

ARISTOTLE ON THE CHOICE OF LIVES: TWO CONCEPTS OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

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1. Aristotle's Inquiry on Lives

In Nicomachean Ethics I 5, Aristotle discusses four sorts of lives, giving special attention to the lives devoted to gratification, politics, and philosophical contemplation, and dismissing the one devoted to making money. On his account, those who live these different sorts of lives pursue manifestly different goals, and their different goals shape different evaluations of all of their actions, reactions, relations, and possessions. Hence, Aristotle simultaneously engages the traditional inquiry into which sort of life is best and extracts from that inquiry beliefs about what the goal of life (called eudaimonia)¹ should be. He first rejects pleasure, the goal suggested by the life of gratification (that is, the "apolaustic" (ἀπολαυστικός) life), and then he disdains honor and virtue, either of which might be pursued by the political life. But Aristotle's inquiry pulls up short. He considers only static conceptions of eudaimonia (pleasure, honor, virtue), and he explicitly postpones a discussion of the goal suggested by the contemplative life. Not until Nicomachean Ethics X 6-8 does Aristotle repair these defects. At this point he argues that the dynamic aim of the apolaustic life, pleasant activity, is not an appropriate goal for human beings, and he compares the activities central to the political life and the contemplative life.

The delay is awkward in two ways. First, it makes difficult any attempt to relate the traditional inquiry on lives (in I 5 and X 6-8) to Aristotle's own long and complicated discussion of the goal of life and the virtues required to pursue that goal (in I 7 through X 5). Is the bulk of the Nicomachean Ethics a discussion of the political life, or a discussion that is supposed to illuminate both the political and the contemplative lives? Second, the delay seems entirely unmotivated. Why should Aristotle not have immediately completed his inquiry into the preferred sorts of lives and their attendant conceptions of the human good?²

These questions have not been front and center in the many recent discussions of Nicomachean Ethics X 6-8. Most commentators have focused on whether Aristotle trades in one conception of eudaimonia (which includes multiple goods) for another conception of eudaimonia (which consists of one good).³ Others have worried that Aristotle's happy contemplator would be a bad man,⁴ ready to do nasty things for the sake of his contemplation or at least unwilling to fulfill the demands of ethical virtue when they threaten his contemplation.⁵ But no matter how these puzzles are solved, my queries linger. Let the conceptualization of eudaimonia be consistent from Book One to Book Ten. Let the philosophical life that is promoted in Book Ten be agreeably virtuous, consisting of a mixture of ethically virtuous activity and contemplative activity that differs only in emphasis from the political life that sprinkles some contemplation in with ethically virtuous activity. There is still awkwardness in the way that Aristotle touches on the traditional choice of lives, postpones his treatment of that choice, and then articulates a surprising position.

To focus attention on the questions I am asking, it helps to recall that the choice between different kinds of lives is a central topos in Greek ethical thought before and after Aristotle.⁶ In Plato's Apology, Socrates seeks to justify his philosophical life and his avoidance of politics, and

in the Gorgias, he attacks the pleasure-seeking life and attempts a persuasive redefinition of the political life. In the Republic, Plato creatively engages the traditional inquiry with his tripartite psychology: some are ruled by the rational part and live in pursuit of wisdom, some are ruled by the spirited part and live in pursuit of honor or victory, and some are ruled by the appetitive part and live in pursuit of bodily pleasures.⁷ After Aristotle, too, philosophers wrestled with the traditional inquiry. They mostly agreed to dismiss the money-making life,⁸ universally agreed to argue against the pleasure-seeking (ἀπολαυστικός) life,⁹ and sharply disagreed about the choice between politics and philosophy. Battle-lines were drawn between those who favored the political life, including Aristotle's pupil Dicaearchus and the Stoics, and those who favored the philosophical life, including Aristotle's pupil Theophrastus and the Epicureans.¹⁰ But the Nicomachean Ethics stakes a position on the traditional battlefield awkwardly, and my two questions push for an explanation of this.¹¹

I offer a partial explanation by demonstrating that an ambiguity in Aristotle's conceptualization of self-sufficiency fuels a dilemma between politics and philosophy.¹² For most of the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle restricts himself to what I will call a political conception of self-sufficiency and he consequently valorizes the political life, but in Nicomachean Ethics X 6-8, he switches to what I will call a solitary conception of self-sufficiency in order to promote the contemplative life. Because Aristotle sees self-sufficiency is a central criterion for happiness, his conflicted account of self-sufficiency renders problematic the choice of which life is happiest. I call this a partial explanation because I am well aware of other possible ways of explaining the awkwardness in Aristotle's discussion on lives. But I focus on this one because it is, as I will try to show, of live philosophical interest. The distinction between two concepts of self-sufficiency has so far escaped scrutiny, but it deserves reflection.¹³

I proceed in four steps. I first introduce Aristotle's awareness of the distinction between political and solitary kinds of self-sufficiency.¹⁴ Then, I show how Aristotle's discussion of the good human life through the bulk of the Nicomachean Ethics is an endorsement of the political life in terms of political self-sufficiency. Third, I demonstrate how Aristotle's late endorsement of contemplative eudaimonia is a preference for the philosophical life in terms of solitary self-sufficiency. I conclude by considering the philosophical significance of Aristotle's use of two concepts of self-sufficiency.

2. Two Concepts of Self-Sufficiency

Self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια) is a curious value, with two tendencies etymologically packed into it. On the one hand, self-sufficiency requires being an independent self (αὐτός), and on the other, it requires being sufficient or having enough (ἀρκέω). Hence, there seem to be two ways of becoming more self-sufficient. You might reduce your needs to the point at which you can procure them all by yourself, or you might just do lots of procuring, perhaps with others' help.

