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The Social Achievement of Self-Understanding: Aristotle on Loving Oneself and Others

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The Social Achievement of Self-Understanding: Aristotle on Loving Oneself and Others

By

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Committee in charge:

Professor Kinch Hoekstra, Co-Chair
Professor Timothy Clarke, Co-Chair
Professor Véronique Munoz-Dardé
Professor Sara Magrin

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Abstract

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The discussion of *philia* ("love" or "friendship") occupies a central place in Aristotle's ethical works. And yet it is hard to see how *philia* could play a correspondingly significant role, on Aristotle's view, in the best possible human life – a life devoted to the fullest expression of our nature as rational animals. In the activities of contemplation and understanding, Aristotle tells us, we are maximally self-sufficient, least susceptible to the incursions of ill-fortune and least dependent on the help of others. The value of such rational self-sufficiency seems to be in tension with the value of *philia*; our nature as rational animals, on the one hand, and our nature as social or political animals, on the other, appear to place conflicting demands upon us.

My dissertation addresses this apparent tension in Aristotle's conception of the happy (*eudaimōn*) human life. It does so by exploring the ways in which *philia* itself is an expression of, and enables the fullest possible realization of, our nature as beings possessed of reason and understanding.

In the first chapter, I explore Aristotle's moral psychology of love in general. To love something in itself, as opposed to loving it because it pleases you or is useful to you, is to love it on the basis of one's rational recognition that it is *kalon* ("fine" or morally "beautiful") and good in itself. To love something in itself, in other words, is a manifestation of our love for what is good as such. It is to love something with our rational soul.

The next two chapters consider Aristotle's account of self-love, for in genuine *philia*, one loves another as one loves oneself. Self-love, Aristotle tells us, is derived from one's love of the good; it is only insofar as one sees one's activity and one's life as a whole as something *kalon* and good in itself that one can exhibit self-love. In its fullest form, it is available only to the truly

virtuous or excellent (*spoudaios*) individual, and to others only derivatively, insofar as they can see themselves as such.

The goodness of the excellent person's life is the result of its order and intelligibility – it is, so to speak, a life that she can make sense of. But such intelligible order comes about not by pursuing intelligible order as such; it is the result of guiding one's life by a conception of the good. In this, there emerges an important theme that runs through what follows: Part of what it is to be a rational being, on Aristotle's view, is to act with practical self-awareness and a desire to be able to see the activities that constitute one's life as intrinsically good and *kalon*. Aristotle is famous for his claim, at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, that the human being, as a rational being, desires by nature to know. I might describe my suggestion by saying that he also thought that the human being, as a practically rational being, desires by nature to understand themselves and their lives. But the intelligibility of one's life is not merely a matter of learning certain facts about it; it is the result of pursuing the good in action. Thus, the desire for self-understanding affects not just how you view your life, but how you *live* it. Since this understanding is, necessarily, framed in terms of the agent's own conception of the human good – her own conception of what it is to live a truly human life – according to which she both guides and judges her life, one might also say that, for Aristotle, to be rational is to be autonomous.

In the final chapter, I turn to Aristotle's account of genuine friendship, and, in particular, to the interpretation of a difficult and complicated argument in which Aristotle seeks to explain, on the basis of his account of self-love, why friendship is good and choiceworthy in itself. (In genuine friendship, Aristotle says, one is related to one's friend as one is related to oneself.) I argue that we should understand Aristotle's argument as appealing to the way in which, through genuine friendship, we deepen our perceptual and cognitive engagement with the world – by being confronted with a distinct perspective on our shared objects of experience, we enrich that experience itself. In this way, rather than standing in tension with the exercise of reason and understanding, friendship makes possible a fuller realization of our nature as rational beings.

To the memory of Barry Stroud

"*In vain thy Reason finer webs shall draw…*
And all our knowledge is, ourselves to know."
-Alexander Pope, An Essay on Man (Epistles III and IV)

"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue…And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will find them gradually, without noticing it, and live along some distant day into the answer."
-Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet

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Acknowledgments

Aristotle tells us that friendship "comes about through sharing in conversation and thought." I do not know how many hundreds of hours I have spent sharing in conversation and thought with Kinch Hoekstra during the years I worked on this dissertation. I do know that I left those conversations with renewed excitement about philosophy, and renewed faith in the value of what we are trying to do as students of its history. Kinch has been a mentor to me in the fullest sense. He has been a model of how one might combine careful philosophical thought with careful historical scholarship; when I would show up in his office with more excitement than clarity, he was a generous interlocutor with whom I could develop my (at best) half-baked ideas; at later stages, he was a careful reader of my work, discussing with me, in great detail, everything from the fine points of Greek translation to (appropriating Wilfrid Sellars' characterization of philosophy) "how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term"; he has supported me during my not-so-intermittent periods of self-doubt; and, when my doubts were more focused on the present state of academic philosophy, he helped me sustain, or discover, some faith in what it could be. It would be impossible to acknowledge, in what follows, each instance of a thought that was worked out only in dialogue with Kinch – not, at any rate, without increasing the number of footnotes by an order of magnitude – and it is hard to overstate the degree to which my completing this degree at all is due to his encouragement.

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In writing this dissertation, I was also fortunate to be able to draw on the expertise of Sara Magrin, my outside member. In fact, it was a discussion with Sara of a notoriously difficult and initially baffling argument in *NE* 9.9 that ended up providing the germ, in retrospect, of the idea for this entire dissertation. And, at a later stage (*much* later, given my propensity for procrastination), a (virtual) discussion with her about Aristotle's theory of

perception – about which I knew only enough to know that I was confused – lead to significant improvements in what follows (and also to a new, nascent interest in this aspect of Aristotle's thought). As well, I am grateful to Klaus Corcilius (though, for entirely contingent reasons, he did not end up on my committee), as Klaus was, in no small part, responsible for my writing a dissertation on Aristotle at all. It was one of Klaus's seminars that opened up to me the richness of Aristotle's thought, and working with him on a qualifying exam on Plato solidified my interest in ancient philosophy. (He also invited me to a workshop on ancient moral psychology in Munich, where I presented a very early version of what ended up becoming chapter 4. I'd also like to thank the other participants in that workshop for their comments on my paper.)

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Introduction

This dissertation explores the moral psychology of *philia* – love or friendship – in Aristotle. Aristotle makes two very general claims about *philia*, which I have taken as guides for the structure of what follows: (1) one's love (*philia*) of oneself is derived from one's love of the good, and (2) the characteristics of genuine *philia*, love of others, are derived from one's love of oneself. (In saying this, Aristotle does not mean that loving others is merely an indirect way of loving oneself – e.g., one benefits them because, in exchange, they will benefit oneself – but that we see the attitudes characteristic of *philia* paradigmatically expressed in self-love.) Thus, the first chapter considers Aristotle on loving the good; the next two consider Aristotle's account of self-love – or, what is equivalent for Aristotle, loving one's "being" or "living";[1] and the final chapter turns to Aristotle's explanation of the value of genuine friendship, "friendship on account of virtue" or "character friendship."[2] Each chapter builds upon the previous ones, but all, I hope, treat philosophical issues which are important and interesting in their own right.

It is requisite to acknowledge that there is no perfect English translation of *philia*.[3] "Friendship" is fairly standard in the context of Aristotle's discussion in *NE* 8-9 and *EE* 7, but the English word is much

[1] Aristotle treats these (oneself, one's being, one's living) interchangeably in the culminating argument of *NE* 9.9 and *EE* 7.12. The equivalence follows from the fact that one's being (*to einai*), in the technical Aristotelian sense, determines what one most fundamentally *is*, and for human beings (as with any living creature) that is determined by what it is to *live* as that kind of creature.

[2] Aristotle uses the phrase "character friendship" very rarely, and only in the *Eudemian Ethics*. Beginning with Cooper ("Three Forms"), it has nonetheless become the preferred label for the ideal form of friendship for many scholars writing on the topic. Cooper argued, persuasively I believe, that Aristotle did not see genuine friendship as confined to fully virtuous agents (which would have been a depressing result, given the rarity of full virtue in Aristotle's view), which makes "friendship on account of virtue" a potentially misleading label, referring only to the absolutely perfect instance of genuine friendship. Rather, Cooper argues that it is friendship based on appreciation of another's character, i.e., appreciation of another for who she is – for virtually *everyone* has some share of goodness, Aristotle tells us in the *EE*. (Except, perhaps, for the utterly depraved and vicious, who, Aristotle repeatedly tells us, are incapable of genuine love, either for themselves or others.) I will often use the phrase "genuine friendship," because I think that even Cooper's suggestion is somewhat too narrow. The attitudes characteristic of genuine friendship (e.g., loving the other for who she is, wishing her well for her own sake, wishing that she exist, etc.; cf. *NE* 9.4) are found, on Aristotle's view, also in familial relations, which (for better or worse) would *not* seem to be based on recognition of goodness. (Indeed, one of Aristotle's favored examples of a relationship exhibiting these characteristics is that of a mother and her child.)

[3] A particularly helpful account of the concept of *philia* in ancient Greece is Jean-Claude Fraisse's *Philia: La notion d'amitié dans la philosophie antique.*

narrower in scope.[4] The verb *philein,* from which *philia* derives, is fairly straightforwardly translatable as "to love" – in the sense in which we might use that word not only to describe our attitude to other people like one's romantic partner or family-members, but also our attitude to inanimate objects like wine and activities like painting, though *philia* refers only to the former attitudes.[5] Since Aristotle's discussion encompasses not only relationships we would readily call "friendships," but also bonds that we think of as stronger or more intense – say, that between lovers or family-members – we might be inclined to translate *philia* with the noun "love." And in many contexts, that is a good translation. But Aristotle's discussion also encompasses relationships that do not involve such intense emotional bonds – say, relationships between business partners, fellow citizens (at least, in a healthy and well-functioning *polis*), or any group of people cooperating in a shared endeavor – and that can make "love" as awkward and misleading as "friendship" (if not more so). In general, one might say that *philia* encompasses any relationship of mutual goodwill and trust. Despairing of the possibility of finding any adequate translation, I have generally opted to simply use the transliterated Greek word. The exception is in chapter 4, which concerns what Aristotle thinks of as the ideal form of *philia;* since that ideal form is a voluntarily-entered relationship involving mutual loving and care for another person for their own sake, the translation "friendship" is apt in that context, and can help to make Aristotle's argument perspicuous to English speakers.

* * *

Roughly one-fifth of Aristotle's ethical writings are devoted to the topic of *philia* – more than is devoted to any other single topic.[6] This reflects

[4] For an interesting dissent from the standard line, see David Konstan, "Greek Friendship." Konstan argues that although *philia* includes the wide range of relationships that I emphasize in this paragraph, when the adjective *philos* is used substantively, it really does mean "friend" narrowly, and this is almost always the right translation. Konstan suggests that *NE* 8-9, though it discusses other forms of *philia*, is really aimed at an account of what it is to be *ho philos,* "a friend." Kosman's suggestion is leant some plausibility by the fact that Aristotle does seem to be especially concerned with voluntary relationships in *NE* 8-9, though, again, he does often cite the love of parents for children as a paradigmatic example of the attitudes characteristic of genuine friendship and he does discuss love in the family and other communities at some length.

[5] According to Aristotle, it only refers to those attitudes when they are reciprocated, though, in fact, it would be perfectly natural to (and indeed Aristotle does) speak of the *philia* between a mother and a child even before the child is capable of reciprocating its mother's love.

[6] The discussion of *philia* takes up two out of the ten books comprising the *NE*, and, although the discussion is squeezed into one book of the *EE*, it is nearly as great a proportion of the whole, considered in terms of the number of Bekker pages. Of course, whether this means that it is longer than the discussion of any other topic depends upon what you are willing to

the importance attached to *philia* among ancient Greek philosophers more generally.[7] And the significant place of *philia* in Aristotle's ethics was recognized, in turn, by philosophical readers of Aristotle from the ancient commentators to Aquinas, to the Renaissance and early modern period, and on through the 19th century.

For much of the 20th century, however, Aristotle's discussion of *philia* suffered relative neglect, at least in the world of Anglophone philosophy. But, after influential work on the topic by scholars such as Julia Annas, Jonathan Cooper, and A.W. Price in the late 70's and early 80's, this shifted dramatically, and, in the intervening years, scholarly interest in this aspect of Aristotle's thought has continued to burgeon.

In part, this is so for some of the same reasons that philosophers came to take renewed interest in Aristotle's ethics generally. For a long time, I think it is fair to say that "analytic" discussions of moral philosophy were dominated by a concern with the question, "What ought I to do?"; and, in particular, with the task of identifying a principle or set of principles which would tell you, for any circumstance in which an agent might find herself, what she was obligated or permitted to do. For broadly Aristotelian reasons, I am skeptical about the prospects for such a task – I doubt that there *is* any answer to that question which is both at the desired level of generality and still informative. But, skepticism about its prospects aside, I think it must be admitted that a theory of right action is, at best, only one small part of philosophical ethics. It is thus unsurprising that the almost exclusive focus on determining whether a consequentialist or Kantian response to the question of what one is obligated to do came to seem, to many philosophers, stifling, for it by necessity leaves out much of the richness and texture of

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count as a single topic – it would not be if you, for instance, think of books 2-5 of the *NE* as all being devoted to virtue of character. But (it seems to me) books 8-9 constitute a unified treatment of a unified topic in a way that books 2-5 do not. In any case, it takes up quite a chunk of Aristotle's ethical writings.

[7] To consider just a few important examples: Love and friendship emerge as important themes in a number of Platonic dialogues (*philia* among the citizens is repeatedly identified as one of the central features of the ideal city in the *Republic*, for instance), as well as, of course, being the explicit focus of dialogues such as the *Lysis* and *Symposium* (and, to some degree, the *Phaedrus*). The Stoic idea that all human beings are *oikeion* to all others (an idea that they have gleaned from Aristotle; cf. *NE* 8.1, 1155a23), and their ideal of the cosmopolis, could plausibly be seen as an attempt to expand the range of *philia* to include all other rational beings. And about what other topic can you imagine Epicurus, who is usually rather subdued, allowing himself such heights of exuberance? "*Philia* dances around the world inviting us all to awake to blessedness" (*Vatican Sayings*, 52); or, again, "The man of noble character is chiefly concerned with wisdom and *philia*; of these, the former is a mortal good, but the latter is immortal" (*Vatican Sayings*, 78). (Though, notoriously, there is a real question of whether Epicurus can actually make sense of the value he himself attaches to *philia* in the austere terms permitted by his hedonism – or, indeed, whether he can even make sense of the very existence, except as a pervasive form of human irrationality, of *philia* given his reductive picture of human motivation.)

human life that makes the study of ethics exciting – not to mention relevant to people who are trying to think about how to act in the world that is full of complexity, not trolley problems.[8]

In light of this context, it is not surprising that Aristotle's ethics emerged as a helpful corrective. Now, what has come to be called "virtue ethics" (supposedly *à la* Aristotle) is often presented as a kind of alternative to either consequentialist or deontological moral theories.[9] But there was always a kind of risk, especially apparent when virtue ethics is tacked on as another unit in introductory courses in moral philosophy, that attached to treating Aristotle as offering a moral theory to compete with that of Bentham or Kant. So, for instance, it is sometimes said that, for Bentham, the good (state of affairs) is prior to the right (action); for Kant, the right is prior to the good; while, for Aristotle, virtue is prior to both. The difficulty is that, if we consider Aristotle's theory from this perspective, it doesn't look terribly interesting or informative. ("Do what the virtuous person would do"?) And, besides, it is almost certainly false to say that Aristotle thought virtue "prior to" the good or right; it is *not* the fact that virtuous person would do *X* that explains why *X* is right, but vice versa.

But there is a different way of understanding the sense in which Aristotle's ethics provided a meaningful alternative to consequentialism and deontology. One insight suggested by the Aristotelian approach ("*eudaimonism,*" as it is often called) is that the real action in moral philosophy is not to be found in looking for an answer to the *general* question of how I ought to behave. It's come to be something of a truism – and, as with many truisms, that's because it contains an important and illuminating element of truth – but Aristotle's ethics is guided not by the question of how I should act, but by the questions of what kind of life I should live and what kind of person I should be. That basic orientation provides a kind of framework in which it makes particular sense to examine what Williams (in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*) called "thick" ethical concepts (concepts like *courageous* or *generous*, rather than "thin" concepts like *good* or *right*) and to ask how the various values represented by such concepts might hang together, or how they all might find their place in a full, flourishing human life. It certainly doesn't demand that we seek to find some single measure

[8] A stifling focus which survives in the design of many an undergraduate introduction to moral philosophy. It was certainly true of my undergraduate introduction, which I found hopelessly dull until we came, in the final week of the semester, to read Martha Nussbaum and Bernard Williams. At that point I wondered why we hadn't gotten to (what was for me) the punchline rather sooner, in which case we could have spent a bit more time thinking about what philosophical ethics might look like if it wasn't going to be a kind of arms-race in coming up with increasingly ingenious thought experiments to serve as purported counter-examples to deontology or utilitarianism.

[9] In the PhilPapers survey of philosophers' views on a range of topics, one of the questions is, "Normative ethics: deontology, consequentialism, or virtue ethics?"

(pleasure or utility or what have you) in which all these various values can be cashed out.

I expect that this can help us to see why philosophers came to take such interest, not only in Aristotelian discussions of concepts like happiness, virtue, or practical wisdom, but also in his discussions of "thicker" ethical concepts like friendship:[10] It was in the hopes of reintroducing into moral philosophy an attention to the richness and complexity of human life as it actually is, a better understanding of some of the things that we – real, living human beings – care about, and the ways in which some of those things we care about can seem to place conflicting demands on us. In any case, this was the reason that I became interested in Aristotle's account of *philia*.

* * *

Readers who are familiar with some of the canonical scholarship[11] on Aristotle's discussion of *philia* might suspect me guilty of a glaring omission in what follows. I make only passing reference to the question of whether Aristotle's account of *philia* is, at bottom, egoistic, or whether it leaves room for genuinely altruistic motivations among friends, despite the fact that, for some time, this seemed to be *the* question that scholars saw fit to ask about *NE* 8-9. Of course, in a way, this is just one instance of the general question of whether Aristotelian *eudaimonism* is objectionably egoistic – as it would seem to be if one (wrongly, in my opinion) takes Aristotle's view to be that the only reason one has for, say, treating others fairly is that one will thereby contribute to one's own happiness or flourishing. But the difficulty may seem to arise in an especially stark form in Aristotle's discussion of friendship, for there he says that the object of love is always something which is (or which one takes to be) good for oneself (though he also says that friendship involves loving another "in himself" (*kath'hauton*) and wishing him goods "for his own sake").

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[10] I may here be using the notion of a "thick" ethical concept in a slightly looser or more extended sense than the one that Williams introduces. Williams's distinction is between two kinds of evaluative concepts, and it's not obvious that "friendship" is an evaluative concept in quite the same way that "courageous," "generous," "good," and "right" all are. Still, "friendship" is like the first two in combining a normative aspect and a descriptive aspect, which aspects, if Williams is right, are inextricable – that is to say, we can't analyze such concepts into their bare descriptive component plus an evaluation ("good," or whatever). This might go some way towards vindicating Aristotle's approach to giving an account of friendship, which ties together descriptive and normative dimensions in a way that a proponent of the fact-value distinction would balk at; if "friendship" is a thick concept in this sense and if Williams was right about how such concepts operate, this reflects not a confusion but an insight.

[11] See, for instance, Annas ("Friendship and Altruism"), Cooper ("Three Forms"), or Kahn ("Aristotle and Altruism").

One of Aristotle's overriding concerns in offering his account of genuine friendship is, to be sure, with what it *is* to love someone "in herself." But it is important to recognize that Aristotle is not asking about what it is to love others as ends in themselves rather than mere means.[12] Rather he is asking what it is to love someone for who they are, rather than loving them "incidentally" (*kata sumbebēkos*). The difference between this distinction and the means-end distinction can be seen in the fact that, even if one's love for another is incidental, that does not mean that one, say, benefits them only as an indirect way of benefiting oneself. Friendship of utility, for instance, is a relationship governed by justice in exchange that conduces to the advantage of each. If the utility of the relationship is removed, then the friendship will ultimately dissolve, but that does not imply, nor does Aristotle suggest, that the friends do well by each other only when or insofar as they think that it will ultimately redound to their own benefit. Certainly, that is not Aristotle's explanation of why one friend would repay a debt of gratitude, which, Aristotle appears to assume, one does simply on the basis of the fact that the other is one's (utility) *friend* and this is what justice demands in relation to such friends. The difference between such a friendship and genuine friendship lies not in whether one treats the friend as an end or a means, but on whether one's love for them is based on a recognition of their character, and on how the friendship as a whole is related to one's own *eudaimonia* – whether it is a source of things that are useful to you, or whether it contributes something, in itself, to one's happiness or flourishing.

But that friendship involves wishing goods for another for her own sake, rather than for one's own (as when, in Aristotle's example, the lover of wine takes care of his wine so that he can enjoy it later), is something that Aristotle takes for granted, as an aspect of the attitudes involved in human friendship. To be sure, he *is* interested in the question of why being related to another in such a way contributes to one's own flourishing or *eudaimonia*. (Of course, with friendships of utility and pleasure, there is no special problem here – they contribute useful and peasant things; the more difficult question is why a relationship involving mutual love one for another in themselves should be thought of as intrinsically valuable to each, and thus be seen as a constitutive element of the flourishing of each. This is the topic I consider in chapter 4.) But that is not to say that he is seeking to reduce the agent's motivations to egoistic ones;[13] he simply does not seem to see any

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[12] *Contra* the assumption of Badhwar ("Friends as Ends in Themselves"), though her aim in the paper is not primarily interpretive.

[13] It might be objected that Aristotle's language in *NE* 9.8 is strongly suggestive of egoism, e.g., when Aristotle says that, when a friend sacrifices his wealth, or honor, or even his life for his friends, he is in fact awarding to himself the greater good (namely, the *kalon*). One thing to note, though, is that Aristotle seems to be appropriating the language of competitive goods for rhetorical or dialectical purposes (even though, as Aristotle observes elsewhere, virtuous action and the *kalon* are not in fact competitive goods, since my having more does

special difficulty with the assumption that the friends care about each other for their own sake.

Of course, there is nothing wrong, in principle, with asking a question about Aristotle's discussion that he was not himself especially concerned with. We might learn something by considering whether Aristotle can ("really") make sense of the possibility of altruistic motivation with the resources he has given himself – though we might mainly learn something about what *we* think is required for genuinely altruistic motivation. But I'd prefer to take as my guiding question one that Aristotle himself is concerned with, and which shapes his account of *philia* overall. This reflects a more general conviction about why, in my view, we do and should care about the history of philosophy. Its interest (I think) lies not so much in looking for past philosophers' answers to *our* questions, but in trying to understand *their* questions – trying to understand why those, rather than ours, might have seemed like the most philosophically pressing and interesting questions to ask. Even if, at the end of the day, we are interested in this because we are interested in a better understanding of ourselves – for instance, because we suspect that some of our own philosophical concerns, for all their seeming apriority, have a history which is essential to them – still, if that self-understanding will be honest and realistic, its genealogy must begin from an honest, realistic effort to understand the thinkers of the past on their own terms. So, for instance, when one recognizes that many of the questions that vexed both early modern philosophers and analytic philosophers in the first half of the 20th century make sense only against the backdrop of a certain, in some ways rather peculiar, way of thinking about the mind's relationship to the world, one might be interested in asking how that picture emerged, what its history is. And that means coming to grips with what it may have been to *not* conceptualize the mind's relationship to the world in that way (which may be to say: to not think in terms of the "(inner) mind" and "(outer) world" at all).[14]

This dissertation does not pretend to anything quite so grand at all that. I mean only to gesture at a certain kind of defense of the *philosophical* importance of the careful, nitty-gritty work of trying to sort out what Aristotle actually thought – to understanding *his* questions, and thus coming to understand, on its own terms, the philosophical theory which is a response to them.

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not *ipso facto* imply your having less). The immediate context, it seems to me, is a concern with the idea (one we might readily associate with Callicles of Plato's *Gorgias*) that, in his willingness to sacrifice himself for his fellow citizens, the virtuous agent is really something of a dupe. Aristotle's point is: Far from it. And he uses the language of competitive goods not because that is his preferred way of thinking about virtue and the *kalon*, but because that is the framework in which the immoralist frames her position.

[14] A profound and illuminating paper on these themes is Burnyeat's "What Descartes saw and Berkeley Missed."

* * *

One Aristotelian question which guides what follows is the question I noted above, of what is involved in loving something "in itself" or someone "in themselves." On Aristotle's view, this kind of loving, we shall see in what follows, has a kind of two-fold relationship to our nature as rational creatures. As we shall see in chapter 1, it is only as rational subjects that we are able to love things in themselves at all, for loving something in itself requires the ability to appreciate it as good by nature and as *kalon*, i.e., as "beautiful" or "fine." Other creatures, Aristotle tells us in the *Politics*, have "perception of pleasure and pain," but only human beings can be aware of something *as good,* since doing so requires being possessed of reason (*logos*). And, in the case of loving other human beings, to love them in themselves is to love them as rational creatures – that is, to love them for what they most essentially are.

These two ways in which rationality functions in genuine love (in its subject and in its object) interact in an interesting way in Aristotle's explanation of *self*-love, or love for one's being and living, which I consider in chapters 2 and 3. And in this discussion there emerges another theme that runs through my dissertation, and which is worth highlighting here. A crucial aspect of being rational animals is that we act with self-awareness, with what Aristotle calls "perception of oneself" or perception of the activity (or activities) that constitute(s) our living, and thus our being. This is not merely the kind of bare consciousness which other animals possess, but, at least potentially, an awareness of ourselves as engaged in something good in itself, an awareness of what we are doing *as* good. This aspect of Aristotle's view is one that has not been much emphasized by scholars,[15] likely because it is largely implicit in his texts; but, if I am right, it is central to understanding Aristotle's account of self-love. It is especially important for understanding why Aristotle denies that the vicious are capable of self-love: Because they identify with and act on the basis of their appetites and other non-rational desires, they are in effect incapable of seeing what they are doing as good in itself. And because their non-rational desires – since they are not guided by reason and understanding (*nous*) – inevitably conflict, they are therefore also incapable of seeing their life as a whole as exhibiting the kind of intelligible order that would make it something *kalon*.

Such intelligible order, I argue, is the grounds for the highest form of self-love for Aristotle – and, insofar as we are rational animals, it is what we all desire. Aristotle famously tells us in the opening of the *Metaphysics* that everyone by nature desires to know; my argument in chapters 2 and 3 could

[15] For an important exception, see Segvic, "Deliberation and Choice" (discussed in chapter 3).

be seen as suggesting there is a kind of practical correlate to this – that every human being desires self-understanding. I call it a "practical correlate" because it is not merely a matter of acquiring knowledge about oneself. It requires also that one *live* in such a way that one's life exhibits the kind of order that makes it something *kalon* and thus pleasant to contemplate. This comes about, I will argue, only by guiding one's life by a conception of what is genuinely good in itself and *kalon,* and thus it is only available, in its fullest form, to the virtuous.

This account of the grounds and nature of self-love is crucial to a proper understanding of a notoriously difficult argument in *NE* 9.9, which is aimed at explaining why the blessedly happy and therefore self-sufficient person still has need of friendship – why, in other words, one could not be called happy without friends. It is thus an argument which seeks to explain how friendship, itself, contributes to the flourishing of an excellent (*spoudaios*) human being, and it does so by applying the results of Aristotle's account of the excellent person's relationship to herself to her relationship to a genuine friend, *via* Aristotle's thesis that a genuine friend is "another self." On the interpretation I will defend in chapter 4 (which builds upon the readings of McCabe and Kosman), Aristotle's explanation of the value of friendship appeals to the way in which it makes possible enriched experience and, with it, a more pleasant form of the kind of self-awareness which, as I argue in chapter 2, is something we all desire. The point, on my reading, is not that friendship is a source of self-knowledge by, say, giving one access to new facts about oneself. Rather, through the shared activity of friendship – and in particular through what Aristotle calls (in an obscure phrase) the friends' "shared perception of [one another's] being," which comes about through "sharing in discussion and thought" – the friends enrich their perceptual and cognitive engagement with the world. That is, they enrich one another's activity or experience itself, and, because of that, the kind of self-awareness which accompanies that activity is made increasingly pleasant – pleasant "by nature" (*phusei*), as Aristotle says. (A natural pleasure, one might say, is how what is good by nature shows up in the subjective experience of those who are themselves good.)

Why Aristotle would have thought of this as explaining why friendship *itself* makes a contribution to the happy life, rather than as bringing about something *else* which does (an enriched form of a distinctively human activity), is a difficult question, and one which I try to address in some detail in chapter 4. But one thing that is worth stressing here is that it is not meant to be a kind of answer to a version of the "immoralist challenge" (an answer to the "misanthropic challenge," so to speak). It is not intended, that is, to convince someone who doesn't care about friendship that they really ought to start doing so. Rather, it is intended for *us*, who do care about friendship, but who may have a sense (perhaps because we've read Plato's *Lysis*) that its value is in some tension with other things we value –

the kind of contemplative activities, for instance, that make us particularly self-sufficient and divine. (Though, as we shall see, in responding to this worry, Aristotle aims to show something about why all of us, and not just philosophers, value friendship. This is often the case, I believe, with respect to Aristotle's responses to *aporiai,* and is part of the reason he believes that methodology is so philosophically important. Generally, the point is not only to dissolve a certain worry [say, about *akrasia,* or the possibility of generation and destruction], but that, in doing so, we learn something philosophically important [say, about moral psychology, or the nature of primary substances].) He does this – that is, he seeks to both address the seeming tension between friendship and self-sufficiency and to explain something about why human beings in general value a friendship as something good in itself – by asking how friendship would contribute to the flourishing of an otherwise self-sufficient human being. In effect, his answer works by explaining the relationship between friendship and those distinctively human activities that the self-sufficient person will value and engage in – contemplation and perceptual experience of something *kalon*. This is not an answer to the "misanthropic challenge," not so much because there's no guarantee that the misanthrope will value activities like contemplation, as because the relationship Aristotle identifies between *philia* and contemplation is not one of reduction. It is far from clear that a person who was interested in making friends only in order to enrich her own contemplative activities would be capable of making or having genuine *friends* at all, given the Aristotelian picture of friendship.

* * *

In this argument, Aristotle evinces, I think, a deeper sympathy with Plato[16] than one might expect. He agrees, in a sense, with Plato's idea that what is genuinely valuable in itself must be something that we would value even if we were self-sufficient; he agrees, that is, with the thought that human values emerge especially clearly when we employ as a heuristic the perspective of the maximally self-sufficient human being, even if that is a somewhat idealized notion. Nor does the difference lie in the fact that Plato thinks that we can, but Aristotle that we cannot, achieve this degree of self-sufficiency – Plato's (Socrates') argument in the *Lysis* does not depend on the idea that a human being could ever become perfectly good and self-sufficient, and indeed it seems to suggest that we could not. Where Aristotle parts ways with Plato is in insisting that the kind of self-sufficiency at issue must still be

[16] There is a question, of course, about whether the views that the character of Socrates defends, say in the *Lysis* or the *Gorgias* (both important sources for the idea that genuine values cannot be, as Nussbaum puts it, "need relative," though only in the former does Plato spell out the implications of this way of thinking for friendship) are in fact *Plato's* views. But since Aristotle appears to assume that they are, I will pass over this complication.

a *human* self-sufficiency, it must not be a conception of self-sufficiency which is inconsistent with the kind of creature we most fundamentally are. If, for instance, we think instead in terms of *god's* self-sufficiency, it is apt to mislead us – and that, Aristotle implies, was Plato's mistake. That this must be a mistake can be seen in the fact that, if we were to insist that our doing well should depend on nothing outside of us, we would in fact be denying ourselves one of the essential conditions of human thought, for human thought (unlike god's) is always of something *else* (*EE* 1245b15-19).

Nonetheless, it might appear that there is a significant contrast with Plato in that Plato does, famously (or infamously, depending on what you think of the prospects of the success of such an argument), seek to respond to the immoralist challenge – not with respect to friendship, but at any rate with respect to another important other-regarding virtue, that of justice. Plato paints a picture of the order of the just individual's soul, in contrast with the miserably conflicted soul of the unjust. But, if my argument in chapter 3 is correct, at this level, Aristotle again agrees. The soul of the excellent person, he tells us, displays harmony among its component parts, whereas the vicious person's soul is so rife with conflict that he inevitably "hates and shuns life" (*NE* 1166b12-13).[17]

What do philosophers mean, then, when they suggest that Plato thinks that he has a response to the "immoralist challenge," whereas Aristotle does not?[18] It cannot be merely that Plato thinks that the immoralist *should* be convinced by the argument; Aristotle surely thinks the same, for he takes himself to have given a good argument, based on a true account of virtue. But does Plato suppose that he can in fact answer the immoralist, and show him the error of his ways? I doubt we are meant to conclude that Callicles is genuinely convinced by Socrates' arguments in the *Gorgias*, or Thrasymachus by Socrates in the *Republic*.[19] Indeed, it is part of Plato's point that Glaucon and Adeimantus are amenable to the argument of the *Republic* precisely because they are *not* in fact immoralists, but noble and good-natured men who are interested in better understanding the value of something they already do value, but concerning which they harbor some lurking unease because they cannot see how it can be philosophically vindicated. In this, Plato seems to be in agreement with Aristotle, who tells us: "As things are…[arguments in moral philosophy] appear to have the power to influence and exhort [only] those young people who possess generosity of spirit and

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[17] Some readers (notably, Julia Annas) have argued that this means that *NE* 9.4 must be a holdover from an earlier phase of Aristotle's thought, when he was still largely under the influence of Platonic philosophy, because it is not genuinely Aristotelian to suggest that the vicious person is conflicted. I argue in chapter 3 that we should resist this conclusion.

[18] Cf. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy,* chapter 2.

[19] And Plato indicates as much in, e.g., *Republic* 350d-e, 351c, 352b, 353e-354a; and *Gorgias* 501c, 505c-506c, 513c. (I am indebted to Kinch for pointing this out to me.)

perhaps to make susceptible to virtue a character that is well bred and truly loves what is *kalon*" (*NE* 10.9, 1197b7-10).

I suspect that what people have in mind, when describing Plato as seeking to answer the immoralist challenge, is that Plato hoped to answer the challenge on its own terms – whether or not the immoralist is willing to listen to or capable of understanding that response – by explaining the value of justice and the other virtues in terms of some value that the immoralist himself accepts. That value might be fairly described as *eudaimonia*, human flourishing, which, on Plato's view, we all in some sense desire, though perhaps in ignorance of what it truly is. The upshot of chapter 3 is that Aristotle, in fact, yet again saw things surprisingly similarly; and that he presents us with a rich and interesting account of the sense in which it is true of all of us that we desire *eudaimonia,* though most of us desire it under a misconception. In fact, the point is that we can see that, even when we desire it under a misconception, we still desire *eudaimonia,* precisely by seeing what is required for such a misconception to count as a misconception <u>of *eudaimonia*</u>.

My point is not that Aristotle is really a Platonist, nor that the similarities are more important than the differences. But one theme – largely implicit, which is part of why I highlight it here – of my dissertation is that Aristotle's sympathies with Plato on these particular questions runs deeper than we have tended to assume; the subtle differences that there are, I suspect, emerged out of a serious and sympathetic engagement with these aspects of Plato's moral philosophy. He saw his rejection of the Platonic Form of the Good as leaving intact much that is philosophically important and worth holding onto.

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In each of the chapters, I draw somewhat freely from both the *Eudemian* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and in chapters 2 and 4, I use material from the *EE* as evidence for an interpretation of an argument in the *NE.* This might strike some readers as suspect. Many scholars believe that the *EE* is an earlier redaction of Aristotle's ethical philosophy, written at a stage when he remained more under the influence of Plato's thinking, and that only the *NE* represents his mature, considered views. Others, fewer certainly (most famously, Anthony Kenny), maintain that it is the *EE* that best represents Aristotle's ethical philosophy. (In considering this topic, it can be tempting to conflate questions of chronology and questions of philosophical superiority – understandably, since one hopes that Aristotle would refine and improve his views over time. Nonetheless, I think it is important to keep them distinct.)

In relying on the *EE* in the way that I do, I do not mean to take a stand on the question of chronology, nor on the question of which, if either, is in

general the superior, or more truly Aristotelian, work. But the discussions of *philia* in the two works, it seems to me, are substantially the same. This suggests that one might assume, as a working hypothesis, that they constitute different redactions of one and the same view. This is, of course, a defeasible hypothesis, but if, on its basis, we are able to develop an interpretation of Aristotle's position which is both internally consistent and philosophically defensible, that seems to me like powerful evidence in favor of that hypothesis. I suppose that is what I try to do in what follows, though my interest is not so much in that working hypothesis itself as in putting it to work in order to develop a plausible reading of Aristotle's account of *philia*.[20]

In what follows, I have opted for the "shortened title" method of citing secondary literature in the footnotes, with full citations in the bibliography. I do so in the hope that it will enable readers familiar with the secondary literature (but who have not memorized years of publication) to recognize what articles I am referring to without continuously flipping to the bibliography. I cite Aristotle's texts using the standard abbreviations, plus book, chapter, and Bekker page and line numbers; I give full citations of the Greek texts I have used in the bibliography.

[20] There is also an entirely difficult problem when it comes to drawing on the *EE*. The text of the *EE*, particularly in comparison with the *NE*, is rife with corruptions and lacunae, and *EE* 7 is far from an exception – indeed, it is especially bad. I have used Susemihl's edition of the Greek text (we are badly in need of a new, critical edition), but have often followed the emendations suggested by Inwood and Woolf in their 2013 translation. I have also benefited from some detailed discussions of textual issues contained in the essays collected in Leigh (ed.), *The* Eudemian Ethics *on the Voluntary, Friendship, and Luck,* as well as discussion with members of the Ancient Philosophy Reading Group here at Berkeley when we read *EE* 7 together in 2015. Without all of these resources, I do not think I could have made much headway with the *Eudemian* discussion of friendship.

Chapter 1

The pleasures of loving the good

Each of us, Aristotle says, loves what is good for them. But what is loveable *haplōs* – that is, what is absolutely loveable, or loveable in general[21] – is what is good *haplōs* (*NE* 8.2, 1155b23-24). For the excellent person (*ho spoudaios*), these will coincide: What is good *haplōs* is also good for her, and she will thus love what is good *haplōs* (*EE* 7.2, 1236b33-1237a9). (A label for this view will be useful in what follows; I'll call it the goodness thesis.)

But Aristotle's explanation of why this is so, of why the goodness thesis holds, seems to admit of two different interpretations. On the one hand, it sometimes sounds as if he means to say that to be good *haplōs* just *is* to be good for the good person. We call "healthy," without qualification, what is good for a healthy body; what is good for a sick body, by contrast, such as medication or surgery, we would not call "healthy" – not, at any rate, without adding some further conditions (such as, "for a person with such and such a medical condition"). By analogy, Aristotle tells us, we call "good *haplōs*" what is good for the excellent person (*EE* 7.2, 1235b30-1236a6; cf. *NE* 3.4, 1113a26-28). This seems to suggest a relativist reading of the goodness thesis, according to which "good for the excellent person" is explanatorily prior to "good *haplōs*."

But Aristotle often employs another analogy – often in almost the same breath – to explain the goodness thesis, and it seems to point us in another direction. Goodness is like perceptible qualities such as "bitter, sweet, hot, heavy, and so on" (*NE* 1113a28-29): The person whose perceptual faculty is in a good condition recognizes what is objectively so, and they only

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[21] Part of what is at stake in this chapter is how to understand the meaning of the adverb *haplōs,* and so I will generally leave it untranslated. It is ambiguous in much the same way as the Latin *simpliciter.* Generally, it means something like "simply (such and such)." But, in the contexts in which Aristotle uses the word, that can be taken in two different senses: (1) It can mean "absolutely" such and such. (The LSJ offers a nice illustration of this usage (II.2): Thucydides tells us that, though some ships were damaged or disabled, τῶν νεῶν κατέδυ οὐδεμία ἁπλῶς – "not one of the ships was sunk *haplōs,*" i.e., none of the ships was completely sunk.) (2) But it can also mean something more like "in general," even in a negative sense meaning "loosely, superficially" (LSJ II.4). This ambiguity plays a role in the ambiguity of the goodness thesis.

In the *Topics*, Aristotle tells us that what is F *haplōs* is what you will say is F "without any addition" – this is the textual basis for the common translation *haplōs*, in Aristotle, as "without qualification." One advantage of this translation is that it is ambiguous in the right way (are you saying X is F "without qualification" because it is absolutely thus, or because you are speaking generally, perhaps even vaguely?), but it is itself too much a technical term to help English speakers get a better intuitive sense of what Aristotle means.

appear otherwise to someone whose sense-organ has been "corrupted and injured" (*Met*. 9.6, 1062b36-1063a6).[22] Analogously, the good person is attuned to what is genuinely good, independently of their reactions, and that is why what is good *haplōs* is good to them (*NE* 3.4, 1113a22-33). (Importantly, given the range of meanings of the dative in Greek, the phrase "good" (*agathon*) + "excellent person" in the dative case (*spoudaiō(i)*) can be read either as meaning: (1) good *for* the excellent person, i.e., a good from which the excellent person benefits, or (2) or good *to* the excellent person, i.e., good in the judgment of the excellent person. This contributes to the ambiguity in Aristotle's presentation of the goodness thesis.[23]) This suggests an objectivist[24] reading of the goodness thesis, according to which what is good *haplōs* is truly good, and the excellent person – this is presumably part of what makes them excellent – reliably tracks what is truly good. On this interpretation, "good *haplōs*" is prior to "good to/for the excellent person."

Aristotle tells us that the excellent person is a "standard and measure" (*kanōn kai metron*) of what is *kalon* (*NE* 3.4, 1113a33). On the first, relativist reading of the goodness thesis, the idea is that the reactions of the excellent person *fix* or *determine* what counts as *kalon* – they are the standard and measure of the good in much like the way in which (to appropriate Kripke's famous example) the standard meter bar was the standard of a meter, i.e., by establishing what is to count as a meter. On the latter, objectivist reading, the good person is the standard and measure of the *kalon* in more like the way in which a normal meter stick is the measure of a meter – by reliably tracking what is, in fact, a meter long.

As we shall see, both the relativist and objectivist interpretations seem to have significant textual basis; this suggests that there may be something more interesting going on that neither interpretation fully captures. And we have other reasons to suspect that. On both the relativist and objectivist interpretations, being good *haplōs* should suffice by itself to make something or someone good to/for the excellent person – since on the relativist version, that is just what good *haplōs* means, and on the objectivist version, one needs simply to point out that the excellent person is right about such things. But there are passages in which Aristotle appears to take it that what is good *haplōs* is not *automatically* good for the excellent person (e.g., *EE* 7.2, 1238a4-7). And, as we shall see in chapters 2 and 4, when Aristotle turns to offering an account of why living together (*suzēn*) with a character-friend is necessary for a fully flourishing human life, he does so by trying to show, on the basis

[22] *We* might be inclined towards a subjectivist account of such perceptible qualities; but Aristotle is, of course, an objectivist about them.
[23] Cf. Gottlieb, "Man as the Measure."
[24] "Relative" and "objective" are notoriously slippery concepts in moral philosophy, and I don't want to put much explanatory weight on them – they should be taken only as convenient labels for these two different interpretations, which will hopefully become clearer as we proceed.

of the fact that the excellent person is "good by nature" (i.e., good *haplōs*), that he is also good for his friend (*NE* 9.9, 1170a13-b19; *EE* 7.12, 1244b1-1245b19). Far from treating this as a more or less immediate inference, Aristotle feels the need to offer a long and complex argument – on Ross's reconstruction of the *Nicomachean* version, the argument comprises 11 syllogisms[25] – to justify the move from the friend's being good *haplōs* to good for his friend.

The main question I'd like to address in what follows, then, is how to understand the goodness thesis and why it holds. But the puzzle about the goodness thesis turns out to be related to a further puzzle, and it will suggest a way forward. In the *Eudemian Ethics*, after asking "whether it is what is good for oneself that is beloved (*philon*) or what is good *haplōs*," Aristotle suggests that this question goes hand in hand with the question of whether "actively loving is [necessarily] accompanied by pleasure, so that the object of love is pleasant" (*EE* 7.2, 1236b33-36). The reason they go hand in hand, it seems, is that the good *haplōs* and the good for oneself "should be harmonized," but "the path to this [harmony] is through pleasure"; we must ensure that what is *kalon* is pleasant to ourselves (1237a2-4). Moreover, in the argument I just mentioned in *NE* 9.9 and *EE* 7.12, for the conclusion that since a good person is good *haplōs* she is good for her friend, he relies at crucial junctures on the *pleasure* one takes in the company of one's friends (*NE* 9.9, 1170a13-b19; *EE* 7.12, 1244b1-1245b19).[26] But this is a bit strange on its face. On what seems to me the standard picture of Aristotelian moral psychology, pleasure should be strictly irrelevant to the question of whether something is genuinely good, and should not be part of the virtuous agent's motivation to engage in activities that are good in themselves; pleasure is at best a kind of bonus that the virtuous agent gets from doing what is good because it is good – a bonus which she gets because her non-rational desires align with her wish for what is genuinely good. So, it is a bit puzzling that Aristotle should suggest that pleasure plays such a crucial role in bringing it about that what is good *haplōs* is good for oneself. Trying to better understand this role will help us to answer our question about the goodness thesis; but it should also, I think, complicate and enrich our understanding of Aristotle's picture of human motivation more generally.

Thus, I have two related goals in this chapter, which turn out to be more closely related than they may look: To develop a more satisfactory understanding of the goodness thesis, and to explain and vindicate Aristotle's appeal to the *pleasure* of loving what is good *haplōs*, in explaining why what

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[25] Ross, note to 1170b19. Cf. Cooper, "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle."

[26] Cf., Whiting ("The Pleasures of Thinking Together," 90): "And the reasons to which he appeals will prove in the end to be largely hedonic." Whiting accounts for this by arguing that, in *EE* 7.12 (and, I presume, *NE* 9.9, since in this respect at least the two arguments are quite similar), Aristotle does *not* intend to argue that the happy person needs friends. This seems to me a strained reading though (see, e.g., the concluding sentences of *NE* 9.9), as I argue in chapter 3.

is good *haplōs* is also good for oneself (if one is excellent). Since, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, doing so will open up some of the complexities of Aristotle's account of the nature and value of *philia*, an ancillary aim is to set up what is to come.

In the outline below, I describe the contents of each section of the chapter, to help orient the reader:

1. *Loving what is good as such:* I briefly lay out the philosophical context in which Aristotle appeals to the goodness thesis – his account of "the objects of love" or "what is loveable" (*ta philēta*), and, in particular, his account of the primary object of love as that which is "good as such."
2. *Two interpretations of the goodness thesis:* I lay out the interpretive puzzle about the goodness thesis in more detail, outlining the textual support for the two different interpretations. Both have significant textual basis, which makes it difficult to dismiss either, and yet they appear to be in tension with one another.
3. *The path through pleasure:* I argue that Aristotle's appeal to pleasure in explaining the goodness thesis suggests that we need to sort out why, on Aristotle's view, what is good *haplōs* and pleasant *haplōs* coincide.
4. *A new reading of the goodness thesis: The excellent person as "the measure" of the* kalon: A proper understanding of the relationship of pleasure to the good suggests a reading of the goodness thesis that (in good Aristotelian fashion) captures the motivations of both the relativist and objectivist interpretations and does justice to the textual evidence, and, moreover, which issues in an interesting and plausible philosophical position in its own right. It does so by bringing out how, for Aristotle, developing the capacity to appreciate what is good independently of your reactions can make that thing good for yourself – not because good for yourself just *means* good in your view, but because being able to appreciate its goodness adds something of value of your life. I do so on the basis of introducing a new analogy as an alternative to Aristotle's favored analogies with health and sensible qualities – both of which capture different aspects of Aristotle's view, but can mislead as to the character of his view as a whole – viz., an analogy with aesthetic appreciation.
5. *The* haplōs *pleasures of virtuous activity:* I turn to an objection to my interpretation – namely, that by taking the goodness and pleasure of perceptual and contemplative activities as a paradigm for my reading, I would seem to have left out virtuous action. I respond to this worry by arguing, on independent grounds, that Aristotle maintains that human action involves self-awareness ("perceiving" one's own "being," as he puts it), and that pleasure of actions one sees as good or *kalon* derive from this self-perception. This allows us to apply the model laid out in sections 3 and 4 to practical action.

6. *The motivational role of pleasure in loving the good:* Finally, I consider what this all means for pleasure as a *motivation* in the excellent person's love of what is good *haplōs*. I argue that Aristotle allows a significant motivational role for pleasure in the psychology of the virtuous agent, without implying that the pleasure they are taking in what they do is what *makes* it good, and that this can help us to understand why he tells us that the "path" to harmonizing the good *haplōs* and the good for oneself is "through pleasure."

1. Loving what is good as such

In the *Eudemian Ethics,* Aristotle raises the question that is our main concern here – namely, "whether it is what is good for oneself that is beloved (*philon*) or what is good *haplōs*" (*EE* 7.2, 1236b33-36) – immediately after introducing his tripartite division of the "objects of love" (*ta philēta*) (cf. *NE* 8.2). Though familiar to most readers, it will help to clarify Aristotle's question if we briefly canvass that tripartite division.

The three kinds of loveable things are what is useful, what is pleasant, and "that which is called good because it is such"[27] (Solomon: "because its nature is such"; Inwood and Woolf: "because it is of a certain quality"), which, for brevity, I'll refer to as that which is "good as such." These objects of love seem to map onto the objects of choice (*prohairesis*) (*NE* 2.3, 1105a1),[28] which Aristotle identifies as the useful,[29] the pleasant, and (not the "good as such"

[27] τὸ μὲν γὰρ τῷ τοιόνδ' εἶναι λέγομεν ἀγαθόν (*EE* 1236a7-8).

[28] Of course, this coincidence of the objects of love and choice is, so to speak, no mere coincidence. Both love and choice are based on or involve desire (*orexis*); desire is aimed at what seems to one to be good; and there are three different ways in which something could seem good (*EE* 7.2, 1236a7-8): (1) One might think that the object is good as such, (2) it could be pleasant for one to engage with, "the pleasant is an object of desire (*orekton*), since pleasure is an apparent good," (διὸ καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ ὀρεκτόν· φαινόμενον γάρ τι ἀγαθόν *EE* 1235b26-27) or (3) one could take it to be useful for procuring something else, ultimately something (which one takes to be) either good as such or pleasant, since "the good and pleasant are loveable as ends." (*NE* 8.2, 1155b20-21). When Aristotle describes the pleasant as an apparent good, he is using "apparent good" in a semi-technical sense, where it is distinguished from what one believes to be good (1235b27-29). He does not always use *phainomenon agathon* in that sense; cf. *NE* 3.4. One might say that, in general, desire is directed at what seems good in this looser sense, where something could seem good to oneself either because one believed it to be, or because it appeared so, or, of course, both (as with the pleasures of the virtuous agent).

[29] *Sumpheron* – admittedly, a different word than Aristotle uses in the discussion of the objects of love, where he uses *chrēsimon*. *Sumpheron* could also be translated as "beneficial" rather than useful. Cooper ("Reason, Moral Virtue, and Moral Value") argues that *sumpheron* cannot refer to what is useful as an instrument to some further end, but rather to what contributes in itself to the agent's good. If so, as Crisp ("Nobility in the *NE,*" p. 234) points out, he would seem to be committed to thinking that what is *sumpheron* is distinct from what is *chrēsimon* for Aristotle, since Aristotle describes what is *chrēsimon* in fairly clearly instrumental terms (e.g.: δόξειε δ' ἂν χρήσιμον εἶναι δι' οὗ γίνεταί ἀγαθόν τι ἢ ἡδονή, ὥστε φιλητὰ ἂν εἴη τἀγαθόν τε καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ ὡς τέλη, *NE* 8.2, 1155b18-21). "What is useful, however, would seem to be that through which something good or pleasant comes about, so that the

but) the *kalon*. The fact that Aristotle tells us that "we may *choose and love* inanimate things [as well as human beings] for each of these reasons" (*EE* 1236a10-13; emphasis added),[30] suggests, not that there is some subtle difference in the objects of choice and love (we choose the *kalon* but love the good), but that "what is good as such" and "what is *kalon*" are different ways of characterizing the same object of love and choice.

This will turn out to be important in what follows, so I'd like to pause briefly to explain this identification of the *kalon* with what is good as such. To begin with, the idea that what is *kalon* is the same as what is good as such (as opposed to being good because it is useful – Aristotle often contrasts the *kalon* with the useful) has a certain plausibility. Aristotle tells us repeatedly in the *Rhetoric* that what is *kalon* is what is worth choosing in itself (e.g., at 1364b27-8), i.e., valuable or good in its own right; and he characterizes the *kalon* in terms that he will also use to explain the nature of the good.[31] This is not to say that *kalon* and "good as such" are *conceptually* the same. To describe a good as *kalon* is to highlight or stress the fact that it will be, in virtue of its goodness, attractive or appealing to people – certainly, at any rate, to people who are themselves *kalon*.[32] Thus we find Aristotle, in the *Rhetoric,* characterizing the *kalon* as "that which, being good, is pleasant because it is good." (*Rh*. I.9, 1366a33–4). To call something *kalon,* then, suggests something about how a (suitably habituated) human being will

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good and the pleasant are loveable as ends." But I don't think this is plausible: We should take it that *sumpheron* is being used synonymously with *chrēsimon*, both because Aristotle seems to tell us that the reasons for love and the reasons of choice are the same (see *EE* 1236a10-13, discussed in main text above), and because he occasionally uses *sumpheron* in lieu of *chrēsimon* in the discussion of philia, without any apparent shift in meaning.

