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The content of happiness: a new case for *theôria*

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§1 Introduction

The broad outline of Aristotle's conception of happiness in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is more or less clear and familiar. The main tenets are

(1) The highest good is the end for the sake of which everything else is chosen (I.2.1094a18-22).

(2) The highest human good is happiness (I.7.1097a34; b22).

(3) Happiness is the principle and cause of goods (I.12.1102a2-4).

(4) The human good is the activity of the rational soul in accordance with excellence in a complete life (I.7.1098a16-18).

My goal is to determine what happiness as excellent rational activity is. The two candidates for this activity are virtuous action (*praxis*) and philosophical reflection (*theôria*). I shall argue that Aristotle's conception of happiness is intellectualist, claiming that the activity of happiness *sans phrase* is reflection.[1] Support for intellectualism is usually drawn from Book X, chapters 7-8, sometimes in connection with I.7.[2] I shall provide a new argument for intellectualism by focussing on *EN* I.12 (where (3) is asserted), a chapter less noticed by interpreters.

[1] Cooper 1975, 40 defines intellectualism as the thesis that human flourishing consists exclusively in pure intellectual activity of the best kind, i.e. *theôria*. Although this definition is not ideal (*phronêsis* is an intellectual virtue too), I shall follow Cooper's use due to the lack of alternatives.
[2] See in particular Cooper 1999.

Aristotle claims that excellent rational activity in a complete life is happiness (2; 4). I will use 'excellent rational activity' to cover both *praxis* and *theôria*, while 'virtuous action' shall refer only to *praxis*. Accordingly, 'virtue' refers to the state whose activation is virtuous action, whereas 'excellence' may refer to virtue, or to intellectual accomplishment. Since (4) is Aristotle's answer to the question 'what is happiness?', we need to have a preliminary look at the roles of happiness as specified in (3) to assess each of Aristotle's candidates.[3]

First, the scope of (1) and (3) is implicitly restricted by the context. Since he advances these claims in an ethical treatise, Aristotle should not be taken to mean that happiness is the cause of *all* goods (e.g. gods and stars, cf. VI.7.1141a34-b2), but only of those which stand in the relevant relation to human happiness.

Second, we should leave open, for now, in what way happiness is 'the principle and cause of goods'. Happiness might either be the cause of their existence, or the cause of their being good.[4] Just as exercise causes health, so happiness might cause goods, or, alternatively, just as being in love renders everything one encounters beautiful, so happiness might render everything good.

Third, Aristotle speaks in (3) of '*the* principle and cause of goods', not of '*a* principle...' (*tên archên kai ton aition tôn agathôn*). This, together with the fact that he mentions no other principle and cause of goods in the *EN*, strongly suggests that happiness alone is the principle and cause of goods, whatever happiness turns out to be. We are, thus, looking for a conception of happiness such that goods for human beings exist or have the status of goods solely due to happiness.

[3] I shall come back to these roles towards the end of my argument.
[4] See *Phys*. II.3.194b32-35 for the first sense, and *EE* I.8.1217b1-15 for the second. Thanks to Tim Clarke for asking me to clarify this.

§2 'Happiness' is used in more than one way

Part of the problem in ascertaining the content of happiness is that 'happiness' is used in more than one way, as we can see in this passage:

Pretty well most people are agreed what to call it [sc. the topmost achievable good]: both ordinary people and people of quality say 'happiness', and suppose that living well (eu zên) and doing well (eu prattein) are the same thing as being happy (eudaimonein). But they are in dispute about what happiness (eudaimonia) actually is, and ordinary people do not give the same answer as intellectuals. The first group identifies it with one of the obvious things that anyone would recognize, like pleasure or wealth or honour, while some pick some other thing and others another (often, too, the same person picks a different thing: when he's ill, it's health, and if he is poor, it's wealth)... (I.4.1095a17-25).[5]

On the one hand *eudaimonia* seems to be the substantive of *eudaimônein*: Aristotle first says that everyone agrees that the highest good (*akrotaton tôn praktôn agathôn*) is *eudaimonia*, adding that people think that doing well and living well are identified with being happy (*eudaimônein*). This is surely meant to illustrate that people agree about *eudaimonia*, which would identify well-living (*euzôia*) or well-doing (*eupraxia*) with happiness (cf. I.8.1098b21; VI.2.1139b3-4).[6] Thus, *eudaimonia* seems to be the

[5] Translations of longer passages are taken from Rowe (Broadie & Rowe 2002); translations of shorter passages follow Rowe unless stated otherwise.

[6] Although Aristotle does regard living well and doing well as essentially the same answer here, it is not clear whether he means to identify them strictly. In particular, if Aristotle is an intellectualist, then there is a sense in which *eu prattein* is not happiness, as *theôria* is not a doing of any sort (as I shall argue in §5). This view seems to be specific to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as Aristotle counts *theôrein* as a doing in *Politics* VII.1.

substantive of *eudaimônein*, an activity: doing well or living well are identified with being happy.[7]

On the other hand, people identify happiness with pleasure, wealth or honour: not all of these are an activity, and none is a form of living well. Assuming that people are not committing a category mistake in putting forward their candidates for happiness, there seem to be two different notions of happiness, one narrow, one broad: money is an appropriate determinate realisation only of the broader notion that is not confined to activities, but encompasses also qualities and substances.[8]

We can formulate the difference between the two uses of 'happiness' more precisely by attending to Aristotle's reported usage. The many apparently think that 'doing well', i.e. being happy, is 'getting what one wants'.[9] If so, it is only a small step to identifying happiness also with the things one wants. Aristotle records that people call 'happiness' the things they want because they assume to be happy through them (cf. *hupolambanein*, I.5.1095b16; I.7.1097b5; I.8.1098b31-33). We can thus distinguish between 'happiness-1' which is the condition of being happy, an activity, and 'happiness-2', a substance, doing/suffering, or quality: through the successful pursuit of happiness-2, one may assume that one will be happy, i.e. to achieve happiness-1.

This distinction between the two uses of *eudaimonia* has two consequences. First, the thought that I will be happy through money, say, requires the assumption that the presence of happiness-2 in a life is that which makes the crucial difference between

[7] See Heinaman 2007, 221-2 for overwhelming evidence that happiness is an activity.
[8] The word *eudaimonia* does not, by itself, restrict candidates to any one category. In fact, *eudaimonia* was often used to designate wealth e.g. in Herodotus 5.28 ll.4-5; 7.220 ll.9-10.
[9] Price 2011, 39.

living and living well.[10] If so, the pursuit of the relevant candidate must be successful, or else it would not be properly integrated in the life and could not render it happy.

Second, if this is what happiness-2 does, we can explain how pleasure, honour etc are pursued for the sake of *eudaimonia*, and for their own sakes (cf. I.7.1097b2-5).[11] I pursue whatever I think will make me happy for this purpose: that it will make me happy. But since happiness-1 is pursued for its own sake, and my being happy *consists in* having either money, pleasure, or honour, each of them will also be pursued for their own sake, not only for the sake of some other goal. So there is a difference in perspective on the candidate: taken in isolation, the candidate is for the sake of happiness, but taken as integrated in a life, when I "have" it, it constitutes happiness, and is thus pursued (and preserved) for its own sake.

How does Aristotle use '*eudaimonia*' when he suggests that excellent rational activity is *eudaimonia*? Although he does not explicitly distinguish between the two senses of *eudaimonia*, we have good reasons for thinking that the crucial role of excellent rational activity is to make a person or a life happy.[12] Taking up the question from I.4.1095a19-

[10] Aristotle acknowledges the importance of goods of fortune (e.g. I.9.1100a4-9), but insists that while a human life needs them, key for *eudaimonia* are excellent rational activities—his candidate for happiness-2 (I.10.1100b7-11).