This dual tendency is amply displayed by two divergent passages in Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War. We see how self-sufficiency can suggest independence when Thucydides has the Corinthians call the Corcyraeans self-sufficient because of their freedom from entangling alliances (I 37.3). Corcyra—present-day Corfu—enjoys a self-sufficiency that is independence. But we see a very different sort of self-sufficiency on display in Pericles' funeral oration, which praises Athens as "a city equipped with everything and most self-sufficient for war and for peace" (II 36.3), a city where every man (ἄνδρα) is self-sufficient (II

41.1). Pericles cannot mean that Athens and Athenians entirely independent of alliances with other cities, for Athens is the seat of an empire.¹⁵

Aristotle displays awareness of the dual tendency of self-sufficiency in a crucial passage in the Nicomachean Ethics where self-sufficiency is invoked as a primary criterion for the human good, eudaimonia. After arguing that eudaimonia seems to be complete or final (τέλειον) because it is never sought for the sake of anything else, Aristotle says,

The same thing seems to follow from a consideration of self-sufficiency, also, for the complete or final good seems to be self-sufficient. We mean the self-sufficient not for someone who is alone, living a solitary life, but also in relation to his parents, children, wife, and, in general, his friends and fellow-citizens, since a human being is by nature a political animal. [...] The self-sufficient we define as that which when alone makes life choiceworthy and lacking in nothing; and such we think eudaimonia to be.¹⁶

Aristotle offers a single, straightforward definition: the self-sufficient is that which makes life choiceworthy and lacking in nothing.¹⁷ But he clearly recognizes that there are two different ways of needing nothing. On the one hand, one might be able to procure by oneself all that one needs. One would be independent in this way if the following three conditions were met: (1) one has the abilities to procure certain needed resources; (2) one does not need any amount of any resource so large as to require help from others; and (3) one does not need any amount whatsoever of those resources, like political power or friendship, which inherently require others. I will call the independence that satisfies these three conditions solitary self-sufficiency. So understood, solitary self-sufficiency does not require that one live apart from all other human beings. It just requires that one does not need any help from those human beings with whom one

is living, and in this way, it is the self-sufficiency fit for someone who is alone. Aristotle recognizes the possibility of solitary self-sufficiency by rejecting it. We are not to consider solitary self-sufficiency because human beings are political animals. Apparently, political animals need amounts and kinds of resources that violate requirements (2) and (3) of solitary self-sufficiency. Because Aristotle associates the sufficiency of these resources with the fact that human beings are political animals, I call it political self-sufficiency. Later, I will return to the claim that human beings are political animals, in order to show why the broad sort of self-sufficiency deserves to be called especially political. For now, I note that although political self-sufficiency, like solitary self-sufficiency, requires having everything one needs, it is unlike solitary self-sufficiency in that it needs some resources that require others' help for procurement or enjoyment.

Three simple facts about this passage should be clear. First, Aristotle thinks that self-sufficiency is an important value and a criterion for determining what eudaimonia is.¹⁸ Second, Aristotle distinguishes between two concepts or kinds of self-sufficiency.¹⁹ Third, Aristotle announces that solitary self-sufficiency is irrelevant to his inquiry in the Nicomachean Ethics. The first two points set up the remarkable developments in Book Ten that I will discuss in section four. The third suggests that the bulk of the Nicomachean Ethics will assume political self-sufficiency; the next section will confirm this suggestion.

3. Political Self-Sufficiency and the Political Life

3.1 Political Self-Sufficiency

Two crucial passages in the middle of Nicomachean Ethics appeal to self-sufficiency. I will argue first that these passages make appeal to political self-sufficiency. Then I will argue that the life imagined in these passages is a specifically political life.

The first crucial passage occurs in Nicomachean Ethics IV 3, where Aristotle paints his picture of the "magnanimous" or "great-souled" (μεγαλόψυχος) man. The magnanimous man can seem a buffoon to modern eyes: he is suitably impressed by his virtuousness (1123b1-2), and is never really impressed by anything else (1125a2-3); he is ashamed to receive benefits, and always repays more than he has received (1124b9-11); and he is fixated on honors and dishonors (1124a4-5). But we would be making a serious error if we were to marginalize Aristotle's account of magnanimity. He insists that the magnanimous man actively embodies all the ethical virtues (1123b26-30, 1124a1-2). Strictly speaking, any good man (ἀγαθός) will exhibit all the ethical virtues because any good man will be practically wise (φρόνιμος) (1145a1-2). So Aristotle's explicit insistence that magnanimity entails all of the other virtues would seem to tie this virtue's to the others especially tightly, rather as "general justice" is the virtue in which all the virtues are summed up (1129b29-30, 1130a8-9).

Among his many remarkable characteristics, Aristotle's great-souled man is obviously wealthy, as he makes large repayments, does grand actions, and displays liberality and magnificence. Aristotle in fact gives us a clear idea of how much wealth the great-souled man has by capping off his characterization thus: "And he is the sort to have beautiful and unprofitable things rather than profitable and useful things, for this is more appropriate for a self-

sufficient man" (1125a11-12). The great-souled man has so little need for useful things that he indulges in beautiful things for their own sake. And this expresses his self-sufficiency! Aristotle does not explicitly say that the great-souled man has more than he could get without the help of other human beings, but it does not seem too much speculation to suppose that he does. Even if this supposition were doubted, the great-souled man cannot express his magnanimity unless there are other people around. His activity as a great-souled man requires other people. The great-souled man's self-sufficiency is thus not solitary self-sufficiency; it is political self-sufficiency.

The second passage to consider focuses not on one of the central ethical virtues but on the central relation of friendship (1169b3-10):

It is also disputed concerning the happy [εὐδαίμονα] man, whether he needs friends or not. For they say that there is no need of friends for the happy [μακαρίοις]²⁰ and self-sufficient, for these people have the good things, and therefore, being self-sufficient, they need nothing more, while a friend, being another person, provides the things which he [the self-sufficient person] is unable to provide himself; from this comes the saying, "When the divinity (δαίμων) gives well, what need is there of friends?" But it seems strange for them to be assigning all good things to the happy (εὐδαίμονι) man, and yet not to give him friends, which seem to be the greatest of external goods.

Still assuming the connection between eudaimonia and self-sufficiency, Aristotle returns to the distinction between solitary self-sufficiency and political self-sufficiency. Some people, in calling a man happy and self-sufficient, obviously have solitary self-sufficiency in mind, for they think that this man would simply have enough resources and would have no need of friends for other resources and no need of friends as resources. But here again Aristotle rebuffs the idea of

solitary self-sufficiency in favor of political self-sufficiency. He even links his appeal to political self-sufficiency with the idea that humans are political, for he adds, "Surely it is strange, too, to make the blessed man solitary; for no one would choose to possess all good things by himself, since the human being is a political animal and naturally constituted to live with others" (1169b16-19).

On the basis of these two passages, we should be inclined to conclude that the virtuous person described in the bulk of the Nicomachean Ethics enjoys what I have called political self-sufficiency. He has more resources than he could get or would need alone, and he has certain kinds of resources, like friends, which directly require (are!) people. But we should not yet be inclined to conclude that Aristotle considers this virtuous life to be a specifically political life.

