Hilde Vinje*
Complete Life in the *Eudemian Ethics*

Abstract: In the *Eudemian Ethics* II 1, 1219a34–b8, Aristotle defines happiness as 'the activity of a complete life in accordance with complete virtue'. Most scholars interpret a complete life as a whole lifetime, which means that happiness involves virtuous activity over an entire life. This article argues against this common reading by using Aristotle's notion of 'activity' (*energeia*) as a touchstone. It argues that happiness, according to the *Eudemian Ethics*, must be a complete activity that reaches its end at any and every moment. The upshot of this reading is that life reaches completeness *within* a lifetime and that death cannot be the requirement for making life complete.

Keywords: Eudemian Ethics, eudaimonia, energeia, complete life, Solon

Aristotle thinks that we must live a 'complete life' in order to be happy.[1] In the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*), Aristotle defines happiness as 'the activity of a complete life (*zōē teleia*) in accordance with complete virtue'.[2] His outline of happiness in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) reflects a similar idea: after having defined the human good as the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, he writes that it only arises in 'a complete life' (*bios teleios*).[3] While it is clear that it takes a long time for a life to achieve completeness, it turns out that it is not easy to determine how, precisely, Aristotle defines 'completeness' or a 'complete life'.

While the meaning of *bios teleios* in the *NE* has been explored by several scholars, far less attention has been paid to the *EE*. Most interpreters discuss the

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issue with regard to the *NE* only,[4] or include brief comparisons with the *EE* without examining its definition of happiness in detail.[5] One reason why interpreters have cared less about the *EE* is that Aristotle seems to agree with Solon's dictum, which urges us to 'call no one happy while alive', without any discussion.[6] We need to know what happens during an entire lifetime before pronouncing someone happy. Owing to this, previous interpretations tend to agree that *zōē teleia* in the *EE* refers to a whole lifetime.[7] The upshot is that Aristotelian happiness involves living well until the end of life. Given this fairly established interpretation, it seems far more fruitful to discuss the *NE*, where Aristotle devotes one chapter to reflection on Solon's advice.

This article argues that the established reading of the complete life in the *EE* runs into a problem that should make us reconsider the notion. The issue is that happiness ends up being an activity that is incomplete as long as we live, only reaching its end when we die. This is problematic, because it goes against Aristotle's description of happiness as a complete activity (*teleia energeia*) that reaches its end at any and every instant. For example, Aristotle writes in the later books of the *EE* that the end (*telos*) is a 'life of activity' (*to zēn to kat' energeian*),[8] connecting this life to perceiving and knowing, which are well-known examples of complete activities in the Aristotelian Corpus. To solve this aporia, I develop a novel reading. Rather than interpreting the complete life as an entire lifetime, as most interpreters do, I argue that it is more promising to understand it as becoming whole and complete *within* a lifetime. While I offer some thoughts on what makes life complete towards the end of the article, the main objective of this article is to establish *that* life reaches

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4 E.g., Emilsson (2015), Farwell (1995), and Arleth (1889).

5 E.g., Broadie (2019), Richardson Lear (2015), Horn (2013), Müller (2013), Purinton (1998), and Irwin (1985).

6 Solon's dictum is a ubiquitous reference in Greek literature. It survives in various formulations, though none of these is found in the fragments of Solon. The main source supplementing the dictum is Herodotus' *Hist.* I.30–3, where Solon argues that we need to see the end of a life before pronouncing someone happy. Until we are dead, no one can know for sure whether our life was a good one or not. Though the Herodotean Solon looks to more than death when assessing some-one's happiness, it remains a key point that we cannot tell whether someone has attained happiness until their life is over. This is particularly evident in the formulations of the dictum that survive in Greek tragedies. Cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 928; Soph. *OT* 1524–30; Eur. *Andr.* 100–3, *Tro.* 509–10, *Heracl.* 864–7, *IA* 161–3.

7 E.g., Richardson Lear (2015, 138), Müller (2013, 54), Woods (1992, 91), Hutchinson (1986, 53), Vanier (1965, 224n1), and Verbeke (1951, 92). Indeed, Simpson (2013, 238–9) departs from these views by interpreting *zōē teleia* as becoming whole before death and my interpretation is similar to his in certain respects. As will be clear, however, I reach this conclusion by taking a new argu-mentative route.

8 VII 12, 1244b23–4.

completion before death. This interpretation has important consequences for what we should take to be the Eudemian view of happiness: happiness is a characteristic of a life at its pinnacle – and not primarily of an entire lifetime.

The structure of the article is as follows: the first section goes through the key passage and explains the interpretative issue in detail, while section two offers an outline of the modern scholarship. Section three argues that life becomes complete *within* a lifetime, while section four defends the reading against three objections. At last, section five reflects on what makes life complete and how this reading compares to the *NE*.

1 The Key Passage

To get a proper grasp on how we may understand the *zōē teleia*, it is essential to start with 'the key passage' – that is, the definition of happiness and the evidence Aristotle offers for it. It goes as follows:

> ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ εὐδαιμονία ψυχῆς ἀγαθῆς ἐνέργεια. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἦν ἡ εὐδαιμονία τέλεόν τι, καὶ ἔστι ζωὴ καὶ τελέα καὶ ἀτελής, καὶ ἀρετὴ ὡσαύτως (ἢ μὲν γὰρ ὅλη, ἢ δὲ μόριον), ἡ δὲ τῶν ἀτελῶν ἐνέργεια ἀτελής, εἴη ἂν ἡ εὐδαιμονία ζωῆς τελείας ἐνέργεια κατ' ἀρετὴν τελείαν. ὅτι δὲ τὸ γένος καὶ τὸν ὅρον αὐτῆς λέγομεν καλῶς, μαρτύρια τὰ δοκοῦντα πᾶσιν ἡμῖν. τό τε γὰρ εὖ πράττειν καὶ τὸ εὖ ζῆν τὸ αὐτὸ τῷ εὐδαιμονεῖν, ὧν ἕκαστον χρῆσίς ἐστι καὶ ἐνέργεια, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ἡ πρᾶξις (καὶ γὰρ ἡ πρακτικὴ χρηστικὴ ἐστίν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ χαλκεὺς ποιεῖ χαλινόν, χρῆται δ' ὁ ἱππικός) καὶ τὸ μήτε μίαν ἡμέραν εἶναι εὐδαίμονα μήτε παῖδα μήθ' ἡλικίαν πᾶσαν (διὸ καὶ τὸ Σόλωνος ἔχει καλῶς, τὸ μὴ ζῶντ' εὐδαιμονίζειν, ἀλλ' ὅταν λάβῃ τέλος· οὐθὲν γὰρ ἀτελὲς εὔδαιμον· οὐ γὰρ ὅλον)· (II 1, 1219a34–b8)

> Happiness, then, is the activity of the good soul. And since happiness is something complete, and life can be complete or incomplete, and so too virtue (since it can be a whole or a part), and the activity of what is incomplete is itself incomplete, it follows that happiness would be the activity of a complete life in accordance with complete virtue. That the genus and definition of happiness are well formulated is supported by views that we all hold: (a) doing well and living well are the same as being happy; (b) each of these, both life and action, is a use and an activity, since a practical life involves use of things – the smith makes a bridle, the rider uses it; (c) one cannot be happy for only a day, or if one is a child, or at every stage of life. (That is why Solon's injunction to call no one happy while alive, but only when he has reached his end (*telos*), is a good one, since nothing incomplete is happy; for it is not whole).

