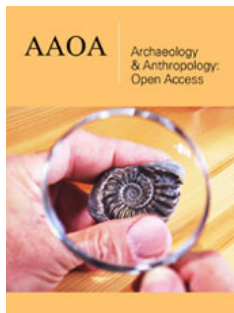


In Defense of Aristotle's Notion of Eudaimonia as an Activity of Contemplation

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Abstract

According to Aristotle, "all things aim" at some good and humans are no exception. We, however, recognize an ultimate or "chief good" which we pursue for its own sake, and for whose sake, we seek and do everything else. Aristotle calls this good eudaimonia or happiness and defines it as an "activity of the soul in accordance with excellence" or arete. That philosophers agree on, but there is no consensus as to what Aristotle's idea of eudaimonia refers to. The two competing interpretations are, that he identifies happiness with "good life" or "faring well", or that happiness for him is the sole activity of contemplation. The controversy is inspired among other things, by Aristotle's treatments of eudaimonia in Book I and Book X of Nicomachean Ethics (NE). The proponents of happiness as living well argue that since humans engage in various activities and pursuits throughout their lives, and Aristotle devotes the better part of NE to discussions about the ethical and intellectual virtues, what lives are good, kinds of actions, etc., happiness must be an inclusive goal referring to nested or related in some way pursuits and engagements. They object to the notion of eudaimonia as the single activity of contemplation arguing that the idea allows no role for the ethical virtues rendering them irrelevant and identifying Aristotle's ethics as amoral at best and possibly immoral. These philosophers argue further that contemplation as outlined by Aristotle is a useless activity and given Aristotle's view that nature does nothing in vain, such an activity questions even the need for contemplation. Regrettably, the proponents of happiness as an activity of contemplation, only defend the idea by attempting to accommodate the various pursuits humans engage in throughout their lives within a notion of eudaimonia as a single overarching goal and in the end, alter the definition of happiness Aristotle intends or forthrightly reject it even if unwittingly.

It could be shown however, that the perceived inconsistency of Aristotle's expositions of happiness is largely premised on the claim that while Aristotle identifies happiness with "good life" or "living well" in Book I, he develops entirely distinct idea of happiness as the singular activity of contemplation in Book X. Even if true, such analyses are almost exclusively premised on the inference that since Aristotle examines various lives considered good in Book I and the ethical virtues throughout NE, he must identify happiness with living a good life and contemplation must be an activity one engages in at will irrespective of one's character and conduct virtuous or not. There is no indication that Aristotle meant for his notion of contemplation to be interpreted this way and both claims are rooted to some extent, in the misconstruction of Aristotle's ergon argument which explains why happiness is an activity of the soul and its significance to the idea of eudaimonia. I would like to resist the accusations of confusion and defend Aristotle's notion of eudaimonia as an activity of contemplation and his ethical theory as a whole. I must insist that there is no inconsistency one can uncover in Aristotle's expositions of happiness but rather, the discussion of "good life" in Book I sets up the premises from which the conclusion in Book X can be drawn after all the conditions for the attainment of happiness have been examined and outlined in Books II-IX. Eudaimonia as Aristotle envisions it is that which makes a life happy, and cultivating an excellent character is a prerequisite for its attainment. Acting in accordance with excellence requires an excellent character, but to acquire such, one must be willing to endure reasonable hardship for Aristotle as "an excellent life requires exertion and does not consist in amusement". (NE, 1177a1) I suppose, this is a startling proposition for a Utilitarian, but a proposition one can hardly deny given Aristotle's emphasis on virtue. And since eudaimonia cannot be attained in the absence of virtuous character which presupposes sustained effort and habituation, even people in fortunate circumstances and of considerable means and wealth, will not attain happiness unless they persevere and are steady in their pursuit of excellent character. Indeed, especially such people since Aristotle shares his doubts about them when he notes that: "...happiness, whether consisting in pleasure or excellence, or both, is more often found with those who are most highly cultivated in their mind and in their character, and have only moderate share of external goods, than among those who possess external goods to a useless extent but are deficient in higher qualities..." (P, 1323b1-5) Eudaimonia in this sense is an award for acquiring virtuous character rather than a product of an activity or an evaluative standard for action and conducting oneself virtuously is how one earns such a reward. As Aristotle explains: "...happiness would then be the prize for those who make themselves and their acts of certain character". (EE, 1215a18-9) To expose the various misconceptions in various philosophers' analyses of Aristotle's notion of happiness and defend it, I will focus on his treatment of happiness in Book I since there is no dispute about Aristotle's identification of happiness with contemplation in Book X.