[11] I do not think that these lines support inclusivism, according to which Aristotle recommends that we should pursue all of these goods as constitutive parts of happiness. Rather, he is here referring back to the positions outlined in I.5 whose proponents assume (*hupolambanein*, the same word is used at I.5.1095b16 and I.7.1097b5) that they will be happy through pleasure, honour, or intelligence respectively, thus suggesting not that one individual pursues all of them, but that for each good, there are proponents who pursue it because they assume it makes them happy. That these goods are pursued individually (and not as a set) is expressed by *hekaston* in I.7.1097b4. The addition of 'all virtues' refers to the amended position of the political life, as their goal properly understood is not honour, but virtue (1095b30-31).

[12] Both 'being happy' (*eudaimôn einai*), and 'counting as happy' (*makarizein, eudaimonizein*) apply to both persons and their lives. There are many places in which Aristotle speaks of a 'happy life', as well as of a 'happy person'. The connection seems to be that since one cannot be happy only for an instant, but must be so over a certain

22 of what *eudaimonia* consists in, Aristotle connects, in I.5, a certain kind of life with the highest good, or *eudaimonia*: those who think that pleasure is *eudaimonia* desire a life of consumption (1095b14-17). More sophisticated people posit honour as the highest good which will, if pursued successfully, result in a political life (a22-23). These two examples make clear that *eudaimonia* here has to be understood as that whose successful pursuit makes a life happy because it results in a certain way of living. (Both pleasure and honour were mentioned in I.4 as candidates for *eudaimonia*.) Now Aristotle pits a third life against the political and the hedonist's life, namely the theoretical life (1095b19). If these lives can compete against each other, we should assume that they are assessed within the same general framework, in particular their conception of happiness. Thus, Aristotle assumes that the central activity of the theoretical life, reflection (*theôria*), plays the same role as pleasure or honour: it is that which makes life happy.

Two examples from less dialectical contexts confirm that Aristotle is mostly concerned with happiness-2. First, in I.7 Aristotle argues that *eudaimonia* is most complete or most final (*teleiotaton*, I.7.1097a30), and then moves on to the next criterion, self-sufficiency (*autarkeia* I.7.1097b7), arguing that it shows the same result.[13] Self-sufficiency is 'what on its own makes the life choice-worthy and lacking in nothing'. Since 'we think that *eudaimonia* is such [sc. self-sufficient]' (b14-16), this criterion helps Aristotle to establish that *eudaimonia* is the highest good. Thus Aristotle must assume that any plausible candidate for the highest good plays the role of

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amount of time to count as happy, the happy person will, automatically, live a happy life (cf. (4); I.8; I.9.1100a5-9). Conversely, if a life is happy, so will be the person leading the life.

[13] Scholars are particularly divided over the question whether the criterion of self-sufficiency implies an inclusivist understanding of happiness or not. See Cooper 2004, 284-9 for pertinent discussion of *autarkeia* as semi-independent criterion for happiness.

rendering the life choice-worthy and lacking in nothing, which is part of what it takes to make a life happy. That the highest good plays *this* role is evident from Aristotle's interaction with Plato's *Philebus*. Aristotle not only takes the criteria of completeness and self-sufficiency from the *Philebus* (20b-23b), but also the role of the good sought, which, in the *Philebus*, is explicated as 'that state or disposition of the soul which provides a happy life for all human beings' (11d4-6).[14] Both Plato and Aristotle use these criteria to test whether a given candidate for the highest good can fulfil *that* role. Thus, both philosophers share the assumption that the highest good is that which is responsible for a life's being happy—and Aristotle calls this happiness.[15]

The second example shows that happiness-2 must be *in* a life to render it happy. On several occasions, Aristotle goes out of his way to show that the happy life is a pleasant one. On his conception of *eudaimonia* as excellent rational activity this claim comes out true because excellent activity is also pleasant in itself (I.8.1099b21-24; X.7.1177a23-24), or because it is somehow a pleasure (VII.13.1153b12-13). Either way it is clear that *eudaimonia* can make a life pleasant only if it is *in* the life. From this obvious point, it is only a small step to accepting that a life can likewise be happy only through the presence of *eudaimonia* in it: just as the presence of *eudaimonia* renders a life pleasant, so its presence renders a life happy.[16] Accordingly, Aristotle rules out that children are justifiably called 'happy', because they do not (yet) engage in the relevant activity (I.9.1100a1-4). This shows that neither aiming successfully at a mistaken candidate for happiness will result in a happy life, nor aiming unsuccessfully at whatever one thinks is

[14] For two excellent studies discussing the relationship between Plato's and Aristotle's use of the criteria, see Lear 2004, 47-71 and Cooper 2004.
[15] For a similar view, distinguishing between the happy life and what makes it happy, see Broadie 1991, 26–7 and nn. 14-15, and Cooper 2004, 289-90.
[16] See Bush 2008, 56-9 with an approving discussion of Cooper 1999 and passages supporting the view that the happy-making activity must be *in* the happy life.

happiness. A memorable example for the latter is Jude Fawley: although his life is for the sake of academic study, he fails to be happy (on his and Aristotle's conception), partly because he cannot realise his conception of happiness in his life.

To sum up, in this section I have shown that '*eudaimonia*' is used in two ways. On the one hand it is identified with being happy, which, in turn, is agreed to be doing well or living well. On the other hand, happiness is that whose successful pursuit makes a life happy by being present in it. Aristotle does not distinguish between these two uses because his own candidate, excellent rational activity, works for both uses: the entity that is successfully pursued is identical with that in which living well consists. Distinguishing between the two uses is nevertheless helpful because it highlights two different functions of *eudaimonia*: on the one hand it is the condition in which everyone wants to be, and on the other it is that whose presence transforms one's life into a happy one. Aristotle's project in the *EN* is to find out what fulfils especially the second function of happiness. This is how his predecessors and his rivals understand happiness; this is how we should understand Aristotle.

§3 EN I.12 on happiness

Having argued that the role of excellent rational activity in (4) is to make a complete life happy, I shall now turn to determining whether this activity is reflection or virtuous activity. The first step is to put the context in which Aristotle asserts (3) on the map. The second step is to argue (in §4) that happiness in I.12 is characterised such that it rules out virtuous action, and finally (in §5) to show that it is tailored to fit reflection perfectly.

Chapter I.12 is the last of a series of arguments (beginning in I.8), that seek to support Aristotle's conception of happiness (as outlined in I.7) by showing that it chimes well with what is said about happiness. While Aristotle considers such mundane questions as 'How does one get happiness?', 'Can a person's life be called "happy" while he is alive?', and 'What is the connection between having good fortune and happiness?', he also indicates that happiness is 'most divine' because 'the prize and fulfilment of virtue appears to be best, and to be something divine and blessed' (I.9.1099b16-18; JA). Aristotle returns to the connection between happiness and the divine when he seeks to confirm that happiness is among the best things by arguing that happiness does not belong to the praiseworthy things (*epaineta*) but rather to the honourable things (*timia,* I.12.1101b10-12).

