

**A CRITIQUE OF ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION OF
EUDEMONIA IN THE *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS***

By

Patrick O. Nyabul



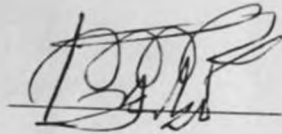
**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Nairobi.**

JUNE 2000

**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
EAST AFRICANA COLLECTION**

DECLARATION

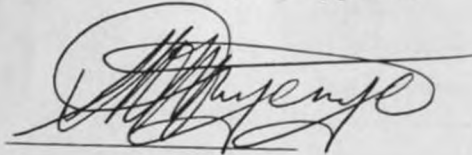
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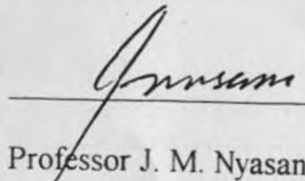
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DEDICATION

I DEDICATE THIS THESIS TO THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE CONCERNED
ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I must thank the Faculty of Arts' Postgraduate Studies' Committee, the Board of Postgraduate Studies as well as my employer and sponsor, namely, the University of Nairobi, for giving me a *chance* to write this thesis. Besides, I thank the Rector, Fr. G. Bertaina, and the library staff, of the Consolata Institute of Philosophy for allowing me to make use of their library at a time when I was carrying out the research whose result is the present thesis.

In addition, some of my colleagues in the Department of Philosophy lent me their personal books and discussed my research proposal at a departmental seminar. I am grateful to them as well for their kind attitude. I would like to thank the following scholars for reading and correcting the original draft of the present thesis. I am indebted to Professor J. M Nyasani and Dr. S. Monyenye, the university supervisors, for their encouragement, good will, guidance and direction during the writing of this thesis. Dr. J. A. Odhiambo also supervised, and Professor D. A. Masolo read and helped me to modify, the original Ph.D proposal that informs the introductory chapter of this thesis. I am indebted to them too. I also asked the following colleagues to read and comment on, the first draft of this thesis: Professor G. Presbey, Dr. D. Sperling, Dr. F. Ochieng'-Odhiambo, Professor J. N. K. Mugambi, Professor J. Mbae, Dr. S. W. Rohio, and Professor Okoth-Okombo, among others. They gave me useful tips and ideas for which I am very grateful. Furthermore, I am especially indebted to the following friends and relatives: Engineer, Professor V. E. Otieno, Mr. F. O. Okello and Mr. J. O. Onyango, and the late Professor H. Odera Oruka, who made a financial contribution towards my study. Finally, I must thank my family without whose support and co-operation I would never have written this thesis.

ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to describe the best life that everyone should lead. It undertakes a case - study of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. The problem involves the description of the best life and Aristotle's conception of it. For Aristotle, the best life is a happy life (*eudaimon* life), while the best good is happiness (*eudaimonia*). *Eudaimonia* consists in contemplation and an *eudaimon* life is a contemplative life. But Aristotle is not quite clear on the relationship between *eudaimonia* and an *eudaimon* life. It is not clear whether these are different or the same. Yet his *eudaimonia* does not seem to be what everyone wants.

For Aristotle contemplation is the sole preoccupation of 'the gods'; only a philosopher can lead this 'divine' life in exercising the 'divine faculty' of reasoning. But it is impossible to prove that the so-called gods exist and that they contemplate.

As Dr. Solomon Monyenye has observed, there are different conceptions of happiness: "The term happiness has a wide range of application and diverse modes of life may each be conceived of as generating happiness to the people concerned."¹ It is a question of relativism.

However, contemporary Aristotelians seem to disagree about Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*. Some scholars argue that *eudaimonia* is a composite end which includes many desirable goods besides contemplation, but other scholars maintain that *eudaimonia* consists in a single monolithic good, namely contemplation. These views have been called the 'inclusive' and the 'dominant' views, respectively (thanks to F. W. R. Hardie) though they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. But there are other scholars like Emilie Oksenberg Rorty who insist that Aristotle was

S. Monyenye, 'Education and National Consciousness,' Ph.D thesis, University of Nairobi, 1984, p. 53.

simply undecided whether to advocate the inclusive or the dominant view of *eudaimonia*. Ackrill, Cooper and White present the inclusive view whereas Hardie, Kenny, and Kraut present the dominant view.

It is difficult to tell which one of these schools of thought is a true representation of Aristotle's view of *eudaimonia*, without reading Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. After reading the text, I discovered that the 'inclusivists' and the 'exclusivists' argue at cross-purposes. For the latter think that *eudaimonia* is the best human *good* while the former think that it is the best human *life* since Aristotle's view of *eudaimonia* is ambiguously unclear. All in all, I found that Aristotle leans towards the dominant view of *eudaimonia*. According to my own interpretation of Aristotle's view of *eudaimonia*, the two are different. But for me, *eudaimonia*(happiness) and an *eudaimon* life(happy life) are synonymous terms. They mean the same thing conceptually and practically, in abstraction as well as in concrete reality. But for Aristotle these are two different things.

At first I thought like Aristotle that there was one kind of human life that is the best of all other kinds of life. But later I realised that different people have different opinions about the best life and that the question 'what is the best life?' cannot be answered conclusively. There is no consensus on this matter. It is a matter of relativism. But the fact that there is no possibility of a universal agreement on what is the best life for all human beings does not prevent anyone from expressing one's view as to what it might be! The best that one can do is to state one's opinion about the best life. I have reiterated the view that the best life is not, as Aristotle thought, an exclusive life of sheer contemplation. I have argued that the best life for me is a satisfactory life comprising all necessary goods. In my view, it is an easy life

in which all that one needs is available. But such a life is unrealisable. It is unattainable and untenable in practice. It is only possible in theory.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter marks the beginning of the discussion of the best life in general and Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* in particular.

1.1 Preamble

There are different conceptions of the best life. Indeed, the question of the ideal life has a great deal of ethical importance. The issue of the highest possible good or the best life for human beings is often subsumed under the general question about the purpose of life. In fact, before the focus shifted to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the research that led to the writing of this thesis began as an investigation into the general metaphysical question of the meaning of life.

1.2 Scope and limitation of the study

Aristotle (384-322 BC), that great, ancient Greek philosopher, dealt with these issues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics*, among others. But this thesis concentrates on the former. Further, I am mainly concerned with one of the issues that Aristotle dealt with in the *Ethics*, namely, the theme of *eudaimonia*, as the title of the treatise suggests. The *Ethics* was named after Aristotle's son, Nicomachus.

Although the *Ethics* is composed of ten books, this study is particularly concerned with only two of them, that is, the first and the last, Book I and Book X, because it is in these books that *eudaimonia* is discussed explicitly. Book I deals with the idea of the highest good. Book II contains a discussion of moral virtues. Book III is a continuation of the treatment of ethical virtues. Book IV also involves the

discussion of some virtues of character such as friendship and generosity. Book V is about justice. Book VI contains a discussion of virtues of thought and the doctrine of the Mean. Book VII involves a further discussion of virtue, vice, and pleasure. Book VIII is devoted to a detailed discussion of friendship and its varieties. Book IX is a continuation of the discussion of friendship. Lastly, Book X involves a final discussion of *eudaimonia*, pleasure, ethics, politics, and moral education.

Even so, the question of the good life is not the only topic that Aristotle addressed himself to in that work. Although there are many other themes in it, the purpose of this thesis is to deal with this one alone and any other subject in it only in so far as it is associated with the good life. The aim is not only to understand Aristotle's conception of the best life in this treatise, but also to critique it, and, to offer a better alternative to it.

Unfortunately, this writer does not know Greek, the original language in which the *Ethics* was written. The lack of the knowledge of the Greek language is a hindrance with regard to reading the text in its original language of publication, that is, classical Greek. I must admit that this is a major constraint on my part. For this reason, I have used a contemporary English translation of the *Ethics* as the main reference. Many of the translators of, and commentators on, Aristotle's works are presumably well versed in contemporary Greek as opposed to the classical one in which Aristotle wrote. For this reason, their translations may not be quite accurate and reliable. Nevertheless, I assume that the ideas of Aristotle remain basically the same, irrespective of the language into which his work has been translated. This thesis is concerned with those ideas, particularly, Aristotle's ideas of the good life.

Many scholars have translated *eudaimonia* to mean 'happiness', while others, notably Sir David Ross, J. M. Cooper, and J. L. Ackrill have maintained that 'happiness' is a wrong and, therefore, a misleading translation of '*eudaimonia*'. In its modern English usage, the term 'happiness' refers "exclusively to a subjective psychological state, and indeed one that is often temporary and recurrent." However, the author argues that this is not what Aristotle meant by '*eudaimonia*.' For the latter thought that *eudaimonia* consisted in a virtuous *activity* of the soul.

As such, there is a controversy surrounding the correct interpretation, and translation, of the Greek term '*eudaimonia*' into English. As the following passage shows, the English translation of this word, which equates it with happiness, is disputable:

The corresponding adjective originally meant 'watched over by a good genius', but in ordinary Greek usage the word means just good fortune, often with special reference to external prosperity. The conventional translation 'happiness' is unsuitable in the *ethics*; for whereas 'happiness' means a state of feeling, differing from 'pleasure' only by its suggestion of permanence, depth, and serenity, Aristotle insists that *eudaimonia* is a kind of activity; that it is not any kind of pleasure, though pleasure naturally accompanies it. The more non-committal translation 'well-being' is therefore better.¹

For instance, Cooper prefers the term "human flourishing," while others prefer "the best possible life," or "well-being," to "happiness." For lack of a better alternative, "happiness" has been substituted for "*eudaimonia*" in many places in this thesis. Both terms are used interchangeably in this thesis as well as by a number of authors. Perhaps the word 'happiness' is the most approximate to, if not, the most appropriate English translation of, '*eudaimonia*,' even if it is not its perfect translation. In any case translations are often imperfect. Even so, the problem of

translation is not the one with which this thesis is concerned. Rather, it is concerned with the problem of understanding Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia*.

1.3 Definition of terms

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle described *the good* as "that at which everything aims."² This is the ultimate end of every action. As the highest end of human action, it is identified with *eudaimonia*, which is defined as the rational "soul's activity that expresses virtue." In other words, it is a rational activity of the soul according to virtue. *Eudaimonia* has been defined as follows: "a vital spiritual well - being. As a compound Greek word, it is etymologically derived from the two roots '*eu*' which means 'well' or 'good', and '*daimon*' which means 'spirit', 'god', 'inner force' or 'genius'."² Thus the literal definition of *eudaimonia* is, "having a good guardian spirit, i.e. the state of having an objectively desirable life."³ so to be *eudaimon* is to be in high spirits, to have a good spirit. Literally, to be possessed of a 'good demon' or spirit.

Eudaimonia means well being, living well or doing well. Nevertheless, for lack of a better term, the problems and disputes of translation notwithstanding, in this thesis the word "happiness" is used to mean *eudaimonia*. Happiness has a great deal to do with success and prosperity. Arguably, it is the good at which everyone aims. It is the best thing that everyone wants. It is the ultimate end of all human actions; that is, the final good. It is the highest of the goods that are achievable in practice, the end toward which every intermediate or proximate end is ultimately directed, the supreme human good.

In Aristotle's *Ethics*, it is supposed that goods can be arranged in a certain rigid ascending hierarchy of goods with the highest good being at the top of it. But it is doubtful whether there is a definite arrangement of goods in an ascending order. It may be that there is no fixed order of goods. In fact, there is an indefinite number of possible hierarchies of goods. One person may place one good above another good that may be placed below the other by a different person. It is impossible to determine the correct hierarchy among many possibilities without a fixed standard of doing that.

The good life is supposed to be a perfect life or an ideal life that human beings are capable of leading. It is the best of all possible kinds of human life. Thus the good means the good life. The good life is called *eudaimonia*. And if Aristotle thought that *eudaimonia* means contemplation, then he thought that the good life means a life of contemplation. Again, if contemplation refers to philosophy, then the good life is a philosophical life.

Autarkeia means self-sufficiency. As an essential property of *eudaimonia*, this concept refers to the autonomy and self-realisation of the contemplative life.

Akrasia incontinence or weakness of will. It describes the condition of someone who knows the right thing to do but lacks the willpower to do it.

Sophia is the Greek term that means theoretical wisdom, the highest virtue, as opposed to practical wisdom *phronesis* which means "1. knowledge wisely applied to everyday living ... 2. That faculty ... in humans which (a) enables them to discover what the correct ... action is in a given situation and (b) makes human desires conform to reason (or allows reason to control such desires). *Phronesis* entails

knowledge of the goods ... of rational human conduct and knowledge of the means and their proper application in achieving those desirable rational goods.”⁴

Arete means virtue or excellence. “A human’s *arete* consists of the development and use of his reason to the utmost level of functioning excellence. (And for Aristotle, in this consists also an individual’s ultimate happiness.)”⁵

Theoria refers to “abstract, intellectual knowledge” as distinguished from *praxis*, “practical ability or manual skill.”⁶

1.4 The statement of the problem

I set out in my research to know the best kind of human life. Is there an ideal way of life? Can we know it? If so, how ought we to live? Toward which goal should we aim? Is there only one end or many ends which human beings should ultimately seek? If so, which one(s)? Perhaps there is only one particular way of life that is the right way of life’ as Aristotle supposed. Or it may be that there is a particular goal or goals of life that is or are the highest goal or goals of life that all human beings should aim at achieving as individuals, if not, collectively. But it is possible that there is not only one definite goal for all human beings to aim at, nor one particular kind of life that all human beings should lead! In other words, it may be that there is no such thing as the good life or the supreme end of all human actions. There may be nothing like the good life or the best life that everyone aspires to, or should aspire to, achieve. The point is that there may be more than one good life. Perhaps there is no particular life that is the best of all kinds of life. Even if it is granted that the best life exists this may still be unknown, unknowable, unattainable

and untenable. In this case, it could be the best life only in theory but not in practice. The question of the best life is not only controversial; but it is also impossible to answer it to the satisfaction of all. There is no unanimity or universal agreement on what is the best way to live. At best, we can only state what we *think* is the best life *for us*. It is a subjective matter. For everyone has a particular view of the best life and it is very difficult, if not, impossible to reconcile their views. Aristotle also had his own *opinion* of the best possible human life as shown in the *Ethics*.

Unfortunately, there does not seem to be any way of telling whoever is wrong or right with regard to this matter. It is one person's word against that of another. 'One man's meat is another's poison.' Everyone has a right to hold his own opinion. However, this does not mean that every point of view is right! Nor does it mean that they are all wrong. There may be one particular viewpoint that is correct. This is what I am looking for. There are certain general ethical standards that can be applied to judge whether one point of view is good or bad. However, it is hard to judge whether or not a particular human life is better than another life.

What is the best life for everyone? In seeking the best life we are undoubtedly involved in making a value judgement. We cannot avoid subjectivism. In saying that a particular life is the best life, we are, in effect, saying that that is the kind of life that we prefer. In this case, the answer to the question of the best life is subject to relativism.

Aristotle's *Ethics* begins with an investigation of *the best life* and ends with an endorsement of *a particular kind of life as the best life for human beings* to lead. However, there is a dispute among Aristotelian scholars about the kind of life that Aristotle really regarded as the best one, that is, whether it was the life of virtue or the

life of contemplation or a mixture of both. That is why it was necessary for me to study his *Ethics* independently in order to find out for myself what Aristotle really thought and wrote about in order to evaluate his theory of the best life.

Again, in the first sentence of the book, *the good* is said to be "that at which everything aims."⁴ This definition is vague and misleading because it purports that everything has an aim. Does everything without exception aim at something? What does it mean to say that something aims at something else? And if everything aims at something then what is the aim of that at which everything aims? Everything cannot possibly aim at something because there must be at least one thing that does not aim at anything, that is, what everything is *supposed* to aim at. Here we seem to be involved in some kind of circular reasoning. If human beings have aims, does it follow that everything else also has an aim? Maybe all conscious things have their aims. But it is doubtful whether unconscious things too have aims. The latter may be said to have aims only in a figurative or a derivative manner of speaking. Really, only conscious beings (*pour-soi*, thanks to Jean-Paul Satre) may have aims to aspire to. Beings without consciousness (*en-soi*, thanks to Jean-Paul Satre) may be said to have the aims that conscious beings ascribe to them and not their own purposes. For aims presuppose and connote consciousness. But since inanimate things have no consciousness, they cannot be said to have purposes and to aim at anything.

It is also difficult to tell whether all human beings have one common ultimate end. Maybe we have a common aim based on our common nature as human beings. At the same time, we pursue various ends that are more or less equal. Different people seem to prefer and to pursue different ends. Everybody does not seem to be

pursuing the same end. But Aristotle opined that the best life is an *eudaimon* life. However, different people seem to have different conceptions of 'the ultimate end'. In that case, there are many conceptions of the ultimate. In any case, even if there is one ultimate end for all people there is no consensus on what it is and there cannot be any universal agreement on this matter since there are conflicting opinions about it. There is no way of proving that one particular kind of life is the ideal life for human beings. But that does not rule out the possibility that such a life really exists. That does not mean that every opinion is right either. Whether it is right or wrong depends on the criterion of judgement that is applied. But there are many criteria that may be applied here.

Aristotelian scholars interpret Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia* in many different and conflicting ways. They differ on the correct interpretation of it. In other words, they disagree about Aristotle's conception of the best life. Is *eudaimonia* a singular or plural good? Is it the supreme human good? If not, what, if any, is the ideal human good? That is the problem I am addressing here. Therefore, there is need to clarify the matter in order to avoid confusion, vagueness and ambiguity.

The disagreement among Aristotelian scholars aggravates the problem of understanding Aristotle's doctrine of the good life. For it is hard to tell whichever interpretation is right, unless one is familiar with the doctrine of the *Ethics*. That is the reason why it is important to study it. In order to avoid confusion and misinterpretation, it is better to read the book in order to hear, from the horse's mouth, so to speak, what 'the philosopher' as Saint Thomas Aquinas called Aristotle, had to say, rather than to rely on commentaries on his work. The disagreement concerns the interpretation of Aristotle's conception of the best life. Aristotle's

theory has proved so problematic to many scholars that some of them have accused him of 'indecision', 'inconsistency', 'ambiguity', and 'ambivalence.' They differ about the correct interpretation of his conception of the best life. The fact that they disagree on the issue of Aristotle's conception of the best life is what has necessitated my study of his *Ethics*, so that I may know the truth about the issue.

This disagreement leaves open the question about Aristotle's conception of the best life. That is, the question whether he advocated a 'dominant' or an 'inclusive' view of *eudaimonia*. One side claims that Aristotle conceived of *eudaimonia* as a dominant end while the other side argues that he viewed it as a composite whole made up of discrete parts. As such, whoever reads the works of these commentators may be confused and perplexed by their conflicting statements. The reader is still left wondering about the true interpretation of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* or the best life. Readers may be confused, uncertain and undecided about the correct answer to the question regarding Aristotle's conclusion on this issue. Similarly, it is not clear whether Aristotle thought that the best life was an intellectual life or a moral life or a mixed life of both morality and intellectualism. That is why I had to peruse his *ethics*.

Therefore, it is necessary to turn to the words of Aristotle themselves, to focus on a close, personal, and independent scrutiny of Aristotle's own views about the best life in the *Ethics*, in order to understand his position versus the claims of his commentators. Otherwise it would be difficult to tell the right side from the wrong side. This is what I have endeavoured to do before I can evaluate Aristotle's view of the best life. In order to be fair and to do justice to an author, one should understand

the author's point of view before criticising his view. For other writers may have misunderstood, misinterpreted, and misrepresented the author's view.

Some scholars argue that in Aristotle's view, *eudaimonia*, as the highest goal for human beings, comprises many valuable ends; but others insist that it consists in one single ultimate end, that is, the activity of study or contemplation alone. According to the latter school of thought, Aristotle advocated a 'dominant' theory of *eudaimonia*, but the rival group of scholars maintains that he articulated an inclusive thesis.

For this reason, it is necessary to find out which one of these theories of *eudaimonia*, if any, Aristotle really held or whether he had a different theory of *eudaimonia*. In order to solve this problem, it is necessary to concentrate on the study of his *Ethics*. The conflicting arguments of Aristotelian scholars are also discussed in this thesis with a view to finding the truth about Aristotle's conception of the nature of the best life for humans.

The research that led to the writing of this thesis sought to understand Aristotle's conception of the best life before it could be evaluated here. But there is a problem of interpretation in as far as Aristotle's theory of the good life is concerned. There is the problem of the nature of *eudaimonia*. Is it a compound end, which comprises many other ends or is it a single end? It is one thing to know what kind of thing Aristotle thought that it was, and another thing altogether to say that it is really the ultimate end of all human actions. Aristotle claimed that we ultimately aim at *eudaimonia* in everything that we do. But is it really true that all people naturally desire happiness? To the contrary, it may be observed that others seek pain and suffering either consciously or unconsciously.

Admittedly, it is not enough to say that the end of human actions is *eudaimonia*. For we should also know the meaning of *eudaimonia*. Aristotle defined it as a rational activity of the soul in accordance with reason. Thus the problem of its definition is also connected with the problem of translating it. Some scholars have argued that the term 'happiness' does not fully render the meaning of *eudaimonia* in English.

Once the meaning of *eudaimonia* is clear, the name that it is given will not seem to matter at all. For Aristotle was dealing with ideas and not only with words. This is a conceptual problem rather than a linguistic one. It is a problem of interpreting Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*, and not a problem of translating the term into English. Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* can be understood easily, irrespective of whichever name the English have given it. As Shakespeare wrote in *Romeo and Juliet*, 'A Rose is a Rose, by any other name it smells sweet.'

In a nutshell, the following are the issues with which this thesis is concerned: How ought we to live? Toward what goal or purpose should we aim? Are there many goals or only one ultimate goal of life? What, if anything, is the best human life? These questions presuppose a perfect way of life, a supreme goal of life. The problem involves the identification, and the definition, of the best life. In order for them to be identified, the best goal and the best life have to exist. For it is futile to try to identify the unidentifiable and the non-existent. This is the problem: what, if anything, is the best kind of life, the ultimate goal of life? This question raises another question: what is the criterion for goodness against which one may consider a particular life to be better than a different kind of life? This question is complicated by the possibility of conflicting criteria of goodness. That is why today there are

various ethical theories such as relativism, egoism and utilitarianism. For what one party takes to be 'the best' is the best thing only from a particular point of view. Indeed, there may be as many 'best' lives as there are different conceptions of what is the 'best', depending on which criterion is applied. There are different standards of moral judgement as a result of various preferences or different scales of value. For whatever one person regards as the best life may be regarded as inferior from another person's point of view. As Yutang put it, "the point of dispute is not what is but what should be, the purpose of human life, and it is therefore a practical, and not a metaphysical question. Into this question of what should be the purpose of human life, every man projects his own conceptions and his own scale of values. It is for this reason that we quarrel over the question, because our scales of value differ from one another."⁵ Nevertheless, everyone is free to express his view concerning what can possibly be the supreme good and the perfect life for everyone. No indisputable answer can be given in response to this question. It is therefore an open question.

According to the inclusive view, the best life is not the life of pure contemplation nor is it a life of pure virtuous activity; it is a perfect life that comprises all necessary goods. This is the interpretation of the good life that the inclusive attribute to Aristotle though the latter seemed to have given priority to contemplation other than moral virtue. In so doing, they seem to be putting words into Aristotle's mouth, as it were. They are wrong because they claim that Aristotle said what he did not say. In effect, they are saying that he said what I think Aristotle should have said. But in this thesis I am saying that though it is possible to tell whether the dominant or the inclusive interpretation of Aristotle's thesis is right, it

seems as if *there is no way of proving that Aristotle's view is right*. Furthermore, even if the inclusive thesis is the correct view of the best life as I think it is, it is not the view of Aristotle in the *Ethics*, at least. In that case, this is what Aristotle should have said but did not say. It is not what he did say. Yet the inclusive thesis claims that it is what he said.

Nevertheless, the view of the best life as an inclusive life of moral and intellectual virtues also has its relativistic problems. There is no way of telling what goods or how many goods should be included in or excluded from such a life and on what basis that should be done. Even if the perfect life possesses certain component goods, there is no way of determining the extent to which a particular good should be pursued and how much of that good is necessary for the perfect life. It is equally hard to establish the order of the ingredient goods in the mixed life as the best life.

Furthermore, the superlative adjectival form 'best' is usually used ambiguously. Indeed, the application of the concept 'best' in reference to life is bound to be subjective and relative. In this case, it is impossible to reach a universal agreement concerning the ideal or the perfect human life. Everyone seems to have his or her own conception of the ideal life and it appears as if there is no way of telling which one of these conflicting conceptions of the perfect life is 'better' than the other. There is no universally acceptable moral criterion of judgement with regard to the value of life. Therefore, there is an apparent risk of subjectivity in any attempt to define the best life. For, there is no standard yardstick for reconciling the conflicting opinions about the best life. The concept of the best life seems to lend itself to various subjective interpretations. Nevertheless, everyone is free to state his

convictions with regard to the best life though it is difficult to identify 'the best' conception of the best life because of the ambiguity of the term.

My view is that the best possible life for all human beings to lead is the ideal possession of everything necessary for life. This includes a perfect combination of all moral virtues and all intellectual virtues, and much more, rather than only one kind of virtue. What does a 'perfect combination' mean and in what does it consist? That is indeterminate. But the problem with this kind of view, as with many others which are based on perfection, is that it is difficult, if not, impossible, to know or to achieve perfection. Nevertheless, the fact that ideals cannot be attained should not prevent us from trying as much as possible to approximate or to approach them, for that is the best thing that we can do practically to enhance our lot.

It is really difficult, if not, impossible, to identify the 'right' conception of the best life amongst many rival interpretations of the best life. Again, there are conflicting opinions on the meaning of the word "right" as well as the term "best." These words are often used ambiguously. Whatever one regards as the best life depends on one's understanding of the meaning of the word "best." But since people's understanding of the meaning of the term "best" differs from one person to another, people's ideas about the best life are equally diverse. There is no universal standard of judgement with regard to this matter. There are many conflicting conceptions of the best thing. But there is no way of telling which one is the 'right' one. Perhaps, there is none that is *right* from a universal point of view. However, the fact that there is no absolute agreement on the question of the best life should not prevent anyone from advancing an argument in favour of a particular conception of the best life. But that does not necessarily mean that everybody is right. Everybody

cannot be right in holding conflicting opinions. Neither does it necessarily mean that everyone is wrong. Whether one is right or wrong depends on the particular ethical standard that is applied in making a moral judgement.

Because of this relativism, one can only talk about *the best life for an individual or group of individuals*. Relativists hold that whatever one individual, or group of individuals, in one particular locality and time, regard as good or right, may be regarded as bad or wrong, by a different individual, or group of individuals, at the same time and place, or at different times and places. Unless an appeal is made to a certain arbitrarily fixed conventional rule or law it seems hard to know which one of many goods is the best one. I know of no such universal rule. There are different ethical rules or standards though some may appear to be more widespread than other criteria. According to relativism, the best life for me is not necessarily the best life for you; and the best life for you and me, is not necessarily the best life for everyone else. Hence there are diverse conceptions of the best life and there is no way of telling which one of them is true. Indeed there is no way of reconciling conflicting conceptions of the best life. At the same time, the best life for me is what I suppose to be the best life for all. Aristotle's conception of the best life is only one of the different conceptions of the best life. Aristotle too had an opinion about the best life. But we cannot tell whether he was right or wrong. Perhaps, the best thing that we can do is to show whether we agree or disagree with him and show why we agree or disagree with him on this matter. And this is what I have set out to do in this thesis. It is impossible to prove beyond reasonable doubt whether he was right or mistaken though anyone may agree or disagree with him. There is no consensus on this matter.

However, everyone is at liberty to express his or her opinion about this issue without imposing any particular view on other people.

1.5 Objectives of the research

One of the aims of writing this thesis is to understand and to critique Aristotle's theory of the best human life, as the title of this thesis indicates. While acknowledging the difficulty of trying to answer the question about the best life, in writing this thesis my aim is to show that the question cannot be answered conclusively. I have used Aristotle's conception of the best life as the main point of reference. But there are problems of interpretation concerning Aristotle's conception of the best life. For this reason, I have tried to resolve these problems by studying Aristotle's *Ethics* closely.

It is important to know what Aristotle meant by the best life, what he took it to be, before criticising his view. For one may attribute his own view or a wrong view to Aristotle. There is a dispute among certain Aristotelian scholars concerning the correct interpretation of his view. There is a controversy surrounding Aristotle's idea of the best life. For that reason, there is a need for the resolution of the conflict between the advocates of the 'dominant' interpretation of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*, on the one hand, and the defenders of the inclusive thesis, on the other hand, in order to find the truth concerning Aristotle's view. It is imperative to study the *Ethics* closely and carefully in order to know Aristotle's idea of the best life. I want to examine and to assess Aristotle's theory of the good life analytically and critically with a view to stating my own view of the ideal life for everyone.

It is reasonable to question and to examine Aristotle's conception of the best human life, without taking it for granted, before one can judge whether or not it is

plausible. There is need to find an unquestionable and acceptable conception of the best life. This thesis attempts to answer the question 'what, if anything, is the highest good that human beings should pursue? Assuming that such a life is possible, this thesis attempts to find out which kind of life it is, what really makes it better than others, and what *is* its ultimate goal. The aim is to identify the highest achievable human goal.

Aristotle's *Ethics* serves as the basic source of reference for the purpose of answering the question of the good life. This is because of its relevance to the subject matter of this thesis. Although the point of reference is Aristotle's conception of the best life, particularly in the *Ethics*, the major aim of writing this thesis is to try to answer the question 'What is the best life?' The other aim is the understanding of Aristotle's view of the best life. This is a topic that has been the subject of a lengthy discussion among many scholars for a long time. For that matter, the views of some scholars are discussed below in order to throw more light on the topic.

As indicated above, one of the aims of this thesis is to arrive at a clear understanding of Aristotle's conception of the best human life. The final aim of man is supposedly one. However, people differ in their conceptions of the best life. As we shall see soon, some think that it is a life of pleasure, while others take it to be the political life or the philosophical life. Yet others suppose that it is the life of making money.

Furthermore, the aim of this thesis is to try to resolve and to reconcile the conflict between the rival interpretations of Aristotle's theory of the good life by stating the 'correct' interpretation of Aristotle's view.

It is imperative to meet these objectives in order to pave way for a critique of Aristotle's theory of the good life with a view to stating a different conception of the good life. Within these pages, I am putting forward my own view of the best life for everyone. I want to philosophise about the best way of living. I am aware that others may hold similar views like mine though they may not articulate them in a similar way. But I also want to understand Aristotle's point of view with regard to the best life.

1.6 Methodology

This thesis consists in an analytical evaluation or critical appraisal of Aristotle's ethical idea of the ideal human life. For I am evaluating Aristotle's theory of the best life. My study is therefore a library-based research. As such, this thesis involves the review and critical analysis of Aristotle's theory of the best human life in the *Ethics* in particular. Besides, I have reviewed the relevant works of certain commentators on Aristotle's work. For instance, I have discussed extensively the views of J. L Ackrill and Richard Kraut in order to illustrate the inclusive and the dominant interpretations of Aristotle's conception of the nature of *eudaimonia*, respectively. They are representatives of the two competing schools of thought. Furthermore, I have tried to review and critically analyse the relevant views of other authors. For philosophy is an analytical activity.

Since this thesis involves the discussion, the description, the analysis, and the criticism, of the concepts of the best life for human beings, its methodology may be rightfully described as conceptual analysis or critical analysis, or descriptive analysis. For philosophy is a discursive, critical, and conceptual discipline.

I have studied Aristotle's idea of the good and the good life. In addition, this thesis embodies a critical and analytical discussion of other scholars' views of the best life.

1.7 Justification and significance of the research

Perhaps, the most important and the most puzzling question that one can ask is this. What is the purpose of living? To ask this question is to take it for granted that there is only one reason or purpose to be achieved in life. But it is debatable whether or not there is one perfect life. This thesis seeks to make another contribution to this debate.

As human beings, we need to know how best we can lead our lives so that we may live accordingly. However, there is no guarantee that when or if we know the "best" way to live, then we shall live in the "best" way!

As the title of this thesis indicates, I made a deliberate choice to study one topic, that is, the best life for human beings. That is the topic I chose to research on out of personal interest. I wondered about the best possible way of life and the best possible achievement in life, before I embarked on the research. Perhaps philosophy begins with wonder, as Aristotle said. The research involved an examination of Aristotle's ideas of the good life. This is not only because I found Aristotle's ideas interesting, but also because these ideas are relevant to the topic that I am writing about. But I disagree with Aristotle concerning the best life.

Although many important changes have taken place in people's ways of life owing to scientific and technological advancement as well as socio-economic and political developments ever since Aristotle wrote about the best human life in the *Ethics*, life has basically remained the same. And it will probably remain the same

for many millennia to come. Some of Aristotle's ideas are still relevant and important for us in this new millennium, especially his ethical, logical and political ideas.

In this thesis, I am writing particularly about Aristotle's claim that *eudaimonia* is the ultimate end of all human aspirations and that the intellectual life or the philosophical life is the best life for all people. I chose to study Aristotle out of interest in him as one of the greatest philosophical geniuses of all times. The choice of this topic has helped me to limit the study to manageable proportions.

It is important to know what Aristotle, as one of the *eminent* philosophers of antiquity had to say about the best way to live and to learn from him. In paying tribute to him, some scholars have described him as "the master of them that know." For example, Karl Marx described him as "the greatest thinker of antiquity" while Saint Thomas Aquinas referred to him honourably as "the philosopher." Since Aristotle was probably one of the first great philosophers to deal explicitly with the theme of the good life, it is important for me to study it in details. Admittedly, *Aristotle's ideas can still serve a useful purpose even today*. For philosophers die, leaving their ideas to outlive them. Of particular concern is the relevance of those ideas to our lives today. Since I am now concerned with *the same problem* that Aristotle was faced with in his *Ethics*, that is, the problem of describing the best kind of life for human beings to lead, it is important to study the *Ethics* because of its relevance to this thesis. I have considered the views of Aristotle about this problem, other people's interpretations of his work, and the relevant works of some other scholars. For this reason, I have given special attention to the study of the *Ethics*

where Aristotle tackled the problem of the best life explicitly. But that is not to say that his other works are irrelevant to the topic.

Unfortunately, certain contemporary scholars disagree about the correct interpretation of Aristotle's views about the best life. But their *disagreement* is an encouragement rather than a hindrance to the study of Aristotle's theory of the best life. This is a controversial issue. And this thesis is my contribution to the debate about Aristotle's opinion of the best life, the ultimate end for all. It is a contribution toward the resolution of the theoretical problem concerning the correct interpretation of the best life in the conception of Aristotle, particularly in his *Ethics*. It is also a contribution to the general knowledge of the 'best' life or the 'ideal' life. Besides, it is a contribution to Aristotelian scholarship. Furthermore, this thesis will be used in the future for academic references. It may be of help to the scholar as well as the general reader. Its theme cuts across disciplinary barriers. Therefore, it is an interdisciplinary study. In addition, I have already observed that the issue of the best life is a problematic matter that should not be taken for granted. For there are problems (read *lacunae*) of interpretation in as far as the good life is concerned.

1.8 Theoretical framework

I am going to apply Aristotle's ethical theory as my theoretical framework because of its relevance to the issue that I am examining, namely, the ideal life. According to Burton F. Porter, Aristotelianism is an ethic of some kind of self-realisation or self-actualisation. In this case, one should try as much as possible to achieve or to realise one's potential, that is, to actualise it. Since potentiality is an abstraction, it may be impossible to know, let alone to achieve, one's potential, for even if one achieves anything one cannot be sure that it is the potential in question.

In Aristotle's ethical theory, people should try to excel as philosophers by contemplating as much as possible. The more we contemplate, the better and happier our lives become. But we cannot become as happy as the 'gods' nor can our lives become as good as their lives for they are supposed to be unlimited divine beings while we are limited human beings. The divine life is the best and the happiest possible life. It is the paradigmatic epitome of goodness and happiness for humanity to follow. For that reason, we cannot lead the best life unless we cease to be human beings and become gods! Try as we would, we cannot become as happy as the gods.

In Aristotle's system, we find a hierarchical arrangement of types of lives. For some lives are better than others. And there is one kind of life that is supposed to be the best of them all. But is it so? Aristotle rigidly assumed that there was only one hierarchy of lives. But there are many possible hierarchies of lives, some of which are irreconcilable with others. The hierarchy that one chooses seems to depend on one's philosophy of life.

As Porter puts it, Aristotle "advocated a doctrine that is still influential today. Aristotle's ethic is self-realizationist in nature, it nevertheless contains certain components of the hedonist theory. Aristotle is sometimes classified as a hedonist (as well as a rationalist and a teleologist), but this is misleading because he only regarded pleasure as the accompaniment of activities aimed at self-realization."⁶ Aristotle's ethical theory is called teleologism because it claims that "everything has an end or purpose, a potentiality seeking actuality."⁷ It is a metaphysical, teleological, ethical theory since it claims that the whole universe and everything in it is organised for some end or purpose. A lot of emphasis is placed on the consequences of human

actions rather than the intention of the moral agent or the nature of human action itself. Nevertheless, it may turn out that there is "no end for which everything is intended or an inherent purpose that all things must fulfil ... human beings in particular may not have a function aside from a self-created one. Perhaps we have no intrinsic function or calling or purpose that can be discovered through introspection and subsequently actualized. The entire approach of seeing objects, animals, or people in terms of function may be wrongheaded."⁸ This one may be an anthropomorphic idea.

The question of the good life is only one of the issues in Aristotle's ethical theory. Ethical theories have been classified in many ways. According to the historical classification, a theory may be either modern or classical. It has been said that "a theory will be classical if it does one of two things, or both: if it attempts to answer the question: 'what is the good life for man?' and if it attempts to answer the question: 'How should men act?'" Since Aristotle's ethical theory is concerned with both questions it is a classical ethical theory in both senses. But it is a classical theory in a historical sense too. For it was formulated during the Greek classical era. The word 'classical' has many senses.

But to the extent that Aristotle's theory focuses on the question of the *end* or the goal of human life, it is a *teleological* ethical theory as opposed to a deontological theory. In so far as it takes the goal of human life to be happiness or *eudaimonia*, it is a *eudaimonistic*, ethical theory, that is, a theory of happiness. Therefore, Aristotle's ethical theory is teleological and *eudaimonistic*. It is a teleological ethical theory in so far as it stresses the ends or purposes of human activities as a basis of moral

judgement. But in so far as *eudaimonia* is thought to consist in an intellectual activity, Aristotle's theory may as well be described as an intellectual theory. It also seems to be an elitist theory in so far as it purports that only the intellectual philosopher can achieve perfect happiness. Arguably, Aristotle took the best human life to be the life of contemplation and regarded this as the highest human goal. Again, he felt that it is a mark of great folly not to have one's life organised towards the achievement of any particular goal.

In the Greek *Polis* or the city-state of Aristotle's days, it was political science that was concerned with the task of investigating the final end of human actions, or the good as stated above. Thus ethics is connected with political science in the sense that both of them are concerned with the good for human beings. However, they differ to the extent that ethics is merely a branch of political science. Again, ethics is concerned with the good of the individual whereas political science is concerned with the common good of the society as a whole.

For Ross, "Aristotle's ethics is definitely *teleological*; morality for him consists in doing *certain actions* not because we see them to be right in themselves but because we see them to be such as will bring us nearer to the 'good for man.' ... At times, however, his teleology is immanent; the good act is a means to the good in the sense that it forms an element in the ideal life."⁹ Nevertheless, whereas every action that helps us to achieve our aim is good in that sense, that is not the reason why they are good. Aristotle's moral theory is partly deontological and partly teleological. It is deontological because it depicts certain actions as good or bad in-themselves. For example, as the following passage shows, adultery is bad in itself. "But not every

action or feeling admits of the mean. For the names of some automatically include baseness, e.g. spite, shamelessness, envy (among feelings), and adultery, theft, murder, among actions. All of these and similar things are called by these names because they themselves, not their excesses or deficiencies, are base. Hence in doing these things we can never be correct, but must invariably be in error. We cannot do them well or not well - e.g. by committing adultery with the right woman at the right time in the right way."¹⁰ Good actions or virtues are moderate in the sense that they are neither deficient nor excessive, though, as Aristotle admitted it, it is difficult to fix the mean accurately in ethical matters. As such, there is a distinction between an ethical mean or a mean relative to us, and an objective mean, such as in mathematics.

As for MacIntyre, 'Aristotle's view is teleological, but it is not consequentialist.' Ross's reference to 'certain actions' and not *all* actions does not safeguard him sufficiently from outright criticism concerning what seems to be a misrepresentation of Aristotle's moral philosophy. Aristotle's ethics cannot be rightly described as purely teleological. This is a simplification of his ethical theory. For Aristotle, some actions are good or bad in themselves while others are seen as good or bad depending on their consequences. That is, some things are intrinsically moral while others are moral extrinsically. The good actions or virtues are those that take the intermediate position, that is, the mean, between the two extremes of excess and deficiency. That is Aristotle's theory of the golden mean, or the doctrine of moderation. Human actions are not good or bad because they promote or fail to promote the achievement of the human good though they may or may not do that. The fact that an action does not result in the attainment of the ultimate end is not a

sufficient justification for dismissing it as a bad action. Neither is the fact that an action leads to the apprehension of the ultimate end enough to qualify it as a good action. For one may use a good or a bad action as a means to attain the ultimate end. Thus an action does not become good only on the ground that it is used as a stepping stone to the ultimate end. An action does not become bad on condition that it does not lead to the ultimate end. A good or a bad action may or may not lead to the attainment of the ultimate end. First of all, it is either good or bad before it can or cannot serve as a means to the good. It does not become good or bad because it serves as a means to the good. The end does not justify the means.

Nevertheless, Aristotle claimed that all other goods apart from *eudaimonia* were, in the final analysis, pursued for the sake of the good. But that does not imply that those goods are good because they are means to it. All the same, they are means to the end and they are good either in themselves or for some other reason. Besides, some actions are neither good nor bad. But they can still be used as a ladder to achieve the good.

1.9 Hypothesis

There are many kinds of human life. Presumably, some of these lives are better than other lives, and there is one particular kind of life that is the best of all kinds of life. Similarly, there are many kinds of goods but there is supposedly one good that is the best of them all. That was the assumption of Aristotle when he set out to investigate the nature of the good life. He assumed that there was something known as the good that everybody wanted to achieve in this life in doing anything. That was his point of departure in the *Ethics*, in particular. The bottom line is that all

things can be arranged in a specific hierarchy with inferior goods and lives occupying the lower positions than the supreme good that occupies the top of the hierarchy.

But it is doubtful whether the good or the life occupying the tip of the hierarchy is single or plural. In other words, it is controversial whether the supreme good is contemplation alone or whether it is a compound of contemplation and some other good(s). Similarly, it is disputable whether the supreme life is a life of pure contemplation or a mixed life of contemplation and other goods.

Nevertheless, Aristotle seemed to have argued for the supremacy of contemplation as a single good and the superiority of a 'mixed life' comprising contemplation, moral virtue and external or physical goods as the best life for man. This is one of the hypotheses that inform the present thesis.

The other hypothesis is that the best good is a compound or a composite of all necessary goods; that the best life is a comprehensive life that encompasses all necessary goods.

For Aristotle, perfect happiness consisted in pure contemplation. And since this is the sole activity of the gods, it is out of reach for humans. However, we are capable of some degree of contemplative activity and, by extension, some degree of happiness that is less than the perfect happiness of the gods. But we are incapable of a continuous or an uninterrupted activity of contemplation because of our human limitation. So, our best activity is the second-best activity in relation to the best activity of the gods. The best activity is pure contemplation and the second-best activity is inferior or subordinate to pure contemplation. Pure contemplation is an ideal that is unattainable and untenable in this life. We cannot achieve it unless we become gods and cease to be human beings. But in that case it is not a human good

but a divine good. Although Aristotle held that the best good was pure contemplation, he also realised that it was humanly impossible for human beings to achieve it since we need other goods in addition to contemplation. This means that we cannot contemplate always or continuously. We cannot spend our lives doing nothing but contemplating as the gods are supposed to do. As human beings living in a human society, we need goods such as money and friends. Pure contemplation brings perfect happiness. Nevertheless, perfect happiness or pure contemplation is an ideal that cannot be possibly achieved in this life, at least. As such, the best thing that we can do is to aim at it and draw near to it as much as it is humanly possible to do so. But we cannot achieve it. The highest human good and the best human life is the one that is most proximate to the divine activity of pure contemplation.

The best life is a life of pure contemplation. It is a divine life and not a human life. Again, we cannot live it without ceasing to be human and before we become gods. So the best thing to do is to aim at the ideal and to try as much as we can to approach it. The more we approach it, the better our lives become and the happier we become. For the divine life is the best of all possible lives. The second-best life is, at the same time, the best possible human life. Therefore, the best human life is merely a second-best life. It is second to the divine life. In Aristotle's view, one can achieve it in so far as one is a philosopher who engages in the best activity of contemplation. For this reason one can be the happiest human being. But none can attain the best good of pure contemplation because it belongs to the gods yet we are human beings. That is, one cannot be perfectly happy though one can be the happiest of all human beings. Perfect happiness belongs to the gods. No one can be perfectly happy because none can be as happy as the gods are.

Furthermore, in Aristotle's view, the philosophical life is the best human life while the moral life is only the best life secondarily or derivatively. It does not follow, however, that the moral life is the second-best life, as Richard Kraut argues below. Ironically, a life of pure contemplation is better and happier than a life of most contemplation plus some other good(s). A life of much contemplation and some other good(s) is happier and better than a life with other goods but with little or no contemplation at all. A life with a little contemplation is better and happier than a life devoid of contemplation. A life with a little contemplation but the least goods is better and happier than a life with a little contemplation but with no other good(s). A life without contemplation at all but with more goods would be better and happier than a life that is without contemplation but has fewer goods, though there cannot possibly be a life that is totally lacking at least one good! That is inconceivable. In Aristotle's view, the longer we contemplate the happier we become; and the better our lives become. Contemplation is the sole criterion for judging whether a life is good or happy. For happiness extends as far as contemplation. All human beings can contemplate; it is only the degree of contemplation that differs from one person to another person. Thus everybody who contemplates is happy to a certain extent. The happier you are the more you contemplate and vice versa. The philosopher, the happiest of all people, contemplates more than the rest. If so, what can we say about Aristotle's claim that neither children nor slaves can be called 'happy'?

This is debatable. For the fact that everyone can contemplate does not necessarily mean that everyone always contemplates. It is questionable whether happiness and contemplation mean the same thing. They are certainly not synonyms. In this case, then, one may contemplate and not be happy. Similarly, one may be

happy without contemplating. But that depends on the meaning of happiness which is applied.

Granted that happiness extends as far as contemplation extends, one becomes happy to the extent that one contemplates. Further, everyone contemplates sometimes and not always. It follows that we are sometimes happy and not always happy since we contemplate at times and not always. That is, if we assume, like Aristotle, that contemplation is the sole criterion for happiness.

The second-best life is a better and a happier life than a life that is merely derivatively or secondarily happiest or best. The moral life is said to be secondarily happiest. Since the best human life is the happiest life that consists mostly in contemplation, the moral life is not the best life in the true sense of the word. It is said to be the best life only derivatively or secondarily.

But it is difficult to understand what Aristotle meant by the moral life being the best life only secondarily. What is the difference between real happiness and secondary happiness? What, if anything, is secondary happiness? Does it exist, in the first place? These questions are not answered in Aristotle's *Ethics*. What does it really mean to say that a particular life is happiest or best secondarily? Does it mean that it is a second-best life? There does not seem to be such a thing as secondary happiness. Either it is happiness or it is not happiness. It is either true happiness or else it is not happiness. Either it is real happiness or it is not happiness.

In this case, the second-best life is one that has most contemplation and some other goods. It is the best human life, the best life for everyone to lead. The more we draw near to the ideal, the happier we become. The closer a life is to the divine life of pure contemplation, the happier and better such a life turns out to be. For the

divine life is the best and the happiest possible life. It is an ideal. It is ideally happy and good. No life can be as happy or good as the divine life. Least of all, no life can be even more happy or better than the divine life of pure contemplation.

Although Aristotle advocated the life of contemplation as the best life, this thesis seeks to show that neither virtue alone nor contemplation alone, is the highest good; and that a perfect combination of virtue and contemplation comprises a part of the ideal end. A virtuous and contemplative life is a better life than a life that is merely contemplative or merely virtuous. Neither practical wisdom alone nor theoretical wisdom alone does constitute the best good. Neither the life of pure practical virtue nor the life of pure contemplation is the best life. The best life involves a perfect combination of virtue and contemplation and much more.

First, Aristotle's investigation begins with the assumption that human beings have one common, natural, ultimate or supreme goal of life. But in this thesis we shall argue that there are many different but equally important goals or kinds of life to aim at. We have different conceptions of the best life. However, the fact that we differ in our conceptions of these does not rule out the possibility of the best life or the best goal.

Nevertheless, I find Aristotle's idea of the best good as contemplation (or a rational activity of the soul according to reason) questionable and unacceptable. However, he purported to state a view of the best good that is unquestionable and acceptable to everybody. He was stating his own view about the best life. For there are many views of the best life and if one of them is the absolute truth, then others must be wrong.

People are not agreed on what is the truth concerning the best way of living and the best goal of life. Everyone has his own opinion about this matter. That is why there are very many philosophies of life as well as religious faiths which purport to show people the 'right' way to live

Contrary to the inclusive thesis, it is not the case that Aristotle defined *eudaimonia* as a compound of many desirable goods. Aristotle's view is that *eudaimonia* is a single goal that dominates all other ends in the best life; but a *eudaimon* life whose end it is, encompasses other goods besides contemplation. The inclusivists seem to be attributing their own view to Aristotle. For them, there is no distinction between happiness and a happy life, between the good and the good life. Aristotle distinguished the one from the other. They have confounded the two concepts with each other. They end up talking of an *eudaimon* life instead of talking about *eudaimonia* as such. They think that *eudaimonia* is an inclusive good. For Aristotle said that the happy person would be in need of external goods besides theoretical virtue. Actually, in Aristotle's view, it is the *eudaimon* life that is inclusive and not *eudaimonia* since these seem to be two different things for Aristotle. But I think that *eudaimonia* (happiness) means an *eudaimon* (happy) life. Happiness cannot be separated from a happy life and vice versa.

A distinction must also be made between what these authors think that Aristotle said and what they think that Aristotle should have said about *eudaimonia*. Sometimes the latter is substituted for the former. The inclusive thesis ends up stating what Aristotle is supposed to have said rather than what he actually did say. The fact that happiness is a single good does not mean that a happy life consists in the achievement of only one particular good! Happiness is a single good since it consists

in contemplation alone; it is an exclusive end. But a happiest life or the best life is inclusive in the sense that it consists of many goods the highest of which is a single good that is known as contemplation. In this case, happiness or contemplation is a dominant end since all other ends are subordinate to it. But this does not mean that the happiest life is a life that consists in doing nothing else apart from contemplation - it is not a life of pure contemplation. Such a life is humanly impossible as noted above. An arm - chair kind of philosophy is an ivory - tower. It has no place in the contemporary world.

The best human life is a life whose final end is contemplation though it requires other goods besides contemplation. If happiness consists only in contemplation and contemplation does not consist of anything else, it follows that it is one good; it is not the case that it is a compound or a composite of many goods, as far as Aristotle was concerned.

Aristotle's claim that the best life is the contemplative or the philosophical life is as debatable as it is implausible. Practically minded people need to be theoreticians and theoreticians need to be practically minded too. We need both theory and practice. There is need for higher levels of production of goods and services, and not absolute contemplation. We need practical skills, crafts and professional proficiency in addition to contemplation. We need practical knowledge as well as theoretical knowledge. Contemplation should be accompanied by excellent action. Ideally, one should combine practical activity with theoretical activity. Even if one is a theoretician, one cannot be a theoretician all the time. Similarly, a practically minded person must also theorise sometimes, and not always. So,

sometimes one is a theoretician while at other times one is a practical minded person.

Theory goes together with practice.

Although there are conflicting interpretations of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* and the *eudaimon* life in the *Ethics*, the research established the fact that the dominant interpretation of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* as the highest good and the philosophical life as the best life, represent the philosopher's view correctly. However, the alleged supremacy of the philosophical life or the contemplative life over the moral life is still a controversial point. For this reason, it can be argued that the best life is not merely a philosophical life; neither is it merely a virtuous life. It is both a theoretical life as well as a practical one. This thesis argues for the supremacy of a perfect combination of the moral life, or the so-called life of action, and the philosophical life and any other necessary good. Moral virtue may be a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for happiness. Similarly, contemplation may be a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition for happiness. In any case, human nature includes much more than contemplation and morality! For instance, we also have an emotional and a spiritual side to our nature. Ideally, we ought to be more than perfectly moral and perfectly intellectual in life. Intellectual astuteness and moral rectitude is not all that constitute the best life. Even if we cannot reach the moral and the intellectual ideals, we should make do with the second-best alternative, which is the nearest approximation to the ideal of perfection. Aristotle also realised that we cannot lead the 'godly life' of pure contemplation on account of our humanity. For such a life is superior to the human level. One will live it not in so far as one is a human being, but in so far as one possesses some divine

element. The moral life is also variously known as the political life, the life of action or the life of virtue.

The point is that *eudaimonia* may have been the best good for Aristotle then, but it is not so for everyone now, even as it was not so for everyone then. Furthermore, the philosophical life may have been the best life for Aristotle then, however, for others it is not the best life now, neither was it so for everyone at that time. In any case, different answers can be given in response to the question 'what does the philosophical life consist in?' One may argue, for example, that virtue is the highest human goal and that the virtuous life is the best human life. For Aristotle, however, *eudaimonia* was the highest goal for human beings and the philosophic life or the contemplative life was the best human life. But his view is questionable. It is doubtful whether happiness consists in only one good, namely, contemplation. Perfect happiness, in my view, consists in the possession of all necessary goods. Similarly, the perfect life is the perfectly happy life; it has all necessary goods and lacks nothing. But such a life is an unachievable ideal. Since it is inaccessible, we should try as much as we can to approach it. That is the best thing that we can do as human beings.

