

An Interpretation and Defense of Aristotle's Theory of Well-Being

By
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Abstract

Sometimes we are required to help others even if it makes us less well off. Cases in which our personal happiness must be sacrificed for moral duty have long vexed moral philosophers and have been central to discussions about the relationship between morality and happiness. My dissertation explores Aristotle's approach to this tension, engaging in both interpretation of Aristotle and contemporary debates about the nature of the good life. I argue that Aristotle's account of perfectionism is both internally coherent and a viable alternative to contemporary forms of perfectionism.

First, my dissertation deals with an interpretive conundrum. Scholars disagree about the nature of the relationship between happiness and morality in Aristotle's theory of the good life. Some claim that the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom, usually referred to as "contemplation", is the greatest kind of happiness for Aristotle, while others argue that courage, generosity, and other moral virtues are equal to contemplation as intrinsically valuable parts of a happy life. Both of these interpretations are problematic, because they have a difficult time explaining why foundational Aristotelian moral virtues such as courage would be intrinsically valuable or, if not intrinsically valuable, why Aristotle would say that they are always choiceworthy when they seemingly require great sacrifice on our part.

In the first three chapters, I examine key passages from Aristotle's main ethical treatise, *Nicomachean Ethics*, to explain Aristotle's view of the relationship between contemplation and moral virtue. Successful interpretation balances Aristotle's insistence that a) moral virtue is always preferable to vice, b) moral virtue is a kind of rational activity (which Aristotle defines as happiness), c) contemplation is preferable to moral virtue. This seems to be a problem, because if c) is true it is unclear why someone would engage in moral virtue if it conflicted with contemplation; that is, in some circumstances vice would be preferable to virtue, contra a). I argue this inconsistency can be resolved if moral virtue is understood as a kind of rationality that aims at contemplation. Moral virtue is an indispensable tool for living a good life, and thus is

worth choosing under certain conditions (even over contemplation). I also maintain that Aristotle believes that human beings have reason to be morally virtuous because they reproduce or are replicated in some way through their families, friends, and broader communities. This is the reason that what appears to be self-sacrifice can be self-interest insofar as other people are other versions of ourselves. Thus, it is possible for Aristotle to believe in a), b), and c).

In the last two chapters, I defend the Aristotelian theory of well-being as outlined in the first part of my dissertation against different kinds of contemporary perfectionism. Perfectionists (including Aristotle) believe that happiness involves perfecting human nature but disagree about what kind of activities constitute human perfection. Some Kantian perfectionists, such as David Brink and Christine Korsgaard, hold that human happiness or well-being consists in the activity of rationally determining what makes for a good life. While rationally determining what we should do with our lives is good, it is inherently aimed at a goal: namely, whatever activity the process of rational determination decrees is most worthwhile. Aristotle can offer such an activity because contemplation is terminal and substantive. The final chapter, I also argue against perfectionist theories of the good life that assert that physical activities are in and of themselves valuable. Rather, I argue that physical activities of a certain kind should be understood as a subset of intellectual achievement. Most worthwhile physical activities involve the exercise of cognitive powers that we would associate with contemplation as well.

My dissertation thus demonstrates that Aristotle's ethical theory explains why it can be in our interest to be morally virtuous and shows that it is also a plausible alternative to contemporary perfectionisms.

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Chapter 1

Aristotle's theory of morality and well-being is notable for its complexity. His moral theory includes a conception of rationality that has generated a great deal of controversy amongst contemporary commentators. Aristotle put forward two kinds of rationality in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (EN): theoretical and practical rationality, which have two corresponding virtues or excellences (*sophia* and *phronesis*). Given that he believes rational activity in accordance with virtue to be human happiness, the relationship and relative status of these two kinds of rationality become central to understanding his normative project. In any pluralistic theory of the good, there will be a tension between the various foundational goods if and when they come into conflict, and this is no different in the case of Aristotle's theory. There are situations in which there clearly seems to be a conflict between living the life of the mind (contemplation) and the moral life (practical rationality). For instance, we can imagine someone who could either report for draft duty (let us stipulate that the government is legitimate, and it is a just war) or evade military service via fraud in order to go to college. Aristotle places a great deal of emphasis on courage as a moral virtue, but he also believes that the life of understanding is intrinsically valuable. The question then becomes how to balance these considerations within his theory of the good life. The purpose of this project will be to examine how Aristotle's substantive theory of happiness reconciles morality with the life of the mind and to further argue that an Aristotelian intellectualism is a viable alternative to contemporary perfectionist theories of well-being.

There has been a great deal of literature on this topic within the interpretive literature on Aristotle, but there are some general schools of thought that most commentators fall into. One broad school is called inclusivism, which asserts that rationality in accordance with

virtue/excellence is a kind of good that along with other goods constitutes a good life, such as friends, pleasure, or honor. Another is intellectualism, which asserts that excellent theoretical rationality (also called contemplation) is the highest good, and all other goods (including excellent practical rationality) take a back seat in importance and value.

Both of these theories have passages and other advantages that speak in their favor, but ultimately, I will argue that both of them will not be satisfactory in their current iterations. The first chapter will focus on Aristotle's formal criteria for happiness and explain how inclusivism arose as a way of dealing with these criteria. However, I will argue that inclusivism can only assert that moral virtue is intrinsically valuable in a *sui generis* way, which is unsatisfactory as a moral theory. Furthermore, I will maintain that inclusivism is not compatible with the text of EN and argue that contemplation is clearly the highest good for Aristotle, which would seem to speak in favor of intellectualism.

This will lead me to a discussion of intellectualism as an alternative to inclusivism in the second chapter. I will review the textual evidence for intellectualism in EN, the way intellectualism can accommodate Aristotle's formal criteria for happiness, and how it might be possible to view practical rationality (and thus morality) as instrumentally valuable for contemplation. However, I will maintain that intellectualism by itself is not a satisfactory reading of Aristotle because it cannot in all cases explain why immoral behavior would be against our interests (insofar as contemplation is the highest good). If it cannot do this, then it will not be able to make sense of Aristotle's insistence that moral virtue is always to our benefit. I will further argue that recent attempts by inclusivists to give a special status to contemplation also fall into this same trap.

To deal with this problem, I will argue that Aristotle holds an extended conception of the self in Chapter 3. The extended-self thesis essential holds that there is considerable evidence throughout EN that Aristotle believes our interests to extend to other members of our community, and thus that we have reason to see to their good. This, I will argue, is the final piece necessary to explain Aristotle's emphasis on moral virtue and practical rationality while at the same time explaining why contemplation is the highest good (though not the most choiceworthy in all circumstances). I will call my view communitarian intellectualism because it holds that contemplation is the highest good but that there are circumstances in which practical rationality is necessary to secure the ability to contemplate for either individuals or communities. I will provide an interpretation for Aristotle's theory of the good life that is internally consistent and faithful to his writings.

In the second half of this project, I will shift from an interpretive lens to one that focuses on Aristotle's theory of well-being within the context of the contemporary literature on the subject. In Chapter 4, I will argue that Aristotle's substantive account of happiness has a significant advantage over Kantian forms of perfectionism that offer an end that is not capable of serving as the end goal of normative activity. Finally, in Chapter 5, I will also explain why Aristotle's intellectualism has some advantages over Hurka's substantive perfectionism which gives weight to physical perfection and practical rationality in a way that Aristotle does not. I will argue that physical perfection should best be understood in humans as an extension of rationality, and that Hurka's account of practical rationality can either be accommodated by communitarian intellectualism or relies on an inadequate intuition. In total, this project argues that Aristotle's theory of the good life is both internally consistent intellectualism that does not threaten morality and remains a plausible account of the human well-being.

The current (first) chapter will focus specifically on Aristotle's formal criteria for happiness and my discussion of inclusivism. In the first section, I will discuss Aristotle's articulation of his criteria for happiness and briefly review some of the debate about their meaning before moving to a basic review of Aristotle's substantive account of human happiness. In the second section, I will then explain how the first examples of inclusivism were an attempt to deal with Aristotle's formal criteria for happiness. I will then explain the problems that arise from inclusivism as well as how later versions of inclusivism fail to meet these challenges. In the third section, I will review key passages from EN (particularly EN X and VI) that undermine the inclusivist interpretation of happiness as a collection of goods.

Section 1: Aristotle's Formal Criteria for Happiness

In EN, Aristotle's discussion of happiness does not immediately begin with a substantive account of what makes for a good life. Instead, he lays out a number of formal considerations that happiness must conform to before breathing content into his own conception, in addition to criticizing other prominent theories of the human good/happiness in the first six chapters of EN I. Before his substantive account of happiness in EN I.7, he lays out two formal criteria specifically as necessary requirements for a successful theory of happiness. It is necessary to understand these formal criteria in order to understand the relationship between practical and theoretical rationality within his theory. This section will thus unpack these formal criteria.

1.1: Finality Criterion

The first criterion for happiness is the finality criterion. The finality criterion holds that happiness must be desired for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else:

Therefore, if there is only one complete end, this will be what we are seeking, and if there are more than one, the most complete of these will be what we are seeking. Now we call that which is in itself worth of pursuit more complete than the things that are desirable for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more complete than the things that are desirable for the sake of something else and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call complete without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of anything else. (EN I.7 1097a28-35)¹

Aristotle here argues that whatever human happiness is, it must be the sort of thing that is entirely desirable for its own sake. It must not be the sort of thing that is desirable for the sake of some further end or good. Aristotle uses the term “complete” when discussing happiness. When Aristotle uses the term *teleios* it can be translated as “complete”, “final”, or “perfect”. Whatever happiness is, it must be something that is inherently worthwhile and not something that is merely valuable for the sake of something else. It is an activity that is thus “complete” in the sense that the process is not unfinished or in need of some further product/goal to make it choiceworthy. He even goes as far as to suggest that happiness cannot even be the sort of thing that is both valuable for its own sake and valuable for the sake of something else. If a good has any value for a further activity or product beyond itself, it cannot be happiness.

Part of what Aristotle says here should be relatively uncontroversial. If one good is valuable for its own sake and another only for the sake of something else, then it seems clear that the former would be the only possible candidate for the human good. Whatever happiness is, it should be something that is intrinsically valuable. If a good (say, medicine) is only valuable for the sake of a further goal, then it is the further goal (and not the activity itself) that would be the proper candidate for human happiness.

¹All translations come from the Revised Oxford Translation unless otherwise noted.

However, the last section of the text is a bit more controversial. His taxonomy of goods harkens back to Glaucon's classification of value in *Republic II*:

Tell me, do you think there is a kind of good we welcome, not because we desire what comes from it, but because we welcome it for its own sake...And is there a kind of good we like for its own sake and also for the sake of what comes from it...And do you also see a third kind of good, such as physical training, medical treatment when sick, medicine itself, and other ways of making money? We'd say that these are onerous but beneficial to us, and we wouldn't choose them for their own sakes, but for the sake of the rewards and other things that come from them? (Republic 357b2-d1)²

So far, Aristotle's discussion does not seem to be substantially different from Plato's. Both have three categories of goods. However, Glaucon asks Socrates in what category he would put justice, and Socrates responds that he "would put it among the finest goods, as something valued by anyone who is going to be blessed with happiness, both because of itself and because of what comes from it" (Republic 357d10-358a2). Socrates' position here seems plausible. Why wouldn't the most valuable goods be valuable for their own sake and for the sake of what comes from them? It seems like killing two birds with one stone. Furthermore, isn't it conceivable that there are many examples of intrinsically valuable things, and that such things are also useful for acquiring each other? For instance, imagine that both meaningful social interaction and going to parties are intrinsically valuable. It seems likely that they could both contribute to each other; that is, having meaningful social interactions facilitating being invited to more parties, and parties might be a good opportunity for social interaction. Given this kind of theory of the good, it seems as though Socrates is right to think that these goods are especially choiceworthy because of the additional effects that they bring about beyond themselves (contra Aristotle).

²All translations of the *Republic* will be from Grube and Reeve.

However, there are reasons to defend Aristotle's position here. If the highest good is squarely above all other goods in ultimate value, it would avoid the kinds of moral dilemmas and conflicts that plagued earlier Greek theories of morality (killing our mothers to avenge our fathers). If the highest good is above all other goods in ultimate value (all other things being equal), then it would not be useful for the sake of some other good. It is perhaps conceptually possible that it could be useful for some lesser good, but if this good were clearly superior to the others, then it would not make sense to pick them instead of the highest good.³ Thus, this helps explain why he believes that happiness (whatever it is) is going to be something that is *complete* and is not aimed at anything else beyond itself.⁴

Nonetheless, there are still important questions about the relationship of happiness to other intrinsically valuable goods. Most people would say that there are a great number of activities or products that are valuable for their own sakes. For instance, board games, family vacations, and ice cream all have their merits as intrinsically valuable products or experiences. How should we understand the relationship that happiness holds to these goods? Are they

³Some commentators, such as Matthew Walker (2018), have argued that contemplation (which for him is the highest good for Aristotle) is useful for other goods. For instance, contemplation could inform our conception of what it means to be human and what the biological needs of human beings are. This could be true, but it would not undermine Aristotle's claim that happiness is entirely for its own sake insofar as the lesser goods are constituents or means towards happiness itself. Goods of the body on this account would still be useful for contemplation.

⁴One possible way of understanding this is that lesser goods could be constitutive of happiness for Aristotle, which would make this claim more ecumenical. However, I will cover this later in the project.

ultimately superfluous to happiness, part of happiness itself, or optional pathways towards it?⁵

These questions are further complicated by Aristotle's next criterion for happiness.⁶

1.2: Self-Sufficiency Criterion

The second criteria Aristotle established is the self-sufficiency criterion. The self-sufficiency criterion is that happiness must be the kind of good that by itself could make a human life happy without any additional good:

For the complete good is thought to be self-sufficient. Now by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is sociable by nature. But some limit must be set to this; for if we extended our requirement to ancestors and descendants and friends' friends we are in for an infinite series...the self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing.; and such we think happiness to be; and further we think it most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others (EN I.7 1097b8-9, 11, 14-17).

No one is an island unto themselves, and so to say that happiness should be "self-sufficient" does not mean that it would someone's life worthwhile without anything else per se. There could, for

⁵ Because of the strange relationship that Aristotle posits between certain goods and happiness, it has led some commentators to suggest that Aristotle has a novel view of the "for the sake of" relationship that we might not find intuitive. This is the primary motivation behind inclusivism, so I will more fully cover the inclusivist reading of the finality criterion in my discussion of inclusivism.

⁶ Some philosophers (notably Henry Richardson, "Degrees of finality and the highest good in Aristotle," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 30, no. 3 [1992]: 327-352) have argued that the finality discussion entails that there are many goods which are valuable for their own sakes, but that are limited or regulated in light of some other good. That is, the finality criterion, on his reading, does not entail that there is some good that all other goods are for the sake of. He does not think this is compatible with Aristotle's assertion that there are goods like honor, pleasure, or reason are both intrinsically valuable (such that we would still choose them absent anything they might bring about) and valuable for the sake of something else. This position closely mirrors inclusivism, and my later comments will consider the possibility that there are many intrinsically valuable goods that fall under the umbrella of human happiness. I do not think that Aristotle means that the most final good will merely regulate or limit other less final goods. However, I will later discuss Thomas Tuozzo's view of the degrees of finality in Chapter 2, which constitutes a response to Richardson's position. In short, Tuozzo notes that there are really four kinds of goods in Aristotle, only the top of which is entirely valuable for its own sake. Furthermore, as I will discuss later, Aristotle believes that some goods may be intrinsically valuable, but are only desirable under certain conditions. While Aristotle does say that moral action should be chosen for its own sake (EN II.4), he also notes that the greatest of practical/moral virtue is not unconditionally worth pursuing (EN X.7-8).

instance, be necessary conditions for human flourishing that someone would need in order to be happy. However, Aristotle means to suggest that if all of the necessary prerequisites are in place, happiness by itself would make one's life go well without any additional good.

There is some question as to what Aristotle exactly means here. The interpretation of EN I is complicated by Aristotle comments on self-sufficiency in EN X.7:

And the self-sufficiency that is spoken of must belong most to the contemplative activity. For while a wise man, as well as a just man and the rest, needs the necessities of life, when they are sufficiently equipped with things of that sort the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others is in the same case, but the wise man, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow-workers, but he is still the most self-sufficient (EN X.7 1177a28-b1).

Here, self-sufficiency is a matter of degree, whereas in the earlier passage Aristotle said that happiness should “[lack] in nothing.” Furthermore, this later section would suggest that one of the things in contemplation's favor is that it requires less external goods than other activities, which seems to be in tension with his assertion from EN I that the life of a happy person would involve some number of friends and family members.

These two passages have led many philosophers to argue that Aristotle in fact has two conceptions of self-sufficiency. I will focus on Eric Brown's arguments here, though there are many other defenders of this position in the literature.⁷ Brown argues that there are in fact two conceptions of self-sufficiency that are at play here (and in Aristotle's broader corpus): solitary and political self-sufficiency. Solitary self-sufficiency refers to the ability to completely take

⁷These include Cooper (1975), Whiting (1986), Curzer (1990), Broadie (1991), and Nussbaum (2001).

care of one's own needs without the help of others.⁸ This is the self-sufficiency of a hermit who has no need of other individuals (in an extreme case). Brown believes that this is not the kind of self-sufficiency that Aristotle has in mind in EN (at least until the last few chapters of EN X). Instead, Brown believes that in EN I.7 Aristotle considers political self-sufficiency, which entails that individuals may need others to fulfill their needs but that they can acquire them via the polity (which, as Brown notes, Aristotle believes is natural to human beings).⁹ A great king might have political self-sufficiency in the sense that they have many needs that require others and can satiate these needs via his subjects.

Brown believes that Aristotle must have political self-sufficiency in mind in EN I.7 because he readily admits in this passage that the happiness of a good person will involve meaningful interaction and relationships with other people (friends, parents, children, etc).¹⁰ The happiness that Aristotle is interested in is not that of a hermit. Brown's point is well-taken as far as it goes. It seems clear that Aristotle believes that humans are essentially political animals, and that we are not supposed to live as hermits. However, there are other ways of understanding the importance of the political nature of human beings without attributing two kinds of self-sufficiency to the Aristotelian corpus (which, as we will see, would create a tension between EN I.7 and EN X.7-8). Humans by their nature are indeed social, and this may mean that human animals cannot be properly understood outside the context of their communities. We will return to this topic in Chapter 3 of this project.

⁸ Eric Brown, "Aristotle on the Choice of Lives: Two Concepts of Self-Sufficiency." *Theoria: Studies on the Status and Meaning of Contemplation in Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. by Pierre Destrée & Marco Zingano Leuven (Belgium: Peeters Publishing, 2014), 117

⁹ Brown, "Choice of Lives," 117

¹⁰ EN I.7 1097b8-11, quoted above

For my part, I am sympathetic to a singular interpretation of the self-sufficiency criterion.¹¹ One of the reasons for this is, as Heineman points out, Aristotle does not have an intervening discussion of self-sufficient between EN I and EN X.7 beyond a brief reference to his previous comments in EN I.7.¹² Given that this is the case, I take Aristotle to reference the original criterion when he says in EN X.7 that contemplation has the most “self-sufficiency that is spoken of.” One of the reasons for the apparent move from total self-sufficiency to a sliding scale thereof is that he is actually talking about two different things in each passage. In EN I, Aristotle considers the activity that will, by itself, make life worth living and lacking in nothing. He explicitly says that while this activity could not possibly be the only good in our lives, he does think that “when isolated” this activity is self-sufficient. To this point in EN, he has considered the specific good or activity that will constitute happiness and will later in EN I introduce considerations about how this activity might fit into a longer life.

In EN X.7, Aristotle is considering the relative merits of the *life* of the wise person and the *life* of the just, courageous, or temperate person. His analysis in EN X is not merely about the activity, though that greatly informs his decision. Rather, he is concerned here with which activity makes life *most* self-sufficient for human beings.¹³ As I will cover later in this chapter,

¹¹ Many other philosophers have argued that there is in fact one conception of self-sufficiency for Aristotle as well. These include Cooper (2003), Van Cleemput (2006), Reeve (2014), and Gasser-Wingate (2020). Richardson Lear (2004) gives perhaps one of the most definitive examples of this view, but the figures who promote it are often intellectualists. As such, I will cover her comments (as a paradigmatic example of these arguments) on this subject more when I discuss intellectualism and the self-sufficiency criterion in Chapter 2.

¹² R. Heinaman, “Eudaimonia and Self-sufficiency in the Nicomachean Ethics,” *Phronesis* 33, (1988): 45; EN 1177a27-28

¹³ Gavin Lawrence considers something similar to this as well. He argues that contemplation is the ideal activity or life for a person in an absolute sense for Aristotle, but that there are circumstances in which it is not plausible or desirable to engage in contemplation (Gavin Lawrence, “Aristotle and the Ideal Life,” *The Philosophical Review* 102, no. 1 [1993]: 30-31). He does not think, however, that Aristotle can offer an effective way to determine why we would forgo contemplation in favor of lesser goods (Lawrence, “Ideal Life,” 31-32). It will be my task in this project to rebut this charge against Aristotle.

human beings are not capable of complete self-sufficiency like the gods are, so total self-sufficiency is not possible for us. Given this, I take Aristotle to direct his audience towards the activity that is as self-sufficient as possible. In other words, he is using the same criterion in both EN I and EN X but is applying it to different questions.

However, if there is one definition of self-sufficiency for Aristotle, this leads to further questions about its exact meaning. Aristotle makes the curious claim that happiness is a) the sort of thing that by itself makes life “desirable and lacking in nothing,” and b) not a good that could be counted amongst other goods. The first claim is bizarre given that there are a great number of goods whose inclusion would make life better (ice cream, good friends, marriage, etc.) and there doesn’t seem to be one good that by itself could make life “lack in nothing”. All of our lives contain a plethora of goods without which they would not be as desirable, yet none seem to be so overwhelmingly powerful that no other good by its addition could make it more desirable in some way.

Even Aristotle himself acknowledges that there are multiple goods that are intrinsically valuable in his discussion of the finality criterion:

honour, pleasure, and reason, and every excellence we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that through them we shall be happy (EN I.7 1097b1-5).

If happiness is supposed to be the kind of thing that when taken by itself makes life worthwhile and good, why would it be the case that “honour, pleasure, and reason” are intrinsically valuable at all? If they are in fact intrinsically valuable, wouldn’t it be the case that a life that included

them with happiness would be superior to a life with only happiness?¹⁴ Furthermore, Aristotle says that we value reason (*nous*) both for its own sake and for the sake of happiness. If reason is something that we pursue for the sake of happiness, then it appears to be distinct from it. Indeed, Aristotle seems to put it on the same level as pleasure and honor; they are all goods that are in valuable for their own sakes but also are not in themselves happiness.

Furthermore, it is strange to suggest that happiness is not a good that can be counted amongst other goods as if it were different in kind from them. Surely, any good can be “counted,” compared, or weighed against others. Why would Aristotle say something like this? Does he believe that happiness is a collection of the goods that taken together make life worth living? Does he mean to say that happiness is the most self-sufficient good when compared to others? Is it possible that happiness is some kind of architectonic good that encompasses all others as subordinate or necessary conditions?

In some ways, the answer to these questions will fall along and sometimes determine the fault lines surrounding broader debates about the nature of happiness. As we will see, the major interpretive camps have readings of this criterion that comport with their understanding of what happiness is for Aristotle, and in some cases the interpretation of the self-sufficiency criterion itself will serve as the basis for defending their interpretation of Aristotle’s conception of well-

¹⁴ The question of the aggregability of happiness with other goods is one of the most hotly contested in the literature on Aristotle. Some argue that happiness is a good that can be counted with other goods, and thus the addition of other goods (perhaps external ones) can make our lives better if added to happiness. These authors include White (1990), Kenny (1992), and Roche (2014). Richardson Lear (2004) concedes that there may be some goods that could add to a life’s desirability beyond happiness, but she does not think this undermines the privileged place that happiness has in the good life. More on her view in Chapter 2. Others argue that happiness is not the sort of thing that can be grouped together with other goods, or perhaps includes all possible goods within it. These include Ackrill (1974), Kraut (1989), and Lawrence (1997). As I mentioned earlier, this question will come up more in Chapter 2, but in short, I think either Richardson Lear’s view or Tuozzo’s is compatible with my substantive account of happiness for Aristotle. I do, however, lean towards the view that happiness is not aggregable with other goods for Aristotle.

being. I will thus cover how different commentators deal with the self-sufficiency criterion in the context of their broader views of Aristotle's account of the good life (be they inclusivists or intellectualists).

1.3: Substantive Account of Happiness

After outlining these two criteria, Aristotle then gives his own positive account of the human good. In doing so, he introduces a third criterion: the uniqueness criterion.¹⁵ He rules out growth and reproduction as the human good because we share these activities with even plants and sense perception because animals engage in this activity (along with humans). This means that there is only one kind of activity left:

There remains, then, an active life of the element that has a rational principle (of this, one part has such a principle in the sense of being obedient to one, the other in the sense of possessing one and exercising thought); and as this too can be taken in two ways, we must state that life in the sense of activity is what we mean; for this seems to be the more proper sense of the term (EN I.7 1098b3-7).

Aristotle believes that rational activity is the only kind of activity that is unique to human beings. Human beings are born with the innate capacity to engage in rationality (given proper instruction and education). Some might immediately balk at this notion on the grounds that there might be some animals that share some of our rational capacities. However, Aristotle is drawing on the taxonomy of living organisms and their powers that he lays out in *De Anima* (DA).¹⁶ That is, he takes rational activity to be a broad causal power that may have many different manifestations.¹⁷ At this point, Aristotle does not outline explicitly what rational activity entails or if there are

¹⁵ EN I.7 1098a1: "We are seeking what is peculiar [*idiom*] to man."

¹⁶ For his taxonomy, see *De Anima* (from here on DA) 414a30-414b3, 18-20.

¹⁷ I will deal with this question more later in the project.

different kinds of rational activity. He leaves these questions for later in EN (particularly EN VI). However, he does explain another important aspect of his ethical theory:

Now if the function of man is an activity of the soul in accordance with, or not without, rational principle...human good turns out to be activity of the soul in accordance with excellence, and if there are more than one excellence, in conformity with the best and most complete (EN I.7 1098b7-18).

Aristotle picks up on the idea from Republic I that virtue is a kind of quality or characteristic that enables something to perform its proper function well. Socrates suggests to Thrasymachus that if “anything has a function it performs it well by means of its own peculiar virtue and badly by means of its vice” (Republic 353c4-7). Aristotle believes that human beings are no exception to this rule; there are qualities or characteristics that enable humans to perform their function well. Thus, these qualities are necessary for living a good human life:

Aristotle further explains his conception of virtue in his other lengthy ethical text.

According to the *Eudeimain Ethics*, virtue allows for the best kind of activity possible for human beings, although it is by itself not human happiness:

Further, let the work of the soul be to produce living...Therefore, since the work must be one and the same both for the soul and for its excellence, the work of the excellence of the soul would be a good life. This, then, is the complete good, which (as we saw) was happiness. And it is clear from our assumptions,...and since the activity is better than the state, and the best activity than the best state, and excellence is the best state, that the activity of the excellence of the soul is the best thing (EE 1219a24-34).¹⁸

Virtue is a kind of quality or character state that allows human beings to engage in the best activity possible for human beings.

¹⁸EE will stand for Eudeimain Ethics.

Aristotle explains more about his conception of virtue after EN I.7, especially in EN I.13, EN II and EN VI.¹⁹ He argues for two kinds of virtues: moral virtue and intellectual virtue. Moral virtues are virtues of the desiderative part of the non-rational soul that allow for virtuous action (EN I.13 1102b29-35, EE II.1 1220a10). While the irrational part of the soul is not the seat of reason or rational directives (that is, it does not determine what should be done or why), it can listen to the dictates of the rational part. Aristotle likens this part of the soul to a child obeying their father. Intellectual virtues are the virtues of the rational part of the human soul (EN I.13 1103b4-10, EE II.1 1220a8-9).

Aristotle believes human beings must acquire moral virtues via practice and habit, and in many ways sees virtuous behavior as a kind of craft, like carpentry or stonemasonry.²⁰ Individuals need to be carefully instructed as to how to work with wood or stone, and then practice until they perfect their work, and Aristotle holds that virtuous character develops in the same way. However, virtuous activity has additional criteria:

In the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchanging character (EN II 1105a32-1105b1).

Anyone, Aristotle notes, can copy a word if they have it in front of them. However, that does not make someone literate (EN II.4 1105a20-26). Rather, a literate person is someone who has practiced writing and understands what symbols to use and when. This is why a virtuous person is not merely someone who does something virtuous; she must have practiced virtue to the point

¹⁹ There are other important passages in EE; I will note them as they are relevant.

²⁰ EN II.1 1103b14-21; at EE I.5 1216b2-25, he explains that knowledge of the virtues is not sufficient for virtue, contra Socrates. Learning what justice, courage, and generosity are does not make someone good. Rather, being just, courageous, generous, etc is the goal of the moral life, and so merely learning that justice, courage,

where it is a kind of skill. She must further choose virtuous action knowingly and for the right reason (i.e. not for some other benefit, like reputation or wealth).

At the end of EN II, Aristotle lists a number of different moral virtues (and their corresponding vices): courage, temperance (self-control), generosity, magnificence, magnanimity, and mildness, to name a few (EN II.7). Most of the virtues he lists would not be terribly surprising to his ancient Greek contemporaries, and many of these character traits are also recognizable as moral qualities to our modern sensibilities. Thus, Aristotle seems to imply that moral virtue is central to living a good, rational life for human beings, given that these are the qualities that are necessary for us to perform our proper function well. In fact, he goes so far as to say that moral vice is never justified under any circumstance, which suggests a great confidence in the relationship between morality and happiness.²¹

However, Aristotle identifies two virtues that have a special place within his theory of the good life. These are intellectual virtues, as opposed to the moral virtues that he listed earlier in EN II. These virtues relate directly to our ability to reason well in two different ways. One is called *phronesis* (practical wisdom). Practical wisdom for Aristotle is the capacity to reason well about practical affairs, both about particular situations and how to live a good life as a whole (EN VI.5 1140a26-30, 1140b20-21). Practical wisdom not only enables individuals to act in the right manner, but also causes them to desire the right things. Thus, it seems to be a kind of “master”

²¹ EN I.10 1100b31-1101a7: “If activities are, as we said, what determines the character of life, no blessed man can become miserable; for he will never do the acts that are hateful and mean. For the man who is truly good and wise, we think, bears all the chances of life becomingly and always makes the best of circumstances, as a good general makes the best military use of the army at his command and a shoemaker makes the best shoes out of the hides that are given him; and so with all other craftsmen. And if this is the case, the happy man can never become miserable.” Hateful and mean acts are vicious ones. The good person, according to this passage, will always do what is best, not what is vicious.

virtue that seems to encompass or governs other moral virtues like courage and generosity.

Phronesis thus has the curious distinction of being an intellectual virtue that is vital and inseparable from its function as the ruler of moral virtue. Thus, the person who masters moral virtue will in fact possess the intellectual virtue of *phronesis*, which means that *phronesis* functions as the pinnacle of the life of practical rationality.

The second of these intellectual virtues is *sophia* (theoretical wisdom). Theoretical wisdom allows for excellent theoretical rationality (*theoria*) or contemplation. Excellent theoretical rationality is the activity people engage in when they grasp scientific first principles and the knowledge that we can derive from them about the “highest by nature” (EN VI.7 1141b3-4). Theoretical wisdom is a quality (acquired via skill or teaching) that would make someone a good biologist, astronomer, or philosopher. It is, in fact,

the most finished of the forms of knowledge. It follows that the wise man must not only know what follows from first principles, but must also possess truth about the first principles. Therefore wisdom must be comprehension combined with knowledge (EN VI.7 1141b16-20).

In other words, theoretical wisdom is a kind of true understanding wedded to knowledge of reality or the truth.

Theoretical wisdom is not concerned (at least directly) with making good life decisions or choices like practical wisdom is. Aristotle holds that the only way to consistently be virtuous or wise is through practice (or habituation) in the case of practical rationality, and learning in the case of theoretical rationality.

To review, Aristotle believes that happiness must be final, self-sufficient, and unique to human beings. Thus, human happiness consists in reason and rational activity. Human

happiness is found in the excellent actualization of these innate capacities. It is, in other words, good for humans to reason well. Humans need certain qualities or characteristics to help them actualize their capacity/function. These qualities are called virtues, some of which relate to moral action and others which relate to intellectual concerns. *Phronesis* is the ultimate virtue of practical activity, and *sophia* is the virtue of theoretical activity. Aristotle insists that both moral virtue and intellectual virtue are important for human happiness. Successful interpreters of Aristotle must be able to explain how all of these elements fit together in Aristotle's theory of the good life. How, for instance, can we balance moral virtue and *phronesis* against contemplation?

In what follows, I will review some of the prominent attempts to weave a coherent picture out of these considerations within Aristotle's work, and why I find these answers to be ultimately unsatisfactory. Much of their respective shortcomings come from explaining one of the three criteria for happiness at the expense of the other two. One school of thought, inclusivism, emphasizes Aristotle's self-sufficiency criteria without accommodating the finality and uniqueness criterion, whereas another camp, intellectualism, accounts for the uniqueness criterion and the finality criterion while proving too much in its attempts to meet the self-sufficiency criterion. Both theories also have a difficult time making sense of important passages from EN. Given the shortcomings of these two interpretations, I will offer one I will call communitarian intellectualism, which when supplemented with an extended-self reading of Aristotle, provides an internally consistent, plausible view of Aristotle's theory of the good life that maintains fidelity to the text itself.

Section 2: Inclusivism

Aristotle's account of happiness and his formal criteria for it in EN leave a number of questions for contemporary commentators. As I noted earlier, Aristotle asserts that happiness must be the kind of thing that by itself makes life worth living when he says that it is self-sufficient; it must be both entirely intrinsically valuable and the totality of all intrinsic value. Happiness is a) the sort of thing that by itself makes life "desirable and lacking in nothing," and b) not a good that could be counted amongst other goods. Given this criterion, some people have proposed that happiness actually includes many goods for Aristotle.

2.1: Ackrill's Inclusivism

J.L. Ackrill saw the problems with the finality and self-sufficiency criteria and offered a novel and innovative way of understanding "for the sake of" in this context. "Happiness" for Aristotle, according to Ackrill, is not a singular good, but rather the collection of goods that in their totality make life happy. Thus, according to Ackrill, the self-sufficiency criterion entails that happiness does indeed lack for nothing because it includes all relevant goods within it.²² Happiness, thus, would be an umbrella category that would "include" a number of disparate goods. This interpretation can make sense of why Aristotle would say that goods like pleasure, wealth, and honor could be valuable for their own sakes and for the sake of happiness. To illustrate this concept, Ackrill, asks us to imagine a good vacation.²³ It might involve a number of activities, such as good meals, fun activities, and quality family time. All of these things would be desirable on their own, but it is their combination that gives rise to a happy day overall.

²² Prominent inclusivists include Ackrill (1976/1980), Whiting (1986), Cooper (1987), Roche (1988), Irwin (1991), and Nussbaum (1995), Charles (1999), Bush (2008), Long (2011), and Thorsrud (2015). There are other interpreters that have a kind of altered inclusivism, and I will discuss key examples of this later.

²³ J. L. Ackrill, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia." in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* Edited by A. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 19

This also explains why happiness is potentially the kind of good that can neither be counted among other goods and lack in nothing. Insofar as happiness is the collection of goods that makes a life fulfilled, it would not be like other substantive goods in kind nor would it be possible to add anything to it to make it better. Thus, Ackrill can potentially explain why happiness could meet the self-sufficient criterion. Because Ackrill believes that happiness includes a number of constituent goods for Aristotle, he called his interpretation inclusivism.²⁴ Furthermore, Ackrill also believes that this is the best way to make sense of the finality criterion because various goods could be intrinsically valuable and valuable as constituents of happiness. His reading would suggest that we love honor for honor's sake (which would make it intrinsically valuable) but also because it is a crucial and indispensable part of a happy life. Happiness, it turns out, is the only good that we value entirely for its own sake. This would explain an otherwise seemingly awkward tension between happiness and honor that EN I.7 might suggest.

There are a number of attractive features of inclusivism. First, it gives a place to a number of disparate goods that Aristotle says are valuable at different points in EN. It also accords practical rationality and the moral virtues Aristotle associates with it a place within the good life. Aristotle consistently rejected moral vice, and any successful interpretation of Aristotle must account for this. Inclusivism seems to be well on its way towards doing this via its ecumenicalism about the human good. Indeed, it would accord with Aristotle's assertion that moral virtue must be chosen for its own sake in EN II in the same way that other goods could be chosen for their own sakes.

²⁴ Ackrill, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia," 16-17

However, there are a number of problems with this interpretation of Aristotle's theory of well-being. First, it does not explain what honor, pleasure, or moral virtue have to do with rational activity of the soul. Most people would not immediately associate pleasure or honor with the life of reason. Inclusivism would leave the connection between these goods opaque. Indeed, looking beyond EN I, inclusivism cannot explain what moral virtue has to do with rational activity either.²⁵ Aristotle says that virtues are qualities or characteristics are involved in the excellent performance of the human function.²⁶ However, Ackrill does not offer an account of how moral virtues such as courage, generosity, or temperance contribute to excellent rational activity. Another way of putting this is that Ackrill's interpretation accounts for the self-sufficiency criterion in a way that ignores the uniqueness criteria that Aristotle lays out in EN I.7. There is no discussion of how the moral virtues are part of the unique function of human beings.

If we are to give a systematic account of Aristotle's theory of the good life, it is important to articulate the connection between rationality and other intrinsic goods. Ackrill's account does not explain this. Why would pleasure, honor, or moral virtue be rational? What makes them more or less rational than their alternatives? Perhaps this is fairly straightforward in the case of pleasure, but Ackrill's account leaves the relationship between various moral virtues and happiness opaque. What explains Aristotle's commitment to courage over cowardice, or self-control over self-indulgence? Aristotle seems very confident that virtues are superior to vices,

²⁵ Gavin Lawrence (Gavin Lawrence, "Nonaggregatability, Inclusiveness, and the Theory of Focal Value: 'Nicomachean Ethics' 1.7.1097b16-20," *Phronesis* 42, no. 1 [1997]: 32-76) argues persuasively that happiness cannot be an aggregate good for Aristotle. He notes that the goods that Aristotle identifies as intrinsically valuable (honor, pleasure, and intellect) can be thought of as constituent goods within the larger human good (Lawrence, "Nonaggregatability," 51-52). I will cover a view similar to this in the next chapter with my discussion of Tuozzo, who offers a more detailed and complete account of how certain goods form a kind of matter for the form of human activity.