For the purpose of Aristotle's argument, the distinction between things honoured and things praised has to be exclusive: the drift of the argument is that praiseworthy things are not among the best, whereas honourable ones are, and happiness is best because it is honourable, but not praiseworthy. Aristotle establishes the first point through an analysis of what it is to be praised or praiseworthy (*epaineton*, b13): 'everything praised appears to be praised for being of a certain quality, or for being disposed in a certain way towards something' (b13-14), namely 'something good and decent' (b18). Thus, to praise something is to relate it to some other and better good, implying that the good praised is praiseworthy because of its usefulness in relation to this other good.[17] Two sets of examples from common use support Aristotle's analysis:

a) The virtues and the virtuous person are prime examples of things praised: 'we praise the just man, the courageous man, and in general the good man, and virtue

[17] What is good in the category of relation is 'useful' (*to chrêsimon*, I.6.1096a26).

because of his actions (*dia tas praxeis*), i.e. because of what he does...' (b14-16). These examples show that those praised are of a certain quality, namely just or courageous or simply good, and that they are disposed towards something good.[18] Thus having the virtues renders its possessor praiseworthy, precisely because something good will come from having these qualities, 'since virtue makes people disposed to fine actions' (b31-32).[19] As the examples show, Aristotle has in mind those virtues whose activation is action. Thus, there is empirical support for Aristotle's analysis because people's laudatory behaviour confirms it.

b) That the analysis of praise is, at core, conceptual, is shown by a second set of examples. The gist is that even when people are making mistakes in their praises, they cannot but relate what is praised to some better good: '[praises of the gods] appear laughable if they are offered by reference to our case, and this actually occurs, because of the fact that we have mentioned, that praise is always with reference to something' (b18-21). This argument not only confirms Aristotle's analysis, it also indicates that some things, such as the gods, are beyond praise: gods are not good in relation to anything but themselves. In particular they do not do anything good for us (cf. X.8.1178b7-18) and are thus not praiseworthy, even if they are, at times, praised.

The analysis and examples show that the best things cannot be praised, as they do not stand in relation to some other good: the best goods are not useful for the attainment of other goods, but are good merely in virtue of what they are. Therefore,

[18] Aristotle does not mean to suggest that only things belonging to the categories of quality or relation are properly praised, as he says that a person (belonging to the category of substance) is praised because she *has* a certain quality or stands in a relation to something good. The same might apply to actions: good ones, suitably related to some other good, may be praised.
[19] At 1101b31-2 Aristotle is not merely reporting Eudoxus' theory: he has to endorse the point since he relies on it in his argument.

praising them is inappropriate, for 'of the best there is no praise, but something greater and better' (1101b22-3; JA), a result reflected in proper laudatory behaviour towards the best living things and goods: 'we call gods and the most godlike men "blessed" and "happy". Similarly in the case of good things: for no one praises happiness as one does justice, but ranks it blessed, as being something more godlike and superior' (b23-7). Thus, although people occasionally get it wrong about the gods, they never get it wrong about happiness: they seem to grasp that things that are both good and divine are better than things that are merely good, and that happiness is divine (*theion ti*, 1102a4)—which is easy, given that the Greek word for happiness (*eudaimonia*) literally means something like 'having a good god', or 'being favoured by a god'.

The analysis of praise, moreover, ties in with a further characteristic of happiness, namely that it is among the things that are final, perfect, or complete (all are viable translations of *teleiôn*, 1102a1): something that is praiseworthy and useful does not have the characteristic of being *teleios*, whereas something that is honourable owes its goodness to no other good, and can therefore count as *teleios*. Aristotle closes by emphasising the importance of being honourable and being divine as characteristics of happiness, as the additional argument at 1102a2-4 shows: it is by reference to happiness that other things count as good, not vice versa, so that happiness can function as the principle and cause of goods because it is something honourable and divine.

§4 Happiness is not virtuous action

I shall now argue that the characterisation of happiness in I.12 rules out virtuous action as the activity of happiness. The argument is very simple: i) Aristotle draws an exclusive distinction between praiseworthy and honourable things, and ii) counts virtue

among things praiseworthy (1101b14-16; b31-2), where iii) virtue includes the virtuous person and her actions (b15-16). Since iv) happiness is honourable (1102a1), it follows that v) virtuous action is not happiness.

This argument, I think, makes a compelling case against non-intellectualism. I shall defend the argument by focusing on the most contentious premise, iii). Non-intellectualists will try to resist the claim that Aristotle here takes virtue, the virtuous person, and virtuous action together. Since the significance of I.12 has apparently escaped many interpreters, there are not many strategies on offer that would separate virtue from virtuous action in regard of their praiseworthiness and honourableness.[20] I shall, therefore, make the best case I can on behalf of non-intellectualism—only to argue that all attempts to separate virtue from virtuous action here are futile.

The easiest way of driving a wedge between virtue and virtuous activity is to highlight those passages in which Aristotle himself does so in Book I. In I.8 he stresses the importance of defining happiness not as a good state, but as its activity, 'for it is possible for the disposition to be present and yet to produce nothing good, as for example in the case of the person who is asleep, or in some other way rendered inactive' (1098b31-1099a2). This passage spells out an argument from I.5 where Aristotle resists the view that virtue could be the good since it is less final, complete, or perfect (*atelesteros* 1095b32) than activity. There is something amiss if the virtues remain unused through one's being asleep and inactive throughout one's life; this is not what they are for, nor is this what we think happiness is. Thus, since Aristotle in I.5 and I.8 explicitly says that happiness is an activity, not merely the state exercised, one could

[20] (Stewart 1892, 151-56) is one of the few who notice that I.12 presents a problem for the non-intellectualist. I will discuss his proposal in n. 36.

argue that he makes the same point all over in I.12, albeit cast in terms of praise and honour: only an activity can be happiness, but not a dispositional state.

This distinction, however, does not help non-intellectualists. First, it is implausible as an interpretation of I.12: Aristotle maintains that we praise the good man and his virtue because of his actions and deeds (*dia tas praxeis kai ta erga,* 1101b15-16) which indicates that good states without activation would not be praiseworthy. So, when we praise a just person, we thereby also refer to her just actions, as we praise the possessor of justice on their account. The passage, thus, links praise so closely to doing that even praising the virtue of justice thereby automatically evokes the actions.[21]

Now, the non-intellectualist might try to turn this around: something is praiseworthy only if it is related to some good better than itself. Action is better than the state, and hence it is only to be expected that we must invoke the action in praising the underlying state. To assess this riposte, we must examine premise iii): if virtuous action also turns out to be merely praiseworthy, we should read Aristotle as grouping virtue and virtuous action together—which confirms the argument. If, however, virtuous action has the characteristics of what is honourable, premise iii) is undermined, and virtuous action remains a candidate for the activity of happiness.

The decisive question is whether virtuous action itself is related to some other good on account of which virtuous action is to be praised. It is natural to start with the passage invoked by the non-intellectualist where Aristotle in fact indicates that virtuous action is concerned with the *production* of some good, as the fault of merely having unused virtue is that no good comes from it (I.8.1099a1-2). Virtuous action remedies this fault because the active person 'will necessarily be acting and will be acting well'

[21] I thank Sarah Broadie for this suggestion.

(I.8.1099a3). This could mean either a) that acting well, i.e. the activation of virtue, is all the good that comes from virtue, a good that we miss if we do not use our virtue, or b) that some *further* good will be attained through the action, since virtuous action is for the sake of bringing about a good state of affairs. Interpretation a) undermines premise iii) of the argument above, whereas interpretation b) supports it. Which one is right?

