and this is what each person essentially is; contemplative activity, *qua* divine, is the best activity this part of the soul can perform, and so this is our functional activity. The activity of the divine part of the soul, unlike the other parts or the body, can operate without dependence on external goods, and is therefore capable of stability, especially when under the divine protection of the gods who care most about what is most like them. Because the gods set the standard for what is honorable, their activity will be honorable activity, and this activity is contemplative; plus, one reason the gods protect contemplators is because those who engage in this activity honor the gods by approximating them. And contemplation is the most pleasant activity because of its purity, as evidenced by the fact that the gods, who lead the most pleasant lives, engage in it.

All in all, then, divinity is a central concept in the *NE*'s treatment of *eudaimonia*. The *AE*, by contrast, does not discuss *eudaimonia* as such. But it does discuss *nous* and its activity, and is therefore an apt place to look for a treatment of the three ways in which the *NE* argues that contemplation is divine.

§4.2 – Divinity in the *AE*

If the *AE* were originally written as the middle part of the *NE*'s argument, we would expect the *AE* to supply some information to help Aristotle make the case for contemplation as the chief good which culminates in *NE* X.7-8, for instance the way the discussion of friendship introduces the idea that each person is her *nous*. Or, if the *NE* were written around a pre-existing version of the *AE*, we would expect the two to at least be compatible,

perhaps with some revisions in the *AE* to foreshadow the argument to come. But, as I'll argue in this section, this is not what we see. Rather, the *AE* and *NE* are inconsistent on the topic of divinity, and therefore on the topic of human happiness.

Since divinity is a multifaceted concept in the *NE*, one which both sets its own criterion for *eudaimonia* and helps explain the others, it is worth isolating some of the features of divinity and discussing them individually. As we saw above, there are three ways in which contemplative activity is divine in the *NE*:

- 1) The objects of contemplation are divine (i.e. immortal, unchanging, and best);
- 2) Contemplation is human characteristic (i.e. functional) activity insofar as humans are identified with their divine *nous*;
- 3) Happiness will be whatever activity humans and gods share, and that activity is contemplation.

We can discuss these in turn. I will argue that, in a qualified way, the *AE* accepts (1), but it rejects (2) and (3).

The *NE* tells us that the objects of contemplation are the “most valuable” (τὸ σπουδαιότατον, 1174^b21-23) of objects, the “greatest...of knowable objects” (κρατίστη... τῶν γνωστῶν, 1177^a19-21), and objects that are “the most noble and divine” (καλῶν καὶ θείων, 1177^a15). This is one way that contemplation is divine: it takes the divine as its object. Though Aristotle doesn't quite say so explicitly, it appears that some of these divine objects will be *archai* (1098^b3-4) as well as the eternal things which Aristotle exempts from the domain of deliberation (τῶν ἀιδίων, 1112^a21). But, someone engaged in contemplation can also have themselves as a contemplative object, since, as we saw in §2.6.1, noetic activity is reflexive. In the case of the gods this is straightforward: the

gods are themselves divine, and so both noble and eternal. Humans, by contrast, are not eternal, at least not *qua* human compound. But Aristotle nevertheless thinks that each person is divine insofar as each is her *nous*, and so enjoins us to act immortally (ἀθανατίζειν) as much as we can (1177^b26-34). This suggests that humans can have themselves as objects of contemplation in addition to other divine objects.

When it comes to the general properties of the objects of contemplation, the *AE* and the *NE* are largely in agreement. The *AE* tells us that the *epistēmonikon* (which includes *nous* as a faculty) “contemplates the sorts of things among those whose *archai* are not capable of being otherwise” (1139^a7-8). These *archai*, as the basis of *epistēmē*, exist “of necessity. And they are therefore eternal (αἰδίου), for everything existing from necessity as such is eternal, and eternal things are ungenerated and unperishing (ἀγένητα καὶ ἀφθαρτα)” (1139^b22-24). *Sophia*, the excellence resulting from the complete combination of *nous* and *epistēmē*, is of “the most honorable things” (τῶν τιμιωτάτων, 1141^a20). He soon repeats that “*nous* is of the things most honorable by nature” (1141^b3), and gives as an example “the most conspicuous (φανερώτατά) objects out of which the *kosmos* is composed” (1141^b1-2), i.e. the celestial bodies.

With the possible exception of the celestial bodies, which Aristotle doesn't explicitly mention in the *NE*, the *AE*'s treatment of the objects of contemplation to this point looks very similar to the *NE*'s.⁵⁰³ And this is because the two treatments are essentially the same: both make the objects of contemplation divine objects, i.e. objects

⁵⁰³ Cf. Greenwood (1973), p. 78, though in general Greenwood is much too sanguine about seeing agreement between the *AE* and *NE*. In particular, in order to make the *AE* and *NE* agree on the nature of happiness, Greenwood has to reject Aristotle's own conception of what is essentially human (pp. 79-80).

that are eternal and the best. There is, however, a significant difference between the two when it comes to the particular objects that satisfy this description. In short, the *NE* allows that humans can themselves be the objects of contemplation, while the *AE* rejects this.

In the very passage where Aristotle tells us that the highest objects of contemplation are celestial bodies and necessary truths, Aristotle draws a stark contrast between these objects and humans. That is, Aristotle argues that “it would be odd to think that *politikē* or *phronesis* is the most important (σπουδαιοτάτην) knowledge, because man is not the best thing in the *kosmos*” (1141^a20-22). He adds “It makes no difference if [one thinks] that man is the best of the other animals, for there are other things much more divine (πολύθειότερα) by nature than man” (1141^a33-^b1), namely the celestial bodies.⁵⁰⁴ Humans, or at least the human good, are within the domain of *phronesis*, rather than *nous* or *sophia* (1140^b4-6, ^b20-21). This is because humans are changeable creatures, and what is good for humans requires deliberation, which puts us squarely in the sphere of the *logistikon* (which Aristotle also calls the *bouleutikon*), rather than the *epistēmonikon*.

So we see that even though the *AE* and *NE* agree on the first way that contemplation is divine, they disagree about how this conception of contemplation applies to humanity. If contemplation is of divine objects in the *AE*, and contemplation is not of humans in the *AE*, then it would follow that humans are not considered divine in the *AE*, or at least not divine in the way that merits our inclusion as objects of contemplation the way the *NE* holds. This is exactly what we see in the *AE*, and it brings us to the second way that

⁵⁰⁴ See Reeve (2013), p. 182 for a discussion of these bodies.

contemplation is divine in the *NE*: it is the activity of the divine part of the soul which each person essentially is. The *AE*, as we'll see, rejects this view.

This is not to say that the *AE* makes humans non-divine in every respect. The claim quoted above, after all, says that some things are more divine than man, and this has the implication, though perhaps not the entailment, that humans are divine to some degree. And this is, in fact, the *AE* view. But this is not enough to show that the *AE* and *NE* agree on this score. This is because, as we're told in *AE* III, "all things possess something divine by nature" (πάντα γὰρ φύσει ἔχει τι θεῖον, 1153^b32), a premise Aristotle uses in his discussion of pleasure to help explain why all creatures, rational and non-rational alike, seek pleasure. But this is not enough to show that the *AE* and *NE* agree on the essential divinity of the human person *qua nous*. For even animals qualify as divine on this standard, yet the *NE* is explicit that animals are not divine enough to share in happiness with humans and gods.

A closer look at the context of Aristotle's claim that all things have a share of the divine shows a second important way in which humans and gods differ in the *AE*. Aristotle once again contrasts humans and gods with respect to the way they enjoy pleasurable experiences.

There is nothing that is always pleasant in itself, because our nature is not simple (τὸ μὴ ἀπλῆν ἡμῶν εἶναι τὴν φύσιν), but rather there is some other element present, insofar as we are perishable, such that when one of the two does something, this is by nature contrary to the nature of the other one, and whenever they are balanced (ἰσάζη), the thing being done seems neither painful nor pleasant, since if something's nature were simple the same action would always be pleasant. Therefore God always enjoys a single, simple pleasure. For there is activity not only of motion but also of

immobility (ἀκίνησις), and pleasure is found more in rest (ἐν ἡρεμίᾳ) than in motion (1154^b20-28)

This is a difficult passage, and it raises questions beyond the scope of the present project regarding how the *AE*'s treatment of pleasure compares to the *NE*'s separate treatment in X.1-6. But we can at least take note of how God enjoys a single unchanging pleasure that, though still an activity, nonetheless is enjoyed in rest rather than in motion or change (cf. 1166^a10-24).⁵⁰⁵ Humans, on the other hand, are perishable compounds, and so do not enjoy pleasure in rest as God does; indeed, Aristotle goes so far as to argue that “an animal is pained at all times (ἀεὶ γὰρ πονεῖ), just as the naturalists testify, that sight and hearing is painful while experienced, but as they say, we have already become accustomed to it” (1154^b7-9).⁵⁰⁶ Aristotle goes on to argue

Change is sweet for all things, according to the poet, due to some kind of wretchedness (πονηρίαν τινά). For just as the wretched person is easily changed (εὐμετάβολος), the nature that needs change is also [wretched]. For it is neither simple nor good (ἐπιεικής) (1154^b28-31).

⁵⁰⁵ Aristotle also argues that intellectual pleasures are self-sustaining, while other kinds of pleasures impede one another (1153^a20-23). But this point is complicated by two features: (i) Aristotle admits just before that contemplation can impede health (1153^a20), and (ii) Aristotle mentions *phronesis* along with contemplation and learning as examples of self-sustaining intellectual pleasure (1153^a20-23). So either the best kind of pleasure can accommodate the *logistikon*'s activity, not just the *epistēmonikon*'s, or this passage is an example of Aristotle failing to distinguish *phronesis* from contemplation in the *AE*. Regardless of how we interpret the passage, then, things are more complicated than we would expect from the *NE*.

⁵⁰⁶ This does not mean that humans do not take pleasure in contemplation: in the same way that the *NE* claims that the pleasure of the contemplative life is “marvelous with respect to its purity and stability” (θαυμαστάς ἡδονὰς ἔχειν καθαρειότητι καὶ τῷ βεβαίῳ, 1177^a25-26), the *AE* argues that contemplation involves no pain at all (1152^b35-53^a2), and the pleasures of contemplation and learning only cause us to engage in this activity more (1153^a20-23). But even here Aristotle includes *phronesis* with contemplation as examples of activities unimpeded by their own pleasure. He does not downplay our compound nature in these passages, nor does he argue that the pleasures of contemplation are somehow more natural for us than other pleasures. If anything, Aristotle does the opposite, emphasizing the naturalness of these changing, unstable pleasures. In addition to 1154^b20-28 cited above, see 1153^a8-17, 1154^b15-19.

This way of thinking about nature, including human nature, is a far cry from the exalted status we get in *NE X*. Where the *NE X* treatment of pleasure subtly introduced the notion that contemplation allows for the best kind of pleasure because it is complete activity that is natural for us, the *AE* treatment of pleasure draws a stark contrast between kinds of pleasure, putting the gods on one side and mortals on the other. According to this passage at any rate, human nature is ineliminably wretched, not divine (or, given the previous comments about divinity in all creatures, at least not divine in a particularly noble way).

There is a possible response here to be made on behalf of human divinity in the *AE*. As we saw in the last chapter, when distinguishing the *epistēmonikon* from the *logistikon*, Aristotle appeals to the principle that different kinds of objects require different kinds of faculties to access them. Hence he concludes that each part has its respective kind of knowledge in virtue of “some kind of similarity and kinship” (ὁμοιότητά τινα καὶ οἰκειότητα) with its object” (1139^a8-11). But if the objects of the *epistēmonikon* are divine, then this part of soul must have a kind of similarity and kinship to the divine. We can concede that this point indicates that humans are divine somehow. But the question is not whether they are divine at all, but whether they are divine in the relevant way. And while it isn’t clear exactly what this similarity and kinship amounts to (note the *τινα*), it cannot be that humans are eternal and unchanging. The excellence of the *epistēmonikon*, *sophia*, involves both intuition and deduction, and deduction involves a kind of change, namely coming to a cognitive grasp of a proposition one did not know before. Nor is *sophia* eternal. Rather, *phronesis* issues orders to the rest of the soul for the sake of *sophia*, so that the latter “may come into being” (ὅπως γένηται, 1145^a8-9). Philosophy, the exercise of *sophia*,

requires experience which can only come with time (1142^a11-19). And so one of the two main human intellectual virtues lacks some of the most notable properties of the divine, despite whatever similarity to divine objects it must possess in order to cognitively access divine objects.

This shows that theoretical *activity* is not sufficiently divine in the *AE* to match what we see in the *NE*, but it doesn't quite touch on the divinity of the theoretical *part*. Now, Aristotle does not explicitly deny that the *epistēmonikon* is divine the way *nous* is in the *NE*, but nor does he explicitly affirm it. And given the differences we saw in the last chapter about how Aristotle thinks about the parts of the soul, we cannot expect the *AE*'s thinking about the *epistēmonikon* to mirror the *NE*'s treatment of *nous* on this score. But the *AE* does say that humans are perishable (φθαρτοί, 1154^b22) and contrasts our compound nature with the simple nature of god. So the implication is that humans are mortal in their very nature, rather than identified with divine *nous* according to which we should act immortally as much as we can.

Moreover, while Aristotle does not explicitly say that the *epistēmonikon* is not itself eternal and unchanging, he does say that this part of the soul is not best. At most, it shares this title with the *logistikon*, since both parts of the soul are superior in different ways: *epistēmonikon* as final cause, *logistikon* as commander of the soul. Aristotle does at one point associate *sophia* with “the better part of us” (τοῦ βελτίονος μορίου, 1145^a6-7), which is reminiscent of the way *nous* is described in the *NE*. But here Aristotle says ‘better’, not ‘best’. And Aristotle uses the same language in *AE* III to argue that animals cannot be vicious because “the better part (τὸ βέλτιον) cannot be corrupted, as it can in humans,

because they do not have one” (1150^a1-3). But it is the practical part of the soul that is corrupted when it comes to vice, not the theoretical part, hence “better part” here must refer to the *logistikon* rather than the *epistemonikon*.⁵⁰⁷ So both intellectual parts of the soul are the better part, though in different ways. And this is exactly what we would expect from the *AE*’s treatment of the soul, given that it splits rationality into two interdependent parts. There is one more issue in the *AE* that suggests that it does not think of part of the human soul as exemplifying our divine essence. There are at least two places where Aristotle seems to define the human essence as involving action in addition to contemplation. The first of these is the definition of *prohairesis* in *AE* II.2, where we are told that “*prohairesis* is either desiderative intellect or cognitive desire, and this sort of *archē* is man” (1139^b4-5). The language here seems essentialist: what it is to be human, at least in part, is to be an *archē* of action through *prohairesis*.⁵⁰⁸

The second passage occurs at *AE* II.12, where Aristotle defends the value of *phronesis* in the happy life. He writes “Moreover, our function is completed by means of *phronesis* and moral virtues. For virtue makes the target right, and *phronesis* what leads to it” (1144^a6-9). Both these passages are similar to claims we saw in the *NE* where Aristotle treats *nous* as both theoretical and practical. But the *AE* attributes these powers to distinct parts of the soul. And so when Aristotle identifies the human essence and the human function with the *logistikon* and its activity, it does not entail that the same applies to the

⁵⁰⁷ Likewise, the *nous* referred to in the next few lines (1150^a4-8) must refer to practical *nous* rather than theoretical *nous*.

⁵⁰⁸ Kenny (1978), p. 169.

epistēmonikon; indeed, the implication is contrastive instead. So even if, contrary to the balance of the evidence we've surveyed, the *AE* holds, or is compatible with, the *epistēmonikon* being divine the way *nous* is in the *NE*, the *AE* does not agree with the *NE* in identifying this part of the soul with the human essence.

We can move on, then, to the third way that contemplation is divine in the *NE*, that it is the activity that we share with the gods. Aristotle actually says very little about the activity of the gods in the *AE*. He suggests that there is a superhuman moral state beyond virtue which he calls divine (1445^a15-27), but it is unlikely that the gods as he conceives of them actually have these states since the category apparently applies to actual humans (1145^a27-30). The closest thing we get to a discussion of the god's activity is in the passage mentioned above where God is said to enjoy a single, simple (μίαν καὶ ἀπλήν) pleasure of immobility (ἀκινήσιος) (1154^b26-27). Aristotle doesn't say that the activity that takes place in immobility is contemplation, but he does say that contemplation involves no pain or desire, since there is no natural impairment involved, and it is therefore the kind of activity that can be pleasurable as such, and so enjoyed while in an equilibrium state, rather than a pleasure that accompanies the restoration to that state (1152^b33-53^a6). Since the contrast between the god's pleasure and mortal pleasure is based on this distinction between what needs restoration and what doesn't, it makes sense that the god's pleasure would be found in contemplation.

But this same contrast undermines the idea that humans and gods are happy in virtue of sharing the same kind of activity. God can enjoy a single uninterrupted pleasure because of his simple nature. But humans cannot do this, because we are perishable

creatures with a compound nature (1154^b2-24). So Aristotle's focus here is to contrast divine activity and human activity, at least as far as pleasure is concerned.

But to see a more direct conflict between the *NE* and *AE* on divinity, we need to step back and ask why it is important that happiness is whatever activity the gods perform. There are, I think, two answers to this question. First, whatever the gods do is, by definition, the best. We've already seen that humans and human activity aren't best, so we don't need to revisit this point. Second, the divinity and honor criteria are closely related: the gods set the standards for what we honor rather than praise in virtue of their divinity, and so the kind of activity that is worthy of honor will be divine activity. We see this principle at work in Aristotle's claims from the *NE* that "The activity of god, excelling in blessedness, would be contemplation, and of human activities the one which is most akin to it would be the happiest" (1178^b21-23) and that "the whole of life is blessed for the gods, and for humans, [life is blessed] to the extent that it has some similarity (*homoiōma*) of this same kind (*toiautēs*) of activity" (1178^b25-27). This way of thinking about happiness suggests that there is a single standard for what constitutes the chief good, a standard which all creatures capable of happiness will have to meet. There is no analogous notion of happiness for animals (1178^b24, ^b27-28), because they cannot meet this standard. Gods and humans, whatever their differences, are judged according to this single standard: the difference between human and divine happiness will be quantitative, based on how much contemplation the nature of each will allow, rather than qualitative.

The *AE*, however, does not appear to think that there is a single standard for happiness shared by gods and humans; this is already suggested when we are told that

humans are not the objects of contemplation on the grounds that they are not the best things in the *kosmos*. Aristotle defends this thought by a *reductio*: if *sophia* were about the human good, then there would be multiple kinds of *sophia* corresponding to the goods of different species, just as practical wisdom and medicine would vary across species (1141^a29-33). But *sophia* is a single, universally applicable kind of knowledge: whiteness and straightness, for example, are the same everywhere (1141^a22-25). But goodness is not like this: what is good for a creature varies by species. Hence what is good for humans might not be the same thing as what is good for gods. And if this is the case, then we cannot infer that human happiness consists of contemplation, let alone that it consists *solely* of contemplation, on the grounds that this is the activity the gods engage in. The *NE*, to the contrary, makes precisely that inference.

There is one final point to raise on the topic of the *AE*'s conception of humanity and its relation to divinity. In the *NE*, contemplation constitutes the happy life: it is the only activity that satisfies the seven criteria for the chief good, and so will be the chief good's sole constituent. Hence Aristotle infers that *eudaimonia* extends only so far as contemplation does and that one is happy only insofar as one contemplates, since contemplation *is eudaimonia* (1178^b 28-32). Though the *AE* does not say very much about happiness as such, it does say enough to suggest that it rejects the *NE*'s strong intellectualist view. We see this in Aristotle's somewhat surprising claim that

Therefore they say that Anaxagoras, Thales, and this sort are theoretically wise but not practically wise, whenever they see them being ignorant of advantages to themselves, and they say that they know things extraordinary and marvelous and difficult and miraculous (*δαμόνια*), but useless, because it is not human goods they seek (1141^b3-8).