Two comments are worth making here. First, it is important to remember Aristotle's previous comments on the relation between life and soul. Before arriving at the key passage, he assumes that living (*to zēn*) is the function (*ergon*) of the soul.[9]

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9 II 1, 1219a24.

Furthermore, the function of the soul's virtue is an excellent life (*spoudaia zōē*), which, in turn, is the final good, happiness.[10] When Aristotle concludes that happiness involves 'the activity of a complete life', we need to keep in mind that the life he describes is *not* a separate entity detached from the soul. To the contrary, this life is essentially tied to its soul and arises from it. Second, it might not seem entirely clear what the genus (*genos*) and the definition (*horos*) of happiness is.[11] The most plausible answer to the question concerning the genus of happiness is, I presume, that it is activity.[12] When it comes to the definition, it narrows happiness down to a specific kind of activity: the activity of a complete life in accordance with complete virtue.

Aristotle furthermore offers three commonly held views in support of his outline of the genus and definition of happiness:[13]

(a) doing well and living well are the same as being happy
(b) both life and action are a use and an activity
(c) one cannot be happy for only a day, or if one is a child, or at every stage of life[14]

Happiness, then, requires completeness in both virtue and life. What 'complete virtue' (*aretē teleia*) means emerges as an important question in Aristotle's ethics. The answer is found in the last book of the *EE*, where Aristotle states that complete virtue is nobility (*kalokagathia*).[15] This is a virtue that arises from having the particular virtues.[16] In other words, the *teleia* virtue is a whole made up of well-defined parts, that is, the individual virtues. What we should define as a *teleia* life, however, is never made fully clear by Aristotle. The problem, then, is this: how should we understand Aristotle when he writes that happiness involves the 'activity of a *zōē teleia*'?

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10 II 1, 1219a25–8.

11 Inwood and Woolf translate *genos* in 1219a39 as 'classification', but it seems more reasonable to understand Aristotle to speak of 'genus' here.

12 Cf. Woods (1992, 91–2).

13 II 1, 1219a39–b8. Translators differ both in how many views they count as supporting the genus and definition of happiness, and in how we are to distinguish them from one another. I here follow Inwood and Woolf.

14 'At every stage of life' (*hēlikian pasan*) is ambiguous both in English and Greek: it can mean either (i) that not all stages of life can be happy (e.g., that youth is too early for someone to be happy), or (ii) that a single stage of life cannot be happy on its own. My reading is (i). Even if (ii) is a decent interpretation on its own, my arguments in section three should make it clear why I think that reading cannot be reconciled with the definition of happiness.

15 VIII 3, 1249a16–17.

16 VIII 3, 1248b10. There has been some debate as to whether the virtue of nobility indeed includes all of the intellectual virtues. Cf. Bonasio (2020).

We should begin with the possible meanings of *teleios*, which can be translated in different ways. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle offers an explanation of how we may understand the word *teleios*. This exposition allows us to single out the basic meanings of the adjective. According to *Metaphysics* Δ 16, 1021b13–22a5, *teleios* may mean:

(1) 'having all of its parts'. In English, this is best captured by the translation 'complete'.
(2) 'being best of its kind'. This is best rendered into English as 'perfect'.
(3) 'having reached its end (*telos*)', which can be captured in English as 'fully developed' or 'fully realized'. Aristotle further notes that this meaning of the word also can be used in a transferred sense to describe bad things, such as perishing 'completely' or being 'completely' destroyed. In this sense, death can be called an end as a figure of speech.

The various translations allow us to emphasize what we take to be the most important aspect of the *zōē teleia*. Given that Aristotle speaks of 'whole' and 'part' in the key passage, we might prefer the first option at the outset. Yet, his clarification of the semantic range of *teleios* does not solve our problem: something can be complete, perfect, or fully realized in various ways; and what is perfect or fully realized, is, in some sense, also complete. This entails that the three options are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Let us see, then, how scholars have traditionally read the key passage.

2 Modern Scholarship

The notion *zōē teleia* has hardly received any systematic treatment in the literature.[17] Yet, it is fair to begin with an assessment of the ideas about the notion that have been briefly suggested. Most previous readings propose that a life is complete once it is over, regardless of its length. Other interpretations, however, also suggest that a life needs to have a full length and reach its natural end – that is, we must go through adolescence, the prime of life, and then old age in order for our lives to be complete. Common to both readings is that a life needs to be over before reaching completeness

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17 Apart from commentaries on the *EE* (by Dirlmeier (1962), Woods (1992), and Simpson (2013)), scholars have only brought in the passage when their concern is to interpret the *NE*, cf. n. 4–5. Furthermore, much of this scholarship focusses on whether Aristotle accepts Solon's dictum in the *EE* and remains silent on how this influences their understanding of the *zōē teleia*, cf. n. 18. In section three, I return to the question of how Aristotle's view on the complete life and Solon's dictum relate to each other and whether there might be a difference between being happy and calling someone happy.

and that Aristotle agrees with Solon's advice to call no one happy while alive.[18] I will refer to them as 'the broad' and 'narrow' version of the lifetime view.

The broad, and most common, version understands *zōē teleia* as a lifetime of any length: from the beginning to end, whenever the end may arrive.[19] The key passage makes such a reading plausible, at least at first glance. After Aristotle has defined happiness, he proceeds to list commonly held opinions that accord well with the definition. It is in this context we find the reference to Solon's dictum: Aristotle writes that it is well said, since nothing incomplete is happy. This remark, it seems, has led this group of scholars to view *zōē teleia* as an entire lifetime.

The main advantage of this interpretation is that it straightforwardly explains Aristotle's reference to Solon's dictum: he brings it in to better explain one of the commonly held opinions that is offered to support the definition. More precisely, this opinion is that one cannot be happy for a day, as a child, or at every stage of life. By adding 'that is why Solon's saying is well said' (*dio kai to Solōnos echei kalōs*, II 1, 1219b6), Aristotle makes it clear that the three examples all lack the necessary completeness spoken of in the definition. By understanding *zōē teleia* as a lifespan, explaining *why* Aristotle alludes to the dictum is unnecessary; it is simply proof that *zōē teleia* denotes an entire lifetime.

The narrow, and less common, version of the lifetime view interprets *zōē teleia* as a full length of life.[20] That is, we need to go through childhood, adolescence,

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18 The interpretation that claims that Aristotle agrees with Solon in the *EE* does, on the contrary, not necessarily entail a lifetime interpretation of the complete life. In theory, an interpreter might prefer to keep Aristotle's view on the *zōē teleia* and Solon's advice apart. Since some scholars do not specify their view on the complete life, but only notes that Aristotle seems to agree with Solon's dictum in the *EE*, it is fair to leave it open exactly how they understand the *zōē teleia*. Cf. Broadie (2019, 28), Roche (2014, 59n47), Horn (2013, 28), Farwell (1995, 258), and Irwin (1985, 103).

19 Richardson Lear writes that 'Aristotle says in the *EE* that virtuous activity must last for a whole life' (2015, 138). Müller speaks of the complete life 'im Sinne der vollständigen Lebensdauer' (2013, 54). Woods claims, though with some uncertainty about the details, that the definition of happiness suggests that it is 'primarily a characteristic of a whole life' (1992, 91). Hutchinson writes that 'a necessary condition for a life to be perfect is that it be finished' when assessing the *EE* (1986, 53). Vanier maintains that '[l]a suite de la citation de l'*Éthique à Eudème* donne cependant un peu l'impression que le bonheur n'est complet qu'à la mort' (1965, 224n1). Verbeke paraphrases the Eudemian definition of happiness as the activity of a virtuous soul 'durant le cours entier de l'existance humaine' (1951, 92).