I shall argue that it is in the nature of virtuous action to be beneficial, as it is essential that the virtuous agent aims at bringing about a good state of affairs through his action. This is clear for the virtue of open-handedness: 'it belongs more to virtue to bestow benefits (*to eu poiein*) than receiving them (*to eu paschein*) and doing fine things (*ta kala prattein*) than not doing shameful ones' (IV.1.1120a11-13). The context makes clear that doing fine things and bestowing benefits belong together: by giving appropriately, the open-handed person does both (a13-14). That the open-handed person does not only produce the good consisting in the activation of the virtue of liberality, but that she usually also benefits someone else, explains why she is perhaps loved most of all virtuous agents: since they produce some good that lasts longer than the action, they are useful, and 'their usefulness lies in their giving' (IV.1.1120a22-3). So, at least the activation of open-handedness is useful, and therefore merits praise (cf. a16).

This schema can be generalised for most if not all virtues: particular virtuous actions aim at bringing about a particular good other than the activation of their respective virtues. An action is genuinely virtuous only if the goal is something fine, where bringing about the fine seems to be linked to the beneficial: doing good and doing well

(*to eu poiein* and *eu prattein*) go hand in hand.[22] For example, the goal of a just action is to bring about a just and proportionate distribution; the goal of courage to establish peace and political freedom (cf. X.7.1177b4-12).[23] It is, thus, clear that not only open-handed action tends to be beneficial, but most if not all instances of virtuous action are.[24] Thus, when Aristotle says in I.12 that we praise the good person or virtue on account of their action (*dia tas praxeis*, 1101b15), he does not mean that the mere action is the good to which a virtue has to be referred to merit praise, but that the action consists in benefiting the beneficiary, so that necessarily some good comes about. This, in fact, is suggested by coupling 'actions' with 'deeds' (*erga*, b16) which suggests that the actions achieve what they aim at.

The non-intellectualist might accept most of this, but resist the last move by introducing a further distinction: *aiming* at some external good may be essential to virtue, but *achieving* the good is not. When external factors prevent the good result from coming about in a way that does not place any fault on the agent, the person's action is no less virtuous. Why should I not be able to fight courageously if my side loses the war? Moreover, Aristotle distinguishes between production (*poiêsis*) and action (*praxis*) in VI.5 as follows: 'the end of production is something distinct from the productive process, whereas that of action will not be; here, doing well (*eupraxia*) serves as end.' (1140b6-7). Since action is here contrasted with the production of some good, the non-intellectualist might argue, achieving the good at which it aims cannot be part of

[22] Cf. IV.3.1124b9; VIII.13.1162b36; IX.9.1169b11-12. Note that this is not a sufficient condition for virtuous action, as II.4.1105b30-34 attests.
[23] See Lear 2004, 151-3 for further discussion of courage and war. The goals of virtue are explored in more detail by Whiting 2002, 278-80: my argument up to the interim conclusion is indebted to hers.
[24] At any rate, Aristotle nowhere argues that virtuous actions might differ in this respect. Paradigmatic virtuous actions, as I show towards the end of this section, certainly do conform to this schema.

virtuous action. Thus, attaining the goal might be praise-worthy, but virtuous action *per se* is not, as achieving the goal is not essential to it.

It is hard to determine Aristotle's position, as he does not explicitly discuss the distinction between virtuous action as aiming-at-an-external-result and as aiming-at-an-external-result-and-attaining-it. Thus, it remains disputed whether virtuous action is honourable or not. To avoid a stalemate, let us accept for the sake of the argument that attaining the good at which it aims is not essential to virtuous action: virtuous action is merely acting well, i.e. the flawless exercise of virtue.[25] To break the tie, let us turn to the other two characteristics of happiness in I.12. I shall argue that virtuous action as merely flawless exercise is neither complete nor perfect (1102a1), nor best (1101b21-27).

Whether something counts as complete or perfect or final (*teleios*) in I.12 depends on whether it is honourable or not: a thing that helps to promote something else is neither honourable nor *teleios* because the other thing functions as its goal or good (*telos*). Accordingly, if a particular virtuous action essentially aims at the promotion of good G, then G is the *telos* of this particular action in that it determines when the action is over, and provides a normative framework for success and failure of the activity: the *telos* establishes what acting well in a particular case consists in.[26] So, if we decouple flawless virtuous action from attaining the goal, then virtuous action on its own turns out to be less of a *telos* than happiness is said to be in I.12.

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[25] Note that in attributing this position to Aristotle, non-intellectualists attribute a Stoic position to Aristotle (cf. Cicero, *De Finibus* III.22 in Long, & Sedley 1987, 64F). Alexander of Aphrodisias, distinguishing kinds of knowledge that, when flawlessly used, guarantee achieving the goal from those that do not, seems to place virtue in the latter category (Ophuijsen 2001, 33, 24-34, 5).

[26] For a very helpful reminder of the Aristotelian conception of a *telos* see (Lear 2004, 11-15).

Considering the connection between virtuous action and pleasure reinforces this result. In Book X, Aristotle contends that pleasure completes or perfects an activity as a superadded end (1174b31-3). While it is not very easy to pin down exactly what Aristotle means, it is clear that an action that is enjoyed is more complete or perfect than one that is not. Virtuous action, Aristotle argues, is inherently pleasant. That is, enjoying a virtuous action is not anything additional to the performance, but an essential part of it (I.8.1099a13-21). Thus, a virtuous action that is not enjoyed lacks something essential.[27]

Aristotle takes up this issue in the context of courage where it is especially pressing to clarify in what sense e.g. fighting in battle is pleasant. He contrasts mere with pleasant virtuous activity, where the contrast is explained by reference to attaining the goal: courageous fighting *is* pleasant 'to the extent that pleasant activity touches on the end (*telos*) itself' (III.9.1117b15-16). This is important, because Aristotle's comparison between virtuous agents and boxers shows that the end of courageous action, the fine, is not exhausted by the flawless exercise of one's capacities, but rather rests in something additional and lasting that is attained through one's action (honour in the case of the boxers, 1117b1-4). So, unless courageous action reaches its goal, it is not enjoyed, and hence lacks something.

Since Aristotle says not only of courage that its end is the fine, but pretty much of all practical virtues, it is reasonable to assume that the structure of courage is similar to that of other virtues: they are enjoyed when the goal, their particular version of the fine, is reached. Thus virtuous action as the flawless exercise of a virtuous state is insufficient

[27] I discuss the connection between pleasure and virtuous activity elsewhere in greater detail.

to capture that virtuous activity is fully complete or perfect, as it does not guarantee that the agent's enjoyment would perfect or complete the activity.

The connection between virtuous action and pleasure also illuminates why the mere flawless exercise of virtue is not among the best things. According to I.12 happiness belongs to things that are best. For one thing, happiness is best because it cannot be improved, where the improvement is not extrinsic, e.g. through counting happiness together with any random good, but, *per impossibile*, intrinsic improvement (I.7.1097b16-20; X.2.1172a28-35). So, the best things in I.12 would have to be the best versions of themselves.

But the mere flawless exercise of virtue is not necessarily the best version of virtuous action. For Aristotle agrees with Eudoxus that adding pleasure to virtuous actions makes them more choice-worthy and better (X.2.1172b23-5). Since pleasure is inherent to virtuous activity, it is not as if some good is simply counted together with pleasure. Rather, on condition that the goal is attained, the pleasure that comes with the virtuous action is an integral part of it. Thus, the conclusion is the same as in the case of completion/perfection: if virtuous action is decoupled from attaining its goal, virtuous action would not be a candidate for happiness in I.12 because it does not count among the best things.