The implication here is that Anaxagoras and Thales are not happy (they lack human goods), despite being in possession of theoretical wisdom. And this is not because of misfortune or lack of external goods, at least not directly. Rather, theoretical wisdom appears to be a different kind of concern from the human good, one which it is possible to attain and yet fail to be happy. If this is right, then even in the right conditions contemplation would not be self-sufficient for *eudaimonia*, let alone its sole constituent.

What emerges from this examination of divinity in the *AE* is a very different picture from what we see in the *NE*. Divinity is one of the central features of the *NE*'s defense of contemplation as the chief good, yet the *AE* disagrees with the *NE* approach to divinity at nearly every stage. The contrast between these two texts is stark, and not at all what we would expect if the *AE* were an original part of the *NE*, let alone if it were revised for inclusion in the *NE* or if the *NE* were written to complete the *AE*'s inquiry. The more plausible conclusion is that the *NE* and *AE* are separate works.

§4.3 – Divinity in the *EE*

But before we can firmly conclude that the *AE* does not belong in the *NE*, we have to consider whether it is a better fit with the *EE*. As in the last chapter, it is possible that the middle books fit poorly with both works, and it remains to be seen whether the *AE* and *EE* are any more compatible than the *AE* and *NE* are.⁵⁰⁹ But, also as in the last chapter, it

⁵⁰⁹ So Broadie (1991), p. 400 apparently thinks, writing that in *NE X* “Aristotle separates and connects the two sides of the ambiguity left unresolved in the *Eudemian Ethics*. The activity’s subject, *nous*, is divine or of a divine nature; and its objects are also things ‘noble and divine’. What are these objects?”. As we’ll see, these questions are not unresolved in the *EE*: we are given a more specific answer about the objects of contemplation, and a different description from the *NE* on its subject.

will turn out that this is not the case. The *AE* and *EE* are perfectly consistent, and indeed mutually reinforcing, on the topic of humanity and divinity.⁵¹⁰

As in the last section, we will look at each of the three ways in which contemplation is divine in the *NE*:

- 1) The objects of contemplation are divine (i.e. immortal, unchanging, and best);
- 2) Contemplation is human characteristic (i.e. functional) activity insofar as humans are identified with their divine *nous*;
- 3) Happiness will be whatever activity humans and gods share, and that activity is contemplation.

As we'll see, the *EE* follows in the *AE* in giving a qualified acceptance of (1), but rejecting (2) and (3).

The quantity of Aristotle's remarks on the objects of contemplation in the *EE* is small, but they tend to be more direct than what we see in the *NE*. There are two passages in particular that merit our attention, from the first and last books of the *EE* respectively. The first comes in Aristotle's survey of views on happiness in *EE* I.4. The *EE* follows the *NE* in inferring from popular behavior that there are three primary good, pleasure, virtue,

⁵¹⁰ It is worth noting in advance of this section that the *EE* tends to talk about the divine in a slightly different way than the *NE* does. The *EE* almost invariably talks about God in the singular, though in some cases it is ambiguous whether this is meant to pick out God as an individual or just 'a god' (e.g. 1242^a22-30, 1245^b27-31). The *NE*, by contrast, almost always refers to gods in the plural; of the four exceptions, I've found, one refers to Eudoxus's view (1101^b28-31), and the other three can be read as definite or indefinite (1096^a24, 1159^a3-9, 1166^a19-24); for instance, the claim that God and *nous* are goods in the category of substance doesn't entail a single God any more than it entails a single *nous*. The *AE* is intermediate: it refers to God twice and gods four times, though most of the latter are clear references to popular morality (as, to be fair, many of the *NE* plural references are). I suspect that this shift in diction reflects a shift in thinking as well, but it is difficult to properly adjudicate this evidence independently of other interpretive considerations, so for now I'll only flag the apparent difference; I will not rely on it in what follows. See Bodéüs (2000) and Verdenius (1960) for an overview of the relationship between traditional elements of Greek religion and Aristotle's own view.

and wisdom, and so three corresponding lives. The *EE* also appeals to the opinions of the wise, giving Socrates and Anaxagoras as examples.⁵¹¹ About the latter Aristotle writes:

The philosopher (ὁ μὲν φιλόσοφος) wishes to be concerned with *phronesis* and contemplation about the truth (τὴν θεωρίαν τὴν περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν)...Anaxagoras of Clazomenae, when asked who was the happiest, said ‘No one who you would consider. But someone who would appear unusual to you.’... But he himself probably thought the person living a blameless and pure life with respect to justice, or having some kind of share of divine contemplation (τινος θεωρίας κοινωνοῦντα θείας), this person he said was blessedly happy. (1215^b1-14)

Though Aristotle is reporting the views of others here rather than expressing his own, he is nonetheless comfortable with identifying a certain kind of contemplation as having the divine as its object, and he associates this kind of contemplation with the philosophical life. When Anaxagoras is mentioned in the next chapter, however, Aristotle specifies that Anaxagoras argued that the reason it was worth being born rather than not was “to contemplate the heavens and the whole order of the *kosmos*” (θεωρῆσαι τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν περὶ τὸν ὅλον κόσμον τάξιν, 1216^a13-14). This matches the *AE*’s practice of specifying that the divine objects of contemplation are the celestial bodies, something we don’t explicitly see in the *NE*.⁵¹²

A slightly more informative passage for our purposes comes in the very last lines of the *EE*. Here Aristotle gives the *EE*’s final conception of what constitutes happiness, focusing in particular on the nature of the *orthos logos* that prescribes right action. He concludes:

⁵¹¹ See Karbowski (2015b) and Karbowski (2016c) for a discussion of the endoxic method in the *EE*.

⁵¹² Reeve (2013), p. 182 also sees the *EE* and *AE* in agreement, but he argues the other direction, interpreting the *AE* comments in light of the *EE*. Reeve is eager to show that theoretical wisdom can be practically beneficial, an appropriate concern for the *EE*, but not for the *NE*.

Whatever choice (αἴρεσις) and possession of things good by nature most produces contemplation of God (τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ θεωρίαν), of goods of body or wealth or friends or other things, this is best, and this limit is the finest (ὁ ὄρος κάλλιστος). And whatever by either deficiency or excess hinders serving and contemplating God (τὸν θεὸν θεραπεύειν καὶ θεωρεῖν), this is base. (1249^b16-21)

We will discuss the import of this passage in more detail below. For now, we need only note that here the object of contemplation is specifically identified as God.

But, just like the *AE*, there are some differences in how the *EE* thinks about which objects are sufficiently divine to count as objects of contemplation compared to the *NE*. We've already seen that the *AE* and *EE* make celestial bodies an object of contemplation for humans, something the *NE* does not explicitly address. This difference could be only a small omission on the *NE*'s part, so the contrast between our texts here is not significantly worrying. But there are other differences that are more notable. When discussing friendship and self-sufficiency in the *EE*, for example, Aristotle argues that God "is better than to think of something other than himself." (1245^b16-17). This confirms again that God is a proper object of contemplation. But it also suggests that humans are not such an object, since God doesn't think about humans, but rather only himself.

This point is corroborated by the way Aristotle handles divinity's influence on good fortune. We saw in the *NE* that one reason contemplation is stable is because the gods look out for those who engage in the same activity they do. Aristotle also considers the

possibility that the gods are responsible for good fortune in the *EE*, but rejects this possibility.⁵¹³ He argues,

Or [is good fortune due to] being loved, as some say, by the gods, and that getting it right (τὸ κατορθοῦν) is something from outside, for example as a badly constructed ship often sails better, not due to itself, but because it has a good captain, likewise does the fortunate person have a *daimōn* as good captain? But it would be odd for God or a *daimōn* to love this sort of person, rather than the best and most *phronimos*. So if it is necessary that getting it right is a matter of nature or *nous* or a kind of oversight (ἐπιτροπία), and it is not the last two, then fortunate people must be due to nature. (1247^a23-31)

This passage, at first glance, might look like it fits with *NE* X.8, since it also says that it would make sense for God to protect the best and wisest people. But there are important differences between these passages. First, it is not because of contemplation that people would be aptly loved by the gods, but rather for their practical wisdom, since it is people who consistently act well who generate the puzzles about good fortune under discussion here. Second, these practically wise people are contrasted with the fortunate, and Aristotle ends the passage by rejecting the idea that the fortunate are protected by God. So even if the *EE* and *NE* agree about God loving the wise, they disagree about God being the source of good fortune.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹³ See Buddensiek (2012) and Johnson (1997) for discussions of the *EE*'s treatment of fortune more broadly. There is some debate about whether Aristotle's conception of τύχη in the *EE* matches his discussion from the *Physics*. Woods (1992), pp. 166-67 argues that it is not, while K. Johnson (1997) and M.R. Johnson (2014) argue that it does. I think that the latter side is probably right, but nothing in what follows depends on this point.

⁵¹⁴ Cf. Kenny (1992), pp. 72-75. Kenny insightfully connects this passage to one from *AE* III we discussed above, where Aristotle argues that all creatures pursue pleasure because they have some element of the divine in them that leads them toward their own good. See also Gabbe (2012), pp. 367-375, Johnson (2014), pp. 259-60, Ponesse (2012), pp. 324-327.

But it turns out matters are more complicated than this. Aristotle goes on to distinguish two senses of good fortune, and the passage above applies to only one.⁵¹⁵ In making this distinction Aristotle discusses God as a source of movement in the whole universe, including movement in us, and this will be an important passage for us to consider shortly.⁵¹⁶ For now we can skip to the conclusion of Aristotle's argument:

It is clear that there are two forms of good fortune, one being divine (which is why the fortunate person seems to get things right due to God), the other due to nature. The first is the sort of person who tends to be correct in accordance with their impulse, the other to do so contrary to their impulse. But both are non-rational (ἄλογοι). And the one kind is more continuous, the other not continuous. (1248^b3-7)

Here Aristotle allows that there is a kind of good afortune due to the divine, contrary to the first passage.⁵¹⁷ But what both passages agree about is that the kind of fortune under discussion is not something that involves rationality.⁵¹⁸ So even if there is a kind of divine good luck, it is not the sort we find in the *NE*, where the gods protect the people who exercise the excellence of the rational part of the soul.⁵¹⁹ This removes one of the main

⁵¹⁵ See Mills (1983) for a careful discussion of the basis for this distinction.

⁵¹⁶ See Johnson (2014), pp. 274-75 for a nice discussion of this passage and its relation to fortune.

⁵¹⁷ See van der Eijk (1989), pp. 27-33 for a discussion of how the apparent contradiction between these two passages is to be resolved.

⁵¹⁸ Cf. Johnson (1997), p. 100, White (1994), pp. 142-43, but see also pp. 145-49, where White argues that the fortunate person is not wholly non-rational, since their activities can involve deliberation even if it doesn't depend on it.

⁵¹⁹ Johnson (2014) p. 274 helpfully notes that the kind of causality at work in the intervening argument is final, not efficient, and so would not play the right causal role to count as fortune in the way the problem was originally posed. But, going beyond Johnson's observation, the *NE* argument does think of the gods as engaging in efficient causation of the good fortune of the wise. Reeve (2012), pp. 216-218 notices the tension between the *NE*'s comments about being loved by the gods and the conception of God as self-contemplator we see in the *EE* (though he attributes this view to *Metaphysics* instead, ignoring the *EE* in this context). He resolves the tension by arguing that the *NE* passage is not to be taken literally.

ways that the *NE* shows that humans are a proper object of contemplation insofar as they are divine.

But of course the primary way to discern whether humans can be an object of contemplation is to look directly at whether the *EE* thinks that humans are themselves divine in the relevant way. The *NE* holds that humans are essentially *nous*, and *nous* is divine. As we saw in §3.4 and §3.5, the *EE* and *AE* both reject this conception of human nature. But it is still possible that the *EE* thinks humans are divine in another way, which would allow them to be objects of contemplation. For instance, the *EE* repeats the *NE*'s claim that *nous* and God are examples of good in the category of substance (1217^b25-31), which could lead us to something like the *NE*'s view with the right additional conclusions. But this does not appear to be the case in the *EE*. There are several places where Aristotle is concerned to contrast humans and gods rather than compare them, and not just in the *NE*'s quantitative sense that the gods are able to contemplate more and better than we are. For example, in a passage from *EE* I.7 which we will discuss in detail below, Aristotle says that only creatures that have a share of the divine can be happy (1217^a20-27). This passage looks promising until we notice that it explicitly contrasts human with divine happiness, suggesting that even if humans are divine, they aren't divine the way God is. In a discussion of voluntary action in *EE* II.6, Aristotle contrasts God, as the *archē* of what is eternal and unchanging, with humans as the *archai* of actions (1222^b15-29). Likewise in *EE* VII.12, in a discussion of self-sufficiency and friendship that parallels *NE* IX.9, Aristotle argues that God does not have friends, while humans do, and people have been led to think otherwise

by falsely assuming that humans are similar to God and so will be happy in the same way (1245^b13-19).⁵²⁰

There is one passage in particular where this issue is especially salient, one we only briefly discussed above when discussing God's role in good fortune. Recall that there are two kinds of good fortune, one of which is divine. Aristotle posits this kind of fortune to explain why some people happen to have all the right impulses, and so naturally do what is right without need of deliberation or thought. If we can't appeal to deliberation or thought to explain this phenomenon, we have to posit something else in order to stop an infinite regress (1248^a16-23). This leads Aristotle to argue as follows:

Or is there some *archē* of which there is no other external *archē*, because it the sort of thing that is able to do this sort of thing? For this is what we are searching for, what is the *archē* of motion in the soul. And there clearly is. Just as God is in the whole [universe], so too it is in there. For the divine in us in some way moves everything. But reason (*λόγος*) is not the *archē* of reason, but rather something better. And what could be better than knowledge, and *nous*, save God? For virtue is a tool of *nous*. (1248^a23-29)⁵²¹

At first pass, this passage looks similar to the *NE* view: *nous* is the *archē* of the soul's movement, and as the divine thing in us *nous* governs the soul just as God governs the universe. But this is not the position that Aristotle is actually endorsing here. Yes, Aristotle says there is something divine in us that moves the soul. But this isn't *nous*, and it does not move the soul the way *nous* moves it in the *NE*, by giving commands. The divine thing in

⁵²⁰ This argument has some important differences from the *NE* treatment, on which see Green (2015) and Whiting (2005).

⁵²¹ I follow Kenny and Inwood & Woolf in retaining the supplement *καὶ νοῦ* at 1248^a28-29, which the OCT prints following Spengel's suggestion based on a Latin manuscript.

us is not *nous* because it is something better than *nous*.⁵²² Reason is not the *archē* of reason, and God is better than *nous*. Hence the divine thing in us cannot itself be *nous*.⁵²³

Moreover, the way that the divine in us moves the soul is by being a final cause, not an efficient cause.⁵²⁴ As we learn in *EE* VIII.3, parallel to what we saw in the *AE*, “God does not rule by commanding (οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτακτικῶς ἄρχων ὁ θεός), but rather is that for the sake of which *phronesis* commands” (1249^b13-15). So the divine in us is not the commanding part of the soul, as it is in the *NE*; rather, the divine is in us as the ultimate end toward which *phronesis* reasons and commands. The precise details are left unclear (hence the *πῶς* at 1248^a27),⁵²⁵ and the text itself is corrupted in ways that calls for emendation and hence allows for multiple renderings, but I think the most plausible reading is that (i) we read adopt Spengel’s reading, (ὡσπερ ἐν τῷ ὅλῳ θεός, [καὶ] κἀν ἐκείνῃ) at 1248^a26, and (ii) this line means something like “God moves things in it (i.e. in the soul) just as he does in the whole *kosmos*”, the idea being that God is the final cause of motion in the universe, and so too final cause of motion in the soul.⁵²⁶ The right reading of this passage will need to postulate a single cause of all motion, and make it so that cosmic

⁵²² I assume that Aristotle is referring to intellectual *nous* here, but it is possible that he means practical *nous* instead, at least if we accept that the *EE* follows the *AE* in making this distinction. If this is so, then the divine thing in us could be theoretical *nous*, which is separate from practical *nous* and better than it. But I find this reading unlikely, since Aristotle explicitly refers to *λόγος* and to *ἐπιστήμη*; while the former could be practical, the latter almost assuredly is not.

⁵²³ Cf. Buddensiek (2012), pp. 165-66, Gabbe (2012) *passim*, Ponesse (2012), p. 330.

⁵²⁴ Johnson (2014), p. 274.

⁵²⁵ See Gabbe (2012), p. 364 on this qualification.

⁵²⁶ If this is right, then this passage is apparently presuming the doctrine of *Physics* VIII and/or *Metaphysics* Λ; cf. Bodéüs (2000), pp. 158-168. Some scholars (e.g. von Arnim, Dirlmeier, and Düring) have suggested emending the text here to replace ‘God’ with ‘*nous*’, presumably to make it match the *NE* view more neatly. See Kenny (1978), pp. 173-76 and Verdenius (1971), pp. 288-91 for a discussion of this point and objections to making this emendation.

motion and psychic motion are caused in the same way. This makes it difficult to see how the divine in us could be a second divine thing, separate from God, since this would lead to causal overdetermination. One possibility would be that the divine is in us as an intentional object of our thought, either theoretically (we have an idea of God in our minds as we contemplate, or perhaps *nous* become divine in thinking of God the way it takes on the properties of its objects more generally) or practically (we have God *qua* final cause as the goal of our deliberation).⁵²⁷ Whatever the details, this passage does not endorse the *NE* view: the divine thing in us that moves the soul is God as final cause, not *nous* as efficient cause.

These considerations show that Aristotle does not think of *nous* as divine the way he does in the *NE*, and so therefore not divine in a way that would warrant making humans the objects of contemplation. Instead, the picture seems to be that God contemplates himself, while humans contemplate God, celestial objects, and necessary truths. But since God is the *archē* of the latter two categories, all contemplation will ultimately be contemplation of God. So far this nicely matches the *AE*, which picks out the same categories of contemplable objects and which also makes God the final cause. Before moving on to the third way that contemplation is divine, however, I want to address two passages that might look like counter-examples to the reading of the *EE* I've defended so far.

⁵²⁷ Pace White (1994), pp. 150-51, who argues that the God in us, in virtue of being in us, could not be an external God. I've given one example of how it could be both internal and external in the relevant way, which should be enough to demonstrate the possibility of this arrangement.

The first passage we've alluded to already. In *EE* I.7 Aristotle writes "Of the other animals, as many as are worse than humans by nature, they have no share of this title. For no horse or bird or fish or any other of these beings is happy, unless it does by name have a share of something divine by nature" (1217a24-29). If having a share of the divine is a necessary condition, one which separates humans and gods from animals (1217a22-24), then it looks like humans are divine in the *EE* after all. Moreover, the way we explained a somewhat similar passage in the *AE* (that all creatures have a share of the divine, as evidenced by their all seeking pleasure) won't work here, because here animals and humans are contrasted. There are two observations to make about this passage. First, Aristotle says just before this passage that "there is probably a *eudaimonia* for some other, better sort of being, for example God" (1217^a22-24). This shows that there is also a contrast between humans and God, one which (i) fits nicely with the *AE*'s claim that humans aren't the best things in the universe and therefore not a proper object for contemplation, and (ii) allows that humans and God have different kinds of *eudaimonia*.

