

## Aristotle on the benefits of virtue (EN 10.7 and 9.8)

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### 1. Introduction

Ancient virtue ethics assumes that all persons have a natural concern for their own life and well-being. It holds that the ability to lead a good life is grounded on certain excellent qualities and dispositions of one's character and intellect. Those qualities or dispositions are called *aretai* – 'virtues' as the term is traditionally if problematically translated.<sup>1</sup> A crucial question for ancient virtue theory is: does the set of 'virtues' that enable a person to lead a good life have to include attitudes like justice and generosity? Or are the intelligent, self-controlled, resolute egoists who see other people as mere instruments, or obstacles, to their own well-being equally or even better suited to leading a good life?

The speech of Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias* is a famous and forceful defence of the attitude of moral egoism. A theoretical elaboration of the view that all human beings are ultimately egoists is set forth in Glaucon's speech in Plato's *Republic II*. Aristotle follows Socrates' and Plato's footsteps in depreciating a sort of egoism that seeks fulfilment in the augmentation and gratification of bodily pleasures or the amassment of wealth and social prestige. He unequivocally affirms the value of virtues like justice and generosity and states that behaviour exhibiting those virtues has to be motivated by the acknowledgement of their value and, hence, is clearly different from a strategic *pretence* of justice or generosity. But he also extols, like Plato before him, the philosophical life, and one has to wonder if the philosophers, whose life-form and enjoyments are focused on their own philosophical insights, might not quite as well be conceived of as moral egoists who care for other people only insofar as those others are helpful to their own philosophical fulfilment.

This question of moral egoism can even be raised with regard to the performance of the ethical virtues. It is the requirement that the motivation for virtuous action has to be based on the acknowledgement of its intrinsic value<sup>2</sup> which opens the possibility for such virtues to be founded on a more sophisticated kind of moral egoism. In order to explain why, I need to comment on some general features of, and open questions about, Aristotle's theory of the teleology of human actions.

According to Aristotle, the virtuous action is, in a certain sense, self-referential. It is so because the value of a course of action that consists in its ethical correctness and fineness is supposed to provide an ultimate reason for that action. Thus the ethically desirable action is, in some sense, *chosen for its own sake* or, what seems to be the same for Aristotle, *because of its inherent value*. (Aristotle often uses the term '*kalon*' to name this ethical

value – with the connotation that such an action is valuable, fine and also pleasing from the point of view of sound ethical judgement. The corresponding ethical motivation is called ‘acting for the sake of what is *kalon*’.)<sup>3</sup>

The ethical correctness of an action includes this self-referential structure. But of course there has to be some foundation for its value that goes beyond its self-referentiality. The inherent value of the action must be rooted in some other features of the action that precede the acknowledgement of its value. Emotional reactions and ensuing actions are ethically correct, according to Aristotle, if they are as they ‘ought to be’ in a number of different respects that have to be distinguished as the type of action requires it. Let’s take the case of a generous action as an example. Here those respects would include that it has the right beneficiaries, provides the right kind of gift and chooses the right timing (EN 4.1, 1120a23–6). If and only if the action is right in all those respects, and provided it be chosen on account of this correctness, is it an action how it ‘ought to be’. Then, and only then, does it qualify as something fine or noble (*kalon*) in the ethical sense of this word.<sup>4</sup>

But what about the purpose (*hou heneka*) which is also mentioned as one of the relevant respects of the ‘how it ought to be’ (2.6, 1106b21–2)? In the case of a generous action one would expect this action to aim at helping somebody who needs and deserves help (without requesting a return). Yet in his treatise on generosity (or liberality), as in his other treatises on particular virtues, he consistently specifies the purpose to be pursued as that which is *kalon* (*tou kalou heneka*),<sup>5</sup> and when we further notice that Aristotle equates this expression with the alternative phrase ‘because it [the action] is *kalon*’,<sup>6</sup> we cannot doubt that the motivating ground of a virtuous action as such is supposed to be its inherent value as a *kalon*. That is why we are allowed to speak of the self-referentiality, or self-motivating nature, of the virtuous action. On the other hand, an act of generosity has an external effect and aims at producing that effect. In his treatise on generosity this becomes explicit when he calls acts of generosity both instances of *eu poiein* (*tina*) – doing good (to somebody) – and of noble activity (*kala prattein*, *kalê praxis*) (4.1, 1120a11–15). We know from other passages that explain the terminological distinction between *poiêsis* and *praxis*<sup>7</sup> that the former term names an activity that effects or brings about some external result which is its purpose, while *praxis*, in this context, signifies an instance of human behaviour which can bear an intrinsic moral quality (e.g. the property *kalon*) that would render the action self-motivating. Generous behaviour somehow includes both: insofar as it exhibits a virtue, it is *praxis*, an instance of *to kalon* and thus an end in itself; but insofar as it is, or is wedded to, an act of *poiêsis*, it has an external purpose. So, it seems that we encounter a duality of *undervived* ends for the same action, one other-regarding and one self-regarding.

But, on the other hand, it is a standard doctrine of Aristotle's that the ends pursued by acts of *poiêsis* are only *means* for enabling performances of valuable praxis (*eupraxia*) which are ends in themselves.

The situation is further complicated because virtuous action can have not only an external but also an 'internal' purpose, besides being somehow self-motivating *qua* virtuous action. The desirable internal consequence is the agent's *eudaimonia*, i.e. the overall excellence of the agent's life-performance which can be increased by fitting acts of virtue. Let's call the latter type of consequence the *internal teleology* of virtuous actions and the former their *external teleology*. Already in the case of activities that have only an internal teleology in addition to their inherent desirability (like acts of contemplation) the question arises what the true motive of the activity is. Is it self-motivating or motivated because of that desired internal consequence? We get into even deeper waters when, in addition, an external desirable consequence comes into play.

Now, in the first case (inherent desirability plus internal teleology) the congruence of the two motivational sources can be explained by pointing out that excellent performances contribute to the excellence of the overall life-performance roughly the way parts constitute a whole. The idea is that a life is good only if the person succeeds in tracking and realizing types of activity that can confer value upon this life. So the concern for *eudaimonia* naturally, as it were, seizes upon actions that have inherent value and hence self-motivating force. The acknowledgement of their inherent value is not compromised by the fact that they are also desired as constituents of a eudaimonic life-performance, because they can fulfil this function only on account of their inherent value and desirability.

The issue is more intricate, though, in the second case (virtuous actions with inherent desirability plus internal teleology plus external teleology) since, for us at least, part of the moral value of such actions seems to depend on the seriousness of the other-regarding concern. The crucial question here is: how can the other-regarding motivations connect with rational self-regarding concern without the latter cancelling or compromising the former? Commentators on Aristotle's ethics today often are confident that other-regarding concern is part of what makes up Aristotelian virtue and that there is no problem of incompatibility between other-regarding and self-regarding concerns if the agents define the desired value of their lives by the standards of virtue. I will call this the *Compatibility Thesis* (CT).<sup>8</sup> Yet it remains a controversial issue since other-regarding and self-regarding motivations seem to be opposite motivational pulls. One wonders what really *drives* the individual act of generosity: concern for one's own excellence or genuine concern for the beneficiary?<sup>9</sup> Moreover, it is not even clear yet if Aristotle himself was interested in that sort of compatibility. To be sure, the acknowledgement that someone is worthy as an object of

one's own generosity is, as we have seen, part of what constitutes a genuine act of generosity, but that does not necessarily imply that one has to really care about that other person, or any other person at all. The other person might just serve as a welcome circumstantial element in the situation occasioning but not motivating the generous action. The motivation for generous actions could thus be entirely based on one's interest in increasing or preserving the intrinsic value of one's own life-performance. Accordingly, the attitude underlying those seemingly altruistic exploits of virtue might turn out to be but another example of a more sophisticated type of egoism. In view of the aesthetic connotations of the leading value term *kalon*, this might be seen as resulting from a kind of aesthetics of behaviour.

The example of generosity that I have used allows for a conveniently straightforward exposition of the question how other-regarding concern fits into a theory of virtuous action as 'choiceworthy in itself'. But this problem is equally relevant, for example, for Aristotle's theory of justice as a virtue (in view of the importance of the various types of this virtue for the common good) and of courage (in view of the prime application of courage to actions in war on behalf of the city community).