Keywords: Contradictory; Ethical works; Hardie's presumption, Eudaimonia; Investigation

Is Eudaimonia an End Inclusive of Various Pursuits?

As I mentioned above, Aristotle's scholarship is divided broadly speaking into two camps with respect to the nature of eudaimonia as an end, but what is peculiar about these opposing interpretations is that they share the conviction that Aristotle's expositions of eudaimonia lack clarity and consistency. Gurtler sums up the debate aptly while exposing his own misconceptions about Aristotle's notion of happiness by noting that: One group of commentators takes book 10 as determinative and thus tortures the text in book 1 to say the same thing... Indeed, Aristotle appears inconsistent or even contradictory, recommending in these two brief chapters of book 10 a life devoted to contemplation that only grudgingly allows for the necessity of the practical life discussed in such detail in the rest of his ethical works... The other group takes 1.7 as determinative for the definition of human virtue, and its task is to explain whether 10.7-8 fits into Aristotle's general ethical position. In this view, virtue is understood inclusively, with both ethical and intellectual components. So far no satisfactory account of 10.6-8 has been able to integrate it into Aristotle's account of virtue and happiness, with the result that it is either ignored as an aberration or left as an anomaly." [1] Hardie's assessment of Aristotle's expositions of happiness illustrates Gurtler's summary perfectly though Hardie does not so much as endorse one interpretation as opposed to the other but affirm the prevailing opinion that Aristotle's notion of eudaimonia is "confused". He believes that the confusion is quite obvious for while Aristotle's "explicit view" that eudaimonia is an activity of contemplation is clearly stated, it is also clear that his notion of happiness is about the attainment of many different ends and the means one utilizes in the pursuit of these ends in addition to contemplation . Hardie objects that for one, not everyone has a single end in mind which one pursues and even if one does, this does not mean that one "gives a central and dominating place to a single desired object. In other words, this dominant end is not necessarily given the priority Aristotle assigns to it for even if: "... the satisfaction of theoretical curiosity may be dominant in the life of a philosopher. No man has only one interest. Hence an end which is to function as a target, as a criterion for deciding what to do and how to live, must be inclusive" [2].

Possibly. However, this objection is largely rooted in Hardie's presumption that Aristotle has in mind professional philosophers when he argues for contemplation, but it is not clear from the text that he does. Be that as it may, unless Hardie argues against the idea that humans prioritize and value happiness above all other pursuits and do everything else in the name of that pursuit, his objection is to no avail. Hardie also insists that happiness is an inclusive end and that Aristotle's mistake in claiming that it is dominant is the result of Aristotle's treating practical wisdom as mere "search for means" making Aristotle's ethical theory ultimately unethical. Put otherwise, whatever eudaimonia turns out to be, it isn't what Aristotle claims it is, at least not without the purported improvements and clarifications philosophers offer. I, however, reject the very premise that Aristotle's expositions of happiness are

inconsistent with each other for while Gurtler's description nimbly outlines the debate about them, it also shows that this debate is based to some extent on the incorrect summation that Aristotle identifies eudaimonia with "living well" or "good life", and partly in the misconstruction of the relationship between the ethical and the intellectual virtues. Certainly, lacking the benefit of Frege's distinction between "meaning" and "reference", Aristotle makes the best of the Greek language and its tools available to him at the time, but even within such limitations his ethical theory is excellently developed and articulated.

To that effect, the first important fact to be noted is that Aristotle does not even mention eudaimonia in the first six chapters of Book I but simply outlines different goods humans pursue and their natures while pointing out that some of them "are to be preferred" to others if it is for the sake of these the others are sought. He approaches the subject of happiness in chapter 7 for the first time by proposing that if there is an end "we desire for its own sake", this would be the "chief good" for whose sake we seek and do everything else (NE, 1094a19-21), and that it is this "chief good" he must examine. That is, Aristotle reveals for the first time that eudaimonia as the "chief good" is the target of his investigation. He further explains that it is widely accepted that eudaimonia is the highest good "achievable by action" (NE, 1095a16), but it is not clear what eudaimonia refers to. It is why, Aristotle begins his investigation not by asking what eudaimonia is, but by examining various goods humans aim at which should help him localize the question about happiness when noting that: "...both the general run of men and people of superior refinement... identify living well and faring well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is they differ... For the former think it is plain and obvious thing, like pleasure, wealth, honor... and often even the same man identifies it with different things... Now some thought that apart from these many goods there is another which is good in itself and causes the goodness of all these as well." (NE, 1095a17-20)

