CHAPTER ONE: EUDAIMONIA

JONATHAN SWIFT, ‘Lines from Cadenus to Vanessa’:

For vices all have different ends,  
But virtue still to virtue tends.

JAMES BOSWELL, Life of Johnson, ætat. 72 (1781): ‘When I in a low-spirited fit, was talking to him with indifference of the pursuits which generally engage us in a course of action, and inquiring a reason for taking so much trouble; “Sir (said he, in an animated tone) it is driving on the system of life.”’

A. PLATO

I: INTRODUCTION

The contemporary student of moral philosophy who turns back to Greek ethics must often be refreshed by a sense of human reality. There are indeed great differences between our societies; yet, with a few exceptions (notably, the treatment of women and the acceptance of slavery), these are rather technological than ethical. As we read Plato and Aristotle (it is harder to form a sense of the other major writers on ethics, since they survive only in fragments), we are presented with a concrete picture of life that is conveyed with the use of psychological and ethical concepts that we largely share. Aristotle, it is true, is a fount of newly precise conceptions that are half-familiar, but in part hard to pin down and not easily expressible in our own terms. Yet, like early Plato at least, he remains close to everyday moral experience, and distant from the abstract ambitions of modern ethics. As we read the early Platonic dialogues, and Aristotle’s mature ethical writings, we are far from two ambitions characteristic of modern ethics: there is no focus upon the analysis of the nature of such colourlessly schematic notions as are conveyed by ‘value’, ‘obligation’, or ‘reason for action’; and there is no attempt to construct an ethical theory that could systematically determine their proper application. Instead, there is a concern with relatively specific conceptions of the virtues of character (such as courage, or temperance), and a focus upon the questions how these connect, and how they contribute to a choiceworthy life. The subject-matter of ethics so conceived is our everyday assessments of agents and options. It is neither something as metaphysical as the nature of value, nor as prescriptive as a decision procedure for action.

And yet we find at the heart of almost all Greek ethics a single concept whose content is elusive, and centrality puzzling. This is the concept of eudaimonia, commonly translated as ‘happiness’, though almost equally often with a warning that this may be misleading. How and to what extent the warning is needed may depend on how we think of happiness. Within modern ethical theory, it is familiar as the focal point of utilitarianism, which, in its classic form, proposes pleasure as at once the natural and the proper object of desire. Yet it is unclear exactly how happiness and pleasure relate. An increase in happiness is taken to involve an increase in
pleasure (or, more exactly, in the balance of pleasure over pain, or of more pleasure over less). Which is supposed to yield a quantitative rule: one option is better than another if it does more to increase happiness, in one of these ways. However, this is evidently a revisionary conception of happiness. On our actual conception, a certain course of action may give pleasure to an unhappy subject without making him happy: should it pursued as producing pleasure, or omitted as neither producing nor increasing happiness? Even if the subject is happy, is it evident that offering him, say, a chocolate cream makes him happier? Hardly; and yet this might be an amiable thing to do.

It may be wiser to set premature philosophizing aside, and reflect upon the ordinary connotations of ‘happiness’ before proposing a distinctive theory of what constitutes it. In our everyday usage, ‘happiness’ labels a state that is desirable for a human being, but uncertainly achievable and largely indeterminate. Kant complained, ‘The concept of happiness is such an indeterminate concept that, although every human being wishes to attain this, he can still never say determinately and consistently with himself what he really wishes and wills’ (1997: 28). In his view, the concept derives from experience, and cannot transcend our everyday conceptions. Yet these are multiple and partial, identifying various desiderabilia that are dubiously compatible: he instances riches without anxiety or envy, insight without discontent, health without temptation to excess. About common specifications Aristotle can complain very similarly: ‘Often even the same man identifies it [eudaimonia] with different things, with health when he is ill, with wealth when he is poor’ (Ethica Nicomachea [EN] 1.4.1095a23-5). And yet he supposes that eudaimonia is not just one of those things that everyone would like to have, but constitutes an intelligible and practicable goal in any agent’s life, and indeed (as I understand him) the ultimate goal of all his deliberate actions. He even proceeds to try to formulate a stable definition of eudaimonia fit to ground his ethical theory. So he does not agree with Kant that eudaimonia is a determinable that resists any consistent determinations. Rather, he believes that philosophy can make its determinable content more precise, and so clarify both its proper role in our thinking, and how it can take on acceptable determinations from context to context – not, however, that it is the task of ethical theory to ground those determinations.

What Plato provided, and Aristotle accepted, was a structure. Both identify eudaimonia with doing well, which for them takes on the distinctive sense of acting well. They take success in life to be primarily a matter of achieving that abstract goal. They agree that it forms the goal of action, and has no further goal beyond itself. ‘For the sake of eudaimonia’ becomes the final answer to a question ‘Why are you doing this?’ – though since whatever one did would have that final goal, this isn’t an answer that explains why one should do this rather than that. The kernel of this shared position is a certain view of choice: at least when he acts on deliberation, an agent chooses to do what he thinks is the thing to do. This tightly links decision to practical judgement. However, that is an entirely formal claim, and leaves the agent’s goals open. Perhaps he tries to identify and perform whatever is indeed the thing to do; but

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1 Dover (1974: 174) cites contexts, from history and oratory, in which eudaimonia, or eutuchia (‘good fortune’), effectively connote material prosperity, even when the speaker does not hold it, in the absence of peace of mind, to be choiceworthy. Elsewhere, it may connote social high standing. This evidences that tradition associated happiness more closely with external luck than philosophy was to do. Differing conceptions may evidence disagreement about universal values (cf. EN 1.4.1095a20-3). Variations may also derive from different contexts within which different values become transiently salient (as Aristotle notes at a23-5).
it doesn’t follow that doing that has any point or purpose in itself. Acting well adds to doing what it is the thing to do a teleology. Plato and Aristotle take it as given that eudaimonia is the end of human action, but need to bring out how this is an end worth achieving for its own sake. Merely insisting that no end can count as eudaimonia if it is pursued for some further goal would be a definitional full stop. Plato and Aristotle locate acting well not only in ethical action, but also, and perhaps especially, in intellectual activity. In respect of ethical action they diverge characteristically, Plato identifying values that are also found, and perhaps most saliently, outside action, Aristotle values that are unique to action. Plato looks for a structure (taxis) that the soul both acquires and manifests by responding to situations in ways that order it properly in relation to the world, and in itself (Gorg. 503e6-504b5). Aristotle looks for features that make an act in context fine or noble (kalos), such as its being done freely, with no ulterior purpose, and in the face of temptations. Both incur some of the same uncertainties. Notably, are we to think of acting well as making the best of whatever circumstances arise, however unfavourable they may be, or as exploiting occasions that a man can embrace and so helping to make up a life that a man would wish for himself? It is hard to identify any consistent answer in the early Plato that I shall be considering. Aristotle’s answer is better developed, and leads him to significant distinctions between different ways, more or less welcome, in which a virtue may be exercised. Finally, since both value intellectual activities even above ethical actions, each has to explain how ethical obligations are not trumped by intellectual opportunities.

II : DOING AND LIVING WELL

The Lysis, discussing what is a ‘friend’ (philos) in the sense of an object of love or desire, recognizes that we commonly desire one thing for the sake of another, which is itself desired, as when we desire medical expertise for the sake of health (219c1-4). If that in turn is desired for the sake of something further, we risk an infinite regress. So we must suppose that there is some starting-point ‘which is a friend first, for the sake of which we say that the other things too, all of them are friends’ (c5-d2). It is this first friend that is truly a friend (d4-5). There is a similar transition in the Gorgias, but with a focus upon actions. If one walks, it is supposing that it is better to walk, and in this sense ‘pursuing the good’ (468b1-2). It is for the sake of the good that agents do what they do, again in the sense that they think it better so to act (b4-8). Yet what we desire is not what we do for the sake of something else, but that thing for the sake of which we act (b9-c1). This again risks a regress. As in the Lysis, the solution appears to be the postulation of a single final good. For Socrates later says to Callicles, ‘Polus and I both thought … that we must, surely, do all things for the sake of good things. Do you also think as we do that the end of all action is the good, and that we must do all other things for its sake, but not it for their sake?’ (499e6-500a1).³

² I shall return to this passage in Ch. 3, A § I.
³ Plato here anticipates Aristotle’s conception of what is ‘final without qualification’, in that we desire other things for its sake, but not it for the sake of anything else (EN 1.7.1097a33-4). Admittedly, the force of ‘must’ (prakteon, dein … prattesthai) is debatable: is the necessity practical (we need to act so), or theoretical (we cannot but act so)? Preceding passages at 467c5-468b8 seem to make it clear that the necessity is theoretical; see Ch. 4, A § I, n. 6.
In neither dialogue is the identify of this single final good specified. However, there is no plausible candidate other than the agent’s *eudaimonia*. Plato’s conception of the place of *eudaimonia* within the motivations of an agent finds a forthright statement within a conversation with Diotima, doubtless fictitious, that is narrated by Socrates in Plato’s *Symposium*:

‘Come on, Socrates: the person who loves, loves good things; why does he love them?’
‘To have them for himself’, I said.
‘And what will the person who has good things get by having them?’
‘That’, I said, ‘I’m better placed to answer: he’ll be happy (*eudaimôn*).’
‘Yes’, she said, ‘because those who are happy are happy by the possession (*ktēsis*) of good things, and one no longer needs to go on to ask “And what reason does the person who wishes to be happy have for wishing it?” Your answer seems to be final (*telos echein*, 204e2-205a3, after Rowe).

The *Symposium* shares its moral psychology – though not its metaphysics, which assumes a theory of Forms – with the early Platonic dialogues. We read similarly in the *Euthydemus*, but in regard to ‘doing well’ (*eu prattein*),

Do all men wish to do well? Or is this question one of the ridiculous ones I was afraid of just now? I suppose it is stupid even to raise such a question, since there could hardly be a man who would not wish to do well … The next question, since we wish to do well, is how we are to do so. Would it be if we had many good things? Or is this question still more simple-minded than the other, since this must obviously be the case too? (278e3-279a4, after Sprague)

In both dialogues, having good things is connected to being happy or doing well. In the *Symposium*, Diotima supposes that by having good things a man becomes happy; further, that this gives a further point or purpose to his having good things, whereas being happy has itself no further point or purpose. In the *Euthydemus*, Socrates introduces having good things as a way or means to doing well, which all men are taken evidently to desire. Here ‘doing well’ and ‘being happy’ are treated as equivalent: they occur together with no distinction (280b6), and the statement ‘We are all keen to be happy’ (282a2) evidently echoes ‘All men wish to do well’ (278e3). Already, however, there is a distinction between being happy/doing well and having good things. If there was none, then one could no more say that one is happy by having good things than that one has good things by being happy – or, indeed, that one is happy by being happy. Rather, being happy (or doing well) is final as a goal in a manner that having good things is not.

And yet it may be that Socrates is speaking ironically in the *Euthydemus*, and overstating the closeness of the relation between the two concepts. For there ensues a series of questions and answers that leads to the following objection:

Would the presence of good things make us happy if they were of no advantage to us, or if they were of some? … And would they be advantageous to us if we simply had them and did not use them? … So it seems that the man who means to be happy must not only

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6 Note especially the words *hina ti?*, or ‘In order that what?’ (205a2), which request a reason in the form of an end to be achieved.
7 Mention of having good things answers a ‘How?’ question about doing well (279a2).
possess such goods but must use them too, or else there is no advantage in possessing them (ktēsis, 280b7-d7).

On the face of it, this corrects not only what Socrates initially stated as obvious in the Euthydemus, but also what I have quoted from Diotima in the Symposium. It must be a quite different kind of good of which Diotima asserts later, ‘Men only love the good’, or, more exactly, ‘their having the good’ (einai to agathon autois, 205e7-206a8). Here, having the good must be identical to being happy. This good cannot be subject to any distinction between having and using. It could not be that the only thing that men desired, and desired to have, was some good having which would be useless unless they also put it to use.

However, quite what Diotima and Socrates meant in the passages that I quoted (Symp. 204e2-205a3, Euthyd. 278e3-279a4) is unclear. When it suits him, Socrates can equivocate between good things that facilitate action, and those that are present in good action. This is evident in a passage in the Meno (77b2-79a2). Socrates there discusses desiring good or bad things, starting from a suggestion by Meno that ‘virtue is to desire beautiful things and have the power to secure them for oneself’ (76b4-5). He glosses desiring x as desiring that x become one’s own (77c7-8). He then presses on Meno that being miserable is nothing else than to desire bad things and come into the possession of them (epithumein te tôn kakòn kai ktasthai, 78a7-8). These evils cannot be parallel to goods that are only beneficial if put to use; if they were, they should be harmless if not put to use. Rather, Socrates doubtless has in mind things that it is bad to do (as in the long related discussion in Gorgias 466d6-468e5). To ‘secure for oneself’ or ‘come into possession of’ such an act can be nothing but to perform it oneself. Yet he puts to Meno, no doubt rightly, that the good things that Meno meant were such things such health, honours, and public offices (78c5-7). To which he can then object that it cannot be virtue’s role to acquire such things wickedly (78d3-79a1). Given this equivocation, one cannot be sure what Diotima or Socrates meant in the passages that I quoted. If they had in mind goods that can be possessed without being put to use, they are rightly corrected in Euthyd. 280b7-d7. If they rather had in mind goods that one secures for oneself in action, these are different from the goods that are there relegated to a lesser category.

It is true that, in the Euthydemus, the proposal, offered as obvious, that we do well if we have good things leads straight into a discussion of health and wealth, and hence to the objection (280b7-d7). Yet there may well be an element of irony, and we have a choice of where to locate it. There is surely irony in the passage I initially quoted, where he takes the question whether we do well if we have many good things to be ‘simple-minded’, since the answer is ‘obvious’ (279a1-4). But there is also evident irony in what follows (a4-8): ‘Well then, what kinds of existing things are good for us? Or perhaps this isn’t a difficult question and we don’t need an important personage to supply the answer because everybody would tell us that to be rich is a good – isn’t that so?’ Socrates’ own view may well be that it is correct to say that one does well by having good things – so long as one has in mind by these not vulgar desiderata such as wealth and health and the like, which need to be put to use, but ethical values that are realized in action. However, in the ensuing discussion he permits the phrase ‘having good things’ to come to connote the possession of advantages or abilities that enable a man to do well. A wide range of such things is identified: wealth, health, good looks, noble birth, power, honour, the virtues, even good fortune, and – identified with good fortune – wisdom (279a7-280b3). Clinias, Socrates’ interlocutor, is amazed by this last identification (279d7). Socrates
explains: wisdom excludes any mistakes, and necessarily does right and succeeds – or it would not be wisdom (280a7-8). If success (tunchanein) is guaranteed by good luck (eutuchia), but also by wisdom, good fortune must be wisdom. Hence a man who has wisdom has no need of good luck as an addition (280b2-3). In short, ‘Knowledge seems to provide men not only with good fortune but also with well-doing, in every case of possession and action’ (281b4).

It becomes clear that the good things that enable a man to do well fall into two classes, the conditional and the unconditional. Conditional goods are resources that, wisely used, help one to do well; badly used, they cause one to do badly; unused, they are useless. When wealth or the like is not being put to use, it does not contribute to a man’s doing well (280b7-d7). If Achilles had decided to live quietly in Greece rather than to die at Troy, not out of cowardice but (let us suppose) a lack of Panhellenic spirit, his courage would not have been undone (though it might have been undetectable), but it would have been idle. By contrast, a wise man makes use of his wisdom when it is wise to do so – or he would not count as wise; and men are placed in a world where they need to make use of what wisdom they have. Moreover, when wealth or the like (including courage and temperance) is put to use, it does more harm than its opposite if wisdom is lacking. We can think of conditional goods as enabling a man to do more, but doing more is dangerous for a man who lacks sense: ‘If he did less, would he not make fewer mistakes? And if he made fewer mistakes, would he not do less badly, and if he did less badly, would he not be less miserable?’ (281b8-c3). Courage and temperance are run together, with a single opposite cowardice, and one can well think of courage as enabling one man to do what cowardice prevents another from doing. Such a capacity is ambivalent, since it enables a man to do things he is wise to do, but also things that he is unwise to do. By contrast, wisdom is unconditionally a good: possessing it cannot contribute to one’s doing badly, and must contribute to one’s doing well.

Socrates’ conclusion appears to shift from a qualified ascription of value to conditional goods to a denial of value to them: It seems likely that with respect to all the things we called good in the beginning, the correct account is not that in themselves they are by nature good, but rather as follows: if ignorance controls them, they are greater evils than their opposites, to the extent that they are more capable of complying with a bad master; but if judgement (phronêsis) and wisdom are in control, they are greater goods. In themselves, however, neither sort is of any value … Isn’t it that, of the other things, no one of them is either good or bad, but of these two, wisdom is good and ignorance bad? (281d3-e5)

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8 This is the terminology of Gómez-Lobo (1994: 85).
10 As I shall discuss in Ch. 2, A § I, this is not Socrates’ own view of courage. In the Meno he speaks as follows of ‘courage when it is not wisdom but a kind of confidence’ (tharros): ‘When a man is confident without understanding, he is harmed; when with understanding, he is benefited’ (88b3-6).

Contingently, this can also hold of temperance of a kind: many projects, good and bad, demand moderation in regard to the pleasures of the flesh; if a man is distracted by a minor indulgence from a major crime, he is saved from a great evil by intemperance – so he is better off not temperate. To such quasi-virtues – which Gómez-Lobo (1994: 84) calls ‘natural conditions’, in contrast to ‘developed moral habits’ – there applies no doctrine of the unity of the virtues. For a similar conception in the Statesman, cf. Ch. 2, A § III, n. 37.
To read this passage as consistent, we must suppose that ‘good’ changes in sense within it: initially, conditional goods count as good if wisdom is in control; finally, they do not count as good. When Socrates denies that any of them ‘is either good or bad’ (e3-4), he evidently means that none of them is, as he has earlier put it (d4-5), in itself good in itself or by nature. The purpose of the switch would appear to be rhetorical, for it cannot in consistency be meant to cancel the concept of a conditional good. On an austere view, wisdom is the only good, and whatever it takes into account from context to context is simply a datum of which it makes the best. Then no evaluative distinction in kind is made between, say, wealth and poverty: it is equally the role of wisdom to cope with either, so that there is no advantage, with respect to doing well, in being rich rather than poor. Such could be the meaning of the last sentence (e3-5), taken in isolation (and it fits 282a1-4, which speaks of using ‘things’ rightly, with no special reference to aids or assets). But that would contradict a nice contrast just drawn: wealth (like the rest) is harmful in the service of ignorance, and beneficial in the service of wisdom. Hence an agent who is wise is helped in doing well if he is also rich (or whatever).

This is confirmed elsewhere. Thus we read in the Apology, ‘Virtue does not come from wealth, but through virtue wealth and everything else, private and public, become good for men’ (30b2-4). It is best in connection to this that we can understand a claim in the Charmides: ‘All good and evil, whether in the body or in the whole man, comes from the soul’ (156e6-8, cf. Prot. 313a7-9). It is the soul that, putting the states in which a man finds himself, mental or physical, to good or bad use, makes them good or bad for him. That ‘all other human activities depend on the soul’ is repeated in the Meno (88e5-6), and explained in a way that generates a brisk argument for the identification of virtue with knowledge (88d4-89d2). Wealth and the like are at times good and at times harmful – harmful if directed by folly, beneficial if directed by wisdom (88d4-7). So, if virtue is something in the soul that cannot but be beneficial, it must be identical to knowledge, since even the qualities of the soul are in themselves neither beneficial nor harmful, but accompanied by wisdom or folly become harmful or beneficial.