Aristotle does not always show so little interest in the motivational significance of other-regarding concern as in his analysis of the singular virtues. There is, to start with, the phenomenon of genuine friendship, about which Aristotle affirms that it is akin to and based on virtue (8.1, 1155a3–4), and also that it is an attitude of genuine caring for some other person.<sup>10</sup> He holds that a prime expression of this attitude is generous acts of giving.<sup>11</sup> The end served by such a generous action, if understood as an act of genuine friendship, is the well-being of the friend for its own sake. *Doing good* (*eu poiein*) is a way to live this friendship. Does that mean that some of these generous acts are self-motivating actualizations of generosity, while others belong to the manifestations of friendship and are for the sake of the friend? The two sets rather seem to overlap. In his theory of generosity, Aristotle maintains that one of the aspects of 'how it ought to be' is the right choice of beneficiaries, and one can already assume that friends in need are the exemplary beneficiaries of generosity.<sup>12</sup> This becomes explicit in the treatise on friendship: it is even suggested here that one of the reasons why an excellent life cannot do without friends is that there are no better-suited objects of generosity than friends (9.9, 1169b11–16). So by an act of *eu poiein* one can realize both an actualization of generosity, self-motivated in view of its inherent excellence, and an act of friendship inspired by genuine caring for the other person.

There is another context in Aristotle's ethics where the altruistic aspect of virtuous behaviour comes to the foreground. In EN 5.1 he sets out a conception of 'universal justice', which is explicated as comprising all ethical virtues insofar as they are applied in

our behaviour toward others and to the benefit of others or the common good (1129b25–30a14). At the same time, universal justice is also identified with the attitude of the law-abiding citizen, on the supposition that the laws are designed so as to serve the common good and to educate the citizens accordingly (1129b11–19). Aristotle’s theory of law is not positivistic. He assumes that law has an essential purpose, viz. the well-being and flourishing of the community of citizens, which provides rational criteria for the goodness and justice of the body of laws. Law would lose its force to command the loyalty of citizens endowed with practical reason (*phronimoi*) if it turned out to be against the common interest. Hence justice, in the sense of the virtue of law-abidingness, is teleologically connected with the common good, and ethically reflective persons abide by the law because they take an interest in the common good. Now, since Aristotle (following Plato), emphasizes the educational role a good body of laws should assume,<sup>13</sup> he can interpret all acts of virtue, to the extent that they serve the common good, as being in accordance with the law. All such acts can thus be understood as expressions of a law-abiding attitude for the sake of the common good as served by the laws. That includes acts of generosity – not because they are literally prescribed by the law (that would no longer be generosity), but rather because they match with the spirit of the laws<sup>14</sup> and the purpose of education as defined by the law. (The concept of justice as universal virtue serving the common good could also be connected with the theory of civic virtue in *Politics* 3.4, since civic virtue implies the wish to foster the public well-being and is at the same time, at least in its highest form, said to be identical with the virtue of a human being as such (cf. 7.14, 1333a11–12), i.e. virtue as dealt with in the ethical treatises. But that is not something I can further develop here.)

Thus it should be clear that altruistic aspects of motivation do not drop out of Aristotle’s description of the motivational set-up of the virtuous and reasonable agent. But one wonders how it all fits together: his theory of the self-motivating nature of virtuous action, his conception of the subordination of virtuous action under the ultimate aim of *eudaimonia* according to the general teleology of human action and practical reasoning, and finally his description and justification of the altruistic elements of virtue as applied in friendship and citizenship. This is a vast topic that cannot be fully explored here. I want to shed some light on it, though, by discussing two exemplary passages in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

In my comments on the significance of friendship for a complete understanding of the teleology of virtuous actions, I hinted at the possibility that an act of giving might at the same time function as an act of friendship, rooted in genuine other-regarding concern, and as an act of generosity desirable both in itself and in view of the desired excellence of one’s

own life. So friendship might serve as a kind of inlet for altruism into Aristotle's ethics and as a way of showing how those two motivational sources can integrate. Yet in a famous chapter in the Nicomachean version of the treatise on friendship, where he talks about the relation between self-love and concern for others (EN 9.8), his argumentation rather seems to confirm the egoistic nature of his ethics. The upshot of this passage appears to be that seemingly altruistic actions to the benefit of others actually are to the greater advantage of the agent, because their intrinsic ethical value (*to kalon*) elevates the agent's life-performance and thus represents a greater benefit accruing to the agent than the external good conferred upon the recipient. On the other hand, a passage in the equally famous and important chapter EN 10.7 seems to contradict these assumptions by stating that the highest kinds of ethically valuable action are not choiceworthy in themselves but only in view of the external benefits that result from them. Since this passage indicates that the specific dignity of those highest exploits of ethical virtue lies in their importance for the public well-being, it confirms the altruistic teleology of such actions. Yet in the end, this passage too seems to have an egoistic upshot since the fact that those acts serve an external purpose seems to provide the very reason for denying the status of perfect *eudaimonia* to a life-form defined by that type of activity.

I am going to call the passage in 10.7 'passage A' (1177b1–26) and that in 9.8 'passage B' (1169a18–b2). Either passage poses a puzzle insofar as it seems to contradict some other important aspect of the Aristotelian theories of virtue and friendship. My aim is to show how those puzzles can be solved and how and to what extent the arguments of both passages are open for a reading that does justice to the basic self-regarding concern of human agents without falling into the position of moral egoism. I will first set out the puzzles and then elaborate the solutions.

## **2. The puzzle posed by EN 10.7, 1177b1–26: Are the supreme kinds of noble action only instrumentally choiceworthy?**

Passage A is part of Aristotle's second treatise on the good life (*eudaimonia*)<sup>15</sup> in the EN (10.6–9). Before addressing this passage, I first want to discuss a relevant point in the preceding stretch of text. Aristotle starts his second treatise on *eudaimonia* in 1176a33–b9 by claiming that *eudaimonia* is, first, a type or mode of activity (*energeia*) rather than an acquired disposition (*hexis*) of one's soul (a point familiar to us from book 1), yet, secondly, not an activity which is necessary/necessitated (*anankaia*) and desirable only in view of some other goal (*di' heteron hairetê*) but one that is choiceworthy in itself (*kath'*

*hautê*). The second claim is argued for by drawing a connection between *eudaimonia* and self-sufficiency. The point of this seems to be that activities that are undertaken *only* so as to ensure or provide some external good indicate a state of want (*endeês*) incompatible with the self-sufficiency characteristic of *eudaimonia*. The talk of ‘necessitated actions’ too refers to actions which are chosen *only* as means to some other indispensable end.<sup>16</sup> Thus we encounter here a twofold distinction of activities:

- D-2 (1) activities choiceworthy in themselves;  
(2) activities choiceworthy for something else and necessitated.

He goes on to say that those activities are choiceworthy in themselves ‘from which nothing is sought beyond themselves’ and identifies them with the class of actions that are ‘grounded on virtue’ (*kat’ aretên*). These in turn are identified with ‘doing what is fine/noble and good (*ta kala kai spoudaia prattein*)’. Aristotle does not specify here the kinds of actions that would qualify as ‘doing what is fine/noble and good’. But elsewhere this expression would be typically applied to actions based on ethical virtue. Now, it may seem puzzling that virtuous actions are classified as actions ‘from which nothing is sought beyond themselves’. After all, virtuous actions often, and quite typically, have external effects that are part of their specification (as in the case of generous acts). Yet we have seen that Aristotle, when talking about virtuous acts *as such*, does not treat the external effects as motivating reasons. So we do not yet have to worry at this point about Aristotle’s consistency.

In book I (7, 1097a25–b6, cf. 6, 1096b8–19) Aristotle has set out an (at least) *threefold* division by taking into account that there are activities and states that can be both desirable in themselves and because of ‘something else’, i.e. some other desirable end they serve. Thus there are:

- D-3 (1) things desirable only in themselves and never relative to something else;  
(2) things desirable both in themselves and relative to something else;  
(3) things desirable only because of something else.

The clear case of an item in class (1) is *eudaimonia*. Virtuous activities, on the other hand, belong to class (2) because they have intrinsic value in view of their being virtuous, but can also serve some other end. Now, the ‘other end’ Aristotle has in mind here is the highest good, *eudaimonia* (1097b4–6): insofar as virtuous activities contribute to the excellence of a

whole life, they are related to that highest good as their consequence and, hence, desirable also in view of that consequence.

