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WHY DOES CONTEMPLATION NOT FIT WELL INTO ARISTOTLE'S ΕΥΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ ?*

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One of the most notorious problems in the interpretation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (EN)[1] is the fact that Aristotle seems to present two different and incompatible accounts of the ultimate aim of the good human life, εὐδαιμονία. In the first book of the EN Aristotle remarks that there is an almost universal verbal agreement that the highest of human goods achievable by action should be called εὐδαιμονία and that living well and doing well is identical with being εὐδαίμων (1,4,1095a15-20). He also says that it is something that can only be possessed by human beings and gods, not by animals (1,9,1099b32-34; 10,8,1178b23-31; EE 1,7,1217a24-29), and of human beings only by adults (1,9,1100a1-4; EE 2,1,1219b5-8), and not as a possession of short periods of time but only of the complete lifetime of a completely virtuous person (1,7,1098a18-20; EE 2,1,1219b5). What Aristotle means by εὐδαιμονία is difficult to understand for several reasons. First, the term is not easily translated into modern languages. In English the conventional translation is 'happiness', but it can be misleading since it often refers to a subjective and temporary feeling, whereas εὐδαιμονία is a relatively stable and objectively definable characteristic of a good human life. Therefore many scholars leave the word untranslated or use translations like 'flourishing', 'well-being' or 'living well'.[2] Aristotle also

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1 All bracketed references are to the Nicomachean Ethics, unless otherwise indicated.

2 There is no consensus among modern scholars; e.g. John M. Cooper, Reason and Human Good in Aristotle, Harvard 1975, 89-90, defends 'flourishing' against 'happiness' as the translation of εὐδαιμονία, Martha C. Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness. Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy, Cambridge 1986, usually leaves the word untranslated, Richard Kraut, Aristotle on the Human Good, Princeton 1989, 3 n. 1, notes the problems but sticks to 'happiness' and only uses alternative translations for the sake of variety.

says in the beginning of the EN (1,12,1095a16-22) that people have different conceptions of what εὐδαιμονία is. Applying his usual dialectical method he then analyses these conceptions and then gives his own answer, which he acknowledges to be a sketch (1,7,1098a20-22). This sketch is filled with more details in the following books.

The most serious difficulty in understanding Aristotle's conception of εὐδαιμονία is, however, that his account of its contents seems to be ambiguous. In the main part of the EN Aristotle seems to hold a so-called inclusivist conception of εὐδαιμονία. This means that human happiness consists in all those activities which are chosen and valued for their own sake and that there is a wide range of these activities. These are the activities in accordance with all the different virtues of intellect and character, each of which is supposed to be valued for its own sake and to be a constituent part of εὐδαιμονία.

In the EN 10, chapters 6 to 8, Aristotle, however, seems to be committed to a very different view, according to which εὐδαιμονία consists in just one activity, i.e. contemplation exercized by the theoretical part of human reason. Aristotle claims that philosophical or contemplative life, βίος θεωρητικός, or the life according to reason, ὁ κατὰ τὸν νοῦν βίος, is the best, most pleasant and most flourishing life (10,7,1178a5-8) in comparison to which the life in accordance with the other virtue, ὁ βίος κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετὴν, i.e. supposedly moral and practical virtue, is said to be εὐδαίμων only in a secondary sense (10,8,1178a9-10). The happy or flourishing person who is leading a philosophical life aims at maximizing contemplative activity in his life. But since human nature is not self-sufficient for contemplation this person also needs other good things and, among other things, always chooses to act in accordance with the virtues of character and practical reason. He does, however, not seem to choose these activities for their own sake and as constituent parts of his εὐδαιμονία but as its necessary conditions which instrumentally promote the ultimate aim of contemplation. Therefore εὐδαιμονία seems to consist exclusively of contemplative activity and nothing else. This will be called the exclusivist conception of εὐδαιμονία.

In the following I shall discuss the different interpretations of Aristotle's two accounts of εὐδαιμονία. First I shall attempt to show that the traditional view according to which the EN as a whole can be read in the light of the book 10 is not successful. Then I shall discuss some modern attempts to give an inclusivist reading for the most part of the EN or even

for the book 10 and show that neither do they succeed in explaining away all the exclusivist elements in Aristotle's text. Finally I shall outline my own interpretation according to which there is a real inconsistency or ambiguity going through the whole of the EN and not restricted to the book 10. I shall propose that this ambiguity could have been intentional on Aristotle's part. Perhaps it was an attempt to defend the value of apparently useless theoretical contemplation and research in a community which was conspicuously pragmatically orientated, or perhaps it was intended to give an expression to a deep ambiguity in Aristotle's attitude to practical activities, which are, on the one hand, intrinsic goods, but on the other hand, when seen as involving struggling against human limits and satisfying human needs goods only in a conditional sense, reaching out for some external end outside of themselves.

I

According to the traditional view, which dates back to medieval Thomistic interpretation of Aristotle's ethics, the argument in the EN 10, the exclusive conception, is Aristotle's official and final account of εὐδαιμονία.[3] This view sees no unsurmountable problems in interpreting the preceeding books from the viewpoint of the exclusively contemplative ideal. The main parts of the EN include lengthy analyses of the virtues of character and practical reason, but, according to the traditional view, these analyses can be understood as descriptions of the different instrumental conditions of contemplative εὐδαιμονία.