This he asks in chapter 4, Book I before he has even told us that eudaimonia is a goal humans prioritize over everything else, and that it is the "chief good". Accordingly, it is quite unreasonable to interpret Aristotle as identifying happiness with living well. He does acknowledge here, that for most people a person who lives well is a happy person, and it is goods like wealth, honor, pleasure, etc. that make life good according to the same people. This is perhaps the biggest culprit and the most cited discussion in defense of the idea that Aristotle identifies happiness with living a "good life" or "faring well". On the contrary, this is not an endorsement of the idea that good lives are happy lives, or even that some good lives are happy, therefore, let us discover which of the good lives are happy so that we may know what happiness is. Rather, Aristotle proposes to examine the various goods outlined in the established opinion and purported to make the respective lives good, and consider whether any of these goods is good in itself and the cause of all the other goods. If he uncovers one which is sought for its own sake, then this is the good which needs to be investigated and defined as it would be fundamentally distinct from all the others. And since many lives are considered good as the quote above shows, and it

would be superfluous to examine all of them, Aristotle restricts his inquiry to the “three prominent types of life”, or the three lives whose ends are possible candidates for the good sought for its own sake: life of pleasure; political life; and life of contemplation. Aristotle dismisses pleasure as the “chief good” outright since life of pleasure is “suitable to beasts” and notes that honor – the goal of political life while appearing to be the sought good is not it either for: “...it seems too superficial to be what we are looking for, since it is thought to depend on those who bestow honor rather than on who receives it, but the good we divine to be something of one’s own...” (NE, 1095b24-6)

Happiness as it were, cannot depend on others for it would not be “one’s own” as one would not attain it through action but receive it from those who bestow it upon him. The only other possible candidate for the good aimed at for its own sake is contemplation, but Aristotle reserves its discussion for later (NE, 1096a5) wherefrom, the exposition of happiness in Book X. Broadie laments the fact that Aristotle does not say more about it, but she must realize that Aristotle cannot defend his claim that eudaimonia is the activity of contemplation yet, for at this point, he has not even established that eudaimonia is the “chief good” which is sought for its own sake. Additionally, even after Aristotle identifies happiness as the “highest good” which is an “activity of the soul in accordance with excellence” and explains why he defines it as such via the ergon argument, he still cannot defend his claim that eudaimonia is the single activity of contemplation. For having identified that there are two kinds of excellences, Aristotle must now show, how they are related to each other and the pursuit of happiness. He must explain how we acquire excellence and show that virtuous character is a requirement which must be satisfied if happiness is to be attained. Only after he has demonstrated this claim, can Aristotle argue that eudaimonia refers to the lone activity of contemplation. In fact, the structure of NE reflects this method of inquiry as the topic of every Chapter and Book is a prelude to the next topic necessitating the discussions that follow. Aristotle does not randomly turn to issues he thinks relevant to his investigation but follows the logical progression of his virtue ethics’ development. The takeaway here is that he identifies contemplation as a possible “chief good” and a referent of eudaimonia from the very beginning and there is no confusion as to what he thinks eudaimonia could be – an unitary activity in accordance with excellence-rather than a “good life” or “living well” referring to plethora of pursuits and goals. Now, Aristotle does explain that the happy man is presumed to live well since happiness “needs the external goods as well” and elaborates that “it is impossible... to do the noble acts without proper equipment” (NE, 1099a32-3) Note however, that what Aristotle claims here is that the man who has his daily needs satisfied will be able to cultivate virtuous character rather than, that possessing external goods is what makes one happy. That is, unless one identifies “living well” or “good life” with happiness which Aristotle clearly rejects, one cannot reasonably argue that eudaimonia can be interpreted as an inclusive end of action. And even if one grants that “good life” and happiness are one and the same, since “good life” itself has a goal for it must, i.e., it must aim at the good which makes

