

THE JOURNAL OF GRECO-ROMAN STUDIES

THE JOURNAL OF
GRECO-ROMAN STUDIES
Vol. 55-3

Vol.55-3

2016 Winter

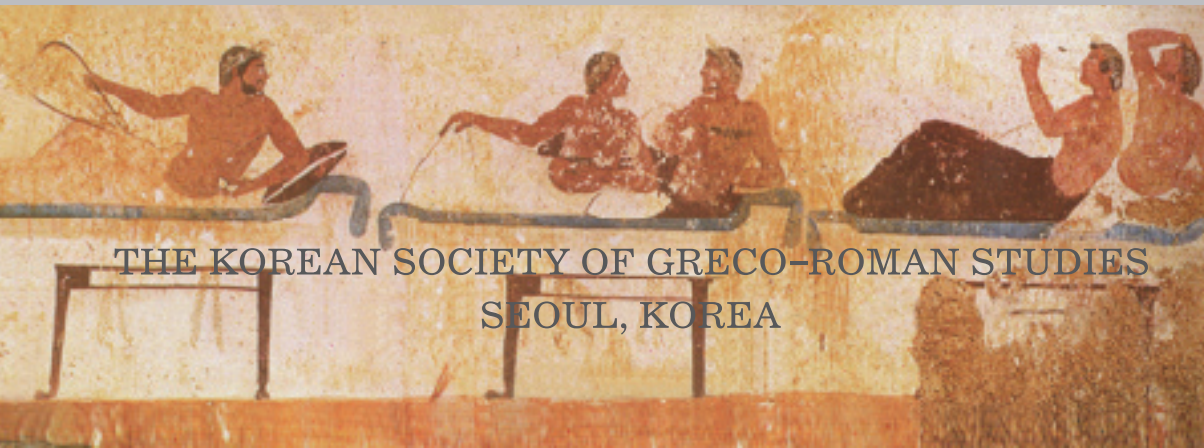
Articles

- The Fate of Powerful Women in Sophocles' *Antigone*,
Euripides' *Medea*, and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* Soo-Yung Bahng 1
- Socrates, Elenchus and Tradition Andre Archie 15
- The Limits of *Eudaimonia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics* Daniel Schwartz 35
- Lexical Bundles in the *Alexiad* of Anna Comnena:
Discourse Analysis Approach Georgios Alexandropoulos 53
- Latin Teaching in Poland:
A Historical Outline and the Current Position Gościwit Malinowski 65

Lecture

- Why Should We Read Classics or Study Classical Scholarship?
..... Paul Schubert 79

Regulations for the *JGRS*



THE KOREAN SOCIETY OF GRECO-ROMAN STUDIES
SEOUL, KOREA

2016 Winter



THE KOREAN SOCIETY OF GRECO-ROMAN STUDIES
SEOUL, KOREA

The Limits of *Eudaimonia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

Daniel Schwartz
(Department of Philosophy,
Georgia State University)

1. Introduction

In Book I of his *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*), Aristotle defines happiness, or *eudaimonia*, in accordance with an argument he makes regarding the distinctive function of human beings.¹ In this paper, I argue that, despite this argument, there are moments in the *NE* where Aristotle appeals to elements of *eudaimonia* that don't follow from the "function argument" itself. The place of these elements in Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia* should, therefore, be a matter of perplexity. For, how can Aristotle appeal to elements of *eudaimonia* not entailed by his argument for what *eudaimonia* involves?

I examine two instances that exemplify the sort of appeal to outside elements that I have in mind. The first deals with Aristotle's reference, in *NE*, I, 8, to certain goods—ancestry, children, beauty—goods unrelated to man's function or his fulfillment of it, but nevertheless required for his happiness. The second instance involves pleasure. Aristotle makes various arguments in Books I and X of the *NE* that tie pleasure to the activity of the soul, and the function argument in turn. However, none of these arguments succeeds in demonstrating that pleasure necessarily follows from this activity. Taken together, these two examples demonstrate that Aristotle's definition of happiness is more inclusive than his function argument permits.²

¹ Thomson (2004).