1.10 Literature review

Writing about 'Eudaimonism and moral wisdom,' in *Moral Wisdom and Good Lives*, John Kekes, for his part, refers to Aristotle's distinction between theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) which is concerned with truth and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) which is concerned with action. The former aims at the metaphysical knowledge of the first principles. This is in contrast to practical wisdom, which is concerned with the contingencies of the life of action. Moral wisdom entails both philosophical and

practical wisdom. For it seeks the knowledge of the first principles with regard to living a good life. It is concerned with the necessary as well as the contingent aspects of good lives. These may be understood from the human point of view or from no particular viewpoint other than God's. They produce "anthropocentric" and "non-anthropocentric" knowledge, respectively. Kekes attributes naturalism to Aristotle's conception of a good life. For "what makes a particular thing good depends on the nature of that thing ... that good lives involve the development of potentialities inherent in human nature."¹¹

It is noteworthy that this author writes about 'a good life' or good 'lives' while this thesis is concerned with 'the best life' or 'the good life.' That is where he differs from Aristotle. The former suggests that there are *more than one* good life but the latter implies that there is *only one* good life or *only one* most perfect life.

Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether there is one particular human life that is better than others since different people have different conceptions of the best life and there is no agreement that any particular kind of life is the best one. But that is not to say that all kinds of life are, therefore, good and admissible. Of course there are good and bad lives. But it is easier to tell the difference between them than to judge whether one good life is 'better' than another good life.

Again, Kekes has somehow misrepresented Aristotle's view. Aristotle philosophises about *the good life* but Kekes writes about the latter's conception of *a* good life or "good lives." Aristotle thought that there was only one kind of life that was superior to all other kinds of life, that is, the philosophical life. He called it the good life, meaning, the best life. Kekes, however, considers good lives in relation to moral wisdom. Evidently, he thinks that there are more than one good life. He talks

about the moral value of many good lives but Aristotle thought of the superlative importance of one kind of human life whose nature he was investigating. But Kekes is concerned about the problem of reconciling the apparent uniformity and diversity of good lives, as shown in the following quotation:

Eudaimonism follows Aristotle in approaching the nature of good lives through human nature. Human nature may be thought of as comprising universal, constant, and invariable characteristics shared by normal human beings. A reasonable conception of a good life must depend on human nature, because what would be a good life for beasts or angels will not suit us. But this line of thought suggests that because a good human life depends on human nature, and because human nature is uniform, the good life will also be uniform for all human beings. Readily available evidence, however, seems to be inconsistent with the expected uniformity. Historical, ethnographic, and literary sources, as well as our personal experience, reveal great human diversity, a multiplicity of radically different conceptions of a good life, and many different good lives that people have actually succeeded in living. How can this apparent plurality be reconciled with the expected uniformity?¹²

According to the author, human nature determines the necessary requirements for a reasonable conception of a good life. For "the expectation of uniformity is indeed reasonable, insofar as the necessary requirements are concerned, 'while the appearance of plurality is a reliable indicator of the different forms good lives may take beyond the necessary requirements.'"¹³ It is the variety of human conditions and traits that accounts for the differences among good lives. There are similarities as well as differences among them. But what this author does not state is what makes a good life good! What he means here by 'good' and by 'a good life' is not yet quite clear.

Kekes argues that "we make what we believe is a good life for ourselves. The making and the living of it, however, are not two processes, but one. We make a good life by living well, and we live a good life only if we make it good."¹⁴ But he tells us neither how to live 'well' nor how to make our lives 'good.' His argument is

circular, it involves the fallacy of begging the question, *petitio principii*. However, differences concerning which kind of life is really good are still bound to occur. As the author himself admits,

It is uncertain how much support for this pluralistic view eudaimonism could derive from Aristotle. He may be read as regarding the contemplative life as the best and highest, while reluctantly acknowledging that human frailty makes its pursuit unrealistic for most people. But there is also textual support for reading him as a critic of Platonic monism and as a realistic advocate of a plurality of morally acceptable ways in which human potentialities can be realized. There is no need to decide this exegetical issue here. One point, however, is clear: Aristotle stressed the central importance of judgement to living a good life.¹⁵

On the contrary, this thesis is based upon the first interpretation of Aristotle. It is concerned with what he calls "this exegetical issue." There is a need to resolve this problem because it is the cause of scholarly disagreements and controversies, which hamper the proper understanding of Aristotle's view of the best life.

There are a number of scholars who have given the same interpretation. For example, according to Sir David Ross' interpretation of Aristotle's view,

Theoretical wisdom is superior to practical and part of the value of the latter is that it helps to produce the former. *It is clear that contemplation is for Aristotle the main ingredient in well-being, whether moral action is another ingredient in it or only a means to its production is not so evident.* The doubt is not entirely removed by bk x. Well-being ... must be activity in accordance with the virtue of the best part of us, which is reason. The activity which is well-being is theoretical. This is the best activity of which we are capable, since it is the exercise of the best in us on the best of all objects, though, those which are eternal and unchanging; it is what we can do most continuously; it brings pleasure of wonderful purity and stability; it is least dependent on other men, while moral virtue requires others as the objects of its activity, it alone seems to be loved for itself, while practical activities-notably the greatest of them, the deeds of the statesman and the soldier aim at goods beyond themselves; it is the life we must ascribe to the gods, since the ascription of moral life to them would be absurd. But the life of contemplation is too high for us; we cannot live it *qua* men, being compound of body, irrational soul, and reason, but only in virtue of the divine element in us-we must, as far as may be 'lay hold on eternal life by living the life of that which, however small a part of us it be, is the best thing in us, and the most truly our self, he who thus lives is the happiest man.¹⁶

The theoretically wise person and the practically wise person are both happy though the former is not only happier than the latter, he is also the happiest person. Nevertheless, Ross' view is mistaken because Aristotle said that the lives of both of them are happiest, though one is happiest only in a *derived* (or debased) sense. "The life expressing the other kind of virtue [i.e. the kind concerned with action] is [happiest] in a secondary way because the activities expressing this virtue are human."¹⁷ Furthermore,

The life of moral virtue and practical wisdom, concerned as it is with feelings springing from our bodily nature, is the life of the whole composite being which man is, and gives a well-being which may be called 'human well-being.' The part assigned to the moral life then by Aristotle seems to be twofold. (1) It constitutes a secondary form of well-being, one which we are driven to fall back upon by the fact that we are not all reason and cannot live always on the level of the contemplative life. And ... it helps to bring into being the higher kind. Aristotle says very little about how it does this.¹⁸

Perhaps the contemplative life consists in the contemplation of the truth in mathematics, physics and metaphysics. As the happiest life, it is the contemplation of, rather than an investigation of, a known truth. It seems to consist in a scientific, aesthetic, and divine contemplation. Nevertheless, there is very little evidence to suggest that Aristotle thought of aesthetic contemplation as a part of the ideal human life. For him, divine contemplation or theology is the highest form of contemplation. It "is reasonable to suppose that this part of the contemplative life would have the character of worship proper to the contemplation of the divine nature. This aspect of the ideal life is much emphasised in the *Eudemian Ethics*, where the best life is defined as 'the worship and contemplation of God.'"¹⁹

Besides, Aristotle argued against the Platonic theory of Forms, particularly the Form of the good as the origin of the human good. For him, the term 'good' did not

have a meaning that applied to all the things it described. The good has no form apart from its individual instances. But even if it has a separate existence, knowing it will not make any difference in the practical life of man.

There are two essential characteristics of the good. "It must be final, something that is chosen always for its own sake, never as a means to anything else."²⁰ Secondly, "it must be self-sufficient, something which by itself makes life worthy of being chosen. Both these marks belong to well - being. But we have still to ask what happiness is. To enable him to answer this question, Aristotle introduced the Platonic notion of work or function."²¹ He used the Platonic idea of function to define *eudaimonia*. It refers to a unique characteristic activity of human beings in accordance with virtue, or the best and the most perfect virtue, *if there are more than one virtue*. The latter phrase shows that Aristotle was still undecided or uncertain whether *eudaimonia* consisted in the exercise of only one virtue or more than one virtue since he uses the word 'if'.

For Aristotle, there were two distinctive elements in every person. The one is rational while the other is non-rational. The former also consists of two parts one of which possesses reason while the other merely obeys it. It is intermediate between the rational and the non-rational elements in us. Therefore, it can be classified as a part of either of the two. This "is the faculty of desire, that which in the self-controlled man obeys the rule of life which he sets before himself, but in the incontinent man disobeys it. There are thus two kinds of virtue-the virtues of the reasonable element proper and those of the intermediate element, the virtues of intellect and those of character."²²

As far as Aristotle was concerned, *eudaimonia* was *not a state*; it was an intrinsically desirable virtuous *activity*. However, amusement cannot constitute the end of human activities because it is not valuable in itself. In fact, it is short-lived. This conception of *eudaimonia* is contrary to the ordinary idea of happiness as a state, rather than an activity, of being amused or pleased.

Aristotle made a distinction between virtues of character and virtues of the intellect, between theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom. We acquire moral virtues by habituation or experience. But we acquire intellectual virtues by experience, or teaching and learning. For example, bravery, temperance and generosity are virtues of character whereas intelligence, wisdom and understanding are virtues of thought. They are said to be virtues of distinct parts of the rational soul. Both of them are said to be intrinsically good.

There are at least two different interpretations of Aristotle's view. Some scholars think that Aristotle advocated an elitist conception of the best life. But others argue that he advanced a comprehensive view of the good life, or the 'mixed life', which is endowed with many desirable goods and not one particular kind of good that is superior to all of them. And as we have seen, some scholars have accused Aristotle of outright ambivalence, indecision, and confusion concerning the issue of the best life for man.

For that matter, it is hard to tell which one among the rival interpretations of the *Ethics* is the right one. That is, if we assume that there is one of them that is right and that not all of them are right or wrong, and that there is no ambiguity nor ambivalence in Aristotle's conception of the good life. There is a problem of interpretation as far as Aristotle's view is concerned. That is the reason why this

problem is worth investigating. Besides, the problem of interpreting Aristotle's conception of the best life for humans is compounded with the difficulty that bedevils the identification of his idea of the ideal goal of human action.

For instance, as Daniel T. Devereux writes, "Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, which equates the ultimate end of human life with happiness (*eudaimonia*), is thought by many readers to argue that this highest goal consists in the largest possible aggregate of intrinsic goods. This is the inclusive view of *eudaimonia*. But it is debatable as shown in the following quotation. "Readers have long struggled with the tension in Aristotle's own text between these options – between the life of practice and the life of divine thought."²³

Richard Kraut rightly declares that Aristotle identified "happiness with only one type of good: excellent activity of the rational soul."²⁴ Similarly, the author observes rightly that

Aristotle's teaching on the subject of happiness has been a topic of intense philosophical debate in recent years. Did he hold that happiness consists in the exercise of all the virtues, moral and intellectual, or that supreme happiness is to be found only in the practice of philosophical contemplation? The question is vital to the relevance of his ethics today.²⁵

In this case, the problem that should be addressed is that of the nature of the best life, and the characteristics by which it can be identified or known. What, then, if anything, is the *true* interpretation of Aristotle's conception of the best life for human beings? Is his view right or mistaken? These are the issues that this thesis is concerned with.

What, *if anything*, is the 'best' possible kind of life for human beings? Or, what is the highest, the ultimate or the best goal for human beings? The attainment of

the best life means the achievement of the best human goal. Indeed, the best human goal is itself the highest goal in the sense that people aspire to achieve it.

Diverse answers have been, and can still be, given to these questions because different people have different conceptions, first of all, of what is the true sense of the term 'best' and therefore, in effect, different ideas of the best life. It has been shown here, for example, that Aristotle's treatise, the *Nicomachean Ethics* provides one such conception. Hence one of the issues which this thesis is concerned with can simply be stated as the problem of identifying and critically assessing Aristotle's conception of the best life for human beings. The idea is to find out what kind of life he took it to be, what he regarded as the best end, and *whether he really thought that this end is a single dominant end or an inclusive, composite end of many desirable goods*. Aristotle's conception of the best life is debatable. Aristotle was not the first person to ask the question 'What is the good?' Plato had asked it before him. In fact, their views of *the good* are strikingly similar.

According to Fitzgibbon, in *Ethics, Fundamental Principles of Moral Philosophy*, Aristotle did not make the meaning of happiness clear though it is admittedly the highest goal that people aim at in all their actions. Human actions are goal-oriented. They are directed towards the attainment of some goal. In Aristotle's view, the goal of all human actions is happiness, or, better still, well - being. We have a natural desire for happiness. Though our actions are geared towards the achievement of happiness, the meaning of the latter is not quite clear. Happiness is the goal of all our actions though different people define it in different ways. "If all human actions are done for the sake of happiness then it would seem to follow that whatever makes us happy is good and is the right thing to do. Furthermore, since it is

natural to seek happiness, to do what comes naturally would be to do what is morally right.”²⁶ Therefore, to act according to human nature is to act reasonably. For there is a universal human nature. Yet human beings also differ in many ways. For instance, differences of race, nationality, tribe, clan and individual differences. Supposedly, these are mere contingencies. We remain the same essentially. Human nature is the essence of our being. The differences among us are only accidental or superficial; they are not substantial. For instance, it does not matter, whether we are white men or black men. We are basically identical as human beings with the same nature as well as the same rationality. However, there are people who argue that there are different levels of rationality among the races of the world and that the white race has the highest level of rationality in general. Of course there are individual differences, for some people are more intelligent than others. There are differences of rationality within each race and not among the different races.

Naturally, everyone wants to be happy. There seems to be a general consensus that happiness is the ultimate goal of all actions. It is the goal that all people aim at in practice. However, there is a disagreement concerning the meaning of happiness. What, then, constitutes happiness as our ultimate goal?

After considering different conceptions of happiness, Aristotle concluded that happiness consisted in a life of contemplation. However, he admitted rightly that it was impossible for a human being to lead a life of *pure* contemplation in this life. He did not believe in an afterlife either. “Such a dilemma was very disturbing to Aristotle as can be seen from the fact that he keeps coming back to this question so often in his *Ethics*. He seems to have settled finally for something less than the

absolute end, something which can be attained in this life, namely, practical wisdom combined with a reasonable amount of pleasure."²⁷ Furthermore,

Other great thinkers concerned themselves with this question and in general they concluded either that the ultimate end could not be attained or that while it cannot be attained in this life it can be attained in another life after this one. To conclude that our ultimate end cannot be attained at all is to conclude that we are condemned to frustration, that is, that by our very nature we seek happiness as our fulfilment but such happiness is impossible to attain. Not only would this be frustrating but it would involve us in a contradiction since we would be saying that our nature which is the source of all our actions tends toward a goal that is impossible to reach, that all of our actions are done for the sake of an end which cannot exist for us.²⁸

We may have one ultimate end since we have the same nature. However, everyone may not attain it. For, our actions may or may not lead to the attainment of the final end. Moreover, one may choose not to strive for the ultimate end. If an ultimate goal exists, it seems to follow that the things that enable us to attain it are good but those that prevent us from achieving it are bad. The ultimate goal determines morality. Although there are many intermediate ends that we aim at in our activities, there is only one ultimate end that all our actions aim at attaining. We choose what to do according to the final end that we intend to achieve. In other words, "we are not free as to what our ultimate end is, but we are free to choose those actions that are means and/or proximate ends to our ultimate end."²⁹ The fact that we have an ultimate end does not mean that we must achieve it. It is one thing to have an aim and another thing altogether to succeed in achieving it.

In *The Good Life, Alternatives in Ethics*, Burton F. Porter also makes a critical review of Aristotle's teleology. In his discussion of the best life, he distinguishes "right" from "good," saying that "Good, in contrast to right, is applied to worthwhile goals in living, the ethically desirable aim or end of existence to which people should aspire. It refers to the basic meaning beneath human choices and the ultimate reason

for living-or dying ... what one is willing to die for is essentially what one lives for. Whatever is posited as being of fundamental importance in life, the pivotal purpose around which human activities are organized, constitutes a person's conception of the good."³⁰ For him, there are various possible conceptions of the good. For instance, some people think that the good is happiness while others identify it with pleasure. But for Aristotle, the good was *eudaimonia*. That is, human "well being", "happiness" or "vital well being" which is "perhaps closed to the Greek, for it implies a dynamic state of personal satisfaction as well as health, good looks, material comforts, achievements, etc., which seems to be what Aristotle had in mind. In any case, Aristotle took *eudaimonia* to be the *summum bonum*, the highest good which human beings can attain."³¹

For Porter, since it is reason that distinguishes man from animals as Aristotle said, "the good for man must in some way involve our reasoning faculty. Humans are the rational beings...and man's purpose in living must be connected with the proper use of this central and primary ability."³² As far as the author is concerned, "the best life for human beings may involve the use of reason, but how, exactly, ought our powers of reason to be employed so as to achieve *eudaimonia*? Aristotle replied in a somewhat circuitous way by saying that we should aim at achieving excellence for ourselves as rational beings. *Arete* or excellent functioning in our area of supremacy (which is reasoning) will yield a good life."³³ Aristotle seemed to argue that "Since reason is central to man, *arete* in the functioning of reason will bring about the ultimate good for man which is well being or *eudaimonia*."³⁴ Porter criticises the idea of a human function. For him, it was doubtful whether human beings have a characteristic function. It is also unclear whether reason is a unique human property.

Moreover, it is possible that human beings are unique in some other cases such as aesthetic and religious experiences. The author wonders why Aristotle chose reason rather than the latter as the unique function of human beings. In any case, human beings do not have to be unique in order to have a characteristic function as human beings. We do not have to be different from other animals in order to have a function. Aristotle tried to cut us off from our "animal roots" yet it maybe that our function, if any, consists in the performance of an activity that we share with other animals.

As for Alasdair MacIntyre, in *After Virtue*, both Aristotle and Plato believed that *eudaimonia* is a single, unitary hierarchical compound of many goods. He thinks that there is a discrepancy vis-à-vis Aristotle's metaphysical and political views of man. For him, "contemplation is the ultimate human *telos*, the essential final and completing ingredient in the life of the man who is *eudaimon* ... In many passages where Aristotle discusses individual virtues, the notion that their possession and practice is in the end subordinate to metaphysical contemplation would seem oddly out of place."³⁵ Aristotle's task involved the formulation of a universal conception of the good that is also particular at the same time. Hence there is a tension between the universal and the particular aspects of his account of the good. In spite of the problem of translation, Aristotle's identification of the good life with happiness has widely been criticised for leaving open the question concerning the composition of *eudaimonia*. Virtue is the quality that enables individuals to achieve happiness. Without it happiness cannot be achieved for it is a necessary means to happiness. However, the word 'means' is often used ambiguously.

Aristotle does not in his writings explicitly distinguish between two different types of means - and relationship. ... *For what constitutes the good for man is a*

complete human life lived at its best, and the exercise of the virtues is a necessary and central part of such a life, not a mere preparatory exercise to secure such a life. We thus cannot characterize the good for man adequately without already having made reference to the virtues. And within an Aristotelian framework the suggestion therefore that there might be some means to achieve the good for man without the exercise of the virtues makes no sense.³⁶

Although happiness has been defined as a virtuous activity of the rational soul, this does not mean that virtue is its ingredient. Rather, it implies that happiness has the quality, and not the content, of virtue. It does not contain virtue; it only has its characteristics. Similarly, the fact that happiness is a rational activity does not mean that it has the component of reason within itself. It means that it is a reasonable activity. For it is a single continuous activity of contemplation that is both virtuous and rational.

The good is the first idea to be discussed in the *Ethics*. Everything else that is discussed thereafter is meant to explain the general idea of the good. The following chapter contains a detailed discussion of the idea of the human good.

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PART I

THE CONCEPT OF EUDAIMONIA

...the good is that of which all things are done for the sake of which we do all things, and which is the end of all things, and which is the good of all things.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE ULTIMATE HUMAN GOOD

In this chapter, I am concerned with what Aristotle called 'the good' or that at which all our actions are directed. It is said to be the end for the sake of which we do every action. The good is said to be self-sufficient and complete.

2.1 Teleology

The opening sentence of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* strikes a teleological cord: "every craft and every investigation, and likewise every action and decision, seems to aim at some good; hence the good has been well described as that at which everything aims."¹ By "aim" Aristotle meant the ultimate end of all human activities taken as a collective whole. He assumed that everything *aims* at something and that there was *something* at which everything aimed.

Teleology is the science of natural purpose. Thus human beings act purposely or in a teleological manner. But some purposes are merely intermediate ends. They are means towards other ends. Ultimately, they are means toward the final end, which is not a means to a further end. This is "the good", the highest tenable good, the *summum bonum*. Aristotle calls it "*eudaimonia*." To be *eudaimon* is to be in 'good spirits' or hilarious.

Arguably, human beings have a natural tendency to think and act purposively. Granted that that is the case, we tend to project our own purposes to everything else. We suppose that inanimate objects too have purposes other than the ones we give them. This manner of thinking may be called personification. From the early stages of infancy, humans think in terms of purposes. We seek to know the purposes of things as if everything must have a purpose. The tendency towards teleological

thinking may eventually lead to a religious conviction. For instance, every part of the body seems to serve a specific purpose. It appears as if "the human body must have been designed by someone having the mental power of vision to see an end to be accomplished, and then to adapt the end."² For believers the person referred to here is God. However, some scholars identify 'purposiveness' with necessity, mechanism or natural adaptation in the course of evolution. Mechanism is the doctrine according to which the world is perceived as some kind of grand machine in which things have a cause and effect relationship. It is a scientific world-view. As a mechanist, a scientist looks for the causal relation among things rather than their 'purposiveness.' In other words, he is concerned the 'How-question' and not the 'Why-question.' But the mechanistic view need not contradict the doctrine of teleology though the latter stresses the purposes or final causes of things rather than efficient causes. They are "not necessarily incompatible. A partial view of the world may make it appear to be governed by strict mechanical laws, adequate and true within their restricted limits of time and space; while 'the spectator of all time and all existence' may see it under the aspect of intelligent plan and purpose."³ These are complementary views. They supplement each other. This means that they are far from being contradictory. There maybe 'purposiveness' within mechanism and mechanism within 'purposiveness.'

2.2 The human good

The human purpose, in Aristotle, may either be an activity or a product of an activity. There are as many ends as there are different actions, crafts and sciences. The hierarchy of these ends corresponds to that of their respective activities. In each case, the end of "the ruling science," that is, political science, is the most choiceworthy of

all the ends of subordinate sciences, which are only chosen for its sake. Ethics is considered as some kind of political science.⁴

It is instructive that Aristotle said that all things "*seem to aim at some good*." At this juncture, it seems as if he was not claiming that all things do in actual fact aim at some particular good, though this is what he meant in the final analysis. The fact that everything *seems* to aim at some good does not necessarily mean that everything *does in fact* aim at a certain good. The fact that something seems to be (the case) does not necessarily mean that it is (the case). It may be true that some things aim at some good(s) or everything aims at some good(s). However, even if *some* things aim at some good, this too does not necessarily mean that *all* things (without exception) therefore do aim at the same good. Even if everything has its end this does not, of necessity, mean that they all aim at the same end. There may be different ends. For instance, the fact that everybody has a mother does not mean that there is someone who is the mother of all. Aristotle's point was that every human action seems to aim at something and there is something that is the ultimate aim of all human actions. This is what he called the good. He supposed that if

(a) There is some end of the things we pursue in our actions which we wish for because of itself, and because of which we wish for the other things; and (b) we do not choose everything because of something else, since (c) if we do, it will go on without limit, making desire empty and futile; then clearly (d) this end will be the good, i.e. the best good.⁵

This statement is a mere supposition; it is not a matter of fact. It is a conditional statement. It is noteworthy that Aristotle did not claim here that there is such an end as the good. Its existence is open to doubt. First of all, he argued that in case the good exists, it is the best good for other ends are pursued for its sake. Otherwise, desire would be 'empty and futile' if it has nothing definite to aim at and if everything

is to be pursued for the sake of something else *in infinitum*. But why cannot desire be futile and why should not there be an infinite regress? It would be unreasonable and absurd.

However, the existence of such a good should be proved, first, before our desire can be shown not to be 'empty and futile.' But Aristotle supposed that the end exists since its non-existence would mean that our desire is purposeless. It is like putting the cart before the horse. It begs the question. The point at issue is exactly that; human striving and desire is ultimately either purposeful or purposeless. Aristotle's argument is persuasive and rhetorical. It is possible that desire could be embroiled in emptiness and futility. Fear, risk, and futility of our desire do not seem to be enough justification for the assumption that there must be some particular end of it. Aristotle's argument is meant to convince us that such an end exists by assuming that it does in fact exist, an assumption that does not have to be true. It is further assumed that the assumption is itself true. The reason for assuming that it is true has been stated as the possibility of the emptiness and futility of our desire in case we assume otherwise. The reason why our desire cannot be empty and futile is supposed to be because there must be a final end of our desire and the reason why our desire cannot be without a final end is because it would otherwise be empty and futile. To that extent, Aristotle's argument seems circular. It begs the question.

Having posited the existence of the good as an intrinsic end for the sake of which other ends are sought, Aristotle went on to argue that the knowledge of the good is of great importance for the conduct of our lives. For "if, like archers, we have a target to aim at, we are more likely to hit the right mark. If so, we should try to grasp, in outline at any rate, *what the good is, and which science or capacity is*

concerned with it."⁶ This is the task Aristotle set for himself at the beginning of the *Ethics*. He supposed that there was such a thing as the best goal and the best life as far as human life is concerned.

2.3 Political science

According to Aristotle, political science was the science that was concerned with the pursuit of the good life. It was the most architectonic science. For him, it was

The most controlling science, the one that, more than any other, is the ruling science ... (1) For it is the one that prescribes which of the sciences ought to be studied in cities, and which ones each class in the city should learn, and how far. (2) Again, we see that even the most honoured capacities, e.g. generalship, household management and rhetoric, are subordinate to it. (3) Further, it uses the other sciences concerned with action, and moreover legislates what must be done and what avoided. Hence its end will include the ends of the other sciences, and so will be the human good.⁷

The end of political science is taken to be the human good that is the end of the ends of all other sciences. Therefore, it seems to be a dominant end. However, it is doubtful whether political science, as it was considered in Aristotle's days, means the same thing today. The political science of Aristotle's days seems to have meant something slightly different from what we mean by political science today. It has undergone a transformation in the course of time. In the ancient Greek city-state in which Aristotle dwelt, it was the most controlling science, the most authoritative science, the ruling science, that determined the subjects which would be studied and the extent to which they could be pursued.⁸ But the days of the city-states are long gone. Instead, we have various independent nations such as Kenya. Knowledge has increased and science too has progressed. It would be anachronistic to suppose that political science has remained the same while other branches of knowledge have developed in the course of time. For Aristotle, ethics or moral philosophy was a branch of political science. Today, however, ethics seems to be an interdisciplinary

study. It seems to be too presumptuous to suggest that the good life is the concern of only one particular science. There is no particular science today whose sole business is to teach people how to lead a good life.

In Aristotle's opinion, although the good of a city may be the same as the good of an individual, "the good of the city is apparently a greater and more complete good to acquire and preserve. For while it is satisfactory to acquire and preserve the good even for an individual, it is finer and more divine to acquire and preserve it for a people and for cities. And so, since our investigation aims at these [goods, for an individual and for a city], it is a sort of political science."⁹ The investigation of the *Ethics* is supposed to be some kind of political science because it is concerned with the individual's good as well as that of the city as a whole. Perhaps the good of the city is greater than that of the individual simply because it concerns the good of many people. The fact that it is the good of a large number of people does not necessarily make it 'finer and more divine' as Aristotle suggested. He assumed that there was a hierarchy of degrees of perfection and divinity. Such claims are difficult to prove or disprove. In fact, he admitted that it is unreasonable to demand scientific exactitude in ethical judgements as in mathematics.

Aristotle set out to find out the end of political science or "the highest of all the goods pursued in action."¹⁰

2.4 *Eudaimonia*

Admittedly, most people concur with Aristotle that the good is *eudaimonia* or happiness. For "both the many and the cultivated call it happiness, and suppose that living well and doing well are the same as being happy."¹¹ However, "they disagree about what happiness is, and the many do not give the same answer as the wise."¹²

There are diverse conceptions of happiness. Aristotle's conception of happiness is one of them. So there is a need to define happiness before any conclusion about the happiest life for human beings can be reached. But there is not one definition of happiness; there are many definitions of happiness. "For the many think it is something obvious and evident, e.g. pleasure, wealth or honour, some thinking one thing, others another; and indeed the same person keeps changing his mind, since in sickness he thinks it is health, in poverty wealth. And when they are conscious of their own ignorance, they admire anyone who speaks of something grand and beyond them."¹³ Happiness, then, seems to mean different things to different people and sometimes even to the same person depending on one's circumstances. This suggests that the meaning of happiness is relative to individuals and circumstances. Happiness seems to be an ambiguous concept because it means different things to different people. Are the different conceptions of happiness reconcilable? If happiness really has many meanings then the problem that arises is that of identifying its true meaning, if indeed there is such a thing as the true meaning of happiness. This implies that there is a 'false' meaning too. In this case, the latter is a contradiction in terms for a 'false meaning' means a 'meaning' which is not the real meaning and therefore it is not a meaning at all. If happiness means different things to different people, then it is a subjective condition and relativism applies to it. In this case, we cannot say that someone is happier than another since there are different conceptions of happiness and there is no way of comparing them, unless we choose one standard of comparison arbitrarily.

Aristotle went on to say that some wise people, like Plato, "think that besides these many goods there is some other good that is something in itself, and also causes

all these goods to be goods.”¹⁴ Nevertheless, Aristotle rejected Plato’s doctrine of the Forms or Ideas and dismissed it as irrelevant for the knowledge of the good. There is no Platonic Form of the good that is supposed to be good in itself.

Aristotle discussed only the most prevalent beliefs or those that are backed by cogent arguments. He observed that people’s conceptions of the good are reasonably derived from the kinds of life they lead. He outlined the most favourite and prevalent kinds of life, namely, the life of pleasure, the political life and the philosophical life. But he barely mentioned the life of making money. In his view, these were the most prominent and popular kinds of life. In this thesis, I have discussed them in turns in the subsequent chapters.

What is the good Aristotle was looking for? What could it possibly be? For him, it seemed to be “one thing in action or craft, and another thing in another; for it is one thing in medicine, another in generalship, and so on for the rest.”¹⁵ But in all these cases the good is certainly “that for the sake of which the other things are done; and in medicine this is health, in generalship victory, in house-building a house, in another case something else, but in every action and decision it is the end, since it is for the sake of the end that everyone does the other things.”¹⁶ Thus, it seems as if there are as many goods as there are different activities since there are many ends that correspond to many activities. If this is the case, then it is possible that there is not one particular good that is the end of all these activities, contrary to Aristotle’s supposition. The question that concerns us here is this: What is the good of human action? In trying to answer this question, we must, of course, assume that the good of human action exists and that knowing it or finding it, is the problem.

Therefore, "if there is *some end* of everything that is pursued in action, *this* will be the good pursued in action; and if there are *more ends than one*, *these* will be the goods pursued in action."¹⁷ But the question is this: are there many ultimate ends or only one ultimate end? Thus the ultimate end may be *one* particular good or *many* goods. This is one of the perennial problems of philosophy, that is, the one-or-many problem. The problem is this: has human action one good or many goods as its ultimate end? The question that arises then is whether the good is single or plural. Did Aristotle believe that the good and, by implication, *eudaimonia* or happiness consists in one good or more than one good? That is the matter. Whatever the case may be, the good is the highest end. But the concept of the good still needs clarification. The fact that Aristotle used the hypothetical form of argumentation, "if then", implies that the good may or may not 'exist.' In case it does not exist, the search for it is an exercise in futility. Aristotle seemed undecided as to whether the good existed or not. He presented a hypothetical case. However, for the purposes of argumentation, he did well to assume that such an end existed, otherwise it would be needless to look for it. He also appeared to be undecided as far as the nature of the good was concerned; he seemed to doubt whether the good was one or many. It is this indecision as well as equivocation that have given rise to the philosophical controversy surrounding the correct interpretation of his conception of the good. He seemed to be non-committal on this matter.

According to Aristotle, there were many different kinds of ends. Some of them are chosen for the sake of something other than themselves. For example, wealth and instruments are means of achieving other ends. Such ends are said to be incomplete. The complete ends are those that are pursued for themselves. And the

good is not an incomplete end; it is thought of as the most complete end, meaning that there are degrees or varieties of completeness, with the lower ones at the bottom of the hierarchy of completeness and the highest one(s) at the top of it.

But the best good is apparently something complete. Hence, if only one end is complete, this will be what we are looking for; and if more than one are complete. The most complete of these will be what we are looking for. An end pursued in itself, we say, is more complete than an end pursued because of something else; and an end that is never choiceworthy because of something else is more complete than ends that are choiceworthy both in themselves and because of this end; and hence an end that is always choiceworthy, and also choiceworthy in itself, never because of something else, is unconditionally complete. Now happiness more than anything else seems unconditionally complete, since we always choose it, and also choose it because of itself, never because of something else.¹⁸

Aristotle assumed that the good was something complete or the most complete end, if there were many ends that are complete. There is an apparent uncertainty about the question whether there is only one complete good or whether there are many complete goods, though Aristotle wrote as if there was only one such good. He supposed that if there were many complete ends, there had to be one that was the best of them all by virtue of its being the most complete. In this case, the possibility that all these purported ends could be equally complete with none of them being more complete than the other was ignored. Maybe the most complete end must necessarily exist among complete ends. If they are really equally complete then it is self-contradictory to suppose that one of them is more complete than the rest, unless there are degrees of completeness. If that is the case, none of them will be more or less complete than others. But what does it mean to say that something is more or less complete? If something can be more complete this seems to suggest that it is simply incomplete because it has a capacity to accommodate more of what it lacks. It is incomplete if it is not perfectly complete. But it would seem as if completeness does not admit of degrees at all. In this case, something is either complete or incomplete.

If it is not complete, then it is incomplete and if it is not incomplete, then it is complete. Aristotle considered the possibility of degrees of completeness, leaving aside the question of the number of complete ends, unsolved. What is meant by 'complete' in this case? Can concepts such as the concept of happiness be said to be complete in the ordinary sense of the term?

There are three categories of goods: those that are pursued for the sake of other goods; those that are sought for their own sake as well as for the sake of other goods; and those that are desired exclusively for themselves (for the sake of nothing other than themselves). The first category of goods is said to be less complete than the intermediate one and the third is the class of the most complete goods. But to assume that the most complete end exists, is to say that there are degrees of completeness. That is, goods are arranged in an ascending order of gradation with the less complete ones at the bottom of the series and the more complete ones at the higher levels of the hierarchy. But the question concerning the number and the nature of the most complete good(s) still remains since it is not clear whether it is one (single) good or one compound good or whether there are many (plural) but distinct goods.

The good is said to be *eudaimonia* or happiness. Although every virtue such as honour, pleasure, and understanding is always chosen for itself, it is also chosen for the sake of happiness. Supposedly we can achieve happiness by their means. However, "happiness ... no one ever chooses for their sake, or for the sake of anything else at all."¹⁹ The good is supposed to be complete and self-sufficient. So is happiness. It is only happiness that seems to meet the two conditions of the good, that is, completeness and self-sufficiency. Happiness is said to be self-sufficient since "all

by itself it makes a life choiceworthy and lacking nothing."²⁰ Besides, happiness is the most 'choiceworthy' good

Since it is not counted as one good among many. If it were counted as one among many, then, clearly, we think that the addition of the smallest of goods would make it more choiceworthy; for the smallest good that is added becomes an extra quantity of goods so creating a good larger than the original good, and the larger of two goods is always more choiceworthy. But we do not think any addition can make happiness more choiceworthy; hence it is most choiceworthy.²¹

As "the end of the things pursued in action," happiness seems to be "something complete and self-sufficient."²² The meaning of the good still needs clarification: "But presumably the remark that the best good is happiness is apparently something generally agreed, and what we miss is a clearer statement of what the best good is."²³ Many people unanimously agree that the good is happiness though they disagree on the meaning of happiness.

2.5 The human function

For Aristotle, the best human good could presumably be found by looking for the human function. The presumed good for a human being seems to depend on his function, like the good for a flutist, a sculptor and craftsman depends on their function. This function must be peculiar to human beings; it is unique. It cannot be the life of nutrition and growth because humans share this with plants. Neither can it be a life of sense experience for this is also shared with animals. It is as if commonality is inferior to uniqueness. Individuality is superior to communality.

Therefore, "the remaining possibility, then, is some sort of life of action of the part of the soul that has reason. Now this part has two parts, which have reason in different ways, one as obeying the reason in the other part, the other as itself having reason and thinking. We intend both. Moreover, life is also spoken of in two ways as

capacity and as activity, and we must take a human being's special function to be life as activity, since this seems to be called life to a fuller extent."²⁴ Aristotle defined the function of man as "the soul's activity that expresses reason as itself having reason or requires reason as obeying reason. ... Now we take the human function to be a certain kind of life, and take this life to be the soul's activity and actions that express reason ... the excellent man's function is to do this finely and well ... The human good turns out to be the soul's activity that expresses virtue. *And if there are more virtues than one*, the good will express the best and most complete virtue. Moreover, it will be in a complete life."²⁵ Here Aristotle is obviously doubting whether there is one virtue or more. Here is another problem: the human function consists in the activity of the soul in accordance with *one* virtue or *many* virtues, whatever the case may be. This is yet another instance of Aristotle's indecision. It is the same problem of one and many in as far as the highest good(s) for human beings is/are concerned.

2.6 Division of goods

Goods may as well be grouped as external goods, goods of the body and goods of the soul.²⁶ The latter "are said to be goods to the fullest extent and most of all, and the soul's actions and activities are ascribed to the soul."²⁷ Aristotle acknowledged that this account of the good is a belief agreed upon by ancient philosophers. The good turns out to be an activity as opposed to a state, and it is a good of the soul. "The belief that the happy person lives well and does well in action also agrees with our account, since we have virtually said that the end is a sort of living well and doing well in action. Further, all the features that people look for in happiness appear to be true of the end described in our account. For to some people it seems to be virtue; to others intelligence; to others some sort of wisdom; to others again it seems to be

these, or one of these, involving pleasure or requiring its addition; and others add in external prosperity as well."²⁸ Some of these views are traditionally held by many while others are held by few famous wise men. For "it is reasonable for each group to be not entirely in error, but correct on one point at least, or even on most points."²⁹

Aristotle's account is in line with the view that happiness is virtue in general or a particular virtue. For the "activity expressing virtue is proper to virtue."³⁰ The life of action is said to be intrinsically pleasant. "For being pleased is a condition of the soul, hence included in the activity of the soul ... Then actions expressing the virtues are pleasant in themselves."³¹

Contrary to the suggestion of the Delian inscription, happiness is the best, the finest and the most pleasant. These three features are not distinguishable. "For all three features are found in the best activities, and happiness we say is *these* activities, or rather *one of them*, the best one."³² The emphasis is mine. Here we encounter yet another instance of Aristotle's indecision concerning the question whether the good is single or plural. Aristotle seemed to be undecided as to whether it consists in one good or many goods. That is the matter upon which the proponents of the dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia* and the advocates of the inclusive view of it disagree. That is, happiness is either one particular thing or a compound whole made up of many particular parts, or it is something else.

The activity of happiness requires external goods as well "since we cannot, or cannot easily, do fine actions if we lack the resources ... further, deprivation of certain externals - e.g. good birth, good children, beauty-marks our blessedness; for we do not altogether have the character of happiness if we look utterly repulsive or are ill-born, solitary or childless, and have it even less, presumably, if our children or friends are

totally bad, or were good but have died.”³³ Happiness seems to need additional prosperity: as a human being, one who is happy also needs external prosperity.³⁴ As a philosopher, the happy person cannot philosophise on an empty stomach! He needs food too. In order to feed, he needs money, especially if he lives in the city. But in order to have money, he needs to acquire it somehow. In other words, he needs to have a source or sources of income. For he is a human being living in a human society. This is why some people identify happiness with good fortune while others identify it with virtue.

2.7 The cause of happiness

Aristotle was also concerned about the causes of happiness. He pointed out that the “[question about the role of fortune] raises a puzzle: Is happiness acquired by learning, or habituation, or by some other form of cultivation? Or is it the result of some divine fate, or even of fortune?”³⁵ Assuming that the gods give gifts to men, it is reasonable for them to give people happiness for this is the best of all human goods.

But even if it is not sent by the gods, but instead results from virtue and some sort of learning or cultivation, happiness appears to be one of the most divine things, since the prize and goal of virtue appears to be the best good, something divine and blessed. Moreover if happiness comes in this way it will be widely shared; for anyone who is not deformed in his capacity for virtue will be able to achieve happiness through some sort of learning and attention. And since it is better to be happy in this way than because of fortune, it is reasonable for this to be the way we become happy. For whatever is natural is naturally in the finest state possible, and so are the products of crafts and of every other cause, especially the best cause; and it would be seriously inappropriate to entrust what is greatest and finest to fortune.³⁶

According to Aristotle, happiness was “a certain sort of activity of the soul expressing virtue, [and hence not a product of fortune]; and some of the other goods are necessary conditions [of happiness], others are naturally useful and co-operative as instruments [but are *not parts* of it.]”³⁷ Now it seems as if Aristotle made up his mind

that happiness has not a compound of parts. In this case, it appears to be a single good, and not a compound one. He contended thus: "this conclusion agrees with our opening remarks. For we took the goal of political science to be the best good; and most of its attention is devoted to the character of the citizens, to make them good people who do fine actions, which is reasonable if happiness depends on virtue, not on fortune."³⁸

According to Aristotle, we are rational animals but no animal should be regarded as happy because animals cannot share in this kind of activity, that is, animals do not and cannot reason. Not even children can be properly said to be happy: "for the same reason a child is not happy either, since his age prevents him from doing these sorts of actions; and if he is called happy, he is being congratulated because of anticipated blessedness, since, as we have said, happiness requires both complete virtue and a complete life."³⁹ The contention that animals and children cannot be happy is contrary to the common belief that they can be happy and the common practice of calling them happy whenever they show signs of happiness. For Aristotle, a complete life was necessary for happiness. However, one might want to know how complete a complete life is or should be. If a complete life means a long life, this does not yet settle the question; for one may still wonder how long such a life should be. No age-limit seems to be long enough. Happiness endures. Happiness is permanent. Since it is stable, it does not fluctuate as much as a person's fortunes. So if a person's happiness depends on his fortunes he will be like a chameleon. His happiness will vary according to the variation of his fortunes. For sometimes he is fortunate but at other times he is unfortunate. Therefore, in this case, it would mean that he is sometimes happy and at other times unhappy. Hence, "it is quite wrong to

be guided by someone's fortunes. For his doing well or badly does not rest on them; though a human life, as we said, needs these added, it is the activities expressing virtue that control happiness, and the contrary activities that control its contrary."⁴⁰ A happy person is not unstable. The person is always happy. There is no fluctuation of the person's happiness. Such happiness does not vary with different circumstances. The person is not happy and unhappy at different times. But it would seem that the person's happiness does admit of degrees of perfection depending on the mode of his contemplation. The happy person is a stable person. The person maintains the same character throughout a lifetime. But that is humanly impossible! "For always, or more than anything else, he will do and study the actions expressing virtue, and will bear fortunes most finely, in every way and in all conditions appropriately, since he is truly 'good, foursquare and blameless'"⁴¹

Since a virtuous person does not perform "hateful and base" activities, such a person can never become miserable.⁴² For "it is activities that control life."⁴³ And a "truly good and intelligent person, ... will bear strokes of fortune suitably, and from his resources at any time will do the finest actions."⁴⁴ He or she will bear strokes of misfortune equally well and with composure and confidence. The happy person will be consistent and he will not be subject to fluctuation. He will not be shaken easily from his happiness by any misfortune. But he can be shaken from it by many great misfortunes: "... and from these a return to happiness will take no short time; at best, it will take a long and complete length of time that includes great and fine successes."⁴⁵ Whatever Aristotle meant by a "*complete length of time*" is not quite clear. Time might probably be complete. Many different answers can be given in response to this question: 'how long is a long life?'

Similarly, what is meant by complete virtue is not quite clear though the happy person is said to be "one who expresses complete virtue in his activities."⁴⁶ He has a sufficient amount of external goods to last a whole lifetime. Perhaps we should add that he will "also go on living this way and will come to an appropriate end."⁴⁷ Whatever this end means?

Happiness is the end that is complete in all ways. "Hence we will say that a living person who has, and will keep, the goods we mentioned is blessed, but blessed as a human being is."⁴⁸ For instance, happiness, unlike justice, is not praiseworthy. But it is counted as... "blessed, as something better and more godlike than anything that is praised."⁴⁹ According to Eudoxus "...only the god and the good have this superiority since the other goods are praised by reference to them (everything is praiseworthy)."⁵⁰

Given what has been said so far, happiness turns out to be "something honourable and complete."⁵¹ Furthermore, "happiness is an origin; for the origin is what we all aim at in all our other actions; and we take the origin and cause of goods to be something honourable and divine."⁵² Happiness is an origin in the Aristotelian sense of its being a final cause.

In Aristotle's view, one cannot be said to be happy while one is asleep since happiness is not a state, but an activity. Neither can a hopeless and miserable life be described as a happy life. Happiness is 'choiceworthy' in itself, not for something else. It is one of those activities that are 'choiceworthy' in themselves. It is not found among the other kind of activities that are only 'choiceworthy' for the sake of other ends. Further, it is self-sufficient since it lacks nothing and "nothing further beyond it is sought from it."⁵³ It is taken to be the end at which all human beings aim,

individually and collectively. Aristotle argued that "happiness, then, is not found in amusement; for it would be absurd if the end were amusement; and our lifelong efforts and sufferings aimed at amusing ourselves. For we choose practically everything for some other end - except for happiness, since it is (the) end; but serious work and toil (only) at amusement, appears stupid and excessively childish."⁵⁴

Happiness consists in a virtuous life of action, not mere amusements or pastimes. Aristotle also claimed that a slave could not share in happiness. May be he thought so because the slavish life was that of suffering and misery. However, we can argue, to the contrary, that to the extent that happiness is the end of human action and in so far as a slave is a human being engaged in performing activities that are really human, there is no justifiable reason for denying that he can be happy. Though it may still be argued that a slave as a slave cannot be happy, this claim is also questionable because he cannot separate himself, as it were, from his humanity! Similarly, Aristotle would not have children to be called happy on the ground that happiness lasts a complete life span yet children have not yet attained it. And when they are called happy they are merely being congratulated for their potential happiness or blessedness. They may be amused but not happy. This claim contradicts common knowledge; we ordinarily ascribe happiness to babies, let alone children. For instance, when children smile and laugh, we presume them to be happy. I say "presume" because a smile or laughter does not necessarily mean happiness. For someone, say an actor, may feign happiness by pretending to be smiling or laughing. However, for Aristotle happiness does not mean the same thing as amusement. We have also noted that even animals would not qualify, in Aristotle's view, to be called happy for they lack the faculty of reason, the distinctive feature of human beings (for him, man is a rational animal). But even this

claim is subject to debate. It is a debatable or controversial point. We can neither prove nor disprove the claim that animals can be happy anymore than we can prove or disprove the claim that animals think. Whether animals can be happy or not depends on the meaning of happiness in question. If happiness means human happiness, then animals cannot definitely be happy because they are not human beings. This seems to be what Aristotle had in mind in denying that animals can be happy.

Nevertheless, animals seem to have some degree of rationality though it appears to be lower than that of man. In any case, it seems difficult, if not impossible, to prove beyond reasonable doubt that animals do not have reason. Therefore, it seems unreasonable and unfair to claim that animals are without reason.

In Aristotle's view, it is reasonable that happiness as a virtuous activity should be an expression of the superior virtue of the best good. That is, the understanding "or whatever else seems to be the natural ruler and leader, and to understand what is fine and divine, but being itself either divine or the most divine element in us."⁵⁵

Complete happiness consists in the proper expression of the virtue of the understanding. That is, "the activity of study."⁵⁶ Study seems to be the most self-sufficient activity. This activity is supreme since the understanding is the supreme element in man. The objects of knowledge are the supreme elements of the understanding. Furthermore, "it is the most continuous activity" which men are capable of engaging in.⁵⁷

2.8 Leisure, pleasure and happiness

Leisure entails happiness. Pleasure is an accompaniment of happiness. The activity of understanding seems to be "superior in excellence because it is the activity of study, aims at no end beyond itself and has its own proper pleasure, which increases

the activity. Further, self-sufficiency, leisure, unvaried activity (as far as is possible for a human being), and any other features ascribed to the blessed person, are evidently features of this activity."⁵⁸ Since incompleteness is not a characteristic feature of happiness, the complete happiness of a human being involves the activity of study that lasts throughout a complete lifetime. As Aristotle admitted, "such a life would be superior to the human level. For someone will live it not in so far as he is a human being, but in so far as he has some divine element in him. And the activity of this divine element is as much superior to the activity expressing the rest of virtue as this element is superior to *the compound*. Hence if understanding is something divine in comparison with a human being, so also will the life that expresses understanding be divine in comparison with human life."⁵⁹

But the reference to 'the compound' in this case seems to suggest that happiness is a compound or a composite whole. It seems to lend credence to the inclusive thesis. For Aristotle, we should think in terms of immortality as much as possible, and not merely of mortal things on account of our mortal being. We should endeavour "to live a life that expresses our supreme element; for however much this element may lack in bulk, by much more it surpasses everything in power and value."⁶⁰ Aristotle argued that since the understanding is the identity of everyone who has developed this element, "it would be absurd, then, if he were to choose not his own life, but something else's."⁶¹ For him, the characteristic nature of something was "supremely best and pleasantest for it; and hence for a human being the life expressing understanding will be supremely best and pleasantest, if understanding above all is the human being. This life, then, will also be happiest. The life expressing the other kind of virtue [i.e. the kind concerned with action] is [happiest]

in a secondary way because the activities expressing this virtue are human."⁶² Intelligence is intertwined with virtues of character that are also associated with feelings. "Since the virtues of the compound are human virtues, the life and the happiness expressing these virtues is also human. The virtue of understanding, however, is separated (from the compound)."⁶³ The latter is divine.

Happiness is seen to be "the human activity that is most akin to the gods."⁶⁴ Happiness is both human and divine. It is what man has in common with Aristotle's gods. It consists in the activity of study or contemplation. Other animals do not share in happiness since they are devoid of the act of study: "for the whole life of the gods is blessed, and human life is blessed to the extent that it has something resembling this sort of activity; but none of the other animals is happy, because none of them shares in study at all. Hence happiness extends just as far as study extends, and the more someone studies, the happier he is, not coincidentally but in so far as he studies, since study is valuable in itself. And so (on this argument) happiness will be some kind of study."⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the idea that happiness is contemporaneous with study is rather odd. It can be objected that there is no happiness in studying as such. Rather, it is the consequent results of study that may yield benefits that make us happy. Indeed, too much study may be detrimental to health. For 'too much of something is dangerous.' There is no guarantee that one will be happy when one studies something. Hence, we can say, on the contrary, that excessive study can easily lead to weariness and unhappiness. There are many people who suffer from mental illnesses as a result of too much study. For instance, there is a proverb that states that "he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."⁶⁶ Although most things seem to have both advantages

as well as disadvantages, Aristotle emphasised the merits of study but ignored its demerits. For example, too much learning can lead to undesirable consequences.

Furthermore, Aristotle's view is anthropomorphic since it ascribes the human activity of study or contemplation to the gods. Although men are known to contemplate, it is not clear whether these gods, granted that they exist, do contemplate at all! Aristotle indulged in the orthodox Greek mythology. He took the existence of the gods for granted.

But the happy person needs other goods as well in so far as he is a human being living in a community.⁶⁷ Since he is not naturally self-sufficient for study, "he needs a healthy body, and needs to have food and the other services provided."⁶⁸ The happy person leads a virtuous life with a moderate supply of external goods. "Solon surely described happy people well, when he said they had been moderately supplied with external goods, had done what he regarded as the finest actions, and had lived their lives temperately. For it is possible to have moderate possessions and still to do the right actions. And Anaxagoras would seem to have supposed that the happy person was neither rich nor powerful, since he said he would not be surprised if the happy person appeared an absurd sort of person to many. For the many judge by externals, since these are all they perceive."⁶⁹ Aristotle thought that his argument was acceptable to some wise people.⁷⁰ However, wise people also disagree among themselves about important issues. Definitely, not all wise people will accept it. So the fact that a few wise people have expressed the same view does not say much about its soundness. For him, it seemed as if the gods showed most love to those whose activities expressed understanding and took care of it. That is, the philosophers.

For if the gods pay some attention to human beings, as they seem to, it would be reasonable for them to take pleasure in what is best and most akin to them, namely understanding; and reasonable for them to benefit in return those who most of all like and honour understanding, on the assumption that these people attend to what is beloved by the gods, and act correctly and finely. Clearly, all this is true of the wise person more than anyone else; hence he is most loved by the gods. And it is likely that this same person will be happiest; hence the wise person will be happier than anyone else on this argument too.⁷¹

Perhaps a better way of studying happiness is through the examination of virtue since it has been described as "an activity of the soul expressing complete virtue."⁷² Since human "happiness is an activity of the soul,"⁷³ and not that of the body, it is the appropriate human virtue and the human good.

2.9 Self-sufficiency and completeness

Aristotle reiterated the then popular view that the end of human life is *eudaimonia*.⁷⁴ He says that it is 'self-sufficient' and 'complete.' For that matter, it lacks nothing at all. It is the same characteristics of self-sufficiency and completeness of *eudaimonia* that make some students of Aristotle suppose that *eudaimonia* is an inclusive end for it 'contains' every requisite thing. Incidentally, others see in the same properties, the uniqueness and dominance of *eudaimonia* as it is said to be the *most* complete and self-sufficient human goal. As such, there is yet another question to be answered here concerning the nature of *eudaimonia*; that is, whether it is a single end, a composite of many ends, an inclusive end, a dominant end, an exclusive end, or some other type of end. Most people agree unanimously that the good is *eudaimonia* though they disagree about its meaning. They differ in their conceptions of *eudaimonia*. Aristotle stated his own view after considering the ordinary views concerning *eudaimonia*. He believed that the common views of *eudaimonia* are neither entirely wrong nor correct. However, they have one common weakness of identifying it with one good such as pleasure, honour, virtue, health and wealth. Such goods are its necessary, and not

sufficient, *conditions* (and not ingredients). In this case, it would appear as if *eudaimonia* is not one particular good such as pleasure. This view seems to contradict the dominant interpretation of Aristotle's idea of *eudaimonia* in the sense that Aristotle dismisses the popular views that identify it with one particular good. But this does not necessarily imply that his view of *eudaimonia* is therefore comprehensive. *Eudaimonia* remains a single good though it is not identifiable with the goods with which people ordinarily associate it. It has been identified with contemplation alone.