How can the twofold division (D-2) in 10.6 be projected onto D-3? Has Aristotle simply forgotten that he has already elaborated a more differentiated analysis in EN 1.6 and 1.7?<sup>17</sup> Aristotle often disregards certain differentiations that he has reached elsewhere but would not serve his current argument. This is all right as long as it does not lead to contradictions. If we want to get a clearer idea about how D-2 compares to D-3 we have to bear in mind that the activities chosen for the sake of ‘something else’ are also called necessitated activities in D-2. This indicates that they would fall into the third class of D-3: choiceworthy *only* in view of the end they serve. That is also confirmed later on by his calling them un leisured activities. The ‘something else’ (*heteron*) served by such an activity is an *external* end or good, whereas the ‘something else’ served by the activities of the second class in D-3 is an *internal* good: the person’s *eudaimonia*. The good life, to be sure, is ‘something else’ relative to individual virtuous activities even if those are thought to constitute the good life, because a whole is not identical with any single part of it. But it is not *external*. In other words, D-2 compares intrinsically valuable activities with activities whose value consists only in some external consequence (which may in turn provide some useful means to one’s own *eudaimonia* – but that would only be an indirect connection between the ‘necessitated’ activity and one’s own good life). D-3, on the other hand, introduces an internal consequence into the picture, the contribution of an intrinsically valuable activity toward the constitution of a good life – an aspect disregarded but not contradicted by D-2. (When I speak of certain activities ‘constituting’ a *good* life, that of course does not mean that a good life has to be composed only of such activities. A life is constituted as a good life by activities through which a person lives up to the leading value and ‘target’ (*skopos*<sup>18</sup>) which defines the life-form that person has chosen.)

After this introductory passage and a passage on the significance of playful activities, Aristotle’s argument takes a crucial step forward in 1177a12–18 by retrieving from book 1 the concept of *eudaimonia* as activity in accordance with the best, or most superior and highest-ranking, virtue in us. The activity according to the superior virtue in us is then identified with the activity of the best thing (*ariston*) in us, namely the *nous* (intellect), according to its proper virtue (which we know to be *sophia*). That activity is then called perfect (teleios<sup>19</sup>) *eudaimonia* and identified as *theôria* (intellectual contemplation).<sup>20</sup>

The subsequent text (1177a19–b26), which contains our passage A, is meant to adduce further evidence for the claim that the activity of *theôria* alone is constitutive of (perfect) *eudaimonia*. It does so partly by way of a comparison of *theôria* with excellent practical activity. First, it allocates the following characteristics to *theôria*.

*Theôria* is

- (1) the most superior or highest-ranking form of activity (*kratistê*);
- (2) most continuous (*sunechestatê*);
- (3) most pleasant (*hêdistê*);
- (4) self-sufficient (*autarkês*) to the highest degree;
- (5) the only activity loved for its own sake;
- (6) involving leisure whereas the most excellent kinds of practical activities (activities in politics and in war) are unleisured.

Point (5) reappears as a premiss in the argument in support of (6). Therefore I treat (5) and the argument in support of (6) as one argument whose intended conclusion is that practical activity cannot qualify as perfect *eudaimonia*. I will quote that argument as my passage A, dividing it up into three chunks:

A-1 (5) And this [sc. activity of contemplation] alone would seem to be loved for its own sake; for nothing arises from it apart from the contemplating, while from practical activities we gain (*peripoioumetha*) more or less apart from the action. (1177b1–4)<sup>21</sup>

Here, we seem to encounter distinction D-2 again. But its application is puzzling. The claim that only activities of contemplation (*theôria*) are loved (or appreciated) for their own sake must seem strange in view of Aristotle's frequent assertions earlier on that virtuous activities in general are desirable in themselves. On the other hand, the way he describes the activities that belong to the second class fits in with the way the second class was characterized in 10.6. For he mentions the intention to *gain* something apart from the action, i.e. some external good or benefit (gaining it *for oneself* as the Greek verb form suggests), and this is indeed a characteristic of actions that are 'necessitated' by some want or need. But then it seems that passage A-1 operates with a false dilemma. For it would turn out that self-motivated acts of virtue fit neither into the second class, which contains only necessitated actions, nor into the first class, which is supposed to contain only acts of contemplation. This is obviously a very unsatisfactory piece of reasoning on Aristotle's part.<sup>22</sup> The next step of the argument, which relates to (6), will roughly pursue the same line. But it will support this with more elaborate reasoning.

A-2 (6) And *eudaimonia* is thought to involve leisure; for we are busy that we may have leisure, and make war that we may live in peace. Now (*men oun*), the practical virtues are exercised in politics or in warfare; but the actions concerned with these [sc. politics or warfare] seem to be unleisurely. Warlike actions are completely so (for no one chooses to be at war, or provokes war, for the sake of being at war . . .); but the activity of the politician also is unleisurely, and aims at securing something beyond the mere participation in politics – positions of authority and honour,<sup>23</sup> or [sc. *alternatively*]<sup>24</sup> *eudaimonia* for himself and his fellow citizens, this *eudaimonia* being different from political activity, and evidently sought as something different.<sup>25</sup> (1177b4–15)

I will interpret the argumentative content of A-2 shortly, but first I want to quote its sequel in A-3. For the stretch of argument introduced by a ‘*men oun*’ in A-2 is not yet complete. It has only set out that and why political and warlike activities are unleisured and thus not by themselves constitutive of *eudaimonia*. To become complete, the argument still has to point out that *theôria*, by contrast, is leisured (*en têi scholê*). Also we want to know why warlike and political activities, and not some other types of action, should be picked out as the activities in which the practical virtues excel. The structure of Aristotle’s argument is, however, somewhat obscured by the fact that these additional elements of his reasoning in support of (6) are added in a subsequent conditional sentence which also reiterates crucial points of the whole preceding argumentation and then introduces the final conclusion that contemplative activity is the perfect form of *eudaimonia*. More precisely, this sentence starts with two complex antecedents, the first of which still comments on practical activity as being unleisured, while the second reiterates the positive attributes of *theôria* that have been set out so far.<sup>26</sup> It is followed by the consequent which gives the intended conclusion, and by an additional antecedent reminding us of the requirement that the life-span has to be complete in order for this life to count as an instance of human *eudaimonia*. The if-clauses are not just hypothetical but give plausible reasons. In my quotation I will leave out all other attributes apart from the characteristics (5) and (6):

A-3     So if [1st antecedent] among actions displaying the virtues those in politics and war stand out as pre-eminent in nobility and grandeur, and yet they are unleisurely, aim at some end and are not desirable for their own sake,  
           and if, on the other hand [2nd antecedent], the activity of the intellect seems to aim at no end beyond itself, . . ., and . . . leisuredness, . . ., and all the other attributes of blessedness are evidently those connected with this activity,

it follows [consequent] that this [sc. activity of the intellect] will be the perfect (*teleia*) human *eudaimonia*, provided [additional antecedent] it be allowed a complete (*teleion*) term of life, for nothing that belongs to *eudaimonia* is imperfect/incomplete (*ateles*). (1177b16–26)

Since the argument in support of (6) draws on point (5), one can treat both claims and the argumentation connected with them as one argument. In reconstructing this argument, we have to spell out some implicit premisses as well. I list these preceded by ‘0’.

- (0a) There are only two general kinds of human activity that can qualify a human life as good: *theôria* and virtuous activity.
- (0b) In order to determine which of those two forms of activity amounts to the *most perfect* life (perfect *eudaimonia*), one has to compare *theôria* with the highest kind of virtuous activity.
- (0c) If an activity turns out to be choiceworthy not for its own sake but only for the sake of something else and (hence) to be unleisured, it cannot be an activity constitutive of *eudaimonia*.
- (1) Among actions displaying the virtues, those in politics and war stand out as pre-eminent in nobility and grandeur (1177b16–17).
- (2) Actions in politics and war are unleisured, aim at some ulterior end and are not desirable for their own sake (1177b17–18).
- (3) *theôria* is chosen only for its own sake and is leisured activity (1177b20, 22).

Concl.: *theôria* does, whereas virtuous activity does not, qualify as constitutive of the most perfect human life (perfect *eudaimonia*).

What are the Aristotelian justifications for these premisses? I concentrate on the four middle premisses from (0b) to (2) which are crucial for his argument on the value of ethical activities.