It follows that doing well is not simply a matter of responding wisely to whatever arises, whether this be some external circumstance, or an inner state. It must be implied that a rich man with sense is better able to do well, and can do better, than a sensible man who is poor. Otherwise, wealth would not even be a conditional good. Saying this leaves open whether wealth, or any other conditional good, or some disjunction of conditional goods, is necessary for doing well. However, any such dependency may be excluded by the claim, ‘If a man has wisdom, he has no need of any good fortune in addition’ (280b2-3). ‘For what?’, one must ask. Presumably in order to do well and be happy. And yet it should be that a greater degree of that is

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11 Irwin reads the passage so (1995: ch. 4, § 40); contra, see Vlastos (1991: 227-31).
12 Yet Gorg. 467e4-5 counts health and wealth as goods, alongside wisdom, in contrast to sitting, walking, running, and sailing, which are sometimes good and sometimes bad (467e6-468a2).
13 Cf. Apol. 41d1-2, ‘No evil can come to a good man, either in life or in death.’ But does this make it depend wholly on his virtue just that he is happy, or also how happy he is? Socrates appears to imply the second alternative when he remarks, in the Gorgias, that ‘the whole of happiness’ (hê pasa eudaimonia) depends on education and justice (470e6-8) – though Vlastos attempts to neutralize that (1991: 221-2). Virtue may not even suffice to make a man happy according to Crito 47e3-5: ‘Is life worth living with a body that is in bad condition and corrupted?’ In no way.’ Yet contrast Gorg. 507c3-5: ‘The good man must do whatever he does well and finely; and the man who does well must be blessed and happy.’ It would seem that Plato vacillates. See Taylor (2008a: 160, n. 19).
made possible by conditional goods, if these are indeed to count, even conditionally, as good.

Characteristically, Socrates illustrates the identification of wisdom with good fortune by citing familiar instances of technical expertise. The flute player has the best fortune when it comes to using flutes, the pilot when it comes to perils at sea, the general on campaign, the doctor in cases of illness (279d8-280a4). How similar are such examples to the wise exploitation of resources in order to achieve the unquestionable end of ‘doing well’ (278e3-6)? The Greek phrase, like the English one, is equivocal: it can be equivalent to ‘faring well’, that is, being in some way well off. The passenger who reaches his home port safely, or the patient who is cured of an illness, can be described as ‘doing well’, though it was not their doing. Neither of these, of course, sounds like a positive good: each is an escape from a narrowly defined danger. Yet escaping from a danger, through one’s own skill or another’s, might still shed indirect light on what is involved in achieving some consequent good through one’s own action. Through skill, one achieves as a product of one’s action the good that one desires. This is one possible conception of how action relates to happiness, or acting well to doing well. Is it Plato’s?

It was at least familiar to Plato, for he provides a model of it in the hedonism of the central argument in the Protagoras against the possibility of acratic action, that is, action contrary to judgement. The hedonism is introduced through a close connection between ‘living well’ (eu zên) and pleasure or the absence of pain. Negatively, no one counts as living well if he lives in pain (351b3-6); positively, to have lived well is to have lived a pleasant life to the end (b6-c1). A pleasure can only be wrong if it has bad consequences, producing eventual and greater pains (353c4-354d3).

Contrariwise, something painful may be good if it produces later pleasures:

Do you call them [athletic training and warfare and medical treatment by cautery and amputation and drugs and starvation diet] good because at the time they cause the most extreme suffering and anguish, or because later on they produce things like health and good bodily condition and the safety of the city and rule over others and wealth? … And are these things good for any other reason than that they result in pleasures and the relief from and avoidance of pains? (354a7-b7)

No account is given here of the nature of pleasure and pain. One might suppose that among the consequences of an action may be other actions that are themselves pleasures, or instances of pleasure, in being enjoyable. Among such pleasant actions, or active pleasures, may be those that are healthy in the sense not of causing health, but of displaying it. However, that point is not made; and the natural implication of 354a7-b7 is rather that action may cause pleasure or pain, either at the time or subsequently, where the pleasure is itself passive rather than active. If so, living well is a consequence of action, by reference to which action is to be assessed.

So glossed, this passage of the Protagoras provides a concrete exemplification – the only one, to my knowledge, that Plato ever offers – of a structure within which eudaimonia is identified not with action, but with the desirable consequences of action for the agent. Whether the reader is to suppose that Socrates honestly accepts the hedonism, or is just exploiting it illustratively for his immediate purposes, has been, and is still, debated. The hedonism that he clearly rejects elsewhere (like that of Callicles in the Gorgias) overvalues the pleasure of the moment, and cultivates an excess of appetite. Here we rather have a temperate hedonism that looks to the

14 I discuss this briefly in Ch. 4, A § 1.
agent’s long-term interests, and is concerned to maximize his pleasures and minimize his pains over a life-time. This is a variety of eudaimonism, and not a rejection of eudaimonism (such as that of the Cyrenaics) on behalf of fixation upon the passing moment.

However, it is most unlikely that Plato himself ever accepted such a hedonist view of the human good, and its relegation of acting well to being a cause of a happiness that itself is passive. For it not easy to reconcile even this sober hedonism with what is certainly a feature of early Platonic ethics, which is a focus upon the ethical character of action itself. In the Apology Socrates ascribes priority, possibly even a monopoly, within deliberation to a consideration of the ethical quality of an action. Thus he professes, ‘O man, you don’t speak well, if you believe that a man worth anything at all would give countervailing weight to danger of life or death, or give consideration to anything but this when he acts: whether his action is just or unjust, the action of a good or of a bad man’ (28b5-9, cf. d9-10). Very similarly, he explains his refusal to comply with the Thirty’s attempt to implicate him in the arrest of Leon as follows: ‘I showed again, not in words but in action, that … death is something I couldn’t care less about, but that my whole concern is not to do anything unjust or impious (32d1-3).

Nothing is said explicitly in the Apology to connect this moralism with eudaimonism. That omission is made good in the Crito:

The most important thing is not living, but living well … Does it stand that living well, living finely, and living justly are the same? … So we must examine whether it is just for me to try to get out of here when the Athenians have not acquitted me, or unjust. If it is seen to be just, we will try to do so; if it is not, we will abandon the idea … For us … the only valid consideration … is whether we should be acting justly … or whether in truth we shall be acting unjustly in doing all this. If it is evident that we shall be doing unjust things, then we have no need at all to take into account whether we shall have to die if we stay here … rather than act unjustly (48b5-d5, after Grube).

This reiterates what was stated in the Apology, but with greater care and precision. Note that it is not said here that the only relevant question, in respect of any option for an agent, is whether it would be unjust or impious. Very likely Socrates had in mind in the Apology only contexts in which what would otherwise be an option is ruled out of consideration as being one or the other. Now, the restriction is evident. That ‘For us the only valid consideration is whether we should be acting justly’ (48c6-8) is not meant universally, but in application to the option of ‘doing all this’ (d2-3), viz. taking whatever steps would be necessary to encompass Socrates’ escape from prison. If these show up on reflection as unjust, then they fall out of consideration (d3-5).

The thought is that ‘It would be unjust to φ’ is decisive against φ’ing, not that considerations of justice are the only reasons for action. On occasion, it might be right to φ because φ’ing is the sensible thing to do. If Socrates could escape execution in a just way, as he offered the jury when he proposed a large fine as an alternative penalty (Apol. 38b4-5), that could be the right thing for him to do, because it was sensible, even if he would not have been unjust for him to stick with his initial provocative suggestion of being fed in the Prytaneum (36d1-37a1).  

15 Elsewhere (as I shall discuss in Ch. 2, A § I), Socrates may identify the virtues with one another, with the implication that to act out of justice is to act out of good sense, and vice versa. That thesis may lie behind Crito 48b8; however, it is not argued in the present passage. All this demands is a weaker thesis of unity: if an act is unjust, it is wrong; no act could be unjust, and yet alright overall in view of other considerations.
Crucial for us is a different feature of the *Crito* passage. As I have noted, the phrase ‘do well’ is ambiguous (as *eu prattein* is in Greek): it may mean ‘act well’, or ‘fare well’. The same holds of ‘live well (*eu zên*): this may mean ‘lead a good life’, which is a function of one’s choices and actions, or ‘have a good life’, which could be a matter of external luck. Yet what links the *Apology* and *Crito* passages just cited is that the latter equates ‘living well’ with ‘living finely’ and ‘living justly’ (48b8). This makes living well a matter of agency. Now to live well is to be happy (for which the Greek is indifferently *eudaimonein*, or *eudaimôn einai*). Yet the phrase ‘do well’ is often used in a way that equates it with ‘be happy’. So ‘do well’ and ‘live well’ tend to be assimilated.\(^{16}\) There remains the contrast that *eupragia* can be glossed or qualified in ways that *eudaimonia* cannot: it can take on the narrow restriction ‘in respect of flutes’ (*Euthyd*. 279e1-2), or the wide extension ‘in every case of possession or action’ (281b4, cf. *Charm*. 172a1-2); in context, it may signify just success in medicine (*Prot*. 345a3). Yet usually ‘do well’ and ‘live well’ are not differentiated.

It is often made clear that ‘do well’ signifies ‘act well’ rather than ‘fare well’, as in the *Crito* passage just cited. The *Charmides* links in turn ‘do finely and well’ in all one’s doings, a simple ‘do well’, and ‘be happy’ (171e7-172a3). It also connects ‘act knowledgeably’ with ‘do well’ and ‘be happy’ (173d3-4).\(^{17}\) And we read in the *Gorgias*, ‘So there is every necessity that the temperate man who, as we have seen, will be just and brave and pious, will be a perfectly good man, and the good man will act well and nobly in whatever he does (*eu te kai kalôs prattein ha an prattê(i)*), and he who acts well (*ton eu prattonta*) will be blessed and happy, and he who is wicked and acts badly (*ton ponêron kai kakôs prattonta*) will be miserable’ (507b8-c5).\(^{18}\)

This is significant. In contrast to the hedonist model (at least as I understood it), being happy is identified in these passages not with a consequence of action, but with action itself. The claim that one cannot become happier by acting unjustly has still to be made out. Prioritizing the ethical hardly restricts the range of possible reasons for action in advance of delimiting the ethical. What it does privilege is action itself, which can both be characterized in the language of the virtues and vices, and identified with *eudaimonia* as the agent’s final end.

### III : THE FINAL END OF ACTION AND DESIRE

So there is a non-match between the maximizing hedonism of the *Protagoras*, and the ethical eudaimonism that we can trace through the *Crito*, *Charmides*, *Euthydemus*, and *Gorgias*. If it is granted that these are incompatible, there can be no real question which is authentically Socratic and Platonic: this has to be the second. And yet a

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\(^{16}\) See *Charm*. 172a3, 173d4, 174b12-c1; *Gorg*. 470e2, 5, 507c4-5. The *Euthyd*. links doing well with being happy (280b6), and doing badly (*kakôs prattein*) with being miserable (*athlitos*, 281c2). As we saw, *Euthyd*. 278e3-6 ascribes just the same finality as an end to doing well that *Symp*. 205a1-3 ascribes to being happy.

\(^{17}\) *Charm*. 174b12-c1 is very similar but with ‘live knowledgeably’.

\(^{18}\) It is true that such passages might be taken, as in Irwin (1977, 1995), to permit the thesis that acting well does not constitute *eudaimonia*, but is rather the one necessary and sufficient condition of it, whatever it may be supposed to be itself – possibly pleasure. Thus it might be that, by a kind of providential coincidence, though calculations of pleasure are generally irrelevant to considerations of justice, the just act will always turn out to maximize the agent’s pleasure. I argue against imputing hedonism to Socrates himself in Ch. 4, A § I. Briefly against any view with such a structure, see Vlastos (1995b), Price (1996b).
critic may wonder whether there was not a real cost. (What I am about to discuss may seem a digression, but it will soon bring us back to Plato. And the points it raises are equally important for Aristotle.) Acting well is a determinable in search of determination. Suppose that every agent aims to act well as he acts in the sense that he is acting upon an answer to the question ‘What, here and now, is the thing for me to do?’ (Unlike Socrates, we would take there to be exceptions to this.) It wouldn’t follow that we, or he, could correctly identify the thing for him to do in the context by reflection upon what it is to act well, or through deliberation’s taking the goal of acting well as a starting-point. Indeed, one might argue that the question ‘Why are you ϕ’ing?’ is never answered by saying ‘Because, here and now, to ϕ is to act well.’ For if every agent acts as he does in order thereby to be acting well, acting well is the universal goal of action, whatever form it takes, and fails on its own to distinguish ϕ’ing from an alternative, say χ’ing. A reason for ϕ’ing rather than χ’ing should rather be a concrete feature of the context that differentiates ϕ’ing from χ’ing and thereby makes it the case that by ϕ’ing, but not by χ’ing, the agent can count as acting well. ‘In order to act well’ is rather a universal filter upon reasons than itself a reason.

Compare the relation of belief to truth. We may take it that, by its very nature, any belief is oriented towards truth: truth is its inherent goal, so that to believe well is to believe truly. Suppose that a subject believes that \( p \) and not that \( q \), where either (say) could explain some phenomenon, and either might be true, but not both. The question ‘Why do you believe that \( p \), rather than that \( q \)?’ is not happily answered by replying ‘Because it is true that \( p \), but not that \( q \).’ The subject couldn’t coherently reason to himself: ‘Shall I believe that \( p \), or that \( q \)? Well, it is true that \( p \), and not that \( q \); so I will believe that \( p \).’ For in judging that it is true that \( p \) he is already believing that \( p \). Suppose that, analogously, any human action, by its very nature, is oriented towards acting well. Then ‘Why do you choose to ϕ, rather than to χ?’ is not happily answered by ‘Because, here and now, ϕ’ing, but not χ’ing, is acting well’; for to judge that is already to choose to ϕ. To justify a belief, or an action, where the agent has options, we need rather to cite some other fact, often a fairly concrete one, that makes it likely that the belief will be true, and the action good.

And yet truth as the goal of belief is not idle in the justification of belief. It is if, and only if, a consideration \( r \) tells in favour of the truth of \( p \) that it is successfully citable in justification of the belief that \( p \). We can distinguish the background goal of believing truly, which is invariant, from the foreground consideration \( r \), which varies from case to case. Is there an analogue within the justification of action? Presumably it would run as follows. It is if, and only if, a consideration \( r \) tells in favour of the goodness of ϕ’ing that it is properly citable in justification of the choice to ϕ. Again, we can distinguish a fixed background from a variable foreground that depends upon the facts of the particular case.

The analogy is fair, so long as a difficulty can be surmounted. If a belief has a determinate content, say that \( p \), its truth or falsity is equally determinate; for ‘It is true that \( p \)’ is true if and only it is true that \( p \). By contrast, even if it is determinate in context what it is to ϕ, it may be indeterminate whether to ϕ is in context to act well. How may this be determined? It might be thought that this question becomes unanswerable once we identify eudaimonia, which is the agent’s ultimate goal, with acting well. If acting well is his ultimate goal, it may be argued, we can offer no

\(^{19}\) However, truth-value gaps complicate the relation between \( p \) and ‘It is true that \( p \).’ If it is neither true nor false that \( p \), then it is false that it is true that \( p \), though not false that \( p \).
determination of acting well to settle whether he is acting well, since that determination would then replace acting well as his ultimate goal.

Actually, that is too quick. Suppose, to return to the apparent theory of the Protagoras, that to act well in φ’ing is to φ in a context where φ’ing does more than any alternative to gain pleasure for the agent and escape pain. On that conception, whether an agent acts well in φ’ing on some occasion becomes as determinate as whether in then φ’ing he does as much as he can to gain pleasure and escape pain. This can illustrate that it would be possible both for his ultimate goal to be acting well, and for the question whether he achieves it to be determined by some consequence of his action. We would be contradicting ourselves if we said both that acting well is his final goal, and that he acts well in order thereby to gain pleasure and escape pain. But the claim can rather be that he φ’s in order thereby to gain pleasure and escape pain, with the ultimate goal of φ’ing with that effect, and hence of acting well. It is φ’ing that, hopefully, will have more pleasure and less pain as its consequence; if it does, then φ’ing with that effect will constitute acting well. This would be a mixed theory, consequentialist in its calculations, non-consequentialist in its evaluations.

One might initially suppose such a position to be irrefutable but idle: it restructures a simple hedonism that it still accepts. In fact, there is an easy test. If the agent’s ultimate goal is pleasure, he should be as grateful for pleasures he passively receives as for pleasures he actively creates. If, on the other hand, his ultimate goal is to act in ways that give him pleasure, he should care about creating pleasures rather than receiving them. However, there is no evidence of the latter position in the Protagoras. Socrates opens its final section by putting to Protagoras the following suggestions (which he doesn’t actually endorse himself): ‘In so far as things are pleasant, are they not to that extent good, leaving their other consequences out of account? And again it’s the same with painful things; in so far as they are painful, are they not bad?’ (351c4-6). This is not restricted to the actions of the agent or their consequences. When Socrates proceeds to urge the point, it is with reference to ‘athletic training and warfare and medical treatment by cautery and amputation and drugs and starvation diet’ (354a4-6), painful at the time but overriding beneficial later, with no distinction between what the agent does, and what he suffers. And Socrates’ final invitation is quite general: ‘Don’t you call suffering pain itself good when it gets rid of greater pains than it has in itself, or when it leads to pleasures which are greater than the pains?’ (d5-7).

So, in pursuit of something Platonic, we have to return to a conception of eudaimonia as acting well that is abstract and determinable. This may give rise to the following worry. Take acting well as the ultimate end of action; and suppose – as we most likely wouldn’t, but Socrates did – that for an agent to choose to φ is for him to judge that for him, in his situation, φ’ing is the thing to do. Would it follow that an agent’s ultimate end is always simply this: to do the thing that is to be done? Surely not. We can’t extract an ultimate end of choice out of so bare a conception of choice. Rather, we need a conception of acting well that, though determinable rather than determinate, captures some intelligible end of acting, some good achievable by and in action. Moreover, if the end is not to be idle, it must meet a further condition: it must be in principle detectable – if not always, nor by everyone – whether or not it is being achieved. It could not be that we all really wanted something of which we could in principle never tell whether we were getting it or not. For then we would have no reason deriving from experience to pursue it in one way rather than another.
Here we come to one of the fundamental presuppositions of Socratic, Platonic, and indeed Aristotelian ethics. I shall first simply state it, and then connect it with central Socratic sayings. Socrates supposes that there is an ultimate object of choice that is common to all human agents. For none of us is it an option whether to pursue it in the choices that we make, for to choose is to choose for its sake. The practical judgements that we make that inform our choices are ultimately judgements about how to achieve this end. Our particular goals are variable and often erroneous. What is best from occasion to occasion varies concretely with the details of the case. What appears best varies concretely with the apparent details of the situation, and the agent’s values and principles. Yet what agents ultimately intend to achieve does not vary, either within an agent’s life, or between agents. Though their values and principles differ, these provide no independent specification of what they really want. Rather, they encapsulate different conceptions of what that is. And here there is room for two kinds of error, or rather for a single error that has two aspects. Objectively, an agent may misconceive what is best achievable in and by human action. This is a mistake about the potential value of human action. Subjectively, he may misconceive what it is in his nature, as a man, to pursue as his final end. This is a mistake about the natural orientation of human beings.

Only the agent who has a general understanding of the end toward which human beings are oriented by nature can count as observing the Delphic precept, which Socrates made his own, ‘Know thyself.’ Nothing in the contexts of when he reiterates this, nor within his ethics in general, suggests that he is prescribing a grasp of anything distinctive or idiosyncratic, anything that is peculiar to oneself. He is speaking not as a romantic who cultivates individuality, but as a moralist who believes that moral errors come of general misunderstandings of a shared teleology that is natural to us as human subjects and agents. An indication of this is his admission in the Phaedrus that he cannot yet count as observing the precept (229e5-6). There he dismisses less material questions, and inquires ‘not into these but into myself, to see whether I am actually a beast more complex and more violent than Typhon, or both a tamer and a simpler creature, sharing some divine and un-Typhonic portion by nature’ (230a3-6). These are not the introspective doubts of a Byronic hero, but a philosophical uncertainty about the true nature, simple or complex, of the human soul, such as was not resolved in the Republic.

Nowadays we may tend to suppose that what a man really (or ultimately) desires is a personal and empirical question that could not be settled by reference to any truths about human nature or objective value. Socrates presumes otherwise. Also indicative of this is a connection that he twice makes between desire and deficiency. Thus he reasons as follows in the Lysis: ‘A thing desires what it lacks … And it becomes lacking of what it is deprived’ (221d7-e3). And he corrects Agathon in the Symposium by insisting ‘What desires desires what it lacks, or, if it doesn’t lack it, it doesn’t desire it’ (200a9-b1). Focal here is the notion of an objective deficiency (cf. ‘lacking’, endeês, four times in Lysis 221d7-e2, twice in Symp. 200a9-b1). On this conception, one fundamentally desires what one needs, not in order to satisfy some

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20 For a reflective exposition of this, see Wieland (1982: 263-80).
21 See Charm. 164d4, Prot. 343b3, Phdr. 229e6, Phil. 48c10; and often in the dubious Alc. I take the Delphic warning to have been against any presumption that is unfitting for a mere man. Socrates goes further, demanding not just humility, but insight.
22 Cf. 10.611b1-612a5, on which see, e.g., Price (1995: 73-4).
23 So does Aristotê (AE C 13.1153b30-2): ‘All pursue pleasure – and perhaps not the pleasure they think or would say they pursue, but the same pleasure; for all things have by nature something divine in them.’
contingent desire, but as a result of a lack that originates from a loss that in some way made one imperfect and incomplete. It is assumed that one’s ultimate needs are ones that one has as a human being. Though men born with different capacities, or landed in different circumstances, may fulfil these needs in different ways, these ways will be determinations of a determinable way of achieving satisfaction that is common to all men.