As the highest human purpose, *eudaimonia* seems to be a 'dominant' rather than an inclusive end. It was presented as the only end that is not desired for the sake of anything at all, except itself. All other ends are either pursued for the sake of other ends or both for their own sake as well as for the sake of something else. Ultimately, all ends are pursued at least for the sake of *eudaimonia*. This suggests that they are inferior or subordinate to it in the hierarchy of ends at the top of which there is a dominant *eudaimonia* itself. Only *eudaimonia* remains as the dominant, supreme or superior end of all other ends.

Arguably, Aristotle regarded the best life purely as a life of *theoria*, a life of contemplation, a life of study, as a philosophic or intellectual life. It is the life of a philosopher. This is said to be a divine life. The philosopher leads this kind of life in so far as he pays most attention to the divine element in him in a *complete life*, that is, the intellectual faculty or the understanding. However, there is a misunderstanding concerning Aristotle's theory of the best life as much as about his theory of *eudaimonia*. For there is a controversy among scholars with regard to the question whether it is a "mixed" life which includes other goods like moral virtue and

pleasure, for example. Aristotle identified the best life with the pursuit of study or contemplation alone. But some scholars argue that for him the best life was the life of study alone while others contend that it is the political life (or the life of virtue); still others maintain that it is the political cum philosophical life. Others argue that the intellectual life was not the best life for Aristotle. Hence, it is important to find out and critically analyse the kind of life that Aristotle really regarded as the best life before criticising it.

Aristotle seems to have deviated from the highly speculative characteristic of ancient Greek philosophy by adopting a scientific or empirical method in his discussion of ethical issues. He set out to define the nature of the good life for human beings not only by reflecting upon it, but by examining the practical lives of ordinary people. He observed that people distinguished between 'good lives' and 'bad lives.' Both ways of life are characterised by happiness and unhappiness, respectively. Having examined these lives, Aristotle arrived at the conclusion that the best life for man was the happiest life. For the good is happiness. A good life is a happy life. However, if there are many types of good lives, it follows that there are also many kinds of happy lives. It may be asked how these lives compare, what the criterion of such comparison is, whether it is really an accurate one, and how one is supposed to go about choosing the best or the happiest life of all. Which one of these lives is, in fact, the best and, therefore, the happiest life? What does it mean to say that the good life is a happy life? What kind of life is a good or a happy life? What are the characteristics with which it is identifiable and by which it is definable? Is it a life of pleasure, success, fame, honour, virtue and what have you? What is the meaning of

happiness? Ordinarily, people mean different and often contradictory things by happiness. Thus it is difficult to tell which one of these is the correct interpretation.

In the *Ethics* Aristotle undertook an analytical investigation of the meaning of happiness. He defined happiness as the activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue. This suggests that there is another sort of virtue that is imperfect. But this definition of happiness is rather vague and ambiguous.

Since it is couched in obscure terminology. In fact, it has been a source of puzzlement for philosophers for centuries, and various interpretations of it have been offered. A plausible interpretation, although not the only one, is this: Aristotle is stressing the fact that happiness is not something which is static, but is an activity. Men tend to think that happiness is something we arrive at—a certain fixed goal which awaits us if we behave in certain ways. Those who hold this view tend to think of happiness as an object of a certain sort...once we finish our tour through life's daily activities, so to speak, then we will have arrived at this goal called happiness. But this is precisely what Aristotle is denying. Happiness is not a goal in this sense. Rather, it's something which accompanies certain activities, instead of being the goal of these activities. Happiness, as a characteristic of men's lives, is something like persistence. A man who engages in a course of conduct persistently does not arrive at a goal called 'persistence.' Instead, it's a way of engaging in various activities of life If one engages in these activities in a certain way, then we can declare him to be happy.⁷⁵

Aristotle's ethical theory is a classical one for it addresses the issues concerning the good life for man and how human beings should conduct themselves. "Aristotle is a classical moralist in both senses. His response to the former is that 'the good life for man is a life of happiness.' As for the latter, he said that 'men ought to behave so as to achieve happiness'."⁷⁶ However, it is still unclear exactly how people should behave if they are to be happy. Perhaps Aristotle's formula of the Golden Mean is the answer to this question. Ideally, men should behave according to the principle of the Golden Mean, avoiding the two extremes of excess and deficiency but striking a balance between them if they want to be happy. This is the doctrine of moderation. The balance may be a totally new virtue. It may be different from the excess and the deficiency. Further, the mean may vary from one individual to another since some

people are better at certain things than others and each type of mean is appropriate to each person though they are unequal. "All of these have in common the fact that if men behave in accordance with the mean, they will achieve happiness: but there may be many ways of so behaving, thus many ways of being happy."⁷⁷ Indeed, there are two kinds of mean, namely, a relative mean and an objective mean.

Unlike Plato, sometimes Aristotle argued for moral relativism. For him, it appears as if there are many ways of behaving well, for what appeals to one person may not appeal to a different person. "Aristotle is both a relativist and an empiricist in ethics."⁷⁸ His is a problematic, common sense, ethical theory. It is impossible for one to prove *a priori* the right way to live. This is only possible through actual experience and experimentation.

Since the *Ethics* begins with the definition of the good as "that at which everything aims," Aristotle assumed that "everything aims" at something whose existence is merely a conjecture. Such an end was presented as a real existent though it was Aristotle's postulate. "If (a) there is some end of the things we pursue in actions which we wish for because of itself, and because of which we wish for other things; and (b) we do not choose everything because of something else, since (c) if we do, it will go on without limit, making desire empty and futile; then clearly (d) this end will be the good, i.e. the best good."⁷⁹ Aristotle denied the possibility of an infinite regress since it would make 'desire empty and futile.' But he did not state the reason why desire should not be 'empty and futile.' He did not explain why the chain of ends must, if indeed it must, end somewhere and why everything should not be desired for the sake of something else. It does not follow necessarily from the statement that if there is no infinite regression of ends, then there must be one

particular end that is chosen for its sake and for the sake of which all other ends are chosen. For it is the existence of the good itself that needs to be proved, in the first place. How can it be known to be the one for the sake of which all other ends are pursued? In any case, it is possible that there are more than one such end: it can either be one end or one compound of many ends. In addition, Aristotle used the conditional form of argumentation as shown above yet he was convinced that the good really existed as a natural end.

The good is supposed to be the end of 'the most controlling science,' the 'master science,' or the 'ruling science,' that is, political science.⁸⁰ For this reason Aristotle's *Ethics* is said to be some form of political science (though this is far from the truth in the modern usage of the term) since its end is the good. All other sciences are taken to be subordinate to political science as their ends are inferior to its end, that is, the good. It encompasses the ends of the other sciences. This means that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the hierarchy of sciences on the one hand, and that of their ends, on the other. Aristotle claimed that although "the good is the same for a city as for an individual, still the good for a city is apparently a greater and more complete good to acquire."⁸¹ Political science is concerned with the common good of the citizens of a city or nation-state, but the *Ethics* deals with the good of individuals. The other kind of good is dealt with in the *Politics*. Here we are only concerned with the good for every individual. Presumably, the good for each individual is the good for us all - the common good.

Aristotle was convinced that the "knowledge of this good is also of great importance for the conduct of our lives, and if, like archers, we have a target to aim at, we are more likely to hit the right mark," than if we have nothing to aim at.⁸²

Elsewhere, he said that it is foolish not to have one's life organised toward the achievement of some goal: "not to have one's life organized in view of some end is a mark of much folly."⁸³ So one ought to aim at the achievement of a particular goal in this life.

Furthermore, Aristotle pointed out that the most people agree that the good is *eudaimonia* though they disagree about its meaning.

As far as its name goes, most people virtually agree {about what the good is,} since both the many and the cultivated call it happiness, and suppose that living well and doing well are the same thing as being happy. But they disagree about what happiness is, and the many do not give the same answer as the wise. For the many think it is something obvious and evident, e.g. pleasure, wealth or honor, some thinking one thing, others another; and indeed the same person keeps changing his mind, since in sickness he thinks it is health, in poverty wealth. And when they are conscious of their own ignorance, they admire anyone who speaks of something grand and beyond them. {Among the wise,} however, some used to think that besides these many goods there is some other good that is something in itself, and also causes all these goods to be goods.⁸⁴

The preceding statement is a clear reference to Plato and his theory of Forms or Ideas that Aristotle criticised and dismissed as irrelevant in so far as the good is concerned. As such, there is no universal agreement on the meaning of *eudaimonia*; it seems to mean different things to different people. As Aristotle himself admitted, "for some people it seems to be virtue, to others intelligence; to others again it seems to be these, or one of these, involving pleasure or requiring its addition; and others add in external prosperity as well."⁸⁵ People's opinions upon this issue seem to vary from time to time and from place to place. Whatever one person regards as *eudaimonia* appears to be relative not only to one's spatio-temporal circumstances, but also one's physical condition. For instance, when one is sick one tends to think that the opposite of sickness, health, is the good. It may as well depend on one's socio-economic

situation. For example, the poor may suppose that the good consists in the opposite of poverty.

If people do not agree on the meaning of *eudaimonia* as the goal of life, they cannot even agree that one particular kind of life is the best or the happiest life, since their conception of this depends on their conception of *eudaimonia*. Hence, there seem to be as many conceptions of the happiest life as there are different interpretations of *eudaimonia*.

If *eudaimonia* is the supreme end of every human activity, all other ends are merely means to it. But there is no unanimity among scholars concerning its meaning. There are at least two categories of ends or goods, that is, goods in themselves or intrinsic goods, and extrinsic goods or ends that are also means to other ends. An extrinsic end is pursued for the sake of another end while an intrinsic end is pursued for its own sake. According to Aristotle, there is yet another kind of end that is pursued both for itself as well as for the sake of some other end. For him, an end which is pursued for itself alone is better than an end which is pursued both for itself as well as for the sake of something else. Moreover, an end that is pursued both for itself as well as for the sake of something else is better than an end that is only pursued for the sake of something else. Therefore, an end for the sake of which all other ends are pursued, an end that is only pursued for itself and not for the sake of anything else is said to be the best of the three kinds of end. *Eudaimonia* is said to be the only end of this kind. Is this a justifiable criterion of goodness? What reason could Aristotle give for preferring it to other criteria? Aristotle claimed that there was only one good that was pursued for its sake and which could never be pursued for the sake of any other thing, for it was the best of all goods, that is, *eudaimonia*. However,

that does not yet solve the problem because he had to show whether *eudaimonia* was one good or a combination of many goods. There are other ends besides *eudaimonia* which are also pursued for themselves. But *eudaimonia* is said to be the only end that is never pursued for the sake of anything else. For Aristotle, although those ends-in-themselves may also be means to some other ends, they are, ultimately, also means to *eudaimonia*. But *eudaimonia* is said to be the only end in itself that is also the end of all other (intrinsic and extrinsic) ends; it is the only end that is not a means to any other end as there is no end beyond it. That is why it is called the supreme end. It is regarded as the highest of all other ends since it is the only one which is unconditionally 'complete' (if not, then the most complete, in case there are more than one complete end; though it does not follow, contrary to Aristotle's suggestion, that in this case there must be one of them that is superior to them all; for some of them or all of them could be equal) and 'self-sufficient.' Perhaps we should add, in the same vein, that if there are more than one self-sufficient good (which is a possibility too) then *eudaimonia* must be the most sufficient good. In both cases then, there are degrees of completeness as well as self-sufficiency. If that is the case then, we might as well be justified in concluding that what is complete or most complete is the same as what is self-sufficient or the most self-sufficient, in which case there is no need of distinguishing between the complete and the self-sufficient. Therefore, it is the 'most choiceworthy' end. Human beings seek other goods, for example, money, only as means to *eudaimonia*. However, people do not aim at it as a means to anything else, for it is not a means to another end; it is an end in itself, a perfect end, the final good for human beings. Therefore, *eudaimonia* is sought strictly for its sake.

Human beings aim at it as the end of the best life. But it is difficult to prove whether one kind of life is better than another one.

Since there are many intrinsic ends, it is not easy to identify the 'best' of them all without making a value judgement. Aristotle said that happiness or *eudaimonia* (that is, well-being) is the best end. Furthermore, he seems to claim (according to one interpretation) that the happiest life, or the best life, is the life of *theoria* or contemplation. It is a philosophical life. The philosopher is said to be the happiest person since he makes the best use of the highest faculty of a human being, namely, the understanding. It has a divine origin. This is the element that constitutes the essential difference between human beings and beasts. Hence the Aristotelian saying that 'Man is a rational animal.' Aristotle's view seems to be elitist or intellectual.

Now, it is doubtful whether all human beings aim at, or ought only to aim at, one final goal or many goals, let alone the question whether or not people naturally strive for, or should aspire to, *eudaimonia* in particular or some other end. Aristotle assumed that *eudaimonia* was the ultimate end pursued by all human beings. As a matter of fact, it is not clear whether there is one common ultimate goal that all human beings naturally aim at or ought to seek. It is difficult to tell whether people aim at a single ultimate end that is the best of all ends or at multiple, different, but equally good ends. As Burton Porter puts it, "there may not be an end for which everything is intended or an inherent purpose that all things must fulfil ... There may not be a purpose to anything aside from the artifacts man creates specifically to serve some purposes. Human beings in particular may not have a function aside from a self-created one. Perhaps we have no intrinsic function or calling or purpose that can be discovered through introspection and subsequently actualized. The entire

approach of seeing objects, animals, or people in terms of function may be wrong-headed."⁸⁶ This is an anthropocentric approach. Aristotle tried to convince us that human beings too have one particular function as different parts of the body seem to have their specific uses.

Well, perhaps we shall find the best good if we first find the function of a human being. For just as the good, i.e. {doing } well, for a flautist, a sculptor, and every craftsman, and, in general, for whatever has a function and {characteristic} action, seems to depend on its function, the same seems to be true for a human being, if a human being has some function ... Then do the carpenter and the leatherworker have their functions and actions, while a human being has none, and is by nature idle, without any function? Or, just as eye, hand, foot and, in general, every {bodily} part apparently has its functions, may we likewise ascribe to a human being some function besides all of theirs? What, then, could this be? For living is apparently shared with plants, but what we are looking for is the special function of a human being; hence we should set aside the life of nutrition and growth. The life next in order is some sort of life of sense-perception; but this too is apparently shared, with horse, ox and every animal. The remaining possibility, then, is some sort of life of action of the {part of the soul} that has reason.⁸⁷

Here, Aristotle tried to persuade his audience to accept the claim that a human being has a definite function just as every part of a body has a function. Perhaps the function of a man is to fulfil a man-made purpose or the purpose of his maker in creating him. Yet different people may have different purposes and, therefore, diverse functions. This issue raises the question whether all human beings have the same human purpose, whether the human purpose is the same as the divine purpose for him, or not. Does a human being have a purpose, an artificial or divine purpose? Assuming that we have a purpose, we should live in such a way as to achieve it. Therefore, the question that we need to answer is this. What is our purpose and how can we achieve it?

For Aristotle, the purpose or function of a human being is to make use of his understanding excellently as the purpose of a knife, for example, is to cut well. Nevertheless, it may be impossible to prove the purpose of a human being beyond any

reasonable doubt. Maybe human beings have various functions. Similarly, the same knife may be used for different purposes. Aristotle suggested that the proper function of something is its essence, its defining characteristic, or its nature (that which makes it what it is). However, even if it is assumed that man has his specific function, Aristotle's conception of the proper function of man may still be disputed together with his conception of the nature of man. The true nature and function of man needs to be established. Aristotle sets out to prove the existence of something, namely the good, whose existence he takes for granted thereby begging the question.

There is no universal agreement on what is the best human life. For that reason, the best life (according to Aristotle) is not necessarily the best life for everyone. Similarly, what was the happiest life for Aristotle then need not be the happiest life for everyone else now. It is assumed that the best life is the same as the happiest life. There is not an accurate way of proving beyond any reasonable doubt what 'the best life' really is because the term best is vague and ambiguous. There is need to know whether the happiest life or the best life is the political life, the life of enjoyment, the life of making money, the intellectual life, or some other kind of life. But the best life cannot be determined to the satisfaction of everyone because everyone has a different conception of the best life. For some scholars at least, the intellectual life seems to be the best and the happiest life *from Aristotle's point of view*. This is said to be the life of a philosopher. It is supposed to be a divine life.

2.10 Intellectual and moral Virtues

Although Aristotle defined *eudaimonia* as an activity of the soul that expresses virtue, he seemed to complicate the matter by distinguishing between two forms of virtue, namely, virtues of character which are acquired through habituation and intellectual

virtues which are taught. So it is not clear whether *eudaimonia* is an ethical virtue or an intellectual virtue or both.

In so far as ethics is concerned, the distinction between moral and intellectual virtues seems arbitrary. Maybe it is possible to be intellectually virtuous without being morally virtuous, or morally virtuous without being intellectually virtuous. For some authors, it is impossible but for others it is possible. According to this study, it is possible to know the truth about what is good or right and still lack the necessary will to bring it to pass. One may know what is right but refuse to perform it.

However, someone might argue that the two are bound together. One may argue that if one is virtuous intellectually, one must also be morally virtuous, otherwise it is not the case that one is intellectually virtuous. And if one is morally virtuous, one must also be virtuous intellectually, otherwise one is not virtuous morally. In this case, theoretical and practical virtues are inter-linked. When one is theoretically wise one is also expected to be practically wise and if one is practically wise one should also be theoretically wise, otherwise one is not wise at all.

In this case, goodness or virtue involves both intellect and character. Whoever is good intellectually should also be good morally and whoever is good morally should also be good intellectually. Whoever is bad morally is supposed to be bad intellectually too. And whoever is bad intellectually should also be bad morally. When you know the right, you will do it, all things being equal, thanks to Plato. Otherwise you cannot be justified in claiming to know the right thing to do. If you do what is not right, it is only because you do not know the right thing to do! This is an ideal situation. In practical life, there are people who know what ought to be done but do not do it. In fact, there are many people who know the right thing to do but do

the opposite of it. They refuse to do what they know to be the right thing to do. Indeed, there are many people who misuse their intelligence. For they use it to device and execute wrong actions, such as crimes. But others may do what is good not because they know that it is good, but coincidentally. They may be forced to do the good for one reason or another.

2.11 The best life

Moreover, Aristotle's definition of *eudaimonia* is a technical one in the sense that this is not what everybody normally understands by "happiness." As a rational activity of the soul, it does not even seem to be what everyone desires. For one thing, it seems to lie beyond the reach of everybody except philosophers. It sounds unfair and wrong to restrict happiness to an exclusive group of people. It is misleading to suggest that the philosophers are the happiest people. As a human good, happiness is attainable by all human beings. It would be wrong to argue that *eudaimonia* is undesirable for some people because, for them, it is unattainable, for they can still desire whatever they cannot attain, though it is unreasonable to do so. Moreover, it is doubtful whether *eudaimonia* is truly the 'highest' human goal. What does it mean to say that one end is higher than another one? For Aristotle, the for-the-sake-of relation is the criterion of judging whether one end is higher than another one. Nevertheless, different people may value different things differently, thus placing them in different places in a hierarchy of ends.

For that reason, there is a disagreement among scholars about what the happiest life is since there are conflicting theories or interpretations of the meaning of happiness. It appears as if there are as many criteria for the happiest and the best life as there are different interpretations of happiness. But it is difficult to tell which one

of these interpretations is the correct one, that is, if we assume that one of them must be correct whereas others are false. Accordingly, it may be difficult to tell which kind of life is happier or better than a different kind of life, if people disagree about the meaning of happiness and goodness. Aristotle said that we must rely on the judgement of the excellent or the wise, person for a solution to this problem. By an 'excellent man', he meant the philosopher. However, disputes may arise concerning human excellence. This creates another problem, how are we supposed to judge whether a person is really excellent or not? What is the criterion for excellence? According to Aristotle, the excellent person spends most of his time on contemplation. Again, it is hard to tell the exact time that an excellent person should devote to contemplation throughout one's lifetime. Is anyone who spends more time in contemplation than another one necessarily a more excellent person than the other person? And is there somebody who spends time on contemplation more than all other people? Furthermore, Aristotle did not clarify, beyond reasonable doubt, the issue whether the excellent person is only theoretically wise, or whether he is only practically wise, or whether he is both theoretically and practically wise. For he made a distinction between theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom. However, as Aristotle admitted that ethics is an inexact science. It is difficult to be accurate in ethical judgements. Therefore "it will be satisfactory if we can indicate the truth roughly and in outline; since ... we argue from and about what holds good usually (but not universally), it will be satisfactory if we can draw conclusions of the same sort. Each of our claims, then, ought to be accepted in the same way (as claiming to hold usually), since the educated person seeks exactness in each area to the extent that the nature of the subject allows; for apparently it is just as mistaken to demand

demonstrations from a rhetorician as to accept (merely) persuasive arguments from a mathematician.”⁸⁸

Now, if there is a difference between Aristotle's definition of *eudaimonia* and what others mean by it, then his ideas of a happy life, a good life, the happiest life, and the best life also differ from some other people's opinions. Since different people have different conceptions of happiness, they also have different conceptions of a happy life and the happiest life. There is no unanimity about a good life and the best life, for people do disagree about the meaning of the terms 'good'. It is not the case that everyone means the same thing by a happy life and the happiest life, either. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether a "good" life is necessarily a "happy" life, or whether the "best" life is the same thing as the "happiest" life, unless goodness and happiness are synonyms. But they are not synonymous terms. Therefore, a good life and the best life do not necessarily mean the same thing as a happy and the happiest life, respectively.

However, for Aristotle, a good life also means a happy life and the happiest life is regarded as the best life. But to say that the best life is a happy life is not the same as saying that they mean the same thing. For goodness is not equivalent to happiness. The question 'what is the best life?' cannot be conclusively answered for different people have different conceptions and interpretations of the best life. There are many conflicting theories of the best good and the best life; Aristotle's theory is only one of them. What, then, is the criterion of judgement to be used to tell which one of these conceptions of the best goal and the best life is the correct one? It seems as if there is no such criterion. Therefore there is no way of telling the correct conception of the highest human end or the best life. In this case, anyone may come

up with any criterion and conception of *eudaimonia* or the best life and claim that it is the right one. It seems as if there is no way of disproving anyone's claims. The best life seems to depend on one's opinion. Whatever someone takes to be the best life would seem to be the best life for him. It is a question of relativism and subjectivism. It seems as if there are as many 'best' goals and 'best' lives as there are different interpretations of or opinions about the best goal and the best life (these seem to be more subjective than objective). There is an element of subjectivity involved in this issue. Perhaps it has nothing to do with objectivity at all. Since the ultimate human good has been equated with *eudaimonia*, it is important to consider its nature. This is the theme of the next chapter.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURE OF *EUDAIMONIA*

The ultimate end of humans is said to be *eudaimonia* though the meaning of this concept is not clear. This chapter attempts to clarify its meaning. It is concerned with the problem of interpreting Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is devoted to the discussion of the conflicting views of Aristotelian scholars about Aristotle's doctrine of *eudaimonia*. In order to do this, I had to study Aristotle's treatise, namely, the *Ethics* independently.

3.1 Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*

According to this study, Aristotle presented a 'dominant' theory of *eudaimonia* and not an 'inclusive' theory. But according to some interpreters, Aristotle recommended the latter instead of the former. This is what he should have said but he did not say, according to other scholars. Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* in the *Ethics* in particular is the source of problems of interpretation for Aristotelian scholars. As a result, there are various interpretations of it. It has generated a lot of controversy.

On the one hand, some scholars contend that Aristotle presented a dominant and an intellectual theory of *eudaimonia*; on the other hand, others argue that Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia* includes much more than intellectualism or contemplation. According to the former school of thought, Aristotle had a "dominant," or an intellectual theory of *eudaimonia*, but according to the latter, he had an "inclusive" or a "comprehensive" theory of *eudaimonia*. One group of scholars sees *eudaimonia* as a single, supreme, determinate end while the other takes

it to be a composite of intrinsically desirable ends, a whole made up of different but co-ordinated ends. These are seemingly conflicting views about the same thing.

Aristotle himself may have been responsible for this confusing misunderstanding or controversy among the critics of his work. Sometimes he seemed to suggest that *eudaimonia* is a single end and at times he argued as if it was one compound of many ends. It seems as if he presented two conflicting conceptions of *eudaimonia*. He was probably undecided concerning the nature of the good. He was apparently torn between the two alternatives. Consequently, some scholars are bound to concentrate on the inclusive view while excluding the exclusive view while others highlight in the same way the exclusive view while they exclude the inclusive view.

For this reason, the true conception of Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia* remains unclear, vague or ambiguous. This is why it is shrouded in controversy. Hence we need to resolve the apparent conflict for a clear and an unambiguous understanding of Aristotle's real point of view.

3.2 The exclusive view

The proponents of the 'dominant-end' viewpoint include W. F. R. Hardie, Thomas Nagel, Kathleen Wilkes, Richard Kraut, and Anthony Kenny, among others. Their views are discussed below.

3.3 W. F. R. Hardie

Hardie is notably one of the best - known defenders of the intellectual thesis. He is credited with the introduction of the key words 'dominant' and 'inclusive' into the debate about Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*.¹ "A dominant end is a single specific end which has more importance than all other ends. An inclusive end is one

which falls into an overall life-plan or network of ends.”² In other words, a dominant end is an exclusive and supreme end while an inclusive end is a comprehensive or composite end.

Hardie accuses Aristotle of failing to distinguish between these ends. He accuses Aristotle of mixing up the dominant and the inclusive theories of *eudaimonia*. However, he is right in arguing that Aristotle generally advocated a dominant theory of *eudaimonia* though he should have advocated an inclusive view of *eudaimonia*. As far as he is concerned, this is not what Aristotle advocated. But as far as his opponents are concerned this is exactly what Aristotle advocates. There is a dispute between the two parties.

As indicated below, J. L. Ackrill argues against Hardie’s contention that Aristotle confuses the two kinds of the ultimate end. In fact, Aristotle himself did not classify ends into dominant or inclusive ones at all. That was not his problem at all. He was not concerned with the distinction between dominant and inclusive ends as Hardie is. This is the problem of the latter. This is related to my own problem with regard to Aristotle’s doctrine, that is, whether he thought that there was only one ultimate end or many ultimate ends that we should aspire to achieve. These concepts have been emphasised by commentators on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, those who attempt to interpret it.

Aristotle states that “goods are divided ... into three types, some called external, some goods of the soul, others goods of the body; and the goods of the soul are said to be goods to the fullest extent and most of all, and the soul’s actions and activities are ascribed to the soul.”³ Besides, ends can either be activities or products beyond the activities that produce them. But some ends are intermediate in the sense

that they are means to other ends (or, at least one end, namely happiness) as well as ends in themselves. For instance, pleasure, honour and virtue seem to be means and ends at the same time.

As we have seen before, ends have been described as 'complete' or 'incomplete.' In Aristotle's view, "an end pursued in itself ... is more complete than an end pursued because of something else; and an end that is never choiceworthy because of something else is more complete than ends that are choiceworthy both in themselves and because of this end; and hence an end that is always {choiceworthy, and also} choiceworthy in itself, never because of something else, is unconditionally complete."⁴ Some scholars have taken issue with this criterion also. How can something which is not sought for the sake of something else be greater (or more complete) than another that is pursued both for itself as well as for the sake of some other thing? This suggests that there is a hierarchy of ends and degrees of completeness, with different ends successively becoming more complete than the lower ones, thus culminating in the most complete end which is *eudaimonia*.

Now, the question is whether this ultimate end is a single, complete end, say, pleasure, honour or virtue; or a perfect combination of all desirable ends. It would seem appropriate to regard this end as complete not in the sense of being full of its necessary constituents like a vessel, but in the sense of being perfect or accomplished in terms of quality and not quantity. In any case, *eudaimonia* may still be conceived of as a unity rather than as a complex composition of various parts.

For Hardie, the perfectly happy person does not necessarily need to aim at *theoria* as the ultimate goal. He argues that it is needless to seek contemplation as an ultimate and dominant end. We should also pursue other ends. He is right. Of

course, this does not mean that he rejects the dominant interpretation of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*. After all, this is the theory that he attributes to Aristotle. He criticises Aristotle for purportedly holding it. Though he admits that there are passages of the *Ethics* where Aristotle argued in favour of the inclusive view of *eudaimonia*, he argues that Aristotle eventually concluded that intellectualism alone was the best human goal. He advocates an intellectual and, therefore, a dominant-end interpretation of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*. For him, then, Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* is that of the single end of contemplation.

3.4 Thomas Nagel

Hardie wins the favour of Thomas Nagel for whom

The *Nicomachean Ethics* exhibits indecision between two accounts of *eudaimonia*—a comprehensive account and an intellectualist account. According to the intellectualist account ... *eudaimonia* is realized in the activity of the most divine part of man, functioning in accordance with its proper excellence. This is the activity of theoretical contemplation. According to the comprehensive account ... *eudaimonia* essentially involves not just the activity of the theoretical intellect but the full range of human life and action, in accordance with the broader excellences of moral virtue and practical wisdom. This view connects *eudaimonia* with the conception of human nature as composite, that is, as involving the interaction of reason, emotion, perception, and action in an ensouled body.⁵

Like Hardie, Nagel claims that the *Ethics* generally presents a dominant theory of *eudaimonia* in spite of its 'indecision between two accounts of *eudaimonia*.' If Aristotle was really undecided about which theory to propagate, as the author claims, then he could not take sides in this dispute. For him, Aristotle confounded the dominant and the inclusive theories of *eudaimonia* not only in the *Nicomachean Ethics* but also in the *Eudemian Ethics*. For he claims that the *Eudemian Ethics* also shows that Aristotle was undecided whether to present a comprehensive or an intellectual view of *eudaimonia*. To a large extent, it implicitly expresses a comprehensive theory of *eudaimonia*. But in the end it contains a passage that

suggests the truth of the intellectual thesis of the last book of the *Nichomachean Ethics*.⁶ In this case, it could be wrong to say that Aristotle was doubtful whether to present a dominant or an inclusive theory of *eudaimonia*, for it appears that he finally settled for the intellectual or the dominant theory of *eudaimonia*.

There is a hierarchy of human ends in which the lower ones are subservient to *eudaimonia* as the most final end. Rationality as the best part of the soul is exalted above all other ends. Reason ensures the transcendence of merely human aspirations. The cultivation of reason thus allows the philosopher to share in the divine preoccupation of contemplation. Reason is said to be the noblest thing possessed by man and it is divine. That is why Aristotle said that one leads the intellectual life in so far as one cultivates reason as a divine element in himself.⁷ At the same time, he said that the philosopher needed external goods only to the extent that he was a human being living in a human society.⁸ According to Nagel's interpretation of the *Ethics*, Aristotle did not say that the ultimate human goal consisted in a composite of certain ends as a whole, rather, it consists in identifying it with one of them, that is, with reason as the highest human and divine faculty.

3.5 Kathleen Wilkes

The accusation that has been levelled against Aristotle by the previous authors has also been emphasised by Kathleen Wilkes when she observes that "it is notorious that Aristotle gives two distinct and seemingly irreconcilable versions of man's *eudaimonia* in the *Nichomachean Ethics*. These conflicting accounts are not only of what the good man should do but also of what it is good for a man to do."⁹ She thinks that 'the life of a good man' and 'the life good for a man' are incompatible ideas yet she sets out to explore the extent of the possibility of uniting them 'in a single concept

of *eudaimonia*.⁹ How can they be possibly united if they are incompatible? In her view, Aristotle succeeded in this task.

His success is of great interest for contemporary moral philosophy. It is true that the way he links "the good man" with "the good for man" as far as the *theoretic* life is concerned-by claiming that a better- than- mortal happiness is, or is an immediate product of, a better-than-human activity-does not have much contemporary relevance once we have denied the reality or feasibility of a life devoted wholly to unproductive contemplation. But his argument that the better a man is at practical reasoning, the better a life he will lead, is of great importance; and its importance is enhanced if we extend the scope of *phronesis*, as we legitimately may, to include human problem-solving intelligence in general. For Aristotle's claim is then that the best man is the man who exercises his rational capacities to their fullest extent *to gain for himself the best life possible*.¹⁰

Hence the good man's life is identical with the life that every man ought to lead. For the good person is the just judge of what is right to do and he actually chooses to do the right thing always. He leads the good life for man, the life that each and every normal person should lead, because it is good. But who is a good man and what is the good life? This question can be answered in many different ways without reaching a universal agreement.

However, Wilkes seems to agree with both Hardie and Nagel that, in the final analysis, it is the intellectual or the dominant version of *eudaimonia*, rather than the comprehensive view, which Aristotle espoused. For she states that if "we take philosophic wisdom (*sophia* or *theoria*) as the highest of man's capacities, we certainly get *Aristotle's own view*, but we also find a multitude of problems."¹¹ Unfortunately, what, in her own words, is "*Aristotle's own view*" is not really his view as far as the advocates of the 'inclusive' thesis are concerned.

Although Wilkes attributes to Aristotle the intellectual thesis, she also criticises him for allegedly holding it. She thinks that intellectualism is not the highest good. She is right. Contemplation alone is not the highest human goal.

Ideally, it ought to be combined with practical virtue. A perfect combination of theoretical virtue and practical virtue does constitute the ideal human end. Theory alone is not enough, nor is practice alone sufficient. These two activities seem to be necessarily co-joined. As human beings, we are naturally endowed with the ability to think and to act. Although we may think without acting, under normal circumstances, we cannot act without thinking. Thinking well is more likely than not, to lead to acting well and acting well presupposes thinking well.

Aristotle defined man's function as a rational activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. But as Wilkes observes "he complicates the issue by distinguishing two major forms of rationality: practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and philosophic wisdom (*sophia*) ... So man's *ergon* may be the activity of the *psuche* in accordance with either or both of these. In the *EE* as in the *NE* Aristotle eventually settles for an unequivocally intellectualist ... answer: the *ergon* of man is to engage in contemplation, *theoria* - philosophic wisdom in its purest or most rarefied form."¹² She notes that, for someone, practical wisdom, rather than theoretical wisdom, could be preferable as the sole determinant of the characteristic function (*ergon*) of man and she questions the rationale of regarding any kind of 'rational activity' as the only specific function of a human being. As Aristotle put it, it is the highest human good. There are many other human activities, which distinguish man from other animals.

Following Nagel, Wilkes considers a common objection to Aristotle's argument concerning the function of a human being that restricts it to contemplation. This is not the preserve of human beings, for it is shared with the gods. But it is doubtful whether animals also reason at a lower level. Aristotle was convinced that neither animals nor children are happy because they do not share in the activity of

reasoning. Besides, many people are unable to contemplate in spite of their rationality. Contemplation is supposedly the end of all other activities and it is concerned with superhuman things like gods, first principles and being. So it seems not to have any contribution to make to the life of the philosopher nor his purposes. However, for Aristotle, the fact that *theoria* was pursued for its own sake was an advantage rather than a disadvantage.

Man may be described in many ways other than as a rational animal, ways that would still distinguish him from other animals. In this case, rationality is not the only specific function of man. Critics claim that "Aristotle's own description of man's *ergon* as nothing but contemplation does not even meet his own condition that it should be *idion* -unique to, and thus defining, the creature whose *ergon* it specifically is: the gods do nothing else."¹³ Wilkes claims that

The activity of contemplation has poor claim to be regarded as that activity the performance of which is definitive of mankind; *not only is it the sole occupation of the gods, but many rational men are incapable of the heights of abstruse and abstract speculation.* Moreover, *theoria* is an activity subserved by all but generating *no* feedback (the objects of contemplation are not the affairs of men but rather transcendental entities- the gods, unchanging first principles, Being). So the activity can not be justified by the contribution it makes to the welfare of the man engaged in it ... nor can it be justified ... by any contribution it makes to someone else's purposes. We need to know why Aristotle thinks that the life of contemplation is the life of the best sort of man (why it is the life of the good man) and why it is the best for him - (why it is a life good for a man.)¹⁴

The emphasis is mine. Now, the human soul is divided into the rational and the non-rational parts. It is the form or essence of a human being and its activity is his function. But the soul's activity includes other activities apart from ratiocination. This means that the function of man may be as multifarious as the activity of the soul. However, Aristotle did not identify the function of man with the activity of the soul as a whole; rather, he identified it only with the *best part* of the soul, that is, the part that

has reason. Since man is some kind of a "hybrid and two-sided creature who has certain properties in common with both animals and gods," Aristotle's definition of the function of man as a rational activity "highlights the side of rationality at the expense of animality and thus oversimplifies the nature of man. With this oversimplification the gap between the life of a good man and the life that is good for a man appears to widen yet further."¹⁵ Yet, for Aristotle the life of the good man means the same thing as the good life for man. The good man or the excellent man is the epitome of the ideal and his actions form the paradigm of human action.

Wilkes also emphasises the conflict between the political life and the philosophic life in Aristotle's *Ethics*, saying that the latter supersedes the former. Consequently, she argues that "Aristotle's position is thus not consistent; one cannot, and should not try to, juggle with the texts so that the conflict of the two lives is solved."¹⁶ Nevertheless, she turns about and claims that these kinds of life can be reconciled easily today. It can be argued that contemplation is not superior to other human activities, that it is not the only divine activity and that it does not constitute *eudaimonia* by itself alone. Thus the philosophic life is not the only good life that man can lead; it is one alternative among others. In this case, it is not the best life for man. Indeed, the distinction between theoretical and practical reason can be disputed. Rationality is applicable in the resolution of different problems.¹⁷ The author concludes that "it would be more charitable to Aristotle-and fortunately in keeping with remarks of his elsewhere-to stress the actively inquiring side of *Sofia* and to play down the praise of contemplation. We could then resolve the conflict between the 'philosophic' and the 'political' lives by agreeing that although the *ergo* of man is indeed 'activity of the *psuche* in accordance with a rational principle,' the 'rational

principle' in question is, broadly, intelligence in general-intelligence that may be applied to craft, science, philosophy, politics, or any other domain."¹⁸ Indeed, the philosopher may as well be a politician. Maybe it is better to be both a philosopher and a politician than to be either a politician or a philosopher.

It is one thing to disagree with an author and a completely different thing to show that the author is wrong. Wilkes questions the role of contemplation in *eudaimonia*, saying that there is no "sufficient evidence to justify the supposition that for men there could be a genuine, long-lasting, and wholly static state or activity of mental gazing."¹⁹ But contemplation does not mean the same thing as the so-called 'mental gazing.' In addition, she claims that to the extent that "the 'philosophic' life is intended to consist of this improbable occupation, it seems neither feasible nor desirable."²⁰

3.6 Richard Kraut

A contemporary British philosopher, Richard Kraut also advocates the dominant or intellectual interpretation of Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia*. His interpretation rightly represents the dominant view of *eudaimonia*. This is how he explains his interpretation of Aristotle's theory:

On my reading of the NE, Aristotle thinks that the ideal life for human beings is one in which we engage in theoretical activity on a regular basis ... But I also believe that according to the NE, we must have many other goods besides contemplation if we are to lead a life in which we are regularly occupied with theoretical studies. Though perfect happiness consists in contemplation alone, that good is just the pinnacle of a large hierarchy of goods, each of which plays a role in promoting the philosophical life. To contemplate over along period of time, we need pleasure, honor, health, financial resources, and so on. Human beings are not gods, for we can engage in contemplation over an extended period of time only by uniting together in communities, and only by providing ourselves with various material resources. Without physical security, health, and like-minded friends, the philosophical life of any normal human being becomes difficult at best.²¹

Furthermore, Aristotle meant that all goods are sought for the sake of the goal of the perfection of happiness to which they are subordinate. The optimum good consists in the limitless pursuit of contemplation. Other goods should be pursued to the extent that they lead to contemplation. So, we naturally do whatever will lead us toward our ultimate end. But there are good and bad actions some of which will lead anywhere but to the ultimate end. Thus, it is misleading to suppose that *all* ends (without exception) are really means for the attainment of the final end or ends. Furthermore, our interests and preferences differ so much that it is doubtful whether we all pursue the same end naturally. An egoistic view of *eudaimonia* may be attributable to Aristotle. In the first book of the *Ethics*,

Aristotle identifies happiness with only one type of good-virtuous activity. I take him to mean by this that happiness consists either in excellent theoretical activity or in excellent practical activity. That is, to lead our lives well, we should make one of these goods our ultimate end, and all other goods should be sought for the sake of one of the highest goals. In Book 1, Aristotle leaves aside the question of whether one of these ultimate ends is a better choice than the other, but in X. 7-8 he argues that a life lived for the sake of philosophical activity is superior to one devoted to moral activity. Accordingly, the best among happy lives is that of a person who regularly contemplates and who chooses all other goods for the sake of contemplation. The second-best life is that of a person who regularly engages in political activity and who pursues all other goals with an eye to this ultimate end."²²

Kraut argues rightly against inclusivism, saying that there is hardly any evidence in the *Ethics* for it. For him, Aristotle equated happiness only with virtuous activity, particularly theoretically virtuous activity. However, Aristotle believed that other goods besides theoretical activity are also good in themselves. It is not the only activity that is good in itself.

The inclusive view seems to have no textual basis. "There simply is no good evidence that in the NE Aristotle identifies happiness with a composite of virtuous activity and other intrinsic goods."²³ For Aristotle, happiness is a single

contemplative activity and not a plurality of some or all choiceworthy activities. The author emphasises his attack on the comprehensive view of *eudaimonia* when he argues that there is no evidence in the first book of the *Ethics* that happiness consists of all intrinsic goods. The inclusive thesis is based on a misinterpretation of a particular passage in the *Ethics*: "All of the other passages in Book I point the other way: far from being an all-inclusive composite, happiness consists in nothing but virtuous activity (either theoretical or practical.)"²⁴ That is, the activity of contemplation. But it ought to be said that it consists in both theoretical as well as practical virtue. According to Kraut,

Aristotle takes himself to have shown in I.2 that the hierarchy of ends terminates and he proposes that we find out what lies at the top of that structure. The possibility that there might be more than one end at the top is kept open, but in I.7 he begins a defence of two closely related kinds of lives, each having one ultimate end. The defence of one of those lives—the life devoted to theoretical activity is taken up in Book X. Both lives are happy, though the political life has certain defects that prevent it from being one of perfect happiness. But none of this should be taken to mean that Aristotle is committed to the thesis that if someone leads a philosophical-political life—a life that seeks to balance these two activities—then he is not living well ... And it should be noticed that even this mixed life is still devoted to one kind of good, namely, virtuous activity. Even so, nothing important hangs on the question whether we describe this mixed life as one that has one ultimate end (virtuous activity) or two (ethical and intellectual activity). What is important is to recognize that a life can be a good one if it has just one ultimate end—provided that this end is some form of virtuous activity—and that a life cannot be the best that is possible for us unless it is devoted to a single ultimate end (contemplation). That complex conclusion is one for which Aristotle is preparing us in I.2, but at that point he has still a long way to go.²⁵

The presentation of the account of the good in the first book of the *Ethics* is consistent with Aristotle's defence of the contemplative life as the good life in the last book. The question is whether Aristotle was right or mistaken in articulating this particular view. According to this thesis he was wrong.

In the first two books, Aristotle sought to answer the question about the good. He sought to find out, in his own words, "what is such that (a) it is desired for itself,

(b) it not desired for the sake of any further good, and (c) all other goods are desired for its sake?"²⁶ He discussed different ways of answering this question and dismissed most of them. For example, he denied that happiness means pleasure, honour, health, wealth, or some other single good. In the first book, the soul's activity in accordance with virtue is the good.²⁷ He tries to confirm this answer. But in the seventh chapter of the first book Aristotle concluded the function argument thus: "the human good turns out to be the soul's activity that expresses virtue ... And if there are more virtues than one, the good will express the best and most complete virtue."²⁸ The last statement shows an apparently indecision on the matter whether there are more than one virtue. In fact, Aristotle divided virtues into theoretical and practical virtues. That is, virtues of the intellect or intellectual virtues which are acquired through teaching and virtues of character that are acquired by habituation. Since there are more than one kind of virtue, one of them, namely, theoretical virtue turns out to be the best one; it is the best and most complete virtue, as shown in the last book of the *Ethics*.

As a result of Aristotle's apparent indecision, a certain controversy has arisen as to whether the human good is the activity of the soul in accordance with only one virtue or with many virtues. At that stage (in the first book) Aristotle was still noncommittal on this matter. Some scholars interpret the passage quoted above as evidence in favour of the dominant view of *eudaimonia* while others use it to defend the inclusive thesis, depending on whether they think that *eudaimonia* is the soul's rational activity in accordance with a single virtue or many virtues.

The dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia* regards the phrase 'the best and most perfect virtue' as a clear reference to theoretical wisdom. In the *Ethics*, it does

not mean a combination of practical and theoretical wisdom though this is actually the best good in as far as this thesis is concerned. However, this does not mean "that according to NE I there is just one kind of happy life for human beings - the theoretical life discussed in X. 7-8."²⁹ These chapters say "that although perfect happiness consists solely in contemplation, one can also be happy (to a secondary degree) if one lives a life devoted to ethical activity as one's ultimate end ... perfect happiness consists in exercising theoretical wisdom (the most perfect virtue), while a less than perfect happiness consists in exercising the practical virtues (the ones that are not most perfect.)"³⁰ Alternatively, both theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom are said to be perfect or most perfect, except that the one is basically perfect or most perfect whereas the other is perfect or most perfect secondarily or derivatively. Both of them are

Good ways of leading one's life, but in both of them one is to take one's ultimate end to consist in a single kind of activity, and other ends are to be pursued to the extent that they promote that highest goal. Whether one leads a philosophical or a political life, all goods are to be arranged in a hierarchy: each lower end is for the sake of some better end, which may in turn be desired for the sake of a still higher end. But each of the two hierarchies terminates in a single end, and in fact the two termini are of the same type: they are activities of the part of the soul that has reason. So, I take the NE to be saying every other type of good (everything that is not virtuous activity) is to be desired for the sake of just one type of good - virtuous activity. In Book I, Aristotle leaves aside the question of which sort of virtuous activity - theoretical or practical - is best.³¹

According to the *Ethics*, other goods besides virtuous activity ought to be sought for their sake alone. For it is the best good. And virtuous activity may either be practical or theoretical. "For no matter which of the two goals one adopts as one's ultimate end, one will lead a good life - if one is adequately supplied with other goods, so that one can regularly engage in virtuous activity over the course of a lifetime."³² Thus there are two aspects of the good life or the happy life, that is, the life according to

practical virtue (in which this is the ultimate end pursued in action) as well as the kind of life in which theoretical virtue is the ultimate end. Since theoretical virtue is greater than practical virtue, according to Aristotle, the kind of life in accordance to it is better than the one according to practical virtue. Indeed it is regarded as the best of all kinds of human life. But is it really the best human life? There is no universal agreement on this matter. There is no guarantee that intellectualism is the best kind of life. For there are many kinds of good lives from which one may choose which kind of life one wants to lead. Different people lead different kinds of lives without necessarily seeking to lead one particular kind of life. We all lead different kinds of life and there is probably no particular kind of life that we should all aspire to lead.

The inclusive thesis claims that Aristotle was "saying that happiness is a composite of all the goods that are desirable for themselves: it is not to be equated with virtuous activity alone, for that is not the only good that is desirable in itself."³³ The following passage is frequently used to show that happiness, for Aristotle, was an all-inclusive composite:

We regard something as self-sufficient when all by itself it makes a life choiceworthy and lacking nothing; and that is what we think happiness does.

Moreover, we think happiness is most choiceworthy of all goods, since it is not counted as one good among many. If it were counted as one among many, then, clearly, we think that the addition of the smallest of goods would make it more choiceworthy; for [the smallest good] that is added becomes an extra quantity of goods [so creating a good larger than the original good], and the larger of two goods is always more choiceworthy. [But we do not think any addition can make happiness more choiceworthy; hence it is most choiceworthy.]³⁴

According to the advocates of the inclusive thesis, Aristotle said that happiness is self-sufficient and complete "because it is composed of all that is desirable in itself."³⁵ In this case, it cannot be identified with a single good, namely the activity of virtue, much less with one virtuous activity - the activity of contemplation.

On the contrary, the dominant interpretation states that the conclusion of the function argument "clearly equates the human good with virtuous activity and with that type of good alone."³⁶ The ultimate end is only one type of virtuous activity, namely, contemplation. The dominant interpretation rejects the rival interpretation that purports "that the ultimate end of the best life consists not just in contemplation, but in a composite of many different types of virtuous activities."³⁷ Even if this argument is granted, "the function argument is still equating the human good with virtuous activities and with no other type of good."³⁸ Even Book I is not "treating human happiness as a composite of all intrinsic goods. On such a reading, Aristotle is contradicting himself within a single chapter: first ... he says that happiness is an all-inclusive composite, and then ... he equates it solely with virtuous activity ... that contradiction can be avoided by reinterpreting the first of these two passages."³⁹

According to the *Ethics*, goods are arranged in a hierarchy that terminates in a single ultimate good. That is, each good is pursued for the sake of *eudaimonia*. However, there is a common objection that states that there is no evidence to show that the hierarchy has a single definite end. Kraut suggests that the hierarchy could take four different forms, two of which are illustrated below.

A B C

M N O

X Y Z

(1)

In this case, X is pursued for the sake of M, and the latter is sought for the sake of A. Similarly, Y and N are pursued for the sake of B. Likewise, Z and O are desirable for the sake of C. The three columns are supposed to be alike in the sense that in every

column a lower good is desired for the sake of a higher one. If A, B and C are goods that are desirable in themselves, there can be

No circles and the hierarchy of ends would eventually terminate in something desirable for itself, but that something would not be a *single* good. There would be no one end for the sake of which all subordinate goods are pursued, except in the trivial sense in which we could say that everything else is desirable for the sake of A-B-C. But A, B, and C could be quite diverse: they might be physical pleasure, contemplation, and health. To speak of them as a single end, and to say that everything else is done for the sake of some one good, would be quite artificial.⁴⁰

Aristotle said that in case all ends were sought for the sake of one particular end then that must be the good. Apparently, he was not sure whether the good consisted in one good or many goods. The reason for denying infinite regress in a series of ends is that it would otherwise make our desire empty and vain. Aristotle assumed that it was not a vicious circle and that the endpoint of the chain of ends is desirable for itself. However, he did not establish in Book I that there was only one end of a series of ends. The conditional form of this observation suggests that it is a hypothesis rather than a conclusive argument.

In the first book of the *Ethics*, it is not yet clear whether the good is a single end or a compound of many different ends. It is still possible that it can be either of the two. It is likely that the apex of the hierarchy of ends or a row of multiple ends each of which is desired for its own sake, appears as in the diagram shown above. Nevertheless, the function argument leaves no doubt that the good is a single end for the sake of which all other ends are pursued. Thirdly,

Aristotle's method involves making assumptions that are justified only at some later point in his argument. As he says in I.4, we begin with starting points for which no reasons are given, but we eventually discover something more basic, which can in turn help us better understand our initial assumptions. ... It would not be surprising, then, if I.2 is only putting forward the hypothesis that there is a single ultimate end: Aristotle is confident that the hypothesis will prove fruitful, because he already sees the direction in which his argument is heading. Virtuous activity will turn out to be the ultimate end, and so the proposal that there is only

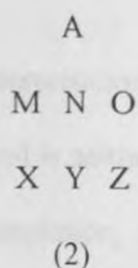
one will eventually be vindicated. ... We cannot expect him to establish in the first few lines of I.2 that the ultimate end is unitary. We must take seriously his plea that we not seek justification right from the start, but patiently wait for his argument to unfold.

In fact, on my reading, we have to wait until X.7-8 until we fully understand why the ultimate end should not be a multiplicity. For even if we agree with Aristotle that happiness consists solely in virtuous activity, we can ask why we should not regard theoretical and practical virtue as equally desirable, and take our ultimate end to consist in equal parts of intellectual and moral activity. Aristotle's argument against taking our highest good to consist in this particular mixture is postponed until Book X, and in Book I he rests content with a more modest conclusion: the ultimate end is not a composite of honor, pleasure, virtuous activity, and other goods that are desired for themselves. It consists in virtuous activity alone.⁴¹

In Book I, Aristotle believed that he had demonstrated that the hierarchy of goods ended somewhere. But as Geach argues, Aristotle seems to commit a fallacy when he moves from the premise "every series whose successive terms stand in the relation *chosen for the sake of* has a last term" to the conclusion that "there is something that is the last term of every series whose successive terms stand in the relation *chosen for the sake of*."⁴² Anthony Kenny too does emphasise the fact that "such a transition is clearly fallacious. Every road leads somewhere: it does not follow that there is somewhere-e.g. Rome - to which all roads lead."⁴⁴ What remains to be determined is its terminus.

The possibility that there might be more than one end at the top is kept open, but in I.7 he begins a defence of two closely related kinds of lives, each having one ultimate end. The defence of one of those lives-the life devoted to ethical activity-is continued throughout the remainder of Book I, and the defence of the life devoted to theoretical activity is taken up in Book X. Both lives are happy, though the political life has certain defects that prevent it from being one of perfect happiness. ... what is important is to recognize that a life can be a good one if it has just one ultimate end-provided that this end is some form of virtuous activity-but that a life cannot be the best that is possible for us unless it is devoted to a single ultimate end(contemplation). That complex conclusion is one for which Aristotle is preparing us in I.2, but at that point he still has a long way to go.⁴⁵

In Book I.2 of the *Ethics*, Aristotle assumed that the terminus of the hierarchy of goods is a single good. According to the dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia*, the structure of the hierarchy of goods takes the following form:



In this diagram, A is the only good in itself that is not desired or desirable for the sake of anything else though all other goods are desired or desirable for its sake. However, M, N, and O are both desirable in themselves and desirable for the sake of A as well. X, Y, and Z are desirable as means to the higher goods, that is M, N, O and finally A, in that order.

Obviously, in Book I.2 there is nothing to play the role of the ultimate end of human decision. The good is the most desirable end and all other goods have something to contribute to it: "for the extent of their contribution will determine the extent to which they should be pursued. One such good, he will argue, is activity in accordance with ethical virtue; an even better one is contemplation. We can look to either one, and determine the extent to which subordinate goods should be pursued. And in using them as standards, we will see why the goods we take for granted - friendship, pleasure, honor, and so on - are truly desirable. This is the project Aristotle carries forward throughout the rest of the NE."⁴⁶

In Book I.2 politics is said to be beneficial to everyone who understands it as it is "the science that studies the ultimate end of human life."⁴⁷ That is, the good.