To draw an interim conclusion: the question whether virtuous action can satisfy the criteria for happiness in I.12 depends on the relationship between virtuous action and the good at which it essentially aims. There are two options: A) if we integrate attaining the good in virtuous action, then virtuous action turns out to be beneficial: it is good because it is in its nature to bring about some good. But if it is beneficial, virtuous action is praiseworthy, but not honourable, and hence no longer a candidate for happiness. B)

if we decouple virtuous action from attaining the goal at which it aims, virtuous action does not directly violate the requirements for being honourable. Still, it does not satisfy the other criteria for happiness in I.12, namely belonging to what is perfect/complete, and to what is best—which is after all what the question whether happiness is honourable or praiseworthy is supposed to establish. So, either way, virtuous action is ruled out as candidate for happiness by I.12.

In the remainder of this section, I shall argue in favour of interpretation A), in order to justify the argument given at the beginning of this section: Aristotle groups virtue and virtuous action together because both are praiseworthy. Support comes from Aristotle's discussion of the voluntary in III.1: 'Since, then, virtue is concerned with affections and actions, and on the voluntary ones praise and blame are bestowed, but on those that are involuntary pardon, and sometimes even pity, to delimit the voluntary and the involuntary is presumably necessary for those who are studying virtue…' (1109b30-4; JA).

Aristotle highlights in this passage that he sees the enquiry into the voluntary as a natural extension of the study of virtue: virtue is concerned particularly with action, and praise is accorded only on account of voluntary action.[28] He thus indicates that the proper response to a certain class of actions is praise, and that understanding the conditions for praise and blame helps to understand virtue better. The general point is

[28] The Greek at lines b30-1 is a little obscure, since it is not clear whether praise is bestowed on the actions (as translated by Ross in Barnes 1991, Irwin 1999, and Crisp 2000) or whether the person is praised on account of the action (Rowe in Broadie & Rowe 2002). I do not think the point matters for my argument: it is enough to show that action, and in particular virtuous action, elicits praise rather than meriting the appellation 'honourable'.

that only voluntary actions stemming from a certain disposition deserve praise.[29] This drives home the argument that where the question of praise is concerned, virtue and virtuous action belong together.[30] Since praise and honour are treated as mutually exclusive, virtuous action is not honourable.

This conclusion is confirmed by passages from Book X. In pitting virtuous action against reflection, Aristotle argues that not all virtuous activity produces some good apart from itself, but that all virtuous *actions* do: '... from practical projects we get something, whether more or less, besides the doing of them' (X.7.1177b2-4).[31] Aristotle explains a little later that it is because the agent aims at some end in virtuous action that, usually, he produces some good besides.[32] This structure is epitomised by war-like and political actions in accordance with virtue: they are the best and most typical of virtuous actions and they characteristically 'aim at some end rather than being desirable because of themselves' (b18).[33]

The context of the passage just quoted offers an explanation for the perhaps unexpected claim that virtuous action is *not* desirable for itself. The question is which of the excellent activities (virtuous action or reflection) is pursued in leisure time. Aristotle highlights that virtuous action is only undertaken in situations that *require*

[29] Aristotle does perhaps not say explicitly in the *EN* that actions themselves are praised, rather than being the ground for praise, but he does so in the *EE* at VIII.3.1248b18-24.
[30] See also Aristotle's account of mixed actions at III.1.1110a19-22.
[31] At III.3.1112b32-3 Aristotle says that actions (*praxeis*) are for the sake of other things, distinguishing between the action and its end for his immediate purpose of analysing deliberation. In other contexts, Aristotle seems to conceive of action as the whole package, attaining-the-end-by-means-of-Φ-ing.
[32] For further discussion, see Nightingale 2004, 212-13.
[33] See also X.8.1178a32 where Aristotle indicates that virtuous action is supposed to achieve something over and above itself: the courageous person needs power 'if he is to achieve anything (*apotelei ti*) in accordance with his excellence.'

action: there is something that compels the virtuous person to act.[34] Aristotle's point, I take it, is that if one could choose, the agent would wish to be in a situation that does not require virtuous action. Instead of bringing about the fine through his virtuous action, it would be better to live in an environment that does not make such actions necessary.

This assessment is reflected in Aristotle's picture of the divine life, a very important picture, given that the gods are paradigmatically happy. Gods do not miss out on anything by not performing virtuous actions: such actions are simply not required of them, and it would be ridiculous to think that they would ever wish to be in a situation that enables them to perform virtuous actions (X.8.1178b10-18). In this sense virtuous action is not chosen for its own sake. It is chosen to set things right, i.e. to produce certain effects,[35] and thus for some goal other than merely its exercise.[36]

The upshot of this discussion is that the distinction between virtuous action that achieves its goal and virtuous action separated from its goal does not help the non-intellectualist to argue her case: if we, *pace* Aristotle, separate the goal from the action, then virtuous action will not have the features required to count as happiness according to I.12. If we take virtuous action and its goal together, as does Aristotle, then virtuous action would come out as praise-worthy because it is useful insofar as it brings about some good other than itself. So, there would be no difference between virtuous action

[34] Remember, that the virtuous person discerns correctly when to act and deliberates correctly what to do, and that the action is an unconditional response to the situation in which the agent finds himself.

[35] Aristotle seems to think that if something is beneficial (as is virtuous action), then it cannot be honourable or choice-worthy simply because of itself: there is an exclusive distinction between the praise-worthy and the honourable.

[36] This helps to understand why even a whole life of virtuous action will not be good enough to be called 'complete' and 'divine'. A life of virtuous action will not be divine, since virtuous action is absent from the gods' lives. So, Stewart's proposal that a life spent in the systematic performance of all good acts should be honourable and complete/perfect (1892, 155) can hardly work, since the activity that would confer these qualities onto the life is neither honourable nor complete.

and virtue insofar as praise is concerned. Virtue and virtuous action do not reach the mark for happiness set in I.12.

§5 Happiness as *theôria*

I turn now to the positive argument that reflection satisfies the criteria for happiness in I.12. In focusing on what is honourable, Aristotle continues a theme begun in the discussion of the steadfastness of excellence in I.10, where he also distinguishes between more and less honourable excellent activities.[37] His conception of happiness can account for the acknowledged stability of happiness because there is something special about activity stemming from excellent states, 'for they seem to be more firm-rooted (*monimôterai*) than the various kinds of knowledge we possess.' (1100b14). This is relevant because, in expanding on this point, Aristotle highlights that among excellent activities, some are even more firm-rooted than others, and these are the most honourable ones: 'the most honourable of these very ones are more firm-rooted because of the fact that those who are blessed spend their life (*katazên*) in them more than anything (*malista*), and most continuously…' (b15-16, JA).[38]

While Aristotle's explanation for the claim that the most honourable activities are the most firm-rooted might seem to make out the activities of ethical virtue as the most honourable ones, this way of taking the passage would be at odds with Aristotle's account of what is honourable. Fortunately, this reading not mandatory: an

[37] Aristotle's examples indicate that *aretê* here refers to excellence in general, not merely to practical virtue.
[38] Taking 'of these same ones' (*toutôn d'autôn,* b15) to refer to the subject of the previous clause, i.e. activities in accordance with excellence, is preferable to Rowe's reading (Broadie & Rowe 2002) where the reference is to kinds of knowledge: Aristotle does not need to show that some kinds of knowledge are more firm-rooted than others, but wants to highlight that there is something special about certain excellent activities.

intellectualist can make good sense of this passage, arguing that, here as elsewhere, the most honourable activity is reflection.

In I.12 Aristotle distinguishes between the godlike and the merely good man: the godlike man is said to be happy (1101b23-5), whereas the good person is merely praised (b14-16). Aristotle later rejects the commonplace explanation that 'men become gods through an excess of [ethical] virtue' (VII.1.1145a23), since he does not share the common assumption about the nature of gods: 'everything about practical doings, if one looks through all the kinds, will obviously turn out to be petty and unworthy of gods' (X.8.1178b17-18). So, the godlike man shares salient features with the gods that the merely good person does not share, where this is not (an excess of) ethical virtue, but something more honourable (VII.1.1145a25-7).