Moreover, a few pages earlier Aristotle makes another claim that suggests he is thinking of human divinity in a less exalted way than he defends in *NE* X. He writes "If [*eudaimonia*] is involved somehow in what sort of person one is (ποιόν), and is according to their conduct (πράξεις), then the good would be more common and more divine" (1215^a15-17), a passage very close to an *NE* parallel that we discussed in §2.6.3. But Aristotle immediately explains what he means by 'more divine' here, in an unexpected way: "more common because it will be able to be shared by more people, more divine because *eudaimonia* will lie in developing one's character and one's conduct" (1215a17-

19). So here Aristotle associates human divinity directly with action, and therefore with *phronesis* rather than *nous*. And, not coincidentally, this feature of humanity is precisely what Aristotle appeals to elsewhere to distinguish us from animals;

All substances are by nature *archai* of a certain sort, which is why each is able to beget many things of the same sort, e.g. a human [begets] humans, and in general an animal animals and a plant plants. But in addition to this, a human, alone of the animals, is an *archē* of certain actions; for we do not say of the others that they act. (1222^b15-20)⁵²⁸

The picture we see here is not one where humans are divine in virtue of their contemplative *nous*. Rather, divinity is an appellation given to the practical part of the soul, which is distinct from *nous* in the *EE*, and which sets us apart from the other animals.⁵²⁹

The second possible counter-example is also one we've briefly mentioned, this time about Aristotle's discussion of friendship and self-sufficiency. This argument, like its *NE* counterpart, is notoriously difficult to decipher. And like its *NE* counterpart, it appeals to self-awareness as a premise in its argument that the happy person will have friends (1244^b24-33). And since the *NE* argument is where Aristotle defends the reflexivity of noetic activity that makes humans an object of contemplation, we might expect the *EE* to follow suit. But again, this is not what we see. For the *EE* argument proceeds in a different way: rather than relying on the premise that a friend is another self, it focuses on the awareness of one's own moral character that is reflected in the perception of a morally

⁵²⁸ This is a common point in the *EE*; see also 1224^a20-30, 1225^b27-28, 1226^b20-23, 1236^a33-35, 1240^b30-34.

⁵²⁹ An additional point worth noting: the *EE* contains nothing like *NE* X.9, where the activity of *nous* is applied to the political realm. This absence allows us to interpret what are otherwise similar remarks about the divinity of achieving happiness in rather different ways. It is also worth noting that the *EE* passage doesn't mention bringing happiness for the masses, which is the specific thing which the *NE* parallel flags as more divine.

good friend.⁵³⁰ In fact, *nous* is hardly mentioned in the *EE* discussion of friendship at all; its only substantive occurrence is when Aristotle says that God only thinks of himself, which has led some people to wrongly think the good person will do the same (1245^b15-18).⁵³¹

We can look at this passage in more detail under the auspices of the third way that happiness is divine in the *NE*, by being the sort of activity that the gods enjoy. It is a fundamental assumption of the *NE*'s approach, recall, that whatever *eudaimonia* ends up being, it will be the sort of thing the gods do, because the gods are paradigmatically happy and happiness is the best possible thing. The *AE*, by contrast, argues that there is not a single standard for happiness, and so no reason to think that humans and gods will be happy in the same way. The *EE* follows the *AE* on this point, arguing

Because God is not the sort of thing to have need of a friend, they think [humans] are similar. And yet, according to this the good person will not think (οὐδὲ νοήσῃ ὁ σπουδαῖος); for it is not in this way that God is in a good condition (εὖ ἔχει), but rather because he is better than to think of something other than himself. The explanation is that the good for us depends on another (ἡμῖν μὲν τὸ εὖ καθ' ἕτερον), but for him he is his own good. (1245^b14-19)

This passage is fascinating because it is explicitly addressed to an error “according to the account” (κατὰ τὸν λόγον, 1245^b12) that made the mistake of thinking humans are too

⁵³⁰ Again, see Green (2010), McCabe (2012) and Whiting (2012) for the details of this argument. Note that the OCT wrongly emends the text to make it refer to the friend as another self; Whiting thoroughly shows why the manuscripts are correct as is.

⁵³¹ There is also a use of the phrase “sensible person”, literally a “*nous*-having” person, at 1237^b37-38. Fritzsche proposes emending 1240^b34 to read that *nous* and desire disagree (1240^b34), but this emendation is unnecessary, as Simpson (2013) p. 156 n. 13 rightly shows. On the relatively absence of *nous*, especially with regards to our essential identity, see Monan (1968), pp. 128-32.

much like God, and therefore entailing false consequences about friendship because of it.

I think Whiting gets this point exactly right

So there are at least two ways in which the comparison of the self-sufficient agent with God threatens to mislead us. It can lead us to forget the need for objects of perception and thought distinct from ourselves, objects without which we would not even perceive or think, let alone perceive or think ourselves. And even if we do not forget the need for such objects, the comparison may lead us to forget about the way in which our thinking, unlike that of Aristotle's divine intellects, can be improved by the company of others.⁵³²

But the approach the *EE* is criticizing here is exactly how the *NE* operates.⁵³³ So the difference between these texts is stark indeed.

This is not the only place where the *EE* rejects the *NE*'s assumption that humans and gods are happy in the same way. As we've already seen, Aristotle also argues that "It is agreed that [*eudaimonia*] is the best of human goods. We say 'human' because there is probably *eudaimonia* for some better sort of beings, for example God" (1217^a21-24). These lines also suggest that there are two different ways of being *eudaimōn*, one for God and one for humans.

The same position is entailed by the *EE*'s final position on *eudaimonia*. There is a broad consensus among scholars that the *EE* endorses an inclusivist conception of happiness, and as we saw in §2.3 inclusivists often appeal to the *EE* for evidence of

⁵³² Whiting (2012), p.152.

⁵³³ I have argued in Green (2015) and Green (2010) that the *EE* treatment of friendship is meant to fix problems with the *NE* treatment of the self, and that the text referred to here is the *NE* itself. But our argument can go through even if the *EE* is referring to another text, or to some unwritten argument we have lost.

inclusivism that doesn't explicitly appear in the *NE*, for instance that there are distinct parts of virtue (1220^a2-4).⁵³⁴ Aristotle begins the final chapter of the *EE* as follows:

We have spoken earlier about each virtue individually (κατὰ μέρος). Since we have distinguished the power of these separately, we must also articulate the virtue that arises from these, which we can now call *kalokagathia*. It is clear that it is necessary for the person who gets this appellation must be furnished with the individual virtues It is necessary that all the parts, or most and the most authoritative (κυριώτατα), must be in the same condition as the whole (1248^b8-16).

It would take us too far afield to discuss the *EE*'s approach to *eudaimonia* the way we did with the *NE*, so we'll have to be content with broad strokes here.⁵³⁵ *EE* VIII.3 argues that there are two categories of ends that are good for their own sake, noble-and- praiseworthy and not noble-and- praiseworthy (1248^b16-20).⁵³⁶ Justice is an example of the former, health of the latter. Both of these kinds of goods are naturally good, i.e. good for the good person (1248^b25-27). The difference is that non-noble goods can be harmful, or at least not beneficial, if they occur in the absence of virtue (1248^b27-36). It is a common mistake, Aristotle argues, to pursue noble goods (i.e. virtue and its activity) for the sake of the non-noble goods (e.g. honor or wealth); the noble person does it the opposite way, pursuing the non-noble goods for the sake of nobility and virtue (1248^b37-49^a16).

But even if we know that we should pursue non-noble goods for the sake of noble ones, we still need more guidance on the extent to which we should pursue these lower

⁵³⁴ See Cooper (1975), pp. 115-119, 133, Jost (2014b), pp. 296-300, Kenny (1978), pp. 203-14, Kenny (1992), pp. 93-95.

⁵³⁵ I am largely in agreement with the treatment in Broadie (2010) on the specifics of *EE* VIII.3. One advantage of this treatment over that in Broadie (1991), pp. 375-83 is that the former does not try to assimilate the *EE*'s view of happiness to the *NE*, as the latter does. See White (1994), pp. 160-166 for a discussion of *kalokagathia* compared to other forms of virtue.

⁵³⁶ See Whiting (1996), pp. 190-93 for a discussion of praise in this passage.

goods; as Aristotle complains, in a remark harking back to *AE* II.1, saying merely “in accordance with reason” is unhelpful: it is true, but not illuminating (1249^b4-6).⁵³⁷ So, we need some standard to guide us in the pursuit of the naturally-good-but-not-praiseworthy goods. Aristotle argues, in a passage we’ve already seen, that contemplation and service of God is “the finest limit” (ὁ ὄρος κάλλιστος, 1249^b19).⁵³⁸ This argument gives a role to contemplation in the *EE*’s conception of happiness. But it is a much reduced role compared to the *NE*: contemplation is not the sole constituent of *eudaimonia*, but rather only a part, and moreover a part whose primary role is, apparently, to serve as the limit of the pursuit of external goods.⁵³⁹ But this view entails that humans and gods cannot be happy in the same way. For, as Aristotle was eager to point out in the *NE*, the gods do not engage in moral activity, presumably because they lack the quasi-rational part of the soul that is the seat of moral virtue. But this kind of activity is a constituent of human happiness in the *EE*. So once again, the *EE* and the *NE* differ with respect to divinity.

⁵³⁷ Cf. Broadie (1991), p. 375, Jost (2014b), p. 301, Woods (1992), pp. 180-81.

⁵³⁸ It is unclear precisely what service of God amounts to. Kenny (1978), pp. 177-180 and Kenny (1992), pp. 101-102 argues that it means noble action, citing a parallel from Plato’s *Euthyphro*. This reading is followed by Buddensiek (2014), pp. 325-31. Majithia (2005) pp. 381-84 conflates service and contemplation, arguing that both are theoretical activities of *phronesis*; for reasons we’ve seen in the last two chapters, this view of *phronesis* cannot be right. Broadie (2010), pp. 23-24 suggests (implicitly, at any rate) that service of God amounts to supporting the practice of our contemplation, rather than serving God directly. Jost (2014b) pp. 307-11 points to a parallel from *Metaphysics* to motivate reading ‘service’ as ‘treatment’ in a medical sense, which certainly fits the context of the *EE* discussion well; he also notes parallel passages in the *NE* where Aristotle argues that the gods love those who “utilize and cultivate their intellect” (ὁ δὲ κατὰ νοῦν ἐνεργῶν καὶ τοῦτον θεραπεύων, 1179^a22-23). But Jost ultimately follows Broadie in understanding service of God as moral self-cultivation for the sake of contemplation. Bodéüs (2000), pp. 168-175 takes the phrase to refer to more literal worship of God, pointing to a parallel from Plato’s *Laws* (650a).

⁵³⁹ Broadie (1991), pp. 375-76, 384-85, Cooper (1975), pp. 140-142, Monan (1968), pp. 126-28, Verdenius (1971), pp. 295-96. Cooper downplays the importance of this standard more than I think is appropriate, because he sees it as playing a different role than the *orthos logos* from *AE* II. We’ll address this issue when discussing the *orthos logos* in the next chapter.

§4.4 – Conclusion

Divinity is a foundational concept in the *NE*'s treatment of *eudaimonia*. Divinity helps explain why the seven criteria for the chief good are what they are, and the fact that contemplation is divine helps explain why it is the only candidate that satisfies these criteria. We see a different view in both the *AE* and *EE*. Though all three texts agree that the objects of contemplation are divine, the *AE* and *EE* do not think that humans qualify as the right kind of object. The *AE* and *EE* also disagree with the *NE* on whether humans are essentially their divine intellect and on whether humans and gods are both happy by sharing in the same kind of activity. So once again the evidence suggests that the *AE* does not belong in the *NE*, either as an original component or as something revised or written around as part of a new work.

Chapter 5 – The Undisputed *NE* as a Treatise

In previous chapters I have argued that (i) the undisputed *NE* books advance a view that makes divine *nous* and its activity the central focus of moral theory, and (ii) the *AE* books agree with the *EE* against the *NE* on *nous* as a part of the soul and on the role of divinity in human happiness. The fact that the *AE* is inconsistent with the *NE* on such foundational issues suggest that the *AE* was never meant to be part of the *NE*. But while the presumption that a competent philosopher would not contradict himself so fundamentally in a single work is a strong piece of evidence in favor of separating the *AE* and *NE*, it is not conclusive. Rather, this philosophical evidence could be undermined by textual evidence to the contrary.

In this chapter I will argue that our textual evidence points in the same direction as our philosophical evidence: the *AE* is not part of the *NE*. In §5.1 I will argue that the *AE* and *EE* refer to each other repeatedly, and that each is incomplete without the other. But the *AE* makes no unambiguous references to the *NE*: any *NE* passage that the *AE* could be referring to has an at least equally plausible *EE* counterpart. The case of *NE* references to the *AE* is slightly more complicated but ultimately similar: the small number of possible references are either fairly obvious editorial insertions, or could be more plausibly read as referring to other *NE* chapters instead. Hence the textual relationships between the *NE* and *AE* support the more philosophical case that the two sets of books do not belong together. In §5.2 I will address objections to this case, arguing that (i) we cannot avoid the inconsistency between the *NE* and *AE* by removing X.7-8 from the former and then

combining the rest, and (ii) the undisputed *NE* books can form a complete, coherent treatise in the absence of the *AE* books.

§5.1 – INTERNAL REFERENCES IN THE ETHICAL TREATISES

Aristotle’s ethical works are replete with forward-references to future discussion and back-references to points already made. We can begin by noting some general patterns about these references.⁵⁴⁰ Broadly speaking, the *NE* tends to make more internal references than the *AE* or *EE* do, at least in absolute terms. I’ve organized the data into the chart below, where I sort the number of forward and backward references into three categories: (1) to the same chapter, (2) to the same book, or (3) to a different book.

	<i>NE</i> Forward / Back	<i>AE</i> Forward / Back	<i>EE</i> Forward / Back
Same Chapter	4 / 19	2 / 5	2 / 2
Same Book	2 / 22	1 / 7	1 / 3
Different Book	7 / 22	1 / 13	10 / 13

⁵⁴⁰ Kenny (1978) makes a similar investigation and also agrees that, on balance, the *AE* fits with the *EE* but is not tied to the *NE*. But his treatment is somewhat cursory (the relevant chapter is just over nine pages), and there are a few relevant passages he misses. All in all, I think a stronger case can be made than the one he makes. Kenny also tends to focus on passages that make claims about the structure of the discussion to come, e.g. the way the *NE* and *EE* each treat the three candidate chief goods and organize their discussions around them. These kinds of passages are, I think, not quite precise enough to use as evidence one way or the other. See also Grant (1866), pp. 26-43.

The *NE* makes a total of 13 forward references and 63 back references, while the *AE* makes four and 25 respectively, and the *EE* makes 13 and 18. The biggest outlier in this pattern is the number of *NE* back references, and here it is really the number of close internal references that differs from the *AE* or *EE*: the *NE* has the stylistic habit of using locutions like “as has been said” to refer to points raised in the last page or so, which the *AE* and *EE* do more sparingly.⁵⁴¹ Yet given that the *NE* is longer than the *AE* or the *EE* (roughly 120 Bekker pages to 50 and 70 respectively), we should not put too much weight on these differences; the data are offered here merely to give context to coming discussion.

The cross-references we’re interested in naturally sort themselves into three groups among Aristotle’s ethical texts: justice, intellectual virtue, and continence and pleasure. Given that these are the respective topics of the three *AE* books, this pattern is almost assuredly not a coincidence. In what follows I will argue that the *AE* and *EE* share a number of forward- and back-references to one another in all three groups, while the *NE* lacks a single indisputable reference to the *AE*.

§5.1.1 - Cross-references: Justice

We can begin with cross-references on the topic of justice.⁵⁴² There are two relevant forward-references in *NE* I-IV:

II.7: There will be a discussion of these states on another appropriate occasion. About justice, since it is not said absolutely, after distinguishing

⁵⁴¹ See Pakaluk (2011), p. 28 for a table of prominent back-references in the *NE*. Pakaluk is concentrating on the differences between the ways Aristotle signals a back-reference, but it is notable that his table contains no back-references between the *NE* and *AE* in either direction. He does mention a back-reference from *AE* II which he takes to refer to *NE* I.13 (p. 28 n. 17), but this reference fits *EE* II.1 just as well.

⁵⁴² For an examination of the stylometric considerations favoring making *AE* I part of the *EE* see Kenny (1978), pp. 60-69 and Rowe (1983).

these we will speak about each, how it is a mean state. And likewise about the rational virtues (τῶν λογικῶν ἀρετῶν). (1108^b6-10)

IV.9: But nor is continence a virtue, but rather a kind of mixed state (τις μικτή); this will be indicated later. But now let us speak about justice. (1128^b33-35)

Both of these references appear to be written with the *AE* in mind. The II.7 reference corresponds to the various kinds of justice surveyed in *AE* I.1-6. And the IV.9 reference constitutes the final lines of *NE* IV, which *AE* I immediately follows. So it might appear that the early *NE* books anticipate the *AE*'s discussion of justice.

But there is good reason to think this appearance is misleading. These two apparent forward-references are more likely to be editorial insertions by a later editor rather than something Aristotle wrote in order to set up his discussion in the *AE*. Both come at the end of a chapter (though these chapter divisions are the result of much later editing, rather than Aristotle's own decisions) and serve as concluding remarks to orient the reader to what comes next. If these passages did not occur in our manuscripts, the surrounding argument would be totally unhampered. It is quite common to see these kinds of remarks at the beginning and end of a chapter or book in Aristotle, and given the unpublished nature of his works it is not unreasonable to suppose that these remarks were included by a later editor. Indeed, it is not at all common to refer to several distinct discussions in a single forward-reference; the two under discussion are the only examples in the entire *NE* of using a single passage to refer forward to multiple discussions, and the *AE* and *EE* are similarly

targeted in their forward-references.⁵⁴³ Yet these two references are written as if all of the *AE* is already present in the author's mind. Moreover, the II.7 reference interrupts the flow of the passage where it occurs; justice is not mentioned at all in the preceding three chapters that give a definition of virtue, nor in the succeeding chapters on finding the mean, and there is nothing in these chapters that prompt us to wonder in particular about the duality of justice or about the intellectual virtues.⁵⁴⁴ And the IV.9 references read exactly like the sort of note that would appear at the end of a manuscript to direct the reader to the next text, which likely would be physically separated from the current one.⁵⁴⁵ These observations are not enough to warrant excising these passages, but it does call for further evidence to settle the issue, and it undermines these passages as independent evidence for the *AE*'s proper location.⁵⁴⁶

Secondly, there are a few details of these references that should make us question whether they refer to the *AE*, at least as we have it. When we look closely, the *AE* doesn't quite match what these *NE* forward references tell us to expect. The II.7 reference

⁵⁴³ I say 'forward-references' in particular because Aristotle will occasionally give somewhat comprehensive summaries of earlier discussions; I will discuss some of them directly in §2.2.5 below. The one possible exception to this trend regarding forward-references occurs in *NE* X.9, but given that this chapter is apparently setting up an entire new treatise (either the *Politics* as we have it or something very similar), it is not much of a counter-example.

⁵⁴⁴ Kenny (1978) p.51 also notes that this passage is odd on two counts: (1) the intellectual virtues are not treated as mean states in the *AE*, and (2) the intellectual virtues are never called λογικαὶ ἀρεταί. We will address both these points in the next section. Gauthier & Jolif (1958) p. 161 suggest that the reference is to the *Rhetoric*, noting that this is the only occurrence of the phrase 'another appropriate occasion' (ἄλλοθι κατὰρ ἔσται) in the *NE*; these considerations raise the probability of the passage being an editorial insertion.

⁵⁴⁵ Indeed, if *NE* IV originally preceded *NE* VIII, and the *AE* were later mistakenly inserted, it would be especially important for an editor to make a note explaining that the *AE* discussion comes next; otherwise, the transition to the next few chapters would be more jarring.