² Whether Aristotle's view of *eudaimonia* is "inclusive" of multiple goods has been a subject of considerable controversy in the literature. See, for instance, Ackrill's published address Ackrill (2010), 33-52. Ackrill presents Aristotle's view of the *eudaimon* life as "inclusive," and hence, not improbably limited to acts of contemplative thought (*theôria*), as others have argued. But even the inclusivity of Ackrill's account is still limited to virtuous activities of some kind and thus cannot

2. Good Ancestry, Good Children, and Personal Beauty

Aristotle's inclusion of goods like ancestry, children, and beauty in his account of *eudaimonia* is by no means intuitive. For, none of these goods necessarily follow from Aristotle's argument for what *eudaimonia* consists of. This argument, often referred to as the "function (*ergon*) argument," can be summarized as follows: the good of any X involves X performing its distinctive or characteristic *ergon* well, that is, virtuously (1097b24-8); man's *ergon* can neither be life nor sentience since man shares these functions with plants and animals respectively (1097b34-1098a4); by elimination then, man's *ergon* must be the activity of his rational soul (1098a7-8); therefore, man's highest good, *eudaimonia*, is achieved through the virtuous activity of his rational soul (1098a17-8).³

Given this definition of *eudaimonia*, Aristotle's appeal to ancestry and the like appears out of place. None of these advantages seem required for activity of the rational soul, nor for that activity to have been performed well. It is possible to imagine that a person, Mr. X, engages his rational soul in the virtuous performance of various activities, despite his being an ugly, childless fellow of low birth. And if Mr. X engages himself as we have imagined, and thereby fulfills his *ergon* in precisely the way Aristotle argues he ought, then whatever prevents him from achieving *eudaimonia* cannot be traced to the *ergon* argument itself. Thus, Aristotle's reference to such advantages must be considered an addendum to the *ergon* argument, an added stipulation about the nature of *eudaimonia* that does not follow from any of the argument's premises.

One way to avoid the conclusion that Aristotle invokes ancestry and other such advantages as an addendum to his *ergon* argument would be to classify these advantages as the 'external goods' (*ta ektos agatha*) Aristotle insists it would be impossible "to do fine deeds without." (1099a33-4) One could then argue, as Richard Kraut does in his article "Aristotle's Ethics," that "one's virtuous activity will be to some extent diminished...if one lacks an adequate supply of other goods...Someone who is friendless, childless [etc.]...will simply not be able to find many opportunities for virtuous activity...To some

accommodate certain elements Aristotle seems to want to capture in his definition of *eudaimonia*. These elements—beauty, pleasure, etc.—are not, as I argue, integral to virtuous activity but nevertheless must be for Aristotle's view to be consistent.

³ My understanding of the *ergon* argument is indebted to Deborah Achtenberg's formulation of it in Deborah (1989).

extent, then, living well requires good fortune.”⁴

On Kraut’s reading, a definition of *eudaimonia* that involved things like ancestry, children, and beauty would follow from the *ergon* argument insofar as these things are necessary for the virtuous fulfillment of one’s function. However, it is also possible to read Aristotle’s appeal to these advantages as different in kind from his appeal to ‘external goods,’ making the former’s role in *eudaimonia* appear incidental. Indeed, in *NE*, I 8, Aristotle invokes the necessity of ‘external goods’ and then *moves on* to discuss the necessity of certain other advantages, advantages a person requires for his life to be ‘blessed.’ (*makarios*) As Aristotle writes:

Nevertheless, it seems clear that happiness needs the addition of external goods, as we have said; for it is difficult if not impossible to do fine deeds without any resources. Many can only be done as it were by instruments—by the help of friends, or wealth, or political influence. There are also certain advantages, such as good ancestry or good children, or personal beauty, the lack of which mars our felicity; for a man is scarcely happy if he is very ugly to look at, or of low birth, or solitary and childless (1099a32-1099b4).

In this passage, Aristotle seems to refer to two classes of things that he believes an adequate account of *eudaimonia* demands. The first class involves the ‘external goods’ of Kraut’s reading, those ‘resources’ (*achorigitos*) or ‘instruments’ (*organa*) man must avail himself of in order to “do fine deeds.” These goods are necessary for the fulfillment of man’s *ergon*, and hence, they are also (per the *ergon* argument) necessary for *eudaimonia*. The second class of goods, however, that of things like ancestry, children, and beauty, is the class Aristotle believes to be required for a ‘blessed’ existence, and for *eudaimonia* in turn. Significantly, Aristotle does not connect this latter class with the performance of actions. He does not associate ancestry, children, or beauty with the language of instruments or a dearth of resources.

It is this lack of association and Aristotle’s progression from the first set of goods (friends, wealth, political influence) to the second (ancestry, children, beauty) that, taken together, indicate a distinction in kind between Kraut’s external goods and the type of goods invoked in the latter part of the passage. Thus, Aristotle does not present ancestry, children, and beauty as instrumental to the performance of actions, and hence, he does not connect

⁴ Kraut (2014).

these goods to the *ergon* argument either. Indeed, he appeals, as I have tried to show, to an element of *eudaimonia* that does not follow from his *ergon* argument for what *eudaimonia* involves.