The contents of εὐδαιμονία is not explicitly discussed before the EN 10, but the upholders of the traditional view have been able refer to numerous passages which seem to anticipate the exclusive conception. For example, in 1,7,1098a16-18 Aristotle remarks that *the good for a human being is the functioning of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are several virtues, in accordance with the best and most perfect one.*[4] In

[3] The traditional interpretation can be found in different versions is such modern works as L. Ollé-Laprune, Essai sur la morale d'Aristote, Paris 1881; Werner Jaeger, Aristoteles: Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung, Berlin 1923; W.D. Ross, Aristotle, London 1923.

[4] All translations of Aristotle are my own but I have also occasionally consulted some earlier ones, mostly Ross's Oxford translation revised by Urmson. Kraut's translations in Aristotle on Human Good and Cooper's ones in Contemplation and Happiness: A Reconsideration, Synthese 72 (1987), 187-216, have also been helpful for me.

1,7,1097a28-30 he says: *What is best appears to be something perfect* (τέλειόν τι) *Thus, if there is only one thing that is perfect, this seems to be what we are looking for, but if there are several perfect things we are seeking the most perfect of these*; and in 1,8,1099a29-30: *it is these, the best activities, or one of these, the best one, that we call* εὐδαιμονία.

Thus Aristotle seems to claim that the best life for the human being is simply contemplative life, in which the only constituent part of εὐδαιμονία and the only immanently valuable thing is the contemplation of eternal truths and all other human activities are only chosen as instrumental means of promoting the ultimate aim of contemplation. The idea that most human activities are only to be understood as instrumental means of maximizing the contemplation of eternal truths was not so difficult to accept in the Thomistic tradition in which the ultimate human aim was identified with the supernatural eternal life. The exclusive understanding of εὐδαιμονία, perhaps, made it easier to accomodate Aristotle's ethics with Christian faith.

There are, however, conclusive reasons for claiming that the exclusive, dominant-end conception of εὐδαιμονία is at least not the only one Aristotle presents in his works or even in the EN. In the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle is quite explicit that he understands εὐδαιμονία inclusively as a composite of several parts. In the EE 2,1,1219a35-39 Aristotle defines εὐδαιμονία as the realization of a complete life in accordance with the complete virtue (ἡ εὐδαιμονία ζωῆς τελείας ἐνέργεια κατ' ἀρετὴν τελείαν), and the following discussion makes it clear that the complete virtue should here be understood as consisting of all specifically human virtues, i.e. those of character as well as those of intellect. If the EE is, however, an earlier work than the EN one can of course suppose that Aristotle changed his mind in regard to the nature of εὐδαιμονία and that the exclusive conception of the EN represents Aristotle's final and more mature view.[5]

There are, however, passages which are very difficult if not impossible to reconcile with the exclusive view in the EN, too. (1) First, we have at least two passages where it is explicitly stated that εὐδαιμονία does

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[5] The question of the relation between the Eudemian and the Nicomachean Ethics is still controversial. Most scholars still seem to share Jaeger's thesis that the EE is earlier than the EN, but at least an important minority has been convinced by Anthony Kenny's arguments according to which the EE postdates the EN. See e.g. C. Rowe, The Eudemian and Nicomachean Ethics – A Study of the Development of Aristotle's Thought. Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society Suppl. 3 (1971); A. Kenny, The Aristotelian Ethics. A Study of the Relationship between the Eudaimonian and the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle, Oxford 1978.

not exclusively consist of intellectual activity. (a) EN 1,7,1097b1-5. states that εὐδαιμονία *is above all something we always choose for its own sake and never for the sake of anything else whereas we choose honor, pleasure, reason* (νοῦς) *and all virtues not only for their own sake, for we would choose all these even if nothing followed from them, but also for the sake of* εὐδαιμονία *for we consider ourselves* εὐδαιμονες *in virtue of these.* This clearly implies that νοῦς or the activity according to it cannot be the whole of εὐδαιμονία, and thus this passage contradicts the claim that εὐδαιμονία consists exclusively of contemplative activity. (b) In the EN 6,12 (1144a3-6.) Aristotle claims that theoretical activity or wisdom (σοφία) contributes to εὐδαιμονία not as medicine produces health, but as healthiness constitutes health. In other words, theoretical wisdom is not an external means towards εὐδαιμονία but an actual constituent part of it. The analogy to health at first seems to point towards an exclusive interpretation and imply that theoretical wisdom is the only constituent of εὐδαιμονία. This is, however, immediately and explicitly denied in the next sentence: *As it* (i.e. wisdom) *is a part of virtue as a whole* (and implicitly not the whole of virtue) *it contributes to one's being* εὐδαίμων *in virtue of its possession and its exercise.* Aristotle clearly here means that one needs all the parts of virtue as a whole in order to be εὐδαίμων and that εὐδαιμονία has to be understood in the inclusive sense as consisting several moral and intellectual activities.