it such, eudaimonia must have an end then as well. Aristotle would not endorse such interpretation for according to him, happiness as the ultimate end of all human activities is sought for its own sake and does not have an end other than itself. Occasionally, Aristotle does make claims which can be interpreted as his identifying happiness with living well as in Chapter 8 of Book I where he explains that he has “practically defined happiness as a sort of living or faring well”. (NE, 1098b21) But note that Aristotle has just defined happiness in the previous chapter as the “chief good” and is now examining how his definition fares with respect to other commonly-held views about eudaimonia: “We must consider it [happiness], however, in the light not only of our conclusion and our premises, but also what is commonly said about it...” (NE, 1098b9-10) Furthermore, since habituation is the way one acquires excellent character, one must act excellently throughout one’s whole life not only sometimes (NE, 1098a19-21) which is why, Aristotle describes happiness as a “sort of living well”. After making the same point in *Magna Moralia* (MM), Aristotle clarifies that “living well is living in accordance with excellence... happiness therefore will consist in a kind of use and activity”, (MM, 1184b28-31) a single activity. In fact, Aristotle cautions in the *Politics* (P) that “others again, who possess the condition of happiness [supply of external goods] go utterly wrong from the first in the pursuit of it [happiness]” (P, 1332a3-4), precisely because eudaimonia is not a life of acquiring things, pursuing objects, amassing wealth, or achieving goals one pursues irrespective of their possibly utter worthlessness. Aristotle further clarifies that: “...happiness is the realization and perfect exercise of excellence, and this is not a conditional, but absolute. And I use the term ‘conditional’ to express that which is indispensable, and ‘absolute’ to express that which is good in itself.” (P, 1332a9-11)

He explains here that having one’s needs satisfied or living well is an “indispensable condition” for the pursuit of happiness, but happiness is the “absolute” which requires the acquiring and exercising of the virtues. Eudaimonia, therefore, is not a plethora of pursuits with different ends or a “comprehensive plan” to achieve multiple objectives one finds desirable and important-a conception of happiness Hardie attributes to Aristotle when he argues that: “... the conception of what might be called the inclusive end [is] a man, reflecting on his various desires and interests, notes that some mean more to him than others... By such reflection he is moved to plan to achieve at least his most important objectives as fully as possible. The following of such a plan is roughly what is sometimes meant by the pursuit of happiness. The desire for happiness so understood, is the desire for orderly and harmonious gratification of desires. Aristotle sometimes, when he speaks of the final end, seems to be fumbling for the idea of an inclusive end or comprehensive plan, in this sense...” [2].

True enough, happiness is often described today as a general pursuit of many goals under the umbrella of a career, life’s plan, etc., but it is not what Aristotle has in mind, and plainly, it is not a description supported by any of the texts where Aristotle discusses the problem of happiness. Indeed, what Hardie describes in this passage is a procedure which prioritizes one pursuit over another. Certainly, Aristotle speaks of preferring some goals over others,

but he does not identify this process as eudaimonia and the ends as its elements. More importantly, Aristotle does not suggest that the attainment of happiness requires the prioritization of a single pursuit and undoubtedly, he never suggests the prioritization of a single object. For this would mean to neglect or abandon in some sense, some pursuits in favor of others. On the contrary, humans engage in, rather than abandon some pursuits for the sake of others. But the most notable example that Aristotle does not think that happiness is constituted by other ends and is not identical with “good” or “happy” life is when he asks “in which of our belongings the happy life is lodged”. (EE, 1214b12) What in effect he is asking here is which of our belongings contribute to living well or represent the “indispensable conditions” for attaining happiness. Such possessions or belongings are not elements of happiness, however. Anticipating the conflation Aristotle asks: “...and what are the indispensable conditions of its [good life] attainment – for health is not the same as the indispensable condition for health; and so it is with many other things, so that the good life and its indispensable conditions are not identical. Of such things some are not peculiar to health or even to life, but common... to all dispositions and actions, e.g. without breathing or being awake or having the power of movement we could enjoy neither good nor evil...” (EE, 1214b14-20)