*Premiss 0b* – This important if implicit assumption seems fairly plausible. If indeed a life committed to the achievements of ethical virtue were the best human life-form, and there is, among the ethical activities, a distinction between higher and more noble ones and those which are noble but to a lesser degree, then the highest-ranking ethical activities would be the most perfect *eudaimonia*. After all, the eudaimonic quality of a life is not to be decided, in the first instance, on how it feels to lead such a life but on its objective value as a human life-form. (It is one of the achievements of character virtue according to Aristotle that

the good activities also feel good, i.e. are enjoyable for the agent.<sup>27</sup>) Thus, if activities to the benefit of the whole city community are the most valuable form of ethical practice, they rather than ethical behaviour in a merely private context would qualify as perfect *eudaimonia*. So if one wants to decide the issue in favour of *theôria*, one has to compare it with these public forms of ethical activity and to show that the latter cannot qualify as perfect *eudaimonia*.

*Premiss 0c* – The value of a life-performance derives primarily, according to Aristotle, from the quality of the activities a person engages in. Some activities have only instrumental value in that they provide some important external goods which in turn are necessary or useful for the activities that have intrinsic value. It is only the latter that can confer intrinsic value upon a life and render it choiceworthy in itself. Thus it is a necessary condition for a type of activity to function as a constituent of good life (*eudaimonia*) that it be intrinsically, and not only instrumentally, valuable.<sup>28</sup>

*Premiss 0c* combines the two characteristics (1) that an activity is chosen only for its instrumental value, and (2) that it is unleisured. The distinction between leisurely and unleisured activities is more fully elaborated in some chapters of the treatise on the ideal political constitution (Pol. 7.3, 14–15; 8.3). Put in a nutshell, an unleisured activity is an activity that we take on only because of a threat to some indispensable or important external goods necessitating action. If people who are able to live a good life engage in such inferior activities, they do it only so as to provide for or preserve the means for doing what they really want to do. The entailment relation suggested in the *Politics* seems to be such that the fact that an activity is unleisured entails that it is undertaken for some other, external end (and hence cannot be constitutive of *eudaimonia*, e.g. Pol. 8.3, 1238a4–6). The passage I am currently commenting on rather suggests a reverse entailment relation. When Aristotle gives his reason why the engagements in war are unleisured he points out that no one would desire war for its own sake. In the case of political activity, both aspects are connected by an ‘and’ (*kai*, 1177b12) which can, and probably should, be read as a *kai explicativum*, indicating that it is the fact that an activity is directed toward some external end which supports the claim that it is unleisured. So here the fact that an act is chosen only to help some other end is supposed to entail that it is a case of unleisured activity (and hence cannot be eudaimonic). This reversal of the entailment-relation does not pose a problem since it is plausible to assume that those two characteristics are *equivalent*.

*Premiss 1* – Already at the beginning of EN 1 (1.2, 1094b7–11), Aristotle has stated that those among the ethical activities which serve not only one’s own well-being but the well-being of the political community are the finest and most noble. The political community of free citizens completes the process of human socialization and provides the

framework for the most elevated human activities (including science and philosophy).<sup>29</sup> That is why there is no aim more noble for virtuous activity than the well-being of this community. So if the life of ethical achievements were the best form of human life, this would apply to a life devoted to the communal good in the first place. A similar connection with the well-being of the community is suggested by Aristotle's explanation of why courage is specifically related to actions in war. Aristotle's argumentation in EN 3.6 aims at showing that acts of 'courage', in the most proper sense of this word, are related to the risk of death that one incurs while fighting in a war. The reason he gives is that war is the most important and noble risk (*megistos kai kallistos kindunos*, 1115a30–1), and a death sustained under such circumstances is hence a 'beautiful/noble death' (*kalos thanatos*, 1115a33). He does not spell out why war is the most significant and noble way to risk one's life, but it is rather obvious that this is connected to the fact that one is risking one's life to save the whole community. Consequently, the specific dignity of courageous actions in war is grounded on the same kind of purpose as that of politics, sc. the preservation and well-being of the *polis*.

*Premiss 2* – An unpleasured activity is, as mentioned above, an activity that serves some other purpose and that no rational person would choose for its own sake. Any kind of labour that nobody would undertake except as a necessary means of ensuring the basic commodities of life falls under this rubric. Engagements in war also are a clear example, since no one with good sense would want or instigate war just in order to exhibit his own virtue. This is a point explicitly argued in passage A-2:

For no one chooses to be at war, or provokes war, for the sake of being at war; anyone would seem utterly bloodthirsty if he turned friendly states into enemies in order to bring about battle and slaughter. (1177b9–12)

One might wonder why people who want to excel in virtue and think that they could perform particularly well in a war should not desire a war to occur. (This attitude has not been so unfamiliar in the course of history.) But Aristotle could reply that truly courageous people are motivated to risk their lives in war out of their concern for the *polis* they belong to. Therefore it would be a perversion of that concern if they actually longed for a war that endangered their own city. But we have to note also that there is a difference between warlike activities and the inferior labours in that the former do, whereas the latter do not, provide the opportunity for exploits of virtue. That is why the latter are not mentioned at all in 10.7. They are disqualified right away as possible constituents of a good life.

While it is clear that nobody in a sound state of mind would desire action in war for its own sake, this sort of claim is much more problematic in the case of political activities. The *polis* community and its well-being is a good in itself dependent on the good performance of the citizens who hold the political offices. Why would Aristotle want to deny that wealthy people in a position of leisure could freely and rationally opt for a political career as their way of leading an excellent life that fully unfolds their virtuous capacities and intentions to the benefit of a worthy object of concern? His argumentation relies on the assumption that political activities are choiceworthy only in view of their external results, since only on the basis of that claim is it plausible to classify them as unleisured activities (cf. *premiss 0c*). Otherwise the argument from attributes (5) and (6) against the eudaimonic character of a life-form defined by such activities would fail.

In this connection, it is an important detail that political activity is said to have a goal which is different from the political activity itself (1177b13–15). This goal is specified as one's own well-being and that of the citizens. Now, that turn of phrase actually names two goals. As to the well-being of the citizen community, it is trivially true that it is not identical with one's political activity. As to the benefit from political activity for one's own well-being, there are at least two ways of understanding that. One would be that the virtuous political activity is constitutive of a certain excellent life-form.<sup>30</sup> But in that case the political activity, taken as a life-form, would indeed be identical with one's chosen form of a good life (or the core of it). So that cannot be the meaning here. The positive effect of the political commitment on one's own well-being, as envisaged in this passage, can consist only in some *causal* connection (for instance the fact that by helping the community to be in a good shape and serve the right purposes one also ensures the right kind of environment for one's own dedication to philosophy). Now, on this assumption political activities would indeed fulfil the criterion of an unleisured activity since they would be undertaken only as a means of providing or preserving some external conditions for a different type of life-form. But then the question arises: why does Aristotle disregard the possibility that virtuous persons may identify with the role of responsible political agents as their way of leading a valuable life?

The outcome of this argument is very puzzling in at least two regards. First, it seems to show too much since virtuous activity, and especially the life-form of the virtuously motivated politician, is soon going to be declared the second-best kind of *eudaimonia* (10.8), but as such, it should be an activity choiceworthy in itself.<sup>31</sup> To be sure, the *conclusion* of this argument is only about *perfect eudaimonia*. As such it does not exclude the possibility that a life dedicated to public activities might provide a less perfect degree of *eudaimonia*. But in the *argument* itself public activities have been characterized as

unleisured, i.e. as motivated only by their external consequences, and it is hard to see how this characterization leaves open the possibility for the political life to count as a second-best kind of *eudaimonia*. Secondly, the argument runs against Aristotle's virtue-theoretical understanding of how the characteristic of being *kalon* confers intrinsic value and desirability on such a kind of activity. Both difficulties are connected because in order to establish the ethically motivated political life-form as a second-best type of human *eudaimonia*, one has to acknowledge the intrinsic value of this type of activity. That seems to be denied in passage A. It therefore gives rise to the following puzzle:

Puzzle I: The argumentation in 1177b1–26 (passage A) claims that ethical virtue excels most in virtuous political and warlike actions and that those, though noble (*kalon*), are not undertaken for their own sakes. Thus it apparently contradicts a central tenet of Aristotle's ethics: that the virtuous person chooses an action which is *kalon* for its own sake.