3.2 Privileging the Political Life

Two passages in the Nicomachean Ethics begin to suggest this, however, for they both claim that the human good and the end of politics are the same thing and they both assert that at least the best pursuits of ethical virtue will be politically engaged pursuits. In the second chapter, Aristotle argues that the science which aims at the chief human good is political science (ἡ πολιτική), because political science determines which other sciences ought to be studied, is superior to even generalship and other important sciences, makes use of other sciences, and legislates what ought to be done (1094a26-b7). Then Aristotle explains, "For if the human good is the same for an individual and for a city, it appears better and more complete to achieve and preserve the good of the city, for while it is not to be scorned even for an individual alone, it is more noble and divine for a people and cities" (1094b7-10).²¹ In other words, the very best sort

of life is a life devoted to pursuing the good for the city; it is an engaged, political life. A more private life devoted to pursuing the good for oneself is "not to be scorned," but it is not the best life of its kind. When we come to consider the good life as a life of ethically virtuous activity, then, we should realise that the best life of ethically virtuous activity is devoted to fostering ethically virtuous activity for the city as a whole; it is a fully political life.

In chapter eight of Book Six, Aristotle gives us further reason. First, he asserts that practical wisdom (*φρόνησις*) and political science are the same state, although different in being.²² His point seems to be that political science and practical wisdom are in fact inseparable, but in definition distinct: the same state of the soul constitutes both political science and practical wisdom, but political science is defined by its concern for the *eudaimonia* of the whole city whereas practical wisdom is defined by its concern for one's own *eudaimonia*. Aristotle accordingly criticizes those who restrict the label 'practical wisdom' to what is concerned with the individual himself, and ignore its other parts, household management, lawgiving, and politics proper, which consists of deliberation and judging (1141b29-33). Although it is possible to call a person who is focused privately on his own *eudaimonia* practically wise, Aristotle believes that those displaying full practical wisdom are politically engaged.

These two passages seem to say only that the political life is an exceptional development of the ethically virtuous life, and not that the political life is a necessary development of the ethically virtuous life. But on Aristotle's view, the self-sufficiency that characterizes the ethically virtuous life is supposed to be the self-sufficiency that befits a political animal (1097b8-11; cf. 1169b3-19), and this might suggest the stronger thesis. In order to complete our account of how political sufficiency relates to the life of ethically virtuous activity, we need to know what Aristotle means by saying that humans are by nature political animals.

3.3 Requiring the Political Life

What does Aristotle mean by this oft-repeated claim?²³ Sometimes Aristotle uses the phrase simply to say that humans desire to live with other humans (e.g., 1169b18-19 and Pol 1278b19). But this is not all the claim amounts to, for in his zoological researches (Historia Animalium), Aristotle explicitly contrasts political animals with other "herding [ἀγελαῖα]" animals on the grounds that the political animals "have some one common task [ἔργον] in view" (Hist. An. 488a7-9).²⁴ Even this conception is too general, for it embraces bees as well as human beings, and does not explain Aristotle's insistence in Politics I 2 that human beings are political more than bees or any herd-animal (1253a7-9). In the main passage of the Politics, our question becomes, what, specifically, does Aristotle mean when he says that human beings are political (and more political than bees)?

To answer this question and thereby shed light on the Nicomachean Ethics' connection between political self-sufficiency and ethically virtuous activity, I offer the following three-step analysis.²⁵ First, because Aristotle explains that a thing's nature is identified by its goal or end (Pol I 2 1252b32-4), his claim that human nature is political means that the goal of human life is political. Second, I hypothesize, 'the human end is political' means that the human end is realized by living as a part of the polis. Third, since living as a part of the polis (and not merely in a polis) requires being a citizen of the polis, Aristotle's dictum that humans are by nature political means that the human end is realized by living as a citizen of a polis. If my hypothesis is correct, then Aristotle thinks that political activity is essential to the politically self-sufficient life of ethically virtuous activity.

To justify my hypothesis and to fill in the analysis, I will look more closely at how Aristotle argues for his claim that the human being is naturally political. This requires an examination of the full chapter in which Aristotle develops three interrelated theses: (1) that the polis exists by nature (1252b30, 1253a2); (2) that a human being is by nature a political animal (1253a2-3); and (3) that the polis is by nature prior to the family and the individual (1253a19).

The first thesis, that the polis exists by nature, can seem especially odd. Standardly, Aristotle marks a sharp contrast between things that come into being naturally and things that come into being by artifice. Given this contrast and the obvious fact that human work makes a polis come into being, Aristotle should deny that the polis exists by nature.²⁶ But in fact Aristotle believes that the polis is an exceptional project. The work humans do in order to bring a polis into being is not like the work that they do to create a house. Bringing a polis into being is required to constitute the activities of living well, which is not the case for any dwelling (which is at best a necessary condition for living well).

That is why Aristotle introduces and justifies his claim that the polis is natural by spinning a genealogical tale of how various communities are established by human beings for the fulfillment of their nature or end.²⁷ The smallest community, the household, fulfills the human pursuit of everyday existence and procreation. A community of households—that is, a "village"—fulfills the human pursuit of more than everyday goods. Finally, the largest community, the polis, is created for reasons Aristotle does not state (on which more below), and is sustained because it fulfills the human pursuit of self-sufficiency (Pol 1252b27-30):

The perfect or complete [τέλειος] community [formed] out of several villages is a polis, which immediately has the limit of total self-sufficiency, so to speak; while it comes to be for the sake of living, it is for the sake of living well.

Immediately, Aristotle concludes that the polis is a natural community (Pol 1252b30-1253a1):

Thus, every polis exists by nature, since the prior communities also exist by nature. For it [viz., the polis] is their end, and nature is an end. For whatever sort of thing each is when its coming-to-be is completed, that we say is its nature, as it is for a human, a horse, or a family. Further, the "that for the sake of which" and the end are best, and self-sufficiency is both the end and best.

Every small community exists for the sake of the polis, the polis exists for the sake of self-sufficiency, and self-sufficiency is the goal of human beings. Aristotle belabors these relations because he needs us to see that human communities are not products like a house, but are creations implicated directly in the perfection of human nature.

If the genealogical account succeeds, it establishes not only that the polis exists by nature but also that the human being realizes his goal only in the polis. Aristotle recognizes this clearly, in the words that immediately follow those just quoted (Pol 1253a1-3, emphasis added): "From these things, then, it is apparent that the polis is one of those things that exist by nature and that the human being is by nature a political animal." In other words, Aristotle concludes that the human pursuit of self-sufficiency, detailed in the genealogical account, explains the naturalness of the polis and the political nature of human beings.²⁸

So what does Aristotle mean by the claim that humans are naturally political? He immediately clarifies by adding, "And he who is without a polis by nature and not by chance is either wretched or better than human" (1253a3-4). He apparently allows that one can live as a human being without a city in unlucky circumstances: the destruction of one's city in war, for example, does not immediately render one sub- or superhuman. But he insists that if one does not locate one's good in a city, then one is a beast or a god.²⁹

This is already close to my hypothesis, according to which 'humans are political' means that humans realize their end only as parts of the polis, but there is a difference between living in a polis and living as a part of a polis.³⁰ Still, Aristotle is not done yet. He has some more explaining to do for the first two theses, and he has a third thesis to introduce.

