Happiness and Superlative Value in the *Eudemian Ethics*

Giulia Bonasio

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ABSTRACT

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In my dissertation *Happiness and Superlative Value in the Eudemian Ethics*, I analyze dimensions of the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*) that, as I see it, make the *EE* a distinctive contribution to ethics. The *EE* discusses a superlative excellence called *kalokagathia*, the virtue of being-beautiful-and-good, which does not figure in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*). The agent who possesses *kalokagathia* is the best agent of Aristotle’s *EE*. Scholars tend to hold that the practically wise person, the *phronimos*, or the theoretically wise person, the *sophos*, are the best agents of the *NE*. If my reading of the *EE* is right, then the *EE* and the *NE* conceive differently of the best agent. This is salient in both treatises’ construals of the unity of the virtues. In the *NE*, the unity of the virtues includes the character virtues and *phronêsis*. In the *EE*, it additionally includes the virtues of theoretical thinking, or so I argue. The *EE* starts with what I call the Superlative Thesis (ST): happiness is what is best, most beautiful, and most pleasant of all. I take this beginning to be programmatic. Aristotle aims to show how these three kinds of value combine in the best human life, rather than coming apart. The Pleasure Thesis (PT) is the most contested aspect of ST: happiness is the most pleasant thing of all. On my reading, Aristotle fully embraces PT. In laying out his proposal for the best human life, the Aristotle of the *EE* develops a distinctive kind of naturalism, which I call Natural Goods Naturalism. I reconstruct this position in two steps: by interpreting the *EE*’s function argument; and by exploring the notion of natural goods, which is central to the *EE*, but does not figure in the *NE*. In sum, my dissertation argues that the *EE* contains a distinctive and under-appreciated option within ancient ethics, and that it contains ideas that are relevant to today’s virtue ethics and ethical naturalism.
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To my husband

To my parents
CHAPTER ONE

Introductory Remarks on Happiness and the Superlative Thesis

A perennial question has been raised in antiquity and continues to be on our minds: how can we be happy? The answer to this question is difficult and there is no general agreement. What is more, it is not even clear that happiness is a unified and agreed upon notion. For Aristotle, eudaimonia - happiness, literally “to have a good daimon” - is the highest goal of human life. Aristotle’s philosophical proposal in the Nicomachean Ethics (NE) has received considerable attention from antiquity on. Conversely, the Eudemian Ethics (EE) is still largely unexplored. It is my aim in this work to shed light on some aspects of Aristotle’s philosophical proposal in this treatise. Is the ethical theory of the EE largely the same as the theory of the NE, or are there important differences? Specifically, does the Aristotle of the EE propose a different view on happiness? Does he discuss a well-lived human life in terms that are familiar from the NE, or does he employ conceptual tools that are distinctively Eudemian?

If we look at how the two treatises begin, something strikes us as profoundly different. From the very first lines of the work, the NE focuses on the good, while three value-properties take center stage in the EE: the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant. All three kinds of values are presented as immediately connected to happiness. Aristotle says that

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happiness is the best, the most beautiful, and the most pleasant thing of all. Throughout this dissertation, I argue that the EE can be read as an extended argument. Aristotle aims to prove that happiness is the best, the most beautiful, and the most pleasant thing of all.

I investigate the relation of the best agent to these three kinds of value. Aristotle calls this agent the *kalos kagathos*. The *kalos kagathos* is the agent who has *kalokagathia*, the complex virtue of being-beautiful-and-good. And on account of this high-level excellence, she lives a life that deserves to be called happy. Her happiness displays the superlative value mentioned in the first sentence of the EE: it is the best, the most beautiful, and the most pleasant thing of all. The route to happiness, I argue, admits a lot of variability regarding the specifics of a given person’s good life. And yet the ideal of happiness, and of being a good person, is ambitious. When we say that someone is a good person, we are saying that overall she is good. That is, we do not specify in what respect the agent is good, whether the agent is courageous or generous, and so forth. We envisage a person who is good without qualification or specification. This is how Aristotle portrays the person who has *kalokagathia*: she is good overall. The questions that I explore are: what virtues does the agent need to have in order to be *kalos kagathos*? How do these virtues function and interact with each other?

In the EE, Aristotle is not only concerned with the case of the best agent. The perspective of what I call the agent in a standard state also plays a fundamental role in determining what is good, beautiful, and pleasant for human beings. Aristotle puts forward a notion that is absent from the NE: the notion of natural goods. What are the natural goods? On my reading, what is good is not what is good absolutely. It is not what is good for the best agent, either. What is good in the sense of the natural goods, is the good for human beings as
we are by nature or for the most part. I introduce the notion of the agent in a standard state to capture this idea: the agent in a standard state is how human beings are by nature or for the most part. That is, as Aristotle conceives of this, by nature or for the most part we are adult, healthy individuals in normal conditions (i.e. in the standard state, we are not drunk, not under the effect of drugs, etc.).

Connected to the notion of natural goods is the better known and yet contested notion of function (ἔργον). The idea that human beings have a function is familiar from the NE. In Plato’s Republic, the claim is that the human soul has a function. The perspective of the EE on the function is close to that of the Republic: the human soul - rather than human beings - has a function. I compare and analyze the so-called Function Arguments that appear in the three works: NE, EE and Republic. The very notion of a “function” can seem off-putting, as if someone had made us for some purpose, as humans make knives. I address the unfortunate, albeit standard, translation “function” as I go along. For now, let me note that the thought is not that a creator made us to serve or to have a specific function, or, closer to the Greek ergon, to do some “job.” In the light of this I take it to be a fundamental question about Aristotle’s ethics why he talks about the ergon of human beings, as he does in the NE, or of the human soul, as he does in the EE.

I conclude my analysis by exploring the most contested of the three value-properties that Aristotle assigns to happiness: the pleasant. In antiquity, pleasure was seen in a negative light especially in discussions that envisaged hedonism as an opponent. At the beginning of the EE and of the NE, Aristotle mentions the life of pleasure as one of the candidates for the

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role of best life. He puts much effort into arguing against this view and in favor of his own proposal that the life of virtue is the best life. And yet, why does Aristotle connect happiness to pleasure from the very first lines of the *EE*? As I demonstrate, the best life as Aristotle conceives of it cannot lack pleasure. Feeling pleasure in virtuous activity serves as a sign that the agent is fully virtuous. If we are to diagnose who is fully virtuous, we can look for this symptom. I argue that Aristotle’s discussion of pleasure in the *EE* suggests that the pleasant is a non-derivative value. In other words, it is not a value that is posterior to some more fundamental value such as the good. It plays an essential role in motivation and in the good life.

In this chapter, I aim to achieve two things. First, I offer a conspectus of the dissertation, sketching its main themes, questions, and proposals. Second, I defend an interpretive claim that is fundamental to my dissertation as a whole. This claim is modest, and yet, at the same time, it prepares the ground for the arguments laid out in the following chapters. This is why its defense is to some extent part of my introductory account of the *EE*. Namely, I propose that the *EE* is concerned with happiness. Its most basic ambition is to lay out a view of what makes a person happy. This is a modest claim because it applies to many texts in ancient ethics. It is also a modest claim because, put in this preliminary way, it is not contentious. It is a claim worth spelling out with respect to the *EE*, however, insofar as the *EE* begins with a remarkable premise about happiness: that happiness is at once the best, the most beautiful, and the most pleasant. The *EE* puts forward a distinctive account of happiness that explores the roles of three kinds of value in a happy life—of goodness, beauty, and pleasure.
The structure of the Introduction, then, is to first supply some background on the scholarship that has treated the EE (section 1). Second, I discuss the substantive accounts of happiness in the EE and in the NE (section 2) and the respective formal accounts of happiness (section 3). I turn next to a discussion of what I call the Superlative Thesis (ST), namely that happiness is the best, the most beautiful, and the most pleasant thing of all (section 4), including an analysis of a quote by Theognis that Aristotle employs (section 5). I examine each of the three claims that constitute ST (section 6). I discuss two fundamental elements in the definitions of happiness, namely how Aristotle conceives of complete virtue and of the best and most complete virtue (section 7). I conclude with an outline of the chapters (section 8).

1. The state-of-the-art

Even in antiquity, the EE was far less studied than the NE. For a long time, the EE has not been regarded as Aristotelian. Following the work of Werner Jaeger (1923), scholars began to consider the EE a genuine part of the Aristotelian oeuvre. The EE contains three books (NE V, VI, VII = EE IV, V, VI) that in some manuscripts appear in the NE, and in others in the EE. For centuries these books were treated as if they were original components of the NE. Aspasius, in his commentary on NE I-IV and VII-VIII, mentions a controversy about the authorship of book VII. And he reports that some scholars attributed it to Eudemus, a student of Aristotle. In the 1970s, C. Rowe published a study of the development of Aristotle’s

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3 Up to the II century, the EE was considered Aristotle’s main ethical treatise. However, after the commentary of Aspasius, the NE starts to be regarded as the main Aristotelian ethical treatise. J. Barnes (1999) puts forward two hypotheses: either Aspasius was commenting on two Peripatetic ethical treatises - the commentary on the NE survived while we have only snippets of the one on the EE - or he was indeed commenting on the NE.

4 W. Jaeger, Aristoteles, Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung (Berlin, 1923).
thought in the *EE* and in the *NE*.\(^5\) A few years later, in 1978, A. Kenny argued that the common books were an original part of the *EE*.\(^6\) He based his argument on a stylometric analysis of the common books and of the undisputed books of the two ethics. The analysis brought to light stronger similarities between the style of the common books and that of the undisputed books of the *EE*.\(^7\) However, there is still no agreement among scholars on this matter. To add even more uncertainty, the chronology of the two treatises is still disputed. C. Rowe argued that the *EE* was written before the *NE*. A. Kenny argued in favor of the idea that the *EE* was later than the *NE*. Since the publication of these two studies in 1970s, scholars side with one position or the other, at times adducing further evidence, but without reaching a unified and agreed upon view. One way or another, the *NE* has long been read as “the” ethical treatise by Aristotle. In effect, many aspects and ideas that appear only in the *EE* have been neglected by Aristotle scholars. Kenny pointed out that since the Middle Ages, a new commentary on the *NE* was published roughly every decade, while we have only a few commentaries on the *EE*.

Though two recent translations - by A. Kenny (2011) and by B. Inwood and R. Woolf (2013) - make the *EE* as a whole (as opposed to only those parts that are not in the *NE*) accessible in a highly readable way, the *EE* remains far less studied than the *NE*.\(^8\) There is only one recent monograph dedicated to the *EE* (Buddensiek 1999) and two collections of

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\(^7\) In the catalogue of Andronicus, the *EE* appears in eight books, but there is no mention of the *NE*.

\(^8\) The first English translation of the *EE* that includes the common books is by A. Kenny (Oxford University Press, 2011). Simpson translates the treatise including the common books. The first complete translation of the *EE* in a modern language is the Italian translation by Fermani: *Aristotele, Le tre Etiche*, A. Fermani (ed.), Bompiani, 2008.

Recently, however, there has been an emerging interest in the EE. An example is the Symposium Aristotelicum of July 2017 dedicated to EE II, including a number of reading groups internationally (in Paris, Princeton, and elsewhere) leading up to the Symposium, as well as a conference in Dublin in June 2018 about questions that arise both with respect to the NE and EE. My work contributes to this trend by opening up new avenues of research. In chapter II, I point out that, while there is a discussion of the unity of the virtues understood as a unity of phronēsis and character virtues (Dahl 1984, Irwin 1988, Badhwar 1996, Halper 1999, Natali 2001, Annas 2011, Russell 2014) there is no discussion of a larger unity of the virtues that includes the character virtues as well as all the virtues of thinking, practical and theoretical. Scholars tend to hold that the best agent of the NE is the phronimos or the sophos (Cooper 1975, McDowell 1979, Woods 1986, Wiggins 1988, Reeve 1992). But there is no discussion of the best agent in the EE. In chapter III, I investigate the Eudemian notion of natural goods that has not yet been the object of a dedicated study so far, but for an article by Broadie (2010). I argue that the notion of natural goods is part of an unexplored and distinctive kind of naturalism: what I call Natural Goods Naturalism (NGN). In chapter IV, I compare the well-known and well-studied Function Argument in the NE (Williams 1972,

Even though I do not focus specifically on the chronology of the two ethics or on the common books, I here provide a brief sketch of where I suspend judgment and which hypothesis I employ. Regarding the chronology, I do not think that there is enough evidence to side with one view or the other. For current purposes, this is not necessary. By engaging with happiness, virtue, natural goods, the Function Argument, and pleasure I aim to demonstrate that there are several lines of argument that begin in Book I of the EE and are developed until the treatise’s conclusion in Book VIII; that is, I aim to elucidate ways in which the EE can be read as an extended argument. This is compatible with it being the earlier and with it being the later Aristotelian treatise on ethics. It is also compatible with the observation that the EE’s text is dense and at times corrupt (especially with regard to the very last book), and that not all passages and sections of the treatise seem equally well integrated. It is possible for the EE as a whole to offer one distinctive outlook, and yet to contain some passages that do not seem to be fully polished and revised with a view to the book as a whole. This applies - albeit more rarely - also to the text of the NE. I state this at the outset in order to forestall the following type of objection. What if we were to think that, on consideration,
some passages are in one way or another ill-integrated? It would not follow, of course, that the treatise as a whole fails to offer a distinctive ethical outlook. A brief comparison with any monograph today makes this evident: it is entirely compatible to take an author to put forward a given view throughout an extended treatise, and yet to have failed to “catch” everything during the review process. This is even more salient for ancient authors, for whom the process of writing and revision were probably very different from today. For example, we may think that in antiquity there was no process of revision with a view to publication. I myself am not going to argue that any particular passages are ill-integrated in this manner. But I want to state explicitly that my interpretation does not hang on there being no such passages whatsoever.

As for the common books, I consider them a part of the EE. This cannot be more than a hypothesis, especially since I do not engage here in close philological work that pertains to this question. Instead, I put forward reconstructions of lines of argument in the EE that are, on the one hand, especially compelling if the middle books are original parts of the EE, and that, on the other hand, lend credibility to this hypothesis. This mode of reconstruction is self-consciously circular, though I submit not in a problematic way. Rather, I here follow an established method of putting together a “picture,” a way of reconstructing and reading a text, that can be assessed by its philosophical and historical plausibility. Along these lines, I provide arguments that show that the common books contain essential parts of Aristotle’s argument in the EE. This view is compatible with the idea that these books were revised or edited in order to fit also the argument of the NE too. If this is enough to say that the EE is earlier than the NE, I would concede this.
The history of the manuscripts containing the EE is far from linear. As D. Harlfinger reconstructs it, the text of the EE does not appear in the two main manuscripts of Aristotle’s works: the 10th century Laurentianus (K) and the 12th Parisiensis (L). The text appears in the Vaticanus (P) - a 13th c. copy of K - and in the early 15th c. Marcianus (M). According to the stemma codicum created by Harlfinger, we can distinguish two manuscript traditions: the Recensio Messanensis and the Recensio Constantinopolitana. There is no complete Medieval translation of the EE. What has survived is a partial translation of William of Moerbeke (13th c.). There are Latin translations of EE VIII.2-3 preserved under the name of Liber de bona fortuna. These seem to be translations of a Greek manuscript that did not survive. We do not know whether the Byzantines had access to the EE insofar as there are no commentaries from that period. There are some translations of the text during so-called period of Renaissance Humanism (by G. Manetti and by G. Tifernate). Regarding the transmission of the common books, they were reported by the Laurentianus 81,15. In 1447, Bessarion received a manuscript (Rav. 210) of the EE without the common books. Based on this manuscript, he decided to make a copy of the EE without the common books.

A.I. Bekker’s edition of the EE is based on the manuscripts Vaticanus 1342 (P) and Marcianus 213 (M). Bekker also examined the CCC MS 112 up to EE 1216 a 7. The two other existing editions of the EE are by F. Susemihl (1881), who completed the study of CCC MS 112 up to the end of EE I, and more recently by R. Walzer and J. Mingay (1991). Susemihl analyzed the manuscript Laurentianus 81,15 (L), which belongs to the so-called

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Recensio Constantinopolitana. F. Dirlmeier (1962) proposed a reconstruction of the text of the EE, in addition to the commentary. F. Buddensiek is preparing a new commentary of the text. C. Rowe is currently in the process of revising the edition of the text including an unexamined manuscript that contains the EE and that is now preserved in Munich. In this work, I use the edition of Susemihl, as well as the edition of Walzer and Mingay. Departures from these editions are reported in the footnotes. The translations of the EE are either by B. Inwood and R. Woolf modified by the author, or done by the author. My translations of the EE are indebted to Inwood/Woolf, Woods, Simpson, Donini, Zanatta, Dalimier and Dirlmeier. My translations of the NE are indebted to Crisp, Irwin, Reeve, Rowe, as well as at times by Natali, Bodéüs and Dirlmeier.

2. Happiness: a substantive account

For a long time, scholars working on Aristotle’s notion of happiness found themselves in different “camps,” defending the so-called dominant interpretation or the so-called inclusive interpretation respectively. Others aim to supersede what can appear to be an entrenched debate, arguing for hybrids of both views.11 For current purposes, an outline of the main issues and contentions suffices. This debate picks up on Aristotle’s discussion of kinds of lives: the life of politics on the one hand, and the life of contemplation on the other. It also attends to those places in the NE where Aristotle ranks faculties and activities of the soul as higher or lower. Defenders of the dominant interpretation understand happiness as contemplative activity. In other words, according to the dominant interpretation, happiness consists in the life of theôria. Defenders of the inclusive interpretation argue that happiness is

11 The distinction between a dominant and an inclusive interpretation is first proposed by W.F.R. Hardie, Aristotle’s Ethical Theory (Oxford 1968). P. Donini (Abitudine e saggezza, Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2014) proposes a way to overcome the differences in the two interpretations.
constituted by activity according to all of the virtues. This debate, we may say, concerns Aristotle’s substantive account of happiness. It addresses the substance of what constitutes a happy life: what it is that the best and happy person does. In both treatises, Aristotle examines substantive accounts of happiness that have been put forward by philosophers and by common people. Arguably, he develops his own view through engagement with these traditional and earlier positions, or at any rate, he uses engagement with these positions as an expository method.

What the best life is was a common question in Greek literature. The best lives are traditionally deemed to be the life of honor, the life of pleasure, or the life of wealth. In EE I, Aristotle considers three competing answers to the question of what the greatest good in life

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is: the greatest good is practical wisdom (φρόνησις), virtue or pleasure. Aristotle says that people think that these are the things in which happiness consists.

(T1) Happiness and the blessed (µακαρίος) and beautiful life might be found in three things above all, namely those that are thought to be the most choiceworthy: some say that the greatest good is practical wisdom, others that it is virtue, and others that it is pleasure.14

Who are these people who think that the greatest good is practical wisdom, virtue, or pleasure? These three proposals - that the greatest good is practical wisdom, virtue, or pleasure - seem to be the proposals of philosophers or perhaps poets; they do not seem to reflect what Aristotle considers the view of ordinary people. In the NE, Aristotle assigns the view that the best life is pleasure to ordinary people. However, in the EE, he seems to examine first these three proposals and then to move to what ordinary people think. While talking about these three views, Aristotle says that people debate about which of these three things contribute more to happiness, and in general about their importance in relation to happiness. This seems to suggest that there is a debate about these proposals and that this debate is theoretical. We may even think that Aristotle has in mind the ethical proposals of Socrates and Plato - both Socrates and Plato agree that the life of virtue/knowledge is the best - and of Eudoxos - for whom pleasure is the best. And yet, Aristotle reports the views not only of philosophers or wise people, but also of non-philosophers. He says that anyone who can live by her own decision and set a goal for her life, thinks that the aim of the best life is honor, reputation, wealth or education.15 It is not clear whether Aristotle has in mind what he elsewhere calls “the many” (οἱ πολλοὶ) - an expression that generically picks out ordinary

14 EE I 1214 a 30-35.

15 EE I 1214 b 6-10. The text is problematic. Inwood and Woolf translate “everyone capable of living by their own decision ought to lay down an end.” They read dei thesthai: dei is not in the manuscripts, but it is inserted by editors. Most manuscripts provide no finite verb.
people - or whether these people who are able to live by their own decision are a more restricted group. In the EE, Aristotle says it is the most important thing of all—and a task for all of us or everyone who at all has the opportunity to turn to it—that we come up with a conception of a good life. Interpreters differ on how ambitious and on how expansive this is. Broadie, for example, considers this an elitist dimension of Aristotle’s ethics.\textsuperscript{16} Very few people, she argues, can ask themselves what would make them happy. Vogt, on the contrary, defends the idea that for Aristotle, the good that ethics studies is the well-lived human life. Whether it is demanding or not, it is a fundamental ethical task to come up with a conception of what would make us happy, so that we can be guided by it.\textsuperscript{17}

In any case, if we compare these answers - the answers of the philosophers and of this second group of people - one element strikes us as counterintuitive: pleasure figures among the answers given by philosophers, but it does not appear among the answers of those who can live by their own decision. It is counterintuitive because the life of pleasure was one of the paradigmatic best lives: the most famous example is the life of Sardanapalus who lives aiming at pleasure. And if current opinions are included among the opinions of people who live by their own decision, pleasure should be there. This absence of pleasure among the things that people consider to be the best already may be a sign that for the Aristotle of the EE, pleasure has a special place and has to be understood in a certain way. I will say more on this in section 4 of this introduction and in chapter V of the dissertation. In a nutshell, it seems that Aristotle is not talking about those pleasures that non-philosophers may choose as the aim of their life - for example, bodily pleasures or excessive pleasures. He seems to talk


\textsuperscript{17} K. Vogt, \textit{Desiring the good} (Oxford, 2017), p. 43.
about those pleasures that philosophers choose as the aim of a good life - pleasures that are unimpeded activities of our natural state, as Aristotle says in EE VI=NE VII - and that can compete with practical wisdom and virtue. Let us now look at the substantive accounts of happiness in the NE. In NE I, Aristotle offers a brief survey of what people think about the best life.

(T2) Most people, I should think, agree about what it is called, since both ordinary people and sophisticated people (χαρίεντες) call it happiness, understanding being happy as equivalent to living well and acting well. They disagree about substantive conceptions of happiness, ordinary people giving an account which differs from that of the philosophers. For the many think it is something straightforward and obvious, like pleasure, wealth, or honor, some thinking it to be one thing, others another.\textsuperscript{18}

In this passage, Aristotle considers the opinion of sophisticated people - χαρίεντες - and of the many. These people called χαρίεντες are indeed called philosophers a few lines below in the passage. Philosophers and the many agree on a very minimal view of happiness: we all strive for happiness. However, not everyone agrees that happiness is the greatest good.\textsuperscript{19} For example, as Aristotle discusses it at the end of EE I, on a different account the greatest good is the Form of the Good. What is more, it is clear that there is disagreement on the substantive account of happiness. For the many, happiness consists in pleasure, wealth, or honor. There are some differences between the EE and the NE regarding what ordinary people think. More in detail, in the NE, pleasure takes the place of education and reputation. And pleasure figures among the answers of the many and it does not appear among the answers of philosophers. Despite this difference, in the EE and in the NE, Aristotle offers a similar sketch of the best

\textsuperscript{18} NE 1095 a 17-23.

\textsuperscript{19} Cf. Vogt 2017.
lives. Aristotle says that people consider the best lives to be the life of politics, of philosophy/contemplation and of enjoyment.

(T3) EE I: Since there are three things that rank as conducive to happiness, the ones that were earlier described as the greatest possible human goods, namely virtue, wisdom and pleasure, we see also that there are three lives, chosen by all who have the means to do so - that of politics, that of philosophy, and that of enjoyment (πολιτικὸν φιλόσοφον ἄπολαυστικόν).

(T4) NE I: For people seem, not unreasonably, to base their conception of the good - happiness, that is - on their own lives. The masses, the coarsest people, see it as pleasure, and so they like the life of enjoyment. There are three especially prominent types of life: that just mentioned, the life of politics, and thirdly the life of contemplation (θεωρητικός).

These lists differ in how they call one of the three lives: philosophical, as the EE has it, or contemplative, as the NE has it. This difference in describing one of these three lives bears on a distinct conception of this kind of life in the NE. By calling it the life of contemplation, it is already explicit what this life consists of or at least what its activity is. Conversely, to talk about the life of philosophy is less specific. A philosopher’s activity need not be called theôria. A philosopher can be an inquirer and investigator, someone who examines life; here terms related to zêtēsis could be used. A philosopher might also be concerned with a wide range of topics: how best to live, the universe, the gods, numbers, and more. In other words, several kinds of thinking and several kinds of objects may figure in the philosopher’s life. The notion of a life of theôria, however, envisages a life of one distinctive kind of reasoning activity, called (in translation) contemplation, which is concerned with its own, high-level objects. To shed more light on this difference in the conceptions of the best life, let us turn to the definitions of happiness in the two treatises.

20 EE I 1215 a 33-35.

21 NE 1095 b 18-21.
3. Happiness: a formal account

A key element for arguments in favor of the dominant and the inclusive views of happiness is the formal definition of happiness. Aristotle offers two definitions of happiness: one in the *EE* and another in the *NE*. By themselves, these definitions do not pronounce on what it is, in substance, that constitutes happiness. In the *EE* and in the *NE*, happiness is defined as follows:

(EE) Happiness is the activity of a complete life in accordance with complete virtue.22

(NE) The human good [happiness] turns out to be activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, if there are several virtues, in accordance with the best and the most complete. Again, this must be over a complete life.23

Formally speaking, then, there is some overlap. In both treatises, Aristotle defines happiness as activity in a complete life. What it means for a life to be “complete” is the object of controversies that, for present purposes, I should set aside.24 The formal definitions in the *EE* and in the *NE*, however, also differ. Two differences matter for my argument: (i) in the *EE*, Aristotle explicitly mentions happiness, while in the *NE*, he speaks of the human good; (ii) in the *EE*, happiness is defined as activity according to complete virtue; in the *NE*, as activity according to the best and most complete virtue.

Scholars debate how to interpret the expression “complete virtue” (ἀρετήν τελείαν). More than that, they discuss how to understand the expression “the best and most complete

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22 *EE* 1219 a 39, tr. by B. Inwood and R. Woolf. ἡ εὐδαιμονία ζωῆς τελείας ἐνέργεια κατ’ ἀρετὴν τελείαν.

23 *NE* 1098 a 17-19, my translation. τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθὸν ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια γίνεται κατὰ ἀρετὴν, εἰ δὲ πλείους αἱ ἀρεταὶ, κατὰ τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ τελειοτάτην. ἐτι δ’ ἐν βίῳ τελείῳ.

virtue” (τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ τελειοτάτην). Is Aristotle referring to the same virtue in the two treatises? What is this virtue? Scholars discuss whether the definitions of happiness in the two treatises, given these characterizations of virtue, are compatible or not. Among defenders of the dominant position, we can find two different interpretative options: some scholars argue that the best and most complete virtue is sophia, others that it is nous. There are also what we may call hybrid views: some scholars argue that the best and most complete virtue is phronēsis, others that it is a combination of sophia and phronēsis. Scholars who support the inclusive interpretation argue that the best and most complete virtue is a virtue that includes virtues of thinking and virtues of character.

Donini proposes a way to overcome the distinction between the inclusive and dominant interpretations. Insofar as sophia co-functions with other virtues, this virtue does not include all of the virtues, but it requires that other virtues are present in order to function well. If sophia cannot function well without the rest of the virtues, it seems plausible to say that, even if the life of contemplation is the best life, it ultimately is a life that involves all the virtues.

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26 Among others, Cooper, Kraut, Kenny, and Donini argue that the best virtue is sophia. The first to defend the position in antiquity is Aspasius. Labarrière argues that the best virtue is nous.

27 Among scholars who argue that the best virtue is phronēsis there is Rowe. The first defender of this position in antiquity is Eustrate. Natali argues that the best virtue is a combination of phronēsis and sophia.


This view is compatible with the idea that the best activity is contemplation. But, insofar as human beings cannot live in a way that involves only contemplation, other virtues need to be part of the best life. As for the NE, the dominant interpretation is currently the most widespread. It is based on the definition of happiness, on the so-called Function Argument that says that the function of human beings is rational activity, and on the explicit claim in NE X that the best life is the life of contemplation.

The inclusive interpretation has prevailed with regard to the EE.30 Even though the EE is less investigated than the NE, studies that focus on happiness in Aristotle’s ethics often mention the difference between the EE’s and the NE’s conceptions of happiness. And they argue that in the EE, happiness is activity according to all the virtues.31 While in the NE, there are two kinds of happiness, in the EE, there is only one kind of happiness. Already the definition of happiness in the EE suggests an inclusive view: in the definition, there is no mention of a virtue that is the best and most complete. Talking about a virtue that is best and most complete suggests that there is a ranking of virtues and that there is a virtue which is best and most complete. Conversely, talking about complete virtue suggests that this virtue includes the other virtues as parts. I will say more about this below, when I turn specifically to the notion of complete virtue. Here it is sufficient to say that scholars agree that in the EE happiness is activity according to complete virtue, and that complete virtue is taken to include all the virtues.32

30 Even though there are not many studies on the EE, comparatively speaking to the NE, the discussion of happiness is one of the most investigated topic: cf. A. Kenny 1992 and J. Cooper 1975.

31 Cooper and Kenny argues that in the EE, happiness is activity according to all the parts of the soul. Kenny argues that kalokagathia is the complete virtue mentioned in the definition of happiness.

The dominant-inclusive debate is not only focused on comparing the definitions of happiness in the two ethics. It concerns also the coherence of Aristotle’s outlook within the NE. At the end of NE I, Aristotle offers a sketch of the soul. Together with the function argument in NE I.7, this sketch clarifies that there is a hierarchy: theoretical thinking is higher and better than practical reasoning. This line of thought shows up again at the very end of the treatise. In NE X, Aristotle says that there are two kinds of happiness: the best kind of happiness consists in contemplation and the second best consists in virtuous activity. The second best life consists in the life of the phronimos (the practically wise person), understood as the person who has excellence in practical reasoning as well as the character virtues. Alas, for long stretches of text in between Books I and X it seems that Aristotle is very seriously concerned with the character virtues, with decision-making, and with practical wisdom. If one reads these books unaware of how the treatise ends, one would not suspect that the life of the character virtues and phronêsis falls in any way short of the life Aristotle recommends—or so scholars have observed. Accordingly, as clear as the evidence in Book X seems to be, the question of how happiness is understood in the NE remains debated.

4. The Superlative Thesis

Let us look more closely at the beginning of the EE and at the thesis that Aristotle defends in this treatise. The EE starts with a programmatic claim - what I call the Superlative

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33 NE 1177 a 13 -14.

34 Cf. P. Donini, Abitudine e Saggezza. Aristotele dall’Etica Eudemia all’Etica Nicomachea (Alessandria, 2014). Donini argues that the life of the phronimos is included in the life of the sophos. Insofar as the theoretically wise person needs to live in a community, she performs virtuous actions. In this sense, Donini argues that with regard to the NE, the inclusive and dominant views can be reconciled.
Thesis (ST) - that happiness is the best, the most beautiful and the most pleasant thing of all:

(T5) The poet who declared his opinion at the god’s site in Delos, inscribing it on the gateway of the Temple of Leto, distinguished the good, the beautiful and the pleasant as not all belonging to the same thing. He wrote: “Most beautiful is what is most just, best is being healthy, most pleasant of all is to attain what one desires.” We should not agree with him. For happiness, being most beautiful and best, is the most pleasant of all things.

Three properties are attributed in the superlative to happiness: the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant. Above I spoke about the differences between the notions of happiness in the NE and in the EE. More fundamentally and prior to Aristotle’s specific notions in these treatises, we should note differences between our notion of happiness today and eudaimonia, as Aristotle conceives of it. I mention only the two most striking ones. First, while today we can say that someone is happy for a short time, even for a moment, for Aristotle, happiness is a life-long activity. This is part of what it means that happiness is the activity of a complete life. Second, for Aristotle, happiness is not a feeling. Instead, happiness has a distinctive metaphysical status: it is an activity. Aristotle distinguishes between activities and processes: while activities have their end in themselves, processes have an external end. The paradigmatic example of a process is house-building: the end of house-building is external to the process. It is a house. As for activities, Aristotle speaks of seeing or studying: these


36 EE I 1214 a 1-7, trans. by B. Inwood and R. Woods modified by GB. ὁ μὲν ἐν Δήλῳ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ τὴν αὐτοῦ γνώμην ἀποφηνάμενος συνέγραψεν ἐπὶ τὸ προπύλαιον τοῦ Λητείου, διελών οὐχ ὑπάρχοντα πάντα τῷ αὐτῷ, τὸ τε ἁγιὰν καὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ ἴδιο, ποιήσας “καλλίστον τὸ δικαίωτατον, λύστον δ᾽ ὑγιαίνειν: πάντων ἡδιστόν δ᾽ οὗ τε ἐρὰ τὸ τυχεῖν:” ἡμεῖς δ᾽ αὐτῷ μὴ συγχωρόμεν. ἡ γὰρ εὐθείων καὶ ἀριστον ἀπάντων οὐδε ἡδιστόν ἔστιν
activities do not have an external end. Happiness as seeing and studying is an activity and it has an end in itself.

According to ST, the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant are co-extensional when they are in the superlative. In other words, in the superlative these three kinds of value are found in one and the same thing: happiness. Happiness, insofar as it has the three value-properties in the superlative is the most desired object. This claim is compatible with the idea that we may still pursue a plurality of goods in our life. And yet, happiness is the final goal. By postulating that happiness is the best, the most beautiful, and the most pleasant thing of all, Aristotle says that there are three values-properties that matter in life. Let us examine the context in which ST appears in the *NE*:

(T6) Actions in accordance with virtue are pleasant in themselves. But they are also good and beautiful as well as pleasant; indeed, since the good person is a good judge of goodness and beauty, actions in accordance with virtue have them to a degree greater than anything else; and here he judges in accordance with our views. Happiness, then, is the best, the most beautiful and the pleasantest thing, and these are not separate as in the inscriptions at Delos: “most beautiful is that which is the most just, and best is being healthy. But most pleasant is obtaining what one longs for.” This is because the best activities have all these [GB: value-properties]. And we say that happiness consists in them, or one of them - the best.40

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38 Wiggins and Nussbaum discuss value pluralism, albeit in relation to akrasia and weakness of will. Cf. D. Wiggins “Weakness of Will, Commensurability, and the Objects of Deliberation and Desire” in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, A.O. Rorty (ed.), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980 and M. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. With the expression “value pluralism,” philosophers refer to the view that there are many values not reducible to one supervalue (dominant value). Value pluralism is opposed to value monism. Value monism is the position according to which there is one supervalue, on which all the other values depend. I use the expressions “value pluralism” and “value monism” as referring to views that accept many values - value pluralism - or one value - value monism - as central.


40 *NE* 1099 a 21-29, trans. by R. Crisp with changed by GB.
As the passage shows, the Superlative Thesis does not play a programmatic role in the
*NE*. First of all, ST does not take center-stage at the beginning of the treatise. Second, the
passage appears in a discussion of beliefs that people have in relation to happiness. The
formulations of ST in the two treatises differ in two fundamental respects. In the *NE*, the
three value-properties are on a par with each other: happiness is best, most beautiful, and
most pleasant. In the *EE*, the text signals that we may not take them to be on a par, or at any
rate, that ST is more intuitive with respect to the good and the beautiful than with respect to
the pleasant. Aristotle says that happiness, insofar as it is best and most beautiful, is also most
pleasant. In the *NE*, Aristotle’s focus is on actions, and only later on happiness: virtuous
actions are best, most beautiful, and most pleasant. It follows that happiness, being activity
according to virtue, is also best, most beautiful, and most pleasant.

In the *EE*, I suggested, ST is a programmatic claim. This provides us with an hypothesis
for exegesis. Namely, it means that we should approach the text as starting out with a
demonstrandum that is then, step by step, analyzed and defended. Immediately after the
introductory passage where Aristotle formulates ST, he further specifies how he wants to
proceed:

(T7) There are many points of interest concerning each kind of object and nature
that create difficulty and need examining. Some of these pertain only to our
knowing, others pertain to the acquisition of the object and to actions as well.
Regarding those that involve only theoretical philosophy (φιλοσοφίαν
θεωρητικήν), we must state, when the right opportunity presents itself, whatever
is appropriate (οἰκεῖον) to the method (τῇ µεθόδῳ). First, however, we must
examine what living well consists in and how it is to be achieved (κτητόν).\(^{41}\)

Aristotle says that we should investigate what happiness is and how happiness is
acquired. The first question pertains to knowledge and the second to actions. Aristotle points

\(^{41}\) *EE* 1214 a 17-30.
out that it is necessary to examine what is appropriate (οἰκεῖον) to the method. In the *NE*, Aristotle says that investigations in the domain of ethics do not have the same exactness as investigations in the domain of theoretical philosophy. Conversely, in the *EE*, there is no concern regarding the precision adequate for ethical investigations. The passage suggests that there are two domains - the domain of theoretical philosophy, and an unnamed domain. To this unnamed domain belongs the question of the acquisition of happiness. Each domain has its own method - literally “a way to go through.” And Aristotle says that we should proceed in a way that is appropriate to the domains.

In *EE* II, Aristotle adds an important element to his programmatic claims. He says that we should investigate the genus and the definition of happiness. This way of proceeding closely resembles what we find in the *Protrepticus* and in Plato’s dialogues:

(T8) That the genus (τὸ γένος) and the definition (τὸν ὤρον) of happiness are well formulated is supported by views that we all hold: (a) doing well and living well are the same as being happy; (b) each of these, both life and action, is an acquisition and an activity, since a life of activity involves acquisition of things - the smith makes a bridle, the rider uses it; (c) one cannot be happy for only a day, or if one is a child, or at every stage of life. That is why Solon’s injunction to call no one happy while alive, but only when life is complete, is a good one, since nothing incomplete is happy; for it is not whole.
The method of distinguishing the genus and the definition is reminiscent of the so-called method of division that divides up a genus into species. This method is developed and examined by Plato for example in the *Phaedrus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*. In the passage, Aristotle says that there is a certain agreement regarding the genus and the definition of happiness. Aristotle is far from suggesting that everybody agrees on what happiness consists in. The “views that we all hold” seem to be opinions of wise people: to exemplify what these views are, Aristotle quotes the opinion of Solon, who was considered among the wisest people in antiquity. Yet, what are the genus and the definition of happiness? Happiness is an activity. This may be the genus of happiness. Regarding the definition, Aristotle points out that it is activity of a complete life according to complete virtue. Let us now turn to the examination of the quote of the unnamed poet that Aristotle reports at the beginning of the *EE*.

5. Theognis’ quote

Aristotle sets out his view by distinguishing it from the view of a poet, expressed in a verse that was inscribed on the temple of Leto in Delos. It was a widespread assumption in antiquity that Theognis was the author of the inscription. Stobaeus quotes the passage and attributes it to Theognis.45 However, the quote may belong to what we consider common sayings in popular wisdom.46 The manuscript tradition that reports Theognis’ poetry does not include precisely the same exact text quoted by Aristotle.47 It is unclear what Aristotle’s


47 Cf. T. Hudson-Williams (eds.), *The elegies of Theognis*, p. 257. In the manuscript, instead of λόστον, there is ράστον. In addition, the pentameter differs at the beginning: Κάλλιστον τὸ δικαιότατον, ράστον δ’ ἐσθ’ ύμαίνειν ἡδίστον δὲ τυχέιν ὃν τις ἐρᾷ τὸ τυχέιν.
source was. In particular, the passage occurs also in the *NE*, but the text is slightly different from what we find in the *EE*: ἥδιστον δὲ πέφυκ’ οὗ τις ἐρᾷ τὸ τυχεῖν. In the *NE*, there is no term of comparison - “of all” - and there is the perfect πέφυκ’ of the Greek verb φύω - to “bring forth.” These differences do not affect the translation of the passage in a significant way, but they may suggest that Aristotle relied on different sources in the *EE* and in the *NE*.

Regarding the two versions of the quote in the *EE* and in the *NE*, we may consider different hypotheses. First, it is conceivable that Aristotle was not interested in reporting the quote in its original phrasing, simply because he cared exclusively about its content. If this is plausible, Aristotle may not have paid much attention to reporting the same quote in two treatises, as long as the content of the quote was clear. Second, Aristotle may have cared about the content to the extent of modifying the formulation, namely by using ἥδιστον and not τερπνότατον in the *EE*. This nuance may have appeared philosophically relevant for his discussion in the *EE* and in the *NE*. And he may have focused on the term for pleasure and on the list of what is best, most beautiful, and most pleasant, setting aside the exact phrasing of the rest of the quote.

A brief sketch of the circulation of this quote in antiquity may shed light on Aristotle’s choice of one source rather than another. As the quote is reported in the *EE* and in the *NE*, “most pleasant” translates ἥδιστον. The term for pleasure most used by Aristotle and by Plato is ἡδονή (ἥδιστον is the corresponding adjective in the superlative form). For example, in the discussion of pleasure in the *Philebus*, ἡδονή occurs many times. And yet, the term ἡδονή is not frequently used in Theognis’ poetry. The first occurrence of ἡδονή that arrived to us appears in Simonides’ fragment 71. Metrical reasons may have prevented authors from using

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48 *NE*, 1099 a 26-27.

the term. This is why it does not appear in the Homeric poems, or so scholars assume. However, ἥδιστον appears in other authors who specifically relate a version of this poem. Only Theognis, if indeed the attribution of the quote to this poet is correct, uses the term τερπνότατον. Is this choice indicative of a different nuance in the understanding of pleasure? If we analyze the occurrences of the words for pleasure, the difference between ἡδονή and τέρποµαι is not clear: ἡδονή comes from a Sanskrit root; the term was used mostly for the pleasure of tasting. Τέρποµαι is used for example in Iliad 11.780 and Odyssey 23.212; it expressed how one fully enjoys something. Theognis says that the most pleasant is what one desires: in this context, τερπνότατον seems more appropriate than ἥδιστον. This different choice of the term for pleasure may suggest that Aristotle appropriated the quote and even changed the term for pleasure in order to better fit his own philosophical analysis of pleasure, where ἡδονή is the standard term for pleasure. However, this is evidently no more than a hypothesis, and one that involves a good deal of speculation.