He concludes by dismissing the idea that eudaimonia has constituents: “For herein is the cause of the disputes about happy living, its nature and causes; for some take to be elements in happiness what are merely indispensable conditions.” (EE, 1214b25-6) Clearly, Aristotle is neither confused nor can he be interpreted as claiming that happiness is an inclusive end identical with “living well” or “good life” for these are merely examples of the indispensable conditions for the attainment of happiness rather than happiness itself. Unfortunately, as a result of these serious misconceptions, the claim that Aristotle’s treatments of eudaimonia are inconsistent has found considerable deference among scholars who as Gurtler notes, have responded by offering various interpretations of Book I in particular, in an effort to explain away the alleged inconsistency while preserving the spirit if not the letter of Aristotle’s ethical theory. Ackrill for instance, defends the idea of happiness as an inclusive end but attempts to accommodate Aristotle’s treatment of eudaimonia as contemplation in Book X within such interpretation. The essence of his argument is that for Aristotle subordinate actions are not mere means-to-eudaimonia and therefore, worthwhile only so far as they promote happiness. Ackrill further elaborates that an action which terminates in no “product apart from itself” can be intrinsically valuable when subordinated to another action if the two are seen as being in a relation akin to that of a part to a whole. He objects, however, to the idea that “the word *telos* (‘end’) must mean an end produced by (instrumental) means, and [the term] ‘for-the-sake-of’ necessarily brings in the idea of an end separate from the action” [3]. Having argued that subordinate actions can be for-the-sake-of-eudaimonia the way a part is for-the-sake-of-the-whole, Ackrill now must explain the notion of happiness as an activity of contemplation within this context, so he proposes that

happiness is to be understood as a “final” or a “complete” end which encompasses other ends as parts or elements of it and therefore, inclusive in nature. To illustrate the point Ackrill proposes that intrinsically valuable actions relate to happiness the way putting relates to golfing where putting is not a “necessary preliminary”, but a “constituent” or “ingredient” of golfing and one can grant him that [3]. But isn’t this the point? Putting one can forego when one sinks the ball in the hole before reaching the green, but one cannot forego virtuous actions in the pursuit of happiness according to Aristotle. They are in fact, the “necessary preliminaries” Ackrill rejects for one cannot be happy unless one conducts one’s affairs virtuously. Remember that Aristotle insists that “those who act rightly win the noble and good things in life”. (NE, 1099a5) Finally, putting is not an activity without a product for when performed, it ends the game of golf, but this does not mean that it is performed for the sake of this product. Ackrill understandably laments that not enough attention has been paid to Aristotle’s discussion of activities and their products as ends but even he fails to appreciate its significance. All Aristotle claims in NE, 1094a12-8 is that some ends are subordinate to other ends and that the “ends of the master arts are to be preferred to the subordinate ends”. He does not make normative claim here, but merely explains that as a practical matter or matter of experience, some ends are preferred to other ends if it is for their sake these, other ends are pursued. And how could he, he hasn’t told us yet what eudaimonia is. Aristotle explains that “it makes no difference whether the activities themselves are the ends of the actions, or something else apart from the activities...” for what is relevant is that there is a hierarchy of ends. Aristotle is setting up the discussion here, about this one particular end which is at the top of this hierarchy of ends-the “chief good”-rather than arguing that subordinate ends are less valuable in some sense.

Failing to distinguish ends from activities as their referents, Ackrill reads Aristotle as claiming that some actions have no products. But upon careful examination of the passage Ackrill refers to-NE, 1094a3-6 – it becomes clear that all Aristotle argues for is that “among ends; some are activities, others are products apart from the activities that produce them”. In other words, the goals we set for ourselves can refer to products resulting from activities or the activities themselves. Certainly, one can read Aristotle as claiming that some activities have no products, but it would be a tenuous interpretation. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to offer an example of an activity which has no product with the exception of eudaimonia of course, for obvious reasons. One must remember here that “it is the nature of the products to be better than the activities” according to Aristotle (NE, 1094a5), and if happiness has a product, then such product would be better than happiness which is an indefensible claim for obvious reasons as well. I expect Ackrill to point to Aristotle’s claim that: “...the arts of making have some other end beyond making; for instance, beyond housebuilding... there is a house as its end beyond making... but in the process of doing there is no other end beyond the doing; for instance, beyond playing the harp there is no other end, but just this is the end, the activity and doing. (MM, 1197a5-11) Fair enough, but one will note that Aristotle does not argue that harp-playing has no product