[30] Aristotle also describes genuine friendship as "mutual choice," *antiprohairesis* – a word he perhaps coined for the purpose.

[31] "The greatest forms of *to kalon* are order and proportion and the definite (*to hōrismenon*)," (*Met*. 1078b1); and he describes approvingly the Pythagorean idea that such order, which gives unity to a complex whole, is what makes things belong in the "column" of goods (*EE* 7.12, 1244b34-45a3). He even suggests that a life which is *hōrismenon*, "of a definite order," is good in itself, while the life of wicked or corrupt is *aoristos* (*NE* 9.9, 1170a19-24). I discuss this in greater detail in chapter 2.

See also Dover, *Greek Popular Morality,* pp. 70-71, who points out that, when applied to actions, *kalon* "tends towards synonymy with other terms of praise" – which comes out in Aristotle's characterization of the *kalon* at *Rh.* 1364b27-8*;* see also Rogers ("Aristotle's Conception of *To Kalon*"), who argues that one principal sense of *kalon* is "functional excellence," and suggests that Aristotle combines this sense with its somewhat more common aesthetic sense (wherein it is naturally translated as "beauty"). Crisp ("Nobility in the *Nicomachean Ethics*") suggests that we should resist reading "any purely aesthetic value" into Aristotle's use of *kalon* in an ethical context. Below and in chapter 2, I will defend what could be fairly described as an aesthetic reading of Aristotle's use of *kalon* in this context. (But perhaps it is not a "purely" aesthetic reading; I'm not entirely sure what Crisp means by that qualifier.)

[32] As is persuasively argued by Gabriel Richardson Lear ("Aristotle on Moral Virtue and the Fine"). I return to this idea below.

respond to it[33] – though you would certainly be saying something about that thing, not about people's responses. Characterizing something as good as such, by contrast, need not bring in the responses of human beings, even in this implicit way.

Of course, people as well as inanimate things can be *kalon*, and Aristotle surely thinks of the goodness of one human being as what attracts another good human being to them – we might wonder, then, why Aristotle demurs from using *kalon* in discussing the objects of love?[34] I suspect that he does only because in such a context it would be too naturally interpreted by a Greek speaker as referring narrowly to *physical* beauty, which is not the principal form of beauty that Aristotle has in mind.[35]

Aristotle does allow that visual, physical beauty can be the grounds of *erotic* love: "what the erotic lover likes most is the sight of his beloved, and this is the sort of perception he chooses over the others, supposing that this is what makes him fall in love and remain in love." By contrast, though also analogously, character friends want above all to perceive one another's "being" – their rational, rather than physical, nature. (Cf. chapter 4.) This point – that *kalon* in this context refers not to physical beauty which might ground non-rational (say, sexual) desire, but to the kind of beauty (e.g., moral beauty) that we appreciate on the basis of reason – suggests a further connection, between the principal object of love and the object of "wish" (*boulēsis*), which Aristotle characterizes as a rational from of desire (*orexis*). And, indeed, in the *EE* Aristotle raises a question about the principal object of love which is directly parallel to the question he had raised, in the *NE,* about the object of wish: He considers "whether it is what is good for oneself that is beloved (*philon*) or what is good *haplōs*" (*EE* 7.2, 1236b33-36). Given that this question is meant to apply to the principal object of love (that which is good as such and *kalon*), Aristotle is not treating "good as such" as equivalent to good *haplōs*; what is "good as such" may, instead, refer to what is good as such *for oneself*.

This might seem like a minor point, but I think it is in fact important. To say that something is good because its nature is such, and (as Aristotle also suggests) which we love "in itself," makes it tempting to think that Aristotle is speaking of that which is *intrinsically* good. But the fact that he takes it as an open question whether, in loving what is good as such, one loves what is good *haplōs* or rather what is good for oneself, suggests that "good as such" does not necessarily refer to what is intrinsically rather than

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[33] Cf. *Poetics* (1450b34-1451a12), discussed below.

[34] In the *EE* (1237b30ff.), Aristotle tells us that virtue friends choose one another's company because it is pleasant and good, after having argued that virtue-friendship is pleasant to the virtuous because it is good; combine this with the *Rhetoric's* claim that what is pleasant because it is good is *kalon*, and it seems very natural to think that virtue friends choose one another insofar as they are *kalon.*

[35] See Dover, *Greek Popular Morality,* p. 69.

extrinsically good; it could potentially pick out what is good as an end as opposed to instrumentally good (i.e., valuable for its own sake rather than for the sake of something else). These (intrinsic vs. extrinsic, final vs. instrumental) are not quite the same distinction: Something can be a final rather than instrumental good, but only in relation, say, to human nature in general, or only in relation to some particular human being's interests or desires (and thus would not be an intrinsic good, strictly speaking).[36] I don't mean to suggest that, at this stage, Aristotle has already concluded that the primary object of love is not an intrinsic good, but a final good; but only that we should not assume that it is is an intrinsic good; we should take "good as such" to be neutral between the two readings. Indeed, it could be that part of what is at stake, in raising question of whether the object of love is good *haplōs* or good for oneself, is whether the object of love is intrinsically good or good as an end (for a given person, or for human beings generally), or both.

It is worth considering a *prima facie* objection to the idea that Aristotle's category of the "good as such" as object of love could refer to an intrinsic good, and another to the idea that it could refer to a final good. It might be objected, first of all, that Aristotle's famous criticism of the Platonic Form of the Good in *NE* 1.6 rules out the existence of an absolutely intrinsic good, and so he could not be speaking of an intrinsic good here. I return to this issue below, but, very briefly: One important upshot of the *NE* 1.6 argument is, I think, that to be good is always either to be a good *X* – where what counts as a good *X* depends on what it is to be an *X* – or to be good for some *Y*. (If I say this knife is good, I mean it is a good knife, where what counts as a good knife depends on what knives are (i.e., on what knives are *for*). If I say that exercise is good, I mean that it is good *for* human beings.) But the first form of goodness can be fairly characterized as a form of intrinsic goodness, for being "good of its kind" is not an instance of goodness relative to something *else*. Thus, this argument does not rule out the idea of intrinsic goodness; it only clarifies what that would mean for Aristotle.

Conversely, one might object that Aristotle cannot mean good as an end when he speaks of what is good as such, since he maintains both that strictly speaking only *activities* can be good as an end, while many things besides activities are objects of love. But he does in fact sometimes speak of the good as such as loveable as an end (*NE* 8.2, 1155b20-21) even where it is clearly not meant to apply only to activities; and it seems to me that we can

[36] As argued by Christine Korsgaard in "Two Distinctions in Goodness."

Is an intrinsic good, by contrast, necessarily a final good? Korsgaard assumes that the answer to this is "yes." But the matter does not seem to me so obvious. If by "good as an end" we mean good as a *human* end, then it seems to me at least conceptually possible that something could be intrinsically good, but not good as an end – e.g., because we were incapable, for whatever reason, of appreciating its intrinsic goodness. Perhaps that possibility could be ruled out by some more involved argument, but it does not seem to me as straightforward as Korsgaard suggests.

make perfectly good sense of this usage. The fact that only activities are, strictly speaking, valuable as ends for Aristotle does not imply that objects can therefore only be instrumentally valuable, e.g., valuable insofar as they enable us to engage in activities that are good in themselves. For certain objects and certain activities, the object has (to put it loosely for the moment) a more internal relationship to the activity than that of an instrument or means. An obvious example here – and one which will nicely set up what is to come – are the objects of perception or thought. Perceiving and thinking are *kalon*, Aristotle suggests, whenever the perceiving or thinking subject is (1) in a "good condition," i.e., has fully developed and honed the relevant capacity, and (2) is perceiving or contemplating an object which is itself *kalon* of its kind (*NE* 10.4, 1174b14-23). It would be a mistake to try to assimilate the relationship of the perceptible object to perceptual activity to the category of means-end relationships. The object of our perceptual and intellectual activity is not a mere instrument enabling us to do something which we would just as soon do without it, if only we could; it plays a constitutive role in the activity, and indeed is partially responsible for whatever value the activity has – indeed, I will argue below, that an essential element in the goodness or value of the perceptual/intellectual capacity derives from the fact that the subject perceives the object as *kalon,* good in itself. We might generalize from the case of perceptual activities: In the case of any activities which are valuable as ends, and which involve such objects not as instruments but as (partially) activity-constituting objects, and particularly in this case where part of the value of the activity stems from the fact that the object is *kalon* (and perhaps also recognized as *kalon* by the agent), it seems natural to think of the objects, by extension, as being valuable in themselves for the perceiving or thinking subjects. And it is not hard to imagine a view – indeed, I will be arguing in chapter 4 that it is Aristotle's view – according to which the value of a friend was an instance of this kind of case: The value of friendship stems from the activities friendship involves; the role of the friend in such activities is not instrumental but constitutive; and the value of those activities depends in part on one seeing one's friend as good or *kalon* in their own right.

2. *Two interpretations of the goodness thesis*

With that by way of background and clarification, we can turn to Aristotle's answer to the question of whether we love what is good *haplōs* or what is good for ourselves. In a sense, his answer is quite straightforward. For each person, the object of their love is what is good for them, while what is loveable *haplōs* is what is good *haplōs*. For the excellent person (*ho spoudaios*), these will coincide: what is absolutely good will be good for the excellent person, and thus loveable for him. (*EE* 7.2, 1236b33-1237a9) In this way, it is just as with what Aristotle says of the object of wish (*NE* 3.4, 1113a22-33) – which should come as no surprise given that the primary object of love

is the object of wish (*EE* 7.2, 1235b19-29). We can call this "the goodness thesis."

But *why* does the goodness thesis hold of the primary object of love? It might seem obvious, because it is a familiar Aristotelian idea. Aristotle also says that the goods of fortune (goods like wealth and political power), with which the *pleonektēs* is concerned, are good *haplōs* and good for the excellent individual, but not for the vicious:

> Since the unjust person is an over-reacher, he will be concerned with goods—not with all goods, but only those involved in good and bad fortune, which are *haplōs* always good, but for this or that person not always good. Though human beings pray for these [goods] and pursue them, they are wrong; the right thing is to pray that what is good without qualification will also be good for us, but to choose what is good for us. (NE V.1, 1129b1-6)[37]

In this case, the matter is relatively straightforward: Though goods such as wealth are good *haplōs,* they are not good for vicious people, simply because vicious people are likely to misuse them for their misguided ends; they are good for the excellent person, by contrast, because virtue enables one to make good use of such goods. We might be tempted to appeal to a similar idea in explaining why the goodness thesis holds of the primary object of love, as Gottlieb and Cooper suggest.[38] But, upon reflection, this won't work. The answer is straightforward in the case of the goods of fortune precisely because the goods of fortune are good insofar as they are useful,[39] rather than good as such, and thus they can be misused for other ends; but this straightforward explanation will not help us answer the question of why what is good as such *haplōs* is also good for the excellent person, but not the vicious.[40] Gottlieb's and Cooper's relatively straightforward explanations of

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[37] ἐπεὶ δὲ πλεο-
νέκτης ὁ ἄδικος, περὶ τἀγαθὰ ἔσται, οὐ πάντα, ἀλλὰ περὶ
ὅσα εὐτυχία καὶ ἀτυχία, ἃ ἐστὶ μὲν ἁπλῶς ἀεὶ ἀγαθά,
τινὶ δ' οὐκ ἀεί. οἱ δ' ἄνθρωποι ταῦτα εὔχονται καὶ διώκουσιν·
δεῖ δ' οὔ, ἀλλ' εὔχεσθαι μὲν τὰ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθὰ καὶ αὐτοῖς
ἀγαθὰ εἶναι, αἱρεῖσθαι δὲ τὰ αὑτοῖς ἀγαθά.

[38] E.g., Gottlieb ("Aristotle and Protagoras"); Cooper (*Reason and Human Good*, pp. 127-133. This might seem *too* obvious. Perhaps it is, but neither Gottlieb nor Cooper aims merely to highlight this point, which is arguably apparent to any careful reader of the *Ethics*; the main contribution of both derives, rather, from their explanations of why it nonetheless makes sense for Aristotle to refer to what is good for the good person as being good "in truth" and "by nature" – namely, that it is better to be in a position where such things are good for you.

[39] Note that Aristotle does speak of what is beneficial or useful (*sumpheron*) *haplōs*, e.g., at *EE* 7.2, 1237a14. I believe that the goods of fortune are good *haplōs* in this sense – of being *sumpheron haplōs.*

[40] In case one might suspect that Aristotle is talking about the goods of fortune rather than what is good as such, note that after he asks "whether it is what is good for oneself that is loved (*philon*) or what is good *haplōs*," Aristotle tells us that what is good *haplōs* but not

why the goods of fortune are both good *haplōs* and good for the excellent person, but not for others, will not suffice to answer our question here.

The explanation of why the goodness thesis holds, not of the goods of fortune, but of what is good as such, is a bit more delicate. Aristotle often explains what he has in mind by appeal to an analogy with "healthy." After distinguishing the three objects of love in the *EE,* he says:

> Among good things, some are good *haplōs,* while others are good for someone (*tini*) but not *haplōs.* And the same things are good *haplōs* and pleasant *haplōs.* For we say that what is beneficial for a healthy body is good for a body without qualification; but we do not say this about what is good for a sick body (for example, medication and surgery). Similarly, what is pleasant *haplōs* is what is pleasant for a healthy and uncorrupted body; for example, seeing in the light rather than the dark is pleasant for someone with healthy eyes, yet it is the opposite for someone with eye disease. (*EE* 7.2, 1235b30-1236a7)[41]

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good for oneself is "nothing to one." But it is certainly not the case that the goods of fortune are "nothing" to the vicious – indeed, the problem with the unjust over-reacher (*pleonektēs*) is precisely that he cares *too* much and in the wrong way about such goods.

As Gottlieb points out, there may also be things that are good *haplōs* in the sense of being good for everyone, in whatever condition, in whatever circumstances. This seems to be the contrast Aristotle has in mind when he says: "that which is good *haplōs* is more worthy of choice than that which is good *tini*, e.g., the enjoyment of health than a surgical operation; for the former is good *haplōs*, the latter is good only *tini*, namely, for the man who requires an operation." (*Top* 3.1, 116b). Here again the explanation of why what is *haplōs* good is good for the good person is again quite straightforward – but only because it is, *ex hypothesi*, good for everyone. (And upon consideration this class of goods might only include *eudaimonia*, since even health might not be good for certain people in certain situations – it might, for instance, allow them to engage in unjust actions, which they could not perform if they were ill.) At any rate, it does not seem to be this *haplōs*/*tini* distinction that Aristotle has in mind in the discussion of the objects of love, for reasons similar to those suggesting that he does not have the goods of fortune in mind – goods like *eudaimonia* and health are certainly not "nothing to one" if one is not virtuous, though one might be confused about what *eudaimonia* actually is.

[41] τῶν
γὰρ ἀγαθῶν τὰ μὲν ἁπλῶς ἐστιν ἀγαθά, τὰ δὲ τινί, ἁπλῶς
δὲ οὔ. καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθὰ καὶ ἁπλῶς ἡδέα. τὰ
μὲν γὰρ τῷ ὑγιαίνοντί φαμεν σώματι συμφέροντα
ἁπλῶς εἶναι σώματι ἀγαθά, τὰ δὲ τῷ κάμνοντι οὔ, οἷ-
ον φαρμακείας καὶ τομάς. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἡδέα ἁπλῶς
σώματι τὰ τῷ ὑγιαίνοντι καὶ ὁλοκλήρῳ, οἷον τὸ ἐν τῷ
φωτὶ ὁρᾶν καὶ οὐ τὸ ἐν τῷ σκότει· καίτοι τῷ ὀφθαλμιῶντι
ἐναντίως. καὶ οἶνος ἡδίων οὐχ ὁ τῷ διεφθαρμένῳ τὴν γλῶτ-
ταν ὑπὸ οἰνοφλυγίας, ἐπεὶ οὔτε ὄξος παρεγχέουσιν, ἀλλὰ τῇ
ἀδιαφθόρῳ αἰσθήσει. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ ψυχῆς, καὶ οὐχ ἃ
τοῖς παιδίοις καὶ τοῖς θηρίοις, ἀλλ' ἃ τοῖς καθεστῶσιν. ἀμφο-
τέρων γοῦν μεμνημένοι ταῦθ' αἱρούμεθα. ὡς δ' ἔχει παιδίον
καὶ θηρίον πρὸς ἄνθρωπον καθεστῶτα, οὕτως ἔχει ὁ φαῦλος
καὶ ἄφρων πρὸς τὸν ἐπιεικῆ καὶ φρόνιμον. τούτοις δὲ ἡδέα

Similarly, what is "good absolutely (*haplōs*)" is what is good for the good person, while other things may be good for a person who is not good (cf. *NE* 3.4, 1113a26-28). As medication and surgery can be healthy for the unwell, though they are not healthy *haplōs,* so too certain kinds education or punishment may be good for the vicious person (on, say, a Socratic theory of punishment), though they are not good *haplōs* (cf. *Pol*. 7.13, 1332a10-15).

This seems to suggest a relativist reading of the goodness thesis. After all, it is not that things like exercise are "unconditionally healthy" in the sense of being healthy independently of whether they are so for certain individuals, and that the healthy individuals are reliably tracking what is "truly" healthy.[42] There is no implication that the sickly person is *mistaken*; surgery and medication really are good for them. It may even seem to imply that the goodness thesis is not a substantive thesis at all, and really amounts to an observation concerning how we use the word "good" in an ethical context: we *call*[43] "healthy" ("without any addition," *Top.* 2.12, 115b29-30) what is healthy for the healthy person; we would not *call* healthy (without any addition) what is healthy for the sick person. Thus, the point of the health analogy would seem to be the straightforward idea that different things are good for different people, but that we identify *agathon haplōs* with what is good for the virtuous or excellent person. (This reading seems to be further supported by Aristotle's claim that "each state of character has its own fine

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τὰ κατὰ τὰς ἕξεις· ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰ καλά.

Cf. also *Topics* 2.12, 115b [cit.]: "Again, at certain times it is beneficial to take medicines e.g. when one is ill, but it is not so haplōs. Or possibly, this may indicate a relativity not to a certain time but to a certain state of health; for it makes no difference when it occurs, if only one is in that state."

[42] Admittedly, Aristotle *does* sometimes use the phrase "truly (*kat'alētheian*) healthy", e.g., at *NE* 1113a27. Does this suggest that Aristotle is not a relativist about health – that he thinks that some things are healthy independently of whether they are healthy for anyone in particular, and that healthy people are "tracking" what is truly healthy? A good reason for doubting this is his use of "healthy" as an illustration of *pros hen* signification. Given that the primary sense of "healthy" is the sense in which we speak of a "healthy condition," "healthy" things must be healthy *for* people, in the sense of being conducive to their healthy condition (or in being signs or symptoms of it). Thus, it seems to me, he is being drawn to use "truly healthy" in lieu of "healthy *haplōs*" because of what he wants ultimately to say about goodness – though the fact that he *is* drawn use "truly," or even "in reality" (another possible translation of *kat'alētheian*), interchangeably with *haplōs* in this context does ultimately push against the relativist reading. (I'm indebted to Tim Clarke for discussion on this question.)

[43] Note in the quoted passage above: "For we <u>say</u> that what is beneficial for a healthy body is absolutely good for a body; but we do not <u>say</u> this about what is good for a sick body…" See also the conclusion of the *Topics* passage on *haplōs*: "A thing is *haplōs* [fine or the contrary] which, without any addition, you will <u>say</u> is fine or the contrary." (Top 2.12, 115b29-30) Of course, Aristotle's *Topics* is devoted to dialectical arguments, which rest on *endoxa*, and so the fact that he speaks here of what we will "say" may only reflect that fact, rather than a amounting to a claim about what is good *haplōs.*

and pleasant things.") On this reading, when Aristotle speaks of what is good for the excellent person vs. what is good for other people – *agathon* plus dative – he is using a standard dative of advantage, signifying the person who benefits. And "good *haplōs*" does not mean "absolutely," "objectively," or "in fact good,"[44] but something more like "good in general," in the sense of "good in normal circumstances" – where what counts as "normal" is defined by reference to the excellent person, as what is normal for bodies is defined by reference to the healthy body.[45] It is in this sense that the excellent person is "a kind of standard and measure of what is fine."

This understanding of the goodness thesis has the apparent virtue of consistency with a common interpretation of Aristotle's criticism, in *NE* 1.6, of the Platonic Form of the Good, and indeed with a common interpretation of Aristotle's notion of ethical goodness generally. In *NE* 1.6, Aristotle argues, first of all, that Plato's notion of something which was good absolutely in itself, i.e., in complete independence from any concrete particular which could be said to be good, and which would explain the goodness of any and all good particulars, rests on a philosophical confusion (or, really, a number of them); there simply could be no such Platonic Form of the Good. And, moreover, even if there were, it would be irrelevant to the study of ethics, which is concerned with the *human* good. This argument might seem to imply that, when Aristotle speaks of what is good *haplōs*, he could *only* have in mind what is good for human beings in general, that "good" is *always* (sometimes implicitly) relativized to human nature[46] – and, given Aristotle's teleological conception of human nature, this means: relativized to the virtuous agent.[47]

But I think that, upon reflection, this virtue is *merely* apparent. Aristotle's view of goodness seems only to rule out the idea of goodness being

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[44] Gottlieb ("Aristotle and Protagoras") has a plausible explanation of why this is not merely a stipulative non-substantive claim: because it is objectively better to be in a position where haplōs goods are good for you. But, again, her explanation of why this is applies to the goods of fortune specifically.

[45] Ackrill (*Aristotle's Ethics*, p. 251) seems to suggest that what I'm calling the "normal condition" would be defined by the condition of *most* people. This may be plausible in the case of "healthy," but I do not think it plausible for the case of the *spoudaios*. Aristotle seems to suggest that most people do not hold the *spoudaios'* view of the good and *kalon*. And note that even in non-ethical contexts it is not clear that what is "normal" can be picked out by considering what happens most of the time: It is normal for an acorn to develop into an oak tree, even though the vast majority do not. (Though, admittedly, this might be a problem for Aristotle, since he tells us that what is natural happens always or for the most part.)

[46] Nussbaum (*Fragility of Goodness*) defends an interpretation of Aristotle's conception of goodness much like this one. This is obviously a vast and difficult philosophical issue, but I believe that what she calls Aristotle's "internal realism" appears to err too far in the direction of relativism to be plausible as an interpretation of Aristotle, though I do find it philosophically interesting in its own right.

[47] Cf. Cooper's point about what he calls "Aristotle's teleological bias" as it applies to his discussion of friendship particularly ("Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship").

independent of any being or kind of being – for something to be good is always, either, for it to be a good *X*, where what counts as a good *X* will depend on what kind of thing *X* is, or for it to be good for some *Y*. And his argument at the end of *NE* 1.6 (1096b30ff.) does imply that, for any good to be relevant to ethics, it must ultimately relate to the human good; but it does not imply that, whenever Aristotle uses the notion of goodness in his ethical works, he must implicitly be speaking of the human good. For instance, Aristotle suggests at various junctures in the *Ethics* that divine beings are good; this obviously does not mean they are good human beings, nor (though perhaps somewhat less obviously) that they are good *for* human beings; they are, rather, good in themselves, as divine beings. This is nonetheless ethically relevant, on Aristotle's view, because for human beings to contemplate what is in fact good – indeed, what is *most* good – is itself good for human beings (i.e., for those human beings who are capable of doing so, and it is better to be so capable).

Moreover, if we consider more fully some of the passages in which Aristotle appeals to the health analogy, we seem to find an entirely different idea at work:

> …should we say that, *haplōs* and in truth, what is wished for is the good, but for each person what is wished for is the apparent good? For the excellent person, then, what is wished for will be what [is good] in reality, while for the base person what is wished for is whatever happens [to appear good to him]. Similarly, in the case of bodies, really healthy things are healthy for people in a good condition, while other things are healthy for sickly people; and the same is true of what is bitter, sweet, hot, heavy, and so on. For the excellent person judges each thing correctly and in each [case] the truth appears to him. For there are distinctive fine and pleasant things according to each state of character, and the excellent person differs most from the others because he sees the truth in each, being a sort of standard and measure of what is fine and pleasant. (NE 3.4, 1113a22-33)[48]

Here, what is so *haplōs* is identified with what is so in truth (*kat'alētheian*), and what is good to each is identified with whatever just happens (*to tuchon*)

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[48] εἰ δὲ δὴ
ταῦτα μὴ ἀρέσκει, ἆρα φατέον ἁπλῶς μὲν καὶ κατ' ἀλή-
θειαν βουλητὸν εἶναι τἀγαθόν, ἑκάστῳ δὲ τὸ φαινόμενον;
τῷ μὲν οὖν σπουδαίῳ τὸ κατ' ἀλήθειαν εἶναι, τῷ δὲ φαύλῳ
τὸ τυχόν, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν σωμάτων τοῖς μὲν εὖ δια-
κειμένοις ὑγιεινά ἐστι τὰ κατ' ἀλήθειαν τοιαῦτα ὄντα, τοῖς
δ' ἐπινόσοις ἕτερα, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ πικρὰ καὶ γλυκέα καὶ
θερμὰ καὶ βαρέα καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἕκαστα· ὁ σπουδαῖος γὰρ
ἕκαστα κρίνει ὀρθῶς, καὶ ἐν ἑκάστοις τἀληθὲς αὐτῷ φαίνε-
ται. καθ' ἑκάστην γὰρ ἕξιν ἴδιά ἐστι καλὰ καὶ ἡδέα καὶ
διαφέρει πλεῖστον ἴσως ὁ σπουδαῖος τῷ τἀληθὲς ἐν ἑκάστοις
ὁρᾶν, ὥσπερ κανὼν καὶ μέτρον αὐτῶν ὤν.

to appear good to him. What is good *haplōs* coincides with what is good to the excellent person, not because we simply identify what is good *haplōs* with what is good for good people, but because "the excellent person judges each thing correctly and in each case the truth appears to him." The more helpful analogy with health, according to this reading, is not really with the distinction between what is healthy for the healthy person vs. what is so for the sick person, but with the distinction between how things appear to the person whose relevant perceptual faculty is healthy vs. how things appear to one whose faculty is in a bad way – on, that is, an objectivist picture of the qualities they are perceiving. (On this reading, when Aristotle says that "each state of character has its own fine and pleasant things," what he means is that each state of character has its own distinctive things which someone of such a character *thinks of* as fine and *finds* pleasant.[49])

We also find this sense of *haplōs* at work in the *Topics* passage – at least, that seems to be the most natural way of understanding of the lines:

> It is in some places *kalon* to sacrifice one's father, e.g., among the Triballoi, whereas, *haplōs*, it is not *kalon*. Or possibly this again may indicate a relativity not to places but to persons; for it makes no difference where they may be; for everywhere it will be *kalon* to them, being Triballoi. (*Top.* 115b22-26)[50]

It seems to me unlikely that Aristotle means here that, as long as you are a Triballos, it really is *kalon* to sacrifice your father; rather he means only that it seems *kalon* to the Triballoi.

He spells the point out more fully in the *Metaphysics:*

> The same thing never appears sweet to some and the opposite of sweet to others, unless in the one case the sense-organ which discriminates the aforesaid flavors has been corrupted and injured. And if this is the case, the one party must be taken to be the measure, and the other not. And I say the same of good and bad, and beautiful and ugly, and all other such qualities. (*Met*. 9.6, 1062b36-1063a6)[51]

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[49] Irwin inserts this into his translation in square brackets. Certainly, translators need sometimes to interpret in order to select an appropriate translation, but this strikes me as a case in which a relatively neutral translation is possible and best.

[50] τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον καὶ ποὺ
μὲν καλὸν τὸν πατέρα θύειν, οἷον ἐν Τριβαλλοῖς, ἁπλῶς
δ' οὐ καλόν. ἢ τοῦτο μὲν οὐ ποὺ σημαίνει ἀλλὰ τισίν· οὐδὲν
γὰρ διαφέρει ὅπου ἂν ὦσιν· πανταχοῦ γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἔσται καλόν,
οὖσι Τριβαλλοῖς.

[51] οὐδέποτε γὰρ
τὸ αὐτὸ φαίνεται τοῖς μὲν γλυκὺ τοῖς δὲ τοὐναντίον, μὴ
διεφθαρμένων καὶ λελωβημένων τῶν ἑτέρων τὸ αἰσθητήριον
καὶ κριτήριον τῶν λεχθέντων χυμῶν. τούτου δ' ὄντος τοιούτου
τοὺς ἑτέρους μὲν ὑποληπτέον μέτρον εἶναι τοὺς δ' ἄλλους οὐχ

And we also find Aristotle appealing to this idea in the *Eudemian* discussion of the objects of love. Here the immediate point concerns what is pleasant *haplōs* rather than what is good *haplōs* – though the relevance to our concerns is suggested by the fact that Aristotle has just pointed out that what is good *haplōs* and what is pleasant *haplōs* coincide.

> And it is not the wine enjoyed by someone whose palate has been ruined by excessive drinking [that is unconditionally pleasant]…but rather the wine which is pleasant to uncorrupted tastes. The situation is similar with the soul, and [that which is unconditionally pleasant] is not what children and wild beasts find pleasant but what mature people find pleasant…The relationship of a base and foolish person to a decent and wise one is like the relationship of a child or 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 fine things. (*EE* 7.2, 1235b35-36a7)

Virtuous agents, the implication seems to be, are picking up on what is genuinely good and fine independently of their reactions, as the person with uncorrupted sense faculties picks up on what is really "bitter, sweet, hot, heavy, and so on"; what is good to them is what is good *haplōs*. Here it seems more natural to translate *agathon* plus dative as "good *to,*" rather than "good *for,*" some person or other: On this reading, the dative is not really a dative of advantage, but a dative signifying the person *in whose judgment* the thing is good.[52] The excellent person is "a kind of standard and measure of what is fine" in that they reliably track what is fine, independently of their reactions. (Call it the objectivist reading of the goodness thesis.)[53]

But the objectivist reading, too, faces some difficulties. There are, after all, the quotes that motivated the relativist reading in the first place, e.g.: "Similarly in the case of bodies, truly healthy things are healthy for people in good condition, while other things are healthy for sickly people." It seems a strain to read the datives here as signifying the person in whose judgment something is healthy, rather than the person for whom it is healthy. A defender of the objectivist interpretation would have to claim, then, that this is a kind of slip. But that too seems hardly credible, for if it is a slip, it is very

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ὑποληπτέον. ὁμοίως δὲ τοῦτο λέγω καὶ ἐπὶ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ,
καὶ καλοῦ καὶ αἰσχροῦ, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν τοιούτων

[52] This is Smyth's first example of a "dative of relation" (#941).

[53] Gottlieb ("The Good Human Being as the Measure") draws a different, but related, distinction between two ways of interpreting what I'm calling the goodness thesis. There is what she calls the "Protagorean" interpretation, which combines elements of both of what I've been calling relativist and objectivist interpretations, since according to the Protagorean interpretation, what is good for *X* just *is* what seems to *X* to be good. On the non-Protagorean interpretation she defends, I am in broad agreement, and my positive suggestion could be seen as supplementing hers. See below, p. []

much not an isolated one. He employs the same analogy, for instance, when he is explaining the good *haplōs* vs. good *tini* distinction in the *Topics* – somewhat strangely, just after the lines about what is *kalon* among the Triballoi:

> Again, at certain times it is beneficial to take medicines e.g. when one is ill, but it is not so *haplōs*. Or possibly, this may indicate a relativity not to a certain time but to a certain state of health; for it makes no difference when it occurs, if only one is in that state. (115b26-29)[54]

What is healthy relative to "a certain state of health" is not what one *thinks* of as healthy, but what is actually healthy for one to do or undergo. Moreover, when Aristotle says that each person loves what is good to/for oneself it seems he cannot mean "good to oneself" in the sense of "good in one's own judgment" or "apparently good." He cannot, because when he raises the question in the *Nicomachean* discussion, he goes on, implicitly but very clearly, to conceptually distinguish "good for oneself" from "appears good for oneself"[55]:

> It seems that each of us loves what is good for himself; and while the good is loveable without qualification, the loveable for each is the good for himself. In fact, each loves not *the* good for him, but the apparent [good for him]. But this will make no difference, for the apparent good will be the apparent object of love. (*NE* 8.2, 1155b23-27)[56]

Finally, there are various passages in which Aristotle suggests, not only that people *do* choose what is good to/for them, but that they *should* do so.[57] On the objectivist reading, according to which "good to/for oneself" means what the person takes to be good, and the excellent person is right about this

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[54] πάλιν ποτὲ μὲν συμφέρει φαρμακεύε-
σθαι, οἷον ὅταν νοσῇ, ἁπλῶς δ' οὔ. ἢ οὐδὲ τοῦτο ποτὲση-
μαίνει ἀλλὰ τῷ διακειμένῳ πως· οὐδὲν γὰρ διαφέρει ὁποτε-
οῦν, ἐὰν οὕτω μόνον διακείμενος ᾖ.

[55] Thus, I find unlikely Ackrill's claim (*Aristotle's Ethics,* p. 201) that Aristotle confuses or conflates the good *haplōs*/good-for distinction with the genuinely good/apparently good distinction. Arguably Aristotle does that in the *Topics* passage on the *haplōs*/*tini* distinction (but that may just because the difference may not be relevant to his immediate concerns there), but not, I don't think, in the *Ethics*.

[56] δοκεῖ δὲ τὸ αὑτῷ ἀγαθὸν φι-
λεῖν ἕκαστος, καὶ εἶναι ἁπλῶς μὲν τἀγαθὸν φιλητόν, ἑκάστῳ
δὲ τὸ ἑκάστῳ· φιλεῖ δ' ἕκαστος οὐ τὸ ὂν αὑτῷ ἀγαθὸν ἀλλὰ
τὸ φαινόμενον. διοίσει δ' οὐδέν· ἔσται γὰρ τὸ φιλητὸν φαι-
νόμενον.

Presumably, the thought there at the end, when Aristotle says that "this will make no difference," is: That's fine; we simply add the "apparent" rider throughout.

[57] E.g., *EE* 7.2, 1236b36-38.

whereas others are wrong, it would make little sense to suggest that less than excellent people ought to choose what is good for them.

The fact that *both* readings seem to have significant textual support, along with philosophical problems, suggests that something more interesting is going on than either reading suggests. This can be seen, moreover, in a further difficulty with both readings. The difficulty is that, in a sense, the inference from good *haplōs* to good to/for the *spoudaios* is *too easy*, since there is no gap to be filled in at all on the relativist reading, and, on the objectivist reading, no gap that isn't filled in by pointing out that the *spoudaios* gets these things right.[58] But consider:

> At the same time it's not enough that he be good without qualification, but he also has to be for you if he is really going to be a friend to you. For a man is good without qualification by being good [i.e., good as such], but he is a friend by being good for someone else; and he is both good without qualification and a friend when both of these coincide, so that what is good without qualification is good for someone else… (*EE* 7.2, 1238a4-7)[59]

On both the relativist and objectivist readings, the fact that a friend is good without qualification *is*, it would seem, enough to make him good for the excellent person. On the relativist reading, it is so trivially (since what is to be good absolutely just *is* to be good for the excellent individual); but that seems to go against the grain of the passage. On the objectivist reading, it should be perfectly straightforward what makes the good *haplōs* good for oneself, namely, good judgment about what is good *haplōs*, and one would have expected Aristotle to have simply pointed that. Instead, Aristotle seems to suggest that something further needs to happen to make what is good *haplōs* good for oneself – some work, so to speak, needs to go into making something good *haplōs* good for oneself, and that is why, Aristotle says, friendship "takes time." This suggests that when Aristotle says that the good *haplōs* is *philēton* for the excellent person, he does not mean that it is an object of their actual love, but rather that it is love*able,* i.e., a potential object

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[58] That this is a difficulty with both readings can also be seen, as I noted in the introduction, in one of the arguments in which we find Aristotle arguing from the fact that something is good *haplōs* to the conclusion that it is good (and choiceworthy) for the *spoudaios*: the argument in *NE* 9.9 and *EE* 7.12 that, since a character friend is good in himself and by nature, he is therefore good for the *spoudaios*, which, on any telling, is a complex, even "tortuous" argument. It was, in fact, puzzling about this argument that first led me to the puzzle of this paper. I had assumed something like the relativist reading and so wondered why Aristotle couldn't get his conclusion more or less straightaway.

[59] ἀγαθὸς μὲν γὰρ
ἁπλῶς ἐστι τῷ ἀγαθὸς εἶναι, φίλος δὲ τῷ ἄλλῳ ἀγαθός,
ἁπλῶς <δ'> ἀγαθὸς καὶ φίλος, ὅταν συμφωνήσῃ ταῦτ' ἄμφω,
ὥστε ὅ ἐστιν ἁπλῶς ἀγαθόν, τὸ τούτου ἄλλῳ

of their love,[60] and that it *would* be good for them (if, say, they came to appreciate and love it).

3. The path through pleasure

The cumulative effect of all this, it seems to me, is to suggest that neither the relativist nor the objectivist readings can stand on their own. What we need, I think, is a reading of the goodness thesis which (a) reads the datives as datives of advantage, signifying the person for whom *X* is good (the person who benefits or gets something of value from *X*), but (b) explains why what is good for someone depends in some important way on their ability (or lack thereof) to recognize what is genuinely good and *kalon*. Because there do seem to be both relativist and objectivist elements in Aristotle's discussion of the good *haplōs* as object of love, we should also look for an interpretation which explains why he would combine or conflate them in this context: an interpretation according to which, *in a sense*, what is genuinely good is dependent on the reactions of the excellent person – though not in the straightforward sense suggested by the relativist reading, for we must still be able to make sense of the idea that the good person is getting it right. Finally, as we have just seen, Aristotle seems to suggest that some *work* needs to go into making what is good *haplōs* good for oneself and an actual object of your love – being excellent does not *automatically* make every *haplōs* good good for you and beloved of you.

There is an interesting passage in the *Eudemian Ethics* that seems to suggest that *pleasure* plays a somehow crucial role in making the good *haplōs* good for oneself. I'll quote it at some length:

> For there is a difficulty as to whether it is what is good for oneself or what is good *haplōs* that is beloved [*philon*], and as to whether actual loving is accompanied by pleasure, so that the loved object is pleasant, or not. For the two must be combined [lit.: "both must be brought together into the same thing"], since things that are not unconditionally good, but could turn out bad,[61] should be avoided, and what is not good for oneself is nothing in relation to oneself; but what is sought is that what is good *haplōs* should be good in this way [i.e., good for oneself]. For what is choiceworthy is what is good *haplōs*, and [what is choiceworthy] for each is what is good for him. These should harmonize. Excellence [*aretē*] brings this about, and the political craft rules over this [process of making them harmonize], so that those not yet thus will become so. As a human being, one is well-adapted for this path (for things that are good *haplōs* are by nature good for him)…But the path is by way of pleasure, *kalon* things must be pleasant. But when they disagree a man is not yet completely excellent, since [in that case] it is

[60] I.e., there is a familiar ambiguity at work with the *-ton* suffix, an ambiguity we also see with *boulēton, hairēton*, etc.

[61] Following Jackson (who is followed by Solomon and by Inwood/Woolf in their respective translations) in reading *kaka an pōs tuxēi* instead of *kaka haplōs tuxēi*.

> possible that akrasia will arise; for akrasia exists by way of the disagreement within one's emotions between the good and what is pleasant. (*EE* 7.2, 1236b33-1237a9)[62]

Why does the "path" to this agreement lie through *pleasure*? In a sense, one might think that the answer is simple: Aristotle suggests that "the political craft" (*hē politikē*) is in charge of this process of harmonizing what is good *haplōs* and what is good for the good individual (1237a1-2); the path is through pleasure because the *politikēs* employs pleasure and pain in habituating the non-rational responses of citizens and thereby instilling ethical virtue in them.[63] Since their non-rational desires aim at pleasure and their rational desire aims at what is good, and since they will thereby come to take pleasure in good things, the objects of their rational and non-rational desires will coincide.

But although this is certainly not wrong, it may be over-simple; it fails to get to the heart of the appeal to pleasure. The importance of pleasure in habituation, on Aristotle's view, derives not from the fact that it functions as a kind of external reward that reinforces certain behavior – it does not simply create positive associations, in the manner of Pavlov's dog. That is, the idea is not merely that, by attaching external awards to certain actions – "virtuous" actions – a child will come to associate such actions with these rewards and, given the more or less mechanistic laws of human psychology, get used to performing them "for their own sake," even when they have no expectation of external reward. Rather, the thought is that, by means of habituation, the *politikēs* (or rather, the system of education designed by the *politikēs*) enables

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[62] ἔχει ἐπίστασιν, πότερον γὰρ
τὸ αὐτῷ ἀγαθὸν ἢ τὸ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθὸν φίλον, καὶ πότερον
τὸ κατ' ἐνέργειαν φιλεῖν μεθ' ἡδονῆς, ὥστε καὶ τὸ φιλητὸν (35)
ἡδύ, ἢ οὔ. ἄμφω γὰρ εἰς ταὐτὸ συνακτέον· τά τε γὰρ
μὴ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθὰ ἀλλὰ κακὰ ἁπλῶς [read: *an pōs*] τύχῃ φευκτά· καὶ
τὸ μὴ αὐτῷ ἀγαθὸν οὐθὲν πρὸς αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ τοῦτ' ἐστιν ὃ
ζητεῖται, τὰ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθὰ οὕτως εἶναι ἀγαθά. ἔστι γὰρ
αἱρετὸν μὲν τὸ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθόν, αὐτῷ δὲ τὸ αὑτῷ ἀγαθόν· (1237a1)
ἃ δεῖ συμφωνῆσαι. καὶ τοῦτο ἡ ἀρετὴ ποιεῖ· καὶ ἡ πολι-
τικὴ ἐπὶ τούτῳ, ὅπως οἷς μήπω ἐστὶ γένηται. εὐθέτως δὲ
καὶ πρὸ ὁδοῦ ἄνθρωπος ὤν (φύσει γὰρ αὐτῷ ἀγαθὰ τὰ
ἁπλῶς ἀγαθά), ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἀνὴρ ἀντὶ γυναικὸς καὶ (5)
εὐφυὴς ἀφυοῦς, διὰ τοῦ ἡδέος δὲ ἡ ὁδός· ἀνάγκη εἶναι τὰ
καλὰ ἡδέα. ὅταν δὲ τοῦτο διαφωνῇ, οὔπω σπουδαῖον τελέως·
ἐνδέχεται γὰρ ἐγγενέσθαι ἀκρασίαν· τῷ γὰρ διαφωνεῖν
τἀγαθὸν τῷ ἡδεῖ ἐν τοῖς πάθεσιν ἀκρασία ἐστίν. (1236b33-1237a9)

[63] Perhaps it could be claimed, on the basis of the concluding sentence of the passage, that Aristotle means only that you must take pleasure in the right things because otherwise you might be *derailed* by pleasure – pleasure, being an apparent good, might lead you to take something to be good (for yourself) when it is in fact not. But saying that the way to harmonize what is good *haplōs* and what is good for oneself lies with pleasure seems to suggest a more positive role.

the child to develop the relevant capacities, and once they have become (so to speak) an ethical virtuoso, they will take pleasure in virtuous action for its own sake, because they will be able to not only perform such actions well, but also to appreciate their (moral) "beauty," and thus will enjoy engaging in them. The *politikēs* is more like the piano teacher who, in addition to requiring the student to engage in training exercises, employs pleasant rewards like praise – not in order to create brute psychological associations in the student, but to help them to see and enjoy when they are doing it right.

The point, then, of such pleasant rewards is ultimately to get the student to take the right kind of pleasure in the right things – say, to enjoy the beauty of a beautiful piece of music, or to enjoy playing well. As such, the importance of pleasure in habituation derives from the role of pleasure in the psychology of the virtuous agent, not because it enables behaviorist reinforcement. And this suggests that when Aristotle stresses the role of pleasure in "harmonizing" what is good *haplōs* with what is good for oneself, and says that "what is *kalon* must be pleasant," at least part of the idea is that one must take pleasure in something that is good *haplōs* for it to also be good for oneself. In fact, we find this suggestion borne out elsewhere in Aristotle's account of friendship: When Aristotle argues that a character friend is not only good in himself, but also good for the excellent person, he argues by appealing to the *pleasure* that the virtuous person will take in "perceiving" (*aisthanesthai*) the "being" (*to einai*) of his friend when they share their lives.[64] As I noted in the introduction, that he does so is a bit surprising, since the pleasure taken in an activity cannot be what *constitutes* its goodness.[65] What work then *is* pleasure doing?

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[64] Whiting ("Pleasures of Thinking Together") stresses this fact about the *EE* 7.12 argument – that it hinges on the pleasure friends take in one another's company – and it is equally true of the *Nicomachean* version. See for instance: "Therefore, just as one's own being is choiceworthy for oneself, in the same way is one's friend's being choiceworthy for one, or nearly the same. We agreed that one's own being is choiceworthy because of perceiving one's own being as good, *such perception being pleasant in itself…*" (*NE* 9.9, 1170b8-10)

[65] This seems to be ruled out by what Aristotle says about the relationship between the decency, choiceworthiness, or excellence of an activity and the decency, choiceoworthiness, or excellence of that activity's "proper pleasure": (*NE* 10.5) Whiting attempts to circumvent the problem (i.e., the problem of why Aristotle would argue on apparently hedonist grounds) by denying that the aim of *EE* 7.12 is to show that the *eudaimōn* person needs friends in order to be *eudaimōn,* but only that it is "intelligible that they do have friends." But this seems to me to go against the grain of the passage. This comes out especially explicitly in the *Nicomachean* version. (It is open, I suppose, to Whiting to deny that the arguments are meant to be arguments for the same conclusion, but whatever import one sees in the differences between the two versions, this seems to me like a real stretch.) After arguing that a friend is choiceworthy for the blessedly happy person, the *Nicomachean* version concludes, "What is choiceworthy he must possess, such otherwise he will in this respect lack something. Anyone who is to be happy, then, must have excellent friends." κἂν ὁ φίλος τῶν αἱρετῶν εἴη. ὃ δ' ἐστὶν αὐτῷ αἱρετόν, τοῦτο δεῖ ὑπάρχειν αὐτῷ, ἢ ταύτῃ ἐνδεὴς ἔσται. δεήσει

I think that we can get some traction on that question by considering why Aristotle thinks that "the same things are good without qualification and pleasant without qualification" (*EE* 1235b30-31). To do so, we will need to traverse the admittedly contested territory of Aristotle's account(s?) of pleasure, and, given that one can hardly say anything at all in this area without saying something controversial, I cannot hope to defend my interpretation of it in the detail that it would warrant. (To do so would require a dissertation in its own right.) I will try to motivate that interpretation as best I can within the constraints of this brief section, but one could perhaps see my central argument as being indirect: When we understand Aristotle's account of pleasure in this way, we can develop a more adequate understanding of the goodness thesis – and, indeed, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, of Aristotle's account of the nature and value of philia more generally. As such, I hope the reader will forgive my somewhat cursory treatment of this interpretively vexed material.

Notoriously, in what's come down to us as the *Nicomachean Ethics*, there are two different discussions of pleasure – one in one of the common books (*NE* 7.11-14/*EE* 6.11-14), and one unique to the *NE* (*NE* 10.1-5). Here, I will focus mainly on book 10. Partly this is because, while his discussion of pleasure in book 7 is primarily oriented around responding to arguments for and against the claim that pleasure is the (human) good, in book 10, Aristotle is much more concerned to develop an account of what pleasure *is*; and partly because, as we will see, that account will suggest answers to our questions about the goodness thesis.

At a certain level of abstraction, the relationship between what is good *haplōs* and what is pleasant *haplōs* is fairly straightforward. In book 7 Aristotle seems to identify pleasure with "unimpeded natural activity" as such.[66] Since "natural activity" could also be proffered as an Aristotelian

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ἄρα τῷ εὐδαιμονήσοντι φίλων σπουδαίων (9.9, 1170b16-19) I discuss this argument, and Whiting's reading, more fully in chapter 4.

[66] διὸ καὶ οὐ καλῶς ἔχει τὸ αἰσθητὴν γένεσιν φάναι εἶναι τὴν ἡδονήν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον λεκτέον ἐνέργειαν τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἕξεως, ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ αἰσθητὴν ἀνεμπόδιστον (*NE* 7.11, 1153a12-15). See also the discussion leading up to this claim, where Aristotle tells us that pleasures "do not even involve a becoming. They are activities and an end, and…they arise not when we are coming to be [in some state] but when we make use [of it]." It could be argued that Aristotle is not identifying pleasure with natural activity as such, but as some natural activity or other. But it seems from the rest of his discussion in chapters 12 and 13 that he means the former. Consider the argument that people "quite reasonably think that the happy life is pleasant and weave pleasure into happiness. For no activity is complete if it is impeded, and happiness is something complete." [cit.] Happiness, in a familiar Aristotelian doctrine, is itself activity in accordance with nature (though, whether it includes all such natural activity, or is to be identified only with the best or most complete of them is, of course, a notorious interpretive difficulty); Aristotle's argument here – that, given the fact that pleasure is unimpeded natural activity, the activity constituting happiness will therefore be pleasant – makes sense only if Aristotle is identifying pleasure with unimpeded natural activity generally, rather than saying that it is some natural activity or other.

definition of the human good, it is obvious why what is pleasant *haplōs* and what is good *haplōs* coincide. Indeed, the difficulty is to see how they could be distinguished at all, even in (as Aristotle might say) in account.[67] In book 10, Aristotle helpfully clarifies the matter. He does not give up the view that what we properly take pleasure *in* are unimpeded natural activities. (E.g., "Each animal is thought to have its proper pleasure, as it has a proper function, i.e., that which corresponds to its activity."[68]) But he is clear now that the correspondence in question is not identity: "Pleasure completes the activity—not, however, as the state does, by being present, but as a sort of supervenient end, like the bloom of youth." Nonetheless, it supervenes in a way that "does not admit of separation" (and that is why pleasure and activity "appear to be the same to some people," though it would be "absurd" to think that they really were[69]). So long as the activity is being done well, then the subject will inevitably take pleasure in the activity.

We will have to set aside for now the thorny question of what it means to say that pleasure "completes" (or "perfects") activity. But first we should consider the human activities which, on Aristotle's view, (*haplōs*) pleasure completes. Interestingly, the book 10 account seems to be almost exclusively concerned with activities of perception and thought. Here is how he introduces his positive account of pleasure:

> Since every perceptual capacity is active in relation to the perceptible object, and since it is completely active when it is in a good condition in relation to the finest objects of the perceptible capacity..., therefore, with respect to each capacity, the best activity is that of the best-conditioned [subject] in relationship to the best of its objects. This activity is also most complete/perfect and most pleasant. For every perceptual capacity has its distinctive pleasure, as does every kind of thought and contemplation; the most pleasant activity is the most complete; and the most complete is the activity of the well-conditioned subject in relation to the most excellent

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[67] Owen ("Aristotelian Pleasures") has argued on this basis that Aristotle is not speaking of pleasure in the sense of *enjoyment* (i.e., a feeling or experience) in book 7, but of that in which we take pleasure, and thus that we need see no conflict with book 10. (He notes that the Greek word *hēdonē*, just as the English "pleasure," is ambiguous between the two senses: I can say that I *felt* pleasure, or that philosophy is among the greatest pleasures in life.) His argument has come under some criticism, though; see Harte ("The *NE* on Pleasure," 310); Gosling and Taylor (*Greeks on Pleasure,* 204-224).

[68] δοκεῖ δ' εἶναι ἑκάστῳ ζῴῳ καὶ ἡδονὴ οἰκεία, ὥσπερ καὶ ἔργον· ἡ γὰρ κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν, *NE* 1176a3-5

[69] Who are "some people" that held this absurd view? One intriguing possibility is that Aristotle is referring in part to himself, and that he has come to see that in his earlier account he had confused what pleasure *is* and what we take pleasure *in*. Perhaps he refers to this view as having been held by "some people" in part to now distance himself from it, but also to stress that it is after all a natural thing to think, given the close relationship between pleasure and the activity it supervenes on.

> objects of the capacity. And pleasure completes the activity. (*NE* 10.4, 1174b14-16; 18-23)[70]

On this account, the greatest pleasure is that which accompanies the best perceptual and contemplative activities, and those are the activities of subjects who have perfected the relevant capacity, and are employing it in relation to the finest or most beautiful (*kalliston,* from *kalon*) object of the relevant capacity. Thus, the most pleasant instance of music-listening would be the activity of someone who has fully honed his music-listening skills and is listening to the finest piece of music; the most pleasant kind of seeing will be that of the person with finely attuned visual capacities looking at the most beautiful visible object; and so on. Thus, Aristotle associates (human) pleasure with perceptual and contemplative activities – though, as we have seen, not because pleasure is identical with such activity, but because it necessarily "supervenes" on it.

One important point of clarification: When Aristotle speaks here of perception of "the most *kalon* perceptible objects [i.e., objects of the perceptual capacity in question]," it is likely, I think, that Aristotle has in mind, not merely the idea that the subject is perceiving objects which are in fact *kalon*, but that she is perceiving them *as kalon*. This has a certain plausibility in itself; to have fully developed one's capacity to listen to music is, in part, to be able to hear beautiful melodies *as beautiful* – and indeed one might think that why such a person will be able to enjoy such melodies. Thus, for instance, in the *Politics*, Aristotle tells us that part of what makes human beings "more political" than any other creature is the fact that "the human being is unique with respect to the other animals in this regard, that they alone have *perception* (*aisthēsis*) *of good and bad, just and unjust, and the rest*" (*Pol.* 1.2, 1253a15-18, emphasis added) – where I take "the rest" to refer to similarly evaluative concepts.