It is against the background of this teleology that we can best understand what is perhaps the best-known of all the Socratic paradoxes, ‘No one does evil willingly’ (e.g., Prot. 345d6-e4). The Gorgias makes a distinction: orators and tyrants do what they think best, but not what they desire (boulethai, 466d6-467b9). Unsurprisingly, this amazes Polus: ‘This is shocking and monstrous stuff you’re saying, Socrates’ (b10). Socrates supports his claim with the thesis that, when an agent does one thing for the sake of another, what he desires is the second and not the first, or (as we may put it) the end and not the means. This is later restated (468b8-c1), but at once qualified: we may allow that the agent does desire a means, yet not ‘just like that’ (haplōs houtōs), but only if it is beneficial in promoting a desirable end; for we desire good things, but not things either neither good nor evil, or evil (c2-7). The qualification shows that Socrates is not simply playing Humpty Dumpty, and deciding to use ‘desire’ as equivalent to ‘desire for its own sake’. It is rather that he is connecting ‘what I truly desire’ and ‘what really benefits me’. What makes this non-arbitrary is that it extends to means a way of thinking that is already assumed for an ultimate end. An agent may intelligibly pursue a means that he believes will leads to a desired end. That end may itself be pursued for the sake of a further or wider end. However, it couldn’t be that he pursued his final end under a misapprehension that it would achieve some good; for then it would be this good, and not the end, that was final. So it would seem that a genuinely final end can only be pursued at once for its own sake, and for the sake of its true nature, i.e. for the sake of something, whatever that may be, that does indeed constitute its nature. Such desiring might be called ‘truly desiring’: anticipating a way of speaking that we meet in the Philebus (where it is applied to pleasures), we may call such desires ‘true desires’, in contrast to ‘false desires’ that are explained by a false conception of the object. Socrates then extends the notion of a true desire from a final end to a means qua means: truly desiring an end, I may come truly to desire a means for the sake of the end, or conditionally upon its being a means to it. We may then say that I desire the means as a means to the end – so long as it would actually promote it.

\[^{24}\text{On this conception, see Price (1997a: 100) after Kosman (1976: 64-5).}\]

\[^{25}\text{As I shall discuss later (in Ch. 3, A § 1), Socrates does not consistently keep to using ‘desire’ (boulethai) in the sense of ‘truly desire’. What I have argued here is that this is a special sense of ‘desire’ that arises intelligibly out of a conception of a fully final end which can only be the object of a true desire. I am not persuaded by Penner and Rowe (2005) that Plato is consistently adopting a radical and distinctive general theory of desire which excludes there being any sense in which one could desire anything that in fact is not beneficial for one. This is confirmed when later in the Gorgias, as Devereux notes (2008: 152), Socrates speaks of desires for things not good (503c6-d3, 505a6-b12), though now using the term epithumein. This may confirm that the Gorgias is a dialogue of transition, which moves towards Plato’s later recognition of a distinction between reason that desires the good, and appetite that desires the pleasant (cf. Price 1995: 33-6). Yet one should not suppose that desire must be either for the truly good or for the apparently pleasant, for that would be arbitrary. A contrast between boulethai the good and epithumein the pleasant (such as we already meet at Charm. 167e1-5, but with no necessary implication of two genera of desire, cf. Price 1995: 30), no more strongly suggests a conception of truly boulethai, whose object is really good, than one of truly epithumein, whose object would be really pleasant. (Think how easily}\]
As I shall discuss in Chapter 2, much changes in the Republic. Notably in two ways: *eudaimonia* is interiorized, so that its field becomes the soul’s internal activities rather than the agent’s external actions; and only rational, in contrast to non-rational, desires are ultimately oriented towards a single final good. Yet it is striking what is retained. In Book 6 we read this:

> With justice or beauty, lots of people might settle for the appearance of them. Even if things aren’t really just or beautiful, they might choose to perform and possess them (and to be taken to be doing so) anyway. When it comes to things that are good, on the other hand, no one has ever yet been satisfied with the appearance. They want things that really are good; they all treat the appearance of it with contempt … This is what every soul pursues and for the sake of which it does all it can (505d5-e2, after Griffith).

Even desires for the just or the beautiful (in the sense of ‘fine’ or ‘honourable’, which is an aspect of the ethical) can be corrupted by an overriding concern to keep face, so that reputation can be preferred to reality. (Contrast the ‘simple and honourable man’ who ‘wants, in Aeschylus’ words, not to appear to be good, but to be good’, 2.361b6-8. To *be* good is to be, for example, just; and the just man desires to act justly, whereby, if he succeeds, he achieves the good.) Yet every man has a fundamental desire that is oriented by nature towards realizing what is good in his own life. This must be why, though men may occasionally do what they recognize as wrong, constant wickedness must be seconded by a false conception of what is best; for this remains the real goal even of a wicked agent.

A confirmation of this is that the Socratic paradox ‘No one does evil willingly’ recurs even in dialogues that have discarded a Socratic psychology for a distinctively Platonic one. Thus we read this, in Republic Book 9, of the tyrannical city and soul:

> ‘The slave city, the city ruled by a tyrant, is the one least able to do what it wants … In which case, the soul which is ruled by a tyrant will also be least able to do what it wants – at any rate if we are talking about the entire soul’ (*hós peri holês eipein psuchês*, 577d10-e1). Within the perspective of his mature moral psychology, Plato cannot deny that, notably in respect of his disorderly appetite, a tyrant has and satisfies non-rational desires. These are not directed towards the good, nor even towards the maximal satisfaction of appetite: they may well frustrate other appetites, and yet do not count as not achieving what they want for that reason – only as frustrating what he wants, as a subject of other appetites, and of would-be rational desires that aim at the good, but radically mistake it. The tyrannic soul ‘will be forever driven onward by a gadfly, and filled with confusion and dissatisfaction’ (e1-2), which Plato takes to confirm that deeper desires are misled and disappointed.

Plato recurrently conceives appetite as being by nature insatiable. In the Gorgias, Socrates says that creatures of appetite ‘carry water to this leaky jar with another leaky thing, a sieve’ (493b5-7). Appetite’s insatiability is confirmed in the Republic

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26 This is a difficult passage, which I shall discuss further in Ch. 4, A § 2. 505d6-7 (*tauta prattein kai kektêsthai kai dokein*) is over-concise, and its sense and syntax are unclear. What Plato must mean in the case of acts, I think, is this: many agents are happy to perform acts that have the appearance of the just or fine without the reality; they are happy to be taken to be thereby acting justly or finely, even if they really are not.

27 On Plato’s attitude to so-called ‘hard’ acrasia, whereby the agent turns consciously away from what he conceives to be good or best, see Price (1995: 102-3), which concludes thus: ‘The hard acratic becomes a marginal character within Plato’s moral melodrama.’
and later explained on the ground that even the unreal cannot be satisfied by the unreal (9.586b-4). Even an unreal desire could only be stilled by the real object of desire; in my earlier phrase, only what is truly desired can fully satisfy any desire. We have to recall that, within Plato’s picture, appetites are not emergent by natural necessity out of the body’s physical nature, but derivative by way of descent from the soul’s authentic desires once it has fallen from heaven and come to animate a human body. It may be true to the phenomena to say that ‘simple thirst is naturally of drink only’, not of good drink, or of drink as a good (4.439a-7). Thirst qua thirst is satisfied by drink. Yet thirst is not what thirst originally was: all desire was originally for the good, and takes on concrete objects in independence of the good only through the degrading and unselving effect of incarnation. Since appetite derives from rational desire, it fails to find final satisfaction in anything less than the ultimate object of rational desire; hence by its true nature, it cannot be fully satisfied by the new objects that it has taken on in becoming appetite.

So much to show that Plato presumes that there is a good that is the primordial object of all human desire – a view that is overlaid, but not discarded, in the Republic. Does he give us any clues as to its nature, and how it is unquestionably desirable? For each agent it is identical to his or her eudaimonia, construed as activity that possesses certain structural and aesthetic properties. Indicative is a passage in the Gorgias that starts by sketching how craftsmen, of whatever kind, aim to impose order upon their material: ‘Each of them arranges in a structure (taxis) whatever he arranges, and compels one thing to be fitting and suitable to another, until he composes the whole thing arranged in a structure and order (tetagmenon te kai kekosmêmemon)’ (503e6-504a1). Physical trainers and doctors impose structure and order upon the human body (504a3-b2-3); analogously, a soul becomes worthy if it acquires a certain structure and order (b4-5). Plato finds here a parallel between a healthy body and an ethical soul: within the body the structure is termed ‘healthy’, within the soul ‘lawful’ (nomimon), and the structure and ordering are justice and temperance (c7-d3).28 In every case, the virtue or excellence (arete) of a thing is not produced at random, but is owed to structure and correctness and skill (506d5-7). Thus ‘the virtue of each thing is something structured and ordered by a structure’ (e1-2). This carries over from the personal to the interpersonal: the man who does not control his appetites is incapable of community, and so of friendship (507e3-6). And even from the interpersonal to the cosmic: heaven and earth are held together by community and friendship, which is why the world is called a kosmos, not akosmia or akolasia (507e6-508a4). Socrates concludes by reproaching Callicles, who had advised a life of unrestrained sensual indulgence, for preferring taking all one can to ‘geometrical equality’ (508a5-7), that is, for preferring arithmetical equality, whereby all desires are satisfied equally, to ‘proportional distribution according to some standard’ (as Alfonso Gómez-Lobo puts it, 1994: 135, n. 241).

Plato thus finds a universal value in eudaimonia, when this is conceived ethically. It then becomes an intelligible object of fundamental human desire. We can now hope to resolve the worry that opened this section. Acting well takes on an substantive content that it would lack if it came to no more than the doing what is to be done that one intends (he assumes) simply in intending to act. Rather, to act well is to act in a way that achieves within action a structural value that also exists outside

28 We equally find an analogy between physical health and virtue of soul in the Crito (47d7-48a1), though there the contrast between ‘being improved’ and ‘being ruined’ was not spelled out in a way that articulated a universal value.
action. Even if this content is left in place by the newly complex conception of the human soul in the Republic, that demands a new articulation (as I shall discuss in Chapter 2). And nothing has yet been said to show how an agent might rationally decide in one way rather than another in order to achieve such eudaimonia (which will be a topic of Chapter 3). And there is then the question of whether an agent who has so decided is still liable to act otherwise (which will be the subject of Chapter 4). But first we must turn to Aristotle’s treatment of eudaimonia, which we shall find to be a further development of the same conception.

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29 This is one reason, among others, why Plato cannot anticipate Aristotle in detaching theoretical from practical wisdom.
A purely ethical conception of eudaimonia must be restrictive of what can count as making a man eudaimôn. In certain ways, Plato and Aristotle take a more inclusive view: notably, we shall have to take into account the intellectual virtues (which will be the topic of § V below). Yet some exclusions may have to be accepted. Let us first reflect from our own point of view, and recall some current ways in which we tend to think of our lives. Then we may relate that to debates about how best to interpret Aristotle. My discussion of this will eventually lead us to an understanding of Aristotle as being faithful to Plato as I have been expounding him.

One concept that is important to us is of how well a life goes. Admittedly, it is with no accuracy that a subject can predict that, or even remember it, over any long period of time. However, a more local variant is in play when one reflects, at the end of one’s day, how well it has gone. It then seems to be true that nothing of positive or negative value, however trivial, is ruled out as simply irrelevant. If I recall delivering a lecture, I can also recall giving a passing greeting; if I recall listening to Wagner’s woodbird, I can also recall hearing a thrush. Thus the question ‘How has my day gone?’ is open to a plethora of different inputs. To an extent, a favourable or unfavourable answer is additive: one may add up goods one has enjoyed, and subtract ills one has suffered. One may also have some structural preferences: idle reading at the end of the day is commonly thought better than idle reading at the start. Perhaps this is just because it is more fully enjoyed at the end than at the beginning; thus the English barrister Norman Birkett experienced, even in partial retirement, a ‘complete’ pleasure only in reading in bed with the sense of a day’s activity behind him (Hyde, 1964: 603). Or the reading may be engrossing enough in either case, and it is from an external point of view that reading after activity is fully welcomed, and reading before activity half regretted. It was ironically that Samuel Butler wrote, ‘Morality turns on whether the pleasure precedes or follows the pain. Thus, it is immoral to get drunk because the headache comes after the drinking, but if the headache came first, and the drunkenness afterwards, it would be moral to get drunk’ (1912: 29). Yet surely we may approve the patience that motivates the maturing child to eat bread and butter before, not after, cake. At least, such complications can arise in evaluation, even within a single day.

I deliberately included within possible recollections of a day a piece of passivity (hearing a thrush), as well as two clear pieces of activity (delivering a lecture, giving a greeting), and one of activity-cum-passivity (listening to a performance). What is in question is more general than what Baudelaire imagines us recalling in ‘L’Examen de Minuit’, which is ‘quel usage/Nous fîmes du jour qui s’enfuit’, that is, what use we made of the past day. Indeed, one may hearken to a thrush’s song, which involves the activity of directing one’s attention – but one may enjoy hearing it without having the time or the interest to pause as one passes. As I walk outside on a fine day, I may momentarily enjoy the sensation of sunshine, even if, in a hurry or a brown study, I fail to savour it mentally. Much, but not all, is lost by a failure to pay attention; a pleasure of a kind may still be felt. And that is a plus, however trivial, within the total record of a day.

Conoscenti of recent debate will recognize in this conception of how well a day or a life goes one familiar interpretation of the nature of Aristotelian eudaimonia.
Viewed all-inclusively, eudaimonia is a life that goes well enough to count as going well, with every good that it contains contributing, however marginally, to its so doing. Aristotle certainly had the conception of a sum of goods that has a value that exceeds the value of any proper subset by the goods that it contains, and that lacks. So the Rhetoric: ‘A greater number of goods is a greater good than one or than a smaller number, if that one or that smaller number is included in the count; for then the larger number surpasses the smaller, and smaller quantity is surpassed as being contained in the larger’ (1.7.1363b18-21; cf. Top. 3.2.117a16-17, EN 10.2.1172b23-8). Yet whether he takes the sum of all the goods that a eudaimôn enjoys through his life to constitute his eudaimonia is debatable. He may, if W. D. Ross translated a debated passage correctly: ‘We think it [sc. eudaimonia] most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others – if it were so counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods; for that which is added becomes an excess of goods, and of goods the greater is always more desirable’ (EN 1.7.1097b16-20). Ross’s condition ‘if it were so counted’ is explicitly counter-factual, as Aristotle’s Greek is not. The line of thought is thereby taken to be the following: given that eudaimonia is indeed ‘most desirable of all things’, it is not to be counted ‘as one good thing among others’. If it were, we would only have to add to it ‘the least of goods’ in order to create a set of goods more desirable, however marginally, than eudaimonia itself – which is excluded. On an all-inclusive conception of eudaimonia, the prohibition is well motivated: any good enjoyed by a man automatically falls within his eudaimonia (if he is eudaimôn); hence it cannot also be counted alongside it without the error of double counting.

One clarification of this reading is straightforward. It is one thing to say, absurdly and impractically, that a man’s eudaimonia must contain all possible goods – even, in Stephen Clark’s happy example (1975: 154), a constant supply of chocolate creams. It is another to say, unabsurdly, that every single one of the goods that a man enjoys contributes, if he is eudaimôn, to his eudaimonia.30 Once we make this distinction, we can interpret eudaimonia as all-inclusive without taking it to be unimprovable. How high we place the threshold of eudaimonia, that is, what quantity of goods, and balance of goods over evils, a man needs to enjoy in order to count as eudaimôn, is not a question that the inclusivist should hurry to answer.31 All he is committed to asserting is that whatever goods a man enjoys contribute to his eudaimonia, if he is eudaimôn.

Another issue is far more complex. In both the Ethica Eudemia (1.2.1214b26-7), and the common books (AE A 1.1129b18), as also in the Rhetoric (1.5.1360b6-7), Aristotle writes of the ‘parts’ (merê or moria) of eudaimonia. He is concerned to distinguish a part of eudaimonia from a necessary condition that is not a part (EE 1.2.1214b11-27).32 This language conveys that eudaimonia is a concrete whole, a whole that is made up of parts. How does the intrinsic value of such a whole relate to the intrinsic values of the parts? (I set aside instrumental value.) We might say that the value of the whole is identical to the sum of the values of the parts, plus whatever values derive from the mutual relations of the parts within the structure of the whole. A more tricky aspect of the question is not the sum of the values, but the distinction

30 As I once compared, all the votes cast for a successful candidate contribute to his election – which does not require that he receive every possible vote (1980: 346-7).
31 So Anthony Kenny sets out a view that is inclusive but not all-inclusive as follows: ‘When Aristotle says that a self-sufficient good makes life “lacking in nothing” he does not mean that it contains everything, but that it is not deficient or needy’ (1992: 28).
32 Cf., on the parts of a city, Pol. 7.8.1328a21-b4, 7.9.1329a34-9.
between what is original and what derivative. Two extremes here are atomic, and holistic: on a purely atomic view, the value of the whole derives from the sum of the values of the parts and of their interrelations; on a purely holistic view, the values of the parts and of their interrelations derive from the value of the whole.  

We might hope for clarification from the influential contemporary statement of the inclusivist position that we owe to John Ackrill. He writes, ‘That the primary ingredients of eudaimonia are for the sake of eudaimonia is not incompatible with their being ends in themselves; for eudaimonia is constituted by activities that are ends in themselves’ (1980a: 19). His denial of any incompatibility may be right, but the ‘for’ is puzzling. Eudaimonia’s being ‘constituted by activities that are ends in themselves’ leaves open that it might be a ragbag (an unstructured and heterogeneous collection) that adds nothing to the miscellaneous values of what it contains; so it cannot itself explain how its elements may also exist, or be good, ‘for the sake of’ eudaimonia. It would be an intelligible proposal – if also an implausibly intricate one – that eudaimonia is a whole consisting of parts, and that each of those parts has a double value, half atomic and independent, half holistic and derivative (deriving from its contribution to achieving a whole that has a global value, that is, a value as a whole). Yet Ackrill cannot suppose that such atomic values entail, or even explain, a global value. Equally confusing is a later passage: ‘One can answer such a question as “Why do you seek pleasure?” by saying that you see it and seek it as an element in the most desirable sort of life … [This] does not imply that pleasure is not intrinsically worth while but only a means to an end. It implies rather that pleasure is intrinsically worth while, being an element in eudaimonia’ (1980a: 21). How is this last sentence to be understood? It might just mean, though not easily, that pleasure is independently worth while for its own sake, and, for that reason (alongside any others), is actually or potentially a constituent of eudaimonia (actually if the subject is eudaimôn, only potentially if he is not). But that would neither entail, nor be entailed by, the claim that the question ‘Why do you seek pleasure?’ permits an answer by reference to eudaimonia as an end more final than pleasure itself. 

Now, it is possible that Ackrill intends the following claim: at least one way in which a thing may have intrinsic value is if it is a component of a whole that has global value. It might be suggested that the global value of a complex whole resides in its components and their relations (though not in their causal preconditions), and thereby bestows upon them a value that may be called theirs, and even counted as intrinsic to them, so long as this does not suggest, falsely, that they could be detached from the whole and yet retain it. We might then try to distinguish, within the intrinsic

33 Not that the distinction is straightforward. To maintain a genuine contrast between a global and atomist view of the value of the interrelations between parts, the atomist must place limits of some kind upon how he talks about them. He might stipulate, for example, that the relation of one good to another can have an intrinsic value of its own only if they fall within a single day. Alternatively, to avoid the arbitrariness of a sharp cut-off point, he might prescribe a high rate of discounting, so that the relations between two goods become rapidly insignificant as the temporal distance between them increases.