That the activity of reflection is the common ground between the godlike person and the gods is clear from the way human beings can engage in it: in the discussion of pleasure in X.4 Aristotle contends that continuous activity is impossible in relation to everything human (X.4.1175a3-5) which highlights that this inability is linked specifically to the human realm. In particular, this is true of actions in accordance with *human* virtue, for 'being continuously active is not easy by oneself' (IX.9.1170a5-6), but is easier with friends. Aristotle takes up the point that virtuous action, or action of any kind, is not what we can do most continuously in X.7 where he states unambiguously that 'reflective activity (*theôrein*) is the most continuous, since we can engage in it more continuously than we can do anything (*prattein hotioun*)' (X.7.1177a21-2, JA).[39] Since, then, *theôria* is the most continuous activity, this is what the blessed and godlike person does characteristically.

[39] Note that Aristotle does not conceive of reflection as some kind of doing, or even producing (1178b20-1).

Aristotle may well indicate that we can engage in reflection most continuously because it involves the body least of all, and is thus least tiring.[40] In addition, I think, Aristotle provides a conceptual point to distinguish reflection from practical projects. We cannot engage continuously in a practical undertaking because each of these is essentially goal-directed, where the goal, as we have seen in the case of virtuous action, lies beyond the mere exercise of the activity. Thus, performing virtuous actions is a non-continuous activity because on attaining its goal, each virtuous action ends.[41]

Reflection is unlike performing virtuous actions in that it does not aim at an end apart from the actualisation of the excellent state (X.7.1177b20): there is nothing inherent to the activity that would require an interruption, as the activity has its goal within itself, and there is no further goal at which it aims. Precisely because reflection has the goal or *telos* within itself, it can be engaged in more continuously than virtuous action. Thus, this is another way of approaching the characteristic of happiness that it is complete/perfect (*teleios*). Activities that do not admit of continuous engagement are not *teleios*, whereas those that are continuous are also *teleios*. Thus, reflection satisfies the demand on happiness (from I.12) that it is complete/perfect.

Aristotle uses the point that happiness is *teleios* to establish that reflection (but not virtuous action) is honourable and divine. The argument rests on the assumption that the gods are paradigmatically happy. *Their* happiness, Aristotle argues, does not consist

[40] Most interpreters take this to be Aristotle's point. So e.g. Broadie in Broadie & Rowe 2002, 442.

[41] Could we say on behalf of the non-intellectualist that attaining the individual goals does not end the activity of living virtuously? (Thanks to Lesley Brown for suggesting this.) If 'living virtuously' means that the person performs, frequently, virtuous actions, then this meta-activity will still be praise-worthy insofar as it is a life that results in many good things apart from the actions and thus would still not qualify as happiness. If it means leading the life of a *phronimos* conceived of as an intellectual virtue (I.13.1103a4-8), then even the gods might have *phronêsis*. However, this possibility need not be considered further since *phronêsis* is not separable from action.

in virtuous action, or indeed any acting or producing (*prattein; poein,* X.8.1178b7-18). Therefore, a god's happiness must consist in reflection (b20-2), a feature which carries over to the human case: 'so then the activity of a god, superior as it is in blessedness, will be one of reflection; and so too the human activity that has the greatest affinity (*sungenestatê*) to this one will be most productive of happiness (*eudaimonikôtatê*)' (b21-3).

But why does it carry over? Aristotle's reason for calling the human activity in question 'divine' is not merely that there is a certain similarity between the human and the divine activity of reflection (X.8.1178b27), but that they are *sungenestatos*, i.e. most nearly akin, belonging to the same family.[42] The kinship consists in their respective sources, as both human and divine reflection are activities of intelligence (*nous*), the most divine element in us (X.7.1177a16; b28-31), 'surpassing everything else in power and honourableness' (1178a1-2). The resemblance is accordingly not superficial, but due to the same divine faculty. If, as suggested in Book VI, this divine faculty is activated in relation to the most honourable objects (VI.6.1141a19-20) and most divine objects (a34-b1), the resulting activity will itself be most honourable and most divine.[43]

The claim that reflection is most honourable, moreover, helps Aristotle to demonstrate that happiness can in fact play the role written for it in I.12. Happiness, remember, was said to be honourable and complete/perfect also because it is by

[42] (Liddell et al 1996, s.v. II).

[43] In VI.6, Aristotle deals with the excellence of *nous*, theoretical accomplishment (*sophia*); the activation of *sophia* is reflection (cf. X.7.1177a23-7 and context). Note that Aristotle extols *sophia* over wisdom (*phronêsis*) by highlighting that *sophia* is not of human affairs, but about things of a far more divine nature (VI.6.1141a34-b1) which, in turn, determines their usefulness: 'This is why people call Anaxagoras and Thales and people of that sort *sophos*, but not *phronimos* when they see them lacking a grasp of what is to their own advantage; and they say that people like that are … even superhuman (*daimonion*)—but useless because what they inquire into are not the goods that are human' (VI.7.1141b3-8).

reference to happiness that other things are good. Aristotle returns to this point in X.8, placing reflection at the top of the value hierarchy by highlighting that it, too, is honourable. But he adds a further important qualification: 'happiness extends as far as reflection does, and to those who have more (*mallon huparchei*) of reflection, more happiness belongs too, not incidentally, but in virtue of the reflection, for this in itself is honourable. So then happiness will be a kind of reflection.' (1178b28-32).

Having reflection is a matter of degree because, unlike the god's life, ours cannot be taken up exclusively by reflection: a) human beings cannot be active continuously, and b) not all human activity can consist in reflection, as we need to eat, dress, and interact with other people (cf. 1178b5-6). Since a life is happy in virtue of the activity of reflection, it follows that those who have more of reflection are happier than those who have less.[44] Accordingly, paradigmatically happy people will spend their lives more than anything (*malista*) in theoretical activities (I.10.1100b2b15-16, cf. X.4.1175a12-15).

To conclude: in I.12 Aristotle distinguishes between the good man and the godlike man; only the latter is said to be happy. Aristotle does not say, in I.12, that the happy man successfully engages in a life of reflection. Nevertheless, he contrives a mark for the highest good that only a life of reflection will hit. Reflection is complete, as it is not for the sake of some further goal, but has its goal within itself; it is honourable and divine insofar as it is the activity of our most honourable and divine element, thus giving us access to the most honourable objects of thought. Since virtuous action has none of

[44] According to an alternative interpretation, *dê* ('therefore') in 1178b29 refers to the claim that other animals do not partake in happiness because they do not engage in *theôria* (b27-8). Hence, Aristotle would use the comparative in 'to those who have more of reflection, more happiness (*eudaimonein*) belongs too, not incidentally, but in virtue of the reflection' (b29-31) to express the thought that no animals partake in contemplation, whereas all human beings do. This seems less plausible to me.

these characteristics, the characteristics of happiness identified in I.12 rule out the life of merely practical virtue as a happy life.

§6 An argument for intellectualism?