²⁶ See EN I.7 1097b22-1098a17 for his discussion of how excellence or virtue is necessary for happiness.

and the inclusivist reading does not explain his confidence. Thus, this interpretation has both a textual problem (because it does not deal with Aristotle's uniqueness criterion) and one of decision-making (because it cannot explain why virtue is preferable to vice). This is in some sense a failure to meet the uniqueness criterion because inclusivism cannot explain what is distinctively rational about moral virtue.

Second, the inclusivist interpretation also has a difficult time explaining why ethical activity is more choiceworthy than other kinds of intrinsically valuable goods, and thus it is unclear even on its own terms why one would choose ethical activity over other kinds of activities. According to inclusivism, Aristotle believes that happiness is a collection of goods. Ackrill notes that pleasure could be desired both for its own sake for how it can become part of a happy life.²⁷ However, if morality and pleasure are both intrinsically valuable, inclusivism needs to explain why Aristotle would think that we need to always choose moral action over pleasure. How should we pick out activities as more virtuous? Nothing in this passage would suggest that ethical activity has a lexical priority over pleasure. Even if the inclusivist argued that any good life would contain some ethical activity, it does not explain why we should always (or even mostly) choose moral activity over pleasure, honor, or anything else on the list of intrinsically valuable things. This even extends to moral action and contemplation: if both are valuable as part of the good life, inclusivism cannot explain why moral action should take precedent over the life of the mind when there is a potential conflict between the two.

If inclusivism cannot explain why we should choose ethical activity over other intrinsically valuable activities (including contemplation), then it will not help us explain the

²⁷ Ackrill, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia," 21

intrinsic value of *phronesis* (which inclusivists maintain is the case) in a way that makes Aristotle's theory of well-being or morality function. Given that Aristotle is not an immoralist, we need to find an interpretation that can explain why Aristotle gives priority to moral virtue over other goods.

2.2: Crisp's Inclusivism

Roger Crisp attempts to construct an inclusivism that avoids some of the central problems of Ackrill's account. He notes that Aristotle's statement that "pleasure, honour, and reason" are intrinsically valuable is in tension with Aristotle's assertion that rational activity of the soul in accordance with virtue is in fact human happiness. To resolve this tension, he suggests that there are three ways in which goods are valuable for Aristotle. First, there are straightforwardly instrumentally valuable goods.²⁸ Beyond that, there are goods which "provide conditions for [happiness] and derive any value they have from it," such as honor and good birth.²⁹ Finally, there are goods which are valuable for their own sakes and are thus part of happiness.

Now, Crisp notes that Aristotle is concerned with what he calls the "more-is-better" objection to the definition of happiness embedded in the self-sufficiency criterion. Happiness must be the kind of thing that cannot be improved by the addition of new goods if it is by itself enough to make human life complete. Purely instrumental goods could not be part of the "more is better" problem because they are only valuable for the sake of what they produce.³⁰ For instance, we wouldn't say that a productive trip to the store would add anything by its mere addition to a satisfying meal. We would only go to the store to buy ingredients, and insofar as

²⁸ Roger Crisp, "Aristotle's Inclusivism," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (1994): 120.

²⁹ Crisp, "Aristotle's Inclusivism," 120

³⁰ Crisp, "Aristotle's Inclusivism," 124

we have them in the pantry already, going to the store does nothing to enhance the meal. Crisp also maintains that this is also true of the second category of goods, which includes honor and pleasure. While Aristotle does say in EN I.7 that they have intrinsic value, Crisp argues that this is not ultimately his considered view on the worth, and he points to passages where Aristotle concludes that honor is in itself intrinsically valuable.³¹ Rather, it seems as though Aristotle is working within the commonly held framework of his contemporary world. Indeed, Aristotle says in EN I.5 that honor and pleasure are not part of the human good (EN I.5 1095b13-31). While Crisp doesn't mention this, it's also worth considering that Aristotle has not given his final argument for why rational activity is by itself the human good at this point in EN I.7. Rather, he offers his argument a few lines later, which proves to be the final (decisive) piece of his discussion of the content of happiness.

Crisp argues that all of the goods that are intrinsically valuable species or parts of rational activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. This makes sense for moral and theoretical virtue, but friendship is one good that is hardest for Crisp to square in this category. Ultimately, he argues that Aristotle thinks friendship is valuable because it is a kind of human excellence (of the practical variety).³² Thus, Crisp's inclusivism entails that all forms of rational activity are part of the human good (even if it does not include pleasure and honor). This helps him explain why

³¹ Crisp, "Aristotle's Inclusivism," 124. Crisp considers Aristotle's discussion of honor at EN I.5 1095b26-28 and EN VIII.8 1159a22-27 to be evidence that Aristotle does not in fact think honor is an external good valued for the sake of the "self-confidence of the excellent person, which we may plausibly assume allows him to reach even greater heights of excellence in his activities" (Crisp, "Aristotle's Inclusivism," 125). He also notes that at IX.8 1168b15-19 that the pursuit of honor can often be "vulgar" for Aristotle. Crisp also asserts that virtuous activities are themselves pleasant, and thus that pleasure is not distinct from them (Crisp, "Aristotle's Inclusivism," 128). These assertions are hotly contested given other passages (including the one here in EN I.7 as well as EN VII.4 1148a23-28, b2-4) where Aristotle says that honor and pleasure have intrinsic value. I will consider these questions later in the project for fulling. Here I will just note what Crisp's position is.

³² Crisp, "Aristotle's Inclusivism," 130

Aristotle prioritizes moral virtue over honor and pleasure, which is an important part of any successful interpretation of EN (which Ackrill's inclusivism cannot do). Thus, Crisp successfully incorporates the substantive uniqueness criterion and the self-sufficiency criterion into his interpretation, which represents an improvement over Ackrill's interpretation.

However, Crisp's interpretation cannot explain away all of the problems that Aristotle's theory of the good faces, and thus cannot solve the decision-making problem that plagued Ackrill's interpretation. He does not explain why Aristotle believe that moral vice is always uncalled for even in cases where it might help to obtain important goods like friendship or contemplation. If someone is forced to choose between their theoretical studies and going in the army, it is not clear why Crisp's inclusivism would compel this individual to honor their civic obligations. Insofar as both theoretical and practical rationality are included in the human good, why, from the perspective of the individual's happiness, should they risk their life when they could stay home and study? As such, Crisp's interpretation still faces some of the main problems that plagued Ackrill's. He cannot explain Aristotle's comprehensive commitment to moral virtue. We will have to look for another way of balancing Aristotle's criteria for happiness that does not suffer from the problems that inclusivism does.

Section 3 - Textual Challenges to Inclusivism: The Case for Contemplation

If Aristotle were an inclusivist, then the internal problems with the theory would serve to undermine the plausibility of his theory of well-being. However, I will argue that there is textual evidence within EN to suggest that Aristotle is not an inclusivist. Of course, inclusivists are aware of these passages and attempt to fit them within their own readings of the text, but I will maintain that these attempts are not ultimately successful. Instead, I will argue that Aristotle

holds that one activity, contemplation, stands above all others as the most final and self-sufficient good. This view is called intellectualism, and the main passages in EN that seem to support it are in EN VI and X. I will deal with them in reverse order. However, intellectualism, on its face, makes the problem of immoralism worse than inclusivism, so it, by itself, will not constitute a satisfactory reading of Aristotle's theory of well-being.

3.1: Book X.7

After spending much of the EN discussing the moral life, Aristotle turns his attention to the contemplative life at the very end of his work. At the beginning of EN X.7, Aristotle states that:

If happiness is activity in accordance with excellence, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest excellence; and this will be that of the best thing in us. Whether it be intellect or something else that is this element which is thought to be our natural ruler and guide and to take thought of things noble and divine, whether it be itself also divine or only the most divine element in us, the activity of this in accordance with its proper excellence will be complete happiness. That this activity is contemplative we have already said (EN X.7 1177a11-18).

Right from the start, Aristotle asserts that it is specifically contemplation that constitutes “complete happiness”. He argues that the activity is the “divine or the most divine element in us”, and that contemplation is most closely associated with our intellect (*nous*), which Aristotle associates most closely with our self in EN IX (EN IX.8 1168b29-1169a19). Given that we are our intellects, Aristotle suggests that the good of the intellect is what is truly the best thing for us. Furthermore, in EN X.7, Aristotle strongly identifies complete happiness with contemplation and not practical rationality. He gives a number of arguments for why contemplation has the privileged status that it does.

The first argument he gives is that contemplation is “most continuous, since we can contemplate truth more continuously than we can *do* anything” (EN X.7 1177a22-23). Aristotle asserts that contemplation is an activity that one can engage in for long periods of time without stopping. This would thus be a temporal argument on Aristotle’s part. Most activities require breaks and cannot be sustained for long. Aristotle may want to argue that contemplation is something that we can do without breaks. He further argues that “the activity of wisdom [*sophia*] is admittedly the pleasantest of excellent activities; at all events philosophy is thought to offer pleasures marvelous for their purity and their enduringness, and it is expected that those who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who inquire” (EN X.7 1177a23-27). This may be connected to the continuous criterion given its reference to the alleged uninterrupted pleasure of contemplation. This argument is reminiscent of Socrates’ argument in favor of philosophy in *Republic IX* (Republic IX 586a-b), and many readers of both the *Republic* and EN are dubious of it. However, the critical takeaway here should be that Aristotle clearly thinks that contemplation is superior to all other activities. Unlike what inclusivists assert, Aristotle himself argues directly here that contemplation is the best activity for humans based on his continuous criterion.

Aristotle also references the self-sufficiency criterion (which he also referenced in EN I). He argues that contemplation is more self-sufficient than ethical activity because it requires less external goods to perform. Aristotle notes that “the wise man, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow-workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient” (EN X.7 1177a29-1177b1). While he does not go quite as far as Socrates in the *Phaedo* (where he famously asserts that the body is an

impediment to contemplation), Aristotle does maintain that contemplation requires minimal external goods like wealth, honor, or even friends.

It is at this point that Aristotle begins to explain why theoretical rationality is superior to practical rationality in some important ways. He notes that “the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others is in the same case” (EN X.7 1177a30-34). In order to perform ethical actions, people need large quantities of the kinds of external goods that contemplation does not need. Without them, there would be no way to be generous, courageous, or just. As the old proverb goes, “If one wants to be generous, it is good to be rich.” Courageous people need enemies to fight against; just people need material goods and honors to distribute; temperate people need passions to control. Thus, ethical activity will not make life happy and worth living by itself, given that it requires many other goods. In contrast, contemplation requires minimal external goods. A philosopher does not need a great deal of material possessions in order to contemplate. According to EN I.7, happiness should make life worth living without (or with as little) additional goods as possible (EN I.7 1097b14-17), and insofar as ethical activity is less self-sufficient than contemplation, then it is not as choiceworthy as contemplation.

Aristotle continues to contrast practical and theoretical rational activity in his discussion of the third criterion: the finality criterion. Aristotle asserts that contemplation is more final or complete than ethical activity, which means that it better comports with the final criterion from EN I.7. As he explains, “and this activity [contemplation] alone would seem to be loved for its own sake; for nothing arises from it apart from the contemplating, while from practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action” (EN X.7 1177b1-4). In EN I.7, Aristotle said that

happiness is not desirable for the sake of anything beyond itself. He indicates here that this is true of contemplation. Apparently, *theoria* is useless in the sense that it is not a means to any other good: “the activity of the intellect, which is contemplative, seems both to be superior in worth [to practical activity] and to aim at no end beyond itself” (EN X.7 1177b19-20).

Contemplating the “highest things” is simply intrinsically valuable. However, Aristotle indicates here that this is not the case with ethical and political activity.

In fact, Aristotle argues that ethical and political activity is not something that would be pursued in any and all circumstances. He notes that:

Now the activity of the practical excellences is exhibited in political and military affairs, but the actions concerned with these seem to be unpleasurable. Warlike actions are completely so (for no one chooses to be at war, or provokes, war for the sake of being at war; any one would seem absolutely murderous if he were to make enemies of his friends in order to bring about battle and slaughter; but the action of the statesman is also unpleasurable, and—apart from the political action itself—aims at despotic power and honours, or at all events happiness, for him and his fellow citizens—a happiness different from political action, and evidently sought as being different (EN X.7 1177b6-15).

Aristotle considers the greatest practical excellences to be found in war and politics. He argues that war is something that no one but the most depraved would find intrinsically valuable and that politics is also aimed at a certain kind of happiness beyond itself. Indeed, given his strong rejection of war’s intrinsic value, it seems as though he is suggesting that practical activity might not even be valuable for its own sake at all (thus reducing it to a mere means to other goods). On the face of it, it seems as though this passage represents strong (and perhaps decisive) evidence that contemplation is the best possible activity in Aristotle’s theory of happiness and well-being. However, there are other sections of EN X.7 that challenge this reading. I will consider these passages and the two ways of interpreting them that would undermine the notion that contemplation is the highest good for Aristotle.

After his strong endorsement of contemplation as the highest good, he admits that

such a life would be too high for man; for it is not in so far as he is man that he will live so, but in so far as something divine is present in him; and by so much as this is superior to our composite nature is its activity superior to that which is the exercise of the other kind of excellence. If the intellect is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with the human life. (EN X.7 1177b27-28).

Many commentators have pointed to this passage to argue that in fact Aristotle does not think of the contemplative life as a human life.³³ They argue that this helps explain why Aristotle focuses so much more on practical activity and rationality in EN and EE than he does on theoretical rationality. In other words, they point to this passage as a way to mitigate the impact of EN X.7-8. Contemplation is in some abstract or cosmic sense the highest good (divine happiness), but the human good/human happiness is still practical rationality (or a combination of practical rationality and other goods). I will consider two ways in which commentators have taken this passage to undermine the notion that contemplation is the highest human good.

The first of these interpretations takes the passage to suggest that the contemplative life is simply impossible for humans to achieve.³⁴ Contemplation may be the highest activity, but it is beyond human capabilities to reach it. On this reading, humans must settle for less grandiose goals than contemplation. Humans must be concerned with what is in our own grasp. The limit of human capabilities helps explain why Aristotle does not focus more on contemplation as the human good throughout the ethics. He references to theoretical rationality in EN X simply to

³³ Examples of such commentators include Roche (1995), Bush (2008), Dahl (2011), and Thorsrud (2015).

³⁴ See Thorsrud (2015) 355 for an example of this view. Harald Thorsrud, "Aristotle's Dichotomous Anthropology: What Is Most Human in the Nicomachean Ethics?" *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 48.3 (2015): 355.

note at the end of his project that there are indeed higher things than human affairs in his universe.

However, given the body of evidence, it seems clear that divine and human happiness are qualitatively similar, or at least that divine happiness is something appropriate for human beings to pursue. Aristotle says that happiness is the human good, and further argues that animals are incapable of happiness because they are not rational (EN I.9 1099b32-1100a1). In fact, the fact that Aristotle identifies that happiness and the intellect with the divine simply suggests that human beings share something in common with the gods. It does not require that we separate human and divine happiness in some sort of qualitative way.

In fact, there is strong evidence that Aristotle identifies contemplation with happiness, both in Book X and Book VI. In EN X.8, Aristotle argues that:

happiness extends, then, just as far as contemplation does, and those to whom contemplation more fully belongs are more truly happy, not accidentally, but in virtue of the contemplation; for this is in itself precious. Happiness, therefore, must be some form of contemplation (EN X.8 1178b28-32).

At the end of EN, Aristotle presents an outlook that seems strongly to favor a kind of intellectual life (insofar as it is possible for human beings to engage in). He essentially says that happiness is co-extensive with contemplation, or perhaps more strongly, asserts an essential relationship between contemplation and happiness. Aristotle suggests in this passage that happiness is a kind of contemplation. Nowhere in this passage does Aristotle qualify that he is talking about divine happiness. Indeed, he tells his audience that they will be happy insofar as they contemplate. It thus becomes difficult to see how we can separate human happiness from divine happiness.

This passage suggests that happiness, as Aristotle has used the term throughout EN and EE, is contemplation. Contemplation is not some free-floating form of happiness far above human affairs. There would be no significance in asserting that contemplation and happiness were co-extensive if he simply had a special, non-human definition of happiness in mind. Indeed, he shouldn't have said something like this at all. Rather, he should have argued that there was a demarcation between what is proper to humans and what is proper to the gods. If he truly wanted to separate human happiness from divine happiness (in terms of what each kind of being should pursue, or what makes their respective lives go well), asserting that happiness and contemplation travel together would be a vague equivocation. The dichotomy (if it existed) should have precluded him from making such a broad claim (given that there would be two distinct kinds of happiness).

Furthermore, if Aristotle thought that divine happiness was irrelevant for human happiness, why would he discuss it at all in the context of his ethical writings? He explicitly says that animals cannot participate in happiness because they have no part in rationality (EN I.9 1099b32-1100a1). Aristotle thus never asserts that perception or growth are identical to happiness at any point in the ethics. He does not advocate pursuing these activities for their own sake in the same way that he does with contemplation. If contemplation truly fit into the same category as sense perception and growth, then there would be no reason for Aristotle to tell his readers that it is co-extensive with happiness (or worth pursuing for its own sake).

Moreover, Aristotle uses the same word (*eudaimonia*) that he has throughout his ethical writings and identifies it with contemplation. It would be strange for Aristotle not to qualify his

use of happiness here as divine (and not human) happiness given that he has used *eudaimonia* as a technical term for human happiness throughout the ethics.

Aristotle's discussion of the kinds of activities the gods engage in also jeopardizes the notion that human and divine happiness are distinct from each other. In these passages, Aristotle goes through a number of practical activities and concludes that it is ridiculous for the gods to engage in them. He argues that it would be ridiculous to think of the gods working to "make contracts and return deposits" just so they can participate in "acts of justice" or "confronting dangers" to engage in courageous actions (EN X.8 1178b13-15). They certainly would have no use for "temperate acts" because "they have no bad appetites" (EN X.8 1178b15-16)." Why would perfect beings need to participate in menial tasks like contract negotiations when they have everything they could possibly need? What possible adversaries would they have to overcome? Why would perfect beings have the kinds of appetites would they have that they would need to suppress or control? Thus, Aristotle concludes, the gods have no use for ethical or practical activity (EN X.8 1178b17-18). However, Aristotle notes that the gods must engage in *some* kind of activity, lest they be nothing more than inanimate objects: "Now if you take away from a living being action, and still more production, what is left but contemplation" (EN X.8 1178b20-21). Thus, the activity that is appropriate for the gods is theoretical rationality.

Aristotle examines a number of activities that humans participate in when considering whether or not the gods have need of *phronesis* and then contrasts that with contemplation. In other words, he considers practical and theoretical rationality as they occur in humans and considers whether or not they are worthy of the gods. His conclusion seems to be that one kind of activity that humans engage in (contemplation) is indeed appropriate for divine happiness.

Such an exercise demonstrates that there is not a qualitative difference between human and divine contemplation. When we combine this with Aristotle's assertion that happiness extends insofar as contemplation does, it is clear that human and divine happiness are qualitatively the same. Contemplation is happiness for both species.

Given the difficulties of the first interpretation of the passage, it is necessary to examine the second one. The second interpretation harkens back to the uniqueness criterion in EN I.7. Roche, for instance, notes that according to EN X.7 the human good needs to be something that we do not share with other living organisms.³⁵ As such, because we share contemplation with God, it is actually practical rationality that is the true human good. Divine happiness is not relevant to human lives in the same way that human happiness is.

There are a few responses to Roche's argument. One is that what Aristotle means in EN I.7 that rationality is unique to human beings amongst all other mortal animals. One might immediately wonder why Aristotle didn't say this exactly if that's what he meant (a fair concern), but when we put his statement together with his assertion that contemplation and practical activity are kinds of rationality, it becomes hard to avoid. If Aristotle did not mean to say that contemplation (and rationality broadly) were specific to human organisms (and did not take into consideration the gods), then he shouldn't have identified rationality as unique to humans in EN I.7. Given what he believes about the gods, he wouldn't have been able to appeal to the uniqueness criterion to explain why rationality was the human function unless he meant to limit the scope of his comparison to other mortal organisms.

³⁵ Timothy Roche, "The Ultimate End of Action: A Critique of Richard Kraut's Aristotle on the Human Good," In *Crossroads of Norm and Nature: Essays on Aristotle's Ethics and Metaphysics*, ed. by May Sim (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1995): 132.

One of the strongest pieces of evidence that Aristotle still holds contemplation to be the most choiceworthy (in an ultimate sense) goal of human lives (and also to constitute human happiness) is the next few lines after he says that the contemplative life is more than human:

we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything (EN X.7 1177b31-1178a1).

Aristotle identifies the function of human beings as rational activity of the soul in accordance with virtue (EN I.7 1098a10-18). He also identifies reason and contemplation with the gods. This anthropology suggests that humans have both a divine and mortal nature. Insofar as human beings have the capacity to engage in divine activities, they should. In other words, the divine should not be separated from the human, given that humanity's capacity for reason is (in some important way) a disposition towards godliness. It does not make sense to separate human and divine happiness (in the sense that what the gods engage in is somehow not proper to human beings and should be avoided in favor of other activities).³⁶ Rather, Aristotle probably means that the gods are more capable of completely and totally actualizing their capacity for reason (specifically contemplation) than human beings are. They know more than we know, and they live (and thus can contemplate) perfectly and forever. Thus, the difference between humans and gods (and thus human and divine happiness) is one of degree, not kind.

Most straightforwardly, it would be nonsense for Aristotle to tell his audience to engage in contemplation as much as possible if it were not proper for human beings to pursue (or if there were more important activities to engage in). This is clear evidence that contemplation is the

³⁶There is a sense in which moral excellence is *merely* human and theoretical excellence is not. I will discuss this more in the next section.

most choiceworthy and highest activity available to human beings and takes a place of special important within his ethical and prudential theory.

Acknowledging the qualitative similarity between the divine and human contemplation allows for EN X.7 to fit with the rest of EN, even if most of the work is devoted to moral virtue and practical rationality. Aristotle adamantly identified virtuous rational activity as the human good in EN I.7 and spent the rest of his work delving into considerations surrounding this insight. Asserting that we need to pursue something beyond what he had already talked about in the rest of EN undermines the importance of his entire work. If we should strain to do something that is beyond our nature, there would be no point in attempting to explain in great detail why we should live within it.

A critic might ask why humans don't also necessarily have to engage in animalistic activities for their own sakes, which is a fair question. One possibility is basically that when Aristotle is referencing uniqueness in EN I, he means that humans are unique from other animals, not all metaphysical entities in the universe. Animal activities (sense perception, locomotion, etc.) are not unique to humans amongst living organisms with souls. Also, insofar as we need to engage in these activities, it will be in a way governed by reason, and thus they remain part of the human function in a way that they are not for animals. God is far beyond the realm of mortal existence, and thus humans are uniquely rational in the material, mortal world. In this way, activities like reproduction, sense perception, and locomotion can still be part of human rationality as constituent parts of moral virtue.

Thus, EN X.7 provides strong evidence that contemplation is the most choiceworthy human activity in some kind of ultimate sense. There is further evidence for this in the next chapter of EN, and it is to this that I will now turn.

3.2 : *Book X.8*

Aristotle continues to argue in EN X.8 that contemplation is the highest and most choiceworthy good. However, his first comments in this section seem to undermine some of my arguments in the previous section: namely, that contemplation is not human (but rather divine) happiness. Aristotle says that

Being connected with the passions also, the moral excellences must belong to our composite nature; and the excellences of our nature are human; so, therefore, are the life and the happiness which correspond to these. The excellence of the intellect is a thing apart (EN X.8 1178a19-22).

Admittedly, Aristotle clearly identifies moral excellence as human whereas the intellect is something different altogether. However, there are ways to read this passage that do not undermine my own reading of the text. First, Aristotle seems to mean by “human” in this passage something with a dual nature: namely, that of an embodied creature with a body and a mind. In this sense, the moral excellence would be most “human” because they engage with both the rational and non-rational aspects of the human soul.³⁷

However, Aristotle then continues to say that the intellect is “a thing apart” from this; that is, it is apart from our dual or composite nature. The intellect (and one of its excellences, theoretical rationality) is seated in the rational part of the soul and is not associated with the non-

³⁷ Aristotle considers planets a kind of animal. They also engage in a kind of rational activity. It seems blasphemous to suggest that planets and humans are of the same species (given the formers’ divine associations), but this may be an implication of Aristotle’s taxonomy of organisms. Then again, given that planets are immortal and humans are not, this may serve as a distinguishing feature that separates them in kind from human beings.

rational aspect of the soul (passions, desires, etc.). That does not mean that the intellect is somehow beyond human beings. Humans obviously have an intellect, and Aristotle never argues that it is improper to engage in theoretical excellence (indeed, he says the opposite). Again, Aristotle says that rational activity considered as a whole is the human good in EN I, which would imply that all species thereof would be included in human happiness. Rather, it seems as though what he means in this passage is that moral excellence is *merely* human (in that it is proper to humans because of their composite nature), but not that there are no other kinds of excellence that are proper to humans. This would mean, in a different manner of speaking, that theoretical wisdom/excellence is in fact a kind of human happiness (in that it is an excellence that human beings can achieve). We might also say that the human good is not merely human happiness, but also includes divine happiness as well.

The Greek also supports this reading. The ROT translates *anthropikae* as “human” in the passage above, but the connotation of the word is “all too human.”³⁸ That is to say, Aristotle

³⁸In Plato’s *Sophist*, the adjective “anthropikon” is used in the following passage: “Imitation of the contrary-speech-producing, insincere, and unknowing sort, of the appearance-making kind of copy-making, the word-juggling part of production that’s marked off as **human** [my emphasis] and not divine. Anyone who says the sophist is of this ‘blood and family’ will be saying, it seems, the complete truth” (268c6-268d2). This passage clearly illustrates the sense that being human in this context is limited and deficient when compared to the divine perspective, which almost identical to what Aristotle says in much of EN X.7-8. When Aristotle himself uses this term in EN, he uses it to refer to activities that we associate with natural human tendencies or dispositions, some of which are not positive. For instance, he says that “irrational passions are thought no less **human** than reason is,” which denotes a kind of ambiguous status for human impulses (EN III.1 1111b1). In his discussion of good temper, he notes that “we oppose the excess rather than the defect; for not only is it commoner (since revenge is more **human**), but bad-tempered people are worse to live with” (EN IV.5 1126a29-31). That is, bad temper is worse than too mild a temper even though it is “more human”. What I take Aristotle to mean here is that it is more common or natural to feel the need for too much revenge than too little. This, however, does not make the excess preferable, and in fact makes it worse. This is clear indication that *anthropikos* does not denote “humanness” in a positive light, and in fact refers to some of the pitfalls and shortcomings of human behavior. Finally, Aristotle offers this observation in EN IX.7: “but it is quite like **human** nature; for most people are forgetful, and are more anxious to be well treated than to treat others well” (1167b26-28). This is not the kind of human nature that Aristotle bases his ethics on. Rather, this is a reference to an unfortunate tendency of human behavior and psychology that should be corrected, and thus also has the air of “all too human.”

seems to be lamenting the limitations of humans, which suggests that eternal contemplation would be good for humans if they were capable of achieving it.

Aristotle further explains what he means by this when he takes up the question of whether or not the gods have any use for *phronesis*. I have already reviewed this passage in conjunction with considerations about EN X.7, but it is worth pointing out that here that Aristotle's appeal to the activities that the gods engage in (or do not engage in) helps explain why he believes that humans who contemplate are most beloved by the gods (EN X.8 1179a23-24).³⁹ This does not represent some kind of appeal to divine command theory at the end of EN. Rather, Aristotle has imagined what beings without any sort of constraints would engage in and then concluded that the only activity appropriate to them is contemplation. As such, he expects that they would look most favorably upon people who come closest to their own lives (that is, on those who contemplate). While this final portion of EN X.8 may on some level be prudential, it is still grounded in a broader argument about what is the best activity in a vacuum.

3.3 : *Book VI*

Many commentators have noted the importance of EN X.7-8 for the intellectualist case. Another key component of this case is found in EN VI.12-13. Aristotle specifically refers to the intrinsic value of *sophia* and *phronesis* and their relationship to happiness. This is especially important, because it begins to explain what the relationship between the two species of

³⁹ It should be noted that Aristotle does not explicitly endorse the notion that the gods care about human activity. Indeed, he discussion of the unmoved mover would suggest that it does not. However, it is beyond the scope of this project to consider these questions extensively.

rationality entails. In this section, I will examine the key passages in EN VI where Aristotle explains the part that practical and theoretical rational activity play in the ultimate human good.

Towards the end of EN VI, Aristotle explains that both theoretical and practical wisdom “are the excellences of the two parts of the soul respectively, even if neither of them produces anything” (EN VI.12 1144a1-3). At this point, there is a dispute about the proper translation (because the Greek is ambiguous), so I will provide the ROT alongside Martin Ostwald’s:

Secondly, they do produce something, not as the art of medicine produces health, however, but as health produces health; so does wisdom produce happiness; for, being a part of excellence entire, by being possessed and by actualizing itself it makes a man happy. Again, the function of man is achieved only in accordance with practical wisdom as well as moral excellence; for excellence makes the aim aright, and practical wisdom the things leading to it (ROT EN VI.12 1144a4-9).

Secondly, they do in fact produce something: theoretical wisdom produces happiness, not as medicine produces health, but as health itself makes a person healthy. For since theoretical wisdom is one portion of virtue in its entirety, possessing and actualizing it makes a man happy. In the third place, a man fulfills his proper function only by way of practical wisdom and moral excellence or virtue: virtue makes us aim at the right target, and practical wisdom makes us use the right means.⁴⁰

The ROT suggests that both *phronesis* and *theoria* produce happiness in the same way that health produces health, whereas the Ostwald translation indicates that only theoretical rationality has this relationship to happiness. I take Aristotle to mean that something is almost a synonym to happiness (whether it only be theoretical wisdom or practical wisdom as well). Contemplation certainly bears an essential relationship to happiness. Given the discrepancy, it is necessary to examine the Greek closely:

πρῶτον μὲν οὖν λέγωμεν ὅτι καθ’ αὐτὰς ἀναγκαῖον αἰρετὰς αὐτὰς εἶναι, ἀρετὰς γ’ οὐσας ἑκατέραν ἑκατέρου τοῦ μορίου, καὶ εἰ μὴ ποιούσι μηδὲν μηδετέρα αὐτῶν.

⁴⁰Ostwald EN VI.12 1144a4-9. I will also note that both translations say that the function of humans is “only” achieved through practical rationality and moral virtue. There is no word in the Greek that directly corresponds to this translation choice.

ἔπειτα καὶ ποιοῦσι μὲν, οὐχ ὡς ἡ ἰατρικὴ δὲ ὑγίαιαν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἡ ὑγίαια, οὕτως ἡ σοφία εὐδαιμονίαν: μέρος γὰρ οὐσα τῆς ὅλης ἀρετῆς τῷ ἔχασθαι ποιεῖ καὶ ἴτῳ ἐνεργεῖν εὐδαιμόνα. ἔτι τὸ ἔργον ἀποτελεῖται κατὰ τὴν φρόνησιν καὶ τὴν ἠθικὴν ἀρετὴν: ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρετὴ τὸν σκοπὸν ποιεῖ ὀρθόν, ἡ δὲ φρόνησις τὰ πρὸς τοῦτον. (EN VI.12 1144a4-9).

It is clear that Aristotle thinks that both *phronesis* and *sophia* produce something because ποιοῦσι is the plural form of the verb. However, “οὕτως ἡ σοφία εὐδαιμονίαν” suggests that it is *sophia* which produces happiness as ὑγίαια produces ὑγίαια. That is, the text suggests that there is an extremely close relationship between theoretical excellence and happiness. While *sophia* is a virtue, and thus would not constitute happiness by itself, Aristotle seems to indicate that excellent theoretical activity shares a kind of essential relationship with happiness.⁴¹ In the case of *phronesis*, Aristotle says that the human ἔργον [function] is achieved κατὰ τὴν φρόνησιν (“in accordance with practical wisdom”), and that *phronesis* selects the correct means towards which we achieve our goals. Nowhere does Aristotle suggest that practical wisdom shares the same relationship with happiness as does theoretical wisdom. In other words, Ostwald’s translation seems to be closer to the actual Greek text.

Given the plausibility of the Ostwald translation, this passage provides strong evidence for the centrality of theoretical wisdom for the good life. Aristotle asserts that there is some sort of analytic relationship between contemplation and happiness when he says that the former produces the latter as health “produces” health. It is as though happiness is by definition contemplation. Practical wisdom is the (indispensable) means by which we determine how to achieve the function of human beings, whereas virtue makes us aim at the right target. This does

⁴¹That is, it might be the case that *sophia* is a necessary constituent to happiness.

not suggest the same kind of relationship between the human function (which Aristotle defines as happiness in EN I) as in the case of contemplation.

A critic of my view might argue that even if I am right about the translation, the further implication that contemplation is the human good is unfounded because it is virtue that “makes the goal right.” This could mean that virtue, and not contemplation, is the ultimate goal of human action, given that it causes humans to pursue the correct goal; perhaps it makes the goal right because it is the right goal. However, this is not the case. Making the goal right is different from being the actual goal. It seems to be the case that virtue (as a kind of habituated character state) is what causes human beings to pick out or move towards the right goal even if it is not the goal itself. It is the difference between an archer’s steady aim and hitting a bullseye. The steady aim is what enables her to hit her intended target, but it is in fact the target that is the goal (and not the steady aim). So it seems to be with practical and theoretical activity.

Aristotle continues the medical analogy later in EN VI.13 when explaining that *phronesis*:

is not *supreme* over wisdom [*sophia*], i.e., over the superior part of us, any more than the art of medicine is over health; for it does not use it but provides for its coming to being; it issues orders, then for its sake, but not to it. Further, to maintain its supremacy would be like saying that the art of politics rules the gods because it issues orders about all the affairs of the state (EN VI.13 1145a7-11).

This is clear evidence that *phronesis* is responsible for the acquisition of *sophia* in the same way that medicine is responsible for the acquisition of health. Given that health clearly has priority over medicine (in the sense that medicine derives its value from health), it appears as though practical wisdom is subservient to theoretical wisdom. However, this passage (and larger problems surrounding the role of *phronesis*) will be the subject of the next chapter. It is

sufficient now to note that Aristotle seems to extend his analogy about medicine further to suggest (at least in part) some sort of means/ends relationship between contemplation and practical activity.

There are important parallels between what he says here and EN 7-8 in that he associates contemplation with the divine. In these two passages in EN VI, Aristotle further suggests that politics (which as we know from EN I.2 and EN X.7-8 is the greatest of the practical activities), is charged with acquiring things for a happy city. Contemplation is never given some task beyond itself to accomplish, which is significant given how important the finality criterion is in both EN I.7 and X.7. Indeed, that contemplation by itself constitutes happiness is strong evidence that it is also self-sufficient. That is, if one possesses theoretical wisdom that is enough to constitute happiness (at least in some way). It does not need anything else (or far less than anything else) to ensure a good life. Insofar as contemplation meets the finality and the self-sufficient criteria, it is strong evidence that it is the most choiceworthy activity human beings can engage in (given that according to these passages *phronesis* is not final).

Some commentators have looked at this passage and suggested that Aristotle does not mean to say that practical wisdom (and activity) is *merely* for the sake of theoretical wisdom (and thus contemplation). Ackrill, for instance, argues that this passage leaves open the possibility that practical activity produces other things than contemplation.⁴² However, even if we grant Ackrill's reading, it does not change the fact that according to Aristotle practical wisdom is *less* final than theoretical wisdom. As Aristotle noted in EN I.7, there are a number of different activities or goods that we value for their own sake ("honour, pleasure, reason, and

⁴² Ackrill, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia," 30

every other excellence”) and for the sake of something beyond them (EN I.7 1097b1-2). It is happiness that is desired solely for its own sake, and contemplation seems to fit that bill.⁴³ Furthermore, Ackrill’s reading does not take into account the analogy to medicine that Aristotle uses in this passage. Medicine is not useful beyond its ability to produce health; if Aristotle did not mean to suggest that practical rationality was solely responsible for securing contemplation, he wouldn’t have used an analogy to a craft and its end.⁴⁴ Indeed, the medical analogy comports with Aristotle’s assertion that contemplation is the essence of happiness whereas practical rationality makes us aim at the correct end. The language here indicates that there is an important way in which practical rationality is subservient and less final than theoretical rationality.

Another question that this passage raises is in what way practical activity might aim at contemplation. At first blush, this seems somewhat strange, especially considering what Aristotle says in other parts of the ethics. If you ask a soldier what the purpose of their courageous actions are, they are unlikely to tell you that it is “contemplation” or “theoretical wisdom”. Indeed, there doesn’t seem to be any moral virtues whose direct consequence or end is the achievement of theoretical rational activity. What seems likely here is that Aristotle envisions further goals for practical activity beyond the immediate or local goal that any particular action or virtue aims at. This is intuitively plausible in the case of many of these activities, such as household management (one of Aristotle’s favorite practical activities). When going to the grocery store, there is an obvious immediate goal for the trip. However, securing

⁴³ Indeed, because of what he says about contemplation both here and in EN X, I suspect that when Aristotle says that “reason” is valuable for its own sake and for the sake of something else, he specifically has practical reason in mind. Whenever he discusses theoretical reason, he always says that it is totally useless (and thus complete/final).

⁴⁴ Or at least he would have picked a craft whose value is not exhausted by the product it makes.

food for the upcoming week should itself be situated in the broader context of running a profitable and happy household.

This intuition receives some support from Aristotle's specific discussion of *phronesis* earlier in Book VI:

Now it is thought to be a mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect, e.g. about what sorts of thing conduce to health or to strength, but about what sorts of things conduce to the good life in general. This is shown by the fact that we credit men with a view to some good end which is one of these that are not the object of any art. Thus in general the man who is capable of deliberating has practical wisdom (EN VI.5 1140a24-30).

According to this passage, practical wisdom (and its corresponding activity, deliberation) make holistic and meta-level decisions about what particular actions or activities make for a good life. That is, practical wisdom presumably makes decisions about what virtuous activity to engage in and when. For instance, it might make determinations about when it is best to fight in battle or study in school. The goal is to live the best life possible, and this involves figuring out what to do and when to do it.