34 And no help comes from a later analogy: ‘Eudaimonia, being absolutely final and genuinely self-sufficient, is more desirable than anything else in that it includes everything desirable in itself. It is best, and better than anything else … in the way that bacon, eggs, and tomatoes is a better breakfast than either bacon or eggs or tomatoes – and is indeed the best breakfast without qualification’ (1980a: 21). The analogy appears doubly unfortunate: it implies that eudaimonia is unimprovable; and it is used to illustrate not (as might be imaginable) that bacon, eggs, and tomatoes, with nothing further added to defeat the digestion or complicate the taste, add up to a uniquely satisfying combination, but that eudaimonia ‘includes everything desirable in itself’ – which rather demands the analogue of a gargantuan feast containing every type (if not, of course, every token) of delectable nourishment.
value of the elements, value that is independent of the whole (cf. 1.6.1096b16-19), and value that is dependent upon the whole and derivative from it. If this is Ackrill’s intention, his claim ‘Pleasure is intrinsically worth while, being an element in eudaimonia’ (1980a: 21) must mean that pleasure is valuable for the sake of eudaimonia in a way that involves its being part of eudaimonia, and hence makes the value of eudaimonia in part its own. However, it is doubtful whether such a way of talking makes sense. Take a different example that is not of part and whole: the symbolic value of an object (say, of a ring that has the role of a wedding-ring) is a value that it has, and yet it is surely an extrinsic and not an intrinsic value. It is better to say that the global value of a whole is intrinsic to itself, and extrinsic to its parts.35 I conclude that Ackrill’s discussion is imperfectly clarificatory.

In fact, it seems that Aristotle cannot be thinking of eudaimonia as a concrete whole when he makes certain strong claims about its finality.36 He tells us that eudaimonia, being ‘final without qualification’, is always desirable in itself, never for the sake of anything else (EN 1.7.1097a30-34, cf. b4-5); again, it is ‘the first principle and cause of goods’ (1.12.1102a3-4). A holistic reading of this as a claim about eudaimonia as a concrete whole would be that everything that has value within the whole derives it from the prior value that attaches to the whole as a whole. By contrast, an atomist would hold that eudaimonia, as a whole consisting of parts, derives its value from the values of its parts (and their relations, restrictively viewed). A middle position would be that any life that is a concrete instance of eudaimonia has a value that is partly original, consisting in what is achieved by uniting its elements within a single unitary structure, and partly derivative, arising from the independent values of those elements (and their restricted relations). According to this, the value of the concrete whole is in part emergent out of the pattern created by its elements, and in part derivative from those elements (and their restricted relations) themselves. It is partly new, being realized only when the pattern of life is complete, and partly old, annexing already existent values. Then this instance of eudaimonia would be desirable at once for a unitary value proprietary to itself, and for an additive value that it derives from the values of its elements (values that only contingently find their resting-place within this instance of eudaimonia, but then help to constitute it). And then it would appear to follow, as I once asserted, ‘If its [eudaimonia’s] components are partly good on their own, then we must partly pursue eudaimonia for the sake of those components’ (1980: 343). But this contradicts Aristotle’s explicit conception (1.7.1097b5-6).37

35 It is true that the existence of the whole is dependent upon the existence of its parts (cf. n. 36 below). Yet it does not follow from that that the value of the whole depends upon the value of any part. More problematic is what to say about the value that the whole derives from the intrinsic values of its parts. Perhaps this value may be called intrinsic to the whole, even though it derives from its parts, since the parts are parts of the whole (without which it would not be the whole that it is). If this is right, Ackrill has perceived a truth, but reversed it: instead of counting the non-derivative value of the whole as intrinsic to the parts (though not original to them), he should count the non-derivative values of the parts as intrinsic to the whole (though not original to it).
37 This might be debated, as follows: ‘Suppose, for simplicity, that some instance of eudaimonia is a whole consisting of (though, since it is structured, not reducible to) the set \{x, y, z\}. There is an asymmetry in the relations of a set to its members: often, each member of a set is conceivable independently of the set (in that it could exist without it); however, the set is never conceivable independently of its members (for its identity depends on them). Hence valuing x in part for the sake of that instance of eudaimonia counts as valuing x for the sake of something other than itself, whereas
My argument is that, if Aristotle combines his conceptions of eudaimonia as final without qualification, and as a concrete whole, he commits himself to an extreme holism. I once tried to illustrate this as follows: ‘The readiest illustration of such holism is aesthetic. A picture (a pattern of colours), or a piece of music (a pattern of sounds), are compounded out of elements none of which, perhaps, need have any value in isolation (nor even within a fragment of the pattern). The role of these elements may be solely to realize a certain structure, so that the whole value of each element is its contribution to the value of the structured complex’ (1980: 344). That was never plausible as a claim about traditional paintings and compositions. It is more plausible of works of conceptual art, which exist in order to embody a single, indivisible idea. Unfortunately for any analogy with Aristotle, a life is utterly unlike such a work, and much more analogous, for example, to a pictorial cycle depicting the life and death of a rake or a martyr; for such cycles form an aesthetic whole, but lack that unity of focus.

II : EUDAIMONIA AS THE FINAL END OF ACTION

We need to ask again how rightly to conceive eudaimonia if it is to be an end ‘final without qualification’ (1.7.1097a33) – indeed, the only such end (10.6.1176b30-1). And here we need to change to a different paradigm. Perhaps the problem has arisen through a mistaken identification of two things that are both evidenced in Aristotle: on the one hand, a conception of eudaimonia as the end of ends, which is a determinable goal; on the other, a conception of a eudaimôn life as a determinate, composite, and concrete whole that realizes that goal. It is the first that I found in Plato. And the distinction has a pre-echo, though at a high level of abstraction, in the passage of Plato that most explicitly privileges eudaimonia as, in effect, unqualifiedly final. As I reported from the Symposium, Diotima relates erôs and eudaimonia as follows: love is a desire for the possession of good things; it is by the possession of good things that eudaimones are eudaimôn; the question ‘Why do you want to be eudaimôn?’ makes no sense (204e2-205a3). The immediate implication is valuing that instance of eudaimonia in part for the sake of something other than itself. However, this only partly accommodates what Aristotle asserts – which is that no one pursues eudaimonia ‘for the sake of these things’ (1097b6), whether we count them as ‘other’ than itself or not.

Further, take an example to which I shall return: a man may pay a debt in order, thereby, to be acting justly (An. Po. 1.24.85b31-2). If it is true, it is presumably necessarily true, at least in those circumstances, both that to pay that debt is to act justly, and that to act justly is to pay that debt. (Symmetry at this level is distinctive of Kant’s ‘perfect’ duties. In the case of an imperfect duty, say of liberality, to give a certain gift may be to act liberally, though to act liberally is not to give that gift rather than others. At a lower level of description, of course, I may pay a debt equally by sending a cheque, or by handing over cash.) So, even if it is true, as Aristotle supposes, that the man pays the debt in order to be acting justly, this will not count as his doing one thing for the sake of something else. Hence, according to the criterion of EN 1.7.1097a30-2, paying the debt and acting justly will count as equally ‘perfect’ or ‘final’ (teleios). Yet Aristotle’s view is surely that paying the debt is less perfect than acting justly, since the former is done for the sake of the latter, and not vice versa (cf. Ackrill, 1980b: 94-5). Hence we should not read into his definition of unqualified finality that x can be pursued for the sake of y, and still be unqualifiedly final, just so long as y is not other than x.

So I believe that the conclusion of my argument stands: if a man’s eudaimonia is a concrete whole composed of parts which possess intrinsic values of their own, then he pursues it in part for the sake of those parts, so that his eudaimonia fails to be an unqualifiedly ‘perfect’ end.

38 Vlastos observes (1991: 207), ‘Plato never uses the “parts/whole” terminology for the relation of intrinsically valuable goods to happiness.’ Unlike Vlastos, I do not view this as a failure to be explicit.
that the question ‘Why do you want to possess good things?’ is permissible, and the answer is ‘In order to be eu\(d\)aimon.’ It is inexplicit how (a) being eu\(d\)aimon relates to (b) possessing good things. Presumably (b) is a necessary as well as a sufficient condition of (a): that is, it is \(by\), and only \(by\), achieving (b) that one achieves (a). Yet (a) is not to be reduced to (b); for (a) gives point to (b), whereas there is nothing else, not even something notionally distinct, which gives point to (a). We might distinguish (a) and (b) as follows: (a) is the ultimate goal of desire, a goal that is highly indeterminate in nature as in structure; (b) is what is involved in achieving that goal. (b) is described in Plato’s text at a level of articulation that is still highly abstract, but adduces other and related notions. Success in a human life has two aspects. There is (a) an ultimate goal achieved through living such a life; and there is (ba) the conjunctive realization of subsidiary goals that are achieved in the course of it. In what does the point of (b) consist? At least partly in its achieving (a), but additionally in the multiple goods whose possession it is. On any realistic view, part of the value of a eu\(d\)aimon life is focal upon the eu\(d\)aimonia that it realizes, whereas part of its value is plural, and derives from the goods that constitute it. In any case, we must not confuse eu\(d\)aimonia as the most final end with a eu\(d\)aimon life that realizes that end in some determinate way.\(^{39}\)

I introduced the conception of eu\(d\)aimonia as a concrete whole with the modern notion of \textit{how well a life goes}. Aristotle’s conception of eu\(d\)aimonia as ‘final without qualification’ is different (I have argued), and coincides with a notion that Anselm Müller (1989) has derived from consideration of Wittgenstein’s ‘A Lecture on Ethics’ (1965). This is the idea of what Müller calls an ‘overall aim’ of action:

An overall aim would be one I could not but have … All my striving would be towards this aim, whatever my particular purpose in a particular action, somewhat as the tendency of a body under the influence of gravitation is towards a state of equilibrium, whatever the direction of its particular movement, and very much as the tendency of someone having a question on his mind is for truth whatever the content of the particular judgement he is about to form … It would not be up to me not to tend towards this aim; for any option I took would already be inspired by it (1989: 236).

\(^{39}\)Given that I have cited the EE and AE for the parts and whole view of eu\(d\)aimonia, and the EN for the final end view, a reader might wonder whether Aristotle’s view changed between the EE and AE and the EN. However, AE B 2 says succinctly, ‘Acting well (eupraxia) is the end’ (1139b3-4); and EE 1.8 identifies an end of action which is that-for-the-sake-of-which, and cause of the things falling under it, being first among all goods (1218b10-12). So it seems rather that Aristotle accepts both conceptions at the same time. Which is fine if they are not confused. Though the distinction between them is hardly made explicit (and is apparently rejected in the probably non-Aristotelian Magna Moralia at 1.2.1184a26-9), it may be present in this passage: ‘Why is eu\(d\)aimonia not praised? Because it is the reason for which other things are praised, either through being referred to it, or being parts of it’ (EE 2.1.1219b11-13). This could just be distinguishing instrumental means from constitutive ways and means; however, talk of ‘being referred’ (anapheresthai) is not so limited (cf. EN 1.12 1101b20-1, 27-31). It at least permits my thought that the eu\(d\)aimonia that has parts is not identical to the eu\(d\)aimonia that is ‘final without qualification’ (1.7.1097a33-4).

Confirmation may be found within Met. Δ 16: ‘the ultimate thing for the sake of which is also an end (telos, 1021b29-30) is distinguished from the things which have attained a good end’, which thereby count as ‘perfect (teleios, 1021b23-5). Accordingly, a eu\(d\)aimon life (which may count as an instance of eu\(d\)aimonia, in one sense) is one that has achieved its goal (which is eu\(d\)aimonia, in the other sense). The distinction is also implicit in Aristotle’s application to eu\(d\)aimonia of his tense test for activities. He counts being eu\(d\)aimon (as expressed by the verbal eu\(d\)aimonein) as an activity, since one simultaneously is eu\(d\)aimon, and has been eu\(d\)aimon (Met. Θ 6.1048b26). This fits living well (which he also cites, b25), but not the concrete life that may constitute an instance of that, which is rather a process that unrolls over time.
Such an aim is a pure object of the will that is constant between different situations of action; in this it differs from ‘any particular aim’, which ‘is, so to speak, adulterated by limiting conditions which are not objects of my wanting’ (1989: 238). The overall aim is neither contingent upon circumstance, nor optional: ‘It is an aim I do not set myself. It is there as soon as I am there; it is as little of my choosing as my existence is; it is somehow set before me’ (ibid.).

Such was the ultimate goal of human action to be found in Plato. We can express it in Aristotelian terminology. Any choice, or chosen action, ipso facto aims at eudaimonia. Eudaimonia is the good of choice and action (in the rich sense of praxis in which all action is chosen, AE B 2.1139a18-20). This is a ready way of making sense of a number of familiar but disputed passages. Eudaimonia ‘is a first principle; for it is for the sake of this that we do all that we do’ (EN 1.12.1102a2-3). In the Politica, Aristotle states that eudaimonia is identical to acting well, eupragia or eupraxia (7.3.1325a22-3, cf. EN 1.8.1098b20-22). Possibly the senses of the words differ in nuance: the term eupraxia may lack the connotation, which the term eudaimonia possesses, of the activity of a complete life (1.7.1098a18). (I found some evidence for such a distinction in Plato between eu prattein and eu zên, though often the phrases are used interchangeably.)

We read in the common books that eupraxia is the final end of action (which subsumes production) and the focus of desire (AE B 2.1139b1-4, cf. 5.1140b6-7). eupraxia is the nominalization of act well (eu prattein, cf. EN 1.4.1095a19), just as action (praxis) is the nominalization of act (prattein).

Primarily, what one performs is an act, and what one pursues is eupraxia or eudaimonia. One can’t do anything without doing an act, and one can’t choose anything without aiming at eudaimonia. Eudaimonia isn’t a reason for doing one thing rather than another, since whatever one did would be done for its sake. Analogously, truth isn’t the reason for judging one way rather than another, since whatever one judged one would judge to be true. Yet eudaimonia is the inherent goal of action, just as truth is the inherent goal of judgement. As I discussed in A § 3 above, reasons for action are eudaimonia-regarding, just as reasons for belief are truth-regarding.

Such a conception can help us to understand how eudaimonia is the most choiceworthy of ends, in the sense of always being chosen for itself and not for anything else (EN 1.7.1097a34-b1). Take a set of acts \{x, y, z\}. I can shift from choosing \{x, y, z\} for the sake of eudaimonia, to choosing \{x, y, z + taking a chocolate cream\} for the sake of eudaimonia; but that can’t count as choosing \{eudaimonia + taking a chocolate cream\} for the sake of eudaimonia – which would be nonsense. Essentially the same point can be made in relation to the determinable ‘acting well’.

In a privileged sense of ‘act’ (such as that evidenced at AE B 2.1139a19-20), it holds that whenever one acts, one is acting in order, thereby, to be acting well – which, as Aristotle puts it, is the ‘mark to which the man who has the logos looks, and heightens or relaxes his activity accordingly’ (B 1.1138b22-3). In an example from the Analytica Posteriora, a man comes to a place in order to get a sum of money, and

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40 I believe that Kenny misses this point when he writes (1992: 8): ‘It is not the case that every single action of every agent has happiness as its ultimate end: some actions are the results of chains of practical reasoning which halt elsewhere – in honour, perhaps, or understanding or pleasure.’ Just because, as I say, eudaimonia isn’t a reason for doing one thing rather than another, it doesn’t properly belong within practical reasoning at all (as Aristotle seems to recognize). What a man takes as his starting-points in deliberation, and how he deals with them, manifests how he conceives of eudaimonia. I discuss this further in Ch. 3 B.
therewith pay a debt, and thereby avoid acting unjustly (1.24.85b27-35). Nothing more need to be said, for not acting unjustly is invariably a condition of acting well. Here we can distinguish: coming to a place is a means towards getting a sum of money, which is itself a means towards paying a debt; paying a debt is a way of avoiding acting unjustly, which itself (though this is left implicit) is a way of acting well. Now it is evidently a mistake – and often evident nonsense – to reverse a means-end chain. (In this case, one might get a sum of money in order to come to a place, saying by hiring a horse – but that is not the situation described.) Could one avoid acting unjustly in order thereby to be paying a debt? Hardly. Could one act well in order thereby to be avoiding acting unjustly? Certainly not. This is partly a matter of the specific and generic: compare that one may paint a wall scarlet in order thereby to be painting it red, but not paint it red in order thereby to be painting it scarlet. It is also a matter of the endlike (or Aristotle’s ‘perfect’ or ‘final’, teleios): acting well is the point of not acting unjustly, rather as not acting unjustly is the point of paying a debt; and ‘being the point of’ is no more a symmetrical relation than ‘being instrumental towards’.

Thus paying a debt may derive its value from acting justly, which in turn derives its value from acting well: one pays a debt in order thereby to be acting justly, and this in order thereby to be acting well. Here, paying a debt is an instance of acting justly, and hence also an instance of acting well. Other things may derive value from acting well without constituting instances of it. This may be the message of a difficult passage that has been much debated:

We call final without qualification that which is always selectable in itself and never for the sake of something else. Now such a thing eudaimonia, above all else, is held to be; for this we select always for itself and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, intelligence, and every virtue we select indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should select each of them), but we select them also for the sake of eudaimonia, judging that through them we shall be eudaimôn (1.7.1097a33-b5).

The word that I have here translated as ‘select’ is haireisthai, which is general, and not prohaireisthai, which Aristotle later adopts specifically to signify deliberative choice. (At points below, where it is more natural, I shall use the term ‘value’, though it fails to imply that the object is a good open to an agent.) It is not fatal to the holist that Aristotle grants that we should select each of ‘honour, pleasure, intelligence and every virtue’ even if ‘nothing resulted from them’; for it is evident elsewhere (cf. AE C 7.1150a19-21, Pol. 7.3.1325b18-19; Plato, Rep. 2.357b5-6) that the term ‘result from’ (apobainein) connotes consequences (such as a benefit or loss to others), and not immanent ends (such as being eudaimôn in acting justly, and acting justly in paying a debt). Hence it is not excluded that the values of these things might derive from some abstract end that they help to realize. What is rather striking is that ‘honour, pleasure, intelligence and every virtue’ are ascribed intrinsic value, even though none of them can itself be an instance of acting well.41 It is possible that Aristotle is writing loosely, and has in mind not possessing ‘intelligence and every virtue’, but exercising it; but that suggestion does not apply to honour. So he seems to

41 This is debatable in the case of pleasure, depending upon how we interpret Aristotle’s view of it. If pleasure is actually identical to uninterrupted activity (AE C 12.1153a13-15), many – though not all – pleasures will be deliberate actions. However, that is certainly not precisely the view, elusive though it is, of EN 10.4: there, enjoying an activity is intimately connected to the activity, but not identified with it.
be granting that many things may be worth having in themselves, though they are not of a kind to be instances of acting well.

At the same time, he asserts of ‘honour, pleasure, intelligence and every virtue’ that ‘we select them also for the sake of eudaimonia, judging that through them (dia toutôn) we shall be eudaimôn’ (1097b2-5). One way of reading ‘through’ here is that they have acting well as a consequence. In the case of virtue, and indeed intelligence, we can cite a later passage: ‘The state of mind may exist without producing any good result, as in a man who is asleep or in some other way quite inactive’ (1.8.1098b33-1099a2).42 If so, when a man is awake, his virtue can be said to ‘produce’ action that not only accords with virtue, but constitutes acting virtuously (2.4.1105a28-33). It is less clear how honour and pleasure could have acting well as a consequence. However, Aristotle will observe much later that one role of pleasure is to ‘increase’ (sunauxanein) the activity in which a man takes pleasure by helping him to progress in it (10.4.1175a30-5). Honour could well be viewed as a means to political influence; but what Aristotle actually suggests is that men pursue honour from good acquaintances as a source of moral reassurance (1.4.1095b26-9).

So read, the passage has the following gist: we value virtue (like the rest) for its own sake, for we would value it even if it had no consequences; but we also value it for having acting well as a consequence. Aristotle remarks in AE B that philosophic and practical wisdom are worth having (hairetos) just because each is a virtue of some part of the soul, even apart from their exercise (12.1144a1-3, cf. 13.1145a2-4). Presumably he would extend this thought to virtues of character. However, Aristotle had ground not to think in this way. For he has a general view that potentiality exists for the sake of actuality, as is stated in Met. 8:

Everything that comes to be moves towards a principle (archê), i.e. an end. For that for the sake of which a thing is, is its principle, and the becoming is for the sake of the end; and the actuality is the end, and it is for the sake of this that the potentiality is acquired. For animals do not see in order that they may have sight, but they have sight that they may see (1050a7-11).