In the quote, Theognis proposes a list of things and of their corresponding value-properties: justice is the most beautiful thing, health is the best, and the most pleasant is what one desires. Stobaeus reports that a similar list occurs in a skolion that some authors in antiquity attributed to Simonides and others to Epicharmus. In early Greek poetry, lists of the best, most beautiful, and most pleasant are widespread. Especially in symposia, we often find questions such as “what is the best thing? What is the most beautiful?” They were a poetic device designed to prompt the discussion. In the context of Theognis’ elegies, the lines

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50 J. Kurath, The semantic sources of the words for emotions in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and the Germanic languages (Menasha 1921).

51 J. Kurath, The semantic sources of the words for emotions in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and the Germanic languages (Menasha 1921).

52 Skolion on Plato’s Gorgias 451e. Reported by Hudson-Williams.
quoted by Aristotle occur in a sympotic context: two young men are described as they engage in a conversation on what is the best, the most beautiful, and the most pleasant thing.

Another Theognidean passage seems to be thematically connected to T1. Aristotle does not quote the passage. However, this passage further helps us supply context for the beginning of the *EE*. It is not a philosophical “invention” to ask how virtue and happiness relate to the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant. Aristotle and Theognis, and quite likely others - for example Sappho - share an interest in this question. What appears to be a fairly technical question to us—how different kinds of value are to be distinguished and what their domains are—seems to have been a widespread concern among poets. A particularly famous and difficult phrase is ascribed to Sappho: ὁ μὲν γάρ κάλος ὄσσον ἵδην πέλεται [κάλος], ὁ δὲ κάγαθος αὕτικα καί κάλος ἔσσεται. The translation of this sentence is controversial.

Literally, the sentence may be taken to say that when someone is beautiful, one can see him to be beautiful, but when someone is good, he will also be beautiful. Dirlmeier offers a paraphrase along these lines: “the beautiful person is beautiful, that much we can see. Is he also good? Conversely, there is no doubt that the good man is beautiful.” This fragment more than others passages, shows that contemporaries problematized the relation between beauty and ethical excellence, and assumed that ultimately, a combination of both is best.

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54 A. Czerniawski translates it: “A beautiful man is only so in appearance, while a good man will be beautiful as well”.

55 More should be said on the notion of beauty in antiquity. We may suppose that Sappho’s notion of beauty is different from beauty as athletic fitness. In Sappho’s terms, being beautiful is close to being the object of desire and love. For a detailed study of *kalos-kallos*, see D. Konstan, *Beauty: the fortune of an Ancient Greek idea*, Oxford University Press, 2015.
In the *Elegies*, Theognis says that it is rare for someone to be both virtuous and beautiful. The person who has beauty and virtue is considered happy. This kind of observation illustrates that the topic is not an abstract one. Rather, this is the sort of observation one may make in everyday life. One admires those who are beautiful, but observes that they are not always good people. This leads one to ask how the two values—beauty and goodness—relate and whether they go together. Aristotle adds a third value-property: the pleasant. Here too everyday ethical thinking supplies context and motivation. We often enjoy something, but we are conflicted about the pleasure we take. This suggests that pleasure, though a value, is not identical with goodness. For after all, it seems that something is, qua pleasure, attractive, and yet not good. Hence we may want to know how the pleasant and the good relate. In contrast to Theognis, who attributes beauty and virtue to the happy person, Aristotle says that happiness is the best, the most beautiful, and the most pleasant thing of all.

6. Happiness and three kinds of value

Let us now turn to an examination of the conjunctions of premises that constitute ST. I take it that ST comprises three claims:

1. Happiness is the best.

2. Happiness is the most beautiful.

3. Happiness is *also* the most pleasant. [Pleasure Thesis]

My formulation of 3 contains a qualifier: “also.” This qualifier signals that 3 has a special dialectical status. Aristotle is aware that, in arguing that happiness is also the most

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56 Theognis, *Elegies*, 1. 933-934, my translation: “few people have virtue and beauty, happy is the one who have both.” Παύροις ἄνθρωπων ἀρετή καὶ κάλλος ὑπηδεί ὀλίμος, δς τούτων ἄμφοτέρων ἔλεγεν.
pleasant, he is up against those who have anti-hedonist intuitions. Because 3 has a special
dialectical status, then, I assign it a label: I call it the Pleasure Thesis (PT). The conjunction
of 1, 2, and 3 provides us with two further premises, which speak to the relationship between
the three kinds of value:

Coextension of Superlative Value: That which is best, most beautiful, and most
pleasant, is the very same thing, namely happiness.

Difference among Value: The good, the beautiful, and the pleasant are three kinds of
value.

Coextension and Difference address the relationships between the three values. They
say, in a nutshell, that while the three kinds of value attach to the same thing when they occur
in their superlative forms, they are different properties. Something that is a bit pleasant need
not also be good and beautiful. Something that is moderately beautiful need not be pleasant
and good. Something that is somewhat good or good with some qualification need not be
pleasant and beautiful. Only in the superlative case, the three properties go together.

1, 2, and 3, combined with Coextension and Difference, express, in condensed form,
much of what I explore in this dissertation, albeit not all of it. As I go along I will fine-tune
my analysis of the relationship between the three values, and I will have more to say about
the specifics of 1, 2, and 3. For now, however, I want to provide a sketch of 1, 2, and 3.

For Aristotle, saying that happiness is the best, the most beautiful, and the most
pleasant thing of all, is a way of saying that happiness is the final aim or the highest good of
human life. That is, happiness displays all the values that matter in a human life. Throughout
this dissertation, I argue that the entire EE can be read as an extended argument in favor of
the premises that constitute ST. Let me offer an overview of Aristotle’s arguments for the claims that happiness is the best, the most beautiful, and the most pleasant thing of all, starting with the claim that happiness is the best thing of all. In EE I, Aristotle says that happiness is the best thing of all because: (i) happiness is considered the best thing in common beliefs: most people think that happiness is the best;\(^{57}\) (ii) happiness and not the Form of the Good, as Plato says, is the best because it is the final aim of human life.\(^{58}\)

In EE I 1217 a 22, Aristotle says that it is agreed that happiness is the greatest and best of human goods. A few lines later, he adds that happiness is the best of the things that are achievable by human action (πρακτά). Aristotle refutes the Platonic claim that the Form of the Good is best by saying that:

- the Form of the Good is dialectical and empty (λογικῶς καὶ κενῶς) (1217 b 20);
- the good is said in many ways and there is no single science that studies the good in itself (1217 b 35);
- there is no common good separated from the things that are good (1218 a 10-15);
- the demonstration that the good itself (τὸ ἑν τὸ ἀγαθὸν) is the one because the numbers strive for unity is hazardous (1218 a 25);
- the Form of the Good is not achievable by action (1218 a 25).

As a conclusion to this refutation, Aristotle argues that happiness is what is best insofar as happiness, and not the Form of the Good, is “that for the sake of which” (τὸ ὑπὸ ἔνεκα) we do everything else in life. Happiness is achievable by action, while the Form of the Good is not among the prakta. In other words, happiness is the final goal of human action.

\(^{57}\) EE 1217 a 20; Cf. NE 1095 a 20.

\(^{58}\) EE 1217 b 1-1218 b 15; Cf. NE I.6.
Throughout the entire *EE*, Aristotle provides arguments to substantiate this claim. Cooper explains what Aristotle means by saying that happiness is “that for the sake of which”: happiness is the best insofar as when we are happy, all our desires are satisfied.\(^{59}\) The argument against Plato’s view that the greatest good is the Form of the Good comes up also in the *NE*.\(^{60}\) However, in the *NE*, Aristotle’s argument that happiness is the best does not follow from the refutation of the Platonic claim. In the *NE*, Aristotle focuses first on the good. Only as a second move does Aristotle say that happiness is the good. As Vogt argues, the *NE* seems to start with a metaethical question about the property of goodness. Only later on in *NE* I does Aristotle specify that ethics should focus on the practical good for human beings and this is happiness.\(^{61}\) Conversely, in the *EE*, the focus is on happiness right from the start of the treatise. That is, the claim “happiness is the best” is postulated already in the first lines of the treatise. Nevertheless, the refutation of the Platonic claim that the Form of the Good is the best comes up also in the *EE* as a divergent metaethical perspective, one that does not think of the good as practical and an object of desire, but as the Form of the Good.

\(^{59}\) Cooper 1975, p. 121.

\(^{60}\) *NE* I.6. At the end of the argument, Aristotle explicitly says that we should conclude this discussion of the Form of the Good and move to something else, namely to what he considers the greatest good: happiness.

I now turn to the second claim of ST (2), that happiness is the most beautiful thing of all.\textsuperscript{62} The first difficulty to substantiate this claim is that Aristotle does not offer a definition of the beautiful in the \textit{EE} or in the \textit{NE}. However, in \textit{EE} VIII.3 he speaks about “beautiful things,” in ways that supply at least some elements toward a definition of the beautiful. Namely, beautiful things are said to be not only praiseworthy in themselves, but also choiceworthy.\textsuperscript{63} They contrast with good things, which are said to be (merely) praiseworthy in themselves.\textsuperscript{64} Hence, our working definition of the beautiful is: the beautiful is what is praiseworthy in itself and also choiceworthy. And yet, this working definition opens up lots of questions regarding the relation or the distinction between the good and the beautiful. Is the beautiful also good? Does one property include the other? The answers to these and similar questions are difficult. To add to this difficulty, the translation of the Greek term \textit{kalon} is controversial and not only because the term has in general a range of meanings. Beyond this, it is not clear that Aristotle uses it consistently throughout the \textit{EE}. At times, \textit{kalon} is fittingly


\textsuperscript{63} \textit{EE} 1248 b 17-21.

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{EE} 1248 b 19.
translated “good.” At times, it is better to translate it as “beautiful.” That is, while we are aiming to arrive at some clarity about the difference between the good and the *kalon*, we must be explicit about the following: we are aiming to clarify the difference between two concepts and two properties, *not* about the difference between two words. To put this another way, I take it that ST refers, in talking about the good and the *kalon*, to two properties, even if at times “*kalon*” can be translated as “good.”

In *EE* 1218 b 5, Aristotle says that the part of the good that does not concern action is beautiful. This idea occurs also in the *Metaphysics*. And yet, Aristotle does not say that this part of the good is *the* beautiful. This last claim would be in contrast with the idea that the beautiful and the good are two value-properties, albeit connected. More than that, it would be in contrast with the idea that the best agent acts for the sake of the beautiful. To render explicit how the beautiful relates to the good is almost impossible, given what Aristotle says on these two values. For present purposes it is enough to establish that, if the best agent acts for the sake of the beautiful, the beautiful must concern also actions. This is confirmed by Aristotle’s claim that when one acts aiming at the beautiful she acts virtuously.

(T9) Virtue makes everyone choose for the sake of something, and this “something for the sake of which” is what is beautiful. That being so, it is clear that courage too, being a virtue, will make us endure what is fearful for the sake

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67 *EE* III 1230 a 27-35.

68 *EE* VIII 1248 b 35-38.
of something, and that will be due neither to ignorance (since virtue makes our judgments more correct) nor to pleasure, but because doing so is beautiful.\textsuperscript{69}

As Aristotle says, when we pursue virtuous action for its own sake, we do not have any external goal. In other words, we pursue virtuous actions because it is beautiful. This is why the beautiful is what is praiseworthy and choiceworthy in itself. And yet, why is happiness beautiful? Happiness is the most beautiful thing of all insofar as it is most of all chosen for its own sake. What is more, it is praiseworthy on its own account. In a related way, one may argue that it is beautiful because it is activity according to complete virtue. And acting virtuously is acting aiming at the beautiful.\textsuperscript{70} To anticipate a conclusion that I discuss in the section on complete virtue, this complete virtue is \textit{kalokagathia}, which is the virtue of being-beautiful-and-good.

Finally, it is time to turn to (3), the claim that happiness is the most pleasant thing of all. As I mentioned already, Aristotle discusses three things that philosophers or poets consider worthy of choice: practical wisdom, virtue and pleasure. Aristotle says that philosophers or poets think that happiness consists in one of these three things. In book I, there is no definite answer to the question of which of these lives - the life of practical wisdom, of virtue and of pleasure - is the best. Aristotle states that we should first examine what practical wisdom and virtue are, and whether they are part of the best life. He says that pleasure will be discussed later. In particular, he says that it should be discussed whether there are pleasures other than the bodily pleasures that make someone happy and that are part of the best life:

(T10) There is no need to investigate what these pleasures (bodily pleasures) are, but instead whether or not they contribute anything to happiness, how they do so, and whether these are the pleasures that should be connected with living beautifully, if in fact any pleasure should be connected with such a life; or is it

\textsuperscript{69} EE II 1230 a 27-35.

\textsuperscript{70} EE 1248 b 34-37, 1249 a 10-17, 1249 b 17-24.
rather that one must share in pleasures in some other way, and that the pleasures reasonably supposed to give the happy person a life of pleasure, and not merely an absence of pain, are different ones. These matters must be examined later.\textsuperscript{71}

Aristotle takes into account various hypotheses: first of all, he considers whether bodily pleasures are part of the happy life. Second, he asks whether there are pleasures other than the bodily pleasures that contribute to the happy life. Third, he puts forward the idea that pleasures that come from absence of pain - what Plato calls restorative pleasures - are not the pleasures of the happy life. According to Plato, in the account that he offers in the \textit{Philebus}, one way to conceive of pleasure is to think about the restored state that occurs after pain.\textsuperscript{72} However, as Aristotle suggests, there may be pleasures not connected with pain. These pleasures seem to be included in the definition of pleasure in \textit{EE VI=NE VII} (they are closer to pure pleasures, as Plato calls them in the \textit{Philebus}). These pleasures are unimpeded activities according to our natural state; these are the pleasures of a happy life.

Yet, besides the pleasure being an element of the happy life, why is happiness the most pleasant? Aristotle proposes what Rapp calls a “contingent identity.”\textsuperscript{73} Pleasure is unimpeded activity of our natural state. What is more, it is the sign of perfect activity and best agency. Happiness is an activity as well. It is complete and must be also unimpeded. One may argue that it is perfect insofar as it is complete and has its end in itself; it is the best activity a human being can desire and engage in. Aristotle classifies both pleasure and happiness as activities, and he claims that happiness is pleasure insofar as it is unimpeded activity according to our natural state. The conclusion of Aristotle’s argument that demonstrates what

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{EE 1216 a 33-1216 b 1.}

\textsuperscript{72} Plato, \textit{Philebus} 32b.

I call the Pleasure Thesis, namely that happiness is the most pleasant thing of all, occurs at
the end of the EE:

(T11) We have, as well, discussed pleasure, stating what it is like and how it is
good and that things which are pleasant simpliciter are also beautiful and that
things which are good simpliciter are pleasant. And pleasure occurs only in
acting, which is why the truly happy man will also live most pleasantly and why
it is not pointless for people to value living pleasantly.74

The passage comes up within the discussion of kalokagathia - the virtue of being-
beautiful-and-good. It may appear to be unrelated to what is discussed before or after the
passage. However, if read together with the beginning of the EE and with ST, T11 is the
conclusion of Aristotle’s argument that happiness is the most pleasant thing of all.

7. Complete virtue

It is now time to address an issue that has been postponed long enough: the analysis of
another essential element in the definitions of happiness, namely complete virtue. The
expression ἀρετὴ τελεία can be read in many ways.75 It can be translated “complete virtue”,
“perfect virtue” or “final virtue.” In what follows, I show that the translation “complete
virtue” fits better the view that Aristotle is defending in the EE. I translate τὴν τελειοτάτην
ἀρετὴν - which occurs in the NE’s definition of happiness - as “most complete virtue” in
order to stress that Aristotle is indeed using the same adjective in the two treatises - albeit in
the superlative in the NE. In the EE, the definition of happiness suggests that there is one
complete virtue. In the NE, as the definition of happiness suggests, there is more than one

74 EE 1249 a 17-21.

The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle, 2012; P. Destrée argues that in the Metaphysics, telesios is connected to
agathos (P. Destrée, “Bonheur et completude” in Aristote, bonheur et vertus, Presses Universitaires de France,
complete virtue. That is, the expression “most complete and best” suggests that there is one virtue that is not only complete, but it is also the very best.

Let us first examine completeness in the *NE*. The adjective *teleios* is difficult to translate and to understand. In *NE* 1097 a 25, Aristotle says that a thing is most complete - *teleiotaton* - if it is chosen always as an end and never as a means for something else. In *NE* 1097 b 1, and in *NE* 1176 b 30, happiness is said to be *teleiotaton*. Happiness is *teleiotaton* because it is chosen for its own sake and for nothing else. It is, thereby, the ultimate or chief end, the end for the sake of which other ends are pursued. This is how completeness is explained if it is happiness - an activity - that is most complete. But what does it mean that a virtue is *teleion*? Let us consider some options. (i) A virtue can be complete if it does not lack any parts. In this sense, a virtue is complete if it is a whole with all its parts. (ii) A virtue can be complete insofar as it is by itself a final value, a value that is pursued for its own sake. My hypothesis is that we can distinguish two ways of understanding completeness: completeness-qua-inherent-value and completeness-qua-unity-of-virtue. I submit that the first way applies to the discussion of complete virtue in the *NE*, while the second applies to the discussion of complete virtue in the *EE*.

Cooper seems to understand complete virtue as explained in option (ii). Cooper argues that in the *NE*, the superlative - τελειοτάτην “most final,” as Cooper translates it - suggests that this virtue is the most final or the most complete in a special context, rather than the virtue that is a whole. According to Cooper, *sophia* is most final or most complete insofar as, as Cooper says, “it has its value in itself.” Cooper says that actions according to the other virtues “bring with them other goods,” while *sophia* and contemplation do not need other

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76 Cooper p. 100.
goods. In other words, *sophia* is the most final or most complete because it is the virtue of the activity that most of all is chosen for its own sake - contemplation - and because it is the virtue of the most self-sufficient activity. In *NE* I, Aristotle does not make explicit what the connection between finality or completeness and self-sufficiency is. I will turn to this in a moment. Cooper adds that Aristotle does not say explicitly that happiness is activity according to *sophia*. Aristotle needs to leave room for two lives that in *NE* X are said to be happy lives: the life of contemplation and the life according to *phronēsis* and the character virtues. For this reason, Cooper says that it is not explicit that *sophia* is the best and most complete virtue. It becomes clear that it is the best and most complete virtue once we read book X, where Aristotle says that the life of *phronēsis* and of the character virtues is happy only in a secondary way.

Irwin reaches a similar conclusion as Cooper, namely that this most complete and best virtue is *sophia*. He argues that only theoretical activity - of which *sophia* is the virtue - meets the two conditions outlined in book I, that is, that happiness is complete or final and self-sufficient. It is complete or final because it is chosen for its own sake and for nothing else. It is self-sufficient because self-sufficiency follows from completeness or finality. In book I, Aristotle does not explain how it follows from completeness or finality. Irwin argues that the idea is that “an end that leaves life lacking something could only be worth pursuing for an end that makes life lack nothing.” Hence, insofar as happiness is pursued for its own

77 Cooper, p. 100.


sake as final end, it must be self-sufficient (it must have αὐτάρκεια - self-sufficiency). Both Cooper and Irwin support the idea that in the *NE* completeness has to be understood as inherent value. This seems the most plausible way of reading completeness in this treatise.

When he defines happiness, Aristotle says that it is activity according to *the best* and the most complete virtue. Let us examine more closely how we can understand “the best.” Similar considerations to the ones regarding completeness apply to “the best.” Cooper suggests that *sophia* is the best virtue insofar as it is the virtue of the best element in us. That is, as Aristotle suggests in *NE* X 1177 a 12, the capacity of contemplation. Irwin argues that *sophia* is the best virtue because theoretical study is the activity of the best part of human beings. Labarrière argues that the best virtue - the virtue that allows us to contemplate - is *nous*. Once again, this is not explicit in book I. As I explained above, scholars are divided between those who support the inclusive interpretation and those who support the dominant interpretation.

Let us turn to how complete virtue is understood in the *EE*. For Cooper, the expression ἀρετὴ τελεία, as it occurs in the definition of happiness in *EE* II 1219 a 39, suggests that there

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80 Labarrière 2003.

is a virtue which is a whole. In order to clarify what complete and whole mean, let us look at a passage in the *Physics*, where *teleion* is said to be very close in its nature to *holon*:

(T12) That of which there is nothing left out (*ἐξω*), it is whole (*ὅλον*) or complete (*τέλειον*). For we define a whole precisely as that from which nothing is absent, for example, a ‘whole man or a whole chest.’ And as with particular wholes, so it is in the main sense (*κυρίως*) [for the whole that is not a part of something else]: the whole is that of which there is nothing left out; whereas that from which something, no matter what, is missing and left outside is not ‘all’ (*ἀπῇ*). And ‘whole’ and ‘complete,’ if not altogether the same, are close in their nature, and nothing is complete (*τέλειον*) unless it has an end (*τέλος*); but an end is a limit.\(^{83}\)

Aristotle says that the whole or the complete is that from which nothing is left out. And he adds that complete and whole are close in their nature. This passage is key for my interpretation of complete virtue in the *EE*. Based on the definition of the whole and of completeness in the *Physics*, complete virtue must be the virtue from which nothing is left out. In other words, as also Cooper and Irwin argue, it is the virtue that includes all the other virtues. Let us examine some possible candidates for complete virtue mentioned in the definition of happiness. I chose these virtues as possible candidates either because Aristotle says that these virtues are complete or because scholars have argued that one of these virtues is complete virtue (mostly in relation to the *NE*, two exceptions are Cooper 1975 and Kenny 1992 who also discuss complete virtue in the *EE*). These candidates are: *megalopsychia*, *dikaiosunê*, *phronësis*, *sophia* and *kalokagathia*.\(^{84}\) I turn first to views that seem clearly unpromising - that complete virtue is *megalopsychia*, or *dikaiosunê* - and then to proposals that have greater plausibility - that complete virtue is *phronësis*, *sophia* or *kalokagathia*.

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\(^{83}\) *Physics* 207 a 9-15. Translation by GB.

Aristotle says that *megalopsychia* (greatness of soul) is the strongest virtue (κράτιστη), and that it never occurs without *kalokagathia*. And yet, Aristotle never calls *megalopsychia* complete virtue. *Megalopsychia* functions with all the virtues. However, it is not clear what these virtues are. They seem to be the character virtues and practical wisdom. Aristotle points out that *megalopsychia* is the adornment or the crown of the virtues. Scholars have debated how to understand this claim: they suggest that either *megalopsychia* is not a virtue at all, or it includes all the virtues and somehow it perfects them. As Curzer argues, for Aristotle, a philosophical notion of *megalopsychia* is an attempt to reconcile the Homeric virtue of grandeur with his new virtue of moderation. *Megalopsychia* has a particular task: it permits the person who possesses it to judge the big and the small in different fields. On similar grounds, it is a virtue that combines honor with self-knowledge. In the EE, Aristotle distinguishes a particular form of *megalopsychia* and a more general form of *megalopsychia*. If one possesses the general *megalopsychia*, this agent possesses all the virtues. As Aristotle says, this general form of *megalopsychia* occurs together with complete virtue. However, it is not the virtue that includes all the other virtues. In particular, it seems not to include the virtue

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85 *EE* 1232 a 34.

86 *NE* 1123 a 8.


89 Cf. Curzer 2012.

90 *EE* 1232 b 23-25. Cooper argues that this distinction is introduced to solve the tension between *megalopsychia* as the virtue of doing great deeds and the virtue of acting moderately. J.M. Cooper, *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*, Harvard University Press, 1975, p. 196.
of theoretical thinking. And for these reasons, it cannot be the complete virtue mentioned in the definition of happiness.

Aristotle calls *dikaiosunê* (justice) complete virtue.\(^9\) As he explains, there are different forms of justice: the highest form of justice is complete virtue. Justice is considered, as *megalopsychia*, the strongest of the virtues. However, Aristotle says that justice is complete virtue in a qualified sense and not *simpliciter* (ἀπλῶς).\(^9\) He says that justice is a whole (ὅλον).\(^9\) One may argue that justice as a whole is the same thing as *kalokagathia*. Both virtues seem to include all the other virtues. However, Aristotle does not say enough on justice as a whole to pursue this line of thought further. He focuses on the form of justice that is a part of virtue. Let us turn to more plausible candidates.

Aristotle says that *phronêsis* (practical wisdom) always functions in conjunction with the character virtues.\(^9\) For this reason, scholars speak of a unity of the virtues that includes practical wisdom and character virtues. However, Aristotle does not say that practical wisdom includes all the virtues. One piece of evidence that speaks against the view that practical wisdom includes all the virtues is that Aristotle says that *phronêsis* prescribes (ἐπιτάττει) for the sake of theoretical wisdom.\(^9\) That is, practical wisdom “serve” or “prepare the ground”

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\(^9\) *EE=NE* 1129 b 27-30.

\(^9\) *EE=NE* 1130 a 16.

\(^9\) *EE=NE* 1144 a 30; 1144 b 15.

\(^9\) *EE=NE* 1145 a 7; *EE* VIII 1249 b 15. The claim in *EE* VIII is that practical wisdom prescribes for the sake of the divine. The claim is obscure: one way to read it is that practical wisdom prescribes for the theoretical capacity (mentioned a few lines before the passage). And the divine is the highest object of this capacity.
for theoretical wisdom: *sophia*. Practical wisdom cannot be the complete virtue mentioned in the definition of happiness in the *EE* insofar as it does not include *sophia*. In addition, it is not the virtue of the most final or self-sufficient activity: it prescribes for the sake of *sophia*. And this seems enough to say that theoretical wisdom is more complete than practical wisdom. Let me draw attention to one passage in the *Magna Moralia* (*MM*) that explicitly confirms that practical wisdom is not complete virtue. In *MM* 1184 a 34, Aristotle says that practical wisdom is not complete because when one acquires it, she still wants and needs other things. Even though the attribution to Aristotle of the *MM* is contested, this passage excludes practical wisdom.

*Sophia* (theoretical wisdom) is the virtue of theoretical contemplation. It is not clear whether *sophia* is the complete virtue mentioned in the *EE*’s definition of happiness. That is, *sophia* does not include the other virtues. However, it is the virtue of the most self-sufficient activity. In *EE=* *NE* 1144 a 1-6, Aristotle says that *sophia* is part of complete virtue and it produces happiness. This is the decisive argument that shows that *sophia* is part of complete virtue, but it is not the complete virtue mentioned in the *EE*’s definition of happiness. Insofar as *EE=* *NE* 1144 a 1-6 occurs in one of the so-called common books, it may also raise a problem for the interpretation of complete virtue in the *NE*. That is, if *sophia* is said to be part of complete virtue, how can it be the most complete virtue of the *NE*? The answer to this question is not clear. One way to solve the problem is to admit that the common books - or at least this passage - belong to the *EE*. Another way to read the passage is that *sophia* is indeed

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96 In *MM* 1198 b 12-18, the author argues that practical wisdom is a steward of *sophia*.

97 Cf. Cooper 1975, p. 121.
the most complete part of complete virtue. However, in the NE, it remains unclear what this complete virtue is.98

Kalokagathia is the virtue of being-beautiful-and-good, as I translate it, and it is discussed in detail in EE VIII.3.99 It does not come up in the NE. In EE VIII.3, Aristotle calls this virtue a whole (ὅλον); he says that it is composed of all the virtues discussed so far in the treatises.100 In chapter II, I provide a detailed argument that kalokagathia includes all the virtues.101 For present purposes, I focus only on the idea that Aristotle calls this virtue a whole and that this virtue is the complete virtue according to which happiness is the activity. In EE II.1, Aristotle says that virtue can be a whole - ὅλον - or a part:102

(T13) Happiness, then, is the activity of the good soul. And since happiness is something complete, and a life can be complete or incomplete, and so too virtue (since it can be a whole or a part), and the activity of what is complete is itself complete, it follows that happiness would be the activity of a complete life in accordance with complete virtue.103

In the passage, Aristotle says that happiness is complete (τελεόν) in a complete life. He compares the happy life to virtue insofar as as life can be complete or incomplete, virtue can

98 Cooper argues that sophia is most final (teleion) insofar as the activity of contemplation does not need other goods. However, he does not explain what the complete virtue of which theoretical contemplation is part is. Cf. Cooper 1975, p. 118.

99 EE VIII 1248 b 8-1249 b 25.

100 EE VIII 1248 b 8-16.

101 Kenny, Buddensiek, Monan and Gastaldi argue that kalokagathia includes the virtues of thinking. Verdenius and Moraux and Harlfinger argue that it does not include the virtues of thinking.

102 Defenders of the inclusive interpretation argue that the most complete virtue refers to all the virtues. A.A. Long summarises the debate in Aristotle on eudaimonia, nous and divinity, in Aristotle’s NE, J. Miller (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2011.

103 EE 1219 a 35-39.
be complete or incomplete.\textsuperscript{104} In other words, virtue can be a whole - ὅλον - or a part. Based on this double occurrence of ὅλον - right before the definition of happiness and in the description of kalokagathia - and based on the similarity between ὅλον and τέλειον, kalokagathia seems to be the complete virtue we have been looking for. Evidences in favor of this claim are provided also by the examination and exclusion of other possible candidates for the role of complete virtue. In addition, Aristotle says that the agent who possesses kalokagathia is completely virtuous: this agent acts aiming at the beautiful, and for her, natural goods are not only good, but also beautiful.\textsuperscript{105} This is a further reason for saying that kalokagathia is complete virtue.

8. Chapter Outline

To conclude the Introduction, let me offer a sketch of each chapter. In this dissertation, I shed light on the distinctive proposal of the Eudemian Ethics by focusing on: (i) the analysis of a superlative excellence called kalokagathia and of (ii) the notion of natural goods, which do not figure in the Nicomachean Ethics; (iii) the function arguments in the EE, in the NE and in the Republic; and (iv) the role of pleasure in relation to happiness and to human agency. I argue that the agent who possesses kalokagathia is the best agent of Aristotle’s EE. This interpretive proposal has significant implications. Scholars tend to hold that the practically wise person, the phronimos, or the theoretically wise person, the sophos, are the

\textsuperscript{104} On happiness being complete and self-sufficient see N.O. Dahl, “Contemplation and eudaimonia in the NE,” in J. Miller (ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2011. C.D.C. Reeve, Action, contemplation and happiness, Harvard University Press, 2012. Aristotle distinguishes activities from processes: activities have their ends in themselves, they do not have external ends to reach in order to be complete. Conversely, processes have external ends. A process is complete only when it reaches its end. An activity is always complete when it is happening. J.B. Beere, “Being in energeia and being in capacity,” in Doing and being, Oxford University Press, 2009. Aristotle uses the example of seeing: when we see a tree outside the window, we are seeing the tree and at the same time we have already seen it. The end happens at the same time of the activity: there is no temporal lack between the starting point of the activity and its end. The act itself of seeing is its end. In this sense, happiness is complete qua activity.

\textsuperscript{105} EE VIII.3 1249 a 5, 1249 a16,
best agents of the *NE*. If this is compelling, and if my reading of the *EE* is right, then the *EE* and the *NE* conceive differently of the best agent. This is salient in both treatises’ construal of the unity of the virtues. In the *NE*, the unity of the virtues includes the character virtues and *phronésis*. In the *EE*, it additionally includes the virtues of theoretical thinking, or so I argue. As I have shown, the *EE* starts with what I call the Superlative Thesis (ST). Aristotle aims to show how these three kinds of value-properties combine in the best human life, rather than coming apart. The Pleasure Thesis (PT) is the most contested aspect of ST: happiness is the most pleasant thing of all. On my reading, Aristotle fully embraces PT. In laying out his proposal for the best human life, the Aristotle of the *EE* develops a distinctive kind of naturalism, which I call Natural Goods Naturalism. I reconstruct this position in two steps: by interpreting the *EE*’s function argument; and by exploring the notion of natural goods, which is central to the *EE*, but does not figure in the *NE*. In sum, my dissertation argues that the *EE* contains a distinctive and under-appreciated option within ancient ethics, and that it contains ideas that are relevant to today’s virtue ethics.

In chapter II, I argue that in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle proposes a different best agent from the one of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, often considered the *phronimos* or the *sophos*. In the *EE*, the best agent is the *kalos kagathos*, the person who has *kalokagathia*. Closely related, I argue that in the *EE*, Aristotle proposes a strong version of the unity of the virtues: the person who is *kalos kagathos* has “all” the virtues. *Kalokagathia* is a whole and the virtues are its parts. I investigate how we should understand this whole and the relation between individual virtues within this whole.

In chapter III, I reconstruct the notion of natural goods as this appears in the *EE*. I argue that Aristotle’s conception of natural goods provides an unexplored resource for a type of
ethical naturalism that I call Natural Goods Naturalism. I analyze what natural goods are and for whom they are good. On my reading, the expressions “natural goods” and “goods-simply” pick out the same goods. I depart from the long standing view that goods-simply are good for the good person. In the reading that I propose, goods-simply, that is, natural goods, are good for the agent in what I call the standard state. The standard state is the state in which human beings are for the most part or by nature.

In chapter IV, I analyze the Function Arguments (FAs) in *Eudemian Ethics* II 1218 b 30- 1219 a 25, in *Nicomachean Ethics* I 1097 b 29- 1098 a 14, and in Plato’s *Republic* I 353 e- 354 a. I provide a chart that compares the structure and the elements of the three arguments. I argue that the FAs in the *EE* and in the *NE* illuminate the discussions of the best life that occur at the end of the two ethics - respectively in *NE* X and in *EE* VIII. In the *NE*, the function (*ergon*) of the human being is activity according to reason and its best fulfillment is contemplation. In the *EE*, Aristotle focuses on the human soul. The function of the human soul is living and the best fulfillment of this function is activity according to all the parts of the soul that share in reason.

In chapter V, I argue that the discussion of pleasure in *EE* VI (*NE* VII) is part of a larger argument in the *EE* that aims at proving PT. Contra Moss (2012), my analysis signals that Aristotle takes the pleasant to be an independent property and not an appearance of the good. I argue that the good and the pleasant are to be explained via a relation between the agent’s psychology and how things are going ‘in the world.’ The pleasant is not a mere appearance of the good, or in some other way derivative or dependent on the good. With respect to psychology, I argue that Aristotle assigns a positive role to pleasure in motivation and in the good life.
CHAPTER TWO

Kalokagathia and the unity of the virtues in the Eudemian Ethics

In discussions of the NE, it is a central theme which kind of life Aristotle considers best. Two primary candidates are the life of contemplation on the one hand, and the life of politics on the other hand. At this point, scholars tend to argue that Aristotle considers the life of contemplation best. On this view, the NE’s best agent is the sophos. Many contributions that shaped virtue ethics and Aristotelian naturalism in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, however, focused on the political life, or in other words, on the ideal of character virtue combined with excellence in deliberation. In this context, it became customary to refer to the NE’s best agent as the phronimos. Much research went into understanding what the phronimos knows, what kind of affective and desiderative attitudes the phronimos has, and how the phronimos’ agency is different from the agency of the merely controlled or vicious agent.

Both interpretive positions come with views of the so-called unity of virtues, the idea that the set of virtues that the best agent possesses is unified. With respect to the person who

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leads the life of theôria, the sophos, it is asked to what extent and how the virtues of an active political life are part of Aristotle’s ideal. It would seem that the sophos must also have the virtues of character; but the focus of her life is on theorizing. With respect to the life of politics, it is assumed that the person who has the virtues of character in a full or strict sense also has phronësis - practical wisdom. Both views, however, fall short of the claim I ascribe to the Aristotle of the Eudemian Ethics (EE). The EE’s best agent, I argue, straightforwardly has all the virtues, in a sense that is not primarily geared toward theorizing or toward an active life in the polis.

I argue that the best agent of the EE differs from the best agent of the NE (whether the latter is the sophos or the phronimos), to the extent that it seems advisable to refer to this agent by a different designation. Possible candidates for the role of best agent, in addition to the phronimos and to the sophos, are the spoudaios, the agathos, the epieikês, and the kalos kagathos. I propose that the best agent, as Aristotle conceives of this agent in the EE is the kalos kagathos: the person who possesses the distinctive and complex quality of being good-and-beautiful (kalokagathia). The agent who possesses kalokagathia is not merely good (spoudaios or agathos), or decent (epieikês), or practically wise (phronimos). She is also not primarily a theorizer. She possesses all the virtues, without the weighing and prioritizing that


110 Relevant Greek terms are often employed in the masculine form; for this reason the transition to feminine forms (as today we often employ in philosophical discussion) can be confusing. Moreover, Aristotle’s own views on women and men make it unlikely that he thinks of an account of the best agent as gender neutral. Nevertheless, for the most part I seek to employ gender neutral expressions.

is involved in either leading a life of contemplation or of theory. Namely, she possesses character virtues and all the virtues of practical and theoretical thinking and she thereby enjoys happiness as defined at the beginning of the EE.\textsuperscript{112}

In the first sentence of the EE, Aristotle advances a programmatic claim: that happiness is the best, most beautiful, and most pleasant thing of all (Superlative Thesis). The best agent of the EE, the \textit{kalos kagathos}, possesses happiness in this sense. That is, this agent exhibits a complex but unified set of virtues and likewise, the agent’s happiness exhibits a complex but unified set of value properties. \textit{Kalokagathia} can be compared to happiness insofar as both have superlative value: \textit{kalokagathia} is the best of the virtues and happiness is the best activity. To capture the idea of superlative value, I call \textit{kalokagathia} a superexcellence. My analysis of \textit{kalokagathia} helps reconstruct the distinctive project of the EE by tying together the beginning and the end of the treatise: \textit{kalokagathia} corresponds, on the level of virtue, to the way in which the Aristotle of the EE conceives of \textit{eudaimonia}, happiness. The discussion of the perfect agent is fundamental to Aristotle’s project in the EE: by claiming that the \textit{kalos kagathos} is the agent who possesses all the virtues, Aristotle argues that excellent thinking and excellent action go together and are both necessary for being the best agent.

I start by analyzing a text that is fundamental for my argument and that occurs toward the end of the treatise, EE VIII.3 1248 b 8-15. On my reading, Aristotle states that the individual virtues as discussed throughout the EE are parts of a superexcellence called \textit{kalokagathia} (section 1). This superexcellence is a whole with parts (section 2). Based on my analysis of EE VIII.3, I turn to the specifics of how we should conceive of this ideal of unified, complete, and superlative virtue. Both in the best agent and in agents who are

\textsuperscript{112} EE I 1214 a 7-8.
virtuous in lesser ways, I argue, the virtues of character depend on the virtues of thinking (section 3). Next I explore a claim that is shared between the *NE* and the *EE*, namely that practical wisdom and the character virtues mutually entail each other (section 4). The final steps in my argument take me to the virtues of theoretical thinking. I defend the view that *kalokagathia* includes *nous* (section 5) as well as *sophia* and *epistêmê* (section 6), and I refute the concern that, according to Aristotle, some theoretically wise persons lack practical wisdom (section 7).

1. *Kalokagathia* and its relation to particular virtues

*EE* VIII.3 contains the most extensive Aristotelian discussion of *kalokagathia*. Aristotle uses this notion to refer to the best kind of excellence a person can attain. The term *kalokagathia* may suggest that this superexcellence combines two excellences: being beautiful (*kalon*) and being good (*agathon*). However, Aristotle uses the term simply to express superlative excellence. What this superlative excellence amounts to, then, is a matter of his substantive ethical proposals. In the spirit of this analysis, my translation of *kalon* is intended as technical. It captures no more and no less than the idea that the *kalon* is, as Aristotle puts this, choiceworthy for itself and praiseworthy for its own sake (*EE* VIII.3 1248 b 19-21). In other words, though I speak of the “beautiful,” I do not mean to pick out the aesthetic domain or physical beauty in particular. Instead I use “beautiful” as a placeholder for the wide semantic range that the term has in Aristotle, including “noble,” “fine,” “fitting,”

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113 Outside the *EE*, *kalokagathia* is discussed in ways that resemble the *EE* discussion in *Magna Moralia* (1207 b 20-1208 a 4). The term *kalokagathia* occurs twice in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1124 a 4, 1179 b 10), though here it does not seem at all fundamental for Aristotle’s project, as well as once in the *Rhetoric* (1424 a 17) and once in the *Politics* (1259 b 34).
and more. In effect, on my reading the superexcellence of *kalokagathia* consists in the possession of all the virtues, rather than to the combined possession of beauty and goodness.

This is explicitly stated when Aristotle introduces *kalokagathia*. At the beginning of the final chapter of the treatise - *EE* VIII.3 1248 b 8-15 - Aristotle remarks that individual virtues have been discussed throughout the treatise (κατὰ μέρος μὲν οὖν περὶ ἑκάστης ἀρετῆς εἴρηται). Translated literally, Aristotle says that up to now he discussed each individual virtue qua part, or that he proceeded “part by part” (κατὰ μέρος) in addressing each individual virtue.

Given that the question of the unity of the virtues, and thereby the question of parts and wholes, shall concern us, we need to attend carefully to this transition. What we need to get clear about is the sense in which particular virtues are each by themselves excellences, while at the same time they are (or can be studied as) parts. The mere fact that the virtues are analyzed individually earlier in the treatise suggests that, up to a point, they are self-standing. They can be studied as individual virtues without this being misleading or confused. Only now, toward the end of the treatise, Aristotle signals that they can also be viewed as parts.

