DAWES HICKS LECTURE ON PHILOSOPHY

ARISTOTLE ON *EUDAIMONIA*

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I

LIKE most great philosophical works Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* raises more questions than it answers. Two central issues as to which it is not even quite clear what Aristotle's view really is are, first, what is the criterion of right action and of moral virtue? and, second, what is the best life for a man to lead? The first question is raised very explicitly by Aristotle himself at the beginning of book VI, where he recalls that moral virtue (or excellence of character) was defined as a mean determined by the rule or standard that the wise man would employ, and now says that this statement though true was not clear: we need also to discover what *is* the right rule and what *is* the standard that fixes it. Unfortunately he does not subsequently take up this question in any direct way. The difficulty about the second question is not that he fails to discuss it—it is after all the centre of his target—or that he fails to answer it, but that he seems to give two answers. Most of the *Ethics* implies that good action is—or is a major element in—man's best life, but eventually in book X purely contemplative activity is said to be perfect *eudaimonia*; and Aristotle does not tell us how to combine or relate these two ideas.

One way of answering the two questions brings them into close connection. For if Aristotle really holds, in the end, that it is contemplation (*theoria*) that is *eudaimonia*, a possible or even inevitable answer to the first question is that right actions are right precisely in virtue of their making possible or in some way promoting *theoria*, and that the states of character commendable as virtues or excellences are so commendable because they are states that favour the one ultimately worthwhile state and activity, the state of theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) and the activity of *theoria*. Professors Gauthier and Jolif, in their admirable commentary,[1] take some such view; and since they recognize that Aristotle sometimes stresses the 'immanent character' of moral

[1] R. A. Gauthier and J. Y. Jolif (1958), *L'Éthique à Nicomaque*, Paris-Louvain. Quotations are from volume ii, pp. 5–7, 199, 574, 886.

action they find here a major incoherence in his thought. They themselves seek to explain why he falls into this incoherence (recognizing the moral value of virtuous actions and yet treating them as 'means to arrive at happiness') by suggesting that in his account of action he brings into play ideas that properly apply not to actions but to productive activities—he fails to free himself from an inappropriate way of speaking and from the associated way of thinking.

Professor Hintikka too has argued recently[1] that Aristotle remained enslaved to a certain traditional Greek way of thought ('conceptual teleology') and that this is why his analysis of human action uses the ends-and-means schema though this 'does not sit very happily with some of the kinds of human action which he considered most important'. According to Hintikka, since Aristotle could not 'accommodate within his conceptual system' an activity that did not have an end (*telos*), he had to provide a *telos* even for activities he wanted precisely to distinguish from productive activities, and so he fell into the absurdity of speaking of an activity of the former kind as *its own end.*

Mr. Hardie,[2] also believing that Aristotle fails in book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics* to think clearly about means and ends, claims that this fact helps to explain why he confuses the idea of an 'inclusive' end and the idea of a 'dominant' end. Hardie attributes to Aristotle as an 'occasional insight' the thought that the best life will involve a variety of aims and interests, but finds that the other doctrine—that *eudaimonia* must be identified with one supremely desired activity—is Aristotle's standard view, and not merely something to which he moves in book X. Dr. Kenny[3] agrees in interpreting book I as treating the pursuit of *eudaimonia* as the pursuit of a single dominant aim: 'Aristotle considers happiness only in the dominant sense.'

II

In this lecture I should like to question some of the views about the *Nicomachean Ethics* that I have been outlining. In

[1] J. Hintikka (1973), 'Remarks on Praxis, Poiesis, and Ergon in Plato and in Aristotle', in *Annales Universitatis Turkuensis* Sarja—Series B Osa–Tom. 126 (*Studia philosophica in honorem Sven Krohn*), Turku. Quotations are from pp. 54, 55, 58.

[2] W. F. R. Hardie (1965), 'The Final Good in Aristotle's Ethics', in *Philosophy*, xl. Quotations are from pp. 277 and 279. (See also Hardie's *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, Oxford, 1968, especially chapter II.)

[3] A. Kenny (1965–6). 'Happiness', in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 66. Quotations are from pp. 99 and 101.

particular I shall contend that in book I (and generally until book X) Aristotle is expounding an 'inclusive' doctrine of *eudaimonia*, and that there is no need to suppose that he was led into confusion on this matter by some inadequacy in his understanding of means and ends.