⁵⁴⁶ This point is compounded by the fact that, as we'll see below, the *EE* contains many of the same kinds of forward references to the *AE*.

announces a future discussion that there are two kinds of justice, both of which are mean states. Admittedly, this is satisfied in *AE* I: the book begins with a promise to investigate what sort of mean justice is (1129^a4-5), and the same chapter notes that justice can mean either lawfulness or equality (1129^a33-34), which corresponds to the difference between complete justice and individual justice.⁵⁴⁷ But Aristotle goes on to focus on individual justice (1130^a14-16), and notes that equality too can be either distributive or rectificatory; the first corresponds to a proportional mean (1131^a14-15), the latter to a distributive mean (1132^a14-19). *AE* I.6-7 proceed to make further distinctions between political, general, and special justice and between natural and legal justice. So while the II.7 reference does match one aspect of *AE* I, it is misleading insofar as the claim that we will discuss “both of these” (περὶ ἐκατέρωθεν) prepares us for a discussion of only two kinds of justice rather than the many we actually get.⁵⁴⁸

The same considerations hold for the way these references refer to intellectual virtue and continence, which I will address in their corresponding sections below. If these aspects are bracketed for the moment, we are left with a brief “But now let us speak about justice” as the very last line of *NE* IV, which is a meagre foundation for arguing that the early *NE* books were written to refer forward to the *AE*.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁷ Though Gautier & Jolif (1958) *ad loc* argue that the reference is inapt because justice in general (i.e. moral rightness) is not a mean. They recommend excising this part of the passage, but retain the rest.

⁵⁴⁸ Another way of putting this point. The *NE* II.7 reference advertises two kinds of virtue. This could be general/individual. It could be proportional/distributive. It could be natural/legal. But it is difficult to see how the frame of ‘both kinds of virtue’ could assimilate all these more fine-grained categories.

⁵⁴⁹ Grant (1866), p. 94 argues that even this line is an interpolation: “Aristotle’s MS. Of the fourth book having ended abruptly at the μικτή, Nicomachus or the editor, whoever he was, in all probability added these clauses in order to give the book a seeming union with the three Eudemian books which were now to be grafted on”. I don’t want to beg any questions about the *EE* at this stage, but if Grant is right about where the original chapter ended, he draws a plausible inference from it. Cf. Kenny (1978), p. 52.

So where does this leave us? It is undeniable that the two references canvassed so far were intended to refer to something like the discussion we find in the *AE*. But the *AE* as we have it does not quite fit these references. These inaccuracies, combined with the stylistic observation that both references resemble editorial notes, suggests that the references were likely written at some point after the *AE* was inserted in the manuscripts of the *NE*. It is possible that this event occurred when Aristotle was composing the *NE*. But it is also possible that the *AE* was not written for the *NE* at all, and at some point a librarian made a mistake in combining them. The first option is no more plausible than the second, and to my mind less plausible. So at best, these references are ambiguous between two interpretations, providing either evidence against including the *AE* with the *NE* books, or providing very weak evidence for combining them.⁵⁵⁰ As we'll see in what follows, this weak evidence will turn out to be par for the course for the *NE+AE* proponent.

There are no explicit back-references in *NE* VIII-X on the topic of justice. And while absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, the lack of back-references to *AE* I is rather conspicuous. This is because the *NE* discussion of friendship in VIII-IX discusses justice at length at several key points.⁵⁵¹ Justice is connected with friendship from the beginning of Aristotle's introductory remarks (1155^a22-28), and VIII.6-7 outlines filial obligations are outlined in terms of proportional and arithmetical equality, just as *AE* I does with justice (cf. VIII.13-IX.1). Moreover, Aristotle engages in a lengthy comparison

⁵⁵⁰ If I am right about the substantive conflicts between the *NE* and *AE*, then we would require much stronger evidence than this to warrant overriding these conflicts.

⁵⁵¹ We will return to this point in §5.2.2

between kinds of friendship and kinds of political arrangements at VIII.9-12. These chapters provide a perfect opportunity to refer to *AE I*'s more in-depth treatment of justice. But the *NE* chapters never make such a reference. So we have something like a falsified prediction: if the *NE* included the *AE*, we would expect a back-reference on justice when returning to the topic in *NE VIII-IX*. We get no such reference. This suggests that the *AE* does not belong with the *NE* after all.

The *AE* contains only two forward references that are not obviously close internal references, and both happen to involve justice. The first occurs in *AE I.3*, where Aristotle advertises a future discussion of whether there are any important distinctions being a good person and a good citizen or whether politics deals with making someone a good citizen, a good person, or both (1130^b26-28). *NE X.9* revisits this issue, arguing that legislation is responsible both for habituating people to become good, and directing the behavior of citizens who have been so habituated (1180^b23-28). But there are reasons to resist taking *X.9* as answering *AE I.3*'s promise. *X.9* begins by asking whether the *NE*'s inquiry has come to an end, and answers 'No', because the *NE* has said little about how to become good (1179^a33-^b4). This makes it look like that discussion of *X.9* is making a new start rather than returning to an earlier point. Second, the *AE I.3* passages suggests that the answer Aristotle has in mind to whether morality and citizenship are different is 'Yes': after stating that the matter will be clarified later, he adds "It probably is not the case that the same thing makes for goodness both in a man and in every city" (1130^b28-29). So the most likely place for *AE I.3* to be referring to is *AE II.8*, where *phronēsis* and *politikē* are distinguished; the former is concerned with individual persons, the latter with cities. If this

is right, then *AE* I.3 gives us evidence that books I and II belong together, but they do not tell us if they belong in the *NE* or *EE*.

The other forward reference in the *AE* comes only a few pages later, in I.7. Aristotle begins by making a distinction between token just or unjust actions versus types of justice or injustice (διαφέρει δὲ τὸ ἀδίκημα καὶ τὸ ἄδικον καὶ τὸ δικαίωμα καὶ τὸ δίκαιον, 1135^a8-9). He concludes by stating “Each of these must be examined later, as to what sort they are in form, and how many, and about what sort of things they are” (1135^a13-15). But there is no comparable discussion in the later books of the *NE*, nor in the *EE*. Several commentators have suspected that this reference is to a lost book of the *Politics*.⁵⁵² But the *AE* contains a reasonably close discussion of the same issue, in the very next chapters (indeed, the only place the term τὸ ἀδίκημα appears in the ethical works is *AE* I.7-11). *AE* I.8 discusses the connection between voluntariness and justice, arguing that an unjust action (τὸ ἀδίκημα) is one which is done knowingly but not from deliberation (1135^b19-22). But when an agent’s movement is caused by choice, then the agent is unjust and acts unjustly in a fuller sense (1135^b25, cf. 1136^a1-3, 1144^a11-20). So it looks like this forward-reference also points to a later *AE* chapter. In any case, since there is nothing in *NE* VIII-X that corresponds to this passage, the passage cannot provide evidence that the *AE* belongs with these *NE* books.

⁵⁵² See Gauthier & Jolif (1958), *ad loc*, Ross & Brown (2009), *ad loc*; Broadie & Rowe (2002), *ad loc*. However, these sources apparently take “each of these” to refer to natural versus conventional justice, which Aristotle discusses earlier in the chapter. I think it is a bit strained to think that ἕκαστον δὲ αὐτῶν skips its nearest referent for something which is, at best, seven lines away without some note that this is what Aristotle intends. It is possible that the extant text is out of order, but we have no independent evidence for this, and we can resist making changes to the text if we have a plausible alternative.

The *AE* also includes an interesting back reference when discussing whether one can be voluntarily treated unjustly by oneself or others. Aristotle writes

I mean by ‘voluntary’, just as was said earlier, what someone does that is among the things up to him, done knowingly and not ignorantly of what he does nor with what or for the sake of what, for example how he strikes and with what and for the sake of what, and each of those not be done incidentally nor by force (as when someone taking another’s hands strikes him with it, this is not voluntary; for it is not up to him). (1135^a23-28)

The basic idea that voluntary action is up to the agent and done knowingly is common to both the *NE* (e.g. 1111^a22-24) and *EE* (e.g. 1225^b8-10), so this passage could refer to either work. But the details of the passage match the *EE* more closely. The qualification “not done incidentally” is mentioned in the *EE* (1225^b6) but does not occur in the *NE*. And the example of hitting someone with their own hand appears at *EE* 1224^b11-15, but not in the *NE*. A few lines later Aristotle mentions natural processes which we knowingly perform but which are not voluntary, such as growing old (1135^a33-^b2). The fact that growing old is a natural but not voluntary process is also mentioned in the *EE*, at 1224^b31-36, but this point is absent from the *NE*. Another piece of evidence comes later in the same chapter, when Aristotle distinguishes voluntary action from choice. He writes, “Of voluntary actions some we do through choice, some without choosing, choosing as many as are deliberated in advance, unchosen as many as are not deliberated in advance” (1335^b8-11; cf. 1135^b19-25). This is precisely the distinction we see in the *EE*. And while the *NE* mentions this distinction once (1111^b9-10), it is not its primary argument to distinguish choice from voluntary action generally; rather the *NE* appeals to the fact that animals can

act voluntarily but are not capable of choice, an observation absent from *AE* I and from the *EE*.⁵⁵³ So this back-reference most likely refers to the *EE*, not the *NE*.

This brings us to the *EE*'s references on the topic of justice. I count two such references, but only one is of use in the present inquiry. *EE* III.7 includes a transition from discussing moral virtue to discussing justice (1234^b13-14), but this reference comes at the very end of the section, and so could be an editor's insertion, just as we saw in the *NE*. Hence this reference is evidentially neutral, as the *NE* parallels were.⁵⁵⁴ A more relevant reference occurs in the discussion of voluntary action in book II.10. In making a distinction between chosen and merely voluntary action, Aristotle appeals to instances of action done without premeditation and therefore not chosen. This leads Aristotle to praise legislators for distinguishing between involuntary, voluntary, and premeditated actions (1226^b36-27^a2). But he then postpones discussing this issue until its appropriate place, in the investigation of justice (1227^a2-3).⁵⁵⁵ Aristotle returns to this topic in *AE* I.8, the same chapter where, as we saw above, he gives a back reference to a discussion of the voluntary that matches the *EE* better than the *NE*. In this chapter Aristotle distinguishes between four kinds of injury (1135^b11-25): mistakes (which are done unknowingly and therefore involuntarily), misfortunes (which are done knowingly and so voluntarily, but counter to one's expectations and so unchosen), unpremeditated injustices (which are caused by anger and so natural to humans), and premeditated injustices (which is chosen and reflects

⁵⁵³ It is also worth mentioning that *NE* III.1 makes not regretting an action a condition for its voluntariness; this feature is also absent from the *EE* and from *AE* I.

⁵⁵⁴ I would be remiss not to point out, however, that, though brief, this *EE* reference does not have the *NE* references' problem of using strange diction and not quite fitting the material it is pointing to.

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. Kenny (1978), p. 55.

depraved character). Aristotle concludes “Because of this it well judged that acts done from anger are not premeditated” (1135^b25-26). *AE* I.8 is therefore a good match for *EE* III.7’s reference.

Both of the final *EE* books contain three relevant back-references. Coincidentally, all three of *EE* VII’s back-references involve justice. This is especially interesting because one of the few dissimilarities between the *EE* and *NE* treatments of friendship is that the latter gives a much more elaborate account of justice and its relationship to friendship. One plausible explanation of this difference is that the *EE* had an earlier discussion to rely on, which the *NE* lacked. And it certainly appears that the *EE* relies on the *AE* at a few points. The first relevant back-reference occurs in *EE* VII.3, where Aristotle distinguishes between equal and unequal kinds of friendship, arguing

Friendship according to superiority differs from these, just as the virtue of god is superior relative to man. And this is another form of friendship, as is in general the friendship between ruler and ruler, just as justice is also different. For it is proportional equality, not arithmetical equality. (1238^b18-21)

This distinction is not argued for here, but is instead taken for granted. The reference is to *AE* I.3-4, where arithmetical and proportional equality are discussed in detail. In particular, *AE* I.3 argues that just distribution is not absolute equality, but rather that some people deserve more in virtue of being better (1131^a22-29).

The second *EE* back reference is on the same topic, and occurs in VII.9. Here Aristotle argues

Since there is arithmetical equality on the one hand and proportional on the other, there will be corresponding forms of justice and friendship and partnership. For partnership and companionly friendship are arithmetical,

since they are measured by the same standard. But aristocratic virtue and kingship are proportional; for the same justice is not due to the giver and receiver, but rather a proportion. The friendship between parent and child is the same, and the same thing holds in partnerships. (1241^b32-40)

This passage, like the previous one, is a clear reference to *AE* I.3-4, where just such a discussion occurs.

The third back-reference in *EE* VII occurs in chapter six, where Aristotle discusses self-love. Aristotle writes

[Self-love] is friendship by a kind of analogy, but not without qualification. For being loved and loving occur in two divided parts. Therefore whether a man is friend to himself depends on how one part of the soul is related to the other parts, as in the discussion of continence and incontinence where it was said how it happens willingly or unwillingly. And it is the same in all such cases, whether one can be friend or enemy to himself, and whether one may treat oneself unjustly. (1240^a13-19)

The issue of whether one is willingly continent or incontinent is discussed in *EE* II.8, where Aristotle, using a prior distinction between internal and external sources of movement, argues that “But when one acts continently or incontinently the impulse leading him is internal (for this holds for both). So it is in no way forced, but rather voluntary because he would do these things without being compelled” (1224^b8-11). This distinction relies on an earlier point, that humans are unique in having two internal sources of motion, reason and desire (1224^a23-30). But this chapter does not discuss justice. However, voluntary/involuntary continence and voluntary/involuntary injustice towards oneself are both discussed in *AE* I, in precisely the same terms that the self-love passage uses. The issue is introduced in I.9, where Aristotle discusses whether one can voluntarily be treated

unjustly by others, and notes that it matters whether or not one is continent or incontinent (1236^a31-^b9). But the topic is discussed in more detail in *AE* I.11. Here Aristotle argues

According to a metaphor and analogy (κατὰ μεταφορὰν δὲ καὶ ὁμοιότητα) there is not justice towards oneself, but rather between one of his parts and another; not every kind of justice, but rather only the despotic or domestic kind. For the reason-having part of the soul stands toward the irrational part in this proportion. (1138^b5-9)

This passage, and the chapter where it occurs, perfectly matches the *EE* discussion of self-love. Both make sense of self-relations, be it voluntary action, self-love, or justice toward oneself, in terms of the relationship between parts of the soul.

A consistent picture emerges from this survey of the ethical works' cross-references on the topic of justice. The *NE*'s two forward references are inconclusive, because they are more likely to be later editorial insertions than Aristotle's own words written in anticipation of the *AE* books. The *NE* contains no back-references on the subject. Moreover, the *AE* does not contain any obvious references to the *NE* regarding justice. The *AE* and *EE*, however, appear to refer to one another repeatedly. The *AE*'s discussion of justice appeals to the *EE* discussion of voluntary action, and the *EE*'s discussion of friendship frequently appeals to the *AE* discussion of justice. So at least on this topic, the *AE* looks to fit much more naturally in the *EE* than the *NE*.

§5.1.2 - Cross-references: Intellectual Virtue

We can now turn to the second group of cross-references, this time on intellectual virtue, and in particular on the role of reason in moral virtue. We'll follow the same pattern as before, beginning with the *NE*.

We can begin with the *NE* II.7 reference we briefly discussed in the last section. Recall that the passage reads “There will be a discussion of these and other such states in due time. About justice, since it is not said absolutely, after these distinguishing we will speak about each, how it is a mean state. And likewise about the rational virtues” (1108^b6-10). Here our focus is the last few words, “about the rational virtues” (περὶ τῶν λογικῶν ἀρετῶν). As several commentators have noted, this is an odd phrase.⁵⁵⁶ The intellectual virtues are never called λογικαὶ ἀρεταί in the *AE*. Indeed, this reference is the only place the term λογικός appears in the *NE* or the *AE*.⁵⁵⁷ Moreover, the intellectual virtues are not treated as mean states in the *AE*. Outside of the first few lines of *AE* II.1 where Aristotle recapitulates the point, argued at length in both the *NE* and *EE*, that virtue is a mean state, the words μέσον and μεσότητες refer to the middle term of a syllogism (1142^b24). So II.7 does not quite match the *AE* as we have it. I see three interpretive options here: (i) Aristotle made a mistake in writing this line, or perhaps had a different version of the *AE* in mind than the one he subsequently wrote, (ii) Aristotle was referring to a written discussion of intellectual virtue that has been lost, displaced in our manuscripts by the *AE*, or (iii) a later editor made a sloppy reference using language that became more common after the ethical treatises were written. Of these, I take it that (iii) is the most plausible.

There is, however, another forward-reference in the early *NE* books that is more substantive. In *NE* II.2 Aristotle writes

⁵⁵⁶ Burnet (1900), *ad loc*, Gauthier & Jolif (1958), *ad loc*, Grant (1866), *ad loc*, Kenny (1978) p.51.

⁵⁵⁷ The term appears three times in the *EE* (two in the critique of Platonism from I.8 (1227^b17, ^b21) and once in II.4 (1221^b7). All three uses mean something like “logical” or “abstract” rather than “intellectual” or “concerning the *logos*-having part of the soul”.

Now, it is held in common that [good action] is done according to right reason (τὸν ὀρθὸν λόγον); let this be stipulated. There will be a discussion about this later, both what right reason is, and how it is related to the other virtues. (1103^b31-34)

Unlike the other *NE* forward-references we've seen, this one makes sense in its context; right reason is both a foundation for any viable discussion of virtue (1103^b31-2) and an important element of Aristotle's definition (1106^b36-^a1), but it would derail the discussion to elucidate it in II.2. It is quite natural to think that this passage is looking forward to *AE* II.1, which II begins with a reprise of the importance of right reason in virtue and a complaint that this definition is unhelpful without a deeper grasp of what right reason amounts to (1138^b18-34). But as before, things are more complicated than they appear. Unlike the previous *NE* references, I think the II.2 reference could be an announcement from Aristotle himself of what is to come. But I submit that he is not referring to the *AE* II discussion, but rather the subsequent chapters of *NE* II.

We can start by noting a common theme in commentaries on the relationship between II.2 and *AE* II: it is often noted that *AE* II does not deliver on the promise of the II.2 reference.⁵⁵⁸ For *AE* II begins

Since we have said earlier that it is necessary to choose the mean, not the excess or the deficient, and that the mean is what right reason (ὁ λόγος ὁ ὀρθός) says, we should clarify this. For in all the states we discussed, as in all other matters, there is a target (σκοπὸς) at which the person with reason (ὁ τὸν λόγον ἔχων) aims by tightening and loosening, and this is the limit (ὄρος) of intermediate states, which as we said are between the excess and the deficient, being according to right reason. (1138^b18-25)

⁵⁵⁸ Allan (1952), pp. 182-3, Devereux (2014), pp. 174-75, Kenny (1978), pp. 54-55, Stewart (1892), p. 7, Taylor (2006), pp. 109-10.

The chapter concludes by announcing “we must clarify what right reason is and what is its limit” (1138^b33-34). Now, one might think that we at least get an answer to the first question when Aristotle later argues that “Virtue is not only a state according to right reason, but rather a state accompanied by right reason. And right reason about these sorts of things is *phronesis*” (1144^b26-28). “These sorts of things” apparently refers to the good components of human life that are attainable by action, which Aristotle earlier makes the domain of *phronesis* (1140^b20-25, 1141^b8-14, 1142^b31-33). And since *phronesis* is necessary and sufficient for any other virtue (1144^b30-32), we apparently have the relation between right reason and “the other virtues” as well. But I don’t think this reading of *AE* II is quite right. For Aristotle does not define right reason or its limit here, nor it is clear that he even identifies *phronesis* and the *orthos logos*.⁵⁵⁹ Rather, we only get a new description of right reason rather than a full explanation.⁵⁶⁰ So if the II.2 reference is to *AE* II, it is not a very good reference; at best, when writing II.2 Aristotle intended to do something slightly different than he eventually did.