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115 The gloss “part by part” is justified by the distributive sense of the Greek preposition *kata*. 
The individual virtues are now discussed insofar as they are parts of *kalokagathia*. This leaves us with the following hypothesis: Aristotle conceives of the particular virtues both as virtues in their own right, and as parts of a comprehensive kind of excellence that he calls *kalokagathia*. Insofar as the particular virtues seem to have a certain level of separateness—sufficient to make their discussion qua individual virtues plausible—I shall assume that the *EE*’s unity of the virtues is, indeed, a unity of the *virtues*. In other words, the relevant unity is not simply virtue in the singular. Here, then, is the text where Aristotle signals the transition from discussing the virtues individually to discussing the virtue that includes all of them:

(T1) We have spoken earlier about each virtue qua part (κατὰ μέρος μὲν ὄν περὶ ἕκαστῆς ἀρετῆς εἴρηται πρότερον); but since we have separately distinguished the capacity of each of them, we have to discuss the virtue composed by them, which we already referred to as being-beautiful-and-good. Now it is evident that whoever truly has this appellation must have the individual virtues (τὰς κατὰ μέρος ἀρετὰς). For it cannot be otherwise in other cases, either. For no one is healthy in his body as a whole (ὅλον), yet not in any part (μέρος) of it; rather, all parts, or most parts and the most important ones, should be in the same state as the whole (ὅλῳ).

Before I say more about the relevant notions of parts and whole, let me address the scope of “by them” in T1. Aristotle says that *kalokagathia* is composed “by them” (ἐκ τούτων), where τούτων refers to the virtues mentioned in the first line of T1. Given that Aristotle refers back to the virtues that were previously discussed in the *EE*, I take it that ἐκ τούτων in effect means “by all of these” insofar as Aristotle says that “we have spoken earlier about each virtue qua part.” He refers to all the virtues that have been discussed in the earlier

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116 The question of whether we should speak about virtue in the singular or about virtues in the plural comes up in Plato’s dialogues. In the *Meno*, Socrates says that even though the virtues are many, all of them have one and the same form (72 d). In the *Republic*, Plato argues that justice is the harmony of all the parts of the soul (443 d). In this sense, all the virtues are forms of justice.

117 *EE* VIII.3 1248 b 8-15.
books of the treatise, and these are all the virtues of thinking and of character (EE II.1, III, and V). That is, ἐκ τοῦτον refers to the character virtues and to the virtues of practical and theoretical thinking. Insofar as in T1, Aristotle says that kalokagathia is composed by these virtues - ἐκ τοῦτον - we can conclude that kalokagathia is composed by all the virtues discussed in the treatise.

Against my reading, someone could raise the objection that Aristotle explicitly backs away from the claim that kalokagathia comprises all virtues. His comparison with health says that, for someone’s body to be healthy as a whole, all or most or the most important parts of the body must be healthy. By analogy, this means that for someone to have kalokagathia she must be virtuous in all or most or the most important parts of the soul; or in other words, she must have all or most or the most important parts of virtue. Doesn’t this permit for cases in which the person who is kalos kagathos precisely does not have all the virtues, as I say she does?

Let’s dwell for a moment on the example of health. When we ascribe health to someone, we typically refer to the person as a whole. We may say that someone is healthy after she recovered from a particular illness, say, a fever. But if only the fever had disappeared, and the person still did not feel well, we would not say “she is healthy.” We only say “she is healthy” when the person as a whole has recovered. This need not mean that the person is perfectly healthy in every possible respect. Instead, we take “she is healthy” to be true if all or most or the most important parts of the body are healthy. Being healthy is a quality of the whole, i.e. the body, and in this sense, it is a self-standing quality. However, the quality of the whole cannot exist if it does not exist in all or most or the most important of the parts. In the case of being healthy, the well-functioning of the individual parts - all, most or
the most important ones - of the body and their co-functioning produce the state of being healthy.

Now suppose the person who recovered from an illness is mildly allergic to some rare food. Hence she is not perfectly healthy. Still, once she recovered from her illness we will say “she is healthy.” This is the kind of case that is covered by saying that one is healthy when one is healthy in most or the most important parts. In the case of kalokagathia, the same “relaxed” all-quantifier (as we may put this) applies in analogous fashion. Suppose someone has all the virtues. This includes that she is courageous. Now suppose she has a mild fear of some harmless spider. The perfectly courageous person would not have this fear. And yet, if this mild fear is the only way in which someone falls short with respect to any of the virtues, she can count as having kalokagathia. The relaxed all-quantifier makes Aristotle’s notion of kalokagathia somewhat flexible. It signals that Aristotle is not concerned with an abstract ideal. He is concerned with an ideal that “real” agents can strive for. And yet, the relaxed all-quantifier does not make this ideal any less demanding with a view to the scope of the relevant excellences. Just as a person who is healthy in the most important parts of her body cannot lack health in any vital organs or other fundamental respects, the person who has superexcellence cannot lack any of the main virtues—and those are the virtues of character, of practical thinking, and of theoretical thinking.

2. Kalokagathia as unified and complete virtue

The comparison between health and kalokagathia addresses, moreover, another dimension of the kind of property we are concerned with. Namely, we may wonder whether kalokagathia is (i) additive, (ii) scalar, or (iii) on-off, as I shall put this. According to (i), an agent is more or less kalos kagathos depending on how many of the individual virtues she
has. The more of them she possesses, and the better they interact, the more is kalos kagathos. According to (ii), agents can have all the virtues, and yet have this unified state to greater and lesser degrees. According to (iii), kalokagathia is a whole that is constituted only if a certain threshold is reached, such that the person has all, most, or the most important individual virtues and the virtues co-function in relevant ways (more on which below). On the view that I am here proposing, (iii) is most plausible. We do not call a person healthy if only we can enumerate a number of organs, etc., of hers, that are healthy; this leaves too much space for her not being healthy after all. The additive option, thus, is not compelling. We do call people more or less healthy, as the scalar option has it. And yet this is not the way of ascribing health that Aristotle envisages here. Instead, he invokes ascriptions of health where we say, without qualification, that someone is healthy. The scalar option, then, does not seem interpretively right either. Instead, the thought seems to be that if the conditions of the parts of a whole hit a threshold, then the body is healthy and, respectively, the person is kalos kagathos.

As in the healthy body the main organs and the main parts of the body interact in such a way that the result is an healthy individual, in the case of kalokagathia, the main parts of the soul and their corresponding virtues need to be in place, interact, and co-function. What are the main parts of the soul and the corresponding virtues? The main parts of the soul are those that for Aristotle are distinctively human insofar as they partake in or inherently relate to reason. These are the parts that Aristotle distinguishes from the vegetative, generative and nutritive parts that also animals have. The virtues of the parts that partake in reason are the virtues of thinking; the virtues of the parts that inherently relate to reason - being able to

\[118\] Cf. S. Sauvé Meyer, “Proceeding to clarity about virtue: the methods of ethics in EE 2.1-2 (1219b26-1220a20),” forthcoming contribution to the Symposium Aristotelicum on EE II.

\[119\] EE II 1219 b 25-32.
“listen” and “obey” (πείθεσθαι καὶ ἀκούειν) - are the virtues of character. Together, these virtues can be considered the most important ones insofar as they are the virtues of parts of the distinctively human soul. We need these virtues in order to have kalokagathia, in the same way in which we need the main organs to be healthy in order for the body to be healthy as a whole. For this reason, the agent cannot lack any of these virtues.

If kalokagathia is an on-off state, as I argued it is, it is metaphysically a blend as opposed to an aggregate. By this I mean that one does not become kalos kagathos by accumulating more and more positive traits. Instead, the very way in which one’s positive traits inter-relate gives rise to a self-standing property that one either has or does not have. In T1, Aristotle describes kalokagathia as a whole (ὅλον), and throughout my analysis so far I invoked this idea. To conclude my discussion of T1, let me draw attention to the way in which wholeness relates to completeness. In an enigmatic passage in EE II.1, Aristotle mentions complete virtue - aretē teleia.

(T2) Since happiness is something complete, and a life can be complete or incomplete, and so too virtue (since it can be a whole or a part), and the activity of what is incomplete is itself incomplete, it follows that happiness would be the activity of a complete life in accordance with complete virtue.

Happiness, Aristotle says, is activity in accordance with complete virtue. Aristotle does not specify what complete virtue is and the translation of aretē teleia is controversial. Instead of translating “complete virtue,” as I do, we could speak of “perfect” or perhaps even of “final virtue.” I take it that, in a side-remark, Aristotle here anticipates ideas to which he turns...

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120 EE II 1220 a 7-12.


122 EE II 1219 a 35-40.
only in *EE* VIII.3: he says that virtue can be a whole or a part. This is the thought we encountered before, that the virtues can be discussed as particular virtues, and that they can be studied as parts of virtue as a whole. I take it, further, that the way in which Aristotle here ties together wholeness and completeness means that virtue as a whole is complete virtue. That is, complete virtue is *kalokagathia*.¹²³ In *EE* VIII.3 1249 a 17, Aristotle explicitly says that *kalokagathia* is *aretē teleia*.

Let me sum up my interpretation of T1 in its immediate context toward the end of the *EE*. *Kalokagathia* is superlative and complete excellence. It is a whole with parts. Its parts are all the virtues that were discussed in the *EE* up to this point—that is, the character virtues as well as the virtues of practical and theoretical thinking. This is my most general proposal, and throughout the chapter I shall invoke T1 in its support. My argument, however, does not end here. Though on my reading T1 clearly states the view that I ascribe to Aristotle, more work needs to be done. We need to elucidate how precisely Aristotle conceives of superlative excellence and, respectively, of the unity of the virtues.

3. Unity of the virtues and unity of the soul

Before I turn to the parts of *kalokagathia*, and of the *EE*’s unity of the virtues, let me prepare the ground with some considerations on how the parts of the soul, and their corresponding virtues, relate. The unity of the virtues, as Aristotle conceives of it in the *EE*, is not a unity of virtue in the singular, as we saw. It is not the claim that there is only one such thing as virtue, an agent’s unified excellent state of mind. It is also not the claim, later

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¹²³ None of the other candidates for the role of complete virtue - *phronēsis*, *megalopsuchia*, *sophia* and justice - includes all the virtues in quite the same way in which *kalokagathia* does.
defended by the Stoics, that for an agent to have one virtue she must have all the virtues.\textsuperscript{124}

What, then, is the claim? Though the virtues can be studied individually, and though particular agents may have this or that virtue to a greater degree, failing to have other virtues to the same degree, there is an ideal case—the case of the \textit{kalos kagathos}—where the agent has all the virtues such that they constitute a whole. My aim in this chapter is to explore this ideal case. But I should address briefly why even instances of virtue that fall short of this ideal are not entirely fragmented. In other words, even in agents who are not \textit{kaloi kagathoi} the particular virtues cooperate and support each other to some extent. This is, simply and fundamentally, because the virtues are excellent activities of parts of the soul, and the parts of the soul are de facto—not only ideally—related. In \textit{EE} II.1, Aristotle says:

\begin{quote}
(T3) Next we must consider the soul, since virtue belongs to the soul, and not incidentally. Since we are looking for human virtue, let us assume that there are two parts of the soul that partake in reason, but do not both partake in reason in the same way. One does so by giving commands, the other because it is by nature such as to obey and listen.\textsuperscript{125}
\end{quote}

In T3, Aristotle has not yet distinguished between character virtues and virtues of thinking. He distinguishes two parts of the soul that partake in reason: the part that commands and the part that obeys and listens ($\piει\thetaεσθαι$ και ἀκούειν). All in all, the soul comprises more. It has three parts: two that, each in its own way, partake in reason and one that is irrational to the extent that its activities do not relate to reason. For present purposes we can set the latter aside. Only those parts of the soul that can be active in better or worse way are relevant for an account of virtue; and the part of the soul that is shared with plants and animals is not of this kind. The virtues of character, as Aristotle points out later, belong to the

\textsuperscript{124} On these as well as further options that are stronger than the view I ascribe to the \textit{EE}, cf. K. Vogt, “The Stoics on virtue and happiness,” in C. Bobonich (ed.), \textit{The Cambridge Companion of Ancient Ethics} (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 183-199.

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{EE} II 1219 b 25-31.
part of the soul that obeys and listens; the virtues of thinking belong to the part of the soul that commands.\textsuperscript{126} In this description of what the parts of the soul do - command and obey - and in assigning the virtues of character and of thinking to these two parts respectively, Aristotle establishes a hierarchical relation. The part that strictly speaking possesses reason is by nature such as to command. The part that merely shares in reason via its relationship to the former can obey and listen. If a person is virtuous, the parts of the soul engage in these activities in excellent ways. That is, in the virtuous person, it is on account of the virtues of thinking that reason lives up to its commanding nature. And it is on account of the virtues of character that the part that can obey and listen in fact obeys and listens to the commands of reason.

But though he analyzes the activities and the roles of these parts of the soul, Aristotle says that they cannot be separated: he compares them to the convex and the concave.\textsuperscript{127} This comparison provides us with a minimal yet fundamental claim about the unity of the virtues. We can distinguish among parts of the soul. But we cannot separate the parts of the soul from each other. Given their relation qua parts of the soul, their activities are \textit{ipso facto} intertwined. This leaves much room for imperfection, since in a given person the activities of some part of the soul may be better than the activities of another part of the soul. However, it does mean that in every case of an agent possessing some virtues to some extent, the relevant (imperfect) activities in one way or another bear on each other.

The so-called Function Argument, as it is outlined in book II of the \textit{EE}, portrays the soul as a unity. In \textit{NE} I.7, Aristotle asks “what is the function of human beings?” In response,

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{EE} II 1220 a 10-12.

\textsuperscript{127} \textit{EE} II 1219 b 35.
he analyzes those activities that are characteristic of humans rather than shared with plants or animals.128 By analyzing several activities that are characteristic of humans, he prepares the ground for the distinction between the virtues of character, the virtues of practical thinking, and the virtues of theoretical reasoning. In the EE, Aristotle asks a slightly different question, namely “what is the *ergon* (function, task, or job) of the human soul?”129 By putting things this way, he focusses on the soul as a unity. The function of the human soul, Aristotle argues, is living. “Living,” here, is one activity, just as “living well” is what ethics ultimately is about. And living, as well as living well, involves all parts of the soul. The difference between both arguments is subtle, and deserves deeper treatment than I will provide in chapter IV. For now, I only want to draw attention to the fact that Aristotle, though he distinguishes between parts of the soul, examines the function of the soul as a whole.

So far, then, we are considering a minimal unity of the virtues that resides in the unity of the soul. We can formulate a richer version of this minimal unity by attending to the soul’s hierarchical structure. As we saw, the parts of the soul co-function in a hierarchical manner; their relation is as it should be if reason commands and the ruled part listens. This is a theme to which Aristotle returns in Book VIII of the EE, that is, the book I am specifically concerned with in analyzing *kalokagathia* (*EE* VIII.1 1246 b 12 and *EE* VIII.3 1249 b 5-10). Here Aristotle describes the relation in terms of “use”: the virtue of the ruling part uses the virtue of the ruled part (*ἡ γὰρ τοῦ ἀρχοντος ἀρετὴ τῇ τοῦ ἀρχοµένου χρῆται*). We should live depending on the commander (*πρὸς τὸ ἄρχον ζῆν*). Aristotle employs the comparison with a slave and a master: we should live depending on the commander as a slave depends on the commander as a slave depends on the commander as a slave depends on

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128 *NE* I 1098 a 14.

129 *EE* II 1219 a 23-25. The Greek word, which is usually translated with function, is *ἔργον*. The Greek term conveys the idea that the *ἔργον* of something is its job, or its task.
master. He points out that human beings are composed of a part which is a commander and of a part that is commanded (συνέστηκεν ἐξ ἀρχοντὸς καὶ ἀρχομένου). The commander and the commanded parts are the two parts that partake in reason respectively by commanding and by obeying and listening, as they are described in EE II.1.

Given this relationship, it is a first and fundamental step toward virtue to have one’s commanding and obeying parts of the soul indeed in these positions—in other words, to have the general normative structure of one’s soul intact, even if imperfectly and inconsistently, as in the akratic agent who at given occasions fails to listen to what she recognizes as best. In effect, this means that even in agents who are not perfectly virtuous there is some measure of cooperation between the parts of the soul. Again, akratic agents can serve as an illustration. Though they fail to do what reason tells them is best, it is by reason that they determine what is best and they attempt to have affective attitudes that obey reason. Throughout the rest of the chapter, I will be interested in excellence that goes beyond this, indeed, in excellence of the best kind. This superlative excellence involves the fundamental ruling relation in the soul. And it involves more, namely excellent activities with respect to literally all the virtues.


130 EE VIII 1249 b 10.
4. Mutual entailment of practical wisdom and character virtues

Scholars have been greatly interested in the relation between *phronēsis* and the character virtues. In *EE V* 1145 a 1, Aristotle explicitly says that when one possesses practical wisdom, one also has all the character virtues. That is, Aristotle seems to propose the unity of the character virtues and practical wisdom. This is how the unity of the virtues in Aristotle is standardly understood. To describe this relation between character virtues and practical wisdom scholars speak of mutual entailment. That is, if an agent has practical wisdom, she has also the character virtues. The reverse is also true: if someone has the character virtues, she has practical wisdom. This is supported by material that is shared between the *EE* and the *NE*. Namely, Aristotle argues that habituation of pleasure and pain attitudes – say, the habituation relevant to acting courageously – must combine with excellence in deliberation for an agent to be fully virtuous, deciding on the right action in any given situation. In one of the so-called common books - books that the *EE* shares with the *NE* - Aristotle says:

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EE V 1144 b 18-1145 a 12.
In the domain of opinion there are two forms (cleverness and practical wisdom), so too in the domain of character there are two: the one is natural virtue and the other is virtue proper, and virtue proper requires practical wisdom. That is why some people say that the virtues are forms of practical wisdom; Socrates was in a way investigating virtue correctly, but in another way he was wrong. He was wrong in that the thought that all the virtues were forms of practical wisdom, but he was right to claim that they require practical wisdom.  

In the domain of character, Aristotle says, we can distinguish between natural virtue and virtue proper. Only virtue proper, or virtue strictly speaking, requires practical wisdom. He adds that it is not correct to think of character virtues as forms of practical wisdom, as Socrates did by arguing that all the virtues are forms of knowledge. Yet, character virtues require practical wisdom. This speaks for entailment, though not yet in favor of mutual entailment. So far we only have the claim that the character virtues require practical wisdom. Right after T4, however, it becomes clear that there is indeed mutual entailment:

(T5) It is clear from what has been said that it is not possible to be good in the proper sense without practical wisdom, nor practically wise without ethical virtue.  

Here Aristotle states that the agent who has the character virtues has also practical wisdom and vice versa. In other words, there is mutual entailment among character virtues and practical wisdom. One cannot be ethically good (that is, good in the sense of the character virtues) without practical wisdom, and one cannot be practically wise without the character virtues. T4 and T5 invoke a distinction between natural virtue and virtue in a strict

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133 EE V=NE VI 1144 b 15-22.

134 EE V=NE VI 1144 b 30-32.
The notion of natural virtues is disputed. Depending on one’s interpretation, one may think of them as the positive traits that individuals have simply by being born with a certain temperament, combined perhaps with the impact of living in a given location at a given time. At the other end of a spectrum of interpretations, one may argue that natural virtues are the character virtues as far as they can be possessed by themselves, without phronēsis. Either way, an agent possesses character virtues in the full or strict sense only if practical wisdom is also present, and the other way around. I assume that the mutual entailment of practical wisdom and character virtues is shared between the EE and the NE. T4 and T5 occur in the common books, which I consider an integral part of the EE. I now turn to two passages - T6 and T7 - one occurring in the common books and the other at the end of EE VIII. T6 and T7 speak in favor of the idea that mutual entailment is defended as a central claim also in the undisputed books of the EE:

(T6) Since we have in fact already said that one must choose the mean, and not the excess or the deficiency, and since the mean is as correct reasoning says it is, let us make some distinctions here. In all the states discussed, just as in other matters, there is a target which the rational person looks to as he intensifies and relaxes (ἐπιτείνει καὶ ἀνίησιν), and there is a defining limit (ὅρος) for the mean states, which we say lie between the excess and the deficiency, being in

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135 EE V=NE VI 1144 b 38-1145 a 1.
138 EE V=NE VI 1144 b 30.
accordance with correct reasoning (ὀρθὸν λόγον). Now this claim is true, but not at all clear.\textsuperscript{139}

(T7) Since even a doctor has a limit (ὅρος) to which he refers when determining which body is healthy and which not, and the extent to which he should perform each procedure (if it is done well the body is healthy, and if it is done too little or too much the body is not healthy) – in the same way, when dealing with actions and choices about things which are good by nature but not praiseworthy, an excellent man must have a certain limit (ὅρος) for the possession, choice and avoidance of money (how much or how little) and of the fruits of good fortune. Earlier on this was specified as being “as reasoning (λόγος) indicates.” But this is like saying in matters of nutrition that it is “as medicine and its reasoning indicate”: \textit{it is true, but not clear}.\textsuperscript{140}

T6 and T7 both address the relation between virtues of character and practical wisdom. They display a rather striking similarity of formulation and proposal. T6 occurs at the beginning of \textit{EE} V.1 (=NE VI.1). Aristotle points out that there is a \textit{horos} (limit) that determines the right measure, which is what the character virtues are about, and that is established by \textit{orthos logos}, roughly, “correct reasoning” or “right reason” as it is sometimes translated. In the paragraph that follows immediately, he argues that it is necessary to discuss \textit{orthos logos} and \textit{horos}.\textsuperscript{141} Correct reasoning understood as \textit{phronêsis} is discussed in \textit{EE} V.5. Aristotle only mentions the limit in \textit{EE} V.1 (=NE VI.1). Though he signals in T5 that more needs to be said. We have to wait until \textit{EE} VIII.3 for a discussion of the limit. This suggests that the two books - \textit{EE} V and \textit{EE} VIII - should be considered part of the same treatise (of course, this is only one of a number of relevant considerations; but it would lead astray for current purposes of pursuing the question of the unity of the \textit{EE}’s argument). Another sign of a relation between \textit{EE} V.1 and \textit{EE} VIII.3 - albeit not decisive for deciding whether the books

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{139} \textit{EE} V 1138 b 16-24: emphasis GB. On “true but not clear” see K. Vogt, \textit{Desiring the good} (New York, 2017), chapter 7; J. Moss, “Right Reason in Plato and Aristotle: on the meaning of \textit{Logos},” \textit{Phronesis}, 59 (3), 2014, pp. 181-230.\\textsuperscript{140} \textit{EE} VIII 1249 a 24-1249 b 6, emphasis GB.\\textsuperscript{141} \textit{EE} V 1138 b 35.}
In T7, Aristotle says that the excellent person adheres to a limit when she deals with things like money and good fortune, things which, in the EE, Aristotle considers good by nature. For Aristotle, actions and choices that are praiseworthy are beautiful (kala). They can be pursued without limit in the same way in which virtuous actions and choices are praiseworthy and do not require a limit. However, there are other things that are good by nature - what Aristotle calls natural goods - even though they are not praiseworthy. Natural goods - such as money and good fortune - should be pursued with a limit. And this limit is established by correct reasoning.

T6 and T7 speak in favor of a unity of phronēsis and the character virtues insofar as Aristotle says that the limit is determined by phronēsis. The two passages add a further specification to the relation between character virtues and practical wisdom: practical wisdom determines the limit. As Aristotle points out, this limit establishes the mean, which is what the character virtues are about. Character virtues and phronēsis cannot be possessed separately. Earlier we saw, in T1, that the individual virtues Aristotle takes himself to have discussed throughout the treatise and which constitute kalokagathia include the excellences of theoretical reasoning. This is what I turn to next: the way in which excellence in theoretical reasoning relates to the virtues we already analyzed. I submit that the unity of character virtues and of virtues of thinking – that is, practical and theoretical virtues - is essential in

142 EE V 1138 b 25; VIII 1249 b 5-6.

143 EE VIII 1248 b 38.

144 EE VIII 1248 b 28-31.
order to be kalos kagathos. This position – a strict unity of all the virtues – has not yet been explored in the literature.

5. Intelligence as part of the unity of the virtues

In this section, I provide evidence that the excellent agent does not only have phronēsis, but also nous (intelligence).145 My argument presupposes the following premise: if it can be demonstrated that the kalos kagathos possesses a given virtue, then this virtue belongs to the set of virtues that is included in the EE’s version of the unity of the virtues. This premise relies on the idea that I explored in section 1: kalokagathia is a whole and an on-off state. Kalokagathia is a unity of such a sort that, if kalokagathia comprises a given virtue, this virtue is part of one whole. Once my examination of how the theoretical virtues are parts of the unity is concluded, I say more regarding the particular type of unity I am considering. In EE V.13 1144 b 12, Aristotle says:

(T8) Natural states (φυσικαὶ ἔξεις) are present in children and beasts, but without intelligence (nous) they are obviously harmful. So much seems a matter of observation, that just as a strong body set blindly in motion winds up going down hard, since it can’t see where it is going, so too in this case. But if one gets intelligence to accompany natural virtues then it makes a difference in one’s actions. That is when the state of natural virtue, similar though it is, becomes virtue in the proper sense. So just as in the domain of opinion there are two forms (cleverness and practical wisdom), so too in the domain of character there are two: the one is natural virtue and the other is virtue proper, and virtue proper requires practical wisdom (phronēsis).146

Aristotle speaks about natural states: these natural states include natural virtues. Natural states without intelligence are compared to a strong-but-blind body set in motion. A weak

145 Nous refers both to a faculty and to the successful exercise of this faculty. The latter includes the state of mind that a person possesses when she successfully engages in nous-thinking. The expression “possessing nous” refers to this excellent state of mind.

146 EE V=NE VI 1144 b 8-16.
body does not do much harm, even if it blindly tumbles along. A strong body, however, will “crash and burn,” as we may paraphrase Aristotle’s expression, if it runs through the world blindly. Analogously, natural states as it were provide humans with strength. Equipped with this kind of strength, a person without intelligence will run into her own demise. Without intelligence, natural states are harmful. Intelligence is figuratively elucidated as a way of seeing - a way of moving through the world with our (mental) eyes open. Nous supplies normative guidance. It helps direct natural states toward the right aim, analogous to the way in which our eyes help us direct our movements. With respect to the character virtues, Aristotle also mentions practical wisdom. He does not offer much detail regarding the division of labor between nous and phronēsis. But we already saw that, earlier in EE V (1140 a 25-1140 b 30; 1141 a 20-1142 a 30; 1143 b 15- 1144 b 1), Aristotle addresses the multifaceted role of phronēsis in detail.

In T8, Aristotle starts out by speaking generically of natural states, and transitions to talk about a certain set of natural states, namely the natural virtues. This transition is the one clue Aristotle provides for the specification of nous’ and phronēsis’ respective roles. Namely, it would seem that intelligence guides natural states in general, including the natural virtues, while practical wisdom contributes in distinctive ways to the guidance of natural virtues. With respect to natural virtues, Aristotle says that nous “makes a difference.” Presumably, however, its contribution does not exhaust the dimensions in which virtue strictly speaking differs from natural virtue. It is here that Aristotle invokes practical wisdom,

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147 EE V=NE VI 1142 a 26.

in ways that clearly reference his more detailed, earlier discussions. His compressed reference to the distinction between cleverness and practical wisdom, for example, is plausibly taken to signal that these matters were already explored earlier.\footnote{EE V=NE VI 1144 a 25-30.}

One may object that in T8, Aristotle refers to \textit{nous} and \textit{phronēsis} in less specific senses than my proposal stipulates, perhaps even using both terms as equivalent. However, T8 is part of a larger section in \textit{EE V=NE VI}, which starts at 1143 a 27 and goes on until T8. In 1143 a 27, Aristotle says that we attribute a set of excellences of thinking - including practical wisdom and intelligence - to the same person. In 1143 a 27-1143 b 13, he discusses \textit{nous}. And he turns to a potential objection: someone may wonder what the use of the excellences of thinking is that were just analyzed (1143 b 15-30). Contemplation is not about anything in the domain of coming-into-being, and yet this is the domain where we aim to lead good lives. \textit{Phronēsis} is about things in the relevant domain; and yet mere knowledge of the just and the fine and the good does not make us perform virtuous actions. These are the sorts of objections someone may raise against the idea that the virtues of theoretical thinking contribute to an excellent human life. T8 is part of Aristotle’s response to this concern. That is, we should expect that the difference between the paradigmatically practical excellence of thinking—\textit{phronēsis}—and other virtues of thinking is on Aristotle’s mind.

On this reading, then, the task of intelligence that T8 highlights is that of, figuratively speaking, the illumination of our path in life. In less figurative terms, \textit{nous} takes on a role of normative guidance. Intelligence and practical wisdom differ in their distinctive contributions and in their scope. In the practical sphere, intelligence is concerned with natural states relevant to human life in general, including the natural virtues. Practical wisdom operates
more specifically in the domain of the natural virtues. For present purposes, we can consider
this hypothesis, one that fits well with Aristotle’s earlier discussions in EE V and that remains
close to the text in T8, and yet still only a hypothesis, given that T8 does not provide as much
detail as we may look for.

The important point, however, is that *nous* operates not only in the theoretical, but also
in the practical domain. So much seems clear. Moreover, this upshot is continuous with
Aristotle’s discussion just a few paragraphs earlier. In his discussion of *nous* as one of the
excellences of thinking, he says that *nous* is “concerned with things that come last in both
directions” (καὶ ὁ νοῦς τῶν ἐσχάτων ἐπ’ ἄμφοτέρα, 1143a35-36). Setting aside how
precisely we are to understand *nous’* concern with what “comes last,” we can invoke this
passage as evidence for our *demonstrandum*, namely that *nous* is an interrelated part of the
virtues that the EE’s best person possesses. The two directions Aristotle addresses represent
*nous’* work in the theoretical and in the practical sphere, or in other words, its concern with
what comes first in demonstrations, and what comes last in practical reasoning. If *nous* has a
distinctive role in practical reasoning, it should be uncontroversial that the best agent must
possess it.

6. *Sophia* and *epistêmê* as part of the unity of the virtues

By now we have seen that *kalokagathia* includes not only the character virtues and
*phronêsis*, but also *nous*. To fill out the picture further, in agreement with my reading of T1,
we need to turn now to the remaining theoretical excellences. We need to consider the roles
that *sophia* and *epistêmê* play in superlative virtue, both in their own right and as they relate

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150 In an enigmatic chapter of the *Posterior Analytics*, II.19, Aristotle says that *nous* enables us to grasp
principles. *Nous* is the only cognitive disposition or faculty (another question that is too large for now) that is
truer and more accurate than *epistêmê* (100b5-17).
to *nous*. If my argument so far is compelling, these excellences are also part of *kalokagathia* and hence of the unity of the virtues as Aristotle conceives of it in the *EE*. To elucidate this claim, let me make a fundamental observation. *NE VI*, the famous book on the virtues of thinking, appears in a different light if we read it as an integral part of the *EE* - that is, if we read it as *EE V*, a book of the *EE* that builds upon earlier discussions in the treatise and that is a stepping stone toward Aristotle’s conclusions in *EE VIII*. With the preparation of the books leading up to *EE V*, and given the way the *EE* continues, we have every reason to assume that all virtues of thinking that are discussed in *EE V* are part of *kalokagathia*. This follows from the very first interpretive premise established in this chapter. T1, I argued, says that all excellences discussed in the treatise so far are part of *kalokagathia*. And all excellences of thinking, as discussed in *EE V*, are some of the individual virtues which, at the end of the book, are said to be parts of *kalokagathia*.

Given this approach, let me offer a minimal characterization of *epistêmê* and *sophia* as they are discussed in *EE V*. In *EE V.12*, Aristotle explicitly states that *sophia* is part of complete virtue.

(T9) These states [that is, theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom; GB] must be choiceworthy in their own right, since each is certainly the virtue of its own part of the soul, even if neither of them accomplishes anything. Next, they do indeed accomplish things, not in the way that medical knowledge brings about health but in the way that health does. That is how theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) causes happiness, since theoretical wisdom is a part of complete virtue and by being possessed and by being active it makes a person happy.\(^1\)

Here Aristotle introduces a distinction between two ways in which something can be productive of something, or in other words, accomplish something. His comparandum is, again, health. Medicine brings about health in one way; in another way, health brings about

\(^1\) *EE V* 1144 a 2-9.
health. What does this mean? If someone is sick, medicine can produce health. If someone is healthy, however, then it is in the nature of being healthy that health sustains itself. In that sense, health brings about health. This is the very sense, according to T9, in which theoretical and practical wisdom are productive. They are ways of being active which sustain themselves. And hence it is not just true to say that they bring about themselves; qua excellent activities, they bring about happiness. At the conclusion of this line of thought, Aristotle makes the claim that interests us here: *sophia* is part of complete virtue. In other words, and in the terms supplied by *EE* VIII, *sophia* is part of *kalokagathia*.

In *EE* V.7 1141 a 19, Aristotle argues that *sophia* is the most exact form of knowledge insofar as it includes *epistêmê* and *nous*. Hence, an agent who has *sophia*, also has *epistêmê* and *nous*. That is, insofar as *kalokagathia* comprises *sophia*, it comprises also *epistêmê* and *nous*. This provides us with the conclusion that, all along, was my demonstrandum: superlative virtue as the *EE* conceives of it comprises the virtues of character, practical wisdom, and the virtues of theoretical reasoning.

Let me sum up what type of unity is the unity of the virtues examined so far. As I have already anticipated, there is a minimal way of understanding this unity according to which the unity of the virtues is a unity of the parts of the soul. Going beyond this minimal reading, the unity of the virtues is a hierarchical structure in which the virtues of thinking command and direct the virtues of character. In this hierarchical structure, which is a whole, the interaction goes both ways: it is true that the virtues of thinking command and direct the virtues of character, but these virtues cannot function at the best if the virtues of character are not

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153 *EE* V 1141 a 19-20.
present. This is clear if we look at the relation of mutual entailment between virtues of character and practical wisdom, but also if we examine how intelligence uses and directs the character virtues. As I show in the next section, also among the virtues of thinking there is cooperation and co-functioning. In this sense, the unity of the virtues is hierarchically structured and it is a unity in which the virtues co-function.

7. Theoretical and practical wisdom

Finally, let me turn to the relation between sophia and phronēsis. We already know that both belong to kalokagathia. Their relation, however, deserves special attention, if only because Aristotle famously refers to some early Greek thinkers as theoretically-but-not-practically wise. Though the evidence examined so far clearly supports that both practical and theoretical wisdom are part of kalokagathia, we must consider whether these practically unwise early thinkers pose a problem for my interpretation. Consider, then, how Aristotle describes the relation between phronēsis and sophia.

(T10) (Phronēsis) is certainly not authoritative over theoretical wisdom (sophia) nor over the better part of the soul, in the same way that medicine is not authoritative over health, since it does not make use of it but rather sees to it that it should come to be. It gives order for its sake but does not give orders to it.154

(T11) Since human beings too are by nature composed of a commander and a commanded, each person would also have to live with reference to his own commanding element. This has two aspects. For the art of medicine and health are commanding elements in different ways (the former is for the sake of the latter). This is how it is with regard to the theoretical capacity. The divine is not a

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commander in the sense of giving orders but as that for the sake of which practical wisdom (phronēsis) gives orders.\textsuperscript{155}

T10 is part of the common books and thus it occurs also in the NE. T11 occurs at the end of EE VIII in the discussion of kalokagathia. In both passages, Aristotle says that phronēsis gives orders (ἐπιτάττει) for the sake of the capacity of theoretical thought.\textsuperscript{156} Phronēsis prepares the ground for the sake of sophia. Phronēsis is excellence in deliberation: for example, by deliberating well, the agent succeeds in organizing her life so that she has time and energy for contemplation. In this sense, phronēsis orders for the sake of sophia. Insofar as these excellences are parts of a whole, for the whole to function well, sophia and phronēsis need to interact. T10 and T11 suggest that, when the agent possesses these two virtues, phronēsis co-functions with sophia, rather than only with the virtues of character. The passages provide evidence of the unity of the virtues of thinking insofar as Aristotle argues that sophia and phronēsis work together and are necessary for each other to function at their best. This applies, by extension, also to epistêmē, given that Aristotle says in EE V.7 1141 a 20 that sophia includes epistêmē. In the superlatively excellent agent, sophia-cum-epistêmē cooperate with phronēsis.

This reading meets two criteria. First, it elucidates how the virtues of practical and theoretical thinking interact if they do. That is, in the best agent, the agent who possesses kalokagathia, phronēsis and theoretical excellences interrelate in the way sketched above. Second, it leaves space for the case where this interaction fails to take place, or fails to take place to a relevant degree, because the agent has phronēsis, but does not have sophia. Recall,

\textsuperscript{155} EE VIII 1249 b 10-15: emphasis GB.

\textsuperscript{156} In T11, Aristotle does not explicitly mention sophia. “Theoretical capacity” translates the Greek term to theoretikon. In Magna Moralia 1198 b 12-18, Aristotle says that phronēsis is the steward (epitropos) of sophia. Phronēsis promotes leisure for the master.
the EE’s unity of the virtues as I conceive of it does not say that for a person to have any of the virtues, she must have all of them. Instead, the claim is significantly more modest. If a person has *kalokagathia*—if she has superlative virtue—then she has all virtues in such a way that they form a unity. This permits a wide range of agents, some of whom will have practical wisdom while not developing their capacities for theoretical reasoning to the level of excellence. In such a case, *phronësis* functions without *sophia*. That is, in this case not only the level of excellence in practical thinking is lower. The very tasks that *phronësis* takes on in the less-than-perfect agent differs from those it has in the best case, where *phronësis* cooperates with *sophia*. If the agent is not theoretically wise, it is not the task of her practical wisdom to order for the sake of *sophia*. That is, there can be cases in which the two virtues do not interact because the agent develops and uses one virtue, but not the other. Of course, this is not the ideal case and we can see that in this case practical wisdom falls short. For in the ideal case, practical wisdom comes up with a conception of a good human life that recognizes the high value of theorizing, to the effect that the agent strives to become an accomplished theorizer. In the best case, then, when the agent uses both virtues, they co-function and they interact in the way described in T10 and T11.\(^{157}\)

But what about the objection I mentioned at the outset of this section? In *EE* V.7 1141 b 5-6, Aristotle claims that people say that Anaxagoras and Thales have *sophia*, but they do not have *phronësis*.

\(^{157}\) The same reference to a commanding element that is authoritative and rules on other elements can be found in Plato’s *Protagoras* 352 a-d.
that are exceptional, amazing, difficult and divine - though useless, because what
they seek are not human goods. 158

Does the passage suggest that one can be excellent in theoretical thinking without
having practical wisdom and the virtues of character? First of all, in the passage, Aristotle
seems to report a common opinion. For this reason we cannot conclude that this is Aristotle’s
view. Second, Aristotle suggests that Anaxagoras and Thales have *sophia* in a qualified sense.

In *EE* V.5 1140 a 29, Aristotle says that people can be practically wise in relation to a
particular aspect (πρός τί); alternatively, they can be practically wise in general (ὅλος). A
similar distinction seems to apply here: one can be *sophos* in relation to a particular aspect -
and this is the case of Anaxagoras and Thales - and not *sophos* in general. *EE* V 1141.7 a 9
further supports this reading. In this passage, Aristotle states that Pheidias and Polykleitos are
considered *sophoi*. He explains that the term *sophoi* refers in this case to the fact that they are
excellent in what they do, namely in doing sculptures. Aristotle points out that in this case,
*sophia* refers to *aretê teknês*. 159 He says that it is possible to distinguish someone who is
*sophos* in relation to a particular aspect (κατὰ µέρος) from someone who is *sophos* in general
(ὅλος). When the agent is *kalos kagathos*, the inter-relation between the individual virtues
influences the individual activities of the virtues. In isolation, a given virtue functions
differently from the way in which it functions when it is an integrated part of co-functioning
virtues that form a whole. For example and as we saw, *phronēsis* does not have the same
tasks when it co-functions with *sophia* and when it functions alone. When it co-functions
with *sophia*, *phronēsis* prescribes for the sake of *sophia*.

158 *EE* V=NE VI 1141 b 3-8.

159 *EE* V=NE VI 1141 a 12.
My argument regarding the role of the virtues of thinking for the unity of the virtues has implications for how we read *EE V* = *NE VI*, as I announced at the beginning of this section. If my argument is compelling, we should expect that *EE V* discusses a set of interrelated excellences of thinking. *EE V* is standardly read as a series of discussions of virtues of thinking. Nevertheless, I submit that we should call this standard reading into question, at least with respect to core virtues of practical and theoretical thought, setting aside for now, for example, how technē fits into the picture. If we read *EE V* together with *EE VIII*, *EE V* offers more than accounts of individual virtues of thinking. The text lays out how excellences of practical and theoretical thought interrelate and co-function. In other words, it explains the different parts that form *kalokagathia*. This view, I propose, is suggested by reading *EE V* conjointly with *EE VIII.3* (and in general with the rest of the *EE*), where Aristotle discusses the superexcellence that includes all the virtues discussed in the treatise: *kalokagathia*.