I shall now discuss a challenge to my argument. Is my argument not an argument for intellectualism after all, if intellectualism is defined as the thesis that the key activity to *human* happiness is reflection? For one might argue that reflection is not central to *human* happiness. We can see this if we distinguish between 'the peculiar or characteristic human good and the highest good that humans can obtain.' (Bush 2008, 61-62)). The thought is that the highest human good is human happiness, consisting in a life of virtuous action, whereas the highest achievable good is a life of reflection, where reflection is a good that human beings can attain, even if it is not a human good.[45]

Motivation for this distinction might be found in the function argument where Aristotle assumes that there is a characteristic human function (I.7.1097b24-5; b32-3) which will tell us about the human good, as the good is found in the function (b26). This function, however, is 'peculiar to human beings' (*idion*, b34) which seems to imply that it is not shared with other species. Bush highlights that Aristotle apparently takes this function to be the life and use of practical wisdom (2008, 63; cf. 1098a3–5). For reflection should not be the human function, as this is an activity shared with the gods, and one does not contemplate insofar as one is human, but insofar as one has a divine element (X.7.1177b27-8). So, the philosopher's life will be not human, but 'superhuman' (Bush 2008, 65). Consequently, the *human* good would seem to be virtuous action, which is clearly distinguished from reflection, something divine.

[45] Bush notes that Joachim 1955, 287-8 has a similar view.

According to Bush, then, Aristotle's primary focus is to determine the human good; in X.7-8 he offers a supplement to that inquiry because 'Aristotle would be remiss if he failed to inform his audience that in addition to the human good, humans can obtain, at least to some degree, a higher good' (Bush 2008, 66 n. 24). In this supplement 'Aristotle is not offering an account of happiness to compete with that introduced in 1.7; rather, he is employing some of the same criteria used to identify the highest human good in 1.7 to identify the divine good, and also informing us that the divine good is attainable by humans.' (Bush 2008, 67). So, since there are effectively two non-competing conceptions of happiness, there would be no conflict between Books I and X of the *EN*, if human happiness were identified with virtuous action throughout the work.

I agree with many of Bush's well-made points, but will resist his conclusion. First, we should remind ourselves that Aristotle does not merely mention the divine life for the sake of knowledge: every turn in the argument of the *EN* has practical relevance, as emphasised by Aristotle in I.2.1095a4-6 and elsewhere. Why, then, do human beings need to know about "divine" happiness? The answer is that it is a political message. Aristotle frames the *EN* specifically as a political enquiry (cf. I.2.1094b11 and X.9) that is addressed not only at philosophers, but also at prospective statesmen. Why tell them about philosophy and divine happiness if they clearly are about to lead a practical sort of life? Surely not to convert them or to inform them of what they are missing.

The most plausible answer is that future statesmen need to know about reflection as the highest achievable good so that they can arrange the state in such a way as to make it possible for at least some of the citizens to engage in philosophical reflection for

reflection's sake.[46] But this tells against Bush's interpretation: Aristotle argues in X.7-8 that reflection is higher and better than virtuous action so that the highest goal at which politics aims would be reflection, not virtuous action. Since the good at which politics aims is said to be the human good (I.2.1094b6-7) reflection would turn out to be the human good.[47]

Aristotle, then, does not distinguish as strictly between human and divine happiness as Bush suggests. Aristotle stands in a tradition of thought that sees a close connection between happiness and the divine. This is especially clear from chapter I.9 where Aristotle considers the prevalent question, whether happiness 'comes by some sort of divine dispensation' (1099b10). This question arises because happiness is the most plausible candidate for a gift by the gods (b11-12). Although Aristotle disagrees, maintaining that happiness rather 'comes through excellence and some process of learning and training' (b15-16), he nevertheless thinks 'it is one of the most divine god-like things, for the prize and fulfilment of excellence appears to be best, and to be something divine and blessed' (I.9.1099b16-18; JA). Thus, happiness as divine prize for excellence mirrors the conclusion of I.12. There is, thus, hardly a contrast between human and divine happiness: Aristotle emphasises in I.9 that his position as outlined in

[46] Aristotle takes this up in the *Politics* where he makes very clear that a proper education needs to educate the young in leisure activities (VIII.3.1338a30-7). Since unleisured activities are for the sake of leisured activities and politics is per definition unleisured, it is clear that political activity is not the final goal for citizens (VII.4.1333a35-6; a41-b5; 1334a9-10). Cf. Nightingale 2004, 244.

[47] Focus on the political dimension of the *EN* goes some way towards explaining why Aristotle spends most of the *EN* on practical virtues: doing philosophy requires leisure (X.7.1177b16-24), and this, or so he implies, is found only in a politically stable and well-functioning community which not only provides the necessities of life (cf. X.8.1178b33-5), but also education (X.9). Having virtuous citizens is the best way of running a political community, and thus the first priority if one is to achieve something even better that requires, in turn, a stable community. That the politician provides the framework for reflective activity also helps to explain why a politician does something more divine than a private good person (I.2.1094b7-10).

the function argument can accommodate the common view that happiness should be something divine.[48]

Next, Bush's interpretation of the function argument should be resisted. Although Aristotle stresses the similarities between human and divine reflection, there remain salient differences: while we have a divine element in us in virtue of which we can engage in reflection, this element is not at our disposal unless we go through some process of learning and training (cf. I.9.1099b16-18). So, since *sophia* needs to be developed, a practical project, our ability to engage in reflection is subject to practical constraints in a way that divine reflection is not. Further, as compound organisms, human beings can engage in reflection only for a limited amount of time which necessarily embeds reflection in a practical life, the life we lead when not reflecting (X.8.1178b25-32). Thus, there is a specifically human way of engaging in reflection that seems sufficient to satisfy the criterion that the function should be peculiar to human beings. Aristotle in fact indicates that human reflection is not exactly the same as divine reflection, as he calls it 'most nearly akin' (X.8.1178b23) and 'similar' to the divine activity of happiness (b27).

What about Aristotle's explicit distinction between two kinds of happiness? Having just called the philosopher and his life 'most happy' (1178a7-8), Aristotle explicitly contrasts it with some kind of a lesser happiness: 'But second happiest is the life in accordance with the rest of virtue; for activities in accordance with this are human.' (X.8.1178a9-10). Since Aristotle clarifies a few lines later that 'the virtues of the compound are human ones; so too, then, is the life in accordance with these, and the

[48] For a good discussion of the connection between happiness and divinity in *EN* I, see Long 2011. His account differs from mine in that he thinks virtuous action is also divine (albeit to a lesser extent).

happiness' (a20-2), the secondarily happiest life is a life of human happiness, i.e. of virtuous action. Does this not show that human happiness is distinct from divine happiness?

While it is undeniable that this passage makes a distinction, it is not one that helps Bush. For Aristotle does *not* distinguish between human and divine happiness (*pace* Bush); he distinguishes between happiness without qualification and its qualified form, human happiness.[49] This distinction is too weak to motivate the claim that there is nothing amiss if human beings confine themselves to human happiness. For a life is happy in virtue of the activity of happiness *in* it (as argued in §2), so that a life's happiness cannot outstrip the activity of happiness: if the happiness in it is qualified, so is the happiness of the life. Consequently, human beings miss out on happiness without qualification if they fail to engage in reflection: happiness extends as far as reflection does (X.8.1178b28-9). Thus, Bush's claim that there are two non-competing conceptions of happiness does not seem to hold up: if we want happiness without qualification, we must engage in reflection.

§7 Conclusion

I have argued that happiness as specified in I.12 rules out virtuous action as the activity that makes a life happy; instead I.12 lays the foundations for identifying happiness with the activity of reflection. Moreover, I have defended my interpretation against the objection that Aristotle introduces reflection merely as a desirable extra, but not mandatory for happiness. On the contrary: a life without reflection cannot be

[49] Note that the godlike man in I.12 is simply called 'happy' and 'blessed' (1101b23-5) without qualification. Calling something '*deuterôs*' often indicates that it is a deviation from the paradigm cases or proper way of talking about it (*Meta*. V.18.1022a18).

unqualifiedly happy. I shall conclude by addressing two further objections specific to the kind of strict intellectualism proposed here.[50] In doing so, I shall outline the unqualifiedly happy life, with particular attention to the role of both practical and intellectual excellences.