Hence he would hold that virtues exist for the sake of acting virtuously, even when they are not being exercised. Consequently, their value derives from the value of acting well. They exemplify a way in which something may derive value from acting well, even existing ‘for the sake of it’ in a sense, even though it is not an instance of acting well, and although no acting well takes place.

Alternatively, and more consistently, Aristotle may mean a different and still closer relation with action. He may have in mind that, when intelligence and a virtue are being exercised, we value them because of a relation to eudaimonia that is not consequential.43 And this is most likely what he means in the case of pleasure, which is not a capacity or disposition. Honour we can set aside: Aristotle presumably mentions it here because he is describing the structure of our valuing, and many decent people take honour to be integral to eudaimonia – mistakenly, as he has already argued (1.5.1095b22-30). But the other three, virtue, intelligence, and pleasure, are linked internally to acting well within Aristotle’s own theory: he requires of acting well that it display a firm character (EN 2.4.1110a32-3), that it involve ‘a logos for the sake of something’ (AE B 2, 1139b32-3), and that it be

42 The Greek for ‘produce’ here is apotelein. On this reading of 1097b2-5, apotelein (1099a1) and apobainein (1097b3) are correlative: if A ‘brings about’ B, B ‘results from’ A.
43 Lawrence (1997: 43-4) is sensitive to the variety of such relations.
pleasant (*EN* 1.8.1099a21, 9.9.1170a8-10, 10.7.1176b25-6) – indeed, with the specific pleasure proper to the activity (see 10.5). In this respect, while virtue, intelligence, and pleasure are not indeed *instances* of acting well, they are essential *aspects* of it. And thus it can be said that we act well *through* them, where ‘through’ indicates not the relation in which a cause stands to a consequence, but one in which a formal cause stands to what it helps to define. Once we allow that other things can take on an intrinsic but derivative value from acting well, we need not be restrictive upon the manner of the derivation. Paying a bill takes on intrinsic value as an instance, or way, of acting well; virtue, intelligence, and pleasure can take on intrinsic value as essential aspects.\(^4\)

So far I have been considering the value that a way of acting, or an aspect of acting, or a potentiality of acting, can derive from the value of acting well. *All* these values may be viewed as derivative from that of *eudaimonia*, though in different ways. So interpreted, the passage that we have been considering all goes to confirm the finality of *eudaimonia*: pleasure, intelligence, and every virtue (even honour, if one wants to bring that in) are valued for its sake, while it is valued for nothing other than itself (1.7.1097b4-6). Yet it is important that *acting well*, though a highly determinable end, is not an umbrella term of indefinite extent. There is even a range of actions that the agent does not intend to fall under it. These include actions that he does not identify as the thing to do, whether because he is acting *against* his own judgement, general or particular, or simply because he is acting spontaneously and without thought. An action that manifests that the agent is well disposed in respect of fear and confidence may well count as *brave*, and have positive value as such, although he does not select what he does as a way of acting well.\(^5\) Outside the realm of actions, Aristotle has given as examples of things good in themselves, which ‘are pursued even when isolated from others’, ‘thinking and seeing and certain pleasures and honours’ (1.6.1096b16-19). Yet he then explicitly excludes perception from contributing to *eudaimonia*, on the contestable ground that it is common to every animal, while we are seeking something distinctively human (1.7.1097b33-1098a3).\(^6\) It is more clearly true that perceiving is not itself a way of acting (though action affects what one perceives, and perception guides action). And yet an enjoyable instance of perception – enjoyable, say, because both the organ and the object are good in their way (which supplies a *paradigm* of pleasure at 10.4.1174b20-31) – surely enhances a life, however minimally. Indeed, in cases where perceiving is a good and a pleasure, one may well *pause to pay attention* (e.g. in looking or listening), which is (or may be) deliberate activity for an end, and so contribute to acting well. Yet even a transient glimpse, of a star or a sunset, is surely already a

\(^{4}\) In *B* § I, I doubted whether it makes sense to suppose that, being through being some part of a whole, an element can derive an *intrinsic* value from the global value of the whole. However, here we have essential aspects of acting well whose presence makes some action (paying a bill, say) an instance of acting well. We may then ascribe intrinsic value both to the action, and to these aspects.

\(^{5}\) Unfortunately, a crucial passage here, *EN* 3.8.1117a17-22, is multiply interpretable. It describes an agent who responds to danger out of courage, but not after reasoning. There are two significantly different readings: (a) he *chooses* to act as he does, and so acts well, though not deliberately; (b) he does a *brave* thing out of courage, but does not *act bravely*, since he does not act on choice (cf. 2.4.1105a28-33) – which entails that he does not *act well*. *If* the last is what Aristotle intends (as I shall argue, against a modern consensus, in Chapter 3, *B* § VIII, nn. 56, 84), this is as significant an instance of something that enhances a life independently of *eudaimonia* as any that I offer Aristotle in the text.

\(^{6}\) As I have heard Robert Heinaman argue, Aristotle’s exclusion of perception is contestable, even if the general principle of exclusion is accepted. For many of our incidental perceptions (such as of a man as ‘son of Diaries’, *De Anima* 2.6.418a21) are surely linked to linguistic concepts, and hence distinctively human.
good, albeit a trivial one. And, if one stops to get a better look, the look that one takes retains a value qua perception even as it takes on a further value qua action.\footnote{Thus Aristotle can hold both that seeing is ‘pursued’ (diôketai) for its own sake (1.6.1096b17), and that it is not part of human eudaimonia, being shared with the lower animals (1.7.1098a1-3). Pursuing seeing appropriately, e.g. in taking a closer look at something worth attention, is a way of acting well; seeing itself is not, though it can still be good in itself.}

When Aristotle concludes, ‘Human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue’, and so on (1.7.1098a16-17), he is tightening an earlier truism: the many and the refined identify ‘living well and doing well’ with being eudaimôn (1.4.1095a18-20). When Aristotle himself asked ‘what is the highest of all good achievable by action’ (a16-17), the question was imprecise. As I noted in relation to Plato, ‘doing well’ is as ambiguous in English as eu prattein is in Greek: either may signify ‘acting well’, or ‘faring well’. Yet the so-called ‘function argument’ of 1.7 imposes restrictions. The transient and passive pleasures that I mentioned early on – catching a ray of sunshine, or a thrush’s song – enhance a life without counting as ways or aspects of living well, as Aristotle chooses to understand that.\footnote{Sarah Broadie has an elegant proposal that resists this inference: ‘For Aristotle excellent rational activity is evidently the principal component of a happy human life: witness the synecdoche in his calling the chief good “excellent activity” (1102a5-6, 1177a12), whereas he never calls it after any other component’ (2002: 278). The charms of the somewhat recherché ‘synecdoche’ (which the 1990 COD glosses as ‘a figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa’) should not persuade us without evidence: it is not as if the formula ‘activity in accordance with virtue’ (1.7.1098a16-17) slips in as an abbreviation of a more comprehensive characterization. Heinaman (2007: 221-2) cites twelve other passages that confirm that formula.}

To add the values of virtue, intelligence, or pleasure to some instance of acting well would involve double counting: an instance of acting well is essentially an enjoyable exercise of virtue and intelligence; and we have seen that virtue and intelligence are valuable for the sake of acting well even when there is no acting well. It is different with perception. There are momentary, or purely passive, perceptions that do not connect with acting well, and yet enhance a life minimally. So, if we take an action that constitutes acting well, and add such a perception, we have a new totality that has more value than the action taken by itself.

What of cases where the subject of passive seeing is also an agent of active looking? The passive pleasure is a function of the good states of organ and object (10.4.1174b14-31), whereas the ethical pleasure is a function of the reasons for looking. Where the agent is observing some object for reasons independent of the pleasure of perceiving it (as when a detective keeps an attractive suspect under observation), there is nothing new to be said: the passive pleasure is incidental, but adds an incidental value to what the agent is up to. More complex are cases where the pure pleasure of passively perceiving something does not merely accompany, but underlies, the ethical pleasure of actively looking at it. Here the ethical pleasure supervenes on the aesthetic pleasure: it is a good idea to look because seeing is a pleasure. Yet the aesthetic pleasure does not depend on the ethical one, and might be

\footnote{A different context, to which Broadie’s proposal is better applicable, is EE 1.2.1214b6-11: ‘Everyone who can live according to his own choice should adopt some goal for the fine life, whether it be honour or reputation or wealth or cultivation – an aim that he will have in view in all his actions; for not to have ordered one’s life in relation to some end is a mark of extreme folly.’ Aristotle’s advice is hardly cogent; yet it avoids insanity if it recommends adopting a project that one never frustrates, but not one that one pursues unceasingly. Aristotle supplies an example that makes my point in a different context. In EN 10.5, he mentions a flute-lover who is distracted from a discussion he is engaged in by the pleasure of overhearing someone playing the flute (1175b3-6). This pleasure is surely in itself a good; but it doesn’t contribute to his acting well – and indeed disrupts it.}
enjoyed even without any choice on the perceiver’s part: this pleasure might be the same even if he looked at the object out of inertia, or weakness. When what makes it right for one to look at a picture is the aesthetic pleasure that it yields, two things seem to be true: one would not be acting well if one didn’t enjoy the sight of what one sees; and yet the aesthetic value of one’s perceptual experience remains distinct from the value of acting well, which is ethical. If we add the two values together, we have some new whole whose total value is greater than the value it has as an instance of acting well. This exemplifies a more general point: acting well, as the ultimate goal of deliberate action, enjoys a unique finality; and yet the value of acting well is not the only source of the values that enhance human life. Acting well, as I understand it, is one aspect of an action among others; it is an abstraction, and not a concrete whole that takes in all its aspects. Not all the values associated with an action come with, or derive from, that particular aspect – privileged though it is within the end-directedness that is inherent in distinctively human praxis.

Passive pleasures make problematic Ross’s translation of a famous and debated passage already quoted: ‘We think it [sc. eudaimonia] most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others – if it were so counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods; for that which is added becomes an excess of goods, and of goods the greater is always more desirable’ (1.7.1097b16–20). Suppose, to vary Clark’s example, that one day, as I lie supine in the sun, a chocolate cream drops into my mouth, like manna from heaven, and begins, delectably, to dissolve on my tongue: this would be a minor good that minutely enhances my life without (at least directly) contributing to my eudaimonia, as Aristotle explicitly conceives that. So we have reason to adopt an alternative interpretation, which is not counter-factual: ‘When it is so counted it is clearly made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods’ (b17–18). Eudaimonia is the most desirable of things for a man – so long as we don’t compare it to a heterogeneous set such as {eudaimonia + the passive reception of a chocolate cream}. Acting well may be the end of action, and the most final of goods; but we enjoy some activities or experiences – though, in Aristotle’s own view, these should not be very significant for us – whose value falls outside its value.

Note that this ethical value can vary in degree: it isn’t that an act only has ethical value as being an instance of acting well (a quality that it shares with all other instances). For a maximal ethical value, see 9.8.1169a19–26 (which I shall later discuss in another connection).

Against this, one might cite 10.2.1172b31–4, which assert ‘The good cannot become more desirable by the addition of anything to it’; so Lawrence (1997: § 5). Yet that may not express Aristotle’s own view, but be a premise required for Plato’s argument against pleasure as the good; see Heinaman (2002: § 4). It is significant that it just talks of ‘the good’: I take ‘the human good’ of the function argument (1.7.1098a16) to be more restricted, viz. to things distinctively human, which Aristotle supposes to be rational actions or activities. Within the scope of that, his view of eudaimonia is maximally inclusive, in my view.

It may, however, precisely be an ethical criticism of certain lives that, e.g., purely sensuous pleasures constitute too much of what makes them liveable. It is true that Aristotle has a different objection to certain ways of living, since he allows what we all agree to be ‘shameful’ pleasures to count as pleasures only relatively to a depraved taste (10.5.1176a22–4). Yet I take him there to have in mind the unnatural pleasures of AE C 5 (such as biting one’s nails, or submitting to pederasty, 1148b28–9). L’homme moyen sensuel lives intemperately, doing things that are better not done and yet yield experiences that may be good of their kind.

Note that how much Aristotle can count as helping to realize eudaimonia and ‘the human good’ (EN 1.7.1098a16) depends on how much he accepts as distinctively human in exercising reason and manifesting virtue. If he accepted that men alone are capable of aesthetic experience that may be more or less discriminating (and the like), he should count looking at a picture as an instance of ‘acting well’ not just when it is chosen, but already when it exercises an intelligent or cultivated taste.
It is a good question why Aristotle should wish to restrict the range of *eudaimonia* in this way. If there is a practicable totality of goods that includes elements extraneous to *eudaimonia*, shouldn’t it be this totality that deliberation takes as its target? Shouldn’t this be the concern of the political art, being the most authoritative and architectonic (1.2.1094a26-8)? However, this complaint confuses distinct deliberative roles. When an agent is deliberating how best to act, he is *ipso facto* trying to act well; *if and only if* he does act well, he will have succeeded. Aristotle’s introduction of virtue and the virtues in EN 1.7 (1098a16-18) is no more than an indication of the complexities that attach to the concept of acting well for human beings who bring a complex make-up to a complicated world. (A provisional *articulation* will follow in 1.13.) Yet acting well as the goal remains abstract. In order to achieve it, an agent needs to take into account whatever values and disvalues he can produce or prevent by the alternative acts open to him (or alternatively, as I shall discuss in § IV, whatever values and disvalues he should take into account). It is only through taking account of what needs attention, and weighing it properly, that he can achieve his abstract goal. He can no more do that by restricting his attention to the goal itself than a philosopher could discover the truth about some matter by restricting his attention to truth. The materials of choice and action are as multiple as the goals, opportunities, and obstacles that are of concern (or proper concern) to human agents. Their final goal, acting well, may be ‘final without qualification’, but it is abstract, and can only be achieved through attending to concrete considerations. Nothing in the *structure* of Aristotle’s account of *eudaimonia* in EN 1.7 provides criteria of relevance for those. Nor should it: Aristotle is trying to lay bare a skeleton that is fleshed out, from day to day, in very different ways by virtuous and vicious agents.

**III : ‘IN A COMPLETE LIFE’**

In EN 1.7, after defining the human good, which is *eudaimonia*, as virtuous activity of a kind, Aristotle continues, ‘But we must add “in a complete life”. For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy’ (1098a18-20). This is a puzzling addition. For one thing, as J. L. Austin once complained, if a life is to come in, it shouldn’t be as an afterthought. (Nothing in the so-called function argument has explicitly prepared for it.) Moreover, it is unclear what Aristotle means here by a ‘complete life’ (*bios teleios*). The alternatives appear to be these: on a *lifeslice* reading, a ‘complete life’ is whatever stretch of life is sufficient for the achievement of one’s goal; on a *lifespan* reading, a complete life is the whole of a lifetime (at least from maturity, cf. 1.9.1100a1-3). In short, as people ask about terms of imprisonment, does ‘life’ here mean *life*?

52 Such questions are pressed by Lawrence (1997: 66-8).

53 Thus nothing excludes choosing to listen to a thrush’s song, primarily because it is a beautiful thing to hear, even though the pleasure of hearing it does not, as such, contribute at all to *eudaimonia*. It is still relevant in that, if I turn out not to enjoy hearing it, it may become doubtful whether I was acting well in deciding to listen to it.

54 It will vary which ethical terms, if any, different agents use in their deliberations. Among the non-virtuous, some, like Thrasymachus, may identify injustice as the virtue. Others may try to be just, but misconceive justice. Others may make little use of ethical language. Nothing in EN 1.7 establishes Aristotle’s own view that men must display the virtues he is about to anatomize if they are achieve the sense of fulfilment that is a mark of success in acting well (but see Ch. 2, B § 5).
Apparently in favour of the lifespan reading is 1.9.1100a4-9, which referring back (presumably to 1.7.1098a18), justify the requirement of ‘a complete life’ by allusion to Priam’s misfortunes in old age. This prefaces discussion of Solon’s advice, stated and endorsed in the *Ethica Eudemia* as follows: ‘One should not felicitate a man on being happy when he is alive, only when his life attains completion; for nothing incomplete is happy, as it does not form a whole’ (2.1.1219b6-8). Here, rather surprisingly, a life is only counted as reaching its goal once it has reached its terminus (which are two senses of telos distinguished in *Metaphysica* Δ 16). *EN* 1.10 is hardly single-minded or decisive, but finally suggests requiring of the happy man, given that eudaimonia is ‘a telos and something in every way teleios’, that he be already actively virtuous be also ‘about to live thus and die as befits his life’ (1101a17-19). This may demand – if we think of the unpredictability of the Trojan War – that secure ascriptions of eudaimonia be retrospective (which may be the *Ethica Eudemia*’s meaning when it endorses Solon). There are problems about this; but in part it might just be realism about the fragility of human success.

And yet there is evidence in Aristotle of a different conception, which orients particular actions towards a goal equally abstract, but less long-term. It has long been a concern of commentators how Aristotle can both make eudaimonia an aspect of ‘a complete life’, and insist that acting well involves performing an act for its own sake. This is required of the man who is not merely to do the just thing, but do it justly (2.4.1105a28-32). Yet how can an action that amounts itself to acting well or eupraxia, but not to living well or eudaimonia (which demands, in some sense, ‘a complete life’), be pursued for its own sake if its only goal that is fully final is eudaimonia?

Against that, one may try to identify eudaimonia with eupraxia. Is that contrary to a sentence that I quoted from the *Ethica Eudemia*, ‘One should not felicitate a man on being happy when he is alive, only when his life attains completion; for nothing incomplete is happy, as it does not form a whole’ (2.1.1219b6-8)? There is a way of steering clear of any incompatibility.\(^{55}\) The object of ‘felicitating on being happy’ (which is Woods’s accurate if verbose rendering of eudaimonizein) is a man; and this may permit a distinction. A single action may achieve eudaimonia in the sense of eupraxia, without sufficing to make it true that its agent is eudaimôn. One might distinguish two theses, one applying to actions, the other to agents. It may be that every man would wish to count as eudaimôn without temporal restriction, which requires that he remain eudaimôn for a lifetime, or at least from the time of assessment until his death. (This is the apparent implication of a tentative piece of reflection at *EN* 1.10.1101a14-21.) Yet the end inherent in any action of his is that it constitute acting well, which is a narrower goal. If so, we can understand how, in *EN* 1.4, Aristotle was willing, without sorting things out, to offer as a commonplace an identification of eudaimonia indifferently with ‘living well’ and with ‘acting well’ (1095a18-20).

One may compare a passage (cited earlier in a different connection) in Plato’s *Protagoras*. Socrates is inveigling Protagoras into accepting a form of hedonism. Relevant to us now is not that, but a point about tenses. Socrates poses this sequence of questions:

Do you think a man would live well if he lived in misery and suffering? … And what if he had a pleasant life to the end? Don’t you think that he would have lived well like that? … So to live pleasantly is good, and to live unpleasantly bad? (351b4-c1, after Taylor)

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\(^{55}\) This was suggested to me by a paper I heard from Stephen White.
Socrates may intend that to live pleasantly is to live a pleasant life to the end; in which case, no one lives pleasantly more than once. Yet his thought may equally well be truistic: a man who has enjoyed a good life to the end may certainly count as having lived well. There need be no implication that I only count as living well now if I am going to continue living well until my death.

Yet what then is added in EN 1.7 by the phrase ‘in a complete life’, glossed by the analogy of the single swallow that does not make a summer, and the remark that ‘one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy’ (1098a18-20)? We need here to tread a narrow line, interpreting it as making a point not already made, yet not adding a requirement not already justified. As I noted, there is the alternative not of a lifespan but of a lifeslice reading, which requires for living or acting well whatever time is enough for the achievement of one’s currently salient goals. For we may interpret ‘life’ (bios) to signify not a lifetime, but any stretch of life sufficient for the success of the project on behalf of which one is presently engaged. If so, talk of a ‘complete life’ makes explicit what was already implicit in talk of eudaimonia as the most final of ends (1097a25-34). Twice in the ensuing discussion in 1.10 a complete time or life is less than a lifespan (1101a12-13, a16). Only so, indeed, can we understand a concession that within the course of a lifetime eudaimonia may be lost, and recovered (1101a9-12).