What is more, once we read *EE V* in this light a more specific hypothesis emerges: *EE V* can be read as a discussion of the limit of *kalokagathia*. The notion of limit - ὄρος - is introduced at the beginning of *EE V.1* 1138 b 23 and at 1138 b 34. It is mentioned again in *EE VIII.3* 1249 b 16-25. In *EE VIII.3* 1249 b 16-25, Aristotle states that the so-called limit of *kalokagathia* is being as little aware of the irrational part of the soul as possible. At the limit, the thought goes, *kalokagathia* is the state of mind that best makes room for and best supports excellence in contemplative activity. This requires that the irrational part of the soul does not disturb us—that we are not the kinds of thinkers who continually take breaks for yet another cup of tea, and so on—and more generally, that the irrational part collaborates in the best possible way with the rational part. As Aristotle argues in *EE VIII.3* 1249 b 16-25, the best conditions to contemplate include also the possession of certain natural goods in a certain
amount, in addition to the absence of distraction caused by the irrational part of the soul. The double occurrence of the notion of limit (ὄρος) at the beginning of EE V.1 and at the end of EE VIII.3 suggests that we should explore this line of thought, and read EE V as a continuous account of interacting excellences, which in sum constitute the parts of kalokagathia that involve excellence in thinking.¹⁶⁰

I take myself to have shown that the kalos kagathos has all the virtues in such a way that these virtues interrelate. The texts cited support, in sum, the following reading: each of the virtues, if in place, influence the natures and activities of the other virtues. An ever more fundamental relation holds between the virtues of character on the one hand and the virtues of thinking on the other. As we saw in section 2, their relationship partly resides in the fact that the parts of the soul are parts of one soul. Insofar as the parts of the soul are interrelated, the activities of their parts interrelate too. Moreover, insofar as the parts of the soul are hierarchically ordered, there is a hierarchy between the virtues associated with these parts. Given this hierarchy, there is a relation of obedience and command, and in other words, a relation of dependence: even in the imperfect case, the character virtues need guidance from the virtues of thinking.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that the best agent of the EE is the kalos kagathos. This agent differs in fundamental ways from the phronimos, namely from the best agent as standardly understood by scholars who focus on the NE. In the EE, Aristotle puts forward a conception of superlative excellence: kalokagathia. The best person is the kalos kagathos. Her excellence is a unity with parts—the parts are all the virtues as discussed throughout the EE. With this

¹⁶⁰ We can assume that technē is part of the unity insofar as Aristotle says in T1 that kalokagathia includes all the virtues discussed so far, and this includes technē. An examination of technē as this virtue is discussed outside of the ethical treatises may shed light on the question, but it would go beyond present purposes.
proposal, Aristotle defends a version of the unity of the virtues that is stronger and more comprehensive than the unity of the virtues in the *NE*. On the view that I defended in the chapter, *EE* and *NE* share a commitment: the virtues of character and practical wisdom mutually entail each other. In other words, a person only possesses one of them fully if she also possesses the other. However, the scope of the unity of the virtues in the *EE* is larger than in the *NE*. The *kalos kagathos* possesses all the virtues, comprising also the virtues of theoretical thinking.

With this proposal, I aim to shed light on core aspects of the ethical theory that Aristotle develops in the *EE*. Though scholars have recently started to work on the *EE* in its own right, this treatise is still less widely studied than the *NE*. Given the argument I advanced, the book that is standardly known as *NE VI*—and that is also part of the *EE*, namely as book V—appears in a different light. *EE V* analyzes the virtues of thinking. If *EE V* relates to *EE VIII* in the ways I propose, then *EE V* does not “simply” offer a series of analyses of particular virtues of thinking. Rather, *EE V* analyzes particular virtues that ultimately are parts of a unified superlative excellence. I have not exhausted the implications of this shift in perspective. But I hope to have illuminated some of the ways in which the *kalos kagathos* is a distinctive ethical ideal, and a highly ambitious one.
CHAPTER THREE
Natural Goods Naturalism in the *Eudemian Ethics*

Scholars read Aristotle’s ethics, more often than not, as a form of naturalism. In the literature, Aristotle’s ethics is characterized as naturalistic for example because there are connections between Aristotle’s ethics and physics. Others take Aristotle to be a naturalist because his ethics starts from a premise about human psychology, namely that human beings desire happiness and happiness is the final goal of human life. Yet others argue that Aristotle’s ethics is naturalistic because for Aristotle, the human function is connected to the human essence, which is a whole and a system; because of the teleological structure of his ethics, including the claim that human beings have a function; and because of the idea that there is a life-form proper to human beings, a life-form that can be contrasted with that of other animals. Each of these proposals has some contentious aspects. Moreover, for the most part they are not pursued separately. Instead, philosophers often aim to combine some of the ideas relevant to these four lines of thought, while steering clear of others.

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In this chapter, I ask whether the EE develops an outlook that adds to the routes Aristotelian naturalists can explore. In short, my answer is yes. The EE operates with a notion of natural goods, and thereby lays out a distinctive naturalist view. This view, which I call Natural Goods Naturalism (NGN), shares ideas with other formulations of Aristotelian naturalism. NGN endorses basic premises that are familiar from other versions of Aristotelian naturalism. Specifically, it shares the appeal to a human ἔργον - something we do, a work or job, translated in unsatisfactory and yet deeply ingrained ways as “function” - and it shares a commitment to not appealing to anything supernatural in one’s account of the good and the bad. It goes beyond other versions of naturalism, however, by developing these ideas with a view to Aristotle’s notion of natural goods (τὰ φύσει ἀγαθά). Natural goods, as I interpret this notion, are natural insofar as they are good for human beings as we are by nature; and they are good insofar as they help fulfill the function of the human soul at the best, which is living a happy life. Natural goods, my argument continues, are good for what I call the human being in a standard state - that is, an adult, healthy human being in normal conditions. The notion of the agent in a standard state captures desiderative attitudes that are characteristically human: human beings in the standard state desire natural goods. At the same time, this notion captures a normative dimension that Aristotle expresses in two idiomatic terms: how human beings are for the most part and how they are by nature.

In the Aristotelian corpus, the expression “natural goods” figures only in the EE, where it occurs eight times.\textsuperscript{166} Aristotle speaks of natural goods once in the NE\textsuperscript{167} and once in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{166} EE, 1237 b 31, 1238 a 17, 1248 b 27, 1248 b 40, 1249 a 1, 1249 a 7, 1249 a 26, 1249 b 17.
\item\textsuperscript{167} NE, 1169 b 20.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Rhetoric, but he does not discuss this notion or employ it in ways that are crucial to his theorizing. In the EE, I submit, the notion of natural goods plays a fundamental role. If there were “merely” eight occurrences, this might appear too far-reaching a claim. However, natural goods figure prominently in the final part of the EE, where Aristotle discusses καλοκἀγαθία, the most complete virtue, and θεωρία, contemplation. That is, Aristotle employs the notion of natural goods in a section of the treatise that is of great importance, namely insofar as it sums up the EE’s ethical outlook by exploring the highest kind of excellence and best kind of activity. Moreover, I argue that natural goods and simpliciter-goods (τὰ ἀπλῶς ἀγαθά) are the same. The notion of simpliciter-goods occurs frequently in the text. If simpliciter-goods are identified with natural goods, this is all the more reason to attend to the latter notion.

Far more scholarly work has explored the NE than the EE and its particular ethical outlook. Aristotle’s conception of natural goods in the EE is exemplary of this trend; so far, there is little analysis devoted to it. Moreover, the EE’s conception of natural goods is especially hard to understand. Other themes of the EE at least have parallels in the NE. Aristotle’s conception of natural goods cannot be reconstructed by comparing it to corresponding discussions elsewhere. Thus, though scholars such as Sarah Broadie recognize that this is an interesting notion, it is still largely unexplored.169

The first step in my argument is to posit an hypothesis: that natural goods are simpliciter-goods (section 1). I then discuss what natural goods are (section 2), and for whom they are good (section 3). Next I explore the distinction between relative goodness and good-

168 Rhetoric, 1366 b 38.

for (section 4) and propose a minimal account of the notion of the agent in a standard state (section 5). To elucidate the idea of a standard state, I introduce the technical notion of “for the most part regularities” and explain how it relates to Aristotle’s notion of something being “by nature” (section 6). In conclusion and based on these analyses, I offer a comprehensive formulation of Natural Goods Naturalism (section 7).

1. Natural goods are simpliciter-goods

The first step in my analysis of the notion of natural goods is to posit an hypothesis, namely that we can identify τὰ φύσει ἀγαθά - natural goods - and τὰ ἀπλῶς ἀγαθά, which I translate as simpliciter-goods. The notion of simpliciter-goods is familiar to the reader of the NE, though its interpretation is contested. However, simpliciter-goods are mostly mentioned in the so-called common books, books that the NE shares with the EE (NE V-VI-VII= EE IV-V-VI). They show up only two times in the NE outside of the common books. That is, even though this notion is familiar via the study of the NE, it is plausibly considered an integral part of the EE. Together with a growing number of scholars, I consider the common books as originally written for the EE. As we will see toward the end of the chapter, close analysis of the passages that discuss natural goods and simpliciter-goods shows that the two expressions are used equivalently. In effect, this means that the reconstruction of the EE’s conception of natural goods can help us understand a notion that has been controversial in the context of interpreting the NE.

170 τὰ ἀπλῶς ἀγαθά appears eleven times in the Eudemian Ethics (1235 b 32, 1236 b 37, 1236 b 39, 1237 a 5, 1237 a 13, 1237 a 17, 1237 a 32, 1238 b 7, 1249 a 12, 1249 a 18, 1249 b 25), five in Magna Moralia, six in the common books of the Nicomachean Ethics (1129 b 3, 1129 b 5, 1134 a 34, 1134 a 4, 1134 b 27, 1137 a 26, 1152 b 27), two times in the NE outside of the common books (1155 b 25, 1157 b 27), once in the Rhetoric (1366 a 23), and once in the Politics (1332 a 23).
The passages that show that Aristotle uses the two expressions interchangeably, however, are dense and speak to a number of issues that I will unpack step by step as I go along. Aristotle explicates both notions - natural goods and simpliciter-goods - by specifying for whom these goods are good, or in another formulation, for whom they are beneficial. Though in other contexts we may want to address the nuances of both notions, for current purposes I shall stipulate that the good is the beneficial. In the passages that interest us, Aristotle often speaks of what is good for some people, and he expresses this idea in a range of interrelated terms, including terms that are well-translated as “beneficial” (συμφέρον). Once we look more closely at who is the agent for whom these goods are good, we realize that simpliciter-goods and natural goods are the same: namely, these goods - simpliciter-goods and natural goods - are good for human beings as human beings are by nature. In EE VII 1235 b 33-1236 a 3, Aristotle says that what is simpliciter-good is what is good for a healthy body, for someone who is not drunk, and for adults. These are the conditions in which the agents need to be in order for natural goods to be good for them. Though I postpone discussion of other texts, let me adduce one passage from EE VII.2 where Aristotle explicitly identifies simpliciter-goods and natural goods.

(T1) What is not good for oneself is nothing to oneself, but what we are seeking is this, that what is good simpliciter should be good in this way. For what is good simpliciter is worth choosing and what is good for oneself is worth choosing for oneself. These things should harmonize and that is what virtue brings about. Political expertise is in charge of this process, so that those not yet in this state will acquire it. As a human being, one is well placed to make progress (for things good simpliciter are by nature good for a human being).  


172 Eudemian Ethics, 1236 b 36-1237 a 4: καὶ τὸ μὴ αὐτῷ ἀγαθὸν οὐθὲν πρὸς αὐτὸν, ἀλλὰ τούτ᾽ ἐστιν ὁ ζητεῖται, τὰ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθὰ οὔτως εἰναι ἀγαθά. ἐστι γὰρ αἱρετῶν μέν τὸ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθόν, αὐτῷ δὲ τὸ αὐτῷ ἀγαθόν: ἢ δέ τι συμφωνήσαι, καὶ τοῦτο ἢ ἀρετὴ ποιεῖ: καὶ ἡ πολιτικὴ ἐπὶ τούτῳ, ὅπως οἱς μήπω ἐστί γένηται. εὐθέτος δὲ καὶ πρὸ ὀδὸν ἀνθρώπου ὃν (φύσει γὰρ αὐτῷ ἀγαθὰ τὰ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθά).
Before we address the larger claims in this passage, let me restate the last phrase. *Simpliciter*-goods are by nature good for human beings, and that is, they are natural goods. In a sense, the rest of the passage does not matter for present purposes. I will elucidate it only to the extent that is needed here, namely, to support the idea that we can invoke T1 as evidence for the identity of *simpliciter*-goods and natural goods.

Aristotle says that what is not good for a given agent is “nothing for her.” Minimally, this confirms the relational nature of goodness. When we ask what is good, we are concerned with what is good for agents. What we are seeking, then, is not the sort of thing that does not stand in any kind of relation to us. Instead, we are seeking that which is good for us, and that is, what Aristotle takes to be good-*simpliciter*. The identity of what is good for us and what is good-*simpliciter* is supported, in Aristotle’s next sentence, by the fact that both are what is worth choosing. Note further that Aristotle conceives of what is and isn’t something “for us” in desiderative terms. What is nothing for an agent is not worth choosing for her; what is something for us—or good for us—is the kind of thing that is worth choosing.

And yet people can be in conditions where what is good-*simpliciter* is not good for them. One of the aims of political expertise is to make the good-*simpliciter* good for the individuals in the community. We need to be in certain conditions in order for the good-*simpliciter* to be good for us. Political expertise takes into account these conditions and how human beings are: Aristotle says that human beings are “well placed” to make this kind of progress. This is so because goods-*simpliciter* are natural goods, namely because these goods are goods for human beings provided that we are in certain conditions. All this is in great need of further elucidation. But for now we should only note that Aristotle seems to identify natural goods and goods-*simpliciter*.
2. Natural goods, dependent goods and external goods

My hypothesis so far is that natural goods are the same thing as goods-simpliciter. In order to establish what natural goods are, we need a list. This list need not be exhaustive, but it should be sufficiently complete to provide us with paradigmatic examples. We also need to ask how the goodness of these goods is to be understood; what, in other words, their metaphysics is. Let’s look first at the list. In EE VIII.2, Aristotle says that honor, wealth, bodily excellences, good fortune and power (dunameis) are natural goods.\textsuperscript{173}

(T2) For the goods we fight for and those which are thought to be greatest (honor, wealth, the bodily excellences, good fortune and power) are good by nature, but they can be harmful to some people because of their dispositions.\textsuperscript{174}

Assuming that the goods listed here are paradigmatic natural goods, we can ask how we should think of the metaphysics of these goods. Not any kind of good is a natural good. In T2, Aristotle ascribes two desiderative properties, as we may put this, to natural goods: we fight for them, and we consider them the greatest. These two specifications offer criteria for detecting what counts as a natural good: a natural good is typically desired by human beings to the point that we even fight for them. And it belongs to the goods characteristically considered to be the greatest goods for a good human life. This desiderative side of natural goods will occupy us in detail later. For now, I want to make a minimal observation. What counts as a natural good has to be determined via a relation between the particular good we are considering - honor, wealth, and so forth - and the motivations and attitudes of the agent. It is thus fundamental to understand what features this agent has.

\textsuperscript{173} The Greek term is plural. However, the translation in the singular better captures the Greek term. Cf. Inwood and Woolf translate “power;” Donini translates “la potenza.”

\textsuperscript{174} Eudemian Ethics, 1248 b 29: τὰ γὰρ περιμένοντα και μέγιστα εἶναι δοκοῦντα ἀγαθά, τιμή καὶ πλουτὸς καὶ σέματος ἄρεται καὶ εὐτυχία καὶ δύναμες, ἀγαθὰ μὲν φύσει ἐστίν, ἐνδέχεται δὲ εἶναι ἐβλαβερὰ τις διὰ τὰς ξένες.
This brings us to the metaphysics of natural goods. In brief, their metaphysics is relational. This means that non-relational reconstructions are not compelling. It also means that the crux of my interpretation will lie in how precisely the relevant relation is to be understood. Let me introduce six ways in which one may conceive of natural goods. (1) and (2) may come to mind because they are familiar from discussions of Plato’s and Aristotle’s ethics. (3)-(5) have been defended with respect to the NE. And (6) is the interpretation that I propose:

(1) What is good-\textit{simpliciter}, and that is, the natural good, is good only if used with wisdom.

(2) What is good-\textit{simpliciter}, and that is, the natural good, is what Aristotle calls external good.

(3) What is good-\textit{simpliciter}, and that is, the natural good, is the absolute good, and that is, the good in a sense that is not relative to any person or kind of person, but that is good insofar as, using an expression of Korsgaard, it “makes the world a better place.”\textsuperscript{175}

(4) What is good-\textit{simpliciter}, and that is, the natural good, is the good for the particular individual (τινί).

(5) What is good-\textit{simpliciter}, and that is, the natural good, is the good as seen by the \textit{phronimos} or by the \textit{kalos kagathos}, and thus, the good-for or good relative to the best agent.

(6) What is good-\textit{simpliciter}, and that is, the natural good, is the good for the human being in a standard state, namely for an adult, healthy individual in normal conditions.

Options (1) and (2) draw on traditional conceptions familiar from the discussion of Greek ethics; I discuss them in this section. Options (3), (4), (5) and (6) have an important common feature: they ask whether the *simpliciter*-good and natural good (assuming both are the same) are good for specific persons; I discuss these options in the next section. (3) is not a serious option, simply because the notion of natural goods involves a good-for relation. What natural goods are is determined, in part, by who they are good for. And yet it is helpful to consider (3), because natural goods are goods of a quite fundamental kind, and here it might be tempting to think of absolute goodness—but we shall see that this would be a misunderstanding. (4) is easily refuted as Aristotle says that what is good-*simpliciter* is not what is good for the particular individual, but I say more below. (5) and (6) are, as we will see, the most serious contenders for getting things right. Here the thought that natural goods are good for certain agents is explored. The crucial question, then, will be to specify how we ought to conceive of these agents.

Let us start, however, with option (1). Given the list of goods in T2, and in the light of modes of argument that are familiar from Plato, one may suspect that natural goods are conditions or states of affairs that can be both good and harmful. For example, according to the *Euthydemus*, so-called goods are only good and beneficial when used with wisdom.\(^{176}\) Applied to Aristotle’s notion of natural goods, this would mean that natural goods are beneficial and harmful in a derivative and conditional fashion - if used with wisdom, or if used foolishly. Call this the Dependent Goods Interpretation. However, Aristotle does not say that natural goods are harmful if not used with wisdom. Instead the criterion he advances is that these things can be harmful for someone in a given disposition (and once we see, below,

\(^{176}\) *Euthydemus*, 278e3–281e.
how he conceives of the standard state, we also see what would be involved in significant
departure from this state).

Alternatively, at least some items on the list may suggest that what Aristotle discusses
here are what are elsewhere called external goods (2). The Peripatetic tradition considers
Aristotle’s division among external goods, goods of the soul, and goods of the body a
cornerstone of his ethics.\(^{177}\) Goods of the body are goods that pertain to one’s physical
condition: for example, health, bodily excellence, and strength. Goods of the soul include the
virtues and knowledge, and arguably all activities of the soul relevant to a well-lived human
life. External goods are goods that do not belong to our body or to our soul. Wealth and
political power can count as examples.\(^{178}\) In spite of the prevalence of this tripartition in later
Aristotelian authors, Aristotle himself is rather tentative in his classifications. Some goods
seem to show up in two classes. For example, friendship can appear to be a good of the soul
on the one hand, and an external good on the other hand. From the point of view of Aristotle’s
theorizing, this seems just fine, for he distinguishes between kinds of friendship. However, it
just does not seem that it is a primary concern of his to neatly categorize each good as falling
into one of the three classes. Moreover and more importantly, the notion of natural goods cuts
across the distinction among external goods, goods of the soul, and goods of the body.

The proposal that natural goods are external goods, however, can also be developed by
reference to a bipartite (as opposed to tripartite) distinction. On this approach, we take all
goods to fall into two classes. Everything soul-related counts as “internal,” and everything

\(^{177}\) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1098 b 13; T. Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, OUP, 2007, p. 144; B.
epistemology and logic*, OUP, 2014, pp. 256-279.

\(^{178}\) *NE* 1099 a 31–b 8, 1100 a 18–21, 1123 b 17–22. See also *Rhetoric* 1 5–6.

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that is not soul-related as external. Broadie argues that natural goods are external goods in this sense.  

This interpretation, however, undersells the very notion of nature that Aristotle applies. Natural goods, as I shall argue, are such that they speak to our nature; we have characteristic desiderative attitudes to them. If we put things this way, it becomes clear that not only the internal-bodily-external distinction, but also the internal-external distinction is an ill fit for the notion of natural goods. Our nature as human beings includes physiological and psychological dimensions. And insofar as natural goods are defined as relative to our nature, their domain cuts across the internal-external distinction.

In addition to these arguments that specifically refute the Dependent Goods Interpretation and the External Goods Interpretation, here is a consideration that speaks conjointly against both. Neither of them is plausible if, as hypothetically proposed, Aristotle identifies what is naturally good and what is good *simpliciter* (ἀπλῶς). This should suffice to show that natural goods are not dependent or derivative. Moreover, *simpliciter*-goods are a mix of external goods, goods of the body and soul-related goods. T2 shows that wealth - a paradigmatic external good - is a natural good, as well as bodily excellence and honor - which may be considered goods related to the body and to the soul. Natural goods include goods of all these kinds: bodily-related goods, soul-related goods, and natural goods. But

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179 If we stipulate a bipartite (rather than tripartite) distinction, according to which everything soul-related falls into one class and everything that is external to the soul into another class, natural goods may seem to be external goods. Cf. S. Broadie, *The good, the noble and the theoretical in Eudemian Ethics VIII.3*, in *Mind, Method, and Morality*, J. Cottingham, Oxford University Press, 2010. But as will become clear, even though this classification is possible, Aristotle does not discuss natural goods as we would expect him to discuss external goods, precisely because natural goods include also goods of the soul and goods of the body.
what are the natural goods if they are not, either, mere dependent goods in the sense familiar from Plato, where health used with wisdom is good; or, alternatively, external goods?180

3. Who are natural goods good for?

Now that we have excluded options (1) and (2), let’s look at options (3)-(6). They are more fundamental than (1) and (2), for they ask a question that is crucial for the interpretation of Aristotle’s ethics: they ask who these goods are good for. According to (3), natural goods are absolute goods. That is, (3) asks who these goods are good for in the negative sense that, according to (3), there is no such restriction. “Absolute” here contrasts with relative, though not with “relative” in the sense of relativism; rather, it contrasts with the idea that there is a relatum, to the effect that what is good is good by being good for someone or something. Absolute goods, the thought goes, are good in every circumstance and for everyone (for further discussion of the distinction between absolute good on one hand, and good-for and relative goodness on the other hand, see section 4). However, there is evidence that natural goods are not good in every circumstance and absolutely. First of all, Aristotle says that natural goods can be harmful for certain people (T2). Hence, whatever else needs to be said it is clear that they are not good for everyone. The agent must meet certain conditions in order to benefit from natural goods. Second, Aristotle says that natural goods are a particular kind of good-for insofar as they are good for human beings (T1). This provides a preliminary account of the relevant relatum: natural goods are good for human beings. This is in need of further specification, as we will see in a moment, because natural goods are good for human beings in certain conditions. One thing, however, is clear: natural goods are not absolute

180 In Nicomachean Ethics 1098 b 12-17, Aristotle divides the goods in external goods (wealth, power, honor, friends,…), goods of the body (health, physical strength, beautiful appearance,…), and goods of the soul (virtue, knowledge,…). Monan (1968) argues that EE VIII 3 is an effort to express the relationship between external goods and the goods of the soul, namely both character virtues and virtues of thought, which form kalokagathia.
goods because they are not good for an animal or for a divine being, but they are good only for specific relata.

Let’s move to (4), the option that natural goods are good for a particular individual. This option has prima facie little plausibility. The very notion of “natural” goods indicates that we are talking at a greater level of generality or of fundamentality, or both. For reasons of completeness, however, I consider also this option. After all, the aim here is to think through the range of conceivable relata of the natural good. (4) is, as it were, a minimal step away from (3), the absolutist reading. Rather than move immediately to the ideal person (5) or some group of persons (6), (3) stipulates that natural goods are good relative just to any particular person. Along the same lines, Aristotle seems to be interested in thinking through the various relata one can imagine for a relative notion of goodness; he addresses the contrast between what is good for a particular person (τινι) and what is good-\emph{simpliciter} in EE VII.2:

\begin{quote}
(T3) For what is good for an individual and what is good-\emph{simpliciter} are distinct, and it is the same for states of character as it is with the useful: what is useful \emph{simpliciter} is different from what is useful for particular individuals, just as training is different from being treated by drugs. So too for the state of character (human virtue). Suppose that human beings are excellent by nature; the virtue of someone who is excellent by nature is good-\emph{simpliciter}, but the virtue of someone who isn’t is good only for himself. It is also the same for the pleasant.\footnote{Eudemian Ethics, 1237 a 13-19: \textit{διχῶς γὰρ ἔχει τὸ τοιδὶ ἄγαθὸν καὶ ἀπλῶς ἄγαθὸν. καὶ ὁμοίως ὅσπερ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὠφελίμου, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἔξεον. ἄλλο γὰρ τὸ ἀπλῶς ὠφελίμων καὶ τὸ καλὸν τοιοῦτον (obelized by Bonitz 1844, 62-63, Apelt 1894, 731, Jackson 1900, 11-12, Arnim 1927, 105) γυμνάζειν πρὸς τὸ φαρμακεύσεσθαι. ὅστε καὶ ἡ ἔξις ἢ ἀνθρώπου ἀρετή. ἐστο γὰρ ὁ ἀνθρώπος τῶν φύσει σπουδαίων: ἢ γὰρ τὸν φύσει σπουδαίου ἀρετή ἀπλῶς ἄγαθόν, ἢ δὲ τὸν μὴ ἔκεινον. ὁμοίως δὴ ἔχει καὶ τὸ ἢδο.}

The passage occurs within the discussion of the different types of friendship (friendship based on utility, pleasure or virtue) and it presents a number of interpretative challenges.\footnote{Cf. F. Dirlmeier, Eudemische Ethik, Akademie-Verlag: Berlin, 1962, p. 394.}

What is most relevant for my analysis is that Aristotle says that what is good for a particular
individual and what is good-\textit{simpliciter} are not the same. (4), then, is not a serious contender. But its consideration establishes some distinctions that we need as we go along.

Aristotle argues that we can compare virtue with the useful insofar as both virtue and the useful are in some way goods. In order to make sense of this claim, I follow Dirlmeier’s interpretation. Dirlmeier starts from the observation that goods can be \(\textit{απλῶς} (\textit{simpliciter})\) or \(\textit{τινί}\) (for a particular individual). This distinction applies to any good. That is, the useful is a good and therefore it can be good-\textit{simpliciter} or good for a particular individual. Virtue too is a good and it can be good-\textit{simpliciter} or good for a particular individual. According to Dirlmeier, virtue and the useful can be compared insofar as they can be good-\textit{simpliciter} or good for a particular individual.\textsuperscript{183}

For someone who is excellent by nature, virtue is good-\textit{simpliciter}. It is conceivable that Aristotle speaks of virtue in a loose sense here, referring to what is best for the individual. In a similarly loose sense, he speaks of the individual who is excellent by nature: this individual seems to be the agent who has all the natural virtues. According to this minimal sketch, the idea is that what is best for the individual who is not excellent by nature seems good only for her. It seems good for her, but it is not good by nature. Setting aside the specifics of what it means to be excellent by nature, for present purposes T3 shows that what is good-\textit{simpliciter}

\textsuperscript{183} Another interpretive challenge concerns the supposition, seemingly simply presupposed in T3, that some individuals are excellent by nature. To readers of the \textit{NE}, this is an unfamiliar claim. In the \textit{NE}, as in the \textit{EE}, Aristotle distinguishes natural virtues from virtues proper. However, in the \textit{NE}, there is no reference to being excellent by nature. One may think that the agent who has natural virtues is excellent by nature. In the \textit{EE}, I submit, an agent is excellent by nature if she has natural virtues. Cf. the discussion of natural virtue in the common books: \textit{EE V=NE VI} 1144 b 5. In \textit{EE III} 1234 a 27, Aristotle explains how natural virtue becomes virtue in the true sense. Regarding the \textit{NE}, there is much scholarly interest in the idea that the virtues of character are acquired by habituation. In \textit{NE} 1113 b 6-20, Aristotle considers the hypothesis that there is a natural disposition in human beings to choose what is good. Aristotle says that whether one’s view of the end is partially determined by nature or not, virtue is still voluntary. However, this seems the only reference to the idea of excellence by nature in the \textit{NE}. It is noteworthy, and indeed surprising, that there is no explicit discussion of virtue acquisition via habituation in the \textit{EE}. The only reference to habituation occurs in \textit{EE II} 1220 b 1, where Aristotle says that character develops from habituation. This reference to habituation is not further explored in the treatise. Cf. P. Donini, \textit{Abitudine e saggezza. Aristotle dall’Etica Eudemia all’Etica Nicomachea}, Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2014.
is not what is good for the particular individual. The difference between the particular individual and the agent for which the simpliciter-good is good is further elucidated by the comparison with the body that needs training and the body that needs drugs. As Aristotle says, training is good-simpliciter or useful simpliciter in the sense that it is good for human beings as human beings generically are, namely healthy. Conversely, being treated with drugs is not good-simpliciter or useful simpliciter insofar as it is good or useful only for the particular sick individual.

Let’s turn to (5), the view that considers the best agent as the relevant relatum of goodness. Given that much of the relevant scholarly debate is about the NE, this position has not been specifically proposed as a reading of the EE. Before discussing how it applies to the EE, let me provide a minimal sketch of the debate on this issue in the NE. The debate focuses on the claim that the virtuous person is the measure of how we should act.184 This position has been put forward by McDowell as well as others. McDowell asserts that Aristotle is what he calls an internal realist, by which he means, among other things, that there is such a thing as what “really” is good, even though what really is good involves the attitudes of an agent.185 What is truly good is what the virtuous person finds good.186 My aim here is not to explore this position, either in its own right or as an interpretation of the NE. My claim is limited to the interpretation of natural goods: in relation to natural goods, I depart from the type of

184 The terminology of “measure” is specifically explored by Vogt, who calls her position Measure Realism (2017); cf. I. McCready Flora, “Protagoras and Plato in Aristotle: Rereading the Measure Doctrine,” OSAP, 49, 2015, pp. 71-127. Other scholars speak in terms of how the world looks to the best agent, of the perceptions of the best agent, and so on.


186 This kind of position is at times called Aristotelian realism. For critical assessment of a purely epistemic version of this position, according to which what really is good is constituted by what the ideal agent sees as good, cf. Vogt (2017) ch. 4.
account McDowell puts forward. Namely, I argue that the virtuous agent is not the measure for the goodness of natural goods.

Scholars who defend the view that the virtuous agent is the measure of how we should act often find support for their view in *NE* 1113 a 23-35. In this passage, Aristotle argues that the good agent is the standard and measure (κανών καὶ μέτρον) of things beautiful and pleasant. *NE* 1113 a 23-35, however, does not establish reading (5). Instead, it permits two interpretations. Either, and this is how the passage tends to be read, we assume that all value is on par. If the good (and that is, here, best) agent is the measure of the beautiful and pleasant, the thought goes, she is also the measure of the good. Alternatively, we keep an open mind with respect to Aristotle’s views on different kinds of value. In this case, it is possible that the best agent is the measure of the beautiful and pleasant without thereby being the measure of the good. Notably, in *NE* 1113 a 23-35, Aristotle does not say that the good agent is the standard and measure of good things. This observation is important for the difference between the *NE* and the *EE*. The *EE* is explicitly concerned with three kinds of value, the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant; the question of how these values relate to each other is flagged as a main theme right at the start of the treatise. That is, the reader of the *EE* is primed for a type of consideration that is not in the forefront of the *NE*: how the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant may come apart. Within this context, it is conceivable that someone is the measure of the beautiful and the pleasant, and someone else is the measure of the good. *A fortiori*, it is conceivable that someone else is the measure of a specific class of goods, namely natural goods. Aristotle does not mention *simpliciter*-goods or natural goods in the passage. That is, the passage provides no evidence for the view that the good agent is the

measure of natural goods. Further reason to doubt that the virtuous agent is not the measure of *simpliciter*-goods is provided by a passage in *EE III*.1:

(T4) Perhaps, then, the fearful, like the pleasant and the good, has two senses. Some things are pleasant and good-*simpliciter*, and others are such to some individual, but not *simpliciter*; on the contrary they are bad and unpleasant, like the things that are beneficial to wicked people or pleasant to children insofar as they are children. Similarly some things are fearful *simpliciter*, others to some individual. Of the things that are fearful to the coward qua coward, some are fearful to no one, others mildly so. What is fearful to most people, and to human nature, we say is fearful *simpliciter*, and it is with regard to this that the courageous person is fearless, and these are the kind of fearful things that he endures. In one sense they are fearful to him, in another not; they are fearful insofar as he is a human being, but not fearful, or slightly so if at all, insofar as he is courageous.  

Aristotle says that what is fearful, pleasant or good for the individual differs from what is fearful, pleasant, or good-*simpliciter*. He then focuses on what is fearful. He explicitly says that what is fearful for human nature is the fearful *simpliciter*. Human nature (however we understand this: I will say more below) is the measure of things that are fearful *simpliciter*. In a similar way, human nature is the measure of what is good-*simpliciter*. In T4, Aristotle argues that what is pleasant for children is not pleasant *simpliciter*. He then says that what is fearful for the courageous is not fearful *simpliciter* insofar as things that are fearless for the courageous may be fearful for human nature. This suggests that the virtuous agent - in this case, the courageous agent - cannot be the measure of things that are fearful *simpliciter*. Fighting in battle is fearful for human nature. And yet, it is not fearful for the courageous agent. As the courageous agent is not the measure of the fearful *simpliciter*, the virtuous agent is not the measure of what is good-*simpliciter*.

188 *EE* III 1228 b 18-30: ἀλλά ἣσσος τὸ φοβερὸν λέγεται, ὡσπερ καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ τἀγαθὸν, διχός. τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἀπλῶς, τὰ δὲ τινὶ μὲν καὶ ἡδὲ καὶ ἁγαθὰ ἐστὶν, ἀπλῶς δ᾿ οὐ, ἀλλὰ τοῦτον τὸν φαύλα καὶ αὐτὸν ἡδέα, διὰ τὸς πονηρὸς ὑφέλιμα, καὶ διὰ ἡδέα τοῖς παιδίοις ἡ παιδία. ομοίως δὲ καὶ τὰ φοβερὰ τὰ μὲν ἀπλῶς ἐστὶ, τὰ δὲ τινὶ· ἡ μὲν δὴ ὁι δὲ λοί φοβεῖται ἡ διελώς, τὰ μὲν οὐδὲν ἐστι φοβερὰ, τὰ δὲ ἡρέμα· τὰ δὲ τοῖς πλείστοις φοβερὰ, καὶ διὰ τῇ ἀνθρωπίνῃ φύσει, ταὐτῷ ἀπλῶς φοβερὰ λέγομεν. ὁ δ᾿ ἁνδρείος πρὸς ταῦτ᾿ ἔχει ἀφόβος, καὶ ὑπομένει τὰ τουτιά φοβερὰ, ἂ δὲ δὲ τῷ φοβερῷ αὐτῷ ἐστὶ δ᾿ ὡς οὖ, ἡ μὲν ἁνθρωπος φοβερά, ἡ δ᾿ ἁνδρείος οὐ φοβερά ἀλλ᾽ ἡ ἡρέμαι, ἤ οὐδαμός.
Assume, then, that the good agent is not the measure of natural goods. This is compatible with a weaker claim: natural goods are good for the best agent, insofar as the good agent belongs to a larger set of agents. They are good for, but not only good for the best agent. This is how I reconstruct the relation between natural goods and the good person. In EE VIII.3 1248 b 27, Aristotle says: “A good person is one for whom the natural goods are good.” The relation between the best person and goodness, as Aristotle conceives of it, is sometimes construed as if the best person’s attitudes were constitutive of it; in other words, as if goodness was in some sense constituted by the best person’s perspective and set of attitudes. It is conceivable that some such account applies to what, according to Aristotle, truly is beautiful and truly is pleasant. However, if natural goods are good for the best agent as well as for (to be specified) others, then this type of account cannot apply to natural goods. Instead the good person is the person who finds natural goods good, but the goodness of natural goods does not depend on this.

This interpretation has the virtue to accommodate what may otherwise appear to be inconsistent strands in Aristotle’s view. Namely, on the one hand, Aristotle says that if we move toward virtue we attain a condition where the simpliciter-good is what is worth choosing for ourselves; we saw this in T1. Here it would seem that simpliciter-goods, and hence (according to my hypothesis) natural goods are associated with either a virtuous condition, or at any rate a condition that approaches virtue.

On the other hand, in T2, Aristotle says that natural goods are goods for which we fight (τὰ γὰρ περιμάχητα καὶ μέγιστα εἶναι δοκοῦντα ἀγαθά). Natural goods, it seems, are competitive goods, goods that typically people desire to possess. This seems true not only for

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189 EE VIII 1248 b 27: ἀγαθὸς μὲν οὖν ἔστιν ὁ τὰ φύσει ἀγαθά ἔστιν ἀγαθά. This statement occurs also in the Politics, in a passage where Aristotle refers to the Ethics.
the virtuous or almost-virtuous agent. Instead there seems to be a shared perspective among
agents regarding the goodness of natural goods. We may even say that perceptual,
desiderative and cognitive attitudes that are characteristic for human beings make natural
goods appealing to us.\textsuperscript{190} Again, this shared perspective need not encompass literally
everyone. Aristotle says that the natural goods are bad for some people because of their
dispositions. However, he does not say that they are bad for almost everyone, excluding the
virtuous. Rather, it seems that they are good, and desired as such, typically, which is
compatible with there being exceptions.

It is a desideratum for a compelling interpretation that it accommodates these two
dimensions of the account: natural goods (\textit{simpliciter}-goods) are good for the virtuous
person; and they are good for a larger group of persons. This is what my proposal, option (6),
says. More precisely, natural goods are good for human beings in a standard state. It is not
sufficient to be a human being in order to benefit from natural goods. One needs to be in a
standard state in order to desire natural goods and to benefit from them. The standard state is
not to be confused with the particulars about given persons that Aristotle discusses elsewhere,
for example, when he observes that a moderate amount of food for the athlete differs from a
moderate amount of food for a beginner.\textsuperscript{191} Everyone is in some condition or other in myriad
respects at a given moment, and these conditions matter for the minutiae of what is, at a given
moment, the right thing to do. When we ask what it means to be in a standard state, however,

\textsuperscript{190} Berryman (S. Berryman, “On a curious passage in \textit{EE} ii 6,” \textit{Ancient Philosophy}, 38, 2018, pp. 137-150),
emphasises, as I do here, the role of conceptions of a good life. However, my position differs from hers insofar
as she argues that human nature cannot be the standard to determine what is good for human beings, and that
human beings control the normativity of action. In this chapter, I argue that there is a distinctive psychological
human nature: this psychological nature is the standard of what is good for us in the sense of the natural good.
Already the characterization of natural goods as “goods for which we fight” speaks in favor of this. On

\textsuperscript{191} \textit{NE} 1106 b 6.

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we are concerned with conditions of a more general sort. For example, and as we will see in
more detail, it counts as non-standard to be sick; this is compatible with a wide range of states
that are “more or less” healthy, and that fall, broadly speaking, into the range of what is
“standard.” However, before I explore this further, let me focus on one relevant aspect,
namely the kind of relativity-to-agents that is involved in the notion of natural goods.

4. Good-for vs relative goodness

With respect to the *NE*, scholars tend to hold one of two views about Aristotle’s notion
of *simpliciter*-goods. They either take it that *simpliciter* goods are absolute goods (3), or that
they are good for the excellent individual (5).192 The idea that *simpliciter* goods are good
absolutely is sometimes also expressed in terms of their intrinsic quality: what is absolutely
good is good by itself, or intrinsically. According to Vogt, scholars have often interpreted the
distinction between good-*simpliciter* and good-for as a distinction between non-relative
goodness and relative goodness. However, this is misleading given that Aristotle conceives of
the good-*simpliciter* as also good-for.193

In a passage in the *NE* often referred to by scholars who defend naturalism, Aristotle
argues that healthy and good are different for human beings and for fish.194 This is not a
relativist claim. According to relativism what seems good to X is what is good for X. As Vogt

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192 Scholars tend to interpret *simpliciter*-goods as good without qualification. They understand “good without qualification” along the same lines as Kant’s good will, which is good without qualification. In Kant, the good will has intrinsic goodness. Cf. J. Auferheide, R.M. Bader (eds.), *The Highest Good in Aristotle and Kant*, Oxford University Press, 2015; N.P. White, ‘Goodness and Human Aims in Aristotle’s Ethics’. In *Studies in Aristotle*, edited by D. J. O’Meara, Washington: The Catholic University Press of America, 1981, pp. 225–46.


194 *NE* 1141 a 23.
argues this is not quite the same as the claim that what seems to X is how the world is for X. The latter claim captures a real phenomenon. Say, when one freezes, one is cold. But all we are saying here is that seemings—perceptions, impressions, and so on—are the states of minds they are. If one is attracted to something, one is attracted to something. If one is amused, one is amused. If something seems good to one, it seems good to one. In an Aristotelian framework, this does not mean that the object really is attractive, amusing, or good.

That is, the formulation that what seems to X is how things are for X leaves room for the possibility that one’s own seeming, or in other words one’s own belief, can be false. This makes all the difference: according to relativism, all “seemings” or beliefs are true; each of them is true for the subject who holds it. For a position to differ from relativism it must permit falsity. Falsity shows up from a third-person perspective. We are able to say that it is false if someone thinks the moderate amount of food for her is three plates of tiramisu three times a day. Absent some highly uncommon conditions (or extraordinarily small plates), this is too much.