20 When interpreting *bios teleios* in the *NE*, Purinton argues that *teleios* should be read as 'perfect' and that 'a "perfect life" is one which includes childhood, adolescence, mature adulthood, and ripe old age' (1998, 294). He mentions that this thesis is compatible with the usage of *teleios* in the *EE*, but does not offer any close reading. Dudley includes a short reading of the *EE* as an extension of his discussion of *bios teleios* in the *NE*, remarking that '[t]he phrase ζωὴ τελεία [...] means the whole of life, since Aristotle contrast the whole with a part. Thus in *EE* the happy life must last throughout youth, maturity and old age, that is, throughout the whole of life' (2012, 231).

prime, and old age before our lives are complete. This interpretation posits a further condition for what counts as a whole: a life must not simply be over; the person whose life it is must have passed through all of the human life stages.

One strength of this reading is that it makes sense of Aristotle's implicit idea that life can exist as a whole or a part. In *EE* II 1, 1219a37, he draws the following parallel: in the same way as a life can be complete or incomplete, virtue can be a whole or a part. Although Aristotle does not explain the parallel more closely, it seems likely that he thinks of the particular virtues as 'parts' and the superior virtue, nobility (*kalokagathia*), as a 'whole'. In *EE* VIII 3, 1248b8–11, Aristotle explicitly writes that 'we have spoken about each particular virtue' and that it is fitting to speak about the virtue 'which is composed of them', namely nobility (*kalokagathia*). The question then, is: how are we to understand life in the same fashion? If we understand the life stages as the 'parts' of life, then we would have a similar way of explaining life and virtue. Just as virtue becomes whole when it has been composed of each particular virtue, a life would become whole when all the life stages are lived through and nothing more can be added to it.

Although the two readings have their own special characteristics, they both rely on an understanding of happiness as being essentially tied to a lifetime. Given these readings, one cannot be happy for a period shorter than an entire lifetime; for happiness would simply *be* the activity of an entire lifetime. One needs to reach the *telos* before pronouncing anyone happy; and *telos*, on these interpretations, implies death. If a good life meets with serious misfortunes before it comes to an end, then it would simply not measure up to what happiness is – no matter how much the person whose life it is flourished in her earlier years.

An alternative approach is to propose that life somehow becomes *teleia* before death. This reading has not yet been systematically developed, but has been briefly suggested by Peter L.P. Simpson in his notes on the *EE*.[21] When commenting upon the key passage, he proposes that *zōē teleia* concerns 'wholeness in living' and then later suggests that friendship is ultimately what makes life complete.[22] While I believe that Simpson's idea that life reaches completion before death is very promising, it nonetheless needs to be developed within the framework of Aristotle's philosophy. This will be my objective in what follows: to develop an account

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[21] Simpson (2013, 238–9). Given the limited amount of literature about the *EE*, it is worth mentioning that also Buddensiek's reading (1999, 136–8) seems to be compatible with this general view. While Buddensiek does not offer a systematic reading of *zōē teleia* specifically, his interpretation of the adjective *teleion* in *EE* II.1 as 'zielhaft' seems to imply that happiness does not hinge on the end of a lifetime. However, Buddensiek (1999, 137n56) also remarks that *telos* appears to mean 'Lebensende' when Aristotle refers to Solon, and it is not entirely clear to me whether Buddensiek takes Aristotle to accept Solon's dictum fully.

[22] Simpson (2013, 239, 335, 139n1).

of why life must become complete within a lifetime.[23] Indeed, as I will attempt to demonstrate, the lifetime view creates tension within Aristotle's account of happiness. The problem is that happiness ends up being an incomplete activity during our lifetime, and that it only reaches its end when life is over, while other passages in the *EE* indicate that it is a complete activity. By contrast, I will argue that happiness is precisely a complete activity, which does not hinge on the outcome of a lifetime to reach its completeness.

3 The Complete Life Reconsidered

Why should we understand the complete life as generally arising *within* a lifetime? In what follows, I use Aristotle's notion of 'activity' (*energeia*) as a touchstone and argue that this notion strongly suggests that life reaches completion before death. While the arguments I offer in this section do not rely on a specific reading of *what* makes life perfect, it aims to show *that* happiness is an activity that reaches completeness, and its end, before we die. Then, I proceed to discuss how Aristotle's account of happiness and Solon's dictum relate to each other and whether there might be a difference between being happy and calling someone happy.

3.1 Happiness and Activity

Aristotelian happiness is an activity. It is not just a complete life in accordance with complete virtue, but the *activity* of such a life. This feature of happiness is reflected in the supporting views proffered by Aristotle. Both doing well and living well, which are the same as being happy, are a use and an activity, since the practical life involves the use of things.[24] Since happiness by nature is an activity, it is appropriate to clarify what it means to say that happiness involves 'the activity of a complete life' (*energeia zōēs teleias*).[25] What does 'activity' mean in this context?

Given the lifetime view, a life achieves completion when it is over. Nothing can be added to it when it has reached its end: not a stage of life, not a day, not even a second. The *activity* of this complete life, then, refers to the activity of this entire lifetime. At the same time, another statement in the key passage sheds light on the link between completion and activity: Aristotle writes that 'the activity of what is

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23 My account does not hinge on the correctness of Simpson's proposal that friendship makes life complete. I return to a consideration of what makes life complete in section five.

24 II 1, 1219b2–3.

25 II 1, 1219a38.

incomplete is itself incomplete' (*hē de tōn atelōn energeia atelēs*).[26] For anything to generate complete activities, it needs to be complete itself. Given this latter statement, an incomplete life – that is, a life that is not yet finished – would only give rise to incomplete activities:

> P1. Life is complete when our lifetime is over (the lifetime view)
> P2. The activity of what is incomplete is itself incomplete (II 1, 1219a37–8)
> C. The activity of our life will be incomplete as long as we live

The result is that the activity of a life will be incomplete as long as it lasts. In one sense, the conclusion comes across as quite plausible: so long as we are here, the activity of our life will be ongoing. Only an end point – namely death – can make the activity of our life complete. On this reading, life becomes complete when it reaches death.

On closer consideration, however, this outcome is problematic. The problem is that it leads to a tension in Aristotle's theory of happiness: he seems to think of happiness as an activity that is complete once it begins, both in the *EE* and elsewhere, *not* as an incomplete activity.

To understand my objection, it is necessary to examine what is implied by the notion of *energeia* ('activity'). This term, which is of vital importance to Aristotle's ethics, is used both in a broad and narrow sense in his corpus. In the broad sense, *energeia* can cover several narrow activities (*energeiai*) and what is known as processes, changes, or movements (*kinēseis*).[27] In the narrow sense, *energeia* refers to an activity that is complete at every instant and whose end (*telos*) is already thereby realised. The main source for understanding *energeia* in this narrow sense is a well-known passage in *Metaphysics* Θ 6, where Aristotle speaks of changes and activities in the sphere of action.[28] Aristotle's examples of such complete activities

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26 II 1, 1219a37–8.

27 A *kinēsis* is a sort of activity that is incomplete (*atelēs*) (*DA* II 5, 417a17–18; III 7, 431a6–7; *Phys.* III 2, 291b31; VIII 3; VIII 5, 257b8).