But after having examined this subject, some do best to devote their lives to the understanding of other subjects: they take to heart the conclusion that the best life is philosophical, and they have the ability to lead such a life. Others do best to stay with politics, pursuing the questions investigated in Aristotle's other practical writings and exercising civic leadership in light of his conclusions. In either case, one will be pursuing a single ultimate end. And the ultimate end that the political leader seeks for himself and for others is not contemplation but moral activity- not because moral activity is better, but because it is the highest good that all citizens can achieve.⁴⁸

But according to the inclusive interpretation, happiness is a composite of all intrinsically desirable goods. The good is neither contemplation nor virtuous activity. So all other goods, including contemplation, ought to be pursued for the sake of happiness. It is an all-inclusive good. As a composite whole, happiness is superior to any of its individual parts.⁴⁹

J. L. Ackrill is the best known proponent of this interpretation of Book I. He bases his interpretation on passages in Book I.1-2 and Book I.7. However, Kraut believes that Ackrill has misread these passages. He argues that "this seriously weakens his attempt to show that in I.7 Aristotle took happiness to be an all-inclusive composite."⁵⁰

There is a big difference between the causal for-the-sake-of relation that Ackrill tries to explain and the one Kraut has discussed. It is

Illustrated by means of the examples Aristotle uses in I.1: certain activities are pursued for the sake of the products they yield, and those products in turn are desired for the sake of further ends they promote. But the for-the-sake of relation that Ackrill is talking about is a relation between part and whole. Happiness is the whole for the sake of which each of its components is desired, and to say that one good is desired for the sake of another, in this sense, does not mean that it causally contributes to that further good. Contemplation is-in this new sense-for the sake of happiness, without causing it to come into being. And if I am asked why I want this good, then I should reply, according to Ackrill's reading, that I want it both for itself and because it is one of the goods of which happiness is composed. Ackrill does not hold that this for-the-sake of relation is the only one present in the NE. His claim is that both sorts of relations can be found in Aristotle's work. Intrinsic goods are for the sake of happiness in one way, and mere means are for the sake of their ends in another.⁵¹

The causal relation advocated by Ackrill is a mysterious one. For the components of the composite of happiness seem not to have any connecting link. They are merely conglomerated within the compound of happiness. The good must be the most inclusive good, since the more the intrinsic goods it contains, the better it becomes. "Now, if there need be no connection between any one component of happiness and any other, then there is no explanatory value in the statement that some single good is desirable for the sake of the larger whole ... since that relation is mysterious, we should not attribute it to Aristotle without strong textual reason for doing so."⁵²

According to the dominant interpretation, Aristotle was saying that, at best, ethical virtues ought to be pursued for the sake of contemplation. The distinction between "more and less perfect virtues" is based "on the assumption that ethical virtue is to be desired in part because it promotes theoretical virtue."⁵³ However, according to the inclusive thesis pursuing A for the sake of B means that the former is a part of the latter.

Akrill claims that Aristotle committed a fallacy in the passage at 1094a18-22. For he seemed to move "from the claim (a) that every activity aims at some end, to the conclusion (b) that there is some one end aimed at by every activity. (This is the same fallacy that would be committed by someone who argued that since everyone has a father, there is some one person who is the father of everyone.)"⁵⁴ According to Ackrill's reading of Book I.2 Aristotle showed here that "there is some one good for the sake of which all others are pursued."⁵⁵ For him, it is 'possible to acquit' Book I.2 of this fallacy when "we realize that he is thinking in terms of this for-the-sake-of relation."⁵⁶

Prior to his presentation of the function argument in Book I.7, Aristotle granted "the possibility that the best life will have diverse ultimate ends."⁵⁷ However, if this

is the case, then there are as many different conceptions of the best life as there are different ultimate ends. But there can only be one ultimate end in the same series of ends; there cannot really be more than one ultimate end, in the true sense of the word 'ultimate,' like one terminus of a railway or road from one direction and not many termini. Aristotle's students took it far more for granted than contemporary readers "that a well-lived life is organized around some one final end."⁵⁸

In Book I.2 Aristotle set out to find out the supposed good at the top of the hierarchy of goods. He did not claim that he had shown that there was only one good at the top of the hierarchy. "... He and his audience treated that as a natural and widespread assumption. Since it is a belief that Aristotle eventually tries to confirm, we have every reason to acquit him of fallacy in I.2. He rejects the possibility of an endless hierarchy, draws on his audience's willingness to believe that some one good is at the top, and focuses our attention on the question of what that good is."⁵⁹ Ackrill uses this passage to defend his inclusive interpretation. According to him, the characterisation of politics, in this passage, as the study of the good commits Aristotle to the inclusive thesis. For Aristotle described politics as the ruling science whose end embraces the ends of all other subordinate sciences.⁶⁰

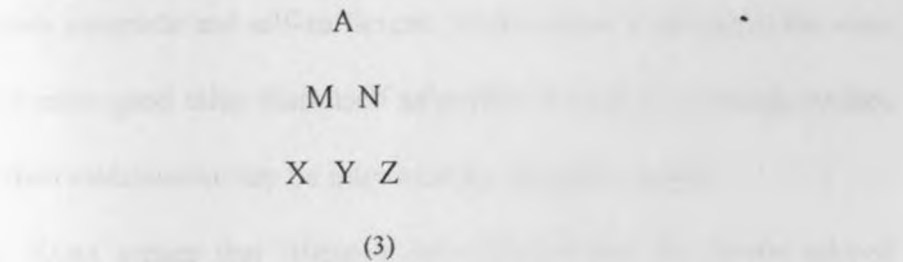
But this alone does not prove that the good as the ultimate end is a compound of many intrinsic goods. Indeed, the points that Aristotle made about politics and the ultimate end favour the dominant interpretation rather than the inclusive view of Ackrill. Ackrill uses the claim that the end of politics embraces the ends of all other crafts as the evidence for his inclusive interpretation of the good. For he takes Aristotle's conception of the good to be a composite as opposed to a single good. For him, however, *eudaimonia* is not the composite of all kinds of goods; it is the

composite of intrinsic goods. Yet the end of political science, namely, the good, embraces other intrinsic ends in the sense that these are pursued for its sake. Contrary to Ackrill's suggestion, it does not embrace them in the sense that they are its ingredients.

Kraut rightly observes that Aristotle's suggestion at the beginning of Book I.2 is that "the good is an end which is desired for itself and for the sake of which other ends are desired ... This means that there are other ends besides the ultimate end; and so the ultimate end cannot be inclusive of all intrinsic and instrumental goods."⁶¹ In Book I.1-2 there is no mention of the end of politics. The ultimate end is stated for the first time in the function argument in Book I.7. According to the dominant interpretation, Aristotle said that the best and the second-best choices for the ultimate end are contemplation and ethical virtuous activity, respectively. In this case, these goods seem to be quite distinct. But this does not mean that they are mutually exclusive. If they are not mutually exclusive, then there is a possibility that they are interrelated in a certain way. So, contemplation may involve ethical virtuous activity and vice versa.

Aristotle was seeking a certain single good that is the ultimate end of all other goods. But is it right to identify happiness only with a single good, as he supposed? It is important to identify it with the right good. This raises another question: what is really the right good? According to Kraut, "Conceptions of happiness that identify it with a single end are therefore perfectly in order: their success or failure will depend on the kind of good they propose as the ultimate end. This does not mean that some single good must succeed; it may turn out that all single goods are poor candidates for the ultimate end, and that happiness must instead be identified with a complex

combination of goods. But the best way to point out whether this is true is to examine the leading single-end candidates, and see whether any can plausibly be regarded as the ultimate end."⁶² Kraut denies that ... there is a possibility that Aristotle still thought that there were many ultimate ends. It is a foregone conclusion that the end is only one. For Aristotle stated "that the end of each craft is different, and since there are many crafts, there must be many ends. When he says 'if they are many,' he must be talking about the top of the hierarchy. He is trying to determine where this hierarchy terminates, and is admitting that this highest level might be a row of several goods rather than some single end. Evidently, he did not intend to prove in i.1-2 that the hierarchy of goods has just one end at the top. That is a conclusion he has yet to reach."⁶³ There are two possibilities: there is either only one end or more than one end on top of the hierarchy of goods. Whatever the case may be, the good must occupy the top position in that hierarchy as illustrated below:



As the ultimate end, A is an intrinsic end that is never sought for the sake of anything else but itself. M and N are intermediate goods that are sought for themselves as well as for the sake of A. But X, Y and Z are extrinsic goods that are not sought for themselves but only for the sake of higher goods such as M and N. They are ultimately desirable for the sake of A. They are means to the latter.

Aristotle discussed non-perfect, perfect, and most perfect ends.⁶⁴ The most perfect good is happiness. The other goods such as "honor, pleasure, and

understanding are not unconditionally perfect, for they are desirable for the sake of further ends. They are more perfect, however, than lower goods like wealth and instruments. Happiness appears to be a different thing since these goods are not at the apex of the hierarchy of goods yet it is.

Akrill opposes this interpretation of the three kinds of ends. For him, happiness is the end that comprises every intrinsic good. A good is said to be more perfect than another one if it contains more goods than the other one. And happiness is taken to be the most perfect good because it is the composite of all intrinsic goods. Akrill thinks that the concept of *eudaimonia* is inclusive of all goods that are desirable in themselves. This is his conception of *eudaimonia*. Although he tries to attribute it to Aristotle, the latter really never thought of *eudaimonia* like this. Indeed, *eudaimonia* is the highest good precisely because it is perfect and cannot be improved upon by any additional good, not because it contains enough goods already, but because it is already complete and self-sufficient. *Eudaimonia* is unique in the sense that it requires no extra good other than itself to perfect it since it is already perfect. But goods other than *eudaimonia* may be improved by additional goods.

However, Kraut argues that "there is no evidence that the for-the-sake-of relation is something treated as a relation between individual goods and a larger composite that includes them."⁶⁵ Indeed, it is difficult to conceptualise the comprehensiveness of a good. The idea of one good that contains other goods is rather strange. This is, at best, a figurative manner of speaking. What does it mean to say that one good contains or includes another one? Individual goods are concrete and discrete. They are not containers of other goods.

Different alternatives are examined in Book I.5 but none of them is rejected on the basis of the fact that it is only a unitary good. Aristotle was certainly looking for some single perfect good that constituted happiness, a good that was not a mere means to anything else. He took the most perfect good not to be a means to any further end, but as a good that is the end of all other goods or ends.

But according to Ackrill, Aristotle made "a clear conceptual point," ... when he says that we choose honor and several other goods for the sake of happiness."⁶⁶ The unavailability of the alternative to his interpretation is the reason he gives for thinking that it is correct. Either Aristotle is making a 'conceptual point' or "a rash and probably false empirical claim."⁶⁷ But he could as well have made a conceptual as well as an empirical point. On Kraut's reading, however, "Aristotle is making certain empirical assumptions."⁶⁸

Aristotle's observation that the best virtuous activity is the good implies that it is our ultimate end. Since it is not only a good but the good, it has all the three properties of an ultimate end: "it is desirable in itself, it is not desirable for the sake of anything else, and every other end should be desired for its sake."⁶⁹ That is the end that Aristotle was investigating in Book I. The function argument is an attempt to explain what it is. At the top of the hierarchy of ends there is some virtuous activity.

According to the dominant interpretation, Aristotle took theoretical wisdom as the best and the most perfect virtue. Contemplation is the good because it is the only activity according to the best or the most perfect virtue, namely, theoretical wisdom. There is a distinction between happiness proper and secondary happiness in Book X. Although the life of political activity is also a happy life since it consists in the exercise of practical virtuous activities, properly speaking, perfect happiness can only

be found in contemplation. The indecision concerning which of these two kinds of life is superior to the other in Book I is finally resolved in the tenth book where the philosophical life is said to be the happiest life or the perfect life, in the true sense of the word. However, the political life is also the happiest life. It is also a perfect life. Nevertheless, it is the happiest life in a secondary or a derivative way. Both lives are well-lived happy lives. But perfect happiness, in the real sense, consists only in the contemplative activity of the philosopher. The theoretical wisdom of the philosopher is the good or the ultimate end since it consists in contemplation as the activity according to the most perfect virtue. In Book I, the good is only described as an activity according to virtue, leaving open the question as to what that activity is. At last, it is identified as contemplation, in Book X. Furthermore, moral activity is apparently depicted as the penultimate end while intellectual activity is portrayed as the ultimate end of humans. The distinction between the two activities seems arbitrary. Both of them are human activities. As such, one can engage in both activities at the same time. There seems to be no clear justification for distinguishing between intellectual activity and moral activity. One may be a moral intellectual. Ideally, one ought to be an intellectual who is a morally upright individual.

Aristotle denied that moral activity constituted perfect happiness. However, he also seemed to be saying that ethical activity did somehow constitute happiness. In fact, he believed "that to be happy to a secondary degree, one must lead a life in which all other ends are pursued for the sake of activity in accordance with ethical virtue. It is perfectly correct then, to say that the function argument does not commit Aristotle to the thesis that happiness consists in contemplation alone. Contemplation is the only activity being referred to when he speaks of 'the best and most perfect'

virtue, but we should not infer from this that, in his opinion, no other kind of good should be identified with happiness."⁷⁰ Book I emphasises the point that the exercise of perfect virtue constitutes happiness.

On the contrary, the function argument shows that the good is an activity of the soul according to the best virtue. According to the dominant interpretation of Aristotle's doctrine, the less perfect goods are practical virtues such as temperance and generosity. The fact that perfect virtue is referred to repeatedly reflects the conviction that the function argument can be used to prove that the exercise of moral virtues constitutes a secondary form of happiness. For "perfect happiness consists in exercising the most perfect virtue, whereas secondary happiness consists in exercising virtues that are not perfect without qualification."⁷¹ The function argument plays a double role; for it involves a defence of the political and the philosophical lives. Unacceptable consequences do not follow from the identification of the best and most perfect virtue with theoretical wisdom. Once we see how the function argument is supposed to serve as a defence of two kinds of lives, we may understand why Aristotle concluded that the good was the exercise of the most perfect virtue.

Aristotle wrote in Book I that the most perfect end was "the one for the sake of which all others were chosen."⁷² This account of perfection is the only one that is offered in Book I, and it would be absurd not to use it in the attempt to understand what the most perfect virtue is. If ends have more or less perfection depending on where they stand in a hierarchy, then Aristotle must have meant that virtues too can be arranged in a hierarchy. Accordingly, a virtue that is not perfect is one that is desirable only on condition that it promotes some further virtue. A virtue that is perfect is one that is desirable in-itself. And the most perfect virtue is the one that is

not desirable for the sake of any other, though all of the other virtues are desirable for its sake. That virtue is contemplation in Aristotle's view.

Ackrill thinks that the highest virtue is made up of all virtues. Unlike Kraut, he does not take it to be the single good of theoretical wisdom; he believes that it is a composite of both practical and theoretical virtues. "But this is a conclusion we cannot accept, since we have rejected his way of understanding Aristotle's trichotomy of ends. There is no justification for taking the most perfect virtue to be a composite of all virtues, unless Aristotle has already introduced the idea of a composite good, and has treated degrees of perfection in terms of greater inclusiveness. And this he has not done."⁷³ Some virtues are perfect and not most perfect.

I agree with Kraut but disagree with Ackrill. Kraut assumes that Aristotle took the best and most perfect virtue as a single virtue, that is, theoretical virtue or contemplation, while Ackrill regards Aristotle's conception of the good as a composite of all virtues. Aristotle identified the good with the rational and the virtuous activity of the soul alone.

Aristotle's reference to the good as an activity in accordance with the best and most perfect virtue implies that he identified it with one virtue. "This of course does not commit him to the view that someone leading the best life needs only one virtue. Rather, his claim is only that the activity at the pinnacle of human goods is the exercise of some one virtue; many other virtues are needed, but they occupy lower positions in the hierarchy."⁷⁴

Although Aristotle identified the good with only one virtue, he also thought that it was possible to be happy by acting according to the less perfect virtues. It is for this reason that Aristotle pointed out in Book I.8 that happiness consists in the best

activity or the best activities. And in Book X.7-8 he made a distinction between perfect happiness and secondary happiness. The latter is identified with the second-best activity while the former is identified with the best activity.

The virtue Aristotle refers to at the conclusion of the function argument - the one that is "best and most perfect"-is some single virtue whose superlative nature consists partly in its relation to the other virtues: all other virtues are desirable for its sake, and though it is desirable in itself, it is not desirable for the sake of any other virtue. Aristotle does not say which virtue it is because he has postponed discussion of the contemplative life. But he can hardly be blamed for not saying which virtue is best until he has a chance to discuss them all. By referring to some one virtue that is best, he alerts us to the fact that some ranking of the virtues will be required before we can determine which life is best.⁷⁵

Perfect happiness consists in activity according to theoretical wisdom while secondary happiness consists in activity in accordance with practical (or moral) wisdom. In the final analysis, Aristotle made it clear that the political and the philosophical lives are both happy though the latter is happier than the former. Indeed, he regarded it as the happiest life.

In the rest of Book I.7, there is no mention of the best, the most perfect virtue or the life of contemplation. It is in Book X.7-8 that Aristotle concluded that the best virtue is theoretical virtue and that the philosophic life that is devoted to its pursuit was the happiest life. However, in the first book he was concerned with the virtues and the activities of the second-best life. He used the function argument to defend the best and the second-best kinds of life, that is, the moral life as well as the intellectual life.

Kraut denies that in Book I.8-11 Aristotle said that happiness consisted of all intrinsic goods. For him, Aristotle identified it only with a single good, that is, the activity in accordance with virtue. All goods can be divided into three categories, namely, external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul and the latter are said to be the best goods.⁷⁶ According to Aristotle, the good was an activity of the

soul; it was not an external good. The good is happiness or virtuous activity. Hence there are two kinds of virtuous activity or two forms of happiness, that is, perfect happiness and secondary happiness.

Aristotle thought that it was unthinkable that the end of life should be determined by fortune.⁷⁷ It is not a matter of changing fortunes or chance. Human life has a certain design, a certain plan and purpose. We do not act purposelessly; we always act according to some purpose(s) that we would like to achieve. Our purposes seem to be ordered in an ascending order with the highest of them all at the top of the hierarchy. In this case, it maybe that this is a fixed order, such that every good occupies its rightful place above or below the adjacent good(s). But it is questionable whether such a rigid hierarchy of ends really exists.

All other goods in human life serve the purpose of promoting theoretical virtuous activity as the highest good. Happiness does not depend on good fortune though good fortune may equip one with certain necessary requirements in a happy life. This does not mean that good luck produces happiness itself. Happiness requires an indeterminate exercise of a great deal of personal effort during a lengthy but an unspecified duration during which the necessary virtues are acquired. We are not told how great such individual drive should be or how many years constitute the happy life as our ultimate purpose. We are simply told that the happy life requires a great effort and lasts long.

Happiness or virtuous activity does not depend on goods such as honour, health, wealth, and friends. Although a happy human life contains a variety of goods, its ultimate goal is not a composite of many different virtuous activities; on the contrary, it consists in only one form of virtuous activity. That is, theoretical virtuous

activity. The ultimate end of life is the end of the happiest life or the life of the most perfect happiness, while the penultimate end of life is the end of the second-best life or the life of secondary happiness. Happiness extends as far as virtuous activity extends. That is, the more one engages in virtuous activity the happier one becomes and vice versa.

The ultimate end of life is not an external good, but a good of the soul.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the alleged arrangement of such diverse goods in a rigid hierarchy seems quite presumptuous. At best, it is only the same category of goods, be it the goods of the soul, or those of the body or external goods, that might be organised in an order of merit though the different categories may also be ordered in a certain way. Even then, there are many ways in which different goods can be arranged, depending on the priority of the person who orders them unless the alleged hierarchy of goods consists of fixed levels of parts like a machine.

According to Aristotle, the unhappy person was one who was involved in an unjust pursuit of goods such as physical pleasure, amusements, wealth and power in the belief that these are the best goods. As an unjust person, he seeks them at all costs and in total disregard of the interests of other people. Unhappiness is the result that ensues when one acts according to the vices that force one to regard these as the best of all available goods. On the contrary, happiness only consists in the two-prong pursuit of the second best and the best goods, viz., moral and intellectual activity.

In Aristotle's view, the fact that virtuous activities control happiness does not mean that they are necessary conditions of happiness. Good luck is also necessary for happiness. For anyone who suffers Priam's kind of misfortune can hardly be called

happy.⁷⁹ Priam was a Homeric character who fell from grace. Although happiness requires other goods apart from virtuous activities, the latter only controls it.

It is one supreme end, namely, virtuous activity, that regulates all intermediate goods as their ultimate end. It is the only good that controls our happiness as it is the only good that constitutes our ultimate end. All subordinate goods are to be regulated by it as the supreme good, that is, their ultimate end. Although both virtuous activities as well as external goods such as friends and wealth are necessary requirements in the good life, human life and human happiness depend on and is controlled by, virtuous activities alone as the sole ultimate end of human life. As the end of the most controlling discipline, it is the controlling good.⁸⁰ Human life and happiness is controlled by virtuous activity. Aristotle's project starts with the search for the ultimate end of human life and ends with its identification with the good as the most controlling good. "In book I, he does not say which virtuous activity is the one that is most in control-for he leaves aside the question of which is most perfect. Eventually, he will adopt a theory in which contemplation is the controlling good of the perfectly happy life, and ethically virtuous activity is the controlling good of the political life."⁸¹

The contemplative faculty seems to be our natural ruler and guide.⁸² It "does not actually give commands or deliberate about how we should act; it is practical reason that does that. Theoretical reason is the natural ruler of one's soul. The exercise of this capacity is the good that has authority or control over all other goods since it is the ultimate end of the best life."⁸³ In the best life, exercising theoretical wisdom is the ultimate end, and practical wisdom subordinates itself to this goal.⁸⁴

As far as the dominant interpretation is concerned, "*the best life* is one in which theoretical wisdom is one's ruler and guide, but that does not mean that it is the only kind of ruler one should acknowledge."⁸⁵ The happy person needs a sufficient supply of equipment too.⁸⁶ He requires external goods as well. However, such goods do not constitute happiness; they are necessary requirements for happiness. The happy person requires them though they are not the ingredients of his happiness. They are not components of happiness because happiness is not a composite of goods: it is a single thing. Happiness has no constituents other than contemplation. It consists only in one virtuous activity. As the good, it is the only end for the sake of which all other ends are pursued. It is the perfect, reasonable activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.

Happiness is not a composite good. But the happy life consists of other goods as well. The ultimate end consists in one of the goods of the soul.⁸⁷ Other goods are means to happiness but they are not parts of happiness.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, they constitute the happy life. External goods such as friends, wealth and power are related to virtuous activity as their ultimate end in the same way that a cause is related to its effect, but not as a part is connected to the whole of which it is a part. There is absolutely no textual evidence in Book I that happiness is 'an all-inclusive composite' of goods that are desirable in themselves. Although a reasonable amount of external goods is required for the promotion of happiness, the latter consists only in the activity of virtue that is either practical or theoretical. The theoretical activity of virtue is called perfect happiness while its practical activity is known as secondary happiness.

Ackrill and other opponents of the dominant interpretation say that happiness should not be identified with any single good such as ethical activity, or contemplation, or honour, or pleasure. For any such good is one among many, and no matter how desirable it may be, it is always less desirable than the combination of that good and some other good no matter how little it might turn out to be. For example, they would insist that contemplation is less desirable than the composite that consists in contemplation plus physical pleasure - assuming that both of them are good in themselves. And so the best good is the largest composite. In other words, happiness is seen as an inclusive composite of all goods that are desirable in themselves. That is probably "why Aristotle says that it is self-sufficient: it makes life 'choiceworthy and in need of nothing.'"⁸⁹ Obviously, everyone who has everything that he requires does not lack anything that he requires. That is, what makes him happy is the fact that he is self-sufficient. In this case, happiness is especially desirable because it is complete and it does not require additional goods to supplement it and to make it a better whole. According to this interpretation, happiness is 'an all-inclusive composite' whole that is in need of nothing to improve on it since it already contains everything it needs.⁹⁰

However, according to the dominant interpretation, perfect happiness can only be equated with perfect virtuous activity of the rational part of the soul. Perfect happiness and secondary happiness both consist in excellent theoretical and practical activities, respectively. Although these lives have many other intrinsic goods apart from excellent activity, the goods in question are not contents of happiness. They are subordinate to it. Thus, there is a hierarchy of goods at the top of which there is

happiness. Contrary to the doctrine of inclusivism, it is not the case that happiness is identical with the hierarchy as a whole.

As a single good, happiness has no components; nor is it a single compound good. This is the dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia*. Scholars do not argue only about how Aristotle used a certain word; the more important question is what he took the best kind of life to be. He held that the more happiness a life has, the better a life it is. For him, the happiest life was the best life. However, everyone cannot agree with him on what he took as the happiest and, therefore, the best life. Everyone seems to have his or her own idea of the best life and the happiest life. And there is no way of telling which one of the different conceptions is the correct one!

However, according to the inclusive interpretation, the best life is not the one that has the greatest possible amount of some single good. Ackrill regards it as the one that has the appropriate amount of each component of happiness. Aristotle endorsed a simple formula: those who have more contemplation also have more happiness, for contemplation is perfect happiness. Ackrill thinks that there is no way of reconciling the treatment of happiness in Book I and Book X. This is the controversial passage: "(a) the self-sufficient we posit as that which when taken by itself makes life choiceworthy and in need of nothing. Such we think happiness to be ... (b) furthermore, it is the most choiceworthy of all, without being counted in addition-being counted in addition it is obviously more choiceworthy {when taken} with the least of goods. For what is added on is an increase of goods, and of goods the greatest is always more choiceworthy."⁹¹ Although Kraut criticises Ackrill's interpretation, he says that he is in partial agreement with him. For he too takes (b) to be putting forward an argument in the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*.

If happiness is merely one good among many, then, it would be better to have it plus something else than to have it alone. For more goods are better than fewer. According to the inclusive conception of happiness, a person who is happy is not as well off as someone who has happiness and some further good. Our highest aim, according to this way of thinking, would not only be to be happy, but happiness plus all the other intrinsic goods. And that simply is not what anyone in his right mind wants to say about happiness. We take that good to be most desirable in a special way: it is not only a good, however valuable; rather it is the sort of good that cannot be improved upon by being counted in addition to other goods.

Once you have the greatest amount of happiness that settles the matter: there are no other goods that can make one's life better. Ackrill and others infer from this way of reading Aristotle's argument that he was identifying happiness not with any one good such as contemplation but with the composite of all intrinsic goods. He seems to be reading his own conception of happiness into Aristotle's conception of happiness. But Kraut says that there is no evidence that Aristotle did that. Kraut denies that the argument above commits Aristotle to the inclusive view. On the contrary, he attributes to him the view that happiness is not subject to improvement by the addition of any other good not because it contains all necessary goods, but because it is characterised by the optimum amount of a single good, the virtuous, rational activity of the soul. Since happiness consists in virtuous activity alone, the addition of something other than virtuous activity to virtuous activity does not produce more happiness; only more virtuous activity leads to more happiness. There cannot be an increment in happiness on account of an increment of goods other than itself. This is the correct interpretation of Aristotle's conception of happiness.

As Kraut rightly admits, "this passage puts constraints on any adequate conception of happiness: the good or goods with which happiness is identified must not be subject to improvement through combination with others. But I do not find Aristotle saying that this condition of adequacy can be met only by identifying happiness with the composite of all intrinsic goods."⁹² In this case, happiness is identifiable with one or more goods. Ackrill believes that Aristotle identified it with many goods while Kraut maintains that he did not do that, since there is a great deal of evidence that Aristotle equated happiness with virtuous activity alone.

Furthermore, as far as Anthony Kenny's interpretation of Aristotle's conception of happiness is concerned, Aristotle insisted that happiness was most worthy of choice only in the limited sense that when it is compared with any other single good, it can be seen to be more desirable. Happiness cannot be improved upon by the addition of any other good for it is already complete and self-sufficient. But when we multiply other goods the resulting bundle is expected to be better than the initial good. Accordingly, Kenny thinks that Aristotle was putting this constraint on the single-most desirable good there was. So conceived, the good turns out to be contemplation, for virtuous activities are the best goods and contemplation is the highest virtuous activity. But on Kenny's reading, Aristotle gladly admitted that the sum of this one end plus any other end is better than contemplation alone. The fact that it is subject to improvement does not disqualify it from being happiness because it is understood from the start that happiness is made more desirable by the addition of any further good.

On the contrary, that is not Aristotle's view! Other goods may be improved upon. But happiness cannot be improved upon. For it is an end in itself. It is

complete and self-sufficient. It lacks nothing. It is the sole good of the soul that can make a life worth choosing without qualification. Other goods apart from happiness become better with the addition of more goods. Happiness is "most choiceworthy of all goods, since it is not counted as one good among many. If it were counted as one among many, then, clearly, we think that the addition of the smallest of goods would make it more choiceworthy; for (the smallest good) that is added becomes an extra quality of goods (so creating a good larger than the original good), and the larger of two goods is always more choiceworthy. (But we do not think any addition can make happiness more choiceworthy; hence it is most choiceworthy.) happiness, then, is apparently something complete and self-sufficient, since it is the end of the things pursued in action."⁹³

Kraut is right in rejecting Kenny's interpretation. He says that it is unacceptable and unorthodox. Happiness is the good and the good is that for the sake of which we do all that we do. Accordingly, we cannot take 'the choiceworthy passage' to be saying that happiness can be improved upon by being combined with other goods.

Aristotle was saying quite clearly that happiness was the most worthy of choice good in the special sense that it could not be improved upon through a combination with other goods. For if it could be improved upon, then it would become more worthy of choice when even the least of goods was added to it. Consequently the composite would be better than happiness alone. But that is absurd if happiness is really the best or the most worthy of choice good. As the most worthy of choice good, happiness lacks, and is in need of, nothing. Aristotle explained the meaning of *eudaimonia* as a concept before he could present his own conception of

eudaimonia. But he denied that it was obviously true that all goods that are desirable in themselves constitute *eudaimonia*. The latter has no constituents other than contemplation; it is identical with contemplation alone. If the inclusive thesis was true, Aristotle could not have regarded the happiness of gods as the ideal of human happiness, for they lack goods other than contemplation.

Aristotle claimed that the gods were the happiest beings.⁹⁴ Contemplation is thought to be their sole activity. They do not engage in any other activity. This is a highly questionable assumption. For it is impossible to establish whether the so-called gods contemplate or not, let alone to prove their existence beyond reasonable doubt. They do not take part in ethical activity either. Their happiness is supreme. And their lives have the maximum amount of contemplation. If it were conceptually true that happiness is a composite of every intrinsic good, then it would be equally true that they are the components of the happiest life too. However, Aristotle did not advance the inclusive thesis.

Kraut argues that Ackrill's interpretation of the 'self-sufficiency and most-choiceworthy passages' is incompatible with Aristotle's identification of happiness with virtuous activity alone in Book I. But there are two kinds of virtuous activity, viz. theoretical and practical, virtuous activity. Kraut takes Aristotle to be saying that happiness or the good is what lies at the tip of the hierarchy of ends in which the lower ends serve as means to the higher ones and all of them are means to the good itself. The good is not a compound of intrinsic ends but the summit of all kinds of ends. The good does not contain perfect ends like honour, virtue, and pleasure nor does it include the ends for which they are desired. Admittedly, Aristotle was aware of the possibility that happiness might have been a composite of many goods. For he

observed that *"if there is some end of all actions, this would be the good achievable by action; but if there are many {it would be} these"*⁹⁵ Since the second alternative was not viable, Aristotle settled for the first option.

Kraut believes that his interpretation is advantageous in the sense that it demonstrates that there is no conflict between the view expressed in the 'most choice-worthy' passage and identifying happiness with the single good of virtuous activity. Aristotle's theology is quite compatible with his practical philosophy. The gods enjoy perfect happiness even though they lack other goods since happiness depends on contemplation alone. If happiness includes as many goods as possible, then divine happiness would not be regarded as the standard of human happiness, for they do not engage in the many activities that people engage in. Indeed, if happiness were an inclusive end, men would be happier than the gods in this case. One does not become less happy on account of the lack of goods other than virtuous activity. Aristotle conceived of happiness as the most choiceworthy good, for intermediate goods could not supplement or improve it.

According to the interpretation of Ackrill, even the smallest intrinsic good is enough to lessen the amount of happiness if it is lacking from the compound of happiness that contains all intrinsic goods. Thus each good has a place in our lives. But as far as the dominant interpretation goes, happiness increases or decreases according to the degree of virtuous activity alone. The more one engages in virtuous activity, the happier one becomes and the lesser one is involved in virtuous activity, the less happy one becomes. Since happiness depends only on virtuous activity, it is not enhanced nor diminished by the absence or presence of goods other than itself in one's self.

Akrill equates 'the best possible good' with 'the largest composite of intrinsic goods.' On the contrary, Aristotle himself thought that the good differed from any other good in the sense that it was the most complete and self-sufficient end. Thus happiness as the human good cannot be improved upon by combining it with any extra good. That is the message of the 'most choiceworthy' passage.

The argument for inclusiveness takes contemplation to be a mere good whereas Aristotle took it to be the final good. Only virtuous activity constitutes happiness. There is no better good than happiness. Indeed happiness cannot be improved upon by the addition of any good. "Since the good is whatever lies at the top of the hierarchy of ends-whether the top is simple or complex - goods occupying lower rows cannot be added to the pinnacle to form a superior composite."⁹⁶ On the contrary, according to Aristotle, the good was simple and not complex.

Pleasure is a good whose addition to some intrinsically desirable thing other than the good makes the result better than the original good. But it is not the good since it can be improved upon yet the good cannot be improved upon. In Plato's view the best human life is a mixed life of pleasure as well as understanding.⁹⁷ Even if the good life is a mixed life, this does not necessarily mean that the ultimate end of life is also a mixed end. Since pleasure and worthwhile activity are necessarily connected, it must be an ingredient of the good life. Aristotle wrote that taking interest in a particular activity makes it better in the way it is done.⁹⁸ He regarded activity in accordance with virtue as the most pleasant activity.

3.7 Anthony Kenny

Anthony Kenny, for his part, compares and contrasts the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics* together with Books I-VII, which they have in common, in terms

of their discussion of *eudaimonia*. There are essential, structural as well as substantial differences and similarities between the two. For instance, the former presents a dominant conception of *eudaimonia* while the latter articulates a comprehensive or an inclusive view of *eudaimonia*. He accepts the dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia*. But if the same author wrote these treatises, they ought to present the same point of view, unless different authors with different points of view wrote them, if not, then their author might have been confused. But for Kenny, "The NE sees happiness as constituted essentially by the contemplative activity of *nous*: this is the only happiness really worthy of the name, and the moral virtue is a second-rate kind of happiness. In the EE, on the other hand, happiness consists in the ideal functioning of every part of the soul: the activity of contemplation is only one, admittedly the highest one, among a family of activities which constitute the happy life."⁹⁹ There is a disagreement among scholars as to which of the two conceptions of happiness is advocated in the books that are common to both treatises. The implication is that the *Nichomachean Ethics* does not appear to form a coherent treatise but a disjointed book consisting of three different parts. Not only is the *Nichomachean Ethics* different from the *Eudaimian Ethics*, but there are also differences as well as similarities among its beginning, the middle as well as its final part. Yet the same author arguably, wrote both works. In that case, their author is inconsistent. It is unlikely that an author of such a great genius as Aristotle could fail to distinguish two different conceptions of the same idea in two different works, let alone within the same work! But still that is humanly possible since 'it is human to err.'

As far as the conception of happiness in the controversial books is concerned, their view is said to be generally closer to the *Eudemian Ethics* than the *Nichomachean Ethics* though this is not quite clear, for they are similar to both books in certain aspects. This suggests that they originally belonged to the former and that they were later incorporated in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, assuming that the latter came later than the former. Indeed, there is another controversy among scholars not only about the authorship of the two treatises, but also about their historical origin and therefore that of the common books. But that is not my concern here.

The *Nichomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics* are said to differ also in terms of their structure. The latter begins with a discussion of two questions: a theoretical question, 'what is the good life and how is it caused?' and a practical one, 'what goal in life should I pursue'. These questions are obviously interrelated though they are not the same. Happiness is seen as an intrinsic end comprising every moral and intellectual virtue, the best of which is pleasure since it consists in the cultivation of all virtues. Probably virtues can be enumerated. Thus happiness is an "activity of complete life in accordance with complete virtue."¹⁰⁰

Again, the *Eudemian Ethics*, commences with the discussion of happiness before discussing the good while the *Nichomachean Ethics* starts with the discussion of the good before proceeding to the discussion of happiness as the good. In this case, it is claimed that the latter is more Platonic than the former in giving priority to the concept of the good over happiness. Not everything that comes first like a firstborn is necessarily more important than whatever follows it. The first idea to feature in any discussion is not always the most important of all ideas. Sometimes the most important idea may appear at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a

particular work depending on the structural organisation preferred by its author. There is no conventional and strict rule about this matter.

However, to the extent that the *Eudemian Ethics* deals with the function of the soul while the *Nicomachean Ethics* is concerned with that of man, the former seems to express a more philosophical and Platonic view than the latter as far as Kenny is concerned. Further, the first book of the latter differs most importantly from the first two books of the former. The latter "identifies happiness with a single dominant end, the activity of the highest virtue; whereas the former views happiness as an inclusive end, the activity of all the virtues of the rational soul in the broadest sense."¹⁰¹ However, unlike Ackrill, he denies that the first book of the latter presents an inclusive view of *eudaimonia*.

In Ackrill, the alleged difference between the first and the last books within the *Nicomachean Ethics* is apparently the same as the perceived contrast, in Kenny, between the latter and the *Eudemian Ethics* taken as a whole. According to Ackrill, the first book and the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are said to present an inclusive and a dominant view of happiness, respectively. Similarly, in Kenny, the latter as a whole and the *Eudemian Ethics* in general are seen as presenting a dominant and an inclusive interpretation of happiness, respectively. Thus the view expressed in the final book, and not the first book, of the former is selectively taken by Kenny to be the predominant view of the whole work. On the other hand, his critics and the proponents of the inclusive theory such as Ackrill seem to find it unjustifiable to generalise the view of the last book, while ignoring that of the first one, as the conclusive view of the entire treatise. Instead, they have chosen to attribute the comprehensive idea of happiness purportedly articulated in first book,

rather than the last one, to the whole work thereby subordinating and suppressing the notion of happiness presented in the latter. In both cases, the overall theory of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is reduced to the idea expressed in its last book and no attempt is made to reconcile these divergent views.

Granted that its first and the last books really advocate contradictory theories of *eudaimonia*, there seems to be no justification for attributing the view of one book other than the other to the whole work. It is fallacious to do so. However, if there is no contradiction between the views given in these books, then the view of the concluding chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics* may be treated as the final development of the view of the first book. Like a conclusion, it comes last in Aristotle's investigation of the nature of the good that begins, as an introduction in the first book.

Like Kraut, Kenny disagrees with Ackrill on the interpretation of the latter concerning the clause 'if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete' as a reference to 'many,' 'total,' 'comprehensive or the sum of all virtues.' For Kenny, it should be interpreted as a reference to the supreme virtue, that is, contemplation, as it has traditionally been construed. "The traditional view sees the clause 'if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete', as keeping open a place for the eventual doctrine of *Nicomachean Ethics* 10 that happiness is the activity of the supreme virtue of *sophia*. Even Ackrill does not try to deny that in *Nicomachean Ethics* 10 a 'dominant' view of happiness is adopted."¹⁰² Kenny puts forward the 'traditional view' and reiterates his criticism of Ackrill's view when he observes that in the preceding chapter of the *Nicomachean Ethics*

Aristotle has already made clear that he does not regard happiness as an inclusive end, but as a dominant one, in the passage in which he says that when we are looking for something which, when not added to anything else, is most choiceworthy—clearly, if it is so added it is more choiceworthy with even the least additional good. If happiness were meant as an inclusive end, as the sum total of goods sought for their own sake, it would be absurd to speak of goods additional to happiness. When Aristotle speaks of ‘the best and most *telei* virtue’ the word ‘*teleia*’ admittedly has several senses, one of which is ‘complete’; but it is hard to take the word for ‘best’ to mean ‘comprehensive of many’, rather than ‘better than the rest. *Aretè*, like the English word ‘virtue’, can be used as a mass-noun (as in ‘a man of great virtues’) or as a count-noun (as in ‘a man of many virtues’); but on Ackrill’s view Aristotle is made to switch from the mass-noun to the count-noun use within a space of ten words.¹⁰³

The author disagrees with Ackrill’s inclusive interpretation of the doctrine of the early part of the *Ethics* though he agrees with him concerning his dominant view of happiness in the last book. Instead, he rightly thinks that Aristotle presented a dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia* in the whole treatise. “The contrast, then, between the inclusive, organic view of happiness in the EE, and the dominant, intellectualist one of the NE is clear and profound. Instead of a single life offering us all the values sought by the promoters of the three traditional lives, the concluding section of the NE offers us a first-class, perfect happiness consisting of the exercise of *sophia*, and an alternative, second-class career consisting in the exercise of *phronesis* and the moral virtues. Now which of these conceptions of happiness matches better the remarks about happiness in the disputed books?”¹⁰⁴

In Kenny’s view, this question has either been ignored or questioned by other scholars. The ‘three traditional lives’ referred to above are the life of pleasure, the political life and the life of study. These are the main contenders for the best life.

Aristotle’s requirement that happiness must be self-sufficient is used as a principal argument by those who wish to express an inclusive interpretation of the concept of happiness in the first book of the *Nichomachean Ethics*. If perfect

happiness makes life desirable and lacking in nothing on its own, then, so it is argued, it cannot be restricted solely to contemplation. For, it is obvious that there are all parts of other goods that would be lacking in a life of pure contemplation. However, it is one thing to express one's notion of happiness, and another thing, to express Aristotle's conception of happiness.

Aristotle did not maintain in the *Ethics* that a happy man is self-sufficient. He made this clear when he said that the happy man also needs friends.¹⁰⁵ He thought that contemplation alone was a sufficient condition for happiness. He identified happiness with contemplation because one who contemplates approaches the ideal of self-sufficiency more closely than the person who seeks the life of action. Even the intellectual needs the basic necessities of life like the just person. However, he can do without those who benefit from his well doing. Indeed, he is able to theorise alone though he can do it better with his colleagues.¹⁰⁶

If happiness were meant as an inclusive end, as the sum total of goods sought for their own sake, it would be absurd to speak of goods additional to happiness. The evidence that has so far been adduced shows that Aristotle did not consider happiness as an inclusive end.

Ackrill and Cooper regard happiness as an inclusive good. In his paper 'Aristotelian Happiness,' Stephen White's own interpretation rests on a distinction between happiness as comprehensive, and happiness as inclusive. He believes that in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, happiness is inclusive in the sense that it includes more than one component: contemplation all by itself cannot be identical with happiness even happiness of the best sort. While it is inclusive, it is not comprehensive. He

believes that it does not contain all goods. As such it can be improved by the addition of extra goods.

Here is a clear distinction between comprehensive and inclusive goods. But it is absurd to think of the good as a comprehensive end that includes all goods. Aristotle's observation that the good makes life 'lack nothing' should not be interpreted that it includes everything; it means that it has no deficiency. There is no evidence that Aristotle regarded happiness as a composite of every good. Perhaps, the idea of the good as an inclusive end that is not comprehensive is the one that is expressed in Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics*. However, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, happiness is portrayed neither as an inclusive end nor is it a comprehensive end. If Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* in the two ethical treatises are really dissimilar or contradictory, then this raises the question of the authenticity of the authorship of these works. In that case, it is doubtful whether both of them are really the products of the same writer. Why can the same writer express contradictory ideas about the same thing in the same work or in different works?

In the *Ethics*, there seem to be two different kinds of happiness: contemplation, the superior one, and moral action the inferior one. Nowhere in the *Ethics*, or in the *Eudemian Ethics* did Aristotle suggest that contemplation and moral virtue are constituent parts of a single overall happiness.

On the face of it, the concluding section of the *Ethics*, unlike the *Eudemian Ethics*, does not offer a single life containing all the goods sought by the promoters of the three prominent lives. Instead, it offers a first-class, perfect happiness, consisting of the exercise of understanding, and an alternative, second-class career, consisting in the exercise of wisdom and the moral virtues.

Aristotle wanted a stable account of happiness that was conducive to human nature. Although no human situation can possibly achieve the ideal of self-sufficiency, self-sufficiency offers an ideal standard of measuring candidates for *eudaimonia*. In Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is used as a criterion for discriminating between the claims of contemplation and the life of moral virtue to be the supreme sort of happiness.

Those who favour an inclusive interpretation of *eudaimonia* argue that in the *Ethics* Book I, and perhaps even in Book X, moral virtue is a necessary constituent of supreme happiness. Their arguments have already been rebutted.

3.8 Terence Irwin

Further, T. Irwin argues that if happiness is comprehensive, and goods that depend on fortune are genuine goods, then happiness must include them. John Cooper, in a striking departure from his earlier position, sees the *Ethics* as being unique among the Aristotle's ethical treatises in the sense that it requires an adequate supply of external goods in the meaning of happiness itself as its essential characteristic.¹⁰⁷ He claims that this is Aristotle's final theory on the matter.

3.9 The inclusive thesis

The representatives of the inclusive-end theory of *eudaimonia* are J. L. Ackrill, J. M. Cooper, and S. White, among others. The inclusive interpretation of happiness in Book I is popular with many commentators. However, Book X cannot easily be interpreted in an inclusive way. In spite of Anthony Kenny's efforts in 'Intellectualism in Aristotle', it seems impossible to depict the two books as offering different accounts of happiness.

The word 'Perfect' seems ambiguous in Aristotle's vocabulary ... if it means 'final' rather than 'complete,' that confirms the claim that it means the same thing in the passage of Book I of the *Ethics* to which reference has been made. On the other hand, if it means 'complete', then it implies that there is no other element in perfect happiness apart from the contemplative activity of the mind.

Aristotle went on to show that theoretic contemplation possessed all the qualities which, according to Book I, were in popular opinion and in truth, properties of happiness.¹⁰⁸ In Book I happiness is described as the best activity¹⁰⁹ but contemplation is the best activity, because it is the operation of the best thing in man (the understanding) and concerns the highest objects of knowledge (noble and divine things.)¹¹⁰

In the first book Aristotle listed the properties which people believed to be essential to happiness, and in the tenth book he sought to show that only philosophical contemplation possessed those essential qualities. But the concluding section of the *Ethics*, instead of offering, like the *Eudemian Ethics*, a single life containing all the value sought by the promoters of the three traditional lives, offers a first - class, perfect happiness, consisting in the exercise of understanding. As an alternative, the former goes on to offer a second - class career consisting in the exercise of wisdom and the moral virtues; that it is not perfect happiness.¹¹¹

The main reason why interpreters are motivated to reject this elitist position is that they do not find it to be a credible philosophy. Admirers of Aristotle are unwilling to attribute such a strange doctrine to his mature ethical work. In particular, they find the contemplative person who is the hero of the tenth book, a strange and repellent human being. If contemplation alone constitutes perfect

happiness, then in cases where there is a conflict between the demands of moral virtue and contemplation, the agent should engage in contemplation, even if the alternative is saving his neighbour from a burning house. For instance, Devereux also argues that in case the contemplative person lacks moral virtue there is nothing to prevent him from being quite ruthless in pursuing his goal.

3.10 J. L. Ackrill

Akrill also seems to agree with all these authors as far as the problem of understanding Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia* is concerned when he says that Aristotle 'seems to give two answers' to the question 'what is the best life for a man to lead?' But his usage of the word 'seems' suggests that Ackrill is careful or cautious in his criticism of the subject of the *Ethics*. For what merely seems to be the case may or may not be the case. In this case, Aristotle may have given two conflicting answers to the question of the ideal life for man. In actual fact, one may misunderstand his point very easily. It may turn out eventually that he had given one consistent answer to the question about the best life. At any rate, if indeed his answer is ambivalent as Ackrill and others claim, then there is no justification whatsoever for attributing to him the inclusive rather than the dominant view of *eudaimonia* and vice versa.

However, Ackrill disagrees with Hardie and others on their dominant interpretation of Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia*. He argues, instead, for the inclusive theory of *eudaimonia*. His claim that Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* is predominantly inclusive rather than dominant sounds strange in the light of what has been said so far. He argues that the fact that there is one ultimate end for the sake of which every other end is desired should not be interpreted that

There is a 'single object of desire', in the sense of a monolithic as opposed to 'inclusive' end. Indeed the immediately following references to the political art as architectonic and as having an end that embraces the ends of other arts are themselves (as Hardie allows) indicative of an inclusive conception. If, however, the idea is admitted of an end that includes every independently desired end, the *possibility* presents itself of constructing one (inclusive) end from any plurality of separate ends and of speaking of the one compound or inclusive end as the highest good for the sake of which we seek each of the ingredient ends.¹¹²

According to this interpretation, "most of the *Ethics* implies that good action is - or is a major element in - man's best life, but eventually in Book Ten purely contemplative activity is said to be perfect *eudaimonia*; and Aristotle does not tell us how to combine or relate these two ideas."¹¹³ Thus, he acknowledges the truth of the dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia*, partly. At least he admits the presence of an intellectualist conception of *eudaimonia* in the *Ethics*. Ackrill thinks that Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* is inclusive because *eudaimonia* is the good, the end of the most authoritative science, that is, political science, which includes all other ends. Nevertheless, the good does not include other ends in the sense that it contains them, but in the sense that they are sought for its sake.

For Ackrill, "Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* raises more questions than it answers. Two central issues as to which it is not even quite clear what Aristotle's view really is, first, what is the criterion of right action and of moral virtue? And second, *what is the best life for a man to lead?*"¹¹⁴ As far as the first question is concerned, he rightly denies that Aristotle committed "himself to the thesis that actions are valuable only insofar as they promote *theoria*."¹¹⁵ Instead, Aristotle advanced the doctrine of virtue as the mean between the two extremes of deficiency and excess. This is the criterion of right and moral action as far as the *Ethics* is concerned, which Ackrill seems to overlook when he claims above that Aristotle's view is not clear on the moral criterion. It is the doctrine of moderation. Right

actions are those that are neither deficient nor excessive. However, it is difficult to fix the mean accurately as far as human action is concerned.

Ackrill claims that Aristotle failed to give a 'satisfactory answer' to the question of the best life for man. The latter attributed the best life to the gods. That is, the life of *theoria*. Admittedly, Aristotle acknowledged the fact that it was impossible for human beings to lead the divine life of pure *theoria*. But the philosopher can lead a life akin to it in so far as he is also involved in the activity of *theoria* to some extent. However, unlike the gods, he can only theorise at times and not all the time for he is a human being. He is therefore limited in this sense.

As Ackrill rightly observes "you do not give a man a complete rule or recipe for life by telling him to engage in *theoria*. Any human life must include action, and in the best life practical wisdom and moral virtue will therefore be displayed as well as *sophia*."¹⁶ It is true that the best human life does not, and cannot, consist in pure contemplation. It is partly theoretical and partly practical. The best human life consists in a combination of *theoria* and *praxis*. That is the ideal human life. Furthermore, Ackrill admits that Aristotle "cannot make intelligible in the *Ethics* the nature of man as a compound of 'something divine' and much that is not divine. How can there be a coalition between such parties? But if the nature of man is thus unintelligible the best life for man must remain incapable of clear specification even in principle."¹⁷ He is right. One can only say what one takes the best life to be and not what the best life is, since what one takes it to be is not the same as what another takes it to be. He goes on to discuss the contrast between the political and the philosophical lives.

Like Wilkes, Ackrill questions the distinction between the political and the philosophic life. Neither the philosophical life nor the political life consists of an uninterrupted single activity of theoretical or moral virtue. The fact that they are different does not mean that they do not have certain characteristics in common. Sometimes Ackrill acknowledges the fact that Aristotle thought that the philosophical life was superior to the political. "Insofar then, as he is concerned to pick out the philosopher's life and the statesman's life as the two worthiest ideals and to rank the former higher than the latter, Aristotle is not obliged to ask how in the philosopher's life the distinctive activity of *theoria* is to be combined with humbler practical activities."¹¹⁸ Neither did Aristotle specify how practical activity was to be related to theoretical activity in the political life.

According to Aristotle's definition of the function of a human being as a 'rational principle,' it includes both practical, as well as theoretical, rational activity.

However, Aristotle's final conclusion adds what is usually taken to be a restriction to theoretical or contemplative thought, *theoria*, and to express therefore a narrow as opposed to an inclusive view of *eudaimonia*. For he says: 'the good for man turns out to be the activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete' (or 'most final,' *teleiōtaton*); and it is supposed that this last must refer to *sophia*, the virtue of *theoria*. However, there is absolutely nothing in what precedes that would justify any such restriction. Aristotle has clearly stated that the principle of the *ergon* argument is that one must ask what powers and activities are peculiar to and distinctive of man. He has answered by referring to man's power of thought; and that this is what distinguishes man from lower animals is standard doctrine. But no argument has been adduced to suggest that one type of thought is any more distinctive of man than another. In fact practical reason, so far from being in any way less distinctive of man than theoretical, is really more so; for man shares with Aristotle's god the activity of *theoria*.¹¹⁹

Akrill argues that Aristotle conceived of *eudaimonia* as a whole made up of intrinsic ends. "That the primary ingredients of *eudaimonia* are for the sake of *eudaimonia* is not incompatible with their being ends in themselves; for *eudaimonia* is constituted

by activities that are ends in themselves."¹²¹ He declares that "when Aristotle says that A is for the sake of B, he need not mean that A is a means to subsequent B but may mean that A contributes as a constituent to B; that this is what he does mean when he says that good actions are for the sake of *eudaimonia*; and that he does not argue or imply that *eudaimonia* consists in a single type of activity, *theoria*."¹²² This is the conception of *eudaimonia* that Ackrill thinks Aristotle advocated, the view the latter must have advocated. According to him, Aristotle was "saying, then, that *eudaimonia*, being absolutely final and genuinely self-sufficient, is more desirable than anything else in the sense that it *includes* everything in itself. It is best, and better than everything else, not in the way that bacon is better than eggs and than tomatoes (and therefore the best of the three to choose), but in the way that bacon, eggs, and tomatoes is a better breakfast than either bacon or eggs or tomatoes - and is indeed the best breakfast without qualification."¹²³ He sees *eudaimonia* as a compound of many ends as opposed to a single, dominant end. It is unconditionally better than any or all of its constituents. Nevertheless the comparison of a whole and its individual parts is quite unnecessary. Ackrill denies the intellectual thesis but affirms the inclusive interpretation emphatically. He attributes to Aristotle a thesis that the latter should have advocated although he did not advocate it. Aristotle advocated an intellectual thesis instead of a comprehensive thesis.