Illuminating here may be the discussion in the Poetica of the requirements of a satisfactory plot, whether in tragedy or epic. Aristotle declares, ‘Tragedy is an imitation of a complete, i.e. whole, action, possessing a certain magnitude’ (teleias kai holês praxeōs mimêsin echousês ti megethos, 7.1450b24-5). To count as a whole, it must have a beginning, a middle, and an end (b26-7). He then explicitly rejects any idea that a single life, just in being the life of a single man, counts as a whole:

A plot is not (as some think) unified because it is concerned with a single person. An indeterminately large number of things happen to any one person, not all of which constitute a unity; likewise a single individual performs many actions, and they do not make up a single action … Just as in other imitative arts the imitation is unified if it imitates a single object, so too the plot, as the imitation of an action, should imitate a single, unified action – and one that is also a whole (1451a16-19, 30-32).

Striking here is the use of the term praxis to signify what we would count as a sequence of actions, and one which is likely (as within a tragedy) to take in the actions of several agents. We may compare, of course, our talk of ‘the action’ of a play.

Clearly this cannot be the sense of praxis that Aristotle intends in his Ethics; yet it does suggest a notion in between that of an individual action, standardly originated by a single prohairesis, and that of a lifetime of activity. Such a notion follows on much more easily within the context of EN 1.7. On the field of battle, for example, particular actions may themselves be ambiguous. (Consider: ‘He appears to be running away. What is going on? Has he lost his head, or is he up to something?’ Only a certain period of time will tell.) It may not be less than a man’s conduct throughout the battle that constitutes an instance of courage, and so achieves the end of acting well.36

36 Cf. All’s Well That Ends Well, I ii 216-19: Helena, ‘You go so much backward when you fight’; Parolles, ‘That’s for advantage.’ (In fact, Parolles is a thrasudeilos, showing a bold face except in danger; cf. EN 3.7.1115b29-33. Less bogus is Byron’s Johnson, who ‘never ran away, except when
When Aristotle concludes a stretch of argument within *EN* 1.7 with the words, ‘Human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue’ (1098a16-17), what is the force of the preposition *kata* (‘in accordance with’)? This raises a number of questions. I shall discuss three: in what sense such activity must be an exercise of virtue; whether it needs favourable circumstances, or has only to make the best of whatever circumstances obtain; and whether all values and costs are relevant to identifying it.

How much of a restriction is it that acting well involves acting ‘in accordance with virtue’? Terence Irwin has contrasted a narrow, and a wide, reading (1991: 390). In ‘a narrow, “prescriptive” sense’, it means that *eudaimonia* ‘consists solely in actions that are fully characteristic of, and prescribed by, the different virtues’. In ‘a broad, “regulative” sense’, it ‘refers to regulation by virtue, as distinct from full manifestation of the virtues’. One might well suppose that, when the ‘well’ of acting well is ethical, the man who acts well must act *virtuously*, in the full sense spelled out in *EN* 2.4: an agent who acts justly or temperately ‘is in a certain condition when he acts, first if he acts knowingly, secondly if he acts from choice, and choice of these things for their own sake, and thirdly if he acts from a stable and unchangeable state of character’ (1105a30-3). However, Irwin introduces a wider notion of ‘acting in accordance with virtue’ when he cites ‘the recreations and amusements of virtuous people’: these are not prescribed by the virtues, but they are regulated by them (sadistic pleasures are excluded). He appears to assume that, within both senses, the phrase ‘in accordance with virtue’ alludes to the virtues (plural) as they are about to be distinguished and identified within *EN* 2-5. If a piece of recreation falls under no item on the list, there is no virtue that it can be exercising, though it may be excluded by, e.g., courage or temperance (unlike walking away from a danger that should be confronted, or into a dive of low repute). Irwin ascribes the broad sense to Aristotle (in particular, at 1.7.1098a17). This is how he counts an unobjectionable recreational walk as a component of *eudaimonia*.

Roger Crisp agrees with Irwin not generally, but in one respect. He concedes that one might ‘argue that the excellent person can demonstrate his excellence by walking “in a mean”: he will walk at the right time, on the right occasions, for the right reasons, and so on (2.6.1106b21-3)’ (1994: 117). Yet Crisp finds a ‘tension with other passages’ where ‘Aristotle seems to restrict the scope of each excellence to some particular sphere of life’, since ‘there is no excellence the exercise of which characteristically consists in walking’ (ibid.). Much here turns upon what is included within Aristotle’s lists of virtues. Let me concede two things: the lists in the *EN* and *EE* are very close, with discrepancies either minute, or aberrant (see Woods, 1992: 105-6); and the former ostensibly aims to delimit how many virtues there are (3.5.1115a4-5). However, Aristotle makes no systematic attempt to map out the spheres of life to which different virtues apply, and cannot seriously pretend to comprehensiveness in the virtues he recognizes (cf. Pakaluk, 2005: 115). In any case, running/Was nothing but a valorous kind of cunning’; *Don Juan* VIII xxxv 7-8.) Or think of a man making an investment on the Stock Exchange. What constitutes a case of *wise dealing in stocks and shares*? Certainly not a single sale or purchase; rather, a profitable pattern of buying and selling.
Crisp’s talk of ‘spheres of life’ seems unapt. Take courage: Aristotle indeed privileges courage on the field of battle, since there the danger is ‘greatest and noblest’ (3.6.1115a30-31); yet he allows that courage is also manifested, by a distinctive way of being fearless, ‘at sea also, and in disease’ (a35-b1). Yet disease is no more a ‘sphere’ of courage than of temperance. A better suggestion may be that different virtues discipline different passions (with the complication that courage indissolubly involves both fear and confidence). But there is no system to Aristotle’s treatment of the passions (certainly not in Rhetoric 2), and no plausibility in a claim that it is only in properly managing some particular passion that an action can enhance an agent’s life in a way that earns it inclusion as a component of his eudaimonia. I see no ground to resist the supposition that a walk sensibly taken for recreation may exercise phronêsis even if it falls under no particular virtue of character; thus it can accord with virtue even in Irwin’s ‘narrow, “prescriptive” sense’. 57

If that is right, it leaves less work to be done by Irwin’s ‘broad, “regulative” sense’ of the phrase ‘activity in accordance with virtue’. Would that sense still be well motivated? Not clearly: recreational walking can then be prescribed by phronêsis; hearing a thrush singing cannot even be regulated by phronêsis until it becomes listening – and then it can actually be prescribed. In any case, is the broad sense well grounded? I think not, for two reasons. First, other occurrences of the phrase confirm the narrow, but not the broad, sense (e.g., 1.8.1099a10-11, a21, 4.1.1120a23-4, 9.1.1164a35-b1, 10.6.1176b7-9, 1177a9-11, 10.7.1177a23-5). 58 Secondly, the broad sense would undermine the very argument of EN 1.7. Irwin takes the broad reading of ‘in accordance with virtue’ (1098a17) to be confirmed by the earlier characterization of the activity that is the function of man’s soul as being ‘in accordance with reason or not without reason’ (a7-8), which he takes as an allusion to reason’s regulative role. However, that characterization is an inference from an argument that excludes from man’s function various aspects of life – nutrition, growth, perception – that we share with the lower animals (1097b33-1098a4). And yet, within a human life, those are all subject to regulation by reason to the extent that they are under our control, even if they are not, in themselves, rational activities. Hence Irwin’s ‘broad, “regulative” sense’ is too broad for Aristotle’s purpose.

More difficult, I believe, is my second question about the connotations of the phrase ‘activity in accordance with virtue’. Does it apply to actions that make the best of limited capacities, and even of dire predicaments? What is it, in short, to act well? Is it just to act as phronêsis prescribes in one’s situation, and in the right state of mind (cf. 2.4.1105a30-4)? Or is it to act, as phronêsis prescribes, and in the right state of mind, in a situation that an agent may welcome in that it enables his virtues to achieve the general ends that it is characteristic of them to set themselves? As I have noted before (1980: 349), Aristotle might have argued for the former, austerer thesis: thus he writes, ‘The term “liberality” is used relatively to a man’s substance; for liberality resides not in the multitude of gifts but in the state of character of the giver, and this is relative to the giver’s substance’ (4.1.1120b7-11). However, he also remarks, ‘The liberal man will need money for the doing of his liberal deeds’ (10.8.1178a28-9), as if

57 This may be particularly clear in a case where it would be more amusing, but less refreshing, for the agent to play dice, say, rather than take a walk. In disparagement of ‘amusement’ (paidia) – a term perhaps inapt for the sobriety of a walk, but surely applicable to amateur sport – Aristotle remarks, ‘Relaxation is not an end, for it is taken for the sake of activity’ (10.6.1176b35-1177a1). This surely indicates that deliberately taking some relaxation, not for its own sake but in order thereafter to return to something serious, can count itself as ‘acting well’.

58 So do other phrases characterizing eudaimonia, such as being a ‘use’ (chrêsis) of virtue (Pol. 2.8.1328a37-8, 2.13.1332a7-9); see Heinaman (2007: 225).
the widow fails to be liberal in offering her mite.\(^{59}\) Yet he cannot intend to be unrealistically demanding: he finds it a recommendation of his own view that \textit{eudaimonia} should be ‘widely shared’, and open to ‘all who are not maimed as regards their potentiality for virtue’ – though to realize the potentiality requires both training and application (which \textit{we} might view as moral luck, 1.9.1099b18-20). His discussion of misfortune in 1.10 may be imperfectly decisive, but is concerned to stress the resilience of \textit{eudaimonia}. The \textit{eudaimôn} who makes the best of wretched circumstances (like the shoemaker who ‘makes the best shoes out of the hides that are given him’) can never become \textit{miserable}, though he may cease to be \textit{blessed} (\textit{makarios}, 1100b33-1101a8). It is unclear whether \textit{makarios} is an elegant variation upon \textit{eudaimôn}, or an intensification of it.\(^{60}\) Yet, if a multitude of misfortunes ‘crush and maim \textit{eudaimonia}’, since ‘they both bring pain with them and hinder many activities’ (1100b25-9), it would seem that \textit{eudaimônia} demands a modicum of good fortune.\(^{61}\)

More evidently demanding is a discussion in \textit{Politics} 7.13. There Aristotle defines \textit{eudaimonia} as ‘the actualization and perfect employment of virtue – not conditionally, but absolutely’ (1332a7-10). What follows (a10-21) sets aside ‘just penalties and punishments’ as displays of virtue that fail to fall within \textit{eudaimonia} since they ‘remove something bad’ instead of being ‘preparatory to and productive of good things’. In several ways, the passage is puzzling: it makes a cross-reference to ‘the \textit{Ethics}’ (\textit{en tois Êthikois}, a8) that is either untraceable or inexact;\(^{62}\) it identifies what is conditional with what is necessary, and what is absolute with what is noble (a10-11), and yet allows that the noble may come about ‘from necessity’ (a11-14); further it finds ‘absolutely noblest’ actions that aim at ‘honours and abundance’ (a15-16), though the \textit{EN} deprecates honour as a goal on the ground that ‘it is thought to depend on those who bestow it rather than on him who receives it’ (1.5.1095b24-5). There is the further non-match that the \textit{EN} finds supreme nobility in laying down one’s life in battle for others (9.8.1169a18-26), although ‘no one chooses to be at war for the sake of being at war’, which would seem ‘absolutely murderous’ (10.7.1177b9-11). However, all these uncertainties surely leave one general point standing: acting virtuously can fail to help constitute the agent’s \textit{eudaimonia}, if the action is not of a kind that a virtuous agent would wish to be performing.\(^{63}\)

\(^{59}\) If so, the ‘liberality’ of \textit{EN} 4.1 differs from the ‘magnificence’ of 4.2 only in scale: both will demand means adequate for a purpose, though the second’s purposes are more expensive than the first’s. On how these two virtues relate, see Pakaluk (2004).


\(^{61}\) Heinaman (2002: 133-4) also cites or quotes \textit{EN} 1.5.1095b33-1096a2, 1.9.1100a5-9, 10.6.1176a33-5, \textit{AE} C 13.1153b19-21. \textit{Pol.} 4.11.1295a36-7 refers to ‘the \textit{Ethics}’ as identifying the \textit{eudaimôn} life with an ‘unimpeded one in accordance with virtue’, which \textit{AE} C 13 takes to demand ‘goods of the body and external goods, i.e. those of fortune, viz. in order that he may not be impeded in these ways’ (1153b17-19). For a critical discussion, see Frede (2009: 202-7).

\(^{62}\) We meet the distinction between what is absolute (\textit{haplòs}) and what is conditional (\textit{ex hupotheoseús}) at \textit{EE} 7.2.1238b5-9 applied to different ways in which a friend may be benefited: taking a drug may be good for him if he is ill – though even this is ultimately for the sake of things absolutely good. This could connect in that taking a drug may not count as a way of acting well that contributes to one’s \textit{eudaimonia} even if it is advisable when one is ill. (\textit{Cf. Top.} 3.2.118a6-15, which allows that what a man needs may be preferable for him, clearly as a means, even when fine things are better, clearly as ends.) Yet the distinction in \textit{Pol.} 7.13 is absent from the accounts of \textit{eudaimonia} in the \textit{EN} and \textit{EE}.

\(^{63}\) It is surely on the assumption that they are achieving \textit{eudaimonia}, and not in anticipation of Stoic austerity, that Aristotle finds that virtuous agents have nothing to regret (9.4.1166a29), in contrast to the vicious who are full of regret (b24-5). The mixed actions of 3.1.1110a4-b7 (and \textit{EE} 2.8.1225a2-19), such as throwing goods overboard in a storm, which are voluntary (and deliberate) in the
This fits a distinction that may well be drawn within the *Ethics*. Aristotle writes of *eudaimonia* as follows:

Yet it needs the external goods as well; for it is impossible, or not easy, to do fine acts without the proper equipment. In many actions we use friends and riches and political power as instruments; and there are some things the lack of which mars happiness, as good birth, goodly children, beauty; for the man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary and childless is not very likely to be happy, and perhaps a man would be still less likely if he had thoroughly bad children or friends or had lost good children or friends by death (*EN* 1.8.1099a31-b6).

The structure of the passage creates a presumption that Aristotle wishes to distinguish two ways in which external goods are requisite as ‘the proper equipment’ for acting well. Yet the expression ‘mars’ (*rupainein*, from *rupos* = dirt, filth) rather fits a somewhat different thought: making the best of far from ideal circumstances lacks the desirability proper to *eudaimonia*. If so, it is not simply that the loss of a child, for example, robs a father of certain desirable expedients (such as the existence of a collaborator or successor within some long-term project), but that it denies him the context within which a man could reasonably hope and expect to exercise his virtues. Such a bereavement could not be said to deny his virtues scope: indeed, it gives all to much scope to the virtue, unspecified by Aristotle but demanded by Plato (*Rep.* 10.603e4-606c8), of moderation in grief (called by Dr Johnson ‘a species of idleness’). Rather, it denies his virtues the exercise that a normal human agent would prefer or could accept.

Aristotle’s position becomes complicated: in one sense of ‘acting well’, to act deliberately is to intend to be thereby acting well (however unkind the circumstances), in another and more demanding sense, in which acting well is automatically part (or such as to be part) of being *eudaimôn*, one can act deliberately with no hope of thereby acting well. There are, in fact, two ways in which this can arise. First, if the agent has had, through misfortunes like those of Priam, to give up his hopes of being *eudaimôn in general*, he cannot act for the sake of *eudaimonia*, if this means in order to be *eudaimôn*. If we wish to maintain the centrality of *eudaimonia* to the explanation of deliberate action (citing, say, 1.12.1102a2-3), we

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64 The punctuation is, of course, not Aristotle’s; but note the structure of *men ... de ...* (a33-b2).
65 So Irwin (1985: 95), Heinaman (1993: 35, 2007: 243-6). Cooper proposes that what is needed for *eudaimonia* is ‘a normally full range of options’ (1999b: 299), which demands normality and fullness where Aristotle seems rather to demand desirability – or at least not too much undesirability. Christof Rapp wrongly takes himself to be agreeing with Cooper when he well writes (2009: 224), ‘For each virtue there are, so to speak, preferred circumstances in which the optimal exercise of the virtue is possible.’ The same distinction, between what is serviceable as an *instrument* and what is preferable (or at least tolerable) as a *context*, recurs at *EN* 1.10.1100b25-30. Consider also *AE* C 13.1153b19-21: ‘Those who say that a man who is being tortured and has suffered terrible calamities is happy if he is a good man are willy-nilly talking nonsense.’ No doubt being tortured denies one most of one’s freedom of action; but I take the point rather to be that facing torture gives scope for heroism, but in a maximally unwelcome way.
66 For a poignant instance, cf. John Aubrey (*Brief Lives*) on the death of Sir William Platers’s son during the Civil War, ‘which his father took so to heart that he enjoyed not himselfe afterwards’.
67 For the thought that acting virtuously suffices for achieving *eudaimonia*, see *EN* 1.10.1100b9-10, and 10.8.1179a8-9.
68 In such a case, as in dealing well with poverty or disease, one may even act ‘finely’, and yet not in a manner within which *eudaimonia* is to be found (*Pol.* 7.13.1332a19-21).
must then appeal to a sentence of the *De Caelo* (cited by Robert Heinaman, 1993: 31): ‘While it is clearly best for any being to attain the end, yet, if that cannot be, the nearer it is to the best the better for it’ (2.12.292b17-19). Secondly, if the agent is *eudaimôn*, or can reasonably hope to become so, he acts in suitable circumstances so as thereby to be creating a component of his own *eudaimonia*. In unsuitable circumstances, he still acts for the sake of his own *eudaimonia*, but by what Heinaman has called ‘indirection’ (1993: 50): if, instead, he acted badly, he would be making himself *kakodaimôn*. Hence his acting well, in the less demanding sense, is a condition of his being *eudaimôn*, though not a component of it. *Eudaimonia* remains privileged as the end of ends: no one deliberately turns his back on it. It inspires some actions that count as acting well in the more demanding sense (Pol. 7.3), and other actions that can count as acting well in a less demanding sense, since performing them may be necessary to living well (and sufficient for coming as close to that as misfortune leaves open). Ideally, one acts in order to be thereby acting well; less ideally, one acts in order to preserve (or come closer to) one’s counting as *eudaimôn* oneself.

About dying in battle, Aristotle expresses contrasting attitudes, each of which he appears to endorse. Take a pair of passages from the *EN*:

Death and wounds will be painful to the brave man and against his will, but he will face them because it is noble to do so or base not to. And the more he possesses the whole of virtue and is happy, the more he will be pained at the prospect of death; for life is most valuable to such a man, and he is knowingly losing the greatest goods, which is distressing. Yet he is brave none the less, and perhaps even more so, because he accepts nobility in battle at this cost (3.9.1117b7-15).

It is true of a good person, moreover, that he does many things for the sake of his friends and his fatherland, even, if necessary, dying for them, since he will give up money and honours and, in a word, the ‘fought-over’ goods, acquiring what is noble for himself. For he would prefer to enjoy himself intensely for a brief while rather than slightly for a long time; and to live nobly for a year, rather than as chance may have it for many years; and to do one noble and great action rather than many insignificant ones. This presumably happens with those who lay down their lives for others: they choose, then, some especially noble thing for themselves (9.8.1169a18-26, after Pakaluk).

Neither passage is entirely unequivocal. The first agent ‘accepts nobility in battle at this cost’ (1117b14-15), though death is ‘against his will’ (b8); the second prefers ‘one noble and great action’ to ‘many insignificant ones’ (1169a24-5), and yet dies for his fellow-citizens only ‘if necessary’ (a19). And yet, despite elements of tension both between the passages and within them, it appears that Aristotle is making a broad distinction between the courage of a Greek hoplite, which must be more painful than pleasant, and the heroism of a Homeric hero, which can be more pleasant than painful.60 I read him as differentiating common or garden cases where it is a

60 Compare Blake’s sunflower that counts the steps of the sun, though it can never actually go where the sun goes.

69 Though not all the details fit, Aristotle must have in mind the choice of Achilles, who preferred to go to Troy and die young than to live long and ingloriously. He allows an element of pleasure even to the hoplite (‘The end which courage sets before it would seem to be pleasant’, 1117a35-b1, cf. b15-16 – by which he must have in mind the nobility or fineness of the action, cf. 3.7.1115b12-13), but there rather emphasizes its occlusion (‘but to be concealed by the attending circumstances’, b1-2). Somewhat more positive, however, is talk in 1.10 of the fine’s ‘shining through’ (*dialampei*) even misfortunes that ‘crush and maim’ blessedness (1100b29-31).
misfortune to have to fight, given a real risk of death, from heroic cases where going to war is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The soldier who ‘endures’ death (hupomenein, 1117a9) dies with reluctance, knowing that he is faring badly; the hero who lays down his life (huperapothnēsekein, 1169a25) dies with enthusiasm, knowing that he is acting well. It should follow that, on the battlefield, the soldier negatively escapes kakodaimonia, while the hero positively achieves eudaimonia. The second isn’t explicitly stated. However, it seems implicit within the higher salesmanship that is evident in these lines; and it confirms this that the whole topic of 9.8 is self-love (philautia), whose object, in all its varieties, is surely one’s own eudaimonia.