### **3. The puzzle posed by en 9.8, 1169a18–b2: Are the (apparently altruistic) actions of friendship inherently egoistic?**

In EN 9.8, Aristotle raises the question whether one should love oneself more than any other person. First he introduces two arguments pro and contra, the argument contra relying on the common understanding of selfishness as morally bad (1168a29–35), while the argument in favour of the priority of self-love draws on an interpretation of certain common opinions and sayings in the light of his earlier argument in 9.4 which set out how other-regarding love is in some way derived from self-love (1168b1–10). He then proceeds to a more systematic account which, in a way, salvages both positions as partial truths and dissolves the apparent contradiction. The clue to the solution is that there are two types of self-love: (1) a natural and reasonable pro-attitude toward oneself which provides the reason why people care about themselves and about the quality of their lives; (2) selfish behaviour which seeks to gain undeserved advantages in external goods but is based on a misconception of what is truly important for leading a good life. Reasonable self-love knows that it is the intrinsic value of virtuous actions which renders one's life a good and noble life – a life as reasonable and virtuous persons wish to lead. The behaviour that springs from this attitude is therefore sharply distinct from that of the selfish person who believes that external advantages, even if gained by unfair or disgraceful means, can enhance one's life. On that basis Aristotle can state that the common disapproval of self-love is

directed against this kind of selfishness and is fully justified as to that. At the same time he can uphold the priority of the concern for oneself.

With the bad man therefore, what he does clashes with what he ought to do,<sup>32</sup> but what the good man ought to do he does; for the intellect (*nous*) always chooses what is best for itself, and the good man obeys his intellect. (1169a15–18)

So far the argumentation could be summarized as maintaining that self-love has priority but also emphasizing that this does not imply what is commonly called selfishness:

(1) Although the love for another person, if genuine, is built upon a genuine pro-attitude toward that person and his well-being, rendering this external goal an end in itself for the loving person, this pro-attitude cannot be as intensive as that implied in the rational person's self-love. This would imply that if there should arise a conflict between the integrity of my own life and the possibility of some virtuous and beneficial action in the interest of the other person, the interest in preserving my own integrity would prevail.

(2) But such a conflict cannot arise! It cannot arise since people who give are in fact always the winners since they get the better part – getting *to kalon* while giving a mere external benefit – enhancing the quality of their own life-performance immediately while relinquishing only some external tool for a possible enhancement of their life-performance. This latter point is well set out in the passage I call passage B:

It is true of the good man too that he does many acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and if necessary dies for them; for he will surrender both wealth and honours and in general the goods that are objects of competition, gaining for himself nobility; since he would prefer a short period of rapture to a long one of mild enjoyment, a year of noble life to many years of ordinary existence, and one great and noble action to many trivial ones. Now those who die for others doubtless attain this result; and thus they choose great nobility for themselves. They will forgo wealth too on condition that their friends will gain more; for while a man's friend gains wealth he himself achieves nobility; and thus he assigns the greater good to himself. The same too is true of honour and office; all these things he will sacrifice to his friend; for this is noble and laudable for himself. . . . In all spheres of praiseworthy conduct, therefore, it is manifest that the good man assigns to himself the greater share in what is noble. In this sense then, as has been said, one should be a lover of self; but in the sense in which most men are one ought not. (1169 a18–b2)

The problem with this argumentation is that it sounds as if altruism in the case of friendship were *just a particularly clever form of egoism*. But that would seem incompatible with his description of the attitude of genuine friendship in EN 8 as based on genuine, non-instrumental benevolence.<sup>33</sup>

The argumentation in passage B is not limited to the case of individual friendship. As the clearest example of altruistic action, passage B mentions the case of ‘giving one’s life’ for the sake of one’s friends or one’s own city community (*polis*). This allows for a particularly neat comparison with the argument of passage A (in 10.7) about political and warlike actions. The shared example of both passages is that of courageous actions in war on behalf of one’s city. But while in A the warlike action is treated as altruistic, as being motivated by a goal that is different from one’s own *eudaimonia*, sc. the well-being of the city, passage B seems to view it as but another example of this trade-off in which the giving part always gets the better deal and knows it in advance. With regard to passage B we can thus formulate a second puzzle:

Puzzle II: The claim that benevolent agents acting for the benefit of their friends or city community assign to themselves, by those very acts, the higher kind of good appears to indicate that such acts are in reality motivated by self-interest. This claim seems incompatible with Aristotle’s analysis of genuine friendship and civic virtue as based on other-regarding concern.

#### **4. Solution to puzzle II: The compatibility and connectedness of other-regarding and self-regarding concerns in the case of virtuous actions**

As I have set out in my introduction, it is by now a widely shared view that in Aristotle’s model of how a rational and virtuous person acts, there is no real conflict between altruistic and egoistic motivation, or self-love and other-regarding concern. I called this the *Compatibility Thesis* (CT). In my introduction I also remarked that Aristotle’s treatises on the singular virtues do not talk about the concern for others as a relevant element for virtuous action at all. So on the basis of those treatises one might doubt whether Aristotle was interested in any version of CT at all. Passage B, however, belongs to the treatise on friendship and talks about actions for the benefit of friends, and here at least we can expect Aristotle to come up with some version of CT, since other-regarding concern is constitutive for genuine friendship and should therefore also inform virtuous acts towards our friends.

Yet his argumentation in passage B seems to lead back into egoism, and that is the core of our second puzzle.

The whole issue is connected with certain value-theoretical assumptions that may be spelled out as follows:

- (1) There is objective intrinsic value, and human activities can instantiate such value.
- (2) Rational self-love aims at instantiating value in one's own life as a whole through activities with intrinsic value.
- (3) The class of activities that instantiate intrinsic value includes virtuous activities with a genuinely benevolent other-regarding intention.

Premiss (3) is the critical one for CT. The supporters of CT among the modern interpreters of Aristotle understand the other-regarding intention as a genuine concern for the other person. Yet it could be given a much weaker interpretation. Thus the exact moral implications of CT are far from clear. I want to illustrate that by introducing two possible interpretations of CT that stand, as it were, at opposite ends of a range of possibilities. (It is important to see that the act of entertaining a reason functions as a cause if the action is a rational one, i.e. the outcome of practical deliberation. This is at least the way Aristotle understands rational action.)

*Interpretation 1:* The dominant reason or rational cause for helping out a friend is that by doing so one's own life-performance is embellished. This attitude actually bears the danger that one starts looking for such opportunities and welcomes other people's misery in this perspective. But as long as that includes the acknowledgement that the beneficiaries of my actions are worthy objects of altruistic action and that this is the reason why helping them embellishes my life-performance, that attitude may still be seen as one way of spelling out CT. But of course such a person would be very self-centred.

*Interpretation 2:* The, so to speak, active cause of the action is one's wish to help. But one's awareness of the fact that this activity does not impair the integrity of one's own life (and on the contrary rather supports it) is also causally relevant since in the case of incompatibility with one's integrity there would be an overriding reason against such an action. In other words, the two causal factors would be combined so that one would operate analogously to a driving force, the other analogously to a stabilizing cause that prevents the interposition of a possible obstacle. The attitude of caring for the other person would indeed provide the driving motive, but the awareness of the fittingness of such a kind of action for one's overall life-performance would still be a causally relevant background factor. That

would be an elaboration of CT much more in line with the intuitions on moral motivation many of us today share.

So Aristotle's suggestion in passage B, that other-regarding virtuous actions do not conflict with reasonable self-love because they are valuable aspects of one's performance in life, can be developed in very different ways. At one pole, there is the narcissistic person who acknowledges the intrinsic value of certain other persons but views them just as beautiful and fitting elements in a world centred around him, and as suitable points of reference for his own wonderful exploits of virtue and generosity. At the other pole, there are those who are helpful and committed out of a genuine concern for others, though their rush into benevolent action would still be controlled by the concern for the integrity of their own lives.

Now, we should not expect Aristotle's 'virtuous man' (*spoudaios*), who is also a man of practical reason (*phronimos*), to fit right away into the picture evoked by *interpretation 2*. At least the treatises on *eudaimonia* and the highest human good, and also his treatises on 'greatness of soul' (*megalopsuchia*) and on *phronêsis*, let us expect that the integrity of one's life is more than just a background concern for the Aristotelian *phronimos*. But what I want to show is that the Aristotelian virtuous person is also not to be approximated to the type described in *interpretation 1*, although passage B might invite such a misunderstanding. Aristotle's conception of genuine friendship and of its great significance for a good life, and also his conception of civic virtue and justice, withstand such a narcissistic misunderstanding, and our task is to show why the argumentation in B is not inconsistent with genuine other-regarding concern.