Aristotle has argued that living well requires living in a polis and not merely in a village, but he has not said why. This question requires an answer, because a village offers a supply of more than everyday goods.³¹ What does a polis have that a village lacks? Instead of addressing this question directly, Aristotle introduces a distinction between the way in which some non-human animals are political and the way in which humans are political (Pol 1253a7-18):

That the human being is a political animal more than any bee or any herd-animal is clear. For, as we say, nature does nothing in vain, and the human being alone among the animals has speech. Whereas voice is a sign of the painful and the pleasant, and for that reason belongs to the other animals (for their nature has grasped just up to this point, to having perception of the painful and the pleasant and to giving signs of these perceptions to each other), speech is for making clear the beneficial and the harmful, and so also the just and the unjust. For this is particular to humans in relation to the other animals, that humans alone have perception of the good and the bad, the just and the unjust, etc. And community of these things makes a household and a polis.

Some non-human animals, like bees, are political in some sense, because they can cooperate toward some end in view. But only humans can communicate what is good and bad, right and wrong. The non-human animals like bees can share at most some reports of what is favorable or

unfavorable, and in doing this, they are merely giving voice to pleasure and pain, not articulating what is good and bad, right and wrong.

At first blush, this does not explain what a polis has that a village lacks. After all, every human community—every household, village, and polis—is constituted by shared ethical evaluations. Nevertheless, the considerations Aristotle introduces to distinguish between humans and bees do allow us to answer the question concerning his distinction between the polis and the village. For there is a difference in the ways in which ethical evaluations are shared in the various human communities. The polis has public institutions fully and exclusively committed to articulating and shared standards of ethical evaluation, especially concerning justice (cf. 1253a37-39). On this view, the bare existence of shared evaluations is not enough. Only the special sharing of the evaluations through public institutions committed to making the evaluations explicit explains the difference between the polis and the best "pre-political" communities.

But if this is the right way to see Aristotle's distinction between the polis and the village, then a polis offers special value by offering a special sharing of ethical evaluations through public institutions, and no human being would realize the value of this sharing without being a part of it. That is, a human being realizes his end not merely by being in a polis but by being a part of a polis. But this is the hypothesis I introduced to explain Aristotle's claim that humans are naturally political. My hypothesis emerges from the attempt to explain the distinction between a village and a polis and thereby complete Aristotle's argument for the claims that the polis is natural and humans are naturally political.

One might reject this support for my hypothesis, and seek another account of Aristotle's distinction between the village and the polis.³² But Aristotle still has his third thesis in Politics I

2, and this gives excellent support to my hypothesis. Immediately after discussing the importance of community standards, Aristotle says, "The polis is by nature prior to the household and to each of us, for the whole is necessarily prior to the part" (1253a18-20). In other words, Aristotle is inferring his third thesis, that

The polis is by nature prior to the individual human being
from a general axiom concerning wholes and parts, that

The whole is prior to each of its parts.

But of course, this inference fails unless Aristotle can take as established that

The individual human being is by nature a part of the polis.

So the articulation of the third thesis depends upon the exact claim that I have supposed is crucial to Aristotle's argument for his first two theses. That is why he backs up his third thesis by repeating a point he made in articulating the first two theses: any human being who (by nature) does not live as a part of the polis is either less than human or more than human (Pol I 2 1253a27-29; 'by nature' added in light of 1253a2-4, quoted above). Whatever else we should say about Aristotle's priority thesis, it depends upon his view that humans fully realize their political nature only as parts of a polis.³³

Thus, according to Aristotle's only full discussion of the specific claim that humans are naturally political, the goal of human life—self-sufficiency—is fully realized only by those living as parts of a polis, in a politically engaged life. The elaborate connection between (political) self-sufficiency and the political nature of human beings in Politics I 2 illuminates the Nicomachean Ethics' simple assertion that the human good is politically self-sufficient because humans are naturally political. The argument of Politics I 2 also supports the view that the Nicomachean Ethics' ethically virtuous activities especially characterize the political life.

Indeed, it encourages us to attribute to Aristotle the belief that a life of ethically virtuous activity requires political engagement.³⁴ On these grounds, we should respond to the first question that I originally posed by saying that the life described in the bulk of the Nicomachean Ethics is a political life. We can now turn to the second question, concerning the awkwardness in Aristotle's comparison of the political and philosophical lives.

4. Solitary Self-Sufficiency and the Philosophical Life

To explain this awkwardness, we need to note two facts about Nicomachean Ethics X 7-8. First, in these chapters Aristotle claims that the philosophical life and its central activity of contemplation are even more valuable than the political life and its central activity of ethically virtuous activity. Second, the delayed promotion of the contemplative ideal is accompanied by a flip-flop concerning self-sufficiency. Although Aristotle has for the bulk of the Nicomachean Ethics assumed that solitary self-sufficiency is an inappropriate value for human beings—it is either less than human or more than human, of either a beast or a god—his elevation of the philosophical life depends upon the acceptance of solitary self-sufficiency as a criterion of the best human activity.³⁵

Two passages in Book Ten establish these facts. The first passage is in the middle of Aristotle's comparison of contemplative activity with ethically virtuous activity in chapter seven. He invokes six criteria, the fourth of which is self-sufficiency (1177a27-b1):³⁶

The self-sufficiency which is spoken of applies most of all to contemplative activity. For while the wise man, the just man, and the rest need the necessities for living, of those who have been equipped enough with such things, the just man

needs people towards whom and with whom he can do just things, and likewise for the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others, but the wise man is able to contemplate even by himself, and the better the wiser he is, and although he might do better if he has others sharing in the contemplation [συνεργούς], still he is the most self-sufficient.

Aristotle is clearly discussing different types of lives, characterized by different central activities. First, he says that no one is permanently self-sufficient with regard to the necessities, invoking that lowly self-sufficiency mentioned in the Politics. This point aside, of those who have the necessities, there is a big difference between those whose lives focus primarily on ethically virtuous activity and those whose lives focus primarily on contemplative activity. The former are dependent for their primary activity on other people towards whom and with whom to do ethically virtuous activities. The contemplator, on the other hand, in his act of contemplating does not need others. Then Aristotle calls the contemplator more self-sufficient, simply because he has less need of other people. The only self-sufficiency that could license this conclusion is the solitary kind. Contemplative activity meets the third condition of solitary self-sufficiency of having no need of those external resources that intrinsically depend on other people while ethically virtuous activity fails to meet this condition.