I’ll argue below that *AE* II is closely interwoven with the *EE* in a number of ways. But even if this is right, we would also need an explanation of where *NE* II.2 is referring if not the *AE*. It is possible that the reference could also be an editorial insertion, but it lacks the usual marks of these interpolations, so we would do better to explain it another way.

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. Taylor (2006), pp. 107-110. Burnet (1900), p. 80 also questions the strict identification of the *orthos logos* with *phronesis* (see also p. 286). Moss (2014) pp. 222-23 suggests that either Aristotle doesn’t make a strict identification of *logos* and reason here, or, if he is, then he is introducing a different sense of *logos* than he had used elsewhere.

⁵⁶⁰ This charge is leveled in various ways by Ackrill (1980), p. 15, Cooper (1975), pp. 101-03, Dryer (1983), p. 199. Rowe (1971), pp. 109-12 argues that Aristotle gives an explanation of the *orthos logos* in one sense, but not another.

The answer, I think, is that this is an internal reference, to II.6-9. In these chapters we do get an account of what right reason is and how it is related to virtue. This answer isn't as determinate as we might like, which perhaps explains why this option has not been thoroughly explored, but I contend that it is the right level of determinacy given Aristotle's methodological remarks earlier in books I-II.

So let us look closely at the chapters of *NE* II, first by continuing with II.2, which sets the stage for the rest of the book's discussion of virtue. II.2 begins with some methodological remarks: the aim of the *NE* is not theoretical knowledge, but practical knowledge. That is, the intention is to learn what to do to be good, not to learn simply what goodness is (1103^b26-31). This remark is immediately followed by our reference: it is agreed that acting well entails acting according to right reason, the details of which will be discussed later. I will note, however, that the word Aristotle uses here is ῥηθήσεται, which is rather non-committal, as opposed to a more definite verb like ὀρίζω; this leaves us room to expect something less than an explicit definition of right reason in what follows. Aristotle then returns to methodological remarks, this time the famous claim that ethical inquiry cannot be more precise than its subject matter allows. And it turns out that ethical matters are not very precise:

Regarding matters involving action and of what is beneficial there is nothing fixed (οὐδὲν ἔστηκός), just like in health. And since the general account (τοῦ καθόλου λόγου) is like this, the account about particulars has even more imprecision. For none of them falls under an art or set of rules (παραγγελίαν), but it is necessary in all cases for the person acting to look toward what is appropriate (τὸν καιρὸν), just as it holds for medicine and navigation. (1104^a3-10)

These remarks already begin to warn us that we should not expect a very precise account of right reason. A rigid rule or precise formula for what right reason enjoins would be inappropriately definite given its subject matter. This is in keeping with the general methodology of the *NE*, which we discussed in §2.2: Aristotle thinks it is inappropriate for a moral theory to be too precise in content.

After going through some preliminaries about emotion, pleasure and pain, and the difference between states, dispositions, and feelings, Aristotle returns to his analysis of virtue in II.6. It is here that Aristotle introduces the notion of the mean relative to us, which involves emotional states that can be either excessive or deficient along a variety of dimensions. A few lines later we are warned that there are many ways to go wrong, but only one way to go right, as the Pythagoreans have shown, and therefore “it is easy to miss one’s target, and difficult to hit it” (1106^b28-35).

We are then given Aristotle’s final definition of virtue: “Virtue is a *prohairesis* state, in the mean relative to us, a mean determined by reason (ὠρισμένη λόγῳ) and the way the *phronimos* would determine it” (1106^b36-07^a2). The rest of the chapter goes on to restrict the kinds of states that have means, and the following chapter illustrates the definition through the examples of particular virtues. *NE* II.8 then warns about the difficulties of recognizing the mean with reference to particular virtues: an excess on one side can make the opposite side look closer to the mean (e.g. the coward looks closer to appropriate bravery when compared to the rash person than when considered in isolation), and often one extreme is intrinsically closer to the mean than its opposite (e.g. rashness is closer to bravery than cowardice is). In general, the more an extreme state involves pleasure, the

more likely it is that we will be drawn toward it rather than the mean or the opposite extreme; likewise, the more an extreme state involves pain, the more likely it is that we will flee to the opposite extreme. Finally, II.9 concludes with a second discussion the difficulty of hitting the mean, arguing that “It is work to be a good person (σπουδαῖον). For in each case it is work to hit the mean, for example finding the center of a circle is not a job for everyone, but rather the person who knows (τοῦ εἰδότος)” (1109^a24-26). He then gives advice for getting closer to the mean, for instance being wary of pleasure and pain or aiming away from the extreme toward which one is naturally disposed. We are reminded repeatedly that this is not an easy task (1109^a26-29, ^a33-35, ^b14-16), and in particular that the mean “ is not easy to define using reason” (οὐ ῥάδιον τῷ λόγῳ ἀφορίσαι, 1109^b21). Hence Aristotle concludes that we can most easily hit the mean not by knowing some formula for identifying the mean itself, but by aiming towards the extremes instead (1109^b23-26).

The picture that emerges from *NE* II is that right reason is not a specific standard applied to particular cases, or even a general rule that holds for the most part.⁵⁶¹ Rather, right reason is what the good person exhibits in her moral perception; it is a matter of recognizing moral salience and seeing how many moral features relate to one another.⁵⁶²

⁵⁶¹ This does not mean that there are no moral rules of any sort. Aristotle recognizes that some kinds of actions are always wrong (1107^a8-27), from which we can infer rules like ‘never commit adultery’. But knowing that some actions always fall outside the mean is not very helpful to determining where the mean is. See Curzer (2016) for a more thorough discussion of this topic. Curzer suggests that every virtue (except perhaps wit) can be given rules, but the examples he gives (e.g. “Perform acts which are deserving of honor”, p. 89) give very little practical guidance, amounting to little more than a more specific redescription of ‘do what is right’.

⁵⁶² There is a more complicated topic than I can adequately do justice to here. See Fortenbaugh (1964), Glidden (1992), Jost (1979), Sorabji (1980), McDowell (1995), McDowell (1980), Wiggins (1995), Wiggins (1980).

Right reason is not something the good person, the *spoudaios* or *phronimos*, reacts to, but rather something she embodies.⁵⁶³ We see this in *NE* II's definition of virtue, which aims at the mean as the *logos* of the *phronimos* determines it. But this means that Aristotle cannot give us some explicit description of right reason, because as he frequently says, it is difficult to determine the mean by use of reason, i.e. there are no rules we can use to say, e.g., what amount of anger is appropriate across a range of circumstances. This is what Aristotle means when he writes in II.2 that an account of ethics will depend on perception of what is appropriate rather than an art or set of rules.⁵⁶⁴

The *NE*'s emphasis on the difficulty of specifying both where the mean lies and what actions fall inside it suggests that the *NE* is thinking about right reason in a different way than the *AE* does. In the *AE* right reason points us to a *horos*, a standard which serves as the boundary between what is intermediate and what is extreme. We are told at the end of *AE* II.1 that it will be explained (*διωρισμένον*) not only that there is such a *horos*, but what it is, i.e. what is the specific rule that serves as the limit of right reason (1138^b33-34). The level of precision aspired to here is alien to the *NE*, which instead frequently tells us not to approach ethical thought in these terms. Given the methodological commitments of the *NE*, we should not get a specific answer to what the *horos* determined by right reason is, but rather, just as we see in *NE* II, a second-order explanation of why this cannot be given, and a set of practical recommendations to compensate.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶³ Cf. Stewart (1892), pp. 200-08.

⁵⁶⁴ See Moss (2012), esp. Chs. 1-3, and Hankinson (1990) on moral perception outside the ethical works.

⁵⁶⁵ This difference helps to mitigate, at least partially, a running problem in commentaries on this issue, whether to translate *orthos logos* as 'right reason' (i.e. a correct rule or prescription) or 'right reasoning'. A useful history of this problem is given in Moss (2014) pp. 181-89. See also in Taylor (2006), pp. 65-66.

Consequently, it is likely that our reference in *NE* II.2 does not point to *AE* II. But this doesn't mean it is unsatisfied. We do get an account of what right reason is, and how it is related to the other virtues, in *NE* II itself.⁵⁶⁶ Right reason is precisely that hard-to-articulate moral perception that we have to use given the vagaries of moral action in a world of particulars.⁵⁶⁷ It is related to the other virtues in that right reason is a constituent of virtue as such, and will therefore be a constituent of any particular virtue: right reason will tell us how much passion to feel, and how much pleasure to pursue or pain to avoid, in the domains of all the virtues listed in *NE* II.7.⁵⁶⁸ To expect anything more precise than this is to reject the methodological remarks that Aristotle stresses in *NE* II (and which, we should note, are much less pronounced in the *EE*). These remarks tell us not to look for precisely that conception of right reason that *AE* II complains we do not yet have. This is why Aristotle goes to such lengths in the later chapters of *NE* II to show how difficult it is to say what precisely right reason would enjoin in any particular case. But this does not mean that there is no such account in *NE* II.

The answer is 'Both'. *NE* II uses the latter conception, *AE* II the former, and it is the assumption that they belong to the same work that compels us to minimize the differences.

⁵⁶⁶ Rowe (1971), pp. 109-114 endorses this view of the *orthos logos* and its *horos*, but attributes it to *AE* II, but only on the basis of a "echo of this doctrine" (p. 111) from the *NE*, where Aristotle argues "we ought to attend to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of experienced and older people or of *phronimoi* (1143^b11-13). This is a rather weak foundation for a reading of the *AE*, but given that Rowe's project is to unify the *NE* and *AE*, it is not surprising that he projects the former's view onto the latter.

⁵⁶⁷ This is the reading of *orthos logos* in *AE* II defended by Gómez-Lobo (1992), Peterson (1988) and Rowe (1971) among others, the latter two of which point to *NE* II for defense. I take this to be an advantage of my view, despite the fact that I read *AE* II in a different way. If we can extract what others take to be the *AE* view from *NE* II without referring to the *AE* itself, then there is no need to appeal to the *AE* text to complete the view, and therefore no need for the forward-reference to point beyond the book in which it occurs.

⁵⁶⁸ Moreover, as we learn in II.4, it is by practicing virtuous action that we become more virtuous, i.e. develop our capacity to reason rightly.

Is this an irrefutable case that the *NE*'s forward reference does not point to *AE* II? No. But it doesn't need to be. We have three interpretive options: the *NE* II.2 reference is either (a) Aristotle's own words, with the intention of referring to the *AE*, (b) Aristotle's own words, with the intention of referring to later chapters of *NE* II, or (c) an editorial insertion, made to bridge the *NE* and *AE* after the latter was inserted into the former. All three are possible options. But (a) is the only option that would give us reason to think the *NE* and *AE* belong together, while (b) and (c) suggest the opposite. And (b) and (c) together are more likely than (a), even if (a) is the most probable of the three individually. Moreover, even if we granted that (a) is the most likely option, it will serve as a single piece of evidence pointing one direction, against a preponderance of evidence (most of which we have yet to discuss) that point the other way.⁵⁶⁹ So even granting (a) is not enough on its own to show that the *NE* and *AE* belong together.

There is also one relevant back-reference in the *NE* to discuss before turning to the *AE* and *EE*'s treatment of right reason. This is, as far as I can tell, the only place the later *NE* books refer back to an early discussion outside of the obvious back-references in *NE* X.6-8. In the discussion of self-love in *NE* IX.4, Aristotle writes "It is likely, as we have said, that virtue and the *spoudaios* is the measure of each case" (1166^a12-13). This is a reference to *NE* III.4, where we are told "For the *spoudaios* judges each thing correctly, and in each case the truth is evident to him" (1113^a29-311 cf. 1176^a15-19). This reference, I take it, is corroborating evidence for the reading of *NE* II I've presented.

⁵⁶⁹ We also have to weigh the plausibility of (a) on its own against the fact that endorsing it would make the *NE* thoroughly inconsistent, given the conflicts between the *NE* and *AE* we saw in the last two chapters.

So much, then, for the *NE*'s references on intellectual virtue. We can now turn to the *AE*, starting with its back-references. However, evaluating this evidence will be a bit more complicated. The beginning books of the *NE* and *EE* are quite similar in structure and content, and many of the references in the *AE* could fit either work. So our task in the remainder of this section is to determine which text is the better fit for the *AE*'s references.

We can begin with a few back references which are sufficiently vague to refer to either the *NE* or the *EE* equally well. There are, I think, three such references. The first comes in *AE* II.1, where Aristotle writes

When distinguishing the virtues of the soul we said some are ethical, some intellectual. We have gone through the moral virtues, so now let us speak as follows about the remaining ones, first speaking about the soul. We said earlier that there are two parts of the soul, one that has reason and one that is irrational. (1138^b5-39^a6)

The *NE* and the *EE* both make claims corresponding to this passage. The *NE* claims that “We have spoken about [the soul] sufficiently in some of the exoteric works, and it should be used for this. For example, there is an irrational part of it, and a reason-having part” (1102^a26-28), and later that “One can distinguish virtue according to this difference. For we say some of them are intellectual, some moral” (1103^a3-5). But the *EE* has likewise

There are two species of virtue, moral and intellectual.... Since the intellectual virtues accompany reason, they are the sort belonging to the reason-having part, which is authoritative over the soul in virtue of having reason, while the moral virtues belong to the irrational part, which by nature is commanding by the reason-having part. (1220^a4-11)

Since the *NE* and *EE* agree on these points, the *AE* passage is neutral between them.

But as I suggested above, *AE* II.1 appears to fit the *EE* better than it does the *NE* insofar as the *AE* and *NE* use different conceptions of right reason. Another interesting

feature of *AE* II is that it discusses right reason in terms of a *horos* or limit (1138^b23, ^b34), a feature absent from the *NE* treatment.⁵⁷⁰

Since we have said earlier, that one should choose the mean, not the excess nor the deficient, the mean being as right reason says, let us distinguish this. In all the states we discussed, as in all other cases, there is a target toward which the reason-having person aims by tightening and loosening, and this is a kind of *horos* of mean states, which we say is between the excess and the deficient, being according to right reason. To speak this way is true, but not at all clear. (1138^b18-26)

Moreover, *AE* II operates on a level of precision that is at the very least in tension with the *NE*'s methodological commitment to ethical imprecision: supplying the *horos* of right reason to which the *phronimos* looks implies that there is a general conception of right reason that can be defined theoretically.

But to see how well the *AE*'s back-reference on right reason fits the *EE*, we need to look at the *EE* more closely. The *EE* also has a forward-reference on the topic of right reason. In *EE* III.7 Aristotle writes “what right reason is, and toward what *horos* we say aiming at the mean is, must be investigated (ἐπισκεπτέον) later” (1222^b8-10). This reference comes at the very end of the chapter, after all the *EE*'s corresponding details of moral virtue have been discussed. Though like the corresponding *NE*'s forward-reference it makes sense in context and is therefore unlikely to be an editorial insertion, the *EE* is written slightly differently: the *NE* reference precedes a lengthy discussion of virtue and

⁵⁷⁰ The only mention of a *horos* in the undisputed *NE* is Aristotle's claim at 1097^b11-12 that there must be some limit on the number and distance of relationships we have with reference to our self-sufficiency (cf. Reeve (2013), pp. 96-97). The verb ὀρίζω is of course more common. Burnet (1900), pp. 250-251 notes the absence of *horos* in the undisputed books, but argues that it “seems incredible” that Eudemus could have written *AE* II.1 and *EE* VIII.3. Putting aside the issue of authorship, I don't see what is incredible about this: the *EE* specifically mentions that the issue has been raised, but not fully addressed, and this is precisely what we see in *AE* II.

getting things right, while the *EE*'s reference comes late in the book and has nowhere to point to if not *AE* II.⁵⁷¹

Finally, the *EE* also contains a back-reference on the topic of right reason and its *horos*. After arguing that the good life will also be the most pleasant, Aristotle returns to the topic of right reason and its limit. He argues that, just as the doctor has the doctor as a standard of reference for pursuing health,

Thus for the good person regarding the actions and choices that are good by nature but not praiseworthy there should be a kind of standard of one's state and one's choice and avoidance regarding abundance and scarcity of wealth and of good fortune. In an earlier place it was said [that this standard is] 'the one according to reason'. But this is as if one said that the standard regarding diet is 'according to medicine and its reason'. This is true, but not clear. (1249^a24-^b6)

As we saw above, *EE* II.5 contains a forward reference to a discussion of right reason and its limit. This VIII.3 passage cannot be its referent, since it appeals to an earlier discussion of the same topic. The obvious location for this discussion is *AE* II, where, as we've seen, these topics are covered in more detail in the exact same language we see here. I argued above that the *AE* does not actually tell us what the limit of right reason is, but rather only defines *phronesis* in terms of right reason. VIII.3 shows that this is the correct reading, since it too complains that the limit of right reason has not yet been properly defined. We have a consistent line of thought, using the same diction, running from *EE* II through *AE* II to *EE* VIII.

⁵⁷¹ Cf. Kenny (1978), pp. 54-55

In addition to discussing right reason, there is another issue involving intellectual virtue that is worth our attention. In *EE* I.8, Aristotle concludes his introductory remarks on happiness with the claim that

This, then, would be the good itself, the end of all actions for humans. This is the science which is authoritative over everything. It is political science and household management and *phronesis*. For these states (αἱ ἔξεισις) differ from others in being this sort of thing; whether they differ from one another must be discussed later” (1218^b12-16)

There is, however, no passage in the *EE* books which distinguish *phronesis* from these other states. But the distinction between these three domains is exactly the topic of *AE* II.8.⁵⁷² Here we are told that “political science and *phronesis* are the same state (ἡ αὐτὴ μὲν ἔξεισις) but their essence is not the same” (1141^b23-24). Aristotle later goes into more detail:

It seems that *phronesis* is most of all the state about oneself and singular; this one gets the common name, ‘*phronesis*’. Of the others there is household management and legislation and political science, and this one can be legislative or judicial. (1141^b29-33)

There is no comparable passage anywhere in the undisputed *EE* books that could serve as II.8’s referent.

This completes our survey of cross-references on the topic of intellectual virtue. As with justice, we see that the *NE* contains no indisputable references to the *AE*, nor the *AE* to the *NE*. But once again the *AE* and *EE* appear to refer to one another with regularity.

⁵⁷² Cf. Kenny (1978), p. 54.

§5.1.3 - Cross-references: Continnence and Pleasure

Our third and final topic for examining cross-references in Aristotle's ethical texts will be the topics of *AE* III, continence/incontinence and pleasure/pain. We'll start with continence. There is one reference in the *NE* on this issue, the IV.9 passage we discussed above. Recall that at the end of Book IV, we see the line "But nor is continence a virtue, but rather a kind of mixed state (ἀλλά τις μικτή); this will be indicated later" (1128^b33-35). As I argued above, this line reads like an editorial insertion, all the more because it is literally the last lines of the early set of *NE* books.⁵⁷³ A second reason for reading the line as an insertion is that the description of continence is not an accurate account of the *AE* discussion to which it is taken to refer. Continnence is discussed in detail in *AE* III.1-10, and it is distinguished from virtue in several places (e.g. 1145^a35-^b2). But it is never called a mixed state. The term μικτός is used four other times in the *NE*, once to refer to mixed actions in III.1 (1110^a11-12), once to refer to friends as mixed blessings in times of misfortune in IX.11. (1171^a34-5), and twice the *NE*'s discussion of pleasure (1172^b28-31, 1173^a22-23) to refer to Plato's *Philebus* and mixed versus pure pleasures, respectively. Presumably the IV.9 reference means that continence combines elements of virtue (knowing and choosing what is right) and vice (desiring what is wrong). But we must speculate, because the *AE* never tells us. So once again, the reference does not quite fit the text of the *AE* as we have it. As before, we have three interpretive options: either (i) Aristotle wrote the IV.9 reference to accurately refer to a book we have lost, (ii) Aristotle

⁵⁷³ Cf. Stewart (1892), *ad loc.*

tried to refer to *AE* III but failed by giving an inaccurate description, or (iii) a later editor made a quick, inartful insertion to direct the reader where to go after reading Book IV. The last option is the most charitable and the most plausible.