One possible explanation for this would be to suppose that Aristotle's understanding of perception (*aisthēsis*) is cognitively richer than what we might think of as bare sense-perception. In this vein, Aufderheide ("Aristotle against Delos") argues that, in general for Aristotle, to be able to perceive *X* is to be able discriminate what is *X* from what is not *X*; but *X* need not be a bare sensible quality (like "red" or "heavy"); it could be a higher-order and more value-laden concept than the concepts that we might normally think

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[70] Αἰσθήσεως δὲ πάσης πρὸς τὸ αἰσθητὸν ἐνεργούσης, τελείως δὲ τῆς εὖ διακειμένης πρὸς τὸ κάλλιστον τῶν ὑπὸ τὴν αἴσθησιν…καθ' ἑκάστην δὴ βελτίστη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐνέργεια τοῦ ἄριστα διακειμένου πρὸς τὸ κράτιστον τῶν ὑπ' αὐτήν. αὕτη δ' ἂν τελειοτάτη εἴη καὶ ἡδίστη. κατὰ πᾶσαν γὰρ αἴσθησίν ἐστιν ἡδονή, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ διάνοιαν καὶ θεωρίαν, ἡδίστη δ' ἡ τελειοτάτη, τελειοτάτη δ' ἡ τοῦ εὖ ἔχοντος πρὸς τὸ σπουδαιότατον τῶν ὑπ' αὐτήν· τελειοῖ δὲ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἡ ἡδονή.

of as structuring our sense-perception.[71] However, we do not *need* to suppose that Aristotle thinks that such concepts are deployed in perception (in the narrow or technical sense of "perception"), nor even that *any* concepts are, to explain the sense in which Aristotle believes that we can perceive something as good or *kalon*. Consider a different picture: At the level of the *perception* of something, *X*, which is *kalon,* there is no difference between the excellent person and the non-excellent; all the same perceptible qualities of *X* are accessible to each. But, because of her rational judgment of what is fine and because of the way in which her non-rational desires accord with that judgment, the excellent person is attuned to certain perceptible features of *X* – namely, those features that make it *kalon*. Those are the ones that are salient in her experience of *X*. We might say, she *represents X* as something *kalon*, but this representation will not be given merely by perception; it is shaped, as well, by other features of her moral psychology. If this picture is right, then we might suppose that when Aristotle speaks of "perception" in (e.g.,) the *Politics* passage cited above, he is using a "perception" in a somewhat looser sense – to pick out the way in which someone might represent, perhaps in part on the basis of things other than perception (judgment, desire, whether rational or non-rational) what is given to them in perception. As we might put it, there is more to their perceptual experience of a thing than what is given to them by perception alone. What I would like to say below is, I believe, neutral between the two sides to this particular controversy, and when I speak of "perception," I mean it in this looser sense of perceptual experience or representation.

In *NE* 10.4, is Aristotle simply using perception and contemplation as *examples* of the kinds of natural activities that we take pleasure in, or does he mean to suggest that *haplōs* or genuine pleasure is *always* associated with perception and contemplation? One might be inclined to the former possibility, given that Aristotle has stressed, throughout his *Ethics*, the importance of the pleasure that the virtuous person takes in acting virtuously. And yet, in presenting his positive account of pleasure in book 10, focuses almost exclusively on pleasures that "complete" the activities of perception and thought – and even in the few cases in which he seems to be bringing in other activities than these, it turns out upon further scrutiny that he is thinking of these too as, in some sense, perceptual or intellectual activities. He for instance speaks of "living as some kind of activity," and explores the possibility that either "we choose life because of [the desire for] pleasure or pleasure because of [the desire for] life." But his only examples of life-constituting activities are, again, perception and contemplation:

[71] This is certainly a controversial suggestion. Cf., Moss, *Aristotle on the Apparent Good*, and Morison's review of Moss in his "Book Notes: Aristotle," *Phronesis* 58 (3).

> Living is some kind of activity, and each of us is active toward the objects he is especially fond of and in the ways he is especially fond of, e.g., the musician is active with his hearing in relation to melodies, the lover of learning with his thought in with respect to the objects of contemplation, and so in each of the rest of the cases. Pleasure completes/perfects their activities and hence their life, which they desire. It is reasonable that they aim at pleasure, then, since for each it completes his life and life is choiceworthy. (*NE* 10.4, 1175a10-17)[72]

This should perhaps come as no surprise given that, in *NE* 9.9, Aristotle told us that, for human beings, "fully living" consists in "perceiving or thinking."[73]

Similarly, when Aristotle turns, in *NE* 10.5, from his positive account of pleasure to his argument that pleasures differ in kind, he does mention the pleasures of "doing geometry," "music," and "building." But, as Verity Harte ("The *NE* on Pleasure") has pointed out, these are the very activities that Socrates lists, in the *Philebus*, as examples of *knowledge*. Given the degree to which Aristotle's discussion of pleasure is oriented around the *Philebus,* it is unlikely that this is a coincidence; Aristotle is following Plato in using these as examples of intellectual activities (or, at least, activities that involve an important intellectual aspect). Later on, he seems to bring in virtuous activity, though implicitly: "Since activities differ in degrees of decency and badness, and some are choiceworthy, some to be avoided, some neither, the same is true of pleasures; for each activity has its own proper pleasure." But then he goes on to say that, "Still, [pleasure] would seem to *be* neither thought nor perception," – as if he had only been speaking about varieties of thought and perception in speaking of the activities that differ in degrees of decency, choiceworthiness, etc.

Given all this, I believe that we should conclude that, according to Aristotle's account in book 10, all *haplōs* pleasure supervenes on the activities of perception and thought – in particular, on the (relevantly) excellent subject's perceiving or contemplating what is *kalon*. This fails to include the pleasures of practically virtuous activity only on the assumption that such activity does not involve such perception or contemplation, or that the

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[72] ὀρέγεσθαι δὲ τῆς ἡδονῆς οἰηθείη τις ἂν ἅπαντας, ὅτι καὶ τοῦ ζῆν ἅπαντες ἐφίενται· ἡ δὲ ζωὴ ἐνέργειά τις ἐστί, καὶ ἕκαστος περὶ ταῦτα καὶ τούτοις ἐνεργεῖ ἃ καὶ μάλιστ' ἀγαπᾷ, οἷον ὁ μὲν μουσικὸς τῇ ἀκοῇ περὶ τὰ μέλη, ὁ δὲ φιλομαθὴς τῇ διανοίᾳ περὶ τὰ θεωρήματα, οὕτω δὲ καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἕκαστος· ἡ δ' ἡδονὴ τελειοῖ τὰς ἐνεργείας, καὶ τὸ ζῆν δή, οὗ ὀρέγονται. εὐλόγως οὖν καὶ τῆς ἡδονῆς ἐφίενται· τελειοῖ γὰρ ἑκάστῳ τὸ ζῆν, αἱρετὸν ὄν.

[73] The whole sentence is relevant, for it makes clear that Aristotle thinking of this as following from the *definition* of what it is to live as a human being: τὸ δὲ ζῆν ὁρίζονται τοῖς ζῴοις δυνάμει αἰσθήσεως, ἀνθρώποις δ' αἰσθήσεως ἢ νοήσεως· ἡ δὲ δύναμις εἰς τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἀνάγεται, τὸ δὲ κύριον ἐν τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ· ἔοικε δὴ τὸ ζῆν εἶναι κυρίως τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι ἢ νοεῖν (1170a16-19). Thus, for humans, perhaps our "proper function" is perceiving and thinking. This would also explain why human beings seem to have *different* proper pleasures (cf., 10.5, on the pleasure "proper" to the many): part of being rational involves acting self-consciously, with self-awareness. See chapter 2.

pleasure that comes with virtuous action could not attach to whatever perception or contemplation virtuous action involves. I would like to call that assumption into question below, in section 5. But first I'd like to return to the relationship between what is pleasant and good *haplōs* and what is pleasant and good for the excellent person.

4. *A new reading of the goodness thesis: The excellent person as "the measure"*

With the book 10 account of pleasure in hand, I think we are in a better position to see how a more satisfactory answer to our question about the goodness thesis might go. It will be easiest for me to lay out my suggestion by considering an example in some detail. Consider, as the book 10 model of *haplōs* pleasure suggests, a case of aesthetic appreciation – say, the reading of a great, but fairly difficult, novel like *Moby Dick*.

I was supposed to read *Moby Dick* in high school, but I will admit that it was not a success. I am probably not alone in, at 16, having found it both boring and pompous, and I gave up before Ishmael even gets *to* Nantucket. Perhaps, with more willpower, I could have made it through the book; but I doubt that there was anything I could have done, by force of will alone, to get myself to appreciate it or enjoy reading it – I simply was not then in a position to do so. Even if I had been a more dedicated student and *had* managed to slog my way through, the book would not have been valuable to me because, however great a novel it may be, I was not able to appreciate what makes it so. In saying that it would not have been "valuable to me," I don't mean only that I wouldn't have *seen* it as valuable, though that is part of it; rather, I wouldn't have gotten anything of value out of it. Because I was not able to appreciate or recognize what makes it good, it was not "good for me," in Aristotle's sense.

(An important word of caution here, before I go on: The fact that English sentences of the form "*X* was good for me" are so naturally read as being a claim about something which is unpleasant in itself but good for your character or education or development threatens to obscure the point. Perhaps it would have been good for me in *that* sense to slog through *Moby Dick* – a kind of training in readerly patience and determination or something – but that is not what is at issue here: the question, rather, is whether it would have been *non-instrumentally valuable for me*, and it seems to me that the answer is fairly clearly "no.")

More recently, I finally did read *Moby Dick,* and immediately fell in love with it – rather than pompous and boring, it now seemed both profound and exhilarating, often amusing, even hilarious. The difference, I think, is that I was in a much better position to appreciate it, both because I had become a better reader, more comfortable with all those endless subordinate clauses, and perhaps because I had simply lived a bit longer and experienced a bit more and so had some better hope of understanding what Melville was

on about.[74] The second time we can fairly say that reading the book was "good for me," in Aristotle's sense, though it had not been before. This was not just a change, but a development: I came to enjoy the book because, to adapt what Aristotle says about the most "complete" and most pleasant activities, I had become a better-conditioned perceptual subject (in the relevant respect), engaging with an especially *kalon* object of my readerly-perceptual capacity. In becoming "better-conditioned" in this way, I became more able to recognize aspects of the work that I could not recognize before, aspects which make it a great book, and, in coming to be able to recognize these good-making aspects, I came also to enjoy the book.

This, I think, can help us to see how to resolve our original puzzle about the goodness thesis, if we take the ideal reader as a kind of stand in for the excellent person (both being instances of a subject who is excellent in the relevant capacity). Why is a book that is good *haplōs* also good for the ideal reader? In one sense, it is so (as the objectivist reading would have it) because the ideal reader has the capacity to recognize what is, in fact, good *haplōs,* independently of their reactions; in this, it is analogous to a subject with an uninjured, uncorrupted faculty of sense-perception perceiving a sensible quality. But this is not the end of the story; as the relativist reading insists, and as the analogy with "healthy" suggests, the book that is good *haplōs* is good *for* the ideal reader, while it would not be for, say, a child. Now we are in a position to see how to hold on to both of these ideas, and to understand why there was some ambiguity, in Aristotle's explanation of the goodness thesis, between good *for* and good *in the eyes of*. In fact, both senses are involved: what is good *haplōs* is good for the excellent person – is valuable to him, benefits him – in part because he is able to recognize it *as* good (is good in his eyes). ("Good in his eyes" either because, as Aufderheide would have it, his perception involves the deployment of concepts like *kalon* or "good"; or, instead, because he is attuned to those perceptible qualities which, he recognizes, make it something *kalon* or good.) The ability to appreciate and enjoy the goodness of a good (*haplōs*) book *makes* it good for the ideal reader. Because they have honed the relevant skills, they are able to engage with it in perceptual or contemplative activity which is itself good or *kalon*; since it is *their* activity, it is part of their good. The good *haplōs* book is good for them, then, in the sense that it is an integral part of their good activity.

We can also see, then, why what is good *haplōs* in this sense may *not* be good for someone who has not developed the relevant capacities – not just in that they don't recognize it as good, but in that (because they can't recognize its goodness) they won't get anything of value out of engaging with

[74] Kinch: "Are you sure it's not just that *you* have become pompous and boring?"
I *hope* not. But last semester a student told me that he was not surprised to learn that I worked on ancient philosophy "because you talk in, like, a really ancient way." So, that's potentially somewhat troubling in this connection.

it – and why something which is not good *haplōs* might be better for them. *Moby Dick* won't be good for children, because they will not be able to appreciate what makes it good; another book, say, *Charlotte's Web* might be better for them. This is so even though it is not great *haplōs*. (If I were to try to draw up a list of great works of fiction (*simpliciter*), I would probably not include *Charlotte's Web*.) This is not to denigrate it: it *is* a great children's book, i.e., a great book for children. And it might be great for them in part because it could help them develop the relevant readerly capacities, such that they could one days enjoy books that are good *haplōs*.

I think this can help us to see what Aristotle means when he says that the *spoudaios* is a "standard and measure" of what is pleasant. It is worth noting that Aristotle sometimes refers to what is pleasant *haplōs* as pleasant "in truth" (*kat'alētheian*). Here is a telling passage, where although he does not use the particular phrase *kat'alētheian*, he does seem to be defending the basic idea:

> In fact, however, pleasures differ quite a lot, in human beings at any rate. For the same things delight some people, and cause pain to others; and while some find them painful and hateful, others find them pleasant and loveable…But in all such cases it seems that what appears [so] to the excellent person *is* [so]. If this is right, and virtue and the good person insofar as he is good is the measure of each thing, then what appear pleasures to him will also be pleasures, and what is pleasant will be what he enjoys. And if what he finds objectionable appears pleasant to someone, that is not at all surprising, for human beings suffer many sorts of corruption and damage. But it is not pleasant except for people in these conditions. (*NE* 1176a10-24)[75]

This could seem odd. Is Aristotle suggesting that people can be *wrong* about what is pleasant? One (particularly, a 21st century reader) might think: What pleases you is what pleases you; you might be morally wrong to take pleasure in something, but you cannot be wrong *that* you are taking pleasure in it; and

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[75] διαλλάττουσι δ' οὐ σμικρὸν ἐπί γε τῶν ἀνθρώπων· τὰ γὰρ αὐτὰ τοὺς μὲν τέρπει τοὺς δὲ λυπεῖ, καὶ τοῖς μὲν λυπηρὰ καὶ μισητά ἐστι τοῖς δὲ ἡδέα καὶ φιλητά. καὶ ἐπὶ γλυκέων δὲ τοῦτο συμβαίνει· οὐ γὰρ τὰ αὐτὰ δοκεῖ τῷ πυρέττοντι καὶ τῷ ὑγιαίνοντι, οὐδὲ θερμὸν εἶναι τῷ ἀσθενεῖ καὶ τῷ εὐεκτικῷ. ὁμοίως δὲ τοῦτο καὶ ἐφ' ἑτέρων συμβαίνει. δοκεῖ δ' ἐν ἅπασι τοῖς τοιούτοις εἶναι τὸ φαινόμενον τῷ σπουδαίῳ. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο καλῶς λέγεται, καθάπερ δοκεῖ, καὶ ἔστιν ἑκάστου μέτρον ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἀγαθός, ᾗ τοιοῦτος, καὶ ἡδοναὶ εἶεν ἂν αἱ τούτῳ φαινόμεναι καὶ ἡδέα οἷς οὗτος χαίρει. τὰ δὲ τούτῳ δυσχερῆ εἴ τῳ φαίνεται ἡδέα, οὐδὲν θαυμαστόν· πολλαὶ γὰρ φθοραὶ καὶ λῦμαι ἀνθρώπων γίνονται· ἡδέα δ' οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ τούτοις καὶ οὕτω διακειμένοις. τὰς μὲν οὖν ὁμολογουμένως αἰσχρὰς δῆλον ὡς οὐ φατέον ἡδονὰς εἶναι, πλὴν τοῖς διεφθαρμένοις.

so isn't it just the case that it is pleasant? It pleases *you*, at any rate – and what more could there be to something's being pleasant than that it pleases people? But with respect to engaging with a challenging work of art, something like Aristotle's thought does seem to be fairly natural – it seems natural to say that a book really is enjoyable, even if many people who try to read it don't enjoy it (say, all those high school students), so long as it would be enjoyed by someone who possessed the relevant capacities. That is, the ideal reader is the standard of what is enjoyable. Similarly, one might say that the excellent person – where that now means, a person who has developed and honed the relevant capacities – is a "kind of standard and measure" of what is truly pleasant or enjoyable in the sense that what *counts* as pleasant or enjoyable is determined by what *they* would enjoy .

It is worth noting that the point at issue has nothing to do with high art. These observations will apply in any case where the activity in question requires a certain training or expertise if one is to engage successfully in it. If I tell someone that chess is boring, and they discover that I have not really learned anything beyond the rules, they might fairly point out that I am not yet in a position to say whether it is enjoyable or boring – although, of course, I am perfectly well in a position to say whether I enjoy it, as things presently stand. Similarly, if I say that basketball is no fun, and the problem turns out to be that I am simply terrible at it. (Nonetheless, aesthetic appreciation will turn out to be a helpful analogy in this and subsequent chapters, and I will make frequent use of it.)

Can we make sense of an even stronger version of this idea – the idea that pleasures, like beliefs, might be true or false? It's an idea we find forcefully expressed in Plato's *Philebus*, where Socrates suggests that "the wicked have pleasures painted in their minds" which are "somehow false," in the way that that expectations about the future and other judgments can be false (40a-d), while the pleasures of good people are true, as their judgments are. Admittedly, Aristotle never explicitly affirms such a view; but he does speak of what is "truly" pleasant, and at least on one occasion even refers to "curative" pleasures (i.e., pleasures of restoration) as "false," and he never objects to this idea from the *Philebus*, as he does with so many other of the theses Socrates defends in that work. Moreover, I think the account of the natural pleasures of book 10 that we've considered suggests a way of making sense of it. I've already suggested that part of what Aristotle has in mind when he speaks of the "pleasure" that completes and supervenes on the activity of perceiving or contemplating what is good and *kalon* is that it completes the activity of experiencing the object *as* good and *kalon* – that is, one takes pleasure not merely in experiencing an object which is in fact good and beautiful, but in experiencing it *as* good and beautiful. If that's right, then this kind of pleasure has in a sense an "intentional object"; it presents the world, or a part of the world, as being a certain way (as being good or worth pursuing).

One might try to make the case that this holds of pleasure *in general* – that is, even of pleasures other than those natural pleasures that Aristotle describes in *NE* 10 – as Jessica Moss claims.[76] On this way of thinking, when Aristotle says that pleasure is an "apparent good," (*EE* 1235b26-27) he does not mean that pleasurable experiences appear to oneself as goods to pursue, but rather that to experience *X* as pleasant is for it to appear good and choiceworthy.[77] As Aristotle helpfully clarifies, this would not necessarily mean that one will form the *belief* that it is good, since opinion and appearance are different things (*EE* 1235b27-29). But if that is so, if pleasure in this way presents something *as good*, then it will be perfectly natural to speak of truth and falsity in connection with pleasure. The pleasures of the well-conditioned subject will be "true" because to find something pleasant is for it to appear good, and they find pleasant what is, in fact, good. But, whether or not this holds of pleasure in general, as Moss believes, I think it is highly plausible that it holds of the pleasures of *NE* 10.

Given that Aristotle is happy to speak of what is pleasant in truth, perhaps it might be thought that the excellent person is a standard and measure in virtue of tracking what is *objectively* pleasant, i.e., independently of whether anyone does or would enjoy it (and not that their responses play the constitutive role I suggested above) – i.e., that "pleasant" is, like sensible qualities for Aristotle, a feature of how things are in themselves. Here, I think we must be careful, partially because of the slipperiness of the concept of objectivity. If we ask what *makes* a certain book, say, pleasant or enjoyable, we will cite features of the book, not readers; in that sense, what makes it pleasant is "objective." And, if what I said in the last paragraph is right, then Aristotle thinks that to take pleasure in something is to experience it *as good* (e.g., to take pleasure in a piece of music is to experience it as beautiful), and thus that pleasure represents something as being (let us assume) objectively a certain way. But neither of these points suffice to justify this stronger idea, that things are pleasant or not independently of how people do or would experience them; it leaves open a constitutive role for the responses of the *spoudaios* (the ideal reader) in determining what it is for something to be pleasant.

Now, admittedly, nothing we have seen so far about Aristotle's view of pleasure rules out this stronger, more objectivist picture of pleasure. But neither does his view of pleasure require the objectivist picture, and it seems somewhat unlikely in itself – it seems rather more intuitive that for something to be pleasant is for it to be the case that people (or people capable of responding to it appropriately) would take pleasure in it. One might say,

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[76] *Aristotle on the Apparent Good*; but cf. Morison's review of Moss in his "Book Notes: Aristotle," *Phronesis* 58 (3). For another contrasting view, see Lorenz, *The Brute Within.*

[77] Here, an ambiguity in the word *hēdonē*, "pleasure," is important…Cf. Owen, "Aristotelian Pleasures."

pleasure or enjoyment seems to be conceptually prior to the quality of being pleasant (whereas, by contrast, being good is conceptually prior to experiencing something as good[78]). I don't think it's merely that this seems intuitive to *us*. As Verity Hart ("Pleasure in the *NE*") argues, "it is not that Aristotle supposes that some things are actually pleasant, irrespective of whether somebody would ever find them so" (313). Consider Aristotle's claim that "A horse, a dog and a human being have different pleasures…" (1176a5-6). I don't think that it is *impossible* to square this with the radical kind of objectivism about what is pleasant under consideration, but it seems natural to think that Aristotle is assuming that different creatures have different pleasures because what is pleasant depends on what pleases them (when they are in a good condition). Since nothing Aristotle says commits him to the more radical objectivism about pleasure, I think we should conclude that the excellent person is the standard and measure of what is pleasant *haplōs* in that what counts as pleasant is determined by what they, having developed the relevant capacities, would take pleasure in.

Should we say something similar about goodness – that the responses of the excellent person play such a constitutive role in determining what is good – so that the account of the relationship between what is good *haplōs* and what is good to the good person would be exactly parallel to the relationship between what is pleasant *haplōs* and what is pleasant to the good person? Our example of aesthetic appreciation might suggest so. Again, this is not to say that we would think that their responses *make* a book good. If I ask what makes *Moby Dick* a great book, you might cite things like the depth of the characters' psychology, its treatment of universal themes, the beauty of its language, etc.; and it is the ability to respond appropriately to such good-making aspects of a book that make our ideal reader an ideal reader. But, as we saw, the same is true concerning what makes a book enjoyable – indeed, the things that make it enjoyable are, in this case, largely what makes it good. The role of the ideal reader in this account comes in when we ask, not "what features of a book make it enjoyable?", but: "what makes it the case that these kinds of features count as enjoyable?" It is not implausible to think something similar about what constitutes the goodness of a good book: The (hypothetical) responses of the ideal reader are not what *makes* a book good, but perhaps they are what explains why *these* features are the kinds of features that make a book a good book. Indeed, it might be natural to suppose that it is because such features make the work enjoyable to the ideal reader that they are also good-making features.

But here we are perhaps up against the limits of our analogy with aesthetic appreciation. This last idea may be plausible only because it is part of the *point* of a book or a play to be enjoyed by people. But if the function of

[78] Cf. Sellars point about so-called secondary qualities in "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind."

something has nothing to do with producing certain responses in people, then what makes it count as good, similarly, won't necessarily be relative to ideal observers. Aristotle would likely balk at the idea that the explanation of it is why these features of god that make god good is to be found in the fact that human beings (with the relevant capacities developed) enjoy contemplating such beings and find them beautiful. What makes contemplation of god truly *pleasant* may be relative in this way to the pleasure of the ideal contemplator, but what makes god truly good will not be.

The issue is delicate and hard to formulate precisely. In the case of both pleasure and goodness a certain biconditional holds: (1) Whenever something is pleasant *haplōs,* the excellent person takes pleasure in it. (2) Whenever something is good *haplōs,* the excellent person sees it as good and it is good for him. The difference comes in when we ask which side of the biconditional is more basic than, and explanatory of, the other (i.e., is "prior" in Aristotle's technical sense).[79] My suggestion is that in (1) it is the responses of the excellent person which explain why what is pleasant *haplōs* is pleasant *haplōs,* but that in (2) it is what is good *haplōs* that explains the responses of the excellent person: It is because god is good, independently of what any contemplators do or would think of it, that ideal contemplators enjoy contemplating god and such contemplation is good for them. This enables us to hold on to the idea that what is good *haplōs* is good for the excellent person because they are able to recognize and appreciate what *is* good. They are responding appropriately to what is in fact good; it is not that their responses constitute its goodness.

Against this, and in support of the idea that Aristotle thinks of goodness, too, as posterior to the responses of the excellent person, someone might appeal to a well-known passage from the *Poetics*:

> Again, a beautiful object – a living organism and every whole composed from parts – must not only have well-ordered parts; it also cannot be of just any size. For beauty is a matter of size and order, and therefore impossible in a very minute creature, since our perception becomes indistinct…or in a creature of vast size (say, 10,000 stades long), as, in that case, instead of the object being seen all at once, the unity and wholeness of it is lost to the beholder. Just in the same way, then, as with bodies and living organisms, they must be of a certain size [in order to be beautiful], i.e., a size to be taken in at once, so a story or a plot must be of some length, i.e., a length to be taken in by the memory…The limit set by the actual nature of the thing is

[79] It is important to note here that a biconditional need not state an identity; only that it always allows you to draw an inference from one proposition to the other. Thus, for instance, if I say, "The flowers will grow if and only if the spring is rainy," I can conclude that the flowers will grow from the fact that the spring is rainy, or that the spring was rainy from the fact that the flowers grew. My point is that does not tell you, by itself, which of those facts is more basic than and explanatory of the other.

> this: the longer the story, consistently with its being comprehensible as a whole, the finer it is be reason of its magnitude. (*Poetics* 1450b34-1451a12)[80]

What is interesting about this passage, for our purposes, is that Aristotle suggests that for something to *be kalon* (beautiful or fine), it must be possible for someone to be able to appreciate it as beautiful. And he suggests this not only when it comes to tragedies – which might be explained by appeal to the fact that it is part of the point of tragedies to be appreciated – but also natural beings, living organisms. Aristotle's point is *not* that to be beautiful is to be thought of as beautiful; he tells us in the *Metaphysics* that "the greatest forms of beauty are order and proportion and the definite," (*Met.* 1078b1)[81] and whether something exhibits these qualities is a matter of how it is in itself, not of what anyone thinks of it. Still, Aristotle seems to suggest in the *Poetics* that for things like "order" to make a particular whole beautiful, it must be possible for a human being to *take in* that order – to perceive or contemplate it, and thereby see the whole as beautiful. Thus, Aristotle seems to suggest something about the *kalon* which is very similar to what I suggested (on his behalf) about the pleasant. Since, as we saw earlier, the *kalon* seems to coincide with what is good as such, one might be tempted to conclude that what counts as good, too, is relative to human capacities – that in order for some intrinsic features of *X* to make *X* good (and not merely possessed of those features), people must be able to grasp or recognize that *X* instantiates those features and is therefore good. In this way, the relationship between good *haplōs* and good for the excellent would again be parallel to the relationship between what is pleasant *haplōs* and pleasant to the excellent

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[80] ἔτι δ' ἐπεὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ ζῷον καὶ ἅπαν
πρᾶγμα ὃ συνέστηκεν ἐκ τινῶν οὐ μόνον ταῦτα τεταγμένα
δεῖ ἔχειν ἀλλὰ καὶ μέγεθος ὑπάρχειν μὴ τὸ τυχόν· τὸ
γὰρ καλὸν ἐν μεγέθει καὶ τάξει ἐστίν, διὸ οὔτε πάμμικρον
ἄν τι γένοιτο καλὸν ζῷον (συγχεῖται γὰρ ἡ θεωρία ἐγγὺς
τοῦ ἀναισθήτου χρόνου γινομένη) οὔτε παμμέγεθες (οὐ γὰρ
ἅμα ἡ θεωρία γίνεται ἀλλ' οἴχεται τοῖς θεωροῦσι τὸ ἓν
καὶ τὸ ὅλον ἐκ τῆς θεωρίας) οἷον εἰ μυρίων σταδίων εἴη
ζῷον· ὥστε δεῖ καθάπερ ἐπὶ τῶν σωμάτων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν
ζώων ἔχειν μὲν μέγεθος, τοῦτο δὲ εὐσύνοπτον εἶναι, οὕτω
καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν μύθων ἔχειν μὲν μῆκος, τοῦτο δὲ εὐμνημόνευ-
τον εἶναι. τοῦ δὲ μήκους ὅρος <ὁ> μὲν πρὸς τοὺς ἀγῶνας καὶ
τὴν αἴσθησιν οὐ τῆς τέχνης ἐστίν· εἰ γὰρ ἔδει ἑκατὸν
τραγῳδίας ἀγωνίζεσθαι, πρὸς κλεψύδρας ἂν ἠγωνίζοντο,
†ὥσπερ ποτὲ καὶ ἄλλοτέ φασιν†. ὁ δὲ κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν
φύσιν τοῦ πράγματος ὅρος, ἀεὶ μὲν ὁ μείζων μέχρι τοῦ σύν-
δηλος εἶναι καλλίων ἐστὶ κατὰ τὸ μέγεθος

[81] τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ μέγιστα εἴδη τάξις καὶ συμμετρία καὶ τὸ ὡρισμένον. It's a bit hard to know how to translate *to hōrismenon* here (I've gone with "the definite," but that's hardly more than a placeholder); as it turns out to play an interesting and important role in the self-awareness arguments of *NE* 9.9 and *EE* 7.12, I discuss the concept and why it might be thought to contribute to something's beauty in chapter 2.

person – not by appeal to an objectivist picture of the pleasant, but a (subtle, non-Protagorean) kind of relativism about the good.

There is, however, a different way of understanding what is going on – one that is more interesting and, I think, plausibly more Aristotelian. The idea would be that the *kalon* serves as a bridge, so to speak, between the good and the pleasant. Aristotle tells us, in the *Rhetoric,* that "whatever, being good, is pleasant because it is good" is *kalon*.[82] That is, even though when you say that something is *kalon* you are saying something about how it is and not about anyone's experience, you are highlighting how it will present itself – as appealing or worth pursuing – to a suitable subject. (It is for this reason, I would suggest, that Aristotle speaks of the objects of genuinely pleasant perception and contemplation as *kalon,* rather than good, though he certainly also thinks that they are good *haplōs.*) Thus, to say that *X* is *kalon* will imply something about how it will function in the experience of a (suitably habituated) person: It will strike them as appealing or attractive or worth pursuing, in a way that isn't necessarily implied by saying that it is good.

To make the thought clearer, a simplified example might help: In the *Poetics* passage, as in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle suggests that one thing that makes a complex whole *kalon* and good of its kind is that it is well-ordered. Now, an Aristotelian philosopher might sort out just what it takes for something to be well-ordered; he then might turn to Aristotle's 10,000-stade creature that is simply too vast for him to take in all at once, and, by proceeding through a systematic examination of its parts one by one, come to realize that, in the abstract, it satisfies each of the criteria for being well-ordered; he might conclude that it is therefore good of its (very big) kind – but, on Aristotle's view, there would still be something off about him describing it as *kalon*. Because it eludes his ability to comprehend as a whole, all at once, it simply cannot *strike him* as *kalon*, cannot present itself to him as beautiful. This implies, on Aristotle's view, that it is not *kalon*.[83] And the point need not be simply a matter of visual beauty; it could be applied to an elegant argument or theory, or the literary beauty of a novel. (More interestingly, and perhaps to the dismay of certain moral philosophers, it seems that the point could be applied to human action: However unassailable

[82] καλὸν μὲν οὖν ἐστιν ὃ ἂν δι' αὑτὸ αἱρετὸν ὂν ἐπαινετὸν ᾖ, ἢ ὃ ἂν ἀγαθὸν ὂν ἡδὺ ᾖ, ὅτι ἀγαθόν. (*Rh*. I.9, 1366a33–4) Thus, the whole sentence translates: "The *kalon* is, either, whatever is choiceworthy in itself because it is praiseworthy, or whatever, being good, is pleasant because it is good." Earlier he had said: τὸ γὰρ καλόν ἐστιν ἤτοι τὸ ἡδὺ ἢ τὸ καθ' αὑτὸ αἱρετόν (1364b27-8). Particularly when taken together, these might seem to suggest that Aristotle is intending to contrast the sense of *kalon* as something "noble" and thus choiceworthy (though it may be painful), or as something "beautiful" and thus pleasant to contemplate – which, if true, would potentially be a problem for what I want to say.

[83] Perhaps it could be *kalon* in counterfactual sense, in that its goodness could be appreciated by a creature without cognitive limits (or with different ones), though Aristotle does not avail himself of this idea.

of a theoretical argument one has that some action is in fact good, if people cannot on that basis *see* the action as *kalon*, then, the implication seems to be, it will not *be kalon*.)

Perhaps, then, it is no accident that Aristotle tells us that the excellent person is "a kind of standard and measure of what is *kalon* and pleasant," rather than what is *good* and pleasant. The allusion to Protagoras is not tongue-in-cheek (as I think it would be if he meant that the good person is "the measure" in the sense that he is an accurate measuring instrument of what is objectively fine and pleasant); Aristotle *is* committed to a kind of relativism about the pleasant and the fine: He is a relativist about the pleasant insofar as he thinks to say that something is pleasant *haplōs* or in truth is to say that a person with the appropriately honed perceptual and contemplative activities will take pleasure in it (and that the latter *explains* the former). And he is a relativist about the *kalon* because to say that something is *kalon* is to highlight how it will present itself to an excellent person as something attractive – and thus something could not *be kalon* if, given the nature of even ideally developed human capacities, it could not make this kind of impact in the excellent person's experience. But it is a relativism that is built upon an objectivist picture of the good. It is the responses of the excellent person, and not just anyone, that go into determining what is genuinely pleasant and the *kalon* because the excellent person is able to recognize and appreciate what is, in fact, good; they experience what is objectively good as *kalon* and take pleasure in it. And this, as we have seen, is part of why what is good *haplōs* is good for them; *their* activities of perceiving or contemplating the good are themselves good, and thus part of their own good.

5. *The* haplōs *pleasures of virtuous activity*

It is time to consider a significant objection to my interpretation of what makes the pleasant and good *haplōs* pleasant and good for the excellent person. On my interpretation, it is because the excellent person is able to perceive and contemplate what is good as such, and they therefore enjoy or take pleasure in doing so. In articulating and defending that account, I relied on the assumption that the aesthetic/contemplative model of pleasure offered in *NE* 10.4 was intended to be not merely an *example* of pleasure, but an account of pleasure in general. But where does this leave the pleasures of virtuous *practical* actions (*praxeis*) – which are, after all, something else than the mental activities of perceiving and contemplating? Surely, a view of Aristotle's theory of pleasure in the *Ethics* is plausible only if it can accommodate such ethically significant pleasures as these.[84]

One could give up that assumption about pleasure in *NE* 10, and instead try to bring out how the aesthetic model provides an analogy for the

[84] This is true even if one is inclined towards an "intellectualist," rather than "inclusivist," interpretation of Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia*.

pleasures of virtuous action, even though virtuous action is not an instance of perception or contemplation. But I don't see how that would work. The other option, which I will try to defend here, is to bring out how virtuous action *involves* perception or thought, and argue that this is the source of the pleasure of virtuous action.

Now, in one sense, the idea that virtuous action involves perception and thought is obvious: To be ethically virtuous, one needs *phronēsis*, and to act virtuously requires the exercise of *phronesis* – i.e., requires that one engage in good practical reasoning on the basis of sound perception of the particulars of the circumstance one finds oneself in. It is this point that Verity Harte seems to appeal to when she argues that book 10's "restriction of focus to the pleasures of perceptual and intellectual activities" makes perfect sense since "it is (certain) perceptual and intellectual activities (including the intellectual activities of practical wisdom, the virtues) that, in light of the 'function argument' of NE 1.7, remain in contention for identification as *eudaimonia*." (309) In fact, I believe that book 10 is concerned with what is pleasant *haplōs,* and that is, I think, a broader class than that of the pleasures that attach to the activities that constitute *eudaimonia* (e.g., playing the lyre well may be pleasant *haplōs,* but even for the most inclusivist reader of the *NE*, it will not be a part of human *eudaimonia*). But there is a more important difficulty. Is it plausible to think the pleasures of virtuous action are to be found exclusively in the pleasures of the perceptual and intellectual activities of practical wisdom – the activities, I take it, of skillful perception of the particulars of the situation in which one must act, and good deliberation on the basis of that perception and a correct view of the human end? [85] For one thing, it is not clear how the perception of the *phronimos* would fit the model of *NE* 10.4, since the object of his perception (the situation he finds himself in) need not be *kalon*. And even if his deliberation involves contemplating *kalon* actions, and that is pleasant for him, why should that make his *action* – which may, after all, be temporally separate from his deliberation – pleasant?

[85] Perhaps Harte is actually referring to some other perceptual and intellectual activities involved in the exercise of *phronēsis* and ethical virtue – other than the perception of particulars and practical reasoning. But since these are what Aristotle discusses under the heading of *phronēsis,* and since Harte does not cite any others, I will assume that this is what she has in mind.

At least, I don't *think* she cites any others, though perhaps this passage is meant to point to another kind of ethical perception: "When the temperate person takes pleasure in acting temperately, the object of his pleasure is not as such his temperance, as if the person might say 'Here I am, acting temperately. Isn't that great!' Rather, the enjoyment of acting temperately will consist, at least in part, in the enjoyment of those acts that constitute temperance: eating and drinking moderately, for example." (312) Is she here talking about enjoying *perceiving* those temperate acts (rather than *perceiving* oneself engaged in temperate acts), or simply enjoying acting temperately? I am simply not sure.

We can come a bit closer to an answer by considering the reading defended by Aufderheide ("Aristotle against Delos"), who tells us that:

> My interpretation rests on the assumption that the fine *can* be perceived…Just as a baker can *see* that the bread is good, so a virtuous person can *see* that an action is good by perceiving that the parameters are in the mean. Hitting the mean in all dimensions is difficult and rare: actions that succeed are praiseworthy and fine…Thus, agents who can see the mean and competently predicate 'fine' will be able to perceive good and praiseworthy actions as fine. (295-6)

It does seem right that acting virtuously requires being able to perceive what is *kalon* in Aufderheide's sense, i.e., being able to discriminate actions that are *kalon* from those that are not. (How else would the virtuous agent know what to do?) But, if this is going to explain the pleasure of virtuous activity as such, and not the pleasure of something *else* that one must be able to do in order to engage in virtuous activity, we need some argument that Aristotle believes some kind of such "ethical perception" (as Aufderheide calls it) is involved in acting virtuously, in a kind of ongoing and constitutive way. (Think about the analogy with the baker for a moment. A good baker is able to discriminate well-baked loaves from poorly baked ones, and he make take pleasure in perceiving a well-baked loaf; he may also take pleasure in the activity of baking itself, say, in kneading dough; but it is not obvious how the former pleasure explains the latter.)

In fact, I think we have independent reason to believe Aristotle maintains that practical actions involve self-awareness or self-perception ("perceiving one's own being" or "perceiving one's own living," as Aristotle puts it in book 9). It is because of this self-awareness that, when the practical actions are virtuous, the agent will take pleasure in them – for it will then be an instance of perceiving what is *kalon*, in this case, one's own actions.

In the passage from *NE* 9.9 that I cited earlier, where Aristotle tells us that living as a human being consists in perceiving and thinking, Aristotle had connected this point with the pleasure one finds in living: Since whenever one perceives, one perceives that one perceives, and to fully live as a human being is to perceive, therefore, insofar as one is living fully, "there is something in us that perceives that we are active,"[86] i.e., one will be aware of

[86] ἔστι τι τὸ αἰσθανόμενον ὅτι ἐνεργοῦμεν (1170a30-31). I am not sure how much weight to place on the fact that Aristotle asserts here that there is "*something*" (in our soul, presumably) that perceives that we are active, rather than (as one might have expected given the course of the argument thus far) asserting simply that the agent herself perceives that she is active. Is Aristotle here alluding to some kind of "inner sense," which is responsible not for the immediate awareness or perception of external objects, but for self-awareness or apperception – our awareness that we are perceiving? But isn't part of the drift of *DA* 3.2 that it is by *sight* (rather than some other faculty) that we are aware that we are seeing? (Tim pointed out to me that the fact that the DA 3.2 argument that it is "by sight" that we are

one's living. This means that living is pleasant in itself, Aristotle tells us, since "living is something good by nature, and it is pleasant to perceive a good as present in oneself."[87] Thus, at least part of what makes living pleasant is that, in living, we perceive something that is good in itself (namely, living) "present in us."

But it later becomes clear that Aristotle's point is not, as it may first seem, that it is pleasant to be aware merely of the fact that we are *alive*. Later on, in *NE* 9.12, after recapitulating his argument that, as each of desires self-perception, so too we desire perception of our friend's being, Aristotle tells us that this is why friends will want "to share in whatever actions they believe their shared life [to consist in]."[88] (Aristotle's examples are: drinking together, playing dice together, doing gymnastics or hunting together, philosophizing together – thus reinforcing the point that it is not necessarily actions which *are* constitutive of living well, but rather actions which the subject *takes* to be that are accompanied by this pleasant self-awareness, though of course these actions will only be pleasant *haplōs* if they really are good.) This suggests that when Aristotle speaks of the perception of your own living or being, he has in mind the awareness of the particular actions which, on your own view, constitute a human life well-lived (what you take *really living* to consist in, so to speak); and this suggests, moreover, that when he says that, in being aware of living, you are aware of something good in itself being present in you, he has in mind not merely the idea that it is good in the abstract to be alive and thus pleasant to be aware of that, but that it is pleasant to be aware of being engaged in the activities that (in your view) make your life *good*, make it worth living.[89]

If we apply this thought to the virtuous actions of the excellent person, which are good both in fact and in the view of the excellent person, the implication would seem to be that the excellent person will take pleasure in perceiving himself engaged in the activity, and in particular in his perception of what he is doing *as* good or *kalon*.[90] Given this, he can avail himself of the

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aware that we are seeing does not mean that there is not something – a "common sense" – which enables us to discriminate, say, this taste from this color; perhaps this passage from the *NE* suggests that this common sense also plays some role in our awareness of ourselves. This seems like an intriguing possibility, but because what I want to say doesn't hang on it, I won't pursue it here.)

[87] τὸ δ' αἰσθάνεσθαι ὅτι ζῇ, τῶν ἡδέων καθ' αὑτό (φύσει γὰρ ἀγαθὸν ζωή, τὸ δ' ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχον ἐν ἑαυτῷ αἰσθάνεσθαι ἡδύ) (1170b1-3).

[88] συζῆν γὰρ βουλόμενοι μετὰ τῶν φίλων, ταῦτα ποιοῦσι καὶ τούτων κοινωνοῦσιν οἷς οἴονται συζῆν (1172a6-8)

[89] This is a highly compressed version of an argument that I present in much greater detail in chapter 2.

[90] This idea will sound implausible if one thinks of self-consciousness in the pejorative sense, which often interferes with one's performance of an activity and tends, if anything, to make it *less* pleasant. But we need not think of what Aristotle calls "perception of one's being" as self-consciousness in this sense; he likely has in mind simply the fact that, when we are

model developed in *NE* 10.4 to explain the pleasure that the virtuous take in acting virtuously: It is an instance of a well-conditioned subject (the virtuous agent) perceiving fine or beautiful objects (his own virtuous actions) of the relevant perceptual capacity (perhaps the capacity for practical self-awareness, though Aristotle never explicitly speaks of such a thing as far as I know).

And, upon reflection, there is something very natural about the thought that the pleasure one takes in what one does stems from the fact one's actions involve self-awareness. If we allow ourselves the assumption that *NE* 7 (*EE* 6) was originally composed for the *Eudemian Ethics* and that the *EE* was composed at an earlier stage in Aristotle's career,[91] we might speculate that Aristotle's thinking on pleasure evolved as follows: At first, in composing *NE 7*/*EE* 6, Aristotle rejected the idea that pleasure was a perceived process of restoration, taking issue not only with the idea that it is a process, but also that it is necessarily "perceived"[92] – because, we might imagine Aristotle reasoning at that point, pleasure also attaches to non-perceptual activities. But, then, he might have later asked himself, would the agent derive pleasure from her activity if she were not aware of herself as engaged in the activity, i.e., if she were not conscious of it? Since the answer to that would seem to be "no," Aristotle may have concluded that pleasure *does* attach, in every case, to either perception or thought, where the object of perception or thought is either what the agent is doing or something external (a beautiful object, god, etc.).[93] Certainly, this is only speculation, but it seems to me to have some plausibility. (In another sense, he is *not* giving up the idea that pleasure attaches to unimpeded natural activity at all – but is now insisting that, for human beings, unimpeded natural activity

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engaged in some action, we are aware of what we are doing – one might say, simply that we are conscious of what we are doing.

[91] Though certainly not universally accepted, I take this to be the majority view among scholars. For the classic dissent, see Kenny, *The Aristotelian Ethics*. See also Lawrence Jost ("The *EE* and its Controversial Relationship to the *NE*") for a nice overview of the state of play. In allowing myself a developmental hypothesis as to the differing accounts of pleasure, I do not mean to imply that we should *always* look to the *NE* as opposed to the *EE* for Aristotle's considered view, since whatever differences exist between the two works need not always be a result of Aristotle reconsidering something. For instance, in the discussion of friendship in the *EE*, it seems to me that (for whatever reason) Aristotle relies more freely and extensively on technical Aristotelian ideas that he develops in his works on natural philosophy and metaphysics, and that can make it in some ways more useful to the interpreter.

[92] διὸ καὶ οὐ καλῶς ἔχει τὸ αἰσθητὴν γένεσιν φάναι εἶναι τὴν ἡδονήν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον λεκτέον ἐνέργειαν τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἕξεως, ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ αἰσθητὴν ἀνεμπόδιστον (*NE* 7.11, 1153a12-15)

[93] Admittedly, this line of thought would not be a logically unassailable. Even if the absence of self-perception necessarily implied absence of pleasure, this does not imply that what we take pleasure in is self-perception. But it may have suggested to Aristotle the possibility that pleasure attaches to self-perception, even without strictly implying it.

always consists in, or at least involves as an integral element, perception and thought.[94])

In fact, Gabriel Richardson Lear ("Aristotle on Moral Virtue and the Fine") has argued for a similar picture of the pleasure of virtuous activity from, so to speak, the other side – that is, by considering the nature of virtuous activity and the virtuous agent's motivation to engage in it; I can offer some further support for my reading by briefly canvassing her argument. Lear considers what it means for Aristotle to claim that the virtuous person chooses virtuous action for the sake of the fine or beautiful (*kalon*). What does this add to his claim that it is chosen because it is good in itself, or that it is chosen for its own sake? One of Lear's central claims is that, in saying that the virtuous person acts for the sake of the *kalon,* Aristotle is emphasizing that in acting virtuously "goodness [of one's actions] is easily intelligible and pleasant to contemplate." (132) As we have already seen, to say that something is *kalon* is to say not only that it is good, and not only that it is good in itself, but also that its goodness is in some sense manifest (at least to the *spoudaios*); and that, if one is capable of appreciating the type of goodness, the beauty in question, it will be pleasant for one to perceive or contemplate. [95] Thus, Lear lays great stress on the fact that Aristotle often speaks of virtuous action "shining forth" and describes the virtuous agent as "contemplating" virtuous actions: Just prior to arguing that, even in the very worst circumstances, the most tragic misfortunes, "the fineness [of the virtuous person's actions] shines through (*dialampei*)," Aristotle asserts that "the happy person always, or more than anyone else, does and contemplates (*theōrēsei*) virtuous actions, and he bears his fortune in the finest and altogether most harmonious way" (1100b19-21). And then, in 9.9: "the blessedly happy man…chooses to contemplate actions that are decent *and his*

[94] Bostock ("Pleasure and Activity in Aristotle's Ethics") has argued on this basis that Aristotle was maintaining that pleasure is always the pleasure of perception all along, i.e., in book 7 as well – that when he there identified pleasure with unimpeded natural activity, he meant perceptual activity. But it is hard to see why, if this were so, Aristotle would insist explicitly that pleasure should *not* be defined as "perceived" activity, but rather as "unimpeded" activity. Bostock's response to this question is that (1) perception is built into his notion of activity, but (2) Aristotle does not explicitly affirm that pleasure derives from perception because "it is a view which he has held for so many years that he has now forgotten that it needs stating explicitly." My sense is that this could serve as an explanation of why Aristotle had neglected to point out that the pleasure of activity was the pleasure of perception involved, but it does not seem to me very satisfying as an explanation of why Aristotle specifically says that we should *not* characterize pleasure in terms of perception.

[95] Particularly if we have in mind the association of *to kalon* with a certain elevated social standing – *kalon* as meaning "noble" – we might be tempted to think that Aristotle is emphasizing the way in which, in acting virtuously, one's goodness is manifest *to others*; but Lear argues that Aristotle has primarily in mind the fact that it is manifest to oneself, *as opposed to its being manifest to others*. In chapter 4, I will suggest that Aristotle saw a more interesting relationship between the goodness of one's actions being manifest to oneself and its being manifest to others.

own,"[96] since such actions "possess both of the naturally pleasant features,"[97] namely, being intrinsically good and being one's own. This is in the course of arguing that he will want to contemplate the actions of a virtue friend; but the thrust of the argument is that he wants to do this because it is either is in some sense a way of, or is relevantly similar to, contemplating his own actions. Given this background, when, in that same chapter, Aristotle goes on to say that the excellent person "delights in virtuous actions…just as the musician takes pleasure in beautiful (*kalois*) melodies,"[98] it is likely that Aristotle means not only the virtuous actions (melodies) of others, but also one's own virtuous actions (melodies).

If the pleasure of virtuous action derives not from the action in of itself, but from our awareness of ourselves as doing something fine, should we say something similar about the activity of perceiving a beautiful external object or contemplating god? That is, should we say that the pleasure really derives, not from the perceiving of a beautiful external object itself, but from our awareness of ourselves doing so (and therefore doing something that is itself *kalon*, viz., contemplating something *kalon*)? But perhaps Aristotle would maintain that this is an ill-framed question. Part of what it *is* to perceive is to be aware of oneself perceiving: self-awareness or consciousness is necessarily part of the activity of perception – such an essential part that perhaps we cannot even coherently ask whether the pleasure derives from the awareness of the external object, or of ourselves being aware of it.[99] (Perhaps the point will come out more clearly if we frame it in terms of "experience" rather than "perception": We might say that Aristotle's view is that pleasure derives from *experiencing* the fine or beautiful. There would be something off about then asking whether the pleasure really derives from the experience of the beautiful itself or from our awareness that we are experiencing something beautiful; there just isn't enough daylight between experiencing *X* and being aware that you are experiencing *X*.) And if this is right, we might after all want to say something similar about virtuous action: that it is part of the idea of an *action* that one performs it with a certain

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[96] ὁ μακάριος…θεωρεῖν προαιρεῖται πράξεις ἐπιεικεῖς καὶ οἰκείας, 1170a2-3; where I think we should take οἰκείας is the sense of "his own" rather than e.g. "fitting for him," since he has just used οἰκείας at 1169b35 in what must be that sense and seems odd for Aristotle to shift senses so quickly, and anyway it would ruin his argument if it did.

[97] ἄμφω γὰρ ἔχουσι τὰ τῇ φύσει ἡδέα, 1170a1

[98] ὁ γὰρ σπουδαῖος, ᾗ σπουδαῖος, ταῖς κατ' ἀρετὴν πράξεσι χαίρει, ταῖς δ' ἀπὸ κακίας δυσχεραίνει, καθάπερ ὁ μουσικὸς τοῖς καλοῖς μέλεσιν ἥδεται, ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς φαύλοις λυπεῖται. (1170a8-11)

[99] According to Kosman ("Perceiving that We Perceive") this is part of the difference between merely being affected and perceiving. Kosman suggests that this element of self-awareness explains the difference, for Aristotle, between: (1) a piece of cheese in the fridge which, sitting next to some onion, has come to smell *like* onion – it has, an Aristotelian might say, "taken on the olfactory form of the onion without its matter" (p. 507) – but clearly it does not *smell the onion*; and (2) what a human being, say, is capable of doing, that is, smelling the onion.

awareness of what one is doing. We could coherently imagine someone "going through the motions" and doing what looks from the outside much the same as the virtuous person's virtuous action, but it would certainly not be virtuous action; and if one lacked self-awareness altogether, perhaps it wouldn't even be an *action*. One's awareness, or practical self-knowledge, is after all an essential part of what one does – without it, not only would one not take pleasure in one's actions, one wouldn't be acting at all.[100]

Admittedly, Aristotle does not avail himself of precisely this point. But I think the idea that it is an aspect of his view gets some support by considering, as I shall do in the next section, by returning to the question of why pleasure is the "path" to making what is good *haplōs* good for oneself.