There is a second passage comparing contemplation and ethically virtuous activity with regard to self-sufficiency. In the next chapter, Aristotle makes the comparison not with respect to other people, but with respect to external resources (1178a23-30, 32-33, b3-5):

It would seem that it [viz., the excellence of νοῦς] needs external goods just a little, or less than ethical excellence. Let's assume that the need for necessities is the same for both, even if the political man does more work concerning the body

and things of that sort, for it differs just a little. But it will differ a lot for their activities. For the liberal man will need money for doing liberal deeds, and so, too, will the just man for paybacks [...] and the brave man will need power, if he is to achieve anything in accordance with his excellence. [...] But for the contemplator, there will be no need of such things for his activity, but they are, so to speak, an impediment to contemplation.

Here, Aristotle again says that both the contemplator and the ethically virtuous person are dependent on the necessities of life.³⁷ But again Aristotle is concerned to show that the contemplator needs less in general. He says that the contemplator needs no external goods for his contemplation while the ethically virtuous person does need external goods for his ethically virtuous activity. Contemplative activity clearly meets the second condition of solitary self-sufficiency, of not needing so many external resources that help from others will be required, and the sharp contrast drawn between the contemplator and the virtuous agent suggests that the virtuous agent does not meet this second condition. Once again, contemplative activity can be called more self-sufficient because it is solitarily self-sufficient while ethically virtuous activity is not.

It is important to realize that although Aristotle is invoking solitary self-sufficiency to explain why contemplative activity is best, and why the life that is centrally concerned with contemplative activity is better than the life that is centrally concerned with ethically virtuous activity, Aristotle is not saying that it is best to live as a hermit. In fact, Aristotle despises the idea of an entirely solitary life (IX 9 1170a4-7). Although he uses solitary self-sufficiency to characterize the central activity of the best life, he cannot use it to characterize the whole of that life, for two reasons. First, for all I have said, the happiness of the philosopher may include or at least require more than just contemplative activity, and these other constituents of his happiness

may require the support or at least presence of other people. And second, even if the happiness of the philosopher consists exclusively in contemplative activity, there is reason to believe that the philosopher, being human and thus being unable to contemplate all the time, will require other people for certain non-contemplative facets of his life. He will not be, for example, self-sufficient with regard to the necessities.³⁸

These caveats entered, what makes the philosopher's life better than the active citizen's life is that the philosopher's central activity of contemplating is more self-sufficient than the citizen's central activities. This is a startling development. The active citizen's life is more politically self-sufficient than the philosopher—contemplative activity lacks several of the goods intrinsic to political self-sufficiency—and Aristotle might therefore have continued to insist that the active citizen's life is best. But he does not. In Book Ten, Aristotle decides that solitary self-sufficiency is more self-sufficient than political self-sufficiency. The difficult choice between the philosophical life and the political life plays out a tension between conceptions of self-sufficiency.³⁹

5. Conclusion

I have argued that Aristotle's attempt to be true to two concepts of self-sufficiency contributes to the awkward way in which he treats the choice between the political and the philosophical lives. For most of the Nicomachean Ethics, he marginalizes one conception of self-sufficiency while valorizing the political life, and in Book Ten, he appeals to another conception of self-sufficiency in order to valorize the philosophical life. Even if there is no conflict between EN I and EN X on the conceptualization of eudaimonia, and even if the

political and philosophical lives both include ethically virtuous activity and contemplative activity, still there is a manifest awkwardness in the comparison of the political and philosophical lives, and still that awkwardness can be explained by reference to an uncertainty about whether one should make valorize above all activity that is solitarily self-sufficient instead of activity that is politically self-sufficient.

This is not the only way to explain the awkwardness of Aristotle's discussion on lives in the Nicomachean Ethics. We might refer to two different phases of Aristotle's thinking or two different stages of his development: perhaps he wrote Nicomachean Ethics X 6-8 as a young Platonist or at least in a Platonist mood, while the bulk of the Ethics was written in a more properly Aristotelian spirit.⁴⁰ Or we might prefer to explain the awkwardness by reference to an unsteady conception of what a human being really is. For most of the Nicomachean Ethics, on this view, Aristotle sees human beings as complex beings, whereas in X 6-8, he opts for a view of human beings in terms of intellect especially (cf. 1178a6-7).⁴¹ These alternative explanations might be true. But if they are the only true explanations, then so much the worse for Aristotle's problem concerning the philosophical and political lives. For why should Aristotle have been stuck in a Platonist mood, and why should he have entertained the thought that a human is most of all his intellect? The alternative explanations leave Aristotle's problem seeming quite remote from us.

The tension between two concepts of self-sufficiency, by contrast, does not go away. It is not tied to any particular historical context or to any metaphysical mode of thought. It should have some interest to anyone who is tempted to think that self-sufficiency is a value. It should have even more significance to those who are, like Aristotle, tempted to think that self-sufficiency is a good that can guide our deliberation about other goods. The trouble for this

thought is that self-sufficiency is not a simple value. Perhaps this means that even self-sufficiency is itself subject to deliberation.⁴² Or perhaps it means that our commitment to one concept of self-sufficiency over another reflects a brute choice we have made (or a deep psychological fact about us).⁴³ Either way, the appeal to self-sufficiency by itself seems to do less work than we might have supposed. Puzzles lurk where Aristotle had trouble straightforwardly engaging a traditional inquiry.

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Notes

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- ¹ I treat this transliteration of εὐδαιμονία as an English word, and I also occasionally render it 'happiness' or 'human flourishing'. All of these should be understood as terms of art for an objectively flourishing human life, which is the universally recognized goal (EN I 4 1095a17-20). All parenthetical citations to the Nicomachean Ethics ('EN' where specification is needed) are to the text of Bywater (1894), and all translations are mine.
- ² I have been told that some people do not find these questions puzzling and do not find the delay awkward in any way. These people should not give up reading: sometimes an explanans illuminates even where one did not recognize an explanandum.
- ³ The most influential statement of this problem is Ackrill (1974/1980). See also Cooper (1975). Among the many who think that both passages can be made to fit the "inclusivist" model are (born-again) Cooper (1987-1999), Depew (1991), Keyt (1978/1983), and Whiting

(1986). Kraut (1989) and Lear (2004) provide the fullest "monist" interpretations. Among those who at least try to step outside the usual dichotomy, see Broadie (1991), Charles (1999), Crisp (1994), Korsgaard (1986), and Roche (1988).