(2) In the EN 1,7,1097b14-21 we have the important passage on the self-sufficiency of εὐδαιμονία: *The self-sufficient we posit as that which taken by itself makes life worthy of being chosen and in need of nothing. Such we think* εὐδαιμονία *to be. We even consider it the most worthy of being chosen of all without being counted as one among others. For if it were counted as one among others it would clearly become more worthy of being chosen with the addition of the least of goods, for what is added will be an excess of goods, and a greater good is always more worthy of being chosen.* Εὐδαιμονία *then appears to be something complete and self-sufficient, and it is the end of all action.* The criteria of self-sufficiency thus means that εὐδαιμονία is something that lacks nothing, something that becomes no more worthy of being chosen by the addition of any good things. Therefore εὐδαιμονία has to be inclusive of all goods that have intrinsic value or at least all those intrinsically good things that can be possibly included in a single life. It cannot consist of a single activity unless there is only one thing with intrinsic value.

(3) There is a lot of evidence in the EN for the great variety of intrinsically good things. Activities in accordance to all the virtues of character are said to be worthy of being chosen for their own sake; in fact in Aristotle's view an activity cannot be virtuous if it is not chosen for its own sake (2,4,1105a28-33, cf. 1,10,1100b33). The same idea can be seen in Aristotle's famous distinction between action (πρᾶξις) and making (ποίησις): in making there is an end distinct from the act of making whereas in action there is no distinct end; therefore, good action is an end that is good in itself (6,5,1140b6-7). Even in the EN 10,6,1176b4-9 Aristotle seems to suppose that the self-sufficiency criteria implies the inclusiveness of εὐδαιμονία; i.e. it consists of all actions that are worthy of being chosen for their own sake, also including noble and good deeds (τὰ καλὰ καὶ σπουδαῖα), i.e. activitites in accordance with the virtues of character. In the EN 9,9, Aristotle argues that an εὐδαίμων person needs friends, not only because of their usefulness and instrumental value, but as friendship is an intrinsically good thing and therefore a constituent of εὐδαιμονία (8,1,1155a5-6, 9,9,1169b3-22).

II

Numerous different strategies have been proposed to explain the apparent inconsistency between the inclusive and exclusive interpretations of εὐδαιμονία. They can roughly be classified into four groups. (1) It can be admitted that Aristotle is genuinely ambiguous and wavering with respect to these views: throughout his ethical works he sometimes identifies εὐδαιμονία with one good, sometimes with many.[6] (2) It can also be claimed that the exclusive view is restricted to the tenth book of the EN which is thus inconsistent with the rest of the treatise. Therefore, passages outside the EN 10,6-8 which seem to support the exclusive view have to be interpreted inclusively.[7] (3) Or it can be claimed that even the EN 10,6-8

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6 See e.g. W.F.R. Hardie, The Final Good in Aristotle's Ethics, in Aristotle: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. J.M.E. Moravcsic, Garden City 1967, 297-322; Hardie, Aristotle's Ethical Theory. Second Edition, Oxford 1980, 336-357, 414-429.

7 This is the view of J.L. Ackrill, Aristotle on eudaimonia, in Essays on Aristotle's Ethics, ed. Amélie Rorty, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1980, 15-33, Cooper, Reason and Human Good, 144-180, and Nussbaum, Fragility, 373-377. See also A.W.H. Adkins, *Theoria* vs. *Praxis* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Republic*, Classical Philology 73 (1978) 297-313. Thomas Nagel, Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*, in Rorty 7-14; Kathleen V. Wilkes, The Good Man and the Good for Man in Aristotle's Ethics, in Rorty, 341-358.

can be given an inclusivist reading according to which the best and happiest life for a human being does not exclusively consist of contemplation but is a mixed life in which both political and theoretical activities are intrinsically valuable constituents of εὐδαιμονία. Thus, the inconsistency between EN 10,6-8 and the rest of the treatise would only be apparent.[8] (4) The fourth possibility is to claim that the correct interpretation of the concept of εὐδαιμονία in the whole of the EN is, after all, an exclusive one, i.e. εὐδαιμονία solely consists of the best and most perfect human activity, which is, in the ideal case, philosophical contemplation and, in the second-best case, virtuous practical activity in a political life. The revival of the exclusivist interpretation, however, does not make all non-theoretical goods instrumentally valuable only but insists, on the contrary, that there is a variety of goods desirable in themselves outside εὐδαιμονία, including activity in accordance with ethical virtue. This view also claims that the εὐδαίμων person necessarily chooses these goods for his life even if they do not form a part of his εὐδαιμονία.[9]

Let us now set aside the first strategy and consider the other three. The second strategy emphasizes the inclusivist features in the discussion of εὐδαιμονία in the EN I and tries to explain away those elements that seem to contradict them. This strategy has to insist that the human function argument in the EN 1,7 has to be understood inclusively. According to the function argument the good for a thing consists of doing well the characteristic activities that are essential or definitive for that sort of being. For the human being the characteristic activity that distinguishes it from other living things and animals is the activity of soul in accordance with reason or not without reason (ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου) (EN 1,7,1098a7-8). Aristotle's expression here suggests that human function does not exclusively consist of mere reasoning activity but includes also elements shared by other living beings. These elements are, however, organized and shaped in a characteristically human way by practical reason.