6. *The motivational role of pleasure in loving of the good*

If my reading of Aristotle's account of pleasure in book 10 is on the right track, then it can help us to clarify why "the same things are good *haplōs* and pleasant *haplōs,*" and why what is good and pleasant *haplōs* is good and pleasant to the excellent person. *Haplōs* pleasures derive from perceiving or contemplating something that is *kalon* and thus good in itself – where this *kalon* thing might be either one's own action or something external. Such perceptive and contemplative activities are themselves good and pleasant, since "the best activity is that of the best-conditioned [subject] in relationship to the best of its objects" and the greatest pleasure is that which supervenes on and completes "the activity of the well-conditioned subject in relation to the most excellent objects of the capacity." The excellent person, then, is able to appreciate the goodness of what is good as such in perceiving or contemplating it, and her perceptual and contemplative activity will therefore be good; good in itself, but also part of her good, since it is after all *her* activity; what is good *haplōs* and as such will also be good for her, since

[100] This way of thinking about the relationship between pleasure and virtuous actions (*praxeis*) is lent some further support by the fact that it solves a certain difficulty with Aristotle's account of pleasure. Aristotle says, at the end of *NE* 10.4, that "pleasure never arises without activity and completes every activity," which I take to mean that every pleasure arises *from* some activity, and every activity has some pleasure which supervenes on it (and "completes" it) when it is done in a *kalon* way. Given that he has just been discussing the difference between activity (*energeia*) and process (*kinēsis*) – which he has "discussed exactly elsewhere," (1174b3) i.e., in more theoretical and technical works like the *Physics*, and which account he is here relying on – I take it that Aristotle is here using *energeia* in its technical sense. But many *praxeis* are not *energeiai* in the technical sense – for instance, courageously defending one's city from an onslaught or justly distributing a set of natural goods to those who deserve them. Such must be processes rather than activity, since they "are not complete at every time": If one ends up submitting to the attackers or if the goods are stolen before they can be distributed, than one will not have courageously defended one's city or justly distributed anything (though that's what one was *trying* to do). (Cf. Owen, "Aristotelian Pleasures.") But perception and contemplation are *energeiai* in this more technical sense.

it is an integral part of her own good activity. Since her activity is itself excellent and her own, she will also take pleasure in it.

But we have also seen that Aristotle appears to give a more significant role to pleasure. It is not just that what is good *haplōs* is also (happily enough) pleasant for the excellent person; when Aristotle tells us that what is good *haplōs* and good for oneself must be "harmonized," he suggests that "the path [to this harmonization] is by way of pleasure; *kalon* things must be pleasant." And when he argues that a virtue friend is not only good by nature (i.e., good *haplōs* – see, e.g., *EE* 1237a4-5 for the identification of good *haplōs* and good *phusei*), but also good for the excellent person, his argument proceeds by demonstrating that it is pleasant to perceive the being (*to einai*) of one's character friend (which comes about "when they live together and share in conversation and thought," 1170b11-12). So, in what sense does the path to harmonizing what is good *haplōs* and good for oneself lie with pleasure?[101]

What makes the question difficult is that the pleasure that the excellent person derives from something cannot be what *explains* its goodness. We have seen that *haplōs* pleasures are pleasures that derive from not only perceiving or contemplating an object that is *kalon*, but also recognizing that the object one is perceiving or contemplating is *kalon* – perceiving it *as kalon*; as such, it would seem, the (perceived) goodness of the object or activity is prior to the pleasure derived from it. One is pleased in so acting *because* one sees one's action as good. One is pleased perceiving a beautiful melody *because* one perceives the melody as beautiful.[102] If one loves the melody on this basis, the true object of one's love is not pleasure, but goodness (or, your perceiving it as good).

Of course, since genuine pleasure "necessarily supervenes" on *kalon* perceptual and contemplative activities, whenever they are *kalon*, the pleasure that a person takes in perceiving something could be seen as a kind indicator that what is good *haplōs* has become good for them. But this does not seem to be enough to account for the kind of positive role that Aristotle assigns to pleasure, either when he says that the path to harmonizing the good *haplōs* and the good for oneself is through pleasure, or in the argument of *NE* 9.9 (and *EE* 7.12), for it might make it seem as though pleasure were an idly spinning wheel, or just a nice bonus.

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[101] As I argued above, I don't mean to deny that, in speaking of the path through pleasure, Aristotle is also pointing to the role of pleasure in habituation, and thus the development of ethical virtue. But Aristotle is not thinking of pleasure as a kind of external reward with which one tempts people into virtue (the carrot of the carrot and stick); pleasure plays this role in habituation precisely because of the role it plays in harmonizing the good *haplōs* and the good for oneself in the virtuous agent.

[102] Here, again, we should recall what Aristotle says about *to kalon* in the *Rhetoric,* that "what, being good, is pleasant *because it is good*, is *kalon*."

We can begin to understand this more positive role by considering why such pleasures reinforce such activities, enabling one to engage in them more continuously and further perfect them:

> For the proper pleasure increases the activity; for we judge each thing better and more exactly when our activity involves pleasure. If, for instance, we enjoy doing geometry, we become better geometers and understand each question better; and, similarly, lovers of music, building, and so on improve at their proper function when they enjoy it. (*NE* 10.5, 1175a30-35)[103]

The fact that the proper pleasure reinforces, and increases the quality of, an activity makes perfect sense if we recall that such pleasures of perception are an aspect of the conscious experience of what is good as something attractive and worth pursuing, i.e., as *kalon*. Pleasure necessarily "supervenes" on perceiving or contemplating what is *kalon* as *kalon*, because to find something pleasant is to experience it as *kalon*. If someone does not take pleasure in something, this implies that they are not in fact experiencing it as good; they might know, in the abstract, that it is good, but it is not making the right kind of impact in their experience of the thing. Thus, if a virtuous person suddenly ceased to take pleasure in something, they would cease to perform at as well, as continuously, or reliably.[104] For they would no longer be experiencing it *as* good, in a kind of immediate or first-personal way; they would have to fall back on their theoretical or socially engrained belief that it is in fact good, though they do not experience it as such – and it would be no surprise if actions undertaken on this basis were done mechanically rather than in a *kalon*, fine or beautiful, way. At the extreme, perhaps they would cease to perform virtuous actions at all; if one no longer sees something *as* good, but has to continually remind oneself that it *must* be good (because could everything you were taught really be wrong?), one might eventually lose faith in one's considered judgment.[105] (Think about the difference between how well one might be expected to read *Moby Dick* if one *finds* it beautiful, eloquent, profound, etc., as opposed to how one might read it if one "knows" that it is among the great works of literature but does not experience it as such, and thus reads it out of a sense that is the kind of book

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[103] συναύξει γὰρ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἡ
οἰκεία ἡδονή. μᾶλλον γὰρ ἕκαστα κρίνουσι καὶ ἐξακριβοῦσιν
οἱ μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἐνεργοῦντες, οἷον γεωμετρικοὶ γίνονται οἱ χαί-
ροντες τῷ γεωμετρεῖν, καὶ κατανοοῦσιν ἕκαστα μᾶλλον,
ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ οἱ φιλόμουσοι καὶ φιλοικοδόμοι καὶ τῶν ἄλ-
λων ἕκαστοι ἐπιδιδόασιν εἰς τὸ οἰκεῖον ἔργον χαίροντες αὐτῷ·

[104] Aristotle stresses the unlikelihood of this. To cease to take pleasure in the right things would be to lose one's virtue, but virtue is something "stable."

[105] Of course, if what one was taught *was* wrong, then this will be a good thing – as when Huck Finn decides he can't turn in Jim, though he "knows" he's supposed to, telling himself, "All right then, I'll go to hell."

that one is supposed to have read.) There is thus a kind of feedback between the goodness of an activity and its proper pleasure.

It might be objected here that Aristotle says just the opposite of the view I've been attributing to him, when he says that "there are many things that we would take seriously even if they were to bring about no pleasure, such as seeing, remembering, knowing, and possessing the virtues. Even if pleasures follow from them by necessity, it makes no difference; for we would choose them even if no pleasure were to follow from them" (*NE* 10.3, 1174a4-8).[106] The first thing to observe, however, is that Aristotle says this in the course of laying out the *endoxa* and *aporiai*, before moving on to his positive view of pleasure – just three lines later Aristotle concludes, "Let this be a sufficient discussion of *what is said* concerning pleasure and pain." (1174a11-12) I do not mean that Aristotle ultimately rejects the counterfactual (that we would choose things like seeing, remembering and the virtues even if no pleasure were attached to them).[107] But does he think that this means that the pleasure – which, as things in fact stand, accompany such things – "makes no difference"?

What *is* shown, after all by the counterfactual? Perhaps the fact that we *would* still choose all of these things (perceiving, knowing, being virtuous) in a world where no pleasure resulted from them does not reveal much to us about whether pleasure plays an important motivational role for beings like us, in our world, where pleasure is a necessary feature of such things. (I am reminded here of a moment in Plato's *Lysis* when, after raising the question of what we would still love if we inhabited a world where nothing could be bad for us, Socrates seems to experience a moment of philosophical self-doubt: "Or is it ridiculous to ask what will be then and what will not? Who knows?" (221a)) And indeed, all the counterfactual really tells us is that we have *other* reasons for choosing perceiving, knowing, and possessing the virtues – which was, come to think of it, rather obvious anyway, given the

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[106] περὶ πολλά τε σπουδὴν ποιη-
σαίμεθ' ἂν καὶ εἰ μηδεμίαν ἐπιφέροι ἡδονήν, οἷον ὁρᾶν,
μνημονεύειν, εἰδέναι, τὰς ἀρετὰς ἔχειν. εἰ δ' ἐξ ἀνάγκης
ἕπονται τούτοις ἡδοναί, οὐδὲν διαφέρει· ἐλοίμεθα γὰρ ἂν
ταῦτα καὶ εἰ μὴ γίνοιτ' ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἡδονή.

[107] But cf. Gosling and Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure,* 260: "Again, the point that we should desire vision, memory, knowledge, and the excellences (1174a4-8) even if no pleasure followed begins to look strange. For, of course, we should desire good vision and memory, and the exercise of those on appropriate objects. But now it sounds strange to suggest that we should want these even if no pleasure accrued, when it emerges that the perfections of these actualizations just are (human) pleasures. It consequently becomes obscure just what is being suggested by the counter-factual condition. This also shows that Socrates has no alternative when he opposes a life of intellectual exercise to one of pleasure; for proper intellectual exercise is a pleasure for any being capable of it. " Their suggestion, I think, is that, in putting forward the counterfactual, Aristotle is not really speaking in his own voice, but reporting an argument of Socrates in the *Philebus*.

various benefits that come from having those abilities – not that pleasure is not a legitimate reason for choosing such things. And choosing something for the sake of *X* does not, on Aristotle's view, preclude choosing it for the sake of *Y*:

> Honor, pleasure, understanding, and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves, since we would choose them even if they had no further result; but we also choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy. (NE 1.7, 1097b2-5)

Even if Aristotle is putting forward the counter-factual in his own voice, then, he may still want to take issue with the conclusion that one might be tempted to draw from it, that pleasure therefore "makes no difference."

And, in the very next chapter, it seems to me that Aristotle allows the possibility that pleasure plays a significant motivational role in the psychology of the virtuous person – much more significant, it seems to me, than we should expect on the standard picture of Aristotle's attitude towards hedonism. After presenting his positive account of pleasure in *NE* 10.4, Aristotle considers why everyone seems to desire pleasure:

> Living is a type of activity, and each of us is active toward the objects he likes most and in the ways he likes most. The musician, for instance, activates his hearing in hearing melodies; the lover of learning activates his thought in thinking about objects of study and so on for each of the others. Pleasure completes their activities, and hence completes life, which they desire. It is reasonable, then, that they aim at pleasure, since it completes each person's life for him and life is choiceworthy. But do we choose life because of pleasure or pleasure because of life? Let us set aside the question for present purposes since the two appear to be combined and to allow no separation; for pleasure never arises without activity and completes every activity. (*NE* 10.4, 1175a10-21)[108]

Irwin tells us (a little matter-of-factly, to my mind) in his note to this passage that "Though Aristotle sets aside this question about pleasure and life as

[108] ὀρέγεσθαι δὲ
τῆς ἡδονῆς οἰηθείη τις ἂν ἅπαντας, ὅτι καὶ τοῦ ζῆν ἅπαντες
ἐφίενται· ἡ δὲ ζωὴ ἐνέργειά τις ἐστί, καὶ ἕκαστος περὶ ταῦτα
καὶ τούτοις ἐνεργεῖ ἃ καὶ μάλιστ' ἀγαπᾷ, οἷον ὁ μὲν μουσικὸς
τῇ ἀκοῇ περὶ τὰ μέλη, ὁ δὲ φιλομαθὴς τῇ διανοίᾳ περὶ τὰ
θεωρήματα, οὕτω δὲ καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἕκαστος· ἡ δ' ἡδονὴ τελει-
οῖ τὰς ἐνεργείας, καὶ τὸ ζῆν δή, οὗ ὀρέγονται. εὐλόγως οὖν καὶ
τῆς ἡδονῆς ἐφίενται· τελειοῖ γὰρ ἑκάστῳ τὸ ζῆν, αἱρετὸν ὄν.
Πότερον δὲ διὰ τὴν ἡδονὴν τὸ ζῆν αἱρούμεθα ἢ διὰ τὸ ζῆν τὴν
ἡδονήν, ἀφείσθω ἐν τῷ παρόντι. συνεζεῦχθαι μὲν γὰρ ταῦτα
φαίνεται καὶ χωρισμὸν οὐ δέχεσθαι· ἄνευ τε γὰρ ἐνεργείας οὐ
γίνεται ἡδονή, πᾶσάν τε ἐνέργειαν τελειοῖ ἡ ἡδονή.

ends, his answer to it emerges from 1174a4 [the passage about choosing seeing, remembering, etc., even if no pleasure resulted from them] and from what he just said. We do not choose life and its activities purely for the sake of pleasures…Nor do we choose pleasure purely for the sake of living; it is one of the desirable activities that constitute our living." (p. 306) Thus, Irwin seems to suggest, Aristotle's answer to the question is obvious: both, or sometimes one, sometimes the other.

But if Aristotle's answer to this question emerged so clearly from what he had said one Bekker page before, and from what he has *just* said, then it is a bit surprising for him to defer the question indefinitely, suggesting that pleasure and activity are so inseparable that we cannot answer the question at present (and never returning to it). There is, however, another possibility, that seems to better fit the text: Aristotle thinks that, once we have seen what pleasure *is* (as we have by the end of *NE* 10.4), we will see that the way in which pleasure and activity are bound up means it is difficult to even make sense of the question.[109] If the activities are those of perceiving and contemplating what is *kalon*, and pleasure is an aspect of what it is like to experience the *kalon*, then to say either that we choose activity for the sake of pleasure, or pleasure for the sake of activity, separates the two in a way that does violence to the phenomena. The reason that Aristotle doesn't maintain that we choose activity for the sake of pleasure is not because he thinks we choose pleasure for the sake of activity, but because that makes it sound as if the activity were a means of bringing about something else, a pleasurable experience. That is not the right way of thinking about the relationship between activity and pleasure, at least in the case of the *haplōs* pleasures of perceiving or contemplating what is *kalon*.[110]

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[109] Here I am in agreement with Gosling and Taylor: "That is to say, it looks as though Aristotle may have thought that correctly interpreted there was no assigning of priority to one over the other. For 'life' has to be taken as referring to the kind of life in question. With humans this means perceiving and thinking, not just staying alive. So the question becomes: do we want to live a life of thought and perception because it is pleasant or want pleasure because it is or leads to thought and perception? But life so conceived is something good and pleasant in itself, as also appears from the fact that everyone pursues it; and is to be chosen, especially by the good, because it is good and pleasant to them. The whole passage takes it that if we are considering what is pleasant in itself and what life for a given species consists in, then wanting life (i.e., the actualization of the species' nature) and wanting pleasure (i.e., what is in itself pleasant to that species) amount to the same thing, and there would be the same air of redundancy whether one said that one wants a full life because it is in itself pleasant or that one wanted what is in itself pleasant because that is a full life." (256)

[110] Irwin's mistake, I think, is to think of the pleasure as *another activity* that goes along with the activity that it completes, saying that pleasure is "one of the desirable activities that constitute our living." But if one thinks of pleasure as another activity in this way, then it will suggest this mistaken picture of the relationship between an activity and its proper pleasure. But, in book 10, Aristotle does not tell us that pleasure *is* an activity, but that it completes or perfects activity. (The ambiguity of the world "pleasure"/*hēdonē* threatens to confuse the point – since the activity that pleasure (i.e., enjoyment) completes is the activity in which

None of this undermines the priority of the good over the pleasant. What is pleasant *haplōs* is the experience of the good as good, the *kalon* as *kalon* – the pleasure the excellent person derives from the activity of contemplating god, say, is in part due to the fact that they recognize the object of their contemplation as good in itself. But pleasure may nonetheless be part of what attracts them to engaging in such contemplation.

One might worry, however, that I have presented a picture in which goodness and pleasure are *so* bound up as to undermine the distinction between pleasure and goodness as grounds of *philia*, at least for excellent people. Others, of course, may have pleasure-friendships in part because they are not always attracted to what is pleasant *haplōs*. But, since the excellent person will not be mistaken in this way, and what is pleasant to him will be pleasant because he recognizes it as good, his supposed pleasure friendships must ultimately be grounded in what he sees as good. And, if what I have said about the importance of pleasure as a motivation for the excellent agent is right, then Aristotle cannot say that the difference lies in the fact that, in character-friendship, pleasure is only a nice bonus that the excellent person gets, but she is not *motivated* by pleasure (while in her pleasure-friendships she is motivated by pleasure). In short, the pleasure-friendships of the virtuous, must be grounded in goodness, while their character-friendships involve pleasure as a significant motivation. What room does that leave for a distinction between their pleasure- and character-friendships at all?

We can glean Aristotle's answer from a passage in the *EE*, and it sheds light on how Aristotle is thinking about how the various objects of love ground *philiai*:

> Hence it is said…"bad men bond with each other because of pleasure." For bad [people] may be pleasant to one another [and thus may be pleasure-friends], not *qua* bad, nor *qua* neither good nor bad, but, say, as being both musicians, or if one is a music-lover and the other is a musician; and inasmuch as all have some good in them, in this way they harmonize with one another…Again, in these ways those who are not excellent could also be friends to each other. One might be pleasant to another not insofar as he is base but insofar as he shares a common interest – for example, if he is a culture-lover – or again insofar as there is something decent in everyone…; or insofar as they adapt to each other. For all people possess something of the good. (*EE* 7.2, 1238a33-b14)

I take the idea here to be that all people are capable of friendship because all people – unless they are utterly beyond the pale – can share in activities that they enjoy with others who also enjoy those activities. Though Aristotle's

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one takes pleasure (i.e., that one enjoys), one could refer (in English as in Greek) to the activity one enjoys as "a pleasure" – in the sense of "pleasure" wherein it refers to that which one enjoys or is pleased by.)

immediate point here concerns friendships between those who are not excellent, it also brings out how excellent people can be pleasure-friends with people who are not excellent, or who they do not yet know well enough to know to be excellent: They can partake together in activities that both enjoy. Since at least one of the friends is, *ex hypothesi*, excellent, these activities will themselves be good, and that is why the excellent person takes pleasure in them. The friendship is not based in the excellent person seeing *the other person* as good or *kalon* but only as someone that it is pleasant to share these good, enjoyable activities with; the *kalon* thing that the excellent person is taking pleasure in is not their friend, but the activities that they happen to be able to share with their friend.[111] Thus, the difference does not lie as much in whether pleasure or goodness is the ultimate motivation in the friend's psychology, but more in *what* the friends find good and pleasant – is it in the character of their friend as such, or in the activities they share with their friend? In the chapters that follow, we will see how, on Aristotle's view, recognizing another as good could be the basis of something that could reasonably be referred to as *philia* in Greek and "friendship" in English.[112]

Conclusion

The excellent person loves what is good *haplōs*, Aristotle tells us, because what is good *haplōs* is also good for them. Since what is good *haplōs* is also pleasant *haplōs*, and thus pleasant to the excellent person, they will take pleasure in the object of their love. It is, in many ways, a simple view, and yet lying behind it is a complicated picture of human motivation, and of the nature of pleasure and its relation to goodness. What is good *haplōs* and *kalon* is good for the excellent person because they have developed the capacity to appreciate its goodness and beauty; and, having done so, they are able to engage with it in activities of perception and thought that are themselves good and *kalon*; thus, it is good for them insofar as it is part of their own flourishing or happiness. The pleasure that the excellent person takes in such activities reflects the fact that what is good *haplōs* has become good for them, for pleasure is an aspect of what it is like to appreciate the *kalon* as *kalon* – it derives not, that is, from simply believing, or even

[111] This can also help us to make sense of a somewhat confusing moment in the *Nicomachean* discussion of friendship. Just before explaining that the friendship of genuine friends is based on the recognition of one another's virtue, Aristotle offers wittiness (being εὐτράπελος) as an example for a grounds of pleasure-friendship – but being εὐτράπελος is among the virtues of character that Aristotle discusses in book 4 (*NE* 4.8, 1127b33-1128a16). But now we can see what the idea is: The point is that, in pleasure-friendships one takes pleasure *not* in the recognition of one's friend's wittiness because one sees one's friend's character (in respect of wittiness anyway) as something good in itself or *kalon*; rather, one takes pleasure in, say, chatting over drinks with him, because he is witty.

[112] That is, in this case, it's not just that Aristotle would call it *philia* because *philia* is a more capacious concept than our concept of friendship. [I actually have come to think that the difference has been a bit overblown.]

knowing, that something is good, but to experience it *as* good, in an immediate way. Part of what it is to feel pleasure, to experience the good as good, is to be attracted to it, and thus the "path" to making the good *haplōs* good for oneself is through pleasure – it draws one in to engaging in the activity more continuously, more precisely, and thus leads one to further hone those capacities that enable one to experience the *kalon*.

Aristotle's view that the excellent person is "a kind of standard and measure of what is *kalon* and pleasant" is correspondingly subtle. Aristotle *is* committed to a kind of relativism about the pleasant and the fine: He is a relativist about the pleasant insofar as he thinks that to say that something is pleasant *haplōs* or in truth is to say that a person with the appropriately honed perceptual and contemplative activities will take pleasure in it (and that the latter *explains* the former). And he is a relativist about the *kalon* because to say that something is *kalon* is to highlight how it will present itself to an excellent person, i.e., as something attractive – and thus something could not *be kalon* if, given the nature of even ideally developed human capacities, it could not make this kind of impact in the excellent person's experience. But it is a relativism that is built upon an objectivist picture of the good. It is the responses of the excellent person, and not just anyone, that go into determining what is genuinely pleasant and the *kalon* because the excellent person is able to recognize and appreciate what is, in fact, good; they experience what is objectively good as *kalon* and take pleasure in it. And this, as we have seen, is part of why what is good *haplōs* is good for them; *their* activities of perceiving or contemplating the good are themselves good, and thus part of their own good.

This is a model which appears ill-suited to explain the pleasure and goodness of virtuous action for the excellent person, and thus of her love of acting virtuously; and yet we have seen that, by bringing in his view that human beings are by nature self-perceptive or self-aware creatures, Aristotle is able to present a theoretically unified of such pleasures as well: The pleasure of virtuous action stems not directly from the action itself, but from the kind of self-awareness that is an aspect of all fully human action. When that action is itself *kalon*, such self-awareness is another instance of "[perceptual] activity of the [perceiving] subject in good condition in relation to the most excellent object of the capacity." This, as we shall explore in more detail in the next chapter, provides the grounds of self-love in Aristotle.

Chapter 2

That living is choiceworthy: Aristotle's self-awareness argument

My aim in this chapter is to offer an account of Aristotle's answer to the question of what makes living "choiceworthy" (αἱρετόν). That topic recalls the common trope in ancient Greek literature that the best thing would be never to have been born, second best to die as soon as possible – an idea that Aristotle himself refers to[1] as one that "is said so often [that it] passes for a trite expression." And when the idea that perhaps human life is by nature so miserable that it would be better to die than go on is considered an open possibility, the question of why living is choiceworthy begins to look like not merely an abstract, theoretical inquiry, but an existential one. It might, for that reason, seem hard to imagine Aristotle grappling with it. But there is, in fact, an argument in book 9 of the *NE*, and a corresponding argument in book 7 of the *EE*, in which Aristotle sets out to show, on the basis of quite fundamental facts about what it *is* to live as a human being, why living is choiceworthy. It is a difficult, notoriously obscure argument, and making sense of it will be my central task here.

We can see Aristotle's argument beginning from an intuitive or common-sense view that life would *not* be worth living if it meant merely staying alive, without conscious awareness. This is no more than a necessary condition, however; we would not choose a life of conscious awareness if what we were aware *of* was only misery and pain. But Aristotle tries to work up from here into an account of what suffices to make living choiceworthy, by asking, "Given that the life we want is a life of self-awareness, what kind of awareness do we want most of all?" Aristotle's answer, I will argue, is that what we want, or need, is to be able to recognize our lives, as exhibiting the kind of "definite order"[2] which makes our life intelligible to us and, thus, something we can see as good or *kalon*. One's life is choiceworthy insofar as one is able to make sense of one's life, such that the kind of self-awareness that is a necessary aspect of a fully human life is a source of genuine pleasure.

"Is life worth living?"

In a famous address, "Is Life Worth Living?," given before the Young Men's Christian Association of Harvard University, William James asked his

[1] In a fragment preserved by Plutarch (*Consolatio ad Appolonium,* 115b-e), discussed below.

[2] "Having a definite order" is Irwin's translation of ὡρισμένον, when Aristotle tells us that living is good in itself and choiceworthy because it is ὡρισμένον. Though I am not sure that is a good *translation*, I do think, as I will argue below, that it is a good expression of the point Aristotle is ultimately trying to make when he says that.

audience to consider the question: What, if anything, could we say to "a fellow-mortal who is on such terms with life that the only comfort left him is to brood on the assurance 'you may end it when you will'?" (38) One wonders what Harvard's Young Christian Men would have made of it.

James must have sensed that his audience would be inclined to wave off, as so much maudlin melodrama, the topic of his lecture. He refers to the "jocose answer" to the question of whether life is worth living that "has great currency in the newspapers": "It depends on the *liver*" (32) – a punning appeal to the obvious point that it depends on whose life you're talking about, and to that antique theory that depressive moods are caused by a certain concoction of the humors. (A more doctrinaire humorist would have insisted that an excess of black bile depends on the *spleen*, but that of course would have come at the cost of the cringeworthy double-entendre.[3]) Perhaps the tendency to pathologize the question, and the rather heavy-handed attempt at comedy in doing so, reflects some anxiety – perhaps even the newspaperman recognizes, James suggests, in some "hidden corner" of the "deepest heart…in which the ultimate mystery of things works sadly," that "we are of one substance with these suicides, and their life is the life we all share." (37)

We have our own ways of pathologizing the question (or the questioner), something about a deficiency of serotonin, I suppose – which upon reflection sounds rather similar to that more antique theory, though of course now it's all happening (as it must) in the brain. And so, we have our own ways of dismissing the question, particularly as a topic of *philosophical* concern. If the real problem is that she is sick, on account of an imbalance in her humors or brain chemistry or what have you, then what good will some *argument* do her? But, perhaps, as with James's newspapermen, the effort to pathologize, and thereby dismiss, the question, reflects the fact that, once the question is seriously raised, we sense that we may not be not possessed of anything like a satisfying answer to it.

In any case, I imagine that many would expect Aristotle's company in this dismissive attitude. For one thing, it simply doesn't seem in keeping with his cool, perennially reasonable tone to imagine him dwelling over-much on the possibility that our final consolation may only be found in the fact that "it ends soon and nevermore shall be." For another, he insists, famously, that students of moral philosophy must show up already rightly-constituted – born with a nature appropriate to excellence or virtue, and with an upbringing that has left one properly "habituated" to virtue's exercise: "As things are…[philosophical arguments] appear to have the power to influence and exhort [only] those young people who possess generosity of spirit and perhaps to make susceptible to virtue a character that is well bred and truly loves what is *kalon*" (*NE* 10.9, 1197b7-10). One might imagine, for such

[3] See what I did there?

"healthy-minded" (as James would later come to call them[4]) folk, the question of whether life is worth living would hardly arise. And, finally, most readers of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are unlikely to recall Aristotle ever addressing himself to such a question. He is concerned, of course, to offer an account of what a happy or flourishing life looks like; and, though it may fall out of such an account that such a life is worth living, it is not an answer to the question of whether human life *in general* is worth living. After all, *eudaimonia* is, on Aristotle's view, exceedingly rare, and it would be a (literally) depressing result if only *eudaimōn* lives are better than death. Moreover, it is not wholly clear that an account of the happy human life would necessarily imply that even a happy life is worth living. It would not, for instance, if the account of happiness *presupposed* that human life is worth living.

But, on second thought, perhaps it would be quite surprising if Aristotle thought he could dismiss or pathologize such a question, or if he failed to recognize that it could seriously arise. For recall how common is that common Greek trope, the earliest known instance we find in Theognis' *Elegies*:

> The best of all things for earthly creatures is not to be born and never to see the beams of the bright sun; but if born, then as quickly as possible to pass the gates of Hades, and to lie deep buried. (425-8)[5]

Setting aside the tricky question of what exactly it might mean to say that it is best "for earthly creatures" (ἐπιχθονίοισιν) never to have been born (*who* would that have been good for?), it is worth noting that in an early dialogue, Aristotle himself gives voice to, and grapples with, this very thought, telling us that it "is said so often [that it] passes for a trite expression." The dialogue has been lost, but the relevant fragment is preserved by Plutarch, which I reproduce here in its entirety:

> You, most blessed and happiest among humans, may well consider those blessed and happiest who have departed this life before you, and thus you may consider it unlawful, indeed blasphemous, to speak anything ill or false

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[4] In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, lectures 4 and 5.

[5] Πάντων μὲν μὴ φῦναι ἐπιχθονίοισιν ἄριστονμηδ' ἐσιδεῖν αὐγὰς ὀξέος ἠελίου, φύντα δ' ὅπως ὤκιστα πύλας Ἀίδαο περῆσαι καὶ κεῖσθαι πολλὴν γῆν ἐπαμησάμενον.
In a similar vein, Herodotus describes the customs of the Trausi as follows (5.4.1-2): "When a child is born, the kinsmen sit around it and lament all the ills that it must endure from its birth onward, recounting all the sorrows of men. The dead, however, they bury with celebration and gladness, asserting that he is rid of so many ills and has achieved a state of complete blessedness." A fragment from Euripides' *Bellerophon* provides evidence of how common is the trope, for a character says: "I myself affirm what is of course a common word everywhere, that it is best for a man not to be born" (ἐγὼ τὸ μὲν δὴ πανταχοῦ θρυλούμενονκράτιστον εἶναι φημὶ μὴ φῦναι βροτῷ) (F 285). Perhaps the most familiar expression of the idea is found in Sophocles *Oedipus at Colonus* 1224-7.

> of them, since they now have been transformed into a better and more refined nature. This thought is indeed so old that the one who first uttered it is no longer known; it has been passed down to us from eternity, and hence doubtless it is true. Moreover, you know what is so often said and passes for a trite expression. What is that, he asked? He answered: It is best not to be born at all; and next to that, it is better to die than to live; and this is confirmed even by divine testimony. Pertinently to this they say that Midas, after hunting, asked his captive Silenus somewhat urgently, what was the most desirable thing among humankind. At first he could offer no response, and was obstinately silent. At length, when Midas would not stop plaguing him, he erupted with these words, though very unwillingly: 'you, seed of an evil genius and precarious offspring of hard fortune, whose life is but for a day, why do you compel me to tell you those things of which it is better you should remain ignorant? For he lives with the least worry who knows not his misfortune; but for humans, the best for them is not to be born at all, not to partake of nature's excellence; not to be is best, for both sexes. This should our choice be, if choice we have; and the next to this is, when we are born, to die as soon as we can.' It is plain therefore, that he declared the condition of the dead to be better than that of the living. (*Consolatio ad Appolonium,* 115b-e; Loeb translation)[6]

Aristotle's use of the Silenus story is probably somewhat tongue in cheek. It seems that what Silenus (like Theognis, like the Trausi as described by Herodotus, like the chorus in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*) wants to suggest is that it is better to die than remain alive because life is so wretched and death is our only escape; [7] Aristotle acts as if what Silenus really means is that the condition of being dead is better than that of being alive, because the soul survives in a blessedly disembodied condition. ("They now have been transformed into a better and more refined nature.") In any case, it is hard to conclude much about Aristotle's considered view about life's worth from this fragment. For one thing, the dialogue appears to have been written to commemorate Eudemus, a friend and classmate of Aristotle's in the Academy, and who was killed in 357 BCE, in a military campaign intended to liberate Syracuse from Dionysus the Younger.[8] Since part of the purpose of such a dialogue would have been to offer consolation to Eudemus's friends (including, let's suppose, the author himself), one might think: *Of course* Aristotle would, in this context, sing the praises of the condition of (bodily) death. Still, that does not imply that Aristotle does not believe what he says,

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[6] Plutarch introduces the fragment by saying, "Aristotle says that Silenus when he was captured declared this to Midas. It is better to quote the very words of the philosopher. He says, in the work which is entitled *Eudemus*, or Of the Soul, the following…" See A.H. Chroust, "*Eudemus,* or *On the Soul*" for a plausible account of the purpose and gist of the dialogue.

[7] Cf. Cicero's telling of the same story.

[8] A.H. Chroust, "*Eudemus,* or *On the Soul*," p. 18, referring to Plutarch (*Dion* 22, 3).

any more the dramatic context and purpose of the *Phaedo* implies that what Socrates says there about the immortality of the soul doesn't represent Plato's real view. But the resonance with Plato's *Phaedo* brings us to the second reason we must be circumspect in drawing any conclusions about Aristotle's considered view from this dialogue: It appears to have been written at a very early time in Aristotle's career, when he remained very much under the influence of Platonic philosophy. Even if Aristotle never wholly gives up the view that soul is immortal, he does give up the view that the whole soul is, and one might think *that* is what is needed to salvage the idea that it is Eudemus who survives death, rather than universal *nous*.

What I think we *can* take away from this fragment, however, is that Aristotle saw the idea that human life may not be worth living as an opinion that must be taken seriously. And once we are open to that possibility, I think we will see that he did not simply grow out of a concern with it, even if he grew out of this particular response. In book 1 of the *Eudemian Ethics,*[9] Aristotle considers the "question of what would make coming into existence better than not" (1216a12-13):

> After all, many things come about that make people give up their lives…Evidently in the face of these one might have chosen not to be born in the first place, if one had that choice. In addition, there is the life one lives while still a child; no one of good sense could bear to regress to that. Moreover, many things that involve no pleasure or pain or involve pleasure that is not noble [*kalēn*] are such as to make non-existence better than living…One would not on account of these elements choose living over not living…[even if] one added on an unlimited amount of time. Nor indeed would anyone who was not completely slavish prefer life merely for the pleasure of nourishment or sex, if deprived of the other pleasures that knowledge or sight or any of the other senses provide people with. It is evident that whoever makes this choice might just as well have been born a beast as a human being…What is the difference between an uninterrupted sleep from first day till last, for ten thousand years or anything you like, and living as a plant? (1215b18-1216a5)

In saying that "One would not on account of these elements choose living over not living…[even if] one added on an unlimited amount of time," Aristotle may be alluding to the story of Achilles, who had to choose between a glorious death in battle and enjoying a much longer life full of the simple pleasures of a humble householder. (One also thinks of a darker parallel to Achilles's choice: that of Ajax, who, on Sophocles's telling, saw non-existence as preferable to continuing to exist after such humiliation.) But even if one were to think that Achilles's choice made him *eudaimōn* (and, poignantly

[9] Named after a *different* Eudemus, most probably – namely, Eudemus of Rhodes, a student of Aristotle's.

enough, according to the *Odyssey,* that is not how Achilles saw the matter, in the end), it is important to recognize that, despite the clear connections between what Aristotle says here and his account of *eudaimonia* – above all, in the strategy of basing his argument on a consideration of what it means to live as a human being – the question he is raising is distinct from that of what *eudaimonia* consists in. Rather, he is examining whether there is something such that, "if it is taken away, life is not worth living."[10] That must be something more generally available than *eudaimonia*, of which relatively few human beings are capable, since Aristotle does not maintain that death is preferable to the life of most human beings.[11] And those who are capable of happiness if fortune cooperates need not prefer death to a life that falls short of it when fortune does not. Even in extreme misfortune, Aristotle suggests, the *kalon* nature of the virtuous person's action "shines through" and is pleasant for him to contemplate (*NE* 1100b19-21); it makes his life choiceworthy, at least relative to death.

Of course, not everyone is able to achieve in action what is truly *kalon*. Nonetheless, we can see here hints of Aristotle's ultimate answer to the question of what makes living, as such, choiceworthy. I will argue that Aristotle's view is that, for one's living to be choiceworthy, one must be able to make sense of one's life as something basically decent, at least according to one's own view of the good. Everyone who is not utterly vicious and corrupt – who, Aristotle tells us, do not love themselves but even "shun life" and "kill themselves" (*NE* 1166b12-13) – and does not suffer some catastrophic tragedy is capable of this.

The self-awareness argument

Though virtually all of the remainder of Aristotle's *Ethics* concerns the nature of that loftier form of human life, *eudaimonia*, he does not entirely forget the more fundamental question of what makes human life worth living more generally and in the first place. There is an argument in the *Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9 (1170a13-1170b5) that aims to show why "living itself is good and pleasant…by nature" (1170a19-21), why "everyone seems to desire it" (1170a26-7), and why, for each of us, "being is choiceworthy." (1170b8-9) According to that argument, living is choiceworthy "on account of perceiving one's own being as good" (1170b9); I will thus refer to it as the "self-awareness argument."

I expect that the interest of this argument has not been widely acknowledged in part because only one part of a broader argument which is meant to show why even the blessedly happy person needs friends, and it is in that context that the sub-argument which is my concern here has been considered. Perfectly understandably, when discussing *NE* 9.9, scholars have

[10] ταύτης ἐξαιρουμένης οὐκ ἔστιν ἄξιον ζῆν, *Protrepticus* 44.11-12. See below, note 15.
[11] As we shall see below, Aristotle maintains that, for most of us, living is choiceworthy.

focused on what Aristotle means to say about friendship and happiness. But this can make it easy to miss the fact that this sub-argument addresses the "worry" that Aristotle raises in *EE* 1.5, that non-existence may be preferable to existence.[12]

The aim of the argument

The argument of *NE* 9.9 is not meant *only* to show something about the character of the happy life. For one, there is the fact (noted above) that, in the self-awareness (sub-)argument, he tells us that this is why *everyone* desires life as something good in itself (though he immediately sets aside a life that is "vicious and corrupt or full of pains, since [such a life] lacks a definite order" (1170a22-24) – an important caveat, to which I will return below). Moreover, when later recapitulating the argument in *NE* 9.12, Aristotle makes clear that he means for it to show something not only about why the happy person will share her life with friends, but why everyone desires to do so. In doing so, he also reveals that in speaking of the "perception of one's own being" which makes living choiceworthy, he has in mind not only the virtuous person's perception of her own virtuous way of living, but various people's perception of their own various less-than-virtuous ways of living as well:

> With respect to oneself, the perception that one exists is choiceworthy; so too with respect to one's friend. Perception is active when we live with him; therefore, it makes sense that this is what we seek. And whatever it is to be for each person, or that for the sake of which he chooses to live, he wants to spend his time [engaged] in that activity with his friends. That's why some drink together, others play dice together, while others do gymnastics and hunt together or philosophize together, each [set of friends] spending their days together in whatever pursuit in life they like most. For, wanting to live together with friends, they do the actions and share the things in which they believe living together [to consist(?)].[13]

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[12] But cf. Whiting ("Pleasures of Thinking Together"), who notes the connection between the first part of the *EE* 7.12 version of the argument – the part with which I am concerned here – and the material from *EE* 1.5 that I quote above.

[13] περὶ αὑτὸν δ' ἡ αἴσθησις ὅτι ἔστιν αἱρετή, καὶ περὶ
τὸν φίλον δή· ἡ δ' ἐνέργεια γίνεται αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ συζῆν,
ὥστ' εἰκότως τούτου ἐφίενται. καὶ ὅ ποτ' ἐστὶν ἑκάστοις τὸ
εἶναι ἢ οὗ χάριν αἱροῦνται τὸ ζῆν, ἐν τούτῳ μετὰ τῶν φί-
λων βούλονται διάγειν· διόπερ οἱ μὲν συμπίνουσιν, οἱ δὲ
συγκυβεύουσιν, ἄλλοι δὲ συγγυμνάζονται καὶ συγκυνηγοῦσιν
ἢ συμφιλοσοφοῦσιν, ἕκαστοι ἐν τούτῳ συνημερεύοντες ὅ τι
περ μάλιστ' ἀγαπῶσι τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ· συζῆν γὰρ βουλόμε-
νοι μετὰ τῶν φίλων, ταῦτα ποιοῦσι καὶ τούτων κοινωνοῦσιν
οἷς οἴονται συζῆν. (1171b34-1172a8)

Thus, when Aristotle says, in 9.9, that it is pleasant to perceive one's being or living as good in itself, and this is why living is choiceworthy, he means to include the way in which different people perceive their lives and themselves as good, according to their own conception of what it *is* to (truly) live as a human being.

Thus, the argument of *NE* 9.9 is clearly meant to establish not *only* something about the character of the happy life; it is rather meant, on the basis of why each of us – whatever we think fully living to consist in – desires or values her own living, to explain why we all value shared life with friends. In the next chapter, I will turn to what Aristotle has to say about the value of friendship in this connection. Here, I propose to focus on the first half of this notoriously difficult argument, which is meant to explain why living as a human being, in general, is choiceworthy, and thus to answer the worries raised in *EE* 1.5.

The overall structure of the argument (and some apparent difficulties with it)

Aristotle begins his argument as follows:

> For animals, living is defined by the capacity for perception, but for human beings, it is defined by the capacity for perception or thinking; moreover, every capacity refers to its activity, and what something is fully is found in its activity; hence, fully living [as a human being] would seem to be perceiving or thinking. 1170a16-19)

Thus, we find Aristotle beginning by drawing on his own view of what distinguishes animal life from life more generally, and by what further distinguishes human life from animal life; and, moreover, by drawing on his own technical distinction between capacity (δύναμις) and activity or actuality (ἐνεργεία). This is just as we should expect, given that Aristotle singles this out as being from a "more naturalistic" or "more scientific" (φυσικώτερον) perspective.[14]

And yet we should not let this blind us to the fact that, in starting here, Aristotle also intends to base his argument on a common-sense idea about the conditions under which we would choose to live. This comes out especially clearly if we consider our argument in light of an earlier argument in his *Protrepticus* – which, although it is an argument for a different conclusion, is closely related in its strategy:

[14] Earlier (1155b2), Aristotle had used the same term in setting aside the "more naturalistic" theorists who view *philia* "from higher up" (ἀνώτερον) – theorists like Empedocles, who viewed φιλότης as a kind natural force, operative among inanimate bodies as much as human beings. Now we can see that Aristotle did not mean to dismiss the φυσικώτερον perspective *tout court,* but to develop one more adequate to the inquiry into the nature of human *philia*.

> Living is distinguished from not living by perceiving, and living is defined by its presence and power, and if it is taken away life is not worth living, as if when you do away with perception you do away with life itself. But among the senses the capacity of sight is distinguished by being the most distinct, and for this reason as well we value it most; but every perception [i.e., perceptual capacity] is a capacity for understanding through a body, just as hearing senses the sound through the ears. [17] Thus, if living is valuable because of perception, and perception is a kind of cognition, and we choose it because the soul is capable of recognizing by means of it; but long ago we said that the more valuable of two things is always the one that provides more of the same thing, and of the senses sight is of necessity the most valuable and honorable, and intelligence (φρόνησις) is more valuable than it and all the others, and more valuable than living, intelligence is more authoritative than truth; hence the main pursuit of all humans is to be intelligent.[15]

Most readers of Aristotle will be familiar with the basic thrust of this argument from the opening of his *Metaphysics*.[16] What is importantly distinct about this version, for my purposes, is the fact that he explicitly connects it with what, "if it is taken away, makes life not worth living" (ταύτης ἐξαιρουμένης οὐκ ἔστιν ἄξιον ζῆν). The basic thought appears to be that we would not choose to live if that meant living in a merely vegetative state; we would only choose to live if we would be able to exercise perception or cognition – some form of conscious awareness. Aristotle seeks to build up

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[15] ἀλλὰ μὴν τό γε ζῆν τῷ αἰσθά-
νεσθαι διακρίνεται τοῦ μὴ ζῆν, καὶ ταύτης παρουσίᾳ
καὶ δυνάμει τὸ ζῆν διώρισται, καὶ ταύτης ἐξαιρου-
μένης οὐκ ἔστιν ἄξιον ζῆν ὥσπερ ἀναιρουμένου τοῦ
ζῆν αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν. τῆς δὲ αἰσθήσεως ἡ τῆς
ὄψεως διαφέρει δύναμις τῷ σαφεστάτη εἶναι, καὶ διὰ
τοῦτο καὶ μάλιστα αἱρούμεθα αὐτήν· αἴσθησις δὲ
πᾶσα δύναμίς ἐστι γνωριστικὴ διὰ σώματος, ὥσπερ ἡ
ἀκοὴ τοῦ ψόφου αἰσθάνεται διὰ τῶν ὤτων. οὐκοῦν
εἰ τὸ ζῆν μέν ἐστιν αἱρετὸν διὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν ἡ δ'
αἴσθησις γνῶσίς τις, καὶ διὰ τὸ γνωρίζειν αὐτῇ δύ-
νασθαι τὴν ψυχὴν αἱρούμεθα, πάλαι δὲ εἴπομεν ὅτι-
περ δυοῖν ἀεὶ μᾶλλον αἱρετὸν ᾧ μᾶλλον ὑπάρχει
ταὐτόν, τῶν μὲν αἰσθήσεων τὴν ὄψιν ἀνάγκη μάλιστα
αἱρετὴν εἶναι καὶ τιμίαν, ταύτης δὲ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων
ἁπασῶν αἱρετωτέρα καὶ τοῦ ζῆν ἐστιν ἡ φρόνησις κυ-
ριωτέρα τῆς ἀληθείας· ὥστε πάντες ἄνθρωποι τὸ
φρονεῖν μάλιστα διώκουσι. Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* 44.9-26 (from a speech by "Aristotle").

I accept the argument of D.S. Hutchinson and M.R. Johnson that Iamblichus is here reporting the content of Aristotle's own *Protrepticus*. See their "Authenticating Aristotle's *Protrepticus*," as well as their "Provisional Reconstruction" of the *Protrepticus*.

[16] The correspondence is, of course, no coincidence. It makes perfect sense for Aristotle to begin his *Metaphysics* protreptically, i.e., with an exhortation to (first) philosophy.

from that fact to an account of what ultimately makes life worth living for human beings.

In the *Protrepticus* argument, the focus is on the perception or awareness of things out there, in the world around us. In the argument from *NE* 9.9, however, the focus is on one's awareness of oneself – that is, one's "being" or "living," or (as we shall see below) the particular activities which make up one's living. If Aristotle means to be basing his argument in part on a common-sense idea about a necessary condition for life being worth living, this makes good sense; most of us would not choose to live without awareness of what we are doing (perhaps, again, because we feel that such a life wouldn't really be a human life at all).

It will help to start with a first approximation of the overall course of Aristotle's argument in *NE* 9.9, which I offer below. (I haven't tried to fill in implicit premises so as to present a deductively valid argument; instead, I've only listed the steps that are either stated outright in, or, in the case of step 3, very clearly implied by, the text.)

1. Living is good and pleasant in itself, because (i.e., only when[17]) it is ὡρισμένον (since what is ὡρισμένον is "of the nature of the good"). (1170a19-21)
2. In living, one perceives that one is living. (1170a29-1170b1)
    a. This follows from the definition of living as a human being as perceiving and thinking (1170a16-19), plus the fact that whenever one perceives, one perceives that one perceives (1170a29-32; cf. *DA* 3.2, discussed below), and whenever one thinks one perceives (or thinks?) that one thinks (cf. *Met.* 1074b35-36, also discussed below).
3. Thus, in living, one perceives that one is engaged in something good in itself.
4. It is pleasant and good in itself to perceive that one is engaged in something good in itself. (1170b1-3)[18]
5. Therefore, living is choiceworthy. (1170b2-4)

As Aristotle recapitulates the argument a few lines later: For each of us, "being is choiceworthy on account of perceiving oneself as good." (τὸ δ' εἶναι ἦν αἱρετὸν διὰ τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι αὐτοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ὄντος. (1170b8-9))

The overall structure looks fairly straightforward; and both the idea that it is good and pleasant to be aware of what one is doing, at least when what one is doing is itself good, and the idea that such pleasant awareness

[17] As is clear from the fact that Aristotle almost immediately sets aside a life that is "vicious and corrupt or full of pains."

[18] Literally translated, Aristotle says "...to perceive a good present in oneself" (τὸ δ' ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχον ἐν ἑαυτῷ αἰσθάνεσθαι), but he is referring to perceiving one's *activity* as a good.

contributes somehow to the choiceworthiness of human life, seem fairly intuitive. But there are two related things that are confusing about the argument (well, no doubt there are more, but I'd like to focus on two), at least on this reconstruction of it. The first is: Why should the fact the living is ὡρισμένον imply that it is good and pleasant in itself? The participle ὡρισμένον derives from a word that Aristotle has just used a few lines earlier, ὁρίζεσθαι, in saying that living is "defined" as perceiving and thinking. (Or, somewhat more literally, to say that they "ὁρίζονται living" is to say that they "demarcate" or "divide living [from non-living, or human living from animal living].") But why should the fact that living is "defined" or "definite" or "demarcated" imply that it is good and pleasant?

More puzzlingly still, it is not at all obvious why Aristotle needs steps 2-4 *at all*. We *start* with the premise – at least, so it seems – that living is good and pleasant in itself (because it is ὡρισμένον); from steps 3 and 4, we seem to get the conclusion that…living is good and pleasant in itself (because it necessarily involves perception of what is good, viz. living), which Aristotle appears to think entitles him to the conclusion that living is choiceworthy. But then why could he not have concluded that immediately from step 1?

The Eudemian *version*

I think that if we consider the corresponding argument in the *Eudemian Ethics* (1244b23-1245a10), we will see that Aristotle's presentation in the *NE* may be misleading;[19] and once we recognize why that is so, we can see our way to a resolution to these two problems. In the *NE*, the idea that living is ὡρισμένον and therefore good in itself appears to be prior to, and thus independent of, the material about the reflexivity of perception and thought. In the *EE*, by contrast, Aristotle makes much clearer the way in which the two points are closely connected. In broad strokes, the argument proceeds as follows: Aristotle sets out to establish what makes living "most choiceworthy" (*EE* 1244b27), and, similarly to the *NE*, he does so by beginning with the idea that living (as a human being) is "perceiving and knowing."[20] (1244b24-25) Here, however, the presentation diverges somewhat. Instead of suggesting immediately that living is ὡρισμένον, Aristotle introduces the

[19] I am assuming that, because the arguments are so similar in strategy and upshot, the *Eudemian* argument is another version (in some respects more carefully developed) of the same argument as what we find in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, though of course this is a defeasible assumption. At any rate, this assumption has the practical benefit of enabling us to read them in light of each other, and if we arrive thereby at an interesting, plausible argument, that counts as strong evidence in favor of the assumption.

[20] I don't think the shift from "knowing" and "thinking" is important, for our purposes. I would speculate (though it is just speculation) that Aristotle came to see that the word *noein* is better for his purposes, because he wants to focus on intrinsically valuable cognitive activities; but γιγνώσκω, though it can refer to something one *does* – find out, discover, recognize – can be naturally taken to refer to the state of knowing something, which might lead one to naturally think of the (extrinsic) *benefits* of knowing things.

(Pythagorean) "columns" (1245a1), saying that in one of these columns, we find what is choiceworthy, as well as the object of knowledge and perception, which are in that column because they "share in the nature of the ὡρισμένον." (1245a1-3) As we can see from what Aristotle says about these Pythagorean "columns" in the *Metaphysics* (discussed below), the two columns are comprised of a series of contrary elements – good and bad, being and non-being, unity and plurality, etc. – with the first column including the choiceworthy and intelligible elements. This can help us to see why we want to be the *object* of knowledge and perception: "wanting to perceive oneself is wanting oneself to be such [i.e., ὡρισμένον]" (1245a4-5) – since to "share in the nature of the ὡρισμένον" is to be in a choiceworthy condition. "But," Aristotle goes on, "we are each of these" – i.e., the object of knowledge and perception, thus, ὡρισμένον and "of the nature of the good" – "not in ourselves, but rather by sharing in the capacities of perceiving and knowing (for when one perceives, one becomes the object of [one's own] perception…)" (1245a4-9)

The ὡρισμένον*, intelligible, and beautiful*

Certainly, this is obscure. But I think it at least provides us with the materials we need to sort out what is really going on. There are a few distinct questions I want to address: First, in what sense is the object of perception ὡρισμένον? Second, why is the ὡρισμένον choiceworthy and good? And, finally, why should it be that, in participating in the capacities of perception and thought, we become ὡρισμένον in this sense?

To say that something is ὡρισμένον is, most literally, to say that it is marked out by ὅροι – boundaries and borders. Thus, we might say that something is ὡρισμένον if it is sufficiently "definite" or "demarcated" such that it can be distinguished from other things. This makes it clear why the object of perception would be ὡρισμένον. To be able to perceive a *K* is to be able to distinguish what is *K* from what is not *K*. It is for *K* to be intelligible to or graspable by you, at least in this minimal way, that you can differentiate between *K*-things and non-*K*-things. Thus, if in perceiving you become the object of perception, you must be ὡρισμένον in this sense.

But this doesn't seem sufficient to explain why the ὡρισμένον is good and choiceworthy. Aristotle clearly maintains this, and not only in the passage we've been considering. He tells us in the *Metaphysics,* for instance, that the ὡρισμένον is one of the principal forms of the *kalon* (1078b1). I suspect that we should think of ὡρισμένον as representing a kind of spectrum. At the minimal end, you might say that something is ὡρισμένον if it is determinate enough to be perceptible (αἰσθητόν) as a particular thing, distinguishable from other things. At the other end of the spectrum, we have that which is maximally ὡρισμένον and therefore beautiful. The question is why should making something more "determinate" – or however we want to translate ὡρισμένον – make it thus.