It may seem inconsistent with it because he describes the generous acts to the benefit of friends or the courageous acts on behalf of the city as if they were a trade-off in which the giving party is always the winner. But the question Aristotle wants to answer here is whether there is a conflict *in principle* between self-regarding and other-regarding motivation. His answer is that there isn't.

One might raise the following objection, though: does not the fact that the virtuous person chooses to procure for the friend only an *external* good, not the higher good of some ethical *kalon*, show the element of latent egoism irreconcilable with altruistic motivation? But this objection fails. For it is not possible to hand over, as it were, an instance of the ethical *kalon*, because the ethical *kalon* is an internal good constituted by the right kind of motivation and corresponding *praxis*. It can come into being only through an agent's own decision-making and acting.

To be sure, the objection could be reformulated so that it refers to the *opportunity* for noble action: would not altruism require that the opportunity for such action be yielded

to the friend? Aristotle, anticipating this objection in passage B,<sup>34</sup> acknowledges that a virtuous person might do that but then points out that even so this person could not help getting the better part out of it because that act of yielding would be even nobler than the action the opportunity for which has been yielded to the friend.<sup>35</sup>

Because of that win-win situation, virtuous altruistic action and its corresponding motivation can harmonize with the concern for the value of one's own good life. The overridingness of self-love does not have to imply more than overridingness of the concern for the integrity of one's own life, but this integrity can never be vitiated by reasonable acts of altruism.

## **5. A possible solution for puzzle I: The motivation for community-related commitments from the viewpoint of the philosophical form of life**

How can it be that, in passage A, Aristotle excludes the achievements of virtue in politics and war from the class of activities undertaken for their own sake? Is that not utterly incompatible with his general theory of virtuous action and his remarks in passage B about the self-regarding benefits of virtuous altruistic actions?

There seem to be only two ways of saving Aristotle's consistency on such a very basic point. One way would be to interpret the crucial text (1177b18) as if Aristotle had said that one chooses political activity *not only* for its own sake.<sup>36</sup> But that is not what he says.

I therefore prefer to argue for the following solution: In 10.7, Aristotle describes the motivational situation from the point of view of a life devoted to philosophy. What reason could a philosopher have for engaging in politics or war? None, unless the situation forces him to do so. And when I speak of the situation forcing the philosopher into a certain kind of action to the benefit of the community, I do not have in mind some force exerted by the society on the philosopher. I mean rather something like the force of a moral obligation arising from a certain situation and exerting itself on a person who is endowed with the relevant ethical virtues.<sup>37</sup> Aristotle's philosopher has a moral identity as well: '...but insofar as he is a human being and living in the society of others, he chooses to engage in virtuous action' (1178b5–6). The standard case (in the Greek context) would be that the philosopher is a citizen of the city-state he lives in. Obviously, as citizen of an ancient Greek city, he would act unjustly if he tried to evade his obligation to serve the city in a war. The philosophers are supposed to have a good character and good practical judgement.<sup>38</sup> Living a life of human beings (*anthrôpeuesthai*, 1178b7) and hence embedded into social and political frameworks, they will not only exhibit justice, moderation etc. in their behaviour

toward others, but also commit themselves to politics or war if the circumstances demand it. But that will not be the purpose of their lives. Although they acknowledge the intrinsic value of such actions, they will not identify them as constituents of their own *eudaimonia*.<sup>39</sup> Therefore such actions, especially commitments in politics and war, would indeed be un leisured activities from their point of view, i.e. activities they are compelled to undertake as virtuous citizens in order to ensure some necessary external means and conditions of good human life not only for their own sakes, but also for the sake of the entire city community (cf. 1177b14).

For people who opted for a life that gains its value from the noble character of their political activities, the situation would be very different. To be sure, their own well-being and integrity would not be identical with that of the *polis*. But by making themselves useful to the *polis* they would, by the same token, also achieve their own ‘happiness’, not just by helping to create the right social conditions for good human life but by living a good life through those excellent activities. Being in a position of leisure, they would choose public engagements as their way of personal accomplishment. They would understand their activity as a form of *eu poiein* (doing good) causally benefiting the community, which at the same time, as a form of *kalê praxis* (noble activity), contributed to their own good life by constituting it. (Hence, in their case, those activities would belong in the upper class of D-2.)

This is the way the benefits of a life dedicated to public commitments will be described in 9.8. But in passage A (10.7) we are *not* supposed to see things from the point of view of that merely second-best form of life. Passage A describes the teleology of human activities from the point of view of those who search for and create the defining value of their lives in the pursuit of philosophical inquiry. For Aristotle, this life-form and its point of view is not just one option beside others. It is the choice of the best life a human being can accomplish because there is no more elevated activity than science and philosophy, as Aristotle tries to show by drawing on an ontological conception of value that singles out the theoretical intellect as the most valuable part in us, able to reach out for the most important and elevated objects (10.7–8, 1177b26–1178a23).

We know already why that does not imply that the philosophers’ behaviour toward others will be egoistic. One might even suggest that Aristotle’s philosophers can be more clearly altruistically motivated in their ethical behaviour. To be sure, the philosophers, if anyone, will be able to appreciate the intrinsic value that such actions have and can confer upon a life as a whole. But they won’t need that as a source of value for their own lives, because they have a life-form which is even better. Thus for people who seek value through ethical exploits, ethically valuable activities will always be an expression not only of their other-regarding concerns, but also of their self-love, while Aristotle’s virtuous philosophers

could act purely altruistically when the situation challenges them to perform such activities, performing them as a compelling human requirement, not as a constituent of their own *eudaimonia*.

There remains, however, a doubt regarding the consistency of this result with Aristotle's general theory of virtue. The development of a virtuous character includes the acquisition of a certain understanding of *negative* value, as part of the process of moral learning which is described by Aristotle in other contexts. The philosophers who are also just and courageous would, if they dodged some incontrovertible obligation toward their fellow citizens, knowingly harm their own personal value, and thus the value of their life-performance as a whole. It seems that this consideration, if pursued further, would lead toward a more inclusive understanding of *eudaimonia*.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> I will also translate *aretê* as 'virtue', at least in the case of the ethical *aretai* (excellent character dispositions), just to preserve the terminological continuity of 'virtue theories', which undoubtedly include the ancient philosophical theories of human *aretê*.

<sup>2</sup> A note on my usage of the terms 'intrinsic value' or 'inherent value': it will turn out that, in the Aristotelian conception, the value of an action which makes it desirable 'in itself' can include the reference to some desirable external consequences. The intrinsic value of an action *qua* virtuous action can hence supervene in some way on a set of properties that includes relational (extrinsic) properties.

<sup>3</sup> For acts to count as grounded on virtue, they have to be chosen 'because of what they are (*di'auta*): EN 2.4, 1105a32; 'for their own sakes (*autôn heneka*): 6.12, 1144a13–20; 'for the sake of what is *kalon* (*tou kalou heneka*)' or 'because (*hoti*) it is *kalon*': 3.7, 1115b10–15, 21–4; 8, 1116b2–3, 1117a16–17; 9, 1117b9; 11, 1119a18; 12, 1119b15–18; 4.1, 1120a23–5; 2, 1122b6–7. The passages in 3.7 and 4.2 emphasize that this is a mark of virtue in general (cf. also EE 3.1, 1230a26–33). An action's being just (*dikaion*) can likewise be treated as an intrinsically motivating quality from the point of view of the virtuous agent (e.g. EN 5.5, 1134a1–2); but this quality can also be subsumed under the *kalon* together with all the other virtue predicates (cf. 9.8, 1168b25–8). On '*kalon*' as naming the intrinsic value property of an action, not a consequence, compare e.g. Ross 1964: 204; Gauthier and Jolif 1970: vol. 2, ad 1115b12–13.

<sup>4</sup> The theory of the different aspects of the correctness of an emotional reaction, or a feeling of pleasure or pain, or an ensuing tendency to act is part of his theory of virtue as being and tracking some sort of mean between excess and deficiency in our reactions and actions (see EN 2.3, 1104b21–4; 2.6, 1106b21–2, 1107a4). He equates *to kalon* with *to deon*, i.e. ‘that which ought to be (felt or done)’, and with what is correct (*orthon*), or is grounded in or exhibits the right kind of logos (reason, reasoning, proportion). The *deon* or *hôs dei* can be spelled out in a list of different aspects of how it ought to be. The talk of *to deon* and its aspects occurs frequently in his analysis of the ethical virtues (e.g. 3.7, 1115b12–24; 11, 118b21–7, 1119a11–20; 12, 1119b15–19; 4.1, 1120a23–b4, 1121a1–4,a8–b12 et passim). An interesting attempt to further elaborate Aristotle’s conception of those aspects of correctness can be found in Müller 2004.