Aristotle's account of the subservient relationship between practical and theoretical rationality could take on a similar structure. The exact nature of this structure (that is, the ways in which practical rational activity could be useful for contemplation) will be the subject of the next chapter. It is sufficient at this point to note that the textual evidence from EN VI and EN X strongly point to the primacy of contemplation in Aristotle's theory of the good life. Aristotle clearly states that practical rationality is not as complete or choiceworthy (all things considered) as contemplation, which undermines Ackrill's kind of inclusivism.

4 - Conclusion

I have argued to this point that inclusivism that gives no special place to contemplation cannot account for several key passages within EN. This by itself would be sufficient to rule it out as an interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the good life. However, I also noted that it potentially introduces the problem of immoralism into Aristotle's theory of happiness as well. Aristotle does not differentiate between well-being/happiness on one hand and morality on the other in the way that later philosophers like Kant would. Aristotle does not seem to even consider the possibility that being morally virtuous would potentially make someone's life worse. While he does believe that harm can come to the good person (contra Socrates), he does not think that there is any situation in which "hateful and mean" actions (including vice) would make the life of the good man better.⁴⁵ This is the operative assumption of the EN, and so it is necessary for any interpretation of the EN to incorporate it along with the three criteria for happiness and the standard requirement of textual fidelity. It is thus necessary to examine other prominent interpretations of Aristotle to see if they can meet these challenges. It is to these theories (in particular intellectualism), that I will now turn.

⁴⁵ EN I.10 1100b31-1101a7: "If activities are, as we said, what determines the character of life, no blessed man can become miserable; for he will never do the acts that are hateful and mean. For the man who is truly good and wise, we think, bears all the chances of life becomingly and always makes the best of circumstances, as a good general makes the best military use of the army at his command and a shoemaker makes the best shoes out of the hides that are given him; and so with all other craftsmen. And if this is the case, the happy man can never become miserable."

Chapter 2

Thus far in my project, I have argued that inclusivism has substantial philosophical and textual problems that undermine its viability as an interpretation of Aristotle. Inclusivism cannot explain why particular goods should be chosen over others, which is a problem when some of those goods are moral virtue and moral vice. Any theory of the good should be able to explain why moral behavior is better or more correct than immoral behavior, and inclusivism is unable to do this. Furthermore, Aristotle says in a number of places that contemplation is more choiceworthy than practical rationality, so inclusivism also does not sufficiently cohere to the key texts in question. Insofar as EN VI and X suggest that contemplation is the best human activity, a successful interpretation of Aristotle must take this into account. In its attempts to satisfy Aristotle's self-sufficiency criterion, it fails to account for his finality and uniqueness criteria, which are foundational to why Aristotle believes contemplation to be the greatest human activity.

Given the textual and philosophical problems with standard inclusivism, intellectualism looks like a promising alternative; it holds that contemplation is the most choiceworthy activity for Aristotle, and thus can make sense of the passages where he indicates that this is the case. There are inclusivists who agree with intellectualists that contemplation is the highest good in Aristotle but maintain that it is merely the best part of a good life that will include other intrinsically valuable goods. It is thus not surprising that many of the most prominent commentators on Aristotle's ethical writings fall within these two camps. Relatedly, those that hold that contemplation is the highest good for Aristotle can account for this in terms of the three criteria that Aristotle lays out for happiness in EN I. Contemplation is the most self-sufficient

and final activity, according to EN X. Furthermore, it is unique to humans, and can thus satisfy the uniqueness criterion.⁴⁶

However, intellectualism has trouble dealing with other passages in EN that seem to suggest that practical rationality and moral virtue are intrinsically valuable in Aristotle. If this is the case, then intellectualism will suffer from the same problem of immoralism that plagued inclusivism while also ignoring important sections of EN. The purpose of this chapter will be to trace how intellectualists and others who place contemplation at the pinnacle of Aristotle's goods have attempted to deal with these problems. In Section 1, I will begin by reviewing key selections from EN where Aristotle discusses the intrinsic value of practical rationality; I will then discuss how prominent intellectualists have interpreted these passages so as to make them compatible with intellectualism. Subsequently in Section 2, I will make a slight alteration to these moves and argue that practical rationality is just as much a species of rationality as contemplation, though it is only conditionally valuable in certain contexts. In Section 3, I will discuss how moral virtue can lead to contemplation, which would thus justify its importance even on an intellectualist position, and then explain how it differs from technical crafts in Section 4. However, this by itself will not be enough to rule out immoralism and justify Aristotle's concern with other-directed moral virtues (which I will also refer to as "moral virtues"). This means that intellectualists and inclusivists who hold that contemplation is the best human activity have potentially made it too self-sufficient for Aristotle's theory of the good life. I will argue in Section 5 that if contemplation by itself were entirely sufficient for living a good life, then it will have no use for moral virtue or *phronesis* in situations where they might interfere with

⁴⁶This is not actually the case. Gods, after all, contemplate. However, it is beyond the scope of this project to delve into this question more. As a brief side note, contemplation is at least the unique purview of rational beings.

philosophy, which Aristotle's writings will not allow. Therefore, I will present another addendum to moral instrumentalism in the following chapter that will serve to complete my interpretation of Aristotle's theory of happiness.

Section 1 – The Intrinsic Value of Practical Rationality

Intellectualism holds that contemplation is the highest good in Aristotle's theory of well-being and the good life. However, Aristotle says on multiple occasions practical rationality has intrinsic value. In EN I.7, Aristotle says that the "human good turns out to be activity of the soul in conformity with excellence" (EN I.7 1098a16-17). Later in EN VI, he also says that *phronesis* "must be a reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regard to human goods" (EN VI.5 1140b20-21). This implies that the ability to deliberate well about human affairs is a kind of rationality. If practical rationality (and more precisely reasoning well about goals) is a kind of rationality, then it presumably has intrinsic value as a kind of rationality. This is in fact what Aristotle indicates about moral action. One of the clearest examples of a passage where Aristotle says that virtuous ethical activity is valuable for its own sake is in EN II. In EN II, Aristotle outlines some criteria for morally virtuous action. He argues that being a virtuous person is more than simply doing the right thing. Rather,

Actions, then, are called just or temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate man would do; but it is not the man who does these that is just and temperate, but the man who does them *as* just and temperate men do them (EN II.4 1105b5-7).

This looks almost tautological, but he seems to mean that being virtuous is akin to being literate, in that one must write "in accordance with the grammatical knowledge within himself" (EN II.4 1105a25). Anyone could copy a word that they see; however, that does not make someone literate. In order to be literate, a person must understand the written characters and have the skill

to produce them in a meaningful way. So it is with virtuous action. Virtuous activity is similar to a craft or skill that someone must master before they can be called virtuous. In order for someone to be virtuous:

In the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchanging character (EN II.4 1105a31-1105b1).

Thus, we see two important features of virtuous action that any interpretation of Aristotle's theory of morality and well-being must account for. One is that the agent must choose ethical action for its intrinsic value; furthermore, it must come from a kind of character state or disposition to do the right thing. Aristotle explicitly says in Book VI that both theoretical and practical virtue "are the excellences of the two parts of the soul respectively, even if neither of them produces anything" (EN VI.12 1144a1-3). Thus, we see in a number of places that Aristotle holds that excellent practical activity is valuable for its own sake.

This presents an immediate question for intellectualism. If moral virtue is intrinsically valuable, what status does it hold next to contemplation? Unlike certain contingent goods, Aristotle clearly says that it is valuable in and of itself. While there is no direct contradiction between holding moral virtue to be of secondary importance and intrinsically valuable, the amount of time Aristotle devotes to it would suggest it is of paramount importance in the good life. After all, most of EN is devoted to moral, and not intellectual, virtue. It seems implausible to suggest that he believes that moral virtue and action are not worth pursuing at the end of the day in the face of opportunities for contemplation. One option in logical space is to concede that Aristotle does in fact find ethical activity intrinsically valuable, but that it is not as valuable or choiceworthy as contemplation. This, in fact, is the route that Richard Kraut takes. He argues that practical rationality and its virtue, *phronesis*, are a kind of secondary happiness that is still

choiceworthy in some situations. He gives the example of a son who has to choose between taking care of his ailing father and engaging in contemplation.⁴⁷ He argues that the son still should see to his father's needs because it is morally required and that the son still lives the second happiest kind of life because it involves a high degree of excellent ethical activity. Kraut suggests that we have this moral requirement because he has some normative reason to help other people engage in the highest amount of rational activity possible.⁴⁸ Even if the father is not a great philosopher or scientist, he perhaps can still live a happy life of practical rationality, and because of this it is worth it for the son to help his father. While Kraut admits that there are certain situations where maximal well-being and morality can come apart, he maintains that in cases like these we can still say that the son is engaging in a high degree of happiness via ethical activity.⁴⁹ If this is the case, then we can still make sense of the passages where Aristotle says that we must choose virtuous actions for their own sake.

Gabriel Richardson Lear, another intellectualist, has a similar view to Kraut. However, she argues that instead of being a kind of secondary happiness, practical rationality is an approximate happiness:

I will argue that morally virtuous action is, in Aristotle's account, a teleological approximation of contemplation... The excellent exercise of practical reason accompanied as it must be by the agreement of emotion and desire, grasps truth about the good in action as exactly as possible. In fact, grasping the truth is the practically wise person's aim... However, Aristotle believes that the project of grasping truth is more perfectly realized in the exercise of theoretical wisdom.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Richard Kraut, *Aristotle on the Human Good* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989): 85.

⁴⁸ Kraut, *Human Good*, 87

⁴⁹ Kraut, *Human Good*, 93

⁵⁰ Gabriel Richardson Lear, *Happy Lives and the Highest Good: An Essay on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004): 3-4.

According to Richardson Lear, excellent practical rationality is like contemplation in the sense that it is directed or oriented towards a kind of truth. When someone attempts to figure out what they should do in a given situation, they are trying to find the true or correct course of action. This means that practical rationality would be intrinsically valuable because it is analogous to theoretical rationality in terms of the pursuit of truth; at the same time, this account would still give primacy to theoretical rationality as a higher or more pure form of happiness.

1.2 – The Self-Sufficiency Criterion and Contemplation

This gives rise to questions about the self-sufficiency of happiness. If practical rationality is intrinsically valuable, then it seems like adding it to theoretical rationality would make life better. Indeed, insofar as Aristotle asserts that there are intrinsically valuable things such as honor and pleasure are valuable for their own sakes, how could it be the case that contemplation is self-sufficient?⁵¹ At least in the case of practical rationality, *phronesis* and excellent practical rational activity have to do with the regulation of these goods, whereas contemplation does not.⁵² It seems as though two intrinsically valuable things are more valuable than either one individually. If this is the case, then it seems as though intellectualists will not be able to meet one of Aristotle's basic requirements for happiness.

⁵¹ EN I.7: "for [happiness] we choose always for itself and never for anything else, but honour, pleasure, reason [*nous*], and every other excellence we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we would still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging through them we shall be happy." Aristotle does in fact say that these things are intrinsically valuable, but it is possible to be rational/morally virtuous without being entirely blessed or supremely happy if your luck is bad enough. Nonetheless, these things will always be good for the good person, and certainly better than vice. See my discussion of Tuozzo on powers and noble goods for a further consideration of the "intrinsic" value of honor, as well as my discussion of Priam in Chapter 3 for a further consideration of the necessity of moral virtue for the good life.

⁵² Temperance is the virtue involved with pleasure (EN II.7 1107b5), and proper pride with honor (EN 1107b22).

In response to this, Richardson Lear has offered an account of “self-sufficiency” that attempts to reconcile intellectualism with the self-sufficiency criterion. At first blush, it seems as though the human life includes many goods beyond contemplation, and that if a life had only contemplation, it would indeed lack something. If this is the case, then it seems as though the intellectualist interpretation would attribute a view to Aristotle that would not pass his own criterion for happiness. However, Richardson Lear argues that by self-sufficient, Aristotle does not mean that the good must by itself make life lack in nothing. Rather, she argues that self-sufficiency is related in important ways to finality. Happiness, according to Richardson Lear, is the kind of good whose presence makes life worth living and lacking in nothing if it can properly serve as the final good of a well-lived and fulfilled life.⁵³ While there are many lesser or subordinate goods in any conception of a happy life, the presence of happiness would necessarily (according to Lear’s Aristotle) give the life sufficient justification or reason for its existence or flourishing.⁵⁴ Thus, happiness would not be a good that by itself makes life lack in nothing, but rather a good that by itself would serve as an appropriate aim without any additional goal or end. Thus, contemplation could potentially pass the self-sufficiency test without any other good, and there is good reason to think that Aristotle believes contemplation to be just such a good (as covered earlier). Thus, we can see how intellectualism can jump this hurdle on its way towards interpretive viability.

As mentioned earlier, other commentators, such as Robert Heinaman, have noted that Aristotle himself says that contemplation meets his own self-sufficiency criterion in EN X.7:

⁵³ Gabriel Richardson Lear, *Happy Lives and the Highest Good*, 58.

⁵⁴ Other philosophers, such as Matthew Cashen (2012), have defended a similar view.

“And the self-sufficiency that is spoken of must belong most to the contemplative activity.”⁵⁵ If the self-sufficiency criterion ruled out contemplation, then it wouldn’t make sense for Aristotle to say that it was the most self-sufficient activity available to human beings. Kraut further notes that insofar as contemplation is happiness, it is not possible to add more happiness to a life without adding more contemplation.⁵⁶ If happiness extends as far as contemplation does, then adding practical rationality would be at best a sideways move. In other words, insofar as both theoretical and practical rationality are a kind of happiness (even if the latter is a secondary kind), a happy life could contain various mixtures of both and contain the same level of happiness throughout.

1.3 – The Finality Criterion and Contemplation

Intellectualists must also explain Aristotle’s pronouncement that there are other goods such as honor and pleasure that are intrinsically valuable. Insofar as other goods are in fact good, then it seems as though a good life would thus include those goods in addition to the intellectualist account of happiness (contemplation). In other words, the intellectualists must still explain why contemplation, and not some collection of contemplation and other goods, is the end and object of the happiest life. Why would Aristotle feel comfortable saying in EN X.7-8 that contemplation is the most choiceworthy good that lacks in nothing if other goods are genuine goods?

Fortunately, Tuozzo has offered an account of how the other goods that Aristotle mentions could be both valuable in their own right (understood in an Aristotelian way) and for

⁵⁵ R. Heinaman, “Eudaimonia and Self-sufficiency in the Nicomachean Ethics,” *Phronesis* 33, (1988): 45.

⁵⁶ Kraut, *Human Good*, 270-271

the sake of contemplation. Tuozzo reaches into the Peripatetic tradition to help explain the different kinds of goods that Aristotle has in mind when he discusses the finality criterion. Tuozzo points to Alexander of Aphrodisias and Arius Didymus in their commentaries on Aristotelian texts (some of which are lost) where they argue for four kinds of value in the Aristotelian system: auxiliary goods, powers, noble goods, and honored goods.⁵⁷

Auxiliary goods are those with what we would now call merely instrumental value.⁵⁸ In Aristotle's system, they are goods such as hammers, tables, or horse bridles. They are merely valuable for some other purpose or end. Powers are goods that are always useful or good in the hands of virtuous people. Tuozzo argues that goods such as money, honor, and good looks would fall into this category for Aristotle.⁵⁹ These goods are genuinely valuable for people who are capable of using them appropriately. For instance, a generous woman will always make good use of money in the service of her generous actions. In the Aristotelian metaphysical system, the powers serve as a kind of matter or material cause that the virtuous person imposes the proper "form" (virtuous action) upon.⁶⁰ However, it is also possible for vicious or incontinent people to use these goods for unworthy ends, and thus these goods are not unconditionally good. There is evidence for this sort of view in Aristotle given that he says at different times that wealth is and is not intrinsically valuable.⁶¹ Tuozzo and the Peripatetics have offered a framework that makes sense of these seemingly disparate statements from Aristotle.

⁵⁷ Thomas Tuozzo, "Aristotle's Theory of the Good and Its Causal Basis," *Phronesis* 40 (1995): 298.

⁵⁸ Tuozzo, "Causal Basis," 299

⁵⁹ Tuozzo, "Causal Basis," 302

⁶⁰ Tuozzo, "Causal Basis," 303

⁶¹ EN I.5 1096a5-6: "The life of money-making is one undertaken under compulsion, and wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else." Contrast with EN VII.4 1148a23-28, b2-4: "Now of appetites and pleasures some belong to the case of things generically noble and good—for some pleasant things are by nature worthy of choice—while others are contrary to these, and others are intermediate,

Noble goods, in contrast, are goods for Aristotle that are always good for the people who possess them in all circumstances.⁶² Practical virtues fall into this category. There is no situation in which possessing the virtue of courage or generosity would make the person who has them worse off. Virtuous character always makes human lives better. Lastly, honored goods are those that are those goods which are tied to an *arche* or first principle.⁶³ These goods are a first principle in the sense that they “command” or order the other goods in particular ways. This probably refers to something like how the end or goal of an activity will give meaning and purpose to all of the various aspects and motions of therein. For instance, in the case of chess, the “honored good” would be checkmate. The pursuit of checkmate directs or orders all of the player’s moves and strategy. The honored good is thus the final cause of other goods in Aristotle’s paradigm. Tuozzo notes that the only honored good for Aristotle is in fact contemplation.⁶⁴ Thus, Tuozzo’s account can help us understand how the other activities that Aristotle says are choiceworthy fit into an intellectualist interpretation, and thus how intellectualists can explain why contemplation is the most final activity in the Aristotelian system. If all other goods are ultimately useful for contemplation (in various ways and degrees), then it must clearly be the most final good available.⁶⁵

to adopt our previous distinction, e.g. wealth, gain, victory, and honour. And with reference to all objects whether of this or of the intermediate kind men are not blamed for being affected by them...There is no wickedness, then, with regard to these objects, for the reason named, viz. because each of them is by nature a thing worthy of choice for its own sake; yet excesses in respect of them are bad and to be avoided.”

⁶² Tuozzo, “Causal Basis,” 305

⁶³ Tuozzo, “Causal Basis,” 307

⁶⁴ Tuozzo, “Causal Basis,” 308

⁶⁵ Tuozzo’s discussion of the four kinds of goods in Aristotle helps to respond to concerns that Roche (2014) has raised about the place of external goods in the happy life. Roche notes that, according to Aristotle, deprivation of certain goods, such as noble birth, children, or good looks, can deprive someone of perfect happiness (Roche, “External Goods,” 47, 55; EN 1099a31-b8). If this is the case, he believes that these goods make a direction contribution to happiness, and that it is bizarre to suggest that something like good children could be merely useful for virtuous activity (Roche, “External Goods,” 49). While the extended-self thesis covered in the next chapter can in part help explain how children can still constitute our own virtuous activity without resorting to an objectionable

1.3 – Contemplation and Immoralism

Thus, we can see that the intellectualist interpretation can offer a reading of Aristotle that meets the finality and self-sufficiency criteria. Nonetheless, this may in fact present a problem in its own right. The interpretive strategy that Kraut and Richardson Lear employ jeopardizes the plausibility of Aristotle's ethical theory and clashes with Aristotle's own prohibition against vice. Most theories of the good look to explain why ethical action is worthwhile. It seems reasonable that a moral theory would encourage us to do the right thing, and thus most provide reasons for why this is the case. Contemplation is clearly not identical to moral action (nor does Aristotle suggest that it is), and yet intellectualism tells us that it is the highest good possible. Kraut's and Richardson Lear's reading suggests at first blush that intellectualism would prioritize theoretical excellence over practical excellence. This seems to make Aristotle's theory implausible as a normative theory. Most of us feel as though we have an obligation to follow important moral rules even when it does not obviously benefit us. Aristotle himself believes that the life of the virtuous man will not ever involve what is "hateful and mean," and further asserts that the good man (and not the bad man) will do best in both fortunate and unfortunate circumstances (EN I.10 1100b22-1101a7). In the case of the son of the sick father, Kraut's interpretation would imply that the son does in fact have reason to abandon his ailing father, which clearly seems like a vicious action. It is unclear why the son should choose the secondary happiness of practical excellence if theoretical excellence is also on the table. In the case of

egoism, Tuozzo's position can help us understand that goods need not merely be of intrinsic or instrumental value. Many goods are constitutive parts of happiness in the sense that they are the matter to the form of virtuous action. External goods like wealth, children, or friends are not divorced from virtuous action. They are indeed indispensable parts thereof. I will not delve into the exact metaphysics of the relationship between matter and form here, but there is no question that when the form properly governs its matter, there is one substance or activity, not two separate things.

Richardson Lear's reading, the same problem presents itself. If practical rationality is merely an approximation of a better kind of happiness in contemplation, why would the son choose the approximation over the real thing? As David Charles notes, it seems as though we would not have reason to pick the secondary/approximate happiness of ethical activity over the primary happiness of contemplation.⁶⁶ Thus, even if the intellectualists assigns a secondary kind of happiness or status to practical activity, it still does not justify giving up contemplation for practical excellence. The fear here is that the intellectualists have perhaps made contemplation too self-sufficient: it cannot, by itself, make life worth living lest we slide into a kind of immoralism. We will need to find a different interpretive strategy that will help us explain why we should do the moral thing even when it might force us to forgo contemplation.

Section 2 - *Phronesis* and *Theoria* as Species of Rational Excellence

In order to solve the puzzle of immoralism, it is necessary to carefully consider why Aristotle believes contemplation to be the highest good. Intellectualists are understandably drawn to the conclusion that contemplation is more valuable than ethical activity given what Aristotle says in EN X.7-8. However, his praise of contemplation is based on the ability to engage it in continuously, its self-sufficiency, and its finality. Focusing on the first and third of these criteria in conjunction with I.7 will help us see exactly why he thinks contemplation is more choiceworthy than ethical activity. Furthermore, it will help us understand the kind of value that Aristotle wants to accord practical rational activity.

⁶⁶D. Charles, "Aristotle on Well-Being and Intellectual Contemplation," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, sup. 73 (1999): 207.

The first criterion is the continuous nature of contemplation: “it is most continuous, since we can contemplate truth more continuously than we can *do* anything” (EN X.7 1177a22-23). It’s worth noting that this appears to be a quantitative metric of sorts. Contemplation as an activity is superior to practical activity because it is something we can engage with most continuously or with the least amount of interruption. This criterion, in other words, does not suggest by itself that contemplation is *qualitatively* more choiceworthy than practical activity. Indeed, in just analyzing this criterion, it seems clear that if it was not possible to continuously contemplate without the use of practical activities (eating, finding shelter, etc.) it would be rational for an agent to suspend contemplation to deal with the practical concerns. Aristotle’s argument here is more of a *ceteris partibus* requirement, which is important for discovering what the best activity would be in ideal conditions but not necessarily in every instance and at all times. It is important to know what the best life or activity looks like (as it gives us a goal to aim at), but this doesn’t mean that we always take part in it. To take a parallel example, someone might believe that being a movie critic and professional runner are of equal intrinsic value, but in the end decide to be a movie critic on the grounds that it is not possible to run as continuously as they can watch movies. In the end, it might be the case that the life of the movie critic has more intrinsic value given this life’s quantitative superiority. However, it does not follow from this that the movie critic would never go for a jog.⁶⁷

Aristotle also asserts that contemplation is more final than practical rationality because contemplation is not aimed at any further activity or goal beyond itself. In this sense, it is always

⁶⁷I admit that this criterion is not going to be compelling to everybody. For our purposes, it is just important to note that the criterion suggests that Aristotle is perhaps not suggesting that theoretical and practical rationality differ in the amount of intrinsic value.

completed or “perfect” whenever it is performed. He notes that contemplation is final because “nothing arises from it apart from the action,” whereas in the case of “the practical activities we gain more or less apart from the action” (EN X.71177b2-3). Aristotle here suggests that contemplation is more choiceworthy than practical activity because it is more final. This is a clear appeal to the final criterion in I.7, and the upshot here is apparent when we consider both kinds of rational activity in the context of what the highest good is. Apparently, practical rationality is desirable for something beyond the action itself. If that’s the case, then it may not be worth pursuing if there is no need to procure what it is aimed at. This is not the case with contemplation. It is also desirable to engage in contemplation for Aristotle because it is simply intrinsically valuable. This is part of the story as to why it is the highest good (though this may not mean that it is most choiceworthy in any and all contexts).

This conception of finality is related to Aristotle’s metaphysics. In *Meta. Theta*, Aristotle notes that certain activities are perfect or complete (which are all possible translations of the same Greek word for final, *teleios*) in the sense that to participate in them at all is to have fully achieved their end or *telos* (*Meta. Theta VI*: 1048b20-35). He gives happiness and sight as examples of these kinds of activities. If someone looks at a statue, they necessarily have seen. If someone is happy, they necessarily have been happy. The process of engaging in these activities is co-extensive with accomplishing their ends. This is not the case with other kinds of activities, like house-building. Just because you have started building a house does not mean that you have necessarily finished building one. In the case of these kinds of activities, there is a product beyond them that constitutes their completion.

Practical rationality is one of these kinds of activities (at least in part) because practical activities always aim at something beyond themselves. Courage, for instance, has to do with controlling one's fear in the face of grave danger for the correct purposes.⁶⁸ This control of fear or confidence is useful for a further end: victory.⁶⁹ While there could be some intrinsic value in fighting to the best of one's abilities, this is not its only purpose. Simply fighting bravely in battle does not mean that a soldier has successfully achieved its ultimate end (that is, winning). A quote from George S. Patton comes to mind: "No bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor dumb bastard die for his country."⁷⁰ Generosity falls into this same category. Simply sending a check to a charity does not entail that one has achieved the end of generosity. The money must actually help buy food for someone in need before the action can be complete or successful.

Contemplation does not fall into this category. As soon as someone has meditated on what human nature is (or any other metaphysical truth), they necessarily have accomplished the end of contemplation. Their activity of contemplation is co-extensive with its completion. It is

⁶⁸ EN III.7 115b10-13. David Pears (1976) explains how courage is an especially trenchant example of this paradigm of moral virtue in Aristotle. He notes that unlike a virtue like temperance, which aims at both health/happiness as a further goal and the median between two extremes (David F Pears, "Aristotle's Analysis of Courage." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 3 [1978]: 44), courage as a virtue must consider both the risk or danger involved in a particular action and weigh that against the payoff that the risk might bring about (Pears, "Analysis of Courage," 50). Unlike a virtue like temperance, where the virtuous agent has not deviant or disordered desires for, say, unhealthy food, the courageous person does in fact experience fear of danger or harm (at least, in the face of truly dangerous threats), but recognizes that the goal in question will be worth the risk (Pears, "Analysis of Courage," 51). Thus, we see that unlike contemplation, there has to be a further goal beyond engaging in the activity in question that explains what makes courageous actions courageous as opposed to reckless. If courage has some product beyond itself that it aims at, it is not as final as contemplation, as I note below.

⁶⁹ Politics I.9 1258a12-13: "The quality of courage, for example, is not intended to make wealth, but to inspire confidence; neither is the aim of the general's or of the physician's art: but the one aims at victory and the other at health."

⁷⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sv9XNFpRdhg&feature=emb_title

There is some question as to the exact wording of the quote from Patton, and he seems to have used some variation of it on different occasions. I will not get into that here, so I am linking to the movie version.

analogous to seeing in the metaphysical sense for Aristotle. It is not the kind of activity which is in fact a kind of process whose completion comes only at the end of the activity (or in some further product or object). While discovering the truth is a process like this, contemplation is viewing or revisiting the truth that has already been discovered. While he doesn't say this explicitly, he seems to believe that an activity must be final or complete in the metaphysical sense if it is to be entirely valued for its own sake. Not all activities that are complete in the metaphysical sense are part of the human good (sight, for instance, is not by itself a part of the human good), but nonetheless this metaphysical completeness plays a role as a kind of necessary condition or criterion for the highest and most (normatively) complete good.

On the other hand, the way Aristotle cashes out this use of the finality criterion makes it seem as though there are circumstances where practical reason might be worth pursuing: namely, when we need to procure what practical reason aims at beyond itself. This suggests something like what was the case in his discussion of the continuous criterion. Aristotle asserts that contemplation is the highest good because it is a kind of rational activity that is worth pursuing in ideal circumstances. However, this does not mean that it is always better to engage in contemplation than practical rationality.

To really understand what Aristotle is doing here, we have to look back at what he said in EN I.7. Aristotle asserted that happiness was rational activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. He does not distinguish between theoretical and practical reason at this point in his argument, so I take him to mean that rationality broadly speaking is the human good. It is choiceworthy for its own sake (final), self-sufficient, and unique to humans (at least when compared to other mortals). It is only later that Aristotle differentiates between two kinds of

rationality (theoretical and practical). In other words, it seems plausible to say that both species of excellent rational activity constitute human happiness. Both the life of the politician and the philosopher can be meaningful. Of course, many intellectualists would agree with this but further argue that practical activity is a kind of secondary happiness that is not as choiceworthy as theoretical rational activity. It is true that Aristotle says this, as we have seen above, his arguments in EN X.7 suggest that practical rationality is not “perfect” happiness (that is, it is not final) because it aims at other goods beyond itself. Nevertheless, nowhere does he say that practical rationality is less rational or requires less virtue or excellence than theoretical activity. The only difference between the two for Aristotle is that one aims at an end other than pure rational activity and the other does not.

If this is the case, then it is plausible to say that practical rationality does not represent *less* happiness than theoretical rationality. It is, after all, rational activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. It does not represent a lesser happiness than contemplation, and thus should not be viewed as less worthwhile, which avoids the problems that intellectualists face when they elevate contemplation. It is just not perfect happiness in the sense that it is also directed at some other end beyond itself. This means that all things being equal, theoretical rationality is more choiceworthy than practical rationality because if there is no further goal that someone needs to attain, there would be no reason to engage in the kind of rationality that is aimed at something beyond itself. However, if an agent does need something beyond rational activity that morality or other practical arts could acquire, then it would be necessary to pursue excellent practical activity. In this case, the agent does not sacrifice their happiness in pursuit of this goal because practical activity is just as much a kind of happiness as contemplation. There is no sacrifice, as it were. If this is the case, then we can begin to see why Aristotle does not

separate happiness from morality in any significant way. Practical activity is an intrinsically valuable kind of rational activity, but one that is aimed at a particular goal. Even if an agent had successfully inculcated good moral/practical habits, they would require continuous practice (as with all skills and habits). Thus, my reading of Aristotle amounts to a rejection of strict intellectualism in favor of a communitarian intellectualism.

However, there are three important questions that this line of interpretation must now deal with. One involves what end practical rationality is oriented towards. At first glance, this line of thinking seems to create more problems than it solves. If Aristotle believes that rationality is the highest good, then what possible end could practical rationality aim at (beyond itself) that would be as important or choiceworthy as rational activity itself? Furthermore, I will have to explain Aristotle's reticence to declare that practical rationality as worth pursuing in any and all cases if it is intrinsically valuable. Even if it is aimed at some goal, why not pursue the activity if it is valuable? Finally, we are left with a concern we saw earlier: we will have to develop an account of why the moral virtues are in fact virtuous. Many accounts of why the practical virtues are intrinsically valuable (such as inclusivism) do not explain why they are rational. An optimal account of Aristotle's ethical theory will give some account of why virtues like courage, generosity, and temperance are more rational than their respective vices.

A number of other commentators have suggested one possibility that would still make sense of Aristotle's commitment to the primacy of rational activity. Richard Kraut, Gabriel Richardson Lear, and Matthew Walker have both have argued that contemplation is the highest good, and that (at least in some ways) practical rationality is a means to contemplation, which is a possibility that has obvious appeal for intellectualism (or other theories, like Walker's, that

hold that contemplation is the highest good).⁷¹ In this case, practical rationality would aim at something beyond itself that is still a kind of rational activity. Other commentators, such as Timothy Roche, have objected to this line of argument on the grounds that Aristotle never says that the practical virtues are a means to contemplation or explains how this would be the case.⁷² However, Aristotle does hint at something like this at the end of EN VI. At this point, Aristotle is commenting on the relationship of the two kinds of rationality to each other. He argues that practical wisdom:

is not *supreme* over wisdom [*sophia*], i.e., over the superior part of us, any more than the art of medicine is over health; for it does not use it but provides for its coming to being; it issues orders, then for its sake, but not to it. Further, to maintain its supremacy would be like saying that the art of politics rules the gods because it issues orders about all the affairs of the state (EN VI.13 1145a7-11).

At the very least, Aristotle says that practical wisdom is responsible for securing the “coming to be” of contemplation. Of course, it might be the case that *phronesis* has other duties, it is clear from this passage that Aristotle does think that practical activity aims at contemplation in the same way that medicine aims at health. Thus, I believe that Walker, Kraut, and Richardson Lear are right in that Aristotle does identify practical wisdom as (in part) a means to contemplation. That said, Aristotle does not explain how this is the case in this passage, so we will have to do more work to determine the relationship between excellent practical activity and contemplation.

Section 3 - Practical Rationality as a Means to Contemplation

⁷¹ Kraut, *Human Good*, 178. More on Walker later.

⁷² Timothy Roche, “The Ultimate End of Action: A Critique of Richard Kraut’s Aristotle on the Human Good,” In *Crossroads of Norm and Nature: Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics and Metaphysics*, ed. by May Sim (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1995), 126. Scholars who articulate a similar concern include Long (2011), Dahl (2011), Meyer (2011), and Thorsrud (2015).

So far, I have argued that Aristotle identifies contemplation as the highest good for humans but does so in a way that leaves open the possibility that practical rationality is still valuable and important as species of rationality. Indeed, Aristotle argues that something can be both valuable for its own sake and for the sake of something else in EN I.7, and it seem as though practical rationality falls into this category (EN I.7 1097a30-35). I have also suggested that practical rationality (in addition to having intrinsic value) might contribute to living a contemplative life. This approach is one that intellectualists have offered for some time in one form or another. Richard Kraut offered this kind of account in *Aristotle on the Human Good*:

I believe that, according to Aristotle, there is a causal relationship between the two kinds of virtues—theoretical and practical—that those leading the best lives have. His idea, as I understand it, is that to be well equipped for the theoretical life, one needs certain habits of character, and not merely skills of pure thought.⁷³

The contemplative life cannot just be one of pure philosophical research and study. Human beings have physical and social needs that require attention and resources. As such, Kraut argues that the moral virtues (“habits of character”) are a vital and indispensable part of any good life, even if the best part of that life is ultimately contemplation. It is the job of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) to see to these needs via virtues of character, or moral virtue.

Gabriel Richardson Lear also believes that moral virtues contribute to the contemplative life for Aristotle. She argues that

though practical wisdom is an excellence of reason, theoretical wisdom is more perfect. Thus, there is a sense in which all virtuous actions, insofar as they are fine, ought to show that the agent is oriented to the precision and truthfulness best exemplified in theoretical contemplation.⁷⁴

⁷³ Kraut, *Human Good*, 178

⁷⁴ Richardson Lear, *Happy Lives and the Highest Good*, 147

Contemplation, according to Richardson Lear, is the highest good for Aristotle, so the value of moral virtue must in some way help the agent engage in contemplation. Thus, in the case of courage, “the beauty of courageous actions depends on the value of contemplation.”⁷⁵ Insofar as Richardson Lear believes that contemplation is the highest good for Aristotle, courage should be important in the good life because “grasping this practical truth [the importance of community] approximates contemplation.”⁷⁶ Given how these theorists have asserted that practical virtue and rationality are instruments towards contemplation, I will call this view moral instrumentalism.⁷⁷

The important task now is to flesh out how this is the case within the Aristotelian framework. As I noted in the case of standard inclusivism, it is not immediately clear how virtues like courage and temperance might contribute to the philosophical life of the mind. There are two basic ways in which practical virtues might contribute to contemplation. One entails regulating oneself in such a way that it is possible to contemplate. I will call these virtues the prudential virtues. The second involves duties or obligations we have to the social community in which we belong (in addition to possibly being prudential as well). I will label these moral or other-directed virtues. I will discuss both of these kinds of practical virtues in this section.

3.1 : Prudential Virtues

Thomas Tuozzo has argued that the virtues always serve a prudential function for Aristotle. He notes that the virtues have to do with regulating *pathe* (emotions or drives) so that

⁷⁵ Richardson Lear, *Happy Lives and the Highest Good*, 149

⁷⁶ Richardson Lear, *Happy Lives and the Highest Good*, 207

⁷⁷ Most of the scholars I cite here as moral instrumentalists would no doubt balk at the label “instrumentalist” because all of them would assert that there is intrinsic value in moral virtue and not just instrumental value. However, I don’t mean this to be an exclusive definition. By instrumental, I only mean that they all find instrumental value for moral virtue. All of them, however, argue that contemplation is in some important sense above or superior to practical virtue and rationality.

we can engage in contemplation. Human beings are not gods and cannot rid themselves of their emotions and appetites, but there are certain actions and character states that satiate or corral our passions so that they do not impede our ability to contemplate.⁷⁸ We might look to virtues like temperance to see how Tuozzo's suggestion might work. Most people (ancient and modern) would agree that drinking too much alcohol and developing a physical/chemical dependency on it would get in the way of pursuing other life goals, including scientific or philosophical investigation. Conversely, human beings have material needs and require rest, and thus alcohol in moderation may be good for human beings. Aristotle holds a similar view, and thus maintains that temperance is important. Tuozzo points to a passage in *Magna Moralia* as evidence for this interpretation of Aristotle:

Perhaps *phronesis* is like an estate-manager in a household. This person has authority over everything and manages everything; but he does not for all that rule over everything, but provides leisure to the master, so that the latter may not, hindered by necessities, be prevented from doing some noble and fitting thing. In this way and similarly to him, *phronesis* is as it were an estate-manager for *sophia* and furnishes it with leisure and the chance to perform its own work, by restraining the passions and making them temperate.⁷⁹

This passage suggests that practical reason is supposed to make contemplation possible. Tuozzo also brings in EE VIII.3 (VII.15), where Aristotle says that the good person “should have a standard of both disposition and of choice and avoidance with regard to excess or deficiency of wealth and good fortune, the standard being—as above said—as reason directs.”⁸⁰ Tuozzo

⁷⁸ Thomas Tuozzo, “Contemplation, the Noble, and the Mean: The Standard of Moral Virtue in Aristotle's Ethics,” *Apeiron*, 28, no. 4 (1995): 143-145.

⁷⁹ MM 1198b13-20, Tuozzo, “Standard of Virtue,” 145. It should be noted that MM is of questionable authenticity, but scholarly consensus seems to suggest that the text is a set of notes taken by one of Aristotle's students during one of his lectures.