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[8] This strategy seems to have been gaining more and more support in recent research. For different variants see e.g. David Keyt, Intellectualism in Aristotle, in Essays in Greek Philosophy, ed. John P. Anton and Anthony Preus, Albany 1983, 364-387; Jennifer Whiting, Human Nature and Intellectualism in Aristotle, Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie 68 (1986) 70-95; John M. Cooper, Contemplation and Happiness: A Reconsideration, Synthese 72 (1987), 187-216 (in this article Cooper has essentially revised his earlier view); Timothy D. Roche, Ergon and Eudaimonia in the Nicomachean Ethics I: Reconsidering the Intellectualist Interpretation, Journal of the History of Philosophy 26 (1988) 175-194.

[9] The main proponent of this view is Kraut in Human Good.

Thus the human good could be reasonably understood as an inclusive composite of various communal and individual activities.

The attempt to interpret the EN 1 inclusively has difficulties with those passages mentioned above in which Aristotle seems to say that εὐδαιμονία does not include all the human virtues but only the best and most perfect one. This especially seems to be the case in regard to the conclusion of the human function argument, according to which the human good is the functioning of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are several virtues, in accordance with the τελειοτάτη virtue (EN 1,7,1098a16-18). The defenders of the inclusivist reading usually understand the term τέλειος in the sense of completeness, i.e. τελειοτάτη ἀρετή is the virtue that is the inclusive sum total of all the particular human virtues. As this happens to be exactly how Aristotle understands τελεία ἀρετή in the EE 2,1,1219a35-39, it would only seem natural to understand it in the same way in the EN 1, too.

Τέλειος is, however, an ambiguous term, as Aristotle himself acknowledges in the *Metaphysics*: it can sometimes mean 'complete' in the sense of that which has its all parts but also that which is the best in its kind, i.e. perfect, or that which has reached its end, i.e. fully realized. The use of the superlative and the comparison to other virtues in our passage seems to suggest that Aristotle is here singling out one particular virtue in contrast with all others, rather than the inclusive sum total of all the human virtues. Therefore the sense of the term τέλειος seems to be different from the one used in the EE. The passage 1,7,1098a28-30 also seems to vindicate the conclusion that the τελειότατον which Aristotle is looking for is one single thing among many τέλεια rather than the sum of all these things. The inclusivist reading could perhaps be supported by claiming that in the EN 1,7, the term τελειότατος is used in a special sense, meaning 'chosen always for its own sake and never for the sake of anything else'. In the EN 1 – unlike in the EN 10 – this feature only characterizes εὐδαιμονία as a whole and not merely a part of it, not even the theoretical activity. Even in this case the inclusivist interpretation cannot explain away 1,8,1099a29-30: it is these, the best activities, or one of these, the best one, that we call εὐδαιμονία. Here, the best one of several good activities cannot be the inclusive sum of all of them, since in that case the two possible ways of understanding εὐδαιμονία given in the sentence would not be real alternatives and the meaning of the sentence would become nonsensical. Thus, it seems to me that Aristotle did not unambigously uphold an

inclusive conception of εὐδαιμονία even in the EN 1.

Let us now consider the third strategy according to which Aristotle's conception of εὐδαιμονία remains consistently inclusive throughout the EN. According to this interpretation Aristotle gives theoretical activity a special place as the most important single element of εὐδαιμονία but does not deny intrinsic value of non-contemplative activities which can thus be understood as constituent parts of εὐδαιμονία, not merely its instrumental means.

Besides sharing the difficulties of the previous approach, this strategy has to struggle hard in order to show that even in the EN 10 the non-contemplative virtuous activities are supposed to be chosen for their own sake and independently valued as components of εὐδαιμονία. David Keyt has attempted to show this by claiming that the two βίοι described in the EN 10, βίος θεωρητικός or βίος κατὰ τὸν νοῦν and βίος κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετὴν, are not two distinct types of life but two aspects of a single εὐδαίμων life.[10] The evidence brought forward by him for the view that βίος can be understood in the sense 'an aspect of life' is, however, controversial; it has been rejected by John Cooper and Martha Nussbaum.[11] Although Cooper is perhaps unnecessarily strict in claiming that in Greek language the word βίος *always* means a complete mode of life and that one person can *never* simultaneously have more than one such βίος, in the EN 10 Aristotle clearly seems to speak of two different modes of life, structured around different organizing principles and represented by two different types of person, a philosopher and a politically active citizen or a statesman.

The other possibility is to show that even βίος θεωρητικός is a mixed life which does not merely aim at maximizing contemplation but includes non-theoretical activities as intrinsically valuable parts. There are, however, passages in the EN 10 which seem to speak against this interpretation and which are not easily explained away.

First, Aristotle seems exclusively to identify the human being with the theoretical part of the soul in the EN 10,7,1178a2-4 *This* (i.e. theoretical intellect (νοῦς), which is defined as something divine in comparison with the human being (θεῖον πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον) as a whole and the highest

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10 See Keyt, Intellectualism, and The Meaning of BIOS in Aristotle's Ethics and Politics, Ancient Philosophy 9 (1987) 15-21.