but that it has no other aim but the playing itself. Certainly, harp-playing is a different activity than the activity of composing music for harp which would be artmaking, but this does not mean that harp-playing does not result in a product even if this product is not its goal. Enjoyable sound would be an example of a product of harp-playing and there could be others. One is apt to ask here why focus on this distinction? Aristotle must distinguish between an action performed for its own sake even though it results in a product, and an action performed for its own sake, which however has no product. The latter could only be eudaimonia which naturally is performed for its own sake and has no product. The former however, results in a product but it can be chosen and performed for its own sake alone, which will identify such action as virtuous. Consider the action of donating \$10,000 to one's Alma Mater-the product of such donation could be funding for research or buying a new car for the university's provost-the donation's end, however, needn't be any of these products but the act of donating itself. Thus, when Aristotle outlines the distinction between different goals, Ackrill is correct to argue that virtuous actions are not mere means-to-happiness but not because they are components of it, but because acts chosen or performed for their own sake rather than their products are a "condition for the possession of excellence". (NE, 1105b34-5) More importantly, if an act virtuous as it were, has no product, what would distinguish it from eudaimonia. Nothing from where I can see. The lack of such a distinction will dispense with the idea that happiness is that which we seek for its own sake, its nature notwithstanding.

Ackrill also asks "what does it mean for an action or activity to be performed for the sake of another, in cases where the first does not terminate in a product or outcome which the second can then use or exploit?" [3] This question is indicative of the misconceptions involved in the various analyses of "for-the-sake-of" expression permeating the debate about happiness' nature and contributing to the conflation about what Aristotle thinks eudaimonia refers to. The idea of exploiting a product is so far removed from the idea of performing an act for the sake of happiness, it is hard to overstate the disparity. Undeniably, we use and exploit products and things in our pursuits of happiness, but not the acts we choose to perform for their own sake. When Aristotle tells us that some acts are chosen and performed for their own sake and for the sake of eudaimonia at the same time, it is because the attainment of happiness requires an excellent character. An excellent character on the other hand, can only be acquired by choosing and performing virtuous acts for their own sake rather than for the benefits said acts and their products might result in. These misapprehensions are influenced if not based at least to some extent, on Ackrill's identification of happiness with "the most desirable sort of life, the life that contains all intrinsically worthwhile activities" [3]. He notes that "there can be plenty of disagreement as to what form of life eudaimonia is" [3] but not that it is desirable. He naturally attributes the interpretation of happiness as "good life" to Aristotle noting that he "has explained that the concept of eudaimonia is that of the complete and perfectly satisfying life..." [3] Well, Aristotle has done no such thing. He has explained, however, that happiness signifies that which we desire

for its own sake and refers to the unitary activity of contemplation. Of course, Aristotle also claims that the life whose end is the activity of contemplation is the best life and those who attain happiness live "complete and perfectly satisfying lives", but these lives are not identical with or the referents of happiness. They rather aim at happiness, which when attained is what makes them happy lives, i.e., the goal such lives pursue which in this case is contemplation, is what makes them happy. Without this misidentification of happiness with "good life", the argument for eudaimonia as an inclusive end does not even get off the ground. Ackrill however, is correct to object to the subordination of the ethical virtues to even the most excellent of activities, but it is not a subordination Aristotle countenances. In fact, he finds the virtues so important to the pursuit of happiness that he devotes the better part of his ethical theory to examining them and their relationship with eudaimonia.

The Ethical Virtues as an Absolute Necessity for the Attainment of Happiness

I have argued so far, that for Aristotle eudaimonia is the activity of contemplation, but what about ethical virtues – what is their role in the pursuit of happiness and why couldn't one contemplate in their absence. To that end, virtuous character is a prerequisite for happiness because the contemplation Aristotle has in mind, is not an activity one simply chooses to engage in. Rather, one is led to contemplation as a result of acquiring virtuous character, it is one's reward. Better yet, having become virtuous, one seeks and finds pleasure in no other activity, needs no other good, and seeks no other goal but contemplation. Therefrom, the self-sufficiency of the happy one for: "...he will be happy throughout his life; for always, or by reference to everything else, he will do and contemplate what is excellent, and he will bear the chances of life most nobly and altogether decorously, if he is 'truly good' and 'foursquare beyond reproach'. (NE, 1100b18-21)