28 1048b18–35. The passage gives rise to several interpretative issues. As Makin notes (2006, 128), the Greek text is rather corrupt and missing from several manuscripts. Burnyeat (2008) argues that the passage was not originally part of *Metaphysics* Θ 6 and that it stems from a lost work by Aristotle on pleasure. More controversially, he also argues that the distinction between *kinēsis* and *energeia* in the passage should not be taken as a standard Aristotelian doctrine, that it should not be imported into other contexts, and that the passage is 'a freak performance' (2008, 276). Natali (2013), while agreeing with Burnyeat's claim that the passage was not originally written for the *Metaphysics*, argues that the passage nevertheless fits into the programme of Θ 6. Gonzalez (2019) defends its importance: against Burnyeat, he argues that the passage is *not* at odds with Aristotle's ontology and that it is crucial for the project in Θ 6. While I attempt to stay neutral on how we are to relate the passage to Aristotle's project in the *Metaphysics*, I maintain that we cannot dismiss the

in this passage are highly pertinent to our current discussion. His first examples are sight and wisdom: once we see something, we also have something in view; once we are wise, we have achieved wisdom. Nothing further is required to complete these acts. By contrast, we cannot say that we have learned once we are learning; in that case, the activity is incomplete and has not yet achieved its end. What is striking is that Aristotle further uses the verbs 'to live well' (*to eu zēn*) and 'to be happy' (*eudaimonein*) as examples of an activity in the narrow sense. Once a person is living well (*eu zē*), she has achieved the good life (*eu ezēken*) at the very same time. Moreover, once she is happy (*eudaimonei*), it is also true that she has achieved happiness (*eudaimonēken*). These examples count as activities in the narrow sense, which means that they are complete at any and every moment. Now, this gives rise to a problem: if Aristotle indeed thinks of happiness as a complete activity rather than a process, why should there be any need for him to indicate that happiness hinges on what happens towards the end of a lifetime?

By contrast with the view of happiness expressed in the passage quoted above, the lifetime view leaves us with an understanding of happiness as only being secure when life ends. Importantly, the lifetime view does not allow for interpreting happiness as a complete activity that occurs *within* a lifetime. Given the definition of happiness, this possibility is not open to us: the activity of happiness cannot be treated in isolation from the complete life because happiness is said to *be* the activity of a complete life (in accordance with complete virtue). Therefore, proponents of the lifetime view cannot disregard my objection by introducing a distinction between a happy lifetime and happy moments within a lifetime. However, before we are able to say whether it really *is* questionable that the activity of happiness is only complete when a life is over, we need to turn back to the *EE* and look at the notion in the immediate and broader context of the key passage. Given the distinction between complete and incomplete activities, how are we to construe 'the activity of a complete life' in *EE* II 1?

At the beginning of *EE* II 1, Aristotle notes that, of the things in the soul, 'some are states or capacities, while others are activities and processes' (*ta men hexeis ē dunameis eisi, ta d' energeiai kai kinēseis*).[29] Thus, a distinction between activity and process is brought up soon before we arrive at the key passage. Aristotle does not, however, discuss the distinction further in the chapter, at least not explicitly.

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relevance of the passage when discussing the activity of happiness in particular. The reason is that Aristotle explicitly uses both 'to be happy' (*eudaimonein*) and 'to live well' (*eu zēn*) as examples of what counts as an *energeia*. For my reading, it is not crucial whether the passage originally was located in the *Metaphysics* or not. What matters is that it sheds a highly interesting light on how Aristotle looked upon the activity of happiness and well-being specifically.

29 II 1, 1218b36–7.

So, what importance should we attribute to it? Does the activity/process distinction of 1218b37 suggest that Aristotle from here on exclusively refers to activities in a narrow sense – that is, complete activities – when he proceeds to speak of *energeia* in the definition of happiness?

The sole mention of the activity/process distinction cannot by itself vindicate such a conclusion. Yet, some support for understanding the activity involved in happiness as complete is found in the function argument, which follows shortly after. Aristotle here points out that 'function' (*ergon*) may be understood in two senses.[30] First, as something that is over and above the use of a thing. His first examples are housebuilding and medicine: the function of the former is not building itself, but a house. The same goes for medicine: its function is health, and not the act of curing or applying treatment. Second, the function may be the use itself. For instance, seeing is the function of sight, and studying (*theōria*) is the function of mathematical knowledge. In cases where the function is the use, he adds, the use is better than the state.[31] Apart from the striking overlap in his choice of examples,[32] it is interesting that Aristotle proceeds to state that the function of the soul 'is to produce living (*to zēn*), this consisting in using (*chrēsis*) and being awake'.[33] The function of the soul, which is essentially tied to our happiness, is a use – and not a result *apart from* the use.[34] After having defined happiness, Aristotle also makes a similar point in the supporting evidence. Each of these – both living (*zōē*) and action (*praxis*) – is a use and an activity.[35]

In addition, there are clear indications that the activity of a complete life qualifies as narrow in the later books, which are exclusive to the *EE*. Consider VII 12, 1244b23–6, where Aristotle reminds us that the end is a life of activity:

> δῆλον δὲ λαβοῦσι τί τὸ ζῆν τὸ κατ' ἐνέργειαν, καὶ ὡς τέλος. φανερὸν οὖν ὅτι τὸ αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ γνωρίζειν, ὥστε καὶ τὸ συζῆν τὸ συναισθάνεσθαι καὶ τὸ συγγνωρίζειν ἐστίν.

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30 II 1, 1219a13–18.

31 II 1, 1219a17–18.

32 In *Met*. Θ 6, 1048b18–35, housebuilding (*oikodomēsis*) and curing (*hugiazein*) are presented as examples of a process, while seeing, understanding (*phronein*), and thinking (*noein*) are used to illustrate an activity.

33 II 1, 1219a24–5. I follow Solomon (in Barnes (1984)) in reading *touto* for *tou* in 1219a24.

34 The same description of happiness is found in *Met*. Θ 8. In 1050a23–b2, Aristotle is distinguishing between (i) cases in which the use (*chrēsis*) is the ultimate thing and (ii) cases in which a product follows. Seeing and theorizing are mentioned as examples of the former class, while housebuilding and weaving are examples of the latter. Interestingly, Aristotle states that happiness is an example of the first class. His train of thought is as follows: life (*zōē*) in the soul is a case where the use is the ultimate thing, therefore the same goes for happiness since 'it is a certain kind of life (*zōē*)' (ζωὴ γὰρ ποιά τίς ἐστιν, 1050b1–2).

35 II 1, 1219b2–3.

> This is clear if we grasp what a life of activity (*to zēn to kat' energeian*) is and that it is the end (*telos*). Obviously it is perceiving and knowing, so that living together is perceiving together and knowing together.