Thus action relates variably to eudaimonia. Compare two agents, A and B, who have already each enjoyed, in one morning, various instances of just action that amount to acting well in the full sense. Suppose that A is offered a further opportunity of just action that amounts to acting well in the full sense, though failing to take advantage of the opportunity would not itself be unjust (the act might involve doing a friend a kindness that is not obligatory but of which he is not undeserving). Meanwhile, B is landed with a requirement of just action that does not, itself, amount to acting well (for reasons of the kind given in Pol. 7.13), though acting otherwise would amount to acting badly, and so cut him off from eudaimonia. Clearly, A has reason to take the opportunity, and B to meet the requirement, though only A can thereby become more eudaimôn. It will not follow that C, a mutual friend, would rather help A in his action than B in his; for A’s action may merely enhance his eudaimonia slightly, whereas inaction by B would destroy his. Equally, neither A nor B could sensibly adopt a policy of always preferring actions that enhance one’s eudaimonia to actions that preserve it. Presumably acts that are, as the Politica oddly puts it, ‘noble out of necessity’ (7.13.1332a13-14) have some intrinsic value, though less than acts that, being absolutely noble, contribute positively to the agent’s eudaimonia; yet some of them – those that the situation demands of the agent – may be necessary for eudaimonia.

What turns out to be overridingly important is threshold effects: an act that makes the difference, for better or worse, between an agent’s achieving eudaimôn, or falling into kakadaimonia, is not only desirable but imperative. Being a condition of eudaimonia is a more important feature of an action than being a component of eudaimonia.

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71 I take this distinction to be Aristotle’s answer to an anxiety that David Wiggins has about a soldier whose commanders are incompetent, so that he lays down his life ‘in great anger at the necessity of the act’ (1995: 222). As Wiggins imagines him, ‘At any point he can indignantly reflect that his future life would not be worth living if he refused at this point to do the act that is required of him.’ He acts as he does not for its own sake, but in order to avoid the base (223). It seems to me that Aristotle’s less rosy alternative accommodates much of this. When he writes of his soldier that he faces death and wounds ‘because it is noble to do so or base not to’ (3.9.1117b9), the disjunction may even – despite the final words ‘He accepts nobility in battle at this cost’ (b14-15) – anticipate Wiggins’s further point that, in very unideal circumstances, one may act to avoid the base, but cannot achieve the noble. In general, the position that I here (after Heinaman) ascribe to Aristotle escapes Wiggins’s complaint of ‘rigorism’ (226-9).

72 Heinaman (1993: 54, n. 64) rejects this an unintelligible: ‘How could it be that one acts to promote one’s living well by doing what ensures that one is not living at all?’ It is true that the man who freely lays down his life is not intending to live well thereafter; but exposing oneself to being killed is an act that precedes death, and can confirm that one has lived well. Being eudaimôn requires no definite length, and cannot demand that one stay alive for as long as is in one’s power. Frederick the Great was making a point when he rebuked the Prussians who held back at the Battle of Kolin (18 June 1757), ‘Ihr Racker, wollt ihr ewig leben?’ (‘Rascals, would you live for ever?’)
My final question is about the range of considerations that an agent who is trying to act ‘in accordance with virtue’ can, or should, take into account. David Wiggins writes as follows (2002b: 254), ‘For the agent to embrace a specific conception of eudaimonia just is for him to become susceptible to certain distinctive and distinctively compelling reasons for acting in certain sorts of ways.’ This identifies a conception of eudaimonia with a restrictive privileging of certain kinds of reasons for action that sets others aside, at least when they come into conflict with reasons of a preferred kind. We must then be cautious about the following claim (1.7.1097b14-17): ‘The self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think eudaimonia to be; and further we think it most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others.’ We have found ground anyway to take this to mean that eudaimonia is not the enjoyment, per impossibile, of every possible kind of good, but success in acting well over an appropriate stretch of time in not too unfavourable circumstances. Such success may well be supposed to leave an agent in need of nothing more.

John McDowell agrees, but turns the screw by the further thought that, if an agent fully comprehends that the requirements of eudaimonia demand, in a certain context, that, of two goods A and B both at hand, he pursue A and set B aside, he will appreciate that he has no reason to pursue B instead. Any general reason to pursue B is silenced in the context (1998c: 90-3). This can make it easier to make sense of a rosy view of the virtuous agent that Aristotle expresses in EN 9.4, in Ross’s translation as revised by Barnes: ‘He grieves and rejoices, more than any other, with himself; for the same thing is always painful, and the same thing always pleasant, and not one thing at one time and another at another; he has, so to speak, nothing to regret’ (1166a27-9). If this means that there is really nothing which such agents are missing out on, talk of silencing can help to sustain it. Suppose that, out of temperance, Paris had turned his back on Helen: if she had not already been married, that would have been a loss of what men count as bliss; since she was another’s wife, a temperate Paris would not really have been denying himself anything that was open to him. This suggests a special way of reading remarks such as this in EN 3.11: ‘The temperate man is so called because he is not pained at the absence of what is pleasant and at his abstinence from it’ (1118b32-3). For this may now be paraphrased as follows: he is not pained by missing pleasures which he has no reason to pursue that is not silenced in context. Such a man can feel no regret for opportunities that he rightly passes by.73

Yet we have already seen that such view coheres with one line (9.8.1169a18-26) that Aristotle takes about laying down one’s life in battle, but not with another (3.9.1117b7-15). If (as I proposed) one interprets him as fundamentally consistent, and discriminating two different cases, one cannot ascribe to him any general view that, when it is right to act in a certain way, that silences any reasons for acting otherwise. And surely he would be right to reject such a view, which runs together two very different ethical experiences, to both of which any human agent, however meritorious, is subject. There are cases where one embraces some opportunity, and almost welcomes what would otherwise count as costs; for to accept them without

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73 This is certainly one way of interpreting a difficult passage at the end of EN 3.12: ‘The appetitive element in a temperate man should harmonize with the logos; for the fine is the mark at which both aim, and the temperate man has an appetite for the things he ought, as he ought, and when he ought; and this is what the logos prescribes’ (1119b15-18). A sign that one’s appetite is directed towards the fine might be that, when it would be shameful to indulge, any appetitive desire withers. Alternatively, however, as I propose in the text, it may be that it causes no trouble.
regret is to prove where one’s heart is set. But there are other cases where the costs of acting well are real, and not erased within a perspective that eclipses them.

So we should think again about how to read passages where Aristotle apparently excludes the virtuous agent from feeling pain or regret. It is the intemperate man, who chooses pleasures at the cost of everything else, who is said to be ‘pained both when he fails to get them and when he desires them appetitively’ (3.11.1119a3-4). When we read, ‘Appetite involves pain, but it seems absurd to be pained for the sake of pleasure’ (a4-5), we should interpret this not as an incoherent verdict upon appetite in general, but as a criticism of an intemperate appetite for which a pleasure denied or even delayed is indeed a source of distress. We needn’t suppose, however, that, given that the pleasure is intemperate, the temperate man who renounces it is renouncing nothing.

W. D. Ross translated EN 9.4 rather differently: the virtuous agent ‘has, so to speak, nothing to repent of’ (1166a29). Perhaps ‘repent of’ is too Christian in its connotations, but Barnes’s alternative ‘He has, so to speak, nothing to regret’ may mislead in its own way. Irwin renders and supplies instead, ‘He practically never regrets [what he has done]’, which seems right. He explains in a note (1999: 291-2), ‘The good person will surely be sorry if things have gone wrong … However, he will not decide … that he could reasonably have made past decisions different from those he has made. Hence he will have nothing to blame himself or reproach himself for.’ However, it doesn’t appear that Aristotle is particularly thinking of justifiable decisions that turn out badly. He is rather making a contrast with bad agents who (even if they are vicious and not acratic) suffer from dissonance not only between their current appetites and wishes, but between past and later selves: ‘If a man cannot at the same time be pained and pleased, at all events after a short time he is pained because he was pleased, and he could have wished that these things had not been pleasant to him; for bad men are laden with regrets’ (1166a22-5). Aristotle’s point is that good men decide well, and stand by their decisions, whereas bad men come to realize either that they made the wrong choice, or that, while they had to make the choice they made given the non-rational desires they had, it would have been better if these had been different (so Irwin, 1999: 292).

Hence it seems that we should not use McDowell’s concept of silencing as a general gloss upon Wiggins’s proposal that the virtuous agent is ‘susceptible to certain distinctive and distinctively compelling reasons for acting in certain sorts of ways’ (2002b: 254). Yet this proposal itself can stand. We can think of it as a contemporary rendering of a idea that is certainly recurrent in Aristotle: the truly ethical agent is overwhelmingly motivated to act for the sake of the fine or noble (to kalon). We must place this within the teleological structure that I have been describing. Acting well, I have proposed, is the end inherent in all deliberate action. The kernel of this is simply that, in deliberating, an agent tries to identify what, for him then and there is the thing to do; it is then a success if he both specifies this correctly, and carries it out. However, the mere notion of the thing to do does not itself place any restriction upon the range of relevant considerations. Aristotle’s identification of the human good with ‘activity of soul in accordance with virtue’ (1.7.1098a16-17) enriches the bare notion of doing what is to be done. He doubtless already has in mind that activity (energeia, a16) accordant with virtue involves more than accordant occurrences or outputs (ginomena, 2.4.1105a29). For the former, it is not enough that the agent does the things that a virtuous man would do. For his

activity, mental and physical, to accord with virtue he must do these things virtuously, which he achieves ‘first if he does them knowingly, secondly if does them choosing them, and choosing them for their own sake, and thirdly if he does them from a stable and unchangeable character’ (1105a31-3). In aiming, in this full sense, to act well, the agent values his action for its own sake as embodying an ingrained respect for ethical and other values. These are values that Aristotle never grounds or regiments, but lays open to view in his treatment of the ethical and intellectual virtues. His presentation of ethical virtues is essentially pluralist: though he makes recurrent use of some highly abstract notions (notably of the mean, and the fine), he recommends these to us through applying them in different contexts and in connection with different desires and emotions. However, three contrasts stand out. What is done finely is done freely, and not from necessity (e.g., in the case of courage, 3.8.1116b2-3). It is done with no ulterior purpose (e.g., in the case of liberality, 4.2.1123a24-6, 8.13.1162b36-1163a1). And it is done despite a common counter-motivation (such as to enjoy a physical pleasure, or escape a danger, or increase one’s means). Acting finely doesn’t just supervene upon such features in context, but becomes a central goal of the agent. So it is said that the brave man faces dangers ‘for the sake of the fine, for this is an end of virtue’ (3.7.1115b12-13). Aristotle views a virtuous agent as centrally concerned that he exercise the virtues in his actions. It is not just that he aims to act well when he acts on choice; further, what most concerns him about his own life is that it be a life of acting well. The good man is one who is such as to act well, and it is with acting well – in a line of argument that is often questioned – that Aristotle identifies the human good (1.7.1098a16-17). The man who implicitly accepts this thinks of himself primarily as an agent, and so is content for himself if he succeeds in acting well (which, we have seen, may require some contribution from favourable circumstances.)

An agent who achieves ‘a stable and unchangeable character’ (2.4.1105a33) has complied with a piece of advice in the EE: ‘Everyone who can live according to his own choice should adopt some goal for the fine life, whether it be honour or reputation or wealth or cultivation – an aim that he will have in view in all his actions’ (1.2.1214b6-9). Such an agent may or may not count as virtuous in our or Aristotle’s book; but he achieves a mature character in supplementing the bare (and, in itself, unhelpful) abstraction acting well so as to form a distinctive (and serviceable) conception of what fills the bill. I take this conception (as I shall argue in Chapter 3, B § 3) to be not a blueprint or decision procedure, but just the selective sensitivity to

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75 As I shall distinguish in B § 5, what is excluded is acting finely for the sake of a personal benefit deriving from the fineness of one’s action (such as admiration or reciprocation), not doing something (such as risking one’s life in battle) that counts as fine because it is such as to benefit others.

76 Of course, this is just what one would expect of an ethical outlook that remains individually eudaimonist. Precisely in this form, it captures what is arguably an essential feature of morality. Any ethical agent must be centrally concerned that he act well and not badly. This is what it is to take responsibility for one’s own actions – a responsibility that one cannot have for the free actions of others. Such a concern was manifested by Socrates when he preferred to risk his own life than to join in causing the death of an innocent man (Apol. 32c4-e1). Here we find a coincidence between Greek eudaimonism and perennial morality. For an illuminating discussion, see Müller (1977).

77 Cf. McDowell (1998a: § 12). Wiggins (1995: 221) so characterizes Aristotle’s perfectionism: ‘We value our own existence and (by that same token) we must wish for the existent thing that is us to be as good a thing as possible. But the only way of that existent thing to be as good as possible is by our euraxia. For what we are is what we are in action, and that is what we are by our acts.’ He then quotes 9.4.1166a14-29.
certain kinds of reason that Wiggins ascribes to the virtuous agent.\textsuperscript{78} Aristotle’s formulation, ‘activity of soul in accordance with virtue’ (\textit{EN} 1.7.1090a16-17), is Janus-faced: in one way, it just makes explicit what is already implicit in the phrase ‘acting well’; in another way, it anticipates Aristotle’s own exploration of the virtues of character and intellect. \textit{That} he rests upon no a priori foundation (though it has an empirical grounding in his stratification of human nature, initially in 1.13, finally in 10.7-8). He must rather hope that the reader who has been well brought up (cf. 1.4.1095b4-8) will recognize, and come better to appreciate, the ethical and intellectual values that he lays open to view, and adopt them consciously as his goal. We need not suppose that the educated agent will \textit{discount} other considerations, if that means (as with silencing) that they cease to be considerations for him \textit{at all}. And considerations other than those he usually privileges may impose themselves in an emergency. Yet he has dispositions of attention and preference that constitute a \textit{character} that influences his perceptions of his opportunities and structures his repertory of options. Only with the help of that can an overriding concern to act well engage effectively and coherently with a world of indefinite data and possibilities.

\textbf{V : INTELLECTUAL CONTEMPLATION}

As I noted earlier (at the beginning of B § I), to ascribe to Plato and Aristotle a purely ethical conception of \textit{eudaimonia} is certainly too restrictive in one way: it neglects that they recognize intellectual virtues, virtues of reason, as well as ethical virtues, virtues of character. So we might speak instead of ‘aretaic’ virtues (from the Greek word for virtue or excellence of any kind, \textit{aretê}). But that answers no questions about the proper priorities.

In early Plato, this is less of an issue, and for two reasons. First, the relation of ‘wisdom’ (\textit{sophia}) or ‘knowledge’ (\textit{epistêmê}) to ethical virtues such as courage or temperance is very close, so close that – as I shall discuss in Chapter 2 – they can be viewed as identical. If so, simply doing philosophy displays the same virtue as doing it \textit{with} and \textit{for} someone whom one thereby intends to benefit. Secondly, Socrates typically philosophizes in the company of others, in a way that is at once obedient to the gods (whose directions he claims to be following, \textit{Apol.} 37e5-38a1), and beneficent towards his fellow men (36c2-e1). In later Plato, the distinction between the practical and the theoretical generates practical and theoretical problems. The \textit{Republic} distinguishes at least four central virtues: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. However exactly they relate, it is clear that one may, on some occasion, exercise one without the others. Wisdom is the virtue of reason, which has both intellectual and ethical responsibilities. It is its task to discover truth (9.580d10, 583a2), and also its passion (4.435e7, 9.580d10, 581b5-10, 586e4). Yet it is also its responsibility to govern the entire soul with knowledge of what is beneficial to each part and to the whole (4.441e4-442c8). A tension results between private vocation and public obligation. Whether this is resolved, and if so how, is unclear. Plato’s justification of justice must ideally demand that no agent could become happier by opting to act unjustly.\textsuperscript{79} Yet at times his recommendation to the Guardians of his utopia appears to be that they must respect their obligations to the state and their

\textsuperscript{78} In Ch. 3, B § III, I return to this passage in order to correct a possible over-interpretation of it. It is not the role of such a conception to impose a one-track mind, or to remove the need for judgement.

\textsuperscript{79} It is surely implicit – though not logically implied – at 5.472e4-d1 that the perfectly just man is also perfectly happy.
fellow-citizens even if, through curtailing their enjoyment of the Forms, this makes them fare less well they could otherwise have done (7.519b7-520e1). In defining the conception of happiness proper to a guardian with social responsibilities, Socrates can sound like a *satisficer*, one who rejects maximizing the degree to which one’s ends are fulfilled in favour of a principle that enough is enough (see 519e1-520a4, 4.420b4-421c4, 5.465e5-466c2). This leaves standing the thought that, in acting rationally, an agent always intends thereby to act well, and be *eudaimôn*. To this extent, eudaimonism is respected. Yet there are cases where a philosopher who plays his proper role within the city apparently fares less well (*eu prattein* is the phrase at 519e2), and is less *eudaimôn*, than he could otherwise have contrived. Socrates’ explicit response to this complaint in the *Republic* is to appeal to the compulsion and necessity that operate through the agent’s own rational recognition of a social obligation (7.519e4, 520a8, e1-2). It is less clear whether this incorporates interpersonal justice within a reconception of eudaimonism, or rather restricts eudaimonism by imposing a moral side-constraint.80

Aristotle distinguishes between theoretical wisdom (*sophia* or *epistêmê*), and practical wisdom (*phronêsis*), treating them as two different virtues. Acting ethically is no longer, as in Plato, a possible exercise of wisdom. Is contemplating still a possible exercise of practical wisdom? In a manner, it may be: being voluntary, it may be assessed, say, as being opportune or inopportune. Yet when Aristotle insists that contemplation too is a mode of action (*praxis*), it is not on that ground. He writes in the *Politica* as follows:

It is not necessary for the active life to be one lived in relation to others, as some believe, nor are those thoughts alone active which we have in order to get results from action; much more active are those contemplations and thoughts that are complete in themselves and for their own sake. For good action is the end, and therefore a certain kind of action is also the end (7.3.1325b16-21).81

This connects with a remark in the *Ethics* that contemplation is ‘perfect eudaimonia’ (*EN* 10.7.1177a16-17). Practical thinking (as I shall discuss in Chapter 3) is thinking for the sake of action. Theoretical thinking, at least when it takes the form of rehearsing things already known, has no end beyond itself, and the acting well that it realizes. Practical action for the sake of acting well *in* so acting, but also for the sake of the consequences of things done, is less purely final, and less like *eudaimonia* itself (cf. 1.7.1097a33-b1). Hence even if, in contemplating, one is concerned not to be unjust or intemperate thereby (say in failing to keep a promise, or to take an unpleasant medicine), and may even (on rare occasion) thereby prove oneself to be, say, brave (when one is resisting duress), it is not *in these respects* that one most

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80 This has been much discussed; see especially Irwin (1995: ch. 18), Kraut (1999). I say a little in Price (1997b: § 6). One point to be made is that all the soul-parts within the Republic’s tripartition are subject to external inputs, at different levels of reality. (Hence its moral psychology cannot be purely internalist: it makes a difference what lies outside.) A reason that functions well will come to appreciate reasonable considerations of justice as transcendental demands of the Form of Justice. Loving that Form, it will come to wish to ‘serve’ and ‘increase’ it by reforming the city in which it finds itself (7.540d7-e2). Its conception of what it is to act well, when (improbably) one is a philosopher with political opportunities, is thereby extended. Even if it cannot enjoy politics as it enjoys philosophy, it loses any ability to enjoy what is philosophical but supererogatory at the cost of what is political but obligatory.

81 Relevant here is the distinction between active and passive intellect in *DA* 3.5. Contemplating, even viewed purely as an exercise of intellectual thinking (and not, say, as a way of passing the time), is active as well as passive.
counts as acting well. It is rather because contemplating is rational activity that displays the virtues of theoretical reason.