The answer seems to have to do with the ways in which Aristotle connects beauty with intelligibility, and intelligibility with the ὡρισμένον. At *Metaphysics* 1072a26-1072b1, he speaks again of the Pythagorean columns of contraries, where he associates one side with the object of thought (νοητόν, i.e., intelligible), being, and unity, as well the good and the desirable (ὀρεκτόν). At *Met*. 986a22-26,[21] he lists some further elements in these columns of Pythagorean contraries; and although he does not use the word ὡρισμένον there, he does employ a closely related one, πέρας, "limit," saying that πέρας is in the first column (i.e., the column of intelligible and, therefore, good things), while ἄπειρον, "the unlimited," is located in the opposite column. (Later (1066a15-16), he adds ἀόριστος, the opposite of ὡρισμένον, to the second column as well.) Taking these passages together, Aristotle appears to associate "limit" or "boundedness" with unity, intelligibility, goodness, and choiceworthiness. We find this association of ὡρισμένον with order, intelligibility and goodness even more clearly expressed in the *Protrepticus:*

> For knowledge is more concerned with things that are ὡρισμένον and ordered than with their contraries…Now, good things are more ὡρισμένον and ordered than bad things, just as a good man is more ὡρισμένον than a bad man…[22]

We can glean a fuller idea of what Aristotle might have in mind by looking to Plato's *Philebus,* where we find a clear expression of the view that the introduction of "limit" (πέρας) into something which is "unlimited" (ἄπειρον) is necessary for it to have some kind of order or structure, and, therefore, some kind of intelligibility and beauty. The point is first introduced at 16c-d, as part of a kind of metaphysical theory — reality, we are told, is composed of the ἄπειρον and πέρας; and it is almost immediately applied to (or illustrated by?) language and music: We need to introduce "limit," πέρας, in order to move from mere sound (which is ἄπειρον) to something that makes sense. The idea is presumably that sound, as an undifferentiated range of pitch and volume and so on, means nothing. One must first divide sound up into definite elements (say, consonants and vowels). Later on, in a similar vein, he speaks of the need to introduce

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[21] ἕτεροι δὲ τῶν αὐτῶν τούτων τὰς ἀρχὰς δέκα λέγουσιν εἶναι
τὰς κατὰ συστοιχίαν λεγομένας, πέρας [καὶ] ἄπειρον, περιτ-
τὸν [καὶ] ἄρτιον, ἓν [καὶ] πλῆθος, δεξιὸν [καὶ] ἀριστερόν, ἄρρεν
[καὶ] θῆλυ, ἠρεμοῦν [καὶ] κινούμενον, εὐθὺ [καὶ] καμπύλον, φῶς
[καὶ] σκότος, ἀγαθὸν [καὶ] κακόν, τετράγωνον [καὶ] ἑτερόμηκες

[22] τῶν γὰρ ὡρισμένων καὶ τεταγμένων
ἐπιστήμη μᾶλλόν ἐστιν ἢ τῶν ἐναντίων, ἔτι δὲ τῶν
αἰτίων ἢ τῶν ἀποβαινόντων. ἔστι δ' ὡρισμένα καὶ
τεταγμένα τἀγαθὰ τῶν κακῶν μᾶλλον, ὥσπερ ἄνθρω-
πος ἐπιεικὴς ἀνθρώπου φαύλου (38.5-9)

"measure" (μέτρον) and "harmony" or "symmetry" (σύμμετρον) in order to make a "mixture" *kalon* (64d-e).[23] This introduction of "limit" (πέρας) and "measure" (μέτρον) requires knowledge: One must know how to arrange these newly defined elements in certain determinate ways to move, e.g., from noise to language.

Aristotle, too, seems to associate the idea of "bounds" or "boundedness" with order; in the *Rhetoric*, for instance, he uses ἀόριστος ("without boundaries" or "unlimited) – the same word he uses in opposition to ὡρισμένον in the self-awareness argument – in opposition to κατὰ τάξιν τινὰ, "according to some order."[24] The thought, as in Plato's *Philebus*, seems to be that to lack boundaries is to lack order or structure. And it is because of this association that he tells us that Aristotle goes on to tell us that "order and proportion (or harmony) and the ὡρισμένον are the greatest forms of the *kalon*" (τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ μέγιστα εἴδη τάξις καὶ συμμετρία καὶ τὸ ὡρισμένον, *Met.* 1078b1).

We might wonder why ὡρισμένον, a word derived ultimately from the noun ὅρος, meaning boundary, could come to connote order and intelligibility in this way. Aristotle does not really indicate an answer to this question, but here are a couple of speculations: (1) To be ὡρισμένον is to be something which can be distinguished from other things; but for a complex whole to be a *single* thing distinct from others, its various parts must be unified in a kind of order or structure. (2) The kind of ὅρος, boundary, at play may be so to speak "internal" boundaries as opposed to delimiting ones – as if Aristotle (and Plato in the *Philebus*) were thinking of a complex whole as being divided up into parts, with the "boundaries" representing its abstract structure (as when we speak of nature's joints), so that to say that something is ὡρισμένον is to say that it is divided up into an ordered, structured whole. Both of these ideas would help explain why, on at least one occasion, Aristotle connects ὅρος with a κανῶν, "standard" or "criterion" – in particular, a standard of goodness.[25] So, one might say that to be fully ὡρισμένον makes something fully satisfy the relevant criterion or standard of goodness.

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[23] The ultimate point of this, in the context of the *Philebus*, is that to have a good life, one must introduce some kind of πέρας into the ἄπειρον elements of a life, to impose some kind of structure or order upon them and, thereby, potentially make the whole into something καλόν. In particular, the point is that pleasure might be one of the ἄπειρον constituents of a well-lived life, but it needs to be correctly combined with the other constituents, and that requires the introduction of πέρας.

[24] Speaking of the two forms of monarchy, Aristotle says that kingship is κατὰ τάξιν τινὰ, while tyranny is ἀόριστος (1365b37-1366a2). (It is worth thinking about why tyranny is ἀόριστος. Is it because the tyrant is led by personal whim, rather than rational consideration of the common good? If so, it would make the analogy with the sense in which vice is ἀόριστος (discussed in the next chapter) quite close.)

[25] "What standard (κανῶν) or what ὅρος of good things is more precise than an intelligent man?" (Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* 39.19). See also *Politics* 1294a10. Plato also uses it in this sense when Socrates asks: τίνα ὅρον ὁρίζῃ; "What standard do you use (or lay down) [i.e., to

I suspect that all of these connotations are at play: What makes something a single thing, and so distinguishable from other things or the wider world, is its having a distinct or definite order (as Irwin translates ὡρισμένον in the *NE* 9.9 argument), and what makes something good of its kind – the standard or criterion relative to it – is determined by what it *is* to be that kind, to more fully or perfectly exhibit the order characteristic of that kind of thing. Thus, we can think of the spectrum as follows: At the minimum, you might say that something is ὡρισμένον if it is determinate enough to be perceptible as a particular thing, distinguished from its surroundings – it has enough order, is sufficiently unified, to be minimally intelligible. But as we introduce more order and harmony, something becomes not only increasingly intelligible, but increasingly *kalon*, i.e., beautiful or fine.[26] It is for this reason, I suspect, that Aristotle maintains that the object of thought just *is* the object of desire (*Met.* 1072a27-30) – a context, as we have seen, in which he appeals to the Pythagorean columns. Thus, we might associate the minimal end of the spectrum with being perceptible (an object of perception, αἰσθητόν) and thus distinguishable from other things, the other end with being fully intelligible (the object of thought, νοητόν) and thus *kalon* and the object of desire and choice.

Self-awareness

But what does this have to do with self-awareness, with "perception" of oneself? When Aristotle says that we are the object of perception and knowledge insofar as we participate in the capacities of perception and knowledge, he undoubtedly has in mind a view he articulates in *De Anima* and the *Metaphysics*. In the former, Aristotle presents his account of why it is that, in perceiving, we perceive that we perceive (*DA* 3.2,); and, in the latter, he tells us that "[human] knowledge and perception and opinion and thought are always of something else, but of itself peripherally (ἐν παρέργῳ)" (*Met.* 1074b35-36). Exploring precisely *why* Aristotle maintains this – or what he thinks the mechanism is by which perception is "peripherally" of itself, and thought of itself, etc. – would take us too far afield. But it perhaps suffices for our purposes to note that Aristotle is here attempting to explain the fact that, in perceiving and thinking, we are aware of ourselves perceiving and

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distinguish what is better/worse]?" (with *horon* being used as an internal accusative). One could just translate this "Where do you draw the line?" but the context makes clear that Socrates is asking for a *criterion* for drawing the line there.

[26] Note in this connection Aristotle's argument that, "If sound (φωνή) is a concord (συμφωνία), and if [the actuality of] sound and the hearing of it are one and the same [in number, though not in being], and if concord is a ratio (*logos*), hearing as well as what is heard must be a ratio. That is why the excess of either the sharp or flat destroys the hearing." (*DA* 426a27-31). It is as if a harmony were more of a sound, i.e., as if by making something increasingly perceptible by hearing – not in the sense of making it louder, but more of the *kind* of thing you can hear as something – you will eventually make it into something harmonious.

thinking. Interestingly, in the *Nicomachean* version of our argument, Aristotle includes not only our reflexive awareness of seeing, hearing, thinking, and so on, but also our awareness that we are (e.g.) *walking* (1170a30), "and similarly in the other cases, there is something that perceives that we are active (ἐνεργοῦμεν)."[27] In general, as creatures capable of perception and thought, we are aware of what we are doing (when we "are fully alive," e.g., not asleep). As a contemporary philosopher might put it, we are conscious beings.[28]

The fact that, in perceiving, we are ourselves also the object of our perception means that, as Aristotle says, insofar as we share in the capacity of perception, we are also perceptible. And this implies, as we have seen, that we must be ὡρισμένον in the minimal sense. But when Aristotle speaks in the *Eudemian* argument of wanting to be the object of perception and thought because then we share in the nature of the ὡρισμένον, and thus the choiceworthy, and when he speaks in the *Nicomachean Ethics* of perceiving one's being or living *as* good (since it is something ὡρισμένον), he must have the more elevated sense of ὡρισμένον in view, according to which something ὡρισμένον exhibits such "definite order" as to be intelligible, *kalon*, and thus choiceworthy. But it is hard to see how the reflexivity of perception would make one's life is ὡρισμένον in this more elevated sense.

Aristotle never explains how, but I think that we can make a reasonable speculation on the basis of the argument from the *Protrepticus* which I cited above. The argument is meant to show that, in fact (and whether they know it or not), the "main pursuit of all humans is to be intelligent (i.e., to exhibit φρόνησις[29])." He seeks to establish this on the basis of the fact that it is generally agreed[30] that, if perception (αἴσθησις) is taken away, life is not worth living – so that it is perceiving that makes human life worth living. Of the senses, we value sight the most, because it is most distinct (σαφεστάτη); which suggests that we value perception (that which makes life worth living) more the more distinct it is. But every form of perception is a capacity for cognizing or apprehending (γνωριστική); so, our idea that perception, and above all sight, is what makes life worth living, really reflects that we value, above all, distinct cognition or understanding. And so, if there is a cognitive capacity which is yet *more* distinct, *that* is what

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[27] καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὁμοίως ἔστι
τι τὸ αἰσθανόμενον ὅτι ἐνεργοῦμεν (1170a30-31)
Perhaps this "something" that perceives we are active is the common sense?

[28] Cf. Caston, "Aristotle on Consciousness."

[29] Since the point seems to be that everyone wants to understand things, to be able to make sense of them, Aristotle is probably not using φρόνησις in the technical sense that he will develop later; thus I have followed Hutchinson and Johnson in translating it "intelligent," and *phronein* as "be intelligent."

[30] Aristotle does not explicitly say that this is something that all or most people think, but the argument seems to make the most sense if we take that as the idea and the similar passage in *EE* 1.5 shows that Aristotle does believe it.

we really are after. And, Aristotle suggests, there is indeed a more distinct cognitive capacity, namely φρόνησις in the *Protrepticus* version (or the capacity for knowing (εἰδέναι) in the version that opens the *Metaphysics*).

We could see the argument in *EE* 7.12/*NE* 9.9 as, roughly speaking, a practical correlate to the *Protrepticus* / *Metaphysics* argument. Here, the focus has shifted from perceiving and knowing things out there, to perceiving and knowing (or thinking of) *ourselves* engaged in some activity. We could take the spectrum of ὠρισμένον as the range of objects corresponding to the range of distinctness of cognitive capacities mentioned in the *Protrepticus*; as a cognitive capacity is more distinct, so its object is more ὠρισμένον. Being by nature creatures capable of perception, and thus of self-awareness, we are aware of what we are doing, and thus are ὠρισμένον in the minimal sense. This is not only a brute fact, but something we value, as can be seen in the fact that most of us feel that, if deprived of such awareness or consciousness, life would not be worth living. But (being rational creatures) we also desire something more than this – not only to be conscious of ourselves living (i.e., conscious of the activities that constitute our lives), but for our lives to be intelligible in a more robust sense. We want to be able to *make sense* of our lives (say, as being organized around projects that we think of as good or meaningful). And this means that we want be ὠρισμένον in the more robust sense: to meet certain standards and exhibit the kind of order that makes our life *kalon*. This of course does not come automatically; to satisfy our desire for self-awareness in this more elevated sense, our desire for self-understanding, requires *living* in a certain way. And so, this desire affects not only how we think about our life, but how we live it.

Thus, I think we can plausibly see the argument as attempting to move from a *necessary* condition for having a life worth living (indeed, a necessary condition for having a human life at all) to a *sufficient* condition. Certainly, the kind of reflexive cognitive and perceptual capacities mentioned in the beginning of the *NE* and *EE* arguments are no more than a necessary condition: One might be aware of living a life which is utterly miserable (a life which, Aristotle says, is ἀόριστος – meaning, presumably, not that is so lacking in determinateness that it is literally imperceptible, but that it is lacking the degree of order that could make it pleasant to contemplate[31]). And in summing up this part of the argument, Aristotle says that "We saw that one's own being is choiceworthy because he perceives himself as good, such perception being pleasant in itself." Aristotle's point of course is not that it suffices, for a choiceworthy life, that one *thinks* of one's life as good; one must have awareness of a form of life that is in fact good, and recognize that it is good – which recognition, as we saw in the last chapter, will necessarily be pleasant *haplōs*.

[31] I return to this idea that a wretched or corrupt life is ἀόριστος in chapter 3.

Perceiving the good

Aristotle is not saying merely that, since the object of perception (in this case, oneself or one's living/being) is ὡρισμένον and thus good in itself, it is therefore pleasant to perceive; rather, he suggests that it is pleasant to perceive because one perceives it *as* good, or perceives *that* it is good: "We saw that being [i.e., living] is choiceworthy on account of perceiving oneself as good, and this sort of perception is pleasant in itself"[32] We could translate the object of "perceiving," *hautou agathou ontos*, with a that-clause, e.g., "that one is good," as Irwin does. On this translation, it sounds as if the object of our pleasant awareness was a certain (purported) fact, the fact *that* one is good. This would help make salient that the kind of awareness in question, and which contributes to the choiceworthiness of human life, is not the kind of bare sensory awareness of which other creatures are capable.[33] After all, what makes living good is that it exhibits order and intelligibility; to perceive that it is good, plausibly, involves recognizing this order, and so being able to make sense of one's life.

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[32] τὸ δ' εἶναι ἦν αἱρετὸν διὰ τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι αὑτοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ὄντος, ἡ δὲ τοιαύτη αἴσθησις ἡδεῖα (1170b8-10)

[33] This is a somewhat contentious point. Interpreters have disagreed about whether the "awareness" or "perception" in question is "the sort of awareness of what one is experiencing and doing that we ordinarily take to be built in to the first-order experience and action not just of human beings but also of other animals; or whether it is… not just 'reflexive' but in fact 'reflective' in a way that involves stepping back and reflecting on one's experience and actions, and…is only open to rational animals." (Whiting (2012), p79, n.2) In a related vein, one of the reasons that Cooper (1999) rejects the version of the argument (which he finds in both of Aristotle's *Ethics*) revolving around the possibility of self-awareness — preferring an argument that revolves around self-*knowledge* (the *Magna Moralia* version) — is the fact that self-awareness is too simple and immediate to be plausibly thought to require the awareness of one's friend. Self-knowledge, on the other hand, "is certainly a more complex matter…, and the idea that it depends upon knowledge of others might strike one as plausible…" (341). So, Whiting and Cooper both take the self-awareness at issue in the argument to be the kind of thing of which non-rational animals, too, are capable. McCabe (2012), on the other hand, believes it is something much more complex. (Human beings can not only perceive themselves, but perceive themselves as perceiving, i.e., as the *subject* of perception.) It may seem like I am siding with McCabe in this dispute. But what I really want to suggest is that this dispute is over-simple. It is important that Aristotle, in using the word *aisthēsis*, intends to capture the immediate awareness of what one is doing that is built into all conscious activity, and not reflection on what one is doing (which would be separate from the first-order activity). Many other animals, too, have immediate awareness of what they are doing. But that does not mean that the awareness in question is the same (except in its "immediacy"); our awareness of what we are doing may be fundamentally reshaped by the fact that we are rational creatures — that we develop our rational capacities, come to have a certain idea of the good, and so on. This suggests that there could be a lot more structure "built in" to our awareness of what we are doing; that is what I have been trying to suggest, and I will argue in the final chapter that seeing the matter in this way will enable us to make better sense of the application of these ideas to the ultimate argument for the value of friendship.

One thing that this translation might obscure, however, is the way in which this perception of oneself as a subject of activity is, I want to argue in what follows, built into one's activity – it is not *another* thing one does (think about, and take pleasure in, a fact about oneself). Aristotle has been speaking throughout the argument of one's "living" (treated as equivalent to oneself and one's being, since what it is to *be* a human being is what it is to *live* as a human being), or the activities that constitute one's living/being, as the object of one's perception. I don't think we should take Aristotle to be shifting to speaking of the awareness of a certain proposition fact, i.e., *that* one is good. Rather, I want he is speaking of a certain way of perceiving or being aware of oneself engaged in some activity – perceiving it *as* good, perceiving under the aspect of its goodness, or "under the description" of it as good (though it may be the case that we could not perceive things *as* good unless we could also think *that* things were good).

One might wonder, though, if αἴσθησις, "perception," of something could really involve so much. After all, other creatures than human beings are capable of perception, but they surely cannot see their lives as exhibiting a kind of abstract order and intelligibility that makes it something good in itself. But Aristotle gives some hint in this passage that he may be using αἰσθάνεσθαι in a way that includes cognitively enriched forms of apprehension. As we have seen, he begins the argument by pointing out that, for animals in general, living is most basically defined as the capacity for perceiving, while for humans in particular, living is the capacity for perceiving or thinking, though in the subsequent argumentation, he for the most part drops "thinking" and just speaking of "perceiving." The contrast with animals is perhaps not just that human beings are capable of another kind of cognitive activity (thinking), but rather that their perceptual experience is itself cognitively enriched – being possessed of *logos,* they are able to represent the things that they perceive *as* being, say, *kalon* or good. (As I discussed in the last chapter, in saying this, I do not mean to commit myself to the view that such higher order or value-laden concepts are deployed in sense-perception itself, though that is one possible explanation. Another is that more may go into the ways in which we represent the objects of perception than merely what we get through sense-perception itself.) In a famous passage from the *Politics*, Aristotle also uses "perception," αἴσθησις, in this way, to include not just sense-perception, but what we might think of as "intellectualized" perception. Aristotle identifies one of the differences between humans and other animals as being a difference between human and animal αἴσθησις: While other animals "have perception of pain and pleasure,...the human being is unique in this regard, that they alone have perception of good and bad, just and unjust, and the rest." Moreover, Aristotle connects the fact that human beings alone have perception of the

good with the fact that human beings alone possess *logos*,[34] which suggests that Aristotle believes that our capacity for higher-order cognition affects the ways in which we represent perceptible things: Because we can engage in *logos*, we can have perception not just of the outer world, and feel pleasure and pain in connection with it, but can also perceive things as *good*, as *just,* and so on. So, for example, because she is a rational being, a human being can perceive the beauty of a poem. The point is not that, in addition to hearing the sounds, she can also have the thought "This is beautiful," but rather that, because she can also think such thoughts, she can perceive the sounds *as* beautiful (and, of course, as words). Thus, when Aristotle tells us that human life consists in "perceiving or thinking," he can be taken as highlighting the fact that, because human beings are capable of thought, they are also capable of representing the content given in sense-perception *as* being (say) *kalon* or good, etc. And it is this cognitively enriched, distinctively human form of perceptual experience that Aristotle focuses on throughout the argument.

This raises the question of why Aristotle insists on framing the matter in terms of perception in the first place. If I am right, "perceiving," in this argument, means not just bare awareness (the kind of thing of which non-rational creatures are also capable) but also includes the cognitively rich ways in which we might represent the things that we perceive,[35] and "perceiving" one's living, in this sense, can involve making sense of it, recognizing its "definiteness" — recognizing the way in which it embodies standards or values that make it something genuinely good. But then why would Aristotle not use a verb that more unambiguously conveys the cognitive richness he has in mind? It would seem that there are any number of words he could have used to better convey this idea than "perception," which might seem only to cause confusion.

I believe that an answer to this question is suggested by the prominent role in the argument of the claim, mentioned above, that whenever one is engaged in the activities of perception and thought, one perceives oneself as being so engaged, i.e., that whenever we are acting (*energoumen*), we are conscious of ourselves acting. One thing that emerges, I believe, from *DA* 3.2, where Aristotle argues that it is "by sight that one perceives that one sees," (425b13) rather than by something else, is that being aware that one is seeing is not something *else* one does in addition to seeing. I am here following Victor Caston who defends what he calls an "activity reading" (as opposed to a "capacity reading") of the view Aristotle defends in *DA* 3.2 – that is, Aristotle

[34] In the next chapter, I will emphasize the social aspect of *logos* in this context – Aristotle is in fact speaking of rational discussion, and not just (individual) rationality.

[35] Again, whether we think that this is because human sense-perception itself involves the deployment of concepts, or because of something *else* we do (represent the content given by sense-perception in certain more cognitively rich ways), does not, I think, make a difference to my argument here.

is saying that it is by *seeing* that one is aware that one seeing, not that it is by the faculty of sight that one perceives that one is seeing; as well as Kosman who argues that it is this in-built element of self-awareness that distinguishes *seeing* from merely being affected in such a way as to take on the visible object's visible form. (A photograph can take on something's visible form, and do so by being causally affected by it, but it would be a peculiar view according to which it has *seen* anything.[36] Kosman's suggestion is that Aristotle sees the addition of self-awareness as what is crucial to move from being affected by something's visible form, as the photograph is, to being able to see, as the photograph cannot.) On this account, it is simply part of what it is to *see* that one is aware of oneself seeing, and, similarly, it is a constitutive part of what it is to *think* that one is aware of oneself thinking.

This can help us to recognize that, in *DA* 3.2 and the arguments of *EE* 7.12 and *NE* 9.9 that clearly draw on it, Aristotle does not have in mind the (often unpleasant or at least distracting) kind of self-consciousness where, while one is, say, talking to a colleague, one is also thinking of oneself talking to a colleague (perhaps imagining how what one is saying might be coming off, how one appears, etc.); where one is not fully immersed in one's activity, but to some degree distancing oneself from it and observing it; and where, precisely because one is trying to do something *else* in addition to conversing, one does it less well, more distractedly. (Perhaps, as seems phenomenologically plausible to me anyway, this is because one *can't* really do both at once, and so one is in effect alternating rapidly back and forth between conversing and thinking about oneself conversing – so one tends to lose the thread of the conversation.) Aristotle's discussion in *De Anima*, according to which it is by *seeing* (not, e.g., thinking about oneself seeing) that one is aware that one is seeing, strongly suggests that he does not have in mind self-consciousness in this often pejorative sense. Similarly, his claim that human thought is of something else, and of itself only "peripherally" (*en perergō(i)*), suggests again that, in speaking of the fact that when one thinks, one is aware of oneself thinking, he has mind the simple fact that thinking is a conscious process, rather than the phenomenon of thinking about oneself.[37]

Since Aristotle speaks not only of perceiving that we see, hear, think, etc., but also that we are, e.g., "walking," (so that whenever we are active, we are aware of being active), we might extend this point about the reflexive character of cognitive activities to practical activities as well: In acting, we

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[36] Okay, this involves me in the peculiarly anachronistic task of analyzing photography in terms of the Aristotelian theory of perception, but it makes the point I want to make particularly salient.

[37] Aristotle tells us that human thought is *always* of something else, which might look a little baffling, as if we could not take our own thinking as the object of our thought. But perhaps his idea is that, even in this case, the thinking that is the *object* of your thought is not identical with this instance of thinking (though this instance of thinking is peripherally of itself).

are aware of ourselves acting. (Aristotle may think that this follows from the fact that, while we are walking (and, presumably, in order to be capable of walking[38]) we are always also perceiving – perceiving, e.g., the hardness and resistance of the ground, the air on our skin, our visible surroundings moving relative to us, etc.) Here, too, we should resist the idea that there are *two* different things going on – one's action, and one's awareness of acting. To say that human behavior is perceived by the agent, is to say that her behavior is conscious, intelligent behavior, not automatic behavior accompanied by a kind of inward gaze.

When one perceives that one is engaged in some activity, then, it is at the very least misleading to think that there is on the one hand, one's engaging in some activity, and on the other hand, an accompanying awareness of that activity, as if there were two separate activities or processes running on parallel tracks. My suggestion is that what is captured by speaking of *aisthēsis* of one's living is the way in which one's self-awareness is built into one's activity – and not only the activities of perception, but also the activities of thought: in thinking, the subject perceives or thinks herself thinking, i.e., is aware of herself as thinking.[39] (We might call this the "immediacy" of self-awareness.)

As we have already seen, in being self-aware in this way, it is not merely that we know what we are doing and that it is we who are doing it; we also (are able to) act with the awareness of what we are doing *as good*. In our argument, it is precisely this kind awareness of what one is doing *as good,* that is at issue; and, if what I have said about *aisthēsis* so far is right, I think that Aristotle is suggesting that this awareness of what one is doing as something worth doing, too, is built into the first-order activity itself. That is, the immediacy conveyed by *aisthanesthai* suggests that we should resist the idea that the perception of one's activity as good is a matter of having certain conscious thoughts accompany one's activity. It's *not* that one engages in some activity and then, later on, one reflects upon it, and realizes it is good, nor is it that one thinks about what kinds of activities are good, and then goes on to engage in them — though, of course, people do both of those things, and if we could not, we would not be capable of the enriched form of self-awareness now under discussion. Nor again is it that one engages in one of these more reflective activities and the first-order activity simultaneously. Rather, for rational creatures, their activity is suffused with their awareness of what they are up to, and (at least some of the time) that awareness includes their conception of it as something worth doing. And

[38] This might partially explain why Aristotle takes perception as the psychologically fundamental capacity of the part of the soul that is also responsible for locomotion.

[39] In the *NE* 9.9 argument, Aristotle seems to suggest that one *perceives* oneself thinking, whereas in the *Metaphysics* he suggests that one *thinks* oneself thinking. I'm not sure which of these represents his considered view of the matter, nor exactly what the difference would be.

such awareness or understanding is not "epiphenomenal." To make sense of what people are doing, one must very often see it as a manifestation of such an understanding. To act intelligently, as we at least sometimes do, is to act while "knowing what one is doing"; and, for beings like us, knowing what one is doing involves (or can involve) understanding what one is doing as "good" (or "appropriate," "reasonable," etc.). One might say, intelligent action is action under a conception of what one is doing as good. Indeed, the way such awareness is built into the activity is part of what it is to *act,* as opposed to merely exhibiting some behavior.

If I am right about this, there is a fairly rich philosophy of action at work in the passage. But Aristotle uses this material, in part, to make a point about the *value* of living: "[the good person's] being is choiceworthy because of perceiving oneself as good" (τὸ δ᾽ εἶναι ἦν αἱρετὸν διὰ τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι αὑτοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ὄντος). (Since Aristotle has just explained that "being" for a human being consists in activity, when he speaks of "perceiving oneself" he is referring to the awareness of one's own activity, and in particular the awareness of one's activity as good.) What this suggests is that the goodness of a human life depends, in part, upon one's awareness of it as good — just as one's living (as a human being) necessarily involves the awareness of one's living, so too the goodness of one's living necessarily involves awareness of that goodness.

This is not an expression of any kind of subjectivism — it's not, of course, as if Aristotle were saying that a life is good simply because one believes it to be so. A life is good because it is ὡρισμένον, and that, presumably, is an objective fact about it. Indeed, his argument can, if anything, give the impression of too radically separating the goodness of a life from one's own "perception" and understanding of that life *as* good. He first argues that good people's living is good and then goes on to argue that it is good and pleasant to them; and structuring the argument this way seems to suggest that there is, on the one hand, the fact that the good person's life is ὡρισμένον, and therefore good in itself; and, on the other hand, the fact that he perceives it as good and thinks of it as good, and takes pleasure in this. But, upon reflection, this impression is misleading; one's (pleasant) conscious awareness of one's life and the nature of that life must be more intimately connected than that.

This is so for two reasons. First, for rational, self-aware creatures like us to count as doing well, it's not enough that we are in a condition which is in fact good, or are engaged in activity which is in fact worth doing; we need to be able to recognize this fact, to understand that we are in such a condition and thus engaged; and when we do recognize this fact, we take pleasure in it. Perhaps that is still somewhat misleading. For rational creatures, part of what it is to do well — part of living a good life — is to be aware that they are doing so; and indeed, part of what it is to be engaged in an activity that is in fact good is to recognize it as such and be doing it for that reason (as is suggested

by Aristotle's claim that, in order to act virtuously, one must act for the sake of the *kalon*). There is thus a kind of inevitable reflexivity built into *eudaimonia*; without being aware of itself doing something valuable, a rational creature would *not* be functioning well. Thus, although Aristotle certainly does not think that living well is simply a matter of *believing* that you are, there is an essential subjective component of a good life.[40]

Secondly, as I suggested above, it is in part the effort to make one's life intelligible, to make sense of one's life, that leads to its actually being ὡρισμένον; it does not just happen to be so, and then one goes on to recognize this fact. The intelligibility in question is an irreducibly practical intelligibility, and thus the effort to make sense of your life affects not just how you view your life, but how you live it. (As Aristotle puts it in the *Eudemian Ethics*, "[W]ishing to perceive oneself is wishing that oneself *be* ὡρισμένον" (1245a4-5).) Living as a rational creature is, we might say, a constant effort to live in such a way that one can make sense of one's life.

Conclusion

In what I have been calling the "self-awareness argument," Aristotle presents us with an account of what makes living "choiceworthy" – an answer, if I am right, to the question which he raised in *EE* 1.5 about the conditions under which we would choose existence over non-existence, and thus a response to the common trope that it would be best never to have been born. Aristotle's answer begins from the idea that life would *not* be worth choosing if that meant merely being alive, say, in a vegetative state, without conscious awareness; that, after all, would not really be a *human* life at all.

This, however, is no more than a necessary condition for having a life worth living, as is evident from the fact that one may well not choose such a life if what one was conscious *of* was only misery and pain. But Aristotle seeks to build up from this necessary condition for life's choiceworthiness to a sufficient one. He asks, in effect, given that we desire conscious awareness, what *kind* of conscious awareness do we really desire? My proposal is that, on Aristotle's view, is that what we want is to be aware of ourselves as living a life that is ὡρισμένον, and thus a life that we can make sense of and see as *kalon* and good in itself.

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[40] This has not been emphasized by many of Aristotle's readers. But cf. Heda Segvic's "Deliberation and Choice in Aristotle," where she says: "There is an element of irreducible subjectivity in Aristotle's account of what the good life for human beings consists in…What is missing in [purely objectivist] characterizations of the good human life is Aristotle's thought that a human being does not do well in life unless he lives in accordance with his own conception of what doing well in life consists in. This conception has to be one's own, in the sense of being to a large degree the result of one's own deliberation. It has also to be one's own in the sense that it is not a picture of the good life one merely speculates or fantasizes about, but is rather a conception that is operative in what one aims at in life." (181)

My interpretation explains two puzzling features of that argument: (1) Why might being ὡρισμένον be thought to make a life good in itself, as Aristotle suggests? And (2) given that a ὡρισμένον life *is* good in itself, why is that not sufficient, by itself, to make life choiceworthy for the subject, insofar as her life is ὡρισμένον? In particular, what work is being done in the argument by the material about the reflexivity of perception and thought? I have argued that we should see the ὡρισμένον as representing a continuum of increasing determinacy and thus intelligibility. At a minimum, something is ὡρισμένον insofar as it is determinate enough to be perceptible as a particular thing at all; but the more determinate it is, the more intelligible, and thus the more *kalon*, it is. Insofar as we are subjects of perception and thought, we are ourselves perceptible, since both perception and thought are peripherally of themselves; thus, simply in virtue of being a conscious human being, we must be minimally ὡρισμένον – ὡρισμένον enough to be perceptible. However, being not just conscious but also rational creatures, we naturally desire something more; not to be merely perceptible, but to be *intelligible* to ourselves – to be able to *make sense* of our lives.

The ability to make sense of our lives, however, is not simply a matter of knowing certain truths about it. We need to *live* in such a way that our life is fully intelligible. This requires, on Aristotle's view, guiding our actions by a certain conception of what is good and *kalon*, and thus being able to see ourselves as living up to that conception. (On this way of thinking, one might say, there is an important connection between the intelligibility of our lives and our being *autonomous* agents.)

Thus, there is a certain respect in which Aristotle's presentation in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is misleading. It is not that our life is *first* ὡρισμένον, to the degree that would make it something *kalon* and good in itself, and then we go on (because of the reflexive nature of perception and thought) to recognize that fact and take pleasure in it. Rather, because of the reflexive character of perception and thought, we are aware of ourselves living, and thus our life is necessarily ὡρισμένον only in the minimal sense; but given that we must live with this awareness of ourselves, we naturally desire to be able to make sense of our life and see it as something *kalon*; this leads us to want to live in such a way that our life will be ὡρισμένον to the fullest degree – for that will make our life into something that we can see as *kalon* and thus be something we can take pleasure in contemplating. That is, the fact that we are self-aware (causally) explains why our life is fully ὡρισμένον (when it is), for it drives us to live in such a way that we can see it as such. When it is, when we *do* live in such a way, we take pleasure in the kind of self-awareness which is an essential aspect of living as rational, conscious beings.

Chapter 3

Vice as a miserable disorder: Aristotle on the grounds of self-love

In the last chapter, we considered Aristotle's account of what makes living choiceworthy for human beings. We now turn to Aristotle's discussion of self-love,[1] or, as we might more naturally call it, self-respect. These two topics are closely related, and perhaps that comes as no surprise. When we say, "If I did that, I couldn't live with myself," we mean in part that we couldn't do that and sustain any self-respect.[2]

As we saw in discussing the self-awareness argument, Aristotle maintains that, for our life to be choiceworthy, we must be able to be aware of our living – i.e., aware of the activities that (on one's own view) constitute living a good human life – as exhibiting the kind of order or structure which makes our life intelligible to us and, thus, something we can see as good or *kalon*. We can see an important point of connection between this argument's focus on order and intelligibility and Aristotle's account of the grounds of self-love: In discussing self-love, he insists on the importance of the kind of unity of the virtuous person's soul, the order in their life, and, above all, on the fact that they are able to see themselves as good. (One's *philia* for oneself, Aristotle tells us in the *EE*, derives from one's *philia* for the good (1240b18-19).)

But Aristotle explicitly denies that the grounds of such self-love are available to the vicious (μοχθηρός). He does not only mean that there is nothing *genuinely* loveable about them, but that they cannot love themselves – he even tells us that they "shun life" and "kill themselves." (*NE* 1166b12-13) This might seem surprising. Isn't the difference between the vicious and the *akratic* precisely that the vicious believe in what they do, that they think of what they are doing as good? Isn't it that the vicious are like the virtuous in guiding their lives by a certain conception of *eudaimonia*, except that their conception of *eudaimonia* is so *mis*conceived as to make them evil? In fact, I will argue in this chapter, this is not Aristotle's picture of the vicious agent, though it is (understandably) the picture many of his readers have gleaned

[1] I.e., the attitude of the *philautos,* "self-lover," in the non-pejorative sense. There is no corresponding Greek word that I know of that picks out this attitude directly, though Aristotle does speak – with some reservation, since *philia* may by definition pick out a relationship between two distinct agents – of *phila* with oneself or in relation to oneself.

[2] Note in this connection that one of the characteristics of self-love that Aristotle identifies in *NE* 9.4 is precisely the ability to "live with oneself" – by which Aristotle seems to mean, to spend time alone, without needing the company of others to distract you from disturbing regrets and anticipations (*NE* 1166a24-29; cf. 1166b15-19).

from his discussion of *akrasia*. Instead, on Aristotle's view, the vicious are those who simply take as their goal whatever they happen to desire or have an appetite for in a given moment. Such non-rational desires do not add up to a conception of the human good which might serve as a principle of their actions. As I will argue, to think of them as having a conception of the human good, just one according to which whatever they happen to desire counts as good, is like thinking that I could believe, take as true, whatever passing thought I happened to entertain. If I did that, then, at the limit, I wouldn't be working with the notion of truth, and so wouldn't have beliefs at all (which is to say, I couldn't actually do that).

This is, admittedly, a controversial interpretation of Aristotle on vice, and defending it will be a somewhat involved task. But exploring why Aristotle denies that the vicious can exhibit self-love seems to me an especially perspicuous way of explaining Aristotle's account of the grounds of self-love and dealing with some of the central objections to it. On the interpretation I will defend, self-love requires a kind of order or harmony among the parts of the agent's soul, and (what turns out to be closely related) the ability to see herself as good. Both of these conditions are made possible by her acting on the basis of a rationally worked out conception of the human good. Such a conception provides a set of standards for her to live by, and for the agent to see herself as good is to see herself as living up to those standards.

Self-love and self-worth

"A person's love (*philia*) for himself," Aristotle tells us, "is derived from (ἀνάγεται) his love for the good" (*EE* 1240b18-19). We have seen that the excellent person values his life – which is to say, himself[3] – because, in living, he perceives his living, and perceives it as something ὡρισμένον – something which exhibits the kind of order (τάξις) that makes it intelligible. In what sense does his love for himself, then, derive from his love for his good? Aristotle does not say tell us this explicitly, but it seems likely that it is because a person does not achieve such intelligible order by pursuing it directly; rather, it is the result of organizing one's life around the pursuit of projects which, the excellent person recognizes, are themselves good. We saw in the last chapter that being ὡρισμένον is associated both with order or

[3] In the self-awareness argument, Aristotle moves back and forth between speaking of one's *living*, one's *being*, and *oneself*: what one *is,* it seems, is seen in the activities (perceiving and thinking/ knowing) which comprise living, i.e., the actualization of those capacities which determine human life. This identity between human living, being, and activity (*energeia*) is just as we should expect, given other of Aristotle's philosophical views. But if there is any doubt that he is treating these concepts as interchangeable in this context, consider the fact that, after explaining how the good person is related to the activities that constitute his living, Aristotle goes on to say that "as the good person is related to himself, so is he related to his friend," i.e., so is he related to the life and being of his friend.

structure as well as with being in accordance with certain standards; it is as if both of these aspects come together in Aristotle's view: by setting himself a standard to live by, namely a (correct) conception of the good, the excellent person's life comes to exhibit such order and structure that it is itself *kalon* and pleasant for him to perceive and contemplate.

However, Aristotle does not think that *only* the truly virtuous love themselves or find their lives pleasant to contemplate and choiceworthy. In the review of the *NE* 9.9 argument that Aristotle presents in *NE* 9.12, he tells us that "perception of one's own being is choiceworthy," but then goes on in a way that implies that by "one's being" Aristotle means "whatever being *is* for each [i.e., in his view], or the end for which he chooses to be alive" (giving examples such as participating in *symposia*, gymnastics, hunting, and philosophy) – which suggests, I think, that in speaking of perceiving one's being, Aristotle has in mind perceiving one's being *under one's own conception of being/living*. And in the discussion of self-love, after explaining why the truly virtuous exhibit the characteristic features of *philia* in relation to themselves, Aristotle tells us that: "The many, base though they are, also appear to have these features [the features of self-love]. But is it that they share in them only insofar as they approve of themselves and suppose that they are decent (ἐπιεικεῖς)?" (*NE* 9.4, 1166b2-4) Given that the implied answer appears to be "yes," it seems that Aristotle takes it that at least certain conceptions of what it is to live as a human being, other than the true or ideal conception, provide a standard for people to live by, and which provides a sufficient basis of order and intelligibility to ground some degree of self-satisfaction – enough that they at least "appear" to have the features of self-love. And, given that people love not what is loveable *haplōs,* but what *appears* loveable to themselves, this means that they do love themselves. Even though the end for which they choose to live is not, in fact, *the* human good, still, by pursuing it, they can at least make enough sense of their life to see it as valuable and loveable. As we shall see, the truly vicious, by contrast, are not capable even of this self-love; for they hate themselves so much that they "shun life." They do not, it would seem, even *appear* loveable *to themselves*.

We can see a connection between Aristotle's argument and our nature as *rational* animals. Other animals have a good and pursue it in *some* sense (say, instinctively). But human beings pursue it deliberately, by forming a *conception* of it. This of course makes us subject to errors from which other creatures are immune (Aristotle appears to think that it is quite rare to live on the basis of *the* true conception of the human good), but it also makes possible self-love:

> Hence, in the case of human beings, it seems that each person[4] is a friend to himself, but in the case of other animals this is not so; for example, a horse does not seem good to itself, and so is not a friend [to itself]. But this is also not the case for children, until they become capable of decision, since only then does their insight (νοῦς) conflict with their appetite. (*EE* 7.6, 1240b30-34)

It might seem odd that it is not until people can experience psychic conflict that they become capable of self-love – isn't it the absence of such conflict that makes for self-love in the virtuous?[5] But Aristotle's idea is perhaps that one can have psychic harmony only where psychic conflict is also possible (since harmony is harmony between *distinct* elements). What is required for self-love is that one becomes able to distance herself from her non-rational desires by forming a conception of her good for which she has a *rational* desire or wish. This makes psychic conflict possible, but it also makes possible living on the basis of a conception of our good; only then can we see our actions as good, because to see them as good means seeing them as living up to that conception; and, if we can do that, we can see ourselves as good and exhibit self-love. Moreover, in living on the basis of a conception of the good, we are guiding ourselves by *logos*, and thereby loving what we most truly are, namely, rational beings. Even those who do not identify their good with their rational nature still do, insofar as they guide themselves by a conception of the good that endorse on the basis of reason (though mistakenly), thereby express their being as rational creatures.

These ideas will emerge most clearly, and receive some further support, if we consider those who, on Aristotle's view, whose lives are too disordered to even seem *kalon* and choiceworthy, even *to themselves,* and who are thus incapable of self-love.

Aristotle on vice

Aristotle appears to take it that people who fall short of genuine virtue, insofar as they live on the basis of a conception of the good, can at least appear loveable to themselves, and thus find their lives choiceworthy. However, there is a limit to just how wrong, on Aristotle's view, people can be about the human good and still be capable of self-love. A life which is vicious (μοχθηρὰν) and corrupt, or full of misery, he tells us in *NE* 9.9, is ἀόριστος (1170a23-24) – which is to say, if what I said in the previous chapter was on the right track, that it does not exhibit the kind of intelligible order which is pleasant to contemplate and makes one's life choiceworthy. Why a life that is full of pain and misery would fall short is perhaps clear enough. But why shouldn't the truly vicious person take pleasure in perceiving and contemplating the debauched activities that constitute his life? After all, it is

[4] With, as we shall see, certain exceptions.
[5] Cf. *NE* 9.4, discussed in the next section.

natural to conclude on the basis of Aristotle's discussion of the difference between *akrasia* and vice in book 7, that, by the vicious person's standards and conception of the human good, those debauched activities are good to engage in, and that successfully engaging in them can make for a great human life. Given the vicious person's picture of the human good, why couldn't he coherently (by his lights) organize his life around the pursuit of those activities?

One might think that this is just a slip, or that the reading of the sense of ὡρισμένον/ ἀόριστος at work in the self-awareness argument that I offered in the last chapter must be wrong – except that Aristotle quite explicitly argues in NE 9.4 that the "utterly base" (κομιδῇ φαῦλος) and "vicious" (μοχθηρός) have souls that are inevitably unharmonious; that they find it unpleasant to recollect the actions they've done, or contemplate the ones they are likely to do in the future; that they exhibit no self-love; and even that they "shun life" and "kill themselves". I will quote the relevant passage at some length:

> [1] The many, base though they are, also appear to have these features [the features of self-love]. But is it that they share in them only insofar as they approve of themselves and suppose that they are decent? For no one who is utterly base (κομιδῇ φαῦλος) and unscrupulous (ἀνοσιουργός) has or [even] appears to have these features. Indeed, even base people hardly have them. For they are at odds with themselves, and have an appetite for one thing and a wish for another, as incontinent people do. For they do not choose things that seem to be good for them, but instead choose pleasant things that are actually harmful; and cowardice or laziness causes others to shrink from doing what they think best for themselves. [2] And those who have done many terrible actions hate and shun life because of their vice, and kill themselves[6]...For when they are by themselves, they remember many disagreeable actions, and anticipate others in the future...These people have nothing loveable about them, and so have no friendly feelings toward themselves. Hence, such a person does not share in his own enjoyments and distresses. For his soul is in conflict, and because he is vicious one part is distressed at being restrained, and another is pleased; and so each part pulls in a different direction, as though they were tearing him apart. [Or rather, (?)] even if he cannot be distressed and pleased at the same time, still he is soon distressed because he was pleased, and wishes these things had not

[6] For this sentence, the OCT has: οἷς δὲ πολλὰ καὶ δεινὰ πέπρακται καὶ διὰ τὴν μοχθηρίαν μισοῦνται, καὶ φεύγουσι τὸ ζῆν καὶ ἀναιροῦσιν ἑαυτούς, i.e., "those who have done many terrible actions are hated because of their vice, and shun life and kill themselves." I prefer the text of the 12th c. manuscript L^b (as does Irwin, though he translates the line slightly differently), which has μισοῦσι τε καὶ, not μισοῦνται, καὶ. Aristotle is not saying that *others* hate the vicious (though that may be true) but that they hate themselves, and he is not saying that their vice explains why others hate them (though that may be true) but that it explains why they hate themselves and shun life.

> been pleasant for him; for base people are full of regret (μεταμελείας…γέμουσιν). (*NE* 9.4, 1166b2-25)

Before turning to the apparent inconsistency with *NE* 7, it is worth registering that this passage supports the reading of the self-awareness argument articulated in the previous chapter. Although it is not entirely clear, I *think* that the passage is characterizing two different groups of people (which I've indicated by the numerals [1] and [2] in the passage), who fall at different points on the spectrum of undesirable and blameworthy characters. On the one hand, there are "the many," who are base, but not utterly so, and so can at least approve of themselves (some of the time?) and see themselves as basically decent. For this reason, they are capable of some degree of self-love. But since one's love of oneself refers back to one's love of the good – i.e., (if what I said above is correct) one loves oneself and find one's life choiceworthy insofar as one can see oneself as living up to the standards set by one's conception of the good – and the many do not consistently act on the basis of their conception of the good, they can only approve of and love themselves to a limited degree. On the other hand, there are those who are "*utterly* base," "unscrupulous," and "vicious," who perform "many terrible actions," and are therefore characterized as living completely disordered lives, and being entirely incapable of self-love, because they don't approve of themselves and even think of themselves as decent – to such an extent that they in fact "shun life" and even "kill themselves."[7]

It might be objected here that Aristotle considers *hoi polloi* to be vicious – look at the scorn he frequently heaps upon them! However, the idea that Aristotle does not, in fact, think of *hoi polloi* as utterly base or truly vicious, though they certainly exhibit an undesirable state of character, is supported by the fact that he tells us that "the self-controlled (*enkratic*) person abides [by reason] more than most people are capable of, and the *akratic* person less" (1152a25); this seems to imply that most people fall

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[7] Thus, again, we see the connection between that which makes life choiceworthy and that without which non-existence would be better than existence. The life of the utterly vicious is so lacking in what makes life *haireton* that they will even kill themselves.

I wonder – okay, this is admittedly going to be farfetched – if there isn't even a kind of verbal play on the word ἀναιροῦσιν, meaning "take away" and, of men, "kill." It is formed from the same root as *haireton* (the verb *airousthai,* meaning "take for oneself," so, "choose"), with a prefix (*an-*) which here means "up" or "away," but which is (here) spelled the same as another root meaning "not" or "without" – as if Aristotle were also suggesting that the vicious "un-choose" their lives, find life un-choiceworthy. (In partial defense of that silly thought: Aristotle *is* prone to fanciful etymological speculation.)

Note that Irwin (as well as others) translates ἀναιροῦσιν as "destroy" (themselves), perhaps with the thought that Aristotle means something less dramatic than that the vicious are suicidal, namely that they are ruining themselves by acting the way that they do. Certainly, ἀναιροῦσιν can mean "destroy." But since Aristotle has just said that the vicious "shun life" (φεύγουσι τὸ ζῆν), it seems more likely that we should take ἀναιροῦσιν in the sense of "kill."

somewhere between *enkrateia* and *akrasia*, sometimes managing to resist temptation, sometimes succumbing – and thus, as Aristotle says of them here, they have an appetite for one thing and a wish for another. [8,9] And, if I might be permitted to extrapolate from my own case, that strikes me as very plausible.

But this makes all the more forceful the worry canvassed above: Why *shouldn't* the vicious approve of themselves and think they are decent? Aren't they living in accordance with their conception of a good human life? And, indeed, why should they exhibit psychic conflict and be "full of regrets"? Indeed, in book 7, Aristotle seemed to say precisely the opposite – that while the *akratic* person is prone to regret, the intemperate person is *not*.

I will turn to that more direct (apparent) contradiction below. I want to start, however, by considering the more general picture of vice that many readers have (understandably) gleaned from *NE* 7.1-10, and which is in tension with his characterization of vice in 9.4. We need to consider whether this is the only, or even the most plausible, interpretation of vice in book 7.

In book 7, chapter 1, Aristotle divides human states of character into virtue, *enkrateia*, *akrasia*, and vice (with heroic or divine virtue and bestiality lying in some sense outside the range of human characters). The distinction among these states might be schematically summed up as follows:

- Virtuous: Good ends; good actions; good appetites
- *Enkratic*: Good ends; good actions; bad appetites
- *Akratic*: Good ends; bad actions; bad appetites

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[8] Certainly, Aristotle often refers to the many as φαῦλος and πόνηρος. I might be tempted to appeal to the fact that these terms admit of less strongly pejorative connotations than, say, κακός or μοχθηρός, and to the fact that Aristotle uses κακία when he distinguishes vice from *akrasia*, and that he uses μοχθηρία when he tells us that "vice" is ἀόριστος and when he tells us that it is on account of "vice" that the vicious hate and shun life. The difficulty is that Aristotle is not systematic in his use of these various terms of disapprobation, and so one cannot rely on the terminology alone. Still, I think the more conceptual or theoretical considerations that I canvass in the body of the paper seem to push us in favor of thinking that there is a range of culpable states of character, and that most people fall somewhere closer to the neutral side of the range. They are still not *good*, certainly, but neither are they utterly depraved. Moreover, this seems to be in keeping with Aristotle's *endoxic* method, which seeks to do justice to common (as well as reputable) opinions.

[9] Given that Aristotle often suggests that the many are committed to one of the three ways of life – the life devoted to pleasure, in the sense of pleasant gratification or amusement – one might very reasonably wonder why they are inherently prone to conflict between their wish and their appetite: Isn't their wish just *for* the satisfaction of their appetite? One possible explanation is that, if one wishes for maximum overall pleasure, then there will be inevitable conflict between that wish and one's appetite, here and now, for some particular pleasure – whenever, that is, satisfying that appetite would result in less pleasure overall. Another possibility is that the many have, in fact, internalized some (non-hedonistic) moral norms – a sense, for instance, that some things would be shameful, no matter how pleasant – and that this is a source of their psychic conflict. In this sense, they wouldn't have purely hedonistic conception of the good, though they might think they do.

- Vicious: Bad ends; bad actions; bad appetites

Moreover, in the subsequent discussion, Aristotle tells us that the intemperate person pursues bodily pleasure because he thinks it is *right* (or that one should, δεῖ) do so, that what he does "accords with [his] decision," and that vicious people do not see themselves as vicious. Understandably enough, this has given rise to the impression that the vicious person is a kind of evil doppelgänger of the virtuous: Unlike the akratic person, there is no conflict between his actions, appetites and the principles he's committed to, because his actions flow from, and his appetites accord with, his evil principles of action. On this interpretation, the vicious person, like the virtuous, has a conception of his good, around which he organizes his life; like the virtuous person, there is harmony between his wish (βούλησις) for this end, his appetites, and his actions; but his conception of the good is fundamentally mis-conceived, and so the actions that flow from it and the appetites that are in accordance with it are vicious. Julia Annas makes the assumption explicit:

> Aristotle's bad man is like his good man in so far as both display unity of thought and feeling when they act; the bad are those who have had their grasp of the principles a man should follow in action corrupted by bad training or the effect of previous bad choices. Aristotle's bad man is someone who has come to have systematically perverted ends, who believes in what he is doing, unlike the Platonic bad man, who is never really given the belief that what he is doing is right, and is thus always presented as a pathetic mass of conflicts. (554)

Thus understood, the picture is in obvious tension with what Aristotle says about the vicious person in book 9. This is why Gauthier and Jolif conclude that, in book 9, Aristotle must have been carried away by "un excès du zèle" to denigrate vice and recommend virtue; and it is why Annas dismisses the *NE* 9.4 passage as so much "moralizing about the miseries of being in a state of constant change and conflict," and tells us that it "depends on a moral psychology which is both surprising for him to put forward…and implausible in itself." (541) She describes the idea "that good men are internally consistent and unified whereas bad men are internally conflicted" as "an idea which [Aristotle] takes over unquestioned from [Plato's] *Lysis*" and inserts into his discussion of friendship, but which "does not fit happily into Aristotle's *Ethics*" more generally.