Admittedly, several translators of the *NE* are divided over how to gloss the above passage. For instance, Terrence Irwin and W. D. Ross' translations retain the sense of two classes of goods, while Roger Crisp and Robert C. Bartlett's translations do not.⁵ One reason to prefer the Thomson translation cited earlier in this paper, however, is that it may explain Aristotle's reference to a *makarios* existence. If, as Ross and H. H. Joachim have argued, Aristotle uses the term *makarios* specifically to designate a state of virtuous activity sweetened by 'good fortune' (*eutuchia*), then the goods of the passage's latter half can be grouped together as advantages dependent upon fortune, that is, dependent upon providence or luck.⁶ Friends, wealth, and political influence can be acquired—ancestry, fertility, and beauty less so. As regards fertility, even if it is noble children that Aristotle has in mind good parenting can only do so much.

In the last sentence of *NE*, I, 8 Aristotle makes this association between fortune and the 'certain advantages' of the passage more explicit, writing that "as we said, happiness seems to require this sort of prosperity too; which is why some identify it with good fortune, although others identify it with virtue." (1099b7-9) Given that this statement follows Aristotle's discussion of good ancestry and the like, we may infer that it is indeed these latter sorts of advantages that Aristotle believes people associate with fortune. That is, some people, or so the argument goes, think happiness includes advantages such as good ancestry. And yet, one can't possess a thing like good ancestry without the help of fortune. Therefore, one can't account for happiness without accounting for the role fortune plays in its promotion.

Notice also that Aristotle then refers to the view of happiness that involves virtue in order to contrast it with the view of happiness that involves fortune. The goods that some people think are essential for happiness—those that depend on fortune—these goods explain "why some identify it [i.e. happiness] with good fortune." "[A]lthough," there are other people who think that the goods essential for happiness depend on virtue, and hence, these people "identify it [i.e. happiness] with virtue." There is then, in the construction of this final sentence of *NE*, I, 8, a syntactic distinction made between the goods of fortune, goods like personal beauty and the like, and the goods of virtue.

⁵ Irwin (1985); Ross (1980); Crisp (2000); Bartlett and Collins (2011).

⁶ Gavertsson (2013).

Moreover, it is this syntactic distinction which supports the reading I have offered in the following way. Ancestry, children, and beauty can be disassociated from the virtuous activity of the *ergon* argument inasmuch as people associate these goods with fortune and thereby disassociate them from virtue.

It is true that Aristotle does not explicitly endorse the association of good ancestry with fortune; he says merely that ‘some’ people do. But Aristotle does not oppose this association either, nor is he typically shy about opposing conventional, or even authoritative, assumptions he disagrees with.⁷ It seems more plausible that Aristotle cites, without qualification, this connection between ‘certain advantages’ and fortune because it is one with which he is comfortable. Whether ancestry, fertility, and beauty can be grouped together as blessings of fortune, however, it is still the case that Aristotle invokes these goods independently of his *ergon* argument and thereby expands his *ergonistic* account of *eudaimonia*.

Admittedly, I have so far only identified this class of goods (good ancestry and the like) as it appears in a single passage in a single book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. But if this class genuinely signifies a category of importance for Aristotle, if it is indeed a robust and stubborn counterexample to the *ergon* argument, one would expect it to recur elsewhere in the *NE*. Consider, therefore, the following passage in *NE*, VII, 13 where, in a context markedly like the one under consideration, Aristotle alludes to a class of goods essential for happiness. Note also, and especially, Aristotle’s invocation of fortune and compare it with the mention in *NE*, I, 8 of a *makarios* existence and the subsequent association Aristotle makes between fortune and happiness.

This is why everybody assumes that the happy life is a pleasant life, i.e. makes pleasure a constituent of happiness—with good reason. For no activity is perfect if it is impeded and happiness is a perfect thing. That is why the happy man needs (besides his other qualifications) physical advantages as well as external goods *and the gifts of fortune*, so that he may not be hampered by lack of these things (1153b14-20; emphasis mine).

Here the order and structure of Aristotle’s remarks are strikingly like the order and structure of our passage in *NE*, I, 8. In both, Aristotle begins by

⁷ E.g.: “Cultured people, however, and men of affairs identify the good with honor because this is (broadly speaking) the goal of political life. *Yet it appears to be too superficial to be the required answer* (1095b23-4; emphasis mine).”

discussing pleasure (1099a8-30; 1153b1-15). In both, Aristotle proceeds to the essential role of certain ‘external goods’ in happiness (1099a33; 1153b19). Finally, in both, Aristotle moves on to the goods bestowed on us by fortune. With respect to *NE*, I, 8, I argued that blessings of beauty and the like are categorically distinct from ‘external goods’ because of (among other things) their association with fortune, and the way Aristotle appears to *move on* to these goods of fortune from his consideration of ‘external goods.’