Falsity also shows up from a first-person perspective. It may appear good to a person with a cold to stay in bed all day. The agent herself can be aware that what appears good to her appears good to her qua someone who has a cold. Suppose further that what seems good to her actually is good for her; for her, staying in bed all day is an effective way to recover.


196 Like Vogt (2017), I here stay close to Plato’s Theaetetus, which explores Protagorean relativism and nearby positions. That the person who is freezing really is cold is one of Plato’s main examples.

197 For a discussion of seemings as beliefs see K. Vogt, Desiring the good, p. 95.
Still, “staying in bed all day is good” is by her own lights false, insofar as this is considered a general claim. This gap between what seems to a person and what the person assumes is actually the case matter to my interpretation of the notion of simpliciter-goods. Namely, a person may be aware that she is not in a standard condition. What appears good to her and what she desires is not simpliciter-good. There is an intuitive sense in which “not having a cold” is standard. By the lights of the sick person, this is how she usually is and how lots of people around her are. For the most part, people don’t have colds. Note, however, that the contrast is not between how things are for the sick person on the one hand, and how things are in a non-relative manner. Instead, the contrast is one between two different relata: between how things are for the sick person (or person in some other non-standard state) on the one hand, and for people in standard conditions on the other hand.

More could be said regarding relativism and its different formulations, but for present purposes this minimal sketch suffices. According to this minimal sketch, the claim that I am considering here - the simpliciter-good is what is good for the human being in a standard state - is not a relativist claim. Good has a relatum, and is relative in that sense. But the simpliciter-good is not relativist, where this would mean that whatever appears good to someone really is good. To return to the example of health, not everything that appears tempting to a sick person is actually good for her. It may seem good to someone whose hand has caught fire to put the hand in cold water in order to extinguish fire. And yet the agent shouldn’t, or so, she takes it, experts say. She must extinguish the fire with a piece of cloth in order for her burned skin to recover faster. The distinction between a standard and a non-standard state permits both kinds of cases: (i) where what seems good to the person, say, staying in bed, really is good for her; (ii) where what seems good to the person, say, put a burning hand in cold water,
is not good for her. This is another way of saying that goodness is relative to a person in a given state, but it is not relativist.

5. A minimal notion of the standard state

So far, I argued that the notion of a standard state is broad enough to encompass the best agent as well as many others. I also argued that natural goods, by being good for people in a standard state, have a relatum without thereby being relativist. In this section, I add four further features to my account of natural goods and the standard state. First, I elaborate on an idea we encountered earlier, namely that natural goods are goods of great generality. Second, I argue that the standard state involves characteristic desiderative attitudes. Third, I discuss Aristotle’s claim that the standard state involves health, and unimpeded perceptual and cognitive capacities. Fourth, I turn to the proposal that the standard state involves adulthood. This makes Natural Goods Naturalism a diachronic theory—a theory that attends to different life stages in order to establish what it is that is good for human beings.

First, then, consider the level of generality involved in Aristotle’s proposals. Suppose that someone who is tired from a long day is on the whole in a standard state. She is a reasonably healthy adult person. Nevertheless, a whole range of different things may appear good to her. To one agent, baking a cake appears adequate to help her relax after work. To another person, chatting with her friend on the phone seems restorative. According to Aristotle, these agents may be right or wrong about what actually is good for them. And yet, these matters do not pertain to his notion of natural goods. For these two options are within a range of fairly standard things that may be relaxing to those who are on the whole in standard conditions, and yet tired from work. The notion of natural goods does nothing to help us decide among them. Rather, the notion of natural goods is fairly minimal. According to T2,
natural goods are goods for which we fight and are considered to be the greatest good for a
good human life. Baking a cake or talking to a friend do not count as natural goods. A given
agent may desire to bake a cake or to talk with a friend, but in our example these are
dependent goods. Honor and wealth are natural goods, and activities that help restore honor
and wealth derive their value from this relationship. But it is honor, wealth, and so on, that we
fight for and that we consider the greatest, as Aristotle puts this in T2. This provides us with
one basic feature of natural goods and the standard state: natural goods have a high level of
generality; they are good for people who are, with respect to the particulars of their condition
and attitudes, in a wide variety of states.

Second, another feature of natural goods, I submit, resides in the desiderative attitudes
that human beings typically have to them. What does it mean that we “fight for” these goods
and consider them “the greatest”? In the previous step in my argument, I proposed that
natural goods are not made good by the attitudes of agents; they are good for agents in a
standard state, whether or not they appear good to them (this is the rejection of relativism).
But while it is not true that the simpliciter-good is good by virtue of a given person finding it
good, Aristotle does think that the natural good appears good to us. Natural goods are goods
to which we respond and to which we are attracted, if only we are in standard states. If the
agent is in a standard state, what seems good to her is the simpliciter-good.

This is compatible, however, with a wide range of more specific seemings. Say,
depending on the circumstances and specifics regarding the agent, baking a cake or chatting
with a friend may be ways in which the natural goods of strength and health seem desirable—
these are, for a given agent, ways of relaxing, regaining strength and maintaining health.
Moreover, agents can be wrong about the specifics and yet the natural good appears good to
them. That is, someone may desire to be wealthy, and yet in a given situation desire to buy an expensive dress rather than saving money, though in fact saving would make her wealthy. The fact that agents often make these kinds of mistakes does not mean, however, that the natural goods do not appear good to them. A standard state, then, is not a state where agents get the specifics of what is and what is not good for them right; this would be far too demanding. Rather, a standard state is a state where agents desire natural goods. That is, they desire what typically human beings desire and these are goods such as wealth and honor, namely goods that are considered the greatest.

I turn now to my third and fourth proposals, which attends to health and unaltered capacities on the one hand, and the diachronic dimension of Aristotle’s view on the other hand. Aristotle addresses these dimensions of the standard state conjointly. The following passage in EE VII clarifies that the human being in a standard state is an healthy individual in normal conditions, who is adult:

(T5) Some good things are good simpliciter, and others are good for a particular person but not simpliciter; and the same things are good simpliciter and pleasant simpliciter. For we say that what is beneficial for a healthy body is good simpliciter for a body, but we do not say this about what is good for a sick body (for example, medication and surgery). Similarly, what is pleasant for a healthy and sound body is pleasant for a body simpliciter, for example, seeing in light, not in darkness is pleasant for someone with healthy eyes, yet, it is the opposite for someone with eye disease. And it is not the wine enjoyed by someone whose palate has been ruined by excessive drinking that is more pleasant (since those people adulterate it with sour wine) but rather the wine which is pleasant to uncorrupted tastes. The situation is similar with the soul, and it is not what children and wild beasts find pleasant but rather what mature people find pleasant, at least, when we remember both we choose the latter. The relationship of a base and foolish people to a decent and wise one is like the relationship of a
child or a wild beast to a mature human being. What is pleasant for them is what matches their states - and for the latter that is good and beautiful things.\footnote{EE VII, 1235 b 30- 1236 a 6: τὸν γὰρ ἄγαθὸν τὰ μὲν ἀπλῶς ἔστιν ἄγαθά, τὰ δὲ τινί, ἀπλῶς δὲ οὐ. καὶ τὰ αὐτά ἀπλῶς ἄγαθα καὶ ἀπλῶς ἥδεα. τὰ μὲν γὰρ τὸ ὑγιαίνοντι φαμέν σώματι συμφέροντα ἀπλῶς εἶναι σώματι ἄγαθά, τὰ δὲ τῷ κάμνοντι οὐ, οἷον φαρμακείας καὶ τομῆς, ὁμοίους δὲ καὶ ἥδεα ἀπλῶς σώματι τὰ τῷ ὑγιαίνοντι καὶ ὄλοκλήρῳ, οἷον τὸ εἰς τὸ φωτὶ ὑπόστη καὶ οὐ τὸ εἰς τὸ σκότος: κατὰ τὸ ὑφάλλομεν ἕναντίος. καὶ οἷον ἥδεν οὐχ ὁ τῷ διεφθαρένῳ τὴν γλῶτταν υπὸ οἰνοφλυγίας, ἀλλὰ οὐκ ὡς ἀδίαφρόνος αἰσθήσεως ὁμοίους δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ ψυχῆς, καὶ οὐχ ὡς τοῖς παιδίοις καὶ τοῖς θηρίοις, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς τοῖς καθεστῶσι. ἀμφότερον γονὺς μεμενημένοι ταῦθ᾽ αἰροῦμεθα. ὡς δ᾽ ἔχει παιδίον καὶ θηρίον πρὸς ἀνθρώπων καθεστώτων, οὕτως ἔχει ὁ φαῦλος καὶ ἀφρών πρὸς τὸν ἐπιεικῆ καὶ φρόνιμον. τούτοις δὲ ἥδεα τὰ κατὰ τὰς ἔξεις: ταύτα δ᾽ ἐστὶ τὰ ἄγαθά καὶ τὰ καλά.}

Aristotle distinguishes the good-simply (ἁπλῶς) from the good for the particular individual (τῷ). I discussed this distinction as option (4). Aristotle says that the same things that are good-simply are also pleasant simply. Then he introduces a comparison with healthy and sick bodies. Some things are good-simply for the body: these things are good for the healthy body. However, they are not good for the sick body. Similarly, the things that are good-simply for the healthy body are also pleasant simply for this body. But they are not pleasant for the sick body. The good-simply and the pleasant simply go hand in hand when the body is healthy. The comparison with the healthy body suggests that what is good-simply is not what is good for an ideal or exceptional individual. Conversely, the comparison with the healthy body suggests that what is good-simply is good and pleasant for the individual in a standard state. Being healthy is not an exceptional state.\footnote{In the view that I defend, the agent in a standard state is healthy. Health itself is not a natural good. Rather, for the agent who is healthy, natural goods are good. Aristotle claims that bodily excellences are natural goods. Examples of bodily excellences are strength, having athletic capacities, and so forth.}

Aristotle also considers the case of the drunk person: what is good for this person is not the good-simply. This supports the idea that what is good-simply is good for an agent when her perceptual and cognitive capacities are not altered. This dimension of the standard state seems continuous with health. Extreme alterations of our capacities—say, through strong drugs—seem comparable to illness. Finally, Aristotle says that we are not considering...
what is good for children or wild beasts, but what is good for mature individuals. Again, this is presented as continuous with the earlier dimensions. Presumably, being adult is also a physical and mental condition, a state in which we are, say, strong in ways in which children aren’t and in which our capacities for perceiving and thinking are developed in ways in which they are not during childhood. The notion of natural goods, then, takes a diachronic perspective. It does not identify features of human beings that would manifest differently throughout life. Rather, it identifies features of human beings that culminate and are especially manifest during adulthood.

In sum, T5 says that the agent in a standard state as an adult, healthy individual in normal conditions, where normal conditions captures the conditions in which our perceptual and cognitives attitudes are when they are not altered (we are not drunk, we are not under the influence of drugs, and so forth). So far we encountered six features of natural goods. They are good for a large class of people including the best agent. Their goodness is relative, not relativist. They have a high level of generality. Human beings relate to them with characteristic desiderative attitudes. And their account involves attention to health, unaltered capacities and adulthood. These findings may leave us with the following question. What notion of human nature is at work in Natural Goods Relativism? More specifically, how does the relevant notion of human nature permit the focus on adulthood, setting aside other phases of human life, and how does it permit inclusion of very many, but not all, human beings?

6. For the most part and by nature

To address this question let me invoke two of Aristotle’s technical terms: “for the most part” (ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολύ) and “by nature” (φύσει). As I wish to show in this section, the human being in a standard state is representative of how human beings are for the most part or how
they are by nature. In the Prior Analytics, Aristotle distinguishes what is for the most part from what is necessary:

(T6) The expression “to be possible” is used in two senses: (1) to describe what is for the most part, but falls short of being necessary, e.g., a person’s becoming grey-haired or growing or wasting away, or in general that which belongs to someone in virtue of being brought forth by nature.200

In the passage, what is for the most part is described as what is not necessary, but what occurs with a certain regularity. Aristotle uses the example of grey hair to illustrate the notion of “for the most part:” by nature human beings have grey hair when they age. However, not everyone has grey hair.201 Aristotle says that what is “for the most part” is what can be “by nature” applicable to the subject. In a similar fashion, in talking about the agent in a standard state, I refer to how human beings are “for-the-most-part.” As others have argued, for the most part is not a statistical notion.202 The proposal is not that, quantitatively, most human beings are healthy adults in normal circumstances. When Aristotle employs the notion of “for the most part,” he discusses the kinds of regularities we find in a given field. In metaphysics, say, we are concerned with necessary regularities. In the domain of ethics, however, we only find for the most part regularities. In her account of this feature of Aristotelian ethics, Vogt picks up Aristotle’s notion of the “sublunary” sphere: like the lives of trees and animals, human lives play out in a sphere that doesn’t display necessary regularity.203 The life of a human being,

200 Prior Analytics 32 b 4-9, trans. by H. Tredennick with changes by GB: Διωρισμένον δὲ τούτων πάλιν λέγομεν ὅτι τὸ ἐνδέχεσθαι κατὰ δύο λέγεται τρόποις, ἕνα μὲν τὸ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ γίγνεσθαι καὶ διαλείπεται τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, οἷον τὸ πολιοῦσθαι ἢ τὸ αὐξάνεσθαι ἢ φθίνειν, ἢ ὅλως τὸ πεφυκὸς ὑπάρχειν.


then, has a life cycle comparable to that of other natural entities. This is one dimension of the notion of nature Aristotle brings to bear when he talks about natural goods. In book II.8 of the EE, Aristotle defines how, for present purposes, he understands the expression “by nature” (φύσει):

(T7) We pretty much define what is by nature with reference to these two criteria, that is, whatever arises for everyone as soon as they are born, and whatever comes about for us when our development is allowed to continue on, including grey hair, old age, and so forth.204

On this account, two kinds of features of human beings count as natural. First, features we have at birth. An example might be having two legs. Second, features that come about as a human being grows up and ages, such as grey hair. These features are “by nature.” Of course, some human beings may be born with only one leg, and some human beings may not come to have grey hair when they age. Human life, according to Aristotle, belongs to a for-the-most-part domain. Whether one’s hair grows grey, say, is contingent; nevertheless, it is natural insofar as it is for the most part the case.205 This diachronic notion of human nature matters to ethics, it would seem, because human agents change over time. A plausible kind of naturalism should capture this dimension. The notion of nature, then, is normative in the sense that we prioritize one life phase over others. Now—in adulthood—the human being is in standard state, or so the claim goes.

204 Eudemian Ethics, 1224 b 31-35, tr. by B. Inwood and R. Woolf: σχεδὸν δὲ τούτοις δυσὶ τὸ φύσει διορίζομεν, τῷ τε ὅσα εὐθὺς γνιομένοις ἀκολουθεῖ πάσι, καὶ ὅσα ἐωτερικῶς τῆς γενέσεως εὐθυπορεῖν γίγνεται ἡμῖν, οἷον πολλὰ καὶ γῆρας καὶ τάλα τὰ τουάτα. All translations of the EE are by B. Inwood and R. Woolf with changes by GB.

The relevant notion of nature, however, is normative also in a more familiar sense, a sense that scholars of ancient philosophy often explore. What is natural for some being, here, is a matter of what this being is—in more technical terms, the “what it is” or essence of this being. To see in which sense “for the most part” is not a statistical notion, we also need to appeal to this way of thinking about nature (or natures, in the plural). Namely, according to Aristotle human beings are a certain kind of being. For present purposes, this is best illuminated by drawing on the function argument and the account of the soul that comes with it. We are beings for whom such-and-such activities are characteristic. On this conception, it is conceivable that human beings who live in greatly deprived circumstances—say, after a severe disaster—do not perform those activities that are characteristic of human nature. In the terms of the Politics there are conditions where all we want is survive, rather than live a good human life. Insofar as it is conceivable that very many people live under greatly deprived circumstances, it is conceivable that very many people are not active in ways that are characteristic for human beings.

The role of for the most part regularities in NGN brings to light an important dimension of the theory. Namely, though a number of features of the standard state can appear to be descriptive, ultimately we are considering a theory where seemingly descriptive features are tied up with a normative framework. Throughout, Aristotle is concerned with what is characteristic for human beings, in a sense that relates to a normative notion of human nature.

7. Formulation of Natural Goods Naturalism

Before moving to a comprehensive formulation of NGN, we should return to the hypothesis that I posited at the beginning of the chapter: natural goods are *simpliciter*-goods.

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206 Politics, 1252 b 32.
Has this hypothesis been substantiated? Let us examine first occurrences in which Aristotle explicitly says that what is good-\textit{simpliciter} is good by nature. First of all, in T1, Aristotle says that \textit{simpliciter}-goods are by nature good for a human being. In T3, he says that the virtue of someone who is excellent by nature is good-\textit{simpliciter}. In T4, he states that what is excellent by nature is good-\textit{simpliciter}. And in T8, Aristotle explains that what is fearful \textit{simpliciter} is fearful for human beings. These four passages provide evidence that Aristotle uses the two expressions interchangeably. This identification is not limited to how Aristotle uses these expressions: if we ask what natural goods are and for whom they are good, we see that natural goods are the same things as \textit{simpliciter}-goods (see T3-T5). Natural goods and \textit{simpliciter}-goods are one way to think about what is good for human beings as we are by nature.

Once elucidated what natural goods are and for whom they are good, we can offer a comprehensive formulation of NGN. According to NGN, the natural good is what is good for human beings in a standard state. The agent in the standard state is adult, healthy and in normal conditions; this agent desires to possess natural goods. NGN does not exhaust what is good for human beings. Accordingly, it does not exhaust Aristotelian naturalism. But it attends to a fundamental kind of good, natural goods, and argues that these goods—qua goods we desire—are basic to human life.

NGN does not address the relationship between virtue and nature, and it does not rank lives as better or worse, as other reconstructions of Aristotelian naturalism do. As far as I reconstruct NGN, it is compatible with such stronger forms of naturalism. But the attraction of NGN, as I see it, is that by itself it is a theoretically more modest position. It does not commit us to considering one kind of life as the best. NGN is worth reconstructing, I submit,
as part of the larger exegetical project of understanding the outlook of the EE. In this context, the observation that the EE contains nothing less than a distinctive kind of naturalism should interest us. In addition, if as ethicists today we do not aim for a complete exegetical account, but instead aim to unearth theoretical options that may interest us, NGN deserves our attention. It is a form of naturalism that, if developed further, aside from Aristotle exegesis, is compatible with pluralism about good human lives.207

Conclusion

In this chapter, I offered an interpretation of the distinctive Eudemian notion of natural goods and the agent for whom they are good. Conjunctly, this amounts to the reconstruction of a kind of naturalism which I call Natural Goods Naturalism or, in short, NGN. I argued that the notion of natural goods cuts across the distinction among external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul. According to NGN, honor, wealth, bodily excellences, good fortune and power are genuine goods. These goods have a particular relation to human nature.

NGN is so far entirely unexplored. Though there are some recent papers on passages or notions relevant to it, my observation that the EE contains an approach that can enrich discussions of Aristotelian naturalism is new. As I hope to have shown, natural goods are what are better known as simpliciter-goods. The two expressions pick out the same goods. The expression simpliciter-goods occurs two times in the NE, but it is not fundamental for the distinctively Nicomachean proposals. In the Eudemian account of goods, however, simpliciter-goods play a fundamental role. I considered six options to interpret the notion of natural goods: natural goods are external goods, natural goods are dependent goods, natural goods

207 This is where McDowell’s and Vogt’s realism come apart. McDowell’s Aristotelian realism is committed to considering the life of the phronimos as the best life; Vogt’s realism admits variability albeit recognizing that there are core common features in good human lives.
goods are good absolutely, they are good for the particular agent, they are good for the the best agent, and they are good for the agent in a standard state. I provided evidence in favor of the last claim. The conception of a standard state and its relation to natural goods, my argument continued, has the following dimensions. The best agent as well as many other agents are in the standard state. Though natural goods have a relatum, there is nothing relativist about Aristotle’s account of natural goods. Natural goods are goods of great generality. The standard state involves characteristic desiderative attitudes, namely, ones of desiring natural goods. The standard state involves health, unimpeded perceptual and cognitive capacities, and adulthood. In sum, NGN cuts across the distinction between the descriptive and the normative. Some features of the standard state are seemingly entirely descriptive, such as being an adult or not drunk. Other features are more evidently normative, such as having characteristic human desiderative attitudes. Ultimately, the dimensions of the theory blend the normative and the descriptive, for the reason I explore at the end of the chapter. Aristotle’s theory is one about how human beings are for the most part. This, however, is not a statistical notion, but one that latches on to Aristotle’s thought about the natures of things, and thereby to normative notions of what it is for something to be what it is.
CHAPTER FOUR

Function Argument, human nature and contemplation in the EE and in the NE

The FA figures both in the Eudemian Ethics (EE) and in the Nicomachean Ethics (NE). The Nicomachean Ethics-Function Argument (NE-FA) has received a lot of attention by scholars who study Aristotle’s ethics. T. Nagel criticizes Aristotle’s proposal that rational activity is the distinctive function of human beings. Nagel argues that our function should involve all our capacities, rather than only rational capacity, as the FA suggests. B. Williams famously criticizes the isolation argument. The isolation argument is the argument that Aristotle proposes to show that the human function is something uniquely human. Williams aims at investigating whether there are activities exclusively human other than rational activity. R. Nozick shares Williams’s critique and suggests that, if our function should be something exclusively human, having a sense of humor is uniquely human as much as rational activity. In addition to these critiques concerning the content of the FA, many scholars stressed that the FA is not truly an argument but rather an analogy.

My aim in the chapter is to offer an interpretation of the FA in the Eudemain Ethics (EE-FA), and of its relation with the FA in the NE and with the Platonic version of the

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208 EE II 1218 b 30- 1219 a 25.

209 NE I 1097 b 29- 1098 a 14.


Function Argument in the *Republic* (*Republic-FA*). The differences in the FAs, as they appear in the three works, are such that we can speak of three FAs. I argue that the Aristotelian FA sheds light on the discussions of the best life that occur at the end of the two ethics - respectively in *NE* X and in *EE* VIII. In the *NE*, the function (ἔργον) of the human being is defined as activity according to reason; its best fulfillment is contemplation. This is the best life: happiness. In the *EE*, the function of the human soul is living; I argue that the best fulfillment of this function is activity according to all the parts of the soul that share in reason (λόγος). In other words, the best life - which is happiness - is activity according to the virtues of thinking and according to the character virtues.

In the *EE*, Aristotle says that the ergon (function, task or job) of the human soul is living. In the *NE*, he points out that the ergon of human beings is activity according to reason. At first sight, it seems that the two questions that Aristotle is asking in the two treatises - what is the function of the human soul? What is the function of human beings? - amount to the same. However, in this chapter, I argue that the two FAs are different. They are indicative of a different focus in the approach to the soul and to happiness in the two treatises. In both treatises, Aristotle seems to work with a notion of the soul that has early Greek ancestors. Roughly, according to this early notion the soul is what makes something alive. For this reason, vegetative activities belong to the soul. The growth and decay of cells (as today we put this) is one way in which we are alive. Affective and desiderative activities as well as reasoning are also ways of being alive, and they are more distinctively human. Despite this common ground, there are differences, perhaps not regarding fundamental premises, but at least regarding emphasis. Namely, in preliminary terms, the *EE* attends more to the ways in

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which all dimensions of the soul that are distinctively human form a unity; and the *NE* attends more to the specific ways of being alive when we exercise one set of capacities rather than another.

In the *EE*, Aristotle speaks in the singular: he is concerned with “the soul.” I take this to be indicative of his focus on the unity of distinctively human soul-activities. That is, the virtues of character and of thinking are interwoven as virtues of the soul. In line with this unified notion of the soul, there is one excellent life, which involves all the virtues of character and all the virtues of thinking. Of course, the *NE* does not reject that the human soul has unity, and at times Aristotle also speaks of the soul in the singular. But in the *NE*, Aristotle’s focus on human beings relies on an implicit identification of human beings with the part of the soul capable of thinking. The *NE*-FA lays out a distinction that figures throughout the *NE*: the distinction between doing well in terms of the virtues of character on the one hand, and doing well in terms of the virtues of thinking on the other hand. In effect, there seems to be two kinds of excellent lives. In my analysis, I show that the *EE*-FA has stronger connections than the *NE*-FA to the *Republic*-FA.

In what follows, I propose and explain a chart that compares the three FAs as they appear in the *EE*, in the *NE*, and in the *Republic* (section 1). I examine the distinctive features of each argument: that is, I examine the subject and purpose, the structure, the role of virtue and of use in relation to the FAs (sections 2-7). I offer an analysis of how the *EE*-FA is connected to the discussions of the divine and of the best fulfillment of the human soul’s function in *EE* VIII (section 8 and 9). I compare this discussion in the *EE* with the corresponding discussion of the best life - the best fulfillment of the human function - in *NE* X (section 10).
1. The Function Arguments

As I mentioned, the NE-Function Argument has been at the center of the attention of scholars who study Aristotle’s ethics. Both its structure and its content are disputed. The Greek word, which is usually translated with function, is ἔργον. The Greek term conveys the idea that the ἔργον of something is its job, or its task. In other words, it is what something does when it is active in its characteristic and distinctive fashion. As Aristotle thinks of it, the ergon of something realizes its true nature. The notion of nature includes the process of development that occurs spontaneously in an individual as she grows up and ages. Accordingly, “function” is not an ideal translation. At the worst, it may suggest that human beings have a function in such a way that someone is using us for something; this idea must be explicitly set aside. However, to translate ἔργον differently would ultimately be confusing, simply because the translation as “function” is so very well established. The Function Arguments in Aristotle’s NE and EE share some aspects with Plato’s Function Argument in the Republic. In the following chart, I propose a comparison of the three arguments in NE, EE and in the Republic. I discuss each point of comparison in what follows.

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215 This seems to be how phusis is understood in Aristotle’s ethics. It is also how nature is understood when it is very rarely used in Homer. Cf. G. Naddaf, The Greek concept of nature, New York: SUNY Press, 2005.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Function of human being</th>
<th>Function of the soul</th>
<th>Function of the soul</th>
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<td>Living</td>
<td>Living</td>
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<td>Purpose of the FA</td>
<td>Prepare the ground</td>
<td>Prepare the ground</td>
<td>Understand whether</td>
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<td></td>
<td>for the discussion of</td>
<td>for the discussion</td>
<td>just people are</td>
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<td></td>
<td>happiness</td>
<td>of happiness</td>
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<td>Rep. 335 d, where</td>
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<td>Plato says that the</td>
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<td>benefit)</td>
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<td>Yes (Aristotle makes</td>
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<td>a stronger claim</td>
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<td>than in the NE and</td>
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<td>by induction it</td>
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<td>works in all cases).</td>
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<td>Comparanda</td>
<td>Flute-player, sculptor,</td>
<td>Cloak, boat, house,</td>
<td>Horse, eyes, ears,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>craftsman, shoemaker,</td>
<td>shoemaker</td>
<td>knife</td>
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<td></td>
<td>carpenter, eye, foot,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parts of the body</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Premises</td>
<td>- the good of something is in its function</td>
<td>- all things that have a virtue, have a function or use</td>
<td>- function of goodness is to benefit; the good is useful (335 d)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- other things have functions, human beings should have a function too</td>
<td>- the state and the better state are related</td>
<td>- the function is that which one can do only with it or best with it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- if the parts of X have a function, there must be a function of the whole</td>
<td>- the function and the better function are related</td>
<td>- all things that have a virtue, have a function or use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- function of X and of a good X is the same in kind</td>
<td>- the better state has a better function</td>
<td>- in order to perform the function well, one needs the corresponding virtue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- a function is fulfilled in an excellent way if it is fulfilled in accord with virtue</td>
<td>- the function is the end</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- the function is better than the state</td>
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<td>same function as its</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>relation to virtue)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elimination Argument</td>
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<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function is the end</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtue is what allows to perform the function well</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
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</table>
2. Subject and purpose of the FAs

In the NE-Function Argument, Aristotle aims at finding the function of human beings. The EE-Function Argument and the Republic-Function Argument examine the function of the human soul rather than the function of human beings. At first sight, speaking of the function of human beings and of the function of the human soul seem to be the same. However, in what follows, I show that this difference reveals a distinct emphasis on what constitutes a human being and on happiness.

The NE-FA prepares the ground for the definition of happiness. In NE 1097 b 27, the good of human beings - happiness - is said to reside in the function that human beings have. In other words, happiness is the best fulfillment of the human function. Yet, what is the function of human beings? The focus on human beings rather than on their soul suggests that Aristotle is considering what constitutes a human being as a whole, which is the compound of body and soul. In NE 1097 b 30, Aristotle talks indeed about the body, and he points out that bodily parts have functions. Two questions come to mind: is there a function of the body as a
whole? What is the relation of this function to the function of the individual body parts? In the text, there is no answer to these questions. In the FA, Aristotle does not make any reference to the compound of body and soul, or to the soul as a unity with parts:

(T1) What remains is an active life of the element that possesses reason. (Of this element, one part has reason in being obedient to reason, the other in possessing it and engaging in thought.)216

Aristotle says that the function of human beings is an active life of the element that possesses reason. A few lines later he proposes a slightly modified definition of the function as:

(T2) Activity of the soul in accordance with reason or at least not entirely lacking it.217

The function of human beings concerns human beings as a whole; but it resides only in that part of the soul that engages in thought, or at least in the part that obeys reason. For a human being to do well is to engage in the activities of our highest capacities. Indeed, there seem to be two formulations of what the function is: according to T1, the function is activity of the part of the soul that possesses reason including the part that obeys reason; according to T2, it is activity of the part of the soul that possesses reason or at least of the part that does not lack reason. I will discuss the parts of the soul in a dedicated section of this chapter. For now, let me anticipate some of the fundamental ideas. In NE 1102 b 38-1103 a 5, Aristotle divides the soul in two parts: one part has reason and the other is alogon. However, within the alogon part, the vegetative part lacks reason entirely, while the desiderative and appetitive part shares (μετέχει) in reason by listening and obeying to reason. At times, Aristotle calls the

216 NE 1098 a 4-6.

217 NE 1098 a 10.
part that listens and obeys reason *alogon* and at times, he says that it shares in reason without fully possessing it.\(^{218}\)

In the *EE*, as in the *NE*, the FA leads up to the definition of happiness. The *EE*-FA aims at establishing that the function of the human soul is living:

(T3) Let the function of the soul be to make a thing be alive [...] Hence, given that the function of the soul and of its virtue must be one and the same thing, its virtue’s function would be an excellent life. This, then, is the complete good, which is what happiness is.\(^{219}\)

Living, which is the function of the human soul, involves all the parts of the soul. That is, it includes also the part of the soul that does not share in *logos* (which fulfills the vegetative, nutritive and generative functions). In the *EE*, Aristotle divides the soul in two parts that share (\(\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\chi\epsilon\nu\)) in *logos* - one that commands and the other that listens and obeys - and a third part that does not share in *logos*.\(^{220}\) Correspondingly to the function of living, there is the best function - in other words, the function of the virtue of the soul. Aristotle says that this best function is complete good: happiness. I will discuss the relation between the function of the soul and of its virtue in section 5.

In the *Republic*, the FA occurs in the discussion of justice and not in a discussion of happiness, as in the *NE* and in the *EE*. The *Republic*-FA shares with the *EE*-FA the focus on the function of the human soul rather than on the function of human beings. The FA is introduced by Socrates’ question of whether people who are just live a happier and better life.

\(^{218}\) *NE* 1102 b 38- 1103 a 5.

\(^{219}\) *EE* II 1219 a 24-26.

\(^{220}\) *EE* II 1219 b 30.
than people who are unjust. As Plato argues later on in the dialogue, justice is the virtue that results from the harmony in the soul. In other words, it results from each part of the soul doing its job. In the Republic, Plato says that virtue is what allows an artifact or an individual to perform its function at the best. In other words, justice is the virtue that allows the human soul to perform its function at the best. Yet, what is this function? There seem to be two accounts of what the function is:

(i) Taking care of things, deliberating and ruling is the function of the human soul.

(ii) Living is the function of the human soul.

Socrates asks Thrasymachus whether living is the function of the soul. Thrasymachus answers that it certainly is. The function as described in (i) is soon set aside in favor of (ii). Socrates says that justice is the virtue that allows the human soul to perform its function well. Function as described in (ii) plays a more important role in the argument than the function of taking care of things, ruling, and deliberating. We can even say that it has a broader scope and it includes (i). This is evident in the conclusion of the argument that aims at elucidating who

221 Republic 352 d.

222 Republic, 444 a.


224 Republic 353 e-354 a.

225 Republic 353 d.

226 Republic 353 d.
lives well. Plato says that the just person lives well and lives a better life than the unjust person.

3. Structure of the Function Arguments

Let us turn to the structure of the three arguments. Scholars discuss whether the *NE-Function Argument* has the structure of an argument or is simply an analogy. Indeed Aristotle seems to proceed inductively from the idea that some things have a function to the claim that human beings have a function. The *NE-FA* is often called a rhetorical argument insofar as the argument presupposes premises that are not explicitly stated. Aristotle says that a sculptor, a flute-player and an artist all have functions. Similarly, bodily parts have functions. Since sculptors, flute-players, artists and even bodily parts have functions, by extension there should be a human function. Insofar as Aristotle jumps from stating that some things have a function to claiming that humans have a function, scholars say that this is not an argument, but it is an analogy.

In the chart, I distinguish what I call the elimination argument from the isolation argument. The elimination argument is an argument in which we consider different options and we eliminate options progressively until there is only one option left. The isolation argument differs from the elimination argument insofar as it aims at isolating the function that is uniquely human. In the *NE*, Aristotle proposes an isolation argument: he aims at

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distinguishing the function of human beings from the rest, namely he wants to find the distinctive (ἰδιόν) function of human beings. At the same time, he puts forward an elimination argument: he excludes nutrition, growing and perception as functions of human beings insofar as also animals participate in those activities. Aristotle says that the proper function of human beings is an activity of the soul according to reason. Yet, even though he proposes an isolation argument, Aristotle is far from saying that we are the only ones performing rational activity: the divine engages in rational activity as well. In this sense, rational activity is not enough to distinguish or to isolate human beings from other beings. However, our rational activity differs in degree and in its object from the activity of the divine: human beings cannot contemplate continuously as the divine does, and they do not contemplate the same object as the divine. Nonetheless, Aristotle emphasizes that he is considering the human function and the good for humans, and not for other beings. He calls happiness the human good (ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθὸν). The human good is “activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are several virtues, in accordance with the best and most complete.” The excellent person fulfills the function at the best by engaging in activity of the soul according to the best and most complete virtue.

In the EE-FA, Aristotle explicitly says that he is proceeding by induction: he observes that in all cases in which there is a virtue, there is also a function. He uses the examples of a cloak, a boat, a house, and a shoemaker as all cases of things that have a function. In the EE-FA, Aristotle does not aim to isolate what is distinctive of human beings. He points out

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229 NE 1097 b 24-1098 a 16.

230 NE 1098 a 23.

231 EE II 1219 a 1.
that the function of the human soul is living. This function is shared by all living things. On similar grounds, there is no elimination argument. Rather, Aristotle focuses on what makes the human soul part of nature and continuous with nature: living.232 This difference between the EE and the NE concerns the very notion of ἔργον. With respect to the NE, scholars are used to conceive the ἔργον as that which is peculiar or distinctive of human beings, as opposed to that which is shared with other living beings. But if living is the ἔργον of the human soul, as Aristotle says in the EE, then our ἔργον is not peculiar to us. Instead, we would seem to share our ἔργον with everything that has a soul, for it would seem that in other living beings, the same line of thought applies. The ἔργον of the bird’s soul and of the tree’s soul too would seem to be living. That is, ἔργον here seems to mean simply job or task, rather than identifying or characteristic job or task.

Let us move to the Republic-FA. In the Republic-FA, Plato discusses the functions of horses, eyes, ears, and knives.233 As in the NE and in the EE, the argument proceeds by analogy between the function of these things and the function of the human soul. Plato does not propose an argument by elimination: he does not exclude all the activities that are shared by other living beings. Yet, Socrates asks whether there is a function that is peculiar to the human soul. In other words, there is an isolation argument. Plato aims at isolating the function that is distinctive only of the human soul. Socrates considers taking care of things, ruling, and deliberating as possible functions of the human soul. However, none of these activities, with perhaps the exception of deliberating, seems uniquely human. Certain animals


233 Republic 352 d-352 a.
- we can think about ants and bees - take care of their environment and of each others, and some non-human individuals rule over others. In the Republic, the question of whether there is a function that is exclusively human is left unanswered. That is, Plato does not discuss whether the activities considered are shared also by other living beings. If my earlier analysis is along the right lines, and we are ultimately left with the view that the function of the human soul is living, then it seems that the isolation argument of the Republic fails. Either we concede that Plato identifies a function that is shared among all living beings. Or, we may say that we are left with the task of finding a compelling isolation argument, to the effect that the notion of the ἔργον entails the idea of what is distinctive of a given being, but that so far we have not found this distinctive ἔργον.

4. Parts of the soul and the human good

In the EE, when Aristotle discusses the virtues, there is some version of what I call the isolation argument - the argument that aims at isolating what is distinctive of human beings. In EE II 1219 b 27, Aristotle looks for human virtue and not for some virtue that is shared also by animals or by divine beings.

(T4) Since we are looking for human virtue, let us assume that there are two parts of the soul that share in reason, but not both share in reason in the same way. One does so by giving commands, the other because it is by nature such as to obey and listen. Let us exclude any part that is irrational in some other sense. It makes no difference if the soul is or is not divisible into parts; it still has different capacities, including those we have mentioned - just as the convex is not separable in a curve from the concave, nor is the straight from the white in a line. Yet the straight is not white, except incidentally and not in its own substance. Any other part of the soul, for example the vegetative, has been excluded. The parts we have mentioned are peculiar to the human soul. Hence the virtues of the nutritive and generative part are not human virtues. For if virtues belong to a human being qua human, reasoning must inhere, as principle of command and
action must inhere too; but reasoning commands not to reasoning but to desire and the affections, so a human must have these parts.\textsuperscript{234}

The passage is fraught with difficulties. Let us analyze it step by step. First of all, as Aristotle says, the vegetative part of the soul is of no interest for his analysis. Whatever virtues there might be of the nutritive and the generative parts, they are not distinctively human virtues, because these parts of the soul are not exclusively human. Aristotle says that we should not linger over the irrational parts of the soul.\textsuperscript{235} We should focus on the parts of the soul that share in reason.\textsuperscript{236} Second, he considers two parts of the soul that share in reason: the part that gives commands and the part that obeys and listens. We can distinguish between these parts conceptually, and we should do so, because their tasks differ. It is not possible to physically or literally divide these parts of the soul. Aristotle says that they are as the convex and the concave in a curve, or as the straight and the white in a substance. The second example is obscure: the main idea seems to be that straight and white are two aspects or powers of the substance. The case is similar for the concave and the convex: they are two aspects or powers of the curve. In the same way in which we cannot separate the concave and the convex in a curve, the parts of the soul cannot be separated one from the other.

T4 can be compared to the parallel passage in the NE, where Aristotle discusses human virtue and the parts in which the soul is divided. In NE 1102 a 10, Aristotle points out that we are focusing on human virtue and on the human good, and not on any other kind of virtue or

\textsuperscript{234} EE II 1219 b 27-1220 a 2.

\textsuperscript{235} In EE II 1219 b 32, Aristotle says that the virtues of the nutritive and generative parts of the soul are not proper of human beings. The manuscripts of the EE has “nutritive and desiderative” parts. Bonitz changed ὀρεκτικὸν in αὔξητικὸν.

\textsuperscript{236} EE II 1219 b 30. On “sharing in reason,” see S. Sauvē Meyer, “Proceeding to clarity about virtue: the methods of ethics in EE 2.1-2 (1219b26-1220a20),” forthcoming contribution to the Symposium Aristotelicum on EE II.
good. In order to have a better understanding of human virtue, we need to examine the parts of the human soul.

(T5) It is said, for example, that one element of the soul has reason, while another lacks it. It does not matter for the moment whether these elements are separate like the parts of the body or anything else that can be physically divided or whether they are naturally inseparable but differentiated in thought, like the convex and concave aspects of a curved surface.237

There are similarities between T4 in the EE and T5 in the NE. In both passages, Aristotle says that there are two parts of the soul in addition to the vegetative part: in the EE, he states that they both share in reason; in the NE, he says that one part has reason and the other lacks it. However, a few lines later, in NE 1102 b 10 and in 1102 b 35, Aristotle points out that the part that lacks reason in a way shares in it insofar as it listens and obeys reason. Aristotle clarifies that these two parts of the soul that share in reason cannot be truly divided. They are rather one way in which we distinguish or categorize the parts of the soul on the basis of their tasks. The example of the convex and the concave comes up in T4 as well as in T5. Conversely, the example of the white and the straight occurs only in the EE. Aristotle distances himself from any literal talk about parts. He signals that talk about parts is shorthand for something more complicated, namely that we can distinguish different capacities and their activities. In order to do so, we need not postulate parts in a robust sense. But we can talk about parts because this is a convenient way of discussing the various things that the human soul does. In NE 1102 b 35-40, Aristotle describes the part that shares in reason without properly possessing reason:

(T6) So the element without reason seems itself to have two parts. For the vegetative part has no share at all in reason, while the part consisting in appetite and desire in general does share in it in a way, in so far as it listens to and obeys it. So it has reason in the sense that a person who listens to the reason of his father

237 NE 1102 a 30-40, trans. by R. Crisp.
and his friends is said to have reason, not reason in the mathematical sense (οὐχ ὡσπερ τῶν μαθηματικῶν). That the element without reason is in some way persuaded by reason is indicated as well by the offering of advice, and all kinds of criticism and encouragement. And if we must say that this element possesses reason, then the element with reason will also have two parts, one, in the strict sense, possessing it in itself, the other ready to listen to reason as one is ready to listen to the reason of one’s father.  