<sup>5</sup> EN 4.1, 1120a23–5, 27–9, 1121b3–5; cf. e.g. 3.7, 1115b12–13; 8, 1116b31, 1117a8; 3.12, 1119b16; 4.2, 1122b6–7, 1123a24–5.

<sup>6</sup> EN 3.7, 1116a11–15,b2–3; 8, 1116b2–3, 1117a17; 9, 1117b9; EE 3.1, 1230a31–2. These examples are from the treatise on courage, but 4.1, 1121b4–5 has the same implication; see also n. 3 above.

<sup>7</sup> EN 6.2, 1139b1–4; 4, 1140a2–6; 5, 1140b6–7; Pol. 1.4, 1254a5–8. In a phrase like *kala prattein* the grammatical object (*kala*) does not designate some external object or effect of the action, but the act done as something which is *kalon* (cf. Ebert 1976).

<sup>8</sup> See for instance Annas 1993: 260 (commenting on EN 9.8), ‘The agent acts out of self-concern, but where this is concern for oneself as a rational agent aiming at the fine, this will take the form of other-directed and moral action.’ For the related issue if the intrinsic desirability of an action (the quality that makes it an appropriate constituent of a valuable life) is compatible with genuine other-regarding concern, see also Brodie 1991: 422, ‘There is no difficulty in reconciling the assumption that the good person engages in the right or noble practical action just because it is noble or right, with the supposition that he seeks a result beyond his action; for it is the nature of practical action to be directed to getting something changed;’ Korsgaard 1996: 216, ‘If we take Aristotle to hold a double-aspect theory of motivation, however, there is no problem at all. ... It is the whole package – the action along with the purpose, sacrificing your life for the sake of your country – that is chosen for its own sake.’ For a more sceptical stance on the significance of other-regarding concern in Aristotle’s ethics cf. de Vogel 1985.

<sup>9</sup> The question of how genuine other-regarding concern fits into a theory of moral action as self-motivating can also be raised with regard to modern deontological theories in the Kantian vein. A once influential philosophical attack against the idea that moral action is self-motivating in view of its inherent rightness and value, claiming that this idea leads to a position of moral complacency, can be found in Scheler 1954:

49, 140–1 et seq. Today, the issue of how individual altruistic concern or caring fits into a general and abstract theory of moral rightness is often discussed by adherents of virtue ethics under the heading of the moral ‘schizophrenia’ which supposedly results from the disparity of real life motives based on caring and abstract moral reasoning, following Stocker 1976 (a perhaps not very successfully argued but often quoted paper).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. n. 33 below.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. 8.1, 1155a5–9; 13, 1162b6–8; 9.8, 1169a18–b2; 9, 1169b10–22; 11, 1171b12–25.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the casual remark in 4.1, 1122a11 and Gauthier and Jolif 1970: vol. 2, ad 1120a25–6.

<sup>13</sup> EN 2.1, 1103b2–6; 5.1, 1129b19–25; 2, 1130b22–9; 10.9, 1179b31–1180b28; Pol. 7.14, 1333a11–16, 8.1.

<sup>14</sup> In his discussion of the advantages of the institution of private property Aristotle affirms that the use or benefits of private property should be shared (Pol. 2.5, 1263a21–40). Those acts of having other people share in the benefits should not be prescribed by law but left to the owners’ virtue (this virtue obviously being generosity). However, the lawgiver should aim at educating the citizens accordingly (probably so as to foster concord and unity among the citizen body liable to disintegration through great inequalities in wealth). This is an important example of how generosity, though not directly prescribable by law, can and should be set up as an educational goal by the laws. For more details cf. Szaif 2005a: 54–7.

<sup>15</sup> I will consistently avoid translating *eudaimonia* as ‘happiness’ because that term tends to be understood as a name for a certain way of experiencing one’s own life or situation, and that is not implied in the meaning of the Greek term. Put in a nutshell, *eudaimonia* is the kind of life a sensible person would wish to be able to lead or enjoy. A hedonist would of course suggest that the good life is the life that feels good. But that is a specific theoretical viewpoint about the true nature of a good human life not yet implied in the meaning of the term *eudaimonia* as it is used by ancient philosophers.

<sup>16</sup> It is typical for Aristotle to contrast such activities as are necessitated and constrained (*anankaia*) with what is *kalon* and done for its own sake and at leisure: e.g. Pol. 4.4, 1291a17–18; 7.13, 1332a7–18; 14, 1333a30–6, a41–b3; 8.3, 1338a11–13, a30–32; EN 4.1, 1120b1; 8.1, 1155a28–9; 9.2, 1165a4; 10, 1171a24–6; see also Met. 5.5, 1015a20–6; Part. an. 1.1, 639b11–40a10.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Gauthier and Jolif 1970: vol. 2, ad 1177b1–4.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. 1.2, 1094a23–5; EE 1.2, 1214b6–11; 2.10, 1126b29–30; Pol. 7.2, 1324a32–5; 13, 1331b29–34.

<sup>19</sup> Today we often encounter the translation ‘complete’ for *teleios*. This is a possible translation for *teleios*, but it should not serve as the default translation because *teleios* in Greek, especially in an ethical context, has a strong evaluative connotation which gets lost when translated as ‘complete’. The traditional translation ‘perfect’ also has the advantage of being non-tendentious on the issue of the ‘dominant end’ or ‘inclusive end’ reading. The perfection of a life-form can be construed as the most inclusive or as the highest-ranking unfolding of valuable human capacities.

<sup>20</sup> The term ‘contemplation’ for *theôria* is not meant to designate some kind of mystical vision or religious meditation but rather the activity of entertaining thoughts about objects of philosophical and scientific knowledge accompanied by understanding (cf. Burnyeat 1981 about understanding). It is different from the activity of the researcher who is still trying to achieve complete understanding (cf. EN 10.7, 1177a26–7).

<sup>21</sup> The translations are after Ross 1984 and Rackham 1934. See also n. 15 above.

<sup>22</sup> To avoid such a consequence, Kraut 1989: 191–2 suggests a different mapping of D-2 onto D-3. He suggests that the lower class in D-2 comprises all the activities that are chosen *not only* for the sake of themselves. That would remove our problems with the argument in A-2. But it would not fit in with the way D-2 was introduced in EN 10.6, since there it was suggested that the upper class of D-2 could be identified with the class of activities grounded on or actualizing virtue (*hai kat’ aretên praxeis*). Moreover, it would only shift the problem to another place. Aristotle claims that the activities in the lower class of D-2 are necessitated (1176b3, cf. n. 16 above) and un leisured (1177b17–18). So in the end, we would not have to worry, maybe, about why he restricts the upper class to acts of contemplation, but instead we would have to explain why all other activities except contemplation are supposed to be un leisured and necessitated. That is not consistent with his standard doctrine either.

<sup>23</sup> Here I follow Rackham’s translation, which seems to me to catch the sense of this clause better than Ross’s.

<sup>24</sup> The ‘*ge*’ in this clause should be translated not as ‘at all events’, as Ross does, but as emphasizing that the disjunctive clause introduces an alternative (cf. LSJ art. γε, II.3.b). The sentence implies a distinction between two kinds of political activity and their different goals. First he mentions ‘positions of authority and honour’, secondly the well-being or *eudaimonia* of the agent and his fellow citizens. Politicians who see power and honour as their leading goal have not yet understood the true purpose of politics, as Aristotle

has pointed out in EN 1.5, while those committed to the true purpose of politics would desire positions of authority and honour only as a necessary means. Aristotle on the benefits of virtue

<sup>25</sup> This final clause, which Ross (more or less closely followed by the more recent translators of the *Nicomachean Ethics*) translates as ‘and evidently sought as something different’, can also be interpreted in a very different way as in Rackham (‘indeed we are clearly investigating it as so distinct’). Gauthier and Jolif 1970 see it as a doublet of the preceding clause and conjecture that it might derive from a second redaction by Aristotle’s own hand.