So contemplation is a way of acting well as an exercise of wisdom (even when it also avoids practical vice, or actually achieves practical virtue). It is even a possible interpretation of Aristotle’s view that the only ways of acting well are activities of contemplation (whose object is the unchanging features of the universe). This is one reading of the opening of EN 10.7 (1177a12-18). It accords also with one reading of a contested passage in 1.7: ‘Human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and, if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most perfect’ (1098a16-18). That eudaimonia is activity in accordance with ‘the most perfect virtue’ (teleiotatê, a18), and that ‘perfect’ happiness (teleia, 1177a17) is theoretical activity, are both ambiguous claims; one reading would be supported by a claim that contemplation is the only genuine component of eudaimonia. If this is true, it is only in contemplating that an agent can directly increase his eudaimonia.

A common reaction to that has been one of moral discomposure. Thus Michael Pakaluk writes, ‘If the theoretical life were simply a life of a full-tilt pursuit of philosophical contemplation, it is difficult to see why (in a familiar example) a fellow should not murder his wealthy aunt and collect her inheritance, if he could get away with it, if this increased his possibilities for philosophical reflection’ (2005: 322). We have seen that this does not follow. Even if no practical action were such that performing it itself enhances an agent’s eudaimonia, it could be that some actions are such that either doing them, or leaving them undone, is a necessary condition of it. To kill one’s aunt in order to accelerate an inheritance might be, as Heinaman has put it, ‘to be burdened with evil that puts eudaimonia out of reach’ (1993: 52). It could be that, within assessments of eudaimonia, no amount of contemplation could compensate for a single act of murder (for whatever purpose), so that murder could never be wisely motivated by the wish to be eudaimôn through contemplating.82

It is true that no one, looking back over an ordinary day’s activity, can count it as a feature that adds to his acting well that he hasn’t committed a murder that day. However, to capture enough of morality, we need also to privilege pressing concerns and obligations to do certain things. And it will then follow that, to count as eudaimôn, even the successful contemplator needs to find time to meet the demands of morality.83 And surely even the agent whose vocation is contemplative may look back over his day and count any meritorious ethical actions or omissions, whether pressing or supererogatory, as contributing positively to how well his day has gone. At least, this would not be excluded by a restriction of eudaimonia to contemplation.

82 For the structure, cf. Kenny (1992: 108): ‘No value is absolute in the sense that its pursuit justifies the violation of every norm. Some norms are absolute in the sense that no value will ever justify their violation.’ In Robert Nozick’s terminology, murder would then become subject to a side-constraint (1974: 28-35), so that there could be no weighing up what benefit licenses an act of murder. That Aristotle recognizes certain side-constraints is evident from EN 2.6.1107a8-17. 83 It is debated whether the ‘lives’ which Aristotle compares in 10.6-8 are total and alternative biographies, or aspects combinable within a single biography. (In defence of the second, see Pakaluk 2005: 319-28.) However, if they are whole lives, the phrases ‘the life according to reason’ (10.7.1178a6-7) and ‘the life in accordance with the other kind of virtue’ (or perhaps rather ‘the rest of virtue’, 10.8.1078a9) appear to label lives that are not all of a piece by their most salient feature (as would also have to be true of talk of alternative ‘lives’ in 1.5). (This would be an instance of synecdoche, perhaps better evidenced here than elsewhere; cf. B § II n. 47 above.) In either case, Aristotle can write, quite precisely, ‘The man who is contemplating needs no such thing [viz. some external good specifically required for activity of a certain type], at least with a view to the exercise of his activity’ (pros ge tên energían, 1178b3-4), where the qualification ‘at least’ (ge) economically indicates (as b5-7 will confirm) that, being a man, he too needs such things for ethical activity.
I previously illustrated the possibility of a positive value falling outside eudaimonia by the passive tasting of a chocolate cream. Even if no ethical action were itself part of eudaimonia, it could still be that even supererogatory meritorious acts might still do enough to enhance a life, without enhancing its eudaimonia, to be worth performing.  

Yet it would be a natural thought that such an act, though just better to perform than to omit, would never, in itself, take precedence over any possibility of contemplation. Aristotle is less well placed to resist this implication than he might be, given his additive conception of the value of a totality (as I noted above from passages including Rhet. 1.7.1363b18-21); hence he must welcome any extra contribution to eudaimonia – which may outweigh any supererogatory contribution to non-eudaimonic well-being. Without that conception, no clear recommendations would follow for terrestrial life within time from his view that, at its best, this imitates a divine life of timeless and continuous contemplation. Perhaps human contemplation that is uninterrupted through time is the closest temporal approximation to divine contemplation that is outside time; but what entails that, if there are to be interruptions, it is best (unless they subserve contemplation indirectly, say instrumentally) that they be as brief as possible? Well, the additive conception. And this might be regretted on his behalf. However, the extent to which this would justify an unattractive absorption in things immutable does depend on how ethically demanding he is willing to be. To the extent that he expands the sphere of requirements and shrinks that of the supererogatory, much may still be demanded ethically of the contemplator, even on this purely contemplative conception of eudaimonia.

In any case, as most interpreters agree, this reading of Aristotle is insecurely grounded in the texts. Even if we choose to interpret ‘the best and most perfect’ virtue of EN 1.7.1098a17-18 as an anticipatory allusion to theoretical wisdom, and the very ‘best’ of ‘the best activities’ of 1.8.1099a29-30 as likewise alluding to contemplation, those passages rather throw open the possibility of a later restriction upon the breadth of eudaimonia than decide the matter themselves. Whence, most likely, their allusiveness. When it is said in the common books that phronēsis does not use wisdom (sophia) ‘but provides for its coming into being’, so that ‘it issues orders, then, for its sake, but not to it’ (B 13.1145a8-9), one goal of phronēsis is thereby specified (very likely among others), but nothing is implied as to whether acting on phronēsis, for the sake of theôria (which is an exercise of sophia), is itself part of eudaimonia or not. In 10.7, the exercise of reason ‘in accordance with its proper virtue’, which appears to be sophia, is called ‘perfect eudaimonia’ (1177a16-17). This is then argued by reference to what we may call the marks of eudaimonia, many of which served in EN Book 1 to argue that eudaimonia is indeed the human good. Aristotle’s thought seems to be that among the components of eudaimonia, theôria is the most end-like; if so, it is privileged, but has no monopoly.

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84 It is an obvious corollary of rejecting the all-inclusive conception of eudaimonia that exclusion from its extension ceases to be fatal to a value (though it must matter in some way how we delimit it).
85 So interpreted, 1098a17-18 constitute, as Kenny remarks, ‘not a conclusion of the function argument, but a separate, self-standing development’ (1992: 29.)
86 EE 8.3.1249b16-19 call a selection of natural goods ‘that will most produce the speculation of the god’ the ‘best’, and ‘the finest limit’ – not, be it noted, the only limit. And a phrase that follows, ‘the service and speculation of the god’ (b20-21), may allude to practical as much as to theoretical activity.
87 As Kenny has nicely observed (1992: 36), there is a tacit shift: whereas in 1.7 the self-sufficient was ‘that which on its own makes a man eudaimôn’, in 10.7 it becomes ‘that which makes a man eudaimôn on his own’ (1992: 36). Two points should be made. First, this is very likely not a slip, since now
There is an apparent contradiction between two passages certainly belonging to the *EN*. 2.4 defined it as a condition of not only doing the virtuous thing, but acting virtuously, that one not only choose one’s act, but choose it *for its own sake* (1105a31-2). Yet 10.7 argues that contemplation ‘alone would seem to be loved for its own sake’, since ‘nothing arises from it apart from the contemplating’, whereas ‘from practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action’ (1177b1-4). This last might seem a curious reason for preferring contemplation to practical activities: how is a point against an activity that it has good consequences? And how it could follow that practical activities are not also valued intrinsically?\(^88\) However, we must read on: ‘The activity of the practical virtues is exhibited in political or military affairs, but the actions concerned with these seem to be unleisurely’ (b6-8). Thus no one chooses to be at war for the sake of being at war, while political activity aims at benefits, for oneself and others, that are distinct from the activity itself (b9-15). Here Aristotle argues from just two spheres within the practical – war, and politics. It becomes still clearer that he is narrowing his focus *within* the practical sphere when he continues, ‘Among virtuous actions political and military actions are distinguished by nobility and greatness, and these are unleisurely and aim at an end and are not desirable for their own sake’ (b16-18 – all this within a conditional clause, but one that is implicitly asserted). In order, I would concede, to make a general contrast between ethical and intellectual activity, he focuses upon the most prestigious spheres of ethical activity, which are political and military.

The paradox that emerges is that the noblest practical actions are the least ‘leisurely’, in this sense: they would not be noble, and might (in some cases) even be ‘murderous’ (b10), if they were not necessary, either in an emergency, or for the sake of some great public good. I suggest that we have to apply the phrase ‘for its own sake’ (or ‘because of’ itself, *di’ auta* 2.4.1105a32, *di’hautas* 10.7.1177b18) differently in the two contexts: in 2.4, the thought is that virtuous action is worthwhile in itself; in 10.7, the thought is that, as is salient in certain contexts (military and political), an act *counts as* virtuous only if it is beneficial – or, as Aristotle would surely be willing to distinguish, is *such as to be beneficial*. (For this, it must be *likely* to succeed in context, but whether it *does* succeed may be subject to contingency or luck.) A salient example might be self-sacrifice on the battlefield on behalf of friends and country (9.8.1169a18-26): this is pre-eminently noble in itself (a21-2, 26) – and not just contingently, say through the posthumous award of a Victoria Cross – but precisely in that, at a great personal cost, it benefits (or is such as to benefit) others. Thus it is not that *acting virtuously* derives its value from likely consequences, but that *standing one’s ground in battle*, say, counts as brave and virtuous only if, in context, it looks to serve some good purpose.\(^89\) Acting well is a fully final end, and has no further end (cf. 1.7.1097a33-4); but whether doing some act *counts as* acting

\(^88\) Irwin (1999) instead translates ‘Study seems to be liked because of itself alone’, on the ground that this makes better sense of the reasoning within 1177b1-2. This would have force if the Greek could mean that. I prefer to make a different sense of the passage that is anyway (I think) more adequate to Aristotle’s purpose.

\(^89\) We may think of the legendary heroism of Arnold Winkelried, who is said, at the Battle of Sempach (1386), to have gathered into his own body the spears of the Austrians, thus enabling the Swiss to break through the enemy’s front line.
well is not independent of its function in context. Contemplation is different: it is ‘loved for its own sake’ in that what has value is not any act that has consequences (actual or intended), but the contemplation of some truth or truths. Hence contemplative activity is more pervasively end-like – and so may be said to constitute ‘perfect’ or ‘final’ (teleios) eudaimonia.

Aristotle’s train of thought may thus be represented as follows: ‘Contemplating shares with other component activities which go to compose a eudaimôn life that it is pursued for the sake of eudaimonia; it has further in common with eudaimonia that is not pursued for the sake of any other component. Hence contemplation is more end-like than other components, and so more fully akin to, and of a piece with, eudaimonia itself.’ This is surely a privilege, and yet it is a restricted one. Nothing follows about how the peculiarly intrinsic value of contemplation compares with the mixed values of other components of eudaimonia. It might even be argued that the purity of contemplation is a restriction: granted that acting well always has intrinsic value, might it not be better to act well in ways that also involve desirable consequences? Aristotle must have reasons independent of the bare logic of finality (spelled out in 1.7.1097a25-b6) for not thinking that way.

There is another and more interesting line of thought in Aristotle that may also privilege contemplation. It is a recurrent idea that ‘the element that thinks would seem to be the individual man, or to be him especially’ (malista, 9.4.1166a22-3, cf. 9.8.1169a2); reason ‘would seem to be each man himself, since it is the authoritative and better part of him’ (10.7.1178a2-3, cf. a6-7). Within 10.7, this confirms that ‘we must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal’ (1177b33), that is, imitate the intelligent activity of the gods, which is purely contemplative. Man is, we may say, a contemplative animal. Something here is surely central to Aristotle; yet it needs careful statement, and may have no disconcerting practical implications.

We should first note that the connotations of the idea vary between contexts: in EN Book 9, the reasoning is practical; in Book 10, it is theoretical. Rather than have Aristotle equivocate, we may suppose that it is the same reason that is active in both, though practical thinking demands attention to the body and its physical environment. This may explain what otherwise appears a confused and confusing passage:

The other animals have no share in eudaimonia, being completely deprived of such activity. For while the whole life of the gods is blessed, and that of men too in so far as some likeness of such activity belongs to them, none of the other animals is eudaimôn, since they in no way share in contemplation. Eudaimonia extends, then, just as far as contemplation does, and those to whom it more fully belongs are more truly eudaimon, for this is in itself precious. Eudaimonia, therefore, must be some form of contemplation (10.8.1178b27-32).

This need not be read as groundlessly narrowing the intelligence that distinguishes men from the lower animals in such a way as to exclude practical reason, and leave

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90 For the same point, see Korsgaard (2008: 191), Scott (2000b: § 5).
91 Compare Rep. 2.358a1-3, which places in the ‘finest’ (kallistos) category acts desirable for their consequences as well as for themselves.
92 It is a fair question: how can theoretical reason be ‘authoritative’ (kurios, 1178a3), or ‘our natural ruler and guide’ (kata phusin doken archein kai hegeisthai, 1177a14-15)? Surely, one might say, though ours, it ignores us. But cf. EE 8.3.1249b13-15: though the text is debated, the thought is evidently that theoretical reasoning is a ruler (archôn), but not ‘in a prescriptive fashion’ (epitaktikós, cf. AE B 10.1143a8); in this, it resembles health rather than medicine (which ‘govern’ in different senses, the second prescribing on behalf of the first, 1249b12-13, cf. AE B 13.1145a6-11).
only theoretical reason. Rather, Aristotle’s talk of animals who ‘in no way share in contemplation’, and so cannot be eudaimon since eudaimonia is ‘some form of contemplation’ (theòría tis, 1178b32), allows that there is a single rational capacity, which we may simply call reason, whose exercise may be called ‘contemplation’, whether it be theoretical or practical.\(^9\)

What may yet privilege the more narrowly ‘contemplative’, i.e. theoretical, within the rational? Not easily the function argument of 1.7. There Aristotle writes, ‘We are seeking what is peculiar to man’ (1097b34); but theoretical reason is shared, no doubt unequally, by men and gods. More fruitfully characteristic of Aristotelian teleology is the following line of thought. We are above all reason in that the structure of our psychic capacities can be explained as subserving the exercise of reason within a body. ‘Why do we have appetites and perceptions?’ must be partly answered by reference to reason; ‘Why do we have reason?’ cannot be properly answered by reference to appetite and perception (which we share with the lower animals). Reason is the teleological focus of our humanity. Moreover, it is in reasoning theoretically that we best imitate the rational life of the gods, which realizes rationality in its purest form. Hence what is most explanatory of the way we are constituted is the final end of accommodating the closest likeness to divine life that is possible within a physical body. That is ultimately what we are for, and hence also what we primarily are.

This may suggest various further ways of privileging theoretical reason and reasoning. We owe two recent and ingenious proposals to Dominic Scott and Gabriel Richardson Lear. Scott focuses on a remark that reason, which seems in context to connote theoretical reason, ‘is especially a man’ (10.7.1178a7). He concedes that the qualification ‘especially’ indicates that there is another answer to the question ‘What is man?’ than reason, comparing that there are two answers to the question ‘What is substance?’ in the Categories (1999: 232). But the 1178a7 answer is privileged: ‘The most accurate answer is that we are our nous but, in a qualified way, we can be identified with our anthropic element’ (ibid.). He thus finds in Aristotle what he calls a ‘bifocal anthropology’ (1999: 240), which he distinguishes from a less problematically composite anthropology. If it were true ‘in the strictest sense’ that ‘we have a single complex essence with parts, one higher than another’ (1999: 233), then there would be a single human eudaimonia, though with elements unequally weighted. Instead, Scott thinks, ‘contemplation is primary eudaimonia because it is the activity that expresses what we are in the strictest sense’ (ibid.). Hence ‘What constitutes human eudaimonia?’ is not a single question with a complex answer, but a question that can be answered in different ways, viz. more or less strictly.

Richardson Lear argues differently, though compatibly, for a view that contemplation is primary eudaimonia. She proposes that practical activity is performed ‘for the sake of’ contemplative activity, though not necessarily as a means to it. Rather, it is for the sake of contemplation in that its own value derives from that of contemplation, consisting in its approximating to contemplation (2004: 4). In this way, the value of contemplation is focal, while that of action is derivative. Practical reason is the closest approximation to pure reason within the context of practical activity.

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\(^9\) Theòrein is used of practical thinking in these places: EN 1.10.1100b19-20, 9.9.1169b33-1170a3; AE B 1.1139a8, 4.1140a11, 7.1141a25, C 3.1146b33-5. EN 10.8 expresses the thesis of 10.7 by the words ‘Perfect eudaimonia is a certain theoretical activity’ (theôrétikê tis energeia, 1178b7-8), which also indicates a wider use of theòrein – though it is true that generally, in that chapter, it specifically connoted ‘the activity of sophia’ (1177a24).
Doubts in detail may attach to both these attempts to relate a secondary to a primary *eudaimonia*. One may wonder whether it is felicitous of Scott to identify our primary nature with what we act *strictly*, or *accurately*, speaking. Surely the argument in the *Categories* is not that Socrates is strictly a substance, whereas man is only loosely a substance, but that man is the substance of (e.g.) Socrates, and hence derivatively a substance. It is Aristotle himself, after all, who chooses to call man a substance; this isn’t a concession to a common, but inaccurate, way of speaking. And his distinction between primary and secondary substances precisely allows him to call both Socrates a substance, and man, without having to choose between them. Man may indeed be a rational animal; and what is distinctive of his animality may be explicable (as I have suggested) as a condition of the presence of reason in a body. Yet it can hardly be only an inaccurate way of speaking that essentially differentiates an individual who is a man from a god.

Equally, one may doubt whether it is wise of Richardson Lear to associate her proposal of how action is derivatively valuable with the phrase ‘for the sake of’. For a problem then arises with human *eudaimonia* itself, of whatever kind. Aristotle insists that this is not pursued because of (i.e. for the sake of) anything else, and hence is finally final (1.7.1097a33-b6). Yet it is indeed an approximation to, or imitation of, divine activity (as 10.8.1178b26-7 eventually makes explicit). She writes (2004: 3), ‘According to Aristotle, X may also be choiceworthy for the sake of Y when it approximates or imitates Y … Under appropriate conditions teleological approximations are worth choosing *both* for their own sakes *and* for the sake of the paradigm.’ It should follow that men pursue their own *eudaimonia* both for its own sake, and for the sake of the divine; but then the *eudaimonia* that is practicable for men is *not* unqualifiedly final.

So there are difficulties in detail. Yet let us suppose that it is Aristotle’s view, in some form that invites further clarification, that the value of practical reason is derivative from that of theoretical reason. This means that the value of the second comes before that of the first *in order of explanation*. Nothing evidently follows about how the claims of the two are to be balanced within a single life, and it cannot be assumed that the primary always takes precedence. Logic would even appear to permit that the value of what is primary might be magnified in the value of what is derivative. (Whether this made any sense in a particular case would depend upon the nature of the values.) If in fact it is true, as Aristotle supposes, that the life of contemplation is the happiest (10.7.1178a7-8), this does not follow from a distinction between the original and the derivative alone. Nor, within a single life, need it follow that its subject ought to extend his hours of contemplation as much as possible, at whatever cost to other aspects of his activity. For there may be a global loss if a pursuit of the best leads to a neglect of diversity, and of much that is distinctively and valuably human. Nor is it either entailed or excluded that the derivation may feed into requirements that demand to be respected by more than a weighing up of losses and gains. It is still left open that, as I argued above (B § IV), a neglect of certain requirements may land the agent in *kakodaimonia*, so that no amount of contemplation could restore him to *eudaimonia*.

There is much more that could be said. Provisionally, I conclude that Aristotle’s position is complex, and still not wholly clear. So far we may say that any practical inferences that must be unpalatable look gratuitous, and not logically or conceptually required. We can hardly, in the light of *EN* Book 10, call Aristotle a philosopher of common sense; and yet to be *contrary* to common sense is not his way, either.

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