In *NE*, VII, 13 both this association with fortune and this sense of *moving on* is retained. Indeed, here Aristotle calls these goods ‘gifts of fortune,’ which as I have argued is already in *NE*, I, 8 associated with goods like personal beauty, both because of the latter goods’ contribution to a *makarios* existence and because of the connection Aristotle makes between fortune and happiness at the end of *NE*, I, 8 (1099b8). As far as the sense of *moving on* is concerned this too is implied, albeit glancingly, in the phrase, “That is why the happy man needs (besides his other qualifications) physical advantages as well as external goods *and* the gifts of fortune.” (1153b19; emphasis mine)

This sense of distinction between ‘external goods’ and ‘gifts of fortune’ denoted by the conjunction ‘and’ is also echoed by Bartlett, Crisp, and Irwin’s translations of *NE*.⁸ For both these reasons—Aristotle’s reference to fortune and his *moving on* from external goods—the *NE*, VII, 13 passage should be read as an echo of *NE*, I, where, while cataloging *eudaimonia*’s various features, Aristotle invokes goods like personal beauty shortly after his consideration of pleasure. Thus, the category of advantages Aristotle originally refers to in *NE*, I, 8 is not a standalone anomaly, but is rather a stable and recurring class of goods substantially featured in Aristotle’s account of *eudaimonia*, yet not in his argument for what *eudaimonia* involves.

John M. Cooper, in his article “Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune,” also sees Aristotle as making a distinction between the two classes of goods I have tried to differentiate above.⁹ Cooper and I disagree, however, on what this distinction amounts to. The distinction between goods like wealth on the one hand, and advantages like beauty on the other, is rooted for Cooper in the role both play in virtuous activity. Goods like wealth help a person perform virtuous actions, while beauty, and advantages like it, give a person more opportunity to perform virtuous actions in the first place (182). For Cooper, both classes of goods can then be integrated into the *ergon* argument because

⁸ Ross diverges here, equating ‘external goods’ with ‘those of fortune’ in his translation of the passage in Ross (1980), 92.

⁹ Cooper (1985).

both enable a person to act virtuously. Cooper's view, if it is correct, would then invalidate my own view that there is a class of goods required for *eudaimonia* that cannot be incorporated into Aristotle's argument for how *eudaimonia* should be defined.

There are problems with Cooper's view, however. It is unclear why advantages like beauty, birth, and children give a person ampler opportunity to act virtuously. Cooper explains by saying that a beautiful person, for instance, has more occasion to practice the virtue of temperance (*sôphrosunê*) when it comes to sex because such a person is so often beset by admirers (182). But there are other opportunities for virtue that a person is afforded by lacking beauty. A Mr. X who is routinely bullied because of his looks will have more occasion to exercise the virtue of patience (*praotês*) in his social interactions than a Mr. Y who is the matinee idol of his generation. Indeed, one can readily imagine how the converse of each advantage Aristotle mentions might offer someone equally many opportunities to exercise equally many virtues.

Unlike Cooper, Jiyuan Yu acknowledges the existence of goods unaccounted for by the *ergon* argument but nonetheless required for *eudaimonia* (54).¹⁰ For Yu, though, this is not, as I have argued, an inconsistency on Aristotle's part, but is rather an indication that there are two conceptions of *eudaimonia* in the *NE* (68). The first conception describes the contemplative existence to which a person should aspire. This existence, though primarily realized in a life of virtuous contemplation, requires—in order to be livable—goods not proper to contemplation *per se*. This is Aristotle's inclusive conception of *eudaimonia*.

Aristotle's second conception of *eudaimonia* applies solely to the happiness of reason and is unconcerned with the happiness of a livable human life (67). But if the *NE* has two conceptions of *eudaimonia*—one inclusive, the other intellectual—then the goods I have claimed the *ergon* argument cannot account for may simply belong to Aristotle's inclusive conception. For, on Yu's reading, though the *ergon* argument explicates intellectual happiness it does not wholly determine which goods are integral to the happiness of a human life (68).

There are, however, good reasons to resist Yu's reading and the objection that follows from it. There are passages in the *NE* which strongly imply that Aristotle intends to develop only one notion of *eudaimonia*—not two as Yu suggests. Moreover, several of these passages are found in the introductory

¹⁰ Yu (2003), 51-74.

section of the *NE*, a section Aristotle concludes with the following: “So much by way of introductory remarks about ... the proposed course.” (1095a14) As is often the case, and as the phrase ‘proposed course’ implies, Aristotle’s prefatory remarks identify the goal and plan of his work as a whole. These remarks should then be considered authoritative when it comes to determining what sort of account of happiness Aristotle intends to offer and whether his intention is to offer more than one.