<sup>26</sup> He takes up not only the points (1) to(6) listed above but also the specific ‘seriousness’ of the contemplative activity, which harks back to the discussion of serious and playful pursuits in EN 10.6, 1176b9–1177a11.

<sup>27</sup> Compare e.g. EN 1.9, 1099a11–21; 2.3, 1104b3–13; 3.4, 1113a25–b2; 9.9, 1170a14–16; 10.5, 1176a10–22; EE 7.2, 1236b39–1237a2.

<sup>28</sup> These statements are independent from the position on the inclusive vs. dominant-end debate. Even the dominant-end version (which seems to be unequivocally asserted in EN 10, cf. Kenny 1992; Kraut 1989) needs to specify some specific kind of intrinsically valuable activity which constitutes a eudaimonic activity. Inclusiveness (cf. Lawrence 1997 on that) can mean that other valuable activities, namely the engagements of ethical virtue, are parts of *eudaimonia* (apparently the favoured point of view of the EE), or that even other types of goods are additional components of the structured aggregate of goods that somehow makes up a good life (e.g. enjoyment, cf. EN 10.4, or certain external social goods with more than instrumental significance, especially loved ones and the city community, cf. 1.8–10). Irrespective of the degree of ‘inclusiveness’ in the conception of *eudaimonia*, it cannot be doubted that intrinsically valuable activities (some or all) are the core of *eudaimonia* for Aristotle. On *eudaimonia* as ultimate purpose see e.g. EN 1.4, 1095a17–20; 7, 1097a33–b6, b20–1; 6.5, 1140a25–8; EE 1.7, 1217a20–2; Pol. 7.13, 1331b39–40; *eudaimonia* as constituted by intrinsically valuable activities but only aided by activities and goods with merely instrumental value: e.g. EE 1.2, 1214b11–27; EN 1.7, 1097b1–6; Pol. 7.8, 1328a21–5. A survey of Aristotle’s terminology, ethical teleology and epistemology of the human good and goods can be found in Szaif 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Pol. 1.2, 1252b27–30; 3.9, 1280b39–81a4; 7.1, 1323a14–21; EN 1.13, 1102a5–15; see also 2.1, 1103b2–5; 10.9; Pol. 7.13, 1332a28–b11.

<sup>30</sup> In the EE, it is very clearly affirmed that the politician who has the appropriate understanding of his life-form engages in noble activities (*kalai praxeis*) for their own sakes (1.5, 1216a24–6, cf. 1.4, 1215b3–4). EN 1.5 likewise hints at the idea that the right kind of political activity aims at being a practice of virtue (1095b26–1096a2).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Kraut 1989: 191.

<sup>32</sup> The ‘ought (*dei*)’ in this and the next clause is not strictly moral in the modern sense but relates to what the requirements of reasonableness in a given situation are.

<sup>33</sup> See EN 8.2, 1155b31; 3, 1156a6–19, 1156b7–12; 4, 1157a30–1,b3; 9.4, 1166a2–6; compare also Aristotle’s idea that the friend is for me ‘another (my)self’ (EE 7.12, 1245a29–30; EN 9.4, 1166a31–2; 9, 1169b6–7, 1170b6–7), meaning a similarity of attitude between one’s self-regarding concern and the concern for this specific other person (cf. 9.4, 1166a29–32; 9, 1170b5–7; 12, 1171b33–4). On the general character of the theory of perfect friendship and the meaning of the ‘other self’ formula cf. Price 1989: 103–30; Szaif 2005b: 37–56.

<sup>34</sup> EN 9.8, 1169a32–4: ‘It may even be the case that he gives up actions to his friend and that it is nobler for him to become the cause of his friend’s acting than to act himself.’

<sup>35</sup> Of course, the attempt to let the other do the action could be reciprocated as well, as when two people mutually try to let the other one pass through a doorway first, and in theory that would be the starting point of an infinite regress preventing the action from ever taking place. But in practice that does not seem to be a real problem.

<sup>36</sup> Kraut 1989: 190–2, for instance, interprets 1177b18 as if it stated that those actions were chosen not only because of themselves. But such an ‘only’ is not in the text (as Kraut acknowledges), and the way he wants to insert it into the implied meaning, namely through a different interpretation of the meaning of D-2, only shifts but does not solve the problem, as I have pointed out above (n. 22). Broadie 1991: 423 suggests that he is describing here not the attitude that ideally the politician should assume but ‘a divergent *de facto* attitude’, i.e. the attitude that real politicians happen to have. But Aristotle’s argumentation here is not about *de facto* politicians but about the status *in principle* of political activity, as the highest form of virtuous activity, in comparison to the philosophical life-form. Some interpreters (cf. D. Frede 1998: 280; Wolf 2002: 248–9) suggest that his assessment in this passage is based on a different understanding of *autarkeia* compared to that in EN 1.7. Yet it seems that the reference to *autarkeia* belongs to a different part of the argumentation in 10.7. The argument regarding the attributes (5) and (6) of *theōria* does not

depend on the understanding of *autarkeia*. Irwin's translation would avoid the problems, but it does not match with the unequivocal semantic import of the two crucial clauses in 1177b1–4 and b18 (cf. Kraut 1989: 90, n. 18).

<sup>37</sup> Wolf 2002: 246–53 also tries to explain the claim in 10.7 that political activity, even if virtuous, is not desirable in itself, as due to the fact that Aristotle is here assuming the perspective of the philosopher. Her position differs from mine, though, in that she suggests (referring to 1178b5–6) that philosophers would engage in politics to a limited extent only so as to preserve the political framework necessary for their own philosophical leisure (249–51), following Cooper 1975 to some extent. This would mean that their political commitments would be only self-serving. But I do not think that that would be a consistent position for Aristotle to hold. If Aristotle's philosophers, who are supposed to be endowed with the ethical virtues, perceive that there is a need for them to engage in the politics of their city, they will do so according to the teleology of right political action, because otherwise their ethical virtue and *phronêsis* would not be genuine. The inherent purpose of political activity and right attitude of someone who holds a public office is to serve justice and the common well-being (EN 5.6, 1134b1–8; 6.8, 1141b23–33; Pol. 3.12, 1282b14–18), and hence to help all citizens to realize the best life possible for them (Pol. 7.2, 1324a23–5).

<sup>38</sup> One may wonder why philosophers are supposed to have the ethical virtues and *phronêsis*. Can you not be a good philosopher without being a good fellow human and good citizen? There is a simple way for stating Aristotle's case based on EN 6.13. The philosopher's life with its focus on philosophy has to be organized by *phronêsis* (1145a6–11), because organizing a life is, by definition, the task of *phronêsis* (cf. 6.5). But *phronêsis* can only come in one package with all the character virtues (1144b30–45a2). – Yet this conclusion cannot be more convincing than its premisses. Why can *phronêsis*, as the rational foundation for leading any kind of really good life, be had only in a package with all the character virtues? Based on EN 6, especially 6.12–13, one can try to develop an answer by starting from the premiss that *phronêsis* can fulfil its task (i.e. provide a correct orientation for how to live a good life) only on the basis of a correct understanding of the objective values that matter for a human life, together with the ability to find out how, in the particular situations of one's life, those leading values can be realized or approximated. The second required premiss would be that this sort of understanding cannot fully develop and become operative without a congruent development of the character virtues that make the person *enjoy* the values realized by excellent activities. The unequivocal commitment to a life of philosophy and science (not for some extrinsic purposes) would depend on such a correct understanding of the significance and order of human values, aided by the right character development. As based on that kind of understanding, it would not only acknowledge the superiority of the objects and achievements of contemplation but also

the intrinsic value of ethical virtues (and by the same token acquire the characteristic motivational patterns that dispose one to moral behaviour).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Heinaman 1988: 51–3; Kenny 1992: 86–92. There are four combinatory possibilities here that have been covered by recent scholars (and I will mention just a few): Aristotle in book 10 might hold that the acts of ethical virtue either are a part of the *eudaimonia* of the philosopher (I), or are not (II); and he might take those acts to have value for the philosophers either *only* as a means to contemplative activity (A), or also intrinsically (B). I-A is supported by Keyt 1983 and Cooper 1987; I-B by Gauthier and Jolif 1970: vol. 2, 860–6; II-A by Kraut 1989: 23–7 et seq.; II-B by Heinaman 1988 and Kenny 1992, and also in this article.

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