11 See Cooper, Contemplation, Nussbaum, Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics, forthcoming in Essays in Honor of Bernard Williams, ed. J. Altham - R. Harrison.

thing in each of us (κράτιστον τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ) *seems to be what each of us is, since it is the most authoritative and better part. Thus it would be strange if one did not choose his own life but that of somebody else.* If non-theoretical aspects of humanity were not parts of the essence of the person, the activities connected to these aspects could at most be necessary conditions of the existence of the person's true self and therefore merely instrumentally valuable. Fortunately, for the inclusive interpretation, the strict identification of person with his theoretical reason is not necessarily Aristotle's final word. This is indicated by the use of the verb δοκεῖν and the optative in our passage and especially by the addition of the qualification μάλιστα into the identification of the human being with his theoretical reason in the sentence following the above quotation. If the human being is, thus, essentially a mixed composite of both theoretical and non-theoretical elements, it is not ruled out that non-theoretical activities can have independent value as components of the contemplator's εὐδαιμονία.

There is also Aristotle's injunction to ignore *those who tell us to think human thoughts since we are human and mortal thoughts since we are mortal, but to strive, as far as possible, to imitate the immortals and do all we can in order to live in accordance with the highest part in us* (10,7,1177b32-34). This passage seems to propagate maximizing contemplation and identification with one's godly part in one's life. The upholders of the inclusivist interpretation, however, remark that Aristotle does not suggest we do this unqualifiedly, at any cost, but only ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται, *as far as possible*, which suggests that it is not possible or even desirable to separate oneself from the non-divine elements of one's humanity. Perhaps, Aristotle's point is that we should not restrict ourselves to merely human thoughts and activities, but should remember that divine theoretical intellect is also a part of human essence. Thus, this passage does not necessarily deny the independent value of practical activities and moral virtue.

However, even if some problematic passages can be shown to be consistent with the inclusivist interpretation, there is not much positive evidence for the intrinsic value of non-theoretical activities in the EN 10. Unfortunately, for the inclusivist view, there is an important passage which cannot be explained away in the 10,7,1177b1-4: *It appears that this, i.e. contemplative activity, is the only thing that is loved for its own sake, for nothing comes into being from it beyond contemplation whereas from the practical activities we acquire more or less besides the action itself.* Here

Aristotle seems to claim plainly and explicitly that only contemplation and nothing else has intrinsic value. It could perhaps be tempting to explain this passage away by claiming that Aristotle just forgot to add that contemplation is the only activity loved for its own sake *only* whereas different practical activities can be *both* aimed at some external ends *and* loved for their own sake.[12] A few lines below there is, however, an even clearer denial of the independent value of practical activities: *If political and military activities stand out in nobility and greatness among the activities in accordance with virtues and if they are unleisured and directed to some end without being chosen for their own sake ...(then the activity of intellect is perfect human* εὐδαιμονία) (1177b16-18, 24-25). Of course, we have again the verb δοκεῖν and the optative in our passage, but there is nothing qualifying these statements in the sequence, and therefore it is natural to assume that they express Aristotle's positive doctrine. They cannot be convincingly accomodated to the inclusivist interpretation, and therefore an inconsistency or at least an internal tension in Aristotles conception of εὐδαιμονία cannot be explained away.

I shall now discuss the fourth strategy of interpreting Aristotle's conception of εὐδαιμονία, mainly represented by Richard Kraut, very briefly, although it should deserve a much more thorough analysis.[13] The central idea of this interpretation is to revive the exclusive conception of εὐδαιμονία and to claim that Aristotle consistently upholds it throughout the whole of the EN. Thus, εὐδαιμονία would consist in just one good, the excellent reasoning activity, which means, in the ideal case, philosophical contemplation and, in the second-best case, virtuous activity in practical and political life. Although contemplation is ideally the only constituent of εὐδαιμονία it is not, however, the only intrinsic good, but there are many different things desirable in themselves besides εὐδαιμονία and the philosopher needs them all. These things, however, are desired not only for their own sake but also because they promote contemplation, the only thing merely desired for the sake of itself. They stand below contemplation in the hierarchy of good things and are not constituents of εὐδαιμονία. Kraut also claims that although Aristotle considered a life the better the more contemplation it contains, he was not an egoist.[14] This means that one

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12 See Keyt, Intellectualism 380-381.

13 All arguments presented by Kraut in nearly four hundred densely written pages of Aristotle on Human Good cannot obviously be answered in a short article.

14 Kraut, Human Good, 78-154.

should, according to Aristotle, not always maximize contemplation or one's own good even if it promoted happiness for oneself.

The problems in this interpretation seem to be very much similar to those of the third strategy. It has problems in giving a convincing explanation for Aristotle's denial of the intrinsic value of all the non-theoretical activities in the EN 10,7. On the other hand, it has further difficulties with the passages which seem to speak most strongly against the exclusivist interpretation. Kraut makes an attempt to interpret the self-sufficiency condition of εὐδαιμονία stated in the EN 1,7,1097b14-20 in a way that does not imply that εὐδαιμονία is a composite of all intrinsically worthwhile activities.[15] Aristotle says in the self-sufficiency passage that εὐδαιμονία is the most worthy of being chosen of all goods, not only one good among others but rather the sort of good that a life which has the greatest amount of it cannot be improved upon by having other goods in addition to it. It does not follow, however, according to Kraut, that there are no intrinsic goods besides εὐδαιμονία. On the contrary, a happy life in fact needs many other intrinsic goods as its necessary parts. Even if we agreed with Kraut's reading which gives a rather idiosyncratic sense to Aristotle's concept of intrinsic good, we still have some passages mentioned above which are not so easily explained away but indicate that contemplation cannot be the only constituent of εὐδαιμονία. In 1,7,1097b1-5 it is stated that νοῦς, among many other things, is chosen not only because of itself but also for the sake of εὐδαιμονία, which seems to imply that there has to be other constituents of εὐδαιμονία besides the activity of theoretical reason. There is also the passage 6,12,1144a3-6 according to which wisdom is not the whole of virtue but only a part of it, and which, as a part of virtue, makes the person who has it εὐδαίμων. This implies that one needs all the parts of virtue in order to be εὐδαίμων and the activities in accordance with all those parts are the constituents of εὐδαιμονία. It is true that Kraut discusses all these passages and even brings forward some evidence outside the EN, but he hardly succeeds in proving conclusively that Aristotle never admits any non-theoretical activities as parts of εὐδαιμονία.