In *NE*, I, 1 Aristotle characterizes his ethical investigation as ‘a kind of political science.’ (1094b11-12) In *NE*, I, 3, Aristotle expands on this by describing the sort of discipline political science is and what it demands of its students. Aristotle cautions that “a young man is not a fit person to attend lectures on political science, because he is not versed in the practical business of life from which politics draws its premises and subject-matter.” (1095a2-4) Given that Aristotle classifies ethics as political science and describes political science as concerned with the “practical business of life,” it is wrong for Yu to suppose, that the *NE* is divided between two conceptions of happiness and that one of these conceptions has only to do with the happiness of reason—reason as separate from the lived experiences of human beings. The object of Aristotle’s investigation is the happiness of human life and it is this happiness that Aristotle gives an account of.

3. Pleasure

Pleasure (*hedonē*) stands out as another example in which Aristotle appeals to a feature of *eudaimonia* not entailed by the *ergon* argument. The connection between a person engaging his rational soul in virtuous activity and deriving pleasure from this activity is admittedly intuitive. However, I believe Aristotle intends to make this connection necessary. After all, if one of the goals of the *NE* is to offer an account of *eudaimonia*’s essential constitution, then *eudaimonia* cannot be what it is without being so constituted. Thus, I believe Aristotle intends to demonstrate that *eudaimonia* entails some form of pleasure, and it is with this entailment in mind that, he lays out the following *reductio ad ridiculum* argument. “It is obvious also that if pleasure...is not a good, then the life of the happy man will not be pleasant—for why should he need pleasure if it is not a good, and his life may equally well be a painful one? For pain is neither good nor bad if pleasure is neither too. Why, then, should he avoid it [i.e. pain]?” (1154a2-5) The idea that a person spends her entire life in pain and is still *eudaimon* is,

of course, ridiculous, and hence, untenable.¹¹ But if a *eudaimon* existence is untenable without the attainment of some pleasure and the (concomitant) avoidance of some pain, then pleasure is in a sense required for *eudaimonia*.

Thus, Aristotle offers several arguments in the *NE*, three of them in *NE*, I, 8, that present pleasure as an inevitable complement to *eudaimonia*. The first argument of *NE*, I, 8 proceeds thusly. The life of the *eudaimon* man Mr. X—who engages his rational soul in virtuous activity—is inherently pleasurable insofar as Mr. X is a lover of virtue. For, just as horses give pleasure to lovers of horses, so too does virtuous activity give pleasure to lovers of virtue (1099a8-12). The *ergon* argument, however, defines the *eudaimon* man as virtuous, but not necessarily as a lover of virtue. In *NE*, I, 7, where Aristotle proposes his *ergon* argument, Aristotle analogizes man’s virtue to the virtue of various artists, contending that each is virtuous relative to how well he performs his function. The virtue of a flautist, for instance, depends on how well he performs with his flute.¹² The virtue of a person depends on how well he performs with his rational soul (1097b25-9).

By this analogy, virtue is a perfection, but not necessarily a predilection. One can be an excellent flautist and still hate playing the flute, just as one can be an excellent human and still hate fulfilling one’s *ergon* in accordance with virtue. Thus, the argument that the virtuous person will derive pleasure from acting virtuously fails to conclusively tie pleasure to *eudaimonia* insofar as the virtuous person’s love of virtue is a matter of contingency.

The second argument of *NE*, I, 8 asserts that virtuous actions are inherently pleasurable and that virtuous people will lead pleasurable lives just by performing them (1099a14). But it is not at all clear why we should assume the premise that virtuous actions are inherently pleasurable. Some actions that Aristotle may well consider virtuous are bound to be discomforting if not downright distressing for the person performing them. The courage (*andreia*) it takes to rescue a helpless child from a burning building may be laudable, but it is hard to see how it is necessarily pleasurable for the rescuer, even if she “faces and fears ... the right things for the right reason and in the right way and at the right time.” (1115b18-20) This second argument too, then, fails to conclusively join pleasure to the *ergon* argument, insofar as virtuous activity is only contingently pleasurable.

¹¹ Note that Aristotle does not here establish pleasure as the supreme good. Pleasure is a good the happy person will have some share in, but it is not a good sufficient for her happiness.

¹² “The Greek *aulos* was not a flute but a reed instrument” Thomson (2004), 15n1.

Aristotle's third argument in *NE*, I, 8 claims that, by definition, a virtuous person takes pleasure in behaving virtuously and that we only ever refer to people as virtuous in such cases. "[F]or nobody," Aristotle insists, "would say that a man is just unless he enjoys acting justly, nor liberal (*eleutheriotēs*) unless he enjoys liberal actions, and similarly in all the other cases. If this is so, virtuous actions must be pleasurable in themselves." (1099a18-22) But here too, there is no compelling reason to assume Aristotle's premise. Granted, we may want to say that Mr. X must be genuinely inclined to behave as he does in cases of moral action. A person terribly embittered, for instance, by an act of charity (or liberality in Thomson's translation) cannot *really* be said to be charitable. But in the case of some of the other Aristotelian virtues, no such requirement obtains. For surely Euclid's claim to *epistēmē* (the virtue of scientific knowledge) would not be in doubt if it turned out that he detested mathematical inquiry. Again, as in the case of the flautist, a talent for something does not entail a preference for it. Here too, then, Aristotle has not proven that pleasure and virtuous activity must go hand in hand. It remains an open question, therefore, how Aristotle may appeal to elements of *eudaimonia*, which do not follow from the ergon argument that defines it.