- ⁴ I do not use gender-neutral language to describe Aristotle's theory because Aristotle's theory is very far from being gender-neutral. For Aristotle's view of women, see especially Politics I 13, and for defense of the policy I have adopted, see Kleingeld (1993).
- ⁵ Many have noted this apparent implication of EN X 7-8; see especially Adkins (1978). Broadly similar attempts to solve the problem can be found in Broadie (1991), Charles (1999), Cooper (1987/1999), Depew (1991), Keyt (1978/1983), and Whiting (1986). Unique solutions are proffered by Kraut (1989) and Lawrence (1993).
- ⁶ The fullest discussion of the traditional inquiry is Joly (1956), but his conclusions frequently deserve to be contested, as on Pythagoras (cf. Burkert (1960) and Gottschalk (1980), 23-36), Chrysippus (cf. Brown (2006), chp. 7), and Seneca (cf. Griffin (1976), chp. 10). Some recent treatments of EN X 7-8 have the effect of entirely severing Aristotle's treatment from the traditional inquiry. See especially the construal of the word 'life [βίος]' as a mere facet of a life by Keyt (1978/1983), 372-374, and (1989), and contrast Cooper (1975), 159-160, and (1987/1999), 229-231n14.
- ⁷ See especially Republic 580d3-581c5, and compare the slightly different classification at Phaedo 68bc. Plato's analysis constitutes a creative engagement because he sees these three categories of persons as exhaustive of all human lives, and not as three lives among many. Aristotle and the broader tradition would recognize the life of the artisan, for example, as

something distinct from the apolaustic, political, and philosophical lives, whereas Plato would count him among money-lovers.

- ⁸ Stoics such as Chrysippus do not dismiss money-making. See, e.g., the reports in Plutarch, Stoic. rep. 1047f and Diogenes Laertius VII 188-189.
- ⁹ It may seem surprising that the Epicureans would join in such agreement, but Epicurus' account of pleasure as the absence of pain (e. g., Ep. Men. 131) is unfriendly to the apolaustic's pursuit of bodily pleasure.
- ¹⁰ The dispute between Dicaearchus and Theophrastus is recorded by, e.g., Cicero, Att II 16.3. For discussion, see Jaeger (1928/1948). The Stoics hold that the sage participates in politics if nothing prevents him (e.g., DL VII 120), but this endorsement of politics is offered for different reasons by different Stoics, and with varying degrees of commitment to philosophy alongside politics: see Brown (2006), esp. chps. 7 and 9. Epicurus' view is represented as the flip-side of the Stoic doctrine: the sage avoids politics if nothing prevents him. This view rejects the political life (SV 58; DL X 119, citing Epicurus' On Lives; Seneca, Otio 3.2) in favor of the philosophical life (Ep. Men. 122ff.; KD 11-13; SV 27, 41, 54; Sextus, M 11.169).
- ¹¹ Bostock (2000) comes close to calling for the kind of inquiry I am making. He suggests that recent scholars have fussed about the tension in the conceptualization of eudaimonia more than they ought (201), he argues that those who worry about evil contemplators address concerns that escaped Aristotle's notice (203-209), and he encourages attention to Aristotle's discussion in the framework of the traditional inquiry on lives. But Bostock does not pursue this kind of inquiry.

- ¹² I am here concerned exclusively with questions internal to the Nicomachean Ethics, and I discuss other texts only to fill out its claims. It is worth noting, however, that readers frequently find awkwardness in the discussions on lives in the Politics and Eudemian Ethics. At Politics VII 2-3, Aristotle leaves entirely unclear whether the political or philosophical life is superior (cf. Irwin (1990), 79-80). And in the Eudemian Ethics, Aristotle promises a fuller discussion (at 1216a37), but leaves the promise unfulfilled. The argument for a mixed life in the Eudemian Ethics seems "disappointingly abstract" (Cooper (1975), 145; cf. Broadie (1991), 388), and the argument for including contemplation is "abrupt and dogmatic" in comparison with the Nicomachean version (Broadie (1991), 389).
- ¹³ The general tension I am after has been found in a Socratic context by Irwin (1995), 33, and the possibility of it in Aristotle has at least been noted by some scholars, including Bostock (2000), 24n42, Broadie (1991), 52-53, Crisp (1994), 112n5, Curzer (1990), 424, Kraut (1989), 299n28, Lear (2004), 175-176n1, Nussbaum (1986), 376, and Richardson (1994), 211-218. But the tension between the two concepts (or conceptions) of self-sufficiency in Aristotle's work has not been explored. The helpful discussions of Aristotelian self-sufficiency in Adkins (1978) and Depew (1991) offer no suggestion of the tension I am after. Most discussions of Aristotelian self-sufficiency are at cross-purposes with my project. Many (e.g., Heinaman (1988)) concern the narrow question of whether the invocation of self-sufficiency in EN I 7 favors an inclusivist conception of eudaimonia. Some (e.g., Mayhew (1997a), 37-58, drawing on Meikle (1995), 44-45) focus on a narrowly economic interpretation of self-sufficiency. One (Cole (1988-9)) has tried, I think unpersuasively, to identify Aristotelian self-sufficiency with the modern notion of autonomy.

- ¹⁴ It will be noticed that I refer interchangeably to two "conceptions," "concepts," and "kinds" of self-sufficiency. For my purposes, what Aristotle thinks about concepts or kinds is irrelevant. If the reader is convinced that Aristotle has a technical theory according to which he must be invoking two -----s of self-sufficiency, she is invited to make the appropriate substitutions.
- ¹⁵ For more on self-sufficiency in Thucydides, see Raaflaub (1985/2004), 184-187. Raaflaub recognizes the tension I highlight: he notes that "Athens certainly depends on the outside world" (186) but nevertheless argues that Athens has the "complete independence" that comes with a "virtually absolute capacity for self-determination" (187).
- ¹⁶ EN I 7 1097b6-11, 14-16: φαίνεται δὲ καὶ ἐκ τῆς αὐταρκείας τὸ αὐτὸ συμβαίνειν· τὸ γὰρ τέλειον ἀγαθὸν αὐταρκες εἶναι δοκεῖ. τὸ δ' αὐταρκες λέγομεν οὐκ αὐτῷ μόνῳ, τῷ ζῶντι βίον μονώτην, ἀλλὰ καὶ γοεῦσι καὶ τέκνοις καὶ γυναικὶ καὶ ὅλως τοῖς φίλους καὶ πολίταις, ἐπειδὴ φύσει πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος. [...] τὸ δ' αὐταρκες τίθεμεν ὁ μονούμενον αἰρετὸν ποιεῖ τὸν βίον καὶ μηδενὸς ἔνδεα· τοιοῦτον δὲ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν οἴομεθα εἶναι. I have construed the datives with the words 'in relation to his parents, children, wife, and, in general, his friends and fellow-citizens'. Contrast the renderings of Irwin (1999) and the Revised Oxford Translation (Barnes (1984)), which suggest that one person's happiness is self-sufficient for all sorts of other people: "not what suffices for a solitary person by himself, but what suffices also for parents, children, wife, and in general for friends and fellow-citizens." Aristotle cannot be suggesting that one person's eudaimonia be sufficient for all his fellow-citizens. Rather, he is saying that eudaimonia's self-sufficiency for the happy person is to be construed not as self-sufficiency for a solitary chap,

but as self-sufficiency for one who lives among, and depends upon, others. Cf. the paraphrase of Kullmann (1980/1991), 104, and the discussion of Broadie (1991), 32, and Cooper (1990/1999), 356n1.