15 Kraut, Human Good 267-272.

III

Thus far my method in this paper has been more or less deconstructionist. I have attempted to show that there are tensions, ambiguities and inconsistencies in Aristotle's conception of εὐδαιμονία, and they are not successfully explained away by any of the approaches discussed above. Now I want to propose, in a very general outline, some new possibilities for explaining the tension between inclusive and exclusive conceptions of εὐδαιμονία.

First, some methodological remarks. As we have seen, the close philological reading of the relevant texts forces us to admit that Aristotle was ambiguous and perhaps even inconsistent about the contents of εὐδαιμονία. This is, however, a fact that makes or, at least, should make any interpreter feel uneasy. It is a most natural way to relieve this uneasiness by attempting to find some stated or unstated background assumptions which could explain the ambiguities and save the consistency of Aristotle's view. The fact that I admit this means that I do not, in principle, want to question the interpretive strategy applied by most of the scholars whose views have been discussed above. On the contrary, the best strategy which a historiographer of philosophy can adopt is based on the so-called principle of charity, i.e. the principle that when interpreting a philosophical text, one should first make the most favorable assumptions about the writer's intelligence, knowledge, sense of relevance, consistency, etc.[16] Only after this strategy has failed – and I believe that it has failed in the case of Aristotle's conception of εὐδαιμονία – has one to adopt other strategies in order to explain apparent ambiguities and inconsistencies.

One possibility would be to make some kind of developmental hypothesis, i.e. to claim that inconsistent passages have been written in different times and represent different phases of development of the philosopher's thought. This strategy has also been widely applied in Aristotelian scholarship since the days of Werner Jaeger. The temptation to use developmental hypotheses in the interpretation of Aristotle is indeed great since we know that most of his treatises were not originally intended for publication but were rather unfinished notes used for lectures in the Lyceum. They were written in the course of many years, and contain

16 On 'charity' as a principle of interpretation see Gregory Vlastos, Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher, Cambridge 1991, 9 n. 36, 236; See also S. Makin, How Can We Find Out What Ancient Philosophers Said, Phronesis 33 (1988) 121-132.

numerous revisions, afterthoughts and corrections. There can therefore be levels dating back to different periods of Aristotle's life and philosophical development even inside single passages. Uncontested results have, however, been rare in developmental studies, and the discussion is still continuing. The different accounts of εὐδαιμονία have also been interpreted on the basis of developmental hypotheses but none of these attempts have been very successful.[17]

One might now ask whether the only possibility available is to surrender and admit that even Aristotle could perhaps sometimes have made himself guilty of confused or fallacious arguments. Perhaps even Aristotle can make mistakes. I don't, however, think that we have to adopt this defeatist stand in the case of his view on εὐδαιμονία. On the contrary, I want to claim that Aristotle's ambiguity about the contents of εὐδαιμονία could have been intentional, and what is more, that there can even be some good philosophical grounds for retaining the ambiguity and not being satisfied with an consistently inclusivist account.

It has not been sufficiently appreciated that in Aristotle's view of human nature consists of fundamentally inconsistent elements. According to his usual definition, the human being is a rational and political creature, and especially in the conclusion of the famous human function argument in the first book of the EN, he seems to assume that these aspects of humanity can be fitted consistently together in an inclusive conception: he defines the human function as practical life of that which has reason (πρακτική τις τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος, 1,7,1098a3-4) or an activity of the soul in accordance with reason or not without reason (ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου, 1,7,1098a7-8). In this definition reason clearly is a distinctive organizing principle around which other component activities are structured or by which they are infused and not an exclusive activity in which those activities which human beings share with plants and animals have no part.[18] There are, however, passages in which this aim to inclusive consistency cannot be found but Aristotle rather seems to indicate a potential conflict between human (theoretical) rationality and sociability. In the beginning of the *History of Animals* he remarks that the human species "plays a double game" or "dualizes" (ἐπαμφοτερίζει)[19], i.e. it has a nature that consists of

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17 For further discussion see Kraut, Human Good, 287-291; Cooper, Reason and Human Good.