The *AE* contains no forward- or back-references on the topic of continence, at least as far as I can tell. There are two mentions of an earlier discussion of the connection of pleasure and pain to temperance (1150^a9-11) or to virtue in general (1152^b4-7). Both of these claims are common to the *NE* and *EE* alike, for both connect temperance to pleasure and pain (*NE* 1107^b4-6, *EE* 1230^b9-12), and both discuss the connection between pleasure and pain and virtue at length (e.g. *NE* II.3 *passim*, *EE* II.4 *passim*). So on this score the *AE* is neutral between the two ethical texts.

The *EE*, however, does contain a pair of references to a discussion of continence. The first is a forward-reference in *EE* II.11. Though the chapter is primarily about how choice works, the chapter begins with the following discussion:

Having made these distinctions, we should say whether virtue makes choice unerring and the end right (such that one chooses that for which one should) or whether, as it appears to some, it makes reason right. But this is what continence does. For continence does not corrupt reason. But virtue and continence are different. There should be a discussion about these matters later, since for this reason it appears to some that virtue provides for right reason. (1227^b12-16)

The chapter goes on to reiterate that choice is a matter of means not ends, a point argued at length in the preceding chapter and familiar from *NE* III.2-4 as well. But this chapter does not discuss continence. There are only two discussions of continence in the later *EE* books. One is in the context of self-love, which we discussed above in the context of justice. The other is in VIII.2, where Aristotle writes, “Again, *phronesis* in the rational part of the

soul makes the licentiousness in the irrational part of the soul temperate. This is what continence appears to be” (1246^b23-25). This line, though relevant, does not appear to be substantive enough to count as a discussion of the issue, and the “Again” (πάλιν) with which the line begins suggests an earlier account.

This is exactly what we find in the *AE*. *AE* II.12-13 return to the relationship between virtue and choice, arguing in more detail that virtue points to the right end and *phronesis* (i.e. excellent choice) to the right means. And the differences between virtue and continence are spelled out in detail throughout *AE* III. Chapter 1 begins with a taxonomy of moral psychology that differentiates virtue, continence, and godliness from vice, incontinence, and brutishness. And we are told in *AE* III.8 that “For virtue and vice either corrupt or preserve the *archē*, and the *archē* in action is that for the sake of which, just as it is the hypotheses in mathematics” (1151^a15-17). Aristotle continues

But there is one who because of emotion is disposed contrary to right reason, whom emotion masters so as not do to what is according to right reason, but does not master him so much that he is the sort of person who is persuaded that he must pursue these sorts of pleasures. This sort is incontinent, and is better than the licentious person, since he is not wholly bad. (1151^a20-4)

These passages from *AE* II-III once again use the same terminology that we see in the *EE* forward references, and there are no comparable passages elsewhere in the *EE*.

The second *EE* reference to continence is a back-reference in VIII.1. Here Aristotle writes, “Or is it, as some say, that incontinence is vice of the irrational part of the soul, and the incontinent person is somehow licentious, while keeping his intelligence?” (1246^b12-14). This belief is reported as an *endoxon* in the *AE*, at II.1, 1145^b10-14, and Aristotle later

notes that incontinence is thought to be a vice (1148^a2-4). But, as we saw above, Aristotle distinguishes virtue/vice from continence/incontinence in *AE* III.1, and does not endorse the idea that virtue applies to the non-rational parts of the soul. Hence later in *EE* VIII.1 Aristotle follows suit by going on to reject this belief.

We can now move on to pleasure and pain. The fact that the *AE* contains a self-contained discussion of pleasure constitutes its own *prima facie* case against inclusion in the *NE*, since X.1-5 of the latter makes the *AE* treatment largely superfluous. Though there have been attempts to explain why a single text might contain two separate and apparently inconsistent analyses of pleasure, most commentators take the *AE* discussion of pleasure to be a poor fit in the *NE*. As we'll see in the remainder of this section, the pattern of cross-references in the ethical texts provide further evidence for this view.

I have found no forward-references in the early books of the *NE* to a discussion of pleasure and pain. There is, however, a forward reference in IX.9, where Aristotle pauses in a complicated argument about the pleasure of self-perception to promise that “It will be clearer about pain in the next book (ἐν τοῖς ἐχομένοις)” (1170^a24-25). Aristotle fulfills this promise a few chapters later, in X.5 (see esp. 1175^b16-24). That this forward-reference occurs so late in the *NE* is telling; pain is discussed in comparable detail in *AE* III.14, yet Aristotle acts as if he had not yet discussed it.

In addition, Aristotle ends his discussion of friendship by announcing “It would complete our discussion by talking about pleasure” (1172^a15). The beginning of *NE* X.1 follows immediately, where Aristotle writes “After these matters it would probably come next to discuss pleasure” (1172^a19). The first of these claims is likely another instance of

editorial insertion: while it is common to begin a new set of chapters with a ‘having discussed *x*, we will now consider *y*’ formulation, finishing a previous chapter with a redundant version of the same is likely an editorial marker meant to show which book comes next.. And while we are on the topic of the introductory lines of the later *NE* books, it is worth noting that VIII begins by saying that a discussion of friendship naturally follows a discussion of virtue (1155^a3-5). But VIII does not follow a discussion of virtue as the *NE* is printed; it follows *AE* III’s discussion of pleasure (we’ll return to this passage below).

The final place to look for *NE* reference to the *AE*’s treatment of pleasure and pain is a pair of references to earlier relevant claims. The first of these comes in IX.9, where in part of a long argument Aristotle writes

As was said at the beginning, *eudaimonia* is a kind of activity, and it is clear that activity comes into being and does not persist like some kind of possession. But if *eudaimonia* occurs in living and being active, and the respectable (σπουδαία) activities of a good person are intrinsically pleasant, as we said at the beginning, and what is one’s own (τὸ οἰκεῖον) is among the pleasures...” (1169^b28-33)

Given that this passage occurs in the chapters on friendship, and so before the book X treatment of pleasure, this reference could conceivably point to *AE* III. But this does not appear to be the case. Aristotle’s repeated use of “at the beginning” (ἐν ἀρχῇ) suggests that he has earlier passages in mind, *viz.* *NE* I-II.⁵⁷⁴ And this is precisely what we find. *NE* I.8 argues that *eudaimonia* involves activity that is naturally pleasant, in particular the pleasure of virtuous activity experienced by the *spoudaios* (1099^a7-24). Aristotle also devotes the entirety of *NE* II.3 to explicating the many tight conceptual connections between character

⁵⁷⁴ Cf, Pakaluk (2011), p. 28.

and pleasure/pain. So it is likely that these chapters are what Aristotle had in mind when writing the IX.9 passage. And it is likely the sum of these chapters that Aristotle was referring to when he wrote the second of our pair of references, in X.6:

Just as has been said on many occasions, the sort of things honorable and pleasant to the *spoudaios* really are so. And for each person the activity according to their own state (ἡ κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἕξις) is choiceworthy; for the *spoudaios* it is activity according to excellence. (1176^b25-27).

Hence the *NE* is consistent in failing to refer to the *AE* discussion of pleasure and pain.

The *AE* has no back- or forward-references on the topic of pleasure and pain, save an uninformative final sentence summarizing the discussion of *AE* III and saying that it remains to speak of friendship (1154^b32-34). The *EE*, on the other hand, has one of each. The forward reference comes in I.5, where Aristotle affirms the *endoxon* that *eudaimonia* must be a pleasant life. But he declines to go into more detail, writing “there are other pleasures due to which people reasonably think that *eudaimonia* is a pleasant life and not merely painless. But there will be an investigation about these matters later” (1216^a35-37).⁵⁷⁵ The *EE*’s back-reference to *AE* III comes in the concluding section of VIII.3. Just before returning to the topic of right reason and its limit, Aristotle writes “And it has been discussed about pleasure what sort of thing it is and how it is a good, and that (i) absolutely pleasurable things (τά τε ἀπλῶς ἡδέα) are also good (καλά) and (ii) absolutely good (τά ἀπλῶς ἀγαθὰ) things are pleasant” (1249^a17-18).

Both these references point to the same chapter, *AE* III.12. The chapter begins by making a distinction between what is absolutely good and what is good to a particular

⁵⁷⁵ See also Kenny (1978), p. 53 on this passage.

person, which grounds a corresponding distinction between natures and states and between movements and processes (1152^b25-28). This allows Aristotle to argue that “people do not enjoy the same things while being replenished of their nature and when they are restored. Rather, they enjoy what is absolutely pleasant when they are restored, but opposite while being replenished.” (1153^a2-4). Aristotle goes on to use this distinction to address three problems at once: that the temperate person avoids pleasure, that the wise man pursues the painless life, and that children and animals pursue pleasure (1153^a27-29). To these putative counter-examples he responds

Since it has been shown how pleasures are absolutely good and how not all pleasures are good, children and animals pursue this latter sort, but the wise person is painless regarding them, the ones accompanied by desire and pain and associated with the body (for these are the same sort) and according to the excesses of which the licentious person is licentious. Therefore the temperate person avoids these, since there are also pleasures of the temperate person. (1153^a29-35)

The concordance between the discussion in this chapter and both the topic and diction of the *EE*'s references are, I take it, evident.

When it comes to the topics of *AE* III, continence/incontinence and pleasure/pain, we see a third instance of the pattern observed in the preceding sections discussing justice and intellectual virtues respectively. The *NE* does not unambiguously refer to the *AE* at any point, while the *EE* clearly does.

§5.1.4 – Interim Conclusion: Internal References

The results of our survey of the internal cross-references in Aristotle's ethical texts are fairly conclusive. The *AE* frequently refers both back and forward to the *EE* on all three of the topics we've discussed, and both the early and later *EE* books often refer to the *AE*.

The *AE* and *NE* show a much weaker connection. The *AE* does not refer to *NE* VIII-X, nor do *NE* VIII-IX refer to the *AE*. The passages in *NE* I-IV that could satisfy the *AE* back-references are met as well or better by *EE* I-III. And of three possible forward references to the *AE* in *NE* I-IV, two are obvious interpolations, and one can be plausibly read as reference to later in the same book. So at best there is one possible reference that can serve as evidence that the *AE* belongs in the *NE*, and even this reference is disputable. This does not prove conclusively that the *AE* was not meant to be part of the *NE*; even a complete absence of textual evidence one way and an abundance to the contrary could not do so. But it does make this conclusion more likely than the alternative, because if the *AE* were written as part of the *NE*, or even if the already written *AE* were revised to be included in the *NE*, with the latter written around it, we would expect more textual connections between the two than we actually see. Hence I submit that the appropriate conclusion to draw, especially in light of the contradictions between the *AE* and *NE* we've already canvassed, is that the *AE* was not meant to be part of the *NE*.

There is one more source of evidence that supports this conclusion: the summarizing remarks that begin *NE* VIII.1 and X.6. VIII.1 begins as follows: "After these matters it would come next to go through a discussion about friendship. For it is a kind of virtue or is accompanied by virtue, and moreover it is most necessary for life" (1155^a3-5). I read the γὰρ in the second sentence as suggesting something like "we have just discussed virtue, and friendship is closely related to virtue." This is not a natural way of putting things if the *AE* books come just before *NE* VIII. But this transitional sentence would be quite

appropriate if it followed the last undisputed *NE* book, *NE IV*, which was in fact about moral virtue.⁵⁷⁶

X.6 makes a new start by first summarizing the entire treatise to that point. It reads “Having spoken of matters regarding virtue and friendship and pleasure, it remains to go through a discussion, in outline, of *eudaimonia*, since we stipulate it as the end of human affairs” (1176^a30-32). This summary is exhaustive of the *NE* books, but disregards much of *AE II-III*. It is possible to think that “matters regarding virtue” includes both moral and intellectual virtue, in which case *AE I* and *II* could conceivably be included. But even if we read this reference broadly, it is difficult to see how it would include *AE III*. Now of course it is possible that Aristotle simply took for granted that he did not need to mention every topic covered so far in the *NE*. But we have two competing hypotheses here that must be treated on their own terms. Given that the X.6 summary captures the undisputed books perfectly, but not the *NE* and *AE* together, the more plausible hypothesis is that, read literally, X.6 was not meant to refer to the *AE* because it did not belong with the undisputed *NE* books.

The final book of the *EE* does not give us the same kind of survey of previous topics that the *NE* does, so it is difficult to make a direct comparison. But as we’ve seen, *EE VII* and *VIII* both contain a number of explicit appeals to the *AE*. Moreover, the transition between *AE III* and *EE VII* is much smoother than between *AE III* and *NE VIII*: the latter is not simply awkward, as we’ve just seen, but also redundant, since *AE III* ends with an

⁵⁷⁶ *NE X.1* also starts with a justification for the topic it introduces, but this justification is an independent argument for the importance of pleasure. It is, however, noteworthy that, as I mentioned above, at no point does X.1-5 mention an earlier discussion of pleasure.

announcement that a discussion of friendship will follow and *EE* VIII begins without a second set of introductory remarks. In this respect *EE* VIII resembles *AE* I, which also starts the discussion directly, though *EE* III and *NE* IV both end with an announcement that justice is the next topic to be discussed.

As I've already indicated, none of the material surveyed in this chapter so far can show conclusively that the *AE* doesn't belong with the *NE*: it is possible that Aristotle for whatever reason never thought to refer to either text when writing the other, just as it is possible that he contradicted himself on some of the fundamental concepts of his ethical theory. But this is a remote possibility, far less likely and less satisfying than other options. Our survey does show that there is no conclusive evidence that requires us to include the *AE* in the *NE* either. Hence the textual evidence supports, or at the very least is insufficient to overturn, the conclusion reached in the last two chapters as well: the *AE* does not belong in the *NE*, either as an original constituent or as a part the *NE* was written to incorporate.

§5.2 – THE CONSTITUTION OF THE *NE*

Given the doctrinal conflicts between the *NE* and *AE* on *nous* and divinity, and the absence of cross-references to yoke the texts together, the picture that emerges is that the *AE* was never supposed to be part of the *NE*: they were not written together, the *AE* was not edited to be inserted in the *NE* later, and the *NE* was not written to incorporate the *AE*. If this is right, then it is possible that the undisputed *NE* books form a single, apparently complete treatise on their own. In what remains of this chapter I will defend this conclusion from possible objections.

§5.2.1 – *NE* vs. *AE*

The first objection to consider here is that the contradiction between the *NE* and *AE* is really a contradiction between *NE* X.7-8 and the rest of the *NE*, which commentators take to include the *AE*.⁵⁷⁷ If this is right, then we cannot infer that the *AE* doesn't belong with the undisputed *NE* books. It is also possible that *NE* I-X.6, 9 form a treatise including the *AE*, and that X.7-8 was the mistaken insertion.

There are two main reasons why this objection is not plausible. First, the *NE* doctrine that is inconsistent with the *AE* books runs throughout the *NE*; it is not found only in *NE* X.7-8. For instance, the three-part model of the soul is found in the initial discussion of the soul in *NE* I.13, the discussion of voluntary action and choice in III.1-5, and the discussion of self-love in IX.4-9. Divinity plays an important role not only in X.7-8, but in setting up the criteria for *eudaimonia* in I.7-12. The identification of the self with *nous* is introduced in *NE* IX, not in X.7-8. And many of the properties of contemplative activity are introduced in X.1-5. So, at least on the topic of *nous* and its role in *eudaimonia*, the undisputed *NE* books all express the same view, and so they are all inconsistent with the *AE* on these matters. Second, and relatedly, *NE* X.7-8 relies on these earlier books to make its arguments; it is not a free-standing lecture. X.6-8 complete the project of evaluating

⁵⁷⁷ Ackrill (1974), p. 15-17, 29-33, Annas (1993), p. 216 n. 658, Cooper (1987), pp. 190-90, Keyt (1983), pp.

Nussbaum (1986), pp. 373-377. Hardie (1965) thinks that the view of *NE* X.7-8 is inconsistent with *NE* I, but this is because of a confusion that occurs throughout the work rather than having two discrete, incompatible views in different places; his (1979) discussion makes *NE* I and X more consistent. Lawrence (1993) argues that the difference between X.7-8 and the rest of the work is one of emphasis: the former uses a different kind of ideal than the latter, but they are not inconsistent. Moline (1983) argues that X.7-8 are inconsistent with the rest of the work, but it belongs anyway, because Aristotle was ironically exaggerating a position to the point of absurdity. I cannot see how this interpretation can be made plausible; see Broadie (2003) for a partial rejoinder.

candidates for the chief good against the criteria of I.7-13, with X.6 (drawing on X.1-5) arguing that pleasure doesn't qualify, and X.6-8 together that moral virtue doesn't qualify while contemplation does. But these criteria had to be introduced and explained elsewhere: X.7-8 refers back to this discussion and only applies the criteria rather than discussing them on their own terms. Likewise, X.7-8 relies on the pleasure chapters for their explication of different kinds of activity, the friendship books for its conception of person as *nous*, and the books on virtue for the material necessary to show why practical activity isn't the chief good. So neither X.7-8 nor the other *NE* books can be so easily removed from one another as this objection suggests.

We can appeal to these same considerations to anticipate a response in defense of this objection. One could reply that X.7-8 is not simply an insertion, but one which displaced the original final chapters of the *NE* where Aristotle would have endorsed a view that is consistent with the *AE*. In particular, we might expect this hypothesized original *NE* conclusion to endorse an inclusivist conception of *eudaimonia* more in line with how many commentators read *NE* I. This specific suggestion is only plausible to the extent that the early *NE* books support inclusivism, and we saw in §2.3 that this is not the case: the more plausible reading of *NE* I.7-12 is that they do not endorse inclusivism, either leaning against or, at best, remaining neutral in advance of a more detailed look at the leading candidates for the chief good. And it is hard to see how an inclusivist conclusion could fit into the *NE*, since the criteria from *NE* I rule out moral virtue as the chief good. Hence the suggestion that the *NE* would have originally had a different ending is unmotivated, especially given the many positions in X.7-8 that are found throughout the earlier books.

These considerations show that we cannot resolve the problem of the conflict between the *NE* and *AE* by jettisoning *NE* X.7-8. The *AE* is inconsistent with the undisputed *NE* books as a whole, not just their last few chapters. But there is also a worry from the other direction: some scholars have argued that X.7-8 are inconsistent with other parts of the undisputed *NE*. If this is the case, then the *NE* would appear not to be a proper treatise at all, but rather a loose collection of independent lectures, more akin to the *Politics*, or perhaps even the *Metaphysics*, than to Aristotle's more unified works.⁵⁷⁸ More specifically, what we call the *NE* would contain no less than six separate works: an incomplete investigation of *eudaimonia* found in *NE* I (possibly with I.9-12 as a separate work), an investigation of moral virtue in *NE* II-IV (possibly with III.1-5 as a separate work), the *AE*, an investigation of friendship in *NE* VIII-IX, an investigation of pleasure in X.1-5, and then a second, distinct investigation of *eudaimonia* in X.7-8 and possibly X.9.⁵⁷⁹

I think this view is unmotivated, because *NE* X.7-8 and the other books are not in fact inconsistent. We will address specific claims to the contrary below. But first we should notice just what this view is committed to. First, it effectively dissolves the *NE* as a major work, leaving the *EE* (including the *AE*), as Aristotle's only unified, substantive discussion of *Ethics*. Though fans of the *EE* might be pleased to see it promoted in status as a result, it would be unfortunate to subject the *NE* to this fate if we can avoid it. Second, this view would have to choose between either allowing that many of the *NE* books are only

⁵⁷⁸ Annas (1993), p. 216 n. 658 endorses this view.