⁸⁰ EE VIII.3 1249a25-b2, Tuozzo, “Standard of Virtue”, 141

suggests that when we read these two passages together, it appears as though the standard of virtuous activity is the ability to contemplate.⁸¹

It is also the case that virtues can also help the agent make rational and prudential decisions that keep them safe. Matthew Walker makes this case in regard to courage. He notes that courage is a virtue that governs not only the human emotion of fear but also “daring.”⁸² Good (or great) people will know when it a risk is worth the potential achievement that comes along with it. Walker also notes that the courageous person is not merely someone who experiences or responds to fear in the right way, but also experiences the impulse to defend “oneself or one’s own in the face of offenses, obstacles, and difficulties.”⁸³

Courage for Aristotle, according to Walker, is a virtue that is important for human beings and not gods because nothing can truly threaten a god.⁸⁴ However, like gods, human beings are the kind of things for which contemplation is the highest good, so it is appropriate for human beings to both fear real dangers to their (mortal) lives and also defend their interests when necessary.⁸⁵ Someone who doesn’t fear anything at all would not be able to recognize situations that were dangerous to them, which would cause them to take unnecessary risks that may result in their death or serious injury. Conversely, individuals who flee from situations that are not in fact dangerous or who cannot stand up to dangers that are important to face, will be unable to

⁸¹ Tuozzo, “Standard of Virtue,” 145

⁸² Tuozzo, “Standard of Virtue,” 145

⁸³ Walker, *Uses of Contemplation*, 190

⁸⁴ Walker, *Uses of Contemplation*, 190

⁸⁵ Walker, *Uses of Contemplation*, 190. As Walker notes on 189, Aristotle discusses the importance of courage to facing dangers at EN 1115a6-7, 1115a30-35. Thus, there is a great deal of merit to what Walker says about courage in Aristotle.

protect their interests. They will not live good lives because they will lose important goods when they refuse to defend them.

This helps to answer Roche's challenge that Aristotle never says that the practical virtues are for the sake of contemplation. While I already noted where he says this in EN VI, Aristotle explicates this in MM. The prudential virtues regulate our emotions in such a way that they do not interfere with contemplation. This helps to explain why Aristotle maintains that contemplation is more choiceworthy than practical activity. Practical activity is in some way a means to contemplation, which naturally explains why contemplation would be a more worthy and final end. Insofar as the passions are intrinsic to who we are as rational animals (and indeed, to our conscious identity), then their regulation is of intrinsic value. This also explains why the gods would have no interest in practical rationality on Aristotle's account. Gods don't have emotions and passions like human beings do, so they have no use for an activity that aims at controlling them.

Because human beings cannot exist independent of our emotions or physical bodies, all people will need to take care of the prudential virtues if they are to engage in contemplation. In other words, while practical rationality is a means to contemplation, it is still indispensable. Thus, Tuozzo's and Walker's interpretations on this point help to explain why Aristotle takes certain practical virtues to be central to any good human life. In order for human happiness to be self-sufficient, even someone who wants to contemplate must engage in processes that are necessary for contemplation to take place. Thus, the contemplative life can be self-sufficient provided that its necessary antecedents are present. However, I believe there is another

important function of certain practical virtues that does not as heavily rely on Aristotle's specific account of the human soul and emotions. It is to this justification that I will now turn.

3.2: *Moral Virtues*

In EN V, Aristotle turns to his conception of justice. He says that a certain form of justice is

complete excellence—not absolutely, but in relation to others...And it is complete excellence in the fullest sense, because it is the actual exercise of complete excellence. It is complete because he who possesses it can exercise his excellence towards others too and not merely by himself; for many men can exercise excellence in their own affairs, but not in their relation to others...For this same reason justice, alone of the excellences, is thought to be another's good, because it is related to others; for it does what is advantageous to another, either a ruler or a partner...Justice in this sense, then, is not part of excellence but excellence entire, nor is the contrary injustice a part of vice but vice entire (EN V.1 1129b28-1130a10).

It is clear from this passage that Aristotle believes that justice is primarily concerned with the good of others. He praises justice (or this sense of justice) as the most complete of the virtues. His opinion of justice suggests that there is an end that justice (and the moral virtues involved with it) aims at, which comports with Aristotle's assertion in EN X that politics is not perfect/final. How might justice aim at the good of others? Aristotle answers this a few lines earlier:

Now the laws in their enactments on all subjects aim at the common advantage either of all or of the best or of those who hold power, or something of that sort; so that in one sense we call those acts just that tend to produce and preserve happiness and its components for the political society. And the law bid us do both the acts of brave men (e.g. not to desert our post or take flight or throw away our arms), and those of a temperate man (e.g. not to commit adultery or outrage), and those of a good-tempered man (e.g. not to strike another or speak evil), and similarly with regard to other excellences and forms of wickedness, commanding some acts and forbidding others; and the rightly framed law does this rightly, and the hastily conceived one less well (EN V.1 1129b15-25).

Aristotle explicitly says that certain moral virtues maintain or contribute to the common human good within a political society. This makes a good deal of sense. Courage as a quality or character state obviously benefits the community. Without brave people, it would not be possible for the polis to defend itself. Temperance (which clearly has value specifically for oneself as well) is an important character trait for citizens to have, lest they infringe on the happiness of other people via excess.

This paradigm also covers some of the virtues Aristotle does not mention. Generosity, for instance, is a good candidate for this kind of framework. When we give our extra money to people who would not be able to provide certain necessities for themselves, it helps the individuals we give money to directly but also helps prevent unrest in the community. Moral virtues generally seem to be the qualities or traits that enable cities as a whole to achieve their proper function.

Aristotle's remarks in EN V.1 help to explain why he says that practical rationality is not final or complete in EN X.7-8. If the moral virtues are in part for the sake of the happiness of the community, they aim at something beyond themselves. Furthermore, if the moral virtues aim at happiness, it means that they are not completely synonymous with happiness itself. An inclusivist or another defender of the intrinsic value of practical rationality might argue that Aristotle could just mean in this passage that practical rationality aims at itself, i.e. the ability to engage in more practical rationality. This reading, however, is ruled out in EN X.7, when Aristotle specifically says that starting wars for the sake of bravery or courage is bloodthirsty. He further reiterates this position in *Pol.* VII, when he denounces states that engage in warfare for the sake of warfare (Politics 1325a6-7). Could Aristotle mean that some moral virtues (like

courage) are aimed at certain other practical excellences? Perhaps, but most of them seem to fall into the same dubious category. It is clear from EN X.7 that Aristotle picked warfare and politics as his examples of practical virtues because they were the greatest and most choiceworthy of their genus. It seems implausible to say that the greatest of the practical virtues are actually for the sake of lesser ones, so it does not seem like there are other practical excellences that courage and justice are directed towards.

A number of moral instrumentalists have endorsed this reading of Aristotle on courage. Walker argues that Aristotle believes that our communities are essential to our own lives.⁸⁶ Kraut's analysis of also courage fits into this broader paradigm:

Courage is a virtue that enables one to master one's fear on the battlefield and determine when it is necessary to fight. Now, the philosophical life is no different from any other, in this respect: to be free to lead the kind of life one chooses, one must live in favorable political circumstances. Tyrannical regimes must be opposed, and foreign enemies who seek one's death or enslavement must be resisted. When one is sent to the battlefield to help accomplish these purposes, one's effectiveness in defending the life one leads will be impeded if one lacks the emotional and physical skills of a courageous fighter. A disabling fear of death would undermine one's efforts to defend oneself. But on the other hand, someone who never experienced fear at the prospect of dying would be disabled in other ways: apathy in dangerous situations would deprive him of a useful warning signal that special caution is needed.⁸⁷

Kraut argues here that courage is the disposition or character state that enables the prudent person to face dangers that are necessary for a free (and thus contemplative) life while at the same time helping her recognize when to be cautious in the face of legitimate danger. He specifically identifies the importance of courage for defending the broader political community in addition to the kind of personal benefit that Walker mentions in the passage above.

⁸⁶ Walker, *Uses of Contemplation*, 192

⁸⁷ Kraut, *Human Good*, 180

Richardson Lear also argues for a similar position in her own work. As with Kraut, she believes that courage is an important value because it is necessary for successful political community:

Now I said before that an action will be fine in part because it is oriented to the human good. It is important to see that insofar as warlike actions aim to preserve political autonomy and peace, they do aim at the human good. For as we saw in our discussion of self-sufficiency, human beings are by nature political animals. Thus the human good, the end which by nature we seek, must be realized in the context of a political community.⁸⁸

Human beings are intractably social in Aristotle's anthropology, and thus courage would be the kind of virtue that would contribute to the survival and maintenance of the communities that make happiness possible. Thus, the good person performs courageous actions because the survival of their polity is necessary for their flourishing.

The moral instrumentalists' point here is well taken. Aristotle explicitly endorses the importance of community in *Politics*:

Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state is either a bad man or above humanity; he is like the 'tribeless, lawless, heartless one' whom Homer denounces—the natural outcast is forthwith a lover of war; he may be compared to an isolated piece at draughts (Pol. I.2 1253a2-6).

Aristotle explicitly identifies someone who is uncontrollably bellicose as outside the bounds of community, which supports the reading that warfare is a tool towards something else that is not always good. Given that courage explicitly a martial quality in Aristotle, this supports the notion that it is not always right to look for opportunities to be courageous. Humans are the kind of things that need other members of their own species, and more precisely, need other people

⁸⁸Richardson Lear, *Happy Lives and the Highest Good*, 152

within a particular structure (that is, a community). Thus, insofar as human beings need their communities in order to live good lives, they have some reason to defend their cities.

Furthermore, if we examine the other moral virtues Aristotle does not mention, they seem to have the same conditional value as courage and justice. Aristotle discusses how ridiculous it would be to think that the gods would engage in any of the practical virtues, and I have argued this is in part because the practical virtues are directed at solving problems (which of course the gods would not have). Let's take generosity as one of our examples. Why would we expect Aristotle to say that generosity is something that is worth pursuing in any and all circumstances? Generosity is only useful if there are people in need. While that is a part of the world we live in, there is no reason to suppose that we would will that there be poor people in the perfect world just so that we could have the opportunity to help them. If Aristotle did not think that this was the case with generosity (or the other practical virtues), he presumably would have mentioned that the gods actually do take part in certain practical excellences. However, he did not, so we have good reason to infer that all of the moral virtues would be necessary for the proper functioning of the political community. This would mean that they are not the perfectly final ends, and thus would be of secondary status when compared with theoretical excellence.

If the practical virtues aim at happiness (the proper function of human beings), and it is not the happiness of excellent practical activity, then there is only one other plausible candidate for the kind of happiness the Aristotle references: *theoria*. While admittedly he does not reference it directly, it is clear via process of elimination that he must mean this. Aristotle is very clear that happiness is rational activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and he only

ever identifies two kinds of rationality. If practical rationality is not happiness, then it must be the other.

Even if someone does not think that my inference is plausible, it is very clear that Aristotle believes that moral virtues aim at the good of the community. At the very least, functional communities enable human beings to be happy in a way that they would not be without them. This seems to be what Aristotle is getting at when he says that cities are natural: they enable the actualization of human nature.⁸⁹ Given that this is the case, communities are almost certainly necessary to engage in contemplation. Isolated individuals could not contemplate, as they would not be able to provide basic, fundamental goods that all people need. While Aristotle says in EN X that contemplation is the most self-sufficient activity, he still concedes that there are goods that the philosopher needs to successfully engage in *theoria*.⁹⁰ If this is the case, then we can still make an important connection between the moral virtues and contemplation, even if their relationship is somewhat indirect.

This framework helps to give a more complete answer Roche's challenge beyond what Aristotle says in EN VI.13. Roche argued that Aristotle never explicitly says that the practical virtues are for the sake of contemplation. However, the passages above provide clear evidence that Aristotle thinks this is the case. He clearly either implies that the moral virtues are for the

⁸⁹ Politics 1252b28-1253a2: "When several villages are united in a single community, large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing, the state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life. And therefore, if the earlier forms of society are natural, so to is the state, for it is the end of them, and the nature of a thing is its end. For what each thing is when fully developed, we call its nature, whether we are speaking of a man, a horse, or a family. Besides, the final cause and end of a thing is the best, and to be self-sufficing is the end and the best."

⁹⁰ EN X.7 1177a28-29: "For while a wise man, as well as a just man and the rest, need the necessities of life..." Aristotle goes on to assert that the wise man needs less external goods than the just man. However, the important take away for our purposes is that the philosopher still needs some external goods.

sake of *theoria* (if my disjunctive syllogism is correct) and/or the happiness and flourishing of the city (which would include, if not entirely be constituted by, contemplation).

Given this interpretation, it is also clear why Aristotle does not think that practical excellence is worth pursuing in any and all circumstances even though it is intrinsically valuable. Practical rationality is aimed at the good of others and/or the community. It is intrinsically important to help other people (which is what we aim at when we are morally virtuous), but their good is the ability to engage in contemplation. As such, the good of practical and moral excellence is ultimately contemplation (or at least the conditions necessary for it), and the activity would no longer be good if we did not need to acquire contemplation. The prescriptions it would issue would not be correct if aimed at something other than its proper end. As such, we can now understand why Aristotle does not think that we should create problems in order to have the opportunity to participate in excellent ethical or practical activity. Insofar as the goal of certain moral and practical virtues has been achieved, it is no longer right to use them for other purposes. This is especially true since engaging in practical activity involves doing all sorts of things that might detract from rational activity. Fighting wars when there is no need to promote happy cities actually detracts from our ability to engage in rational activity. Thus, courage and other practical virtues like it are not even possible to engage in when they are not necessary, given that a wise person is precisely the kind of person who appropriately judges when a given situation constitutes virtue (like courage) or vice (like recklessness). Of course, given that contemplation is a rational activity that is perfect (not aimed at any other end), it does not have this problem. As such, Aristotle identifies it as the more choiceworthy activity (all things being equal).

If practical rationality is both intrinsically valuable as a species of rationality and for the sake of contemplation, we can make sense of why Aristotle says that practical reason is both intrinsically valuable and why it is less choiceworthy (and for the sake of) contemplation. Referring back to EN II.4, Aristotle can intelligibly say that we should choose virtuous ethical or practical activity for its own sake because it is in fact a kind of rationality. Rationality is intrinsically valuable, so we must recognize that when we choose it. However, it is also directed at some end beyond itself. This would put practical rational activity in the category of goods that are both intrinsically valuable and valuable for a further product that Aristotle considers in EN I.1 and I.7. Thus, we are not forced to saddle Aristotle with an inconsistent account of the value of moral and practical excellence.

We can also explain why we would sometimes forgo contemplation (and other goods) in the name of pursuing practical excellence. Inclusivists also fall into a parallel problem because they do not provide an explanation for why moral virtue is superior to other goods included in happiness. However, on my account, practical activity is necessary in certain circumstances to secure contemplation. While contemplation is the most final kind of happiness (and thus one that would without reservation be pursued for its own sake), it is not possible for human beings to contemplate at all times. We are not gods, which means that there are a number of physical, emotional, and social needs that we must attend to if we are to engage in the most complete form of happiness. Aristotle identifies the activity of satisfying these needs as a species of rationality. Given his argument in EN I.7 that rational activity is human happiness, we can further see why spending time on practical affairs is not simply a sacrifice but something of a sideways move. Insofar as practical rationality is a kind of happiness, engaging in it would still constitute a good life.

Some of the practical virtues would be indispensable under any circumstances, as Aristotle indicates in Pol. VII.⁹¹ Self-regulation and social cohesion are necessary given the kinds of creatures that human beings are. Fortunately, seeing to these needs is also a kind of happiness. Others represent the kinds of activities that are necessary to secure contemplation within the political community which would not always be choiceworthy for their own sake. Christine Korsgaard suggests something along these lines.⁹² It is conceivable for something to be intrinsically valuable in particular circumstances but not outside of them. That seems to be the case with certain of the moral virtues for Aristotle. Korsgaard notes that a life based on the moral virtues can be worth living, “but this sort of life of the moral virtues is conditional in a particular way, namely, on something's being wrong or imperfect.”⁹³ As such, Korsgaard argues that the moral virtues have “conditional” value. However, because they are still a kind of rationality, Aristotle is licensed to suggest that engaging in them (and not contemplation) is not some sort of sacrifice.

However, my account so far creates a question surrounding the status of *phronesis* as intrinsically valuable. If Aristotle truly believes that excellent practical activity is aimed at some good beyond itself, what distinguishes this good from regular arts and crafts (*techne*) that are

⁹¹ “For no one would maintain that he is happy who has not in him a particle of courage or temperance or justice or practical wisdom, who is afraid of every insect which flutters past him, and will commit any crime, however great, in order to gratify his lust for meat or drink, who will sacrifice his dearest friend for the sake of half a farthing, and is as feeble and false in mind as a child or a madman” (Pol. VII 1323a26-34). It should be noted that here Aristotle appears to say that courage is important for any human life, but it is also clear that he does not mean the exercise of courage in battle. This passage still does not suggest that we should actively pursue situations in which to exhibit great courage.

⁹² Christine M. Korsgaard, “Aristotle and Kant on the Source of Value,” *Ethics* 96, no. 3 (1986): 496-497.

⁹³ Korsgaard, “Sources of Value,” 496-497

clearly only instrumentally valuable for other goods. Why would rationality have the status of intrinsic worth and not these other disciplines?

Section 4 - The Difference Between *Phronesis* and *Techne*

Given that I have argued that practical rationality is useful for contemplation, it may seem as though I must provide a reason that Aristotle thinks that it is intrinsically valuable whereas other product crafts (*techne*) are not. What exactly distinguishes, say, courageous or generous actions from activities like carpentry, masonry, or medicine? Virtuous activity and crafts involve all sorts of calculation, planning, and knowledge that make them both seem like a kind of rationality. This section will offer two explanations for why Aristotle say that practical rationality has a privileged status.

Aristotle, for his part, thinks that practical rationality is not equivalent to *techne* “because action and making are different kinds of thing...For while making has an end other than itself, action cannot; for good action itself is an end” (EN VI.5 1140b4). That is, practical rationality is an activity that is intrinsically valuable whereas *techne* produces something beyond itself. This statement appears to be a problem for my view Aristotle seems to say that practical excellence is valuable for its own sake and cannot make something beyond itself (namely, contemplation). I have two ways of understanding this passage in a way that does not harm my larger project.

My first response has to do with the way in which practical rationality is intrinsically (or unavoidably) valuable in a way that the products of *techne* are not. Tuozzo’s discussion of the difference between the various kinds of good in Aristotle’s thought is again helpful here. *Techne*

produces auxiliary goods or powers; that is, it produces things that can be used for good or ill.⁹⁴ There is nothing inherent to knives, ships, or buildings that make them good in some unqualified sense. A good knife can be used for evil purposes. However, Aristotle does not think this is the case for the practical virtues. He says that practical virtue concerns itself with “what sorts of things conduce to the good life in general” (EN VI.5 1140a28-29). Aristotle indicates that practical reason is concerned with making a good life. There is no such thing as courage (or more precisely, the aim or product of courage) being used for an evil end. If someone engages in warfare for the wrong reason, it is recklessness (not courage). Because the practical virtues inherently relate to living a good life as a whole, they are always going to be good in a way that *techne* and its products will not be. Tuozzo points out that noble goods (virtuous action and character) are an essential part of the good life that cannot make their possessor’s life worse.⁹⁵ They and their products can only make her life better, which means that moral virtue is good an unqualified sense in a way that *techne* and its products do not.

Some might respond and point out that on Aristotle’s account, the moral/civic virtues do not aim at contemplation. Rather, he says that they aim at leisure or peace (which in turn should be taken up by contemplation).⁹⁶ However, it seems perfectly possible to misuse leisure. Indeed, Aristotle fears in Book X that people may waste their free time on trivial pursuits that have no value.⁹⁷ This is a serious question, but it also could be the case that practical rationality

⁹⁴ Tuozzo, “Causal Basis,” 305

⁹⁵ Tuozzo, “Causal Basis,” 305-306

⁹⁶ “And happiness is thought to depend on leisure; for we are busy that we may have leisure, and make war that we may live in peace. Now the activity of the practical excellences is exhibited in political or military affairs, but the actions concerned with these seem to be unleisurely” (EN 1177b4-9). Busyness (which I take both political and military affairs to be) is for the sake of leisure, and war is certainly only for the sake of the peace that it can bring about.

⁹⁷ See his discussion of pleasant amusements in EN X.6

should rule over how we spend our leisure time as well. In other words, a well-formed person might be able to determine what the best use of free time is and will set up a city in which it is oriented towards contemplative pursuits. This might make it seem like all good people must know that contemplation is the highest good (a seemingly dubious proposition, even for Aristotle), but considering how important drama and other art forms were in the Greek world (and given how Aristotle feels as though drama and philosophy share the same concern with the general), it does not seem so tenuous. Good people should have some idea of how to use their free time in a productive and meaningful way.

The second reason for the distinction between *techne* and practical rationality is closely related to the first. Aristotle does believe that the products of *techne* do not make human beings good in the same way that practical rationality does. Crafts imprint a form onto material products. Chairs, tables, and other tools are inanimate objects outside of the human person. Practical excellence imprints excellence onto the soul. I have argued that moral/practical virtues help make human beings happy on an individual or collective level. We need virtues like self-control and courage to flourish. That is, moral virtue is a kind of excellence that changes who we are as persons or human beings. It entails habits and character traits that are an intimate part of who we are in a way that hammers and tables are not. Not everyone needs to be a carpenter; all human beings need practical excellence. This goes to the heart of Aristotle's theory of moral virtue. Thus, it is understandable why Aristotle would want to make a distinction between the value of *techne* and practical rationality. It is true that both work in analogous ways; both require time, energy, and guided practice to master. The end product should be the result of a master of the discipline that has the skills and character to meet the various challenges that are entailed in her work. However, they work in different mediums, as it were. Aristotle says that

the goal of moral virtues is to tame or control the irrational parts of the human soul (that is, to make them listen to the rational part of the soul as a son would his father).⁹⁸ Because *phronesis* produces an activity that is intrinsic to persons, and it thus has intrinsic value.

These explanations are not mutually exclusive. If either one holds, we can make sense of why Aristotle distinguishes between *techne* and practical rationality, and why practical rationality is a kind of rationality that has intrinsic value. If that is the case, we can understand why Aristotle can hold that engaging in moral or practical activity is not a step down from contemplation while engaging in craft is.

Section 5 - The Continued Specter of Immoralism

Thus far, I have offered an interpretation of Aristotle that makes sense of his assertion that a) practical rationality is an intrinsically valuable part of the good life (in ways that other activities are not), and b) that nonetheless contemplation is the most final and self-sufficient good, which makes it the most choiceworthy. I have done this by defending a conditionally-restricted intellectualism, which suggests that practical rationality is a kind of rationality that is vital when it is necessary to secure contemplation. In some cases, this involves necessary self-regulation on the part of the agent, and at other times it entails contributing to the welfare of the political community.

However, the interpretation I have offered still does not entirely deal with the problem of immoralism. It is still not clear exactly why individuals should care about the welfare of their

⁹⁸ "Some of them [the practical virtues] even arise from the body, and excellence of character to be in many ways bound up with the passions" (EN X.8 1178a14-15). "Therefore the irrational element also appears to be two-fold. For the vegetative element in no way shares in reason, but the appetitive and in general the desiring element in a sense shares in it, in so far as it listens to and obeys it; this is the sense in which we speak of paying heed to one's father or one's friends..." (EN I.13 1102b29-32).

respective political communities in all cases. It is certainly true that in many ways we are reliant on the social community around us to live happy lives (and to contemplate). We need food, clothing, water, roads, and a host of other goods that could only be supplied in a social community. Even if we could survive as hermits on our own, it would take so much time to provide for our material needs that it makes sense to live in a community. Nevertheless, an egoist might recognize this but only contribute the minimum amount towards the good of the community in the hopes of maximizing her own contemplation. If contemplation is truly sufficient for a good life, then there would be no need to engage in practical rationality beyond the bare minimum required to preserve social cohesion.

Indeed, there might even be an incentive to avoid providing “one’s fair share” to the community in the form of taxes, military service, or other onerous requirements. While a state needs most of its people to be courageous in times of war, surely it can survive if a few of them are not. If this is the case, then an egoist has an incentive to be one of the “free-riders” that gives as little as possible to others. Insofar as practical rationality and contemplation are both species of rationality, then there would be no reason for the free rider to put themselves in situations where they would undermine their own personal happiness and contemplation for the sake of the needs of others. A person who has to choose between living a quiet, contemplative existence and fighting in war might forgo military service if my interpretation is right. Fighting in a war is obviously a life-threatening proposition. Dying would end our ability to contemplate, and thus risking our lives would presumably not be in our interest in many cases. If opting out of our civic obligations (like to fight in a war) allowed us to contemplate more, then it is hard to see how the moral instrumentalist account of the value of courage could motivate someone to engage in this kind of self-sacrifice. If risking death were by itself absolutely necessary for the survival

of the community, then it seems plausible that an agent would indeed have reason to be courageous (given that the end of her community would be devastating for her). However, outside of these kinds of circumstances (which are not particularly common), agents would seem to have a strong reason to be free-loaders and cheats in this context. Indeed, if Walker is right that courage is about preventing the agent from unnecessary risk, why wouldn't fighting in a war of any kind be an unnecessary risk so long as my abrogation of responsibility did not jeopardize the survival of my community?

This problem is especially acute in the case of courage, but it would of course apply to any moral or other-directed virtue that requires some kind of sacrifice for others. The community will surely survive without my generous charitable contribution or even if I cheat the local mechanic who fixes my car. If we want to explain Aristotle's hard and fast rule against moral vice and common sense understandings of these virtues, then we will need something else to explain why the moral virtues are an important part of this theory of the good life.

Richardson Lear proposes another intellectualist answer to this quandary. She argues that according to Aristotle we have reason to help other people because our contemplation can extend beyond our own persons, and references her discussion of friends as other versions of ourselves in EN IX as evidence of this.⁹⁹ She further suggests that as human beings it is not possible (according to Aristotle) to live isolated lives, and so we must see to the needs of the communities in which we live. It is to this possibility of an extended-self in Aristotle that I will now turn.

⁹⁹Richardson Lear, *Happy Lives and the Highest Good*, 200

Chapter 3

To this point, my project has attempted to explain the content of Aristotle's theory of well-being. I have focused on the relationship between theoretical rationality and moral virtue and have argued that it is theoretical rationality is the more choiceworthy of two. However, I also argued that there were certain cases (that all humans would find themselves in) in which it was still important to engage in excellent practical rationality because it was necessary to secure the opportunity for contemplation. This framework can help us understand why Aristotle felt licensed to advocate certain ethical virtues like moderation. It could even explain why certain other-directed moral virtues like generosity or integrity were necessary in particular situations. If one's community diminishes sufficiently, it will no longer be possible to contemplate. As such, agents have some reason not to undermine or destroy the communities in which they live.

Aristotle says as much in EN IX 9:

But bad men cannot be unanimous except to a small extent, any more than they can be friends, since they aim at getting more than their share of advantages, while in labour and public service they fall short of their share; and each man wishing for advantage to himself criticizes his neighbor and stands in his way; for if people do not watch carefully the common interest is soon destroyed. They result is that they are in a state of faction, putting compulsion on each other but unwilling themselves to do what is just (EN IX.9 1167b9-15).

Aristotle is talking specifically about the corrosive impact of vicious people on community, but this has implications for people living in communities. If people want to live good lives, they must make sure that their actions do not undermine the communities that make the good life possible.

However, this does not explain away concerns about free riders in regard to other-directed virtues. It may be in my self-interest to help other people enough such that they do not

want or need to forcibly take my resources to survive, and it may require a state or communal apparatus to properly address such needs. This does not explain why someone should participate in such programs or common interests if their personal contributions would not impact the overall system. Perhaps there are individuals in these sorts of communities that realize that their money will not make or break the overall government food stamps program. They might conclude that if they can figure out how to successfully cheat on their taxes, they have no reason to contribute to the collective funds.

This is of course just one example of free riding. Aristotle argues that courage is an important virtue, but it is unclear why this would be the case if contemplation is the highest good. If someone can figure out how to dodge the draft, then she might have reason to do so. It seems as though risking one's life could seriously threaten a person's ability to engage in theoretical rationality. These are just two examples of what I will call "other-directed virtues". They are virtues that Aristotle puts forward (along with many other people) that in some cases seem only to help other people and not ourselves. They are ostensibly difficult to explain within Aristotle's overall normative theory because they do not obviously contribute to living a contemplative life (and in fact may at points interfere with it). Indeed, this is one of the main challenges for moderate inclusivist or intellectualist reading of Aristotle, including my own communitarian intellectualism. While the intellectualists can account for contemplation's finality and uniqueness, their efforts have made contemplation too self-sufficient. Insofar as Aristotle believes that the good life includes moral virtue (and does not include moral vice), then we must explain why contemplation divorced from morality is not an option for him.

I will respond to these challenges defending a reading of Aristotle that attributes the extended-self thesis to him. That is, I will argue that he thinks that we have self-interested reasons to help other people. According to Aristotle, we have the same (or similar) reasons for helping other people as we do ourselves because our existence is intimately connected with theirs. He outlines his position (for the most part) in Books VIII and IX of EN, and my task in this part of the chapter will be to explain his position while pushing back against objections to my interpretations (as well as passages that seem to undermine the extended-self reading of Aristotle). He has two basic arguments for the existence of an extended-self. One involves an argument from reproduction (or the movement from potentiality to actuality) and the other draws on a parallel between self-love and friendship. I will deal with each in turn. In the case of reproduction (Section 1), Aristotle asserts that it is possible to actualize your own potentiality within other people, and given his views of potentiality and actuality, this constitutes existence outside of one's own body. I will then explain why Aristotle believes that this metaphysical fact is a normative one (contra other commentators), and then explain how this kind of reproduction can fit with contemplation. In the case of friendship (Section 2), I will argue that Aristotle believes our friends to be other versions of ourselves which we have reason to care about, but then argue that this is not tantamount to narcissism or partiality as some scholars have suggested. After considering both reproduction and friendship, I will review passages that potentially cut against the extended-self interpretation (Section 3).

My contention is that his arguments are successful in demonstrating (based on his philosophical anthropology) that the other-directed virtues which he promotes throughout the ethics are indeed in an important sense self-directed, even if the best possible life is the contemplative one.

After considering the interpretive importance of the extended-self thesis, I will then begin to shift this project towards the contemporary debate about well-being and perfectionism. I will review arguments for the extended-self thesis put forward by philosophers who are in some ways drawing inspiration from Aristotle (Section 4) and respond to three objections to this view (Section 5). My defense of the extended-self thesis will enable Aristotle's theory of the good life, or something close to it, to become plausible and avoid egoism and extreme selfishness.

Section 1 - Aristotelian Reproduction

One of the oldest threats to morality is self-interest. The thinking goes that there is no reason (or no strong reason) to help other people when it comes at the expense of one's own flourishing or happiness. This is at the heart of the conflict between self-interest and morality. This is articulated by Glaucon in Republic II:

I'll argue that all who practice [justice] do so unwillingly, as something necessary, not as something good. [Then] I'll argue that they have good reason to act as they do, for the life of an unjust person is, they say, much better than that of a just one (Republic II 358c1-5).

However, what if it were the case that it was always beneficial to help other people? What if in fact the happiness and flourishing of other people was intimately tied to our own such that we could not make sense of a life in which we flourished but other people did not? This, I will argue, is at the heart of Aristotle's justification for other-directed virtues. He believes that we have self-interested reasons to help other people because they are reproductions of ourselves (or potentially so). The task of this section will be to review the key passages where Aristotle discusses this kind of reproduction. After this, I will also consider alternative readings of Aristotle on reproduction that would not give it the normative significance necessary to get my

reading of Aristotle off the ground, and finally I will turn to relationship between reproduction and contemplation.

1.1 – Reproduction as Actuality

In EN VIII.12, Aristotle discusses the kind of friendship that exists in families. Of particular interest for our purposes is his treatment of the love that parents have for their children:

The friendship of kinsmen itself, while it seems to be of many kinds, appears to depend in every case on parental friendship; for parents love their children as being a part of themselves, and children their parents as being something originating from them. Now parents know their offspring better than their children know that they are their children, and the originator is more attached to his offspring than the offspring to the begetter; for the product belongs to the producer (e.g. a tooth or hair or anything else to him whose it is), but the producer does not belong to the product, or belongs in a less degree...Parents, then, love their children as themselves (for their issue are by virtue of their separate existence a sort of other selves)...(EN VIII.12 1161b17-24, 28-30).

Aristotle gives us several pieces that can be used to make the case for an extended-self. He points out that parents love their offspring because producers love their products more than the products loves their producers. He further argues that children represent a product of the parent. This is significant because for Aristotle one's product or activity represents the fully actualized expression of a substance. In *Metaphysics Theta*, Aristotle says that actuality is preferable to potentiality:

That the good actuality is better and more valuable than the good potentially is evident from the following argument. Everything of which we say that it can do something, is alike capable of contraries, e.g. that of which we say that it can be healthy is the same as that which can be ill, and has both potentialities at once; for one and the same potentiality is a potentiality for health and illness, for rest and motion, for building and throwing down, for being built and being thrown down. The capacity for contraries is present at the same time; but contraries cannot be present at the same time, and the actualities also cannot be present at the same

time, e.g. health and illness. Therefore, one of them must be the good, but the capacity is both the contraries alike, or neither; the actuality, then, is better. And in the case of bad things, the end or actuality must be worse than the potentiality; for that which can is both contraries alike (Metaphysics IX.9 1051a4-17).

Thus, Aristotle believes that actuality is superior to potentiality. If there is something that has potentiality, it is better to actualize it than to have it remain in an embryonic state.¹⁰⁰ This is strong evidence that parents have prudential reason to care about their children. Children can actualize fundamentally human capacities that, say, inanimate objects cannot because they are also human. Children carry on traits and qualities that are essential to who their parents are. This alone establishes how we can have self-interested concern for other people. If children are a kind of actualization of the parents' potentiality, then they should be valuable to the parents for the same reason that their individual actuality is important to them.

Aristotle's analogy to producers and children has further important implications. Parents apparently love their children because they made them. As such, it stands to reason that creators of all kinds care about their products. These products belong to the producer, which gives the latter some sort of self-interested reason to care about them. Insofar as such products can be other people (as they are in the case of children), then it is possible that human beings could have other kinds of *descendants*. Indeed, Aristotle's position here is wide enough to accommodate this kind of reproduction or creation.

He further develops this general line of thought in EN IX.7. Here, Aristotle attempts to explain why benefactors have more affection for the people they benefit than vice versa.

¹⁰⁰ This is why Aristotle rejects virtue as happiness in EN I.5. Virtue is a capacity or potentiality, not an activity itself. Possessing virtue while sleeping for twenty years is not the happy life.

Ultimately, Aristotle asserts that this proclivity is “deeply rooted in the nature of things” (EN IX.7 1167b28-29). He argues that

Those who have done a service to others feel friendship and love for those they have served even if they are of no use to them and never will be. This is what happens with craftsmen too; every man loves his own handiwork better than he would be loved by it if it came alive; and this happens most of all with poets; for they have an excessive love for their own poems, doting on them as if they were their own children. This is what the position of benefactors is like; for that which they have treated well is their handiwork, and therefore they love this more than the handiwork does the maker. The cause of this is that the existence is to all men a thing to be chosen and loved, and that we exist by virtue of activity (i.e. by living and acting), and that the handiwork *is* in a sense, the producer in activity; he loves his handiwork, therefore, because he loves existence. And this is rooted in the nature of things; for what he is in potentiality, his handiwork manifests in activity (EN IX.7 1167b31-1168a9).

This is strong evidence that Aristotle believes that there is almost an identity relationship between a person and her activities. Aristotle once again emphasizes that people love what they produce because it is a kind of extension of their own existence. It is a way for them to move from potentiality to actuality, which Aristotle says is one of the most foundational aspects of reality. When people help others, they exert some influence on them. This is a way of imprinting one’s existence on to something else. This would apply in especially substantial cases of “handiwork.” The product embodies the activity of the maker, which is precisely what Aristotle believes is a key part of the nature of happiness (rational *activity* of the soul). This explains why parents, poets, and craftsmen feel so strongly about their creations.

1.2 – Actuality and Normativity?

The passages above offer, when taken together, reason to believe that our existence, and thus our happiness, can be extended to other people. However, this is not an uncontroversial reading of Aristotle, and it has faced resistance from certain commentators. Some scholars (such

as Jennifer Whiting) have objected that Aristotle is offering a descriptive claim about desires that most human beings have and not a normative one.¹⁰¹ Whiting argues that while Aristotle clearly believes that interpersonal relationships are important, it is not the case that the discussion of poetry or parenting is supposed to signal that these methods of reproduction are by themselves normatively compelling, or at least not overridingly so. That is, it might be the case that Aristotle thinks that most people care about their handiwork, but that this tendency by itself does not indicate a prescriptive call to invest in one's offspring or creations.¹⁰² It is perhaps better channeled in other directions which are less parochial. After all, in the passage about poets, he says that poets care too much about their own poems.

This could be a problem for the extended-self interpretation insofar as Whiting's reading would undermine the normative significance that reproduction has.¹⁰³ While it might be true that

¹⁰¹ Jennifer Whiting, "The Nicomachean Account of *Philia*," in *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, edited by Richard Kraut, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) 276-304. From 289: "But the apparent assimilation of character friendship to the attitude of parents toward their children may give us pause. For this makes it seem as if Aristotle's account of character-friendship is grounded in the sort of egocentric bias on which ethnocentric and other objectionable forms of bias are based. So we must pause to see that this is not the case."

¹⁰² Whiting, "Philia," 285, 286, 288. From 290: "Aristotle clearly represents character friendship as the ideal toward which even blood-relations should aspire. This suggests that his appeal to psychological facts about whom and how we *do* love is not a crude attempt to justify conclusions about whom and how we *ought* to love, but rather a strategy for establishing the *possibility* of attitudes he seeks eventually to *recommend*...Aristotle seeks to show how the attitudes he would recommend are made *possible* by natural human tendencies (such as parents' affection for their children and artists' affection for their work)." Whiting seems to suggest that Aristotle's reference to productivity is not meant to be, by itself, a normative prescription, but instead merely a psychological tendency of human beings that can be harnessed towards something that is truly valuable. Character friendship is paradigm for human relationships, and parental relationships should strive for this kind of reproduction. While I agree with this, it is important for the extended-self thesis that there is something fundamentally desirable about reproduction, even if it is not as significant as other kinds of reproduction. In other words, Whiting believes that parental relationships are a brute fact that need to be harnessed towards friendship. My interpretation is that Aristotle's normative justification for biological relationships will apply to other kinds of transmission.