Other readers, however, have been a bit more circumspect in attributing to Aristotle this straightforward inconsistency. And rightly so. The idea that the good life is well-ordered and the bad life disordered plays an important role not only in *NE* 9.4, but also (as we have seen) in the argument of *NE* 9.9, which could be seen in some respects as a culminating

argument of his account of friendship. Annas' line then would involve not only dismissing 9.4, but much else besides. Annas readily accept this – she attributes it to Aristotle's lack of a "concern for global systematization," though my own sense is that one need not be overly concerned with global systematization to be concerned not to say one thing and then imply the very opposite. In any case, although it is of course true that Aristotle will contradict himself from time to time, attributing to him a contradiction (particularly such a straightforward one) should always be the interpreter's last resort.

And there is an alternative to seeing the vicious person as being fully committed to a mistaken conception of *eudaimonia,* exhibiting unity of thought, feeling and action in its pursuit. We might instead see him as lacking such a conception – or at least, lacking a conception which constitutes a principle of his actions – and thus fundamentally unharmonious, because his actions flow from his unruly appetites (and there is no order or harmony to what one happens to find pleasant or happens to find oneself desiring, if not guided by a conception of what is *worth* desiring and taking pleasure in[10]). The enumeration of character states in book 7 would, on this way of thinking, reflect a continuum of increasing disorder – with vice not just a failure to structure one's life by *right* reasoning, but a failure to rationally structure one's life at all.[11]

On this reading, there is no contradiction with what he says in book 9 – indeed, it would be quite consonant with it. In book 9, as we have seen,

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[10] "Now the things that please most people conflict, because they are not pleasant by nature, whereas the things that please lovers of the fine are pleasant by nature." (*NE* 1099a11-13) In this connection, Kinch raised the question of where this leaves the principled hedonist. Admittedly, I remain somewhat ambivalent on this question. I am not sure whether we should say that (a) in a sense, it is simply impossible to be a *principled* hedonist – because an inherently conflicted principle is no principle at all; or that (b) though it is possible to be reflectively committed to a conception of the good as consisting in the overall maximization of pleasure, i.e., that is the object of one's *boulēsis* (and that one could be in this sense a principled hedonist), such a conception of the good would not count as a *principle* of one's actions – in the sense that it is not one's *boulēsis* that is the ultimate explanation of what one does, but one's non-rational desires which have warped one's *boulēsis*. I suppose that, at present, I am inclined to think that this ambivalence is the result of the indeterminacy involved in attributing to someone a conception of the good (an indeterminacy I discuss below).

We should also consider the possibility that, although the many are inclined to *say* that pleasure is the good, the fact that there are pleasures which they consider too shameful to pursue, however pleasant they may be (cf. Socrates's argument in the *Gorgias*), betrays the fact that the many don't really see goodness as being *solely* a matter of pleasure. This would explain why, despite their profession of hedonism, they still live basically decent lives: their pursuit of pleasure is structured by some internalized sense of what is shameful.

[11] One might instead suggest that he does not lack a conception of the good, but is committed to a conception of the good which is itself disordered, and could in this way maintain the traditional picture of the principled vicious agent, while reconciling it with Aristotle's suggestion that the vicious person is disordered. I discuss this below.

Aristotle says that a vicious life is ἀόριστος while a decent life is ὡρισμένον, similar to the way in which he tells us (in the *Rhetoric*) that tyranny is ἀόριστος while kingship is "according to some order." He also tells us, moreover, that a person's self-love refers back to their love of the good; that people who are not "utterly base" appear loveable to themselves because they can think of themselves as basically decent, relative to their own view of the good; but that (utterly) vicious people are completely devoid of such self-love. Together, these seem to imply that the vicious person cannot even think of himself as good, and it is plausible to assume that this is because he does not organize his life around the pursuit of what he takes to be good at all. As Müller ("Aristotle on Vice") points out, this picture is also supported by what Aristotle says about intemperance in books 2 and 3. There, for instance, Aristotle refers to the opposite of intemperance as "orderliness," (κοσμιότης, 1109a16), suggests that the intemperate person is ἀνόητος (1119b9) – i.e., that he acts without understanding or not on the basis of understanding – and that his appetites are so "large and intense [that] they expel rational calculation." (1119b10)

Thus, I propose that we should see the taxonomy as presenting a continuum of character-states in which appetites are increasingly powerful and unruly, and thus increasingly liable to overthrow reason and destroy one's conception of the good, and thus increasingly apt to produce disorder.[12, 13] In the *enkratic* agent, the appetites do not accord with her reason and conception of the good, but are not so powerful as to prevent her from acting on that conception; in the *akratic* agent, her appetites are contrary to her

[12] In fact, this is suggested by the taxonomy Aristotle offers in book 7 itself. If Aristotle were thinking of the vicious person as one who has a bad conception of the human good, then we shouldn't expect a continuum from virtue, through *enrkateia* and *akrasia,* to vice. Rather, we should expect different forms of *enkrateia* and *akrasia* relative to different conceptions of the good. If one has a mis-conception of *eudaimonia*, there is nothing to rule out experiencing appetites that conflict with it, or finding oneself unable to act on it. So, if Aristotle were thinking of pure vice as the mirror-image of virtue, then we should expect the picture to be of two different sets of character traits (or, rather, many more than two, depending on the variety of vicious conceptions of the good): Virtue-*enkrateia*-*akrasia*, mirrored by Vice-*enkrateia*$_{\text{vice}}$-*akrasia*$_{\text{vice}}$.

Aristotle himself does acknowledge the possibility of *akratic* viciousness, which may be preferable to pure viciousness. (One thinks here of the mobster who, in an inexplicable moment of compassion, declines to pull the trigger – but that is in a way, a matter of luck, for it all depends on what his conflicting passions happen to be. He may just as easily have found himself feeling irrationally (even by his own lights) cruel. Thus, we have another gangster movie trope: Even the moment of supposed compassion turns out to be, at heart, a display of arbitrary power, a demonstration that the boss can do whatever he damn well feels like.) However, this is not in general Aristotle's way of thinking about the nature of *akrasia* and its relationship to vice; in general, he sticks with the idea that there is a continuum from virtue, through *akrasia*, to vice.

[13] Müller, "Aristotle on Vice," defends a similar interpretation. Below I will discuss some of the ways in which my view differs from his, but I am in broad agreement with him.

reason and conception of the good, and are powerful enough to lead her to act against reason; in the vicious person, they are still more powerful – so much so that they overwhelm her reason altogether, and those appetites, rather than her conception of the good, set her ends for her. There is thus, it is true, no direct conflict between what she has an appetite for and what she takes as her end in a particular moment, but there is a conflict among those ends themselves, since there is no harmony to what simply happens to please her; and that conflict will only increase, since, as she continues to act on those appetites without restraint, her appetites will increase, eventually becoming insatiable (1119b7-10).

In allowing their appetites to set their ends for them, it is not so much that the vicious are *wrong* about what is *kalon* and thus worth pursuing, but that they don't think in terms of what is *kalon* and worth pursuing at all. Aristotle tells us that the vicious seek "to gratify their appetites and in general their feelings and the non-rational part of the soul" (1168b20), while the virtuous are guided by reason; and that the virtuous self-lover differs from the vicious self-lover "as much as the life guided by reason differs from the life guided by feelings, and as much as the desire for what is fine differs from the desire for what seems advantageous." (1169a5) Aristotle thus associates being guided by reason and *nous* with being concerned with the *kalon*, and living in accordance with passion with pursuing merely what seems to be advantageous (*NE* 9.8, 1169a2-6). As Irwin ("Vice and Reason") argues, the idea cannot be that the virtuous never perform actions for merely instrumental reasons, nor that the vicious only ever do, but nor is it that the vicious *think* that useful things are *kalon*. Rather, the point is likely that the vicious do not desire the *kalon* because they simply allow their feelings to set their ends for them: they find themselves with a desire for wine, say, and then they deliberate about how to get some, and pursue things that will be useful for the satisfaction of their non-rational desires. But, on Irwin's reading, to take drinking wine as your end because you happen to desire it is not to desire it *as something kalon*.

Perhaps this is because to desire something *as kalon* is to desire it *because* one recognizes it to be *kalon* – it thus means that one's desire would be consequent on one's opinion, as Aristotle says in explaining why the object of thought and object of desire coincide (*Met*. 1072a27-30). This would explain why being guided by reason and *nous* is associated with desiring and pursuing the fine: In that case, it's one's rational recognition of what is good and *kalon* that gives rise to one's desire for it and one's actions in pursuit of it. An appetite or non-rational desire that one simply finds oneself, by contrast, will not generally be based on such an opinion. This is not to deny that, in having a non-rational desire for something, it seems good to you – Aristotle often characterizes the object of appetite as an apparent good. But that need mean nothing more than that it seems to you appealing or attractive. The problem with the utterly vicious, on Aristotle's view, is that

they allow themselves to be guided by these appearances. It is not that they think that what they have a non-rational desire for must be good in reality (e.g., because they were possessed of a theory of goodness in which desiring it makes it good[14]); it is as if their thinking stops at the level of appearances. It appears to them worth pursuing, and they pursue it. Thus, they will be concerned with what seems useful for satisfying the non-rational desires they find themselves with. But they will not be concerned with the *kalon*, since seeing something as *kalon* involves seeing its goodness as being a *ground* for one's desire, not the other way around. (Recall Aristotle's claim that the *kalon* is "that which, being good, is pleasant *because* it is good." (*Rh.* 1364b27-8))
A vicious person could be committed to this, in a sense, on principle. They might think that there *is* nothing more to be considered – they might think that the idea of something's being "really" good, independently of whether they want it, is nonsense. Or they could be unreflectively vicious, treating their desire for something as a sufficient reason to pursue it, not because they have considered the alternative and decided against it, but because they have not considered it at all. In either case, it is their appetites and feelings that set their ends for them.[15]

This is not to say that it is impossible to be excessively concerned with something *kalon*. Aristotle does consider, in book 7, people who have a mistaken conception of the good because they place undue emphasis on one particular kind of *kalon* thing, but he tells us that this is *not vice*:

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[14] Kinch has raised, in this connection, the question of whether they would really need to have such an exorbitant theory of the good – why couldn't they think that the object of their desire was good *in reality* but *only at the time of their action* (while, at another time, subject to a conflicting desire, they would not think it good in reality)? Here is at least a gesture at a response: Though it is certainly possible to change one's mind about what is good in reality, I don't think that we can make sense of the idea of someone *constantly* changing their mind about what is good in reality, on the basis of what they happen to desire – we should hesitate to attribute to such a person views about what is good *in reality* at all, because to take something as good in reality is to take it as good *anyway,* regardless of what you think about it (unless, that is, you had that exorbitant, relativist picture of the good – though this raises the worry that such a picture of the good may not be coherent at all).

[15] It is worth noting here, in order to head off a possible objection, that we need not assume that all the kinds of undesirable states of excess and deficiency that Aristotle enumerates in books three and four would suffice to make one vicious (μοχθηρός or κακός). Indeed, Aristotle even says of some of these unvirtuous states of character (e.g., those who are excessive or deficient relative to the magnanimous person) that "these also seem not to be evil (*kakoi*) people…but [only] to be in error (*hēmartēmenoi*)." (*NE* 1125a19-20) This seems to speak against the task that Nielsen ("Vice in the *NE*") sets for herself, and criticizes others for failing to undertake, of giving a single account of vice in general. The difficulty is that what she calls "vice" doesn't correspond to a single ethical concept in Aristotle, unless it is the concept of an undesirable state of character – but there does not seem to be good reason to expect a single, unified account of everything that would count as an undesirable state of character (cf. *NE* 2.6, 1106b30ff.).

> Hence some appetites and pleasures are for fine and excellent kinds of things, such as wealth, profit, victory, and honor. About all these…people are blamed not for feeling an appetite and love for them, but for doing so in particular way, namely to excess. Some people are overcome by, or pursue, some of these naturally fine and good things to a degree that goes against reason; they take honor, or children, or parents, for instance, more seriously than is right. For though these are certainly good and people are praised for taking them seriously, still excess about them is also possible…*There is no vice* [μοχθηρία] *here*…since each of these things is naturally choiceworthy for itself, though excess about them is bad and to be avoided.[16, 17]

The truly vicious person, by contrast, is concerned with what is not naturally choiceworthy at all, and the truly *akratic* person is overcome by temptation to pursue such un-choiceworthy things.

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[16] ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ τῶν ἡδο-
νῶν αἳ μέν εἰσι <τῶν> τῷ γένει καλῶν καὶ σπουδαίων (τῶν
γὰρ ἡδέων ἔνια φύσει αἱρετά), τὰ δ' ἐναντία τούτων, τὰ δὲ
μεταξύ, καθάπερ διείλομεν πρότερον, οἷον χρήματα καὶ
κέρδος καὶ νίκη καὶ τιμή· πρὸς ἅπαντα δὲ καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα
καὶ τὰ μεταξὺ οὐ τῷ πάσχειν καὶ ἐπιθυμεῖν καὶ φιλεῖν
ψέγονται, ἀλλὰ τῷ πῶς καὶ ὑπερβάλλειν (διὸ ὅσοι μὲν παρὰ
τὸν λόγον ἢ κρατοῦνται ἢ διώκουσι τῶν φύσει τι καλῶν
καὶ ἀγαθῶν, οἷον οἱ περὶ τιμὴν μᾶλλον ἢ δεῖ σπουδάζοντες
ἢ περὶ τέκνα καὶ γονεῖς· καὶ γὰρ ταῦτα τῶν ἀγαθῶν, καὶ
ἐπαινοῦνται οἱ περὶ ταῦτα σπουδάζοντες· ἀλλ' ὅμως ἔστι
τις ὑπερβολὴ καὶ ἐν τούτοις, εἴ τις ὥσπερ ἡ Νιόβη μά-
χοιτο καὶ πρὸς τοὺς θεούς, ἢ ὥσπερ Σάτυρος ὁ φιλο-
πάτωρ ἐπικαλούμενος περὶ τὸν πατέρα· λίαν γὰρ ἐδόκει
μωραίνειν)· μοχθηρία μὲν οὖν οὐδεμία περὶ ταῦτ' ἐστὶ διὰ τὸ
εἰρημένον, ὅτι φύσει τῶν αἱρετῶν ἕκαστόν ἐστι δι' αὐτό,
φαῦλαι δὲ καὶ φευκταὶ αὐτῶν εἰσὶν αἱ ὑπερβολαί. (1148a22-b4)

[17] It is not clear to me whether the person here described as someone who takes honor too seriously is the same as or different from the blameworthy honor-lover of book 4. In book 4, Aristotle says that "we blame the honor-lover for aiming at honor more than is right *and for the wrong reasons*." My inclination is to think that they are different characters, and the book 7 discussion shows that the second condition must be met for it to count as vice, whereas if only the first condition is met, then it is a kind of excess to be avoided but not vice. The other possibility is that they are the same, and that the honor-lover of book 4, too, is not *vicious* (μοχθηρός) strictly speaking – since, as we saw above, perhaps not all of the undesirable character-states of books 3 and 4 are truly *vices*.

One note on my translation "…and for the wrong reasons": The Greek reads, τόν τε γὰρ φιλότιμον ψέγομεν ὡς μᾶλλον ἢ δεῖ καὶ ὅθεν οὐ δεῖ τῆς τιμῆς ἐφιέμενον. So, literally: "for aiming at honor more than is right, and aiming at honor from what is not right." This could just mean, as Irwin translates it, "from the wrong sources," but ὅθεν, in addition to meaning "whence, from which," can also mean "for which reason" (LSJ), and I expect both senses are at play. One might even say that blameworthy honor-lovers pursue honor from the wrong sources *because* they pursue it for the wrong reasons; if they were concerned only with honor for the right reasons – namely, as desert for honorable, *kalon* actions – than they would not be interested in honor from the wrong sources (e.g., people who are not good judges of whether their action was *kalon*).

One might wonder, why is there no vice here? Isn't the *pleonectic* person – surely vicious if anyone is – precisely the one who cares about things like honor, wealth, and victory too much? This is a tricky question; in the next few paragraphs, I will try to present an interpretation of Aristotle's view of *pleonectic* vices that explains why the *pleonectic* person is different from the person who care too much about *genuine* goods. I should stress that I do not have any direct textual evidence for my suggestion beyond the fact that it would resolve the apparent tension between the above quote and Aristotle's characterization of the *pleonectic* person as someone who takes goods like honor, wealth, and victory "too seriously."

Perhaps when Aristotle characterizes the *pleonectic* person as someone who takes such goods too seriously he is speaking a bit loosely: It's not so much that they care about something that the virtuous person also cares about, only *too much,* but that they care about it in the wrong way – or really, that, in caring about it in that way, they betray the fact that they are not really concerned with the *kalon* and good at all. They are *pleonectic* in wanting "too much" of certain goods, in the sense of desiring to get *more than they deserve*; they desire that, because they are concerned with these goods for the wrong kind of reason.

We can see what Aristotle might have in mind by considering an example: I have a cousin who competes at a fairly high level in those endurance adventure races which have seemed to gain inexplicably in popularity in recent years. On the one hand, I feel like his dedication has something undeniably admirable about it; on the other, I also feel that he cares about winning excessively – that to build one's life around winning these races impoverishes it too dramatically, narrows its scope too much, that such a life is missing out on too much of the richness that makes for a good human life. But the thing to emphasize here is that even though he cares about winning too much, arguably more than anything, he would never under any circumstances (I am pretty certain of this) cheat, whatever the guarantee of getting away with it (*pace* Glaucon). And the point is not that if he cared about it still more, *then* he would cheat, or that it really must be the case that at the end of the day he cares about fairness more than winning. Rather, his view is that to gain the podium by cheating is not to win at all, but to be falsely thought to have won, and he cares about *winning*. There is thus no such thing, on this way of thinking, as caring about winning so much that you would cheat; once you are willing to cheat, you have become interested in something other than winning. This is part of what makes his dedication admirable. It would be misleading to say that it is admirable because it is not *so* excessive that he'd be willing to cheat; rather, the fact that it is both excessive and yet he would not cheat shows that it is a dedication to something worth being dedicated to (even if not *that* much) – a dedication

to actually being the best (along with, perfectly reasonably, being recognized as such[18]), and not merely to being *thought* to be the best.

By contrast, a *pleonectic* person's pursuit of victory – or, rather, "victory" – is not structured by justice or fairness in this way; and that means, if we can extrapolate from the above example,[19] that they are not pursuing something that is naturally choiceworthy at all. Their pursuit is not of being the best at some competitive endeavor, but merely of being thought to be. In this, it is perhaps as with "the vulgar person who aims *not at the fine*,[20] but at the display of wealth and at the admiration he thinks he wins in this way." In this, he is like *pleonectic* person who is concerned with victory in such a way that he would cheat to get it: In this willingness, as we have seen, he displays that he is not really concerned with *victory* at all, but the appearance of it, and so not really concerned with something *kalon*.[21]

Why are such people so concerned with appearing honorable, victorious, etc.? Perhaps it is because of the useful benefits that might thereby accrue to oneself, and which they might employ in satisfying their appetites and other non-rational desires. Which is to say, in Aristotelian terms, that they are concerned not with the *kalon* (e.g., *being* honorable or victorious), but with something "expedient" or "useful" (*appearing* so).

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[18] The mistake of Glaucon's demand *Republic* 2, I think, is the idea that if one is really committed to actually *being* good and not seeming good, then you should desire being good even if one were to take away all the benefits of seeming good. (That is, Glaucon seems to assume, and Socrates to accept, that, in order to show that the life of actually *being* just is good in itself, he would have to show that it is better than the life of injustice, even if one gave the just person all the costs of seeming unjust and the unjust person all the benefits of seeming just.) But the fact that my cousin's dedication would undoubtedly waver if one subtracted the recognition does not imply that what he really cares about is seeming to win and not winning.

[19] The accumulation of wealth is a somewhat harder case, since the money will have its use-value however you acquire it (so long as you don't get caught). But I expect that when Aristotle is speaking of those who take wealth too seriously, but are *not* vicious, he has in mind those who see wealth as a stand-in for honor. And such a person may care very much about playing by the rules, since in a way he is seeing wealth-acquisition as a competitive game. I suspect that many of the ultra-wealthy are similarly motivated – for how much more useful is it to have a billion dollars than a hundred million, or a hundred billion than a billion? One has long since passed the point where one can buy whatever one could want – except, that is, for superiority in wealth itself.

[20] This seems to push against Nielsen, who, in the course of criticizing Irwin, says that "the ostentatious man may seem *excessively* concerned with fine action, to the point where he overspends on public goods…" (11)

[21] This would make *pleonexia* in a sense similar to vanity. While the magnanimous man is concerned with honor for doing what is genuinely honorable, the vain person "goes to excess" not so much in being more concerned with honor in *this* sense, but in being concerned with being honored independently of whether the honor is warranted – as is reflected in their overweening concern with appearances: "They adorn themselves with clothes and ostentatious style and that sort of thing; and since they want everyone to know how fortunate they are, they talk about it…" (1125a25ff.)

Do vicious people have a conception of the good?

Vicious people, then, are those who are out to simply satisfy their non-rational desires, whatever they happen to be, deciding on whatever seems to them useful for procuring such satisfaction; they do no not seek to guide their desires and their actions by a conception of what is *kalon*. This implies, I will argue, that they can only be described as having a conception of the good in a very limited respect: Because they do not pursue things because they take them to be good and *kalon* independently of whether or not they happen to want them, ascribing to them a conception of the good (as consisting, say, in the satisfaction of their desires) is just to sum up the fact that they treat their desires as establishing their ends in action. Thus, it is not a rationally worked out conception of the good, but their non-rational desires, which function as a principle of their actions. But this means (I will argue below) that, at the limit, we should hesitate to ascribe to them a conception of the good at all.

Müller ("Aristotle on Vice"), who defends the idea that Aristotle is consistently committed to a picture of the vicious agent as exhibiting perennial psychic conflict, claims that the vicious lack a conception of the good; most other interpreters assume that the vicious person does have a conception (not necessarily explicit, of course) of *eudaimonia*, though it is a conception which is itself liable to give rise to psychic conflict. (As Aristotle suggests, what pleases you from time to time, if not guided by a sense of what is *kalon* and so what ought to please you, will inevitably conflict.) I expect, however, there is just an inherent indeterminacy in the question. Certainly, we can describe, e.g., the intemperate person as taking his happiness to consist in bodily pleasure. That will enable us, to a certain extent, to make intelligible his actions, and perhaps to predict very roughly what he will do in certain circumstances (he is likely to get drunk at the symposium, say). It also conveys the point that, unlike the *akratic* person, he thinks that what he is doing is perfectly all right, that there is really nothing to be said against his way of life. But his "conception" of the good does not play quite the same explanatory role in his psychology as the virtuous person's conception does in his. For the virtuous person's conception of the good is the explanatory principle which explains both his non-rational desires and his actions; for the vicious person, it is his appetites and other non-rational desires that play this basic role – his actions and his "conception" of the good flow from his desires. (In the *enkratic* person, his conception of the good explains his actions, but not his passions; in the *akratic* person, his passions explain his actions, but not his conception of the good.) To ascribe to the vicious person a conception of the good is, in a way, just to sum up the fact that he always pursues the pleasure at hand. It does not provide the ultimate basis on which he decides what to do.

Thus, if he has a conception of the good, it is not a principle of his actions. But, for this very reason, we may, at the limit, begin to hesitate to

ascribe to him a conception of the good at all. He takes his desires as *given*, and simply pursues their satisfaction. There is no order among the things he finds himself wanting,[22] because such order is the product of guiding one's desires by a stable picture of what is genuinely good, independently of what one desires. At a certain point, an inconsistent conception of something starts to shade off into not having a *conception* of it (or, not having a conception of *it*) at all.

Consider an analogy with belief: Let's say I were to simply "believe" every passing thought I'd had or story I'd heard or thing I'd read about lightning (if this seems to you impossible, so much the better): Lightning strikes are divine punishments; lightning is caused by clouds rubbing against each other[23]; lightning is attracted to keys which are attached to kites and so they are electricity; lightning is that which wise men wish their words had forked; lightning takes place during thunderstorms, except during summer, when dry lightning flashes spontaneously. Is this an inconsistent set of beliefs about lightning, or just a failure to have beliefs about lightning (because they fail to be beliefs, or because it fails to be about *lightning* – or indeed about any particular things at all)? If I were to "believe," i.e., take as true, whatever passing thought about lightning I entertained, I could hardly be said to have beliefs about lightning at all, or (and this is related of course) to be operating with anything like a notion of truth. If there's no such thing as getting it wrong, then I don't really have *beliefs*.

Similarly, if the vicious person's conception of *eudaimonia* is such that, whatever he happens to desire, he takes satisfying that desire to be part of his *eudaimonia*, then he can be hardly be said to have a conception of *eudaimonia* at all.[24] To have anything like a conception of the human good, one must see certain things as *worth* desiring, as that which one ought to desire, but that involves seeing them as good independently of whether one happens to desire them. This is related to the point I made above, that the vicious do not act in pursuit of (even what they take to be) the *kalon*. He can't be said to view things as *kalon,* because he doesn't take anything to be good or worth pursuing independently of whether he has a desire for it, but that's just part of what it is to see something as *kalon*. Thus, one might say, to have a conception of the human good – even a *mis*conception of the good – one

[22] "Now the things that please most people conflict, because they are not pleasant by nature, whereas the things that please lovers of the fine are pleasant by nature." (*NE* 1099a11-13)

[23] I don't know how I arrived at this theory, but as a kid I remember very clearly thinking that this must be how lightning is caused.

[24] Concerning this analogy between believing something to be true and desiring something as good, Kinch suggested to me an interesting possibility: What if the cognitive state of the hedonist were not like the person who *accepts as true* everything that seems good to him, but like the skeptic who withholds judgment, but provisionally accepts and acts on the basis of appearances? In fact, I think that this is quite amenable to what I am trying to say here – my point could be framed as: The hedonist can *only* be like that. But then he is not being guided by rational judgment, but non-rational appearance.

must see certain things as *kalon* and worth pursuing independently of whether one happens to desire them. (This is why the person who overvalues something *kalon* can be described as having a conception of the good, only a mistaken one; whereas the truly vicious person, who does not act for the sake of the *kalon* at all, does not.)

Against this suggestion, it might be argued that this is inconsistent with Aristotle's claims that the vicious person *decides* to pursue the present pleasure. Thus, Nielsen ("Vice in the *NE*") takes Müller ("Aristotle on Vice") to task, saying that, if Müller were right that the vicious person does not operate with a conception of the good, then he would not be able to make decisions in Aristotle's "technical sense of decision." Unfortunately, Nielsen never tells us what Aristotle's technical sense of decision is. She must be assuming that, on Aristotle's view, the agent must begin from a conception of *eudaimonia* and work her way from that, all the way down to what to do in this particular moment. But (a) this is not a very plausible picture of decision, and (b) Aristotle never says such a thing. He does characterize decision as a desire based on deliberation, and tells us that deliberation is the process by which one starts from an end that is laid down, and then works out what is "towards" (*pros*) that end, until one arrives at something that is within one's power to do (then, if one is not *akratic,* one does that). There is a question about whether deliberating about what is "towards" the end laid down only includes instrumental reasoning, or whether it also includes thinking about what would *constitute* achieving the end here and now. I expect the latter: For instance, one might take as an end the fair distribution of some good; it seems that the first step in working out how to do that would be working out what would count as a just distribution in this case, and there is no reason not to think of that as part of the deliberative process for Aristotle. But in any case, the main point is that Aristotle never suggests that the only end that is ever laid down is *eudaimonia* (as the agent conceives it), and that all deliberation must always begin from a conception of *eudaimonia.* And indeed it seems like his view of *eudaimonia* – according to which it involves choosing virtuous actions for themselves – makes the most sense if we think of virtuous agents as taking things like (as in my example above) justly distributing some good as their (local) end, and deliberating about how to achieve it here and now.[25] Aristotle says, after all, not that we deliberate about what promotes *the* end, but about what promotes "ends" (*NE* 1112b12.)

If that's so, then there's no reason to think that the vicious person needs a conception of *eudaimonia*, in the sense that a virtuous agent has a conception of *eudaimonia*, in order to make decisions. The vicious person takes as his end simply whatever he happens to want, and then thinks about how to achieve it, makes a decision, and acts. But his ends are not themselves organized by reference to a conception of the good, since the only sense in

[25] Cf. Whiting, "Choosing Virtuous Actions for Themselves."

which he has a conception of the good is that he thinks it's good to get whatever he happens to want (and there is no inherent organization to such passing desires). The ends that the virtuous agent pursues, by contrast, are themselves organized by her conception of human flourishing.[26] And that conception structures her more local goals precisely because it is a conception of what is good independently of what she might happen to want (though, by the time she's become truly virtuous, her wants themselves will have been shaped by her conception of what is really good).

What of the fact that Aristotle tells us that the intemperate person thinks that he *should* (δεῖ) pursue bodily pleasure? Doesn't this suggest that he has, like the virtuous person, some conception of his good which explain and (from his point of view) justify his actions? But here we should consider more fully a passage in which Aristotle tells us this. What he tells us is that the vicious person is "so overcome [by his excessive appetites] as to be persuaded that he should pursue such [bodily] pleasures without restraint." (1151a22-24) That is, the picture is of the vicious person as being *more* overcome by his appetites than the *akratic* – while the *akratic* person's appetites are powerful and unruly enough to interfere with acting on the basis of his rational desire for the good, the vicious person's appetites are so powerful and unruly that they corrupt his rational desire itself. In saying that the vicious person thinks that she should pursue bodily pleasure, Aristotle need have in mind nothing more than the fact that the vicious person allows her non-rational desires to set her ends for her, and thus to mark out a contrast with the *akratic* person who does not and thus believes that he is doing what he should not.[27] If the vicious person believes what he is doing is right in any stronger of a sense than that, it could only be rationalization – for it is his powerful desire for pleasure which explains his conviction, not vice versa. It is for this reason that the vicious person tends to be incurable; no rational persuasion will convince him to curb his appetites, for his rational capacity no longer operates independently of those appetites.[28] He thinks one should pursue the pleasure at hand not in the sense that he takes his conception of the good to justify doing that, but in that he finds it appealing and – since he doesn't think in terms of justification on the basis of what he

[26] Cf. McDowell, "Virtue and Reason."

[27] I do not mean to deny that, if pressed, such a vicious person would say (like Callicles) that the good consists in the satisfaction of their appetites. But that does not identify the ultimate *reason* that they act on their desires, since they have that conception of the good *because* their unruly appetites have corrupted their reason and *boulēsis*; their *boulēsis* flows from their appetites, not vice versa.

[28] It's true that what the akratic person primarily needs is not rational persuasion, but habituation. But she is liable to persuasion in the sense that there is hope of convincing her that habituation is what she needs, and of her acting on that basis – keeping sweets or booze out of the house, asking friends to cut her off at the party, etc.

takes to be genuinely good or *kalon* at all – doesn't think there is anything to be said against pursuing it.

Finally, there is the fact that "vice escapes notice" (1150b35) – i.e., the vicious person does not recognize that she is vicious. Nielsen seems to interpret this as meaning that the vicious person thinks she is *virtuous* – but Aristotle takes care *not* to say that. One *could* fail to notice that one is vicious because one thinks one is virtuous, but one could equally fail to notice that because one is not thinking in terms of virtue and vice, nor the *kalon* and the base, at all.

Still, one might understandably feel like, insofar as this picture of a vicious life as inherently disordered is plausible, it is plausible only because we have been focusing on vices like intemperance and *pleonexia*. But is it plausible to think that this holds even of other vices of excess? (Vices of deficiency pose an even more obvious problem, which I will turn to momentarily.) For instance, consider the coward, that is, someone who feels an excessive degree of fear. This might be blameworthy, but why should it make the coward's life disordered? Why couldn't he carefully plan a humble, private life that kept him relatively free of danger?

In considering this problem, it is important to bear in mind that books three and four are focused on blameworthy conditions of the non-rational soul, the disposition to experience certain passionate responses. But once we get, in book 7, the distinction between genuine vice and *akrasia*, we see that being disposed to feel too much fear (or to fear the wrong things, etc.) is not sufficient to make one a μοχθηρός or κακός person, not even if one is disposed also to act upon one's excessive fear. One must also think that, e.g., abandoning one's friends on the battlefield is what one should do, and to think so *because* of one's powerful non-rational desires. But being guided by one's excessive passions is precisely what produces disharmony, since they disrupt one's ability to form rational convictions about what is good. Moreover, once we see that this is what is involved in truly vicious cowardice, it is hard to imagine that one could be cowardly and not base in other ways as well. If one had the capacity to rationally grasp the *kalon* and good in other domains, as something distinct from what one happens to desire, it would seem to make very unstable one's conviction that running away was the thing to do because one wanted to do it. Local *akrasia* seems readily intelligible, but local μοχθηρία much less so.

Since we have been considering vices that by definition involve excessive appetite, it may be natural to think that they produce disorder in the agent's life. But could vices that involve deficient appetites really be thought to produce such disorder as well? When Aristotle is discussing the disorder of a vicious person's life, he does seem to have primarily vices of excess in view. Perhaps he simply does not think of states of character like "insensibility" to make one μοχθηρός at all – they are not virtuous ways to be, but perhaps *neither* are they utterly wretched and corrupt.

There is, however, another way of thinking about the matter, though it is somewhat speculative. When we are thinking of the kind of intelligible order to a human life that makes it *kalon* and pleasant to contemplate, we are thinking of the order of a complex whole. It is not enough, to have a well-ordered human life, to simply lack disorder. One needs also to have the right variety of elements to arrange in a *kalon* way, and one might imagine that a life that involved deficient passionate responses would be lacking in these elements. (By analogy, a "song" that consisted of a single note couldn't be faulted for being disordered or cacophonous, but it would be odd to think of it as well-ordered or harmonious.) This need not be because the passions themselves are the elements to be ordered in human life – we could think of the elements as those human values and endeavors that the passions are responses *to*. A person deficient in fellow-feeling would likely live a life deficient in *philia*, and thus a life that lacked some of the richness and texture that makes for a truly *kalon* human life.[29]

Varieties of regret

This picture of vice can help us to see how to resolve the more direct apparent contradiction between *NE* 9.4 and *NE* 7. In his discussion of *akrasia,* Aristotle says that the intemperate (i.e., vicious) person, unlike the *akratēs*, "is not ever-regretful (μεταμελητικός), since he abides by his decision," (1150b30); in *NE* 9.4, he tells us that vicious people are "full of regret" (μεταμελεία). The *Eudemian* chapter corresponding to *NE* 9.4 suggests a relatively straightforward way of dealing with the apparent contradiction: "The good person does not rebuke himself in the moment, the way an akratic person does; nor does his later self rebuke his former self, the way a person who is prone to regret does." Drawing on this, we might think that when Aristotle says that the vicious person is not prone to regret, he is thinking of *synchronic* "regret," whereas he *is* prone to (indeed "full of") diachronic regret.[30] That is, at the time of his action, he has no reservations about it; but

[29] One might object that, if this is right, then it still leaves out an important form of vice – the coolly calculating and ruthless mafia boss, for instance, who whatever else might be said against him does not seem to be beset by random, disorganized desires. But is it so implausible for Aristotle not to have considered this vice *simpliciter*? Consider how comparable (distressingly comparable, I take it, for some modern readers of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*) such characters are to Greek heroes like Achilles or Odysseus, who are so indifferent to the lives of others (sometimes even their own men) as they pursue glory. I'm not saying Aristotle thought them virtuous; only that it may have seemed to Aristotle a bit radical to think of them as *vicious*. He might well think that there is something genuinely *kalon* about them, in the way they hold steadfastly to a kind of honor code.

[30] The notion of synchronic regret might seem paradoxical, since one might think that *regret* is, by definition, backwards looking. (But think of its usage in phrases like, "I regret the inconvenience.") Even if that is part of the concept of "regret," we can certainly make sense of the idea which is something much like regret, but synchronic – feeling bad about doing something while one is doing it – so it's easy enough to think in terms of a concept of

later, he will come to grief because of doing what he thought, at the time, was the thing to do. Thus, as Aristotle says, "even if [the vicious person] cannot be distressed and pleased at the same time [i.e., because he is vicious, not *akratic*?], still he is soon distressed because he was pleased, and wishes these things had not become pleasant to him." If we think of the intemperate vicious person as an example, it is not too hard to imagine what Aristotle has in mind. The intemperate person is likely to drink an excessive amount of wine at the symposium – not because he can't resist (though, presumably, given his excessive appetites, he couldn't even if he wanted to), but because what a more reasonable person sees as excessive, he sees as appealing, and the temperate person seems to him dull and puritanical. (When Aristotle suggests that the intemperate person chooses excess "for itself," he presumably means not that he sees it as excessive and chooses it for that reason, but that what in fact makes it excessive is precisely what he finds appealing.)

An early proponent of this solution was Ross,[31] and other readers have expanded on this basic idea, in order to suggest an explanation of why it is that the vicious will necessarily be prone to backwards-looking regret, though not synchronic regret. Though there are subtle differences among the various versions, many (e.g., Brickhouse, Bostock) defend Aristotle here on the basis of some version of the idea that is so central to Plato's *Gorgias*: that if one always satisfies one's appetites, whatever they happen to be, one's appetites will inevitably grow ever larger. As they grow, to satisfy them will inevitably lead one to suffer (hangovers, ill-health, and so on); and they will ultimately grow to a point where they are virtually impossible to satisfy, and so the vicious will find themselves saddled with appetites which are for them only a source of pain – pain which could only be worsened by the fact that they take the satisfaction of their desires as their central goal. An akratic person, who knows that she would indulge if only it were possible and

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something broader than regret, and includes regret as its distinctively backwards-looking manifestation.

Nielsen argues (against, e.g., the scholars mentioned below) that, even if true, this cannot be the whole story, and we *also* need an explanation of why the vicious experience synchronic conflict, since Aristotle says that "his soul is in conflict and because he is vicious one part is distressed at being restrained and another is pleased, and so each part pulls in a different direction, as though they were tearing him apart." But Nielsen is on pretty thin ice here since Aristotle *immediately* goes on to say: "Even if he cannot be distressed and pleased at the same time, still, he is soon distressed because he was pleased, and wishes these things had not become pleasant to him; for base people are full of regret."

[31] Who, in his notes to 1166b, says: "This seems inconsistent with earlier claims (e.g. at 1152a4–6) that the vicious person, in the form of the self-indulgent, is comfortable with his actions, which he chooses and thinks he should be doing…In VII it was the incontinent, not the bad, who were characterized as prone to regret. But the incontinent regret their actions at the time; perhaps the point about the bad is that they regret *past* actions."

experiences the pain of an unsatisfied desire, would, by contrast, derive some comfort in being tied to the mast.

However, I expect that the best way of dealing with the apparent contradiction is by appeal to a more interesting ambiguity in the word, μεταμελεία, (one which, moreover, I think accounts for the element of truth in the appeal to the distinction between synchronic and diachronic regret). The word admits of both what we might think of as a moral and a non-moral or prudential sense – remorse (as we might naturally call this kind of regret) for doing something that you know to be wrong in itself vs. self-reproach for having done something the negative results of which, one now sees, outweigh the positive.[32] Of course, the vicious are unlikely to experience the former – since they think it is right to do whatever they feel like, to pursue whatever they have an appetite for – and in *that* sense they are not prone to μεταμελεία. But they may well experience regret in the non-moral sense. When they wake up with a hangover, they might regret drinking those last few glasses of wine; when they are awaiting punishment, they might regret stealing (or stealing so carelessly). The point is not that they see anything wrong, in itself, with what they did, but they have simply come to see that it was not worth it given the subsequent suffering it produced.

A couple important things to note: First, non-moral regret *can* be grounds for self-reproach; even the vicious can feel like he *should have known* that he'd come to regret that last glass of wine, or should have been able to act on the knowledge he had; he might wake up not only with a hangover, but kicking himself for being such a fool. This is important, for the mere wish that things hadn't turned out as they did after you performed some action (which need not involve any self-reproach, since one may feel like one made the right decision in the circumstances), would not seem to suffice to explain the kind of painful psychic conflict and self-loathing that Aristotle attributes to the vicious in 9.4.

Second (and this can help us to accommodate the motivations of the common appeal to the synchronic/diachronic distinction), we can see why the non-moral version would be *characteristically* backwards looking, since it depends on the results of one's actions rather than its intrinsic features, and that can help us to see why Aristotle seems to associate synchronic conflict with the akratic (rather than vicious) agent specifically, and can help vindicate, to some degree, the common interpretive solution to the conflict between *NE* 7 and 9. But it's worth noting that non-moral regret can also be synchronic: After a few such hangovers, the intemperate man might decide he should cut himself off – and then, when the wine is making the rounds

[32] This is closely related to the ambiguity noted by Irwin ("Vice and Reason," 90). But he is concerned with the difference between the kind of regret one can feel even when one acted perfectly blamelessly (e.g., one did the right thing relative to what one knew at the time and one does not feel like one *should* have known more) and when one blames oneself for what one did.

again, find himself unable to resist, knowing all the while that it won't be worth it.[33]

Why *must* the vicious experience such regret? Aristotle does say that "the active exercise of appetite increases the appetite that [the intemperate person] already had from birth, and if the appetites are large and intense enough, they actually expel rational calculation." (1119b9-10) If the intemperate person allows his appetites to grow in this way, he will eventually get himself into trouble and be perennially subject to regret – as they grow, they will be increasingly difficult to satisfy, and the intemperate person will be saddled with appetites he can't satisfy or the satisfaction of which inevitably lead to later suffering; thus, "he is soon distressed because he was pleased, and wishes these things had not become pleasant to him" (1166b23-24).

If the intemperate person were someone who had a rationally worked out a conception of the human good according to which it consisted in maximizing overall the pleasures of appetite-satisfaction,[34] there would be no reason that he could not, in principle, exhibit enough self-control that he never let his appetites get so large as to be practically unsatisfiable, and to never act on them when he realized it would cause more pain in the long run than one gets pleasure in the moment. There seems to be no reason to deny that a person who identified his good with pleasure could be practically clever enough – possess the calculative art that Socrates describes in the *Protagoras* – to know when enough is enough, and self-controlled enough to act on that knowledge. But, as we have already seen, this is not Aristotle's picture of the vicious agent. Aristotle's vicious person is simply one who is overcome by his appetites or other non-rational desires – so overcome that he thinks he should satisfy them, whatever they are.

But does Aristotle simply not think it is possible to have a conception of the good as consisting in maximal bodily pleasure, to have a rational wish for maximal appetite-satisfaction? Certainly, Aristotle thinks that pleasure is

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[33] Nielsen argues that their conflict between wish and appetite is a result of the fact that, when their appetites have spiraled out of control (as per Bostock's and Brickhouse's interpretations), the effort to satisfy them will inevitably lead them to do things which are shameful *even by their own lights* – in other words, her thought is that Aristotle's view is much like Socrates' in the *Gorgias*. But she gives us no reason to explain why (Aristotle would think that) the vicious *must* see what they do as shameful. It is worth registering in this regard that Socrates' argument works (to some degree!) against Callicles precisely because Callicles (being, one presumes, a relatively upper-class Athenian citizen, and having been raised as such) does have some sense that some things are just shameful, period, regardless of whether they are pleasant. (Once Callicles notices that admitting this will be inconsistent with the hedonism he has defended earlier, he tries to bite the bullet – but this comes at the cost of him being genuinely involved in the dialogue with Socrates.) But why should we expect a truly vicious person to have been habituated in such a way as to find these "shameful" things repugnant?

[34] Perhaps *per impossibile* – see next paragraph.

a serious contender for the human good, which suggests that it is possible to have a life organized around a conception of pleasure as the end. If by this we mean not the pursuit of whatever one happens to want at the moment (i.e., the pursuit, on Aristotle's view, of the vicious person), but a reflective picture of what kinds of things one ought to pursue – which is to say, if we are speaking of a conception of pleasure as the human good – then it may make possible a degree of self-love, though it will fall short of a virtuous life. It is important to recall, in this connection, that Aristotle often suggests that the pleasures of virtuous action and contemplation are not only more *kalon*, but also more *pleasant*, and that anyone who has tasted such pleasures will enjoy them more than bodily pleasures or childish amusements. This can't be because they offer more of the same – since pleasures differ in kind according to the difference in the activities they complete, they will be incommensurable, and no amount of pleasurable eating will compensate for the lack of pleasurable contemplation; but, nonetheless, it suggests that Aristotle thinks that, even if you (mistakenly) take the human end to consist in the most pleasant life possible for you, you will naturally desire those distinctively human and *kalon* pleasures.[35] Perhaps the reason that any reflective conception of the good contains an element of truth is that human beings do have a natural affinity or desire for what is genuinely good, and that it really takes a significant degree of "corruption" of their rational capacity and wish to wholly derail them from its pursuit. A conception of bodily pleasure as *the* end would be radically unstable: One pursues the satisfaction of appetite because it is enjoyable; but if other things are *more* enjoyable, and if one is in the business of guiding one's actions by what one ought to desire and do, then why would one not go in for the *most* enjoyable life possible for human beings? If this is right, then perhaps Aristotle thinks that, insofar as one acts on the basis of a conception of *eudaimonia*, one might end up deciding that it consisted in the most pleasant life, but not that it consisted in bodily pleasure. People treat bodily pleasure as their main pursuit in life only by failing to guide their life by a conception of *eudaimonia* at all.

In the last chapter, we considered Aristotle's claim that the life of a decent person is ὡρισμένον, the life of a vicious person ἀόριστος. In the immediate context, it was tempting to take ὡρισμένον to mean "defined," ἀόριστος as "undefined," or "outside the definition [of human life?]." But it was hard to see, first of all, why the vicious person's life was ἀόριστος in this sense – for he is still after all a human being, and doesn't that mean the definition of "human being" applies to him? And doesn't he exhibit perception and thought? And second of all it was hard to see why the decent person's life being "defined" should imply that it is good. Now we are in a

[35] Thus, Aristotle tells us in the *Protrepticus*, whether your aim is virtue, knowledge, *or pleasure*, you should engage in philosophy.

position to see, however, that the sense of ἀόριστος as "outside the definition of human life" perhaps was at play after all. Since the vicious person does not guide his life by a conception of the good, for which he has a rational wish and in accordance with which he acts, he is living in a way which is, in a sense, beyond the definition of a truly human life. He still perceives and thinks, certainly, but he does not act on the basis of the kind of *aisthēsis* of the good that we saw at work in the decent person's life in the last section, and all his thinking is in the service of his non-rational impulses. The kind of psychic conflict and misery to which he is prone is perhaps in part a result of the fact that, for all that, he still *is* a human being,[36] though he lives almost as if he were a beast.

Conclusion

If what I have said is correct, then there is a close connection (on Aristotle's view) between what makes a person's life choiceworthy (the topic of the last chapter), and what enables self-love. Both are grounded in the agent's ability to guide and structure her life by a commitment to the human good, as she conceives it. Being committed to something that is genuinely worth pursuing gives a kind of order to the agent's life, and makes it both intelligible and, at least to some degree, *kalon*. The agent is able to *make sense* of her life, as we might put it, and this is reflected in the fact that she takes pleasure in the self-awareness that is an essential aspect of her fully human activity. This ability to see herself as living up to her own conception of the good, and the resultant order among her actions and harmony in her soul, are also what make possible self-love.

By contrast, the vicious, who are not committed to *any* conception of the human good, are incapable of self-love. Being without a conception of the good to guide their actions, they will have no grounds for seeing themselves as good, and when their chosen activities lead them to later suffer, as they inevitably will, they will have none of the pleasures of contemplating the goodness of their activity to set against and counterbalance that suffering.[37] And, without being guided by a conception of what is genuinely worth pursuing, their desires will inevitably be disordered and their souls in perennial conflict. This is a view we more often associate with Plato, but if I am right, then it is also one that Aristotle is committed to throughout the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*, and for which he gives a novel and distinctively Aristotelian justification.

In closing, I would like to make one observation about a more general implication of the view I have defended here. Aristotle suggests, in book 1, of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that, in some sense, all human beings pursue

[36] Unlike the "bestial" character who, it would seem, is not really a human character at all – for such a creature, unlike the vicious person, lacks *nous* and *logos* altogether.
[37] A point made by Terence Irwin in his "Vice and Reason."

eudaimonia, and have it as their natural *telos*. But I – and, I think, many of Aristotle's readers – have often wondered whether Aristotle can really mean anything more than this than that all human beings *should* pursue *eudaimonia*. If what I have said in this chapter is right, however, it seems to suggest a way of making sense of Aristotle's view that we all really *do* pursue the human good. Insofar as human beings guide their actions by a conception of the human good, that conception, though it is unlikely to be fully adequate, will inevitably reflect some aspect of the true human good, will be picking up on something which is genuinely worth pursuing for human beings (though perhaps at the expense of other things that are, or are even more so). For, Aristotle tells us, "all human beings possess something of the good" (*EE* 1238b13-14), and their views of the good inevitably contain an element of truth;[38] and this is what makes it correct to refer to their conception as a conception *of the human good*. Thus, they can be genuinely said to pursue and desire the human good, even if they are pursuing it under a misdescription of it. And those who do *not* so guide their actions, simply ignoring their rational nature or subjugating it to their non-rational impulses, will inevitably, and for that reason, suffer through miserable lives and be prone to self-loathing – which perhaps makes it reasonable to say that they too, whether they are in a position to admit it or not, really do have a desire for the human good.

[38] As Aristotle sometimes says when explaining his method in ethics and justifying his reliance on commonly held views.

Chapter 4

Shared perception and the friend as another self (*Nicomachean Ethics* 9.9, 1170a13-b19)

Aristotle makes two different claims about the kind of creatures we fundamentally are: We are "rational animals"—the only animals possessed of reason and understanding. We are also "political animals"—animals whose natural way of life is communal. These two aspects of human nature seem to correspond to competing conceptions of the good life.[1] We could live in such a way as to pursue the perfection of our rational nature, which would make us maximally self-sufficient and god-like.[2] Alternatively, we could pursue the perfection of our social and political nature. This requires a commitment to others that renders us in some ways more vulnerable, for it places more of what we value outside of our direct control—but Aristotle himself recognized that the pursuit of ethical invulnerability would rob one of much of what makes a human life worth living.[3] Thus, it is hard to shake the sense that the cost of pursuing the former course is great, if it means demoting *philia*, especially when we recall that *philia* refers not only to friendship, the standard translation, but to the whole range of healthy human relationships involving mutual trust and goodwill.

My immediate target in this chapter is a better of understanding of a fairly brief, but notoriously difficult, argument in book 9, chapter 9 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1170a13-b19). But my larger aim is to show that, for Aristotle, the relationship between our rational nature and our social nature is more complex and interesting than this familiar dilemma suggests; and that, therefore, the choice between the political life and the contemplative life is much less stark than we might have tended to assume. In particular, on the interpretation of *NE* 1170a13-b19 that I will defend here, the realization of our nature as rational animals is a fundamentally social achievement. Of course, as a claim about developmental psychology, it may be obvious that human beings develop the capacity to reason in part by being appropriately socialized. But I have in mind a more controversial version of the idea: Only through what Aristotle calls the "shared perception" (*sunaisthēsis*) made possible by friendship can human beings fully make sense of themselves and the world in which they act. Unlike god, our ability for understanding (*noēsis*) depends constitutively and in an ongoing way on engaging with

[1] This is not to deny that political life involves the exercise of (practical) reason, and thus is also a manifestation of our nature as rational animals. But the life of study (*theōria*) is a higher expression of that rational nature.

[2] Cf. *NE* 10.7, especially 1177a27-b1.

[3] As was compellingly argued by Martha Nussbaum in *The Fragility of Goodness*.

others, and in particular with genuine friends, "in conversation and thought" (1170b11-12).

This is the kind of view that we are likely to associate more with Hegel than with Aristotle. And that, no doubt, may pique some readerly skepticism. But, before diving in to my argument, it may help to begin with a brief preview of the basic idea.

Friendship is choiceworthy, according to Aristotle, even for the (otherwise) self-sufficient human being—one, that is, who need not rely on others to procure material goods (*NE* 1169b25-25), and who "finds it pleasant to spend time by himself" (*NE* 1166a24)—because friendship involves "shared perception of [one's] friend's being." (1170b10-11) For all human beings, activity involves self-awareness (what Aristotle calls perception (*aisthēsis*) of one's living or one's activity, the topic of chapter 2). One thing that is distinctive of genuine friendship is that one can (in some sense) share in one's friend's perception of herself (*aisthēsis hautou*), i.e., share in one's friend's awareness of her activity. This is, admittedly, a peculiar-sounding suggestion. We might begin to get a grip on it by considering a mundane example—say, a case in which a friend and I reflect together on a shared experience. After seeing a play or movie, for example, we discuss it—what we enjoyed about it, what perplexed us, what was surprising, unsettling, illuminating. In doing this, I am confronted with a distinct perspective on the experience, a perspective which, because it is my friend's, I both know well and take seriously. It is thus a perspective which I am able and willing to inhabit. Given the appropriate groundwork laid by our friendship, through "sharing in conversation and thought," I may come to see what it *is* to experience the play in her way—in a favored phrase of contemporary philosophy, I may come to understand "what it's like" to be her, at the play. It is this sense in which I may be said to come to share in my friend's own self-awareness. (It might be pointed out that this is the friend's perception of something else, not of herself; however, as we saw in chapter 2, such perception of the world is always, for Aristotle, "peripherally" (*en parergō(i)*) perception of oneself – i.e., at least on the interpretation I proposed, an essential part of what it is to perceive something is to be aware of oneself perceiving. It is this kind of self-awareness, rather than, say, self-consciousness, that Aristotle has in mind in the argument.)