Aristotle returns to the question of pleasure and virtuous activity in Book X of the *NE* but here too, as I argue, fails to establish a necessary connection between the two. Aristotle begins to address this connection in *NE*, X, 4, asserting that activity is accompanied by pleasure "so long...as the object of thought or sensation, and that which judges or contemplates, are in the right condition." (1174b35-7) It is not clear from this context what 'right condition' Aristotle has in mind, what, in other words, would have to be true of a given activity for pleasure to occur. However, there are several reasons to think that pleasurable activity does not, for Aristotle, demand extraordinary circumstances.

In *NE*, VII, 13 Aristotle writes that "the *unimpeded* exercise of a faculty is a pleasure (1153b14; emphasis mine)." From this context, at least, it seems as if the wrong conditions for pleasure may only amount to some form of infirmity or abnormality. Also telling, and to some extent confirmatory of this reading, is the question Aristotle poses in *NE*, X, 4's next paragraph, namely, "How is it ... that nobody feels pleasure continuously?" (1174a4) A view of pleasure that regards pleasure's absence as perplexing cannot demand a singular set of circumstances for pleasure's presence. Thus, for both these reasons the 'right condition' for pleasurable activity ought not to be too refined.

And yet, if Aristotle indeed presents pleasurable activity as ordinary, as nothing more remarkable than 'the unimpeded exercise of a faculty,' how

assured can such a connection between pleasure and activity be? At the end of *NE*, X, 4 Aristotle goes further in assuring this connection, claiming that just “as pleasure does not occur without activity, so every activity is perfected by its pleasure.” (1175a20-2) The proposition is twofold: no pleasure without activity; no activity without pleasure. Of course, it is possible to interpret the second half of this proposition as more tentative: “every activity may be improved by its complementary pleasure,” rather than, “every activity is improved by the pleasure that necessarily accompanies it.” However, I think the latter reading makes better sense of the quotation’s context.

Directly before this statement on pleasure and activity, Aristotle writes, “Whether we choose life on account of pleasure or pleasure on account of life is a question that may be dismissed at the moment; for it appears they are closely connected and *do not admit of separation*.” (1175a19-20) The same, as I have argued, can be said for pleasure and activity: they are, for Aristotle, “closely connected and do not admit of separation.” And indeed, this is precisely the connection Aristotle must establish if pleasure is to genuinely follow from the *ergon* argument. For if pleasure is an essential component of human happiness then pleasure should be entailed by the argument for what happiness involves.

I do not, however, think we can accept Aristotle’s account of necessarily pleasurable activity. Even granting the caveat Aristotle is careful to offer, that we don’t constantly experience pleasure because we become desensitized to the ordinary objects of sensation and cognition, there is still more that would need to be said to establish that we necessarily experience pleasure when engaging with objects for the first time (1175a5-11).¹³ The character of this engagement, and hence, under what precise conditions Aristotle expects pleasure to arise, is admittedly somewhat difficult to specify. However, as I have argued, Aristotle’s ‘unimpeded exercise of a faculty’ indicates that even ordinary instances of sensation and cognition should qualify. Indeed W.D. Ross, in his book *Aristotle*, appears to agree: “When one of our senses is in a healthy state and is engaged on an object which is good of its kind (e.g., a distinctly visible object), the activity of that sense is necessarily most pleasant, and the same is true of the activity of thought. And the pleasure completes the activity.”¹⁴

And yet, there are simply so many objects that give a person no pleasure at all, even on first exposure, and even when that person’s faculties are actively

¹³ Ross (1995).

¹⁴ Ross (1995), 236.

engaged and fully functioning. Say Mr. X comes into contact for the first time with a doorstop which, as Ross specifies, “is good of its kind.” The doorstop is distinctly visible and it stops doors with all the alacrity and aplomb one could want. And yet, Mr. X is thoroughly unmoved, indeed totally indifferent to the supposed pleasures of the doorstop, the very pleasures his faculties ought now to be engaging with for the first time. This counterexample—Mr. X and his indifference—casts doubt on the point Aristotle has tried to establish, that pleasure accompanies activities (even certain sorts of activities) inevitably.¹⁵

4. Goods vs. Pleasure

There may appear to be an important difference between the point I have made about beauty and the like and the point I have made about Aristotle’s treatment of pleasure. Regarding good ancestry, good children, and personal beauty, I argued that Aristotle characterizes *eudaimonia* in ways exogenous to his *ergon* argument, thereby disregarding his functional definition of *eudaimonia*. With respect to pleasure, however, I argued that Aristotle fails in his attempt to make pleasure endogenous to the *ergon* argument. Aristotle doesn’t disregard the function argument *per se*, but rather comes up short in his effort to conclusively tie pleasure to it.