¹⁰³ Whiting, "Philia," 296: "[Irwin and Cooper take] Aristotle to be concerned primarily with the justificatory question: why have friends in the first place?" On 302: "Insofar as my friend's activities are constitutive of her *eudaimonia*, I am, of course – *in promoting her activities for themselves* – promoting her *eudaimonia* for *itself*. And while it may also be true that I am, in doing so, *realizing my own eudaimonia*, this is *not* the reason *why* I promote her activities, at least not if I am a genuine friend: I do so simply because I value her activities *for themselves*. So the fact that I am *realizing my own eudaimonia* does *not* require us to say that I am acting for the *sake* of my *eudaimonia*."

there are better ways of reproducing (moving from potentiality to actuality), it needs to be the case that Aristotle believes that the metaphysical relationship we have with others gives us reason to care about them. It is in the passages about crafts that he signifies that it is possible to extend ourselves via service or creation. If we do not have special reason to care about our creations, then this would not be a fruitful way of grounding other-directed virtues.

However, there is strong reason to interpret reproduction as significant for human happiness and flourishing. Aristotle continuously refers to the “nature of things” when looking for normative insights. His entire ethical system is built upon his theory of human nature. He also says in *Metaphysics* that actuality is superior to potentiality, and that is exactly what he is referring to in the case of the benefactor’s handiwork.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, if we care about our own existence (something fundamental to any theory of well-being), it follows that extensions of our activity are worth preserving and helping. The passage above thus represents evidence that Aristotle believes we have reason to help other people, who share many of our same qualities and characteristics. This goes a long way towards explaining why other-directed virtues are important for Aristotle’s theory of well-being.

Aristotle further explains his claim that reproduction is a fundamental aspect of the existence of living organisms in *De Anima* (DA) when he discusses the human desire for immortality. DA represents Aristotle’s attempt to describe the powers of the soul, which

¹⁰⁴ In the case of the poet, Aristotle probably means that poets do not always write good poems and thus should not be overly attached to their work. Thus, we do not have to conclude that it is bad to care about worthwhile examples of our handiwork are evidence against the extended-self reading. Furthermore, if the extended-self reading is accurate, then we will have to balance the importance of various “offspring.” It is possible to value one descendant more than others. This could be happening with the poets.

reappears in EN I.7 as the basis for human happiness (EN I.7 1097b30-1098a17). Aristotle gives his account of what nutrition and reproduction aim at in all living organisms:

It follows that first of all we must treat nutrition and reproduction, for the nutritive soul is found along with all the others and is the most primitive and widely distributed power of soul, being indeed that one in virtue of which all are said to have life. The acts in which it manifests itself are reproduction and the use of food, because for any living thing that has reached its normal development and which is unmutilated, and whose mode of generation is not spontaneous, the most natural act is the production of another like itself...in order that, as far as nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal towards which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible...Since no living thing is able to partake in what is eternal and divine by uninterrupted continuance (for nothing perishable can forever remain one and the same), it tries to achieve that end in the only way possible to it, and success is possible in varying degrees; so it remains not indeed as the self-same individual but continues its existence in something like itself—not numerically but specifically one (De Anima II.4 415a23-415b8).

Aristotle takes reproduction to be an attempt by living organisms at a kind of immortality. He believes this to be a fundamental aspect of what it means to be alive in the first place. Of course, as mortal beings we cannot become eternal like the gods¹⁰⁵; however, passing something of ourselves via offspring is the next best thing. Our children, in fact, are in some ways better conduits for our survival than our own persons given that they will probably live much longer than we do (and will then have our grandchildren themselves that will also pass on some of the same qualities and characteristics that we gave them).

When combined with his thoughts on the value of immortality in EN X.8, it becomes difficult to accept that reproduction is simply a descriptive fact about most people is not

¹⁰⁵ This reflects his comments in EN X.8-9 when he says that it is not possible for human beings to contemplate forever like the gods do.

necessarily something Aristotle believes that we should foster. Aristotle implores us to achieve as much immortality as possible (in the form of contemplation):

But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us.¹⁰⁶

Given the importance Aristotle places on the quest for immortality here, it seems as though engaging in reproduction (which, according to *DA*, is a way to partake in the eternal and divine) is one of the highest and most important activities available to human beings.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Aristotle's advice in both places springs from a central motivation. Humans, Aristotle tells us, should be as godlike as possible; therefore, any activity that would bring us closer to this goal is worthwhile. In light of this, we should understand Aristotle's discussion of reproduction in *EN VIII* to have normative significance. If contemplation is good because it is divine (or the activity that we have most in common with the gods), then it seems plausible to say that reproduction is as well. It is not just a descriptive account of the way that human beings happen to operate (let alone something that should be overcome). To be clear, it might be the case that in certain circumstances the desire for our "products" to continue our existence might not be virtuous or praiseworthy if the products are not in themselves good. However, these passages suggest that reproduction is a way to imitate the divine. There is surely more that goes into making reproduction laudable than mere replication, but it is certainly part of a good life for humans.

¹⁰⁶ *EN X.8* 1177b31-35. It should be noted that he is talking about contemplation here, but the principle would also seem to apply to reproduction insofar as it is divine.

¹⁰⁷ There could be degrees of reproduction depending on the offspring. That is, there could be offspring that better pass along the best part of ourselves than others. Plato discusses this in the *Symposium*. Also, readers may object to this elevation of reproduction given that even plants can reproduce, and Aristotle is quite clear that reproduction is not part of the human good precisely because it is shared with plants and animals. However, reproduction is still important to human beings because it is the mechanism by which the human good (contemplation) survives over time. Thus, reproduction in this case is important because of its value to the human good.

A critic might respond that character-friendship (a relationship between to excellent individuals) is a higher kind of reproduction than sexual/physical reproduction. However, if this is the case, it only strengthens the case for other-directed virtues under the extended-self thesis. Caring more about one's intellectual or political "offspring" (regardless of whether or not they are genetic descendants) fits into Aristotle's concern with civic virtues as a whole.¹⁰⁸ Even if Aristotle does not see physical reproduction (and the affinity we have for our children) as the highest kind of reproduction, this only recommends a kind of reproduction that fits even better with moral framework.

The passage in *De Anima* further illustrates that Aristotle almost certainly views the desire to reproduce, in one way or another, as a normative one (and not simply a descriptive one). Insofar as this desire or capacity is common to almost all living things, then it seems as though it is fundamental to our potentiality as living organisms. Furthermore, this capacity is the way we can reach for the divine, so it seems clear that this is a noble and worthwhile endeavor, especially when it furthers the highest ends open to human beings (rational activity). All the pieces are in place to suggest that Aristotle's philosophy entails a kind of extended activity that can go beyond our own deaths. His work is congruent with what he says about parenthood in EN VIII and IX; indeed, it provides a further psychological and metaphysical explanation of why this concern for offspring (biological or otherwise) is central to our lives.

This ontological framework would give us reason to reproduce ourselves for the same reason that we have for extending our own lives. If we want our lives to go well, we have to make sure that we continue to exist. If we do not exist, our lives cannot go well, and because of

¹⁰⁸ "Political offspring" here can refer to those people that carry on our legacy and moral or political agents, as in the case of Athens and Pericles.

this we have strong reason to extend our own lives. This same logic applies to why we would want to reproduce and pass versions of ourselves on so that we can survive our own death. Extending our lives by having children, teaching others what we have learned, and building civic institutions all represent opportunities for this kind of survival.

1.3 – Reproduction and Contemplation

Even if Aristotle does believe that our activity can extend to other things or people, he doesn't reference contemplation in any of the passages above. How might contemplation fit into this picture? The passages from EN VIII.12 suggest that we have a reason to care about our creations as we do ourselves. Of course, we want to live the best life possible, which Aristotle suggests is the contemplative life. As Aristotle points out in EN I, "one swallow does not make a spring", so we have reason to want to extend our lives in such a way as to allow for more contemplation. However, living forever is not possible for human beings, so creating more versions of ourselves is the only way that we can outlive our physical deaths. This is where teaching comes into the picture.

While Aristotle never says that teaching is a form of reproduction explicitly, he does say that a producer puts something of themselves in what they create, and this clearly would apply to the students of a teacher. Aristotle believes that the seat of the "self" is located in the intellect (*nous*), and the character/content of the intellect is of course passed on through education.¹⁰⁹ Teaching would thus afford one the opportunity of passing on one's characteristic activity

¹⁰⁹ Aristotle identifies the "self" (using that term loosely) with both practical and theoretical rationality (EN IX.8 and X.7 respectively). In either case, reproduction would involve teaching of one form or another. In the case of theoretical rationality, one imparts knowledge to another via academic teaching; in the case of practical rationality, it involves moral instruction.

(perhaps the most important part of a human being: the activity of the intellect) onto some other person and count as a kind of reproduction. One interesting implication of this paradigm is that what we pass on of ourselves is not in fact idiosyncratic to us. Contemplation, after all, should be the same amongst people who truly understand the nature of physical laws, for instance. Therefore, reproduction does not involve passing on the unique characteristics of ourselves to others; rather, it involves passing on the characteristic activity of human flourishing and happiness.¹¹⁰

There is some indirect textual evidence that Aristotle feels as though this kind of contemplative reproduction is possible. When Aristotle discusses the bond between brothers, he suggests that such connections are strong because the “similarly educated are more akin to each other” (EN VIII.12 1162a13). Aristotle thus implies that psychological similarity comes in part from similar education, which means that it can serve as the basis for self-interested concerns for other people (as in the case of siblings).

A teacher who passes on theoretical knowledge to their intellectual offspring will thus have reason to care about them for prudential reasons on the Aristotelian framework.¹¹¹ It also

¹¹⁰ This would conform to Carreras’s non-egotistical interpretation of reproduction in Aristotle. It in principle could mean that any individual whom the agent teaches could be a vessel for the extended self. I will discuss Carreras more later.

¹¹¹ Insofar as contemplative or intellectual reproduction involves passing on abstract ideas or principles that exist independent of ourselves, this kind of reproduction is even less egoistic than others. The principles, after all, are not by their nature our own individual creations. This can help us understand what Aristotle (or the Aristotelian author) has in mind in *Magna Moralia* when he says that the good man is “a lover of the good, not a lover of self. For, if he does love himself, it is only because he is good. But the bad man is a lover of self. For he has nothing in the way of nobility for which he should love himself, but apart from these grounds he will love himself *qua* self” (II.14 1212b18-21). Whiting argues that this passage indicates that “instead of taking the legitimacy of brute self-love for granted and seeking – as on rational egoist readings – to extend it to others, Aristotle argues in IX.8 that brute self-love is not justified...the virtuous agent’s attitudes toward his friends derives from his attitudes toward himself, he will not love his friends because they are his ‘other selves’ in the sense that they are simply like him: he will love them, as he loves himself, because they are good” (Whiting, “*Philia*,” 291). However, I do not think Whiting is right to suggest that this passage rules out the possibility that we have reason to care especially about

applies to educational or intellectual institutions (like universities or academies) that an individual has influenced or crafted. This of course is not a radically counter-intuitive notion, and many people share it. It is not uncommon for people to care about the legacy of people and institutions that they created or worked with in their lives.

This also dovetails with Aristotle's argument for the necessity of practical rationality. Civic institutions are necessary for the preservation of one's descendants. Because they constitute the creation (handiwork) of the creators (and thus have value to them in the same way that a child does for a parent), our intellectual descendants are an extension of characteristic activity, as are our intellectual "siblings" who have been nourished by the same source. Thus, we have every reason to want them to do well, and the only way for that to happen is for vital civic institutions to remain in place. We want them to have access to schools, libraries, and other institutions of learning. On top of that, we want them to live in a society where they are protected, which justifies the existence of a military and many other civic institutions necessary for their continued existence. If we live in an especially happy polity, then most people will be connected to us in virtue of having the same access to contemplation (in one form or another) and will have received this ability from similar institutions. This means that the entire polity is a kind of extension of ourselves, and we have reason to defend it.

ourselves, our friends, or our particular communities. I take Aristotle to mean here that only the good person should find themselves pleasant or noble (thus worthy of *philia*). If he is wise (*sophia*), then he will have knowledge of the world, which is not of course relative to himself, and this wisdom could be transferred to others. As an aside, I do not think this means that people have no reason to care about their own personal development. For instance, I do not think this passage would rule out someone caring about their own moral development if they currently are not yet a good or virtuous person. This would, in fact, be the basis for the EN as a treatise on moral development. The objectionable kind of self-love is when the bad or vicious person takes their current self to be praiseworthy and good.

Thus, we have no reason to cheat other people and civic institutions any more than we would ourselves. It does not make sense within the context of Aristotle's theory of reproduction. It may be the case that there are circumstances in which there may be no alternative to sacrificing ourselves for the sake of people or things we love; however, while this may be unfortunate, it does not suggest that it is better for us to cheat on our obligations to other people than it would be to benefit them. Insofar as they are extensions of ourselves, we have the same reason to help them as we do our particular persons. This would vindicate Aristotle's other-directed virtues as part of the good life.¹¹²

Now that this framework is in place, we can understand why Aristotle does not endorse moral vices like cheating the system or cowardice. According to my reading of the Aristotelian paradigm, we can infer that human beings "reproduce" via their communities and other people in those communities. They bear a similar relationship to individuals in their society as they do to their biological children. If that's the case, we can see why it would be in one's self interest to sacrifice personal well-being in the name of helping others in certain circumstances. We can imagine two parents who die in an attempt to save their children. On the one hand, this might seem like a selfless action; they are not identical to their children, and thus they have given their own lives to save others. However, we can make sense of their actions from the standpoint of self-interest. Most of us recognize that we should care for our children a great deal; they represent something of ourselves that will outlive us. As such, it is in our own interest to help our children. If this same (or at least a similar) relation holds between our fellow citizens and

¹¹² At least when necessary. Again, there is no reason to start wars in order to die for one's country. We only have reason to die for our polis when there is no other alternative. Sometimes we must choose between bad and worse options.

communities, then we have good reason to sacrifice personal well-being in order to help them if such a sacrifice is required. The key aspects of our existence and character are not limited to our individual persons, so there is much in our broader social world that is worth nurturing. If the metaphysical connection to our social universe is strong enough (and, as I will cover later, there is such a connection), then this would radically reorient our perspective on self and self-interest.

This, in other words, can explain why citizens have an interest in the survival of their polities. They are intimately tied to their communities and participating in practices that undermine its welfare (or the welfare of many of its inhabitants) would not be in their interest (whether they recognize this or not). Courage is important because it helps us defend our political “offspring.” It is not possible to neatly separate our own interests from that of our communities, and thus shirking civic obligations does not benefit us.

Insofar as self-interest does not end where their persons do, people have reason to care about the society in which they live. In the case of extreme danger, Aristotle can offer reasons why facing that danger is still good for us. If, say, a war is necessary for the survival of for our country, we have reason to do what we can to support a just war effort. Furthermore, slotting someone else into our place on the front didn’t save us in the ways that they had hoped if Aristotle’s view of the extended-self is correct. According to Aristotelian theories of reproduction and friendship, it seems as though one’s fellow citizens are in important ways extensions of ourselves. Thus, their misfortune is our own. We are part of a larger community that embodies values or characteristics that we think are important. It is an extension of who we are, or better yet we are small part of it. We should thus care about its flourishing. In order for it to function, the component parts of the community must work in tandem and respect the dignity

and importance of other citizens within the context of the whole. The society will not function without moral virtue within it, and thus we need to do what is necessary to preserve it. If we die in the attempt, then we will have hopefully survived in an important way if the community continues on. On this account, privileging oneself over another person in the polis is an arbitrary and capricious exercise.

Section 2 - Self-Love and Friendship

Aristotle's vision of reproduction by itself makes a strong case for the other-directed virtues he espouses. However, he also provides a second kind of reason for why we should help other people. This revolves around his understanding of why we find ourselves valuable and how that relates to why we like being around our friends. This section will explore the passages where he discusses our relationship to our friends and explain how this would fit in with an intellectualist reading of Aristotle before considering concerns that this account of friendship is narcissistic or objectionably partial to people in our own communities.

2.1 – Friendship in EN IX

Book IX contains some of the strongest evidence that Aristotle believes that we have self-interested reasons to help other people. Aristotle essentially argues that we care about our friends for the same reason that we care about ourselves (provided that we are good people)¹¹³: “Friendly relations with one's neighbours, and the marks by which friendship are defined, seem

¹¹³ I mean “good” in the sense that they are living flourishing lives. Aristotle does not think that anyone other than virtuous individuals are capable of developing “perfect” friendship (EN VIII.3 1156b6-7). Everyone should care about living a good life. Only good people can thus engage in a justified version of self-love. People who are not virtuous will not feel as though good people are pleasant, and thus will not take pleasure in the right sort of friends. Pleasure and pain, after all, are the test of virtue. That is why political science is concerned with managing pleasure and pain (EN II.3 1105a10-16).

to have proceeded from a man's relations to himself" (EN IX.4 1166a1-2). Thus, our love for our neighbors proceeds from our relations to ourselves. This is a rather provocative thesis, but Aristotle lays out some of the reasons for this parallel.

Aristotle then moves on to outline the reasons that a good man cares about himself, and how that explains his concern for his friends:

For his opinions are harmonious, and he desires the same things with all his soul; and therefore he wishes for himself what is good and what seems so, and does it (the it is characteristic of the good man to exert himself for the good), and does so for its own sake (for he does it for the same of the intellectual element in him, which is thought to be the man himself); and he wishes himself to live and be preserved, and especially the element that thinks would seem to be the individual man, or to be so more than any other element in him. And such a man wishes to live with himself; for he does so with pleasure, since the memories of his past acts are delightful and his hopes for the future are good, and therefore pleasant. His mind is well stored too with subjects of contemplation. And he grieves and rejoices, more than any other, with himself; for the same thing is always painful, and the same thing always pleasant, and not one thing at one time and another at another; he has, so to speak, nothing to regret (EN IX.4 1166a10-29).

A good person is someone who always does what they think is pleasant, noble, and right (as he explains at EN VIII.3 1156b6-32). A good man has healthy desires and has the character to always do what is necessary to fulfill them. He finds accomplishing good things (and the memories of such experiences) enjoyable and pleasant. There is no room for self-loathing in the good person because his behavior always matches what he thinks is good and right. Thus, the life of a good person is supremely satisfying.

Aristotle points out that the lives of our (good) friends will be pleasant to us for the same reasons that we (insofar as we are good, virtuous people) will be pleasant to ourselves:

Therefore, since each of these characteristics belongs to the good man in relation to himself, and he is related to his friends as to himself (for his friend is another

self), friendship too is thought to be one of these attributes, and those who have these attributes to be friends (EN IX.4 1166a30-32).

Virtuous friends will share our opinions. They will desire what we desire and manage to fulfill these desires (all things being equal). When they do good things, we will enjoy seeing their actions and remembering what they did. Their minds are full of worthy “subjects of contemplation” and we can access their thoughts in our interactions with them. In other words, virtuous friends will be pleasant to a good person for the same reason that he is pleasant to herself. Insofar as a good person has reason to preserve their own life and work towards their flourishing, they have reason to preserve their friends’ lives and work towards their flourishing.

2.2 – Friendship and Other-Directed Virtues

Aristotle clearly says that the love we have for our friends and ourselves springs from the same source. This kind of prudential reason can explain why Aristotle believes that certain virtues can be other-directed or even require significant person sacrifice on our part. It would be deeply unpleasant and tragic for us to witness the destruction or death of our friends. As such, we have reason to be courageous in dangerous situations in order to help them. Of course, less dramatic virtues also fit into this paradigm. Insofar as we like seeing our virtuous friends do well, we have reason to be honest with them and to treat them fairly in business dealings. If they are in financial trouble, generosity would be in order.

This explanation of why we have reason to help our friends also explains why concerns about free-riding are not lethal to his theory of the good life. We are not only interested in our friends because we care about our reputations or want them to provide us with goods for our own personal flourishing. Aristotle gives us a reason to care about the well-being of our friends that closely mirrors our own self-interest. Cheating a friend in a business deal would make their lives

go worse, and we would not derive satisfaction or pleasure in this for the same reason we ourselves would not want to be cheated. In other words, we have reason to be virtuous towards our friends even if we can get away with vice.

Now, some might object that all of this does not amount to an explicit assertion of an extended-self on the part of Aristotle. In a vacuum, this is correct. Aristotle does not explicitly say that friends are identical to ourselves. However, this is not necessary to get some of his other-directed virtues off the ground. There are enough similarities or connections between our friends to give us reason to help them even if we are not identical to them. Indeed, we may not have this kind of identity relationship to our future selves anyway (insofar as we do not share a high degree of similarity with our future selves), and it would be strange to deny that we have reason to help future versions of ourselves. Granted, Aristotle thinks that the character of the good person is stable over time, but it is of course the case that many other qualities change a great deal over time. Nonetheless, we still think that if certain important qualities remain, then we have reason to care about our future selves, and this would equally apply to our friends who share a similar character. In order to make sense of other-directed virtues, their defenders only need to establish that we have self-interested reason to help others, not that we are identical to them. This could apply to the Aristotelian paradigm; something similar to this was likely operative for Aristotle given the larger Greek emphasis on communal happiness and flourishing.¹¹⁴

2.3 – Friendship and Politics, or Political Friendship

¹¹⁴ Some may balk at this, but in Aristotle's reference of Priam at EN I.10 1101b6 (which is taken up at other points of this project) suggests that he shares the broad Greek view of Priam's life. Priam experienced great hardship in his life because he lost his city and family to the Greeks. Their suffering was his.

Aristotle connects his principle of friendship to larger civic relationships within political communities in EN VIII.9:

Friendship and justice seem, as we have said at the outset of our discussion, to be concerned with the same objects and exhibited between the same persons. For in every community there is thought to be some form of justice, and friendship too (EN VIII.9 1159b25-27).

He thus establishes that there is a connection between friendship and community in his theory.

People are not independent, and thus need to form collectives in order to meet some of their basic needs. However, Aristotle insists that political friendship goes beyond a simple relationship of utility, “for [the political community] aims not at present advantage but at what is advantageous for life as a whole” (EN VIII.9 1160a20-21). Thus, political relationships would be similar to character-based friendships that Aristotle references in EN VIII and IX. The members of a political community do not merely associate with each other so that they can gain particular, local advantages (as in, say, the case of one person buying food from another). Rather, they enter into the relationship they do because they want to live good lives. This means that many of Aristotle’s arguments as to why we have reason to care about our friends also apply to our fellow citizens.

Aristotle further elucidates this mentality in EN IX.6:

Unanimity also seems to be a friendly relation...we do say that a city is unanimous when men have the same opinion about what is to their interest, and choose the same actions, and do what they have resolved in common. It is about things to be done, therefore, that people are said to be unanimous, and among these things, about matters of consequence and in which it is possible for both or all parties to get what they want...Unanimity seems, then, to be political friendship, as indeed it is commonly said to be; for it is concerned with things that are to our interest and have influence on our lives (EN IX.6 1167a21-28, 1167b2-4).

Political friendship exists for Aristotle when citizens of a community have agreed and move towards the same end. Insofar as Aristotle believes that we derive pleasure from seeing and doing good and noble things, then citizens of a just community would derive a great deal of satisfaction from seeing the state function well. This can explain why Aristotle believes that certain civic virtues are important for the good life. Without them, it would not be possible to see the fruits of our labors manifest in a social context.

Once again, this can fit with the communitarian intellectualist reading of Aristotle. Aristotle believes that contemplation is pleasant, and thus we can see why it would be pleasant to see other people contemplate. Indeed, perceiving the contemplation of others is almost identical to contemplating by ourselves (given that viewing the contemplation of others would of course cause us to contemplate). For instance, if we have a rich conversation with our friends about moral philosophy, her contemplation/insight causes us to understand and contemplate as well. Thus, perceiving others contemplate (in the right way) is akin to our own contemplation. Furthermore, viewing the contemplation of others can help us learn new things and become wiser and more knowledgeable. Seeing the contemplative lives of others destroyed would cause us a great deal of pain and sadness, much in the same way the loss of our own contemplative capacities would.

2.4 – Friendship as Narcissism?

If we love our friends because they are similar to us, it might be the case that this interpretation of Aristotle saddles him with an implausibly self-centered vision of friendship and concern for others. Some commentators have objected that this view of friendship (and the extended-self generally) is objectionably narcissistic or egoistic. If this is the correct

interpretation of Aristotle's theory, then it makes it seem like agents should strive to make other people like themselves and further advance their own interests in a quasi-imperialistic sense.

To avoid this unwelcome outcome, several prominent Aristotelian interpreters have suggested that Aristotle does not in fact believe this kind of "other self" referenced in EN IX to be literal.¹¹⁵ For the purposes of this project, I will focus on the arguments from Julia Annas.¹¹⁶ She argues that our friends are only "other selves" in the sense that we adopt a concern for their well-being and happiness in the same way that we do our own.¹¹⁷ Friendships or relationships with others generally are just brute facts about human beings that need no justification. However, Anthony Carreras has offered a substantial response to this position.¹¹⁸ He notes that the kind of extension that Aristotle argues for can be mutually beneficial. If I have a significant relation, the interaction between the two of us will influence us both.¹¹⁹ Thus, we both change each other in a way that we grow more similar to each other as we change for the better.

This is critical, but it also confirms some of the broader contours of the position I outlined above. On my account, it is wrong to think of ourselves as independent agents who simply impose ourselves on others. Rather, we have been influenced by our own parents, teachers, and mentors and thus become extensions of them. This means we as individuals are part of a larger project that is in no way reducible to one person. In turn, we pass on this identity to our children, students, and civic relations. Thus, properly understood, this is not a project of

¹¹⁵ These include Whiting (2006), Richard Kraut (1989), and Dennis McKerlie (1991), and Lorraine Smith Pangle (2003).

¹¹⁶ Julia Annas, "Self-Love in Aristotle," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 27, Issue Supplement (1989), 1-18.

¹¹⁷ Annas, "Self-Love," 4

¹¹⁸ Anthony Carreras, "Aristotle on Other-Selfhood and Reciprocal Shaping," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* Vol. 29, Issue 4 (2012): 330-331

¹¹⁹ Carreras, "Reciprocal Sharing," 328-329

petty selfishness and egoism. Insofar as we are merely part of a larger project, then my reproduction is not my own limited, personal replication. As Carreras suggests, it is more of a “we” than “I” who reproduces by implanting something of ourselves in others.¹²⁰

Whiting also voices a related objection to this aspect of the extended-self reading of Aristotle. She worries that attributing this reading to Aristotle makes him look like an egoist who only has friends in order to enjoy their activities (which, if the extended-self thesis holds, are “our” activities).¹²¹ Most people believe that it is wrong to think of friends as toys; rather we should value our friends for their own sakes and not for the value they bring to us. Cooper notes that advantage and pleasure friendships exist because both parties get something out of the other person; while these sorts of friends do care about each other, it is only because they find value in what the other person can provide for them.¹²² The extended-self thesis threatens to collapse character-friendship into these lesser relationships in ways that Aristotle would not condone.

As such, Whiting refers to Aristotle’s theory of pleasure to explain why Aristotle does not in fact endorse the extended-self thesis. Aristotle argues that we take pleasure in things we find intrinsically valuable, and thus if we find our friends’ activities pleasurable, it must be that he believes we find them valuable for their own sake (and not for the sake of the benefit they give to us, which would instrumentalize their actions).¹²³ Insofar as good people only take

¹²⁰ Carreras, “Reciprocal Sharing,” 328-329

¹²¹ Whiting, “Philia,” 296: “Aristotle no doubt believes that someone who has good friends will realize herself more fully than she would if she had no friends. But if he allows this to serve as the agent’s reason for having friends in the first place, he threatens to undermine the primacy of wishing and doing well to another for the *other’s* sake. For even if having friends involves some sort of wishing them well for *their* sakes, it is problematic for the agent to take as her reason for having friends the fact that doing so is the only (or the best) way to achieve the sort of self-knowledge or self-realization in which *her eudaimonia* consists. But we *need not* read Aristotle as arguing in this way.”

¹²² John M. Cooper, “Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 30, no. 4 (1977): 619-648. 641

¹²³ Whiting, “Philia,” 301-302

pleasure in things they find intrinsically valuable (which, for them, will be things that are truly good), then the pleasure that the good person derives from seeing her friends perform virtuous actions must mean that the good person cares about their friends as ends-in-themselves. They do not view their friends simply as proxies or instruments to extend their own happiness or flourishing. If they did, then they would not derive intrinsic pleasure from their actions.

Whiting raises a serious concern here. As she notes, Aristotle objects to crass egoism that entails a kind of selfish use of friends.¹²⁴ This would potentially rule out Cooper's assertion that virtuous people engage in friendship because it is through their relations with others that they gain certain self-knowledge and maintain their drive to participate in virtuous activities and projects.¹²⁵ Both Annas and Whiting suggest that there must be a more altruistic or selfless justification for caring about the well-being of others.

However, my reading of Aristotle entails that the moral virtues are worth pursuing based on prudential reasons. Thus, it is necessary to respond to Whiting's concern in a way that does not compromise the self-interested nature of friendship. Fortunately, Whiting's concern can be accommodated within the framework of the extended-self thesis.

¹²⁴ Whiting, "Philia," 296

¹²⁵ John M. Cooper, "Friendship and the Good in Aristotle," *The Philosophical Review* 86, no. 3 (1977): 290-315. From 310: "If my interpretations are correct, Aristotle argues, first, that to know the goodness of one's life, which he reasonably assumes to be a necessary condition of flourishing, one needs to have intimate friends whose lives are similarly good, since one is better able to reach a sound and secure estimate of the quality of a life when it is not one's own. Secondly, he argues that the fundamental moral and intellectual activities that go to make up a flourishing life cannot be continuously engaged in with pleasure and interest, as they must be if the life is to be a flourishing one, unless they are engaged in as parts of shared activities, rather than pursued merely in private; and given the nature of the activities that are in question, this sharing is possible only with intimate friends who are themselves morally good persons."

Whiting seems to take this position as a kind of refutation of the theory that Aristotle is some kind of egoist.¹²⁶ It is not clear to me that this is the case if we hold to the extended-self thesis, even without considering Carreras's response to Annas. It is possible to hold both that we value the actions and activities of our friends for their own sake and for the benefit it provides for us because our friends are extensions of ourselves. While they are not completely identical to us, we do in fact have reason to help them for similar reasons that we have to help ourselves. Insofar as we believe that Aristotle holds that we have intrinsic value to ourselves, our friends will also have intrinsic value. They share some qualities or characteristics that are central to who we are. Thus, the extended-self reading of Aristotle can accept Whiting's argument that the activity of our friends is valuable for its own sake while still understanding this value to be rooted in self-interest.¹²⁷ Thus, her argument does not provide a reason to abandon the extended-self thesis.

2.5 – The Extended-Self and Impartiality

There is no reason that the extended-self thesis would commit Aristotle to a kind of crass egoism. However, it might be the case that Aristotle's conception of friendship may not meet the threshold of impartiality that some people expect from a contemporary ethical system. Whiting and others who share her view may hope that Aristotle would develop an ethical system that

¹²⁶ Whiting, "Philia," 277: "commentators sometimes read Aristotle's conception of the friend as an 'other self' as explaining how the agent's eudaimonia comes to include that of others: because the agent's friend is her other self, her friend's eudaimonia is part of her own and promoting her friend's eudaimonia is a way of promoting her own. Some even read Aristotle as making the friend a literal extension of oneself. Irwin (1988), for example, reads Aristotle as treating the character and activities of one's friend as an 'extension of [one's] own activity': friendship is thus conceived as a mode of 'self-realization'...But we should not assume straightaway that his eudaimonism is a form of rational egoism. For his account of philia, if read without this assumption, may tell against rational egoist readings of that framework."

¹²⁷ That is, not as toys but as extensions of ourselves.

would give us reason to help all people, and not just those we know.¹²⁸ However, Aristotle explains that

Goodwill is a friendly sort of relation, but is not *identical* with friendship; for one may have goodwill both towards people whom one does not know, and without their knowing it, but not friendship. This has indeed been already said. But goodwill is not even a friendly feeling. For it does not involve intensity or desire, whereas these accompany friendly feeling; and friendly feeling implies intimacy while goodwill may arise of a sudden, as it does towards competitors in a contest; we come to feel goodwill for them and to share in their wishes, but we would not *do* anything with them (EN IX.5 1166b30-1167a2).

This suggests that friendship (i.e. what I have argued a foundational pillar of other-directed virtues) only applies to people that we interact with to the point where some kind of emotional intimacy develops. Indeed, Aristotle suggests that feelings of goodwill alone are not enough to serve as the basis for any sort of interaction with someone.

Further evidence of this mindset in Aristotle comes later in Book IX.9. At this juncture, he claims that the reason we find our friends pleasant is because we enjoy seeing their excellent rational activity:

For we have said from the onset that happiness is an activity; and activity plainly comes into being and is not present at the start like a piece of property. If happiness lies in living and being active, and the good man's activity is virtuous and pleasant in itself...and if a thing being one's own is one of the attributes that make it pleasant, and if we can contemplate our neighbors better than ourselves and their actions better than our own, and if the actions of virtuous men who are their friends are pleasant to good men...if this be so, the blessed men will need friends of this sort, since he chooses to contemplate worthy actions and actions that are his own, and the actions of a good man who is his friends have both these qualities...Now if [a good person] were a solitary, life would be hard for him; for by oneself it is not easy to be continuously active; but with others and towards others it is easier. With others therefore his activity will be more continuous,

¹²⁸ Whiting, "Philia," 291: "But this misses Aristotle's point, which is that human beings stand out among animals as especially *clannish*. We are the most *ethnocentric* – or, as Aristotle puts it, the most *homoethnic* – of animals. That is why we *praise* those who are (simply) *philanthropoi*: they have managed to overcome this common but regrettable tendency."

being in itself pleasant, as it ought to be for the man who is blessed (EN IX.9 1169b29-1170a7).

There are a number of things to unpack there. One is that Aristotle does not think that someone in isolation can be truly happy, and that the reason for this is because a hermit cannot perceive the virtuous actions of her friends from afar. This means that it is not possible to have “friends” that one does not regularly interact with (which seems to be necessary in order to contemplate their actions). It is thus implausible to suggest that Aristotle’s conception of friendship can extend to people that we have no relationship with or do not come into contact with on a regular basis. This would mean that the other-directed virtues would not apply to strangers, even if those strangers were similar to us in character and intellect.

Many contemporary readers will object that this would make our moral obligations too localized and would instead call for a system of ethics that gives us obligations to those that we do not know (Peter Singer and the drowning child come to mind).¹²⁹ Indeed, many people in today’s world want an ethical theory that will require us to help people beyond our own nation. Aristotle’s theory may not give us strong reason to care about people outside of our own city.¹³⁰

One response to this question is to simply concede that Aristotle’s vision of morality and care for others was more limited in scope than those common in secular liberal democracies. It is perhaps the Abrahamic influence on our society that accounts for this kind of intuition or moral paradigm. We may need to find a supplement to Aristotle’s normative theory in order to defend our more egalitarian and impartial intuitions about morality. It also might be the case that

¹²⁹ Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1972): 229-243. Pg 231

¹³⁰ It is, in fact, unsurprising that Aristotle’s theory of morality might be limited given his focus on the Greek polis/city-state.

Aristotle's own theory allows for a more impartial system than they realized, though I will deal with this possibility later in the chapter in my discussion of the remotest Mysian.

Nonetheless, the combination of Aristotle's conceptions of reproduction and friendship provide a powerful justification for other-directed virtues. Aristotle is licensed to hold these as virtues because human beings are by their nature social animals that cannot flourish or be happy outside of a community. Indeed, we are part of larger social organizations whose success is crucial to our individual self-interest (even if the good life is a contemplative one), and thus our "selves" extend to other individuals in our communities. If my arguments hold, they will have explained why Aristotle's other-directed virtues have a place in the good life. Our friends will constitute extensions of ourselves that we have prudential reason to care about.

Section 3 – Textual Evidence Against the Extended-Self Thesis

Thus far, I have made a positive case for the extended-self interpretation based on certain passages in EN VIII and IX, in addition to a few other pieces from the Aristotelian corpus. I have also responded to critiques of my interpretations of these passages. However, despite the passages above, there are passages in Aristotle's writings that ostensibly cut against reading him as a proponent of the extended-self thesis. It is thus necessary for me to deal with this interpretive difficulty in order to defend my account of Aristotelian moral virtue. I will consider Aristotle's discussion of the living and the dead, ostracism, and competition between friends before dealing with a general concern about why Aristotle never explicitly speaks in the language of the extended-self.

3.1 – The Fortunes of the Living and the Dead

The most glaring problem for the extended-self thesis is that Aristotle seems to directly object to it in EN I. Aristotle considers whether the fortunes of one's dead relatives impact their happiness. He gives his final verdict as follows:

For it seems, from these considerations, that even if anything whether good or evil penetrates to [the dead], it must be something weak and negligible, either in itself or for them, or if not, at least it must be such in degree and kind as not to make happy those who are not happy nor to take away their blessedness from those who are. The good or bad fortunes of friends, then, seem to have some effects on the dead, but effects of such a kind and degree as neither to make the happy unhappy nor to produce any other change of the kind (EN 1.11 1101a35-b9).

As Richard Kraut notes, Aristotle indicates that the fortunes of the living cannot impact people who have died.¹³¹ This potentially undermines the extended-self thesis as a way to explain why other-directed virtues are actually in our self-interest. If the welfare of friends, family, and community does not impact people who have died, it seems difficult to suggest that we “live on” through our relations after we die. If that's the case, then we might not have a reason to sacrifice aspects of our personal well-being or happiness (let alone our very lives) in the name of helping other people. If the fortunes of our friends and family do not affect us beyond the grave, then why would we have prudential reason to die in battle for their sake, or to give liberally to charity? My interpretation of Aristotle would fail if I cannot explain why Aristotle still believe we have reason to help other people for prudential reasons.

As a preliminary note, I do think that there is a tension between what Aristotle says here and what he says in *DA* and EN VIII about the importance of reproduction. He explicitly calls reproduction a lesser form of immortality (as reviewed above). It is a gateway for participating in the divine. If mortal reproduction involves a kind of immortality, then it seems as though the

¹³¹ Richard Kraut, *Aristotle on the Human Good* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 152

fortunes of the living should impact their progenitors. Insofar as we survive through our offspring, then it follows that in some way live on through them. If that's the case, then why would their fortunes not impact our own? Thus, it is hard to see exactly why he would say something like this here in EN I.11. It is thus possible that Aristotle vacillated on this question within his own works.