In NE 1102 b 38- 1103 a 5, Aristotle says that there is a part of the soul that lacks reason. This is the appetitive/desiderative part. In T6, he describes the same part as able to be persuaded by reason. This part listens and obeys as a son does with his father. On similar grounds, this part does not have reason “in the mathematical sense,” as Aristotle says. The comparison is obscure: what does it mean “in the mathematical sense”? It is not even clear that the translation is what Aristotle had in mind. Perhaps the expression τῶν μαθηματικῶν refers to the objects of learning. One way to understand the passage is the following: Aristotle seems to suggest that this part of the soul does not have reason in it; it does not have the capacity of reasoning. It has only the capacity of following reason. Aristotle’s conclusion closely resembles what he says in the EE: the appetitive/desiderative part of the soul shares in reason by listening and obeying reason.

5. Virtue in the Function Arguments

The definition of virtue figures prominently at the beginning of the EE-FA: “(virtue) is the best disposition or state or capacity of each of the things that have some use (χρῆσις) or function.” In order for something or someone to have virtue, there needs to be a function or a use. According to Aristotle, this holds also for artifacts. In the case of artifacts, virtue is

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238 NE 1102 b 38- 1103 a 5.

239 EE II 1218 b 38-39.

240 I postpone the discussion of use to the following section.
their best state. Aristotle uses the example of the cloak to explain this point: the cloak has a function – we can say that it has the function to cover or to keep warm. Its virtue is being in its best state to fulfill this function, namely being an excellent cloak. In other words, its virtue is to be in such a way that the cloak covers and keeps someone warm in the best way. It would not be possible for the cloak to be an excellent cloak, if it does not cover or keep warm.

(T7) A cloak has a virtue, since it has a function and use, and its best state (hexis) is its virtue. The same applies to a boat and a house, and so on, and hence to the soul, since it has some function. Let us assume that the better state has a better function. And, just as states are related to one another, let the functions that arise from them be so related. And let the function of each thing be its end. So it is evident from this that the function is better than the state. For the end, being the end, is the best thing, since it has been laid down that what is best and ultimate is the end, and all the other things are for its sake. So it is clear that the function is better than the state and the disposition.

The relation between function and virtue - that is, the idea that in order to have virtue, one needs to have a function - is essential in the context of the EE-FA. Let us sum up what Aristotle puts forward in the passage:

(i) In order to have virtue, we need a function.

(ii) The best state of something is its virtue.

(iii) The better state has a better function.

(iv) The state and the better state of something are related.

241 Not only objects and individuals have functions, but also processes and activities. Happiness is the best activity and the best function for human beings. Aristotle distinguishes two types of functions in relation to processes and activities. Processes have an end-product. Conversely, activities do not have an end-product. The function is the end-product of the process, such as the house in the case of building, or health in the case of medicine. For activities, the activity itself is its function, such as seeing in the case of sight or studying in the case of mathematical knowledge. For example, in the case of building, the virtue is an excellent house.

242 EE II 1219 a 1-13.
(v) The function and the better function of something are related.

(vi) The function is the end (τέλος).

(vii) The function is better than the state and the disposition (διάθεσις) insofar as it is the end.

First of all, the relation between function and virtue provides a reason why Aristotle assigns a function to the human soul rather than to human beings. That is, in *EE* VIII.3, Aristotle discusses the most complete virtue of the soul - *kalokagathia* (the virtue of being-beautiful-and-good). He cannot discuss the virtue that results from all the other virtues without establishing a function of the soul: as he said, there is no virtue of something if there is no function.²⁴³ Insofar as the virtue is the best state of something, he needs to discuss how the state relates to the virtue. According to the *EE-FA*, being completely virtuous and happy is being excellent at fulfilling the human soul’s function. As Aristotle says (iii), the better state has a better function. Hence, the agent who has the best state - *kalokagathia* - has the best function. And yet, this best function is related to the function as the better state is related to the state. In *EE* II 1219 a 8, Aristotle proposes an identification: the function is the end (τέλος). And the function of the soul and of its virtue is the same: this is good living.²⁴⁴ In other words, it is happiness. In this passage, Aristotle aims at stressing that happiness is an activity (ἐνέργεια) and not a state (ἕξις) insofar as he has established that the function (an activity) is better than the state. And in 1219 a 33, he adds that the activity is better than the

²⁴³ Aristotle says that *kalokagathia* is the virtue that results from all the virtues discussed so far: *EE* VIII.3 1248 b 10.

²⁴⁴ *EE* II 1219 a 27.
disposition (διάθεσις). Insofar as to best activity belongs the best state, Aristotle concludes that the activity of the soul’s virtue is the best thing and this is happiness.

Let us turn to the NE. In the NE, the function is activity of the soul according to reason (λόγος). In NE 1098 a 8, Aristotle says that the function of a cithara-player and of a good cithara-player are the same in kind (τῷ γένει). As Aristotle describes it, being a good cithara-player is an addition or superiority (ὑπεροχῆς) over the function. However, the function of the good cithara-player is the same in kind as the function of the average cithara-player. The case is similar for the function of human beings: the function of human beings and of the good human being is the same in kind. This suggests that being a good human being adds something to the function, but it does not change the function. And yet, according to what Aristotle says in NE X, the best activity for human beings is contemplation.245 How does contemplation relate to the function of human beings? Can we say that the activity of the contemplator goes beyond the activity according to practical wisdom and the character virtue? Correspondingly, are the two best lives - the life of contemplation and of politics - the same in kind? The examples of the cithara-player and of the good cithara-player seem to suggest so. I will discuss a possible objection to this claim in section 7.

Let us move to the Republic. In the Republic, Plato, as the Aristotle of the EE, points out that virtue is what allows someone/something to fulfill her/its function well and that it is

245 NE 1177 a 18.
not possible to fulfill one’s function well without the corresponding virtue.\textsuperscript{246} Plato uses the examples of the eyes and ears and their corresponding virtues to explain this relation between function and virtue.\textsuperscript{247} The eyes are not able to see well if deprived of their virtue. The ears are not able to hear well without their proper virtue.\textsuperscript{248} In the case of the soul, the virtue of the soul is justice. Justice seems to include all the other virtues. On similar grounds, all the virtues are forms of justice. Virtue is what allows to perform the function well. And the function of the soul is living. Hence, no one would be able to live a good and happy life if deprived of the virtue of justice.

6. Use in the Function Arguments

In the \textit{EE} II 1219 a 14, Aristotle says that the term function has two senses. In one sense, X’s function is its use (\(\chiρηςις\)). His examples are seeing as the use or function of sight, and studying as the use or function of mathematical knowledge.\textsuperscript{249} In the \textit{EE-FA}, \(\chiρηςις\) figures in the definition of the function of the human soul:

\textsuperscript{246} Kosman says that it would not be possible to perform one’s function without the corresponding virtue and that the function is determined on the basis of the proper virtue, p. 129: “An appropriate function, then, is the function for which a thing is best suited, and that in turn means the function for which it has the appropriate virtues. Justice, therefore, is a virtue of any complex and functionally differentiated entity in which function is determined on the basis of virtue. It turns out, therefore, that justice is, so to speak, a self-referring virtue. It is the virtue that characterizes those entities whose functional differentiation is in accordance with the principle of function following virtue. It is, to reveal again why we think of it as justice, the proper adjustment of function and virtue.”


\textsuperscript{248} \textit{Republic} 353 b-c.

\textsuperscript{249} In the \textit{NE}, there is no reference to use. What is more, there are surprisingly few occurrences of \(\chiρηςις\) in discussions of virtue and of the function in the \textit{NE}. Two of these occurrences are in book V, which is one of the books that the \textit{NE} shares with the \textit{EE}: \textit{NE V} = \textit{EE IV} 1129 b 31, 1130 b 20.
(T8) Let the function of the soul be to make a thing alive, and let the function of being alive be a using and a being awake - sleep is a kind of idleness and rest.²⁵⁰

Aristotle says that there is a function of the soul, which is making something alive. More than that, he points out that there is a function of this function (i.e., being alive), which is “a using and a being awake.” In the case of a tool, its function is its use. Let us consider the example of the knife: the function of the knife is cutting. And yet, what does it mean that the use of sight is seeing? Let us examine the relevant passage:

(T9) Function has two senses: some things have a function which is different from the use. For example, the function of building is not building but a house, and the function of medicine is not healing or treating, but health. With other things, their use is their function. For example, the function of sight is seeing and the function of mathematical knowledge is studying. Hence, where a thing’s use is its function, the use is necessarily better than the state.²⁵¹

Aristotle seems to propose an analogy with tools. As in the case of tools, the function is the use, in the case of sight, the activity of seeing is its function and its use. On similar grounds, this analogy holds between the human soul and a tool: as the use is the function of the tool, the use of the human soul is being awake.²⁵² As Aristotle says in T8, also processes have a function. Aristotle points out that there are processes such as building and medicine in which the function is the goal or aim of these processes. Processes have an external aim: this is their function. Conversely, activities such as seeing or studying do not have an external aim. Their aim is performing the activity. For these activities, their function is their use: in

²⁵⁰ EE II 1219 a 23-25.

²⁵¹ EE II 1219 a 14-18.

²⁵² W.R.F. Hardie argues that one cannot say that human beings have a function unless he conceives of human beings as tool (Aristotle’s Ethical Theory, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 23).
other words, it is performing the activity. Hence, the use of sight is seeing. The following passage in EE II further supports this reading:

(T10) To act well and to live well are the same as to be happy, and each of these is a use and an activity, both life and action (as also the practical is a capacity of using things - the smith makes a bridle, the rider uses it).

In T8, Aristotle says that the function of being alive is a use. In T10, Aristotle clarifies this claim by saying that life and action have to do with using things. In life, we use the virtues, as in action, we use things: for example, the rider uses the bridle when she rides. In the EE, the notion of use goes hand in hand with the notion of activity, which plays a central role in Aristotle’s account of function and of happiness. A similar approach to the notion of use can be found in Plato’s Republic. In the Republic, Plato says that virtue is related to use:

(T11) Then aren’t the virtue or excellence, the beauty and correctness of each manufactured item, living creature, and action related to nothing but the use for which each is made or naturally developed (πεφυκός)?

In the EE-FA, Aristotle argues that there is no virtue if there is no function or use. In the Republic, Plato says that the virtue of a thing or of an individual is related to the use. Plato considers tools and also living beings. He says that the virtue of a tool or of a living being is the best use for which the tool is made. For example, the virtue of the knife is to cut well. In the case of the human soul, the virtue is the fulfillment of the function - in other words, the use - of the human soul. The function or use of the human soul is living: as the knife is made for cutting, the soul is by nature made for living. Plato uses the perfect participle πεφυκός, which derives from the verb φύω - literally “to bring forth.” I translate πεφυκός “naturally

253 Cf. the distinction between processes and activities in J. Beere, Doing and Being, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012.

254 EE II 1219 b 1-4.

255 Plato, Republic 601 e.
developed” insofar as the verb has the same root of φύσις - nature. Nature refers to what grows and develops spontaneously. In this sense, living beings are naturally developed in order to fulfill the function of living. And this is the use for which a living being is made by nature. In T11, Plato says that the function of the human soul is simply living. However, the idea that by nature human beings have more sophisticated functions occurs in many passages in the Republic. In 375 c-d and in 410 e, Plato points out that in order to become a guardian, one needs to have by nature a certain disposition of character. In 433 a, he explains that each one has to perform the task that by nature is more fitted for each individual. In 454 d, Plato says that the nature of a doctor and of a carpenter are different. For this reason, they have different functions in the city. In the Republic, nature and function are related: the function is assigned by nature; it is what one by nature is more fitted to do. The idea of being by nature (πεφυκός) made to fulfill a function occurs also in the NE. In NE 1097 b 25, Aristotle asks whether of all beings that have a function human beings are the only ones that by nature are functionless (ἀργὸν πέφυκεν). However, in the NE, the use is not one of the ways in which we understand the function. This seems to be peculiar of the EE and of the Republic.

7. Fulfilling the function

Let us dwell for a moment on a passage in the common books. According to the NE-FA, having the virtues of thinking is essential to fulfill the function of human beings insofar as the function is activity according to reason. However, it is not clear whether the virtues of character have some role to play in fulfilling the function. Scholars debate on the issue. Korsgaard argues that we need both the virtues of thinking and the virtues of character in order to fulfill our function well. She points out that Aristotle’s description of the virtues of

character aims at showing how the virtues of character make us good at rational thinking. For Korsgaard, not only is there no tension between Aristotle’s claim that the human function is activity according to reason and the lengthy discussion of the virtues of character in the NE, but the FA is essential for explaining Aristotle’s theory of the virtues. Let us look at a passage that occurs in one of the common books - NE VI= EE V - in a section where Aristotle is explaining why practical and theoretical wisdom are useful. Aristotle says:

(T12) The function [GB: of the human soul] is fully achieved (ἀποτελεῖται) in accordance with practical wisdom as well as in accordance with the virtue of character; for virtue makes the aim right, and practical wisdom the things leading to it.257

The interpretation of the passage is controversial. There is a complex scholarly debate on the role of character virtues and of practical wisdom in determining the end and the means of action. For present purposes we do not need to examine these interpretational controversies. What matters for my analysis is that in T12, Aristotle points out that the function is achieved - and yet it matters how we translate ἀποτελεῖται - in accordance with practical wisdom and with the virtues of character. Let us deal immediately with one possible objection: Aristotle uses the term ergon in T12. Someone may say that Aristotle is not talking about the function of the soul or of the human being. However, if we look at the sentence immediately before T12, Aristotle says that theoretical wisdom causes happiness and that it is part of complete virtue.258 Hence, the context suggests that Aristotle has in mind the function as described in the FA, and in particular the best fulfillment of this function - happiness. As I already argued, there is a distinction, which holds both for the EE and for the NE, between fulfilling the function and fulfilling the function at its best (happiness). According to the EE,

257 NE=EE, 1144 a 7-8, trans. by GB: ἐτὶ τὸ ἔργον ἀποτελεῖται κατὰ τὴν φρόνησιν καὶ τὴν ἱθυκὴν ἀρετὴν: ἢ μὲν γὰρ ἀρετὴ τὸν σκοπὸν ποιεῖ ὀρθὸν, ἢ δὲ φρόνησις τὰ πρὸς τοῦτον.

258 EE V=NE VI 1044 5-7.
the function and the best function are related in the same way in which the state (including virtue) and the best state are related. According to the *NE*, the function and the best function are the same in kind (recall the example of the cithara-player and the good cithara-player). One preliminary question is in order: in T12, is the function living - as described in the *EE-FA* - or activity according to reason - as described in the *NE-FA*? Aristotle says that the function is fully achieved in accordance with practical wisdom and the virtues of character. If the function is activity according to reason, in a way, Aristotle legitimizes the role of the virtues of character in fulfilling the function. If we read T12 within the context of the *EE*, Aristotle says that practical wisdom and the virtues of thinking are necessary to fulfill the function of living fully or at the best. This may sound too far-reaching insofar as the intuitive idea is that we do not need practical wisdom and the virtues of character in order to fulfill the function of living. As I understand it, there are at least three ways of reading T12 depending on how we interpret the Greek verb ἀποτελεῖται. These three ways take into account the distinction between the function and the best function discussed in the two treatises.

(a) If we translate the verb ἀποτελεῖται “achieve,” practical wisdom and character virtues seem necessary to fulfill the function of the human soul even on a basic level (i.e. not at the best).\(^{259}\)

(b) If we translate ἀποτελεῖται “fully achieve,” or “achieve at its best,” (as the prefix ἀπο suggests) in order to achieve the function at its best, the agent needs practical wisdom and character virtues. However, this is compatible with the idea that in order to fulfill the

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\(^{259}\) The term is translated as “achieve” by Ross’s (revised by L. Brown). Barnes translates “is achieved.” Irwin translates “we fulfill our function in so far as we have intelligence and virtue of character.” Broadie-Rowe translate “the product is brought to completion by virtue of a person’s having wisdom and excellence of character.”
function on a basic level, practical wisdom and character virtues are not required. They are necessary only to fulfill the function at the best.

(c) A third possibility is to admit that the function of the human soul is achieved according to practical wisdom and the virtues of character. One may not fully develop practical wisdom and the virtues of character. And yet, she may still retain the potentiality of developing them. According to the EE, the soul of every agent fulfills its function of living, no matter whether the agent has fully developed practical wisdom and the virtues of character or not.

According to (b) and (c), T12 is compatible with the reading of the EE-FA that I put forward in this chapter. Conversely, if we admit that the function of the human soul includes the full development of practical wisdom and the virtues of character, only the agent who has developed practical wisdom and the virtues of character fulfills this function. This means that if the agent is not virtuous, the soul of this agent does not fulfill the function. According to (b) and (c), if the agent does not have practical wisdom and the character virtues, the soul of this agent does not fulfill the function at the best; it does not develop the virtues that it is by nature fitted to develop. And yet, the soul of the non-virtuous agent still fulfills the function. With regard to the NE, only option (a) is compatible with the claim that the function is activity according to reason.

8. Human function and the divine in the EE

I turn to an analysis of how these two Function Arguments prepare the ground for the discussions of the best fulfillment of the function, that is, the best life, that occur at the end of

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The two treatises - respectively in EE VIII and in NE X. In particular, I focus on the following question: what is the relation between fulfilling the function of the human soul and fulfilling its function at the best? Let us consider first the EE. Recall that in EE II 1219 a 6, Aristotle says that as the state and the better state are related, the function and the better function are related. And in EE II 1219 a 26, he adds that the function of the soul and of its virtue are the same. Once we have secured these two premises, let us look at EE VIII.3:

(T13) One must, then, as in other domains, live with reference to the commander and with reference to the disposition and activity of the commander, as a slave must live with an eye to that of his master and each must live with reference to the appropriate commanding element. Since human beings too are by nature composed of a commander and a commanded, each person would also have to live with reference to his own commanding element. This has two aspects. For the art of medicine and health are commanding elements in different ways (the former is for the sake of the latter). This is how it is with regard to the contemplative. God is not a commander in the sense of giving orders but as that for the sake of which practical wisdom gives orders. And that for the sake of which is double (the distinction has been made elsewhere), since god is in need of nothing.261

The passage is fraught with difficulties. Aristotle says that we have to live with reference to the state and activity - ἕξις and ἐνέργεια - of the commander - τὸ ἄρχον - literally “that which governs.” This seems to be the best life; in other words, it is the best fulfillment of the human function. In order to understand the passage, we need to clarify what the commander is. Once this is done, I turn to an analysis of what the state and the activity of the commander are.

261 Eudemian Ethics, 1249 b 7-18, translated by B. Inwood, R. Woolf with changes by GB: δεῖ δὴ δὴ δισεπερ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις πρὸς τὸ ἄρχον ζῆν, καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἔξιν κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τὴν τοῦ ἄρχοντος, οἷον δοῦλον πρὸς δεσπότου καὶ ἐκαστὸν πρὸς τὴν ἐκάστου καθήκουσαν ἄρχην. ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ ἄνθρωπος φύει συνέστηκεν ἐξ ἄρχοντος καὶ ἄρχομένου, καὶ ἐκαστὸν ἐν δειοὶ πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἄρχην ζῆν (αὕτη δὲ διετή: ἄλλοις γὰρ ἡ ἰατρικὴ ἄρχη καὶ ἄλλοις ἡ ὑγίεια: ταύτης δὲ ἕνεκα ἐκεῖνη); οὕτω δ᾽ ἔχει κατὰ τὸ θεωρητικόν, οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτακτικὸς ἄρχον ὁ θεὸς, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ ἕνεκα ἡ φρόνησις ἐπιτάττει (διίτον δὲ τὸ οὐ ἕνεκα: διώρισται δ᾽ ἐν ἄλλοις), ἐπεὶ κείνος γε οὐθενὸς δεῖται.
Let us consider two interpretations: the interpretation of Taylor and Gosling and the interpretation of Kenny. According to Taylor and Gosling, the commander is the divine. Taylor and Gosling’s interpretation of the commander relies on the section of the EE that occurs immediately before T13, where Aristotle discusses natural goods. In EE VIII 1248 b 29, Aristotle offers a paradigmatic list of natural goods: honor, wealth, bodily excellences, good fortune and power. In chapter III, I argue that natural goods are a mix of external goods, goods of the soul and goods of the body. For present purposes, let us assume this as a minimal account of what natural goods are. Taylor and Gosling argue that natural goods promote θεωρία. They promote the contemplation of the divine. And this divine is the commander. However, there seem to be at least two things that are called “commander.” First, Aristotle says that human beings are composed of a commander and of a commanded. And he says that each person must live according to his commander. This commander cannot be the divine since it is part of the human soul. Second, Aristotle proposes a comparison: medicine and health are compared to practical wisdom and god. In the context of this comparison, Aristotle says that god is a commander. Only this second occurrence of the commander refers to the divine.

Kenny translates τό ἄρχον as “one’s superior” and as “raison d’ être.” According to Kenny, it is possible to distinguish two parts of human reason that are related to one another as the superior to the inferior. On his view, the superior part is a “broad intellectual faculty” (θεωρητικόν) and the inferior part is practical wisdom (φρόνησις). Kenny interprets


263 In manuscripts P, C, and L, we have ἑαυτῶν, Susemihl reads αὑτοῦ.

T13 in the light of the comparison with health and medicine that Aristotle puts forward immediately before T13: in *EE* VIII.3 1249 a 22-29. Health is the *raison d’être* of medicine and both are ἄρχαι (causes or principles). In the soul, there are two principles that resemble medicine and health. One can compare practical wisdom (φρόνησις) to medicine; the “speculative part of the soul” - as Kenny calls it - is its *raison d’être*. On similar grounds, as health is what medicine is for, god is what practical wisdom is for. There are two ἄρχαι: god who does not issue commands, and practical wisdom that does issue commands. In this sense, god is not like a master with a slave (the soul). According to Kenny, practical wisdom is more suited to this analogy since it commands to the soul as a master commands to a slave. My proposal is close to Kenny’s insofar as I agree that Aristotle’s focus on τὸ θεωρητικὸν in *EE* VIII.3 1249 b 13 is fundamental to understand the passage. Insofar as Aristotle speaks about τὸ θεωρητικὸν in the same section where he discusses the commander, the part of the soul to which the virtues of theoretical thought belongs is the *archê* of the human soul.

Aristotle says that practical wisdom prescribes for the sake of theos. At the same time, he says that each person has its own commander. And right after the comparison with medicine and health, he adds that so are things in relation to the theoretical capacity. This suggests that there are theoretical virtues involved, and that the commander cannot be only practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is simply not the virtue of theoretical contemplation. For these reasons, it seems more plausible to read τὸ ἄρχον as the part of the soul that commands

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266 Gabbe (“Aristotle on the starting points of motion in the soul,” *Phronesis*, 57, 4, 2012, pp. 358-379) puts forward the view that in *EE* VIII.2, god is the *archê* in the sense that it is the final cause of thoughts and desires: god explains the nature of the desiderative and rational faculties in human beings. In other words, god explains why we desire what we take to be good. In *EE* 1248 a 28, Aristotle says that God is the cause of motion in the soul. I focus on a different passage, albeit occurring close in the text to the passage that Gabbe considers, and I argue that in T13, *archê* cannot refer to god insofar as Aristotle says that human beings are composed of an *archontos*. 

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and to which all the virtues of thinking belong, including practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom. As discussed above, in *EE*.II 1219 b 30, Aristotle divides the soul into parts. In this section of the text, Aristotle uses the same verb ἐπιτάττει - “to command” - to describe the task of the part of the soul to which the virtues of thinking belong. The same verb appears also in T13. This may suggest that the commander is the part of the soul that gives orders. This idea is further confirmed in *EE* VIII 1249 b 11, where Aristotle says that human beings are by nature composed of a commander and of a commanded. The part of the soul that gives commands is by nature constitutive of human beings. In order to fulfill the function of the human soul at the best - that is, in order to be happy - we need to follow the commands of this part of the soul. The commander orders to the commanded, which is the part of the soul that shares in reason by obeying and listening, and to which the character virtues belong.  

In order to explain the relation between the commander and “that for the sake of which” (οὗ ἔνεκα) the commander gives order, Aristotle introduces the comparison with health and medicine. There are two ways to understand οὗ ἔνεκα: τὸ οὗ ἔνεκα τινός is the aim for which we do something; τὸ οὗ ἔνεκα τινί is the beneficiary of what we do.  

As medicine is for the sake of health, practical wisdom is for the sake of the divine (*EE* VIII 1249 b 13). Aristotle says that “the art of medicine and health are commanding elements in different ways […] this is how it is with regard to the contemplative (θεωρετικόν).” As medicine commands for the sake of health, practical wisdom commands the part of the soul that listens and obeys. And it commands for the sake of the divine. This last claim is obscure. At first sight, it may seem

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267 *EE* II 1220 a 10.


269 *EE* VIII 1249 b 14.
that practical wisdom is the virtue of contemplation. And this is in contrast with how the virtues are understood in the rest of the text. One possible reading is that practical wisdom commands ultimately for the sake of the divine in the sense that it commands for the sake of the theoretical capacity mentioned in EE 1249b 13. The theoretical capacity concerns the divine.

A glance over the next lines sheds further light on the expression οὗ ἐνεκα: Aristotle says that “god is not a commander in the sense of giving orders, but as that for the sake of which practical wisdom gives orders.” Practical wisdom - together with all the other virtues of thinking - is a commander because it gives order to the part of the soul that listens and obeys. However, also god is in some way a commander insofar as it is “that for the sake of which” practical wisdom gives orders. The expression οὗ ἐνεκα suggests that god is the end and the object of contemplation. Aristotle specifies that the human activity of contemplation does not benefit in any way god insofar as god is in need of nothing.\footnote{On οὗ ἐνεκα be the end of something cf. Metaphysics 1072 b 1-4 and in On the soul 415 b 2-4.}

Let me turn to two interpretations of θεός (god) as this term occurs in T13: (1) Dirlmeier says that θεός is νοῦς;\footnote{Von Arnim defends this interpretation.} (2) Verdenius argues that god is not an internal divine principle - what we may call “god in us,” but it is the divine being described in Metaphysics Lambda.\footnote{Cf. Buddensiek (F. Buddensiek, Contemplation and service of the god, in P. Destrée, M. Zingano, Theoria, studies on the status and meaning of contemplation in Aristotle’s ethics, Louvain: Peeters, 2014) argues that “god” refers to the best possible object of contemplation. Von Arnim (1924) interprets theos as nous. This interpretation is shared by Gouthier and Jolif (1970). Needler (1926) interprets it as internal god.} Scholars are divided between those who support the so called internal reading and those who prefer the external reading of the divine: according to the internal reading, the
divine is human intelligence (νοῦς) - the so-called divine principle in us. According to the external interpretation, it is the god described also in the *Metaphysics* as the prime mover.

Dirlmeier argues that in EE VIII.3, θεός is the “god in us” - namely, intelligence (νοῦς). Noûς is not only considered divine, but it is even called god (EE 1248 a 26-29, NE 1177 a 16). Dirlmeier argues that god is the *Endzweck* (goal) of φρόνησις. As Aristotle points out in EE V=NE VI, φρόνησις is not the faculty of the soul suited for the contemplation of god. Aristotle says that practical wisdom commands for the sake of god. According to Dirlmeier, in order to understand this claim, we have to interpret θεός as νοῦς. Dirlmeier argues that only in this way, the passage is consistent with what Aristotle says on the role assigned to νοῦς and to φρόνησις in the NE. However, Aristotle does not say that practical wisdom is the virtue that allows us to contemplate the divine. He says that practical wisdom prescribes for the sake of god. That is, the final aim is the divine. On Dirlmeier’s view, for Aristotle, φρόνησις is the inferior part of the soul and νοûς is the superior part. In order to substantiate his reading, Dirlmeier points out that already in the fifth century the idea of νοûς as the “god in us” was widespread (as he points out, in Pindar and in Euripides, we find similar formulations of this idea). However, Aristotle explicitly mentions the theoretical capacity a few words before mentioning god. God seems to be the object of this capacity. When

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274 See Kenny and Jaeger. L. Jost argues that the service of the god consists in attending to our own moral development. L. Jost, “Theos, Theoria, and Therapeia in Aristotle’s Ethical Endings,” in *Theoria*, pp. 287-213.

275 Defourny (P. Defourny, *Contemplation in Aristotle’s ethics*, in J. Barnes, M. Schofield, R. Sorabji (eds.), *Articles on Aristotle 2: ethics and politics*, London: Duckworth, 1977) argues that φρόνησις in EE VIII 3 means practical wisdom, while Buddensiek (2014) argues that it is prudence. Rowe (1971) claims that there is no distinction between practical and theoretical wisdom in the EE.

Aristotle says that god is a commander, this commander is not the commander that is described as a part of the soul a few lines before. Verdenius proposes a different reading of theos. He argues that even if Aristotle says that νοῦς is divine, he never calls it “god.”

Verdenius explains that god is self-sufficient. And in T13, Aristotle says that god is self-sufficient and in need of nothing. For this reason, it would be impossible to read θεός as νοῦς insofar as intelligence is not self-sufficient as god. According to Verdenius, god is the end of contemplation; it is that for the sake of which φρόνησις gives orders. The reading proposed by Verdenius seems more plausible given how Aristotle describes the tasks of practical wisdom in the rest of the treatise, and how he conceives of the divine in particular in the Metaphysics.

Further evidence in favor of the interpretation of theos as the divine is provided by the repetition of theos in EE VIII.3 1249 b 17. This reading is compatible with the idea that θεός is the divine principle as Aristotle describes it in the Metaphysics, which is self-sufficient and in need of nothing. In EE VIII.3 1249 b 16, Aristotle says that the commander is in need of nothing, which seems to suggest that the commander is the self-sufficient principle of the Metaphysics.

277 W.J. Verdenius, Human reason and God, in P. Moraux, D. Harlfinger, Untersuchungen zur Eudemischen Ethik, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971, p. 291: “It is extremely unlikely that Aristotle should have used the term o teos to denote the human nous. It is true that he calls reason “the divine” and even “the most divine”, but that makes all the difference […] The fact that Aristotle regards human reason as divine but not as God is not difficult to explain. God is too perfect to think anything else beside himself. This level of self-sufficiency is beyond the reach of man.”


279 In MM 1198 b 7, φρόνησις is called the steward of nous, and it procures leisure for the “master.”

280 Cf. Metaphysics, 1072 b 14 and followings.
To sum up, T13 is relevant for present purposes insofar as the passage clarifies what the best life is for the Aristotle of the *EE*. As I suggested, fulfilling the function at the best - best living - is living according to the part of the soul that commands. To this part of the soul belong the virtues of thinking. Based only on these passages one may think that the best fulfillment of the function is the life of contemplation. However, as Aristotle says in the *FA*, the function of the human soul is living. He stresses that the soul is a unity with parts. In line with this idea, the best fulfillment of the function involves the soul as a unity, and not just the part of the soul that commands. The *alogen* part of the soul does not contribute in significant ways to the best life insofar as Aristotle says that we need to be as less aware of this part as possible. However, the part of the soul that shares in reason by obeying and listening is a constitutive and contributing part of the best life. There cannot be a commander without a commanded. Further support to this idea is brought by the references to natural goods that Aristotle repeatedly makes before and after T13. If the best life solely consists in contemplation, why are natural goods so important? The discussion of natural goods suggests that the best fulfillment of the human soul does not consists uniquely in contemplation, but it involves the activities of the two parts of the soul that share in reason and their respective virtues: the virtues of thinking and the character virtues. In this sense, the proposal of the *EE* does not include two best lives, but a unified notion of happiness, which includes the activities of the virtues of thinking and of the virtues of character. Even though other aspects - the idea of a commander and of a commanded, the importance of practical wisdom for contemplation - are close to the proposal of the *NE*, the notion of one best life that includes all the virtues seems prominent only in the *EE*.

281 *EE* VIII 1249 b 10-12.
9. Function, limit and contemplation

Insofar as the discussion of natural goods adds important elements to the idea that the best life does not uniquely consist in contemplation, let us look more closely at one salient passage. In *EE* VIII 1249 b 18-25, Aristotle says:

(T14) Whatever choice and acquisition of natural goods will most effectively produce the contemplation of the divine, either goods of the body or money or friends or other goods, that choice is the best and this acquisition is the most beautiful limit, and whatever choice and acquisition of natural goods impedes, either by deficiency or by excess, our cultivation and contemplation of the divine, is base. And this applies to the soul, and it is the best limit for the soul when one is least aware of the irrational part of the soul as such. Let this be our account of the \textit{limit} for being-beautiful-and-good and of the aim served by \textit{simpliciter-goods}.\footnote{EE VIII 1249 b 18-25: ἦτες οὖν ἀφείςεις καὶ κτήσεις τῶν φύσει ἀγαθῶν ποιήσει μάλιστα τὴν τοῦ \textit{θείου} θεωρίαν, ἢ σοματικὸς ἢ χρηματικὸς ἢ φίλων ἢ τῶν ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν, αὕτη ἁριστή, καὶ οὕτως ὁ ὁρός κάλλιστος. ἦτες ὁ δ’ ἢ δ’ ἔννοιαν ἢ δι’ ὑπερβολὴν καλύπτει τὸ θεῖον θεωρεῖν καὶ θεωρεῖν, αὕτη δὲ φαύλη, ἔχει δὲ τούτῳ τῇ ψυχή, καὶ οὕτως τῆς ψυχῆς ὁροῦ ἁριστος, ὅταν ἡμιστα αισθάνεσθαι τοῦ ἁλόγου μέρους τῆς ψυχῆς, ἢ τοιοῦτον. τις μὲν οὖν ὁροῦ τῆς καλοκαγαθίας, καὶ τις ὁ σκοπὸς τῶν ἁπλῶς ἀγαθῶν, ἢτοι εἰρημένον. Dirlmeier translates 1249 b 16-20: “Jene Wahl nun und jene Erwerbung der natürlichen Güter, seien es körperliche oder Geld oder Freunde oder die sonstigen Güter, welche am maisten das betrachtende Verhalten des Gottes ermöglichen, die ist die beste und dieser Maßstabis der schönste.”

Aristotle says that the choice and the acquisition of natural goods that most effectively promote the contemplation of the divine are the most beautiful limit. This claim is not clear and it is in need of careful analysis. First of all, it is not clear how the choice and acquisition of natural goods relate to the contemplation of god. Second, Aristotle uses an enigmatic expression: κάλλιστος ὁρός - literally “the most beautiful limit.” There are four references to the limit in VIII.3, and they are obscure: (i) in *EE* 1249 a 22, Aristotle compares \textit{καλοκαγαθία} - being-beautiful-and-good - to medicine, and he states that the doctor must have a limit (ὁρός). This limit helps us understand for example, what is good for health and what is not. (ii) In *EE* 1249 b 19, Aristotle says that the choice and acquisition of natural goods that best promote the contemplation of the divine is the most beautiful limit; (iii) In *EE* 1249 b 21, he
says that being aware as little as possible of the irrational part of the soul is the best limit of the soul; (iv) In EE 1249 b 25, ὅρος is the limit of καλοκαγαθία.

Either the limit is the same in all these occurrences, or we are talking about different limits. There are at least two strands of scholarship. According to the first strand, the limit does not specify the norm of action, but it specifies the norm for the choice of natural goods. According to the second strand, the limit does indeed concern actions. Kenny explains that for Aristotle, the limit is the criterion of perfect virtue. According to Kenny, natural goods are the subject matter of virtues discussed in EE III, namely magnanimity, magnificence and liberality. Passions and the irrational part of the soul are the subject matter of virtues such as courage, temperance and meekness. On his view, practical wisdom sets the mean for each of these virtues and for the sake of the contemplation of the divine. In this sense, for Kenny, ὅρος is the criterion of perfect virtue. A similar interpretation is defended by Gosling and Taylor. According to Gosling and Taylor, the limit concerns actions and not only natural goods. The reading defended by Kenny, and by Gosling and Taylor, is supported by the claim that the limit is a limit of the soul and of kalokagathia, and not only of natural goods. Of course, this presupposes that Aristotle is talking about the same limit in all the occurrences.

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285 Eudemian Ethics, 1231 b 28.

286 A. Kenny, Aristotle on the perfect life, cit., p. 100.

287 Gosling and Taylor, p. 343.
Broadie believes that there are at least two limits: the limit of natural goods and the limit of kalokagathia. She argues that kalokagathia is the limit of natural goods. On her view, this idea is necessary for Aristotle to introduce θεωρία as a noble activity. According to Broadie, Aristotle’s audience would not take for granted that θεωρία is a noble activity equally valuable as other noble activities: contemplation does not contribute to the polis. Aristotle introduces kalokagathia to convey the idea that contemplation has value.288 As she explains, contemplation is the most beautiful activity and it is the best limit for the soul: while engaged in this activity, the soul perceives the irrational part as little as possible.289 According to Broadie, θεωρία is the limit of kalokagathia; kalokagathia is in its turn the limit of natural goods. Broadie interprets ὅρος as “moral safeguard:” virtue allows the agent to choose and acquire natural goods with a view to what would contribute to a good life. However, if we follow Broadie’s reading, we have two notions of limit in the passage: the limit of natural goods, and the limit of kalokagathia.

Let us assume as a premise what I demonstrated in chapter III, that natural goods are a mix of external goods, goods of the soul, and goods of the body. If this is a plausible account of natural goods, they benefit us in different ways. That is, they do not concern only our soul: bodily excellences and wealth satisfy the needs of our bodies; friends, honor and power provide for our social needs, and so forth. However, all these are for the sake of something.


289 S. Broadie, Ethics with Aristotle, cit., p. 385: “Aristotle first invokes a notion of nobility in which his audience would see noble practical deeds as the only kind of limit; and then implies that pursuit and use of natural goods are not adequately limited by it alone [...] Aristotle has insinuated the thought that nobility (kalokagathia), which is said to be complete virtue, is not complete unless endowed with more than is required for noble practical deeds: it needs more by way of natural goods to use and more, too, by way of a further goal in the light of which to use them. And along with this he has also insinuated the thought that without that goal, but with the extra goods, nobility is not stably noble. Theoria is not only glorious in itself, but is a moral safeguard: it preserves practical nobility in superfluity much as practical nobility preserves sheer basic goodness.”
They are for the sake of the best activity of our soul: contemplation. As Aristotle says, the best limit of the soul is what “makes us less aware of the irrational part of our soul.” For present purposes, it seems sufficient to say that natural goods make us less aware of the irrational part of the soul insofar as they fulfill the need of this part. Insofar as we do not need to attend to this irrational part, we are better off for contemplation. And not only this: we are indeed in the best conditions to attend to virtuous actions. For example, insofar as we have wealth, we can be generous; insofar as we have bodily strength, we can be courageous, and so forth. The discussion of ὁρος that occurs in EE V 1138 b 20-35 speaks in favor of this reading. In EE V=NE VI, Aristotle says:

(T15) Since we have in fact already said that one must choose the mean, and not the excess or the deficiency, and since the mean is as correct reasoning says it is, let us make some distinctions here. In all the states discussed, just as in other matters, there is a target which the rational person looks to as he intensifies and relaxes, and there is a limit for the mean states, which we say lie between the excess and the deficiency, being in accordance with correct reasoning (ὀρθὸν λόγον). Now this claim is true, but not at all clear.

In this passage, Aristotle says that there is a limit (or a criterion) for the mean states. This limit determines what the measure is. In other words, it establishes the middle point between excess and deficiency. What is more, the limit is regulated by correct reasoning, which seems to be practical wisdom. This idea appears also in EE VIII.3 1249 a 22, where Aristotle says that the doctor has a limit when he determines which body is healthy and which is not. The comparison with medicine and health comes up in EE V, as well as in EE VIII.

290 EE VIII 1249 b 23.

291 Rowe argues that EE VIII.3 narrows down the application of horos that was introduced in book V. C.J. Rowe, The Eudemian and Nicomachean Ethics: A study in the development of Aristotle’s Thought.

292 EE V=NE VI 1138 b 20-35.
3. In both passages, the limit is the criterion of something; in other words, it establishes the measure of something. As the example of the doctor mentioned in EE VIII.3 1249 a 22 suggests, the limit establishes the right measure to say that the body is healthy. In EE VIII.3 1249 b 1 and in 1249 b 19, the limit establishes the quantity of natural goods. Once again, the limit is between excess and deficiency, as in the case of the mean states.

To further clarify the nature of the limit, let us dwell for a moment on the Greek text of EE VIII.3 1249 b 17-19: ἥτις οὖν αἵρεσις καὶ κτήσεις τῶν φύσει ἄγαθῶν ποιήσει μάλιστα τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ θεωρίαν, ὣς σώματος ὃς χρημάτων ὣς φίλων ὣς τῶν ἄλλων ἄγαθῶν, αὕτη ἄριστη, καὶ οὗτος ὁ ὁρός κάλλιστος. The passage can be translated literally as follows: “whatever choice and acquisition of natural goods will most effectively produce the contemplation of the divine, either goods of the body or money or friends or other goods, that choice is the best and this acquisition is the most beautiful limit.” As the Greek text reveals, it is not clear what the antecedent of οὗτος is. Broadie argues that it is contemplation; my hypothesis is that it is the acquisition of natural goods. The grammatical structure of the passage allows both readings. Let us suppose that the acquisition of natural goods is the limit. This account of the limit is in line with what Aristotle says at the very end of the treatise. In EE VIII.3, Aristotle says that it has been discussed - and he seems to look back to the discussion of natural goods - what the limit of kalokagathia is. The choice and acquisition of natural goods is the most

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293 Book V is one of the so-called common books and the parallelism between book V 1138 b 20-35 and EE VIII 1249 a 22- 1249 b 5 may be an additional argument in favor of the fact that the common books were originally part of the EE.