One may, therefore, object to my criticism of pleasure as out of keeping with my criticism of beauty and the like. For there is a difference between identifying an inconsistency on Aristotle’s part—including things like good ancestry in *eudaimonia* but not in the human *ergon*—and attacking those arguments Aristotle makes to remain consistent, arguments that link pleasure with the function of human beings. One might then accuse my latter attack on pleasure as an instance of trifling disagreement rather than an instance of real insight into the structural inconsistencies of Aristotelian *eudaimonia*. It is one thing to question the assumed premises of Aristotle’s case for pleasure and another thing, a more compelling thing, to demonstrate that beauty and the like’s inclusion in *eudaimonia* breaks the rules Aristotle’s own *ergon* argument has established. There is good reason, however, to think that the difference between my criticism of beauty and pleasure is not as significant

¹⁵ Anscombe, in her inimitably concise way, also noted the trouble pleasure seemed to give “the ancients,” writing that it “reduced Aristotle to sheer babble about ‘the bloom on the cheek of youth’ because, for good reasons, he wanted to make it out both identical with and different from the pleasurable activity” Anscombe, (1958), 3.

as it may seem.

Aristotle himself doesn't appear convinced that he has adequately assimilated pleasure into his *ergon* argument. Indeed, in *NE*, I, 8 alone Aristotle makes, as we have seen, several arguments for pleasure's connection to virtuous activity (and the function argument in turn). Then, in *NE*, X, Aristotle returns to the relationship between pleasure and activity and offers further evidence of a necessary connection between the two. The sheer number and variety of Aristotle's arguments is some indication of how inconclusive he felt each individual argument to be.¹⁶

This acknowledged inconclusiveness would then amount to a disregard for the *ergon* argument itself, at least insofar as the inclusion of pleasure in *eudaimonia* is concerned. For, if all the necessary features of *eudaimonia* are entailed by the successful fulfillment of a person's function, and pleasure is only contingently related to this function, then Aristotle can only include pleasure by means of importing it into his definition of *eudaimonia* irrespective of its relationship to the *ergon* argument itself. Thus, if Aristotle did recognize the uncertainty of pleasure's connection to the function argument, then the distinction between my criticisms of pleasure and personal beauty begins to recede. For now, in both cases, Aristotle must ultimately disregard the role of the *ergon* argument in defining his view of happiness.

Evidence for this Aristotelian ambivalence over pleasure's relation to the function argument can be found in *NE*, I, 8 where, as I have said, Aristotle's rapid proliferation of arguments betrays his dissatisfaction with any single one of the arguments connecting pleasure to virtuous activity. Aristotle begins by asserting that the lover of virtue's fondness for virtuous activity will result in pleasure whenever that activity is engaged in (1099a8). Not six lines below this Aristotle claims that virtuous actions are also "pleasant by nature" and will, therefore, be inherently pleasurable to all who perform them (1099a14).

Consider again Aristotle's first argument, that the lover of virtue, by

¹⁶ I am hardly alone in regarding the multiplication of arguments for a single proposition as a liability. Kant writes in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, for instance, that "it is a highly unphilosophical expedient to resort to a number of proofs for one and the same proposition, consoling oneself that the multitude of reasons makes up for the inadequacy of any one of them taken by itself; for this indicates trickery and insincerity. When different insufficient reasons are, juxtaposed, one does not compensate for the deficiency of the others for certainty or even for probability." Kant (1996), 6:403-404.

definition, takes pleasure in virtuous activity.¹⁷ In this case, pleasure would only ever be an incidental accessory to *eudaimonia*. Pleasure is a part of some people's—the virtue lover's—happiness only because of the lover's disposition toward virtue, that is, only because she takes pleasure in behaving virtuously. Indeed, in this case, the *eudaimon* life would only “have pleasure attached to it as a sort of accessory.” (1099a16-7) It is then to shore up the internal connection between pleasure and virtue that Aristotle, very shortly thereafter, argues that pleasure is immanent to virtuous action itself and not merely to the disposition of the virtuous actor.