However, there are a number of possible ways to reconcile this passage with his thoughts in EN VIII.12 (though they require an especially intricate balance that sometimes relies on a good deal of inference). First, it is possible that Aristotle believes that the fortunes of one's offspring impact someone while they are alive but not after they die. He makes references to the importance of children for a good life too often to assume that parents should not care about their children while they are alive. It might be the case for Aristotle that their self-interest is tied up with their children as long as they are alive. This would still be sufficient to explain other directed obligations because sacrificing other people that we care about to save ourselves would not make our lives go better. In such circumstances, death would be preferable to living on while our offspring or children are dead. Aristotle suggests as much in EN I.11:

If, then, as some of a man's own misadventures have a certain weight and influence on life while others are, as it were, lighter, so too there are differences among the misadventures of all our friends, and it makes a difference whether the various sufferings befall the living or the dead...this difference must be taken into account (1101a27-31, 33).

Here we see that he believes that the fortunes of our friends impact us when we are alive. If we are dead, the good or bad actions or fates of our friends do not impact or affect us in the same way that they do when we are living. This would constitute an interpretation that accommodates all of the passages in question.

This would be enough to support the extended-self thesis, because it would still give us reason to care about the well-being of our friends and community as long as we were alive. Apparently, Aristotle believes that our friend's academic or political achievement can make us better off before we die, so it still makes prudential sense to help those with which we have this kind of connection. While this diminishes in death, we still could recognize that it would be worse for us to abandon other people we care about to preserve our own lives. Such a decision would make our lives especially wretched. Thus, Aristotle still can say to people that have reason to be courageous in battle or generous with their money. These virtues help other versions of ourselves which can impact our well-being as long as we are alive, and their misfortune can make our lives go poorly.

Indeed, his discussion of Priam in EN I.10 supports this reading. Here, Aristotle considers whether fortune (that is, luck or fate outside of one's control) can be bad enough to make a good person unhappy:

If activities are, as we said, what determines the character of life, no blessed man can become miserable; for he will never do the acts that are hateful and mean. For the man who is truly good and wise, we think, bears all the chances of life becomingly and always makes the best of circumstances, as a good general makes the best military use of the army at his command and a shoemaker makes the best shoes out of the hides that are given him; and so with all other craftsmen. And if this is the case, the happy man can never become miserable—though he will not reach *blessedness*, if he meets with fortunes like those of Priam (EN I.10 1100b33-1101a7).

Aristotle gives us some evidence he supports the extended-self thesis in this passage. He takes it as clear and obvious that Priam had a sad life (or at least was deprived of blessedness). Priam was the king of Troy but lived to see all of his sons killed and his city destroyed before finally dying himself. If Aristotle takes it as obvious that Priam's life was not maximally happy, this implies that the things Priam lost had an impact on his life. The most prominent examples of

things he lost were his son Hector (the greatest of the Trojan princes and warriors) and his city. It is hard to imagine that Aristotle is referring to anything else in this passage.¹³² If this is the case, then it is clear that the fortunes of one's friends and community can impact one's happiness. This aligns with what Aristotle suggests about the importance of children (and other products) to their parents. Based on what he says in EN VIII and IX, Aristotle would likely say that Priam cared for Hector because Hector was the embodiment of what Priam thought was good and noble. Priam shares biological similarities with Hector, and he was responsible for his son's existence and upbringing, meaning that Priam had a strong reason to care for him as his offspring. Furthermore, Hector was his successor, and his city (something that he had a hand in shaping as king) would also suffer because of his son's death.

As we have seen above, Aristotle also believes that it is pleasant to see our friends living happy lives for the same reason we find it pleasant to observe ourselves living happy lives. Thus, he would probably say that Priam was sad because he observed his son (and his city) meeting a gruesome and tragic end. The flourishing of his family and community was cut short before his eyes. Given how unpleasant this would be to Priam, it makes sense that he would have reason to attempt to prevent this outcome (even at the expense of his own life).

Insofar as the lives and fortunes of our products can impact our own happiness (so long as we are alive), then we have strong prudential reason to care about them. These two components interact to make an especially strong case that it is better to be virtuous towards other people. While dying in the name of friends or family is bad, Aristotle does not believe that

¹³² Some might object that he could be referring solely to Priam's death, but the context makes this reading dubious. Aristotle argues that the good man does what is best given the circumstances, and that cannot apply to people who have already died. Therefore, he is almost certainly references the other things Priam lost beyond his own life.

it constitutes the same level of wretchedness as cowardice or stinginess. In other words, dying (or other hardships) is preferable to injustice and baseness. We can make sense of this argument if we keep Aristotle's assertion about the importance of products to their producers. Insofar as they represent other copies of ourselves, it makes sense that we would want them to do well for the same reasons that we want to do well. If we allow other people who are important to us to die or face extreme hardship, we are essentially sacrificing things we have prudential reason to care about. That does not make a whole lot of sense.

Another possibility that could explain how the extended-self thesis is compatible with EN I.11 is that Aristotle is considering two distinct concepts that have different scope in the passages in question. In EN I.11, Aristotle might only be referring to the happiness of the individual in question. However, this does not rule out the possibility that this person has self-interested reason to help other people beyond themselves. It would not be necessary to establish an identical relationship to other people in order to demonstrate that we have self-interested reasons to help them. Following Parfit, we are not necessarily identical to future versions of ourselves, but we still have self-interested reasons to care about them. Other people could have enough psychological or character similarity to us that they would require prudential concern on our part. On this reading, we could live happy lives by ourselves (that is, we could say that our lives went well without necessarily referring to the fortunes of our friends or associates); however, that does not mean we should not care about the happiness of our friends/family insofar as they bear some kind of similarity to us. On this reading, Aristotle could say that the fortunes of the living do not impact the dead but still say that we have reason to care about other people when we are alive. If they have enough connection to us, then perhaps they are related to us in a way that would still give us reason to be concerned with their well-being.

It is worth noting here that Aristotle seems to take this kind of concern for others for granted (even if it involves giving up our own lives in certain circumstances). In other words, he does not seem to think that we lack reason to care about the happiness of other people, even if this does not entail our own personal well-being. Yet Aristotle never gives any indication that he believes that virtue is ever not in our self-interest. This reading thus has the potential to explain both his remarks here in EN I and his commitments in other places to the possibility of survival through reproduction. This is admittedly a weaker version of the extended-self thesis, but it still will be able to make sense of the other-directed virtues that Aristotle asserts are part of the good life. Even though Aristotle never develops an explicit account of personal identity like Parfit, his various commitments imply that he has something like this in mind which informs his theory of moral virtue.

3.2 – Aristotle on Ostracism

Kraut also provides an objection to the extended-self thesis in *Pol.* III.13, where Aristotle says that the democratic practice of ostracism was justifiable in cases where one individual had acquired too many external goods.¹³³ Kraut argues that if the individual in question is virtuous, then the city would exile this person simply because they had too many friends or too much money. This would suggest that they could acquire goods virtuously while at the same time undermining the collective good of the democracy. If this is the case, it is possible to benefit while the city does not, and thus defeats the argument that personal and collective well-being always coincide for Aristotle. However, it is worth noting that Aristotle was considering this kind of practice within a democracy specifically, in which “only can the government be stable

¹³³ *Pol.* III.13 1284a20-21, b27; Kraut, *Human Good*, 92-93

where the middle class exceeds one or both of the others” (*Pol.* IV.12 1296b38). Democracies cannot function with large wealth disparities lest the rich and poor fight with each other for control of the polis (*Pol.* IV.11 1296a21-27). This may be one of the reasons that he believes that democracies are not ideal forms of government: they could require the censure of virtuous people who should be left to flourish.

However, it is also worth noting that the way I have interpreted the extended-self thesis in Aristotle could accommodate Aristotle’s thoughts on ostracism. Aristotle recognizes that individuals are not identical with the collective. This does not mean that they do not have self-interested reasons to help other people. Those reasons may even outweigh their own personal well-being. If this is the case, then we can see why ostracism could be acceptable in a democratic society. Acquiring a great deal of wealth and popularity may be good for you personally, but if it negatively impacts the overall symmetry or equality necessary in a democracy, then it might not be good for the community. If you have prudential reasons to care about the community, then it would make sense to allow for other people to become closer to your level. If a citizen does not do this, then the other members of the democracy can rightly claim that exceptional citizen is not maximizing their self-interest (which can extend beyond their personal happiness and flourishing).

It should also be noted that democracy is a kind of unjust government for Aristotle and that in an ideal state ostracism would not be used against individuals who far exceeded others in excellence:

It is true that under certain perverted forms of government, and from their special point of view, such a measure [ostracism] is just and expedient, but it is also clear that it is not absolutely just. In the perfect state there would be great doubts about the use of it, not when applied to excess in strength, wealth, popularity, or the

like, but when used against someone who is pre-eminent in excellence...(Pol. III.13 1284b23-29)

Virtuous people should not be punished simply because they are superior to others in excellence.

Rather, if there truly was an individual whose excellence far exceeded those of her fellow citizens, the government should become a monarchy:

What is to be done with [an exceptionally excellent person]? People will not say that such a man is to be expelled and exiled; on the other hand, he ought not be a subject—that would be as if mankind should claim to rule over Zeus, dividing his offices among them. The only alternative is that all should happily obey such a ruler, according to what seems to be the order of nature, and that men like him should be kings in their state for life (Pol. III.13 1284b29-34).

Aristotle's position here is that there is no good reason to exile an exceptionally good person from the community; their presence does not make the community worse in any absolute way. In fact, they should be given the power of a monarch in order to do what is best for the community and the excellent person. Thus, Aristotle considered position on ostracism does not suggest that there must be a sharp demarcation between the good of the community and the individual.

3.3 – *Friendly Competition*

Beyond his discussion of ostracism, Kraut gives another argument that revolves around passages in Aristotle where he endorses moral competition between virtuous people.¹³⁴ Aristotle in fact says that virtuous people desire this kind of contest with each other. Kraut notes that it would not make sense to compete for these kinds of honors or activities if the extended-self thesis holds. If my friend's achievement does me just as much good as my own, why would it make sense for me to compete with my friend for the same opportunities for excellence?

¹³⁴ Kraut, *Human Good*, 152, EN 1169a25-b2

This is an interesting question, but I do not believe this undermines the extended-self thesis. While it might be the case that seeing our friends do well contributes to our well-being for the same reasons that own accomplishments do, there are other reasons why Aristotle might endorse this kind of friendly competition. One is that it is better for the community if people indulge their competitive natures in this way. It might be useful for the polis if we try to outdo each other in virtue. Such a competition (if pursued honorably, which seems like the only way it could be virtuous) would mean that people attempt to become better and more productive citizens and people. This seems like a good thing and one that we could endorse from the perspective of the extended-self. Indeed, we often try to compete against ourselves for the same reason (as when a marathon runner tries to beat her own best time).

Furthermore, competition can push us towards greater and greater rational excellence.¹³⁵ This is good for the individuals involved, because it utilizes natural psychological tendencies to encourage them to be better. While the rivalry between Raphael and Michelangelo probably would not be considered virtuous or honorable in many respects, it did push both artists to create greater and greater art. Thus, friendly rivalry can allow virtuous people an avenue to benefit all the people involved. The competition might in fact be a good thing according to the extended-self thesis because it creates a better outcome than would perhaps otherwise exist. If this is right, then we have a good explanation for why Aristotle might think that moral competition is important. Harnessing basic human inclinations towards higher ends seems to fit in with Aristotle's broader moral and political project.

¹³⁵ This competition might even exist between our past and present selves. Many great athletes have been driven by the desire to break their own records.

It is thus the case that these three passages do not undermine the extended-self reading of Aristotle. If anything, Aristotle's discussion of ostracism and friendly competition are quite complementary to it, and his reflections on the fortunes of the living and the dead are still compatible with it despite the apparent contradiction. Thus, the extended-self thesis can serve to explain why we have reason, according to Aristotle, to help other people and abide by other directed virtues. Aristotle does not have the neat demarcation between self and community that modern philosophers tend to emphasize, which means that he can more easily make the case for helping others based on prudence and self-interest. The result is an internally consistent theory of the good life for human beings, which accommodates his philosophical anthropology and the social dimensions of human existence.

3.4 – Aristotle and the Language of the Extended-Self

At this point, I will now begin to consider the relevance for Aristotle's theory of well-being and the good life in a contemporary context, starting with modern defenders of the extended-self thesis along Aristotelian lines. There is a general textual concern with the extended-self interpretation of Aristotle. Aristotle never explicitly uses the language of extended-self to justify other-directed virtues. While he does use language about the state as an organism (and its various parts as organs) in *Pol.* I, he never uses the exact diction that philosophers like David Brink do when explaining their views of personal extension across individuals. He does say that friends constitute a "second self," but he never explicitly says that this is the basis for other-directed or political virtues. It is easy to imagine a critic arguing that I am attributing to Aristotle a view that is foreign to his actual work. After all, if he believed in an extended-self, why does that or an analogous term never appear in the Aristotelian corpus?

I have argued that the extended-self thesis falls out of the various positions that Aristotle holds in EN, and thus it is not per se necessary to demonstrate that Aristotle himself believed in the extended self-thesis in order to demonstrate that it follows from his own writings. However, part of my project has been to explain why Aristotle himself believes in other directed virtues. Thus, it matters for my project's consistency to explain why Aristotle never uses the language of the extended-self, even though his views seem to support it. I believe that the main reason he does not is that a more robust communitarian identity was part of the Greek worldview for some time. Homer's heroes, for instance, clearly consider the welfare of their communities to be closely tied to their own. Indeed, to the Greeks, it would be alien and confusing to assert that there is a "self" or "individual" who is divorced or conceivable outside the bounds of their society or polis. Modern conceptions of the self did not arise until much later in Western intellectual history, so it is unsurprising that Aristotle did not bother to explain why he did not believe in them.

Section 4 - Derek Parfit, David Brink, and Modern Iterations of the Extended-Self

At this point, my project will now move from an interpretive enterprise to one that considers Aristotle's account of happiness and the good life in the context of contemporary debates about well-being. Even if my interpretation of Aristotle is internally consistent and faithful to the text, this does not by itself demonstrate that it is a plausible account of what it means to live a happy life. Further argument and defense will be necessary in order to show that Aristotle's views on this topic rise above the level of historical interest and are relevant to current debates about human flourishing and goodness. The first step in this process will be to explain

how the extended-self thesis is in fact a viable way to defend other-directed concern for other people.

Many modern readers will no doubt find Aristotle's extended-self thesis implausible given our modern conception of the individual. However, there are several contemporary philosophers that have put forward a defense of the extended-self thesis that would in some ways parallel (and indeed draw upon) Aristotle's own theory. I will explain the work of these contemporary philosophers to show that the extended-self thesis can still help us make sense of our other-directed virtues or practical reasons.

Contemporary versions of the extended-self thesis find their origins in Derek Parfit's *Reasons and Persons*. Parfit runs through a number of common ways of explaining our psychological survival over time. Many people believe that their continued existence as a person depends on some kind of shared or continuous psychological characteristic. Parfit takes psychological connectedness to be the most "important both in theory and in practice."¹³⁶ According to Parfit, psychological connectedness exists between two individuals in the case of shared "direct memories," but also when two individuals share "an intention and the later act in which this intention is carried out," as well as "when a belief, or a desire, or any other psychological feature, continues to be had."¹³⁷ Some people might be tempted to say that this is necessary for personal identity over time, but Parfit points out that this will not do because it is not a transitive relationship (A and B can be psychologically connected, and B to C, but this does not mean that A and C are).¹³⁸ Nonetheless, we might believe that sharing psychological

¹³⁶ Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 206

¹³⁷ Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 205-206

¹³⁸ Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 206

connectedness is at least a sufficient condition for establishing something resembling survival over time if it holds between my current and future self. For instance, if my current life goal is to be a basketball player, and my future self also holds this desire (and acts upon it), then we might say that some important aspect of myself survived into the future.

Psychological connectedness can give rise to what Parfit calls psychological continuity, which occurs when two individuals share “overlapping chains of *strong* connectedness,” or when “at least half” of direct connections exist between two individuals.¹³⁹ This kind of relation could potentially be a standard for personal identity because it, unlike psychological connectedness, is a transitive relationship. That is, a person could (at least in theory) contain a long line of psychological continuity throughout their lives. While the eight-year-old version of the person may not share any psychological connections with the eighty year old version, there nonetheless exists a chain of overlapping psychological connections with the intermediate versions of themselves. There would be a chain of individuals on each day of this person’s life who share enough strong psychological connection to the individual who existed on the previous day and the subsequent day that they can all be said to represent the life of a single person.

However, Parfit famously uses cases of personal identity “fission” to put pressure on this basic intuition about our existence over time. He asks his readers to imagine that there are two copies of yourself that pop out of a teleporter. They are exact physical and mental copies of you. They have all of the same memories that you do. Do you have reason to care about the welfare of both individuals? Insofar as we have strong psychological connectedness with both

¹³⁹ Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 206

individuals, then the answer to this question seems to be “yes”. Furthermore, if they have a psychological connection to you, then you have self-interested reasons to benefit them.

What happens if they go on to live different lives? Would they still be the same person? If not, then how could it be the case that we, the original, are the same person as both of them? It seems as though transitivity would demand that all three are the same person or that all three are different and distinct individuals. However, Parfit does not per se abandon psychological connectedness as the basis for survival over time. This means that our self-interest can extend to people who are not identical to us. Instead, he suggests that we should rather talk about a sequence of “selves” that have some level of psychological connection with each other, even though this would not represent a personal identity relation with some of our past selves.¹⁴⁰ This provides a key step in demonstrating that prudence can be extended to people who we would not normally think of as part of “ourselves”. Nonetheless, to some people this may seem like a farfetched case. After all, most of us will never experience the kind of fission that this kind of teleporter could create. As such, it may seem as though none of undergo any kind of fission in our normal lives, which would in fact mean that our self-interest only tracks with our own individual self. However, Parfit argues that there are many examples of this kind of discontinuity in our own lives.

Psychological continuity, however, will not be able to ground our self-interest over time. Parfit notes that there are many instances in which our psychological continuity does not last over time. He gives the example of someone who takes a sleep medication.¹⁴¹ A common side effect of these medications is short-term memory loss. An individual ingesting such medications

¹⁴⁰ Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 304

¹⁴¹ Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 287-288

will forget their conscious experiences between taking the medication and going to sleep when they wake up in the morning. This means that there is no psychological continuity between the person who took the sleeping pills and the one who wakes up in the morning. One person “dies” when they go to sleep. This means that a strict standard of psychological continuity will not explain why we have reason to care about our future selves (given that this does not exist over extended periods of time).¹⁴² As such, the weaker standard of psychological connection must be the one that grounds our prudential reasons.

If psychological connectedness is the only psychological ground for our concern for our future selves, it will have to apply to any individuals who share a certain kind of psychological connection with us (that is why it can ground self-interest without begging the question). Thus, if we can demonstrate that other individuals beyond “ourselves” share this connection, it would justify prudential concern for them as well. David Brink is a philosopher who embarks on just such a project. He builds on Parfit’s work on personal identity and the reasons he gives for caring about our future selves. He notes that we care about our future selves because they have certain psychological connections to them, but that this also applies to a substantial number of other people:

Interpersonal connections and continuity can be found among intimates who interact on a regular basis and help shape each other’s mental life; in such relationships, the experiences, beliefs, desires, ideals, and actions of each depend in significant part upon those of the others. We can see this in the familial friendships that Plato, Aristotle, and Green all take as their models. Parents make plans for their children that affect the children’s actions, opportunities, and experiences; they impart information and teach skills; they make suggestions, act as sounding boards, and set limits. In these and countless other ways, parents help shape their children’s faculties, experiences, beliefs, desires, values, opportunities, and goals. Similar relations hold among spouses and friends who share experiences, conversation, and plans. They can also be found, to a lesser

¹⁴² Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 304

extent, among partners in cooperative ventures where the deliberations, desires, plans, and expectations of each are formed together and conditioned by each other. More generally, membership in various sorts of associations will affect the beliefs, desires, expectations, and plans of members so as to establish significant interpersonal psychological continuity among the association's members.¹⁴³

Brink believes that an account of personal identity that relies on psychological connections or continuity (“experiences, beliefs, desires, values, opportunities, and goals”) shared between individuals) will necessarily extend our self-interest beyond our future selves and towards other people. If I have reason to benefit my future self (a rather uncontroversial position) because I share similar values, beliefs, or desires as my future self, I will also have reason to benefit other people who share such values, beliefs, and desires as part of a broader cooperative enterprise.¹⁴⁴

As Brink notes, a person “should regard the good of those to whom she stands in such relationships as a constituent part of her overall good, just as she should regard the good of her own future self as a constituent part of her overall good.”¹⁴⁵ The psychological links we have with other people will thus justify a number of other directed virtues. We will give money to other people, for instance, for the same reason that we put money away for our future selves. In this way, we can make sense of a virtue like generosity.

Courage represents a harder case because it seems as though by definition our death is the end of the possibility of our well-being. However, if we take the extended-self thesis seriously, we have reason to preserve the lives of other people for the same reason that we do our own. Furthermore, as Aristotle notes, it may be horrific to live our lives devoid of the people we care deeply about; as such, it may make more sense to die for their sake than to live without them. Of

¹⁴³ David Brink, “Self-Love and Altruism,” *Social and Political and Policy* 14, no. 1 (1997): 141.

¹⁴⁴ It is an important question as to whether or not we have obligation to people who specifically share in our particular cooperative enterprise or those that have similar values and beliefs for contingent reasons (perhaps we’ve never even met them). Answering this question is perhaps beyond the scope of this project.

¹⁴⁵ Brink, “Altruism,” 143

course, the degree to which self-sacrifice is necessary under this framework is something that must be judged on a case by case basis. For instance, we will have to decide if we are required to defend our parents against potential murderers as well as give them our heart if they need it to survive (these are difficult questions that go beyond the scope of this project). This, though, would fit into the larger paradigm of Aristotle's virtue ethics, given his reticence to give concrete laws that apply in all situations. This perhaps comports with our own intuitions to some degree. It seems far more plausible to suggest that one has an obligation to die for the sake of one's children than for a total stranger.

There is, of course, a broader question about virtues directed towards people to whom we have seemingly little psychological connection. However, Brink's (and Aristotle's) theory nonetheless has room to explain why we have reason to help certain people beyond our close friends and family. Brink notes that "membership in various sorts of associations" can confer a level of psychological connection between individuals. We can see how this would work in a religious or political context. If I am a member of a particular political community that has a robust articulation of its values and makes an effort to promulgate those values amongst its citizens, then there is a degree to which I will have psychological connection to the other citizens in my community. This kind of political community is what Aristotle has in mind when he describes just political communities in the *Politics*. Just cities are ones in which the citizens (however many there are) have shared values and are committed to the success of the polis: "And therefore, men, even when they do not require one another's help, desire to live together; not but that they are also brought together by their common interests in so far as they each attain to any measure of well-being" (Pol. III.6 1278b19-21). Insofar as this kind of psychological connection exists in a community, we have reason to look after the well-being of our fellow citizens. This

would justify many of the other-directed virtues that Aristotle believes in. Thus, the Aristotelian system can provide a framework for moral obligations that most people think that we have, albeit in a way that stems from prudence.

The communitarian intellectualist reading of Aristotle will simply provide content to what the well-being of our (extended) selves entails. It is possible to believe that contemplation is the highest good and that the scope of one's self-interest extends beyond what we would typically think of as one's own life. We would thus care about helping other people to contemplate because that would constitute the best life possible for them. Thus, Aristotle's account of reproduction is plausible given the extended-self thesis defended by Brink. We can absolutely pass on the best parts of ourselves to other people (thus ensuring a kind of psychological connection between ourselves and them). Concern for others thus becomes a way of surviving our own deaths. It might also inform the kinds of friendships or communities that we pursue in our own lives.

Of course, we may wonder why we would want to extend ourselves to the extent that would justify other-directed virtues (particularly civic ones). After all, making all of these connections might ensure that we will be required to make sacrifices in more situations than we would if we only had a few close friends and associates. Brink, however, gives several arguments for why we have reason to extend our interests:

[Aristotle] focuses on the sharing of thought and discussion, especially about how best to live, as well as cooperative interaction. Sharing thought and discussion with another diversifies my experiences by providing me with additional perspectives on the world. By enlarging my perspective, it gives me a more objective picture of the world, its possibilities, and my place in it.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Brink, "Altruism," 144

No one is an island. People are not self-sufficient by themselves, and even in the pursuit of knowledge and rational activity they require an incredible amount of information and wisdom from other people. None of us could have figured out theoretical physics or complex philosophy without significant contributions and assistance from other people. As such, someone who wants to live a good rational life will need to associate and interact with other people. There is thus every reason to extend ourselves beyond a narrow group of people.

Moreover, cooperative interaction with others allows me to participate in larger, more complex projects and thus to extend the scope of my deliberative control over my environment. In this way, I spread my interests more widely than I could by acting on my own.¹⁴⁷

Communities are a way of extending our vision of the world beyond ourselves. Thus, engaging in these efforts is a way to make the world into the place we think it should be. This may seem egomaniacal, but of course we are not the sole authors of our own projects. As we influence others, we in turn have been influenced by those who came before us. Our efforts to build these kinds of projects thus connect us both to people in the past and the future. It is thus a truly collective effort to acquire knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. In other words, there is every reason to avoid the existence of a hermit. Insofar as we should extend ourselves, we will have reason to care about these extensions.

Section 5 – Objections to the Extended-Self Thesis

An account of extended identity or self-interest unsurprisingly faces many potential objections in the contemporary discourse. I will cover three here: the concern for impartiality,

¹⁴⁷ Brink, *Perfectionism and the Common Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): 49.

the plausibility of psychological criteria for personal identity, and the implausibility of praise/blame crossing generational gaps.

5.1 – *Quasi-Impartiality: The Remotest Mysian*

Many modern readers will no doubt object that this conception of morality does not give enough weight to people who have absolutely no relation to us (which Julia Annas calls “the remotest Mysian[s]”). Peter Singer, for instance, famously argues that we have an obligation to help people from families and communities far from our own.¹⁴⁸ If we want our moral theories to explain how we have obligations to people we have no connection to, then it seems as though Aristotelian perfectionism has a serious blind spot. However, Brink presents an argument that we do have some reason to help people who are far away from us. He concedes that he “can have no backward looking reason to be concerned about [the remotest Mysian]” because “the remotest Mysian and I stand in no relations of psychological connection.”¹⁴⁹ Insofar as psychological connection grounds self-interested relations, there is nothing in the past that would justify concern for this person. However, Brink points out that he does “have forward-looking reasons” to help the remotest Mysian:

It is within my power to interact with him, and all the reasons for cultivating interpersonal self-extension apply and provide a forward-looking rationale for concern. Even when the remotest Mysian and I have no prospect of further interaction, my assistance will enable or facilitate his pursuit of his own projects, and this will make his subsequent actions and mental states dependent upon my assistance... To the extent that another’s actions and mental states are dependent upon my assistance, I can view the assistance as making his good a part of my own.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Singer, “Famine,” 231-232

¹⁴⁹ Brink, *Perfectionism*, 55

¹⁵⁰ Brink, *Perfectionism*, 55

All things being equal, it does us more good to help the remotest Mysian than it does to harm him. If we have spare resources (that we do not need to help other people closer to us), then it is in our interest to help him. Helping someone who is far away from us still helps us survive in some way. Granted, this does not justify the level of other-directed concern that someone like Singer will find satisfying, but it might be the case that we have stronger reason to help those closer to us. Such sentiments would be in line with standard judgements about moral obligations generally. Again, we have strong intuitions that we have more reason to help family members than total strangers. Indeed, if someone asserts that we have as much obligation to help complete strangers as those close to us, they seem to be the ones that have the burden of explaining away some of our most powerful moral intuitions.

5.2 – Is the Extended-Self Thesis a Reductio ad Absurdum?

More broadly, the extended-self thesis faces another problem. Upon surveying some of the implications of the psychological criterion for personal, many people would be tempted to simply reject it as a theory of personal identity. If we are forced to conclude that we have self-interested relationships with people beyond what we normally consider to be our own persons (extending as far as strangers in our own communities and even to the remotest Mysians), then perhaps we need a new theory of personal identity. Perhaps a physical criterion for personal identity will do a better job of capturing who we are as persons.

However, I believe that this impulse would lead us in the wrong direction. The psychological criterion for personal identity is powerful enough that it is worth keeping despite some of its seemingly strange results. Losing our memories of our friends, families, or job skills would clearly seem to constitute a significant loss of identity. The psychological criterion is the

best way to make sense of this. Furthermore, it helps us to explain how someone could be the same person across time (despite the fact that many key aspects of our corporeal form changes).

Indeed, it is this continuity over time that helps explain why the extended-self thesis is plausible. Most people would hold that they have self-interested reason to benefit their own persons thirty years in the future. How might we explain such a reason? It seems as though a plausible way to do so is the psychological criterion for personal identity. The person thirty years in the future shares some key psychological with one's present self. There are some shared memories, dispositions, and desires that can last over a long period of time. It is difficult to find a similar marker that holds within an individual and that person they want to identify with thirty years in the future. The price for making sense of this intuition is some sort of psychological criterion for personal identity.

In other words, if we want to say that we have some reason to care about our future selves (and to ground this in a kind of psychological account of personal identity), then it opens the door to reason to help other people via our psychological connection to them. If we want to explain and preserve the very basic intuition that we have reason to help other people in the future (those that we in many circumstances refer to as "ourselves"), it will require us to acknowledge that we also have some prudential reason to help other people (whom we may not have previous thought of as "ourselves"). Thus, the extended-self thesis is plausible and Aristotle is licensed to us it as a way of explaining the other-directed virtues that he discusses in EN.

5.3 – Cross-Generational Benefit and Harm

Richard Kraut also offers an objection to the extended-self thesis which casts doubt on the notion that parents can inherit the successes of their children and that the happiness (or suffering) of parents can impact their children. Kraut asks us to imagine a woman whose son lives a happy life. If the extended-self thesis holds, then we must imagine her happy regardless of her own circumstances.¹⁵¹ This would lead to the strange conclusion that even if she were morally and intellectually depraved or frustrated, she would be just as happy as if she also personally achieved a great deal of rational excellence on her own. However, it seems as though the mother's personal excellence should be the primary way by which we assess whether or she lived a good life. We wouldn't want to say that abusive parents, for instance, lived a good life just because their children went on to do amazing things. Relatedly, parents who suffer immensely in their personal lives (via something like debilitating illness) should not be counted as blessed just because their children do well.

Kraut offers an extension of the first argument that seems even more unsavory. He now asks us to imagine a son whose father is in failing health. If the son's contemplation can be counted towards his father's happiness, then why would the son have any reason to see to the needs of his ailing father? Abandoning the father in order to study philosophy would apparently benefit him as much as if the son stayed to help him. Most people (including Aristotle) would seem to suggest that we have an obligation to help our parents in their old age, even if it comes as our own expense in some regards. Furthermore, this objection could potentially apply to relationships beyond those of children and parents; why would the success or happiness of a teacher, elder statesman, or philanthropist impact her student, protégé, or beneficiary?

¹⁵¹ Kraut, *Human Good*, 152

This is an admittedly serious concern for the extended-self thesis. It would be problematic to argue that vicious or destitute people could live good lives simply on account of the happiness of their children (physical or otherwise). However, there are a few ways to respond to Kraut's objections to the extended-self thesis. One is to note that it is not in fact farfetched to suggest that the fortunes of one's children do in fact impact the happiness of the parent. On an intuitive level, it seems as though parents' lives go better when their children succeed (and go worse when their children fail or suffer greatly). I take this to be rather uncontroversial, so Kraut's objection to the extended-self reading of Aristotle may not do as much work as he hopes it to. While it is admittedly counter-intuitive when taken to extremes, it is not all that strange to suggest that parents have some stake in their happiness of their children in most cases.

However, Kraut may push back on this by suggesting that we are talking about the specific way in which the extended-self thesis would explain the intuition that the lives of one's children have an impact on one's well-being. After all, even if he conceded that the lives of one's children can impact the happiness of their parents, surely it would be strange to say that the *excellence* of a child can simply be attributed to the parents. Isn't it obvious that there is a difference between the discoveries of a scientist and those of her parents? I do not think that this is the case. This may seem counter-intuitive initially, but when framed in a slightly different light, I believe it becomes more defensible. After all, our future selves are very different from our current selves, and yet we still think it is appropriate to say that the achievements of our future selves contribute to our flourishing.¹⁵²

¹⁵² It may even be possible that benefitting our parents is a way to benefit our past selves.

However, we can go beyond this to explain why we should care about our parents (and others within the sphere of our extended selves). The extended-self thesis entails that those who share certain connections with us should receive prudential consideration from us. Now, Aristotle only talks about reproduction going from parents to children, but his account of self-love and friendship should go in the other direction as well if we take his arguments to their logical conclusions. Insofar as they share the character traits that we admire in ourselves, then it seems as though they would be our “friends” in the Aristotelian sense. We thus would celebrate their lives and accomplishments in the same way that we would our own. This means that we have reason to care about their well-being. I do not find the application of Aristotle’s view of friendship to the case of a child’s love for their parents to be particularly objectionable (contra Kraut). Aristotle’s paradigm seems to adequately explain our love for our parents (or at least contribute to an explanation).¹⁵³ It is not farfetched to suggest that we care about our parents because they embody many of the character-traits and qualities that we find valuable (and that they passed on to us).

Section 6 – Transition to Contemporary Perfectionism

Aristotle offers an internally consistent theory of happiness, and the extended-self thesis is relevant both as an interpretation of Aristotle and as an account of other-directed concern. The

¹⁵³ Earlier in the chapter, I noted that Aristotle believes that parents have more reason to care about their children than vice versa. Some might worry that this would undermine my contention that we have reason to help ailing parents. However, it might be the case that parents have more obligations to their children than children do for their parents. For instance, an elderly parent might give their only functioning kidney to their child (and thus sacrifice their life) for supererogatory reasons, but I doubt that most people would feel as though the same force goes in the other direction. The exact nature of obligations between parents and children is beyond the scope of this paper, but at the very least I can note that there is some substantial reason on Aristotle’s theory for helping one’s children or parents.

task of this project will now be to explain why Aristotle's substantive theory of the good life is relevant to contemporary accounts of perfectionism.

Chapter 4

To this point in my project, I have given an interpretation of Aristotle's theory of well-being that is internally consistent and has fidelity to his major ethical writings. I have also defended the viability of the extended-self thesis in contemporary philosophical discourse. This, of course, does not entail that his theory of well-being is plausible as a contemporary conception of the good life. However, I do in fact think that a theory of well-being centered around the contemplation is a viable iteration of perfectionism, which is already a theory that has traction in current debates about well-being and happiness. In what follows, I will briefly explain the appeal of Aristotle's perfectionism (Section 1 of this chapter) and then move to the main task for the remainder of the project: arguing that Aristotle's perfectionism has some major advantages over other rival perfectionist theories. There are many different perfectionisms, so it will be necessary to review several different iterations of the theory and explain why Aristotle's perfectionism doesn't suffer from the same problems as other perfectionisms or has independent reasons in its favor that do not apply to other similar theories. In some cases, this will involve responding to contemporary criticisms of Aristotle's contemplative view from other perfectionisms.

In the fourth chapter (after outlining a key requirement for practical deliberation in Section 2), I will review perfectionisms that stress the importance of the process towards a goal in addition (or instead of) the end itself. The first of these is what I call "Kantian perfectionism" given its genesis with Immanuel Kant, and the second is Gwen Bradford's account of achievement. Kant and his descendants hold that the best human life is one that involves respecting the autonomous authority of humanity's capacity for rational deliberation. There are a

number of Kantian perfectionists, but in this chapter, I will examine the work of David Brink (Section 3) and Christine Korsgaard (Section 4) to lay out a strong and robust articulation of this theory.

They are not totally unrelated to Aristotle's account of the human good (particularly practical rationality), but I will argue that these accounts of well-being fundamentally prioritize a goal-oriented process, which is conceptually difficult given that the end that a process aims at is presumably more valuable than the process itself (Section 5).

Gwen Bradford's perfectionist account of achievement holds that the amount of effort put towards an achievement contributes to its overall value (Section 6). While this is clearly different from Kantian perfectionism, it shares a similar structure to it because it suggests that the process, and not just the product, are of significant consideration for perfectionism. I will argue that Bradford's position is not as tenable as Aristotle's own substantive account of the good life because it gives undue weight to Nietzschean theories of perfection that are not entirely

Section 1 – An Initial Defense of Contemplation

Aristotle's basic argument for the importance of human nature rests on his teleological conception of the world. For him, entities are defined by their innate capacities. He "divides nature at its joints" by examining what dispositions or powers various things have. Something's existence will thus be tied up in performing a particular function. Thus, a thing's good is found in the manifestation or actualization of a particular capacity/function. If someone asks why we should care about actualizing our innate capacities, Aristotle can say that there is an analytic connection between being human and achieving the human good. Being rational is what it means to be human. Someone cannot conceive of a human being without understanding that it is

fundamentally aimed at or oriented towards a particular end. It would be analogous to asking why a chess player strives for checkmate; the reason chess players aim at checkmate is simply because that is what it means to be a chess player. While it is possible for someone who is playing chess not to care about checkmate (maybe they want to let the other person win because they placed a bet against themselves), such a reason has nothing to do with the nature of chess itself. The only normative goal that chess by itself can produce is the goal of checkmate, albeit within the confines of the rules of the game. Thus, Aristotle's argument would run parallel to the chess example. According to Aristotle, humans are rational animals. Their capacity for reason is what delineates them from everything else in the universe and is essential to being human. Thus, a good human will reason well because that is what it means to be human. It may be possible to question the value of being human in the first place, but insofar as someone is human, they have reason to be rational.

I also take Aristotle's arguments about the relationship between contemplation and practical reason to be convincing. Without some further end to moral virtue beyond itself, moral virtues look capricious or even vicious in certain capacities. We need an account of why it is good to be generous, courageous, or just. If these virtues are aimed ultimately at contemplation, we can connect them to an activity that is entirely final. Contemplation is not aimed at any other end, and thus will do as the basis for the good life. My own view, however, is that contemplation can be broader than philosophy. I have already hinted at this, but the reason Aristotle gives philosophy a privileged position is because it has to do with understanding fundamental and important truths about the world. Aristotle's view of what kinds of activities fall into this category is too narrow, but the principle can hold. Insofar as an activity enhances or contributes to our understanding of the world in a profound or meaningful way, this would be a

proper end of a good life. Thus, many of the arts and sciences would be “contemplative”.