If, then, the *Nicomachean Ethics* addition- "if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete"-is a reference by Aristotle to a "monolithic" doctrine, the doctrine that *eudaimonia* is really to be found in just one activity, *theoria*, it is entirely unsupported by previous argument, part of whose conclusion it purports to be. Moreover, it is not called for-and by the conceptual clarification of the notion of *eudaimonia* earlier in the book and chapter; for it has not there been said that the end for man must be "monolithic" (or even contain a dominant component). Thus such a restriction will be an ill-fitting and at first unintelligible intrusion of a view only to be explained and expounded much later. Now this is certainly a possibility, but not, in the circumstances, a very strong one. For we are not dealing with a work that in general shows signs that marginal notes

and later additions or revisions have got incorporated but not properly integrated into the text.¹²⁴

For Ackrill, one possible "alternative to constructing 'the best and most complete virtue' as an allusion to *sophia*."¹²⁵ is to "interpret it as referring to the total virtue, the combination of all virtues ... this interpretation gives a sense to the conclusion of the *ergon* argument that is exactly what the argument itself requires."¹²⁶ For him, "the only proper conclusion of the *argon* argument would be: "if there are more than one virtue, then in accordance with all of them."¹²⁷ This is not only what he thinks that Aristotle advocated, but also what he thinks that Aristotle should have advocated. He thinks that

This suggestion is confirmed by two later passages in Book 1, where Aristotle uses the term *teleia arete* and clearly is not referring to *sophia* (or any one particular virtue) but rather to comprehensive or complete virtue. The first of these passages (1.9.10) is explicitly taking up the conclusion of the *ergon* argument- 'there is required, as we said, both complete virtue (*arete teleias*) and a complete life.' The second (1.13.1) equally obviously relies upon it: 'since eudaimonia is an activity of soul in accordance with complete virtue (*arete teleian*), we must investigate virtue.' And the whole further development of the work, with its detailed discussion of moral virtues and its stress upon the intrinsic value of good action, follows naturally if (but only if) the conclusion of the *ergon* argument is understood to refer to *complete* and not to some one *particular* virtue.¹²⁸

Here Ackrill seems to read his own views into Aristotle's work. In particular, he seems to interpret the word 'complete' to mean 'inclusive of other ends.' Instead of regarding some or all-intrinsic ends as parts or ingredients of the final good (*eudaimonia*) as a whole, he ought to take some of them, if not, all of them as its attributes, qualities or accompaniments. These are its effects or consequences rather than its components.

3.11 J. M. Cooper

But as far as Cooper's interpretation is concerned, Aristotle advocated a comprehensive theory of *eudaimonia*, not only in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but in the *Eudemian Ethics* as well. However, like Ackrill, he admits that there is an 'intellectualist strain' in the former. For "an intellectualist thesis remains, but one so hedged about as not to contradict the more inclusive view put forward in the *Eudemian Ethics* and presupposed by the remainder of the *Nicomachean*."¹²⁹ He also admits that Aristotelian interpreters often disagree about the importance of the life devoted to intellectual pursuit and its relationship with the moral life. For him, Aristotle advocated the "mixed" life. He rejects the intellectual interpretation of *eudaimonia*. He thinks that it is irreconcilable with Aristotle's conception of moral virtues as intrinsic ends. Contrary to the intellectual thesis, he denies that ends other than intellectualism merely serve as means to it. A single, ultimate end need not be a dominant one. In his discussion of Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia*, Cooper rightly observes that "readers have regularly found the various things Aristotle said on this topic extremely difficult to reconcile with each other. What was apparently meant by its author as a single coherent theory has often seemed to collapse into a set of disconnected remarks - remarks which are suggestive, no doubt, but which seem hardly developed enough to count as a theory of anything."¹³⁰ He claims to be defending "an interpretation of Aristotle's conception of what it is for a human being to flourish that does ... make it a coherent theory and does so without ignoring or doing violence to anything he says which bears on the topic."¹³¹ He examines the intellectual thesis, "the view that human flourishing consists exclusively in pure intellectual activity of the best kind."¹³² According to him, "such an intellectualist

interpretation cannot make coherent sense of Aristotle's real view in the *Nicomachean Ethics* taken as a whole."¹³³ He tries to show that "certain passages, particularly in the sixth book, suggest that Aristotle's real view of what it is for a human being to flourish includes much more than merely intellectual activity."¹³⁴ For Cooper as well as for Kenny, the "basic concept of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, from its logical and structural form, is the good rather than *eudaimonia*."¹³⁵ But this distinction does not seem to make much sense given that the good is the same thing as *eudaimonia*.

The good, in Aristotle's view, is *eudaimonia*. In evaluating Aristotle's position, Cooper does well to deny that contemplation alone is the ultimate human goal. Although he argues that Aristotle had a comprehensive theory of *eudaimonia*, he seems to contradict himself when he attributes the exclusive conception of *eudaimonia* too to Aristotle. For he says that "the notion that human desires thus converge on a single object of pursuit certainly does not immediately recommend itself. One might rather have a variety of fundamental desires none dependent on any of the others. What then makes Aristotle think that anyone's desires do exhibit such a bizarre structure?"¹³⁶ This question shows that Cooper thinks that Aristotle thought that everyone desires one ultimate end without pursuing other ends, yet this is the interpretation of Aristotle's theory that he is supposed to refute! He ends up expressing opposing interpretations of Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia*. Admittedly, "Aristotle's words tend to imply that we all have such an end. But in the *Eudemian Ethics* he holds not that everyone does have his desires organized on this pattern, but that everyone ought to."¹³⁷ In other words, the one is descriptive ethics while the other is prescriptive ethics. Indeed, sometimes Aristotle seemed to say that such an

end actually existed. It could be more accurate to say that in the *Nicomachean Ethics* he supposed, especially at the beginning, that such an end existed and not that it did actually exist. For he stated that *if* there was an end for the sake of which everything was pursued, then it would be the good, the best good that he was seeking in his ethical investigation. The use of the conditional sentence form: 'if ... then,' implies the possibility of the non-existence of 'the good,' so-called. It is an indication that Aristotle was probably not sure whether or not such an end existed. There may or may not be such a thing as the good. For there are many goods to be pursued. However, he set out to find out what the good was while he supposed that it did in fact exist. In other words, he might have committed the fallacy of begging the question. That is the assumption or the presupposition on which he based his investigation. Cooper concludes that

Although in the tenth book Aristotle does adopt an intellectualist ideal, he does so only with important reservations ... These are significant reservations. For they show that in his most mature ethical theory Aristotle does not totally abandon the conception of human flourishing as a life organized so as to bring a great variety of different goods by being devoted to the exercise both of the intellectual and of the moral excellences. He continues to develop and expound this view on the assumption that it is this ultimate end which the person who possesses practical intelligence (*phronèsis*) and a virtuous character will pursue. But whereas in the *Eudemian Ethics* such a life is the highest ideal conceived, in the *Nicomachean*, in the final analysis, Aristotle both conceives and prefers another, intellectualist, ideal which it is fair to describe, with Rodier, as superhuman, by contrast with the more down-to-earth ideal of the *Eudemian Ethics*. Many will find much to regret in this, and will accordingly find the moral theory of the *Eudemian Ethics* the more interesting and the sounder of the two. I am myself sympathetic to this assessment. But even in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as I have argued, the older view, though in the end given a secondary position, continues to survive for those who do not, or cannot, regard only their intellectual nature as essential to what they are.¹³⁸

Given such a wide disparity of interpretations of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*, it seems as if there is some kind of *lacuna*, a gap left to be filled, in the understanding of his theory. Which one of these conflicting theories of *eudaimonia*

did Aristotle truly advocate? It is not possible that both antagonists are right if they express contradictory views. But if there is a possibility that one class of scholars is right while the other is wrong, then there is need to prove one side right and the other wrong. Furthermore, if the disputants are equally mistaken, what is the theory that Aristotle actually propagated? Aristotle himself was to blame for the confusion and misunderstanding among his readers. Had he been quite clear on the meaning of *eudaimonia* and the good life, the interpretation of his ethics would not have been subject to such disputes and controversy.

Some of those who argue in favour of the dominant thesis argue that there are passages in the *Ethics* where Aristotle defended the inclusive interpretation and those who subscribe to the latter argue that there are passages that show that he held the dominant view. Maybe this ambiguity is not their fault. Aristotle himself was the cause this misunderstanding. It is as if he provided an ambivalent theory of *eudaimonia*. He seemed to affirm and to deny at the same time that *eudaimonia* is a single dominant activity thereby contradicting himself. But it should be noted that the intellectual interpretation comes at the very end of the treatise, giving the impression that Aristotle, having begun his investigation into the human good finally concluded that it consisted in the activity of contemplation as the best of all other human activities.

This chapter concludes the discussion, in part I, of the good that started in the preceding chapter. Now, since this thesis is concerned with the idea of the ultimate human good as well as the idea of the good life, the next step is to turn to part II and consider one of the candidates for the good life, namely, the life of enjoyment.

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PART II

THE APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF EUDAIMONIA TO
CONTEMPORARY LIFE

CONTEMPORARY LIFE

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LIFE OF PLEASURE

This chapter examines the life of enjoyment or gratification as a candidate for the best life. It considers the view that pleasure is the highest human goal.

4.1 Hedonism

Hedonism, which derives etymologically from the Greek word *hedone*, meaning pleasure, is one of the ancient and most influential philosophies of life. As its name suggests, it is the view that pleasure is the greatest good. It claims that only pleasure is good in itself.

G. E. Moore devotes the whole of the third chapter of his book, *Principia Ethica*, to the discussion of hedonism. His views on hedonism will be discussed and analysed in the rest of this chapter because of the relevance of this theory to the subject of pleasure and the life of pleasure. Hedonism is probably the "most famous and most widely held of all ethical principles."¹ The hedonistic principle is the doctrine that human beings should aim at pleasure alone since it is the only good which is not sought for the sake of anything else but itself.

But that was not so for Aristotle. The latter thought that it was not pleasure, but *eudaimonia* that was sought for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else. Moore attributes the assumption that pleasure is the sole good to 'the Naturalistic fallacy'. To define a natural term (such as 'good') in terms of an unnatural term (such as pleasure) is to commit the so-called Naturalistic fallacy. It "consists in the contention that good *means* nothing but some simple or complex notion, that can be defined in terms of natural qualities."² For the *good* is a simple, 'unanalysable' and, therefore, indefinable notion like 'yellow.' Therefore, it cannot be defined in terms

of a natural term. The proof of this view lies in the fact that its denial is self-contradictory. So to define 'good' in terms of a natural quality such as pleasure is to commit the fallacy named above.

However, 'good' in this sense of the term is quite different from the sense in which Aristotle used it. Here reference is being made to 'good' as a simple ethical quality in contrast to 'bad', whereas Aristotle used the same term to refer to a desired end, the highest goal of human action.² These are two different senses of the same word (or are they different words?). Indeed, they not only seem to be two different senses of the same word; they are also different tenses, for in one sense, good is an adjective and in another sense, it is a noun. But these two senses seem to be related in a certain way - to the extent that what is good can also be an end of human action and the latter can as well be described as good. The human good is good and it is good to seek it. Maybe the good is pursued because it is good or it is good because everybody pursues it! This is reminiscent of Plato's question in the *Thaetetus*: 'are things good because they are approved by God or does God approve of them because they are good?'

Hedonists, "hold that all other things but pleasure, whether conduct or virtue or knowledge, whether life or nature or beauty, are only good as means to pleasure or for the sake of pleasure, never for their own sakes or as ends in themselves."³ Hedonism is the view that only pleasure is an intrinsic good. But Moore assumes that pleasure is one of the intrinsic goods. Similarly, he denies that the view that pleasure is one of the things that are good as means, is "inconsistent with Hedonism."⁴ It is not the view that pleasure is *one of* the things that are good as ends in themselves. It is not the view that 'pleasure *is* good as an end or in itself,' nor is it a doctrine about

"the best means we can take in order to obtain pleasure or any other end."⁵ Rather, hedonism is the doctrine that 'pleasure *alone* is good as an end or in itself.'⁶ Taken in this sense, hedonism is not the view of Aristotle. The latter believed that *eudaimonia* (and not pleasure) was the only thing that was good in itself and that for the sake of which all other goods were pursued. Hence, his rejection of hedonism.

Moore too sets out to clarify the meaning of hedonism with a view to showing the absurdity of its basic principle and its inconsistency with other views. For him, the hedonistic principle or the view that 'pleasure alone is good as an end - good in and for itself,' is an intuition. He argues that the views that pleasure alone is good as an end and that some pleasures are better than others in terms of quality, are not only distinguishable but also contradictory to each other. For "we must choose between them: and if we choose the latter, then we must give up the principle of Hedonism."⁷ The acceptance of both propositions embodies a contradiction and an inconsistency. However, some writers accept the view that pleasure alone is good as an end but reject the view that pleasure admits of degrees.

While referring to Plato's *Philebus*, in which Socrates tries to convince Protarchus to believe that hedonism is absurd, Moore tends to carry his attempted refutation of hedonism to its extreme logical absurdity. "If we are really going to maintain that pleasure alone is good as an end, we must maintain that it is good, whether we are conscious of it or not. We must declare it reasonable to take as our ideal (an unattainable ideal it may be) that we should be as happy as possible even on condition that we never know and never can know that we are happy ... Can we really still disagree? Can anyone still declare it obvious that this is reasonable? That pleasure alone is good as an end?"⁸ On the contrary, it is self-contradictory to say, as

the author does, that one can be pleased or happy without being conscious of pleasure or happiness. It is a contradiction in terms to distinguish pleasure and its consciousness. For the consciousness of pleasure is presupposed in its definition. A pleasure that none is conscious of would not, in the first place, *be*. Even though the concept of pleasure is a different thing from pleasure, both must be in consciousness. An experience cannot be known to be *pleasant* at all unless someone is conscious of it. The very nature of pleasure essentially involves the fact of its being felt. If a feeling is a conscious thing and pleasure is a kind of feeling, it follows that pleasure too is a conscious thing.

The author seems to be mistaken in his hypothetical distinction between pleasure and the consciousness of it. Pleasure cannot *be* without consciousness. When we talk of pleasure, it means that we are conscious of it; there is nothing like pleasure without consciousness. Maybe this is possible theoretically, but not in practice. It is a hair-splitting exercise to claim that pleasure can be distinguished from consciousness more or less like particular colours are distinguishable (in principle) from colour. According to Moore, they should be distinguished if pleasure alone is to count as the ultimate end. He assumes that if they are inseparable, consciousness would still serve as a means to the end of pleasure. He concludes that if "the pleasure would be comparatively valueless without the consciousness, then we are bound to say that pleasure is *not* the only end, that some consciousness at least must be included with it as a veritable part of the end."⁹ On the contrary, it seems as if consciousness is not something to be included in pleasure since it is already there. Its presence is presupposed by the existence of pleasure. It is inseparably bound up with pleasure. Indeed, the term 'consciousness of pleasure' is a tautology because

pleasure is actually the consciousness of pleasure. The idea of pleasure cannot possibly be separated from its consciousness though the *feeling* of pleasure is a different thing from the *idea* of that feeling. Every concept entails consciousness. Concepts cannot be separated from consciousness. But thinking about pleasure is a different thing from the feeling or the experience of pleasure. Although one may know pleasure without having or feeling it at the same time, no one can experience pleasure unknowingly. Nevertheless, one may derive pleasure from thinking about pleasure. Thinking also has its pleasures.

Moore sounds unrealistically too radical in his idealism. It is understandable that in claiming that pleasure alone is the good, the hedonist presupposes the consciousness of pleasure, as a bare minimum condition for the possible truth of that proposition. Consciousness is not a consequence of pleasure but its precondition. One cannot experience pleasure unconsciously! It is a contradiction in terms to suggest otherwise. Indeed, experience is a form of consciousness and consciousness is an experience. As the existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre put it, there is no pure consciousness; there is no consciousness as such. For instance, when one is *conscious* one must necessarily be conscious of being conscious. For consciousness is necessarily the consciousness of something. At least, we may talk of the consciousness of consciousness and the consciousness of the consciousness of consciousness, *in infinitum*.

For Moore, hedonism is a mistaken and misleading philosophy because it confuses means and ends and regards pleasure alone rather than its consciousness, as the only good. In his view, it is wrong to suppose that consciousness must necessarily accompany pleasure and that it does not matter therefore whether pleasure alone or its

consciousness is said to be the sole good. As far as he is concerned, it is "extremely doubtful" whether consciousness is a necessary accompaniment of pleasure. On the contrary, consciousness is not a concomitant quality of pleasure, but its essential precondition. There is no such thing as a pleasure which none is conscious of!

If we place fairly before us the question: is consciousness of pleasure the sole good? The answer must be: No. And with this the last defence of Hedonism has been broken down. In order to put the question fairly we must isolate consciousness of pleasure. We must ask: suppose we were conscious of pleasure only, and of nothing else, not even that we were conscious, would that state of things however *great the quantity*, be very *desirable*? No one, I think, can suppose it so. On the other hand, it seems quite plain, that we do regard as very desirable, many complicated states of mind in which the consciousness of other things-states which we call 'enjoyment' of so and so. If this is correct, then it follows that consciousness of pleasure is not the sole good, and that many other states, in which it is included as a part are much better than it. Once we recognise the principle of organic unities, any objection to this conclusion, founded on the supposed fact that the other elements of such states have no value in themselves, must disappear. And I do not know that I need to say any more in refutation of Hedonism.¹⁰

It is self-contradictory to talk of pleasure without consciousness and the supposed desirability of the greatest quantity of such 'pleasure' at the same time, since these terms connote the very notion of consciousness of pleasure which is being denied here. When pleasure is said to be the sole good the reference is not to the idea of pleasure as the ultimate end, rather the goal is the experience of pleasure alone as opposed to thinking about pleasure. One person may merely think about pleasure whereas another may actually be in possession of the same pleasure that the other one is merely thinking about. Indeed, the same person may think of pleasure, but not experience pleasure, except perhaps the experience of thinking of pleasure itself on one occasion. But on a different occasion, one may experience pleasure without thinking about it though one must necessarily be conscious of the experience of pleasure. Now, by the pleasure principle the hedonist must be taken to mean the

actual experience of pleasure and not the mere thought of pleasure; though one cannot experience anything without being mentally aware of such experience at the same time.

Although Moore makes a distinction between pleasure and the consciousness of pleasure the two are naturally bound together; they are inseparable. According to his interpretation of hedonism, "either pleasure by itself (even though we can't get it) would be all that is desirable, or a consciousness of it would be all that is desirable, or a consciousness of it would be more plausible still. Both these propositions cannot be true; ... it is plain that the latter is true; whence it follows that pleasure is *not* the sole good."¹¹ Moore observes that it is absurd to regard 'the consciousness of pleasure' as the sole good since it is not. But he is mistaken in the sense that he does not acknowledge the fact that the reality of pleasure is necessarily the consciousness of it. However, there is a difference between the thought of, or the idea of pleasure and the experience of it. Therefore, it is not absurd to regard an experience of pleasure (together with the necessary consciousness of it) as the sole good. It has already been observed that the two are inseparable.

But according to Moore, it is necessarily safe to use the so-called 'method of isolation' in order to find the intrinsic value of something like pleasure. That is, to consider how valuable it would be if at all "it existed in absolute isolation, stripped of all its usual accompaniments."¹² This is a mere supposition, a hypothetical case. For nothing can possibly be deprived of its necessary and essential properties or its essence without being annihilated. This assumption is reminiscent of the existentialist method of abstraction or the *bracketing of experience* as a means of understanding metaphysical being. At best, it is a hypothetical, rather than a

practical, 'method.' Indeed, it is even doubtful whether it is really a *method* in the true sense of the word.

4.2 Epicureanism

There are two forms of hedonism: hedonism proper, which was founded by Aristipus (435-356 BC) and Epicureanism, which is named after, and attributed to, its founder, Epicurus. These were notably the ancient Greek philosophers who advocated for hedonism in various forms. The former was a pupil of Socrates. He founded the Cyrenaic School. Epicurus is said to have suffered from stomach - ache for many years and allegedly lived on bread and water only. His life-style was frugal, abstemious and ascetic. This is the kind of life he not only recommended, but he also lived.

But in the twentieth century hedonism was espoused, for instance, by utilitarians (notably by Mill and Bentham) as well as by Herbert Spencer and Henry Sidgwick.¹³ That is not to say, however, that these are the only people who believe in hedonism. The popularity of this philosophy of life is quite evident as most people are often seen seeking pleasure openly and deliberately as if pleasure is really the only thing that matters in this world. Most people seem to believe in the philosophy of hedonism. Again, most people appear to be hedonists in their practical lives. They are hedonists not only in theory but also in practice. One may believe in hedonism without necessarily living as a hedonist. One may theorise about hedonism without practising it, as much as another may live like a hedonist without theorising about hedonism. However, it is reasonable to expect one who believes in hedonism to practise it and one who practises it to believe in it. For it is unusual (though not impossible) for one to believe in something yet not to practice it and to practise

whatever one does not believe in. It is insincere to preach what one does not practice and pretentious to practise what one does not believe in.

To begin with, Aristippus talked of all the pleasures of one's lifetime. He explained the meaning of pleasure in terms of bodily and ordinary sense experiences like making love, seeing, touching, hearing, smelling and tasting. For him, human beings are highly sensuous and selfish animals, that are always after their own comfort, welfare and gratification. He believed that selfishness is neither shameful nor wrong.

The hedonist considers the life of pleasure as the ideal life. For him, everyone seeks (or should seek) as many or as much pleasures as he or she can possibly get. But those circumstances without pleasure or those ones with very few pleasures ought to be avoided at all costs. For the present matters much more than the remoteness of the past and the uncertainty of the future. Pleasure is transitory. So, the hedonist would rather eat, drink and make merry today for he fears that he might die tomorrow (instead of looking forward to the indefinite and uncertain future). He tries to make the maximum and the best use of the present in terms of enjoyment. He capitalises on the transient pleasures of the moment.

In effect, the hedonist makes several assumptions. For instance, he assumes, first, that everybody needs the greatest possible amount of pleasure. Secondly, he assumes that it is impossible to get the necessary pleasure. Thirdly, he assumes that pleasure is good. Fourth, he assumes that pleasure can never be superfluous. Fifth, he assumes that it is unfortunate to do without pleasure and that this is a misfortune for which one ought to be compensated.

Unlike hedonism proper, Epicureanism emphasises the negative avoidance of pain more than the positive desire for pleasure alone. Epicurus was some kind of an ethical hedonist. He distinguished between good and bad pleasures and believed that the good ones are to be pursued while the bad ones are to be avoided. However, he was highly critical of Aristippus's version of hedonism. Instead, he held that the latter was logically flawed and impracticable. For him, hedonism was too much concerned with the passage of time and the fear of death. However, he did not only criticise it; he also tried to understand and to modify it. He accepted the hedonistic principle. It stipulates that pleasure is "the only thing at which we ought to aim, the only thing that is good as an end and for its own sake."¹⁴ Moore denies Aristippus's claim that pleasure is directly proportional to happiness. He disagrees with the hedonists' claim that the more pleasure one has, the happier one becomes and that the more pleasant the activity, the happier it becomes. For him, happiness is not synonymous with pleasure.

Epicurus was wary of excessive pleasures with painful consequences. He believed in moderate eating and drinking, the pursuit of intellectual pleasures, and an awareness of the impossibility of permanent pleasure. For him, the good life involved the acquisition of such good pleasures as friendship and engaging in philosophic discussions.

The influence of his philosophy can be judged from the fact that the English language still contains the word 'epicure', which is based upon the view of Epicurus. Like so many words, however, the connotations of the word 'epicure' as it is now employed do not represent accurately the sort of philosophy which was held by Epicurus himself. "An 'epicurean' is now depicted as a gourmet, as a person whose main delight consists in the enjoyment of exotic or fastidiously prepared food and rare wines. Epicurus himself suffered for years from stomach trouble and was never an 'epicure' in the modern sense. He ate frugally, allegedly drank only water, and in general, lived in a highly abstemious fashion. (His letters contained such sentences as the following: 'I am thrilled with pleasure in the body

when I live on bread and water, and I spit on luxurious pleasures, not for their own sake, but because of the inconveniences that follow them.')¹⁵

An Epicurean believes in pleasant and moderate living. For him, pleasure is the good. However, he also realises that an ardent pursuit of pleasure can produce painful consequences. For instance, the 'pleasure of drinking' often has the painful aftermath of hangovers and sicknesses, especially in the morning of the day after the drinking spree. According to Epicurus, a moderate pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of its unwanted painful consequences was the right way of living. A good and happy life is both pleasant and painless. But a bad life and an unhappy life is unpleasant and painful.

It is said that some pleasures are painful while others are painless. Obviously, good pleasures are the painless ones. There are 'dynamic' and 'passive' pleasures too. Arguably, dynamic pleasures include, for example, sexual love, which "is bad because it is accompanied by fatigue, remorse and depression ... gluttony, the fame that one achieves through a life of public service, drinking and marriage. All of these are bad because they are accompanied by pain: gluttony will lead to indigestion, fame may be accompanied by all sorts of distress, drinking will lead to headaches, disease ..." and so on.¹⁶ On the contrary, friendship is a passive pleasure. Epicurus recommended it because it was purportedly unaccompanied by painful effects.

For he seemed to prefer the avoidance of pain to the pursuit of pleasures with painful consequences. For him, pleasure was the highest end of life. Each person is looking for happiness and this entails pleasure. Epicurus also made a distinction between temporary or momentary pleasures and permanent or life-long pleasures, emphasising the latter instead of the former. Long-lasting pleasures are to be found in

the serenity of the soul of a physically healthy human being. For him, pleasure consisted, in a negative sense, mainly in the lack of pain rather than the fulfilment of the desire for satisfaction. Like Aristotle, he emphasised intellectual pleasures. In his view, pleasure was good but pain was bad or evil. He stressed teleologism. People should aspire to the good life that consists in the tranquillity of the soul and a healthy body. He advocated a rational, harmonious and peaceful life. For him, unhappiness was the consequence of fear as well as a futile and an unbridled desire. It is a mark of wisdom to desist from the multiplication of needs since this is tantamount to the increment of the causes of pain and sorrow. The wise person will minimise his or her needs.

Epicureanism recognises the fact that nothing lasts forever, not even pleasure. Pleasure is temporary. For that matter, the pursuit of the pleasures of fame and riches, for instance, seems to be a futile, self-defeating exercise. The wealthy and the famous usually feel insecure and are distrustful of the poor. They may be worried about petty jealousy and the perceived envious schemes of the poor against them. Epicureanism regards pain or unpleasantness as part of life and it seeks to minimise it rather than to eliminate it totally or to whip up whimsical sentiments of sheer optimism. Although hedonists and epicureans alike love pleasures, the latter prefer moderation while the former go to the extremes of enjoyment. An epicurean seems to be a decent and disciplined person. For he pursues pleasure in moderation. However, it is difficult to determine the extent of the right moderation. He realises the importance of the saying that 'too much of something is dangerous.' He believes in self-control and self-determination in matters concerning the pursuit of pleasure. To a large extent, then, Epicureanism seems to be closer to Aristotle's doctrine of the

golden mean than the mainstream hedonism. However, critics object that both forms of hedonism stress individualism and selfishness at the expense of altruism and social welfare, - the common good.

4.3 Psychological and ethical hedonism

Another distinction has also been made between psychological and ethical versions of hedonism. According to the former, people actually pursue pleasure throughout their lives. We cannot help, but pursue pleasure. For this reason, psychological hedonism is descriptive while ethical hedonism is prescriptive. For the latter holds that people ought to seek pleasure. According to Henry Sidgwick, Psychological Hedonism is the view that the object of every human desire is pleasure. It is believed that pleasure is the only object of all human desires, that it is the universal end of all human activities.¹⁷ But most prominent psychologists have unanimously rejected it. This view is "commonly held by people not expert either in psychology or in philosophy."¹⁸ Thus, hedonism is a complicated ethical theory consisting of many versions. Both versions of hedonism appeal to different people. Pleasure (and the absence of pain) is regarded as the ultimate end in human life.

Its psychological version claims that pleasure is the sole motivating factor in everyday life. Every human activity aims at the acquisition of pleasure in one way or another. For example, hermitage and fame are not ends in themselves but mere means to pleasure as an end in itself.

Psychological hedonism purports to single out only one true explanation of all human activities. The search for pleasure is said to be the only reason for every activity. Pleasure is seen as the ultimate end that is sought for its own sake. All other things such as fame and riches are sought as means to pleasure. Only pleasure is not

sought for the sake of anything else. Therefore, it is regarded as the highest and the best good or the final end of human life.

Psychological hedonism claims to be a scientific explanation of human behaviour. However, 'it does not withstand' the test of 'scientific scrutiny.' Nowadays psychologists acknowledge the fact that the need for pleasure does motivate *some* (and not all) people *sometimes* (and not always) to engage in *some* (and by no means all) activities. However, they deny that this is always the case in every situation. For instance, the desire for wealth may begin as a means to acquire pleasure but wealth, once acquired, is often treated as an end in itself rather than as a mere means to pleasure as in the case of some rich misers. Attention is apparently fixed on the attainment of wealth rather than on pleasure. Money seems to be hoarded for its own sake and not for the sake of the pleasure it promises to bring. Indeed, pleasure may be disregarded and rejected sometimes, especially if it hampers the acquisition of wealth. For instance, it is possible that some slum-dwellers are reasonably rich people. If, then, money and not pleasure is an end in itself, at least for certain people, then psychological hedonism is a wrong and misleading theory of human motivation. However, psychological hedonists claim that the miser derives pleasure from the practice of hoarding money and that he does not thereby treat money as an end in itself. This is his style of gaining pleasure. Pleasure is still the final end for which he strives by means of keeping money even if he denies it. Therefore, there is need for the psychological hedonist "to prove that we always do desire pleasure or freedom from pain, and that we never desire anything else whatever."¹⁹ On the contrary, Moore claims that he has shown "how obviously untrue it is that we never desire anything but pleasure; and how there is not a shadow of

ground for saying even that, whenever we desire anything, we always desire pleasure as well as that thing."²⁰

Contrary to its claim, psychological hedonism is not a scientific theory. It can neither be falsified nor refuted by an appeal to facts.

For when any theory cannot be refuted by facts, then it loses its explanatory force. It becomes true 'by definition' but no longer refers to the world in the way in which genuine scientific theories do, since its truth or falsity no longer depends upon the facts. When this happens, the theory may be rejected on the ground that it has lost its power to provide us with a satisfactory explanation as 'what men desire', so that in asserting that all men are motivated by a desire for pleasure, it is asserting no more than the tautology that all men are motivated by a desire for what they desire. It has become irrefutable by becoming trivial-i.e., it is not worth refuting.²¹

Unlike psychological hedonism, ethical hedonism, does not only say that people normally strive for pleasure. Instead, it claims that everybody should strive for pleasure because it is the only ultimate good that is good in itself.

Obviously it is possible to be an ethical hedonist without being a psychological hedonist and vice versa. One may hold that people ought to pursue pleasure and deny that they actually do so. Alternatively, one may believe that people ought not to pursue pleasure but disagree that everybody does so. For these doctrines do not entail each other. However, once we admit that people always pursue pleasure as a matter of fact, it seems pointless to say that they should strive for pleasure, since this is what they are doing already. For it is reasonable to advice someone to do what he or she does not do and not what one is already engaged in. Nevertheless, one can argue that people ought *not* to seek pleasure only if this statement implies that they do seek it and that they are capable of attaining it. As Kant would put it, 'ought' implies 'can.' One ought to be told to do what one can do and not what one cannot do. But one may be told that one ought not to do what one can do or whatever one may do.

Again, what one ought to do or not to do, often depends not only on one's ability to do it, but also the goodness or the appropriateness of the action in the given circumstances. Therefore, "It is obvious that psychological hedonism does not entail Ethical Hedonism. One may hold either doctrine without necessarily holding the other. For example, one might believe that men are motivated to seek pleasure, and one also might believe that they ought not to do so."²²

Ethical hedonism seems to go a little bit beyond psychological hedonism. For it admits that people pursue pleasure always but it adds that pleasure being the sole good, really ought to be sought. It attempts to define the best way in which people ought to conduct themselves and the best possible life for human beings. As far as this particular version of hedonism is concerned, we should aim at pleasure alone in everything that we do. For the best kind of human life is taken to be the life of pleasure. However, in suggesting that human beings ought to aim at pleasure, the ethical hedonist seems to say covertly that they do not in fact do so and that even if they do, then they do not do so sufficiently. Hence the need for them to aspire for pleasure. Otherwise, there would be no point to urge people who are already pursuing pleasure to do exactly what they are doing, particularly if they are doing so as they should, unless one wants to encourage them to continue doing so in a better way.

However, other thinkers contend that the good life cannot be the life of pleasure, because not all pleasures are good. Some pleasures are definitely bad. Although some people argue, like Epicurus, that it is the good pleasures that make up the good life, pleasures that appear to be good such as friendship, for example, may also turn out in the end to be bad as in the case of a departed friend. Secondly, it is argued in defence of the doctrine that pleasure is good that pleasure as such can

hardly be bad, even pleasures derived from taking drugs like opium though their consequences could be bad. For some people, at least, the 'pleasure' of smoking bhang (*cannabis sativa*), for instance, seems to be good. However, it is difficult to separate the painful consequences of an activity such as this one from the pleasurable ones. For example, bhang smoking is said to have both pleasurable as well as painful results. These factors seem to be inseparably joined together. Hence the pursuit of pleasure seems to be always accompanied by pain. Indeed, it seems difficult to separate pleasure from its painful consequences, except in principle. Indeed, pain is the exact antithesis of pleasure. But the two are distinctive in time. It does not make sense to claim that pleasure and pain occur concurrently since they are contradictory to each other. Arguably, some pleasures are accompanied by pain so inseparably that to "advise one, as ethical hedonists do, to seek pleasure is in effect frequently equivalent to advising one to seek pain as well, since the two sometimes cannot be dissociated. Ethical hedonism, consequently, must sometimes advise* one not to pursue pleasure when those pleasures are followed by pain, and thus its practical effect seems incompatible with the theory."²³ It seems to contradict the common sense view that sometimes people ought to seek pleasure though not always. Indeed, sometimes people should act not for the sake of pleasure, but as a matter of duty or obligation, even if they derive no pleasure from so acting. In the light of the objection above, hedonism appears to be an inadequate theory of moral behaviour.

Despite its attractiveness, hedonism seems to contradict some ordinary moral beliefs. Sometimes people object to certain pleasant things and pleasurable behaviour on the basis of their immorality. Hedonism is objectionable not only because it recommends the pursuit of superficial pleasures, but also because it wrongly claims

that pleasure alone is worth pursuing. Pleasure is not the only end that people seek in this life. Indeed, it can be argued that it is not the only end that people should aspire to attain. There are many other ends besides it that people look for in this life. In fact, pleasure is, and should, only be consciously pursued sometimes, but not always, at least from the ordinary point of view. Pleasure does not seem to be the supreme good.

There is yet another distinction between two other 'forms of hedonism', that is, Egoism and Utilitarianism. Thus hedonism can be either egoistic or utilitarian. In other words, both Egoism and Utilitarianism are hedonistic. This is a controversial point. For these ethical theories are often treated as being different from hedonism, and not as forms of it. In fact, these theories "are not only different from, but strictly contradictory of, one another; since the former asserts 'My own greatest pleasure is the *sole* good,' the latter 'The greatest pleasure of all is the *sole* good.'"²⁴

4.4 Egoism

Egoism is the view that every individual should ultimately pursue his or her own greatest good in the form of happiness. The self or ego takes the centre-stage. It is prescriptive in this respect. Admittedly, one's greatest good is achievable through altruism. In this sense, egoism is compatible with altruism. In this case, one can serve others' interests as a means to the achievement of one's own interest(s). In any case, the interest(s) of others may as well be in the interest of oneself. But there is a different sense in which egoism is incompatible with altruism. That is the sense in which it denotes some kind of 'egocentricism' or selfishness.

In this sense, a man is an egoist, if all his actions are actually directed towards gaining pleasure for himself; whether he holds that he ought to act so, because he will thereby obtain for himself the greatest possible happiness on the whole, or not.

Egoism may accordingly be used to denote the theory that we should always aim at getting pleasure for ourselves, because that is the best means to the ultimate end, whether the ultimate end be our own greatest pleasure or not. Altruism, on the other hand, may denote the theory that we ought always to aim at other people's happiness, on the ground that this is the best means of securing our own as well as theirs. Accordingly an Egoist ... who holds that his own greatest happiness is the ultimate end, may at the same time be an Altruist: he may hold that he ought to 'love his neighbour,' as the best means to being happy himself. And conversely an Egoist, in the other sense, may at the same time be a Utilitarian. He may hold that he ought always to direct his efforts towards getting pleasure for himself on the ground that he is thereby most likely to increase the general sum of happiness.²⁵

However, egoism is more often used in the selfish rather than the altruistic sense. It is normally applied in reference to one's own good alone, and not one's own pleasure alone, as the final end. In this case, it is possible for one to be an egoist without being a hedonist and the converse is a similar possibility. For Moore,

The conception which is, perhaps, most closely associated with Egoism is that denoted by the words 'my own interest,' the Egoist is the man who holds that a tendency to promote his own interest is the sole possible, and sufficient, justification of all his actions. But this conception of 'my own interest' plainly includes, in general, very much more than my own pleasure. It is, indeed, only because and in so far as 'my own interest' has been thought to consist solely in my own pleasure, that Egoists have been led to hold that my own pleasure is the sole good.²⁶

Hedonists argue that they ought to pursue their own greatest pleasure since their own greatest good consists in it.²⁷

But as far as Moore is concerned, egoism and hedonism, of which it is a type, are self-contradictory mainly because of the ambiguity of the term 'my own good.' For Egoism states "that each man's happiness is the sole good - that a number of different things {according to different people} are each of them the only good thing {for each of them} there is - an absolute contradiction!"²⁸ As such, there seem to be as many ideas of the sole good as there are different people with different opinions about it. Therefore the egoistic principle according to which each individual's good is supposed to be the *sole* good appears to be multiple, rather than single (as it should

be), which is a contradiction in terms. What this implies is that "each man's happiness is the only thing desirable: several things are each of them the only thing desirable. This is the fundamental contradiction of Egoism."²⁹ What it means is that each individual's good is the only good there is. Yet there are many individuals. So, by extension, it can be hypothesised that there are as many '*sole goods*' as there are many individuals or individual goods, which is absurd!

Furthermore, that "it should also be true that the Happiness of all is the sole good, which is the principle of Universalistic Hedonism, would introduce another contradiction. And that these propositions should all be true might be called 'the profoundest problem in Ethics': it would be a problem necessarily insoluble."³⁰ This statement may be interpreted to mean that the best possible condition of humanity is a situation whereby every human being enjoys happiness. The happiness of all is the same as the happiness of each and every individual; there is no such thing as the happiness of everyone apart from the happiness of individuals. In a sense, there is no happiness as such; for happiness is always the happiness of someone. It is a different matter whether the happiness of all is practically achievable, except in theory. It is an ideal that is worth striving for.

There are two kinds of egoism that are usually confused with each other, that is, egoism as a doctrine of means or ends. The former seems to be more or less plausible. There is a difficulty in trying to recognise the contradiction between the pleasure of one individual and the *summum bonum* as the sole good. There is some confusion concerning egoism as a doctrine of means or ends. Apparently, it lends credence to the latter. For him, "if Hedonism is true, Egoism cannot be so; still less can it be so, if Hedonism is false."³¹

4.5 Utilitarianism

Utilitarian philosophers like J. S. Mill and Jeremy Bentham think that the highest good, *summum bonum*, is the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people, they equate happiness with pleasure. Utilitarianism does not entail the view that actions are to be judged as good to the extent that they serve as means to the attainment of pleasure. The utilitarian criterion of ethical judgement "is its tendency to promote the *interest* of everybody."³² But each person has many different interests and different people have many conflicting interests. Utilitarianism stresses the utility or expedience of actions. All goods are seen as means to pleasure.

The utilitarians tend to regard everything as a mere means, neglecting the fact that some things which are good as means are also good as ends. Thus, for instance, assuming pleasure to be a good, there is a tendency to value present pleasure only as a means to future pleasure, and not, as is strictly necessary if pleasure is good as an end, also to weigh it against possible future pleasures. Much utilitarian argument involves the logical absurdity that what is here and now, never has any value in itself, but is only to be judged by its consequences; which again, of course, when they are realised, would have no value in themselves, but would be mere means to a still further future, and so on *ad infinitum*.³³

Utilitarianism does not seem to make a clear distinction between means and ends. It is generally accepted as the view that 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' of people is the standard of ethical judgements. According to utilitarianism, it would seem as if it does not matter much whether pleasure as the sole good is felt by many people, few people, or by *no one*, so long as the result is desirably great. But this criticism of utilitarianism seems to be wrong since utilitarianism does make reference to the greatest happiness of *the greatest number* of people. The problem with utilitarianism is that 'the greatest number' is an indeterminate number.

Nevertheless, the idea of the existence of the sole good as a great quantity of pleasure which none feels is a contradiction in terms since what makes pleasure be called as such is the fact that it is *felt*. Feeling is an essential element in the nature of pleasure. So, there can never be a pleasure that nobody feels.

Accordingly, if the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the *summum bonum* that ought to be aimed at, then the pleasure of the greatest number alone seems to be the best possible means, from the hedonistic point of view, of ensuring that pleasure exists in the greatest quantity. It is more likely that the sole good is the greatest pleasure of many people than that it is the greatest pleasure as such. Strictly speaking, the utilitarian principle according to which the pleasure of the greatest number of people is assumed to be an end in itself, can hardly be described as hedonistic. For it requires the existence of the greatest number of people, as a necessary condition for the existence of the final end. Therefore, pleasure *alone* cannot be legitimately claimed to be the good. There are other things involved in the ultimate end apart from pleasure. At best, it will be acknowledged that the practical conclusions of utilitarianism are not misleading since actions which tend to promote the greatest general good are normally accompanied by the greatest pleasure. Generally, most utilitarian arguments are intended to show that right actions are approved by common sense. This fact seems to prove neither that the sole good is pleasure nor that right actions are effectively most pleasant. This is thought to be absolutely dubious.

In Mill's *Utilitarianism*, happiness is defined as pleasure and the absence of pain. These are the only intrinsic ends. "By happiness is intended pleasure, and the

absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure."³⁴ According to Mill, the only desirable thing is pleasure.

Mill denies that the principle of utility strictly refers to the sense in which it is contrary to pleasure. Utility is pleasure itself and the lack of pain. So it cannot be distinguished from pleasure. "The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness."³⁶ All other desirable ends are as such due to "the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain."³⁷ Like the early Epicureans, Utilitarians have been called names. For instance, they are supposed to imply that the end of human life is no higher, better or nobler than mere pleasure. The Epicureans, on the other hand, argue that it is their accusers who degrade human nature by implying that human beings are only capable of attaining pleasures that animals like pigs are also able to attain, and of being incapable of enjoying higher pleasures than these. It is derogatory to equate the Epicurean life to a beastly life since the human conception of happiness is not the same thing as the pleasure of a beast. Apparently, human beings have more developed faculties as compared to animals. They consciously seek the gratification of higher pleasures than those that any animal is capable of attaining. The Epicurean theory of life attaches more value to the pleasures of the intellect than those of sensation. According to Mill, "it is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact, that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others."³⁸ For him, the idea of degrees of pleasure is incompatible with the view of pleasure as the sole

good. For Mill "the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone."³⁹

The greatest happiness of all as opposed to that of an individual is the utilitarian ethical standard of judgement. The nobility of character contributes a great deal to this goal. It makes the world a better place to live in and benefits the individual concerned as well as others. According to the principle of Utility,

The ultimate end, with reference to and for the sake of which all other things are desirable (whether we are considering our own good or that of other people), is an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality; the test of quality, and the rule for measuring it against quantity, being the preference felt by those who in their opportunities of experience, to which must be added their habits of self-consciousness and self-observation, are best furnished with the means of comparison.⁴⁰

Some critics argue that no form of happiness is a rational end of human life and conduct since it is allegedly untenable. They claim that happiness is an unnecessary ideal. In this case, the achievement of happiness can neither be the end of morality or that of rational human action.

Utility involves the search for happiness as well as the avoidance of unhappiness. For this reason, if happiness cannot be attained, it is necessary to aim at the prevention of unhappiness, at least. Happiness or pleasure is naturally momentary; it is not a permanent state. It does not last forever. But in Aristotle's view, happiness is a permanent activity as opposed to a temporary state.

The utilitarian ethic recognises the ability of human beings to be altruistic. However, it denies that sacrifice alone is itself a good if it does not augment happiness in its totality. But it approves of the need for self-sacrifice as a commitment to the attainment of the happiness of others, either the collective

happiness of humanity as a whole or the happiness of individuals, subject to the limitation of what is in the interest of mankind as a whole. The utilitarian standard of ethical judgement is not an individual's happiness but the happiness of everybody. But this is immeasurable. Utilitarianism stresses the ethical agent's impartiality, disinterestedness and benevolence. The aim of ethics is the increment of happiness.

Moore accepts Mill's idea that "Questions of ultimate ends are not amenable to direct proof. Whatever can be proved to be good, must be so by being shown to be a means to something admitted to be good without proof."⁴¹ According to Mill, ends are desirable things. But for Moore, Mill is mistaken in using the term 'desirable as an end' as a synonym of 'good as an end.' Moore takes Mill to be saying that pleasure alone is good as an end. Utilitarianism teaches that all other ends apart from happiness are only desirable as means to the attainment of the final end of happiness. "The fact is that 'desirable' does not mean 'able to be desired' ... The desirable means simply what ought to be desired or deserves to be desired ... 'Desirable' does indeed mean 'what it is good to desire'; but when this is understood, it is no longer plausible to say that our only test of that is what is actually desired."⁴² Mill commits a fallacy in identifying what is good with what is desired. He confuses the sense of 'desirable' according to which it means that which should be desired, with another sense whereby it is taken to mean that which is desired. "If 'desirable' is to be identical with 'good,' then it must bear quite another sense. And yet to Mill's contention that the desired is necessarily good, it is quite essential that these two senses of 'desirable' should be the same. If he holds they are the same, then he has contradicted himself elsewhere; if he holds they are not the same, then the first step in his proof of Hedonism is absolutely worthless."⁴³

Mill seeks to prove that what is good and what is desired are the same thing. Nevertheless, not everything that is desired is good, for some desires are bad. He "recognises that, if he is further to maintain that pleasure alone is good, he must prove that pleasure alone is really desired."⁴⁴

Mill seems to contradict himself when he argues that everyone's happiness is the only desirable thing since one's own happiness is the desire of everyone. However, he agrees that there are other ends, say, money, fame, food and drink, besides pleasure which are desired "and this admission is at once a contradiction of his Hedonism."⁴⁵ Though utilitarians argue that the object of desire is always pleasure, "pleasure is always, in part at least, the *cause* of desire ... It is this use of the same language to denote quite different facts, which I believe to be the chief cause why psychological Hedonism is so often held, just as it was also the cause of Mill's naturalistic fallacy."⁴⁶ Moore thinks that the Psychological Hedonist confuses the pleasure of thought with the thought of pleasure. "The idea of the object of desire is not always and only the idea of a pleasure."⁴⁷ He claims that "we are not always conscious of expecting pleasure, when we desire a thing. We may be only conscious of the thing which we desire, and may be impelled to make for it at once without any calculation as to whether it will bring us pleasure or pain. And in the second place, even when we do expect pleasure, it can certainly be very rarely pleasure only which we desire."⁴⁸ Furthermore, "the theory then that what is desired is always and only pleasure must break down: it is impossible to prove that pleasure alone is good, by that line of argument."⁴⁹ On the other hand, if pleasure is not regarded as the effect but rather as the cause of human desire, "then all the plausibility of our ethical doctrine that pleasure alone is good straightaway disappears. For in this case,

pleasure is not what I desire, it is not what I want: it is something which I already have, before I can want anything."⁵⁰

Again, although Mill claims that 'happiness is the sole end of human action,' he acknowledges 'that pleasure is not the only thing we actually desire.'⁵¹ For example, human beings (though not all) also desire virtue as much as we want happiness. Further, 'Money is, in many cases, desired in and for itself.'⁵² According to Moore, these "admissions are, of course, in naked and glaring contradiction with his argument that pleasure is the only thing desirable, because it is the only thing desired."⁵³ Mill admits that money, for instance, 'is only desirable as a means to happiness.' For Moore he "has failed to distinguish 'end' in the sense of what is desirable from 'end' in the sense of what is desired: ... This is a consequence of the naturalistic fallacy."⁵⁴

Mill defines the good as the desirable and the desirable as the desired. For him, what can be desired is what is in fact desired. "If therefore, we can find some one thing which is always and alone desired, that thing will necessarily be the only thing that is desirable, the only thing that is good as an end."⁵⁵ He commits the Naturalistic Fallacy in his argument. For he defines the good in terms of one natural quality, that is pleasure. Thus, "Mill tells us that we ought to desire something (an ethical proposition), because we actually do desire it; but if his contention that 'I ought to desire' means nothing but 'I do desire' were true, then he is only entitled to say, 'we do desire so and so because we do desire it' and that is not an ethical proposition at all; it is a mere tautology. The whole object of Mill's book is to help us to discover what we ought to do; but, in fact, by attempting to define the meaning

of this 'ought,' he has completely debarred himself from ever fulfilling that object: he has confined himself to telling us what we do."⁵⁶

First, Mill argues that what is desired is good and what is good is what is desired. "He has to prove that we always do desire pleasure or freedom from pain, and that we never desire anything else whatever."⁵⁷ Sidgwick thinks that this is the doctrine of psychological Hedonism. It is not true "that we never desire anything but pleasure; and how there is not a shadow of ground for saying even that, whenever we desire anything, we always desire pleasure as well as that thing."⁵⁸ The cause of desire is distinct from the object of pleasure.

Again, Mill admits that there are other desired things besides pleasure yet he claims that pleasure is the only desired thing, which is a contradiction in terms. He confuses the ideas of means and ends. For him, what is a "means to an end is the same thing as a part of that end."⁵⁹

As Mill himself does admit, the hedonistic principle that pleasure is the only desirable good cannot be proved directly. His arguments involve the naturalistic fallacy for they identify 'desirable with desired.' Pleasure is not the only thing that is desired. But Sidgwick defends hedonism without committing the fallacy. Hedonism is an intuition. For Moore, "Mill's allowance that some pleasures are inferior in quality to others implies both that it is an Intuition and that it is a false one."⁶⁰ He also accuses Sidgwick of failing to make a distinction between 'pleasure' and 'consciousness of pleasure.' Neither of them is the only good thing there is. For "it seems equally absurd to regard 'consciousness of pleasure' as the sole good, since, if it were so, a world in which nothing else existed might be absolutely perfect."⁶¹ On

the contrary, it can be argued that the idea of the sole good does not entail the notion of a perfect world. These are two different things.

Moore asserts that "the end of Utilitarianism, ... would, if Hedonism were true, be, not indeed the best conceivable, but the best possible for us to promote; but it is refuted by the refutation of Hedonism."⁶² Although he is concerned with the refutation of Mill's naturalistic arguments for hedonism, he admits that hedonism may still be true even though Mill does not prove it beyond reasonable doubt.

4.6 Aristotle's view of pleasure:

The life of pleasure is devoted to the pursuit of pleasure as the highest good. Everything in such a life seems to be done for the sake of pleasure alone. It is imbued with a quest for luxuries. It seems to consist in the pursuit of pleasure at all costs. Though many people go for pleasure, different people appear to derive pleasure from different things and the same thing does not necessarily please the same people or the same person always. For sometimes what seems pleasant or unpleasant to someone depends on his or her condition. For example, whenever one falls sick, one does not usually enjoy the same kind of pleasures that one normally enjoys when one is in a healthy state.

Some people find pleasure in goods like fame, wealth, honour, virtue, study, etceteras. So, "the things that please most people conflict, because they are not pleasant by nature; whereas the things that please lovers of what is fine are things pleasant by nature; and actions expressing virtue are pleasant in this way; and so they both please lovers of what is fine and are pleasant in themselves."⁶³ Their lives do not need an additional pleasure over and above virtuous activity, as some sort of ornamentation, since they have immanent pleasure.

Aristotle examined the different conceptions of pleasure but found them wanting. It is clear from the following discussion of pleasure that Aristotle rejected the view that pleasure is bad. His view was that no man could be happy without a certain amount of pleasure in his life. Aristotle observed that it was generally believed that happiness was some kind of pleasure. For "the many, the most vulgar, would seem to conceive the good and happiness as pleasure, and hence they also like the life of gratification."⁶⁴ In fact, he was convinced that happiness was the "best, finest and most pleasant" activity of the soul."⁶⁵ Being pleased is a condition of the soul. Granted therefore that pleasure is a good of the soul and goods of the soul are goods to the fullest extent and most of all, pleasure too is good in the same way. The other kinds of goods are goods of the body and external goods.

Nevertheless, Aristotle denied the hedonistic claim that the life of gratification is the best human life and that pleasure is the highest or the sole good, though he took pleasure to be an important accompaniment of the good life.

The life of pleasure is one of the three prominent kinds of life that Aristotle discussed in the *Ethics* as possible candidates for the best human life. As far as he was concerned, the life of pleasure appeared to be the most popular kind of life. For "the many, the most vulgar, would seem to conceive the good and happiness as pleasure, and hence they also like the life of gratification. Here they appear completely slavish, since the life they decide on is a life for grazing animals."⁶⁶ As the life of enjoyment, it has been described as a beastly life, the life of herbivores. It is seen as a debased life, a lower kind of life that is only suitable for slaves and 'grazing animals' such as cattle. For those who choose to lead the life of pleasure 'appear completely slavish' because the kind of life they choose "is a life for grazing

animals."⁶⁷ By implication, this means that the life of pleasure is unfit for human beings. Admittedly, hedonists seem to have some arguments in their defence. For example, many people in positions of power also choose this kind of life. However, the fact that something is done by an authority does not necessarily mean that it is a good thing. It does not mean that a particular action is the right thing to do, absolutely or relatively, in the prevailing circumstances, unless the authority concerned is the relevant one in a particular field. It is fallacious to suggest otherwise. In any case, even experts or authorities in the same field do sometimes disagree on certain issues of mutual concern. At times, people even appeal to wrong authorities to defend their claims. For instance, a politician may turn out to be a layman in moral questions. In this case, it is wrong to insinuate that pleasure is the highest goal since such a person believes that it is the highest goal. In this case, one needs to appeal to a moral authority.