It is highly interesting that Aristotle states that a life of activity is perceiving and knowing, and that this is also the end (*telos*). As we have seen, seeing and theorizing are prime examples of complete activities.[36] If we furthermore bring in three 'tests' that are commonly used to distinguish complete activities from processes in the secondary literature,[37] these all classify perceiving and knowing as the former. The first test is known as *the aspect test*. If an agent *has done* (completed aspect) X every time she *is doing* X (continuous aspect), then X counts as a complete activity. This is the case with both perceiving and knowing: once we are perceiving, it is true that we have perceived.[38] And once we know, we have also known. The second test is *the quickly-slowly test*. If X can be done quickly or slowly, then X is a process. If it cannot, then it is a complete activity. While our vision indeed may observe and take in an external object more or less quickly, the activity of seeing itself is not something that happens quickly or slowly. Knowing seems to be similar: while we may *attain* knowledge more or less quickly, the activity of knowing itself is not something that we do quickly or slowly.[39] Finally, we have *the ceasing test*. If it is in the nature of X to cease when X reaches its end (*telos*), then X is a process. If not, it is a complete activity. Now, it is not in the nature of seeing to cease once it reaches its end. It reaches its end once it begins and does not have to stop at that point in order to measure up to what it means to see. The same goes for knowing: the act of knowing does not have to cease at some point in order to qualify as knowing at all. Of course, a human being would not be capable of engaging in the activity of knowing *eternally*, but this is rather owing to human nature and not to what knowing involves in itself. If my application of these three tests is right, then

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36 Cf. *NE* X 4, 1174a13–16; *NE* X 5, 1174b33–75a1; *Met*. Θ 8, 1050a35–6; *SE* 178a9–28.

37 My presentation of the tests is based on Olfert (2014, 234).

38 That Aristotle held this view is attested to at *PN* 446b2–6.

39 One might object that the verb *gnōrizein* ('to know') may also be translated as 'to gain knowledge of [something]', and that *gnōrizein* therefore passes as a process rather than a complete activity. While it is true that this reading is possible given the Greek-English lexicon of Liddell-Scott-Jones, I think it is less likely that Aristotle had this specific sense of *gnōrizein* in mind from a philosophical point of view. In general, we tend to gain knowledge and learn new things precisely because we seek to *use* this knowledge. E.g., we learn foreign languages for the purpose of speaking, reading, or writing this language perfectly – that is, for the purpose of using the language. The aim of the learning process is indeed to master the grammar and pronunciation of the language completely, but we do not consider ourselves done with the language once we have succeeded in learning it. When Aristotle writes that a life of activity is the end, and that it involves *to gnōrizein*, I therefore believe the most reasonable reading of this verb is that of 'knowing' rather than 'gaining knowledge of [something]'.

Aristotle should speak of the activity of a life as a complete activity that is realized at any instant. Consequently, we need to question whether Aristotle indeed claimed that happiness is tied to what happens during an entire lifetime: for if happiness is an activity that is complete at any and every moment, then life needs to achieve its end *before* we die.

Summing up, there is reason to seriously doubt that Aristotle thought of the complete life as a whole lifetime. Instead, my proposal is that Aristotelian happiness only requires time to come into existence. Life surely needs a long span of time to reach the level of completeness – but, once it is complete, there is no need for happiness to last for an entire lifetime.

3.2 Solon's Dictum

If indeed it is right that Aristotelian happiness arises before death, then we clearly need to consider how this idea of happiness fits with Solon's dictum.[40] Strictly speaking, there is a difference between what they are talking about: Aristotle focuses on what it takes *to be* happy, Solon on what it takes *to call* someone happy. So how are we to understand Aristotle's statement that Solon's advice 'is a good one' (*echei kalōs*, II 1, 1219b6)?

We might reasonably ask whether Aristotle could accept Solon's dictum without thereby committing himself to the view that happiness is only secure when life is over. On this reading, we could certainly be happy and attain a complete life while alive, but it would only become clear whether someone could predicate happiness of us when we are done living. This solution would neatly explain why Aristotle praises the dictum as well said. Yet, there is some reason to question whether such a reading really is supported by Aristotle's text.

Consider the context of Aristotle's reference to the dictum: right before mentioning it, he is occupied with telling us that certain ages or stretches of time are insufficient for 'being happy' (*einai eudaimona*, II 1, 1219b5). He then proceeds by paraphrasing Solon's advice and explains that it holds good 'since nothing incomplete is happy; for it is not whole' (*outhen gar ateles eudaimon; ou gar holon*, II 1, 1219b7–8). In other words, Aristotle explains the appeal of Solon's words by referring to what it entails to be happy and not to what it takes to call someone happy. Quite the reverse, the distinction is blurred when Aristotle tells us *why* there

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40 As Herodotus' presentation of Solon's dictum makes clear, one cannot call anyone happy until they are dead. This is also evident from various formulations of it in Greek tragedies, cf. n. 6.

is a value in Solon's words. This is a drawback for anyone who wants to insist that there exists such a distinction in his text.[41]

How are we to account for the praise of Solon's words, if we instead take Aristotle to use the dictum to support his view of what it takes to *be* happy? It is highly interesting, I maintain, that he presents the dictum as urging us to call no one happy while alive 'but only when he has reached his *telos*' (II 1, 1219b6–7).[42] This opens up for a slightly different interpretation: that Aristotle agrees with Solon that a living person needs to reach the *telos* to be considered happy and whole, but that their notions of what properly counts as a *telos* differ. According to Aristotle's terminology in the *EE*, death does not pass as an end: shortly before the key passage, he defines a *telos* as 'that which is best, and which is the final point for whose sake everything else is chosen' (II 1, 1219a10–11, trans. Woods). While death surely is an ultimate thing, it is nevertheless not 'the best'. In the *Physics*, Aristotle even claims that it would be absurd to speak of death as an end precisely because not every final point has a claim to be called a *telos* (194a28–33).[43] Put briefly, death does not qualify to be a *telos* in the Aristotelian sense. Solon's dictum, however, leaves us with the idea that death precisely is the point a person must reach before happiness can be spoken of. If we understand Aristotle's paraphrase along these lines, then we are able to account for the key passage without requiring that Aristotle's use of *telos* in 1219b6 fundamentally departs from how he otherwise uses the notion and without presupposing that Aristotle operates with a distinction that he does not make perspicuous to his audience.

4 Objections to My Reading

Before concluding, I would like to address some objections that a reader of Aristotle might raise to my reading of the complete life. In what follows, I present three possible counterarguments and attempt to demonstrate that the reading is ultimately able to withstand such criticisms.

4.1 The Exercise of Complete Virtue Takes Time

Aristotle is explicit in *EE* that complete virtue presupposes that we have the particular virtues described in the earlier books, such as courage, temperance,

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41 Not to mention, such a reading would also require that the meaning of *telos* and its cognates fundamentally differs throughout the key passage. Cf. Buddensiek (1999, 137n56).

42 In Herodotus' *Histories*, Solon uses *teleutē* ('termination') rather than *telos*.

43 Cf. also *Met*. Δ 16, 1021b23–9.

justice and wisdom. Some of these virtues are expressed in very different situations and belong to different spheres of life. How could it then possibly be the case that happiness may be a complete activity which is realized at any and every moment? If we are to be active in accordance with complete virtue, it seems, it is necessary to exercise all of the singular virtues; and this is an exercise that certainly takes time.

In response to this objection, I think it is worth considering exactly *how* Aristotle describes the complete virtue, which is nobility (*kalokagathia*, 1249a16–17). Though it is indisputable that nobility presupposes the particular virtues, it is not so clear that engaging in nobility means engaging in all the individual virtues separately. Interestingly, Aristotle describes nobility as the exercise of one single virtue that *results from* the particular virtues.[44] In *EE* VIII 3, he makes a transition from talking about each of the particular virtues to the 'virtue which is composed of them' (*tēs aretēs … tēs ek toutōn*, 1248b10). Given this statement, it would not seem necessary to exercise every single virtue *when* exercising the virtue of nobility.[45] Quite the reverse, it seems quite plausible that the exercise of this virtue would be an activity that does not take time to be perfect, which is also supported by the close connection nobility has to the 'contemplation of god' (1249b17, 20–1). As Aristotle otherwise makes clear, contemplation is a complete activity.[46] My understanding of the activity of happiness is therefore not incompatible with what it means to exercise virtue as a whole.