294 EE 1249 b 16-18.

295 Trans. by GB.

296 EE 1249 b 24-25.
beautiful limit insofar as it promotes the most beautiful activity, namely contemplation.\(^{297}\) Natural goods provide the best conditions to perform virtuous actions and to engage in contemplation. At the same time, they are not essential or constitutive of virtuous activity. In this sense, natural goods are the limit of kalokagathia.

10. Function and contemplation in the NE

I turn now to the discussion of the best life at the end of the NE. Two questions should be addressed: is the account of the best life similar in the NE and in EE VIII? If yes, how does it relate to the NE-Function Argument? In NE X, Aristotle says that the fulfillment of the function at the best is contemplation. Two elements suggest that the discussion of the best lives in NE X is strongly connected to the FA in NE I. First of all, in NE X, Aristotle discusses again two features of happiness that he introduces in the NE-FA: self-sufficiency and finality.\(^{298}\) He explicitly sums up the argument outlined in book I by saying that it has been established that happiness does not consist in pleasure. What is more, it would be absurd to posit pleasure as the end of our lives.\(^{299}\) Instead, happiness is self-sufficient and final because it consists in contemplation. Contemplation is self-sufficient and final insofar as it is an activity that does not need anything and that it is pursued for its own sake. Second, Aristotle clarifies the best and most complete virtue mentioned in the definition of happiness in NE 1098 a 23:

\[(T16)\] If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable to expect that it is in accordance with the highest virtue, and this will be the virtue of the best element. Whether this best element is intelligence (nous) or something else


\(^{298}\) NE 1097 b 20; NE 1176 b 5-6.

\(^{299}\) NE X 1177 b 30.
we think naturally rules and guides us and has insight into matters noble and divine, and whether it is divine or just the most divine element in us, its activity, in accordance with its own proper virtue, will be complete happiness.\textsuperscript{300}

This best and most complete virtue is the best element in us. Yet, what is it? Aristotle considers two options: either this best element is intelligence (\textit{νοῦς}), or it is something else that has two characteristics, namely it rules and guides us, and it has insight into matters noble and divine. This second option seems to look back at the division of the parts of the soul that occurs at the end of book I.\textsuperscript{301} In the division of the parts of the soul that Aristotle proposes in book I, there is a part of the soul that rules and another that obeys and listens. T16 is consistent with this division insofar as Aristotle says that the highest virtue is the virtue of what rules and guides us. To this part of the soul belong the virtues of thinking. What is more, this part of the soul is divine. More precisely, it is the most divine element in us. It is divine or similar to the divine because the activity of the divine is contemplation. According to what I argued in chapter I, in the \textit{NE}, completeness is understood as inherent value. In this light, the most complete virtue is the virtue of the activity that most of all has inherent value. That is, this virtue is \textit{sophia}.

Aristotle proposes an argument by elimination in order to establish what the activity of the divine is: in 1178 b 25, he says that we can exclude that the gods are always asleep, that they do not act, and that they do not produce anything. What is left is contemplation. The human activity most similar to this is the most conducive to happiness:

(T17) Such a life is superior to one that is simply human, because someone lives thus, not in so far as he is a human being, but in so far as there is some divine element within him. And the activity of this divine element is as much superior to that in accordance with the other kind of virtue as the element is superior to the compound. If intelligence (\textit{nous}), then, is something divine compared with the

\textsuperscript{300} \textit{NE} 1177 a 15-20.

\textsuperscript{301} \textit{NE} 1102 a 27-1103 a 2.
human being, the life in accordance with it will also be divine compared with human life.\textsuperscript{302}

T17 suggests that the happiest life, the life of contemplation, is the closest we can get to the divine life. It provides also a hierarchy of best lives: the best life is the life according to intelligence, and the second best is the life in accordance with the virtues of character and with practical wisdom.\textsuperscript{303} Here, intelligence seems to refer generically to the virtues of theoretical thinking. This is different from the conclusion that we have in EE VIII, where there is no “second best” human life and where the best fulfillment of the function of the human soul includes all the virtues. In the NE, there are two possible ways to fulfill the function of the human being at its best: the best way is leading a life of contemplation, the second best is the life according to practical wisdom and to the virtues of character. These two lives correspond to the functions described in T1 and T2.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I proposed a chart that compares the Function Arguments as they appear in the Eudemian Ethics, in the Nicomachean Ethics and in the Republic. I examined the structure of the arguments, their similarities and differences. In the EE, there is a different emphasis on the soul as a unity of parts, while in the NE, Aristotle focuses on rational activity. In line with this difference, in the NE, the function of the human being is defined as activity of the soul according to reason. In the EE and in the Republic, the function is performed by all the parts of the soul and it is simply living.

\textsuperscript{302} NE 1177 b 30-35.

\textsuperscript{303} NE 1178 a 10. In NE 177 b 31-34, Aristotle says that we should aim at becoming immortal. The Greek verb ἀθανατίζειν is an hapax in the Corpus Aristotelicum. Cf. S. Gastaldi, \textit{Bios hairetotatos. Generi di vita e felicità in Aristotele}, Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2003, p. 110.
Aristotle compares the function of various things to the function of the human being/human soul. Differently from what he does in the *NE*, the Aristotle of the *EE*, as well as Plato in the *Republic*, compares the function of the human soul to the function of artifacts. On similar grounds, they speak about the use as one of the senses of function. I focused not only on the relation between function and use, but also on the relation between function and nature. In all the works considered, the function is what by nature one is more fitted to do. Aristotle says that the best state has the best function. In the *EE*, Aristotle conceives of the best virtue - *kalokagathia* - as including all the other virtues. Corresponding to this virtue, there is a best function, which is activity according to all the virtues.

In the *NE*, Aristotle says that there is a virtue that is divine and a corresponding function - the life of contemplation - which is better than the life according to practical wisdom and the virtue of character. I argued that the *NE*-FA and the *EE*-FA shed light on the discussions of the best life that occur in *NE* X and in *EE* VIII. In both treatises, there is a distinction between fulfilling the function and fulfilling the function at the best, which is living the good life.
CHAPTER FIVE

Pleasure in the Eudemian Ethics
Against the view that pleasure is the apparent good

The nature of pleasure and its role in the good life are much debated topics among Aristotle scholars. In recent decades, the following view has been defended by a number of interpreters: pleasure is a pre-reflective way, similar to perception, of how something seems to be good. Aristotle scholars who defend this view tend to emphasize the illusory and deceptive nature of pleasure. They argue that something may seem good to the subject though it is indeed bad. In a recent contribution, Jessica Moss offers a detailed version of this view. She argues that pleasure is, in general and in its nature, the apparent good. This claim goes beyond weaker claims, namely that the pleasant can appear good or that something bad can appear good by being perceived as pleasant. Moss departs from a starker claim, according to which pleasure is in no way a guide to value. Against this, Moss argues that pleasure is an indicator of value in the sense that, if things go well, the pleasant actually leads us to the good. However, according to her position, the good and the pleasant are not independent properties: the pleasant is a derivative property insofar as it is how the good appears to us.


305 Moss, J., Aristotle on the apparent good: perception, phantasia, thought and desire (Oxford, 2012). On pleasure as the apparent good, see Broadie 1993, Achtenberg 2002, Tuozzo 1994, 525-549. According to these authors pleasure is a primitive, not conceptualized way in which things seem good to us (Offert 2013, 35-51). Broadie (1993) and Moss (Moss, J., “Aristotle’s non-trivial, non-insane view that we always desire things under the guise of the good,” in S. Tenenbaum (eds.), Desire and the Good (Oxford, 2010) argue that pleasure refers to something that is good for us in that particular condition. Segvic (2009) explores the illusory effects of pleasure.
Moss is primarily concerned with the *NE*. Her argument, however, starts from a passage in the *EE*.306

In this chapter, I situate the passage that functions as starting point for Moss’s argument in the context of the *EE*. I argue that Aristotle’s account of pleasure in this treatise, including the passage that Moss considers, aims at proving what I call the Pleasure Thesis (PT). According to PT, happiness, being best and most beautiful, is also the most pleasant thing of all. PT is the most contested aspect of the thesis with which the *EE* starts. According to this thesis, happiness is best, most beautiful and most pleasant (I call this thesis the Superlative Thesis - ST).307

Contrary to Moss, I am not primarily concerned with the *NE*. Instead I aim to reconstruct the account of motivation in the *EE*, and that is, in the text from which Moss’s analysis takes its departure. If the passage that Moss starts out from is read in its original context of the *EE*, I argue, it has a different upshot. Namely, and this is the view I defend, it is part of the argument that supports PT. On the account that Aristotle begins to lay out with the very first sentence of the *EE*, the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant each play a distinctive role in motivation.308 Throughout the chapter, I argue in favor of three claims regarding pleasure in Aristotle’s *EE*:

306 *EE* VII, 1235 b 25-28. “The object of desire and wish is either the good or the apparent good. That is why the pleasant is an object of desire (for it is an apparent good); some people believe that pleasure is good, while to others it appears good even if they believe that it is not, since appearance and belief are not in the same part of the soul.”

307 *EE* 1214 a 7-8.

308 A detailed account of the situation of the common books in the manuscripts is given in D. Harlfinger, *Die Überlieferungsgeschichte der Eudemischen Ethik* (Symposium Aristotelicum 1970). G. Lieberg (*Die Lehre von der Lust in den Ethiken des Aristoteles* (München, Beck, 1958) argues that the common books were originally part of the *EE*. P. Webb (Philip Webb, “The relative dating of the accounts of pleasure in Aristotle’s Ethics,” *Phronesis*, 22 (1977): 235-262) claims that the common books were added later to the *EE* and they were originally part of the *NE*.
- Metaphysical Claim: the pleasant is a non-derivative value-property;
- Psychological Claim: pleasure has a distinctive presence in the mind of the agent;
- Ethical Claim: pleasure plays important roles in the virtuous person’s life.

I defend these three claims conjointly insofar as for Aristotle, they are intertwined. As far as the metaphysics of value is concerned, the very fact that Aristotle offers a definition of pleasure—and is concerned with the nature of pleasure—supports the idea that the pleasant is non-derivative. Hence, it seems reductive to construe pleasure, as Aristotle thinks of it in the EE, as a pre-reflective way of tracking the good.

According to the distinctive kind of realism that scholars ascribe to Aristotle, value is neither anti-realist nor realist in the sense that these terms have in 20th century metaethics. That is, value is neither explained simply via attitudes, nor is it attitude independent. Instead, value is to be explained via a relation between the agent’s psychology and how things are going ‘in the world’. On my view, this kind of realism applies both to the pleasant and to the good. In order to argue in favor of this idea, I explore the distinction between the pleasant and what appears pleasant. In principle, it is uncontested that there is such a distinction. I argue, however, that a position according to which pleasure simply is the apparent good does away with one of the disjuncts: that which is pleasant. There is a distinction between how something is and how it appears. This distinction comes up within dimensions of evaluation. Say, something may appear good while it really is bad. The distinction also comes up across dimensions of evaluation. Say, something appears X, while it is Y. This is the type of mistake Moss thinks we systematically make with respect to pleasure and the good. As I will show, other properties, and in particular the beautiful, can also appear to be something other than

what they inherently are. Say, the beautiful can appear pleasant. This does not entail, however, that the pleasant really is an appearance of the beautiful.

With respect to the psychological and the ethical claims, I argue that Aristotle assigns a positive role to pleasure in motivation and in the good life. He claims that happiness, the highest good, is the most pleasant;\(^{310}\) and he proposes that an excellent agent and even god enjoy pleasure.\(^{311}\) I argue that, whereas there are different types of pleasure and some of them are excessive or derive from bad objects, there are pleasures that are choiceworthy in themselves. These pleasures are essential components of the happy life. The good, the beautiful, and the pleasant each have a distinctive presence in the happy person’s life. Thus, I end up disagreeing with Moss on three counts. First, her position is not compelling as far as interpretative matters go, because the \textit{EE} passage cannot justify the reading of the \textit{NE} that she puts forward. Second, on my account of pleasure, the pleasant is non-derivative. While Moss thinks that pleasure is a kind of surface property of the good, I propose that the pleasant and the good are two properties. Third, the pleasant plays a distinctive role in motivation.

I start by presenting the Superlative Thesis (ST) and the Pleasure Thesis (PT) (section 1). I explore some views in the literature on what pleasure is (section 2). I examine the different ways that Aristotle proposes for categorizing pleasure. I focus in particular on the claim that there are natural pleasures (section 3). I move to the contingent identity between pleasure and happiness (section 4).\(^{312}\) Next I turn to Moss’s view (section 5) and to my

\(^{310}\) \textit{EE} I, 1214 a 8.

\(^{311}\) \textit{EE} VI, 1154 b 26. On my view, \textit{NE} VII was originally part of the \textit{EE}, where it appears as \textit{EE} VI. The discussion of pleasure in this book, gains in plausibility if read in the context of the argument that Aristotle aims at demonstrating in the \textit{EE}.

\(^{312}\) Happiness translates here the Greek \textit{eudaimonia}. I borrow the expression “contingent identity” from C. Rapp. I will discuss further in the chapter what I refer to with this expression.
argument in favor of the pleasant being non-derivative. I explore the connection between pleasure and the good (section 6) and the relation between apparent and true pleasure (section 7). I conclude by saying that pleasure is connected to the best life and to best agency: I analyse the role of pleasure in the life of the best agent (section 8) and I show that also god, for Aristotle, enjoys pleasure (section 9).

1. The Superlative Thesis and the Pleasure Thesis

Scholars often proceed as if the analysis of pleasure that occurs in NE VII, as well as in EE VI was originally written for the NE. They read it in the context of this treatise and argue that Aristotle proposes two accounts of pleasure in the NE, one in NE VII and the other in NE X. Contrary to this assumption, I examine the account of pleasure that appears in NE VII on the hypothesis that it was originally written as EE VI. I argue that the account of pleasure in NE VII=EE VI is better understood within the project that Aristotle develops in the EE of proving the Superlative Thesis and the Pleasure Thesis. If read in the context of the EE, this account of pleasure elucidates the positive role of pleasure in a good human life insofar as (1) pleasure occurs when there is perfect activity and best agency; (2) pleasure makes us aware of perfect activity and it renders us similar to the best agent and even to god. Elucidating the positive role of pleasure is an essential part of the Pleasure Thesis that Aristotle aims at demonstrating. At the beginning of the EE, Aristotle argues as follows:

(T1) (Theognis) wrote: “Most beautiful is what is most just, best is being healthy, most pleasant of all is to attain what one desires.” We should not agree with him. For happiness, being most beautiful and best, is the most pleasant of all things.315

313 NE VII=EE VI, 1152b 1-1154b 35.


315 EE 1214 a 5-8.
Aristotle, right in the first paragraph of the EE, seems to elevate the pleasant: the pleasant is connected to the most important kinds of value in Greek ethics, καλόν (the beautiful) and ἀγαθόν (the good). Aristotle aims to carve out a positive role for pleasure in a virtuous life. And throughout the EE, Aristotle devotes much space to the question “what is pleasure?” In these discussions, he seems to explore something that is non-derivative, and that plays a distinctive role in human psychology; and he seems to concede that it has positive valence, though it is not the goodness – let alone virtue – he discusses in other places in the ethics.

2. What pleasure is

Let’s turn to the question of what pleasure is. Philosophers try to explain what pleasure is by arguing in favor of different claims. For example, they argue that it is what feels good


317 In the NE, Aristotle argues that happiness is what is best, most beautiful and most pleasant and he disagrees with what the inscription in Delos says (1099 a 24-30). However, ST does not appear to be a programmatic claim. See Chapter One.
and it is desired, it is a feeling, it is a mental state, it is a supervenient end that feels good to us, and so on. It seems uncontested to say that Aristotle considers pleasure an activity. Activity translates the Greek term ἔνεργεια. Aristotle defines pleasure as unimpeded activity according to our natural state. Ryle and Anscombe are among those who try to reconstruct what pleasure is in an Aristotelian framework. Ryle argues, being inspired by Aristotle’s notion of pleasure, that it is an activity and that to do something with pleasure is to do it wholeheartedly. Festugièrè provides the first study of the accounts of


324 EE VI=NE VII, 1153 a 14-15.

pleasure in *EE, NE* and *Magna Moralia*.\(^{326}\) Scholars such as J. Warren points out that what Warren calls the pleasures of reason play an important role in Aristotle’s ethics. Even though these pleasures “feel good,” they cannot be reduced to a feeling.\(^{327}\) C. Olfert argues that pleasure is an important element in ethical development, and that we learn from pleasure.\(^{328}\) C. Shields stresses that pleasure is an indispensable element that arises when our faculties function at the best.\(^{329}\) K. Corcilius and H. Lorenz explore the connection between pleasure and desire.\(^{330}\)

As it appears from the analyses of pleasure in these works, for Aristotle, there is vast support in favor of the idea that pleasure cannot be just a feeling. The feeling is the way in which we are aware of pleasure and in which we experience it. Considering pleasure just as “feeling good” would be reductive. Perhaps it is even a tautology, close to saying that pleasure is pleasurable. In the *EE* and in the *NE*, Aristotle seems to conceive of pleasure as a cognitive and affective state. D. Charles stresses the cognitive, affective and conative


dimension of pleasure. Aristotle’s definition of pleasure speaks directly in favor of the view that pleasure is more than a perceptual phenomenon that detects the good, or a feeling.

Before laying out my argument in favor of the pleasant being non-derivative, let us look at some preliminary evidence in the EE that the pleasant is indeed something distinct from the good. In this text, Aristotle says that both the pleasant and the good are philoi - loved or desired. And he claims that the pleasant and the good are different.

(T2) There is also a puzzle about whether what is loved is the pleasant or the good. If we love what we have an appetite for (and passion is most like this, for every “passionate lover always feels love”) and appetite is for the pleasant, than in this respect the object of love is the pleasant; but if what we love is what we wish for then it is the good. And the pleasant and the good are distinct.

Aristotle says that what we love is either the pleasant or the good. Insofar as Aristotle distinguishes the two, we can say that the pleasant and the good are indeed different and independent properties: the subject can love something because it is pleasant or because it is good. If they were the same property, namely if the pleasant was an appearance of the good, or if the good was a property of things in the world, and the pleasant a psychological property, we would love something either because it is good or because it appears good.

331 Differently from Moss, Charles argues that perceptual pleasure is cognitive, affective and conative. Finding something pleasant always has an effect on the subject who responds in certain ways. Cf. D. Charles, Aristotle’s desire in Vesa Hirvonen, Toivo J. Holopainen and Miira Tuominen (eds.), Mind and Modality, Brill, 2006.

332 EE V, 1153 a 14-15.

333 EE VII, 1235 b 30.

334 EE, 1235 b 19-24: ἐχει δ᾽ ἁπαρίαν καὶ πότερον τὸ ἡδὺ ἢ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἔστι τὸ φιλούμενον. εἰ μὲν γάρ φιλούμεν οὐ ἐπιθυμοῦμεν, καὶ μάλιστα ὁ ἐρως τοιοῦτον (οὐθεὶς γὰρ ἐραστής ὅστις οὐκ ἀεί φιλεῖ) ἢ δὲ ἐπιθυμία τοῦ ἡδέος, ταύτη μὲν τὸ φιλούμενον τὸ ἡδὺ, εἰ δὲ ὁ βουλομένη, τὸ ἀγαθὸν: ἔστι δ’ ἐτερον τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν.

335 In the EE, Aristotle argues that there are three properties that motivate us and that are components of the good life. This perspective seems to be in line with the theory of the three desires that we find in De Anima. This theory of desire seems rather at odds with the view in the NE, where the good plays a central place and there is no mention of the beautiful or of the pleasant as motivating properties that elicit desire.
Conversely, as the passage suggests, we wish to possess the good and the pleasant (and also the beautiful according to ST) in our life. What is more, Aristotle explicitly says that the pleasant and the good are distinct.

Let me appropriate one recent argument by Fred Feldman that provides a useful example to show that pleasure is non-derivative. If pleasure was simply the phenomenal side of goodness—the way it feels to take something to be good—taking pleasure would have to be proportional to judging something to be good. That is, whenever an agent believes that something is good, she would have to experience pleasure in proportion to how, qualitatively or quantitatively, she takes something to be good.

Feldman uses the following example. A person takes pleasure in drinking beer and eating peanuts and sees her neighbor doing the same. Let us assume that two situations are equal in value: one does not value one’s own experience of drinking beer and eating peanuts more than her neighbor’s. If this is so, one would need to take equal pleasure in both. However, it happens that the subject takes more pleasure in her own experience rather than in seeing her neighbor drinking beer and eating peanuts. In this sense, experiencing pleasure is different from believing that something is good. One may object that the example does not show the point insofar as it is one thing to experience something directly and another to see another person experiencing something. Yet, even if we consider two experiences of the same subject, it is clear that the pleasant is different from what appears good. Suppose I think that having tiramisù for dessert tonight is equally good as having tiramisù for dessert tomorrow. I could think that it has equal value for tiramisù to be the dessert one night or the other;

336 This seems in line with the theory of desire that Aristotle presents in De Anima, where there are three distinct desires: De Anima, 415 a 13.

unfortunately, I cannot afford to have it twice. In terms of goodness both options are equal. However, there is a striking difference in terms of pleasure: having tiramisù today seems a lot better. Given temporal closeness and typical ways of future discounting when it comes to pleasure, nearby pleasure is felt to be larger than the pleasure that is in the distant future, even though I judge both to be the same on the level of goodness. In these examples, beliefs about goodness and felt pleasure come apart in ways that support the view that pleasure is non-derivative.

3. Pleasure by nature

In EE VI=NE VII, Aristotle proposes different ways of categorizing pleasure. According to these categorizations, there are pleasures that are illusory and come from bad sources. However, there are other pleasures that are choiceworthy in themselves and that are pleasures by nature. The idea that there are pleasures that are by nature or natural - φύσει - brings evidence in favor of the claim that pleasure is non-derivative. That is, there are things that are pleasant for human beings: being pleasant is not only a way in which they appear to us. Rather, they are pleasures by nature. First of all, Aristotle introduces the distinction between pleasures choiceworthy versus necessary:

(T3) Some sources of pleasure are necessary and others are in themselves choiceworthy but admit of excess. Bodily sources of pleasure are necessary (I mean the sorts of things that involve nutrition and sexual activity, that is, the kinds of bodily sources of pleasure that we claimed were the focus of indiscipline and temperance); the others, however, are not in fact necessary, though they are choiceworthy in themselves (I mean, for example, victory, honor, wealth and these sorts of good and pleasant things).


339 EE VI, 1147 b 23-30: ἐπεὶ δ᾽ ἐστὶ τὰ μὲν ἀναγκαῖα τῶν ποιούντων ἡδονήν, τὰ δ᾽ αἱρετὰ μὲν καθ᾽ αὐτὰ ἔχοντα δ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν, ἀναγκαία μὲν τὰ σωματικὰ (λέγω δὲ τὰ τοιαῦτα, τὰ τε περὶ τὴν τροφὴν καὶ τὴν τῶν ἀφροδισίων χρείαν, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν σωματικῶν περὶ ὧ τὴν ἀκρασίαν ἔθεμεν καὶ τὴν σωφροσύνην), τὰ δ᾽ ἀναγκαῖα μὲν οὐχὶ, αἱρετὰ δὲ καθ᾽ αὐτὰ (λέγω δ᾽ οἷόν νικήν τιμὴν πλούτου καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἡδεῶν).
There are pleasures that are necessary because they are connected to activities necessary to our survival, either as individuals or as species. These pleasures can be excessive. One has to pursue the correct measure of these pleasures. However, there are pleasures that are not necessary. Nonetheless, they are choiceworthy. Aristotle uses the examples of victory, honor, wealth and similar good and pleasant things. Also these pleasant things are good for the individual in a certain measure. However, Aristotle claims that they are choiceworthy in themselves. This seems to suggest that they have a positive role in the good human life. What does it mean that they are choiceworthy in themselves? As Aristotle says, only virtue and virtuous activities are choiceworthy as ends. In other words, they are pursued for their own sake and in any amount. All the other things should be pursued with moderation and not as ends in themselves. There is a distinction between what is pursued as an end in itself and what is choiceworthy for its own sake (αἱρετὰ καθ᾽ αὑτά), but it is not an end in itself. Victory, honor, wealth and so forth, and the pleasures connected with these goods are choiceworthy for their own sake, but they are not ends in themselves. We wish to have these things in our lives. However, they cannot be the final aim of our lives. Aristotle adds the intermediate pleasures to the distinction between pleasures choiceworthy and necessary:

(T4) In accordance with our earlier classification, some appetites and pleasures are beautiful and excellent in kind (some pleasures being naturally (φύσει) choiceworthy, some are opposite to these, and some are in between, as we distinguished before) for example, money and profit and victory and honor; and with respect to all pleasures, these and the intermediate pleasures, people are not blamed just because they experience them or have an appetite for them or like them but rather because they do so in a particular way, i.e., to excess. That is why we blame all those who are dominated by or pursue something that is naturally
beautiful and good, contrary to their reasoning, like those who are more devoted
to honor than they should be, or to their children and parents.340

Aristotle divides pleasures in naturally choiceworthy versus non-choiceworthy versus
intermediate pleasures. Two types of pleasures mentioned in the previous distinction come up
also in this passage: the pleasures of victory and honor. These pleasures are choiceworthy, as
we have seen in the previous passage. Profit, victory, honor, and the like, seem to be pleasant
by nature. This expression - by nature (φύσει) - occurs other times in the EE. In particular, in
EE VIII 1248 b 28, Aristotle says that there are things that are good by nature. He provides a
list of goods that are paradigmatically good by nature, and in the list, there are honor and
wealth. In a nutshell, passages where things good by nature are mentioned show that things
that are good by nature are things good for human beings as we are by nature or for the most
part. These things that are good by nature are also pleasant by nature. That is, they are
pleasant for human beings as we are by nature. The idea that there are pleasures by nature
suggests that they are pleasant for us qua human beings. In other words, they are pleasant for
the particular being that we are. The distinction between pleasures by nature versus pleasure
that are not by nature is further explored in EE VI=NE VII:

(T5) Some things are pleasant by nature, and of these some are pleasant
simpliciter (ἁπλῶς) and others are pleasant according to the genre being it that of
animals or that of human beings. Some things are not pleasant by nature, but of
these some become pleasant as a result of deformities, some as a result of
habituation, others because of wicked natures; so it is possible to observe, in
connection with each of these kinds of pleasure, correspondingly similar states.341

340 EE VI, 1148 a 23-31: ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ τῶν ἡδονῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσὶ τῶν τῷ γένει καλῶν καὶ σπουδαίων
(τῶν γὰρ ἡδεῖν ἦνα φύσει αἱρετά, τὰ δ᾽ ἐναντία τούτων, τὰ δὲ μεταξύ, καθάπερ διεῖλομεν πρότερον), οἷον
χρήματα καὶ κέρδος καὶ νίκη καὶ τιμή: πρὸς ἄπαντα δὲ καὶ τὰ τουαῦτα καὶ τὰ μεταξὺ οὗ τὸ πάσχειν καὶ
ἐπιθυμεῖν καὶ φιλεῖν ψέγονται, ἀλλὰ τῷ ποὺς καὶ ὑπερβάλλειν (διὸ όσοι μὲν παρὰ τὸν λόγον ή κρατοῦνται ή
διόκουσι τῶν φύσει τὰς καὶ ἁγαθὰς, οἷον οἱ περὶ τιμῆν μᾶλλον ή δεῖ σπουδαζόντες ή περὶ τέκνα καὶ
γονέως.

341 EE 1148 b 15-19: ἐπεὶ δ᾽ ἐστίν ἔνα μὲν ἡδεῖα φύσει, καὶ τούτων τὰ μὲν ἄπλως τὰ δὲ κατὰ γένη καὶ θέαν καὶ
ἀνθρώπων, τὰ δ᾽ οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν διὰ προσώπες τὰ δὲ δι’ ἔθη γίνεται, τὰ δὲ διὰ μοχθηρᾶς φύσεις, ἔστι καὶ
περὶ τούτων ἴκαστα παραπλησίας ὑδείν ἔξεις.
Things pleasant by nature for human beings are different for things pleasant by nature for other species. As Aristotle famously said, things healthy or good for human beings differ from things healthy or good for fish. In this sense, things pleasant by nature are not pleasant *simpliciter* for any kind of being. *Simpliciter* and by nature seem to be used interchangeably when we talk about the same species. The pleasant *simpliciter* is not the pleasant absolutely: conversely, it is pleasant *simpliciter* for the being considered, for example, for fish or for human beings. On similar grounds, things pleasant *simpliciter* differ depending on whether they are pleasant *simpliciter* for human beings or pleasant *simpliciter* for fish. There are also pleasures that are not by nature and that are pleasant only because of the agent’s deformities, wrongly oriented habituation or bad upbringing. These things are not pleasant *simpliciter* or by nature insofar as the being considered is not how human beings or animals are by nature or for the most part. In these cases, something occurred that changed how the agent is by nature and hence, how she perceives things. As Aristotle says, the wine that is pleasant for the drunk agent may not be pleasant *simpliciter*. Accordingly, if the agent’s perceptual capacities are altered, things that are not pleasant *simpliciter* may be pleasant for this agent.

To sum up, Aristotle distinguishes pleasures that are necessary, choiceworthy in themselves - which are pleasures by nature - intermediate pleasure, and pleasures not by nature. Pleasures by nature are pleasant for human beings as human beings are by nature or for the most part. Even though these pleasures should be pursued with moderation, they are choiceworthy and we wish to have these pleasures in our lives. The idea that there are

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342 *NE* 1141 a 23.

343 *EE* VII, 1235 b 30- 1236 a 6.
pleasures by nature suggests that pleasure is something in its own right. There are also pleasures connected to virtue and to virtuous activities. These pleasures are connected to our best state as human beings. In this light, it seems plausible to argue, as Aristotle does, that the activity of our best state, namely happiness, which consists in virtuous activities however understood, is the most pleasant thing of all.

4. The contingent identity: pleasure and happiness

Let us examine more closely an essential element for PT and for the ethical claim that I am defending in the chapter: the contingent identity. In EE VI=NE VII, Aristotle argues that pleasure and happiness are both activities and that happiness happens to be pleasure. This “happens-to-be” identification can be described as contingent identity.344 Aristotle defines εὐδαιμονία as activity according to complete virtue in a complete life.345 Happiness is complete and must be also unimpeded. One may argue that it is perfect, where this means that happiness is complete and has its end in itself; it is the best activity a human being can desire and can engage in. Aristotle classifies both pleasure and happiness as activities, and he claims that happiness is pleasure insofar as it is unimpeded activity according to our natural state. C. Rapp argues that “εὐδαιμονία is an activity of certain states and this activity, in virtue of its being unhindered happens to be pleasure.”346 Rapp argues that in EE VI=NE VII, Aristotle does not aim to explain happiness as pleasure; similarly, he does not aim to say that happiness and pleasure are simply the same thing. Their contingent identity, as one may put it


345EE II, 1219 a 39.

colloquially, means that when someone engages in the activity of εὐδαιμονία she engages in
the activity of pleasure, such that the former activities are the very same activities which are
pleasant. The contingent identity shows that pleasure can make us aware of perfect activity.
Pleasure, as Aristotle conceives of it, arises when all our capacities function in accordance
with nature and are unimpeded.

To elucidate further what is at issue in Aristotle’s contingent identification of happiness
and pleasure, consider that there are differences between our notion of happiness and the
ancient notion of εὐδαιμονία that Aristotle invokes and develops. In our everyday talk,
ascriptions of happiness seem close to ascriptions of pleasure: we tend to ascribe happiness to
persons at given moments, rather than to a person’s life as a whole, as Aristotle would.
Thus, to a modern ear the identification of happiness and pleasure may not even be
surprising. But for Aristotle the ascription of happiness is the claim that someone is leading
(or has led) a good life. Accordingly, happiness and pleasure may come apart. As a result, in
Aristotle’s time the claim that happiness is the most pleasant thing of all may not have been

347 Examples of how εὐδαιμονία was conceived in Ancient Greece can be found in the Iliad, Homer described
Achilles as the best of the Achaeans. The Homeric characters are representative of a view according to which
human flourishing, i.e. εὐδαιμονία, is achieved by being excellent. Achilles is the most excellent of the
Achaeans because he fulfills his function at the best: he is the best warrior. Differently from Aristotle’s view,
flourishing for the Homeric heroes coincided with acquiring wealth, prestige and political power. Solon’s view,
according to which no one should be considered happy until death, was widespread in the Greek world (reported
Studies in Ancient Philosophy, 3 (1985): 89-124. Irwin argues that Aristotle rejects the Socratic view that virtue
alone is sufficient for happiness. In order to be happy, the virtuous person needs to make a good use of the
goods. See also Terence Irwin, “Stoic and Aristotelian conceptions of happiness,” in The Norms of Nature, M.
Schofield, G. Striker eds. (Cambridge University Press, 1986) pp. 205-245; Richard Kraut, “Two conceptions of
happiness,” The Philosophical Review, 88, 2 (1979): 167-197. Katja Vogt in The good is the good life (ch. 2 of
Desiring the good, OUP 2017) argues that at the beginning of the NE, Aristotle presents what she calls a
“Cheating Puzzle”. Namely, he introduces some premises concerning the relation between happiness, the good
and the good life as widely agreed-upon. As she argues, Aristotle is well aware that not everyone thinks that the
good is happiness. For example, and this is the topic of NE I.6, Plato says the good is the Form of the good. Vogt
argues that Aristotle moves away from the Solonian-Herodotean view of happiness according to which a third
person can ascribe happiness to someone and one needs to wait until the end of someone else’s life before
describing her as “happy.” In addition, he also rejects Plato’s view according to which happiness is a state and
not an activity (this account of happiness is held by Plato in the Symposium 202c-205d and in the Euthyphro
278e-281e).

348 NE, 1100 a 32 – 1100 b 10.
intuitive. Perhaps it was hard to accept because of the negative connotations that pleasure had, at least in discussions that envisaged hedonism as an opponent. Often, pleasure seems to have been associated with bodily or other “lowly” pleasures. In this context, Aristotle’s view that pleasure and happiness come to the same may be controversial, perhaps even pioneering. For after all, happiness is assumed to be the highest good of all.

So far I provided some evidence in favor of the metaphysical claim - that the pleasant is non-derivative - by discussing Aristotle’s definition of pleasure and his notion of pleasure by nature. I analyzed also some evidence in favor of the ethical claim - that pleasure plays distinctive roles in the virtuous person’s life - by introducing ST and PT and through the contingent identity. Before looking more closely at the psychological claim, let us examine Moss’s proposal.

5. The apparent good

Moss defines appearance of goodness as “a motivating representation through phantasia, which derives from previous perception of its object as pleasant, and forms in turn the basis for thoughts about goodness.” She argues that all motivations involve an appearance of the desired object as good. On her account then, the pleasant is the object of desire qua apparent good. Phantasia is the faculty that detects it. According to Moss, phantasia’s job in picking up on the pleasant is similar to how perception works. The difference resides merely in the fact that, where pleasure and pain are concerned, phantasia can represent an object of desire even when it is not presently perceived; phantasia preserves and reproduces the pleasurable and the painful. The good, however, is not perceived or represented by phantasia. It is grasped through a concept and is the proper object of rational desire. This difference lays the ground for the way in which Moss conceives of the relation

349 Moss, p. Xii.
between the pleasant and the good. According to her position, the good picks out a property of objects in the world and the pleasant is what we may call a merely psychological property, or, perhaps, in terms introduced earlier, an attitude-dependent property. In these terms, Moss is an anti-realist about pleasure. The pleasant, the thought goes, is constituted by our attitudes.

Moss argues that motivation always depends on evaluative cognition: in order to have a rational or an appetitive desire for something, the object needs to appear good to the subject.\textsuperscript{350} She argues that Aristotle understands the apparent good in a quite literal sense, which she elucidates by comparison with optical illusion: in the same way in which we perceive something as X while it is in reality Y, by perceiving something as pleasant we believe that it is good.\textsuperscript{351} As she argues, through \textit{phantasia} the subject experiences quasi-perceptual phenomena of the object appearing good to her. The expression “quasi-perceptual” aims at capturing the idea that \textit{phantasia} seems to work like perception: it produces an image in the same way in which perception presents to us the object perceived. In effect, she argues, we desire the pleasant because \textit{phantasia} produces appearances of goodness. Previous experiences of perception of the same object as pleasant function as the material from which \textit{phantasia} forms appearances of that object as good. Thus, \textit{phantasia} produces images of the object as pleasant and, as Moss argues, as good.\textsuperscript{352} For Moss, we desire the pleasant only insofar as we believe that the pleasant object is good. She argues in favor of a causal relation

\textsuperscript{350} Moss, J., \textit{Aristotle on the apparent good: perception, phantasia, thought and desire} (Oxford, 2012), p. 4.

\textsuperscript{351} Moss quotes \textit{De Insomnis} 460 b 16-20, in order to explain this point: Aristotle argues that there are two distinct faculties, one with which we judge and the other with which we have appearances of things. This duality is the cause of optical illusion, for example the fact that the sun appears to be only one foot in diameter.

\textsuperscript{352} This connection between pleasure and \textit{phantasia} is explained in \textit{Rhetoric} 1370 a 27-35. One may argue that this view cannot be applied in the case of the pleasure discussed in the ethics.
according to which we desire the pleasant because it appears good. In effect, on Moss’ reconstruction, the pleasant is a derivative or dependent property: it is the mere appearance of the good.

I shall concede several intuitions that figure in what we may call the illusion view of pleasure: the good can appear pleasant; the bad can appear pleasant; and often we are deceived about what is truly good. But this is compatible with both goodness and the pleasant being non-derivative, and this is the view I defend. On my view, the pleasant can motivate qua pleasant. It can also motivate qua seeming goodness. Nevertheless, the fact that the pleasant can motivate qua pleasant is significant, because it reflects a fact about the nature of value. In what follows, I address, specifically, three premises Moss formulates. Moss’ position relies on the following three premises:

- All motivations involve evaluation.
- Only by being cognized as good something is desired.
- Pleasure is awareness of the pleasant object as good.

These three premises are basic to her main proposal, that pleasure is the apparent good. But neither of these premises, I argue, is compelling. First of all, all motivations involve an evaluation of the object as bearer of some kind of value. So far I agree with Moss. However, this does not mean that the evaluation is an evaluation of the object as good. For it is not clear that all value is ultimately goodness. Moss seems to presuppose, without discussion, the premise that evaluation is eo ipso evaluation as good. This premise may strike us as familiar and intuitive, given that many contributions in ethics today presuppose it. However, this does not mean...

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not mean that the Aristotle of the *EE* shares it; and it is not even clear that philosophers today who, say, work in aesthetics or work specifically on the nature of pleasure accept it. In this spirit, I defend a view according to which at least in the *EE* (and Moss’ starting point is a passage in *EE VII*) there are three kinds of positive values: goodness, beauty, and pleasure.\(^{354}\)

Before I turn to the three premises of Moss’s argument, however, I address an even more basic issue. Moss seems to presuppose that the metaphysics of goodness is straightforward: it simply is, as it were, a property in the world, just like wooden or dry. And as such it is perceived in a certain way. Pleasure, on her picture, seems to be a psychological phenomenon that occurs when we judge some object or aspect of the world to be good. By drawing on some of the passages that are crucial to Moss’s interpretation, and adducing additional evidence, I call this picture into question. Both goodness and pleasure, I argue, are to be explained by reference both to agential attitudes and to features of the world.

6. **Pleasure and the good**

Moss’ thesis may be summarized as follows: pleasure is how we perceive the good through *phantasia*. In order to examine this claim, I analyze some passages in the *Physics* and in *De Anima*, where Aristotle discusses pleasure in relation to perception. These passages help clarify the relation between the good and the pleasant. I approach these passages with two questions in mind: is pleasure our way of perceiving the good? And, are pleasure and goodness metaphysically on a par, both involving mind-dependent and mind-independent features of the world? If pleasure is merely how we perceive the good (and thus fully explained as a psychological property) and the good is a property of objects in the world (fully explained without reference to the attitudes of the agents), then we should agree with

\(^{354}\) Historically, this is not as much of an outlier than one may suppose. In his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant too thinks that three value properties deserve to be studied: the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant.
Moss’ interpretation. In *Physics* 247 a 16, Aristotle argues that pleasure and pain are connected to perception:

(T6) All the virtues of character are concerned with bodily pleasures and pains, either in doing (in the present moment) or in memory or in hope. Those in doing are according to the sense-perceptual capacity, and must therefore be stirred by some sensible object, and the pleasures and pains of memory or hope are dependent upon those in doing (for they accompany the memory of past pleasure or the expectation of pleasure in the future), so that all such pleasure must spring from objects of perception.355

In T6, it is not clear how we should understand the connection between pleasure and perception. Is pleasure always a feature of perception? Or is Aristotle discussing here a particular kind of pleasure? Aristotle mentions ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας τὰς σωματικὰς. This seems to suggest that he is referring to bodily pleasures (and pains), and not to pleasure (and pain) as a whole. For an agent to feel bodily pleasure in something, she must either currently perceive something, or remember a past perception, taking pleasure in it, or anticipate a perception, enjoying its prospect. Aristotle speaks about the pleasures and pains in doing (ἐν τῇ πράξει): these pleasures are stirred by sensible objects. All the other pleasures - those in memory and hope - depend on the pleasures in doing. That is, when we take pleasure in remembering something or in expecting something in the future, the memory of something or the expectation of something is pleasant because we remembered that we perceived that object as pleasant in the past. Let us say, the expectation of eating chocolate is pleasant because I remember how chocolate tastes. This memory is based on past perception of chocolate. In this sense, sense-perceptual activity is connected to pleasure. However, this

355 *Physics* 247 a 9-15, trans. by P.H. Wicksteed with changes by GB: ἡπειρα γὰρ η ἡθικὴ ἅρματη περὶ ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας τὰς σωματικὰς, αὐτὰ δ᾽ ἐν τῷ πράττει ἢ ἐν τῷ μεμνησθήθει ἢ ἐν τῷ ἔλεζει. αἱ μὲν οὖν ἐν τῇ πράξει κατὰ τὴν αἰσθησίν εἰσιν, ὡςθ᾽ ὅτα ἀισθητοῦ τινος κινεῖσθαι, αἱ δ᾽ ἐν τῇ μνήμῃ καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐλπίδα ὑπὸ ταύτης (ἐ γὰρ οία ἔθεσθαι μεμνημένοι ἦδονται ἢ ἐλπίζοντες οία μέλλουσιν) ὡς ἀνάγκη πᾶσιν τὴν τοιαύτην ἡδονήν ὑπὸ τὸ αἰσθητῶν γίγνεσθαι.
does not suggest that pleasure is a feature of perception. It only speaks in favor of the idea that bodily pleasure derives from perception.