But to cultivate virtuous character, one must choose and perform virtuous actions willingly and for their own sake. Put otherwise, whatever goals we set for ourselves in the pursuit of happiness, the actions such goals necessitate, must be chosen and carried out the way the virtuous carry them out. This in a nutshell is Aristotle's idea of eudaimonia as the sole activity of contemplation but as he often says, this is only an outline, and now, I must fill in the details. To do that, I must turn to Aristotle's *ergon* argument. According to it, the human function is an activity of the soul in accordance with reason which makes the "human good" or happiness the proper excellence of this function. (NE, 1098a8-18) Note that Aristotle defines not only the function of humans in this passage but contemplation as well, and though he stops short of stating that the proper excellence of rational activity is contemplation, he states it shortly after in Chapter 10 of Book I -1100b18-21. But how is contemplation related to the virtues if at all is the question. The soul, as Aristotle argues, has two elements: rational which possesses reason and exercises thought, and irrational which obeys reason and facilitates actions. He also divides the irrational element into that "which causes nutrition and growth" and that "which shares in a rational principle" but sets "the nutritive faculty aside "since it has by its nature no share in human

excellences". (NE, 1102b12) And since eudaimonia is an activity of the soul in accordance with excellence, the two elements of the soul must perform excellently if the soul as a whole is to do the same. Or else, if one is to attain happiness, one must exercise both virtues with the intellectual virtues belonging properly to the rational element of the soul and the ethical virtues to the irrational element. But simply claiming that there is a symbiotic relationship between these two elements of the soul and their excellence is not enough to rebut the various objections against happiness as an activity of contemplation. Aristotle must show that exercising the intellectual virtues is dependent on the exercise of the ethical virtues, and the attainment of eudaimonia is dependent on both their excellences by extension. It is why Aristotle spends seven of the Books in NE on the two excellences establishing the roles sophia or theoretical wisdom, and phronesis or practical wisdom play in the pursuit of happiness and their relationship, while outlining which of the two is the governing principle and why. Now, since the rational element of the soul is the one possessing and exercising reason which the irrational element obeys, it is reasonable to identify it as the governing element of the soul with sophia as its governing principle. However, as Aristotle notes, theoretical wisdom is concerned with universals and first principles only and is of no help when it comes to "that which can be otherwise" or particulars. And since it is practical wisdom or the irrational element of the soul which deliberates about particulars and guides one's choice of action, it appears that the irrational element is superior to the rational. What explains this improbable relationship between the soul's elements is that while sophia supplies the governing principle, it cannot enforce it. Phronesis therefore, evaluates particulars and then applies sophia's first principles to them as a guide to its choice of actions, but must do so willingly. Why does this process matter? If the soul is to achieve its excellence, both of its elements must achieve their excellence. That is, the rational element must achieve its excellence which is exercising reason, and the irrational element must achieve its excellence which is to identify the mean between the extremes of deficiency and excess and prescribe the proper action. However, the irrational element can only choose the right actions if it obeys reason and subjects its analysis of good and bad actions to the rational element's governing principles. Wherefrom, the subordination of the irrational element of the soul to the rational-subordination which must be accomplished without compulsion albeit. Or as Aristotle argues: "To act, then, in accordance with right reason is when the irrational part of the soul does not prevent the rational from displaying its own activity". (MM, 1208a9-10) In other words, the irrational part of the soul must allow reason to be its guiding principle which makes the exercise of the ethical virtues a necessary condition for the exercise of the intellectual virtues, and the acquirement of virtuous character a prerequisite for the attainment of happiness.

Consider how US government functions for instance, as an illustration of this process since its branches are in an analogous relationship to that of the soul's elements which given Aristotle's argument that the aim of politics is to make citizens good or virtuous is a good example. The legislative branch can be equated