4.2 One Cannot be Happy for One Day Only

Another objection arises from Aristotle's claim that 'one cannot be happy for only a day' (1219b5), which seems irreconcilable with happiness being a complete activity. This worry is connected to a larger problem: *if* we accept the objection, then we encounter the equally difficult issue that is currently being discussed: the implication that happiness indeed is a complete activity once it begins, which follows from the statement that 'the activity of what is incomplete is itself

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44 This point is made by Baker (2014, 189–90), who argues that Aristotle in general maintains that the parts are teleologically subordinated to the whole and that Aristotle by *teleion* virtue does 'not mean that it is all the virtues, but rather the single whole virtue that arises out of the combination of all the other virtues'. Cf. also Richardson Lear (2015, 103n3).

45 I do not claim that we do not have to exercise all of the individual virtues *before* nobility can arise. It seems very likely that we have to. My point applies to the exercise of virtue *after* nobility has been formed: for anything to qualify as the exercise of nobility, it does not seem necessary to exercise every single individual virtue.

46 Cf. *NE* X 5, 1174b33–75a1; *Met.* Θ 8, 1050a35–6.

incomplete' (1219a37–8). To reconcile these two claims is thus a challenge for any interpreter, as we cannot have it both ways. So how are we to proceed?

There are, I believe, two main strategies for resolving this tension. The first strategy is to question whether Aristotle deliberately intended to endorse the view that happiness necessarily needs to persist for more than one day when using the verb *einai* in 1219b5.[47] One reason for suspecting that Aristotle did not hold this view firmly, is a passage that makes an almost identical point about happiness and time in *NE* I 7, 1098a19–20. We may here detect a small yet significant change of language: rather than writing that we cannot 'be' (*einai*) happy for one day, Aristotle now states that one day does not 'make' (*poiein*) us happy. That is, he maintains that one day is insufficient for *becoming* happy. This formulation is perfectly consistent with the idea that happiness is a complete activity. If we accept the established view that the *NE* was later than the *EE*, then we might ask whether the shift from *einai* to *poiein* reflects a clarification about this issue.

The second strategy is to consider whether there are other points in the *EE* that might resolve the tension. One potential explanation is whether there might be an ambiguity in Aristotle's use of the verb 'living' (*zēn*) and the noun 'life' (*zōē*), so that 'living' involves an activity that is complete at any moment and 'life' several activities that persist over a certain length of time. If so, living would be complete in an instant, but life not. Yet, it is hard to trace such a distinction in *EE* II.1: shortly after having defined happiness as 'the activity of a complete life (*zōē*) in accordance with virtue', Aristotle proceeds by claiming that 'living (*zēn*) well' is the same as being happy.[48] Given that both 'life' and 'living' are used to explain happiness in these lines, it seems very unlikely that these terms differ philosophically when considering happiness. Furthermore, Aristotle does not seem to attribute significantly different meanings to them in the function argument, where they are used interchangeably.[49] If there indeed was a philosophically relevant distinction between the verb and the noun, it would be very surprising of Aristotle not to make this clear here.

Another point to consider is the account of friendship. This account claims that a virtuous person needs friendship in order to be happy, as a human being cannot

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47 I am certainly not the first interpreter of Aristotle to suspect this. If we look to the Teubner edition of the Greek text Susemihl (1884), we may observe the following conjecture in the critical apparatus: 'μίαν ἡμέραν εἶναι mutilata, μίαν ἡμέραν <εὐδαίμονα ποιεῖν μήτ'> εἶναι aut (commate post εὐδαίμονα posito) <ἐν> μία ἡμέρᾳ εἶναι <τὸν>'. The conjecture was proposed by Fritzsche, who seemed to suspect that the phrase *mian hēmeran einai* was shortened ('mutilata') and proposed to reconstruct the Greek text to clarify its meaning, apparently based on what Aristotle writes in the *NE*.

48 II 1, 1219b1.

49 Cf. II 1, 1219a24 and 1219a27.

be self-sufficient on their own. Time, however, is crucial to the complete and virtuous friendship: according to Aristotle, a friend is not to be had without testing 'nor in a single day; it takes time' (*oude mias hēmeras ho philos, alla chronou dei*, VII 2, 1238a1–2). We need the test of time because true friendship involves trust and stability, and because time reveals who is loved (VII 2, 1238a14–15). Given that friendship requires consistency, we might consider another possible explanation of why one day is insufficient for being happy: that friendship requires that we share and partake in virtuous activities with our friends for more than one day alone. However, one might respond that this thesis does not resolve the tension entirely. Aristotle's motivation for bringing time into the discussion, I take it, is that friendship needs time to come into existence. Unless one denies that there is *a* point in time when complete friendship is formed,[50] it follows that a friendship *in theory* can be broken off if one or both of the friends die(s) after only one single day of true friendship. Although Aristotle's account of friendship explicitly tells us why one day is insufficient for *making* friends, it seems less attractive as an explanation of why happiness needs to persist for more than one day *after* one has reached completeness in virtue and life. If this critique is right, then it seems more reasonable to settle on the first strategy: that Aristotle held the view that one cannot be happy for one day less firmly than the idea that happiness is a complete activity.

4.3 The Activity of an Incomplete Life

A third possible objection concerns what the activity of an incomplete life would amount to. In the key passage, Aristotle writes that 'the activity of what is incomplete is itself incomplete' (*hē de tōn atelōn energeia atelēs*).[51] In other words, Aristotle suggests that a life that is incomplete and not yet whole only generates incomplete activity. This might seem odd if happiness is indeed a complete activity, since complete activities are otherwise not said to have parts but are 'a whole in the now' (*en tō(i) nun holon ti*).[52] The puzzle is perhaps better explained by drawing on another example of complete activity, such as seeing. As long as there is sight, it appears, the activity counts as complete (*teleia*). If an eye is severely

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50 To deny this seems absurd given Aristotle's theory of happiness: if we were incapable of knowing whether complete friendship had formed until there was no time left in life, then we would also end up with a Solonian dictum for friendship ('call no man a friend until he dies'). In that case, complete friendship would seem to be more about avoiding misfortune, since one could never be certain that one might not lose trust in one's friend.

51 II 1, 1219a37–8.

52 *NE* X 4, 1174b9.

damaged and prevented from exercising its function at all, there will be no vision and hence no activity. It therefore seems quite hard to grasp how an eye could possibly give rise to any *incomplete* activity. If it is indeed paradoxical to claim that there exists an incomplete activity of seeing, then would not the same be true of the activity of life as well?

I see two possible explanations of how this can be answered within an Aristotelian framework. The first option is to think of life as a process, at least until the point in life when it becomes complete and we may be said to engage in the activity of happiness. This would follow if we, once again, consider the three tests that are commonly used to spell out the distinction between *energeia* and *kinēsis*.[53]

(1) *The aspect test*. If it is true that an agent *has done* (perfected aspect) X every time she *is doing* X (continuous aspect), X counts as an activity. If it is not, X would be incomplete and count as a process. Let us apply this to the case of life: if life exists as a part, then it is not yet happy and has not reached its *telos*. If life exists as a whole, however, it will be true that the activity of this life would count as happiness every time it is going on.[54]
(2) *The quickly-slowly test*. If X can be done quickly or slowly, then X is incomplete and so a process. If X cannot, then it is an activity. In the case of life, it is reasonable to say that it can reach its end (*telos*) quickly or slowly. As long as our life exists as part(s) and is incomplete, it is true that it has not yet reached its *telos* and that it may do so more or less slowly.
(3) *The ceasing test*. If it is in the nature of X to cease when X reaches its end (*telos*), then X is a process. If it is not in the nature of X to cease at a specific time, then it is an activity. In the case of an incomplete life, its activity would necessarily cease when the end (*telos*) is reached.