First, if reflection is what makes a life happy—how could a life that does not contain it be happy *at all*? In I.12, where he clearly links happiness to the divine, Aristotle says that happiness is the principle and cause of goods because it is for the sake of happiness that we do everything else we do (1102a2-4). If, as has been argued, virtuous action can be no such principle, and reflection is the only principle Aristotle considers (cf. X.8.1178b30-31), a life of virtuous action without reflection in it would have nothing honourable in it, and hence no goods—which surely prevents us from calling it 'happy', even in a qualified sense.

Since Aristotle *does* think that the political life is secondarily happiest, he must, on my interpretation, suppose that this life also contains some contemplation. On one interpretation, even the life of purely virtuous action contains a reflective element in that all the virtues are governed by wisdom (*phronêsis*), an intellectual virtue. While wisdom's activation is not theoretical contemplation, it is nevertheless contemplation of a sort. To the extent that the use of wisdom instantiates contemplation, it is divine and honourable, and thus capable of making the life happy.[51] So, even a thoroughly practical life can be happy in a qualified sense, because, in a way, the practical virtues have an intellectual element that makes the life good.

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[50] Keyt 1978, 371 distinguishes between moderate intellectualism (happiness also contains moral activity) and strict intellectualism (happiness does not contain moral activity).

[51] Lear 2004, 195; cf. Cooper 2004, 304-5.

However, no such account is necessary, and Aristotle certainly does not supply it in the *EN*. The key to understanding Aristotle's position is more basic. Aristotle would not regard a person who gears everything towards good action without pause for reflection as happy. He thinks that something fundamental is missing in a person's life if she neither has nor acts on the desire to enquire into things just for the sake of knowing (as outlined in *Metaphysics* Book I): not everything ought to be geared towards action. This view of human nature seems to me to be entirely plausible, as it makes leisure (on which more below) crucial for a good life. It is, moreover, plausible that the best life should contain not only the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but its best form: contemplation.

On to the second objection: if happiness is solely identified with contemplation, but not with contemplation and virtuous action, and happiness is that for the sake of which everything else is done (cf. I.12.1102a2-3), then we should do everything for the sake of contemplation. But if contemplation is the only thing that determines what we should do, then it would be required of us to subordinate virtuous action to contemplation on occasions of mutually exclusive choice. But this is not what Aristotle says: even the person who lives the most divine life will also be human, and 'insofar as he is a human being, and shares life with many others, he chooses to act in accordance with virtue' (X.8.1178b5-6; JA). But if I do everything for the sake of contemplation, should I not neglect the others to concentrate on my contemplating?

Again, there are various ways of responding. Clearly, a human life necessarily contains practical activity because human beings must engage in activities other than reflecting to nourish and sustain their bodies (cf. VII.12.1153a20). But why act in accordance with virtue? Because virtuous action is for the sake of contemplation. The

interpretations differ, considerably, in spelling out the for-the-sake-of relation.[52] Due to the complexity of this issue, I can at best hint at what I take to be Aristotle's view.

On the simplest account, the highest good, contemplation, is the only goal of action. Ethical virtue is simply a precondition for proper contemplation. Since you lose virtue if you do not act as you should (which is near-impossible if you have it), you must choose to act virtuously over contemplation when required—on pain of putting contemplation permanently out of sight.

This picture has two useful flaws: i) it is hard to see how the requirement to be decent towards others could be grounded in contemplation (rather than, say, human nature); ii) experience shows that a non-virtuous person can excel at theoretical physics. Aristotle, I think, would embrace the possibility of the non-virtuous physicist, but deny that her life is good, even if it contains the highest good, because he recognises that there are demands on us that are not tied to contemplation, but are partly due to the kind of social beings that we are. When interacting with others, we are constrained by these demands, such that ignoring them is blameworthy. Note that this does not mean that virtuous action is that for the sake of which everything else is done; it merely means that when engaged in a situation that requires action, one should do what is right, i.e. act in accordance with ethical virtue.

Obviously, these constraints *do* have an effect on a person's life, as they restrict her pursuit of happiness. Since we may contemplate only when nothing else is required of us, Aristotle identifies a further important goal of practical activity, namely to see to it

[52] It has been proposed that virtuous action is for the sake of reflection in that it is i) instrumental or causal (Kraut 1989), ii) a condition for reflection just as health is a condition for virtuous action (Tuozzo 1995), iii) an approximation of reflection (Lear 2004), iv) governed by reflection (Cooper 2004), v) externally regulated by reflection (Meyer 2011), or that it is vi) derivative of the paradigm of reflection (Charles 1999).

that the agent *can* engage in reflection (VI.13.1145a9-10), i.e. to make sure that the agent is not constantly responding to demands on her due to her environment. Wisdom (*phronêsis*) operates at two different levels: responding to one's surroundings can be called 'quotidian activity', whereas the activity of arranging one's life in certain ways can be called 'architectonic'.[53] At the level of quotidian activity, we are required to do what we should: this cannot be outweighed, cancelled, overridden, or silenced by the highest good. That we do everything for the sake of happiness is thus restricted to the architectonic activity of arranging our life in accordance with what is most valuable.

To claim that in order to be happy the agent has to arrange her life with a view to engaging in activities that are honourable and divine is based on the assumption—an assumption that Aristotle surely shares—that an agent can engage non-culpably in contemplation only on condition that there is no demand on the agent to perform a virtuous action instead: happiness requires the freedom provided by leisure.[54] Thus, two activities are key to happiness, virtuous action and reflection. Their roles, however, differ importantly: contemplation is what makes a life good and happy, but it can do so, in the case of human beings, only on condition that we are at genuine leisure to engage in it. But how are we to spell out the condition? Does the non-virtuous physicist's life fail to be good simply because her behaviour is blameworthy, or is contemplation not even good for her, given that she engages in this activity when she is not free? Aristotle certainly gives no clear-cut answer, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to develop one on his behalf.

Despite these shortcomings, Aristotle has, in my view, made some progress by bringing into relief a problem he takes up, as so often, from Plato. Aristotle agrees with

[53] Broadie 2007, 123-32 invents this distinction and puts it to excellent use.
[54] See Broadie 2007, 133 for further discussion.

Socrates and Plato that excellence is central to happiness, and that only a life that also contains philosophy can count as a happy one. But what counts as excellence? While Socrates frequently likens excellence to craft, Plato seems to be more critical of this analogy. In the central Books of the *Republic* he outlines a curriculum for future philosopher kings that goes far beyond any craft-like conception of excellence. It includes both theoretical and practical studies, as it is supposed to enable the person to become wise in theoretical and practical matters, and culminates in seeing the form of the good.

Once the coping stone of excellence is conceived of as abstract rather than applied philosophy (seeing the form of the good), Plato is forced to address the question whether any given future philosopher would not be happier spending her time doing philosophy, rather than doing politics (519c-d; cf. 498c). Plato does not seem to answer the question properly; he merely says that city founders have to think of the good of the city, not of the good of the individual (519e). Aristotle's distinction in Book VI of the *EN* between *sophia* and *phronêsis* helps to answer the question in distinguishing between two kinds life that are centred on these two distinct excellences. Once the distinction is made, a relative ranking seems inevitable—and this is how Aristotle winds up distinguishing between the happiest life, the life that is based on the highest excellence, and a secondarily happiest life, a life that is happy only insofar as it stands in some relation to the best life.[55]

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