18 See Nussbaum, Aristotle on Human Nature.

19 The verb ἐπαμφοτερίζειν is a rather common one in Greek literature. It sometimes

fundamental characteristics that cross standard typologies and do not necessarily consistently fit together: the human being is both a gregarious (ἀγελαῖον), or more specifically political (πολιτικόν), and a solitary (μοναδικόν) animal (HA 1,1,488a7-14). This means that human beings take part in two different and inconsistent modes of being. On the one hand, they have characteristics that belong to them and to no other species: these are capabilitites to manage those elements that human beings share with animals and plants in a rational way which is not available to animals and plants. The good condition in respect to these is expressed in various practical virtuous activities. On the other hand, human beings, however, take part in a mode of being that belongs to all rational beings, including gods, through their theoretical reason. Apparently, Aristotle saw a coherent solution between these two modes of being virtually impossible in a single life.[20] There is not any answer available in Aristotelian terms to the problem of which of these two viewpoints, exclusively human or godly, human beings should choose as the basis for their action in a particular situation. Practical reason cannot decide when one should contemplate, since, being a lower part of the human soul, it cannot give orders to theoretical reason (EN 6,13,1145a9-11), but on the other hand, theoretical reason does not decide how one should act in a practical situation since it is not at all concerned with the changing aspects of changeable reality.[21]

It seems evident that Aristotle was not satisfied with solving the

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refers to ambiguous arguments which are suspectible of two interpretations, and it is very often used in Aristotle's biological works of intermediate species like bats and seals which do not fit well into standard classifications but 'dualize' e.g. between birds and quadrupeds or land-animals and water-animals. There, however, seems to be at least two different cases of ἐπαμφοτερίζειν: (i) species having sub-species that belong to different classes (e.g. a pig 'dualizes' between solid-hooved and cloven-hooved since there are pigs belonging to both genera, HA 499b12-21), and (ii) species every member of which have characteristics that cross standard typologies (bat, seal, ostrich, HA 566a27; PA 697b14). The verb in itself does not imply that there has to be some explicit inconsistency between the 'dualizing' charactreristics. See A.L. Peck, Introduction to Aristotle's History of Animals (Loeb Classical Library) lxxiii-lxxv.

20 My interpretation does not necessarily depend on which side we take in the debate between Cooper, Keyt and Nussbaum on the meaning of the Greek words βίος and ζωή, i.e. whether they always mean a total way of life in which case an in individual can only have one βίος or ζωή at a time or whether they sometimes refer to an aspect of life. If we, however, accept Cooper's and Nussbaum's view the potential conflict between sociality and rationality becomes even clearer. See above n 10 and 11.

21 There is one passage in which Aristotle seems to subordinate theoretical sciences to practical reason; according to 1,2,1094a27-b2, it is political science or the art of politics that determines which sciences there should be in the state, and which of these the citizens should learn and how much. It is, however, in conflict with Aristotle's main line of argument.

tension between the two aspects of human striving in an inclusivist way so that contemplation would be the most important single element in the flourishing life in which there would be some kind of hierarchy of different types of good things but many of those good things, besides contemplation, could unambiguously be called intrinsically good. He wanted contemplation to be something more, something from the viewpoint of which all other good things would only seem to be valuable in an instrumental sense. On the other hand, he was clearly equally reluctant to remove all intrinsic value from practical activities if they are considered from the viewpoint of humanity as a whole, which includes those characteristics human beings share with animals and plants, and not from the viewpoint of generic rationality. But is this sticking to two different viewpoints which lead to different and inconsistent directions just sloppy philosophy or does it capture something philosophically interesting about human nature when it makes an aspiration to contemplative self-transcendence an essential part of the human good? The latter alternative would at least increase the possibility of confict in human life in a more radical way than is allowed by Nussbaum who has emphasized the sensitivity of Aristotle's conception of human good to vulnerability and potential tragic conflict but regards the contemplative ideal as a misjudged aspiration to leave behind altogether the constitutive conditions of humanity.[22]

I admit that some of the reasons why Aristotle was so insistent on the special role of contemplation can be called "ideological", i.e. believed not because of rational considerations which may be offered in their support but as a result either of social causation or of a desire to promote the intrests of a particular group in a society.[23] This means, for example, that the exclusive view of contemplation could perhaps partly be explained by the theologically orientated heritage of the Academy which Aristotle was unable or reluctant to reject completely, though it does not fit well into the line of thought which he usually represents.[24]

Another ideological reason for giving a special role for contemplation

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22 See Nussbaum, Fragility, and an interesting debate on the role of transcendence between Charles Taylor, Critical Notice on Nussbaum Fragility, Canadian Journal of Philosophy 18 (1988) 805-814, and Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge. Essays on Philosophy and Literature, Oxford 1990, 365-391.

23 On the concept of ideology see Malcolm Schofield, Ideology and Philosophy in Aristotle's Theory of Slavery, Aristoteles' Politik. Akten des XI. Symposium Aristotelicum, hrsg. Günther Patzig, Göttingen 1991, 1-27.