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. Pakaluk (2011), p. 24, though Pakaluk takes *NE* I to be merely an introduction, and includes *AE* I-II in the II-IV discussion of virtues while making *AE* III a separate treatise. Note that Pakaluk thinks the *NE* has been edited to unify all these sections, and that the *AE* were originally written for the *EE*.

incomplete fragments, or positing several missing texts to complete them, e.g. a missing ending of *NE* I and a missing beginning of *NE* X.7-8. Neither of these options are very attractive. This is not to say that this view is impossible, but it does suggest that it should not be proposed glibly, but rather only as a last resort.

Thankfully, I think we can avoid these consequences, by showing that the undisputed *NE* books form a single complete treatise. To do this, I will engage with the most comprehensive account of possible conflicts between *NE* X.7-8 and other *NE* books, from Nussbaum (1977).⁵⁸⁰ Nussbaum gives eight reasons for thinking X.7-8 is an outlier, and I will argue that none of these reasons are persuasive.

We can organize Nussbaum's observations into four groups. The first group concerns whether the *NE* is inclusivist. Nussbaum argues (using her numbering), that (1) the *EE* and the *Magna Moralia* are both inclusivist, so we should expect the *NE* to agree, and (2) *AE* II argues that *sophia* is a part of *eudaimonia* rather than its sole constituent, and so implicitly entails inclusivism. I argued earlier that the *EE* and *AE* do in fact endorse an inclusivist conception of *eudaimonia*, so we can agree with Nussbaum on that score. But this does not entail that the *NE* should be read likewise. The implicit premise behind (1) and (2) is that *ceteris paribus* we should prefer a reading of Aristotle that minimizes contradictions between works. I grant that this is one way of reading Aristotle charitably. But it is not the only way. As we saw in the last two chapters, the *EE* and *AE* disagree with

⁵⁸⁰ A somewhat similar case is made by Sullivan (1977), who raises some of the same points as Nussbaum. But Sullivan's thesis is that when properly understood *NE* X.7-8 is consistent with the rest of the ethics, though it shows a preoccupation with Platonic thought that leads to apparent tensions and differences in emphasis.

the *NE* on a number of points; to interpret these texts otherwise would be to disregard either the plain meaning of the text or, when ambiguous, the most plausible reading. This would also be uncharitable. So we cannot presume from the outset that *any* set of texts must cohere, especially not in the face of evidence to the contrary. Rather, we have to go point by point to see whether the appropriate thing to do is accept the conflict or try to avoid it. In the cases we've seen thus far, the appropriate thing to do is to accept that the *AE* and *NE* conflict.⁵⁸¹

The next group of points Nussbaum raises involves the role of goods in *eudaimonia*. Nussbaum argues that (3) in the earlier *NE* books things other than contemplation are labeled as good for their own sakes, while X.7-8 says that only contemplation is⁵⁸², and (4) given that there is more than one intrinsic value, *eudaimonia* will be a second-order composite of these goods rather than a single activity as X.7-8 argues. To see why (3) is unpersuasive, we need only revisit the distinction between allotelic and autotelic ends. Both are intrinsically valuable, but only autotelic ends are *only* intrinsically valuable: allotelic ends are pursued for their own sakes and for the sake of something further. So it is no objection to X.7-8 to argue that things other than contemplation are intrinsically valuable, because X.7-8 allows this. What X.7-8 argues, and which is nowhere rejected in the rest of

⁵⁸¹ Not to mention, there is something odd in Nussbaum's strategy of arguing both that (i) we should read obviously distinct texts (and if the *MM* is not written by Aristotle, distinct authors) as being consistent across works, while (ii) rejecting as inconsistent two chapters that otherwise appear to be integrated into a single text. Once we grant that some inconsistency is on the table, it is difficult to appeal to broad principles of interpretation to minimize inconsistency. That is, it would make sense, if we were to argue that all of the *NE*, *EE*, *AE*, and *MM* can be made to cohere on the grounds that we should avoid attributing inconsistency to an author if possible. But it does not make sense to argue that we should assume consistency in one place on methodological grounds and then reject consistency elsewhere, as Nussbaum apparently does.

⁵⁸² Nussbaum's point (3) also discusses *philia*, which we will return to below.

the *NE*, is that only contemplation is autotelic. Point (4) is also unpersuasive, because it relies on a misreading of *NE I*. Nussbaum errs here on two counts: she is incorrect that the self-sufficiency criterion entails inclusivism, and she is wrong that “Nothing in Book I implies that *eudaimonia* is a single activity”.⁵⁸³ We’ll return to self-sufficiency when discussing Nussbaum’s other points below, so for now I will focus on the rest of *NE I*. As we saw when discussing the criteria for the chief good in §2.3, several criteria suggest that the chief good will be a single thing. The finality criterion says that the chief good is the most final of more than one autotelic ends, if there is more than one. This criterion singles out one of the first-order goods under discussion as most final. The functional activity criterion likewise picks out a single activity: if there is more than one virtue, then our functional activity will be in accordance with the single best one. And of course Aristotle concludes in *NE I.8* that “these, or the single best one of them (μίαν τούτων τὴν ἀρίστην), we say is *eudaimonia*” (1099^a29-31). So contrary to Nussbaum’s assertion, there are several places in *NE I* that imply that *eudaimonia* is a single activity.

This brings us to the third group of Nussbaum’s points, which appeal to specific criteria from *NE I* that she alleges conflict with X.7-8. In addition to point (4), where Nussbaum argues that the self-sufficiency criterion entails inclusivism, she also argues that (5) the self-sufficiency criterion rules out a solitary life, while the contemplative life is solitary, and (6) the functional activity criterion suggests a life of practical reason, while

⁵⁸³ Nussbaum (1986), p. 376.

X.7-8 interprets our function in terms of theoretical reason.⁵⁸⁴ These points also rely on a tendentious reading of *NE I*. The self-sufficiency criterion, unlike the finality or functional activity criteria, does not entail an inclusivist conception of *eudaimonia*. For one, this criterion can be met by more than one chief good: the self-sufficiency criterion makes no use of a superlative that would point to a single chief good at the expense of others, and it is possible that more than one good could, on its own, make life choiceworthy. The inclusivist reading of the criterion, by contrast, entails that it is *a priori* that only one good is self-sufficient, namely a second-order set of all first-order goods.

And second, this conception of the chief good is independently implausible, as we discussed at length in §2.3.1-2. It would be a mistake to saddle Aristotle with this conception in *NE I*, let alone *NE X*. Nor does the self-sufficiency criterion entail a solitary life. Aristotle is explicit in *NE X* that the happy person, *qua* biological human compound, will live with friends, and that friends can even make contemplation easier. What he denies is not that happiness includes friends, but rather that friendship is a constituent of *eudaimonia*. But there are other ways of including goods in the happy life than constitution, for example as preconditions. So Nussbaum simply misunderstands the *NE X* position here; the correct reading is perfectly compatible with *NE I*, which also concedes that self-sufficiency doesn't entail a solitary life.

As for point (6), we saw when discussing the functional activity criterion that Aristotle is silent in *NE I.7* about the kind of rational activity involved in the human

⁵⁸⁴ Nussbaum says little about this view in her (1986), but points us to Nussbaum (1995) where the function argument is discussed in more detail; see especially pp. 110-21.

function. So we cannot draw the conclusion that the human function is practical activity from the discussion there. Nussbaum has a more plausible basis in *NE* I.13, which distinguishes the rational and quasi-rational parts of the soul in terms of their practically rational abilities. But, as we saw in §2.5.3 and throughout §3, Aristotle thinks of the self as *nous*, and ascribes both theoretical and practical rationality to this single part of the soul. And the excellence of theoretical rationality is better than the excellence of practical rationality, so this must be the human function according to the criterion as outlined in *NE* I.7. The distinction between human function and divine function does not help here: divinity is an important conception throughout the *NE*, including in the discussion of all seven criteria in *NE* I, and Aristotle's position (in *NE* IX as well as X) is that human nature is essentially divine.

Before moving on to Nussbaum's final two arguments that *NE* X.7-8 are inconsistent with the other *NE* books, we should pause to note that other commentators have also seen a tension between *NE* I and X's treatment of self-sufficiency. Curzer (1990) argues that Aristotle deploys two different understandings of self-sufficiency between the *NE*'s first and last books, arguing "In I 7 self-sufficiency is a property of happiness, but in X 6-8 it is a property of the happy person".⁵⁸⁵ But the reading of self-sufficiency we saw in §2.3.2 can apply equally well in both books. For in both places self-sufficiency is most directly a property of the chief good, and only indirectly a property of a life or a person.

⁵⁸⁵ Curzer (1990), p. 423. I should note, however, that Curzer merely concludes that *NE* X is a "reconsideration" of the *NE* I treatment (p. 432), rather than being flatly incompatible with it. Burger (2008,), pp. 199-201 makes roughly the same point, adding that *NE* I and X have slightly different conceptions of finality as well.

That is, the chief good will have a property of making that life choiceworthy when being included in a life with the requisite external goods necessary to live a minimal human life. And the chief good, as we learn from other criteria, will be a kind of activity. Contemplation, as an activity, can be included in a minimally provisioned human life without additional goods that are not necessary for life but are necessary for the activity. Morally virtuous activity, by contrast, cannot be so added: it can only occur in a life if we also add a second category of goods, which life does not require but virtuous activity does.

A person, on the other hand, is not self-sufficient (Aristotle explicitly denies a human can lead a solitary life in both books), but rather self-sufficient to the extent that they live a life directed towards the chief good, contemplation. Again, the point of self-sufficiency, which Aristotle makes clear in *NE* I.7, is not that an activity requires more or less goods; rather, it is the subtly different point about what background context is needed for a good to make a life choiceworthy. Put another way, the value of contemplation is not dependent on external goods the way the value of morally virtuous activity is. So the conclusion we should draw from reading *NE* X is that Aristotle may engage in changes in emphasis there, but there is no change in doctrine.⁵⁸⁶

So much, then, for self-sufficiency as a point of contrast between *NE* X.7-8 and earlier books. We can now return to Nussbaum's list of possible inconsistencies. The final

⁵⁸⁶ This is more in line with how Brown (2014) reads the passage. He also sees two conceptions of self-sufficiency in the *NE*, but he sees Aristotle vacillating between them throughout the work. Brown allows that these two explanations could be explained developmentally, citing Nussbaum as an example of this view (p. 132 n. 41). But he also allows for other possible explanations including that Aristotle is working with an unsteady conception of human nature (p. 132 n. 42). Obviously I think the second option is more promising, though I would prefer to say that Aristotle has two distinct conceptions of human nature without a clear way to express it rather than saying he has a single unsteady conception.

group concerns intellect and divinity. Nussbaum argues that (7) Aristotle vacillates between identifying the self with our theoretical intellect and our practical rationality, and (8) in *NE IX* Aristotle argues it is incoherent to aspire to the life of a god, which is exactly the life book X enjoins. Point (7) we can quickly dispatch: as we've discussed at length in previous chapters, the *NE* does not distinguish between theoretical and practical intellect, and so Nussbaum's reading of *nous* in *NE IX* requires projecting the *AE* account onto the *NE*, which would be question-begging and, as we've discussed at length, inaccurate.

Point (8) is slightly more complicated, but ultimately not a problem either. Nussbaum thinks that Aristotle's claims that someone becoming a god would end their friendships entails that it is "incoherent to aspire to the good life of the god: for this involves wishing for a life that cannot be lived by a being of the same sort as we are".⁵⁸⁷ Nussbaum does not explicate how this argument is supposed to work, so it is not clear exactly what link there is between Aristotle's claims and her conclusion. Aristotle certainly does not think that wishing for the impossible is incoherent; to the contrary, he gives the example of wishing for immortality (*ἀθανασία*, 1111^b20-23) as an example to demarcate it from *prohairesis*, which cannot be of the impossible, in *NE III.2*. Aristotle's call to act as an immortal as much as we can in X.7 can be read in the same light, as something to aspire to and approximate but not fully attain.

In any case, there are two problems even with the cursory version of Nussbaum's argument. One problem is that neither passage makes the point she takes it to make. The

⁵⁸⁷ Nussbaum (1986), p. 376.

first passage Nussbaum refers to (1159^a1-11) says that a friend who became a god would cease being a friend. But this passage occurs in the context of discussing the difference between equal and proportional friendships. Aristotle argues in *NE* VIII.6 that friendship requires equality: between two good people equal in character, or between two people who equally exchange pleasure and/or utility. But there is another kind of friendship, discussed in VIII.7, which relies on proportionality instead of equality. The point here is that, once two people become sufficiently different on some metric, they cannot remain friends.

The chief concern here is that a good person can lose a virtue friend if the friend lapses in their moral character. But the pattern applies more broadly, and Aristotle singles out gods and kings as two examples of entities who excel others in status and so cannot be friends with their subordinates.⁵⁸⁸ Aristotle uses this point to address a sophistic puzzle, whether one could wish for a friend to become a god. Aristotle answers in the negative, because doing so would result in the loss of the friendship. But the point Aristotle is making here must be one of quantitative difference, since he is dealing with a sliding scale of friendship-grounding qualities like virtue. The worry is about gaining/losing friends at some indistinct point along the scale. The gods surpass us on this scale, but their divinity does not make them different in kind from us. This is because humans are divine as well, just not as divine as gods. And the distinction between literal gods and lower divinities is one Aristotle maintains in *NE* X.7-8. Here there is a contrast between what literal gods are like (e.g. they don't engage in any moral activity), and what humans are like. We can act

⁵⁸⁸ See Bodéüs (2000), pp. 142-58, Flannery (2008) and Timmermann (1995) for a more thorough discussion of this topic.

like immortals, but only to some extent. If there is a contrast between gods and lesser divinities in *NE X*, then these chapters would be consistent with a similar contrast between gods and humans in *NE IX*. In other words, though there may be a difference of emphasis here, there is no contradiction.

The second of Nussbaum's passages (1166^a18-23) is more cryptic, saying only that (i) no one chooses the whole world in exchange for becoming someone else, to which Aristotle adds (ii), "for even now God has the good". This parenthetical remark seems to indicate a limiting case: God already has the good, and so has no reason to wish to become something else in order to get the good. At best, this remark is too obscure to serve as a basis for Nussbaum's suggestion to remove *NE X.7-8* from the *NE* to prevent contradictions with the *AE*. If anything, the remark seems to treat humans and God similarly rather than distinguish them, since neither would choose the good on the condition of becoming something else. Moreover, Aristotle immediately adds that, when he says that one wishes the good for what one is, he means to refer to *nous*, the very thing that makes us divine. So this passage is, all in all, not a help to Nussbaum's case.

The second problem with Nussbaum's case is simpler to see. Grant for the sake of argument that my reading of these two passages is wrong, and they do provide evidence that Aristotle thinks one cannot be friends with the gods. This would show a tension between *NE VIII-IX* and *NE X*, since the latter says that the gods care about at least some humans, the ones who lead a contemplative life and are therefore most akin to the gods; these people are specifically labelled as "most god-loved" (θεοφιλέστατος, 1179^a24). But it would also show a tension with the friendship books and *NE I*, since I.9 apparently agrees

with X.8 that *eudaimonia* is god-given in the sense that *eudaimonia* is most divine and godlike. And worse, there is a tension within *NE* VIII-IX themselves. Aristotle explicitly mentions friendships with gods on several occasions, (1160^b25-26, 1162^a4-5). Friendship with gods is also entailed by Aristotle's defense of friendship in *NE* IX.9, which relies on the value of reflexive noetic activity of others *qua* other selves. The gods engage in this activity as well, and indeed do so more and better than we do, so they would be especially valuable as other selves. The fact that here Aristotle treats the self as the part of the soul that contemplates just goes to show that Aristotle takes humans and gods to be importantly similar even in the books Nussbaum takes to be more in tension with *NE* X.7-8.

There is one further bit of evidence I haven't yet addressed that ties *NE* X.7-8 to the earlier *NE* books. We discussed in the last section that the survey of previously discussed topics that begins X.6 does not obviously refer to the *AE*, listing only the virtues, friendship and pleasure (i.e. *NE* II-IV and VIII-IX) without mentioning justice, the intellectual virtues, or continence and incontinence. The rest of the opening paragraph of X.6 gives a quick but accurate summary of the main points of *NE* I-II, or at least the points necessary to argue against pleasure as the chief good in what remains of the chapter. There are also important back-references in *NE* X.7-8. The argument in favor of contemplation as the chief good begins with the assertion that this position "would appear to be in agreement with what was said earlier and with the truth" (1177^a18-19). As the argument proceeds Aristotle mentions "the aforementioned self-sufficiency" (λεγομένη αὐτάρκεια,

1177^a27).⁵⁸⁹ He also alludes to a discussion of the most natural pleasures from X.1-5 (1178^a4-5), a discussion which itself relies on I.7's function argument. *NE* X.9 also starts with a survey of previous topics, namely “these matters (τούτων) and the virtues, and furthermore friendship and pleasure” (1179^a33-34), using the same language that begins X.6.⁵⁹⁰ So these four chapters are all textually connected to each other, and to the preceding books of the *NE*.⁵⁹¹

We see, then, that Nussbaum's case for excising *NE* X.7-8 from the undisputed *NE* is unpersuasive. Rather, these chapters are thoroughly integrated into the *NE*, depending not only on books VIII-IX, but also the early *NE* books. The integration of the undisputed *NE* books, and their separation from the *AE*, suggests that *NE* I-IV and VIII-X together form a complete treatise. In the next section I will argue that this is correct.

§5.2.2 – The *NE* as a Complete Treatise

The primary argument for the undisputed *NE* constituting a single complete text is that there is a single strand of argument running through the *NE* books, with not only references forward and back as the argument progresses, but crucial premises that either

⁵⁸⁹ This point is a further piece of evidence against Curzer (1990)'s reading of X.7-8. Curzer acknowledges Aristotle's back-references here, but still insists on a distinction between the criteria Aristotle says he is using and the criteria he actually uses (p. 423 n. 7, 426 n. 11). But this reading would mean that Aristotle tried and failed to apply his own criteria from *NE* I while he was thinking of doing so in those very terms, and this is, it needn't be said, an uncharitable way to read Aristotle. The reading of the seven criteria I proposed in §2.3 were defended independently there, and work just as well in X.7-8, so there is no need to resort to Curzer's reading.

⁵⁹⁰ Nussbaum (1986), p. 377 complains that “these matters” is “a thin allusion indeed to the climax of the whole work”, but I see nothing wrong with this vague reference given that the referent occupies the immediately preceding chapters.

⁵⁹¹ See Lockwood (2014) for a more thorough discussion of this topic. Lockwood argues, convincingly in my opinion, that *NE* I and X exhibit elements of ring composition, and that the same pattern can be seen within book X.

complete an earlier argument or furnish a later one. I have already implicitly given this argument in my discussion of the *NE* in §2, so I won't belabor the point here.

Instead, I will address two objections dealing with possible gaps in the *NE* which could be filled with material from the *AE*. Though it is no threat to my thesis if it should turn out that the *NE* as we have it is missing a book or books, whether or not they correspond to the topics of the *AE*, it would be simpler if we were not forced to speculate on missing books. So I will argue that whatever gaps may appear to exist in the *NE* as we have it can be bridged. The first of these concerns justice. For a book nominally about *politikē*, one might think it a strange omission if the *NE* did not contain some treatment of justice, the major political virtue. I am not sure how plausible this assumption really is: I see no *a priori* reason why an ethical text has to be comprehensive, and even if the full *AE* were included there are still topics omitted that we might expect Aristotle to include. Moreover, *NE* X.9 points forward to a discussion of politics, and Aristotle could have easily planned on addressing justice there instead. But set these concerns aside, and grant for the sake of argument that, all things being equal, we should expect the *NE* to contain a discussion of justice. MY response is that it does, even without *AE* I. This discussion is found in *NE* VIII-IX's treatment of friendship.