Why is this a promising place to look for the value of friendship? On the view I will defend here, which builds off the work of Kosman and McCabe, it is because by coming to inhabit another concrete perspective in this way enriches one's experience, and thus one's understanding, of the wider world. "Sharing in conversation and thought" after some shared experience can change the texture of the remembered-experience: One can come to see that there were depths to that experience that would have otherwise remained unplumbed; features of it become salient which one would have otherwise ignored or forgotten altogether; sometimes one may even come to see that

they "really" enjoyed something that they otherwise would have been inclined to dismiss or disparage. If we accept this, we might accept something further. Even when friends do not explicitly discuss a shared experience, that it is shared with a friend can re-shape our experience, and in a similar way. If I do something with a friend, then the very idea of his independent perspective on the experience—a perspective which I take seriously and respect—adds depth to the experience. I come to enjoy things my friend enjoys, not just because I take pleasure in his pleasure, but because I come to see how one can take pleasure in such a thing, by learning how to see it differently.

For Aristotle, this constitutes an account of the value of friendship because it shows that friendship makes possible a richness of experience and understanding that we would not otherwise achieve. In particular, the shared perception of friendship makes possible a partial escape from one's own limited perspective on the world. Thus, the human being, even if she were otherwise self-sufficient, would still need friends in order to achieve happiness (*eudaimonia*), because friendship involves or makes possible a perfection of one's nature as an animal who perceives and thinks. *Human* rational self-sufficiency is thus different from that of god, who achieves perfect understanding by contemplating itself, by itself. *We* approach this condition not by mimicking god's self-sufficiency—trying to do our best completely on our own—but by trying to achieve god's degree of cognitive perfection through the "shared perception" of genuine friendship.

This might seem like heady stuff, and a far cry from the cool deductions Aristotle offers in *NE* 9.9, 1170a13-b19. To see that this really is the basic idea at work in Aristotle's argument, it will help to begin with an account of the puzzle (*aporia*) to which it is a response, which I will offer in the next section. From there, the paper proceeds as follows: The third section provides an overview of the structure and strategy of Aristotle's argument. The next considers prima facie reading of the argument, and suggests that this cannot be the whole story. I then develop my own interpretation of the way in which Aristotle applies his account of the self-awareness that makes human life choiceworthy (an account we considered in detail in chapter 2), *via* his thesis that the friend is "another self," to the explanation of friendship's value. In particular, I try to explain the notion of *sunaisthēsis* ("shared perception"), and the crucial role it plays in Aristotle's answer to the question of what makes friendship choiceworthy, even for the blessedly happy and self-sufficient person. I also try defend Aristotle's view against the very natural objection that "shared perception" could, at best, explain the *instrumental* value of friendship (whereas, to satisfactorily respond to the *aporia,* it seems that Aristotle needs to argue that friendship has intrinsic value). I will conclude by briefly arguing that, if Aristotle has identified a value of intimate human relationships, it is one which, ironically, other features of his ethical thought – which I refer to, taken together, as his

"perfectionist bias" – prevent him from fully articulating. We can, in fact, carry the argument that the good of friendship lies in the possibility of "shared perception" farther if we reject that basic commitment.

Understanding the aporia

Aristotle begins *NE* IX.9 by saying: "It is disputed, concerning the happy person, whether he will need friends or not." (1169b3-4) That can seem like a peculiar thing to dispute. After all, we (most of us, most of the time) feel that friendship is among the greatest goods that one can enjoy. But Aristotle accepts, at least in some sense, the claim that "the blessedly happy man is self-sufficient" (*autarkēs*), and it is this, we shall see, that gives rise to the *aporia*.

Self-sufficiency is a recognizable ideal, for us today as for the ancient Greeks. Indeed, it is perhaps difficult to imagine any human society that did not value, at least to some degree, the ability to withstand fortune's slings and arrows, to hold oneself together in the face of the difficulties that punctuate any human life. (It is closely related, then, to integrity, and, like integrity, it has the value it does precisely because moral life is so subject to things outside our control.[4]) But the Greeks may have valorized it more than most. Indeed, A.W.H. Adkins ("Friendship and Self-Sufficiency") argued that, beginning at least from Homeric times, the central *aretai* — the "virtues" or "excellences," those characteristics of a person which make him someone worthy of admiration and envy — were precisely those characteristics that made him *autarkēs*. We can see this at work, to choose a relatively arbtirary example out of many, in Pericles' Funeral Oration (as told by Thucydides), where he suggests that what makes Athens an ethical model for the rest of Greece is the fact its citizens are each *autarkēs*.[5]

Adkins ("'Friendship' and 'Self-Sufficiency'") argued, on the basis of this connection between *aretē* and *autarkeia*, that there was an inevitable "tension" in Greek thought and in Greek culture between the value of *aretē* and that of *philia* (friendship): Given that *aretē* is that quality of a person that makes him *autarkēs*, someone who is truly *agathos*, who fully possesses *aretē,* should have no need of friends. Not, anyway, if friends are those who help us in times of need, who are first and foremost providers of mutual succor—and that is indeed how the Greeks often conceptualized *philoi*.[6] We can see this especially in the common quasi-contractual model of friendship, where

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[4] Cf. Williams's essay in *Utilitarianism: For and Against,* particularly the section "Integrity."

[5] "In summary, I say that the city as a whole is an education for Greece, and I believe every individual among us has the self-sufficiency to respond to every situation with the greatest versatility and grace." (Mynott's translation.)
'ξυνελών τε λέγω τήν τε πᾶσαν πόλιν τῆς Ἑλλάδος παίδευσιν εἶναι καὶ καθ᾽ ἕκαστον δοκεῖν ἄν μοι τὸν αὐτὸν ἄνδρα παρ᾽ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ πλεῖστ᾽ ἂν εἴδη καὶ μετὰ χαρίτων μάλιστ᾽ ἂν εὐτραπέλως τὸ σῶμα αὔταρκες παρέχεσθαι. (II, 41.1)

[6] For a discussion of this trope, see Mary Blundell's *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies.*

friends are those who benefit and are benefited by each other in turn. Pericles' Funeral Oration again provides a nice illustration:

> *We* [Athenians] make our friends not by receiving favors but by conferring them. The benefactor is the stronger partner, as the one who through his favors maintains the debt of gratitude in the recipient, while the one who incurs the obligation has a weaker motive, knowing that he will repay the service not to win a favor but to return a debt. (II, 40.4)[7]

Pericles suggestion makes the most sense, I think, against the backdrop of the assumption (which, to some degree, Pericles inverts) that, in general, friends are those who provide you aid in time of need, by providing benefits you can't secure on your own, or cooperating with you to achieve an end you wouldn't be otherwise able to achieve. But, if that's how we are thinking about *philia*, someone who is truly self-sufficient would seem not to need *philoi*. It is for this reason that Adkins sees a "tension" between the value of friendship, on the one hand, and the value of *autarkeia*, on the other, made possible by an individual's *aretē*.

Insofar as there is a tension here, however, one might be inclined to shrug it off: Perhaps the *autarkēs* doesn't *need* friends; but if he is a psychologically healthy human being, he'll surely want them. And, anyway, no human being is ever going to achieve that degree of *autarkeia*. As Adkins himself points out in his discussion of Homeric *philoi*,

> No man can survive by his strength alone, without tools, possessions, and associates. What… can the Homeric *agathos* rely on? … [He] has his wife, children, servants, and other dependants. On these he can rely, or should be able to; apart from these, only on those with whom he has entered into relations of *philotēs* or *xenia*. (33)

The Homeric *agathos* is *autarkēs* not all on his own, then, but as the head of a more or less autonomous household, at times allied with and aided by other such households. (32-33) That, one might say, is the kind of *autarkeia* that human beings are capable of — *autarkeia* as part of a political community — and far from being in tension with the value of *philia*, *autarkeia* in this sense relies on it. If that is so, it is unsurprising that the "cooperative" virtues (justice, say, or loyalty) came to be seen as being as central to the life of the *agathos* as the more competitive, self-serving virtues of the Homeric warrior. This need not involve giving up the view, which Adkins finds in Homeric culture, that *aretē* is that quality of a person that makes him self-sufficient —

[7] οὐ γὰρ πάσχοντες εὖ, ἀλλὰ δρῶντες κτώμεθα τοὺς φίλους. βεβαιότερος δὲ ὁ δράσας τὴν χάριν ὥστε ὀφειλομένην δι᾽ εὐνοίας ᾧ δέδωκε σῴζειν: ὁ δὲ ἀντοφείλων ἀμβλύτερος, εἰδὼς οὐκ ἐς χάριν, ἀλλ᾽ ἐς ὀφείλημα τὴν ἀρετὴν ἀποδώσων.

provided we grant that self-sufficiency for human beings is self-sufficiency achieved as part of a community.

It need be no part of ancient Greek common sense, then, to feel a *general* need to choose between the value of *philia* and the value of *autarkeia,* or the *aretē* that makes it possible, though there may be circumstances which bring the two values into tension. It would take the philosophical radicalism of Plato to force that choice—and to argue that the truly *agathos* and *eudaimōn* person would have no need of friends.

Plato's view that the goodness of a good human life is something *autarkēs* is familiar. In dialogues like *Gorgias* and *Philebus*, we find Socrates arguing against placing any weight on what Nussbaum (*Fragility of Goodness*) called "need-relative values"—for instance, against valuing those pleasures which are pleasant merely insofar as they involve the replenishment of some lack. Such values (or "values") form no part of the ultimate human good, for that good is *hikanos* and *autarkēs*. A person who built his life around the pursuit of such values, as Callicles recommends in the *Gorgias*, would be radically needy, radically dependent on *tuchē,* on the adventitious goings-on in the wider world. The worth of a good human life, however, could not be like that; *its* value is determined entirely by the state of an individual's soul.

In the *Lysis*, Socrates spells out in stark terms the implications of this way of thinking about human goodness for the value of *philia*:

> *Socrates:* Isn't a good person, insofar as he is good, sufficient to himself?
> *Lysis:* Yes.
> *S:* And a self-sufficient person has no need of anything, just because of his self-sufficiency?
> *L:* How could he?
> *S:* And the person who needs nothing wouldn't prize anything?
> *L:* No, he wouldn't.
> *S:* What he didn't prize he wouldn't love?
> *L:* Definitely not.
> *S:* And whoever doesn't love is not a friend.
> *L:* It appears not.
> *S:* Then how in the world are the good going to be friends to the good? They don't yearn for one another when they are apart, because even then they are sufficient to themselves, and when together they have no need of one another. Is there any way people like that can possibly value each other? (215b)

In light of the *Lysis*, I think that we can conclude that, when Aristotle says, in *NE* 9.9,

> They say that the blessedly happy and self-sufficient have no need of friends. For these people have good things, and, being self-sufficient, they need

> nothing in addition; but a friend, being another self, provides that which one cannot oneself provide. (1169b3-7)[8]

he almost certainly intends, with "they say" (*phasi*), to pick out the claims of philosophers of a Platonic bent—and not, as Adkins claims, the views of "the many." But one might have expected Aristotle to give this supposed *aporia* rather short shrift, given certain of his differences with Plato, and his greater sympathies with common sense. Considering why he does not simply dismiss this Platonic line of thought will help us will help us understand the force of the *aporia,* and what Aristotle may have hoped for from a response to it.

An obvious and seemingly Aristotelian retort to such an argument, for instance, would be to point out that none of us are *that* self-sufficient. Aristotle believes that the human being is a "political animal" or "political by nature," as he points out in laying out the *aporia* (1169b18). Part of what that means is that—and this is a point on which, if what I said above is correct, Aristotle agrees with (ancient Greek) common sense—human beings simply cannot survive except as part of a community, and certainly not comfortably. It is only by forming households that we can satisfy even "everyday needs" (*Pol.* 1252b12-14), and it is only once we establish a *polis* that we "reach the limit of total self-sufficiency" (1252b27-29). "Anyone who cannot form a community with others, or does not need to because he is self-sufficient," Aristotle famously told us, is not be counted as a human being at all, but "a beast or a god" (1253a26-29). And, so, it is not surprising that, in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle specifically warns against confusing the *autarkeia* of a human being with that of a god, suggesting that, in the context of a discussion of the value of friendship, the comparison with god is liable to lead us astray (*EE* 1245b12-19). Being political animals, the only "self-sufficiency" of which we are capable is self-sufficiency as a member of a community.

Moreover, although Aristotle (like Plato) maintains that the human good is *autarkēs*, he quite explicitly argues against the Socratic claim that it must therefore be immune from the incursions of fortune or luck (*tuchē*). Aristotle allows that *eudaimonia* depends on the presence of external goods, goods which are not qualities of body or soul and which are thus, to some degree, outside the agent's control—not just in order to *become* happy, but also, in an ongoing way, in order to *be* happy. At the limit, one needs simply not to be struck down by catastrophe, as Priam was; but, less extremely, one also needs that minimum supply of external goods which is necessary for the full exercise of *aretē*—and although virtues like practical intelligence may make you more likely to acquire and safeguard such external goods, at the end of the day one still needs some cooperation from the wider world. Thus,

[8] οὐθὲν γάρ φασι δεῖν φίλων τοῖς μακαρίοις καὶ αὐτάρκεσιν: ὑπάρχειν γὰρ αὐτοῖς τἀγαθά: αὐτάρκεις οὖν ὄντας οὐδενὸς προσδεῖσθαι, τὸν δὲ φίλον, ἕτερον αὐτὸν ὄντα, πορίζειν ἃ δι᾽ αὑτοῦ ἀδυνατεῖ

when Aristotle claims that *eudaimonia* is *autarkēs,* he is careful to guard against the thought that he means to suggest that the happy person can get by perfectly well on his own:

> For the final good seems to be self-sufficient. But we are speaking not of what is sufficient for a person alone, living a solitary life, but rather for parents and children and wife and, in general, for friends and fellow citizens, since the human being is naturally political. (*NE* 1097b7-11)[9]

These are of course familiar features of Aristotle's ethical thought, features that lead some of his contemporary readers to praise him for his comforting reasonableness (as compared with Plato). I canvass them in order to ask: why does Aristotle not see them as grounds to simply dismiss the *aporia*, as insensitive to the realities of human nature and based on a misconception of (human) *autarkeia*? One might have expected Aristotle to deny that a human being could be *autarkēs* in the sense required to get the puzzle going; or, again, to point out that, although friends are "external goods," that does not mean that the *eudaimōn* agent has no need of them—for there are any number of external goods that one needs, on Aristotle's view, in order to be *eudaimōn*.

Friends, Aristotle points out, are considered to be among the greatest external goods—they provide, for instance, an occasion for particularly fine actions, since "it is more fine to benefit a friend than strangers." (1169b12-13) And so (it would seem) the happy individual will need friends, if he is to be able to exercise virtue to the fullest, finest extent—as he must, if he is indeed happy. Or, again, given that "the human being is political, naturally tending to live together [with other humans]," the happy person (who is still, after all, a human being) would presumably not live a solitary life (1169b16-19). And if he is going to live with others anyway, it would be better, surely, to live with genuine friends than with just anyone (1169b16-20).

Add to these points Aristotle's diagnosis of why "those on the other side" have been inclined to deny that the happy person needs friends — they have assumed that all friendships are for the sake of utility (as Socrates does in the *Lysis*), while recognizing that the blessedly happy person has no need of *these* friendships—and it might seem that Aristotle has perfectly good grounds to merely set the *aporia* aside. "Of [useful] friends, the blessedly happy man will have no need, since he already has the things that are good…and because he does not need such friends, he is thought not to need friends [at all]. But this is surely not true." (1169b22-28) It is surely not true because the fact that someone is useful is only one among three general reasons for loving them. In particular, some friendships are based, instead,

[9] τὸ γὰρ τέλειον ἀγαθὸν [i.e., εὐδαιμονία] αὔταρκες εἶναι δοκεῖ. τὸ δ' αὔταρκες λέγομεν οὐκ αὐτῷ μόνῳ, τῷ ζῶντι βίον μονώτην, ἀλλὰ καὶ γονεῦσι καὶ τέκνοις καὶ γυναικὶ καὶ ὅλως τοῖς φίλοις καὶ πολίταις, ἐπειδὴ φύσει πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος.

on one's love for the friend for who she is—friendship on account of virtue (*dia tēn aretēn*), the kind of friendship that Aristotle sometimes calls "genuine" or "true" friendship.

But Aristotle does not leave matters there; he presses on to offer a series of arguments in favor of the conclusion that the happy person needs friends, the last of which is the notoriously dense and complicated argument that is my concern in this chapter. For, although pointing out that philosophers like Plato (or Plato's Socrates) were assuming that all friendship is utility friendship opens up conceptual space for the argument that friendship has intrinsic value, it does not show us that it does, and thus does not establish that, or why, the happy person will need friends. Let us consider, then, why Aristotle believes that the above points about our nature as political animals—always dependent to some extent on external goods in general and on *philoi* in particular—only as making up what is said on the other side of the *aporia,* and not its resolution. Doing so will reveal something about the import of the *aporia* and what we might hope for from an answer to it.

That we are "political animals," who tend by nature to live in communities, can explain why the question ("Why does the happy person need friends?") tends not to arise, or why the proverbial man on the street may be inclined to dismiss it as "absurd" (*atopon,* 1169b16); it cannot, however, on its own provide the answer to the question once it has arisen. It may well be that the happy person, like anyone, will have an ongoing need for other people—he will need, for instance, to cooperate with them in various ways in order to secure the goods he cannot procure all by himself. But this does not show us that he needs to live with genuine *friends*. And if it seems "obvious," as Aristotle says in laying out the *aporia*, that it would be better to live with friends that with just anyone, that is not to answer the *aporia*, but to assert one's pre-philosophical confidence about how the answer should go.

The following, further point about our political nature might be thought, however, to be of more help. Having by nature a need to live with others, it is unsurprising that we also have by nature a desire or impulse to live with others—and, in particular, to live with friends. Otherwise, we might find ourselves "by nature" at that point in (Plato's) Protagoras's Great Speech when human beings have a natural *need* to live with one another, but have not as yet been given the capacity for justice and friendship, and lack the *ability* to live together.[10] Aristotelian nature would not, however, allow for such a condition.[11] So, human beings do by nature have such a desire. And, so, the happy human being, being after all a human being, will have such a

[10] *Protagoras,* 322a-c.

[11] For Thomas Hobbes, by contrast, one might describe this as *precisely* "the natural condition of mankind."

desire. A solitary, friendless life would be one in which that desire was constantly thwarted, and *that* could not be a "blessedly happy" life. Moreover, if we have by nature such an impulse, then it would be plausible to think that we simply *do*, spontaneously, develop friendly attachments to other people. That is just part of what it is to grow up as a human being. The happy human being, having had a normal human upbringing, just will have formed those kinds of attachments, and so just will have the associated desires; but if that is the case, then he will need to maintain those friendships and to enjoy the pleasant company of his friends if he is to be happy.

Though not exactly wrong—it is certainly true that human beings have by nature a desire to live with others, and that a solitary life would be one in which this natural desire went perennially unsatisfied—it, again, cannot provide a satisfactory resolution to the *aporia*. Such an argument treats the desire to be with others as given, an impulse with which we simply find ourselves; it does not tell us why we desire association, and it particular it does not tell us whether we do so because we think it is worthwhile or valuable in its own right. There may be things we really do find ourselves desiring for no good reason—desires we might unmask or explain away, perhaps by offering some psychological etiology, but not justify. But the satisfaction of such desires is presumably not a necessary feature of the best human life. If we find ourselves with such a desire, we might do best to go to work on ourselves. We may find out that it is too late, the desire too deeply ingrained to be un-habituated; we may be incurable—but then, on Aristotle's view, it may simply be too late for happiness. Of course, we would see it as pathological to view one's desire for friendship in such a way. But that is just to say that we do not treat the desire to be with others as a mere given; we desire friendship and community as things that are good in themselves, as making a meaningful contribution in their own right to living well. Again, merely citing the desire, as a kind of natural fact, cannot explain why we are right to do so.

Because Aristotle, it is often said, has a "normative" conception of nature, it is easy to think that the fact that human beings are political by nature should *ipso facto* imply that the life of the happy person will be a shared, social life. But this is an over-simplification. Human nature is complex, and the realization of some of its aspects may stand in tension with the realization of others; that they are equally part of human nature won't help us to decide which to promote and which to thwart. And descriptive generalizations about human beings or human societies will not help much: though, in general for Aristotle, what is natural is what comes about "always or for the most part," things are somewhat different when it comes to human beings. The human life most in perfect accord with nature, or again the political constitution most in accord with nature, is exceedingly rare, perhaps even unattested.

Thus, although being political animals means that we have both a natural need and a natural desire or impulse to live with others, neither of these facts about us can explain why the happy person needs friends in the sense that Aristotle means here. And that is because neither of those facts, on their own, why *philia* is an essential part of a well-lived life, not for the sake of procuring other goods, but simply in its own right.

Moreover, Aristotle's sympathies with Plato, and in particular with the Platonic view that the good human life is "self-sufficient," go deeper than a crude contrast between them might suggest. (I have in mind the familiar picture of Plato the idealist, viewing human life *sub species divinitatis*, versus Aristotle the pragmatist, ever sensitive to the realities and limitations of human nature).

Consider, in this connection, another feature of Plato's *Lysis*. It might have seemed a depressing enough result that those who are fully good would have no truck with friendship, so that if we achieved what we are in fact aiming at, we would have no further love for our friends. But Socrates goes on to argue on this basis that even those of us—all of us, I take it—who are "neither good nor bad" do not genuinely love (*philein*) their supposed *philoi* either. Given that all *philia* is relative to a need or lack and the good and self-sufficient are thus incapable of loving, the neither-good-nor-bad (who are seeking to become good) love their friends only because of their neediness — as Socrates puts it, "it is on account of the bad that the good is loved" (220c). What the neither-good- nor-bad really want, Socrates suggests, is to achieve goodness and self-sufficiency, and all of their friendships are oriented toward this more fundamental desire. The good itself, therefore, is the "first friend" (*prōton philon*), that "for the sake of which we say that all the rest are beloved (*phila*) too." (219d) "[All] the other things that we have called friends for the sake of that thing," Socrates goes on, "may be deceiving us, like so many phantoms of it" (219d). In other words, what we *really* love is the good, and any love which is conditional upon our lacking the good is only a pseudo-love. The thought, it appears, is that something which we value merely because of some need or lack cannot be something we truly value in itself; to determine what is genuinely valuable, we must consider what we would value even if we had no such lack or need. Thus, the striking claim about the impossibility of *philia* among the *agathoi* is meant to reveal something about *us* — who are not perfectly *agathos,* and thus who do have an ongoing need for others — and in particular about our relationship to our (supposed!) *philoi*.

It is not clear that Plato, or Plato's Socrates, ever maintains that an actual, living human being could, even in principle, attain the kind of self-sufficiency Plato('s Socrates) associates with the good. But the fact that the good is *autarkēs,* and the fact that we desire friendship only on account of our lacking this self-sufficient good implies, so Plato suggests, that we do not desire friendship for its own sake. That is, even though Plato may well think

that the good is not humanly achievable (in this lifetime?), the nature of the good has implications about our present, all-too-human desires. Thus, the contrast between Plato and Aristotle cannot be that Plato believes that we can achieve a kind of divine self-sufficiency that Aristotle recognizes to be impossible given the limitations imposed by human nature.

Nor is it quite right to think that Aristotle disagrees with Plato because he denies the relevance of this idealized self-sufficient human being. In fact, in *NE* 9.9 itself, he endorses the idea that this is a perspective from which the nature of human values may more clearly appear. Although, in *Politics* I.2, Aristotle implies that human beings never achieve such a degree of self-sufficiency that they do not need the help of others to secure material goods, in the argument of *NE* 9.9, he seems to assume the perspective of just such a human being. He considers a person who is self-sufficient in the sense that she either possesses already, or is capable on her own of procuring, all of the human goods (other than the good, if it is a good, of *philia* itself), and asks whether such a human being would need to live with friends. Aristotle must be using the term *autarkēs* in something like this way, for he says that the happy and therefore *autarkēs* person "need nothing in addition," and therefore seem "to have no need of friends"; and he says, again, that "the blessedly happy person will have no need of [friends for utility], since he has the [other] good things." The reasoning in these lines makes sense only because *autarkēs* is being used to characterize someone who is capable of maintaining or procuring, all on his own, all the necessary human goods other than the good (if it is a good) of *philia* itself.[12]

Given Aristotle's denial that we could ever be like that, why does he speak from such a perspective? One reason is that employing the idea of a person who does not need others in that way — although it is an idealization — has the important heuristic effect of forcing us to focus on what, if anything, might make friendship valuable for its own sake, a constitutive element in a well-lived life. A person who is *autarkēs* in the sense suggested in the last paragraph would not need friends for the purpose of procuring any goods other than the good of friendship itself, and so asking why *she* would need friends is to ask what, if anything, makes friendship worth choosing for its own sake. Thus, to resolve the *aporia* of *NE* 9.9 would be to explain why the happy person needs friendship, not instrumentally, but for its own sake — that is, it would be to show how friendship, by itself, makes a constitutive contribution to the happiness of a happy human life. When Aristotle concludes by saying that the happy person needs friends, he means that the

[12] There is therefore a real question about whether he is here using the term *autarkēs* in the same sense as he had used in *NE* 1.7, 1097b7-11. At first glance, it appears that the answer to the question is "no"; but if that is right, then one wonders where he had defended or even endorsed the idea that the human good is *autarkēs* in the relevant sense. A similar question arises with respect to his argument, in *NE* 10.7-8, that the contemplative life is a higher good than the political life because it is more *autarkēs*.

happy person needs friends *insofar as he is happy*, because friendship makes a necessary contribution to happiness — rather than needing it, for example, insofar as he is a living organism in need of various material goods in order to survive. The admittedly idealized notion of a fully self-sufficient person brings the former question into greater focus, and that, I believe, is at least part of Aristotle's interest in the *aporia*.

But the idealized perspective of a perfectly self-sufficient human being is not merely a heuristic. As is made clear by the famous arguments of *NE* 10.7-8 in favor of the contemplative life, Aristotle thinks of *autarkeia* as a genuine aim we should try to achieve to the degree that we, as human beings, can. And, indeed, Aristotle thinks, like Plato, that it is by building our lives around the development and exercise of our nature as rational creatures that we become most like god and achieve maximal self-sufficiency – for, in thought and contemplation, we would seem to have little or no need for others (especially in comparison with practical action). Thus, Aristotle's own picture of the good human life seems to make the *aporia* especially pressing.

As we shall see, Aristotle's argument will bring out the risk of carrying the comparison with god too far. We should *not* ask what we would value if we, like god, were able to contemplate perfectly well on our own – as if for a person, as for a god, doing well might depend on nothing outside of oneself. Though the blessedly happy person is as god-like as a human being can be, if we press the analogy with god *that* far, it is apt to mislead us (*EE* 1245b14-19). Socrates went astray (by Aristotle's lights) not just because he assumed that all friendship was for the sake of utility, but also because he assumed that, if something were genuinely valuable, then we would value it even if we were self-sufficient in the way that only god is. For Aristotle, this is a significant philosophical mistake. For what it is to do well as a certain kind of a thing depends on what it is to be that kind of thing. Thus, our idealization cannot leave behind those constraints imposed by being the kind of creature we are. Although it is in some sense better to be a god than a mere mortal, I cannot rationally wish to be a god (cf. *NE* 1159a5-12)—that is, I cannot have the wish that *I* were a god (as I can have the wish that I were rich).[13] As we shall see, the most significant constraint, for the purposes of this argument, is that human thought, unlike god's, depends on the mind-independent world.

[13] Aristotle's immediate point at *NE* 1159a5-12 is that I cannot wish for my *friend* to become a god – but the argument, if it is successful, would also rule out wishing of myself that I become god. If so, it is interesting to consider why Aristotle would think that I cannot *wish* this. After all, he thinks that wish (*boulēsis*), unlike choice, is not restricted to what we can achieve through our efforts. Thus, the reason that I cannot wish that I was god cannot *simply* be that it is impossible for me to become a god. The thought must be something along the following lines: Wish is always for the (apparent) good, but what counts as good for me is determined by what kind of being I am. Thus, wishing must take as fixed that I am the kind of being that I am.

Thus, Aristotle's argument, as we shall see, will exploit a fundamental difference between the divine and the human exercise of reason: God is able to think perfectly on its own, and so its doing well is entirely independent; but the perfection of human thought might depend upon one's relationships with others. For this to provide a satisfactory answer to the *aporia* and explain why genuine friendship is valuable in itself, however, it must explain how the perfection of human thought depends on others not just *instrumentally* – e.g., because they provide one with the resources or occasions to exercise reason – but in some more intrinsic or constitutive way. Seeing how Aristotle's answer to the *aporia* could meet this condition is one of the central challenges faced by anyone trying to present a satisfactory interpretation.

A note on some competing accounts of the *aporia* in the literature: My claim that Aristotle is trying to explain that the happy person needs friends is not uncontroversial. According to Whiting ("Pleasure of Thinking Together"), offering a reading according to which the happy person has a genuine *need* for friends would be merely "to remove—not to resolve—the *aporia*." If every normal human being needs friends, she tells us, "there should be no problem understanding the evident fact that even the best and most self-sufficient among us *do* have friends: this [would be] all too intelligible given that…we *need* friends…" (78) Whiting thus suggests that we should opt for a reading that "explains why [the happy person] wants to live and act together with her friend, but…does not involve satisfying any bona fide *need* on the part of the self-sufficient agent." (81) In other words, she claims that to truly "resolve" and not merely "remove" the *aporia*, we should give an account that shows us how to understand the fact that the happy person will have friends, even though he does not *need* them. "Aristotle's general strategy," she tells us, "is to deny the inference… from a subject's *not needing* [a friend] to a subject's *not having* [a friend]." (90)

However, that the happy person needs friends is precisely what Aristotle claims in *NE* 9.9.[14] He concludes by saying: "…then a friend will be among the choiceworthy things. What is choiceworthy for him [the blessedly happy person] he must possess, or he will be lacking in this respect. Anyone who will be happy, then, must possess excellent friends." (1170b14-19[15]) Aristotle does *not* conclude, then, that it is merely "understandable" that the happy person should want to live with her friends, despite the fact that she does not *need* to; rather, he concludes that the happy person needs to have

[14] Whiting's paper is about the *Eudemian* version of the argument, so she could simply respond that they have different conclusions. However, while it is true that Aristotle doesn't say quite so clearly in the *Eudemian* version that the happy person needs friends or else he will be lacking something, to suggest that they have different conclusions seems to me quite strained, given their very close similarity in structure and upshot.

[15] κἂν ὁ φίλος τῶν αἱρετῶν εἴη. ὃ δ᾽ ἐστὶν αὐτῷ [i.e., τῷ μακαρίῳ] αἱρετόν, τοῦτο δεῖ ὑπάρχειν αὐτῷ, ἢ ταύτῃ ἐνδεὴς ἔσται. δεήσει ἄρα τῷ εὐδαιμονήσοντι φίλων σπουδαίων.

and spend time with friends if she is to be happy at all. To adapt a point made by Cooper ("Friendship and the Good"), to think that this is inconsistent with the hypothesis that she is happy—if she is sufficiently happy, how could she *need* anything else?—would, of course, be a silly misunderstanding: she might need it in order to be happy. It is equally a misunderstanding to think that there is necessarily an inconsistency between the happy person's *autarkeia* and their need for something: There is no inconsistency in saying that a self-sufficient person needs *x*, if by that one means that they need x *in order to be self-sufficient*. (So, there is nothing infelicitous about saying, "A self-sufficient person needs a strong backbone.") Given that Aristotle is apparently quite happy to use "self-sufficient" in an extended, semi-technical sense ("we are speaking not of what is sufficient for a person alone, living a solitary life, but rather for parents and children and wife and, in general, for friends and fellow citizens"), there does not seem to be any real tension between saying that the happy person is self-sufficient and that he needs friends (in order to be self-sufficient).

Against this, Kosman ("Desirability of Friends") argues: "Some readers have taken Aristotle to be asking whether having friends is a necessary condition of a happy life. But the fact that he introduces the question of why the happy need friends as a perplexity relating to the self-sufficiency of happiness should incline us away from this view. The question Aristotle poses is why we require friends even when we are happy, rather than the similar but distinct question of whether we require friends in order to be happy." (157) I don't find Kosman's suggestion here persuasive. "A person needs *x* in order to be *y*" is, we can agree with Kosman, a distinct claim from "A *y* person needs *x*." But in this case, it is a distinction without a difference.[16] It all depends on what the happy person needs friends for. 'Need', so to speak, is a three-way relation — it does not merely relate an agent to an object, but an to an object for some purpose or other: I need oxygen in order to breathe (and therefore in order to survive); I need meaningful work in order to maintain psychological health (and therefore to live well). What on Kosman's view does the happy person need friends for? The happy person needs friends, on Kosman's view, in order enjoy the good of "shared awareness," a good which provides "a wider, deeper, and more powerful range of objective conscious life." (179) As will become clear, on this point, I think Kosman is absolutely right. But why does the fact that friends enable this activity mean that the happy person needs friends? I do not see any answer in the offing except that such shared perception is a distinctive intrinsic good (i.e.,

[16] The cases in which "A person needs *x* in order to be *y*" is meaningfully distinct from "A *y* person needs *x*" seem to me to be cases in which *y* picks out a role: So, "A soldier needs a gun" (which sounds reasonable) is not the same as "You need a gun in order to be a soldier" (which does not). But "happy" is not a role in this way, nor is "self-sufficient." To say that, "A self-sufficient person needs a strong backbone," is most naturally read (I submit) as saying that one needs a strong backbone in order to be self-sufficient.

something which is good "by nature" and "in itself"), which one cannot achieve in other ways (or not as well) and which one must therefore possess in order to be happy.

The strategy and structure of Aristotle's argument

The argument that will be my focus here (1170a13-b19) is the last, and most involved, of a series of three arguments for the claim that the happy person needs friends. This argument is singled out as showing why friendship "good and pleasant in itself" "more from the perspective of nature" (*physikōteron*).[17] The "nature" in question is, it appears, the nature of human beings: The argument takes as its starting point an account of what it means to *be* human. Aristotle seeks to explain the goodness of friendship by appeal to fundamental features of human nature.[18] But this strategy is especially "natural" in a further sense. It promises to explain why friendship "choiceworthy (*haireton*) by nature (*phusei*) for the excellent (*spoudaios*) person." One might wonder, though: How could one explain the intrinsic value of something by explaining why it is good *for* a human being? But this need not give us much pause. When Aristotle says (in the context of a discussion of ethics) that something is "good by nature" and "choiceworthy in itself," he does not mean intrinsically good as opposed to being good relative to human nature; he means rather that it is something that we, given

[17] This raises the question of what exactly the relationship is between the three arguments, and whether Aristotle is suggesting that the first two fall short of explaining the intrinsic value of friendship. Perälä (2016) has argued that the third argument (the *physikōteron* argument) presupposes the results of the first, according to which it is good to observe the actions of one's (virtuous) friend, since such actions are good in themselves and are, in an extended sense, "one's own." On Perälä's view, Aristotle has *already* established that friendship is intrinsically valuable, and the third argument is only meant to show why, given the value of friendship, it is good and pleasant to "live together" with one's friends, "sharing in conversation and thought." But this seems implausible, for two reasons: (1) Aristotle explicitly singles out the last argument, specifically, as showing why friendship is good by nature and choiceworthy in itself. This is difficult to understand if he takes himself to have already established this and to now be applying that result to derive the value of living with a friend. (2) Nowhere in the third argument does Aristotle indicate that he is employing the conclusion of the first—at most, he employs a premise that he had also employed in the first argument (namely, that in order for something to be pleasant for a virtuous person, it must not only be good in itself, but also "his own [good]"; plausibly, our argument also appeals to this principle at 1170b2).

[18] In the beginning of his discussion of friendship, Aristotle had explicitly set aside a different kind of *physikōteron* perspective, one which examines friendship "from higher up" (1155b1-2)—that is, from the perspective of nature as a whole, as if *philia* were to be thought of as a universal, cosmic force. Such a perspective, Aristotle tells us, is not germane to the present inquiry, which concerns "human affairs" (*ta anthrōpika*). Thus, we should expect that the nature (*physis*) at issue in the "more naturalistic" (*physikōteron*) reasoning of *NE* IX.9 will be the nature of human beings specifically.

the kind of creatures we are, ought to choose for its own sake, given the kind of thing it is.[19]

That Aristotle would try to explain the value of friendship by appeal to human nature is unsurprising. What may be surprising, however, are the particular features of human nature upon which Aristotle bases his argument. For human beings, he says, "living is defined as the capacity…for perception (*aisthēsis*) and thought (*noēsis*)." Though familiar and fundamental features of Aristotelian human nature, they do not seem to be promising bedrock upon which to build a justification of friendship; they seem, on the face of it, to be paradigmatically *individualistic* capacities and activities.[20]

So, how does Aristotle derive the value of friendship from this unlikely basis? Though the passage is complex and frequently confounding, its overall structure, at least, is fairly evident. In rough outline, it might be sketched thus:

1. Living is good and pleasant on account of perceiving one's own being as good. (1170a16-b5; see chapter 2 for the structure of this part of the argument.)

2. Living-together (*suzēn*) with a genuine friend is good and pleasant. (1170b5-14)

- **2.1.** The virtuous person is related to his friend as he is related to himself. (b5-7)
- **2.2.** Since the virtuous person's living was choiceworthy for him, so too will the living of his friend be choiceworthy, and in roughly the same way. (b7-8)
- **2.3.** The virtuous person's own living was choiceworthy to him because he perceives himself living and perceives it as good. (b8-10)
- **2.4.** Thus, his friend's living will be choiceworthy to him because of the shared perception (*sunaisthanesthai*) of his friend's living and, in particular, the shared perception of it as good. (b10-11)
- **2.5.** This shared perception comes about by living together, sharing in conversation and thought. (b11-14)
- **2.6.** Thus, living together with a friend is good and pleasant (for the virtuous person).

Obviously, much more needs to be said to flesh out this skeleton of an argument. One might worry, however, that even at this level of abstraction, we can see that such an argument must be doomed. Cooper ("Friendship and the Good"), for instance, claims that:

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[19] Cf. Chapter 1.

[20] This suggests the possibility, discussed in the first section, that part of Aristotle's interest in the *aporia* derives from the fact that his conception of the happiest human life as one of contemplation might make it appear to be, in principle, an entirely solitary life.

> Aristotle simply assumes, altogether without explicit warrant, that the good man will have friends. It is only if one assumes that he *will* have friends that one can apply to him, as Aristotle does in the remainder of the argument, the consequences that flow…from the fact that a friend is…a second self. (339)

However, if one feels that Aristotle was unlikely to beg the question quite so egregiously as Cooper seems to suggest, one might suspect that the argument is meant to identify some good that one achieves in friendship, which one could not otherwise achieve and, without which, one could not be truly called *eudaimōn*. In other words, the obvious response to Cooper's criticism here is that Aristotle is not assuming that the happy person has friends and then applying to him the consequences that flow from the fact that a friend is another self. Rather, Aristotle is asking: *if* one were related to someone as "another self," is there some good one would achieve which one could not otherwise achieve? After arguing that there is such a good, Aristotle goes on to claim that it is the kind of good without which one could not be happy.

But what is the good one supposedly achieves only by being related to someone in the way that genuine friends are? The most obvious answer, which I would like to consider in the following section, is that it is the pleasurable perception of one's friend which is meant to do the work — a perception, Aristotle tells us, both good and pleasant in itself. I'll suggest in the end that this reading cannot be right—it is, at the very least, misleadingly simplified—but the point of doing so is not merely to reject a possible reading; seeing the limitations of such a reading suggests a more promising way forward—more promising, that is, because it makes better sense of Aristotle's discussion of friendship as a whole, but also because it is (I believe) in of itself a more interesting and illuminating account of the value of friendship.

A first pass

In the case of one's relation to oneself, Aristotle says that "perceiving that we are alive is pleasant in itself"; when he goes on to apply this to the friend, by way of the "another self" thesis, Aristotle says,

> [One's own] being was [shown to be] choiceworthy because he perceives that he is good, and such perception is pleasant in itself. Therefore, he must also share in the perception of his friend's being, and this would come about in living together and sharing in conversation and thought. (1170b8-12)[21]

[21] τὸ δ᾽ εἶναι ἦν αἱρετὸν διὰ τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι αὐτοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ὄντος, ἡ δὲ τοιαύτη αἴσθησις ἡδεῖα καθ᾽ ἑαυτήν. συναισθάνεσθαι ἄρα δεῖ καὶ τοῦ φίλου ὅτι ἔστιν, τοῦτο δὲ γίνοιτ᾽ ἂν ἐν τῷ συζῆν καὶ κοινωνεῖν λόγων καὶ διανοίας.

It might look as if the thought is that having a friend is good for oneself because of the pleasure of perceiving the being and goodness of one's friend. One wants, in particular, to live with one's friend, and to engage together with him in those activities in which one believes living well to consist (*NE* 1172a1-8.), presumably because in doing so, one will be able to enjoy the perception of one's friend doing well (according to one's own beliefs about what doing well consists in).

The first point to recognize is that *pleasure* itself cannot be the ground-floor explanation, although it is, admittedly, the pleasure of self-perception which Aristotle explicitly appeals to when he comes to apply the results of the first part of the argument (*via* the "another self" thesis) to the friend. Not that Aristotle has anything against pleasure. Indeed, Aristotle maintains that the best life is also most pleasant (e.g., at 1099a24-5); thus, he could establish *that* a certain life is happier by establishing that it is more pleasant. Closer to home, Aristotle repeatedly points out in his discussion of friendship that character-friends *do* take pleasure in one another's company. So, the hedonic reading is on perfectly good ground in this respect. But, like all natural pleasures, the pleasures of genuine friendship are not *sui generis*: An activity is pleasant by nature because it is itself good by nature, or because it involves the appreciation of something good by nature. Thus, hedonism cannot be the ground-floor explanation of the value of friendship. The fact that we take "natural" pleasure in friendship is an *indication* that it involves the recognition of some intrinsic good (ἀγαθὸν καθ'αὑτό). That which we take pleasure *in* must be something good in itself. Since this argument is meant to offer an account *why* friendship is worth choosing for its own sake, by explaining why it is good "by nature," Aristotle cannot base the argument on the fact that character-friendship is pleasant. That would be to get things just backwards. So, if it is pleasant "by nature" to perceive one's friend doing well, then, this must be because such an activity is good itself. As Whiting ("Pleasure of Thinking Together") points out,

> …this pleasure [of perceiving myself or perceiving a genuine friend] does not function as the end for the sake of which I value perception of myself or others: it is the goodness of the *object* perceived that makes the *activity* of perceiving that object so *haireton*. The pleasure taken in perceiving a good object is a by-product of what is *truly haireton*. (94-5)

Let us say, then, that the (human) activity of perceiving a good (or "fine," *kalon*) object is itself good for that person. Could this be the basis for Aristotle's argument in *NE* 9.9?

An initial problem for this suggestion is that it would seem to make no difference that it was one's *friend* that one was observing — any virtuous person would do (Cf. Cooper, "Friendship and the Good"). But perhaps this concern could be dealt with: After all, in saying that it is a good to perceive a

good object, we presumably mean that it is good to perceive it *as* good. And that it is my *friend* I am perceiving, rather than a virtuous stranger makes an epistemic difference: As Aristotle argues at some length in *EE* 7, it is only genuine friends whose characters I know well enough to recognize as truly virtuous. Moreover, Aristotle has already identified a further condition on something's being pleasant by nature to perceive, beyond its being good — it must also be "one's own" (1170a1). Perhaps it is only one's virtue-friends that satisfy both of these conditions; they are not only known to you to be good, but also *your* good, in some sense, for they are *your* friends.

Thus, we have two possible senses in which one's virtue friends might be not only good in the abstract (*agathos haplōs*, as Aristotle sometimes says) but good to/for oneself (*agathos hautō(i)*) — they are good "to" oneself in that one perceives them as good, since one knows their character sufficiently well to make that judgment; and they are good "for" oneself in that they are not just good in themselves, but they are "one's own [good]." If we could make sense of either or both of these ideas, then we could perhaps see why it makes a difference that it is one's friend one is perceiving, and not some virtuous stranger. However, even assuming we could do so, there would be a further, and more significant difficulty. It is simply not sufficient, in order to explain why something is necessary for happiness, to argue that it is good both intrinsically and for the happy person. That would be a radically over-demanding account of happiness, even if one is inclined towards "inclusivist" readings of Aristotle.

Jennifer Whiting gets around this problem by (as we have already seen) downplaying Aristotle's aim in the passage, suggesting that Aristotle is not trying to show that one *needs* friends in order to be happy, but merely that it is understandable if the happy person has them. If we accept that suggestion, then there may be no problem here. The fact that some activity is good and pleasant for a *eudaimōn* individual to engage in might suffice to make sense of the fact that some such person engages in that activity. But that the happy person needs friends is *precisely* Aristotle's conclusion, and the fact that some perceptual activity is good and pleasant in itself is not sufficient to show that one *must* engage in that activity in order to be happy at all. For instance, the fact that reading a poem by Emily Dickinson is good and pleasant to someone who has the capacity for appreciating its goodness may why a happy person with that capacity reads that poem; it would not, of course, explain why they *needed* to read poems in order to be happy at all. What is required, for Aristotle's purposes, is really something much stronger. He must show that, given that *this* is what human happiness is (say, the perfect exercise of our distinctively human cognitive capacities), it can only come about through friendship.

Thus, there are some philosophical difficulties for our *prima facie* reading — difficulties both with the idea that the good of friendship might rest on the pleasure it involves, and with the idea that what the friends take

pleasure *in* (thus, where the ultimate value of friendship lies) is the perception of their friend living well. It is, of course, always possible that this was a lapse on Aristotle's part. But there are also some textual difficulties with the straightforward reading, difficulties that suggest there is more going on, and which may also point a way forward.

One thing that may jump out, straightaway, about this way of understanding the basic strategy of the argument is how peripheral a role is being played by the account of the reflexivity of perception, despite its apparently prominent place in Aristotle's discussion (1170a25-b1). Its function, on the reading canvassed above, is only to provide, on the basis of *De Anima* 3.2, a rather convoluted explanation of why living is pleasant to a *eudaimōn* person — to explain, it would seem, the obvious by appeal to the obscure. Why bring in all this heavy machinery? Note that, on this reading, Aristotle does not actually *need* the premise that living is something pleasant in itself; he only needs the premise that perceiving or being aware that one is living (well) is pleasant in itself (when it is good in itself), since it is only that feature of one's relationship to oneself that gets applied to the friend. The only real function of the points about the reflexivity of perception, then, are to establish a potentially interesting but argumentatively irrelevant corollary: Since living for human beings consists in perceiving, and when one perceives, one perceives that one perceives, it follows that whenever one is living one perceives that one is living. And thus — the interesting but irrelevant corollary — if it is pleasant to perceive that one is living, then it will be pleasant to *live*. It would seem preferable to interpret the argument in such a way that the textual prominence of the point about the nature of perception reflected in some way its structural or logical significance.

There is a further textual issue for the interpretation, one which I think strongly suggests that there must be something different going on — but also suggests a direction we might look for what that is. When, in IX.12, Aristotle turns to wrapping up his discussion of friendship, he very briefly recapitulates the argument of IX.9:

> …for friends, living together is most choiceworthy. For friendship is community and one is related to a friend as he is to himself. With respect to oneself, the perception that one exists is choiceworthy; so too with respect to one's friend. Perception is active when we live with him; therefore, it makes sense that this is what we seek. And whatever it is to *be* for each person, or that for the sake of which he chooses to live, he wants to spend his time [engaged] in that activity with his friends. That's why some drink together, others play dice together, while others do gymnastics and hunt together or philosophize together, each [set of friends] spending their days together in whatever pursuit in life they like most. For, wanting to live

> together with friends, they do the actions and share the things in which they believe living together [to consist]. (1171b32-1172a8)[22]

What is significant about this passage is that Aristotle takes the argument of 9.9 to show, not merely why friends want to see their friends engaged in good activity, but why, in particular, friends want to engage in activity *together*. Given this passage, when Aristotle says in 9.9 that, in order to gain the distinctive pleasures of friendship, friends must "live together" (*suzēn*), it is unlikely that he means merely that they should spend their time in relatively close proximity to one another (e.g., by dwelling under the same roof), so that they can perceive each other as much as possible. Rather, the thought must be that they will need to engage *together* in those activities in which they think living well consists.

On the *prima facie* reading we're considering, why would this be? As Kosman ("Desirability of Friends") puts it, if all I needed were to be "aware of my friend's life," it might seem that "I could achieve *that* by reading his biography or talking to his mother." (181) Perhaps this is a *bit* unfair. It may indeed be especially pleasant to know *first-hand* that your friend is doing well; we might derive more pleasure might from the concrete perception than from the abstract awareness. But, still, Kosman is right to press here: If this interpretation were right, Aristotle's emphasis on shared activity would be mysterious. Why wouldn't I be just as happy simply observing my friend engaged in his own, non-shared activity?

Perhaps the thought could be that the pleasure of observation would be augmented when we engage in shared activity by the fact that (given the inherent reciprocity of friendship) one will know that one's friend, too, will enjoy *her* perception of *one's own* doing well — and, as Aristotle also tells us, we take pleasure in the pleasure of our friends (1171b12-21). So, shared activity would provide a kind of hedonic echo chamber. But this would be a very peculiar account of the pleasure of shared activity. The pleasure of dancing together, on this way of thinking, would be the mutual and mutually reinforcing pleasure of observing one's partner dancing well and observing them observing you dancing well (and observing them observing you observing them, etc., etc.); again, no real work would be done by the fact that they are dancing *together* — the pleasure could still be had simply by both dancing alone though within one another's line of sight. In the next section,

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[22] …τοῖς φίλοις αἱρετώτατόν ἐστι τὸ συζῆν. κοινωνία γὰρ ἡ φιλία, καὶ ὡς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἔχει, οὕτω καὶ πρὸς τὸν φίλον· περὶ αὑτὸν δ' ἡ αἴσθησις ὅτι ἔστιν αἱρετή, καὶ περὶ τὸν φίλον δή· ἡ δ' ἐνέργεια γίνεται αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ συζῆν, ὥστ' εἰκότως τούτου ἐφίενται. καὶ ὅ ποτ' ἐστὶν ἑκάστοις τὸ εἶναι ἢ οὗ χάριν αἱροῦνται τὸ ζῆν, ἐν τούτῳ μετὰ τῶν φίλων βούλονται διάγειν· διόπερ οἱ μὲν συμπίνουσιν, οἱ δὲ συγκυβεύουσιν, ἄλλοι δὲ συγγυμνάζονται καὶ συγκυνηγοῦσιν ἢ συμφιλοσοφοῦσιν, ἕκαστοι ἐν τούτῳ συνημερεύοντες ὅ τι περ μάλιστ' ἀγαπῶσι τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ· συζῆν γὰρ βουλόμενοι μετὰ τῶν φίλων, ταῦτα ποιοῦσι καὶ τούτων κοινωνοῦσιν οἷς οἴονται συζῆν.

I will defend in more detail the claim that shared activity is central to the argument; but granting for now on the basis of the *NE* 9.12 passage that it *is* central, this fact suggests that we have not yet identified what is really going on.

Perhaps each of the worries raised in this section could, with some philosophical ingenuity, be dealt with. But it seems to me that the cumulative effect is to cast serious doubt on the idea that Aristotle intends to argue that friendship is valuable because of the fact that it is pleasant to perceive a friend doing well. We need to look elsewhere to find the value of friendship.

Shared perception of the friend's being (1170b5-14)

In chapter 2, I developed a reading of what I called the self-awareness argument, the first part of the argument now under consideration. There, we saw that, according to Aristotle, one's own being or living is choiceworthy in itself because of the element of self-awareness involved in human living – and, in particular, insofar as one is able to live in such a way that one is aware of one's life as something good and *kalon*; the genuine pleasure a decent agent takes in such awareness is a kind of indication of the fact that she is able to make sense of her life according to her conception of the good. Aristotle then applies the results of this sub-argument to one's relationship with friends:

> [1] …living is choiceworthy, but especially so for good people, since for them being is good and pleasant (for they take pleasure in perceiving what is good in itself together [with the fact that it is present in them, cf. 1170b2]), and [2] as the excellent (*spoudaios*) person is related to himself, so too he is related to his friend (since the friend is another self); accordingly, therefore, as his own being is choiceworthy for him, so too is that of his friend, or nearly as much. And [we saw that one's] being was choiceworthy on account of perceiving that one is good, such a perception being pleasant in itself. Therefore, it is necessary to share in the perception (*sunaisthanesthai*) of the friend existing; and this would come about in living together and sharing discussion and thought. For living together for human beings would seem to be spoken of in this way [i.e., as sharing discussion and thought], and not, as with cattle, grazing in the same [field]. (1170b5-14)

This argument is so terse and elliptical as to seem, at first, impenetrable. As an inroad, I want to consider for a moment the last line. I do not think that it is an accident that Aristotle concludes this argument by drawing a contrast with cattle. The cow is a stock example of an animal which is "gregarious" (*agelaios*), but not political. In the *History of Animals*, Aristotle articulates what distinguishes political animals as subset of *agelaios* animals as follows: After dividing creatures into those that live in groups, those that live alone

(and those that "do both") (487b34-488a2[23]), he further subdivides gregarious creatures into those that are "political" and those that live "scattered" (σποραδικά). By σποραδικά, Aristotle presumably means, not that they live far apart from one another — the cattle grazing scattered throughout the field may stay fairly close together — but that the groups they live in are not organized, they are haphazard.