The pleasant is always something that we perceive (or feel), even when the source is rational for example. We can say that we feel pleasure in doing philosophy. It is true that the agent feels or perceives something, namely she perceives pleasure. However, perception is not the source of pleasure. This leads to my second point: the pleasant seems to be a property in the mind of the agent. This claim may be considered in favor of Moss’ position. If we presuppose that for Aristotle, the good is an attitude-independent property (and as I noted, this is a disputed assumption), then it may seem that pleasure, if it is situated in an agent’s psychology, cannot be an independent property in its own right. That is, it may seem to follow from pleasures’s felt presence in an agent’s psychology that it must be dependent on a metaphysically more fundamental property, the good. And this is Moss’s position, though she does not spell it out in terms that the debate about realism and anti-realism supplies. But insofar as Aristotle’s position does not fall on either side of today’s division between realism and anti-realism, and insofar as for him also the good is explained both by reference to an agent’s attitudes and by reference to something attitude-independent (namely, that which is discerned), there is a further option: the pleasant might be just like the good, a property that is to be explained both by appeal to attitudes (features of an agent’s psychology, etc.) and by appeal to attitude-independent features of the world.

One may disagree with Moss and argue that the pleasant and the good are non-derivative. It exceeds the purpose of this chapter to argue in favor of a specific version of Aristotelian realism about value. I take it, however, that we cannot presuppose that the good is in any simple fashion a property of objects in the world; it is a relational property: what is good is good for some living being. And hence we cannot simply assume that the pleasant, if
it is to some extent explained via psychological attitudes, is any different. As in the case of
the good, a full account may involve a complex story about the psychology of agents on the
one hand, and an account of what actually is pleasant for agents, such that agents should
perceive it as pleasant on the other hand. Moss’ argument seems to rely on the idea that the
good is a property of objects in the world, while the pleasant is not. But both the good and the
pleasant require agents for whom something is good or pleasant. We always need a subject in
order to claim that something is good or pleasant.

Let us examine more closely the example of chocolate. Chocolate is not pleasant
*simpliciter* or good *simpliciter*. It may be pleasant for the chocolate-lover and good for the
person who needs sugar. However, it may be not pleasant for the person who does not like
chocolate and bad for the person who has diabetes. It may be indifferent for an agent who has
lost the sense of taste and who does not need sugar but does not have diabetes either.
Depending on the particular conditions and situations in which the subject is, something may
be good or pleasant. However, chocolate in itself is not good or pleasant. And this line of
thought applies not only to things like chocolate. Even virtue is good-for: it is good for
human beings—this is one upshot of Aristotle’s famous function argument. There are human
excellences, and these are ways of being good *for* human beings.

In book III of *De Anima*, Aristotle seems to consider pleasure as occurring
simultaneously with a psychological state of feeling something. In particular, in *De Anima*
431 a 12-13, he says:

(T7) To feel pleasure or pain is to be active with the perceptual mean *in*
*comparison to the* good or bad as such.356

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356 *De Anima*, 431 a 12-13, translation by W.S. Hett, with changes by GB: καὶ ἐστι τὸ ἥδεσθαι καὶ λυπεῖσθαι τὸ ἐνεργεῖν τῇ αἰσθητικῇ μεσότητι πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν, ἡ τοιαύτη. R.D. Hicks translates as “to feel pleasure or pain is precisely to function with the sensitive mean, acting upon good or evil as such.”
T7 is controversial, at least for three reasons: it is unclear what the perceptual mean is, what Aristotle takes “being active” to be, and how we should think of the good or bad as such. It is not plausible to ascribe to Aristotle the view that we take pleasure only in what really is good, and pain only in what really is bad. Hence the relationship between pleasure/pain on the one hand and the good/bad on the other hand cannot be quite as straightforward as an initial reading of the passage may suggest. The idea of “being active” is perhaps least puzzling: Aristotle characterizes pleasure/pain as activities rather than states.\textsuperscript{357} Regarding the perceptual mean, Aristotle may invoke the explanation of what perception is that occurs in \textit{De Anima} 424 a 5-6:

\begin{quote}
(T8) The organ of perception is a sort of mean between the opposition in the sensible objects.\textsuperscript{358}
\end{quote}

Along these lines, Aristotle may refer to the organ of perception by speaking of a perceptual mean.\textsuperscript{359} According to Aristotle, the sense-perceptual capacity can become like the properties that it perceives, let us say hot or cold. It is the mean between two extremes, hot and cold, and in virtue of being such, it can perceive that something is hot or cold. This idea of the sense-organ taking on the property that it perceives, is much-debated and its reconstruction is controversial.\textsuperscript{360} For present purposes, all that matters is that in pleasure (or pain), Aristotle may take it that our sensory faculty itself may be altered. Suppose the agent

\textsuperscript{357} Pleasure is defined in \textit{EE} 1153 a 13 as unimpeded activity according to our natural state. “Being active” may refer to the fact that pleasure is not a state but qua activity, when we feel pleasure we engage in this activity, i.e. pleasure is being active toward something.

\textsuperscript{358} \textit{De Anima}, 424 a 5, translation by GB: ὡς τῆς αἰσθήσεως οἷον μεσότητος τινος οὖσης τῆς ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς ἐναντίωσις.

\textsuperscript{359} Moss argues that the perceptual mean must be either the faculty of perception or an organ of perception. Cf. R.D. Hicks, \textit{Aristotle's De Anima}, Cambridge University Press, 1907.

\textsuperscript{360} A. Marmodoro, \textit{Aristotle on perceiving objects}, Oxford University Press, 2014.
perceives something that is hot: this could be a case of the sensory faculty itself taking on the property hot. The case is not as straightforward if we examine the good. Qua reasoners, we may relate to the good by judging it to be good; but sensorily, the thought is, we may relate to it by taking pleasure in it. Moss takes this to mean that the pleasant is an appearance of the good and, further, that the pleasant is not a property in its own right. But this is not the only, and not the most plausible way of understanding Aristotle’s proposal. Instead, I submit, the first take-away of the passage is that pleasure has a felt quality in the mind, or in terms closer to Aristotle, in the agent’s psychology.

I propose to translate πρὸς τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακόν as in comparison to the good and bad. Aristotle uses πρὸς with the accusative in the sense of in comparison to or in reference to in other passages. This translation has the advantage of clarifying that for Aristotle we do not take pleasure only in the good and pain in the bad. Experience suggests that this idea is not correct: we sometimes take pleasure in the bad and pain in the good. In the context where the passage occurs, Aristotle pursues a comparison between knowledge, perception and action. When we engage in a process of knowledge, we deal with what is true or false. We assert or negate that something is true or false. Likewise, in perception, we deal with the pleasant or the painful and we pursue or avoid it. In action, we deal with the good or the bad, we pursue or avoid them. In this comparison, Aristotle argues that we pursue the pleasant or avoid the painful in comparison to what we do with the good and the bad. If interpreted in this way, the passage does not suggest that we take pleasure in the good, but that we pursue the pleasant in a similar way in which we pursue the good. In this sense, “good and bad as such” seems to suggest that there is a certain way of pursuing the good when the good is truly good. This

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361 This use is attested in, among others, Plato, Thucydides, Herodotus. In Aristotle’s works, see Poetics 1451 a 8, Rhetoric 1409 a 4, Politics 1310 a 14. Particularly relevant is the use of pros with the accusative in order to express the opposition to what is haplòs in Posterior Analytics 72 a 1.
way of pursuing the good is different if the good is a deceitful appearance. By speaking of the
good and bad as such, Aristotle seems to stress the idea that we should compare the relation
between pleasure/pain and perception, to the relation between the good/bad and perception,
and that we should consider the case in which the good or the bad are truly good or bad (and
not deceitful appearances).

There seems to be a difference between properties that require more complex processes
to be perceived (such as the pleasant and the good) and properties perceived with one sense
(for example sweetness). Aristotle’s discussion of sweetness in *De Anima* 426 b 12, suggests
that there is a difference between properties such as the pleasant, and sweetness. Something
sweet may be pleasant for an agent in the same sense in which the good may be pleasant for
someone. Taste is the sense with which we perceive sweetness. What is the sense for the
pleasant? There is no unique sense for the pleasant. Differently from sweetness, the agent
does not perceive the pleasant with taste, but she has to perceive the object as pleasant in
order to pursue it. Aristotle argues that when the soul “says that something is pleasant or
painful, in this case it avoids or pursues it.”

This process of “saying that something is pleasant” is similar to when, by seeing (ὁρῶν)
images and thought in the soul, we calculate and deliberate for the future and for the present. In the case of the pleasant, there is an
additional step in the process that goes from perceiving X to pursuing X, namely we need to
judge X as pleasant. While for sweetness, we perceive sweetness and we pursue it, in the case
of the pleasant we perceive some features of the object, we judge it pleasant and we pursue
the object.

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[362] *De Anima*, 431 b 7-12: ὅτε δὲ τοῖς ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ φαντάσμασιν ἢ νοήμασιν ὅσπερ ὁρῶν λογίζεται καὶ
βουλεύεται τὰ μέλλοντα πρὸς τὰ παρόντα· καὶ ὅταν εἴη ὡς ἐκεῖ τὸ ἡδὺ ἢ λυπηρόν, ἐνταῦθα φεύγει ἢ διώκει,
καὶ ὅλως ἐν πράξει. καὶ τὸ ἄνευ δὲ πράξεως, τὸ ἀληθὲς καὶ τὸ ψευδὸς ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ γένει ἔστι τῷ ἄγαθῷ καὶ
κακῷ ἀλλὰ τῷ γε ἀπλῶς διαφέρει καὶ τινὶ.
Moss takes it that *De anima* provides crucial evidence for her proposal, according to which pleasure is the perception of goodness. Pursuing the analogy according to which the good is the end (suggested already in the first lines of the *NE*), Moss interprets “being active toward something as good”, as striving and trying to pursue it as an end. Moss claims that the passage suggests that when the faculty of perception is in contact with the beneficial or the harmful, it responds with the feeling of pleasure or of pain. This feeling guides the agent toward the beneficial. In other words, on Moss’ reading, pleasure is a way of tracking the good. However, we can agree with much of her analysis and yet not accept the claim that pleasure is only a perceptual phenomenon to track the good.

It is also true that an agent who engages in a good activity enjoys it, and that an agent who loves a good object (say, a good person or a good piece of music) feels pleasure. Nevertheless, the goodness of the activity or object is a distinct phenomenon from the pleasure that is taken in it. Considering pleasure only as the way the good feels fails to give adequate space to other things Aristotle has to say about pleasure, including famous accounts of what pleasure is. Yes, pleasure feels good and the good may feel pleasant to us. However, philosophers in today’s discussions of pleasure complain that by saying that pleasure feels good one says very little, or at any rate not enough, and I submit Aristotle agrees.

7. **Apparent and true pleasure**

If my argument is compelling, the pleasant is a non-derivative value-property. That leaves open, Moss might object, the option that it is not true pleasure which motivates us; and to some extent I agree. But true pleasure can motivate. And hence more needs to be said

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363 J. Moss, *Aristotle’s Non-Trivial, Non-Insane View that Everyone Always Desires Things under the Guise of the Good*, in S. Tennenbaum, *Desire, Practical Reason and the good*, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 68. Moss quotes two ancient commentators who seem to interpret the passage in the same way: “To experience pleasure or distress … is nothing else but to perceive something as commensurate or incommensurate with the perceiver.” (Philoponus, commentary on Aristotle’s *De Anima*). “In being pleased perception cleaves to its proper (*oikeia*) activity as good, while in being pained it rejects it as bad.” (Simplicius, commentary on Aristotle’s *De Anima*).
about the distinction between apparent pleasure and true pleasure, and about true pleasure’s positive valence. In what follows, I examine relevant passages from the *NE* and the *EE* that elucidate the distinction between those for whom the appearance reflects the true nature of something and those for whom the appearance is misleading. In the passage of the *EE* that functions as starting point for Moss’ argument, Aristotle claims that the object of desire and wish is either the good or the apparent good, namely the pleasant.

(T9) The object of desire and wish is either the good or the apparent good. That is why the pleasant is an object of desire (for it is an apparent good); some people believe that pleasure is good, while to others it appears good even if they believe that it is not, since appearance and belief are not in the same part of the soul. It is, however, clear that both the good and the pleasant are dear. With this distinction made, we must make another assumption. Some good things are good *simpliciter* and others are good for a particular person but not *simpliciter*. And the same things are good *simpliciter* and pleasant *simpliciter*. For we say that what is beneficial for a healthy body is good for a body *simpliciter*; but we do not say this about what is good for a sick body. Similarly, what is pleasant for a healthy and sound body is pleasant for a body *simpliciter*.364

Aristotle argues that some people believe that pleasure is good and to others it appears good contrary to their beliefs. Pleasure appears good (*phanetai*) in the sense that *phantasia* produces an image of pleasure as good. In this passage, Aristotle distinguishes between having a belief and having an image of something through *phantasia*. Then he discusses the distinction between being good *simpliciter* and for someone (*tini*). The term *simpliciter* translates the Greek word *haplòs*. An analysis of the occurrences of *haplòs* (*simpliciter*) in the *EE* suggests the following. What is pleasant *haplòs*, at least as far as the *EE* is concerned, is

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364 *EE* VII, 1235 b 25-30: τὸ γὰρ ὀρεκτὸν καὶ βουλητὸν ἢ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἢ τὸ φαινόμενον ἄγαθον. διὸ καὶ τὸ ἡδὸν ὀρεκτὸν: φαινόμενον γὰρ τί ἄγαθον. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ δοκεῖ, τοῖς δὲ φαίνεται κἂν μὴ δοκῇ. οὐ γὰρ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ ψυχῆς ἡ φαντασία καὶ ἡ δόξα. ὅτι μὲντοι φυλον καὶ τὸ ἄγαθον καὶ τὸ ἡδον, δήλον. τούτου δὲ διωρισμένου λιπτέον ὑπόθεσιν έτέραν. τῶν γὰρ ἄγαθων τὰ μὲν ἀπλῶς ἐστίν ἄγαθα, τὰ δὲ τινὶ, ἀπλῶς δὲ οὐ. καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ ἀπλῶς ἄγαθα καὶ ἀπλῶς ἡδέα. τὰ μὲν γὰρ τὸ ἔνδοξον φαμεν σώματι συμφερόντα ἀπλῶς εἶναι σώματι ἄγαθα, τὰ δὲ τῷ κάμυοντι οὐ, ὀίον φαρμακείας καὶ τομᾶς. ὀμοίος δὲ καὶ ἡδέα ἀπλῶς σώματι τὰ τῷ ἔνδοξον καὶ ὀλοκλήρῳ.
what is pleasant for a human being in a standard state. A human being in a standard state is an adult, healthy individual in normal conditions. What is pleasant haplós is not pleasant for a particular person in particular circumstances, but what is pleasant for human beings as we are by nature or for the most part. The agent in a standard state is different from the good agent, and from the best agent, which is the kalos kagathos. The claim that the good or pleasant simpliciter is the good or pleasant for the human being in the standard state marks an important difference with the proposal of the NE. In the NE, Aristotle says that the spoudaios is the standard and measure of pleasant and beautiful things. Gosling and Taylor argue that in the EE, “the criterion of pleasant without qualification [simpliciter] is the normal adult.” They argue that what is pleasant simpliciter is determined by the preference of the person in sound conditions of body and soul. This is radically different from what we find in the NE, where the best agent is the measure of what is pleasant simpliciter. Taylor and Gosling suggest that in the NE, Aristotle is proposing his own version of the Protagorean quote “man is the measure.” According to the NE, “the good agent is the measure.” In this light, we can say that the EE’s version would be “the agent in the standard state is the measure.”

For present purposes, two distinctions are fundamental: first, the distinction between being good or pleasant and appearing good or pleasant; second, the distinction between X being good or pleasant simpliciter, and X being good or pleasant for someone (tini). Aristotle

365 Olfert (Olfert, C, “What we learn from pleasure”, History of philosophy quarterly, 30 (2013), 35-51) discusses three ways in which we can interpret the expression “good simpliciter”: (1) it is measured by what the good person would do, (2) it is good in all the relevant categories, (3) it is unqualifiedly good in the sense of best.

366 EE, 1236 a 3-5.

367 NE, 1113 a 34.

claims that what appears good may be the result of a distorted perception of the subject.\textsuperscript{369} He explains this distinction through the example of the healthy body and of the sick body: healthy things may be bad for the sick body. Similarly, what appears good for particular persons may not be the good \textit{simpliciter}.\textsuperscript{370} It is not clear what Aristotle means with the verb \textit{phainetai}. One possible interpretation is the following: the subject imagines that something is in some way, let us say good or pleasant, even though it is not. As I see it, Aristotle claims that something can appear to have these properties (good, pleasant, beautiful….) and truly possess them, or we can be misguided by how things appear. In the second case, we imagine that something is good or pleasant, or for that matter beautiful, when it is not. But this does not entail that the pleasant is the apparent good or the beautiful is the apparent pleasant.

It is essential to distinguish the pleasant \textit{simpliciter}, the beautiful \textit{simpliciter} and the good \textit{simpliciter} from what appears pleasant, beautiful and good. The latter, again, falls into two classes: that which appears and is pleasant, beautiful and good, and that which merely appears pleasant, beautiful and good without being so. If the subject is able to perceive things as they truly are, the subject recognizes that the appearance is not misleading. At this point, she believes that the object is truly as it appears. It may be the case that the object is not as it appears: let us use the example of a cake that appears pleasant, but it is in reality poisoned. The agent recognizes the appearance as illusory and does not eat the cake. The object appears to be in some way. However, the agent does not believe that the object is as it appears. Of course it may be the case that the agent is not able to recognize that the appearance is illusory. In this last case, she believes that the cake is pleasant.

\textsuperscript{369} G. Pearson argues that the apparent good can be interpreted as what appears good but it is the result of an error (see G. Pearson, \textit{Aristotle on desire}, Cambridge University Press, 2012).

\textsuperscript{370} \textit{EE}, 1235 b 34-37.
Since Moss puts forward a reading that is mostly concerned with the NE, let us look at some passages on the apparent good in the NE. In NE 1113 a 16, Aristotle argues that βούλησις – wish – concerns the end and this is the good or the apparent good. He discusses opinions and he says that to some people the object of wish “seems (δοκεῖ)”\(^{371}\) to be good and to others it seems the apparent good. Then he argues:

(T10) Those who claim that the object of wish is the good are committed to the view that what a person wishes if he is choosing incorrectly is not an object of wish (if it were an object of wish, it would also be a good, but it was, perhaps, bad). On the other hand, those who claim the apparent good to be the object of wish must say that nothing is an object of wish by nature, but only what seems so to each person; and different people have different, perhaps opposing, views.\(^{372}\)

In T10, Aristotle discusses two opinions: some people think that the object of wish is always the good. They think that, when one wishes for something other than the good, she is choosing incorrectly. Other people think that the object of wish is the apparent good, namely what appears good to people. For this last group, the object of wish varies from subject to subject. We may even say that it is relative to the individual. Aristotle argues that the true object of wish is the good. That is, if we consider the object of wish \textit{simpliciter} and according to truth, as Aristotle claims, this is the good.\(^{373}\)

At this point, one may ask for what kind of agent the true object of wish is the good. There is a difference between the object of wish of the good person and of the bad or vicious person. Let us look at the good agent and compare this case with the bad or vicious agent. For the \textit{spoudaios} – the good agent - the object of wish is the good insofar as this agent sees the

\(^{371}\) \textit{NE}, 1113 a 16.

\(^{372}\) \textit{NE}, 1113 a 17-22, all translations of the \textit{NE} are by R. Crisp modified by GB: συμβαίνει δὲ τοῖς μὲν τὸ βουλήσιν τάγαθον λέγουσι μὴ εἶναι βουλήσιν ὃ βούλεται ὃ μὴ ὀρθῶς αἱρετέομενος (εἰ γὰρ ἦσσαν βουλητέον, καὶ ἀγαθόν: ἢν δ’, εἰ οὕτως ἔτυχε, κακόν), τοῖς δ’ αὖ τὸ φαινόμενον ἀγαθόν βουλήσιν λέγουσι μὴ εἶναι φόσος βουλήσιν, ἄλλ’ ἐκάστῳ τὸ δοκοῦν: ἄλλο δ’ ἄλλο φαίνεται, καὶ εἰ οὕτως ἔτυχε, τάναντια.

\(^{373}\) \textit{NE}, 1113 a 23.
truth. The *spoudaios* knows how to discern the good from what appears to be good but it is not. For the bad person the object of wish can be what appears good but it is not insofar as she does not perceive things as they truly are. In this sense, Aristotle compares the bad person to a sick body for which things that are normally healthy are not healthy. This comparison with the sick and healthy bodies appears also in the passage of the *EE* considered by Moss. This parallelism seems to suggest that the two passages argue for the same idea. What is pleasant may appear good for the bad person even if it is not. And this is not limited to pleasure appearing good. Something can appear good, beautiful and pleasant, and not having any of these properties. The bad person does not know how to detect what truly possesses these properties. For this agent, things appear distorted. In the *NE*, Aristotle says that the good person is the standard and measure of the beautiful and of the pleasant:

(T11) For each state has its own conception of what is beautiful and pleasant, and one might say that the good person stands out a long way by seeing the truth in each case, being a sort of standard and measure of what is beautiful and pleasant. In the case of the many, however, pleasure seems to deceive them, because it looks like a good when it is not; people therefore choose what is pleasant thinking it to be a good, and avoid pain thinking it to be an evil.

What appears pleasant is illusory and deceptive in the case of the many who think that pleasure is good and pain is bad. For them there is a general confusion regarding what is truly pleasant, good, or beautiful. They are not able to distinguish the illusory appearance from reality. For this reason, Aristotle argues that for each ἔξιν – state – there are things beautiful

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374 *NE*, 1113 a 33.

375 See *NE*, 1113 a 28-30; *EE* 1235 b 33-35.

376 *NE*, 1113 a 30-1113 b 2: καθ’ ἑκάστην γὰρ ἔξιν ἰδία ἐστὶ καλὰ καὶ ἡδέα, καὶ διαφέρει πλείστον ἵσσως ὁ σπουδαῖος τῷ τἀληθές ἐν ἑκάστοις ὁράν, ὡσπερ κανὼν καὶ μέτρων αὐτὸν δόν ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς δὲ ἡ ἀπάτη διὰ τὴν ἡδονὴν ἔοικε γίνεσθαι: οὐ γὰρ οὔσα ἁγαθόν φαίνεται, αἱροῦνται οὖν τὸ ἡδὺ ὡς ἁγαθὸν, τὴν δὲ λύπην ὡς κακὸν φεύγουσιν.
and pleasant. There seems to be a distinction between (1) what is beautiful and pleasant for
the good agent and for the bad agent, and (2) what appears beautiful and pleasant for the good
agent and for the bad agent. The virtuous person perceives properties correctly. To this agent,
the truly beautiful and pleasant appears beautiful and pleasant. If the virtuous person
perceives something as pleasant, this means that it is pleasant simpliciter. The pleasant for
someone (tini) can be the result of a distorted perception. Someone can perceive as pleasant
what only appears pleasant: her condition is similar to the condition of a drunken person who
finds pleasant the wine mixed with vinegar. In the NE, Aristotle claims that everyone is
responsible for how things appear to her:

(T12) But suppose somebody argues: everyone aims at what appears good to him,
but over this appearance we have no control; rather, how the end appears to each
person depends on what sort of person he is. So, if each person is in some way
responsible for his own state, he will also be in some way responsible for how it
appears.

This seems to follow from what Aristotle argues in NE 1113 a 30, namely that people
who have a certain disposition perceive things as beautiful and pleasant even when they are
not. The same things do not appear pleasant for the virtuous and for the bad person. Aristotle
claims that if one is responsible for her own disposition, she is also responsible for how
things appear to her. Appearances can be misleading. However, one can learn to recognize
when an appearance is misleading and illusory.

This distinction between appearing X and being Y seems to be valid not only in the
case of the pleasant and of the good, but also in the case of other properties, for example in

377 NE, 1113 a 31.

378 EE, 1235 b 40.

379 NE, 1114 a 35- 1114 b 2: ei de tis logos oti pantes efineita tovo phainomenou agathou, tis de fantasiaas ou kuriou, all' opoios poth ekastos esti, toiopto kai to telos phainetai auti: ei men oun ekastos eautoi tis exeus esti proz aitios, kai tis fantasiaas estai proz autous aitios.
the case of the beautiful. If other properties can appear in some way that does not reflect what they truly are, it cannot be right to claim that the pleasant is the apparent good, as Moss does, without claiming that also the beautiful is the apparent pleasant, and so forth.

In *NE* II.2, Aristotle argues that there are three kinds of positive valence, each of them plays a distinctive role in motivation: the pleasant, the beautiful and the *sumpheron*, namely the advantageous. For present purposes, the advantageous can be considered some kind of goodness. Aristotle argues that the beautiful and the advantageous appear pleasant. Thus, also the beautiful and the advantageous can appear in some way, namely pleasant. What matters for my argument is that the pleasant cannot be considered a dependent property of the good, more than the beautiful or the advantageous.

8. Pleasure and the best agent

Now that all the three claims - the metaphysical claim, the psychological claim and the ethical claim - have been addressed, I turn to some additional evidence in favor of our initial thesis - the Pleasure Thesis. In the *EE*, Aristotle associates pleasure not only with happiness, but also with virtue and best agency. This association is a distinctive proposal of the *EE*; it is not put forward, or not in the same way, in the *NE*. One may ask for whom happiness is the most pleasant thing of all. The *EE*’s answer to this question is that happiness is most pleasant for the best agent. In the *EE*, the best agent is the καλός κἀγαθός, the person who possesses

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380 *NE* 1104 b 30.

381 *NE*, 1104 b 30-1105 a 1.

382 Regarding motivation and desire, the pleasant seems to elicit a different reaction if compared to other properties. In *De Anima* 431 a 8, Aristotle claims that when we find something pleasant or painful, the soul makes a sort of affirmation or negation. Finding something pleasant is different from perceiving another property in the sense that we are naturally moved to express an evaluation on the object of perception and, if the evaluation is positive, we desire to pursue the object of perception. Corcilius argues that there is a non-rational desire to what is variably good, i.e. the pleasant, and a rational desire to what is invariably good. See K. Corcilius (2011), “Aristotle’s Definition of Non-rational Pleasure and Pain and Desire,” in J. Miller (ed.), *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge), pp. 117–43.
the complex virtue of being-beautiful-and-good (καλοκάγαθία),383 and not the φρόνιμος,384 or the σοφός often considered by scholars as best agents of the *NE*. The καλός κἀγαθός has all the virtues, understood as including character virtues and virtues of practical and theoretical thinking. Καλοκάγαθία is called complete virtue.385 Happiness, being activity according to complete virtue, includes the exercise of character virtues and also the exercise of virtues of practical and theoretical thinking. For this reason, only the καλός κἀγαθός enjoys true happiness. Thus, happiness is most pleasant for the καλός κἀγαθός.

In *EE* 1222 a 7-14, pleasure is mentioned in the definition of virtue: virtue is “a mean point and has to do with certain means in pleasures and pains and in pleasant and painful things.”386 This idea does not come up in the *NE*, where virtue is defined as the mean between two extremes.387 Though in *NE* 1104 b 9-10, Aristotle says that character virtue concerns pleasure and pain, pleasure and pain do not appear in the *NE*’s definition of virtue.

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383 *EE* VIII, 1248 b 8-1249 b 25.


385 *EE* VIII, 1248 b 8-16.

386 *EE* II, 1222 a 10-13, tr. B. Inwood, R. Woolf.

387 *NE* 1107 a 1-5.
For the καλός κἀγαθός, virtuous activity is second nature insofar as through habituation the agent has developed a natural disposition toward virtue.\(^{388}\) This claim has two dimensions. First, the completely virtuous person (the καλός κἀγαθός) is habituated to pursue virtue, and virtuous activity is natural for her in the sense that she does not have to force herself to pursue virtuous activity. On the contrary, virtuous activity is pleasant for her. Second, by pursuing virtue, the completely virtuous person pursues her complete flourishing as a human being. In both respects, virtue and virtuous activity include all virtues of character, as well as the virtues of practical and theoretical thinking.

In EE VI, Aristotle ties pleasure to perfect activity. He argues that when our faculties perform their activities without any impediment, pleasure naturally arises. Some interpreters take issue with this claim, or at any rate with its generality. They ask whether it is possible for an agent to exercise an activity perfectly and yet fail to enjoy it.\(^{389}\) Whether this is empirically possible or not, I take it that Aristotle fully endorses the view that pleasure is the sign of perfect activity.\(^{390}\) Here I agree with U. Coope. On her reading, feeling pleasure in virtuous activity is a sign of the excellent agent. The person who is merely self-controlled (rather than virtuous) suffers from a rational failure, namely she fails to take rational pleasure in beautiful

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\(^{388}\) Among Aristotle scholars, “second nature” refers to the acquisition of ethical virtues through habituation. When the subject becomes habituated to virtue, acting virtuously becomes “second nature” to her. First nature refers to capacities that we have from birth and second nature to virtuous character developed through habituation. For a discussion of second nature see John McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality,* (Harvard University Press, 1998); John Cooper, “Some remarks on Aristotle’s moral psychology,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy,* 27 (1989): 25-42.

\(^{389}\) *EE* VI, 1153 a 12-15.

actions. Is pleasure the sign of perfect activity or of the excellent agent? In the light of my argument so far the answer must be “both.” To recapitulate the core premises I discussed: happiness and pleasure are contingently identical; pleasure is unimpeded activity according to our natural state; and the best agent feels pleasure. Hence pleasure is both the sign of perfect activity and of the excellent agent: pleasure accompanies (μετά) perfect (τέλειον) activity, and it naturally arises when our capacities function with no impediments. Let me compare the situation of the best agent who takes pleasure in happiness, as Aristotle defines it, with the one of the music critic who takes pleasure in listening to dodecaphonic music. The ordinary listener would not feel pleasure from listening to dodecaphonic music: the music sounds dissonant and it lacks harmony. However, the music critic who knows how the piece is composed and what kind of study and experimentation the piece requires, can fully appreciate it and feel pleasure. At the same time, listening to music is the activity that the music critic performs perfectly. For this reason, it is most pleasant for this agent. Similarly, the καλός κἀγαθός is the person who feels pleasure in virtuous activity, understood as activity in which all the virtues, including the virtues of theoretical thinking, are involved. Feeling pleasure in virtuous activity is the sign that the agent is excellent and also the sign that she is engaging in perfect activity.

9. Pleasure and the divine

In EE VI=NE VII, Aristotle argues that even god experiences pleasure. In Aristotle’s account, god does not have virtue. However, he feels perfect pleasure. God’s pleasure is

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392 EE VI, 1152 b 8.

393 EE, 1154 b 25.
described as single and simple, while our pleasure is described as constantly changing. Our nature is not simple and perfect as the nature of god. This is the reason why we are not able to enjoy the kind of single and simple pleasure that god enjoys. The claim that god, who is the most perfect being, enjoys pleasure is another step in Aristotle’s demonstration of the positive role of pleasure in a good life (and, more generally, of PT). Pleasure can be illusory and bad for human beings insofar as our nature is not perfect; insofar as we are less than virtuous, we often pursue false pleasures. As Aristotle argues in EE VI=NE VII, our defective nature elicits in us a constant search for different pleasures. In contrast, god’s perfect nature makes him enjoy one, constant, true pleasure. However, this suggests that in enjoying pleasure, if and when we succeed in enjoying true pleasure (which Aristotle often refers to as the pleasant ἁπλῶς - simpliciter - or the pleasure by nature), we are similar not only to the best agent, but also to god. The claim that pleasure - insofar as this is admittedly a significant proviso, we succeed in enjoying in approximation what the best agent enjoys - makes us similar to the best agent and even to the divine is supported by a further argument that Aristotle proposes in EE VI=NE VII. While talking about the fact that everyone and every animal pursues pleasure, Aristotle argues as follows:

(T13) Maybe they are really pursuing not the pleasure they think they are pursuing nor even the one they would say they are pursuing, but the same pleasure, since all things have by nature a divine component.

394 Here simpliciter translates the Greek ἁπλῶς.


396 EE VI, 1153 b 30-33.
Aristotle remarks that bodily pleasures seem to be considered as the only type of pleasure, whereas there are in fact different types of pleasure. Pleasure is bad when one pursues different types of pleasure, among which there are excessive pleasures or pleasures that derive from bad sources. However, enjoying one single pleasure is something that only god does. If we get anywhere near this kind of pleasure, we thereby come to resemble the divine.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I defended the view that pleasure is non-derivative, it has a distinctive presence in the mind, and it plays an important role in human motivation. In defending these three claims, I situated my position vis-à-vis the debate and I explained my disagreement with Moss’s view that pleasure is the apparent good. I showed how the passage that functions as starting point for Moss’s argument can be read in a different way if we consider Aristotle’s project in the *EE*. As I argued, in the *EE*, Aristotle connects pleasure to happiness, he says that the best agent and even god enjoy pleasure.

I analyzed different ways of categorizing pleasure that Aristotle proposes. I argued that, while there are illusory pleasures that come from bad sources, certain pleasures are pleasures by nature. They are choiceworthy, even though they should be pursued with moderation. These pleasures are pleasant for the particular being that human beings are. The very idea of something being pleasant by nature supports the view that pleasure is non-derivative. What is pleasant by nature is pleasant for the agent in the standard state. Differently from the *NE*, where the measure of the pleasant *simpliciter* is the good agent, in the *EE*, the measure of what is pleasant *simpliciter* is the agent in a standard state.

I examined the difference between apparent pleasure and true pleasure through an examination of the passages in the *EE* and in the *NE* where Aristotle discusses pleasure and
the apparent good. I showed that also other properties, and not only the pleasant, can appear in some way. And yet, this does not make the beautiful the apparent good.

If my analysis is compelling, by conceiving of pleasure as such and by connecting it to perfect activity and best agency, Aristotle assigns a positive role to pleasure in the good life. The pleasant is not just an appearance of the good: it is non-derivative and as the good, it has to be determined via the relation between how things are in the world and the agent’s psychology.
CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I argued that Aristotle’s philosophical project in the EE differs in important respects from his project in the NE. The EE is, on the whole, less widely studied than the NE. This applies specifically to the dimensions in which, on my reading, it differs from the NE. The ideas on which I focused—kalokagathia, a unity of virtue that is unrestricted in scope, natural goods, and the role of three kinds of value, including pleasure, in a happy life—are philosophically rich. If my proposals are compelling, it would seem that the EE is not only less widely studied. More than that, it would seem to contain ideas that deserve far more attention than they received up to now. Arguably, these ideas are not only of historical interest. They also speak to our own intuitions. After all, we want our lives to be not only good, though that is by itself a tall measure. But we do want more. We also want beauty in our lives, and we would not choose a life that was not, as we experience it, pleasant. If we want all this, we want—and admire—happiness in the sense of the EE. Accordingly, the dimensions of the EE that I explored in this dissertation should help us generate new perspectives in virtue ethics, ethical naturalism, and virtue epistemology.

Let me summarize the main findings of my dissertation briefly. First of all, I discussed one important difference between the EE’s philosophical project and the NE’s one. In the EE, Aristotle aims at proving the Superlative Thesis, and its most contentious aspect, the Pleasure Thesis, while in the NE, Aristotle starts from the question of how the good figures in human action. In other words, the EE focuses on how three values - the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant - relate to happiness right from the start of the treatise, while the NE starts from the good. I showed how the formal and substantive accounts of happiness differ in the two treatises. The EE proposes a unified notion of the best life, which includes virtuous activity and contemplation. According to the NE, there are two lives that are, though not equally
good, both viewed as excellent: the life of politics and the life of contemplation. These two lives can be ranked, according to the hierarchical relation between theoretical thinking on the one hand, and the practical reasoning and affective activities involved in agency on the other hand. Ultimately, the life of contemplation is better than the life of politics.

Second, I moved to the idea that the best agent of the two ethical treatises is not the same. The best agent of the *EE* is the *kalos kagathos*. This agent has all the virtues, including the virtues of theoretical and practical thinking. All the virtues are interrelated and co-function as parts of *kalokagathia*. This way of conceiving of the best agent and of the best life emphasizes the importance of excellent thinking for excellent action. This is why, a moment ago, I said that my discussion bears also on normative epistemology; it bears on ways in which we can be better and worse thinkers, in ways that shape our ethical lives. According to this approach, the search for the truth is not only fundamental for philosophers and for philosophical investigation. Theoretical thinking is not simply disjunct from excellent deliberation and virtuous action. It relates, or so I argue, in manifold ways to decision making and the aim of leading a good human life.

I turned next to the Eudemian notion of natural goods. I argued that Aristotle puts forward an unexplored form of ethical naturalism that I call Natural Goods Naturalism. According to NGN, what is good in the sense of the natural goods is good for human beings as we are by nature or for the most part. The notion of natural goods and NGN suggest that the *EE* differs in a central aspect from the *NE*. That is, the *EE*’s measure of the good, the beautiful and the pleasant is the agent in a standard state and not the *phronimos*, as in the *NE*. This Eudemian approach distinguishes three kinds of positive valence. Ethics, it seems, must come to grips with how it is that happiness involves positive valence of several kinds. This view, I submit, is rich and worth exploring further. Moral psychology and ancient-inspired
ethics is so far mostly concerned with ways in which we desire the good. If the EE is right, we desire the good, and also the beautiful and pleasant, and the superlative instantiations thereof coincide.

NGN shares with other forms of naturalism the appeal to the *ergon*. While the Function Argument in the *NE* is well studied, the Function Argument in the *EE* has so far received little attention. I argued that if we compare the Function Argument as it appears in the *NE*, in the *EE* and in Plato’s *Republic*, important differences come to light. In the *EE* and in the *Republic*, talking about use is one way of talking about function. In other words, the notion of use and the notion of function seem to overlap. In the *NE*, the notion of use does not come up. This difference is important. It relates to a premise about the good that both Plato and Aristotle explore, namely that it benefits or in other words is “of use.” Is this an idea Aristotle gives up on in the *NE*, and if yes, why? Conversely, how does this idea shape the ethical outlook of the *EE*? My chapter on the Function Argument clears the ground for further inquiry. It is intentionally schematic, offering an overview of how the Function Arguments differ. Based on this, we can begin to analyze individual points of comparison. For now, my focus was on the subject of the Function Argument in the *EE*. I argued that it matters for the *EE*’s naturalism and ambitious conception of excellence that we study the function of the human soul, in ways that do not distinguish between different parts or faculties thereof.

Finally, I discussed the Pleasure Thesis. For the Aristotle of the *EE*, pleasure has positive valence. This needs to be emphasized, because hedonism gives pleasure a shady reputation. Aristotle takes on an ambitious project, namely to demonstrate that, though there are many ways in which pleasure is not part of an ethically excellent life, pleasure in the superlative occurs precisely here: nothing other than the very best life is also most pleasant. As part of this approach, the Aristotle of the *EE* considers the view that the life of pleasure is
best not only as the view of “the many.” Though it is also a common belief of the many, it is a philosophical view that deserves serious attention.

My purpose in writing this dissertation was to shed light on aspects of the Eudemian philosophical proposals that are interesting in their own right, ideas that are rich and complex in ways that can inspire new ideas. These new ideas can help us explore uncharted routes to think about happiness, virtue, nature, and pleasure. My research has opened up a host of questions that I wish to explore in future years. On my reading, the *EE* does not contain a theory of habituation. Instead, Aristotle’s approach to virtue in the *EE* analyzes the role of nature and natural development. In my next project, I aim to explore this difference and to investigate the role of virtue and of nature in the development of the virtues. Differently from the *NE*, where it seems that we develop the virtues of character by habituation and the virtues of thinking by teaching (there is little evidence on how we develop the virtues of thinking in the *NE*), in the *EE*, we develop all the virtues by nature, if nothing impedes this process. What is more, I plan to study how the individual virtues interact with each other and co-function. I wish to focus on how the virtuous agent, the ordinary agent and the vicious agent, perceive and desire the apparent good, the apparent beautiful, and the apparent pleasant, as well as how they relate to what is truly good, beautiful, and pleasant.

As my research shows, a careful study of Aristotle’s philosophical proposal in the *EE* is fundamental for our understanding of Aristotle’s ethics. More than that, it unveils philosophical perspectives that are worthy to be explored in their own right.
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