On the contrary, the life of pleasure or gratification seems to be farthest removed from all the things it is wrongly associated with. The slave has no share in the life of pleasure simply because of his slavery. As a slave, he is not free to indulge in the luxury of pleasure. In any case, he cannot afford some kinds of pleasure. The child too, cannot lead the life of pleasure because of its tender age. Neither can grazing animals lead the life of pleasure since pleasures are chosen but they are determined to live according to their master's wish. This does not include enjoyment. Thus, it appears as if man is the only kind of animal that seeks pleasure more than any other animal. Indeed, there are many more things that man does for mere pleasure than those that other animals do. For example, animals engage in coitus at specific

times only for reproductive purposes while human beings seem to do so anytime not only for procreation but also for pleasure.

Clearly, if people derive their conceptions of the highest good or happiness from the kind of life they lead, then those people who lead the life of pleasure also suppose that the highest good is pleasure. They think that the best life for all human beings to lead is the life of pleasure.

As Sir David Ross acknowledges in his book, *Aristotle*, there are two separate discussions of pleasure in the *Ethics*, that is, Book VII and Book X. Aristotle discussed the theory that pleasure was not the good because it was a process of occupying a vacuum.

4.7 Pleasure in Book VII

Book VII, falls short of concluding that pleasure is the *summum bonum* (the best good). It suggests that pleasure could still be the good and it defends this view against the critics. For pleasure has an important role to play in the activity of *eudaimonia*. It is part and parcel of *eudaimonia*.

There are three common conceptions of pleasure. First, there is the view "that no pleasure is a good, either in itself or coincidentally, on the ground that the good is not the same as pleasure". Secondly, there is the view "that some pleasures are good, but most are bad". Thirdly, there is the view "that even if every pleasure is a good, the best good still cannot be pleasure."⁶⁹ Aristotle dismissed all these views.

According to the first view, that is, the view of Speusipus, pleasure is not a good for the following reasons:

- (a) Every pleasure is a perceived becoming towards {the fulfilment of something's} nature, but no becoming is of the same kind as its end, e.g. no {process of} building is of the same kind as a house. (b) Besides, the temperate

person avoids pleasures. (c) Besides, the intelligent person pursues what is painless, not what is pleasant. (d) Besides, pleasures impede intelligent thinking, and impede it more the more we enjoy them; no one, e.g., while having sexual intercourse can think about anything. (e) Besides, every good is the product of a craft, but there is no craft of pleasure. (f) Besides, children and animals pursue pleasure.⁷⁰

Aristotle denied Speusipus's claim (a) that pleasure is "a perceived becoming."⁷¹ For pleasure "should instead be called not perceived, but unimpeded."⁷² As an activity, pleasure "is a good to the full extent."⁷³ However, it is not, as some people suppose, a becoming since activities differ from becoming. Furthermore, Aristotle observed that

Pain is an evil and is to be avoided; for one kind of pain is unconditionally bad, and another is bad in a particular way, by impeding {activities}. But the contrary to what is to be avoided, in so far as it is bad and to be avoided, is good; hence pleasure must be a good. Speusipus' solution - {that pleasure is contrary both to pain and to the good as the greater is contrary both to the lesser and to the equal - does not succeed. For he would not say {as his solution requires} that pleasure is essentially an evil.⁷⁴

In response to Speusipus's claim (b) that the temperate person avoids pleasure, it is said that he only avoids pleasures that are not unconditionally good, and not all pleasures. It is not the case that the temperate person avoids pleasure in general. Like the intelligent person, the temperate one does not avoid all kinds of pleasure; he only avoids the ones that are not good unconditionally. For "there are pleasures of the temperate person too."⁷⁵

Anyway, whether the temperate person avoids pleasure or not, his behaviour does not determine whether pleasure is the good or not.

It is also debatable whether or not pleasure hinders intelligent thinking. Aristotle's response to Speusipus's claim that the intelligent person does not seek pleasure but lack of pain and the claim that pleasure is an impediment to intelligence is this: "the intelligent person pursues painlessness only in relation to" pleasures that

are not unconditionally good, not pleasure *per se*.⁷⁶ For "neither intelligence nor any state is impeded by the pleasures arising from it, but only by alien pleasures. For *the pleasures arising from study and learning will make us study and learn all the more*."⁷⁷ The absence of pain does not entail the presence of pleasure and vice versa. However, the absence of pleasure may mean the presence of pain and the presence of pleasure may connote the absence of pain. In fact, sometimes pleasure and pain may be felt together! For example, there be both pleasure and pain in scratching an itchy spot.

It is true that people are more likely than not to do well in those activities in which they are interested in, those that give them pleasure. Indeed, people seem to do better in those activities in which they are interested than in those that they are less interested in. Therefore, pleasure may enhance intelligence instead of inhibiting it. However, Aristotle's suggestion that there are different kinds of pleasure is also disputable. The difference among pleasures may be that of degree and not of kind. The fact that there are different things that give pleasure does not mean that the pleasures that accrue from them are equally different. Rather, it is the same pleasure that is provided by different things. Pleasures do not differ simply because they emanate from different sources. They may differ in intensity and duration rather than in quality.

Speusipus's claim (e) that every good is the result of a craft but pleasure is not the product of any craft is also questionable. A craft is like a skill. It is a productive, rational discipline.⁷⁸ Admittedly, the "fact that pleasure is not a product of a craft is quite reasonable; for a craft does not belong to a capacity. And yet, the crafts of perfumery and cooking do seem to be crafts of pleasure."⁷⁹

However, the fact that the crafts of perfumery and cooking give pleasure does not mean that they are crafts of pleasure. The purpose of perfumes may be anything other than pleasure; and the purpose of cookery is definitely not the production of pleasure but that of food. Although eating is a pleasant activity, it is not meant for pleasure but for staying alive and in good health. However, a few people may eat for pleasure. But this is an exception rather than the rule. Pleasure merely accompanies feeding but it is not the end of it. For "people who have come to rely for their pleasures on food and drink instead of merely eating because they are hungry and drinking because they are thirsty, continue to eat and drink when they are neither hungry nor thirsty, for the sheer fun of doing so."⁸⁰ Nevertheless, even if it is assumed that children also pursue pleasure, this does not negate the possibility of its being the good. Speusipus's claim implies that pleasure is not the good because children also seek it. The fact that children seek pleasure or anything at that does not necessarily mean that whatever they seek is not what they ought to seek. Even if they seek many things that are not related to the good, this does not mean that everything else that they seek must be opposed to the good. Their pursuit of pleasure is not the reason why it is not the good. Arguably, children and beasts only pursue "pleasures [that are not unconditionally good]" and not all kinds of pleasure. At any rate, children from diverse backgrounds may enjoy different pleasures. In fact, some may not engage in any pleasure at all, depending, of course, on their situation and environment. It is doubtful whether all children act and react in the same way to the same things. It is questionable whether they all like or hate the same things in the same way with the same intensity. Indeed, children's behaviour may be affected by

the factor of their age. For a younger child may enjoy activities that differ from those of an older child. There is no definite pattern of behaviour for all children.

The second view of pleasure is intended 'to show that not all pleasures are excellent things' because (a) some of them are "shameful and reproached, and (b) that some are harmful, since some pleasant things cause disease."⁸¹ This implies that bad consequences (unlike bad sources) need not make such pleasures bad. For some good things have bad effects. For example, healthy things may be bad for the purposes of making money and studying may as well be detrimental to health (if it is overdone or conducted in the wrong way). For instance, a number of people have destroyed themselves mentally as a result of too much learning. There is a proverb to the effect that one who "increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."⁸² It is common knowledge that too much of something is dangerous. Furthermore,

Those who maintain that some pleasures, e.g. the fine ones, are highly choiceworthy, but the bodily pleasures that concern the intemperate person are not, should examine bodily pleasures. If what they say is true, why are the pains contrary to these pleasures awful? For it is a good that is contrary to an evil. Then are the necessary {bodily pleasures} good only in the way that what is not bad is good? Or are they good upto a point? {In fact they are good up to a point.} For though some states and processes allow no excess of what is better, and hence no excess of the pleasure {in them} either, others do allow excess of what is better, and hence also allow excess of the pleasure in them too. Now the bodily goods allow excess. The base person is base because he pursues the excess, but not because he pursues the necessary pleasures; for all enjoy delicacies and wines and sexual relations in some way, though not all in the right way. The contrary is true for pains. The base person avoids pain in general, not [only] an excess of it. For not [all] pain is contrary to excess [of pleasure], except to someone who pursues the excess [of pleasure]. Hence we should say why bodily pleasures appear more choiceworthy. First ... it is because bodily pleasure pushes out pain. Excesses of pain make people seek a cure in the pursuit of excessive pleasure and of bodily pleasure in general. And these cures become intense - that is why they are pursued - because they appear next to their contraries.⁸³

On the contrary, the *base* person does not only avoid excess pain; he avoids any kind of pain. "For not {all} pain is contrary to excess {of pleasure}, except to someone who pursues the excess {of pleasure}."⁸⁴

It is said that pleasure is not good because it is supposed to be an act of a base nature, an innate nature, as in the case of a beast or an habitual (or acquired) nature, as in the case of a base human being (whatever that means?). Consider a slave, for example. Furthermore, some kinds of pleasure are thought to be curative in that they correct certain defects or deficiencies. For instance, cinema-going and theatre-going people may experience Cathartic experiences with curative effects. In this case, "it is better to be in a good state than to be becoming into it."⁸⁵ For example, good health is preferable to the pleasure of undergoing treatment. Such pleasures are excellent by coincidence since they coincide with treatment and convalescence.

Some people are said to be unable to enjoy pleasures other than the physical ones. They pursue them because they are intense enough to cure (or to suppress) pain. Such people are fond of making themselves thirsty. They are blameless or blameworthy depending on whether the resultant thirst is harmless or harmful. "They do this because they enjoy nothing else, and many people's nature makes the neutral condition painful to them."⁸⁶ Such people become base and intemperate because they drive out pain by its contrary pleasure or any other kind of intense pleasure. There are no excesses of painless pleasures.

These are pleasant by nature and not coincidentally. By coincidentally pleasant things I mean pleasant things that are curative; for the {process of} being cured coincides with some action of the part of us that remains healthy, and hence undergoing a cure seems to be pleasant. Things are pleasant by nature, however, when they produce action of a healthy nature. The reason why no one thing is always pleasant is that our nature is not simple, but has more than one constituent, in so far as we are perishable, hence the action of one part is contrary to nature for the other nature in us, and when they are equally balanced, the action seems neither

pleasant nor painful ... For if something has a simple nature the same action will always be pleasantest. That is why the god always enjoys one simple pleasure {without change}. For activity belongs not only to change but also to unchangingness, and indeed there is pleasure in rest more than in change: 'variation in everything is sweet' ... because of some inferiority; for just as it is the inferior human being who is prone to variation, so also the nature that needs variation is inferior, since it is not simple or decent.⁸⁷

Lastly, the third view is supposed "to show that the best good is not pleasure ... that pleasure is not an end, but a becoming."⁸⁸ Some people argue that pleasure is not the best good since it is a becoming and not an end. It may be a good but not the best good. But Aristotle suggested that pleasure might still be the best good in spite of this objection since it fails to prove otherwise. It is still possible that pleasure is the good even if it is only a becoming. For "it is not necessary for something else to be better than pleasure, as the end, some say, is better than the becoming. For pleasures are not becoming, nor do they all even involve a becoming. They are activities, and an end {in themselves}, and arise when we exercise {a capacity}, not when we are coming to be {in some state}."⁸⁹ Pleasures may either be ends in themselves or ends for other ends. Coincidental pleasures in in-patients are means towards good health. Admittedly, "some pleasures might well be the best good, even though most pleasures are bad."⁹⁰ In any case, it is an unimpeded activity. "This is why all think the happy life is pleasant and weave pleasure into happiness, quite reasonably, since no activity is complete if it is impeded, and happiness is something complete ... The fact that all, both beasts and human beings, pursue pleasure is some sign of its being in some way the best good."⁹¹ Furthermore, Aristotle insisted that "if pleasure is not a good and an activity, it will not be true that the happy person lives pleasantly. For what will he need pleasure for if it is not a good? Indeed, it will even be possible for him to live painfully; for pain is neither an evil nor a good if pleasure is not, and why then could

he avoid it? So the life of the excellent person will not be pleasanter if his activities are not also pleasanter."⁹² Most people seem to pursue bodily pleasures frequently and suppose that these are the only pleasures there are because they are the only ones that they know.

The conclusive response to the three arguments is that such people neither prove that pleasure is not a good nor that it is not the best good. But the lack of proof or disproof does not necessarily mean that pleasure is or is not a good or the best good, for that matter. In Aristotle's view, something may be good in two different ways, either absolutely or relatively. The same thing applies to natures, states, processes as well as becoming. As far as the so-called bad processes and becoming are concerned, "(i) some are bad unconditionally, but for some person not bad, and for this person actually choiceworthy. (ii) Some are not choiceworthy for him either, except sometimes and for a short time, not on each occasion. (iii) Some are not even pleasures, but appear to be; these are the {processes}, e.g., in sick people, that involve pain and are means to medical treatment."⁹³ Again, a particular good may be an activity or a state. For that matter,

The processes that restore us to our natural state are pleasant coincidentally. Here the activity in the appetites belong to the rest of our state and nature {i.e. the part that is still undisturbed}. For there are also pleasures without pain and appetite, e.g. the pleasures of studying, those in which our nature lacks nothing. A sign {that supports our distinction between pleasures} is the fact that we do not enjoy the same thing when our nature is being refilled that we enjoy when it is eventually fully restored. When it is fully restored, we enjoy things that are unconditionally pleasant; but when it is being refilled, we enjoy even the contrary things. For we even enjoy sharp or bitter things, though none of these is pleasant by nature or unconditionally pleasant. Hence {these pleasures} are not {unconditionally} pleasures either; for as pleasant things differ from each other, so the pleasures arising from them differ too.⁹⁴

Many people seem to be seeking different pleasures because, for them, the best natural state is seemingly different. Paradoxically, they also seem to desire the same pleasure though it is not the one they would accept that they are pursuing, for everything has an element of divinity in it.

4.8 Pleasure in Book X

But in Book X, Aristotle dealt with pleasure differently. As we shall see soon, there are certain similarities as well as differences between these two treatments of pleasure in Book VII and Book X. In the latter, Aristotle articulated his own view of pleasure and contrasted it with the views of Eudoxus according to whom pleasure was the best good and those of his critics, who believed that pleasure was bad. The discussion of pleasure in Book X repeats the discussion in Book VII more than it contradicts it. Nonetheless, both of them are undoubtedly the works of Aristotle. But it was in Book X that Aristotle not only criticised others' views but also stated his own view.

Here, Aristotle's argument is that pleasure is absolutely complete. As far as the nature of pleasure is concerned, it is not a process or a movement. The latter "takes time, aims at a certain end, and is complete only when it has attained its end, i.e. either in the time which it occupies, taken as a whole, or in the moment of attainment."⁹⁵ Pleasure is always complete; it takes no time to be pleased. Being pleased is instantaneous. One can *become* pleased quickly or slowly but one cannot *be* pleased slowly or quickly. Pleasure is "something complete in itself and satisfactory in every moment of itself, like the activity of perception or of thought."⁹⁶

The activities of thought and the senses are most pleasant whenever they are in their healthy state and their objects are good in themselves. This implies that

pleasure admits of degrees of perfection. Pleasure completes and intensifies activities. It perfects the activities that it accompanies. "Pleasure being thus closely bound up with activity, one might suppose that men desire pleasure because they desire life and because pleasure perfects the activities which make up life."⁹⁷ Different pleasures complete different kinds of activities. Every activity can only be completed by its proper pleasure. The more we take pleasure in doing something, the better we can do it. Similarly, the less we enjoy doing something, the more we tend to do something else.

In addition, the more we enjoy doing something the better we are likely to continue doing it. People are often distracted from concentrating on something by things that please them more than others.

For instance people eat nuts in the theatre if the actors are boring. "For the pleasanter activity pushes out the other one, all the more if it is much pleasanter, so that we no longer even engage in the other activity. Hence if we are enjoying one thing intensely, we do not do another very much. It is when we are only mildly pleased that we do something else, e.g. people who eat nuts in theatres do this most when the actors are bad."⁹⁸ Others may even doze and fall asleep. Alien pleasures are like proper pains in the sense that they interfere with and inhibit activities. The goodness and desirability of different activities differ according to their proper pleasures.

Similarly, different races of animals seem to have their own different pleasures. They have pleasures akin to themselves. Maybe, it should be said that they derive pleasure from different activities; not that they have different pleasures. Pleasure remains the same; only the activities that produce it are different.

Nevertheless, "different men take pleasure in different things. Which pleasures, then, are the true human pleasures? Those in which the practically wise man delights; or, to put it more objectively, those which complete the function or functions proper to man."⁹⁹ Furthermore, the perusal of Book X reveals and confirms the following observations. It is mainly concerned with the discussion of the hedonistic claims of Eudoxus. It states that pleasure is comparable to sight in the sense that both of them are always complete in form. Pleasure is an instantaneous whole. It is neither a 'becoming' (change) nor a 'process.' For these need some duration for their completion but pleasure does not. Therefore, they are incomplete at every stage of their progression except the last moment when they are completed and their end is achieved. On the contrary, pleasure is a complete whole. It need not be completed in time by anything else.

Every process, e.g. constructing a building takes time, and aims at some end, and is completed when it produces the product it seeks, or, [in other words, is complete] in the whole time [that it takes]. Moreover, each process is incomplete during the processes that are its parts, i.e. during the time it goes on; and it consists of processes that are different in form from the whole process and from each other ... Hence [processes that are parts of larger processes] differ in form; and we cannot find a process complete in form at any time [while it is going on] but [only], if at all, in the whole time [that it takes] ... A process is not complete, it would seem, at every time, and the many [constituent] processes are incomplete, and differ in form, since the place from which and the place to which make the form of a process [and different processes begin and end in different places.]¹⁰⁰

Pleasure is always complete. This is what differentiates it from a process. A "process must take time, but being pleased need not; for what takes no time and hence is present in an instant is a whole. This also makes it clear that it is wrong to say there is a process or a coming-to-be of pleasure. For this is not said of everything, but only of what is divisible and not a whole; for seeing, or a point, or a unit, has no coming to be, and none of these is either a process or a becoming. But pleasure is a whole;

hence it too has no coming to be."¹⁰¹ Not everything is a process nor a becoming. There are processes and a becoming of divisible and incomplete things only. However, pleasure is indivisible and complete. Therefore, it can hardly be said to be a process or a becoming. Like points, units and sight, pleasure, as a whole, is neither a process nor a becoming. Therefore, it does not come to be. "Every faculty of perception is active in relation to its perceptible object, and completely active when it is in good condition in relation to the finest of its perceptible objects. For this above all seems to be the character of complete activity, whether it is ascribed to the faculty or to the subject that has it. Hence for each faculty the best activity is the activity of the subject in the best condition in relation to the best object of the faculty."¹⁰² Pleasure eventually completes activities.

Perhaps the reason why there is no continuous pleasure is because it is natural to get tired. Since pleasure is a function of activities and every human activity is limited, it must equally be limited. Pleasure is the completion of activities and the desired life. For instance, the musician and the learner seek pleasure in order to accomplish their activities and to complete their lives. Pleasure makes life 'choiceworthy.'

The question whether life is chosen "because of pleasure, or pleasure because of life" remains unanswered. For "the two appear to be yoked together, and to allow no separation; for pleasure never arises without activity, and equally, it completes every activity."¹⁰³ They are inseparably intertwined. However, it seems as if there are different species of pleasure.

We suppose that different things complete things of different species. That is how it appears, both with natural things and with artefacts, e.g. with animals, trees, a painting, a statue, a house or an implement; and similarly, activities that differ in

species are also completed by things that differ in species. Activities of thought differ in species from activities of the faculties of perception, and so do these from each other; so also, then, do the pleasures that complete them. This is also apparent from the way each pleasure is proper to the activity that it completes. For the proper pleasure increases the activity. For we judge each thing better and more exactly when our activity is associated with pleasure. If, e.g., we enjoy doing geometry, we become better geometers, and understand each question better; and similarly lovers of music, building and so on improve at their proper function when they enjoy it. Each pleasure increases the activity; what increases it is proper to it; and since the activities are different in species, what is proper to them is also different in species.¹⁰⁴

Some pleasures are opposed to each other. The enjoyment of one particular thing militates against the enjoyment of another especially if it is more pleasant than the other which must be ignored consequently. As in the case of a bored audience that resorts to eating nuts during a performance in a theatre because the actors are bad, people are easily distracted from whatever they are doing if they derive very little pleasure or no pleasure at all from it. For example, Aristotle claimed that nobody could think intelligently in the course of sexual intercourse. For "pleasures impede intelligent thinking, and impede it more the more we enjoy them; no one ... while having sexual intercourse can think about anything."¹⁰⁵

There are two types of pleasure: proper pleasures and alien pleasures. The former improve activities while the latter destroy them. Foreign pleasures have the same effect as proper pains which is contrary to that of proper pleasures. Proper pains and pleasures come from the activity but in contrary ways.

Although Aristotle wrote as if there were various pleasures, these are not really many pleasures but one. What was meant by the reference to proper and alien pleasures were the sources of pleasure within and without particular activities. There is no qualitative difference among pleasures.

For Aristotle, every activity had a corresponding pleasure. A decent pleasure is proper to an excellent activity. But a vicious pleasure is proper to a base activity. Arguments do arise whether pleasure is the same as the activity because these appear to be closely connected. Presumably, there are different kinds of pleasure. For example, pleasures of thought differ from pleasures of sensation. Perhaps, different animal species have different corresponding species of pleasure. Even within the same species there seem to be different pleasures. For instance, *"the pleasures differ a lot, in human beings at any rate. For the same things delight some people, and cause pain in others; and while some find them painful and hateful others find them pleasant and lovable."*¹⁰⁶ This is relativism.

There are many things that are experienced differently depending on the conditions of the subjects. For example, sweet things taste differently to one who has a fever. The good or the excellent person is taken to be the connoisseur of pleasure and pleasant things. Is he really infallible? Therefore, there are no such things as shameful pleasures except to those who are corrupt. The kind of pleasure that is appropriate to a human being will be proper to and consequent upon his characteristic activity. Therefore, *"the pleasures that complete the activities of the complete and blessedly happy man, whether he has one activity or more than one, will be called the human pleasures to the fullest extent. The other pleasures will be human in secondary and even more remote ways corresponding to the character of the activities."*¹⁰⁷

Accordingly, pleasure is an integral accompaniment of happiness, the supreme good. Besides, the most pleasant virtuous activity is the expression of wisdom. Arguably, the desire for pleasure is a characteristic of animals. Children too are

educated on the basis of pleasure and pain. They are taught to seek the pleasant and to avoid whatever is painful. Virtuous character seems to depend on the enjoyment and the hatred of the relevant things. Pain and pleasure may be experienced throughout a particular lifetime. They are important ethical elements concerning happiness. People tend to pursue pleasure while avoiding pain, as shown by utilitarians.

Nevertheless, some pleasant things are not good, neither are all painful things bad. For instance, a sugar - coated poison is not good for food while a painful surgical operation may still be necessary for health. At any rate children in different parts of the world are brought up in different ways. For, there are diverse cultures with various ways of raising children. It is evident that the children in question were those who lived in the then known ancient Greek world. Today's children are reared differently. Times and things have changed. Even the ways of nurturing children appear to have changed. In any case, children's upbringing is a matter that depends on the taste of their parents, their environment and the socio - cultural milieu. It depends on individuals, circumstances, times and places. It is relative to these factors. There is no absolute (or universal) way of educating children. In some places they are merely indoctrinated.

These are controversial issues. For that matter, they should not be ignored. Some people argue that the good is pleasure while others contend that pleasure is base because they are either convinced that it is actually base or because they believe that it is ethically healthy to portray pleasure as inferior even if it is not. Most people love pleasure and are enslaved by it. For that reason some people think that the lovers of

pleasure should be directed in the opposite direction so that they can find the mean.

However, Aristotle thought that they were mistaken:

For arguments about actions and feelings are less credible than the facts; hence any conflict between arguments and perceptible [facts] arouses contempt for arguments and moreover undermines the truth as well [as the arguments]. For if someone blames pleasure, but then has been seen to seek it on *some* occasions, the reason for this lapse seems to be that he approves of every type of pleasure; for the many are not the sort to make distinctions. True arguments, then, would seem to be the most useful, not only for knowledge but also for the conduct of life. For since they harmonize with the facts, they are credible, and so encourage those who comprehend them to live by them.¹⁰⁸

But Eudoxus argued that pleasure was the good because of the following reasons:

(1) This was because (a) he saw that all [animals], both rational and non-rational, seek it. (b) In everything, he says, what is choiceworthy is decent, and what is most choiceworthy is supreme. (c) Each thing finds its own good, just as it finds its own nourishment. (d) Hence, when all are drawn to the same thing, [i.e. pleasure], this indicates that it is best for all. (e) And what is good for all, what all aim at, is the good... (2) He thought it was no less evident from consideration of the contrary. (a) Pain in itself is to be avoided for all. (b) Similarly, then, its contrary is choiceworthy for all. (c) What is most choiceworthy is what we choose not because of, or for the sake of, anything else. (d) And it is agreed that this is the character of pleasure, since we never ask anyone what his end is in being pleased, on the assumption that pleasure is choiceworthy in itself. (3) Moreover, [he argued], when pleasure is added to any other good, e.g. to just and temperate action, it makes that good more choiceworthy, and good is increased by the addition of itself.¹⁰⁹

On the contrary, Aristotle argued that nothing could be good in itself if it is made more worthy of choice by the addition of anything that is good in - itself. Human beings are looking for the good that meets this condition (the condition of self-sufficiency) and that we can all share in. People believed Eudoxus's arguments because of his virtuous character rather than on account of their own merits.

Several objections to Eudoxus's arguments are refuted in favour of Eudoxus and against his critics. In the first place, although some critics deny that the good is what everything aims at, Aristotle's charge is that their view is nonsensical. For things

that appear good to everybody are said to be really good. For this reason, the objection is said to be unjustifiable. It would be justifiable only if unintelligent beings desire pleasure. However, intelligent beings also desire pleasure. In any case, it is presumed that there is some superior thing that looks after the good of lower animals as well. Thus the objection seems to be wrong and mistaken.

Secondly, the critics claim that the fact that pleasure is a good does not necessarily follow from the proposition that pain is evil. For evil is contrary to evil and the two are contrary to the mean, that is, the absence of pain or pleasure.

Generally speaking, the objector has a point to make, according to Aristotle, but in this particular case his view is wrong. Granted that pleasure and pain are evil, there is the possibility of avoiding neither or both of them. However, the two are different in the sense that pain is usually avoided as an evil but pleasure is often chosen as a good.

Thirdly, the fact that pleasure is not a quality does not necessarily mean that it is bad. Even happiness and general virtues are not qualities but they are good.

In the fourth place, unlike the pleasure that is indefinite because of its admittance of degrees, the good is something definite like health, which also admits of degrees. Those who hold this view are right provided they are referring to the state of being pleased. The virtue of justice too is relative in the sense that it admits of degrees of perfection. However, if they mean various pleasures, then they have not quite grasped the fact that the reason why there are degrees of pleasures is that some are painful while others are painless.

Fifth, although it is alleged that pleasure is a process and a becoming, this claim seems to be wrong. For pleasure is not even a process. Quickness or slowness

seems to be appropriate to every process either in itself or relative to something else. However, neither of these is true of pleasure. "For though certainly it is possible to *become* pleased quickly, as it is possible to become angry quickly, it is not possible to *be* pleased quickly, not even in relation to something else."¹¹⁰ Sloth or quickness is only possible for processes like walking and growing.

Sixth, it is wrongly claimed that pain is the emptying of the natural condition, and hence the perishing, and pleasure is the refilling, and hence the becoming. Pleasure cannot possibly be a becoming:

Not just any random thing, it seems, comes to be from any other; but what something comes to be from is what it is dissolved into. Hence whatever pleasure is the becoming of, pain should be the perishing of it. They do indeed say that pain is the emptying of the natural [condition, and hence the perishing], and that pleasure is its refilling, [and hence the becoming]. Emptying and refilling happen to the body; if, then, pleasure is the refilling of something natural, what has the refilling will also have the pleasure. Hence it will be the body that has pleasure.¹¹¹

The activity of refilling is not pleasure, though someone might be pleased while a refilling happens, and pained when he is becoming empty. The belief that pleasure is refilling seems to have arisen from pains and pleasure in connection with food, say, hunger, thirst and satisfaction. For, at first, one seems to be empty (hungry or thirsty) and suffers from the pain of hunger then take pleasure in the refilling (eating and drinking to one's satisfaction). This is not true of all pleasures. For instance, in mathematics and the pleasures of sense perception: smell, sound, sight, memories and expectations. These arise without previous pain. Here, there is no question of emptying nor refilling anything. Since no emptiness of anything has come to be, there is nothing whose refilling might come to be.

Seventh, some critics cite the disgraceful pleasures to show that pleasure is not a good. On the contrary, it may be argued that, these sources of disgraceful pleasures are anything but pleasant. For instance, if certain things are healthy, sweet or bitter to sick people, they should not be supposed to be healthy, sweet or bitter, except to them; nor should it be supposed that things appearing white to people with defective eyes are white, except to them. Similarly, if some things are pleasant to people in a bad condition, they should not be supposed to be pleasant, except to such people. In addition, it can be argued that pleasures are worth choosing except when they come from bad sources. Similarly, wealth is desirable, but not if you have to betray someone to get it; and health is desirable, but not if it requires you to eat anything and everything (as the swine seem to do). Moreover, pleasures seem to differ in species. Those from fine sources are different from those from shameful sources; one cannot have the just person's pleasure unless one is just, anymore than one can have the musician's pleasure without being a musician, and so on.

Eighth, the difference between a friend and a flatterer is said to be an indication that pleasure is not a good or a sign that pleasures differ in species. The friend seems to aim at what is good, but the flatterer at what is pleasant. The latter is reproached while the former is praised.

Nevertheless, no one would choose to live with a child's level of thought for a whole lifetime, taking as much pleasure as possible in what pleases children, or to enjoy himself while doing some utterly shameful action, even if he would never suffer pain for it. In fact, there are many things that people would be eager to do even if they brought no pleasure, e.g. seeing, remembering, knowing, and the cultivation of

particular virtues. It does not matter if pleasures necessarily follow on them since they could be chosen even if no pleasure resulted from them.

Therefore, in the discussion of pleasure in Book X of the *Ethics*, Aristotle concluded that "it would seem to be clear, then, that pleasure is not the good, that not every pleasure is choiceworthy, and that some are choiceworthy in themselves, differing in species or in their sources from those that are not."¹¹² In Aristotle's view pleasure is not the best thing for human beings to aspire to. In my view, pleasure is one of the necessary goods for the best life even if it is not the best good for man. Even so, the life of pleasure is inseparable from the other kinds of life. For those who lead the other lives also need pleasure. But an exclusive life of the enjoyment of pleasure does not seem to be the best life for human beings to lead.

Apart from the life of pleasure, another candidate for the good life is the materialistic life of making money. That is the subject of the next chapter.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE LIFE OF MAKING MONEY

This chapter is devoted to the discussion of the view that the best life is the life of moneymaking and that wealth or money is the best good. This is the kind of life that businessmen seem to lead. The overriding purpose of the life of money - making seems to be the accumulation of wealth for its sake. It is a life of maximising profits and minimising losses as much as possible as far as the business of making money is concerned. It is a materialistic or capitalistic style of life.

5.1 Materialism

Materialism has partly been defined as 'the policy or practice of giving too much value to wealth.' Money matters very much in the contemporary world for the purchase of goods and services necessary for life. Pecuniary matters matter very much. Fiscal or financial matters matter a great deal for leading the good life today. The life of money - making is a serious business. Money matters. For "money answereth all things."¹

But Aristotle rejected the received opinion that wealth constituted the highest or the best good. Similarly, he denied the common belief that the best life was the life of making money. For him, "the money-maker's life is in a way forced on him [not chosen for itself]; and clearly wealth is not the good we are seeking, since it is [merely] useful, [choiceworthy only] for some other end. Hence one would be more inclined to suppose that [any of] the goods mentioned earlier is the end, since they are liked for themselves. But apparently they are not [the end] either; and many arguments have been presented against them. Let us, then, dismiss them."² Most people want to become rich; very few people can say honestly that they do not want to

become wealthy. Indeed, to date money seems to be the commodity that most people desire the most. It is the best selling-good. Perhaps it is the best human good. It seems to be the only measurement for success. Nowadays, the amount of money one possesses seems to be the common standard of success all over the world. The more money one has, the more successful one appears. The more goods a life possesses the better it appears to be. By this argument, the best life is a life that consists in the possession of most goods. For the rich are respected while the poor are despised. Poverty is a bad thing. Poverty is an evil thing. Even if one is educated but poor, one seems not to command as much respect as one who is uneducated but rich. Others may despise you if you are highly educated but poor. An educated but poor person has no respect among the uneducated rich. It is as if it is better to have money even if one is uneducated, than to be educated and without money. Nevertheless, someone may argue that the educated person should not be poor when the person can use education to translate his knowledge into its monetary equivalent!

5.2 Napoleon Hill

In *Think and Grow Rich*, Napoleon Hill discusses specialised knowledge as one of the elements in the 'formula' of the accumulation of riches. The other ingredients are desire, faith, autosuggestion, imagination, organised planning, decision-making, persistence, power of the master - mind, the mystery of sex transmutation, the subconscious mind, the brain and the sixth sense. All this sounds rather far-fetched. For him, knowledge is divided into two different kinds: practical and specialised knowledge. The first one is not as useful for the accumulation of riches as the second one. "The faculties of the great universities possess, in the aggregate, practically every form of general knowledge known to civilisation. *Most*

of the professors have but little money. They specialise on teaching knowledge, but they do not specialise on the organisation, or the *use* of knowledge. Knowledge will not attract money, unless it is organized, and intelligently directed, through practical *plans of action* to the definite end of accumulation of money.”³ In this case, the idea of knowledge for its own sake is useless for the accumulation of money. Contrary to Francis Bacon’s idea, it is not the case that ‘knowledge is power’; rather, “Knowledge is only *potential* power. It becomes pōwer only when, and if, it is organized into definite plans of action and directed to a definite end.”⁴ The educational institutions should teach students how to translate what they have learnt into practice.

But not all kinds of knowledge can be applied thus. There is theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Some kind of knowledge is speculative and not as applicable or practical as scientific studies such as medicine, law, engineering, agriculture, and architecture. Indeed, even the sciences are divided into pure science and technology. It is the former that translates into the latter. But technology also relies on pure science for knowledge while pure science depends on it for the required instruments. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two. Both of them are needful.

But according to Napoleon Hill, “an educated man is not, necessarily, one who has an abundance of general or specialized knowledge. An educated man is one who has so developed the faculties of his mind that he may acquire anything he wants, or its equivalent, without violating the rights of others ... Any man is educated who knows where to get knowledge when he needs it, and how to organize that knowledge into definite plans of action.”⁵ The point is that we ought to act on what we know. What counts is practical knowledge – skills; mere ‘head-knowledge’ does

not matter as far as the question of amassing wealth is concerned. It is the practical application of knowledge other than mere theoretical knowledge that counts.

Nevertheless, Aristotle, for his part, placed speculative knowledge above practical knowledge and all other forms of knowledge. He thought that giving priority to the art of making money at the expense of all other things was not a natural way of accumulating wealth. Actually, we need a combination of both theoretical and practical knowledge.

In the words of Hill, "the best-educated people are often those who are known as 'self-made,' or self-educated. It takes more than a college degree to make one a person of education. Any person who is educated is one who has learned to get whatever he wants in life without violating the rights of others. Education consists, not so much of knowledge, but of knowledge effectively and persistently applied. Men are paid, not merely for what they know, but more particularly for what they do with that which they know."⁶ We need specialised knowledge. Its purpose must also be specified. "To a large extent your major purpose in life, the goal toward which you are working, will help determine what knowledge you need."⁷ Knowledge ought to be organised and applied by means of practical plans. Its value lies in its application in the achievement of a particular goal. It is as if the phrase 'the educated poor' is a contradiction in terms, or a misnomer. In that case, those who claim to be educated but are poor are not telling the truth! They may be anything but educated! It is as if you are educated, then you must become rich. While this may be the case sometimes, it is not always the case. In fact, education has divided people into unequal categories. It is partly responsible for the division of people into different classes. Those who are educated stand a great chance of becoming rich but the

uneducated seem to be doomed to poverty forever. They are condemned to poverty unless, by some stroke of luck or chance, they are salvaged from deprivation.

Indeed, it may be observed that there is no such thing as knowledge for its own sake, that education should produce financial prosperity. Education should enable the educated person to lead a better and a happier life than the uneducated person. Nevertheless, the acquisition of wealth seems to depend on other factors apart from education. Though education can enrich you, it is not a necessary condition for riches. It is not an '*open sesame*.' Education is not a guarantee for riches; though it is understandable that the educated people should transmute their knowledge into material wealth if they are really knowledgeable or educated. Otherwise the so-called 'educated poor' are anything but educated or knowledgeable. It does not matter whether or not to be educated means the same thing as to be knowledgeable. In any case, it may be difficult to fix the boundary between the educated and the uneducated class! That is another matter. Indeed, there are people who distinguish knowledge from wisdom. For them, the latter is practicable but the former is theoretical. But that is debatable. The poor seem to be ignorant because they lack the knowledge of making money and/or the ability to make money. Yet both riches and poverty seem to be within the reach of everybody. For anyone can become rich or poor. Whoever is poor today may become rich tomorrow and whoever is rich today may become poor tomorrow. But it is true that one many people live and die as poor people, without getting rich. Conversely, many live and die as rich persons, especially those who are born to affluent families. Though the rich and the poor are different, death seems to equalise them. But still the death of the rich appears to be a greater loss than that of the poor, these days. The poor person

has no respect even in death! Others tend to lament more for the demise of the rich than that of the poor. For "the poor is hated ... but the rich hath many friends."⁸ Indeed, the rich are often given a more 'decent' burial than the poor, because of their riches. Unfortunately, these days unscrupulous 'get-rich quickly at any cost,' kind of people dig up even the graves of the dead in search of valuables!

Nevertheless, it is hard to draw the boundary at which poverty ends and riches begin. For some 'poor' people do consider themselves, or are considered by others, as being rich, whereas some 'rich' people regard themselves, or are regarded by others, as poor people. It is an irony. 'Rich' and 'poor' seem to be relative terms. Some people, for instance, would not regard anyone but a millionaire or a billionaire as a rich person. The judgement as to whether one is rich or poor varies from place to place and from time to time and from individual(s) to individual(s). Whoever is considered rich or poor at one particular time and place may not necessarily be so considered at a different time and place. Others may regard whomsoever one person, or group of persons, regard as, a rich, or a poor, person differently. However, absolute riches and absolute poverty do not exist except as an extreme ideal on the one hand, and an extreme deficiency, on the other hand, at any particular time and place. Among the rich and the poor, there will always be those who are more or less rich or poor than others. Whoever is rich in one respect may as well be poor, in another respect and whoever is poor in one way may be rich in another way. The decision depends on the applied standard of judgement.

Indeed, there are people who were considered rich long ago who are poor by today's standards of economic indices. The rich of the contemporary world will probably be seen as poor people by future generations in the world to come.

But there are many ways of acquiring wealth. Some of them are good but others are bad or evil. For "the love of money is the root of all evil."⁹ It is noteworthy that this statement should not be interpreted to mean that it is bad to be wealthy; rather, it means that an excessive love for money may predispose and exposes one to evil.

The poor desire to become rich and the rich detest poverty. Indeed, the latter are determined to remain rich, if not, to become richer still. There are many people who become rich by unjust means, but others gain wealth fairly, through hard-work, good fortune or by inheritance. Some people manage to acquire riches unscrupulously. Although some of them abandon their evil ways after acquiring wealth, others continue with their corrupt ways of amassing wealth without limit.

For example, two young Kenyans have now been charged in court with kidnapping a businessman from whom they allegedly demanded a ransom of Fifty million Kenya Shillings which they reduced to ten million before they were arrested.¹⁰ It is clear that the desire to get rich quickly is the main motivating factor underlying such crimes. Money is seen as the *open sesame* to the good life and this is identified with luxurious living; money is regarded by many as the panacea for all kinds of problems. For "money answers all things."¹¹ A society that puts a lot of emphasis on affluence will soon face up to the challenges of avarice and unlawful means of acquiring wealth.

Nevertheless, many people acquire wealth honestly, as an inheritance that is bequeathed, in turn, to a posterity that becomes rich by virtue of the same fortune. So there is some kind of wealth that is stolen or ill-gotten wealth and a different kind of wealth that is created legitimately. Hence there is another type of wealth that is

acquired by fortune or by inheritance. Sometimes people acquire wealth by a stroke of good luck, say, when they get it by chance and as a gift or/and without working for it. For instance, one may acquire a lot of money if one wins a lottery such the Kenya Charity Sweepstake betting competition. But some rich people have acquired their wealth fraudulently through such criminal activities as corruption, money laundering, usury, smuggling, mugging, drug trafficking and robbery with, or without, violence in which their victims may be murdered for quick gain. Some people resort to crime as a means of acquiring wealth.

In this case, one can cite the example of the common crime of 'car-jacking' at gunpoint in which the victims are usually killed and robbed of their vehicles. Indeed some of these apparent incidents of 'car-jacking' are actually premeditated murders committed by hired thugs.¹² The stolen vehicles may be smuggled into neighbouring countries, or else they may be sold to others within the country either in a modified form, or they may be dismantled and sold to unsuspecting buyers as spare parts for similar cars for quick gain. Such criminal activities are usually carried out by people who are seriously engaged in the business of making money and acquiring wealth without limit. These people seem to worship money. Money should be a good servant and not a master.

There is a plethora of 'how-to-to-it' books that are meant to teach the reader about the best ways of making money fast enough or getting rich quickly. In the view of many people, money is the most valuable possession. They spend most of their lifetime seeking more and more wealth. Most days of their lives seem to be spent in searching for wealth. Everyday is taken to be a day of making money. Indeed, so much is their love for money that if it were possible they would forgo sleep in every

single day of their lives in order to make more money! Their basic motivating factor is avarice or greed for wealth. It is as if life would be meaningless without wealth. Money seems to be the gateway to all the good things of life.

Indeed, many people dread poverty. Thus everyone seems to be determined to extricate oneself from the prison of poverty. Some people succeed in one way or another in their endeavour to become rich and are referred to as wealthy people or successful people, but others fail to attain it and are called poor people.

Now, the question that might arise is whether the fear of poverty or the desire for wealth or both, is the cause of theft? In fact, it can be argued that it is not always the desire to become rich that causes some thefts but the need to stay rich and to become richer still that is responsible for the prevalence of the current wave of crime and avaricious acquisitiveness in our midst. For instance, the wealthy may be implicated as accomplices in, or masterminds of, bank robberies. However, the poor may steal others' property not only in order to meet their basic needs for survival, and their desire to escape from poverty, but also because of their desire to become rich. Those who are already rich may also steal the property of others not only in order to stay rich, but in order to become richer and richer still. However, it is generally believed that the poor are more likely to rob from the rich because of their poverty and their covetousness, than the rich are apt to rob the poor, precisely because they already have what the poor do not have. But it may be argued that the rich are responsible for the poverty of the poor. For they have exploited, or deprived, them of the rightful share of the common-good. A section of the rich may be accused of taking the lion's share of the national cake as a result of their privileged positions, at the expense of others. They have fleeced the poor of wealth like vampires sucking

blood from their victims or like ticks getting fatter and fatter with the blood from their emaciated hosts. It is as if some rich people prey on the poor by exploiting them. On the contrary, the rich have the rightful share of the commonwealth if they have acquired it legitimately through hard work.

5.3 Karl Marx

It was Karl Marx who lamented that the rich become richer while the poor become poorer in a capitalist society. For there is a class struggle between the rich class and the poor class, or the masses and the gap between the two is ever widening. For the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. The poor become more and more alienated from their labour. They live from hand to mouth as a result of their exploitation. They merely scrap a living. Hence the need for them to unite: 'workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains.' According to the Marxist doctrine of historical materialism the thesis of capitalism will be overcome by the antithesis of socialism and the latter will finally be replaced by communism whose basic tenet will be 'from each according to his ability to each according to his need.'

5.4 Peter Singer

In his discussion of the money - maker's conception of the best life in the book entitled *How are we to live?* Peter singer observes that the nineteen eighties were the height of the ethos of making money in American history in terms of the amount of money that was made, the speed as well as the openness with which the goal of money-making was sought after.¹³ He traces the development of the capitalist system of the production of wealth to its original beginnings, saying that the foundation for the development of the capitalist society was laid down over the ages. There is need to understand the origin of capitalism in order to understand the problems and the

lessons of the last century concerning the ideal life. The moneymaking mentality or the preoccupation with wealth that pervades life in America has a great deal of influence in the so-called 'developed' world as well as in the 'developing' nations. There are many people who forgo many hours of sleep in order to make money. Their businesses remain open overnight for the purpose of making extra dollars. Moreover, the practice of operating business enterprise twenty-four hours everyday has received a jab in the arm with the recent technological innovation of the Internet and e-commerce.

The love for money may drive some people to a point of madness. There is a popular anecdote whose author is anonymous; it states that 'man made money and money made man mad.' Capitalism sanctions the idea of acquisition for its sake as an ethical way of life. But there should be limits to the pursuit of riches. Previously, money and material property were required for the provision of basic goods and essential services.

At the minimum level money and possessions meant that one could afford food, shelter and clothing; at a level of greater abundance, money and possession signified a grand estate, servants, lavish entertainment, travel, perhaps also the ability to attract lovers or gain political power. In the capitalist era money is valued for its own sake, not just for what it can buy. At the highest levels of income, the natural order of things goes into reverse: instead of money being valued for the things it buys, things become valuable for amount of money they cost ... For capitalist man, the sole purpose of one's life's work is, in Weber's words, 'to sink into the grave weighed down with a great material load of money and goods'. We do not acquire goods in order to live, instead we live in order to acquire goods.¹⁴

We need to trace the roots of Western capitalist ideas in order to appreciate the differences capitalism has made to our attitude to acquisition and moneymaking.

According to Singer, the origins of Western capitalist ideas are to be found in ancient Greece, and the Judeo-Christian tradition.¹⁵ In the former, there was a serious

philosophical debate about the good life for man. Aristotle's study of the good life in the *Ethics* is a case in point. However, success was apparently not defined in monetary or material terms in ancient times. For example, in Plato's tripartite, ideal society, only the lowest cadres, that is, farmers and artisans are engaged in profitable activities and the accumulation of wealth. But the highest class of citizens, namely, the guardians and the rulers are not to live in their private homes; they are to live communally, having all things (including their wives) in common in order to be free from the corrupting influences of money. They are to rule according to wisdom and justice. This Utopian ideal is far removed from the practical life of civic life.

5.5 Aristotle's economic theory

As compared with Plato's idealism, Aristotle's philosophy seems more practical and realistic, it might be as relevant today as it was in ancient Greece to the actual life people lead. Aristotle dismissed Plato's idea of the communal ownership of property since people do not have an equal share of the work they are supposed to do. There must be lack of incentive to work (disincentive) in a situation where some people work hard but consume less while others do little but consume much, which is unfair. However, Aristotle recognised and legitimised the pleasure of possession. He made a distinction between self-love and selfishness. For self-love is naturally a necessary feeling but selfishness or excessive love of self, like a miserly love of money, is unnatural and bad.¹⁷ The former is a positive emotion whereas the latter is a negative one.

In line with this distinction, Aristotle also made a distinction between 'the natural art of acquisition' and an excessive desire for money. The natural art of acquisition is a form of 'household management'. Aristotle fixed no definite limit to

it. This implies that people can develop a sense of what is proper for the needs of the household. Making money can be a means to the end of providing the household with what it needs, but because it is only a means to an end, it is limited by the nature of the end itself. This is a proper way of making money. It is contrasted with the improper form of making money. For, "some persons are led to believe that making money is the object of household management, and the whole idea of their lives is that they ought either to increase their money without limit, or at any rate not to lose it ... some men turn every quality or art into a means of making money; this they conceive to be the end, and to the promotion of the end all things must contribute."¹⁸ In this case, the means has been confused with its end. It is wrongly believed that money necessarily means wealth. To prove his point, Aristotle narrated a story of King Midas who prayed that everything he handled should be transformed into gold. Consequently, his prayer was answered favourably and everything he touched, including food inside his mouth was changed into gold! As a result of his greedy request, he had nothing to eat in spite of his having gold! Despite its abundance, the amount of gold in his possession could not be termed wealth for it would not satisfy his basic needs. He would starve to death in spite of his gold. The implication of this observation by Aristotle is that wealth is supposed to help people meet their basic needs otherwise it is not wealth.

Accordingly, it is natural to acquire goods in order to fulfil our necessary needs. For example, the farmer's art of making money out of animals and fruits is natural always.¹⁹ But it is 'unnatural' to make money for its sake. Aristotle believed that it is quite unnatural to conduct business for the purpose of making money. According to him, that practice should be condemned. It is contemptible. For it is a

form of exploitation, 'a mode by which men gain from one another'. In other words, agriculture is a natural way of acquisition for it increases the stock of goods for human consumption. But buying and selling goods to others for profit and at their expense does not add any value to those goods. It is a means of enriching oneself by exploiting one's customers.

Furthermore, Aristotle observed that usury or trade in money for the sake of making profit is the worst type of trade because "it makes a profit from currency itself, instead of making it from the process which currency was meant to serve."²⁰ Thus, every kind of usury, such as that of Shylock in Shakespeare's play, *The Merchant of Venice*, is an evil. For "currency came into existence merely as a means of exchange; usury tries to make it increase ... Hence we can understand why, of all modes of acquisition, usury is the most unnatural."²¹ The moral implication of this observation is that the natural is good but the unnatural is bad. This is the philosophy of naturalism. For this reason, human nature must be good. But does something really become good simply because it is natural? Whatever is according to human nature is good. Granted that human nature is rational, whatever is human is rational and whatever is rational is right and good. Conversely, whatever is contrary to reason is also contrary to human nature. It is therefore wrong and bad. But the problem with this thesis is that it does not show how one can know what is natural and, therefore, what is rational. Do we not usually disagree about what is the natural or rational thing to do? Nevertheless, whether we agree or disagree about this, what is natural will supposedly remain rational. The problem is how to know it. Given that it exists, that is an objective truth that needs to be known.

Let us revert to the topic of making money. Singer refers to the view of Aristotle that money is sterile, the doctrine of the sterility of money. Living things increase naturally, and it is natural for us to use them for our purposes. But since money was supposed to be sterile, Aristotle thought that it was unnatural to make money out of its increase!

Aristotle's view of the sterility of money sounds primitive and outdated today. Profit is important. Investment of capital for the purpose of making profit is the driving force behind the development and progress of humanity nowadays. Perhaps investment in the stock market is the most common contemporary way of making money out of money. For example, the United States' Dollar is traded with other world currencies at internationally fixed exchange rates and shares are bought and sold at the Stock Exchange at market prices that are determined by the market forces of free trade. Thus what Aristotle perceived to be wrong in those ancient days is seen, nowadays, to be the right thing to do because it is profitable. His economic views, then, seem to have been overtaken by events; they sound archaic. In this case, they seem to have long outlived their usefulness.

It is in the first book of the *Politics* that Aristotle presented a general study of the art of acquisition and all forms of property. He also seemed to justify slavery. For he regarded a slave as "an article of property."²² First of all, he considered the problem "whether the art of acquiring property is identical with that of household management, or is a part of it, or is ancillary to it; and whether, if it is ancillary, it is so in the sense in which the art of making shuttles is ancillary to the art of weaving, or in the sense in which the art of casting bronze is ancillary to the art of sculpture."²³ For Aristotle, these "are ancillary in a different way; the one provides instruments,

and the other the material....that the art of household management is not identical with the art of acquiring property is obvious. It is the function of the latter simply to provide, but it is the function of the former to use what has been provided; for what art can there be, other than that of household management, which will use the resources of the household? But the question whether the art of acquisition is a part of it, or a separate art altogether, is one which admits of a divergence of views."²⁴

People's styles of living differ very much. "The most indolent are the pastoral nomads. They acquire a subsistence from domestic animals, at their leisure, and without any trouble; and as it is necessary for their flock to move for the sake of pasturage, they also are forced to follow and to cultivate what may be called a living farm."²⁵ But others "live by hunting; and of these, again, there are different kinds, according to their different modes of hunting."²⁶ Yet others "live by being freebooters."²⁷ Nevertheless, "it is curious to find freebooting or piracy regarded as on the same footing with a pastoral or farming life and as a mode of acquisition dependent on the freebooter's own labour. But piracy was a tolerated pursuit in the Eastern Mediterranean (on something like the same footing as trade) down to Aristotle's time and even later."²⁸ Furthermore, fishermen and hunters "who live near lakes and marshes and rivers, or by a sea which is suitable for the purpose, gain a livelihood by fishing; others live by hunting birds or wild animals."²⁹ However, most people, for example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, are peasant farmers. Therefore, the different ways of life besides trade, are pastoralism, piracy, fishing, hunting and farming. These are labour-intensive occupations. "But there are some who live comfortably by means of a combination of different methods, and who supplement the shortcomings of one way of life, when it tends to fall short of being sufficient in

itself, by adding some other way. For example, some combine the pastoral way of life with the freebooting; others combine farming with hunting; and similar combinations may be made of other ways of life; as need impels people so they shape their lives."³⁰

This is obviously a natural, life-long, universal, acquisitive capacity.³¹ Granted that nothing is made purposelessly or in vain by nature, but for a particular purpose, then it is probable that "all animals must have been made by nature for the sake of men. It also follows that the art of war is a natural mode of acquisition. Hunting is a part of that art; and hunting ought to be practised, not only against wild animals, but also against *human beings who are intended by nature to be ruled by others* and refuse to obey that intention, because this sort of war is naturally just."³² This emphasis is mine. Aristotle's insinuation that some people are supposed to be ruled implies that others are born to be rulers. For Aristotle, some people are intended by nature to be servants or slaves while others are supposed to be masters or owners of slaves. This idea is as intriguing as it is controversial and questionable. It amounts to an attempt to justify or rationalise slavery. The slave traders may have been inspired by such unfortunate pronouncements.