What makes animals *political*, specifically, is that they have a shared "task" or "function" (*ergon*), that what they characteristically do as the kind of creature they are is something they do *together*. (*HA* 488a7-8[24]) It's not enough, to make an animal "political," that they tend to do the same kind of thing in proximity to one another; nor is it even enough that they share an interest in doing so: Cattle may "graze together," and they may do so because of a shared interest in protection from predators. But their interest is "shared" in the sense that the same thing — being in a group — is good for each of them individually. A group of political animals — an ant-colony, say — on the other hand, is not just a collection of individuals living in proximity to one another, because doing so benefits each of them individually. The differentiated functions of individual ants enable them to cooperate and maintain the complex structure of the colony, enabling the colony to constitute a unified whole, as in a human community. In such a case, one can speak of the functioning, the activity of the colony itself, and not just of its members. Moreover, on Aristotle's view, one cannot understand the good of an ant without understanding it in terms of the good of the ant-colony of which it is a member; part of what it is to *be* an ant is to be a member of a functioning colony. And this means, in turn, that the *telos* of ants is a common *telos*, and their good is a common good, in a way that is not true with cattle.

This enables us to say, about ants and humans, but not about cows, that there is some *single* thing that they all do together. That is, several of them (can) all engage in what constitutes one activity (not just that each of them engages in the same *kind* of activity). Of course, when Aristotle discusses the political nature of human beings, he primarily has life in the *political* community in mind. But friendship too is a "community" (*koinōnia*), as Aristotle says repeatedly, and (like other communities) is characterized by shared activity. We see this at work in the passage of *NE* 9.12 that recapitulates our argument:

> …for friends, living together is most choiceworthy. For friendship is community and one is related to a friend as he is to himself. With respect to oneself, the perception that one exists is choiceworthy; so too with respect

[23] Τὰ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἀγελαῖα τὰ δὲ μοναδικά, καὶ πεζὰ καὶ πτηνὰ καὶ πλωτά, τὰ δ' ἐπαμφοτερίζει…

[24] Πολιτικὰ δ'ἐστὶν ὧν ἕν τι καὶ κοινὸν γίνεται πάντων τὸ ἔργον· ὅπερ οὐ πάντα ποιεῖ τὰ ἀγελαῖα. Ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπος, μέλιττα, σφήξ, μύρμηξ, γέρανος.

> to one's friend. Perception is active when we live with him; therefore, it makes sense that this is what we seek. And whatever it is to be for each person, or that for the sake of which he chooses to live, he wants to spend his time [engaged] in that activity with his friends. That's why some drink together, others play dice together, while others do gymnastics and hunt together or philosophize together, each [set of friends] spending their days together in whatever pursuit in life they like most. For, wanting to live together with friends, they do the actions and share the things in which they believe living together [to consist?]. (1171b32-1172a8)[25]

Thus, I want to follow a number of commentators in seeing shared activity as central to Aristotelian friendship. Price (1989) was an early proponent of this view, and he devoted some time to trying to say precisely what is involved in such shared activity. In "joint action," as Price calls it, the parties do not merely *enable* each other to act, but actually "help [each other] *in* action." (116) To illustrate this distinction, Price points to a contrast: if I am engaged in philosophical discussion with a colleague, the way in which my interlocutor "joins in [the] exercise" of my philosophical capacity is quite different from the way in which others may enable its exercise by not interfering, or the way in which the waiter may enable it by bringing me a cup of coffee. In the first case, as in all cases of joint action, "the activity of each party can be viewed as the exercise at once of a capacity of his own, and of a capacity (whether similar or complementary) of the other's; hence the activity of each is not only himself, but also the other in action."

But Price stresses a different way in which an action may be "shared" — it may be shared because the parties "share in choice" (Aristotle says at one point in the *EE* that friends are characterized by "mutual choice," *antiprohairesis*, (1236b3) — a word he seems to have coined for this purpose):

> Emphasis on the ethical aspect of the action (that is, its relation to choice and character…) may seem restrictive, but in fact extends the possibilities: in the example [where "two people, A and B, could *each* become a ditch-digger or a concert-pianist but not *both*; so they decide between themselves that, say, *A* will dig ditches while *B* plays the piano"], *B*'s playing is no actualization of *A*'s ability to play, but it does put into action *A*'s and *B*'s shared decision that *B* should be the pianist; interpreted in relation not to technical capacities, but to states of character, *B*'s activity can, after all, be viewed as a realization in action of a state of *A*'s… [The] style and technique

[25] …τοῖς φίλοις αἱρετώτατόν ἐστι τὸ συζῆν. κοινωνία γὰρ ἡ φιλία, καὶ ὡς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἔχει, οὕτω καὶ πρὸς τὸν φίλον· περὶ αὑτὸν δ' ἡ αἴσθησις ὅτι ἔστιν αἱρετή, καὶ περὶ τὸν φίλον δή· ἡ δ' ἐνέργεια γίνεται αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ συζῆν, ὥστ' εἰκότως τούτου ἐφίενται. καὶ ὅ ποτ' ἐστὶν ἑκάστοις τὸ εἶναι ἢ οὗ χάριν αἱροῦνται τὸ ζῆν, ἐν τούτῳ μετὰ τῶν φίλων βούλονται διάγειν· διόπερ οἱ μὲν συμπίνουσιν, οἱ δὲ συγκυβεύουσιν, ἄλλοι δὲ συγγυμνάζονται καὶ συγκυνηγοῦσιν ἢ συμφιλοσοφοῦσιν, ἕκαστοι ἐν τούτῳ συνημερεύοντες ὅ τι περ μάλιστ' ἀγαπῶσι τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ· συζῆν γὰρ βουλόμενοι μετὰ τῶν φίλων, ταῦτα ποιοῦσι καὶ τούτων κοινωνοῦσιν οἷς οἴονται συζῆν.

> belong solely to *B*…; it is the value of the playing *qua* action (reflecting say the practical good sense of their joint decision) which belongs *in toto* to *A* and *B*. (119-120)

Of course, we engage in shared action, whether directly via cooperation or indirectly via "joint decision," all the time, and with many other people than our friends. What is distinctive of genuine friendship in this connection is that it — unlike other human communities, including other forms of friendship — does not involve shared activity which is merely instrumentally related to the friends' *eudaimonia*. Character-friends seek to share with one another whatever activity (or activities) they believe their *eudaimonia* to consist in.[26] Thus, one might say that our nature as political animals — as animals that have as (part of) their final end some task (function, characteristic activity) that they do *together* — is manifest in a special or distinctive way in friendship, for it is in such a community (*koinōnia*) that the parties make the decision (*prohairesis*) to associate precisely for the purpose of engaging together in living well (cf. *Pol.* 3.9, 1280b38-1281a1).

This means that it is difficult to say, in general, what *the* shared activity of friends is (except by offering a determinable definition like, "living well together"); there are a great variety of activities that friends seek to share, depending on what they believe "living well" *is*. But this is no accidental fact about human communities; it is a byproduct of the fact (discussed in chapters 2 and 3) that we are rational animals, and thus that *our* living well involves doing so on the basis of a conception of what living well consists in. Human beings pursue shared activity intentionally; they do not — as do other creatures, political or otherwise — pursue their good blindly, automatically. That is, they are capable of possessing a conception of *eudaimonia*, and of pursuing their good under the guise of that conception. (I do not mean to suggest by this that people first form a distinct, worked out "theory" of their good, and then set out to realize it. Instead, their understanding of the human good might be implicit in their activity, and might be developed precisely *by* engaging in the activity.)

In fact, Aristotle suggests in the *Politics* that this is what makes us "more political" than other creatures:

> It is clear, moreover, why the human being is more of a political animal than every bee and every [other] gregarious animal. For, as we say, nature makes nothing in vain; and the human being alone among animals has speech (*logos*). While voice is for signifying pain and pleasure — which is why it is possessed by the other animals (for their nature goes as far as this: they have perception of pain and pleasure, and they signify them to one another) — speech (*logos*) is for making clear what is beneficial and harmful, and

[26] ἕκαστοι ἐν τούτῳ συνημερεύοντες ὅ τι περ μάλιστ' ἀγαπῶσι τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ· συζῆν γὰρ βουλόμενοι μετὰ τῶν φίλων, ταῦτα ποιοῦσι καὶ τούτων κοινωνοῦσιν οἷς οἴονται συζῆν.

> therefore also what is just and unjust. For the human being is unique with repsect to the other animals in this regard, that they alone have perception of good and bad, just and unjust, and the rest. And it is community in these that makes a household and a city. (*Pol.* 1253a7-18)[27]

All political animals have a common good (*koinon agathon*) — for it is, as we have seen, of the definition of such a creature to have a common *ergon*, and the good of a creature consists in successfully performing its *ergon*. Human beings, since they are in general capable of "perception" of the good, can form an understanding of their common good. But this, by itself, is not what makes humans "more political than…every gregarious animal" (including that is, other politically gregarious animals like bees). Consider the second capacity Aristotle cites. Human beings also have *logos,* i.e., the capacity "for making clear (*dēloun*) what is beneficial and what is harmful, and, therefore, what is just and unjust." It is perhaps possible that *dēloun* here means clarifying *to oneself*, i.e., getting clear on, what is good and bad, just and unjust, and that *logos* simply refers to the psychological capacity for reasoning — and thus doesn't really add much to the claim that we have *aisthēsis* of the good. But that does not seem to be the most natural reading; Aristotle seems to be speaking of the social capacity to make the good and the just clear to, or with, others. *Logos* refers here not merely to the capacity to reason, but the capacity to engage in rational discussion.

This, I believe, suggests that what makes human beings "more political" than other creatures is that the good of human beings can be *koinon* in a further sense: They can share an *understanding* of their (shared) good, perhaps one arrived at by deliberating together. When Aristotle concludes that it is "community in these things" that makes a household or a *polis* — i.e., a distinctively human community — he should, I think, be taken to mean: a community in *aisthēsis* of what is good and just, rather than simply a community in goods. In fact, there are independent reasons to believe that Aristotle holds that human communities are (normally) held together not merely by their common good, but by their common conception of their common good. For example, the kind of bond that Aristotle identifies as "holding cities together" (1155a24) — the bond which goes by the names "political friendship" and "concord" (1167b2-3) — is precisely such agreement about the common good. It's true that Aristotle does not quite say here that

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[27] διότι δὲ πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ζῷον πάσης μελίττης καὶ παντὸς ἀγελαίου ζῴου μᾶλλον, δῆλον. οὐθὲν γάρ, ὡς φαμέν, μάτην ἡ φύσις ποιεῖ· λόγον δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζῴων· ἡ μὲν οὖν φωνὴ τοῦ λυπηροῦ καὶ ἡδέος ἐστὶ σημεῖον, διὸ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπάρχει ζῴοις (μέχρι γὰρ τούτου ἡ φύσις αὐτῶν ἐλήλυθε, τοῦ ἔχειν αἴσθησιν λυπηροῦ καὶ ἡδέος καὶ ταῦτα σημαίνειν ἀλλήλοις), ὁ δὲ λόγος ἐπὶ τῷ δηλοῦν ἐστι τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ βλαβερόν, ὥστε καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον· τοῦτο γὰρ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ζῷα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἴδιον, τὸ μόνον ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ καὶ δικαίου καὶ ἀδίκου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἴσθησιν ἔχειν· ἡ δὲ τούτων κοινωνία ποιεῖ οἰκίαν καὶ πόλιν.

"concord" and "political friendship" involve a shared conception of the good; he only says that they involve agreement about collective actions, about what is to be done by the *polis*. But that he is also committed to the former, stronger claim comes out clearly in his discussion of "democratic" and "oligarchic" constitutions in the *Politics*: Such regimes are held together by a shared *mis*conception of justice, based in turn on a shared misconception of the nature of the human good. This is, of course, not an ideal case, but, in a way, it better brings out the point that human communities are held together not so much by the common good, but by a common understanding of it.

Of course, Aristotle here has in mind the *polis*, but this is all the more true of friendship: in character-friendship, the friends develop and exhibit a shared conception of the good — not necessarily by engaging in explicit discussion about it (though they might do that, of course, if they are philosophically inclined), but precisely by engaging in shared activity. I believe, this is the key to understanding the final part of the argument of *NE* 9.9.

Thus, shared activity is a paradigmatic expression of our nature as political, or social, animals; and the shared activity of friendship — sharing a way of life, sharing those activities "in which one believes living well to consist" — is genuine friendship's paradigmatic expression. But the fact that friends wish to "share life" is not the bedrock of friendship; it is a fact which is explained by something more fundamental: Friends wish to share their lives, Aristotle suggests, because they desire "to have shared perception (*sunaisthanesthai*) of their friend's being."

Earlier, I argued that Aristotle is not merely saying that one must have perceptual awareness of the fact that one's friend exists (though, of course, one had better at least have that). But then what *does* Aristotle mean by speaking of *sunaisthēsis* of one's friend's being?

In the case of one's own existence, "being [is] choiceworthy on account of perceiving that one is good, such a perception being pleasant in itself." I argued in chapter 2 that this means that, for our life to be going well – for us to be flourishing, successful creatures of our kind – we must be aware of what we are doing *as* something good, and that means our activity must embody and express our conception of the good. The fact that such *aisthēsis* of our activity is pleasant is not the source or grounds of the goodness of our existence; rather, it indicates that we take our existence to be something good, that we take ourselves to be living lives worth living. Being rational creatures, one of our natural pleasures consists in the awareness of what we are doing as good. It is a pleasure we take, then, in the awareness of our individual activity.

What I want to suggest is that *sunaisthēsis*, correspondingly, is our pleasant shared awareness of our *shared* activity. It is the conscious or cognitive aspect of the shared activities of friendship. Following McCabe

("Self-Perception in *EE* 7.12") and Kosman ("Desirability of Friends"), I believe that Aristotle has in mind not each friend's individual perception of their shared activity, but *shared perception*: it is not merely the activity that is shared, but the awareness of it — the conscious or cognitive aspect of the activity. Such shared perception is both developed and exhibited in the activities that the friends choose to engage in together.

The meaning of sunaisthanesthai

What I want to suggest, in effect, is that, in using the word *sunaisthanesthai*, Aristotle is suggesting that "perceiving" (*aisthanesthai*) is something that friends can do *together* (*sun-*). It might be objected, however, that I (along with scholars like Kosman and McCabe) am reading far too much into this Greek verb, and I'd like to take a moment to consider what we can glean about the meaning of the word from other contexts or sources. *Sunaisthanesthai*, and the corresponding noun, *sunaisthēsis*, are not (as far as I have been able to determine) attested before Aristotle; thus, in determining the meaning of the former in our passage, we don't have much to go on besides the meanings of *aisthanesthai* and the *sun-* prefix, as well as other usages by Aristotle of these words.[28]

One thing we should be wary of, however, is reading back into Aristotle a usage which would only clearly emerge much later, a usage signifying the perceptions of a kind of inner sense, a faculty by which we perceive things within one's soul or mind. (The first instance of this usage listed in the LSJ is found in Philodemus.) Aristotle does, as we have seen, believe that, whenever one perceives, one perceives that he perceives; but (a) if my argument in chapters 2 and 3 was correct, this is not a special act of the mind, distinct from one's (first-order) perception; and (b) he does not generally use *sunaisthanesthai* to refer to this "second-order" perception; whenever he is explicitly discussing the fact that, when one perceives, one perceives that one perceives (in *DA* 3.2 and in the first part of our argument, as well as the corresponding argument in *EE* 7.12) he does not use *sunaisthanesthai* at all. Indeed, if he did use a distinct term for that second-order perception, then it would threaten to obscure one of the central points of DA 3.2: that perceiving that we perceive is not something else we do, with some other faculty, besides (first-order) perceiving.

The difficulty is that the first instance of *sunaisthanesthai* in our argument (1170b4-5) does seem to be most naturally read in this later sense.

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[28] If we look outside the ethical treatises, there is only one instance of either *sunaisthanesthai* or *sunaisthēsis* in Aristotle. It is found in the *History of Animals*: "Insects," Aristotle says, "both winged and wingless, *sunaisthanetai* at a distance, as bees and snipes, for instance, do with honey." (Τά τε γὰρ ἔντομα ὄντα πόρρω συναισθάνεται, καὶ τὰ πτερωτὰ καὶ τὰ ἄπτερα, οἷον αἱ μέλιτται καὶ οἱ κνῖπες τοῦ μέλιτος.) (*HA* 534b18-20) This is evidence, apparently, that they have a sense of smell. In this passage, *sunaisthanesthai* seems to mean something like "perceive simultaneously."

If it is to be read in this way, however, then it is unique in Aristotle's corpus. The fact that it is unique in Aristotle's corpus, and that it moreover is most naturally understood in keeping with post-Aristotelian usage, might suggest the possibility that it is a later interpolation. I don't want to press that possibility too far, as there is no other evidence for such a claim; but in any event, I think, its uniqueness means that we should not place too much weight on it. Still, I think we must grant that *sunaisthanesthai* does not *necessarily* refer to something people do together; and the first instance of *sunaisthanesthai* in the argument cannot refer to something friends do together (the friend has not yet been introduced into the argument). It seems that the *sun-* prefix could apply, as it were, either to the object of the prefixed verb or to its subject — that is, *sunaisthanesthai* can either signify one person perceiving two things at once (and "combining" them in perception), or it can signify more than one agent perceiving the same thing at once. The first instance of *sunaisthanesthai* in our argument is perhaps being used in the former way, a person perceiving something as good together with the fact that it is "present in oneself." (If so, it could be seen as a step along the path to the sense it would come later to have, to mean a kind of inner sense or faculty of apperception.)

What about the second instance, which is our real concern here? Aristotle says "It is necessary to *sunaisthanesthai* the friend's existing." (συναισθάνεσθαι ἄρα δεῖ καὶ τοῦ φίλου ὅτι ἔστιν, 1170b10-11.) The difficulty is that, grammatically, the sentence in question contains neither a plural subject nor a plural object: Irwin, in his translation, supplies a second object "…[together with one's own being]." My point for the moment is merely that that is an interpretive move, one which is not determined by the text.

However, there is not equipoise between the interpretive possibilities. If we consider the Eudemian version of our argument, it is quite clear that each of the three instances of *sunaisthēsis*/*sunaisthanesthai* refers to something that friends do together. For instance, he says that, τὸ συζῆν τὸ συναισθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ συγγνωρίζειν ἐστίν (EE 1244b24–26), "Living together is perceiving together (*sunaisthanesthai*) and knowing together." It seems strained to think that here Aristotle is speaking of one person perceiving "the being of his friend [together with his own being]"; the identity between *living together* and *perceiving together* strongly suggests that the togetherness applies to the subjects of the perception, not the objects. And note that in the NE version, Aristotle is again connecting living together with *sunaisthanesthai*: "Therefore it is necessary to share in perception of your friend's being, and this will come about by sharing in discussion and thought." (1170b10-12)[29] Because he doesn't here identify living together with

[29] συναισθάνεσθαι ἄρα δεῖ καὶ τοῦ φίλου ὅτι ἔστιν, τοῦτο δὲ γίνοιτ᾽ ἂν ἐν τῷ συζῆν καὶ κοινωνεῖν λόγων καὶ διανοίας.

sunaisthanesthai, it is possible to read the line as Irwin seems to, as asserting that living with your friend enables you to perceive your friend's being together with your own (since it keeps him more often in your line of sight?); but I think that the parallel with the Eudemian passage speaks strongly against this reading. Rather, I believe, Aristotle is talking about something the friends do together, namely engaging in shared perception; this "comes about" by living together because that's what living together as human beings (unlike cows) consists in.

What is shared perception?

The idea that perceiving is something people can do *together* may sound peculiar. But I believe that Aristotle is picking up on, and trying to make sense of, a basic phenomenological point: We seem to get pleasure out of what I've been calling "shared activity" with our friends — pleasure, I mean, that we would not get out of doing that same activity alone. (Think, for example, of philosophical conversation as opposed to philosophical rumination, or watching a movie with a friend as opposed to by oneself.) Some of the time (for some people, for some activities) no doubt, that is because we would be lonely or bored doing it on our own. Some of the time (for some people, for some activities) we simply could not perform the activity, or not as well or easily, on our own. But if that were all there to it, then friendship would be valuable as a way of avoiding certain experiences that we find unpleasant or would be valuable only instrumentally; it would not be worth choosing for its own sake. This is why Aristotle focuses on the self-sufficient person. He is perfectly capable of enjoying philosophizing or seeing and understanding a tragedy on his own. (This is the sense in which Whiting is right to suggest that he doesn't *need* any help.)

But on reflection, that does not seem to be all there is to it. We desire, and get pleasure out of, shared activity with friends even when we are perfectly capable doing the same activity on our own. What both McCabe and Kosman have argued is that at least part of the reason for this is that sharing an activity with a friend can enrich the experience of each: Doing something with a friend — whether it is philosophical conversation or watching a movie — deepens our experience; we are attuned to things we may not have otherwise seen. If that is right, then it makes sense to speak of "shared perception," for *my* experience is in a real sense *our* accomplishment (and so too is yours). I will sometimes use the phrase "shared experience," for one, because I think "experience" helpfully captures both objective dimension and the subjective or psychological dimension of the phenomenon in question — both the shared activity (what they *do* together) and the shared perception. On my view, these are best thought of as different aspects or dimensions of a single activity, rather than two different processes (cf. chapter 2).

That our experience is a shared achievement is perhaps especially obvious when we not only, say, watch the movie together, but also discuss it afterwards. I will argue, however, that even when the experience is shared in the thinner sense of simply undertaken together — without any accompanying or subsequent explicit effort to come to a shared understanding of the experience — the fact that it is shared with a friend enriches the experience. We may wonder if it is right to see this as *the* source of the value of friendship, as might seem to be suggested by Aristotle's claim that this is how the goodness of friendship will reveal itself "to those who consider the matter from a more natural [or scientific] perspective"; but it really does seem to be something we value about friendship.

Towards the very end of our argument, after concluding that one must *sunaisthanesthai* their friend, Aristotle says that "this [viz., *sunaisthēsis* of one's friend] would come about by living life together and sharing in discussion and thought" (1170b10-12).[30] Considering how "sharing in discussion and thought" could bring about "shared perception" can help us, I think, to understand what Aristotle might have in mind. One way in which this might happen is if, after some shared experience, friends try to make sense of it together — after the movie or the concert, say, we discuss it, what we loved about it, what we did not, and why. This often changes the texture of the remembered-experience; features of it become salient which otherwise we may have ignored or forgotten about altogether; sometimes we may even come to see that we enjoyed a movie that we otherwise would have been inclined to say that we disliked, because we come to see that there were depths to our experience of it that we otherwise would have not perceived, or because the conversation added (*ex post facto*) depth to our experience that it otherwise would have lacked.

It may sound paradoxical to think that one may have enjoyed something without realizing it at the time, because there was more to the experience than we realized or could have realized at the moment — as if the nature of an experience was not transparent to the subject; or that the experience itself could be changed by something done afterward — as if there were some kind of backwards causation at work. But it also seems to me, in this case, to be very possibly true: It may be that the circumstances surrounding an experience, including what happens later, are essential to the nature of some kinds of experience. If this is so, and if some of those experience-shaping circumstances include (in our case) conversations with friends, then we might say that, for creatures like us, some experiences are in a sense the achievement of the friends together, and not of each individually.

What makes this possible, I think, is that in trying to make sense of a shared experience by "sharing in discussion and thought," I am confronted

[30] συναισθάνεσθαι ἄρα δεῖ καὶ τοῦ φίλου ὅτι ἔστιν, τοῦτο δὲ γίνοιτ᾽ ἂν ἐν τῷ συζῆν καὶ κοινωνεῖν λόγων καὶ διανοίας.

with a distinct perspective on the experience — a perspective I take seriously and respect, and which I will seek to some extent therefore to inhabit. This means that, where we agree, my view will be reinforced (thus, Aristotle says that friendship among the virtuous makes them yet more virtuous, while among the vicious it makes them yet more vicious (*NE* 1172a8ff.)), but especially if my friend has her own reasons for agreement. As Aristotle stresses again and again, agreement among genuine friends is essential. At the most basic level, our agreement may only reach as far as the fact that what we are doing is really worth doing. (Why it must reach at least that far is a point that I return to below.) But it is where we (initially) *dis*agree, I think, that holds out the most promise for enriching our experience. When I see the film, I bring, of course, my own preoccupations and preconceptions, my own concerns and values; but when I discuss it with a friend, to a certain degree, I am given the opportunity to take on her perspective, i.e., what is brought into view by her capacities, her preoccupations, her concerns. I may thereby see features or complexities that I would not have otherwise seen. And, of course, in genuine friendship, this is mutual: *Her* experience will be similarly shaped by her coming to understand *my* perspective on that experience. In such a case, it seems to me apt to speak of our having a "shared perception" (*sunaisthēsis*) of what we are doing.

If we grant this, then I think we may be inclined to grant something further: that simply in sharing the experience, where we do *not* explicitly discuss it, the presence of a friend can shape the experience, and in a similar way. To stick with the movie-going case, when I watch with a close friend, it is hard to avoid also imagining the movie from *her* perspective, to the degree I am able. One might retort that, in that case, one does not *need* to share the experience with a friend; simply imagining her perspective will do. It's true that, if we don't reflect on our experience together, it must only be my understanding of my friend's perspective that is doing the work. But it is not merely the abstract idea of a distinct perspective. The abstract idea of a different perspective is not so much a distinct perspective, but an abstraction of my own perspective, stripping away (so far as I am able) the features that are merely accidental. This is a risky enterprise — for how am I to know when I am projecting my own idiosyncrasies onto the abstraction? In the shared activity of friendship, what enriches the experience is the idea of a concrete perspective different from my own, an idea that I have formed through long acquaintance and the work of mutual understanding.

Because of that, the "shared perception" that comes about by "sharing in discussion and thought" is, one might say, "prior" to the thinner kind of shared perception or shared experience. It is only because I have been confronted with your distinct perspective in the past that I have come to understand and take seriously that perspective, which may then inform my understanding, both of activities or experiences I share with you, and also those which I don't. That is, once we have become friends, "distance does not

destroy friendship," (1157b10-11) — nor even, in a sense, does death. For my experience may continue to be shaped by my understanding of my friend, a shaping that is only possible because of the foundation already laid by (actually, not imaginatively) "sharing in discussion and thought." But, in another sense, this aspect of the value of friendship cannot survive without the actual presence of my friend; without her there, I do not face the possibility of being corrected in my complacent projections. As time goes on, it will be less and less clear whether I have internalized a perspective different from my own, or whether I have domesticated that perspective, rendered it no longer distinct from my own after all. And so, "if the absence lasts long, it also seems to bring about the forgetting of friendship; thus, they say 'Lack of conversation has dissolved many friendships'." (*NE* 1157b11-13)

Other interpretations

It may be helpful, both in terms of clarifying and motivating the view I am trying to articulate, to highlight two features of it that set it apart from other interpretations of the passage. First, there is some question as to whether, in *NE* 9.9 (and the similar argument in *EE* 7.12), Aristotle is suggesting that perceiving a friend is valuable because, in some sense, one thereby perceives oneself. On this reading, friendship is valuable because through friendship one achieves self-consciousness, or a more sophisticated form of self-consciousness. For an early version of this view, one might consider Stewart's (1892) *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics,* where he claims that "This perception of self…would hardly be possible to man if his only objects of experience were his own sensations."[31] But, fortunately, once party to friendship, man is not confined to such "dim consciousness of a self"; "it is in the consciousness of the existence of another [specifically, of a friend] that a man becomes truly conscious of himself." (392) Cooper ("Friendship and the Good") rejects the argument thus interpreted — and with it, the argument of *NE* 9.9 in general — because "the priority of other-awareness to self-awareness" is, he tells us, implausible both in itself and as an interpretation of Aristotle; and, besides, even granting that priority, it is unclear why a *friend* in particular, rather than any casual acquaintance, should be required. Cooper thus suggests we set aside the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean* argument(s) altogether, preferring the *Magna Moralia*'s strategy of explaining the value of friendship by appeal to the way in which it enables self-*knowledge*.

Other readers, such as Kosman, see the argument of *NE* 9.9 as appealing to the way in which friendship makes possible a richer experience of the world independent of us, not of ourselves as subjects:

[31] In a strangely casual commitment to a sense-data theory.

> The community of consciousness [i.e., *sunaisthēsis*] allows friends not merely a more extensive subjectivity, as though the question of friendship might be solved by asking: What does a friend, considered as someone in my objective world, contribute to the subjective being that I desire? Through my friends, I acquire a wider, deeper, and more powerful range of objective conscious life. Think here of conversation (dialectic) as a paradigm of how such enrichment occurs. Conversation is not simply the additive co-presence of two independent trains of thought. In conversation there emerges between interlocutors a richer object of discourse; what they are talking about is enlarged and enriched by the synergy—the cooperative activity— of conversation, and the meaning of each moment of the discourse is correspondingly amplified. I mean more by virtue of what we together mean; for my correspondent's meaning is in a sense my meaning. In the same way, it is in general true that the enhancement of my being not simply as subject but as objectively determined consciousness is accomplished by the richer field of objective being made possible by political life, that is, by the life of friendship. (179)

Such an interpretation may look preferable because it seems more plausible in itself to see friendship as enriching my experience of an independent world, than as enriching my self-consciousness (unless by the latter we mean something that comes to the former, e.g., because we have a particular view of the "self" or of "consciousness"). In considering how someone I understand and respect experiences what I too experience, I might triangulate (so to speak) a fuller picture of how things really stand.

But, in fact, I think that the contrast between the two options (seeing the friend as enriching one's consciousness of the world vs. enriching one's self-consciousness) is perhaps somewhat overdrawn. We have already seen that when Aristotle speaks of "perceiving oneself," what that means is the awareness that accompanies all of one's activities; to enrich *that* is not to achieve a fuller inventory of your own mind, but to come to a better understanding of what one is up to, better practical knowledge of what one is doing. And, moreover, we have also seen that a crucial part of individual self-awareness is the awareness of what one is doing *as* good. But that suggests that, if one is able to enrich and thereby improve one's perceptual and cognitive experiences by sharing them with a friend, one might better realize the value of perceiving oneself (i.e., the activity that constitutes one's living) as good.

In the *Eudemian Ethics,* Aristotle says that one relevant difference between a human being and god — the reason that the comparison with god is apt to mislead us in this context — is that the object of god's thought is himself, whereas human beings have as the objects of thought other things. That is why humans, unlike god, need friends. Some readers have assumed that Aristotle means that the human being thinks about his friend as a way of thinking about himself, making him as godlike as possible. But that is not

quite what Aristotle says. Aristotle is pointing out that humans, unlike god, think about and engage with an objective world, a world independent of themselves; when Aristotle speaks of one's perception of one's own being as good, he is speaking of the way in which our activities – say, engaging perceptually with a beautiful piece of art or natural object – involve a ("peripheral," as he puts it in the *Metaphysics*) awareness of what we are doing as good. Thus, we are aware of ourselves by being aware of ourselves engaging with the wider world. Aristotle's point is not that by perceiving one's friend (or by perceiving one's friend perceiving oneself) one is better able to perceive oneself; but rather that by "shared perception" we come to be better able to perceive and understand our world; and that means that our activity will itself be better and more *kalon*, and our awareness of our activity more pleasant.

Let us turn to the question of *how* friendship makes possible this enriched conscious life. Kosman ("Desirability of Friends") tells us that friendship constitutes a kind of "we-subject," and it is to that "we-subject" to which we appropriately attribute "the activity of co-perception" — in the way that we might attribute a language to a certain people as a whole, not individually, or attribute the decision to go to war to an entire *polis*. This we-subject is more capable, cognitively speaking, than each friend individually, and so, in becoming parties to the friendship, the friends expand the range of their "objective conscious life." Thus, his view suggests that what gives friendship the value it has is that the friends come to constitute some greater whole. When Aristotle speaks of the friend as "another self," on this understanding, he means that friendship constitutes a broadening of oneself, bringing the other into the self's fold. (Kosman calls it "the self's capacity to enlarge itself", (182).) His good becomes, in some very literal way, one's own good.

Kosman, however, cautions that, when he speaks of friendship as a "we-subject" to which we should attribute co-perception, he does not mean that individual subjectivity is "to be replaced by a mysterious mode of collective awareness" (181) and in no way "does the individual subject disappear; whether in friendship, polity, or contemplation, the self is enhanced by incorporation, not diminished." The difficulty is that Kosman does not really tell us what it *does* mean, if not this. McCabe ("Self-Perception"), whose view is in this respect quite similar to Kosman's, is willing to frame the view in starker terms: In friendship, "the self is a composite entity, made up of the two of us, engaged in the joint enterprise of self-perception and self-knowledge." (73) Throughout her paper, she draws an analogy that I suspect (given what he says about "a mysterious mode of collective awareness") Kosman would be uncomfortable with: Friendship is like the relationship between lovers in Aristophanes's account of *eros* in the *Symposium* — a relationship whose very point is the dissolution of the individual in the corporate body.

I do not want my criticism of these views to be based in an over-literal interpretation of this notion of a collective subject, as if my worry were primarily ontological in character. Much of my unease about the status of such social composites is more ethical than metaphysical. The kind of ethical worry I have in mine is one we find expressed (if somewhat elliptically) by Aristotle himself in the *Eudemian Ethics*:

> The relations of soul to body, of a craftsman to his tool and of a master to his slave are all similar. There is no community between them, since there are not two things, but rather there is the one, while the other belongs to the one. Nor is the good separable for each of them, but the good of both is in fact the good of the one for whose sake the other exists. For the body is a natural tool, and a slave is like a separated part and tool of the master, and the tool is, as it were, a lifeless slave. (1241b17-24)[32]

Of course, this passage concerns the idea that the good of one community-member might be subservient to the good of another, and that is not immediately relevant to my concern here. But in rejecting that idea, Aristotle clearly implies that, in human communities — including friendships (this is in the midst of the *EE*'s discussion of friendship) — the good of each remains "separable"; and so neither is the good of each absorbed into the good of the whole (contrary, I believe, to certain readings of Aristotle's political philosophy). If it were otherwise, then each would be, as it were, slave to the community itself. (It would not dispel this worry to point out that the friendship or community was still in fact good for each. On Aristotle's view, that is true of "natural" slavery. So, the fact that each might benefit by having their good subsumed under the good of the community would not make them any less slaves.)

This very strongly suggests that, when he describes the genuine friend as "another self," Aristotle is not saying that the friendship constitutes a broadening of oneself, in which the two friends, and their goods, are absorbed into a collective subject, with its greater good. We should prefer a reading that does justice to this: the *otherness* of one's "other self" is central to the value of friendship — it is doing real ethical work. Aristotle does, certainly, emphasize the importance of agreement (*homonoia*) among friends; I do not want to downplay that fact, and I will presently try to offer an account of the nature of that agreement and how it provides the foundation for genuine friendship and thus for *sunaisthēsis*. But what is needed, for friendship to have the value it does, is an interplay between this

[32] ἐπεὶ δ' ὁμοίως ἔχει ψυχὴ πρὸς σῶμα καὶ τεχνίτης πρὸς ὄργανον καὶ δεσπότης πρὸς δοῦλον, τούτων μὲν οὐκ ἔστι κοινωνία. οὐ γὰρ δύ' ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ἕν, τὸ δὲ τοῦ ἑνός [οὐδέν]. οὐδὲ διαιρετὸν τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἑκατέρῳ, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀμφοτέρων τοῦ ἑνὸς οὗ ἕνεκα ἐστίν. τό τε γὰρ σῶμά ἐστιν ὄργανον σύμφυτον, καὶ τοῦ δεσπότου ὁ δοῦλος ὥσπερ μόριον καὶ ὄργανον ἀφαιρετόν, τὸ δ' ὄργανον ὥσπερ δοῦλος ἄψυχος.

underlying agreement and the continued independence of and thus potential disagreement between friends.

Won't an enemy do?

In this subsection and the next, I want to consider two worries that might be raised for the argument of *NE* 9.9, as I have suggested we understand it: first, that, on this reading, one would not have a need for friends in particular, but just for *some* kind of interaction with other people; second, that on this reading, friendship could have at best instrumental value.

Above, I noted in passing that one of Cooper's ("Friendship and the Good") criticisms of the justification of friendship by appeal to "the priority of other-awareness to self-awareness" was that it was unclear why "one needs *friends* for this purpose. Why wouldn't a casual acquaintance do just as well?" (340) My view, similarly, might seem at best to establish a rationale for some kind of social interaction, but not for friendship. Indeed, given the importance (in the interpretation I have offered) of the *independence* of each of the parties' perspectives, and the possibility that they might have different attitudes toward the object of their experience, perhaps someone who disagreed with you rather fundamentally would serve you better.

But consider what conditions are necessary for the social interaction we have been considering to involve *sunaisthēsis*. First of all, shared perception emerges out of shared activity, and in particular the sharing of activities you believe living well to consist in. If I do not share with someone a love of poetry — if all poetry sounded to me absurdly romantic or annoyingly obscure — then we are unlikely to pass our time reading it together; if for some reason we do, my dismissive perspective on it is unlikely to enrich his; for I will see little in it, both because I am unlikely to *try* to see much, and because, not having devoted the time to it (why would I have?), I am unlikely to have developed an ear for it. Thus, the argument presupposes that the parties to a relationship share a basic conception of what kinds of things are worth doing. (This is not to say that an *antecedent* commitment to the same conception of the human good is necessary for a friendship to develop: The friends may share an idea of what is worth doing because they have arrived at it together.) Only then can the relationship enrich each of their conceptions of what is worth doing. Second, for this shared perception to be possible, I need to have the kind of understanding of another person that, so Aristotle suggests, is borne only out of much time together (*EE* 1237b8-1238a3). Our first shared experience, one could say, couldn't be shared in the way suggested above. And the mutual understanding borne of long-shared experience, according to Aristotle, is characteristic of character friendship — friendship based on mutual respect for one another. Otherwise, the friendship is unlikely to survive long enough for us to develop such mutual understanding; and, even if by adventitious circumstance it did

survive, we would not likely have sufficient interest in one another to put in the necessary effort at such mutual understanding. Third, this kind of shared experience requires not only understanding, but also *respect* for one another's perspective. By this, I do not mean the kind of respect we might be said to owe to all people, but the respect we have for those we admire—we take their views seriously, because we think they are worth taking seriously. If I find myself disagreeing with a person I respect in this way, I will try to figure out what I am missing, instead of simply dismissing her as dim or delusional.

So, before I can have *sunaisthēsis* with someone in the way suggested above — thus, before our shared activity can have the kind of value that *sunaisthēsis* can bring — we must share a conception of the good, have developed mutual understanding, and, on the basis of that understanding, mutual respect. But these just are three of the most important and definitive features of genuine friendship, according to Aristotle.

Does this instrumentalize friendship?

I want in this section to develop and (hopefully) respond to a natural worry that the argument I'm suggesting is at work in *NE* 9.9 would instrumentalize friendship. Aristotle tells us, in concluding his argument, that having friends is therefore choiceworthy and good in itself, and that's why the happy person needs friends. But it is natural to balk at this: Have we really seen why friendship is valuable *in itself*? It can seem that the argument, thus interpreted, shows at best that friendship is merely instrumentally valuable. Friendship might appear as only a means to the end of an enriched, more objectively adequate and therefore better form of perception. Though an understandable reaction, I will argue that, at the very least, this conclusion is not forced upon us by Aristotle's account of friendship.

Let us begin with one thing that is clear: On Aristotle's view, we would *not* value friendship if we were not limited in various ways, dependent both on others and the wider world. If we were a radically different kind of creature, without such limitations as we have and thus perfectly self-sufficient, we would have no need for friends. God's nature, for instance, is such that he has no need for friends (*EE* 1245b15) for "he himself just *is* his own good condition," while, for us, being in a "good condition depends on something else" (*EE* 1245b18-19). As we saw in laying out the *aporia,* in the *Lysis*, Socrates concludes from the fact that an unlimited creature would have no desire for friendship (and that, therefore, we humans desire friendship only insofar as we have needs) that we do not value friendship for its own sake. But why should anything follow about *us* from the fact that a radically, almost unimaginably different being would have no desire for friendship? Even Socrates becomes uneasy about his thought-experiment. After considering the possibility of desire in a world where nothing could be bad or painful for us, Socrates second-guesses the whole line of reasoning:

"Or is it ridiculous to ask what will then be and what will not? Who knows?" (221a) The world of our experience, the world in which it makes sense to us to value anything at all, is a world shaped by our limitations, our needs, the fact that we are subject to forces outside our control.

Aristotle, too, warns (in his cool, matter-of-fact way) that the comparison with god is apt to mislead: "[The opposing argument's] claim is that since god is not such as to need a friend, someone like god [i.e., a blessedly happy person] does not either. Yet by this argument, the good man will not even think." (*EE* 1245b14-26) Aristotle's point is that human thought is always of an independent reality, and thus partially dependent on that reality; god's activity, however, is thought thinking itself. This means that if we were to accept as legitimate an argument of the form:

(1) God's activity does not depend on anything else.
(2) The good, happy person is god-like.
(3) Therefore, the happy person's activity cannot depend on anything else.

…then we would have to conclude that human happiness does not even involve thought. For the happy human being is still, of course, human, and human thought does (constitutively) depend on the mind-independent world. We can see that something has gone wrong – for now it looks like, in order to be most like god, who only engages in pure thought, we have to give up thought. The problem, clearly, lies in the move from (1) and (2) to (3). And, thus, the fact that god is such as not to need friends does not mean that even the most god-like human being does not need friends. If my interpretation is on the right track, then she needs friends *in order to be god-like* (i.e., god-like in the way that human beings are capable of being god-like).

More generally, though it might be tempting to think that whenever we desire something because of some lack or limitation we must only value it instrumentally, this is not so; nothing follows about the way *we* do or should value friendship from the fact that a perfectly self-sufficient being would not value it at all.

One might still suspect that Aristotle has only identified an instrumental value of friendship, and not explained its intrinsic value. I have said, after all, that the reason we value and enjoy "sharing in the perception of [our] friend's being" is that it enriches our experience, both of the world and of ourselves acting within it. It may seem that what I really want is an "enriched" experience; I achieve that by sharing it with a friend.

Before trying to address this worry, it is worth pausing for a moment to consider a dilemma that is faced by any effort to explain something's intrinsic value, because I think the difficulty of our present position has much to do with that more general dilemma. The most obvious way of accounting for the value of something is by relating it to some other, recognized value;

but one then always runs the risk of instrumentalizing it, making it appear choiceworthy not for its own sake, but for the sake of that other value. If, on the other hand, one's explanation does not appeal to something valuable to which the good in question contributes, then there will always be a question of whether one has explained the *value* of the thing at all.

Aristotle opts, on the interpretation I have presented, for the first horn: he accounts for the intrinsic value of friendship by relating it to the value of enriched perception—that is, a form of perception that involves increased sensitivity to the complexities of the objective world. It thus makes possible a fuller realization of our nature as rational animals (creatures capable of perception and thought, as he tells us at the beginning of the argument); and so, ultimately, we could say that he explains the value of friendship by appeal to the value of realizing human nature. Is this strategy doomed in principle?

It would be doomed if it were an attempt to answer an analogue of the "immoralist challenge"—that is, to convince someone, who did not already care about friendship, that they ought to start caring about it so as to more fully realize their rational nature. (The misanthropist challenge?) The central reasons that it cannot are that: (1) It is simply not true that friendship is in principle necessary for achieving genuine rationality—it is only so for creatures of a certain kind, and it is not clear that the misanthrope would accept that he *is* a creature of that kind. And, more importantly, (2) one could not achieve the good of enriched perception *via* friendship without caring about one's friends for their own sake. As we saw in the last section, for friendship to involve shared perception of the kind under discussion, one must already have the kind of deep knowledge of the friend's character, as well as love and respect for her, that is borne of long acquaintance. It does not seem that this attitude would come about by trying to force yourself to care for someone so as to achieve, at some point down the line, the good of shared perception.

But we need not see Aristotle as setting out to convince the contemplative sociopath to start making friends. Not all answers to the question of why something is valuable need to be such as to rationally compel someone who did not already value that thing to start doing so. We should instead look at Aristotle's argument in *NE* 9.9 as an attempt to explain the relationship between two values we are already committed to, by arguing that the value of friendship, far from being in conflict with that of rational self-sufficiency, in fact constitutes or enables the realization of our rational nature. It is directed at *us*, who already have friends and value them deeply, but who also value the pursuit of rational self-sufficiency, and who may thus experience a nagging suspicion that our commitment to the latter should undermine our commitment to the former. Aristotle is telling us: Far from it.

Still, why does this not mean that friendship is merely instrumentally valuable, as a way of bringing about this higher realization of our rational

nature? It seems that the value of friendship, on my account, does depend upon its bringing about an increased capacity for perceiving and experiencing the world. One thought would be to suggest that the kind of shared perception of friendship just *is* the realization of a more fully developed perceptual capacity, and to suggest that the relationship between friendship and the realization of our rational nature is not instrumental but *constitutive*.

Originally, this had seemed to me the right Aristotelian response to the worry about instrumentalizing friendship, as it is (I think) with explaining the relationship between virtuous action and *eudaimonia*. But, upon reflection, this does not seem like a plausible idea. It does not because the enriched perception, while it is a *shared achievement* of the friends, is still one's own perception (as long as we resist the Kosman/McCabe style appeal to the idea that the friends constitute a kind of super-organism or we-subject, which is the proper subject of the shared perception), and thus it must be something distinct from the friendship. Thus, it doesn't seem plausible to say that the friendship (even if we think friendship is constituted above all by shared activity) just *is* a (partial) realization of our rational nature, i.e., our capacity for perception and thought. If friendship's value is explained in terms of bringing about the value of an enriched form of perception, then it is after all being explained in terms of bringing about something *else*. In this, the case is not analogous to the relationship between virtuous action and *eudaimonia*.

Still, there does seem to be another potential response – or, perhaps it is better thought of as a way of dissolving the worry, rather than a response to it. It is very tempting to assume that, when the value of something depends upon the fact that it is directed toward bringing about something else of value, then its value must be instrumental. But this is not so. Consider the example of engaging in scientific inquiry. It is, of its nature, directed toward achieving something—say, understanding or knowledge of the natural world. However, it also is, in itself, satisfying to be working towards such understanding. It seems to me a mistake to think that the value of such can be divided into whatever intrinsic value the work has, plus the instrumental value of its helping to bring about understanding. For it may not have the intrinsic value it has if it weren't the effort *to* achieve understanding. Something similar might be said about the value of a fulfilling livelihood. There may well be intrinsic value in employing one's skill as a carpenter (say) *in order to* earn a living. If one wins the lottery, one could take up woodworking as a hobby; but, only slightly paradoxically, one might well feel like one had lost something (something, perhaps, about one's *identity* as a carpenter).

So, too, even if this account of the value of friendship does imply that its value depends upon its being directed towards something else (enriched conscious experience), this does mean that its value is instrumental. This is

so even if we accept, as Aristotle does, that it would be better to be a being (like god) who did not need friendship in order to achieve this richer form of awareness. (That is true of scientific inquiry as well. God does not need to *inquire* into anything; he is able to simply contemplate.) But this is simply a claim about which beings are better than which, not about what is better *for us*. Aristotle would not accept that it would be better for us to be able to achieve this level of contemplation without friends; if we were able to do that, we would no longer be "us" at all. (Cf. *NE* 1159a6ff.)

What *would* show us that some valuable activity is merely instrumentally valuable? If we have a case of something, *x*, whose value depends upon its being directed toward achieving something else, *y*, and we would clearly prefer to have *y* without needing to go by way of *x,* in that case, certainly, the value of *x* is instrumental. To continue our analogy with scientific inquiry, its value is not merely instrumental because it does not satisfy this condition—not so much because we would rather have the work of inquiry plus the satisfaction of understanding, as because we do not know what it would *be* for us to know the workings of the natural world without that knowledge being the achievement of inquiry. So, too, with the relationship between friendship and the deeper, richer understanding of ourselves and the world in which we act that shared perception makes possible. We are creatures for whom a rich field of objective experience depends upon the shared, inter-subjective life of genuine friendship.

Concluding thoughts

I confess that I am somewhat skeptical about the project of giving an account of *the* reason that friendship is in of itself necessary for a happy or flourishing life, if that is indeed what Aristotle means to do in presenting his "more naturalistic" account of why friendship is good by nature. I expect that friendship, like perhaps anything that is of central importance for human beings, involves a complex and confused nest of values, some of them no doubt in tension with one another. But, if what I have said in this paper is on the right track, then I think that Aristotle has given us a compelling explanation of one aspect of the value of friendship, an account that illuminates what is upon reflection a pervasive feature of our social lives: Very many of the things we take pleasure in and find worth doing, we take yet more pleasure in it and find it yet more worthwhile in doing it with friends. (This phenomenon comes out poignantly in its negative aspect: those times when a good experience is darkened somewhat by the thought of how much better it would be if shared with a friend or lover.) It is an account of friendship's value which grounds it in one of the most significant aspects of what it is to be a human being: that our actions and lives are not automatic or merely instinctual, but undertaken on the basis of, or as an expression of, a conception of what it means to be a human being, to live well — a conception of what, in the final analysis, is worth doing. But, at the same

time, it is also an account which does not over-intellectualize this fact; on this telling, we need not (for example) form a conception of the good and then seek out friends on that basis; rather, we work out, or render determinate, that conception through shared life. This is true of social life generally for Aristotle — of the family and of the political community — and not just of friendship. But it is true in a distinctive way of genuine friendship.

However, in closing I want to suggest one way in which other Aristotelian commitments — commitments which are to some extent at play in the argument which has been our main concern — obscure the value that Aristotle has identified, commitments which prevent him from fully articulating that value. Those commitments are part of what we might call the "perfectionist bias" of Aristotle's thought. That bias, at it plays out here, is very roughly this: That there *is* (at least conceivably) such a thing as a finally *eudaimōn* human being, one who has fully achieved virtue and the (human) form of self-sufficiency that goes along with it; and if something is of ultimate value for human beings, it must appear as valuable to such a person. It is true that Aristotle means for his argument to show us something about why *all* of us value friendship for its own sake, and not only why the *makarios* person would; for it is meant to show us why we desire to share our lives with friends, *whatever* we believe living well as a human being to consist in. But he believes that he can only show that we desire it ultimately (for its own sake, as a constitutively necessary aspect of living well) by showing that we would desire it even once we were a blessedly happy and perfectly good person. In this respect, Aristotle does sympathize with the Socratic strategy of argument in the *Lysis*, though he disagrees in insisting that we must after all still have a good *human being* in view.

I think that, about this, Aristotle is mistaken. The idea of a person who has achieved *aretē,* human excellence, once and for all, who has settled into a complete understanding of the human good, is both wrong and deeply misleading. Unless we have settled into complacency or quiet desperation — and *that* surely is no life for a human being — we are always in a continuous process of self-making, of reconceiving ourselves and what we are doing in the world. Nor does it seem to me fruitful to insist that we are, or ought to be, honing in on the one true conception of what it is to live well — not because there is no truth and falsity in this domain, but because there may be incommensurably different ways of living, none of which has a unique claim on being *the* way of living well for human beings. Aristotle is sometimes claimed to be an ethical pluralist, in the sense that he believes that there are various human values, not all of which can be reduced to some common measure (pleasure, utility, or the like). Even if he is a pluralist in this sense, however, he appears nonetheless committed to the idea that there is a single right way of combining all of these values into a single human life, a way that any rational person should want to attain to the degree they are able.

Of course, I do not pretend to have done anything to motivate these anti-Aristotelian suggestions. I bring them up, however, because I want to bring out the way in which these two commitments — to the idea that there is such a thing as a completely excellent, *eudaimōn* human being, and to the idea that anything which is valuable "in itself" and "by nature" must be valuable for such a human being — shape what Aristotle can say about the value of friendship: It means that for Aristotle, the ultimate value of friendship must be based on, or at least basically respect, fundamental "concord" (*homonoia*) between friends. Since friendship must be shown to be valuable even once the friends have arrived at *aretē* and a correct understanding of the human good, and since there is but the one correct understanding, he can only accommodate or allow the possibility of relatively superficial disagreement. (We can see this at work when Aristotle suggests, in the *Eudemian Ethics*, that the value of friendship cannot depend on the possibility of the friends learning from one another, since "it is not possible for friends who are self-sufficient either to teach or learn. For if one is learning, one is not in the proper condition, and if one is teaching [him], then one's friend is not in the proper condition — and [genuine] friendship entails being in the same condition." (1245a16-18)) But this hobbles the very value he has identified in friendship, the value of *sunaisthēsis*. The way in which friends can reshape and deepen one another's experience of the world is more powerful the degree to which friends may always elude or outstrip one another's understanding. If I think I have my friend all figured out, the friendship is likely to become stale, uninteresting. (The same might be said of one's relationship to oneself.) As Alexander Nehamas has argued in his book, *On Friendship,* a genuine friend remains always to be discovered — not because there are hidden depths, but because there is more to be fashioned. The real value of friendship emerges from the fact that the fashioning is done in concert among friends.

To put it somewhat differently, and in terms of a more familiar criticism of Aristotle on friendship, the *personality* of the friends (personality as something distinctive and as something always in the making) must, necessarily, drop out of the picture, at least so far as the basic value of friendship is concerned. Personality may be, at best — as Aristotle once says of pleasure — "like seasoning on food." But it is easy to feel that that could not be enough; it must be the substance of the thing.

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