- ¹⁷ Cf. Politics VII 5 1326b29-30: "the self-sufficient has everything and needs nothing." Compare, too, the pseudo-Platonic definition: "Self-sufficiency is the complete possession of goods, the state in respect of which those who have it rule themselves" (412b6-7).
- ¹⁸ Cf. Rhetoric 1364a5-7, where self-sufficiency is called a standard of goodness, and Politics 1252b34-a1, where it is called "best."
- ¹⁹ Curzer (1990) is among those to note this feature of 1097b7-14, but his account of a two-fold shift between EN I 7 and X 6-8 depends more on 1097b14-18 and is very different from mine. (See Curzer 1990, 422-424 with the shifts succinctly characterized on 423.) First, he says, self-sufficiency in I 7 is a property of happiness, whereas self-sufficiency in X 6-8 is a property of the happy person. I disagree: both discussions involve both the concept of the ultimate aim of a life and the picture of a modestly fortunate life or person with that ultimate aim. This should be clear enough in I 7 from 1097b7-14. Second, on Curzer's view, self-sufficiency in I 7 is "all or nothing," whereas it is "a matter of degree" in X 6-8. But here again there is a difference made by 1097b7-14 in I 7. Only after Aristotle excludes the solitary kind of self-sufficiency from discussion does he characterize happiness as self-sufficient and most choiceworthy. This leaves open the possibility of ranking self-sufficient happinesses when the solitary kind of self-sufficiency is in play, and exactly that possibility is realized in X 6-8.

- ²⁰ In many contexts, at least, Aristotle uses εὐδαιμόνων and μακάριος interchangeably. See Nussbaum (1986), 329-333.
- ²¹ This claim is difficult. Among other things it is not clear why it is more divine to work on behalf of the city's good than one's own, and it is not clear how this activity is more divine if (as EN X 7-8 have it) contemplative activity is most divine. The interpretation of the claim is controversial. For further discussion, see Mulgan (1990) and especially Morrison (2001).
- ²² 1141b23-24. For related uses of this distinction, see EN 1130a-10-13, 1102a28-32, and De An 427a2-3.
- ²³ Aristotle himself makes the claim in seven passages: Pol 1253a7-8, 1278b19, NE 1097b11, 1162a17-18, 1169b18-19, EE 1242a22-23, Hist An 487b33-488a14. There have been many discussions, and I cannot here give a full reckoning of them all. I am especially indebted to Kullmann (1980/1991), Cooper (1990/1999), Miller (1995), and Kraut (2002). But I here abstain from two tendencies in these recent treatments. First, I believe that Aristotle's argument for his claim is independent of his zoology. Second, I believe that Aristotle's claim is stronger than the mere suggestion that humans need to live in a polis.
- ²⁴ I read the text of Peck (1965). This important passage draws contrasts between the herding and the solitary and between the political and the scattered, but there is a controversy about the text that leads to disagreement about whether the latter two traits can be found only among herding animals or among both herding and solitary animals (contrast Mulgan (1974) and Cooper (1990/1999), esp. 358-360n5). Depew (1995) offers an especially plausible alternative; he suggests that Aristotle is offering a continuum of traits, from solitary to scattered to herding to political.

- ²⁵ As I turn to Politics I 2, I cite and translate the text of Ross 1957. I do not assume a priori that the Nicomachean Ethics always refers to the "political animal" claim in just the sense that I extract from Politics I 2. (Obviously, I cannot make that assumption, as I have already noted that the Nicomachean Ethics sometimes invokes the "political animal" claim very generally.) Rather, I argue that the explanation offered in Politics I 2 should be applied to the account of political self-sufficiency in the Nicomachean Ethics because the two passages that associate self-sufficiency with the "political animal" claim in the Nicomachean Ethics are so close to the analysis of the "political animal" claim in terms of the pursuit of self-sufficiency in Politics I 2.
- ²⁶ This is the starting point from which Keyt (1987/1991) argues that Aristotle fails in his attempts to argue that the polis is natural. Unlike Keyt, I believe that Aristotle is aware of the difficulty, and takes pains to insist that the polis is an exceptional sort of natural thing by accounting for its production in terms of the human good. In other words, the naturalness of the polis is explained in terms of human nature (cf. Cooper (1990/1999), and Yack (1993), 90-96). On my view, the naturalness of the polis is not explained by Aristotle's talk of how the communities "grow" (contra Kraut (2002), 240-246), for that talk is merely metaphorical (cf. Kullmann (1980/1991) and Yack (1993), 90-96).
- ²⁷ For my purposes, it does not matter whether this genealogical tale is supposed to represent historical facts or is merely supposed to explain the aetiological foundations of political life, and no commitments should be read into my contrast between the polis and "pre-political" communities. See the discussion in Kullmann (1980/1991).

²⁸ Aristotle does not forget the connection between self-sufficiency and the polis. Note the way in which self-sufficiency regulates his discussion of the ideal polis in Books VII and VIII (e.g., 1326b2-9, 26-32), and note definition of the polis in Pol III 1 (1075b20-21): "to speak generally, the polis is a collection of such people [viz., citizens] which is enough for self-sufficiency of life." Nevertheless, my account of Aristotle's argument for the claim that humans are naturally political swims against two currents of recent scholarship, both apparently rooted in the work of Kullmann (1980/1991). The first locates the arguments for the claim not in the genealogical account but in the discussion that follows 1253a7 (cf. Miller (1995), 32-36). This seems to me unsatisfactory, since Aristotle introduces his "political animal" claim at 1253a2-3 as if it were already established by the genealogical account. The second current is to connect the discussion that follows 1253a7 with the passage in the Historia Animalium, to identify Aristotle's "political animal" claim as zoological, and to consider the grounds for the claim to be observation of biological instinct or desire. (The emphasis on bare desire infects even Kraut (2002), 240-246.) The connection with the Historia Animalium is undeniable, but I doubt that Aristotle is thereby letting zoology set his agenda in the Politics. Much less do I think that bare biological instinct or desire is at play. First, as I interpret Aristotle, human desires—including the desire to live in community (1253a29-30)—are explained and justified by reference to the human goal, and so a narrowly "biological" account of desires is inappropriate. But second, as Depew (1995), 167, rightly insists, even in the Historia Animalium, Aristotle is defining the political trait while differentiating activities and ways of life, and not merely impulses or desires (κατὰ τοὺς βίουσ καὶ τὰς πράξεις, Hist. An. 487b34-35). So I explain what follows 1253a7 as

Aristotle's attempt to give more content to his first two theses (see my ensuing discussion) and to link his ethical-political argument for the first two theses to his zoology. On this view, the ethical-political argument itself (i.e., his genealogical account) does not presuppose the zoological analysis. See also Mulgan (1974).