These three tests leave us with an understanding of the activity of an incomplete life as incomplete and thereby as a process (*kinēsis*), while the activity of a complete life would be complete and qualify as an activity (*energeia*) in the strict sense. To further explain the potential of this account, it might prove helpful to consider another, prime example of a complete activity: the activity of contemplation (*theōria*). Engaging in the activity of contemplation does not require any specific length of time. On Aristotle's account, it will be true that *we have contemplated* as soon as we *are contemplating*. Contemplation is not something that we can do more or less quickly, and it is not in the nature of contemplation that it has to cease at

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53 I am again indebted to Olfert (2014, 234) for the outline of the tests.
54 The activity would naturally have to be in accordance with complete virtue. For the sake of brevity, I do not add 'in accordance with complete virtue' every time I speak of the activity of a complete life in these tests.

some point. Yet, the capacity to engage in the activity of contemplation does not come easily. Before we are able to start contemplating at all, we need to acquire a certain level of knowledge. If I do not know Pythagoras' theorem, for instance, I cannot contemplate it. Put differently, it would require some learning to arrive at a sufficient level of knowledge. And learning (*mathēsis*), as we have seen, counts as a process in the eyes of Aristotle. It is not true that we *have learned* once we *are learning*; learning may be done quickly and slowly; and learning necessarily ceases when we have arrived at its end (*telos*): knowledge.[55] If this reading is correct, then it is not paradoxical to claim that the same may apply to life as well: striving for completeness in life is a process. The activity of life as a part would be incomplete because it would not yet have arrived at its end (*telos*), which is happiness. But once it does arrive at this aim, the activity of life will be complete.

The second alternative for explaining what the activity of an incomplete life would be like is to reconsider what might fall within the category of complete activities. In 'Incomplete activities', C.M.M. Olfert explores a similar puzzle that arises from *NE* X 4, 1174b14–25. In this passage, Aristotle seems to be saying that activities like seeing and contemplating can be *more or less complete*.[56] While this might seem paradoxical at first, at least given Aristotle's previous comments on complete and incomplete activities, there also seems to be something to the idea. Consider, for instance, a person who is severely short-sighted: while it is true that she has vision, everything she sees will be extremely blurred and out of focus. Without the aid of glasses or contact lenses, she will not be able to recognize the facial features of other people, enjoy the subtle details of a beautiful painting (or even discern its basic outline), or read any text that is not right in front of her face. There is something counter-intuitive in thinking of the activity of her vision as being *teleios* – that is, 'complete', 'perfect', or 'fully realized'. Her vision can hardly be described as successful in comparison to the sight of perfectly healthy eyes. So, what are we to

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[55] Some readers might object that other instances of complete activities, such as seeing or hearing, do not follow the same pattern. But upon closer consideration, they seem to do so: before an eye is able to see (or an ear to hear), it needs to sufficiently develop *qua* eye (or ear). This development would count as a process. Now, Aristotle indeed points to a difference in the acquisition of the senses and of the virtues in *NE* II 1, 1103a23–b2: while we do not acquire the senses by frequent seeing or hearing, we acquire the virtues by exercising them. In other words: the senses are acquired by nature, while virtue is acquired through habit. Yet, I maintain that my point holds good: even though senses and virtues are acquired in different ways, the acquisition of the both of them resembles a process.

[56] Note that the idea that pleasure completes the activity is specific to Aristotle's discussion of pleasure in *NE* X 1–5, whereas this idea is not explicitly mentioned in the discussion of pleasure in *EE* VI 11–14 = *NE* VII 11–14. In the current section, my focus lies solely on the issue of whether there is any such thing as *more or less* complete activities, not on the issue of what role pleasure plays for completeness.

make of the acts of seeing of a pair of short-sighted eyes and similar 'unsuccessful' activities? What is their metaphysical status, given the activity/process distinction?

Olfert's proposal for explaining the 'incompleteness' of some complete activities is this:

> The key to answering this question, I suggest, is to distinguish between two different ways of conceiving of degrees of completeness; between *there being one thing, 'completeness', which comes in more or less*, and *degrees of approaching or approximating to a single state of completeness*.[57]

Rather than suggesting that activities such as seeing poorly lack completeness because completeness *itself* comes in degrees, Olfert argues that these activities fail to *approach* a singular state of completeness. To the extent that a particular activity of seeing fails to approach a single state of completeness, it also fails to count as seeing in a strict sense.[58] If Olfert is correct, then there may be unsuccessful and incomplete activities – such as seeing poorly – that are consistent with Aristotle's canonical distinction between activities and processes. Her point that an activity may fail to approach one state of completeness opens up space for a new way of understanding the statement that 'the activity of what is incomplete is itself incomplete' in *EE* II 1. If an object, such as an eye, is not in perfect shape itself, then it cannot give rise to complete activity. But it may still give rise to an activity of seeing that is less successful than the activity of a perfectly healthy eye. Similarly, we may think that an incomplete life gives rise to the activity of living. Yet, this does not make the activity of this life as successful and complete as it could have been.[59] Thus, there seems to be a manner of understanding an incomplete life as an incomplete activity in the narrow sense but not necessarily as a process.

5 Final Remarks

Let us sum up. While most scholars tend to assume, without much discussion, that *zōē teleia* in the *EE* refers to a lifetime, focusing instead on Aristotle's notion of *bios*

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[57] Olfert (2014, 237). Italics by Olfert.
[58] Olfert (2014, 234).
[59] Consider, for instance, the activity of a child. At the outset, we might imagine that children are mainly engaged in learning, which qualify as a process. But presumably, we could also imagine a child engaging in a sort of thinking that does not amount to learning, if the child is not in the process of acquiring knowledge. In this case, the activity of the child's thinking would be incomplete because the faculty of reason of children is not yet fully developed and thus incomplete. The child's incomplete faculty of reason would thereby give rise to incomplete activity, without being a process.

teleios in the *NE*, I have attempted to show in this article that a careful reading of the *EE* leaves us with a different analysis. Instead of taking the complete life to be a lifetime (either in a broad or narrow sense), so that happiness ends up being an incomplete activity as long as we live, I have offered a systematic reading of the passage that concludes that the complete life reaches completeness *within* a lifetime. Before concluding this investigation, let me offer some final remarks on how a life might attain this completeness and how this compares to what Aristotle writes in the *NE*.

While a full examination of what makes life complete lies outside the main scope of this article, it is fair to include some reflections on what options we should consider. If happiness essentially is a complete activity, what other than virtue could contribute to it? A first proposal to what makes life complete, is pleasure (*hēdonē*). This suggestion is inspired by *NE* X 4, 1175a10–17, where Aristotle writes that pleasure completes (*teleioi*) someone's activities and therefore also their life (*to zēn*). On this reading, the completeness of life is directly linked to the completeness of an activity. However, given that the account of pleasure in *NE* X 4 differs from the account of pleasure in the common books on this point, there is reason to doubt that pleasure is the answer. In *NE* VII (= *EE* VI), Aristotle instead argues that pleasure *is* an activity whose end or completion is within it.[60] If pleasure is an activity on its own, as Aristotle seems to hold there, pleasure cannot be what makes the activity of life complete. Rather, they would be two *distinct* activities.