Physics, for instance, has to do with knowledge of the fundamental particles of the universe.

Drama, painting, and other kinds of art concern themselves with the human condition. Aristotle

himself says that poetry is concerned with the same subject matter as philosophy, so this

ecumenicalism can be understood as an extension or development of Aristotle’s own views:

Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do—which is the aim of poetry (Poetics 1451b5-9).

While Aristotle here argues that history is concerned with mere particulars, I do not think this is quite fair to the work of many historians (starting with Thucydides) who have attempted to articulate general rules of human behavior. As such, the history and the social sciences could also fall into the category of “contemplation” if they concern themselves with general principles of human nature and behavior.

As such, my view of contemplation would accommodate a great deal of different kinds of activities that would perhaps look less restrictive than Aristotle’s. Insofar as my own view is more lenient than Aristotle’s, that may head off the objection that my view does not give people enough leeway in determining what the good life is. Telling everyone to be philosophers is perhaps presumptuous; instructing people to gain some knowledge of the world in order to live a good life is a broader and less dubious proposition.

However, some philosophers are not satisfied by this kind of substantive view of perfectionism. After all, the thrust of subjectivism in the first place is that it is entirely formal.

People can determine for themselves what the good life should look like. Of course, this kind of

open vision of the good life could lead to consequences that are in themselves unappealing. A common objection to desire-satisfaction theories of the good life is that it allows people to live trivial or morally objectionable lives. If the only requirement for a good life is following one's desires, then someone could live a perfectly happy life by counting blades of grass. This would seem utterly meaningless and unimportant, and thus it would be strange for this activity to take a central place in a well-lived life. We would thus hope for our theories of the good life to explain why this sort of life is not good or happy. More extreme examples might involve actual violence to others. While morality might check such normative concerns overall, many people do not want to admit that something like torture has any intrinsic value (even if the person desires it). If we imagine someone like Joseph Stalin, we might want to say that his life is unhappy as well as evil. If happiness is nothing more than satisfying one's desires, then it is entirely possible for a mass murderer like Stalin to live a happy life insofar as his most important desire was to kill a lot of people. Again, we thus would want theory of happiness to explain why the life of Stalin or Mao was not in fact good or worthwhile.

It is because of this dilemma that some perfectionists have tried to find a middle way between substantive accounts of the good life and desire-satisfaction theories. There are certain Kantian theories that attempt to articulate a theory of well-being that can make sense of our duty to others while at the same time leaving much of the content of well-being open for certain kinds of deliberative processes. Christine Korsgaard and David Brink offer a perfectionist theory that subscribes to a theory of the extended self that hopes to avoid some of the unsavory consequences of subjectivist theories of well-being. In fact, Brink is influenced by Aristotle's theory of the extended self. Insofar as I have argued that Aristotle can avoid morally abhorrent outcomes in his own theory by way of this extension of our self-interest, such a method seems as

though it would apply to Kantian theories of perfectionism that make the same move. However, it is unclear that these iterations of Kantian perfectionism can sufficiently specify the content of well-being to function as theories of the good life, which I will argue is a critical component for any theory of the good life. As such, it will be necessary to examine the theories of well-being put forward by Brink and Korsgaard and then to articulate some of my main objections to their view which do not apply to the contemplative one.

Section 2 - The End of Practical Deliberation

Before discussing the Kantian perfectionists, it is necessary to discuss the nature of practical deliberation and what we should expect of a theory of the good. The good, however we want to define it, must be the kind of thing that is desirable for its own sake. If a good is simply desirable for the sake of something else, then by definition, it cannot be the final or highest good. There must be some further good (namely, the one that it aims at) that must in fact be choiceworthy for its own sake. Thus, if an activity is entirely aimed at finding some good beyond itself, it would be a category mistake to present it as the highest good. Activities that are directed at other ends will not by themselves constitute a satisfactory theory of the good. This is especially true of deliberative activities where agents determine what they should or should not do. For instance, if a moral theory declared that the right thing to do is to spend one's time determining what the right thing to do is, this would clearly be a problematic theory of morality. The deliberation must either find some further moral rule or slide into an infinite regress that demonstrates why moral deliberation is unconvincing as the entirety of morality. No one would endorse such a moral theory. It might be contingently the case that an agent must engage in

moral deliberation insofar as they don't know what they should do, but this in itself presupposes that there is some further moral truth that we can find.

Thus, we can see that a theory of normativity or the good must offer some terminal end to our attempts to find something worthwhile or valuable. An endless search will not do. Thus, any theory of the good must offer something that is itself intrinsically valuable, and not offer a fruitless process as a substitute. I will call this criterion for a theory of normativity the Terminal Requirement.

Section 3 - David Brink

The first contemporary iteration of Kantian perfectionism that I will consider is that of David Brink. While Brink offers an exegesis of the 19th century philosopher T.H. Green, it seems clear that by doing so he is presenting his own theory of the good life. One of the key features that Brink picks out is epistemic responsibility.¹⁵⁴ Brink argues that human beings are different from “brutes” because they have the ability to think and reason about what they experience and what they do:

For the most part, brutes accept things the way that things appear to them—their doxastic impulses. If they reason, they selection some instrumental means to the satisfaction of their desires, but they do not reason about their appearances.¹⁵⁵

Simple animals, according to Brink, may have some kind of calculative ability which enables them to figure out how to get what they want. However, they are incapable of adjudicating between various desires or drives that they might have. They are forced to act upon their strongest one (or some amalgamation of desires) and cannot reason about which of their desires

¹⁵⁴ David Brink, *Perfectionism and the Common Good*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 20

¹⁵⁵ Brink, *Perfectionism*, 20

is actually worth pursuing. Brink asserts that human beings can in fact deliberate about the various ends or desires that we have, and thus we have the capacity for moral responsibility:

So responsibility or moral agency requires deliberative self-government, and requires self-consciousness. Self-consciousness involves the ability to represent these different impulses as parts of a single psychological system and the recognition of the self as extended in time and endowed with deliberative capacities.¹⁵⁶

The ability to weigh various desires against each other in conjunction with the recognition of a self that exists over time allows human beings to make decisions based on rational considerations. According to Brink, the result of this deliberative process is an agent's will.¹⁵⁷ Human beings can rise above any particular desire or inclination they have because the ability to choose between competing desires and passions:

Green claims that the responsible agent acts not simply on appetites or passions but as the result of ought judgments or in the light of a common conception goods. But he also says that the deliberating agent takes the object of reflexively endorsed desire as his own good, indeed, his own greatest good, and that he aims at 'self satisfaction'.¹⁵⁸

Thus, agents are capable of a decision-making process that accounts for what they think is best for themselves.

Brink's conception of a deliberative agent leads him to reject Mill-style hedonism as a theory of the good. Green believes that any theory of the good must respect the deliberative capacities that make human beings what they are:

The self is not to be identified with any desire or any set of desires; moral personality consists in the ability to subject appetites and desires to a process of deliberative endorsement and to new desires as the result of such deliberations.

¹⁵⁶ Brink, *Perfectionism*, 23

¹⁵⁷ Brink, *Perfectionism*, 26

¹⁵⁸ Brink, *Perfectionism*, 26-27

So the self essentially includes deliberative capacities, and if responsible action expresses the self, it must exercise these deliberative capacities.¹⁵⁹

It is here that we begin to see how this theory is a species of perfectionism. Brink believes that there is a human nature (that centers on our ability to differentiate between various ends or desires) and that our theory of the good must be formed accordingly. This deliberative capacity is deeper than any desire that an agent might have, and is indeed the source of all possible desires.¹⁶⁰ As such, we must respect our core identity as rational deliberative agents if we are to benefit ourselves in any way: “Because the demands of self-realization depend only on those very deliberative capacities that make one a responsible agent, they are categorical imperatives.”¹⁶¹ Agents must then respect their rational capacities regardless of the other desires they might have. For instance, they might have an obligation not to destroy their rational capacities in pursuit of a desire for pleasure or honor. Thus, we can see how Brink’s theory is tied to Kant’s theory of perfection. Both Kant and Brink emphasize the importance of self-consciousness, or the ability to make decisions outside of the bounds of natural desires or inclinations. Instead, they think that humans have the ability to make decisions based on reason.

Brink admits that this theory does not provide much in the way of content to one’s rational deliberation. That is, there are many possible ways to organize one’s desires and inclinations so long as they do not undermine one’s basic capacity for reason. However, given Brink’s commitment to the extended self-thesis, he believes that it can accommodate moral obligations we have to other human beings.¹⁶² Insofar as one’s “self” is tied up with those of others (or at least potentially so, as in the case of people you haven’t met), then apathy or malice

¹⁵⁹ Brink, *Perfectionism*, 40

¹⁶⁰ Brink, *Perfectionism*, 41

¹⁶¹ Brink, *Perfectionism*, 41

¹⁶² Brink, *Perfectionism*, 42

towards other human beings is not justified. Therefore, this theory of perfectionism can avoid some of the worries that accompany individualistic theories of the good (such as extreme selfishness or cruelty) while at the same time giving people latitude to determine what the good life looks like for themselves. Brink could potentially have the benefits of both objective and subjective theories of the good life.

Section 4 - Korsgaard

Christine Korsgaard articulates another iteration of Kantian perfectionism in *Sources of Normativity*. She follows Kant in saying that there are not many restrictions on the content of our actions or maxims. Rather, our maxims must only have “the form of a law.”¹⁶³ Hers is a theory of perfection that leaves a great deal of discretion to individual agents. Her moral restrictions are based on what she calls the authority of reflection. For Korsgaard, human beings (or rational agents) have the ability to reflect on their own actions and reasons for actions. She asserts that:

When you deliberate, it is as if there were something over and above all of your desires, something which is *you*, and which *chooses* which desire to act on. This means that the principle or law by which you determine your actions is one that you regard as being expressive of *yourself*. To identify with such a principle or way of choosing is to be, in St Paul’s famous phrase, a law to yourself.¹⁶⁴

It does not matter whether or not there are independent third person theories of psychology or neurology can predict our behavior. This does not change the fact that we necessarily view ourselves as agents that must choose to act based on particular reasons. You must determine

¹⁶³ Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 98

¹⁶⁴ Korsgaard, *Sources*, 100

what actions are the best or make your life worthwhile. Korsgaard calls this conception of what makes your life go well (or as good as possible) your practical identity:

It is the conceptions of ourselves that are most important to us that give rise to unconditional obligations. For to violate them is to lose your integrity and so your identity, and to no longer be who you are. That is, it is to no longer be able to think of yourself under the description under which you value yourself and find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking. It is to be for all practical purposes dead or worse than dead. When an action cannot be performed without loss of some fundamental part of one's identity, and an agent could just as well be dead, then the obligation not to do it is unconditional and complete.¹⁶⁵

This is where we can see the perfectionist elements of Korsgaard's theory come to the forefront.

According to Korsgaard, it is fundamentally absurd to perform actions that would result in a substantial (to borrow an Aristotelian term) change that alters the most basic and important features of who we are. Such an action would be a kind of death insofar as it does away with what we are. Thus, we have an implicit obligation to act in ways that cohere with our identities.¹⁶⁶ The question then becomes what kind of law is most expressive of yourself; after all, "a good soldier obeys orders, but a good human being doesn't massacre the innocent."¹⁶⁷

Thus, it becomes of critical importance to determine as agents what actions are aligned with who we think we are. After all, there are many possible identities to choose from (soldier, mother, club member, religious disciple, etc.).

Korsgaard suggests that making one's humanity the basis of one's practical identity is in some way better than other options. She gives a few arguments for this. One is that it makes our

¹⁶⁵ Korsgaard, *Sources*, 102

¹⁶⁶ Korsgaard, *Sources*, 102

¹⁶⁷ Korsgaard, *Sources*, 102. As a side note, I am not convinced that our actions must be governed by what we think we have reason to do. I think it is conceivable that someone act and not believe that their reason for action is normative in any way. However, it is beyond the scope of this project to challenge Korsgaard on this premise.

lives go better.¹⁶⁸ I find this assertion questionable because it requires some account of the good by which we could determine whether or not assuming such a practical identity was beneficial.

However, Korsgaard also argues that it is the capacity for self-reflection that counts as an indispensable identity for all human beings:

Reflection does not have an irresistible power over us. But when we do reflect we cannot but think that we ought to do what on reflection we conclude we have reason to do. And when we don't do that we punish ourselves, by guilt and by regret and repentance and remorse. We might say that the acting self concedes to the thinking self its right to government. And the thinking self, in turn, tries to govern as well as it can. So the reflective structure of human consciousness establishes a relation here, a relation which we have to ourselves. And it is a relation not of mere power but rather of *authority*. And *that* is the authority that is the source of obligation.¹⁶⁹

We cannot help but pick reasons for our actions, and thus we have an obligation to pick some reason that we think is best whenever we act.¹⁷⁰ There is nothing negotiable here. So long as we are agents at all, we must determine what we think is the best course of action. Korsgaard, like Brink, believes that we are at bottom reason responsive creatures. In the case of most identities, we can choose whether or not to accept them. For instance, we can choose if we want to be salesperson almost at any time. However, the basic need to have some sort of identity (or reason for our actions) is something that we cannot move away from without abandoning our humanity itself.¹⁷¹ Indeed, Korsgaard argues that the only reason we pick our other identities is because of our basic human/self-conscious identity. It is normatively prior to any of our other obligations or

¹⁶⁸ Korsgaard, *Sources*, 118

¹⁶⁹ Korsgaard, *Sources*, 104

¹⁷⁰ Korsgaard, *Sources*, 104

¹⁷¹ Korsgaard, *Sources*, 121

duties. She further concludes that when we value anything at all, we are conceding that our humanity is valuable itself:

If you value anything at all, or, if you acknowledge the existence of any practical reasons, then you must value your humanity as an end in itself. Or, I might put it, if you are to have any practical identity at all, you must acknowledge yourself to have moral identity – human identity conceived as a form of normative practical identity – as well. And this identity is one that carries obligations. I take this argument to show that any reflective agent can be led to acknowledge that she has moral obligations. What makes morality special is that it springs from a form of identity which cannot be rejected unless we are prepared to reject practical normativity, or the existence of normative reasons, altogether...¹⁷²

Insofar as we must respect our own autonomy, there is a basis for moral obligations that should not be abandoned.

Korsgaard further argues that we have as much reason to respect the humanity of others as we do our own. She relies on an iteration of the golden rule that is informed by Wittgenstein's argument against private language:

Now consider an exchange of ideas, of meanings, rather than an exchange of practical reasons. Here we do not find these two possibilities. If meanings could not be shared, there would be no point in announcing the results of one's private thinking to anybody else. If they can be shared, then it is in principle possible to think the issues through together, and that is what people do when they talk. But if we have to grant that meanings can be shared, why not grant that practical reasons can be shared too?¹⁷³

Essentially, Korsgaard argues that it is possible for human beings to communicate meaning to each other. Indeed, it is impossible to conceive of language without it; linguistic meaning cannot be private, and Korsgaard believes something similar happens in the case of practical reasons.

¹⁷² Korsgaard, *Sources*, 125

¹⁷³ Korsgaard, *Sources*, 141-142

When we see other people in pain or articulating (via language) something about their reasons for action, Korsgaard suggests that we cannot help but find their words intelligible in some way:

Suppose that we are strangers and that you are tormenting me, and suppose that I call upon you to *stop*. I say: ‘How would you like it if someone did that to you?’ And now you cannot proceed as you did before. Oh, you can proceed all right, but not just as you did before. For I have obligated you to stop. How does the obligation come about? Just the way Nagel says it does. I invite you to consider how you would like it if someone did that to you. You realize that you would not merely dislike it, you would resent it. You would think that the other has a reason to stop, more, that he has an obligation to stop. And that obligation would spring from your own objection to what he does to you. You make yourself and end for others; you make yourself a law to them.¹⁷⁴

According to Korsgaard, we all have normative reason to respect our own humanity, and we have no principled reason to trample on that of others’.¹⁷⁵ It is wrong for us to treat others with cruelty or disregard their dignity as agents. Furthermore, when we see humanity in other people, we realize that if our places had been switched, we would not like to be treated in ways that diminish our value as persons or bulldoze through our own preferences. Reasons can be communicated from person to person, and the only way to avoid this kind of communication is if the words of the other person are completely unintelligible to us.¹⁷⁶ We are forced to recognize that other people have reasons for their actions and preferences, and that these reasons spring from their humanity (which is like ours). We thus must recognize their intrinsic value in the same way that we value our own. This, Korsgaard argues, is the basis for normative obligations and/or reasons that extends beyond our own persons.

¹⁷⁴ Korsgaard, *Sources*, 142-143

¹⁷⁵ Korsgaard, *Sources*, 143

¹⁷⁶ Presumably, it would have to be unintelligible in some fundamental way. We could not simply excuse our behavior by saying that they spoke in a language we do not understand. If we recognize that it is a language, then we can see their humanity and given enough time we should be able to understand what they are saying (which enough work with translation).

Section 5 - Rational Deliberation as an End

Brink and Korsgaard's respective theories are not identical to one another. However, they do bear some important similarities. They both emphasize the importance of the deliberative capacities of human beings. According to them, to be human is to be the kind of thing that is capable of determining what actions they should or should not undertake.¹⁷⁷ They believe that this basic capacity grants a kind of dignity or significance to moral agents that they are bound to respect. Thus, like Aristotle, they believe that human nature generates certain normative reasons for action. This amounts to a formal or structural conception of the good life. Kantian perfectionists do not tell you what rational deliberation will recommend to agents. That is for you, as an agent, to determine. Nonetheless, your choices must not compromise your nature as a rational agent and must be based on reasons for action that you think are acceptable or normatively compelling. To be unreflective of or uncritical about one's decisions amounts to a failure to live a good human life.

Unfortunately, the nature of rational deliberation creates problems for Kantian perfectionism because it recommends a means as the source of normativity where an end is required. In other words, it violates the Terminal Requirement for theories of normativity. This creates a fundamental difficulty for Kantian perfectionism. It would not make sense to say that the process of finding an end is intrinsically valuable. Presumably, we would eventually want to find some end that we can aim at or else the process would be fruitless. If I do not find something that is intrinsically valuable, I have failed on the terms of the deliberative process

¹⁷⁷ Or at least, in the case of Korsgaard, it appears that way from the perspective of the agent who undertakes the action.

precisely because it is aimed at finding valuable things. Once we decide upon an end to pursue, then this end will be what we find intrinsically valuable and worthy of pursuit.

Rational deliberation, as a process, is by its nature concerned with ends that are independent of the process itself. When an agent attempts to determine what they have most reason to do, they must consider some activity beyond deliberation. For instance, when considering what career path to embark on, a college student might think through the pros and cons of becoming a doctor, a social worker, or a chef. This process is of course important and worthwhile, but the deliberation itself is clearly aimed at some end beyond itself. Rational deliberation about a career path is not itself a career, after all. Generally, the process of rational deliberation is supposed to recognize the value of various possibilities in question and presumably will render a verdict that causes rational deliberation to end. This means that the Kantian perfectionists have recommended a process that by its nature will in turn pick out something else. Thus, rational deliberation does not look like a good candidate for a terminal, final end. It is not possible for rational deliberation to be an end because it will only offer something else. This is not a substantive objection to Kantian perfectionism, but rather one on its own terms.

There are ways of elucidating this problem in different ways in several cases. In other words, this problem will manifest themselves at several different levels that are all sufficient to undermine Kantian perfectionism. I will cover three of them in the remainder of this section. The first is the problem of the infinite regress. Insofar as rational deliberation inherently aims at some end beyond itself, the Kantian perfectionist might be tempted to say that it could still be worth pursuing as an end in and of itself. I find this position to be implausible for the reasons

stated above, but nonetheless this move would mean that rational deliberation would lead to an infinite regress. Insofar as rational deliberation determined that only rational deliberation was a worthy end, then it would simply cause us to engage in more rational deliberation. This would in turn cause us to once again decide that rational deliberation is the proper end to pursue, and so on and so forth. This means that there is no object that finally is the source of value. It also means that the process is by its nature entirely futile (and at some point no longer possible). If rational deliberation can find no object beyond itself that is worth pursuing, then it will not find the object that it inherently aims at. This would be an unwelcome outcome for any theory of normativity, and thus Kantian perfectionism will not succeed without further supplement.

The second problem is inverted. If we can determine that rational deliberation is the only product or activity that we have normative reason to pursue and are saddled with the problem of an infinite regress, we might think that there is no point in engaging in rational deliberation at all. Why, after all, should we embark on a project that we already know will produce no results beyond itself? It is a useless process, but it is worse than that. It is not even possible to rationally deliberate continuously because we already know what the outcome will be; deliberation presupposes that we do not already know what to do. It would be like trying to learn to read again after already learning it in the first place. If this the case for Kantian perfectionism, then we won't be able to participate in the very activity that it says we have most normative reason to pursue.

This second problem is related to the third. There isn't a clear end that Brink or Kosgaard identify as valuable (beyond the process itself). The Kantian perfectionists do not actually tell us what the content of rational deliberation might produce. It seems as though

Kantian theories do not help us determine what to actually pursue in our lives. Rational deliberation does not seem to be possible without some kind of guidance as to what is rational to choose. If there is no good that is ultimately valuable, then it would not be possible to successfully deliberate about what a proper end is. If the Kantian perfectionist does in fact think that there is an end or kind of end beyond rational deliberation, then (as discussed above) that will be intrinsically valuable and beyond the scope of what Kantian perfectionism says is valuable.

This is especially strange considering that usually rational deliberation involves determining what we have most reason to do. Brink does not offer much in the way of hints about what kinds of things we actually should rationally pursue. It thus seems difficult to engage in rational deliberation about ends when Brink does not discuss what such reasons might look like. Without reasons for why some things are better than others, there can be no process of rational deliberation. However, insofar as he would maintain that there are reasons to choose certain actions or ends over others, then it seems as though those actions and ends would constitute the human good (and not the process why which we figured out what they are). As it stands, his theory cannot meet the Terminal Requirement.

Korsgaard's theory has similar difficulties. She, like the other Kantians, asserts that human beings are the kind of things that reflect on their own actions and wonder what they should do. However, asking these kinds of questions is not by itself final. The reason someone asks a question is because they ostensibly are looking for an answer of some sort. If there is a clear answer to something, then there would be no need to ask the question in the first place. We might be able to see why when we imagine someone who asks questions of an astronomer about

star formation but then is disappointed in receiving the answers to her question. The natural completion of a question is an answer.

It should be noted that this problem does not impact other prominent structural theories of normativity even though they offer no substantive account of what we have reason to do. For instance, desire satisfaction theories of the good avoid this difficulty even though they also do not recommend a substantive theory of happiness or normativity. According to desire satisfaction theories, deliberation ends whenever an agent determines what they most desire (or some variation on that). If someone wants to eat chocolate above all else, then desire-satisfaction theorists can recommend this activity without fear of any infinite regress or conceptual futility. There are a whole host of potential objects or activities that are not inherently aimed at finding some other intrinsically valuable activity. If this is the case, the process of deliberation then can end and does not turn into an infinite regress (at least not necessarily). The problem afflicts Kantian perfectionism uniquely because of the nature of the activity it recommends.

This all contrasts with Aristotelian perfectionism. Aristotle does provide a substantive answer to what the good life involves (contemplation). Because it provides such an answer, it offers a way for people to know what the good life is. Furthermore, the good life for Aristotle is not a process inherently aimed at an end beyond itself but instead an intrinsically valuable activity. While Aristotle acknowledges the importance of rational deliberation for the good life, he ultimately believes that it directs us towards a kind of rationality that is valuable for its own sake. He offers an end to the search for a good life. Insofar as Aristotelian perfectionism can do

this and Kantian perfectionism cannot, then Aristotle's theory of well-being has significant advantages over Kantian perfectionism.

Section 6 - Bradford and Achievement

Kantian perfectionism, at the end of the day, does not provide a sufficiently substantive account of well-being to work on its own. However, there are other perfectionist accounts that also stress the importance of process in addition to the final product. Gwen Bradford develops a perfectionist account of achievement which gives substantial weight to the obstacles we overcome in the course of our accomplishments.¹⁷⁸ She rests her argument for awarding value for effort on a powerful intuition pump: "Like most people, I have a strong intuition that triumphing over extraordinary obstacles is valuable."¹⁷⁹ She further says that there is an inherent value in difficulty that contributes to the overall prudential value of an accomplishment.¹⁸⁰ She explains these intuitions by an appeal to something like Nietzsche's Will to Power.¹⁸¹ In addition to the value she places on rationality, she argues that human beings have a basic drive to "overcome resistance", and thus that achievements have value insofar as "they *difficult*, and difficulty—which is to say, overcoming resistance—is the expression of the will to power."¹⁸²

Bradford's emphasis on difficulty is somewhat plausible. In many cases, it seems right to suggest that the more effort expended, the more valuable the accomplishment. For instance, if someone works much harder to get their degree than another person who acquires the same one, it seems as though the person who expended more effort has achieved more (or that the

¹⁷⁸ Gwen Bradford, *Achievement*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 89-90

¹⁷⁹ Bradford, *Achievement*, 89

¹⁸⁰ Bradford, *Achievement*, 96

¹⁸¹ Bradford, *Achievement*, 120

¹⁸² Bradford, *Achievement*, 120-121

achievement is more impressive). It almost seems crass to suggest otherwise. However, this would undermine an intellectualist perfectionism. Thus, it will be necessary to examine the intuition to see if we really want to accept its consequences.

One immediate concern with this kind of an intuition is that it would potentially suggest that difficulty is something we should actively pursue. In other words, it seems strange to suggest that we should burn people's houses down so that they will have more obstacles to overcome in the course of completing their achievements. Bradford responds to this by suggesting that there are other sources of well-being that may have more importance than difficulty so that this kind of a scenario would not take place.¹⁸³ I take her to mean that we might value comfortable living (perhaps on hedonistic grounds) more than the achievement of overcoming our houses burning down. This is a fair point, but one that might rely on non-perfectionist accounts of well-being and morality.

Nonetheless, I still object to the intuition that difficulty is intrinsically valuable. Perhaps the cases of Mozart and Beethoven are instructive here.¹⁸⁴ Mozart was famous for his ability to seemingly effortlessly produce great pieces of music. Beethoven was the opposite; the creative process was agonizing for him and required a great deal of effort. Bradford's paradigm would imply that Beethoven's achievement is more valuable than Mozart's because it required more effort. However, at the very least it strikes me as implausible to say that Beethoven's symphonies are superior pieces of music to Mozart's on the grounds that the former's emerged from a more tortured process. It is not clear to me why this would be the case. If I am right in

¹⁸³ Bradford, *Achievement*, 93

¹⁸⁴ As a side note, I have no interest in investigating the claims about the relative effort Mozart and Beethoven put into their respective works. The common understanding of their comparative levels of effort will allow us to think through their relative value.

my intuition, then we have to explain why Beethoven's achievement is more valuable than Mozart's beyond the actual substance of their respective products. This seems a bit strange to me, because the purpose of the creative process is to produce something beyond itself.

Furthermore, it seems as though we can recognize that Beethoven's accomplishments are more admirable or praiseworthy without conceding that they are more valuable than Mozart's. Sometimes it is extremely difficult to do the right thing, or to achieve something great. Individuals who manage to accomplish something in the face of significant obstacles are thus to be commended for their hard work and determination, but this seems to be derivative of the fact they ultimately did what was good or right. There is a difference between recognizing that hard work is difficult and thus that it should be admired and asserting that hard work is itself valuable. I opt for the former and not the latter approach.

Bradford protests that there can be great achievements that ultimately fail to accomplish their ultimate end.¹⁸⁵ This, she says, is best accommodated by recognizing the intrinsic value of difficulty. However, we might recognize that there are certain goals that are worth pursuing, and that good faith attempts to reach them are admirable (if ultimately tragic). While we might not be able to save all children who suffer from cancer, we nonetheless recognize that the attempt to help them is nonetheless worthwhile. We do not need to appeal to the inherent difficulty of such a task in order to explain why we should pursue these kinds of goals. Furthermore, even great failures can often involve a tremendous amount of rational excellence. For instance, Napoleon failed to conquer the world, but he has long inspired great praise for his tactical and strategic

¹⁸⁵ Bradford, *Achievement*, 171-172

genius along the way. Indeed, failure would not be great if it did not include a high level of achievement on the perfectionist paradigm.

I also disagree with Bradford's argument in that difficulty always tracts with achievement. There is something incredible about the fact that Mozart did not have to try hard to produce the kind of music that he did. I don't see why I should fault him (in terms of perfectionist value) just because he had a much easier time produce great art than other people. Indeed, it seems to speak to his musical excellence that he was able to do so, which makes his accomplishments more impressive than they otherwise would be. The most extreme example of this kind of competence is God. I don't see why God's excellence would be diminished simply because nothing is hard for him. On the contrary, the fact that nothing is hard for him seems to be more excellent than the alternative. It speaks to his incredible capacities, not against them. It does not seem as though God would be more excellent if things were harder for him.

Bradford believes that in a utopian world we would actually make difficult challenges for ourselves even if we did not have to.¹⁸⁶ For instance, it might be the case that if all our needs were met and all knowledge had been discovered, we would still (perhaps) hide buried treasure just for fun. However, I do not believe this the case. Following Aristotle and the perfectionist tradition that followed him, I maintain that contemplation is the good we would pursue. It is final and self-sufficient. Simply going over one's understanding of the world is an activity that has value in all circumstances given our rational nature. Furthermore, there is no need to make the discovery of this knowledge difficult. It does not seem as though making access to this

¹⁸⁶ Bradford, *Achievement*, 95

knowledge more difficult increases its value in some way, which means that there is no reason to attribute value to difficulty on the perfectionist paradigm that I defend.

At bottom, I simply do not share Bradford's intuition that difficulty is intrinsically valuable. Her case for the value of difficulty rests on a Nietzschean perfectionism which asserts that the will is essential to human nature. I do not believe this is the case, in part because we share the will with other animals. Animals clearly can expend effort in their attempts to get what they want, and thus it seems as though the will is not distinctive to humans. Indeed, the will generally seems to be a mechanism to get what we desire; in other words, it has no content of its own. As in the case of Korsgaard and Brink, the will by itself cannot be intrinsically valuable because we must determine how to direct it in the first place. In other words, the will is a mechanism that determines what is good and what is right (and expends effort towards these ends). Its value is predicated on the existence of good and right achievements or goals. The task of normative projects should involve determine what to set the will towards.

Section 7 – Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Aristotle's substantive theory of perfectionism have significant advantages over some of the structural versions of perfectionism popular in the contemporary well-being literature. At the end of the day, it is important for theories of well-being to be oriented towards an intrinsically valuable goods that are not aimed at some further end. However, there are other perfectionist theories that offer substantive accounts of happiness that differ from Aristotle's. If I am to sufficiently defend Aristotle's intellectualist theory of the good life, it will be necessary to compare it to Thomas Hurka's substantive theory of

perfectionism given its prominent place in the current debates surrounding well-being. It is to his theory that I will turn to in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Thomas Hurka is one of the most notable proponents of perfectionism in contemporary philosophy. Unlike Kantian perfectionists, Hurka offers a substantive account of perfectionism that presents an account of human happiness and flourishing based on human nature. However, there are key differences between their two approaches and Hurka has criticized Aristotle on a number of levels. Given Hurka's importance in the contemporary literature, any attempt to defend Aristotle's theory of well-being will have to respond to Hurka's objections to Aristotle's position. As such, this chapter will outline and develop responses to Hurka's objections to Aristotelian perfectionism. Furthermore, it will also be necessary to explain why Aristotle's perfectionism might have some significant advantages over Hurka's own theory.

In order to adequately compare Hurka's perfectionism to my own reading of Aristotle, we will have to examine Hurka's arguments against Aristotle's conception of perfectionism. In some instances, I will argue that Hurka misinterprets Aristotle's position and thus that his criticisms do not hold. However, I will also offer substantive responses to Hurka's criticisms in the cases where he and I agree on how to read Aristotle.

There are two key differences between Hurka's perfectionism and the intellectualist perfectionism that I defend: the role and importance of both bodily achievement and practical rationality. While it is necessary to handle both of these points of disagreement separately, both cases revolve around intuitions that Hurka thinks should be incorporated into any plausible theory of human well-being. My task will thus be to accommodate his intuitions as far as my theory will allow and then explain why they do not cut ice when they would push us beyond an intellectualist perfectionism. In some cases, it may also be possible to explain why Hurka's own

kind of perfectionism leads to unintuitive consequences that an intellectualist perfectionism does not. In Section 1, I will explain Hurka's objection to Aristotle's criterion for identifying human nature and well-being and argue that these objections miss the mark. In Section 2, I will discuss the nature of bodily perfection and explain how an intellectualist can make sense of it without granting that it is valuable for its own sake as Hurka does. Section 3 will cover Hurka's defense of practical rationality, which I will partly accommodate within intellectualism while maintaining that contemplative activities are still central to the good life. Finally, in Section 4 I will respond to Hurka's charge that Aristotle's normative theory is objectionably egoistic. When taken in its totality, this chapter will demonstrate that there are some significant and overlooked advantages to intellectualist perfectionism that Hurka's theory cannot match.

Section 1 - Hurka's Criticisms of Aristotle: Essential to and Distinctive Of

Hurka identifies the kind of perfectionism that Aristotle's holds to as one that defines human nature by what is essential to and distinctive of human beings (when compared to other substances in the universe). That is, he takes Aristotle to pick out activities or capacities that only human beings have and are an irremovable aspect of what it means to be human. I agree with this characterization of Aristotle and believe it is correct.

Hurka rejects the idea that the specific human good must be both distinctive and unique to humans.¹⁸⁷ He argues that this hybrid criterion would result in strange, counterintuitive accounts of the human good. For instance, Hurka argues that if what perfection entails is the actualization of capacities that are "*essential to and distinctive of humans*", then it seems as though we have reason to perfect our distinct digestive system, which would be a bizarre part of

¹⁸⁷Thomas Hurka, *Perfectionism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 13

human flourishing.¹⁸⁸ This dovetails with a famous argument against perfectionism put forward by Bernard Williams in which he lists a number of activities that only human beings engage in that are obviously not part of living a good life.¹⁸⁹ Surely killing for sport, torture, or breeding outside of a particular season are not essential parts of the good life (despite the fact that they are all essential to and distinctive of human beings).

However, I do not think that either Hurka or Williams adequately capture the way in which Aristotle picks out what is essential to and distinctive of human beings. To do this, we must examine Aristotle's own theory of metaphysics and causal powers. Aristotle notably reviews the different kinds of organisms (living substances) in *De Anima*, and it is here that we will see precisely what Aristotle picks out as human nature.

1.1 - Aristotle's Account of Causal Powers

Aristotle explicitly defines living organisms in terms of their particular causal powers. He asserts that a soul is a kind of "natural body" that has "in itself the power of setting itself in movement and arresting itself" (*De Anima* 412b15-16). Living organisms (natural bodies that have souls) have an internal principle of motion. Of course, this is essentially a formal definition of what it means to be alive, and Aristotle further organizes living beings by the specific abilities or causal powers that they possess. He puts souls into the following categories:

Of the psychic powers above enumerated some kinds of living things, as we have said, possess all, some less than all, others only one. Those we have mentioned are the nutritive, the appetitive, the sensory, the locomotive, and the power of thinking. Plants have none but the first, the nutritive, while another order of living things has this *plus* the sensory. If any order of living things has the sensory, it must also have the appetitive; for appetitive is the genus of which

¹⁸⁸ Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 10-11

¹⁸⁹ Bernard Williams, *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 59.

desire, passion, and wish are the species...Certain kinds of animals possess in addition the power of locomotion, and still others, i.e. man and possibly another order like man or superior to him, the power of thinking and thought (DA 414a29-414b2, 414b16-19).

What's important to note about Aristotle's taxonomy of living organisms is that he defines their various capacities in a broad way. He feels comfortable classifying all kinds of reproduction and growth under a single umbrella. From an ontological point of view, he does not distinguish between the growth of ferns and those of trees (and everything in between). The same goes for sense perception and rationality. In other words, there are going to be many different actions that will be a species of the human capacity for reason. He does not have any interest in differentiating a courageous action from a generous one from a metaphysical standpoint. They are all manifestations of the same power.

1.2 - Contemporary Metaphysical Accounts of Causal Powers and Dispositions

Aristotle's view of metaphysics was of course out of fashion for much of the past three hundred years in philosophy. However, there has been a recent resurgence of interest in metaphysical systems built on causal powers. There are a number of different ontological theories that utilize causal powers, so I will not be able to review all of them here. However, I hope by analyzing two representative theories from this genus that I will be able to demonstrate how several of these different iterations thereof would be somewhat related Aristotle's own metaphysical project in regards to the delineation of causal powers. If these types of metaphysical theories are viable, it will help Aristotelian perfectionism overcome the objection that it picks out trivial or evil behaviors to be part of the good life.

As in the case of Aristotle, modern causal powers theorists believe that dispositions for certain behaviors or actions are broad in the sense that they have many manifestations. No

discrete activity by itself would constitute an exhaustive catalog of any underlying disposition.

C.B. Martin illustrates as follows:

When a dispositional state is structural or systemic, a manifestation is what it is only as *from* a deep enough and broad enough disposition base array, and a disposition base array is what it is only as for certain kinds of manifestation with certain kinds of alternative conditions or disposition partners. A manifestation is the tip of a disposition iceberg.¹⁹⁰

According to Martin, dispositions can become manifest in many different ways. For instance, a hydrogen atom has the disposition to interact with every other hydrogen atom in the universe, as well as different kinds of atoms (such as oxygen). Within this framework, it would be a mistake to point to specific kinds of manifestations as all representing novel causal powers or dispositions. We must look for broad causal powers that have many manifestations.

John Heil, another contemporary causal powers theorist, has similar views about the relationship between dispositions and manifestations. He argues as follows:

Consider a simple case, the sphericity of a particular ball. The ball's sphericity, in concert with incoming light radiation, structures outgoing radiation in a definite way. The very same property of the ball disposes it to produce a concave depression in a lump of clay or to roll. Each of these manifestations depends on the presence of appropriate reciprocal disposition partners: one disposition, many different kinds of manifestation with many different kinds of reciprocal partner.¹⁹¹

Heil argues that the disposition "sphericity" can manifest in many different ways depending on what is interacting with the sphere. That is why distinct manifestations (like rolling down a hill and reflecting light in a particular way) spring from the same basic disposition. Thus, we see that there can be many manifestations of the same disposition.