²⁹ Does Aristotle think that humans in pre-political times are subhuman? Yes, says, Miller (1995), 50-53; no, says Kraut (2002), 263. I am not so certain. First, I am not sure that humans ever existed in pre-political times (see Kullmann (1980/1991)). But second, even if they did, I am not sure that they thereby existed without poleis merely "by chance." And third, even if they did, I am not sure that Aristotle means to be discussing them here; I suspect that Aristotle would want to distinguish between those who lived in pre-political times (not perfectly human) and those who in political times are by nature unfit for the polis (subhuman).

³⁰ In Politics IV 4, for the purposes of making distinctions among a range of constitutions good and bad, Aristotle enumerates ten classes as "parts" of the city, including farmers, laborers, artisans, and merchants alongside judges and administrators (1290b38-1291a40). But it is already clear in this passage that some classes are parts of the city more than others (1291a24-28), and when Aristotle is speaking clearly of proper cities, he distinguishes between parts out of which the city is constituted and the remaining people who just happen to live in the city. (That is why, when he is discussing the ideal city, he insists that the population of real parts be considered, and not the population of residents (1326a16-21).) He also reasons out the distinction between real parts and mere residents: if the city is to be happy, its citizens will have to be happy, and so its citizens will have to be virtuous, and so

its citizens will not be able to be artisans or merchants or farmers (1328b33-1329a2). Aristotle is extending an earlier point made about slaves (1280a31-34): the parts of the city cannot be incapable of eudaimonia, for the city exists for the sake of living well. Cf. Irwin (1990), 77-79.

- ³¹ See 1252b29-30, quoted above, and for the distinction between bare self-sufficiency and the self-sufficiency of living well, see also 1280a31-32.
- ³² Yack (1993), 65, for example, suggests that the polis is created because it offers more security and diversity of goods than a village. I doubt that this exhausts what is special about a polis because I think that Aristotle is committed to the claim that a good life dedicated to ethically virtuous activity must be a citizen's life, a part of a polis and not merely in a polis. My independent reason for thinking this follows above.
- ³³ For further discussion of what the priority thesis might mean, see Keyt (1987/1991), Mayhew (1997b), and Kraut (2002), 253-276.
- ³⁴ For other routes to this conclusion, see Irwin (1990) and Cooper (1990/1999).
- ³⁵ I do not deny that the same formulaic explanation of self-sufficiency is invoked in both Book One and in Book Ten (compare 1097b14-15 with 1176b4-5). But Heinaman (1988), 46, is wrong to assume that the presence of the same formula entails the use of the same concept. (Cf. Kraut (1989), 14, 296, 299n28.) The concern to block the shift from inclusivist to monistic eudaimonia has blinded readers to the shift from interpreting the formula of self-sufficiency in one way to interpreting the formula of self-sufficiency in a quite different way. If Heinaman and Kraut would prefer to say that there is a shift from one conception of self-

sufficiency to another, that is fine by me, so long as we realize that the two conceptions are deeply at odds.

³⁶ Self-sufficiency's importance should not be scorned on account of being only fourth of six, as we have seen ample evidence that it is an extremely important value. The full list of criteria is as follows: (1) contemplation is the best activity, the activity of the best thing in us—*voûς*—which has the best knowable objects (1177a19-21); (2) it is the most continuous (1177a21-2); (3) it is the most pleasant (1177a22-7); (4) it is the most self-sufficient (1177a27-b1); (5) it is most loved for its own sake (1177b1-4); and (6) it is the most leisured (1177b4-15).

³⁷ Aristotle reiterates this point at 1178b33-5: "The contemplator, being a human being, will also need external prosperity, for his nature is not self-sufficient for contemplation, but his body must be healthy and must have food and the rest of its care." His use of 'self-sufficient' here must mean something like the self-sufficiency with regard to necessities which we saw in the Politics.

³⁸ So, again, my point about the comparison between the philosophical life and the political life holds even if the philosophical life is ethically virtuous. It also holds even if the political life incorporates contemplative activity (see EN VI 12 1144a1-6, which may be an artifact of the Eudemian Ethics, since EN VI = EE V), for still there is a difference between the philosopher and the politically engaged citizen, in that the philosopher makes central to his life contemplation (which is solitarily self-sufficient), and the politically engaged citizen makes central to his life ethically virtuous activity in the polis (which is not solitarily self-sufficient).

³⁹ Lawrence (1997), 75n59, suggests that Aristotle has principled reasons for shifting to a different conception of self-sufficiency in Book Ten, for in Book One, he wants to characterize the relation between all human goods and the core goods of eudaimonia, whereas in Book Ten, he wants to characterize the relation between the core goods of eudaimonia and the activity of contemplation. I very much like Lawrence's general picture, but I fail to see how it licenses a shift from one conception of self-sufficiency to another. The puzzle is, why go for this kind of self-sufficiency rather than that one?

⁴⁰ See Nussbaum (1986), 373-377.

⁴¹ See Cooper (1975), 169-180. Cf. Scott (1999). One might even think that this explanation is deeper than the one that refers to two conceptions of self-sufficiency, since the contrasting conceptions of self-sufficiency seem to be predicated on different conceptions of what a human being is (a political animal or an intellect seeking to become as much like god as possible). My point is only that there is significance to the conflict concerning self-sufficiency independent of any worries about the metaphysics of human beings.

⁴² For an articulation of this possibility, see Richardson (1994), 211-218.

⁴³ Compare the way Rawls (1971), 432-433, says that "the Aristotelian Principle" (i. e., that "other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity" [426]) typically "regulates" judgments of ends and activities as goods but does not do so necessarily, and fails to do so in the "fanciful case" of a man "whose only pleasure is to count blades of grass in various geometrically shaped areas such as park

squares and well-trimmed lawns." Rawls' Aristotelian Principle is apparently not subject to deliberation; it is simply a "deep psychological fact" that may not hold of some persons.