We can understand this latter argument as anticipating the above objection: that pleasure is not an ingredient of happiness but, given the right type of person, an accessory to it. Thus, Aristotle makes his case for the union of pleasure and virtuous activity through a progressive accumulation of arguments, and it is Aristotle's felt need for accumulation that, as I have tried to show, indicates his awareness of the objections to which the *NE*'s case for pleasure is subject. I think it more plausible, therefore, to treat personal beauty and pleasure as of a piece, as two elements incorporated in Aristotle's definition of happiness but not, even inevitably not, in his *ergon* argument.

5. Conclusion

It has been the aim of this paper to expose a certain perplexity regarding Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia*: how Aristotle's description of man's ultimate good appears to diverge, at times, from the *ergon* argument intended to sustain it. Things like ancestry, children, and beauty, the feeling of pleasure—these were goods Aristotle evidently thought any adequate definition of *eudaimonia* should include, but, as I have tried to show, these same goods were more incidental to Aristotle's own definition of *eudaimonia* than he would have liked.¹⁸

¹⁷ Loving something, for Aristotle, already entails taking pleasure in it. As Aristotle writes, “each individual finds pleasure in that of which he is said to be fond” (1099a7-8).

¹⁸ I am deeply grateful to Tim O'Keefe for his helpful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper. I am also indebted to Zachary Margulies for his kind assistance with the original Greek. Thanks also to the referees who reviewed this paper and gave me much needed feedback. Finally, I am obliged to the editor in chief of JGRS, Kim Chang-Sung, who has been generous and understanding throughout the publication process.

Bibliography

1) Primary Texts

- Bartlett, R. C. and S. D. Collins, tr., 2011, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Crisp, Roger, tr., 2000, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Irwin, Terence, tr., 1985, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub.
- Kant, Immanuel, 1996, "The Metaphysics of Morals," in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. by Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ross, W. D., tr., 1980, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thomson, J. A. K., tr., 2004, *Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. by Hugh Tredennick, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

2) Secondary Texts

- Achtenberg, Deborah, 1989, "The Role of the Ergon Argument in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics," *Ancient Philosophy* 9(1), 37-47.
- Ackrill, John L., 2010, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia," in *Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics"*, ed. by Otfried Höffe, tr. by David Fernbach, Leiden: Brill Academic, 33-52.
- Annas, Julia, 2004, "Happiness as Achievement," *Daedalus* 133(2), 44-51.
- Anscombe, G. E. M., 1958, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33(124), 1-19.
- Cooper, John M., 1985, "Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune," *The Philosophical Review* 94(2), 173-196.
- Gavertsson, Frits, 2013, "Eudaimonism: A Brief Conceptual History," <http://www.fil.lu.se>. Lunds University, n.d.
- Korsgaard, Christine M., 2008, "Aristotle's Function Argument," *The Constitution of Agency*, 129-150.
- Kraut, Richard, 2014, "Aristotle's Ethics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), (search date: 2015. 09. 26)
- Mackay, A. F., 2005, "Aristotle's Dilemma," *The Journal of Ethics* 9(3-4), 533-549.
- Nussbaum, M. C., 1986, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Ross, W. D., 1995, *Aristotle*, London: Routledge.
- Yu, Jiyuan, 2003, "Will Aristotle Count Socrates Happy? Socrates and the

Nicomachean Ethics,” in *Rationality and Happiness: From the Ancients to the Early Medievals*, ed. by Jiyuan and Jorge J. E., Rochester: University of Rochester, 51-74.

Zalta, Edward N., ed., 2014, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Archive (Summer 2014 Edition) <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/index>

[Abstract]

The Limits of *Eudaimonia* in the *Nicomachean Ethics*

Daniel Schwartz

In Book I of his *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) Aristotle defines happiness, or *eudaimonia*, in accordance with an argument he makes regarding the distinctive function of human beings. In this paper, I argue that, despite this argument, there are moments in the *NE* where Aristotle appeals to elements of happiness that don't follow from the function argument itself. The place of these elements in Aristotle's account of happiness should, therefore, be a matter of perplexity. For, how can Aristotle appeal to elements of happiness not entailed by his argument for what happiness involves? I will examine two instances that exemplify the sort of appeal to outside elements that I have in mind. The first deals with Aristotle's reference, in *NE*, I, 8, to certain goods—ancestry, children, beauty—goods unrelated to man's function or his fulfillment of it, but nevertheless required for his happiness. The second instance involves pleasure. Aristotle makes various arguments, both in Books I and X of the *NE*, that tie pleasure to the activity of the soul, and the function argument in turn. However, none of these arguments succeeds in demonstrating that pleasure would necessarily follow from this activity. Taken together then, these two examples demonstrate the extent to which Aristotle's definition of happiness is more inclusive than his function argument permits.

[Key words]: *Nicomachean Ethics*, *eudaimonia*, Aristotle, *ergon* argument, pleasure

Received: October 06, 2016
Reviewed: December 18, 2016
Accepted: December 19, 2016