It has been said that "one form of acquisition is naturally a part of the art of household management, in the sense that the manager of a household must either have available or ensure the availability of a supply of objects which are either necessary for life or useful to the association of the city {*polis*} or the household. These are the objects which may be regarded as constituting true wealth, for the amount of household property which suffices for a good life is not unlimited, nor of the nature described by Solon* in the verse, 'there is no bound to wealth stands fixed for men.'"³³ The art of the acquisition of wealth is limited. "Wealth may be defined

as a number of instruments used in a household or city."³⁴ Solon was an Athenian statesman and poet, a political and economic reformer of the sixth century B.C.³⁵ Evidently, there is a natural and an unnatural art of acquiring wealth for household managers and statesmen.³⁶ Naturally acquired wealth is meant for the purposes of making a living or acquiring the means of survival as a basic requirement.

Managing a household entails the art of acquisition as one of its parts. Apart from the art of acquisition, there is another part of household management that involves the relation between the master and the slave (as an article of property). What applies to domestic household management is analogous to the management of political economy. Karl Marx's ideas about political economy may have been inspired and influenced by the text of these chapters. They anticipated his famous views. Aristotle used the phrase 'art of acquisition' to refer to various things. "(1) Sometimes it indicates the art of acquisition generally. It then covers all forms (sound and unsound) which the acquisition of property might take. (2) Sometimes it is used to indicate only those forms of acquisition which are perverted or unsound in the sense that they are directed merely to selfish monetary gain. (3) Sometimes, but more rarely, it is used to indicate only the sound or natural forms of acquisition which are necessary for the life of the household or state."³⁷ Aristotle's suggestion that 'plants exist for the sake of animals; other animals exist for the benefit of human beings' is a clear reference to the ecological principle known as 'the food-chain' in which there is interdependence among the members of the eco-system.³⁸

In Chapter X of the *Politics*, it is said that there is a certain art of acquisition that differs from the natural one. It is an unnatural art. It consists in the use of money both as a medium of exchange and for the purposes of making profit. The

accumulation of 'a fund of currency' seems to be the specific concern of this form of the art of acquisition. That is, its aim is the amassing of wealth without limit. On the contrary, there is a different view according to which currency is regarded merely as a convention. According to this view, currency is not the main aim of the art of acquisition. There is some element of truth in this view too. The natural art of acquisition is not different from household management; it forms a part of it. Unlike its unnatural counterpart, the aim of this particular art of acquiring property is not the accumulation of currency; it is the accumulation of true wealth. It is not unlimited, but limited.

The second form of the art of 'getting property' or the art of acquisition suggests that wealth and property are limitless. It has affinities with the previous form of acquisition with which many people identify it. Unlike the previous form of the art of acquisition, the second one is unnatural; it is produced by some kind of skilful experience.

Aristotle used the phrase 'the art of acquisition' (*chrèmatistikè*) to mean three different things. He makes a distinction between the natural and the unnatural art of acquisition. The former "consists in acquiring the means of living a good life and is thus an essential part of household management."³⁹ But the latter is "a perverted kind whose aim is simply to get as much money as possible."⁴⁰ It "consists in making money for its own sake."⁴¹ Ideally, this is the kind of acquisition that most people prefer to engage in. However, Aristotle disapproved of it, for he regards it as unnatural. His ideas may have influenced the modern criticism of the capitalist system of production that thrives on the accumulation of capital, notably the anti-capitalist views of Karl Marx.

According to Aristotle, every article of property can possibly be used for two different purposes. Here he is "making the important distinction between the use value and the exchange value of an article."⁴² They are intrinsic properties of such articles though "they do not belong to it in the same extent. The one use is proper and peculiar to the article concerned; the other is not."⁴³ It is possible to transact business using them for exchange in either way. Such transactions arise from the fact that some people have more properties than they need but others have less than they need. Surprisingly, Aristotle claimed that "retail trade is not *naturally* a part of the art of acquisition. If that were the case, it would only be necessary to practice exchange to the extent that sufficed for the needs of both parties."⁴⁴ This idea also contradicts the contemporary view and practice of trade.

Therefore, it is obvious that exchange has no role to play in the household. In the household people have their property in common. Exchange only comes about in an expanded association. However, long ago people who lived far from one another exchanged different things by barter trade according to their needs. Some communities still do so even today. Some commodity that is found to be useful for one person is exchanged with something else that is useful to someone else without the use of money as the medium of exchange. This kind of exchange is a natural one. It is neither contrary to nature nor is it a form of acquisition. It was prevalent in primitive communities. For it "simply serves to satisfy the natural requirements of sufficiency."⁴⁵ The monetary system of acquisition developed from this art of exchange. Men began to rely on foreign sources to supply their needs. They imported whatever they lacked and exported their surplus produce. This is how the use of money came about. For not all commodities have the quality of portability.

Therefore, people "agreed, for the purpose of their exchange, to give and receive some commodity which itself belonged to the category of useful things and possessed the advantage of being easily handled for the purpose of getting the necessities of life. Such commodities were iron, silver, and other similar metals. At first their value was simply determined by their size and weight; but finally a stamp was imposed on the metal which serving as a definite indication of the quantity, would save people the trouble of determining the value on each occasion."⁴⁶ Although the art of acquisition developed from a natural and necessary form of exchange for the well being of the family, Aristotle thought that it has some kind of unnatural tendency. "In the first stage people exchange goods for money which they then exchange for more goods. Aristotle does not seem to disapprove of this but it has a tendency to develop into a form of acquisition which is intended purely to make money - money is used to buy goods which are then used to make more money."⁴⁷

The second form of the art of acquisition originated following the invention of currency. It involved retail trade. "When in this way a currency had once been instituted, there next arose, from the necessary process of exchange, the second form of the art of acquisition, the one which consists in retail trade."⁴⁸ It has grown over the ages from simple beginnings of retail trade to the more complex trade of modern conglomerates. Its aim is the discovery of the sources as well as the methods of profit maximisation. Consequently, the art of acquisition is believed to be concerned mainly with the accumulation of currency, that it serves the purpose of discovering financial sources. In this case, it is seen as the art of making money and the production of wealth. Since currency is the concern of the art of acquisition and retail

trade, it is assumed that wealth consists in a fund of currency. Thus the use and institution of money as currency becomes inevitable.

The following is the corresponding passage in Book V of the *Ethics* that also deals with the origin of money and its nature:

This is why all items for exchange must be comparable in some way. Currency came along to do exactly this, and in a way it becomes an intermediate, since it measures everything, and so measures excess and deficiency-how many shoes are equal to a house ... Everything, then, must be measured by some one measure, as we said before. In reality, this measure is need, which holds everything together; for if people require nothing, or needed things to different extents, there would be either no exchange or not the same exchange. And currency has become a sort of pledge of need, by convention; in fact it has its name (*nomisma*) because it is not by nature, but by the current law (*nomos*), and it is within our power to alter it and to make it useless ... If an item is not required at the moment, currency serves to guarantee us a future exchange, guaranteeing that the item will be there for us if we require it; for it must be there for us to take if we pay. Now the same thing happens to currency [as to other goods], and it does not always count for the same; still, it tends to be more stable. Hence everything must have a price; for in that way there will always be exchange, and then there will be association. Currency, then, by making things commensurate as a measure does, equalizes them; for there would be no association without commensurability. And so, though things so different cannot become commensurate in reality, no equality without commensurability. And so, though things so different cannot become commensurate in reality, they can become commensurate enough in relation to our needs. Hence there must be some single unit fixed [as current] by a stipulation. This is why it is called currency; for this makes everything commensurate, since everything is measured by currency.⁴⁹

Money facilitates exchange and ensures reciprocal proportionality. Currency is meant to compare goods that are meant for exchange. As a medium of exchange, it is an intermediate good in terms of which excess and deficiency are measured. Without money, it would be difficult to know, for example, how many pairs of shoes are equivalent to a house. Money is the standard of measurement in as far as proportionality is concerned. Exchange depends on the market forces of demand and supply. It is facilitated by money. Currency is a conventional pledge of need. It guarantees a future exchange. It makes things commensurate by equalising them.

"For there would be no association without exchange, no exchange without equality, no equality without commensurability."⁵⁰

However, in the *Politics*, Baker, the editor, supposes that Aristotle meant that the value of an article depended on its demand. Far from it, he argues that the value of articles is determined by their use. However, it is difficult to tell the means by which he assumes that their monetary value can be derived from the value of their use. Besides, use value is supposed to be translatable into monetary value.

On the contrary, others have argued that currency is a conventional sham, an inherent nonentity by nature. "For if those who use a currency give it up in favour of another, that currency is worthless, and useless for any of the necessary purposes of life"⁵¹ unless it is in current use. For it is possible to possess much currency without the means of subsistence. Therefore, "a man rich in currency ... will often be at a loss to procure the necessities of subsistence; and surely it is absurd that a thing should be counted as wealth which a man may possess in abundance and yet none the less die of starvation - like Midas* in the fable, when everything set before him was turned once into gold through the grating of his own avaricious prayer."⁵² Midas prayed that all things that he touched should turn into gold. Accordingly, his prayer was "answered" and everything he touched, including the food inside his mouth was transformed into gold! He might have starved to death in spite of the abundance of his gold. This shows that the value of money or currency lies in its purchasing power.

This form of acquisition (*chrèmastistikè*) is unnatural since it consists merely in the art of making money. It differs from the natural form of the art of acquisition. The latter is an essential element in the well being of households. Retail trade serves

the purpose of making money through the exchange of goods and services. Exchange depends on currency as "both a basic unit and a limiting factor in exchange."⁵³

Furthermore, "the wealth produced by this {second} form of the art of acquisition is unlimited."⁵⁴ Consequently, the art of making money can go on endlessly because there is no apparent limit to the amount of money one can accumulate. However, Aristotle, for his part, argued that there was a limit to the amount of the property that a household required for the well being of its members. Hence the natural art of acquisition is not limitless but limited. For instance, in medical practice whose end is the production of health, the physician does not prescribe as much medicine as possible but only the amount of drugs that is sufficient to treat the patient. Although his aim is to ensure good health as much as possible the means at his disposal are limited.

Since the natural art of acquisition that Aristotle approved of tended to overlap in some cases with the unnatural type of which he disapproved, many people confuse the two and suppose that making money is the only available form of the art of acquisition. The end of the latter is unlimited. Its end is unlimited wealth. It is the acquisition of money for its own sake. "But the art of household management, as distinct from the art of acquisition, has a limit; and the object of that art is not an unlimited amount of wealth."⁵⁵ However, it has no fixed limit.

In this case, it seems as if wealth is limited. However, this is not always the case as "we see the opposite happening and all who are engaged in acquisition increase their fund of currency without any limit or pause."⁵⁶ The contrariety emanates from the relationship between these two types of acquisition. They are

related in the sense that they make use of the same object; though they do not make use of it in the same way.

Thus there are two ways of acquisition. The aim of one of them consists in amassing property. But it is not the object of the other one. For this reason some people think that the aim of household management is the art of mere accumulation of property. That is why they insist in keeping wealth in the form of currency and pursue its unlimited increment.

Aristotle stated that that kind of mental attitude was concerned with mere living rather than with the good life. Basically, the desire to live is as unlimited as that of its causes.

Even those who do aim at well-being seek the means of obtaining physical enjoyments; and, as what they seek appears to depend on the activity of acquisition, they are thus led to occupy themselves wholly in the making of money. This is why the second form of the art of acquisition has come into vogue. Because enjoyment depends on superfluity, men address themselves to the art which produces the superfluity necessary for enjoyment; and if they cannot get what they want by the art of acquisition, they attempt to do so by other means, using each and every capacity in a way not consonant with its nature.⁵⁷

Neither courage, nor medical practice, nor military service has the natural function of making money. However, there are some people who tend to exploit such abilities for the sake of making money. Nowadays medical practice and military services have also been highly commercialised, especially by quacks and mercenaries. "The proper function of courage, for example, is not to produce money but to give confidence. The same is true of military or medical ability: neither has the function of producing money: the one has the function of producing victory, and the other that of producing health. *But those of whom we are speaking turn all such capacities into forms of the art of acquisition, as though to make money were the one aim and everything else*

must contribute to that aim."⁵⁸ Some people use their military prowess, for instance, for commercial purposes, for making money. For instance, they may be hired as mercenaries instead of using their service to make peace. Today there are money-minded quacks who are more concerned with the business of making money than with the responsibility of maintaining good health. They have set up private clinics with the aim of making money. Similarly, some laymen with no knowledge of pharmacology may set up chemist's shops for the same purpose. Of course, these clinics and pharmacies benefit many people. But some of them cause more harm than good. These enterprises may take more of the physician's attention and time than the public hospitals where they are employed. The patients who go to the latter may be advised to see the therapist in his private clinic where they are more likely to receive better treatment. Such people act against their professional ethics. Indeed, others may violate the oath of Hippocrates that is taken upon graduation. Indeed, the paramedical staff may follow suit. For example, in Kenya, many private clinics as well as pharmacies have been established, some of them are even run by unqualified personnel; thanks to the need to make more and more money and 'to make ends meet.' And many illegal practices like abortion are going on daily in a number of such clinics and hospitals in spite of their being outlawed in Kenya today. Abortion is often used as a last resort for getting rid of unwanted pregnancies today, for family planning or birth control. But those who carry them out take the opportunity to make more money.

Many other services and goods are purportedly produced for the good of consumers; however, the actual aim of their producers is moneymaking. That is why there are many fake products. Conmen abound.

So in Aristotle's *ethics* there is evidently a necessary and an unnecessary art of the acquisition of property. The necessary one differs from the unnecessary one in the sense that it is "naturally a branch of subsistence, and not therefore unlimited in its scope as the other form is, but subject to definite bounds."⁵⁹

In Chapter X of the *Politics*, the main object of household management is depicted as the use and the supervision of property and not its acquisition. The household depends on nature for the provision of its needs. On the contrary, the art of acquisition for its own sake "shows its worst side in usury, which makes barren metal breed."⁶⁰ This is the common practice of lending money for making a profit. Such money is refundable with interest. That is the normal practice in all financial institutions today. Even individuals practise usury.

The last chapter is meant to answer this question: "Does the art of acquisition belong to the province of the manager of the household and the statesman? Or is it outside that province, and should property be regarded as something which they can simply take as given?"⁶¹

It can be argued that the art of medicine like that of acquisition are parts of household management.

The members of a household must needs have health, in the same way as they must needs have life or any of the other necessities. There is a sense in which it is the business of the manager of a household or of a ruler to see to the health of the members of his household or city; but there is another sense in which it is not their business but that of the doctor. Similarly, in the matter of property, there is a sense in which it is the business of the manager of a household to see to its acquisition and another sense in which that is not his business, but part of an ancillary art. But in general, as we've already noticed, a supply of property should be ready to hand. The natural form, therefore of the art of acquisition is always, and in all cases, acquisition from fruits and animals. That art, as we've said, has two forms: one which is connected with retail trade, and another which is connected with the management of the household. Of these two forms, the latter is necessary and laudable; the former is a method of exchange which is justly censured, because the gain in which it results is not naturally made, but is made at the expense of other men. The trade of the petty usurer is hated with most reason: it makes a profit

from currency itself, instead of making it from the process which currency was meant to serve. Currency came into existence merely as a means of exchange; usury tries to make it increase. This is the reason why it got its name; for as the offspring resembles its parent, so the interest bred by money is like the principal which breeds it, and it may be called 'currency the son of currency.' hence we can understand why, of all modes of acquisition, usury is the most unnatural.⁶²

The Greek word *tokos* means 'interest.' Its basic meaning is 'breed' or 'offspring' that implies productivity or multiplication.⁶³

Further, in Chapter XI, Aristotle considered the practical aspects of the art of acquisition, its divisions and various practical cases of its successful application. For instance, its usefulness in creating monopolies. He has discussed its theoretical aspects in the previous chapter.

The parts of the art of acquisition which are of actual use are the following. The first is an experience of farm-stock. This involves knowing which are the most profitable breeds, and on what soil, and with what treatment, they, they will give us the greatest profit - knowing, for example, the right way of stocking horses or cattle, or sheep, or any other kind of farm-stock. We need experience to tell how different breeds compare with one another in point of profit, or what breeds are most profitable on what sorts of soil, and some on another sort. Other useful parts of the art of acquisition are experienced in cultivation, not only of cornland but also of land planted with vines and olives; experience in bee-keeping; and experience in the rearing of such fish and fowl as may help to provide subsistence. These are the parts and the original elements of the art of acquisition in its most proper form. We now come to exchange. This includes, first and foremost, commerce (which is divided into the three operations of the provision of a ship, the carriage of freight and offering for sale - operations which differ from one another in the sense that some have a greater margin of safety, and others a greater margin of profit); it includes, in the second place, investment at interest; and it also includes, in the third place, service for hire, , this last part of exchange is partly a matter of skilled craftsmen in the mechanical arts, and partly of unskilled workers who can render only the service of bodily labour. A third form of the art of acquisition is a form intermediate between the first and second; for it possesses elements both of, the first, or natural form, and of the form which consists in exchange. It is concerned with things extracted from the earth or with products of the earth which bear no fruit but are still of use; and we may thus cite, as examples, lumbering and all {forms of} mining.⁶⁴

There are many kinds of metals and different kinds of mining. Lumbering and mining activities differ from farming in the sense that their products are not of immediate use; they have to undergo the process of manufacturing and exchange before they are used.⁶⁵

Aristotle gave a general account of the various forms of the art of acquisition.

He thought that it was of great practical importance to consider its minute details but it is in bad taste to dwell on them.

A collection ought also to be made of the scattered stories about the ways in which different people have succeeded in making a fortune. They are all useful to those who value the art of acquisition. There is, for example, the story which is told of Thales of Miletus. It is a story about a scheme for making money, which is fathered on Thales owing to his reputation for wisdom; but it involves a principle of general application. He was reproached for his poverty, which was supposed to show the uselessness of philosophy, but observing from his knowledge of meteorology ... that there was likely to be a heavy crop of olives, and having a small sum at his command, he paid deposits, early in the year, for the hire of all the olive presses in Miletus and Chios; and he managed, in the absence of any higher offer, to secure them at a low rate. When the season came, and there was a sudden and simultaneous demand for a number of presses, he let out the stock he had collected at any rate he chose to fix; and making a considerable fortune he succeeded in proving that it is easy for philosophers to become rich if they so desire, though it is not the business which they are really about. The story is told as showing that Thales proved his own wisdom; but as we have said, the plan he adopted, which was, in effect, the creation of a monopoly, involves a principle which can be generally applied in the art of acquisition. Some cities, therefore, as well as individuals, adopt this resource when in need of money: they establish, for instance, a monopoly in provisions.⁶⁷

Thales of Miletus is often regarded as the most ancient (Greek) philosopher, one of the famous seven great sages, and the probable founder of empirical science. For he predicted an eclipse of the sun in 585 BC.⁶⁸

Household managers and statesmen should know these ways of making money because "a knowledge of these methods is useful to statesmen - cities, like households, but to an even greater extent, are often in want of financial resources and in need of more ways of gaining them. This is the reason why some of those who adopt a political career confine their political activity to matters of finance."⁶⁹ Indeed, the desire to acquire wealth seems to be the overriding motive for many people who go into political practice. Nevertheless, Aristotle argued that "the money-makers life is in a way forced on him {not chosen for itself}; and clearly wealth is not

the good we are seeking, since it is {merely} useful, {choiceworthy only} for some other end. Hence one would be more inclined to suppose that {any of} the goods mentioned earlier is the end, since they are liked for themselves. But apparently they are not {the end} either; and many arguments have been presented against them. Let us, then, dismiss them."⁷⁰ Everybody wants money not as an end in itself but as a means to another end or to other ends. But since the end of life must be something intrinsically good, it follows that money cannot be the end of life, for it is only good as an instrument and not as an end in itself. That is why Aristotle rejected the money-maker's life. Though it is cited, at the beginning of the *Ethics* as one of the possible candidates for the best life, Aristotle concluded that it did not constitute the best life at all. Yet money is of great importance in the best life for the acquisition of the necessary goods and services. Money is one of the best goods. Its acquisition and possession tends to produce happiness. But lack of money does not enhance happiness. It diminishes it instead. It may even cause unhappiness. Therefore, the best life must somehow have something to do with the possession of wealth.

If wealth is not the good that we are looking for, what else may it be? If the life of affluence is not the best life, what other kind of life is it? If the life of making money is not the best life, what then is the best life? Could it be the political life or the philosophical life, or another kind of life? The next chapter is an attempt to establish whether the political life is the best life.

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CHAPTER SIX

THE POLITICAL LIFE

If the best human life is neither the life of making money nor the life of pleasure, could it be the life of virtue or the life of honour? If neither pleasure nor wealth is the highest human good what then is it? Could it be honour or virtue? This is the topic of this chapter. The life of virtue, the moral life or honour is also called the political life.

6.1 Stoicism

This was an ancient Hellenistic philosophical school whose founder was Zeno of Citium, a Cyprean city (334-262 BC). According to Stoicism, virtue is the ultimate good. And "virtuous living is the only good and the ultimate aim of life ... The study of philosophy leads one to the virtuous life."¹ Moral virtue is the sole good. According to the Stoics, "the virtuous life is the only good but is unattainable without knowledge. The end of the virtuous life is the ideal of complete self-sufficiency and self-mastery of the individual living according to the harmonies of one's inner rational nature and the corresponding universal rational necessity in the cosmos."²

6.2 Honour and virtue

The political life or the life of action is one of the ways of life that may be regarded as the best life. It is probably the best life. The aim of this life is either honour or virtue. That is why in the *Ethics* it is treated as a moral life or a virtuous life. But it is also equated with the life of the politician or the statesman. Hence the ethical and the political life are interrelated. Similarly, ethics is treated as a branch of political science for both are concerned with the good. The one is concerned with the

good of the individual and the other the good of the society in general or the common good. Here the assumption is that the politician is a virtuous or a moral person. Perhaps politicians are said to be honourable because, as leaders, they are supposed to be morally upright and beyond reproach. However, some politicians are anything but morally behaved. But this may be the exception rather than the rule.

So, the best good could possibly be both honour and virtue or either of them. Since we have already dealt with the idea of the good in the second chapter, we shall not go back to it. For now, we are not so much concerned about the good as we are about the good life. Again, in this chapter I am examining the view that the good life or best life is the political life. This is also known as the moral life or the life of virtue. Might Aristotle have thought that the political life was the best life? Could this kind of life be the best life, in actual fact?

Whereas we can search for, and find, the answer to the first question by studying Aristotle's writing(s), especially his ethical work(s), it seems impossible to answer the second question *to everyone's satisfaction*. This is because everyone has a different idea of what the best life is. And everyone claims to be right, supposing that others are mistaken. Therefore issue of the best life is a subjective and a relative matter. It can not be decided beyond reasonable doubt. Every opinion about the best life lays claim to the truth but is debatable, contestable, disputable or controversial. Therefore, the problem of identifying the best way of life seems to be an insoluble problem. The disagreement on the question of the best life cannot be resolved. Even if the best life exists, there is no way of proving its existence. This is a perennial problem that engenders an endless debate whose conclusion cannot be reached. But

that does not mean that we should not say what we think is the best life and why we think so. That is what I intend to do in this thesis.

6.3 Aristotle's political theory

To the best of my knowledge, Aristotle did not say that the happiest life was the political life. But he said that it was the happiest life only secondarily. That is, it is not the best life in the true sense of the word. It is only by derivation that it can be taken to be the best life. However, as we have seen before, it is not clear what he meant by the political life being the happiest life secondarily.

It was Aristotle who described people as political animals. The *ethics* and the *politics* of Aristotle are closely connected. The former is relevant for political theory in particular. In it, political science is the most authoritative science that controls all other sciences to the extent that it determines what disciplines will be studied in the *polis* and to what extent they will be pursued. Political science aims not only at the good of individuals, but also at the good of the community as a whole. It aims at the whole good of the community or the common good.

Aristotle's political theory in the *Politics* begins with the study of the human good in the *Ethics*. The latter is identified with *eudaimonia*. Arguably, it is identified with the exercise of both theoretical and ethical virtues. Aristotle's account of moral virtues seems to reflect the contemporary values of the Greek society, particularly the values of the wealthy and educated male élite. The happy person also requires a suitable amount of external goods apart from having the moral virtues. For instance, he also needs wealth as well as friendship. He needs external goods such as money if he is a generous person and friends if he is a friendly person. These are the means of exercising virtue. Only a limited supply of such external goods is required for

happiness. Aristotle examined the most popular views before criticising and refining them but without dismissing them. Although certain philosophers felt that virtue was self-sufficient for happiness and that external goods were superfluous in so far as virtue was concerned, a number of Greeks identified happiness with material possessions like money, nobility, and political power. Aristotle held that good fortune and moderate material prosperity were only tangentially relevant to happiness. He took a moderate position. This position is rather extra-ordinarily ironical. One's aim in life is the rational development of one's virtuous potency. It cannot be identified with the ownership of wealth or honour. Although happiness is a virtuous activity, some external goods are also requisite. The good life embodies virtue, external goods, and intellectual virtues. Aristotle seems to have arrived at a compromising position that satisfies both theory and practice. Whereas practical wisdom is concerned with human activities, theoretical wisdom has to do with the contemplation of eternal and immutable things. Seemingly, Aristotle's teacher, Plato, influenced him to argue for the supremacy of the philosophical life, as we shall see in the next chapter. Arguably, Aristotle argued that the best and highest act of humans consists in philosophical contemplation. In the tenth book of the *Ethics*, Aristotle returns to the discussion of the theoretical or the philosophical life giving reasons why he thought that it was superior to the rest of the virtues. The reason being that contemplation is the most continuous and the most pleasant activity that is desirable for its own sake. Besides, it is a divine activity; and the philosopher has the least need of external goods. However, this does not imply that philosophical contemplation is the only valuable activity. Neither does it mean that ethical virtues have no value at all.

6.4 The second-best life

Since humans are partially divine and not entirely divine, the life of pure contemplation lies beyond them. Such a life would be 'too high' for man to lead. Therefore, contemplation only occupies a portion of the philosopher's life. But since the philosopher is a person living among others in the society, he must act according to ethical virtues too. These are human, and not divine, virtues. They are necessary for happiness. Thus Aristotle seems to have settled for a mixture of intellectual and ethical virtues as the end of human action. Granted that we are naturally partly divine and partly human, the best life for us must also be both divine and human. This is the inclusive interpretation of the best life as opposed to the dominant interpretation.

Did Aristotle really dismiss the life of virtue? The life of action is probably regarded merely as a second-best life yet it looks like a very strong contender for the ideal life. This is the second kind of life that Aristotle discussed in the *Ethics*. It is the kind of life which statesmen lead. That is statesmanship. They take the good to be honour because this is the end that they pursue.

In the Aristotelian system of thought, there is a hierarchical structure of sciences and their ends. The hierarchy of sciences corresponds to that of their ends. Thus every science has its specific end. For instance, the end of medical practice is good health and the end of household management is the production of wealth. And there is a supreme science whose end is equally supreme. It is the most 'choiceworthy' end that is, at the same time, the end of all other sciences. Political science is the science whose end is the good that is being sought. Hence, the science of the good is political science. It is the most authoritative, the most architectonic, the most controlling, or the ruling, science. "(1) For it is the one that prescribes

which of the sciences ought to be studied in cities, and which ones each class in the city should learn, and how far. (2) Again, we see that even the most honoured capacities, e.g. generalship, household management and rhetoric, are subordinate to it. (3) Further, it uses the other sciences concerned with action, and moreover legislates what must be done and what avoided.”¹ The end of Political Science is the good that includes the ends of all other sciences. As such, its end is superior to the other ends of other sciences. If its end is the good, then it is reasonable to deduce from the foregoing statement that the good includes all other sciences. In this case, the inclusive interpretation of *eudaimonia* seems right. But not before it is shown that the end of political science includes the ends of all other sciences in the sense that they are means (and not contents) to it. If the good is *eudaimonia*, then it follows that *eudaimonia* includes all other ends, in which case it seems true that it is an inclusive end as the inclusive thesis stipulates. It is probably a comprehensive end. But it also seems to be a dominant end in the sense that all other ends are pursued for its sake. The concept of one end including other ends is not quite clear. It is difficult to understand. How can the same end be the highest end and include all ends that are subordinate to it, at the same time? This seems to be a contradiction in terms.

Ethics is some kind of political science since its end is the good of the individual in particular while that of the latter the good of the city in general. However, Aristotle argued that since “the good is something of our own and hard to take from us”, it cannot be honour which depends on those who honour others rather than those who are honoured.² Therefore, honour seems “to be too superficial to be what we are seeking.”³ That is the good. But politicians seem to prefer honour to virtue. For they want to be honoured by intelligent people in order to assure

themselves of their own goodness. But Aristotle insisted that it was virtue rather than honour that seemed to be the goal of the political life. For him, both virtue and honour appeared to be too incomplete to be the good. For instance, it is possible to be virtuous but asleep or inactive throughout one's lifetime.⁴ Furthermore, the virtuous person might lead the most miserable life.⁵ For this reason, it would be philosophically paradoxical or absurd to regard him as a happy man.

Virtue is some kind of mean, an ethical mean, moderation or excellence. But this does not exclude it from being or serving as a means towards the achievement of the good. Virtue has been defined as "(a) a state that decides, (b) {consisting} in a mean, (c) the mean relative to us, (d) which is defined by reference to reason, (e) i.e., to the reason by reference to which the intelligent person would define it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency."⁶ The mean is not definite but relative to the person who fixes it. However, Aristotle's view of the nature of *eudaimonia* is still unclear. For there are two sets of virtue, namely, virtues of character or ethical virtues and virtues of thought or intellectual virtues. Since *Eudaimonia* has been described as a virtuous activity of the human soul, it may be asked whether it is an activity of the soul in accordance with only the virtue(s) of character or according to the virtue(s) of thought alone, or whether it is an activity according to both of them or an activity in accordance with virtue as such. For example, ethical virtues include justice, bravery, temperance, generosity, magnificence and magnanimity whereas intellectual virtues are such qualities as intelligence, wisdom, and understanding.

6.5 Anachronism

There are at least three weaknesses of Aristotle's ethical account. First, Aristotle's account of the virtues in relation to the political structure may have been compatible with the ancient world of city-states but it is incompatible with the contemporary world in which there are no city-states. Secondly, Aristotle's teleology presupposes his metaphysical biology. The rejection of the one implies the denial of the other. Lastly, the city-state is one of many socio-political systems in which the self that exemplifies the virtues can thrive - it is, by no means, the only system whereby the exemplification of the virtues can be found and nurtured.⁷

6.6 Contemplation without happiness

Aristotle said that the life of honour was one of the happiest lives apart from the philosophical life. But it is only the happiest life in a derivative or a secondary way. So one can lead a happy life without necessarily engaging in any philosophical activity. As far as Aristotle was concerned, the philosophical life was preferable to the political. For him, it was the kind of life that was really the happiest life. A life that is devoted to the pursuit of ethical activity as the ultimate end is also a good life even if it lacks theoretical reason.

Since perfect happiness is identified with contemplation alone, one who does not engage in this activity may be presumed not to have perfect happiness. He may be happy but not perfectly happy. If contemplation were the only way of becoming happy, as Aristotle purported, such a life would not be the best life. There is need for theory as well as practice in as far as any life is concerned. Indeed, a life that is purely contemplative is inconceivable. Similarly, a life of nothing but practical virtue is unthinkable. We act when we think, and think when we act. Given that theoretical

virtue is most perfect while practical virtue is perfect but not most perfect, Book I seems to contain two different treatments of happiness.

It is activity in accordance with practical virtue, and it is activity in accordance with theoretical virtue. This dual account corresponds with the fact that in X.7-8 two competing lives are considered, one of them happier than the other. So what Aristotle should be taken to mean in Book I is that perfect happiness consists in one kind (the most perfect kind) of virtuous activity, and a secondary form of happiness consists in another (less perfect) kind of virtuous activity. In other words, one can be happy - though not perfectly so - if one has and exercises the practical virtues, but lacks the theoretical virtues.⁸

Each kind of life has a different ultimate end. In the case of the philosophical life it is contemplation whereas in the political life it is moral activity. Another possible interpretation is that these lives are "devoted to a mixture of philosophy and politics, but they differ in that each places more emphasis on one or other of these two kinds of activity."⁹ Thus the "goal of the best life is a mixture of philosophical and political activity, with more emphasis going to the former than to the latter. The second-best life, by contrast, is one that has no philosophical activity at all."¹⁰ Like the preceding alternative, this interpretation "takes the second-best life to have a single ultimate end - activity in accordance with moral virtue - and it agrees that, according to X.7-8, a life devoid of philosophical activity can still be happy." But in the dominant interpretation of happiness, the best life is said to have "the greatest amount of philosophical activity"; according to Aristotle, it is not a life "that achieves some ideal balance between philosophy and politics."¹¹

6.7 Alternative interpretations of Aristotle's theory of the best life

Alternatively, the best life may be conceived of as the ideal happiness that consists in a relentless pursuit of philosophy. In this case, the happiest people would spend all their time on philosophical contemplation alone if that were possible. Nevertheless, it

is humanly impossible to spend one's whole lifetime doing nothing else but contemplating philosophically. In the same vein, the second-best human life would consist in the least amount of contemplation but involve most political activity, instead. "The second-best life is one that assigns some place to philosophical activity, but keeps that place as small as possible; all of one's remaining time should be devoted to political activity."¹² On this view, "the advocate of the philosophical life and the advocate of the political life agree that some time must be spent on contemplation if one is to be happy. But they disagree about how much time is best devoted to this activity: one party thinks that more is always better, and this is the side of the dispute that Aristotle takes; the other party thinks that contemplation should be kept to a minimum, though it should not diminish to zero."¹³

6.8 Different lifestyles

Different ways of life differ in their conceptions of the good. The political life differs from the philosophical life in giving as much priority to political activity as the latter gives to philosophical activity.

In Book I.5 of the *Ethics* it is suggested that happiness in the political life consists in virtue or honour. This is yet another instance of Aristotle's indecision. Both of them have already been dismissed as inadequate answers to the question about the meaning of happiness. For that reason, neither virtue nor honour constitutes the end of the political life. This implies that there is a correct way of defining happiness in so far as the political life is concerned: happiness is an "activity in accordance with such practical virtues as courage, justice, and temperance and so on."¹⁴

6.9 The political life in Book I

The discussion of the political life in Book I serves only as an introduction to a similar discussion in Book X. Here, it would be wrong to suppose that the political life has been rejected as a possible candidate for the best life; only a couple of answers to the question of the meaning of happiness in connection with that life have been rejected. Rather, it can properly be associated with a particular conception of happiness if its end is taken to be an activity according to moral or ethical virtue. However, Book I.5 does not state the best way of defending the political life on the basis of a particular view of happiness.

It has been claimed that in the first book in particular and the entire *Ethics*, Aristotle presented a comprehensive definition of the meaning of happiness. In other words, "human happiness consists in all compossible intrinsic goods and since this is the end that politics tries to bring about, the advocate of the political life will answer the question "what is happiness?" by equating it with all such goods."¹⁵ On the contrary, Aristotle was advocating a single good by which the political life was identifiable, namely, activity according to practical or moral virtue. He never committed himself to "an all-inclusive conception of happiness."¹⁶ Aristotle thought that a philosophical life was better than a political life. Both lives are related in the sense that they share ethical virtues like temperance, justice and courage. These are required by the politician as well as by the philosopher: both of them require ethical virtues. Since politicians are assumed to be good people, they are not supposed to engage in immoral, unethical or vicious activities.¹⁷ For them, ethical activity is choiceworthy in itself.²⁷ However, since they are also human, they have the same

weaknesses that others have. For instance, even politicians sometimes become angry, quarrel and engage in fistfights instead of using their wits!

Presumably, both the politician and the philosopher are good people who have studied ethical virtue successfully.

Contemplation is the ultimate end of the philosophical life, and activity in accordance with ethical virtue is the ultimate end of the political life. The philosopher will engage in ethical activity, but will do so for the sake of contemplation; therefore, his life is in accordance with understanding and not in accordance with practical virtue. By contrast, the political life is one that omits contemplation: the politician always acts for the sake of moral activity, and since contemplation is not desirable for the sake of any further good, it plays no role in the second-best life.¹⁸

Aristotle ranked the philosophical life above the political life. For instance, the former is preferable to the latter since it requires a minimal amount of external goods as compared with the latter.¹⁹ It is as if the fewer the external goods a particular life possesses the better it is. Nevertheless, Aristotle did not advocate the view that the two kinds of life should ideally be combined. But he did not say that they ought not to be combined either. Since they are different alternatives, one has to choose the one that one prefers to lead. In this case, they seem to be mutually exclusive kinds of life. In other words, one cannot be a politician as well as a philosopher! But this objection is misleading, for there are political philosophers too. In fact, Aristotle realised that the philosopher could not contemplate all the time. For he is a human being living in a society whereby he has to interact with others. Therefore, he needs to have practical virtues in addition to theoretical virtue. Though the latter is the best good in Aristotle's view, the best life for us does not consist in contemplation alone. It is practically impossible for a human being to live such a life unless he becomes a god. But then he would have ceased to be a human being! So long as one is a human

being, one must possess elements of both virtues. In practice, the best human life is characterised by contemplation as well as practical activity. Though it is mostly a contemplative life, it has some practical activity as well. But in theory, the best life for man is a purely contemplative life. As the ideal life, it is approachable though achievable. It is a utopian ideal. Although it is impossible for man to achieve it practically, it is the normal life of the gods.

Another possible alternative is that Aristotle held that the philosophical life differed from the political life in the sense that the former has a certain theoretical activity but the second one is devoid of it. Hence, the best life is the kind of life that consists in an occasional exercise of theoretical wisdom. It was Aristotle's conviction that there was an important difference between the philosophical and the political kinds of life since the former gives a higher priority, than the latter, to contemplation, the only single activity which he regarded as the highest and the best good.

Although Aristotle wrote that there is a different kind of life besides the philosophical one, which is chosen for its sake and is not as happy as the philosophical one, he seemed to leave some questions unanswered. The relation, if any, between them is not obvious; it is not clear whether or not one should choose one and leave the other or whether one is supposed to combine both. Perhaps the person who leads the best life is a philosopher and a politician though he gives top priority to contemplation. This interpretation is also an open possibility.

In Aristotle's days, the question of the meaning of happiness was answered in three different ways, which pointed to different kinds of life.²⁰ First, there was the life of enjoyment or gratification, that was the kind of life that the majority preferred to lead since they equated happiness with bodily pleasure. Aristotle was very critical

of this kind of life.²¹ Secondly, there was an attempt to associate the political life with a particular conception of happiness which purported that it consisted in honour. Aristotle criticised this view of happiness as well. For him, honour depends on the giver rather than the one who is honoured. It cannot therefore be the good because the latter is supposed to be something which is our own and very hard to take away from us.²² Similarly, Aristotle rejected the conception of happiness as virtue, which is thought to be the end of the political life.²³ But the discussion of the third way of life, that is the philosophical or the contemplative kind of life, was postponed to the tenth chapter. The popular claim that wealth constituted happiness was also dismissed. For "the money-maker's life is in a way forced on him not chosen for itself; and clearly wealth is not the good we are seeking, since it is merely useful, choiceworthy only for some other end."²⁴ Hardly any of these conceptions of happiness seem to answer the question of the meaning of happiness correctly.²⁵ Wealth, for instance, is a means to happiness and not the end of life.

6.10 The political life in Book X

When the discussion of the philosophical life resumes in Book X, chapters VII - VIII, this kind of life is said to be happier than the political one. However, the comparison between the two lives is not based on the conception of happiness as the end of the political life. Happiness is said to consist in a virtuous activity. Neither virtue nor honour is identical with happiness.

If Aristotle was doing that, then, having rejected both answers, he would be in a position to say that we should not lead a political life. Instead, I.5 is saying that *if* honor or virtue is taken to be the end of the political life, then that kind of life is based on an unacceptable answer to the question "what is happiness?"... in x.7-8 Aristotle is assuming that the political life can be associated with a better answer to that question than either "honor" or "virtue." The best answer it can give to that question is "activity in accordance with such practical virtues as courage, justice, and temperance and so on."²⁶

On the other hand, the philosophical life is based on the conviction that happiness is an activity according to theoretical wisdom. The introductory discussion of the political life in Book I has seen the rejection of the two conceptions of happiness with which it has been reasonably connected (that is, as honour or virtue). Nevertheless, this does not constitute the rejection of the political life. Even so, Book I leaves open the question concerning the right conception of happiness as the basis for the end of the political life. Arguably, it suggests that the end of the political life is an activity in accordance with virtues of character.

Alternatively, Aristotle was probably advocating for a philosophical cum political life. Maybe he believed that the best definition of happiness was neither theoretical activity alone, or practical activity alone, but a combination of the two in such a way that happiness becomes an activity according to both theoretical and practical virtue. If that is the case, then Aristotle may have been saying that the ideal life consists neither in a philosophical project alone or a political one. It is not a theoretical life nor is it a practical life; it is a mixture of both. For that matter, one should not merely be a politician or a philosopher; ideally one ought to combine the two. In this case, there is no need to choose between these kinds of life. One ought to be both a politician as well as a philosopher.

Admittedly, this interpretation is vulnerable. The life of a politician is taken to be the life in accordance with ethical activity. It is possible that Aristotle was investigating the difference between the lives. However, it may be argued that there is no justification for connecting the two treatments of happiness in the *Ethics*. Some have argued that there is a deep conflict between the both treatments of happiness.

Secondly, according to the inclusive view of happiness, the advocate of the political life is giving a comprehensive answer to the issue of the meaning of happiness. That is to say, happiness is composed of every intrinsic end. Happiness is identified with this composite since it is the end of political science. In this case, happiness is an activity according to practical virtue. Accordingly,

Good methodology requires us to start with the assumption that the NE is internally consistent, and to abandon this assumption only when we have good reason to do so. We should try to see how far we can explain what Aristotle says in one place by appealing to what he says elsewhere, and we should give up this attempt only when our project fails. And so I will continue to range back and forth between Books I and X, on the assumption that they present different aspects of a single coherent theory.²⁷

Thus, Aristotle was not committed to an inclusive conception of *eudaimonia* nor a comprehensive ideal.

The comparison between the political and philosophical lives is addressed in both Books I and X. Each of the different lives is associated with a different conception of happiness: the philosopher says it is theoretical activity, the statesman that it is practical activity. Aristotle implied that the differences between political and philosophical careers must be considered if we are to lead our lives in the best way. Those differences are eventually brought to light in the last book. The two kinds of life are compared and the philosophical one is said to be better than the political one, as shown in the next chapter.

The philosophical life and the political life have a lot in common. They should not be combined. For example, they share such ethical virtues as justice, temperance and courage. Even so, the philosophical life is rated above the political life. Indeed, it is assumed that the political life is characterised by ethical virtues. However, it is doubtful whether the same can be said about the philosophical life.

The point of difference between the two lives is probably that the politician and the philosopher have practical as well as theoretical virtues, respectively, as their exclusive, ultimate ends. Nevertheless, there is some textual evidence for rejecting this interpretation.²⁸ For both of them share the ethical virtues.

Arguably, ethical activity, unlike theoretical activity, is not 'intrinsically desirable' to the philosopher. Presumably, the only intrinsically desirable end is theoretical activity. Thus, the more contemplation a particular kind of life has the better kind of life it is. Hence, the best life must consist in most contemplation or pure contemplation. To the philosopher, ethical activity is a means rather than an end in itself.

If this interpretation is correct, then the statesman and the philosopher do have more in common than their possession of the necessary external goods; statesmen will always act in accordance with the ethical virtues, and philosophers will at least sometimes do the same. But the difference (indeed, incompatibility) between the two lives would be far more striking than their similarities. Philosophers would not have the ethical virtues—instead, they would hold themselves ready to do whatever is contrary to virtue in order to increase their opportunities for contemplating. By contrast, politicians, being good people, would never do anything contrary to virtue ... they choose ethical activity for its own sake.²⁹

The contrast between the two lives only makes sense for one who believes that the treatment of happiness in Book X is inconsistent with that in Book I.

For on this reading, x.7-8 ranks the life of someone indifferent to the virtues of character above the life of someone dedicated to expressing those virtues. And so these chapters would be committed to the view that we are better off if we do not have such virtues as justice and courage. But this doctrine must be inconsistent with the bulk of the NE ... but there would have been no benefit in examining the ethical virtues for those in Aristotle's audience who eventually decide to lead the immoral life he allegedly advocates in X.7-8.³⁰

This interpretation is right. Both the philosopher and the politician are ethically virtuous people. The fact that philosophers decide to engage in ethical activity should

be taken as an expression of the assumption that they have ethical virtues: "since they are human beings and not gods, they live with others, and a good life for those who are in these circumstances requires the possession and exercise of the ethical virtues."³¹ Although this answer may be true, it remains unsatisfactory. For the reason why the philosopher chooses to act ethically is still unclear. It is not even obvious why anybody, for that matter, whether he is a politician or a philosopher, ought to exercise virtues of character. There should be a reason why ethical virtues are necessary for leading the philosophical life.

The life of action or the political life is regarded as the best life only in a secondary or derivative way. Therefore it is not really the best kind of life. The best life is supposed to be good without qualification. It is the best life in the true sense of the word. What, then, may possibly constitute the best life? Yet politics is very important for creating a suitable environment for the realisation of the good life. The good life requires virtue and honour, which are the ends of the political life. And if Aristotle's observance that man is a political (or social) animal is anything to go by, then the good life must be some kind of political life. Thus, the best good is somehow virtuous and the best life is somehow political. Even if the best life is not the life of virtue, the former still requires virtue. For the best life has virtue as one of its ingredients. It is inconceivable that the best life should be a life without any virtue at all. The best life comprises virtue and other necessary goods. The best good also comprises virtue as one of its ingredients.

But as shown in the next chapter, the best life or the happiest possible human life for Aristotle was the life of understanding or the life of study, not the political life. One who leads the best life is called a philosopher. He pays most attention to

the activity of contemplation, the exercise of the highest human faculty, namely, the understanding. But everybody cannot be a politician or a philosopher. There are other kinds of life that are equally significant.

Now, it is clear that even the political life is not the best life. The remaining possibility is that it could be the philosophic life. This is the theme of the next penultimate chapter of this thesis.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PHILOSOPHICAL LIFE

Having seen in the preceding chapters that the best life is neither the life of making money nor the life of pleasure, nor the political life, it is time to consider whether it may be the philosophical life. This is the concern of this chapter.

7.1 The most perfect life

According to Aristotle, the life of the philosopher is the best human life. It is second to none but the divine life. Only the life of the gods is better than the philosophical life. It is also known as the life of study or the life of contemplation. Unlike the practical life of the foregoing chapter, the philosophical life is a theoretical life.

In the foregoing chapter, I have already considered the possibility that Aristotle was not persuading us to lead a philosophical life in preference to a political life, but was rather recommending a kind of life that was both philosophical as well as political. That is, a life that is according to both theoretical and practical virtue. In this view, one should be a philosopher as well as a 'politician.' Sometimes Aristotle seems to be saying that one ought to take part in the political affairs of the *polis* but at other times he seems to argue that one should keep out of politics altogether and instead concentrate on the study of philosophy.

Contemplation is said to be the highest activity that one can possibly engage in. But political activity is highest only to a secondary degree. Thus philosophical activity should be given a higher priority than political activity in the lives of individuals. Therefore, there are two kinds of lives that are called happy, that is, the philosophical and the political life. So one should choose to lead either of them. Yet the former is presumed to be superior to the latter since the latter is happy

secondarily. Indeed, the former is regarded not only as being happier than the latter, but also as the happiest of all kinds of human life.

If Aristotle believed that a philosophical life was superior and more preferable to a political life then this could be construed as a subordination of the ethical, practical virtues, or virtues of character like justice and courage, to those of the intellect or theoretical virtues such as intelligence and wisdom. But some scholars argue that this is an implausible interpretation "for Aristotle indicates throughout the bulk of the NE that we ought to possess and exercise these virtues of character."¹ According to this interpretation, the *Ethics* as a whole takes the life according to understanding as well as practical virtue to be two aspects of the kind of life that Aristotle recommended.

7.2 The possibility of a political cum philosophical life

The one is philosophical while the other is political. So he could be saying that one should lead a life that is both political and philosophical, that is, one should be a politician as well as a philosopher. This is also a mistaken view of Aristotle's conception of the ideal life since

According to Aristotle, the philosopher must be equipped with necessary goods, and will choose to act ethically. But this does not mean that his life is one that is in accordance with food, shelter, health, ethical virtue, and so on. The philosophical life is one that gives a certain kind of primacy to theoretical reason and to contemplation, and that is why Aristotle calls it a life in accordance with understanding ... it is not a life in accordance with practical virtue, because those virtues do not have primacy in it. But we should not infer that these practical excellence plays no role whatsoever in the philosophical life. And so we should not infer that Aristotle's consistency can be preserved only if we take him to be urging his readers to lead a life that is both in accordance with understanding and in accordance with ethical virtue. A life can contain ethical activity without giving primacy to that activity - that is, without being a life in accordance with ethical virtue.²

A good is said to have primacy in a particular life, and that life is said to be according to that particular good, if, as the ultimate end of that life, it meets the following conditions: "(a) all other ends in that life are desired for its sake; (b) it is desired for itself; and (c) it is not desired for the sake of any other good in that life."³ The ultimate end of the philosophical life is contemplation while that of the political life is an activity according to ethical virtue. Since a philosopher exercises practical virtue merely as a means to understanding or contemplation, his priority is not the former, but contemplation. But the political life is devoid of contemplation because it is unnecessary in it. It is the second-best life. The end of the politician is always ethical virtue.

The argument that in Aristotle the political and the philosophical lives are ideally supposed to be combined has already been rejected. Yet a perfect combination of *theoria* and *praxis* seems to be the best life that we can lead. But this is an ideal that not even the philosopher can achieve, precisely because it is an ideal. Therefore, the best thing that we can do is to try to approximate it as much as possible.

Aristotle argued for the superiority of the philosophical life over the political life. The philosophical life is superior to the political life since its end is also taken to be the end of the political life. He does not suggest that the two lives are supposed to be combined. For that matter, he is likely to be understood as saying that it is better to be a philosopher rather than a politician. This is the so-called argument from silence. Contemplation is superior to the activities of a politician who needs more external goods than a philosopher.⁴ If the formula that the more one contemplates the better one's life is, and that there is no limit to the study of philosophy is true, then

this assertion provides a "decisive evidence against the view that the best life for a human being must be one that combines the activities of a philosopher and a political leader."⁵ Political activities take too much time at the expense of the development of one's understanding of theoretical disciplines and the contemplation of their truths.

If, as I shall argue, Aristotle holds that human beings become happier the more they contemplate, then he cannot also believe that the best life we can lead is one in which we willingly give up time we could spend on theoretical pursuits in order to engage in political activity. In normal circumstances, philosophers who are not burdened with the responsibilities of Plato's philosopher-king will have more time for theoretical studies, and, since more contemplation is always better than less, they will have better lives.⁶

In this view, a philosophical life is better than a life that is both political as well as philosophical. Nevertheless, one life may be more political or more philosophical than a different kind of life. But it is practically impossible to lead a life that is purely political or purely philosophical. It is humanly impracticable to lead a kind of life that is devoted to pure study or pure contemplation because human life is multifaceted and we need time to do other things apart from studying or contemplating. Since the philosopher is a human being with various needs, he cannot spend his lifetime as a whole studying or contemplating. The best thing that he can possibly do is to allocate as much time as possible for as much contemplation as he can practically afford.

There are at least two models of leading one's life. These are the lives according to understanding, on the one hand, and according to virtue, on the other. These are the two types of life between which people are supposed to choose. And the former is said to be superior to, and therefore more 'choiceworthy' than, the latter. This is the correct interpretation of the passage above. Although both lives are happy lives since they possess adequate resources, the philosopher's life or the kind of life in

accordance with understanding is regarded as the happiest life in the real sense of the word 'happiest'. But the kind of life in accordance with ethical virtue is also the happiest (read best) only in a derivative sense.

The two lives should not be combined because they are alternatives between which one should choose. However, such a one ought to choose the kind of life that one can lead. So it is not just a matter of choice; it is also a question of ability. For one may want to lead a life that one is incapable of leading. Perhaps, as one interpretation has it, "the only important difference between these two lives is that the first contains some theoretical activity whereas the second has none. The best life is that of a person who, *upon occasion* exercises the virtue of theoretical wisdom; but where this activity is ranked, in one's scale of values, is immaterial, so long as one engages in it to some extent."⁷ On the contrary, it seems as if there is no life that is completely devoid of theoretical wisdom. No one seems to have proposed such an interpretation of Aristotle's conception of the best life. Admittedly, the fact that none has proposed it does not necessarily mean that it is a mistaken view. It is still possible that

Contemplation is the best kind of activity and the highest single good. Therefore, he could not believe that there is nothing to choose between a life that ranks this activity first and a life that gives it a lower priority. He must think that the person who ranks other goods above contemplation is making a mistake about how best to lead his life; such a person does not have a perfect understanding of what his goal in life should be, and such a life cannot be the happiest life there is for human beings.⁸

There is an abundance of evidence to show that in Aristotle's view contemplation is *the best single good* for the reasons stated below. First, it is the activity of the best virtue, namely, theoretical wisdom, and so it is the best activity⁹; second, "the objects studied by the philosopher are the best that can be grasped"¹⁰; third, "it gives us our

greatest pleasures"¹¹; fourth, "it is more self-sufficient than ethical activity";¹² fifth, "a human being is most of all to be identified with theoretical reason"¹³; and, lastly, "this part of the human soul is the one that is most akin to the gods."¹⁴ It is supposedly divine.

Aristotle would not have made these claims "if he thought that where one ranks contemplation among goods is a matter of no practical importance."¹⁵ We should show, in one way or another, that contemplation is superior to any other good. For it is the supreme good. So, "in order to lead the best life, it is not sufficient that one merely *believes* that contemplation is our best activity: such a belief must in some way affect the way one makes choices. And it is not sufficient if one merely engages in this activity at some point or other in one's life: that is not giving it enough prominence,"¹⁶ In order to demonstrate one's belief that contemplation is the best activity, one should consider the amount of contemplation that every alternative is likely to offer in the long run and choose the one that promises to give more contemplation than the rest.