The *NE*'s two-book discussion of friendship is, of course, longer than the *EE*'s single book on the same, despite the overall structural similarity between the two. One reason for this is that the *EE* in general tends to be more cursory, taking for granted the details of arguments the *NE* presents more laboriously. But the two treatments of friendship differ in a more substantive way: the *NE* goes into much more detail about the connections

between friendship and justice, and indeed discusses justice on its own terms. The *EE*, by contrast, only deals with justice in a more passing way, and almost always subservient to another topic.

I want to warn at the outset against making too much of the differences between the *NE* and *EE* on this score. The friendship books of both treatises start with a survey of *endoxa* that include the observation that friendship and justice are extremely closely related (1155^a22-28, 1234^b20-31). Both identify concord (ἡ ὁμόνοια) as political friendship (1167^b2-3, 1241^a30-33). Both rely on a distinction between equality and proportionality to explain varying standards of appropriateness for relationships (1158^b29-35, 1241^b32-40). Both draw analogies between civic and personal relationships to illuminate each of these (*NE* VIII.9-11, *EE* VII.9-10). But even so, the *NE* goes far beyond the *EE* on this topic, certainly far enough to satisfy whatever need a book on *politikē* would have to discuss justice.

We can start with the places where the *NE* and *EE* diverge; in these cases, the *NE* makes justice much more central to the discussion, and spends more time discussing it. We've already mentioned one relevant case, where the texts appeal to the difference between equality and proportionality. The *EE* discussion here is relatively brief, taking for granted (ἐπεὶ δὲ, 1241^b33) the distinction and quickly applying it to show how political and familial relationships are analogous. This distinction is introduced a few pages earlier, where Aristotle explicitly refers (1238^b20-21) to the distinction between arithmetical and proportional equality in *AE* I.2-5 (see also 1242^b5-21). The *NE* treatment, by contrast, is much more involved. We briefly discussed Aristotle's treatment of equal versus

proportional friendships above, so I'll only note here that the *NE* version introduces the distinction as if for the first time, discussing equal friendships first and then adding "But there is another kind of friendship in accordance with excess" (1158^b11-12), as if the reader had not yet been introduced this distinction. He goes on to explain that proportional equality is primary in justice, while arithmetical equality is primary in friendship (1158^b29-34), and at no point refers to or utilizes the *AE* view. Consequently, the *NE* spends much more time explaining, illustrating, and applying this distinction than the *EE* does.

The same phenomenon applies more broadly in both treatises' discussion of the analogies between political constitutions and interpersonal relationships. The *EE* spends only 15 lines discussing these analogues (1241^b24-40), and some of these lines reiterate the arithmetical/proportional slide just discussed. The *NE*, by contrast, spends two chapters (VIII.10-11) outlining his theory of three constitutions and their deviations, and the interpersonal relationships that correspond to them. Likewise, the *EE* spends only a few lines making the claim that there are as many kinds of justice and partnership as there are kinds of friendship, claiming that the differences between them are remote (1241^b10-17). The *NE* spends almost three times this length, the whole of VIII.9, focusing on the same topic throughout. In both cases, this material is presented as if for the first time in the *NE*, while the *EE* depicts it as common knowledge.

In addition to these differences, *NE* VIII-IX also address topics that *EE* VII doesn't discuss. The *NE* spends most of IX.1 talking about contracts, and much of IX.7 with creditors and debtors. The *EE* only mentions this topic in passing (1241^a37-39). Likewise, the *NE*'s focus on the difference between moral and legal friendship in VIII.13 is on utility

friendships, and in particular the legal friendships of utility that involve exchanging resources. The *EE*, on the other hand, mentions this legal form of friendship (1242^b31-39), but focuses instead on the moral side of the divide. The *NE* also frequently describes personal friendships in political terms (1166^b18-22, 1168^b25-29), where the *EE* does not. In general, the *NE*'s focus on political/legal relationships is balanced by the *EE*'s preoccupation with the relationship between parts of the soul or between the soul and other entities (e.g. the body or tools) (e.g. 1240^a15-21, 1240^b225-35, 1241^b17-24, 1242^a15-19, 1242^a28-31).

What all this shows is that *NE* VIII-IX are much more focused than *EE* VII is on political and legal relationships that would be of interest to the politician, in addition to the interpersonal relationships that both treatises also address. This has two implications. First, the sort of information that we would expect to find in a work on *politikē* is still present in *NE* even in the absence of the *AE* books. Granted it is not a complete, self-contained treatment of justice, but it is enough of a treatment to mitigate the absence of the *AE* I account.⁵⁹² And since the *NE* makes contemplation the primary concern of *politikē* anyway, we should not expect more information on justice than is necessary for the promotion of contemplation in the polis. Second, the differences between the *NE* and *EE* on this matter

⁵⁹² In his (1998) commentary on *NE* VIII-IX, Pakaluk struggles to find a meaningful role for the discussion of justice in the *NE* (he gives an overview at pp. 107-111, but the pattern is clear throughout his commentary on the relevant chapters). If I am right that these chapters are meant to play a role something similar to the role *AE* I plays in the *EE*, then the function of justice in VIII-IX is less mysterious: Aristotle apparently thought justice did not merit a separate treatment, but also shouldn't be omitted entirely. The discussion of *philia* is a natural place to include it. This would allow us to read Aristotle's discussion of justice in a less discursive and redundant way, and would also go some distance toward excusing the otherwise cursory and undeveloped treatment of the topic.

show that the *EE* is once again tightly connected to the *AE* in content and in cross-references, while the *NE* operates as if the *AE* had not preceded it. This suggests not only that the *NE* did not contain the *AE*, but that it also did not contain a parallel book to *AE* I that has been lost. So at least regarding justice, there is no reason to think that the undisputed *NE* books form a complete treatise.

The second possible gap in the *NE* as we have it concerns contemplation. Briefly put, the issue is this. Shortly into *NE* X.7, Aristotle tells us “the activity in accordance with the proper virtue [of the most divine thing in us] would be complete *eudaimonia*. That this is contemplation, has been said” (1177^a16-18). The worry is that it has not been said in the undisputed *NE*. The only place where contemplation has been discussed at anything length is in *AE* II.⁵⁹³ So if this is the only place that fit this back-reference, we have an argument for including the *AE* with the *NE* after all. And if not, then there’s some reason to think the *NE* has lost a book corresponding to *AE* II.⁵⁹⁴

The first thing to note in response is that the *AE* cannot satisfy this reference, for the *AE* never specifies that contemplation is *eudaimonia*.⁵⁹⁵ Indeed, since as we’ve seen the *AE* endorses an inclusivist view of happiness, it would not say this. The closest that the *AE* comes to identifying contemplation with happiness is to say that the pleasure of contemplation is a proper pleasure rather than a foreign one, and therefore one which

⁵⁹³ Burnet (1900), p. 461. Reeve (2014a), p. 345 n. 836 concedes that no extant *NE* or *AE* passage satisfies the reference, but points to *NE* I.5 and *AE* II.7 and 12-13. See also Lockwood (2014), p. 358 n. 23.

⁵⁹⁴ Stewart (1892), p. 441 apparently takes this line, one which implies that *AE* II does not satisfy the reference. Stewart also suggests Aristotle has *NE* I.5 in mind.

⁵⁹⁵ Grant (1866), p. 335. Grant also suggests Aristotle might have been thinking of *NE* I.5, perhaps combined with I.13.

causes no pain (1152^b35-53^a2, 1153^a20-23). But these passages occur in *AE* III's discussion of pleasure, the section of the *AE* most likely not to belong to the *NE* (the same section, we should note, also observes that contemplation can be harmful to health (1153^a20), something the *NE* would likely not agree to). So even if there is a missing reference for the *NE*'s statement, it won't be in the *AE*.

Second, it isn't clear that the *NE* requires a referent for this line internally. This is for two reasons. First, as we saw in §2.2, Aristotle tells us that we will only get an account of the chief good in outline, an approach reiterated at the beginning of *NE* X.6 (1176^a30-32). So we do not need to get a full account of what contemplation is or how it works in order for the *NE* to meet its goal. Second, the fact that contemplation has been said to be happiness could have occurred elsewhere: εἴρηται does not always pick out an internal cross-reference. And we know of at least one work which satisfies this reference quite neatly, namely the *Protrepticus*. This early work of Aristotle's is very similar to the *NE* doctrine in many respects.⁵⁹⁶ In particular, it argues that happiness is constituted by contemplative activity (B85-87; cf. B27, B43-44, B69-70). If this is the work Aristotle had in mind, then we need not posit a second possible referent in the *NE* itself.

Third, while Aristotle doesn't explicitly say "Contemplation is *eudaimonia*" before X.7 in the *NE*, he does make a number of remarks in *NE* IX-X that are very close to this, which Aristotle may have been thinking of when composing the introductory remarks of

⁵⁹⁶ Broadie & Rowe (2002), pp. 441-42, Gauthier & Jolif (1958), pp. 876-78. On the *Protrepticus* and the *NE* more broadly, see Düring (1955), Hutchinson & Johnson (2014), Mansion (1960), and Walker (2010b).

X.7.⁵⁹⁷ As noted above, several commentators suggest *NE* I.5 as the referent, and we can concede this is a viable option. But I think there is another way of construing the passage which is more satisfying. The first thing we need to do is attend to the logical structure of the X.7 remark. The first sentence has the form ‘the x that is F will also be G ’, where in this case F is properly excellent activity and G is *eudaimonia*. The second sentence is usually taken as ‘ G is contemplation’. But the more plausible rendering, I submit, is ‘contemplation is F ’. That is, Aristotle is not asserting that contemplation is *eudaimonia*, but rather stating that contemplation is our proper excellent activity, from which it follows that it will also be *eudaimonia*. And Aristotle has already said that contemplation is our proper excellent activity, or at least come very close to saying it. For, as we saw in §2.6.2, contemplation satisfies the pleasantness criterion in virtue of its being our proper pleasure, i.e. the pleasure corresponding to our proper activity. And this position is defended in *NE* IX.5-6. Here Aristotle argues that each creature has a proper pleasure corresponding to its proper functional activity (1176^a3-5), and that for humans what is most pleasant will be what is pleasant by nature, i.e. pleasant to the good person (1176^a16-19). He concludes the section by arguing, “Whether there is one or many activities of the perfect (τελείου) and blessed man, the pleasures that complete these are said in the strict sense (κυρίως) to be the pleasures of man, and the remaining will be so secondarily or even lower, as will be the activities” (1176^a26-29); this ‘whether there is one or many’ formulation, as we’ve seen, tends to precede an argument for there being one rather than many.

⁵⁹⁷ Lockwood (2014) pp. 363-66 makes a similar observation about the reliance of *NE* X.7-8 on X.1-6, but uses it for a different purpose.

Two more pieces are required to complete this puzzle, both of which come from earlier chapters. Aristotle argues in X.4 that “thought and contemplation” (διάνοιαν καὶ θεωρίαν, 1174^b21), are especially pleasant, because “the most complete perception is most pleasant (ἡδίστη δ’ ἡ τελειοτάτη), and the most complete is the pleasure of a well-disposed faculty (ἡ τοῦ εὖ ἔχοντος) toward the most valuable (τὸ σπουδαιότατον) of its objects” (1174^b21-23). This shows us that contemplation is the most pleasant human activity, and if this is what our functional activity is, then contemplation will have been shown to be our functional activity. In the same vein, *NE* IX.9 argues, in a passage we’ve already discussed repeatedly, that reflective noetic activity is pleasant by nature to the good person, insofar as this is the activity of the good person’s self. This entails, again, that noetic activity will be our functional activity.

This suggests that we need not look beyond the *NE* for a referent to satisfies X.7’s claim that contemplation has already been said to be our functional activity, and therefore *eudaimonia*. If we take the claim to be that Aristotle has already told us that *eudaimonia* is contemplation, then we can look to another, earlier work rather than positing a missing book. If we take the claim to be that Aristotle has already said that contemplation is our functional activity, then we have this material close at hand in the preceding *NE* books. Either way, we need not take the *NE* as incomplete on this score, let alone as requiring the *AE* to complete it.

§5.3 – CONCLUSION

In this chapter I’ve argued that (i) the text of the *NE* does not refer to the *AE* in a way that requires us to include them in the same work, (ii) the *AE* does not refer to the *NE*

in a way that requires us to include them in the same work, (iii) the *AE* and *EE* do refer to each other in a way that requires us to include them in the same work, (iv) the inconsistency in doctrine we see between the *NE* and *AE* in terms of *nous* and divinity cannot be resolved by excising *NE* X.7-8 from the undisputed books, and (v) the undisputed *NE* books can be read together as a complete treatise without any gaps that the *AE* would be needed to fill. If this is right, then the scholarly conception of the *NE* requires a major rethink.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions: The *NE* and *EE* Revisited

In the preceding chapters we have looked in detail at the view presented in the *NE*, and at the relationship between the *AE* and the undisputed *NE* and *EE* books. We have said little about the *EE* on its own terms, and little about the relationship between the *NE* and *EE*. Understanding the *EE* itself is a large, separate project, which I cannot undertake here. But restoring the *AE* to its right place as *EE* IV-VI is a crucial first step in this project.

The relationship between the *NE* and the *EE* is also a major undertaking, which would at the very least require us to look closely at parallel arguments in both texts to see how they compare and to look at how well the *NE* and *EE* fit other works in the Aristotelian corpus. I've made some small gestures in this direction in §3 and §4, but this too requires much more work than can be done here.

But this does not mean that nothing can be said on the topic of how the *NE* and *EE* relate. I would like to conclude by briefly considering what consequences the results we have come to have for thinking about the place of the *NE* and the *EE* in Aristotle's thought. As I mentioned in §1.1-2, I am sympathetic to Kenny's argument, presented in Kenny (1978) and (1992), that the *EE* is later than the *NE*, and was meant to replace it as his considered view on ethics. I will not argue this claim here. What I will do instead is argue that Kenny's opponents are committed to this conclusion, given the principles they utilize in arguing for their own views of the *NE/EE* relation.

We can start with Jaeger. Jaeger's argument for an early date for the *EE* is based on the similarities he saw between the *EE* and the *Protrepticus* and in Plato's work. He writes,

The conclusion of the *Eudemian Ethics* is the *locus classicus* of theonomic ethics as taught by Plato in his later days. God is the measure of all things. In preserving this much from the wreck of the Idea-theory Aristotle believes he is retaining the abiding essence of Platonic morality, the notion of the absolute norm and of the metaphysical transcendence of the Good, which had given to the Platonist a new experience of God.... This first lecture on ethics exhales the religious fervour of his youthful Platonic faith. Against such an ethics of pure devotion to God the famous picture of the contemplative life in book ten of the *Nicomachean Ethics* fades, and becomes little more than an objective if idealized description of the life of the scholar devoted to research, rising at the end to the intuition of the ultimate force that guides the spheres.⁵⁹⁸

There are two strands of thought here. The first is that an Aristotelian text will be earlier to the extent that it agrees with Platonic thought. This is an unpersuasive way of thinking, as Owen showed when arguing that we could interpret Aristotle's latent Platonism as the result of a later reconsideration of his younger rebelliousness.⁵⁹⁹ But even by Jaeger's own lights there is little to say here: I agree that much of the *EE* is reminiscent of the *Philebus*, but since Jaeger attributes the view he finds in the *NE* to the *Timaeus*, his own work shows that Platonic thought is found throughout Aristotle's work to varying degrees.⁶⁰⁰ We have seen that the view of the *NE*, properly understood, is also quite Platonic in a way: it is essentially the *Republic* without the forms. That is, Aristotle posits a tripartite model of the soul, with a single rational part that both contemplates and commands, much like the *Republic*'s philosopher-kings. The virtues of the non-rational parts of the soul depend on the rational part being in charge in the right way, just as they do for Plato's soul.⁶⁰¹ So even

⁵⁹⁸ Jaeger (1948), p. 243.

⁵⁹⁹ Owen (1965)

⁶⁰⁰ See Jaeger (1948), pp.234-38 for the *Philebus*, p. 245 for the *Timaeus*.

⁶⁰¹ There are of course important differences between the *NE* and the *Republic*, most notably that the latter aims for happiness for the soul as a whole, understood as something like psychic health, while the latter

if we were to grant to Jaeger that Platonism indicates an early date, there is no reason to think the *EE* fares any differently on this score than the *NE* does.

Jaeger's second line of thought is a corollary of the first: Aristotle's earlier work will tend to be, in his words, more theonomic, while the later work will be more rationalistic. Again, there is no reason in principle to think this is right. But grant it for the sake of argument. We've seen that Jaeger gets the relative concern with divinity in the ethical works exactly backwards. It is the *NE*, not the *EE*, that is especially concerned with divinity. It is God that sets the standard for happiness and excellence in the *NE*, and it is the *NE* that "exhales the religious fervour of his youthful Platonic faith". Most notably, the concern with astronomy that Jaeger takes to be a more mature form of religious practice is found explicitly in the *AE* and *EE*, but not the *NE*. So on the principle Jaeger himself uses to decide which text is earlier and which more mature, it is the *EE* that should come out on top.

Rowe also argues that the *EE* is earlier than the *NE*, on many of the same grounds as Jaeger does. But Rowe is more careful in his argument, avoiding the blatant question-begging of assuming that the *AE* belongs only in the *NE* and then arguing that the *AE* is later. Rowe writes

In conclusion: in *EE*... the practical and the theoretical tend to merge into one another, and this is reflected in the close relation envisaged between speculative and practical thinking. But in *EN*, the distinction between the two spheres is complete. Ethics and the theoretical sciences no longer have anything in common, since their subject-matters are now established as being totally different in kind. Correspondingly, the rational faculty is now

focuses on the excellence of *nous*. But that is to be expected: no one would expect Plato and Aristotle to agree entirely.

divided into two; the φρόνησις of *EE* becomes the ἀρετή of one half, and σοφία is appropriated for that of the other.⁶⁰²

We've seen that Rowe's conclusion regarding *phronesis* in the undisputed books is far too strong: the *NE* and *EE* both use *phronesis* imprecisely in their early books, since they're engaged with common *endoxa*. The *NE* has only one passage which clearly treats *phronesis* as a separate intellectual virtue from *sophia*, and this passage is not without its problems; it also has passages where it does not distinguish between them, and one passage where it appears to locate *phronesis* outside the rational part of the soul. The *EE*, on the other hand, does clearly separate *phronesis* from *sophia* in its later books. More importantly, the *EE* and *AE* agree in positing two distinct rational parts of the soul with different objects and different powers, while the *NE* does not make this distinction, and is in fact committed to not making it. So, if we grant to Rowe that a more sophisticated model of the soul is evidence of later work, then he must agree on that basis that the *EE* is later than the *NE*.

This does not, of course, actually prove that the *NE* precedes the *EE*. But I am happy to rest content with confronting my interlocutors with a dilemma. If they accept in the abstract the principles that Jaeger and Rowe use to decide the relationship between the *NE* and *EE*, then the *NE* seems to be the less mature work. If we do not accept these principles, then the case favoring the *NE* over the *EE* never gets off the ground.

In any case, our main concern here has not been to worry about the chronology of Aristotle's ethical works, but rather to focus on finding the proper home of the *AE*. The result we have seen is that the *AE* belongs in the *EE*, while the *NE* is most likely a complete

⁶⁰² Rowe (1971), p. 72.

seven-book work without the *AE*. Any other questions about how the *NE* and *EE* relate will require their own careful and sustained analysis. But the first step in this larger project is determining what exactly the *NE* and *EE* actually are, i.e. which books constitute them. This is a project I hope to have at least started here; as Aristotle tells us in the *NE*, the start is more than half of the whole (1098^{b7}).

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