Another proposal to what makes life complete, is friendship.[61] In *EE* VII, having enough time is described as crucial for testing and verifying friendships. As pointed out, Aristotle even writes that a friend is not to be had 'in a single day',[62] thus echoing the need for time described in the key passage. Given the importance of time in Aristotle's account of friendship, one might suspect that this account constitutes his answer to how life reaches completeness. Without true and virtuous friendship, we simply cannot engage in the activity that happiness consists in.

There is, however, some reason to doubt whether friendship alone is what makes life complete. Although friendship is crucial for becoming happy, it is not the *only* good that matters to happiness. Thus, one might ask if the broader category of natural or external goods is linked to the completeness of life.[63] These

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60 1153a9–10, Inwood and Woolf (2013, xx).

61 This is Simpson's proposal, cf. n. 22.

62 VII 2, 1238a1.

63 Aristotle speaks of goods (other than happiness itself and the virtues) in various ways. 'Natural goods' (*ta phusei agatha*, VIII 3, 1248b26–7), 'goods without qualifications' (*ta haplōs agatha*, VIII 3, 1249a18), 'external goods' (*agathōn … tōn etkos*, *EE* VI 13 = *NE* VII 13, 1153b17–18), 'bodily goods' (*tōn en sōmati agathōn*, *EE* VI 13 = *NE* VII 13, 1153b17–18), 'goods of fortune' (*agathōn … tēs tuchēs*,

goods, which are all external to the soul and thus not identical with the virtues, include friendship but are not limited to it. In general, Aristotle speaks of these goods as making some sort of contribution to the activity of happiness.[64] While it is clear that natural goods may impede our virtuous activity in case of deficiency or excess,[65] Aristotle is also explicit that a certain measure of natural goods can 'produce contemplation of god' (*poiēsei … tēn tou theou theōrian*).[66] In other words, natural goods may play an important role for the exercise of complete virtue on certain conditions. Given this train of thought, we might suspect that what Aristotle describes as 'the finest measure' (*ho horos kallistos*) of natural goods will render our life complete, making use of these goods in accordance with complete virtue will render us happy.[67] Such an interpretation still gives friendship an important role in attaining completeness, but also acknowledges how other natural goods prevent our virtuous activity from being impeded. While I cannot defend this thesis in its entirety here, it does have the potential for clarifying why virtue alone is not enough for Aristotelian happiness: we also need a certain measure of natural goods to make our virtuous activity complete.

Finally, it is time to ask: how does this interpretation of *zōē teleia* compare to what Aristotle writes about the *bios teleios* in the *NE*? Although there are various interpretations of the latter notion, it is possible to identify some common ground between the complete life requirements in the *EE* and *NE*. If my interpretation is right, then the *EE* and *NE* agree that happiness does not depend on the end of a lifetime.[68] While some previous scholars have suggested that Aristotle revised his

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EE VI 13 = *NE* VII 13, 1153b17–18), and 'goods involved in good fortune' (*agatha … hosa eutuchia*, *EE* IV 1 = *NE* V 1, 1129b2–3) are all descriptions he uses. Following Monan (1968, 127–33), I understand 'natural goods' in the *EE* to be the same as external goods in the broad sense, that is, goods that are located outside of the human soul. Cf. II 1, 1218b32–4. This interpretation differs from Bonasio (2021, 129–30), who maintains that natural goods may include goods related to the soul.

64 Cf. *EE* VI 13 (= *NE* VII 13), 1153b14–19, 1153b21–5; VIII 3, 1249a21–b3, 1249b16–23.

65 VIII 3, 1249b19–21.

66 VIII 3, 1249b17. The Greek in this quotation diverges from the OCT edition by Walzer and Mingay (1991). Following Inwood and Woolf (2013, 162n27), I do not believe that *tou theiou* should be substituted for the MSS's *tou theou*.

67 This proposal does *not* imply that natural goods are an independent source of happiness. As Aristotle makes clear in the definition, happiness is the activity of a complete life *in accordance with virtue*. Natural goods are thus incapable of contributing to our happiness unless they are dealt with in a specifically virtuous manner. This is compatible with Aristotle's description of natural goods in VIII 3, 1248b26–33.

68 That this is the case in the *NE* can be attested by Aristotle's discussion of Solon's dictum, where he admits that someone might lose and possibly regain happiness *within* a lifetime (*NE* I 10, 1101a9–13). Unless we can rise to the level of happiness before death, this statement does not make sense. Cf. Irwin (1985, 104).

view on whether happiness only belongs to a life that is over,[69] I conclude otherwise. Obviously, Aristotle says less about the complete life in the *EE*. But the text still offers us strong evidence for thinking that he viewed happiness as arising *within* a lifetime even here.

That being said, there is also a striking difference between the complete life requirements in the two works: Aristotle's choice of words. How are we to explain that he writes *zōē* in one work and *bios* in the other? Although the question cannot be answered without some speculation, I think one way of explaining the difference is this: it is a well-known problem for interpreters of Aristotle that the *NE* concludes that the happiest life is the contemplative life (*bios theōrētikos*). The political life (*bios politikos*) is happiest only in a secondary way, even though Aristotle clearly speaks of happiness as being essentially connected to a political life in the earlier books. There are thus two ways of leading a happy human life in the *NE*, although it is much debated exactly how they relate to each other.[70] In the *EE*, the situation is somewhat different. Initially, Aristotle similarly acknowledges that there are three different ways of life (*bioi*): the life of politics, the life of philosophy, and the life of pleasure. These are connected to three things that rank as conducive to happiness: virtue, wisdom, and pleasure.[71] Over the course of the treatise, it nevertheless becomes apparent that Aristotle rejects that we should rank one of the three values (i.e., virtue, wisdom, and pleasure) above the others, and pursue the way of life that is linked with this highest value.[72] This is because the happiest human life *includes them all*. Given that this is Aristotle's final view of happiness in the *EE*, it seems more appropriate to employ *zōē* in this context, to avoid any unclarity as to whether any of the three ways of life stands out as better.

In sum, the account of the complete life in the *Eudemian Ethics* defended in this article underlines that happiness is a characteristic of a life at its height. It does not hinge on the end of a lifetime, though it surely takes time to secure completeness in life. But once we arrive at this point our life will be *teleia* in every sense: it will be 'complete' insofar as it is whole and lacks nothing; it will be 'perfect' insofar as it is the best of its kind; and it will be 'fully realized' insofar as this life is tied to the actualization of our final end – happiness.

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69 E.g., Irwin (1985, 104). Cf. also Roche (2014, 59n47).

70 The idea that happiness is associated with a certain manner of living is introduced already in *NE* I 5, 1095b14–19, where Aristotle comments on three traditional ways of life: the life of gratification, the life of politics, and the life of contemplation.

71 I 4, 1215a32–b1.

72 As Kenny observes, the happy life is 'a single life containing all the value sought by the promoters of the three traditional lives' (1992, 88). Although he does not discuss the complete life requirements, I think this remark permits a reasonable explanation for why Aristotle chose to write *zōē* rather than *bios* when defining happiness in II 1, 1219a38–9.

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