¹⁹⁰ C.B. Martin, *The Mind in Nature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

¹⁹¹ John Heil, "Dispositions," *Synthese* Vol. 144, no. 3 (2005): 343-356. Pg 350

This is indicative of broader trends within contemporary causal powers literature.

Almost all causal powers theorists agree that there are many different kinds of manifestations for individual dispositions. The current resurgence of the causal powers framework is important because it mirrors Aristotle's own position on the capacities that organisms have. Both Aristotle and contemporary causal powers theorists group a number of different activities under the same root disposition. In Aristotle's case, this delineation of powers relies on specifying the function that the disposition corresponds to. When Aristotle, for instance, discusses rationality as a function of human beings, he is talking about the ability to reason and move from first principles to conclusions. The capacity for reason, in other words, can manifest in many different ways. This will help Aristotelian perfectionism deal with the objections from Williams and Hurka regarding trivial or obviously immoral manifestations of the human capacity for reason.

1.3 - Responding to Hurka: Ruling Out (or Accommodating) Problematic Cases

Aristotle's framework is of course not identical to any of the current causal powers theorists writing in the contemporary philosophical literature, but his emphasis on broader causal dispositions with many manifestations is similar to certain trends within this literature. Aristotle's theory emphasizes broad capacities that have a myriad of actualizations. In the context of rationality, this would mean that any entity that exhibits the rational power would be a member of the same metaphysical species as humans. They thus would share the same good, given that all rational creatures have the same good (contemplation). This may also seem counterintuitive to many people. Some would be tempted to say that intelligent aliens would not be human insofar as they have radically different physical forms from our own. However, modern work on multiple realizability suggests that things can have many different kinds of

instantiations.¹⁹² Wheels, for instance, can be made out of any number of different physical materials. Nevertheless, if something has the properties and function of a wheel, it is a wheel. So it is with rational animals. As long as something can reason, its good is rational activity, and the essential to and distinctive of criterion is a key part of how communitarian intellectualism gets off the ground.

In the case of human rationality, we can say that this is a disposition that can be manifest in a number of different ways. However, the fact that something is rational need only be a necessary condition for its inclusion in the good life. Some kinds of rational activity, for instance, harm other people (as in the case of killing for fun), and thus would run afoul of Aristotle's concern with the political community (as covered earlier in the dissertation). Insofar as the extended-self thesis holds, then wanton acts of cruelty or selfishness would interfere with the happiness of people whom we have reason to care about. This would rule out many of the examples of uniquely human actions that are morally reprehensible. While it is of course true that human beings are the only living organisms to engage in a slew of cruel or unsavory activities, Aristotle has other prudential considerations in his theory to deal with such cases.

The broad causal powers framework also helps to explain why systems like the human digestive system are not per se part of human flourishing. It is true that the human digestive system is different (to varying degrees) from those of other organisms. However, such specific focus on a particular system of digestion is not what Aristotle has in mind when he determines

¹⁹² I already quoted Heil giving an account of sphericity that could accommodate different instantiations. That is, a sphere can be made of different material components and still be a sphere. For a more detailed overview of multiple realizability, see Chapter 5 of Polger and Shapiro's *The Multiple Realization Book* (2016). While they are not proponents of multiple realizability, they offer an overview of the school of thought since Putnam. They specifically consider the cases of people whose internal organs are on the opposite side of the body than most people (*situs inversus viscerum*) as a prominent example of multiple realizability (86-90).

what it means to be human. From an ontological perspective, there is no in kind or fundamental difference between the digestion of a human and that of a bat (or other kind of organism). All forms of digestion can be understood using the same functional account (namely, to supply the organism with necessary nutrition). Digestion across organisms and species will of course have accidental differences, but not fundamental ones. If there were fundamental metaphysical differences, then they couldn't be grouped under the same causal power or disposition. This may differ in various cases, but the broad disposition remains constant, in the same way that there are many kinds of wheels that are all clearly identifiable as wheels given their shared function. We can look to explanatory value or indispensability to determine what role an activity plays within a system, and then identify different instantiations of the same system. Thus, the human digestive system is part of the broader nutritive power that human beings share with plants and animals. Given that this ability is not distinctive of human beings, it does not represent an essential part of human flourishing (at least necessarily).

However, there are other ways to explain the place of the human digestive system in the good life. While it may not at first seem as though the idiosyncrasies of the human nutritive system are part of the good life, they are (at least in part) distinct from other organisms because human beings have different nutritional and energy requirements than other animals. Part of that relates to the large brains/cortex that *homo sapiens* have, which of course is relates directly to human rationality. As such, it is perhaps not so farfetched to suggest that the human digestive system is in fact an important part of (or a currently indispensable condition for) human happiness (although it does not strictly speaking constitute happiness itself). It is possible that at some point humans could change or alter their bodies in such a way as to require different sustenance, but nonetheless there are clearly features of the human digestive system as it exists

now that relate to the unique rational capacity that humans have. In other words, even if in some science fiction scenario where we can all upload our consciousness to a computer, there is a close relationship to what we are as rational creatures and the kinds of bodies that we have. It is thus not entirely wrong to suggest that having a certain digestive system is closely related to human happiness. Hurka is thus onto something with his defense of bodily perfection.

It is worth pausing here and noting that insofar as Aristotle's theory of well-being relies upon this kind of causal powers metaphysics, it has some advantages over Hurka's own perfectionism because many of his critics launch some of the same criticisms at his own perfectionist theory that he and Williams have to Aristotle's theory. For instance, Philip Kitcher argues that there is no clear way to define the limits of our species without including individuals who do not belong or excluding individuals that do.¹⁹³ Furthermore, he does not think that there is any defining characteristic that all members of our biological species share, and further claims that we cannot make sense of the proper function of human beings in a meaningful way. Kitcher also points to capacities that human beings have that we seemingly have no normative reason to actualize or improve, such as urination.¹⁹⁴

Hurka does not develop a metaphysical framework that can explain the broad differences between growth, perception, and rationality that Aristotle does. Kitcher does not see any way to define human nature in a way that does not exclude individuals that are clearly part of our species and/or include specimens that are clearly not. Indeed, Hurka remains agnostic as to the exact criteria of inclusion in the human species. Aristotle, on the other hand, develops a theory of causal powers that allows him to make ontological distinctions between various substances in

¹⁹³ Philip Kitcher, "Essence and Perfection," *Ethics* Vol. 110, no. 1 (1999): 59-83. Pgs 70-71

¹⁹⁴ Kitcher, "Essence," 70

the universe. This sidesteps questions of modern biology because Aristotle's theory of human nature is not rooted in modern notions of species but rather on the disposition or capacity to engage in a distinctive activity or causal power. Aristotelian perfectionism can rely on contemporary accounts of causal powers to explain the limits between species and what bearing that has on the good life. Aristotelian perfectionism can include any organism that has the capacity for rational activity, regardless of whether they share our exact DNA or evolutionary history. Unlike with biological species, which are idiosyncratic to the particulars of evolutionary science and history, there can be fundamental and qualitative tests for species membership given the functional account of the human species that Aristotle lays out.

However, this is not the only objection to perfectionism that Aristotle can avoid and Hurka struggles to meet. Hurka also holds that bodily perfectionism is a key part of what it means to live a good human life.¹⁹⁵ There are a number of bodily functions that we perform that seem as though they have no connection to well-being or happiness (urination being one of them). Aristotle's theory of perfectionism can rule out these cases altogether (while still making sense of the ones that seem like the best candidates for inclusion in the good life) because it bases human nature on what is essential to and distinctive of human beings. Given that many of these banal bodily properties are shared with many animals (and even plants), they do not warrant inclusion in his theory of well-being. As in the case of digestion, human urination will only be important insofar as it contributes to rational activity. While it is important for humans to rid their bodies of toxins, diseases, or excess resources, this is subservient to the actual human

¹⁹⁵ Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 15-16

good.¹⁹⁶ Hurka has no analogous way of excluding these kinds of bodily functions from his own theory of well-being because he values bodily perfection for its own sake. Insofar as this is the case, it represents one way in which Aristotle's theory has an advantage over Hurka's.

Section 2 - The Place of Bodily Perfection

Hurka also criticizes the essential to and distinctive of view of perfectionism that Aristotle holds because it does not give sufficient important to bodily function and perfection. He suggests our bodily existence “is a deep fact about us—some would say as deep a fact as any—and one an acceptable perfectionism should reflect. If its aim for us is to develop our nature, surely the bodily parts of that nature must be included.”¹⁹⁷ This is a common criticism of Plato's (and to a lesser extent) Aristotle's perfectionism, and insofar as I am defending a communitarian intellectualist theory of well-being, I am essentially putting Aristotle and myself on the hook for answering this concern. Indeed, Hurka is not wrong to suggest that our embodied existence is in certain respects foundational to what we are as humans.

It seems plausible that physical achievement would qualify as a kind of human good. We celebrate people who engage in this kind of achievement regularly. Most people imagine that the athletic prowess of a Michael Jordan or Jerry Rice contributes to their flourishing and well-being. It seems strange to suggest that this is not the case. Furthermore, if we imagine two people who engage in the same level of contemplation, would it really be plausible to say that one did not lead a better life than the other if it involved physical achievement next to the contemplative excellence? Would someone who contemplated a great deal and climbed Mount

¹⁹⁶ The pain or discomfort that can come along with the malfunctioning of these bodily systems can undermine or take away from rational perfection as well.

¹⁹⁷ Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 13

Everest really not have a better life than someone who only contemplated a great deal (that is, to the same degree that the mountain climber did)? If this intuition holds, it undermines a purely intellectualist perfectionism. As such, this presents a potential difficulty for my own view.

However, there are a few ways to respond to this concern. In the case of human beings, we must have a body to reason. Much of our interaction with the outside world comes through our physical senses. That means that our ability to reason is tied up with our bodies. It is thus unsurprising that we would think that any conception of human well-being would take this into consideration. Even an intellectualist like Aristotle would have to acknowledge (as in fact Aristotle does) that human contemplation or intellectual activity is tied up with our physicality. We cannot survive without our bodies, but the very nature of our sense perception means that our bodies will be epistemically indispensable to our version of contemplation. In order to learn and study, we must read, conduct experiments, talk with other knowledgeable people, and participate in a host of other bodily activities. Everything we learn is mediated through our senses. Indeed, one can think of scientists use physical activity as an opportunity to discover truth about the world. Darwin, after all, travelled to the remote and uninhabited Galapagos Islands (i.e. no roads) in order to conduct the research that culminated in the theory of evolution. More directly, artists and writers have long found inspiration in their corporeal existence.

Furthermore, all of us need our digestive systems, motor skills, and sense perception to participate in even the most sedentary rational activity. In this sense, the body is not dispensable from what it means to be human (in the Aristotelian sense of the term). Hurka himself makes this claim: “No human can remain alive without a functioning respiratory, muscular, digestive,

circulatory, and nervous system.”¹⁹⁸ Unless we discover a means to support our existence without a body via magic or science, this does not seem like it will change any time soon. It is also worth noting that many kinds of bodily perfection involve a lot of careful planning, strategy, sound judgment, and a whole host of other rational skill and capability. Some kinds of rational activity require a great deal of physical exertion (such as warfare or sports). The close relationship between human flourishing and bodily perfection can help explain the intuition that people have regarding the importance of bodily perfection. Indeed, in some cases contemplation has come about via physical perfection.

As such, Aristotelian perfectionism can in some ways affirm that bodily flourishing is a foundational aspect of human existence. It can explain why our bodies are so closely tied to our happiness. Of course, this is still different from what Hurka has in mind. An intellectualist perfectionism would not say that bodily achievement is valuable for the sake of bodily achievement. To be sure, certain kinds of bodily activity require a great deal of rational calculation and sophistication, but such activities would be valuable insofar as they involve rational activity. In other words, Aristotelian perfectionism would explain the value of bodily achievement in terms of its contributions towards furthering human understanding or knowledge. Even if in some cases physical activity is necessary for human rationality, it is not valuable simply for the sake of its bodily exercise. Physical activity without some connection to rationality would be merely instrumental in nature. In this way, it may be analogous to the Aristotelian account of friendship that I have covered in previous chapters. Friendship is foundational to how human beings live good human lives; however, this is technically not

¹⁹⁸ Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 37

necessary in an absolute sense. We could imagine humans that need neither friends nor bodies to live a good life, even if such a being is far removed from our current reality.

This may or may not satisfy Hurka, but at the very least Aristotelian perfectionism can accommodate some of his intuition that we are embodied creatures. It can explain why the body is so important for human existence, even if the body might not be by definition necessary for human happiness. Insofar as Aristotelian perfectionism can fit this intuition into its system, then it will answer Hurka's objection on its own terms. Aristotle argues that the human good must be unique to humans, and this requirement is extraordinarily useful for ruling out a great deal of activities or properties that clearly have nothing to do with the good life (having a spatiotemporal location, simple nutrition, etc). As such, this criterion is worth preserving, even at the expense of inclusion of corporeal perfection in the human good.

I also think there are limits to the intuition that Hurka is working with. It is clearly possible to imagine rational beings that do not need bodies to engage in rational activity. For those so inclined, the example of God immediately comes to mind, but we can also envision a similar state via silicon and processors in a not too distant future. In such circumstances, I do not share Hurka's intuition that bodily perfection would be part of the human good.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, if we had the ability to transcend our bodies (which seem to in the end bring our lives to a close because they eventually break down), I do not see a reason why we should keep them simply for the sake of engaging in physical perfection. Contemplation represents rationality done for its

¹⁹⁹ Hurka might move to deny that God or sentient computers are human if they lack bodies. At the risk of impiety, I would suggest that if psychological criterion for personal identity holds, then our survival is tied to our minds, not our bodies. If we can survive without our bodies, that means leaving our bodies would not involve a substantial change in nature. In other words, I take rationality to be a more consistent marker of human nature than any bodily criterion.

own sake, and thus is the most choiceworthy activity that we can pursue (all other things being equal). It is essential to and distinctive of rational creatures, and thus represents their highest good. It just happens that human beings are the kinds of things that need their bodies to contemplate (especially well) in most cases.

The Importance of Distinctive Qualities

Hurka also objects to the essential to and distinctive of criterion because such a definition of human nature would rely on the properties or essences of other substances in the universe. This would be an odd criterion, he says, because that would make human nature contingent on things beyond itself and allow for the possibility for it to change if we discover that certain properties human beings have are not unique to human beings.²⁰⁰ That is, if we discover that non-human primates or dolphins are rational, the essential to and distinctive of criterion would rule that rationality is no longer part of human nature. More exotic examples might include the discovery of alien species that have rational powers like human beings do. However, I think this objection misunderstands how Aristotle's metaphysical theory works. It is true that Aristotle is only aware of one species of rational beings. But given how he defines what it means to be human (that is, based on the capacity for reason), finding other kinds of beings that also reason would not compromise the uniqueness of the rational power. Aristotle notes that the capacity for reason is fundamentally different metaphysically from nutritive, sensory, or locomotive powers found in other living organisms. That means that finding other rational beings who are not *homo sapiens* would no more undermine the distinctiveness of our rational powers any more than discovering additional *homo sapiens* would be. The kind is distinct, and insofar as something

²⁰⁰ Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 14-15

belongs to the kind (i.e. the set of things that have rational powers), then this entity would share in this distinctiveness. To reiterate from earlier, insofar as two creatures share the same essential and distinctive functions, they are part of the same metaphysical kind, much in the same way that wheels can be made of different material but nonetheless still be wheels given the function that they share with each other.

Perhaps we can see how this might work by examining aspects of the medieval worldview (which is heavily influenced by Aristotle). The medievals believed that there were many kinds of rational beings that inhabited the created order. For instance, there is a long tradition in medieval literature and natural philosophy of postulating that the realms of aether and air above the earth were inhabited by daemons.²⁰¹ These were often depicted as having rational powers and were sometimes agents in the sense that they could be good or evil. Aquinas himself believes in the existence of such entities. However, none of this compromised the medieval view that human beings were distinct qua their rationality. Following Aristotle, they identified the natural kinds of living things in the universe as plants, animals, and humans based on the causal powers that particular substances had. Humans and daemons both had rational powers and could be categorized (on the Aristotelian picture) as belonging to the same species. Insofar as they share the same function that is not reducible to anything else, there is compelling reason to put them in the same ontological category (much in the same way that wheels of all kinds share the same function).

That we have a very different picture of universe and its inhabitants is not relevant to the line of thinking that they developed. The discovery of other biological species (in the modern

²⁰¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964; 2012 reprint), 118

sense of the term) does not threaten the uniqueness of our rational capacity because such beings would simply belong to the same metaphysical kind. If certain primates or aliens can reason, then they are human in the Aristotelian sense of the term (even if they do not share our DNA or evolutionary history). If this metaphysical framework holds, then there is no reason to suspect that other rational species would undermine our uniqueness in the way that Hurka fears.

However, this does not deal with the other more fundamental concern that Hurka has about using distinctiveness to define what it means to be human. After all, on some level it might seem strange to define human beings (even in the Aristotelian sense) by qualities that they do not happen to share with other substances in the universe. However, I believe we use this kind of comparison all the time when trying to delineate certain kinds of things from others. For instance, if we are trying to explain what makes chess what it is, we will not get far by explaining that it has a board and pieces. While these are essential qualities of the game, it will not help us to distinguish it from other games. We will have to focus on both essential and distinctive qualities of chess in order to explain what it is. Given the unique and distinctive features of chess, what it means to be a good chess player will be different from a good checkers or go player. The special qualities of a game will inform us as to what it is to be excellent at the game. In the same way, the unique and distinctive features of human beings will tell us what it means to live an excellent human life.

Another example is one Hurka himself brings up. He points out that all physical substances in the universe have the property of taking up space.²⁰² It is immediately clear that if we want to determine or delineate some things from others in the universe, the quality of taking

²⁰² Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 12

up space will not be very useful. We will have to figure out how various objects differ from others. That is in part a comparative project. As such, I do not think that Aristotle's emphasis on what makes human beings distinctive is particularly wrongheaded.

Section 3 - Hurka and Practical Rationality

I have responded to Hurka's criticisms of Aristotle's essential to and distinctive of criterion for human nature. Now it will be necessary to directly respond to Hurka's own theory of what well-being is. There is of course a good deal of agreement between Aristotle's perfectionism and Hurka's. Hurka agrees with Aristotle that contemplation is part of the good life. Aristotle simply differs from Hurka in that he believes contemplation to be by itself the highest and most choiceworthy activity available to human beings. Hurka includes physical achievement and practical rationality in his own theory of perfectionism. I have already explained how Aristotelian perfectionism might deal with Hurka's emphasis on physical activity, so I will focus on Hurka's inclusion of practical rationality. To understand why Aristotle's theory has some advantages over Hurka's, I will have to explain what Hurka takes practical rationality to be and why he believes that it has equal footing with contemplation with regards to the good life.

Hurka's theory of well-being also places a different status on practical rationality than an intellectualist would. He argues that practical rationality is just as worthy as theoretical contemplation. To review, Aristotle's view (which I also hold to in this case) is that practical rationality is just as much a species of rationality as contemplation. However, because it is by nature aimed at goods beyond itself, it is not as choiceworthy for its own sake as contemplation. In other words, if we had the goods that practical rationality aimed at, then we would not need to

engage in it (though such a world is far from our own). Hurka, in contrast, argues that practical rationality is as intrinsically valuable as theoretical rationality, and that Aristotle's emphasis on contemplation is misguided. Hurka essentially argues that there is no reason to give primacy to intellectual activities like poetry or physics over and above activities like mountain climbing and team sports. The latter two cases (which Hurka suggests are instances of practical rationality) seem to be intrinsically valuable and just as worthy of pursuit as the first two. It perhaps would seem stodgy and elitist not to recognize this. If his intuition holds, this would be a serious problem for intellectualist perfectionist theories of well-being.

As such, I will explain my own responses in this section. As with bodily perfection, I believe that intellectualist perfectionism can accommodate or explain some of Hurka's intuitions on this point. I will argue that some of the activities he lists are indeed a kind of rationality, and depending on why we think they are valuable could be in some sense contribute to a good life under intellectualist perfectionism. In part, I will maintain that this is possible because Hurka's account of practical rationality is slightly different than the Aristotle (and I) hold to. However, there will be certain cases where I will have to bite the bullet and simply deny that Hurka's intuitions about practical rationality always carry water. Intellectualist perfectionism will not be able to satisfy everyone who has intuitions that are similar to Hurka's, but I will suggest that there are still good reasons to hold to an intellectualist account of perfectionism.

3.1 - Hurka on Practical and Theoretical Rationality

Hurka's has an account of practical and theoretical rationality that is in some ways very similar to Aristotle's. He says that in order for an agent to have practical rationality, we must be able to explain their actions via the following schema:

A intended to make it the case that p .

A believed that ϕ -ing was the most effective means to p .

A was acting as a rational agent.

A was physically able to ϕ .

Therefore, A ϕ -ed intentionally.²⁰³

Aristotle believes that practical rationality starts with certain general principles of action or character qualities (such as courage, generosity, or modesty), determines how they apply in a given situation, and then acts accordingly (action is the “conclusion” of the practical syllogism). Hurka’s account is somewhat more of a straightforward means/ends calculation in a way that Aristotle does not have in mind, but both theories have to do with forming rational beliefs about a given situation and moving towards a particular end. Hurka’s account of theoretical rationality is also similar to Aristotle’s. As with Aristotle, Hurka believes that contemplation involves forming rational beliefs by starting with certain better known first principles and moving towards more “speculative” ones.²⁰⁴

3.2 - Hurka’s Argument for Practical Rationality (and Against Intellectualism)

Hurka, contra Aristotle, argues that there is no reason to give lexical priority theoretical rationality over practical rationality. He provides two arguments against the Aristotelian position (and for his own position). One is that Aristotle’s appeal to divine activity “is of merely historical interest.”²⁰⁵ The second is that certain practical pursuits are clearly loved for their own

²⁰³ Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 40

²⁰⁴ Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 41

²⁰⁵ Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 86: “Aristotle’s arguments for preferring theory are unimpressive. His central argument—that theoretical excellence realizes a separable and divine element in our nature—is of merely historical interest.”

sake (that is, they are final) and are self-sufficient, contra Aristotle's assertions in EN X: "that [contemplation] is more self-sufficient is dubious, and that it alone is loved for its own sake is false. Players value skill in games not just as a means to winning—many care little for that—but because in itself it exercises rational capacities."²⁰⁶ He points to the example of people who play games for the sake of the rational activity (and obviously not for the immediate end of the respective game). Many people play sports for the mental challenge that it represents, and thus love sports for their own sakes. Hurka asserts that "Without better arguments than Aristotle's, perfectionism should give the rational perfections roughly equal weight, so a world of uniformly good lives devotes roughly equal time to each."²⁰⁷ I will respond to this assertion by carefully unpacking Aristotle's arguments in EN X in regards to their relationship with Hurka's conception of practical rationality.

Hurka's argument that Aristotle's appeal to divine activity is simply antiquated fails to deal with the substance of Aristotle's actual position. Indeed, this relates directly to Hurka's second objection that practical rationality is not less final or self-sufficient than contemplation. Hurka is wrong to say that Aristotle's consideration of the gods is nothing more than a kind of divine command theory. As I have outlined earlier in this project, the reason Aristotle brings up the lives of the gods is a kind of thought experiment that enables him to consider what activities truly have intrinsic value without any consideration of the ends they bring about beyond themselves.

²⁰⁶ Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 86

²⁰⁷ Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 86

We also must remember why this thought experiment leads Aristotle to reject the idea that practical rationality is as choiceworthy as contemplation. Aristotle's notion of practical rationality has to do with moral or prudential decisions that are aimed at living a good life (as we saw in EN VI). Thus, Hurka's appeal to playing games does not easily map onto what Aristotle's account of practical rationality is. In other words, his criticism of Aristotle is not responsive to Aristotle's specific account of practical rationality. When Aristotle discusses practical rationality, he means activities like household management, politics, or warfare. Aristotle thinks it is ridiculous for the gods to engage with any of these activities because the ends at which they are aimed are irrelevant to them. Why would the gods create contracts or fight with each other when they have no need to secure material goods for themselves? They can spend all their time on activities that are not aimed at anything beyond themselves. By their very nature, activities that aim at some end are in some way subservient to those ends. If the end has no value (at least in particular circumstances), then we would not have reason to engage in them. For Aristotle, practical rationality aims at ends that are necessary for human beings (at least in some contexts) and thus would be unnecessary without the need for those ends. If someone wants to make the case that an activity has value beyond what the activity produces beyond itself, this is an implicit argument that the activity is either valuable for its own sake without reference to its end or that there is some other end that it aims at (that is valuable).

This brings us to the example of sports that Hurka brings up. First, it's important to note that this is outside the definition of practical rationality that Aristotle has in mind. I imagine that Aristotle would probably put sports and other games under the category of leisure activity because they don't involve especially grandiose ends (like warfare and politics), are not

necessary to sustain human life, and do not involve the discovery of deep metaphysical truths about the universe.

However, perhaps Aristotle would be myopic to do this. His own theory may in fact make room for the intrinsic value of sports or games. Consider the possibility that playing sports or other games is truly a way of exercising rational perfection. I strongly suspect that putting a ball through a hoop is not, by itself, what attracts people to a game like basketball. At first blush, it seems like basketball (and all other sports/games) immediately fail the same test that politics and warfare did. However, Hurka wants to argue that people play sports for their opportunity to engage in rational activity.²⁰⁸ What makes basketball intrinsically valuable is the skill, strategy, and preparation necessary to achieve a high level of success. In other words, the reason people seem to like basketball can be understood is because it is an exercise in rationality and intelligence (hence ubiquitous references to “basketball IQ” in the discourse surrounding it). We are now in a good position to evaluate whether or not games (when understood in this way) truly undermine Aristotle’s emphasis on contemplation as the highest good.

The first thing to note here is that on Hurka’s sports (understood in this way) does not seem to be a kind of practical rationality as Aristotle understood it. For Aristotle, practical rationality is aimed at some more final end. While ostensibly aimed at a particular end (winning the game), sports are actually a tool or mechanism for engaging in rational excellence.²⁰⁹ This parallels how some people view sports in regards to physical fitness. If some people only play sports for the sake of exercise, then they would truly enjoy the activity for reasons of physical

²⁰⁸ Hurka, *Perfectionism*, 86

²⁰⁹ Or physical excellence, but we have dealt with Hurka’s arguments about physical perfection elsewhere.

perfection. However, many people play sports precisely because it requires a fusion of both bodily and mental excellence. Indeed, another way of looking at sports is that rational excellence is embodied or instantiated through the vehicle of our own bodies, in the same way that a painter uses canvas, ink, or pastels to make something beautiful that is not reducible to the constituent parts. If the same principle could hold true for sports, we could argue that the body is the vehicle or mechanism by which the mind expresses a kind of intellectual perfection.²¹⁰

Human beings are the kinds of creatures that express their rationality through their products (to take some inspiration from Karl Marx).²¹¹ Philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists have used various mediums by which to explore the nature of reality and to explain or express their ideas (in the form of paper, ink, Hindu-Arabic notation, and so forth). In the case of the medievals, artists and architects used cathedrals and frescos to express their view of the world in a material and concrete way. Sports could be another example of this kind of instantiation. Indeed, it is likely that many people view sports in this way, given that mundane activities like throwing a ball through a hoop are not valued outside of the rational excellence that they require in the context of basketball.

If people enjoy sports because of this kind of mental or rational stimulation, then the sport might be incidental (or a useful instrument) towards the intrinsic value of rationality. This makes sports seem more like a kind of contemplation (or perhaps a means to contemplation) than the kinds of practical rationality that Aristotle describes. This may seem like a stretch, but

²¹⁰ Some people might argue that the value of sports could be both a matter of physical and intellectual achievement. I only mean to suggest that intellectualists have some way to make sense of their value.

²¹¹ Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. by Robert Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 66-132. Pgs 71-72

Aristotle finds contemplation to be superior to practical rationality precisely because it is done for its own sake. If there are other activities that also involve rational activity for their own sakes, then they would also be intrinsically valuable in the same way that contemplation is for Aristotle. Thus, Hurka's objection to Aristotle's account of the good may not land given that Aristotle's account of intellectual activity may be able to accommodate sports within an intellectualist framework. This would go a long way towards making sense of the intuition in favor of various embodied activities within Aristotle's broader project, and thus they would not suggest strong counter-examples to his theory of the good life.

Hurka doesn't say this directly, but we can also worry that suggesting that sports or other analogous games (like say chess) are not as choiceworthy as traditional varieties of contemplation is offensive or elitist. There might be a more egalitarian impulse to recognize the intrinsic value of activities that most people find interesting and to avoid presumptuous calls for everyone to become philosophers. If I am right and Hurka's practical reason would actually fit under Aristotle's definition of contemplation, then there is not nearly the amount of substantive disagreement between Aristotle and Hurka on this point. Aristotle could in fact make sense of the value of various games and sports.

Some people might be skeptical that sports involve the same level of rationality as philosophy, science, or literature, and thus would complain that Aristotelian intellectualism gives too little weight to sports and other games. However, there might be good reason to suspect that sports and other games (which is what Hurka identifies with practical reason) are not as choiceworthy as contemplation. It is worth noting that athletes, coaches, and people involved with sports say this all of the time. Most people recognize that sports, while a great source of

entertainment, are not as important as other things in life. In other words, asserting that sports or games are “just a game” is a rather commonplace sentiment, and thus it doesn’t seem as though it is particularly outlandish. If sports are a kind of rational activity, they might not be as important as other intellectual activities.

We might consider whether or not, if faced with a choice, we would want to preserve the completed works of Shakespeare or footage of the 1996-1997 Chicago Bulls season. Despite the fact that this Bulls team was perhaps the greatest ever, it does seem odd to suggest that this is of equal value to Shakespeare. If my readers share my intuition on this, then perhaps the suggestion that sports do not have the same importance as literature or other liberal arts, even if it is a kind of rational activity. This judgment would of course not be limited to sports and other physical activities. We might run the same example with Shakespeare and the best chess strategy book ever written. It seems implausible that we would preserve the chess book over the collected works of Shakespeare. If people share this intuition, then Hurka’s argument that practical rationality is on the same level as theoretical rationality no longer cuts ice. If it is intuitively clear that games and other uses of practical reason (as Hurka has defined it) are not as valuable as literature, art, or philosophy, then we will have a reason to side with a more intellectualist perfectionism.

Now, it might be that some people won’t share this intuition. If that’s the case, then much of my argument against Hurka’s emphasis on practical rationality will not succeed. However, there may be principled reasons that explain why many people feel as though sports and other games are not as important as contemplation. Aristotle’s view of contemplation holds that the highest form of contemplation involves foundational or fundamental metaphysical

principles of the universe. Thus, while knowing the exact number of leaves on a tree is relatively trivial, knowing generally how many leaves a particular species produces (and why) is not as trivial. General knowledge of the particular species will also give us knowledge of its particulars, meaning that general knowledge incorporates a great deal of the value of particulars. Relatedly, knowledge of general principles is foundational to a true understand of particulars and how they operate, meaning that the knowledge of the general is deeper and more substantial. This is the basic perspective of Plato, Aristotle, and their many intellectual descendants.

The highest and most important truth to contemplate is the unmoved mover itself because it is the most foundational and actualized entity in existence. While it is beyond the scope of this project to consider Aristotle's arguments for the existence of god, the general principle at work here might suggest that sports do not deal with foundational metaphysical principles. Sports and other games like chess are primarily concerned with more specific or particular truths. As such, they may not be as valuable as fields or disciplines which deal with more fundamental principles of reality. Of course, it's entirely possible to push back against this and suggest that sports are a great way to learn about teamwork, human psychology, physiology, in which case they would again be valuable as a kind of contemplation.

Thus, we see that depending whose definition of contemplation/practical rationality we use, Aristotelian perfectionism will have two basic responses to Hurka's challenge to explain the pre-eminence of contemplation over practical rationality. One is to say that there does not appear to be a substantial disagreement between Hurka and Aristotle in that they both believe that rationality for the sake of rationality is the best and highest kind of rationality. If Hurka believes that certain kinds of practical rationality are engaged in for the sake of some kind of

rationality, then it seems the only way to make sense of this (given that the apparent goal of games cannot possibly be important) is by putting these games in same category as Aristotle would contemplation, and thus could still be a kind of intellectualism. However, if we still maintain that there is a distinction between games and intellectualism, it is not a stretch to suggest that the liberal arts are more valuable or choiceworthy than games and sports. Thus, Hurka's objection to Aristotle's emphasis on contemplation does not go through.

Section 4 - Hurka Objection to Aristotle's Egoism

In addition to his other objections to Aristotle's perfectionism, Hurka has argued that Aristotle's perfectionist theory on the grounds that it is overly egoistic and does not explain why helping other people is valuable for its own sake. Hurka argues that Aristotle's theory of moral virtue entails that "our ultimate reason to perform these acts is therefore that doing so is part of exercising virtue, which is what we must do to achieve the eudaimon or good life that's our ultimate goal."²¹² Hurka further argues that

This sketch of Aristotle's ethics should be familiar, but it doesn't allow the claim that states of other people such as their pleasure or knowledge are good in a way that by itself gives me sufficient reason to promote them. Any good playing that role must either be or contribute to a chief good that's my own eudaimonia, and states of other people can't do that: my life can't be better or more *eudaimon* because of something true of you.²¹³

Hurka argues that Aristotle is fundamentally an egoist, and that all moral virtue for Aristotle must have some grounding in self-interest. Hurka objects that a moral system should not be so

²¹² Thomas Hurka, "Aristotle on Virtue: Wrong, Wrong, and Wrong," In *Aristotelian Ethics in Contemporary Perspective*, ed. Julia Peters (New York: Routledge – Taylor and Francis Group, 2013), 9-26. Pg. 14

²¹³ Hurka, "Wrong," (2013) 15

self-centered, and given that Aristotle's theory is, it is grounds for rejecting his theory of virtue. The correct moral theory cannot rely on "explanatory egoism."²¹⁴

Normally, this wouldn't be relevant to a theory of well-being, but given that my own reading Aristotle attributes to him a position that justifies other directed virtues in the name of self-interest, I will have to explain why this is not an objectionable feature of Aristotelian perfectionism.

The main thrust of my response to Hurka on this point will (unsurprisingly) rely on the extended-self thesis that I developed in the earlier part of my dissertation. Part of why Aristotle feels confident in ascribing prudential value to ethical action is because he believes that we have self-interested reason to care about others. Certain individuals or institutions can embody key aspects of our personhood and character. They can represent the activity of our own potentiality. Aristotle believes that we have a strong connection with other people in our families and communities. He does not subscribe to a hard and fast distinction between the individual and its larger social network. The reason he feels confident in saying that courageous actions in battle are tied up with our well-being springs from his conviction that human life is not a collection of autonomous nodes but rather intermeshed webs of ties and connections. If other people represent our own actualization and perfection, then we have reason to defend and protect them. Furthermore, I have argued with Anthony Carreras that this goes in the opposite direction as well. We are shaped by other people who give us reason to care about them (and they about us) given shared character and psychology. This means that the extended-self thesis in Aristotle

²¹⁴ Hurka, "Wrong," (2013) 15

need not be objectionably imperialistic. It represents a collective or communal interest that does not reduce to one individual's original desires or inclinations.

It is this philosophical anthropology that will help explain why Hurka's objection does not find its mark. Aristotle does not distinguish between individuals in the way that most people do in our contemporary world. I have already discussed the arguments for the extended-self thesis, both from Aristotle and from Parfit/Brink, in Chapter 3 of this project. Given that we bear the same psychological (in both the Aristotelian and modern sense of that word) relationship to certain other people as we do our future selves, then we have as much reason to help them as our future selves. Thus, it will be hard to articulate exactly how a virtuous action could be self-interested in the way that it would need to be in order to find it objectionable. According to Aristotle, when virtuous people help others, they are doing their part to make the larger social community function. If a soldier has to show courage in battle, this is obviously dangerous and in a perfect world there would be no need for this sacrifice. However, Aristotle's view is that this soldier is fulfilling an important social role that will help other members of the community who bear many important aspects of their own actualization.

Selfishness usually involves one person taking more than their fair share of something or acting for the sake of their own benefit without proper regards for others (or at least, something like this definition of selfishness is necessary for Hurka's argument to run). Aristotle's view of the extended self does not allow us to neatly distinguish between the interests of one person from another's insofar as they are members of the same family or community. Aristotle would concede that there are different nodes (persons) within a community, but they share certain qualities or interests such that they are intimately related.

This is what allows Aristotle to say that someone like Priam is harmed when his children are killed or his city is destroyed. If individuals could be cleanly separated from their broader societies, then taking Priam out of Troy at the moment it falls would keep his well-being and happiness intact. He could potentially do whatever makes him happy in some other place. However, Aristotle's theory of well-being and morality can help make sense of why we can say that Priam had an unfortunate life (even without considering the fact that he also died). Indeed, Virgil himself seems to recognize this given that someone was whisked away from Troy when it fell and has to be made into a new person in order to found a new city. Aeneas has to go through the underworld and pass by all of his fallen comrades before finally turning from Trojan Aeneas to Roman Aeneas. If we agree with Virgil that Aeneas' life was significantly harmed by the fall of Troy despite the fact that he managed to survive it, then we can see the motivation behind Aristotle's own thoughts on this matter.²¹⁵ If your life will go extremely poorly if your community ceases to exist, then it makes sense in some cases to risk your own life to save it.

All of this is to say that Aristotle's comments on the nature of virtue should not lead us to believe that he is objectionably selfish in his theory of morality. Helping other people is a way of helping a broad social community that both the generous person and the recipient of generosity are a part of. If this is the case, then Aristotle's ethical theory no longer looks selfish

²¹⁵ There are of course other theories as to why Aeneas would be harmed by the fall of Troy beyond the extended-self thesis. For instance, maybe Troy represents a project that Aeneas cared about (desire-satisfaction), or perhaps he was dismayed by the loss of life (a kind of utilitarianism). However, a desire-satisfaction view of this case would not by itself establish this harm because Aeneas went on to do something greater (found Rome) that satisfied the same desire, and utilitarianism would not be able to distinguish between the fall of Troy and the sack of some other city that he has no attachment to. Thus, this case should at least give us some reason to suspect that one way to make sense of the particular and special relationships we have with our families, friends, and communities is the extended-self thesis.

in the objectionable way that Hurka suggests that it does. On Aristotle's view, there is no distinct individual or self to benefit at the expense of other people.

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