This manner of interpretation implies that Aristotle's doctrine is egoistic (individualistic), for it seems to attribute to Aristotle the view that one should choose the best activity for *oneself* irrespective of the consequences for others. Of course the aim of ethics is said to be the good of the individual as well as the city.¹⁷ It is concerned with both goods or one that includes both of them. That is the common good which includes the good of the individual as well. Sometimes the latter may coincide with the former. But it is better to pursue the good of the city, (the common good) or the good of the society, than the good of the individual: "For while it is satisfactory to acquire and preserve the good even for an individual, it is finer and

more divine to acquire and preserve it for a people and for cities."¹⁸ But the common good takes precedence over the good of the individual because it is preferable when the two conflict. The good of the individual is sacrificed for the sake of the common good when the two are at variance, as it is in utilitarianism. Here, Aristotle's theory sounds like utilitarianism with its emphasis on the greatest happiness principle. Thus he did not advance a purely individualistic view of happiness. There is no proof that he advanced such a view in the *Ethics*. The individualistic interpretation of the human good does not seem to take into consideration Aristotle's doctrine as a unified whole. It seems to ignore the element of the common good or other people's welfare. Therefore, this interpretation of Aristotle's conception of the best life can be dismissed.

7.3 The superiority of contemplation

There is a different way of showing the priority of contemplation. It involves the act of assigning numbers to goods and giving the highest number to contemplation.

This assignment is not to be made in an arbitrary way; rather, it should reflect the objective importance of various goods. Giving the highest number to contemplation reflects the fact that it is the best single good. The second-best good (activity in accordance with ethical virtue) should receive a lower number-but not just any lower number will do: it must reflect the real differences in value between them. After these weights are correctly assigned, one should schedule one's activities in a way that reflects their relative worth.¹⁹

Unfortunately, no particular work of Aristotle gives us the hint about how to carry out such a project. Indeed, such a project is bound to be subjective rather than objective. For some people are bound to rate certain goods higher or lower than they 'ought' to be arranged. In this case, it is difficult to determine the 'correct' arrangement. The ranking of goods according to the order of merit seems impossible. It is presumptuous for this cannot be done with perfect accuracy. In any case, different

people will give priority to different goods depending on their preferences. Maybe there is one excellent person (read genius) who can arrange goods in a perfect hierarchy with ingenuity! But who can do that? Nevertheless, Aristotle

Nowhere says that contemplation is related to some other good as one number is to a second; nor does he assign numbers to any other pairs of goods in an effort to represent how much more desirable one is than the other. He often claims that the study of the human good lacks the precision available in theoretical subjects, and he could not say this if he thought that assigning numbers to goods were a feasible project ... In fact, a passage in *Politics* iii.12 explicitly says that goods cannot be related in this way. Aristotle argues there that merit should be the basis of distribution both in politics and in the crafts; ... Although some goods are more desirable than others, we cannot say how much better they are and therefore we cannot assign a number to contemplation in a way that would accurately represent its degree of superiority to all other goods.²⁰

What is contemplation? "To contemplate is to bring to mind the truths of a theoretical discipline."²¹ This is said to be the highest activity of mind that is humanly tenable. It is the exercise of the understanding on the attainment of theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) in the philosophical life as opposed to practical wisdom (*phronesis*) in the political life. This is the kind of virtue that is concerned with grasping the first principles of the universe.²² In as far as the *Eudemian Ethics* is concerned, it entails the metaphysical knowledge of the unmoved mover as the final cause of the universe. Thus the ultimate end of human beings is the knowledge or the contemplation of God as the uncaused cause of the universe. The ultimate end of life is the worship and contemplation of God according to Aristotle's conception of the good in the *Eudemian Ethics* though an atheist will disagree with him.

The best activity for a human being is the contemplation of what is divine, but we should not take Aristotle to be saying that in the ideal human life one will always be thinking about the highest cause whenever one thinks about theoretical matters. Though mathematics and natural philosophy are lesser disciplines, that does not mean that they can or should be avoided by someone who wants to lead *the best life*. In order to achieve an understanding of the highest causes, it may be useful or even essential to learn these other subjects. And even after one has achieved the highest understanding, one is vulnerable to the imperfection that is part of the

human condition: we eventually tire of even the greatest pleasures, and seek variation ... So the philosopher in contact with the divine will need a change from even this subject, and will then take delight, as Aristotle did, in lesser theoretical disciplines.²³

Aristotle's theology dovetails well with his ethics and metaphysics. According to Aristotle's conception of the ideal life more time should be spent on contemplation than on any other good. For example, he who gives priority to physical pleasure at the expense of contemplation is not leading the best life as far as Aristotle was concerned. One may spend insufficient time on contemplation or philosophical activity, too little a time for one's own good. One does not lead the best life if one spends no time on philosophical activity at all or if one ranks any other good above it. This standard allows us to judge whether or not a particular life fails to be the best, that is, if it does not meet the standard.²⁴

In this case, there is no limit to the desirable amount of contemplation. There is no such thing as too much contemplation for one's good. Contemplation is complete and, therefore, unimpeded. So, "the happy person needs to have goods of the body and external goods added (to good activities), and needs fortune also, so that he will not be impeded in these ways."²⁵ Aristotle acknowledged the fact that as a human being, the philosopher needs a reasonable amount of external goods too so as to concentrate on contemplation.²⁶ Perhaps one cannot competently contemplate something on an empty stomach, for example. However, neither health nor any other good such as ethical virtue delimits the desirable amount of contemplation. Aristotle believed that there could never be too much philosophical activity for one's good in one's lifetime. There is no such thing as too much philosophical activity for one's good. For him, one should engage in as much philosophical activity as possible.

Nevertheless, although the "defence of the philosophical life does not determine how much time to devote to philosophy, it puts a definite constraint on how we should ideally make decisions about our activities."²⁷ We should choose those activities that provide us with the best possible opportunities for engaging in philosophical contemplation.

Another possible interpretation of Aristotle's theory of the best life is that the most desirable human life is one in which most time is devoted to contemplation at the expense of other goods. Probably, it is a life that has the maximum contemplation beyond which there can never be an additional contemplation. One should only contemplate to the extent that such contemplation is necessary to show it as the good that is most desirable. Thereafter, one should concentrate on other goods. Accordingly, the best plan of life is one which gives contemplation its due by devoting more time to it than to any other good while seeking as much diversity of goods as is necessary. But "there simply is no evidence for the interpretation in question."²⁹

7.4 Equilibrium

Another possible interpretation of Aristotle's conception of the best life is that one should only pursue certain goods like contemplation, ethical virtue, physical pleasure, friends, and honour while maintaining "the right balance between these goods."²⁹ But how can one tell what is the right balance? One should also spend the right amount of time on contemplation, the time that is necessary to show that it is the best good. But how much time is the right time for contemplation? The difference between the time spent on contemplation and the second-best good should be kept to the minimum level, according to the view of the minimal priority of contemplation. Otherwise

there will be a risk of "overestimating the intrinsic worth of contemplation."³⁰ Again, that is an indeterminate point. There is no reason for attributing such an interpretation to Aristotle as there is no textual basis for it. Contemplation cannot possibly be overvalued though it can be pursued more than one ought to do for one's sake or someone else's sake. Its worth cannot be equated with anything else since it must necessarily be higher than that of any other good. The more contemplation a life has the better it is. The limit of the worth of contemplation is indeterminable. There is no limit to contemplation as it is supposed to be the most continuous activity. There is no single answer to the question of how much time one should devote to contemplation since different people find themselves in different circumstances and the amount of contemplation they ought to engage in depends on those circumstances as well as their preferences. Secondly, "the more time one has for contemplation, the better off one is."³¹ Even if contemplation is the best activity that we can engage in, we cannot be preoccupied with it all the time for sometimes there are other duties to be attended to in the course of our lives. Only the gods are said to contemplate continuously. They do nothing else apart from this activity! That is why they are considered the happiest beings. Their happiness is the paradigm of happiness. The amount of time human beings spend on contemplation is necessarily limited.

People who pay most attention to contemplation are called philosophers. But they cannot contemplate all the time because they are human beings and not gods. In any case, there are different capacities and abilities. Though there is a loose sense in which everyone is a philosopher, there is a strict sense in which only very few people like Plato and Aristotle are philosophers. Nevertheless, not everyone is committed to the business of contemplation. There are diversities of careers that we all engage in

though some people seem to pay more attention to theoretical matters more than to practical ones. However, we need both philosophers as well as 'practical people'. At any rate the contemplative person must be practical at times and the practical person must sometimes engage in contemplation.

It might be argued that "there is no such thing as the best amount of contemplation *simpliciter*. For there is no one right or best mixture of goods for all human beings. One simply judges each situation according to its merits, and *the best life for you* is the life in which each of these decisions is wisely made."³² This emphasis is mine. This remark smacks of relativism. For it suggests that there is no such thing as the best life; rather, what there is, is the best life *for you* or for me.

It is doubtful whether the contemplative life is really better than the political life. Maybe the latter is better than the former. But Aristotle compared these two lives and concluded that the philosophical life was the happiest life.³³ For him, it is superior to all other kinds of life. Such judgements depend on the standard that is applied. It is a different matter whether or not it is the right standard. The fact that he thought that it was the best life does not necessarily mean that it is the best life. It was the best life for him. But we cannot tell whether he was right or wrong. The best that we can do is to give our own view of the best life.

If *eudaimonia* consists in contemplation alone, then one may object that this is not what everybody wants. There is no room for 'arm-chair' philosophy especially in the contemporary world of 'cut-throat' competition for survival. Rather, the best good and the best life seem to be virtue and the life of virtue, respectively. Although not everyone desires virtue, it seems to be as good as contemplation, if not better. However, a perfect combination of virtue and contemplation may be preferable to

either. They seem to go together always. But how can we determine the 'perfect combination' of the two?

Maybe wisdom is the highest good. But wisdom may be construed in many conflicting ways. The contemplative person is theoretically wise and the virtuous person is practically wise. But theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom are not mutually exclusive. The fact that someone is theoretically wise does not militate against his being practically wise. One can be theoretically and practically wise as well. Indeed, it seems as if theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom are bound together with each other. Thus, whoever is theoretically wise must also be practically wise and vice versa. It is hard to believe that one can have theoretical wisdom but fail to translate it into practice or that one can be practically wise without being theoretically wise at the same time. Indeed, it is difficult to draw the line between practical and theoretical wisdom. However, this is not to say that there is no theory and practice. They go together.

7.5 The argument from divinity

Nevertheless, Aristotle argued that philosophers were happier than statesmen since they were more akin and dear to the gods who were supposed to have some concern for human life and to pay attention to contemplation as a divine activity.³⁴ But the reality of Aristotle's gods is questionable. If they do not exist, then the theory that divine contemplation is man's ultimate goal breaks down. It can be argued that Aristotle supposed their existence and merely assumed that they were involved in contemplation merely because he thought that contemplation was the best activity for human beings to participate in. Perhaps he could not think of a better activity for human beings other than the philosophy that he happened to engage himself in. In

this case, his doctrine is self-serving. For him, statesmen were less happy than philosophers because they never took part in contemplation at all or else they engaged in it less than the philosophers did. Either way, they are not supposed to be as happy as the philosophers.

Hence, there are degrees of happiness, depending on the level of contemplation, so that the gods are perfectly happy, followed by the philosophers, then the statesmen (or politicians) and others, in that order. But how can one's level of contemplation be determined? The duration of 'philosophical' reflection may not be the absolute standard of judgement for happiness. In any case, differences are bound to arise as to what really constitutes philosophical contemplation. Various definitions of philosophy have been given and can still be given. So how can one tell which of them is the right one? The definition of philosophy is itself a philosophical problem. That is the irony. Philosophers differ among themselves concerning the definition of philosophy. Thus Aristotle's definition of philosophy is not the only definition of philosophy that there is.

The length of time spent on philosophical activity is also of great importance for the conduct of the best life. There is no limit to philosophical activity. The more contemplation one engages in, the happier one seems to become.³⁵ Thus one who engages in more contemplation than another person is happier than that person. In this case the philosopher is said to be happier than the politician since the former spends more time on contemplation than the latter. According to Aristotle's argument from divinity, human beings ought to contemplate because the gods do so. Perfect happiness is said to be an activity of contemplation.³⁶ That was Aristotle's conclusion.

This is a comparison between two rival plans of life, both of which are happy but one is the happiest life. That is, the philosophical and the political lives, each of which gives priority to a different good as the only ultimate end of all human actions. If perfect happiness consists in contemplation, then it is supposed to be the ultimate human end. For every good is desired for the sake of contemplation but the latter is never desired for the sake of any good other than itself. It is desirable in itself. It is intrinsically desirable. If practical virtuous activity is sought for the sake of contemplation, then it is subordinate to it. It is only a second-best end since it is the most proximate end to the ultimate end. But this does not mean that it is a non-perfect happiness; what it means is that it is less perfect than the most perfect end. Aristotle's view is that the happiest life is the philosophical life and that the virtuous life is happiest only in a derivative or secondary sense. The life of virtue is not as good, pleasant, self-sufficient and complete, as the ultimate end, - contemplation. Further, it does not qualify to be the ultimate end because it lacks the quality of not being desired for the sake of something else. For it is desired for the sake of the ultimate end. Aristotle seems to say that the more contemplative activity a life has, the better it is. Hence, virtue is not the ultimate end since it is desired for the latter even though, like the ultimate end, it is also desired for itself. Like the ultimate end, it is also intrinsically desirable.

There is another misleading interpretation that identifies contemplation with the best 'part of happiness,' as if the latter is a compound. According to this interpretation, to say that contemplation is perfect happiness is to say that it is the best good and it is single. The good is not identical with any one good, as far as this interpretation goes. This is the claim of the inclusive thesis. It purports that in the

first book, happiness is portrayed as a composite good. In book I, happiness is said to be a "composite of all compossible intrinsic goods; and what X.7-8 adds is that the perfect part of this composite, the single most valuable good, is contemplation. And so, on this reading, books I and X are concerned with different questions: the first asks "what is happiness?" (meaning "what is the best composite") while the last asks "what is perfect happiness?"³⁷ According to this interpretation of perfect happiness, "happiness is a complex good whose best (that is, perfect) component is contemplation."³⁸ This view is grounded on the inclusive thesis as opposed to the 'dominant' interpretation of Aristotle's conception of happiness. According to the latter, the best possible human life has maximum theoretical activity. The second-best kind of human life aims at maximising practical virtue as opposed to theoretical virtue. This is also a happy life though it lacks theoretical virtue.

But there is no textual basis for the claim that happiness is a composite of some or all, intrinsic goods. Aristotle never identified contemplation with the best part or the perfect component of a composite happiness. Happiness is not a composite that comprises many ends. If it were a composite of a variety of ends, the gods would be disadvantaged in the sense that they would lack all other goods save for their sole activity of contemplation. If happiness is not a compound, it has no constituent parts, the best part being contemplation. Happiness is not an all-inclusive composite. Nevertheless, this interpretation may seem to be correct if one takes into consideration the fact that the identification of the good with one single good such as wealth, health, pleasure, virtue or honour has been dismissed in the first book. Aristotle was probably undecided on whether the good was single or plural, as shown in the following three quotations, all of which begin with 'if'. First, "if there is some

end of everything that is pursued in action, this will be the good pursued in action; and if there are more ends than one, these will be the goods pursued in action,"³⁹ Admittedly, this matter needs further clarification.⁴⁰ A similar indecision is exhibited in the description of the good as a complete end. For it is said that "if only one end is complete, this will be what we are looking for; and if more than one are complete, the most complete of these will be what we are looking for."⁴¹ The same indecision is evident in the definition of the human good as the activity of the soul according to virtue.⁴² Thirdly, "if there are more virtues than one, the good will express the best and most complete virtue."⁴³ Again, it is still not clear whether the good consists of one single virtue or more than one virtue. At this point Aristotle was non-committal on this issue. Furthermore, Aristotle says that his account of the good agrees "with those who say happiness is virtue (in general) or some (particular) virtue."⁴⁴

According to the dominant interpretation, the political and the philosophical lives are alternatives with different conceptions of happiness. The first book is mainly concerned with the end of the political life while the last book deals with a comparison of the two lives. But how can philosophy be better than the end of the political life, which is said to be the end of all other sciences?

We should choose the philosophical life because *its end (contemplation) is superior to the end of the political life* (activity in accordance with practical virtue). The comparison between lives in X.7-8 is carried out in precisely the same manner as the comparison in book I: different lives have different ends, and one life is better than another if its ultimate end is superior. And so, when Aristotle argues in X.7-8 that perfect happiness consists in contemplation, he is answering the question raised in book I: "what is happiness?" To think that books I and X are addressed to different questions is to ignore the fact the opening book raises a major question-should we be philosophers or politicians?-that is answered only in the closing pages of the NE.⁴⁵

The argument from divinity can be interpreted in a way that brings it into conflict with the claim that a non-philosophical life can as well be happy. Aristotle's claims that happiness depends on contemplation and his claim that animals are not happy because they do not contemplate suggests that happiness is identifiable strictly with contemplation. Therefore, lack of theoretical activity means lack of happiness. One who does not practice contemplation is not happy, no matter what. But lack of happiness does not necessarily mean unhappiness. The fact that one is not happy does not therefore mean that one must be unhappy. One may be neither happy nor unhappy. The absence of happiness is not the same as unhappiness.

In the argument from divinity, happiness means the same thing as perfect happiness. Hence one may be happy but not perfectly happy, if one is not a philosopher. Perfect happiness is reserved for the philosopher alone. The philosopher is second to none, but the gods. For the philosopher is the only one who engages in the contemplative activity of the gods. Although the philosopher does not contemplate as much as the gods do because of human limitation, the philosopher is still the happiest human being. Since the gods contemplate more than the philosopher; they are supposedly happier than him.

If perfect happiness consists in philosophical contemplation alone, then statesmen who are not philosophers are not perfectly happy. They may be happy and not perfectly happy. If happiness means philosophical contemplation alone, then the statesman who is not engaged in this activity is not happy at all. Nevertheless, statesmen may be happy, happiest, or even perfectly happy, whichever is construed as the ideal, but they are, at best, happy, happiest or perfectly happy, whatever the case may be, only in a derivative or secondary sense. For "the life expressing the other

kind of virtue (i.e. the kind concerned with action) is (happiest) in a secondary way because the activities expressing this virtue are human."⁴⁶ But contemplation is divine. However, it is doubtful whether politicians and lower animals are happy to a secondary degree only or imperfectly happy. Perfect happiness is said to be "a certain contemplative activity."⁴⁷ This statement suggests that there is an imperfect happiness as well. If so, what makes perfect happiness perfect and what makes imperfect happiness imperfect? What in other words, do the words 'perfect' and 'imperfect' mean in this case? The phrase "perfect happiness" is seldom repeated in the argument from divinity. It occurs at particular, convenient places. Once more, the issue of whether happiness and perfect happiness mean the same thing or not, suggests that Aristotle may have been undecided.

What justification is there in denying that lower animals can be happy simply because they do not engage in contemplative, and by extension, ethical activity?⁴⁸

So, it might seem that horses and oxen fail two independent tests for happiness: first, they do not contemplate, and thus they fail to attain perfect happiness; second, they do not engage in moral activity, and therefore they fail to attain the less perfect form of happiness. The first test uses gods as exemplars of perfect happiness; but the second test is independent of any divine comparison, and instead uses ethical human beings as exemplars of happiness. It is this second test that outstanding politicians pass: though they are like animals in their failure to engage in activity akin to divine contemplation, they are themselves the models of happiness used by the second test.⁴⁹

If contemplation is identifiable with perfect happiness it can be ascribed to the activity of moral virtue as well. So both lives are happy but the contemplative life is happier than the one that is morally virtuous. This view seems to imply that the contemplative life is better than the moral life. But this is debatable. In fact, it is difficult, if not, impossible to separate the two. A contemplative life is somehow moral and a moral life is somehow contemplative. According to this interpretation, it

would seem as if "the best kind of life has contemplation as its sole ultimate end, and the more fully one can realize this end, that is, the more often one can engage in this activity, the better off one is."⁵⁰

However, in the real sense, the happiest life is the philosophical life. The political life is only derivatively or secondarily happiest, meaning that it is not really the happiest life. It is not the happiest life in the true sense of the word! It is a good life and not *the* good life. Although it is a good life, it is not the best life.

The political life and the philosophical life do not differ in the degrees of their pursuit of the same goal, but in the difference in the kinds of goals they pursue. It is a difference in kind not degrees. If so, how can we compare the two lives? "The more one achieves the goal of the best life, the better off one is. Insisting that more contemplation is better than less does not commit him to classifying lives according to degrees of contemplation rather than according to kinds of goals."⁵¹ Thus the philosophical life is *better* than the political life not because it has *more* contemplation than the latter, but because its end (that is, contemplation) is allegedly better than practical virtuous activity. The difference between the two lives is not a difference of degree; it is a difference in kind. They are not different because they have different degrees of contemplation. Rather, they differ to the extent that they pursue different ultimate goods. The philosophical life pursues contemplation as its ultimate end while the political life pursues excellent, virtuous, practical activity. The former is divine whereas the latter is human. Therefore, the philosophical life is better than the political life since the divine is better than the human.

The best thing to aim at in one's pursuit of happiness is not a compound of goods. The best life has the greatest possible amount of one particular good, namely,

contemplation. Similarly, the second-best life has only one ultimate end, that is, virtuous practical activity. Thus, the life of virtue is inferior to the best life on account of its lack of contemplation, as well as on account of the difference of its ultimate end. The one kind of life is inferior to the other in so far as its end is inferior to the end of the other kind of life. Aristotle was

Saying that if one is trying to have *the best life* one can, then this mixture of goods is not the best target to aim at. If one succeeds in achieving this balance, one still will not have as good a life as someone who makes contemplation his sole ultimate end. The goal of having a mixture of philosophy and politics is intermediate between the best goal and the second best; and for reasons we have just given, there is nothing absurd about saying that there are lives that fall between the best goal and the second best. Aristotle can say that anyone who succeeds at this mixed life is happy - not as happy as those who contemplate more, but happier than those who do not contemplate at all.⁵²

One is better off if one's ultimate goal is contemplation alone. One who leads the best life engages on as much philosophical activity as is possible. The argument that happiness is accessible even to one who does not contemplate can be reached without having to introduce the word "perfect" into the argument from divinity. The reason why animals and other people fail to be happy is because they do not engage in contemplation at all. According to this interpretation

(a) The gods are paradigms of happiness, since they have perfect happiness at all times. (b) All other living beings have a greater or a lesser degree of similarity to the gods, or no similarity at all (in the relevant respect). (c) This comparison yields a ranking of living beings in terms of happiness: the degree of well being achieved by all other living things can be assessed by comparing their lives with divine life. (d) Judged in this fashion, human beings have different degrees of happiness, for some of their activities have more resemblance to divine activity than others; but in any case, no human being is happy for the entire duration of his lifetime, from beginning to end. (e) The lives of other animals are not as good as our lives can be, and they are not happy, because "in no way do they share in contemplation."⁵³

Here Aristotle was not only saying that lower animals lack perfect happiness, but he was also saying that they "do not share in happiness."⁵⁴ The happiness of other

creatures "can be assessed by seeing how closely they approximate the divine ... it is standard Aristotelian doctrine that living beings form a hierarchy, and that the best any creature can do is resemble the gods."⁵⁵ Although all human beings are akin to the gods by virtue of possessing the divine faculty of understanding that enables them to be involved in contemplation like them, not all human beings are as happy as the philosophers. The latter pay most attention to the exercise of the understanding while others have a dormant talent that they can exploit but they do not do so. If only we can make use of the understanding like the philosophers, we could be as happy as they are supposed to be. The best life consists in a "supreme, eternal and uninterrupted intellectual activity."⁵⁶

Furthermore, the contemplative activity of the gods is the only paradigm of happiness. Accordingly, excellent reasoning will be the ultimate end of one who wants to lead the best life. In addition, "since the gods achieve the highest degree of happiness by contemplating, the best kind of human life is the one that is devoted to that very activity."⁵⁷ Aristotle's assumption is that human beings resemble gods in the sense that they engage in the so-called divine activity of contemplation. Though "statesmen are deprived of perfect happiness, because they do not engage in the same activity as gods, they can lead happy lives nonetheless, because their ultimate end is the godlike goal of reasoning well."⁵⁸ But how can the existence of the so-called gods of ancient Greek mythology be proved? How can we tell whether or not they contemplate? Whatever answer one gives in response to these questions depends on whatever one's beliefs are.

The conclusion of the argument from divinity is that perfect happiness is the activity of contemplation. So, we should emulate gods when we are faced with the

challenge of deciding on what kind of life we ought to lead. But how can we imitate a god whom we neither know nor believe in? Contemplation is supposed to be the sole preoccupation of the gods. The claim that there are gods whose only occupation is continuous contemplation can neither be proved nor disproved.

Since there is only one standard of happiness that consists in a hierarchy of living things with the gods being at the apex, "to be as happy as we can, we must approximate the condition of the gods."⁵⁹ Given that contemplation is the only activity of the gods, it would appear as if our happiness extends as far as we practice contemplation. Conversely, we cannot be happy unless we exercise contemplation. We can only be happy if and when we are engaged in contemplation. The more we contemplate the happier we become. Whatever else that can make us happy is bound to be imperfect and a second-best alternative to contemplation. Of course, there is a secondary way of being happy, that is, the political way of life. For, "those who lead political lives can be happy even if they engage in no philosophical activity whatsoever."⁶⁰ There is no limit to contemplation. The more we engage in contemplation the better and the happier we become. One's happiness increases in so far as one increases the amount of one's contemplative activity alone. In case two living beings do not engage in contemplation at all, there is no point in asking who exercises more contemplation than the other.

7.6 Critique of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*

If happiness depends on contemplation alone, then one who does not contemplate at all cannot be happy. In that case, if it is true that politicians do not contemplate at all then they cannot be happy at all. Why, then, did Aristotle insist that the political life was *happiest* only secondarily? What did he mean by secondary happiness? It would

seem that one is either happy or not happy. But the fact that one is not happy does not necessarily mean that one is, therefore, unhappy. One could be indifferent. In any case, since different people have different conceptions of happiness, it is impossible to tell which one of the diverse conceptions of happiness is the right one. Everyone thinks that they are right. Since everyone regards different kinds of life as the best or the happiest life, it is impossible to tell which one of these kinds of life is really the best or the happiest life. But that does not mean that one should never express one's opinion about the best life.

For one to be considered happy, one must be involved in contemplation over a considerable length of time. If the duration of contemplation is sufficient then happiness becomes directly proportional to contemplation. Even so, the sufficiency of contemplation is a matter that cannot be decided amicably; it is bound to be controversial. How much contemplation is sufficient for happiness? How long is a 'considerable length of time'? This is a vague notion. Aristotle did not specify the requisite period of contemplation. For him, a political career requires less time than a philosophical one as far as contemplation is concerned. We are better off contemplating as much as possible.

But one cannot be happy if one is inactive or asleep throughout one's lifetime. There must be a considerable period of contemplation for happiness to be achieved. But the length and the number of time(s) spent on contemplation as well as its depth are indefinite.⁶¹ It is possible to arbitrarily deny that a person is happy even if he is happy. The discussion of happiness in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* initiates an investigation of a single ultimate end. In its last book, that end is identified with contemplation and the best life with the contemplative life. The

political life too is the happiest life but only derivatively. Nevertheless, one must not seek one's good egoistically. If one seeks one's good at the expense of others, how would one develop ethical virtues?

Aristotle conceived of the good as an intrinsic end for the sake of which all other things are desired. But the idea of the good can be interpreted in various ways:

One may take it as a logical truth, as an empirical observation, or as a moral imperative. Someone who says that there is a supreme good, in Aristotle's sense, may mean that as a matter of logical truth there is a single end which is aimed at in every choice of a human being. He may mean, on the other hand, that every man does as a matter of contingent fact have a single aim in every one of his choices. Or, finally, he may mean that every man should, under pain of being unreasonable or immoral, aim at a single end in each of his choices.⁶²

Those who address themselves to this question do not make themselves clear as to which one of these three approaches they are adopting. Indeed each interpretation seems ambiguous:

Is the 'single end' in question an end which is, or ought to be, common to every choice of every man? Or is it merely an end which governs every choice of each particular man, but which perhaps differs from man to man? The first of the foregoing alternatives, for instance, may be taken in two ways. It may be a strong thesis to the effect that it is a logical truth that every man, in every choice, aims at a single end which is common to all choices of all men. Or it may be the weaker thesis that each man, in each of his choices, pursues a single end, but one which is perhaps proper to himself.⁶³

Sometimes Aristotle's conception of the good is taken to be the stronger sense of these "logical theses." As Aristotle pointed out at the beginning of the *Ethics*, it seems to be a necessary truth that everything is not chosen for the sake of something else: all "chains of reasoning about means and ends must come to a halt somewhere."⁶⁴ But this does not necessarily mean that there is somewhere where all chains come to an end. It may mean that all chains have different ends. This is not

what he meant. His view was that there is an ultimate end for the sake of which we seek other ends. And that is *eudaimonia*.

Aristotle argued that there was no infinite regress. For if "(a) there is some end of the things we pursue in our actions which we wish for because of itself, and because of which we wish for the other things; and (b) we do not choose everything because of something else, since (c) if we do, it will go on without limit, making desire empty and futile; then clearly (d) this end will be the good, i.e. the best good."⁶⁵ Nevertheless, others have criticised and accused him of committing a fallacy.

This passage has been taken to contain a (fallacious) proof of the existence of a single supreme end of action. Thus Geach writes, 'it is clear that Aristotle thinks himself entitled to pass from "every series whose successive terms stand in the relation chosen for the sake of has a last term" to "there is something that is the last term of every series whose successive terms stand in the relation chosen for the sake of."⁶⁶

Such a transition is clearly fallacious. "Every road leads somewhere: it does not follow that there is somewhere - e.g. Rome-to which all roads lead."⁶⁷ To convict Aristotle of this fallacy one must assume that he was offering the clause 'we do not choose everything for the sake of something else' as a reason for the hypothesis in the first clause 'there is some end of the things we do which we desire for its sake.' But it is not necessary to do this: the second hypothesis may be a consequence of, not a reason for, the first one. Von Wright and Hardie agree with Williams in acquitting Aristotle of the fallacy attributed to him by Geach. The former points out that if Aristotle accepted the conclusion that there was one and only one end of all chains of practical reasoning, then he contradicted himself. Clearly, happiness, for Aristotle, was at least one supreme end. But 'Aristotle also admits that there are ends, other

than happiness, which we pursue for their own sake. He mentions pleasure and honour among them.⁶⁸

It seems false that there is an essential end that every person pursues in every choice. Maybe there is a particular end, such as self-satisfaction, that we always seek voluntarily. But this argument is invalid. If all that it means is that when we act out of desire for something, then we are looking for the satisfaction of our desire for it, this does not mean that we are searching for a single end in all our actions; for there are as many different kinds of satisfaction as there are different ways of fulfilling them. On the other hand, if it is alleged that whenever one acts one must be pursuing a goal which consists in the satisfaction of all one's desires, then the theory, so far from being necessarily true, is not even empirically true. For it is possible not to have as a goal the satisfaction of all one's desires, and indeed positively to hope that not all one's desires will be satisfied. If this is the case, it cannot be logically true that in everything we do we seek the single aim of total satisfaction.

Williams argues that Aristotle accepted the thesis that whatever is pursued is pursued for a single aim, not on the basis of the invalid argument about chains of practical reasoning, but on the basis of the considerations about the function of man. This account of Aristotle's argument is probably mistaken. We need not credit Aristotle with believing that we serve a purpose.

The argument from the function (*ergon*) of a human being cannot show that, as a matter of fact or logic, we all pursue whatever we pursue for the sake of happiness. Arguably, Aristotle did not believe that we seek a single end in all our actions. We may say that every time something is pursued for the sake of happiness. Or it may be that something must be pursued once, at least, for the sake of happiness.

Aristotle rejected the first form of the formula in question. For instance, pleasure is occasionally pursued for its own sake. He did not deny this possibility.

Aristotle considered the suggestion that all actions have a single end. He supposed that *if there is a single end of everything that is done, then this will be the practical good, but if there be more than one such end, then it will be these*.⁶⁹ Although he was probably undecided on this matter of one or many ends, he went on to say that 'there is obviously more than one end.' He refrained from considering imperfect ends such as flutes and wealth. These are often sought for the sake of other ends. Perhaps, there is no single perfect end. Kenny argues that "even as a matter of fact, Aristotle did not believe that men seek a single end in all their actions."⁷⁰ He goes on to say that

It is not true, either in logic or in Aristotelian doctrine, that all men seek happiness in all they do. Is it even true that all men seek happiness? Here it is useful to follow Hardie in distinguishing between a dominant and an inclusive end. If happiness is thought of as a dominant end, then it is the object of a single prime desire: say, for money, or for philosophy. If it is thought of as an inclusive end, then the desire for happiness is the desire for the orderly and harmonious gratification of a number of independent desires. It seems clear that not everyone has a single dominant aim in life: it is surely possible to lead a life consisting of the successive pursuit of a number of unrelated aims of equal importance. If by happiness we mean something sought as a dominant aim, it seems to be untrue that all men seek happiness.⁷¹

Kenny believes rightly that Aristotle perceived happiness in the dominant sense. But he denies that Aristotle thought that everyone sought happiness as the final goal of all actions. Indeed, he denies that everyone pursues happiness. Of course, there are many other ends apart from happiness that people pursue. However, it can still be said that it is possible that people are pursuing happiness in pursuing them. Aristotle "certainly says that all agree that happiness is the purpose of ethics, and that it is the highest of practical goods. But there is no reason why he should think that everybody

practises ethics, or pursues the highest good. All he needs to presume, and all that he does presume, is that all of his lecture audiences are in search of happiness."⁷²

Kenny argues that although Aristotle could be justified in his final identification of happiness with contemplation, it is not the case "that all who seek happiness seek philosophic contemplation."⁷³ In the tenth book, happiness has been identified with contemplation since the latter is the only good that seems to possess all the characteristics of the good as outlined in Book I. Furthermore, Aristotle's "belief that the pursuit of happiness must be the pursuit of a *single dominant* aim, and his account of the nature of philosophy, seem to be both so seriously mistaken as to make unprofitable a discussion of his arguments that happiness consists in *theoria*."⁷⁴ However, Kenny does not deny that Aristotle had a dominant theory of *eudaimonia*; what he objects to, like me, is Aristotle's apparent identification of happiness with a single dominant end. The acceptance of the dominant theory of *eudaimonia* means the acceptance of the idea of a single dominant end, which is *eudaimonia* or happiness.

Furthermore, Aristotle denied that the happy life was the life of pleasure. He claimed that the latter was a beastly life. For him, happiness was something peculiar to human beings. That is why he claimed that animals could not be happy. Even children were said to be incapable of being happy since happiness requires a complete span of life, which they have not yet attained. Aristotle asserted that whenever children were called happy, therefore, they were only being congratulated for their potential happiness. But how can one be congratulated for something that one has not yet achieved?

Kenny criticises Aristotle's claims. He says, for instance, that "it seems odd to us that Aristotle should consider happiness an activity at all. Under normal circumstances, happiness is considered as a particular state."⁷⁵ Aristotle does not identify happiness with virtue because of the possibility that a virtuous person can be idle or asleep throughout his lifetime. Besides, he argues that it is possible for such a person to be befallen by calamity or misfortune and an unfortunate person cannot be called happy; no miserable person should be called happy. But everyone is thus vulnerable. Who then can be rightly called happy? The characteristics of happiness are self-sufficiency and perfection or completeness. There are degrees of perfection; and happiness is thought to be the most perfect of all perfect goods. Unlike other goods such as reason, riches and pleasure, happiness is chosen for its own sake. However, it is ironical that Aristotle distinguished happiness from reason here, yet in the tenth book he identified the happy life with the theoretic life as the most perfect life. "The self-sufficiency of happiness ... does not consist in its being a life for a hermit, but rather in its being an activity which by itself, and without anything else, makes life choice-worthy and complete. Of course, other goods added to happiness will add up to something more choice-worthy. This last remark makes it clear that Aristotle did not consider happiness an inclusive state made up of independent goods."⁷⁶ Nonetheless, Aristotle did not say that additional goods would make happiness more choiceworthy; in fact, he denied that happiness, as the final end, could be improved upon. For happiness is good without qualification.

Kenny argues that one may achieve certain goals in life yet fail to be happy. As such, happiness should not be identified with the achievement of a particular goal. "Happiness as realised appears to be a state of mind, or perhaps rather a state of will;

it is akin to contentment and satisfaction, and might perhaps be described as an attitude, were it not that an attitude seems to be something which can be adopted at will in a way in which happiness cannot. Happiness in this sense might seem to be the satisfaction of one's major desires coupled with the belief that such satisfaction is likely to endure."⁷⁷ In fact, this is the way people conceive of happiness nowadays. Kenny's criticism is a modern day conception of happiness and the good life, as opposed to the ancient and unorthodox view of Aristotle. If happiness is a state rather than activity, and if this is not what everyone aspires to achieve in the final run, then, perhaps, Aristotle was writing about something other than happiness as we know it today. Indeed, the best human good or the best human life has a great deal to do with rational activity, deliberation and contemplation. But this does not mean that intellectual or philosophical activity is the best human activity. Indeed, the best life also requires a certain amount of intellectual activity. But intellectual activity is not all that it needs. Thus philosophy, contemplation, or intellectual activity is neither the best good nor the only good in the best life. Of course, the best life is, in a way, philosophical, contemplative or intellectual, but philosophy alone, contemplation alone, or intellectualism alone is not the supreme human good. The best life comprises much more goods than contemplation. This is only one of them; it is by no means the only one. The best life consists in other activities besides philosophical activity; it is not, as Aristotle thought, a life of pure contemplation. In addition, Aristotle made a false dichotomy between happiness (*eudaimonia*) and a happy (*eudaimon*) life. For me, happiness consists in living the kind of life that is happy. Happiness is not something different from a happy life; indeed, happiness means a happy life. There is no happiness without life though there may be a life without

happiness. For Aristotle happiness and a happy life are different but for me they are not different. I think that happiness and a happy life mean the same thing. I think that the best human good is the best human life. Nevertheless, I disagree with Aristotle on his claim that the best human life is the philosophical life. In this chapter, I have endeavoured to show that the best life is not a philosophical life.

Now, it is time to conclude this thesis; it is high time we concluded our discussion of the best life for human beings to lead. Given that the best life is neither the life of pleasure, nor the life of money – making, nor the political life, nor the philosophical life, what other kind of life, if anything, can be the best human life? This is the task of the next chapter, the last and the concluding chapter of this thesis.

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PART III

CONCLUSION, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE GOOD LIFE

In the previous chapters, we have observed that there is no consensus on the issue of the best life for all human beings to lead since everyone has one's own opinion concerning the matter. But there is no way of reconciling conflicting opinions of the best life. We have also seen that Aristotle opined that the best life is the philosophical life. Now, in this chapter, I am also going to give you my own opinion of the best life. You can do likewise since you also have your own opinion of the best life. In addition, I will summarise the findings of my research before concluding this chapter and this thesis.

8.1 The correct interpretation of Aristotle's theory of *eudaimonia*

We have seen that there are two different interpretations of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*. Some scholars think that Aristotle advocated an inclusive view of *eudaimonia*, whereas others argue that he advocated a dominant view of *eudaimonia*. I have discussed these views mainly in Chapter One and Chapter Two.

My problem has been, first, the possibility of finding the correct interpretation of Aristotle's theory of happiness or *eudaimonia* and the best life; secondly, the determination of whether or not he was right. Concerning the first part of the problem, I have found out that Aristotle advocated the dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia*. But as far as the second part of the problem goes, I have been arguing that he should have advanced the comprehensive doctrine of *eudaimonia*. Though the dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia* is the correct interpretation of Aristotle's conception of the nature of *eudaimonia*, this does not mean that Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* is right. I am not for the idea that the highest of all

achievable goods in action is only one particular good. Indeed, I have questioned Aristotle's system of classifying goods in a fixed hierarchy. If goods must be arranged in a hierarchy, there are bound to be different hierarchies since different people have different preferences and therefore different ways of classifying things. And it is not easy to tell which one of those hierarchies is really the right one. One can be picked arbitrarily as a convention for the sake of convenience. At best, the highest good is a compound of all desirable goods. That is why it is a complete and self-sufficient end. It is a comprehensive good since we have different *needs* and not just one particular good. It is not a monolithic end. But as for the ingredients of *eudaimonia*, no dogmatic answer can be given in this regard without the risk of subjectivism. Again, whereas I agree with Aristotle that the best thing is happiness, I do not think that it consists in contemplation alone. Instead, I think happiness lies in the satisfaction of all our needs. Happiness then will be a function of the satisfaction of all our necessary needs. Furthermore, Aristotle's definition of happiness as an activity of the soul refers to an active state of the mind.

Those who conceive of Aristotle's doctrine of happiness in inclusive terms confound it with his doctrine of a happy life probably because he was not clear about the identity of these ideas. Although Aristotle regarded happiness as a single good, namely, contemplation, he thought that the happy life includes many goods that the happy man has need of. There is a distinction between happiness and a happy life, between the good and the good life in Aristotle's *Ethics*. However, that does not mean that Aristotle was right in making a distinction between the best good and the best life, or between happiness and a happy life. There is a sense in which the best good is identical with the best life. Even if a happy life requires many goods, it can

still be the aim of everyone to lead a happy life. Happiness is the act of living happily. As I have observed above, happiness means living a happy life. It does not exist independently of living a happy life, except as a concept. For the thought of happiness is different from the practice of happiness. Again, there cannot possibly be any such thing as happiness without life. But there are manner ways of life without happiness! Hence, when we say, for example, that happiness is our ultimate end, we mean that it the best way of life that all of us should lead. So happiness is a way of life. It is the best goal or end in the sense of being the best way of life. Happiness and a happy life are not different things. Happiness is the art or activity of living well and since this is what everyone aims at achieving, it is the best good that people aim at. This shows that happiness and a happy life are not different, but identical.

But in Aristotle, *eudaimonia* does not represent both the best good and the best life. It means the best good. Happiness is a single and not a complex good. A happy life is the kind of life whose predominant aim is happiness (read contemplation) though the happy person also possesses other necessary goods. This kind of life requires other goods apart from happiness. Contemplation is not the only good pursued in a happy life though it is pursued to a greater extent than any other good that is pursued alongside it. All other goods are ultimately sought for the sake of contemplation. Other goods besides contemplation are required in the happy life. They are necessary though not sufficient for the achievement of happiness. The fact that happiness consists in a single good does not mean that a happy life must consist of that single good alone.

I have argued against the dominant interpretation of the *happy life* in Aristotle. But I have also argued in favour of the inclusive interpretation of the *happy life*. I

have argued for the dominant interpretation of Aristotle's conception of happiness but I have also argued against the inclusive interpretation of Aristotle's view of *eudaimonia*. Nevertheless, I think that the best possible life is a comprehensive life. Although a comprehensive end is an inclusive end, an inclusive end is not necessarily a comprehensive end. A comprehensive end includes all requisite goods. But an end can still be called 'inclusive' even if it has a few goods in it.

According to Aristotle *eudaimonia* was a single good, namely, the rational activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. Basically, *eudaimonia* is in accordance with theoretical virtue whereas secondary *eudaimonia* is in accordance with practical virtue. However, the most *eudaimon* life is not devoted to the pursuit of one single good, *eudaimonia*, at the exclusion of the rest of the goods. It consists in the pursuit of *eudaimonia* as the highest good and any other necessary goods. The criterion of *eudaimonia* is contemplation. Of course, this is a single good. *Eudaimonia* extends as far as contemplation does. The more contemplation one engages in, the more *eudaimon* one becomes. The most contemplative life is also the most *eudaimon* life.

Aristotle was convinced that the happiest life was the philosophical life. He was also persuaded to suppose that it is not only the most *eudaimon* life, but that it was also the best life. Therefore, the happier a life is the better it is. Thus the quality of life depends on *eudaimonia*. The good life is a happy life though there are varying degrees of happiness. And the best life is the happiest life. Hence the hierarchy of goods has a direct correspondence with the hierarchy of *eudaimonia*.

But if happiness indeed extends as far as contemplation goes, then it means the same thing as contemplation. This is not a mere means to happiness. It is happiness itself. But does contemplation alone or pure contemplation really

constitute happiness? The answer to this question is "NO". Happiness does not mean the same thing as contemplation. These are two different things. Contemplation does not necessarily lead to happiness. When one engages in contemplation, it does not necessarily mean that one is happy. Contemplation does not guarantee happiness. Contemplation is not the only way of finding happiness. One can find happiness in the performance of many things besides contemplation. There are many contemplative people who are miserable; they are anything but happy.

In Aristotle, contemplation is a rational activity of the soul in accordance with virtue. Nevertheless, the fact that he says that the single activity of the soul is rational and virtuous at the same time does not imply that he thought of it as a complex good. Rationality and virtue are merely the attributes of contemplation. In Aristotle's view, these are not the ingredients or components of contemplation. It follows that Aristotle thought that contemplation or *eudaimonia* is a single and not a composite good. Since contemplation is the pinnacle of the hierarchy of goods, it is a dominant end of all other ends. The latter are subordinate to it. For it is the supreme or the ultimate end. But it is a single or a simple good that does not include any good other than itself. It is self-contained and complete. In this case, the dominant interpretation of Aristotle's view of *eudaimonia* is right but the inclusive view is mistaken.

The best life, that is, the happiest life, which is the philosophical life or the contemplative life, or the life of study, is said to be a divine life (in the *Nicomachean Ethics*); it consists in the contemplation and worship of God (in the *Eudemian Ethics*). For that matter, it is a godly life. This is the point of agreement between the two treatises of Aristotle. They both agree that the best life is a divine life. If they are really the works of the same author about the same thing, (unless they belong, as

others have argued, to different writers), then there ought to be this kind of consistency in their conclusions. It is expected that Aristotle was consistent in his thought, in which case, it would be wrong to suppose, as some scholars have done, that he was confused in tackling the problem of the nature of the ideal life for humans.

Although Aristotle wrote in the *Ethics* that such a life appeared to lie beyond the reach of mortal human beings, he encouraged us not only to think of mortal things but also to think about immortality and eternity. He went on to say that though we are mortals we are capable of leading the divine life because of the presence in us of the divine element of understanding. According to the *Eudemian Ethics*, the best life is a life that consists in the contemplation and the worship of God.

Nevertheless, many people cannot help thinking that a particular way of life is the best one and to suppose that others are mistaken. One recommends to others the kind of life that one takes to be the best life. Even within the same community there cannot be any unanimity as to which of the many versions of what is regarded as the ideal life is the right one. So, one supposes that the best life is the kind of life one leads or desires to lead. For, as Aristotle has pointed out in the *Ethics*, people tend to derive their conceptions of the best life from the kinds of life they lead. Indeed, this is also what Aristotle himself did in the *Ethics*. At the risk of committing the *ad hominem* fallacy, one might argue that Aristotle was projecting and universalising his philosophical career. For he probably concluded that the philosophic life was the best life *because* he was a philosopher. Further, he could be accused of having been involved in anthropomorphism, that is, the act of attributing human characteristics to the gods. Hence, in Aristotle's view, the gods contemplate better than humans.

Human beings can contemplate like the gods or is it the gods who contemplate like human beings? The gods do best that which is the best activity.

8.2 Relativism

Therefore, the question about the end of life can be answered in as many ways as there are different conceptions of the end of life. For instance, an agnostic and an atheist cannot help but answer it in an agnostic and an atheistic way. So, in a sense, there is no universal *agreement* on what the best life is. But the fact that there is no universal agreement about what is the best life does not mean that there is not the best life. There may be one life that is the best of all kinds of life even though people disagree among themselves as to what kind of life it is. Different people have different conceptions of the best life. As such, a sceptic may claim that there is no such thing as *the best life* for all people; instead, there are as many 'best' lives as there are diverse opinions about what constitutes the best life. For a critic, we cannot reasonably talk of the best life that is unknown or even unknowable. In this case, there is no way of reconciling the conflicting views. Everyone can, at best, only say what is supposed to be the best life.

Such, then, is the relativism and subjectivism that seems to characterise every attempt to answer the question 'What is the best life?' For a sceptical person, there seem to be as many good lives as there are different conceptions of what a good life is; and there is no such thing as the good life. Ultimately, the question of the good life or the best life is unanswerable for a relativist and a subjectivist. He will say that since there are many opinions there are also many answers to this question. The answer one gives to it seems to depend on one's belief about the kind of life that is good. For the question may be answered in many different ways. But there seems to

be no way of arbitrating between disputing parties. For there seems not to be a universally accepted, absolute, moral criterion of judgement in this matter.

Nevertheless, it has been shown here that the best life for Aristotle was the philosophic life. That was his doctrine. It has been shown further that for him, the ultimate end of all human striving was *eudaimonia*. That is, a rational activity of the soul in accordance with the most perfect virtue, namely, contemplation. In Aristotle's view, *eudaimonia* consists in this single dominant activity. Therefore, for him *eudaimonia* was neither a comprehensive nor an inclusive composite of many ends.

Therefore, Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* was that of a single dominant end. However, it is doubtful whether the so-called *eudaimonia* is really the highest human goal. It is equally unclear whether the philosophic life is the best life that human beings are capable of leading. Although contemplation or study is good, it does not seem to be the highest human goal, the so-called 'the good.' To claim that it is the best good amounts to making a value judgement. There is no universal standard of judgement by which we can determine which kind of life is better or happier, than another kind of life. Since there are degrees of goodness and happiness, there has to be a standard measure by which we compare them, otherwise we would not know which one is better than another one. Though the contemplative life or the life of study or the philosophic life is quite important, it is doubtful whether it is the best of all possible kinds of life, the so-called 'the good life.'

In any case, pure contemplation, or contemplation for the sake of contemplation alone, seems to be a luxury that very few people can afford to engage in continuously. It is humanly impossible to devote oneself to a life of pure uninterrupted contemplation at the expense of other duties, some of which are natural

and necessary, such as work and relaxation. In the so-called Third World countries like Kenya, there is very little room for armchair philosophical speculation at the expense of development. A perfect combination of practical and theoretical wisdom would constitute a better kind of life than the kind of life that is devoted to either theoretical wisdom or practical wisdom. In any case, we need practical wisdom as much as we need theoretical wisdom. But Aristotle gave priority to theoretical wisdom or contemplation over practical wisdom or moral virtue. He placed metaphysics and theology above the practical sciences.

In the *Ethics*, the good, namely *eudaimonia*, has been identified with the function of a human being and the latter has been defined as a virtuous activity of the soul.¹ Therefore, the good has something to do with virtue and it is possible that the good life is the life of virtue. But since *eudaimonia* is also described as a "rational" activity, it has some element of rationality apart from virtue. Therefore, it is evident that the good is something that is both rational and virtuous. It seems to be characterised by intellectual as well as moral virtues, theoretical as well as practical virtues. Nonetheless, contemplation and morality do not exhaust the list of human goods. But if *eudaimonia* is a good of the soul and if the soul is a divine entity, the good is also a divine activity. The good life is also a divine life.

8.3 The ideal human life

There is not only one end or good that all people pursue at the exclusion of all other ends; there are many good things that people aspire to achieve, such as wealth, fame, power, and excellence. In spite of Aristotle's contrary opinion, virtue may be said to be the highest human good and a virtuous life may be seen as the best human life, instead of a contemplative life. However, not everyone wants to be virtuous. Indeed,

some people do not want to be virtuous at all. Since they are opposed to it, they may want to remain vicious.

However, the purpose of the present thesis is not to state what everybody wants or desires most, but to put forward, from a personal standpoint, what everybody ought to pursue in this life since it is the highest and the best goal. Presumably, people ought to aim at the ideal life; we should aim at it for our own good and also for the good of the society in general. Nevertheless, people are not agreed on what constitutes the ideal human life. We should not only be mindful of our own individual goods, that is a selfish view, but also the common good.

Therefore, the conclusion of this thesis is that the best of all kinds of human life is much more than a virtuous and an intellectual life. The best life is a holistic life. The best life and the best good include both practical and theoretical virtue, among many other things. As the ideal life, it entails a perfect combination of practical and theoretical wisdom and much more. It is a comprehensive life that is both self-sufficient as well as complete. As an ideal, it is out of reach of every human being. It cannot be attained and sustained, at least in this life.

8.4 The second-best practical life

Although Aristotle made distinctions among such goods as pleasure, wealth, virtue, honour, and contemplation and distinguished the philosophical life as the best life, from the life of pleasure, the life of money - making, and the political life, these distinctions are largely arbitrary. These are not water - tight compartments. For, there are linkages among all these divisions. For example, there is a sense in which a life of pleasure is a philosophical life; and a political life is a philosophical life. Further, all these lives involve some element of money - making as well. There is no

life that consists in the pursuit of only one good at the expense of all other goods. In this case, it is wrong to think that there is a life of pure pleasure or pure enjoyment. There is no life that is purely a life of making money either. Neither is there a life that is purely a political or a philosophical life. Everyone needs each one of these goods at one time or another. Therefore, human life cannot be divided into different and unconnected kinds. For instance, a theoretical life is never entirely theoretical for it has some practical aspects too. Conversely, a practical life is not always practical, it also engenders some theoretical activity. Therefore, the alleged differences among the lives discussed above are not natural. In the final analysis, the different kinds of life are not practically distinguishable. They are only distinguishable in principle or theoretically. The purported distinctions among those aspects of life are therefore convenient and conventional. For a life of making money cannot be separated from the life of pleasure. Neither is it separable from the other kinds of life. There is no clear-cut distinction between the political and the philosophical life. Both of them cannot be distinguished from either the life of making money or the life of pleasure. Thus all these ways of living are interrelated and integrated. And the best life would be an ideal life that consists in a perfect interrelation as well as integration of all ways of life. Only a perfect individual would be able to lead such a life. But as imperfect beings, we must contend with different ways of life that are far removed from the perfection of the ideal life. Therefore, I conclude that although the best life is conceivable, it is by no means achievable. The best life is unattainable and untenable. It is a utopian ideal. The best thing for us to do then is to try as much as we can to approximate it.

Therefore, the best *achievable* good for man must be a compound of all necessary goods, without exception. The best *practicable* life will be a comprehensive life that is endowed with the compound of all those necessary goods. Although it is not the life of pleasure, the life of making money, the life of virtue, nor the life of philosophical activity alone, it has the best elements of all of them. The best life is not one *particular* life among these but it involves ingredients of all these kinds of life together with other necessary requirements. The best life is an easy life. Furthermore, the realisation of such a life for everyone calls for the creation of the appropriate socio-economic and political conditions.

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