24 Cf. Nussbum, Fragility, 377.

could have been a wish to defend the value of theoretical study in a society which was practically orientated and inclined to have contempt for everything which was considered useless. Perhaps the contemplative ideal was presented as some kind of advertisment for Aristotle's school and the theoretical studies pursued there. We should here notice that Aristotle in fact needed a more powerful defense of the value of theoretical philosophy than Plato, who regarded philosophy as valuable both for its own sake and for the sake of its consequences. Platonic philosophy promised to provide a comprehensive account of the fundamental nature of reality, prescriptions for the correct way of life based on philosophical knowledge and principles for reorganizing human social life. Aristotle, on the other hand, distinguished theoretical and practical reason from each other and regarded theory as valuable for its own sake only and not for the sake of any external product. Thus he outlined a justification for a purely theoretical interest of knowledge, detached from practical daily life. In order to maintain his claim that theoretical activity was the most valuable element in human life Aristotle had to revise the Platonic ranking order among the different types of good things According to the *Republic* (2,357b-358a), those things were best which were valued for their own sake and for the sake of their consequences, those were second-best which were valued for their own sake only, and those were third-best which were only valued for their consequences. Aristotelian contemplation could only be regarded as the best element if this order was changed so that those goods are best which are chosen for their own sake and not for the sake of anything else. Perhaps Aristotle thought that even this is not enough in a society where practical values are dominant. Therefore, he felt it necessary to outline a contemplative ideal from the viewpoint of which practical activities were only seen as creating the necessary preconditions.

As a final note, however, I want to propose that the idea of leaving the tension between theoretical and practical ideals is not necessarily completely devoid of philosophical insight. In this claim I do not follow the lead of most earlier commentators who have approached the tension from the viewpoint of theoretical ideal and attempted to find a place for contemplative self-transcendence in Aristotle's account of human good. Perhaps the problem should be approached starting from the Aristotelian concept of πρᾶξις. When Aristotle claims that practical activities are chosen and valued both for their own sake and for the sake of something else, he does not only mean that they are chosen and valued as parts of εὐδαιμονία. He also means that

these activities have some external ends towards which they aim. Practical activities always involve struggling against some limit, satisfying some need or repairing some damage which means that they do not just aim at excellent activities in themselves which together constitute human εὐδαιμονία but that for each activity there is something other than itself that it is reaching for.

This is illustrated, for example, by Aristotle's analysis of the virtue of courage and courageous action (3,6-9). Good persons are supposed to act courageously on battlefield and other dangerous situations where they have three kinds of goals before themselves: (a) an external goal, i.e. victory and peace in a battle and managing the dangerous situation in other cases, (b) an internal goal, i.e. the nobility of courageous activity in itself, and (c) a counter-goal, i.e. death, wounds or other painful losses, which one wishes to avoid but faces if necessary for the other two goals.[25] When they are on battlefield their motive for choosing to act courageously is the internal goal, if they are really virtuous, but this does not mean that they would value the battle itself as an intrinsic good. If there is no external goal there is also no reason for aiming at the internal goal, and the pain and struggle connected to the counter-goal are in no way valuable in themselves. Human beings necessarily face imperfection, danger, pain and struggle in their lives and they can show courage and other practical virtues in coping with these situations, but this does not mean that human life is best when it is most fraught with difficulty.[26] Practical activities, which all more or less share the three-goal structure of courageous action, are in fact unleisurely (ἄσχολος) or conditional goods: they are valued and chosen for intrinsic reasons but only in certain situations which involve pain and struggle and are not in themselves valuable. This is the point which Aristotle also makes in the EN 10,7, and not too often recognized by commentators who hold the inclusivist interpretation: Εὐδαιμονία *seems to be realized in leisure* (σχολή) *for we are unleisurely in order to have leisure, and we make war in order to have peace. The activity of the practical virtues is exhibited in political and military affairs, and these activities seem to be unleisurely, and military affairs are completely so, for no-one chooses making war or prepares for war for the sake of being at war; one would seem to be a completely bloodthirsty lunatic if he would make enemies out of his friends*

25 For an excellent analysis of Aristotles account of courage, see David Pears, Courage as a Mean, in Rorty, Essays, 171-187.
26 As is also noted by Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge, 377.

in order to bring about battle and slaughter. The activity of the statesman is also unleisurely, and it aims apart from the activity itself at power and honors or at least εὐδαιμονία *for himself and citizens,* εὐδαιμονία *which is different from politics and which we clearly seek as something different* (1177b4-15). The only virtue which seems to be completely leisurely is the virtue of theoretical reason, contemplation.[27]

This is in no sense an exhaustive analysis of the concepts of πρᾶξις or σχολή, but perhaps it shows why Aristotle was inclined to regard practical activities as intrinsically valuable from one viewpoint and as instrumental from another. Human beings live in a condition where a tension between being good in a specifically human way in human limits and a struggle against those very same limits is inevitable. There is no limit which is constitutive of human reality in an absolute sense and could not even in principle be questioned. Similar tensions and ambiguities which occupied Aristotle's mind are in no way alien to modern thought. Let us consider modern attitudes to work. In some connections people are used to regard work as a fundamental value and an essential way of realizing one's personality; in other connections it is only seen as an instrumental means which is necessary for earning money and getting other goods, but in no way intrinsically valuable. The same can be said about social ties and moral institutions. On the one hand, they are regarded as necessary elements in human identity, but on the other hand, only as necessary evils needed for securing the rights of individuals to pursue their own interests. These kinds of tensions could, of course, be settled by showing that the conflicting elements come from different traditions and different models of thought and by opting for one simple model and rejecting others. It is, however, problematic that one and the same person is often inclined to interpret his or her evaluative attitudes in the light of conflicting models since all simple solutions seem to be based on a one-sided and impoverished view of the human condition. From this point of view it is perhaps not an exaggeration to claim that the tension in Aristotle's view of practical activities does after all capture something essential in humanity.

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27 Cf. Pol. 7,15,1334a11-25.