with the rational element of the soul since its role is to pass laws in accordance with US Constitution which is its governing principle. The executive branch then would be the irrational element of the US government as it must obey the laws the legislative branch passes though it often fails to do so. And just like the rational element of the soul, the legislative branch would not function properly unless the executive branch follows the law and does so willingly. A case in point is when the Supreme Court issued a decision in 1832 against the State of Georgia and A. Jackson who was President at the time, was not particularly enamored with either the decision or Justice J. Marshall's opinion. Jackson is believed to have said: "Marshall has made his decision now let him enforce it" [4]. This is a perfect illustration of the tenuous and at the same time necessary relation between the branches of the US government. Whether Jackson made such remark is beside the point, what is important is that while the executive branch is expected to follow the laws which the legislative branch passes, it is up to the executive branch to do so voluntarily so that the US government functions well. Now, there are means outlined by the US Constitution through which the legislative branch can force the executive branch to govern lawfully though they are almost never sought and utilized, but if a government as a whole is to function properly and exercise its excellence, all its branches must exercise their excellences and willingly rather than through coercion [5-10]. The same applies to humans if one wants to attain happiness or engage in activities in accordance with human excellence, one must choose and perform actions which reason identifies as good and must do so willingly and knowingly. Such acts must be chosen for their own sake and be performed without compulsion as it is the only way to cultivate virtuous character [11-15]. Once one is habituated or trained to choose and perform the right action by habit, i.e., has learned to exercise one's ethical excellences without force, the rational part of one's souls will no longer need to issue injunctions and will be free to devote itself to its own excellence. Having achieved the excellences of both its elements, the soul as a whole will be free to exercise its proper excellence which is contemplating the divine. Therefore, when Aristotle enjoins us to "set up for [ourselves] some object for the good life to aim at" (EE,1214b7-9), he does not tell us that accomplishing this goal is ipso facto happiness. What he means to impart is, that given our proneness to seek happiness, we will be more successful in its pursuit if we set up goals for ourselves in reference to which we can acquire the virtuous character necessary for the attainment of happiness by pursuing such goals virtuously. For happiness is not a goal we dwell on so that we can decide whether to seek it – we pursue it for we conceive of its possibility. We cannot but aim at happiness whatever we imagine it to be, because our function is to reason and reason tells us that happiness is the most excellent of ends, and that it is possible to attain. As such, happiness is "the activity of a good soul" alone [16-20]. And while available to all, it is not achievable by all but only those who make themselves worthy of it. (EE,1219a34-5)

Conclusion

Is happiness contemplation and is the happy life, life of contemplation? Perhaps not, but the goal of this project was to

show that eudaimonia for Aristotle, refers to contemplation alone and there is no inconsistency about the idea one can point to. I believe I have shown that contemplation as Aristotle envisions it is a reward or prize for virtuous conduct but perhaps, the opponent of the notion should consider the question: Can one be successful in achieving excellence in any sphere of life without conducting one's life virtuously? For if human excellence is not a necessary element of any accomplishment, how does one define success. And when Aristotle is ever so often accused of restricting happiness to only the few, this is because only few are successful at cultivating virtuous character rather than because contemplation as an activity is reserved for the enlightened. Happiness indeed, is attainable by anyone who makes himself worthy of it and anyone who displays the fortitude to choose and do the right thing for the sake of doing it even in the face of adversities. Indeed, especially in difficult circumstances because: "...if it [happiness] depends on the individual and his personal acts being of certain character, the supreme good would be both more general and more divine, more general because more would be able to possess it, more divine because happiness would then be the prize offered to those who make themselves and their acts of certain character" (EE, 1215a16-7)

And neither is happiness as contemplation the prerogative of professional philosophers though Aristotle is standardly interpreted as referring to them when describing the "happy man" as a philosopher yet another misconception adding to the philosophical chaos about Aristotle's notion of happiness. In fact, he cautions when elaborating on how virtuous character is cultivated that: "...most people do not do these [virtuous acts as virtuous men do them] but take refuge in theory and think they are being philosophers and will become good in this way, behaving somewhat like patients who listen attentively to their doctors, but do none of the things they are ordered to do [21-25]. As the latter will not be made well in body by such a course of treatment, the former will not be made well in soul by such a course of philosophy." (MM, 1105b12-7) In other words, contemplation as Aristotle conceives of it is not becoming professional philosopher and developing philosophical theories for "it is perhaps the part of the philosopher to glance also at subjects adjacent to this main interest". (MM, 1197b31-36) And neither is happiness electing to devote part of one's routine or daily activities to contemplating nature, universe, God, etc., but an activity a virtuous person is led to for nothing else interests or occupies an excellent mind. Gurtler is correct that Aristotle only "grudgingly" allows for the engagement of everyday activities, but not because everyday activities are worthless activities. But because happiness is an activity the happy person resents being taken away from even if to handle daily necessities, we as physical beings must tend to. Perhaps, especially for these. More importantly, happiness for Aristotle is not the unbridled engagement in endless pursuits of even if intellectual goals irrespective of their possible uselessness and lack of any apparent contribution to happiness. As such, happiness "extends just so far as contemplation does" (NE, 1178b28), and if one desires to be happy, one ought to assign virtue its due significance and sine qua non.

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