III

It may be useful before turning to the text, to make two preliminary points. First, the terms 'inclusive' and 'dominant', which have been prominent in recent discussion, need to be used with some care. The term 'inclusive' suggests the contrast between a single aim or 'good' and a plurality, while the term 'dominant' suggests the contrast between a group whose members are roughly equal and a group one of whose members is much superior to the rest. When used as a contrasting pair of terms how are they to be understood? By 'an inclusive end' might be meant any end combining or including two or more values or activities or goods; or there might be meant an end in which different components have roughly equal value (or at least are such that no one component is incommensurably more valuable than another). By 'a dominant end' might be meant a *monolithic* end, an end consisting of just one valued activity or good, or there might be meant that element in an end combining two or more independently valued goods that has a dominant or preponderating or paramount importance. The former (strong) sense of 'dominant end' is being used when Hardie claims that in book I (apart from his occasional insight) Aristotle 'makes the supreme end not inclusive but dominant, the object of one prime desire, philosophy'; the latter (weak) sense when he says that 'some inclusive ends will include a dominant end'. It is clearly in the strong sense of 'dominant' (and the contrasting weak sense of 'inclusive') that Hardie and Kenny claim that book I expounds *eudaimonia* as a dominant and not an inclusive end.

The second point concerns the nature of Aristotle's inquiries about *eudaimonia* in book I. It is not always easy to decide what kind of question he is answering—for example, a linguistic, a conceptual, or an evaluative question. At one end of the scale there is the observation that all agree in using the *word eudaimonia* to stand for that which is 'the highest of all practicable goods', and that all take the expressions 'living well' and 'doing well' to be equivalent to it. At the other end there is the substantial question 'what *is eudaimonia*?', a question that invites alternative

candidates and to which Aristotle offers, with his own arguments, his own answer (or two answers). In between there are remarks about *eudaimonia*, and about what we all think about it, which could be construed as helping to elucidate the very concept of *eudaimonia* or as moves towards answering the question 'what is *eudaimonia*? what form of life satisfies the concept?' It will not be necessary to attempt exact demarcations. But it is important to bear in mind that two things might be meant by the assertion that Aristotle makes *eudaimonia* a dominant end: first, that, according to him, consideration of the logical force of the term *eudaimonia*, and of its place in a network of concepts ('good', 'end', etc.), shows that *eudaimonia* is necessarily a dominant end; or (secondly) that, according to him, although it is not part of the very *concept* of *eudaimonia* that it should be a single activity, yet it is in fact so—the life that fills the bill proves on inquiry to be 'monolithic' although this is not directly deducible from the terms of the bill itself. In claiming that Aristotle expounds in book I an 'inclusive' and not a monolithic doctrine of *eudaimonia* I was referring both to his account of the concept itself—or what one might call in a broad sense the meaning of the word—and to his view about the life that satisfies the concept and deserves the name.

IV

At the very start of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (I. 1) we find Aristotle expounding and using the notion of an end, and connecting it with terms like 'good' and 'for the sake of'. He distinguishes between activities that have ends apart from themselves (e.g. products like bridles or outcomes like victory), and others that are their own ends. After remarking that where an activity has a separate end that end is better than the activity, he says that one activity or skill, *A*, may be subordinate to another, *B*, and he gives some examples, cases in fact where what *A* produces is used or exploited by *B*. He then makes a statement that is often neglected and never (I think) given its full weight: 'it makes no difference whether the activities themselves are the ends of the actions or something else apart from these, as in the case of the above-mentioned crafts' (1094^{a} 16–18). He is clearly saying here that his point about the subordination of one activity to another has application not only where (as in his examples) the subordinate activity produces a product or outcome which the superior activity uses, but also where the subordinate activity has no such end apart from itself

but is its own end. Commentators have not been sufficiently puzzled as to what Aristotle has in mind. It is after all not obvious what is meant by saying that one action or activity is for the sake of another, in cases where the first does not terminate in a product or outcome which the second can then use or exploit. It is no doubt true, as Stewart remarks, that a builder may walk to his work. But it is not clear that walking to get to the building-site is properly to be regarded as an activity that is its own end. Walking to get somewhere is more like fighting for victory: its success or failure depends on the outcome, and that is its point.

It would be natural to expect that corresponding to the initial distinction between activities there would be a fundamental distinction between the ways in which activities of the two different types could be subordinate to another activity. The idea of the use or exploitation of a product or outcome being inappropriate where the subordinate activity is not directed to a product or outcome, what immediately suggests itself instead is a relation like that of part to whole, the relation an activity or end may have to an activity or end that includes or embraces it. Many different types of case could be distinguished. But, to seek no more precision than immediate needs require, one may think of the relation of putting to playing golf or of playing golf to having a good holiday. One does not putt *in order to* play golf as one buys a club in order to play golf; and this distinction matches that between activities that do not and those that do produce a product. It will be 'because' you wanted to play golf that you are putting, and 'for the sake' of a good holiday that you are playing golf; but this is because putting and golfing are *constituents of* or *ingredients in* golfing and having a good holiday respectively, not because they are necessary preliminaries. Putting *is* playing golf (though not all that playing golf is), and golfing (in a somewhat different way) *is* having a good holiday (though not all that having a good holiday is).

Now the idea that some things are done for their own sake and may yet be done for the sake of something else is precisely the idea Aristotle will need and use in talking of good actions and *eudaimonia*. For *eudaimonia*—what all men want—is not, he insists, the result or outcome of a lifetime's effort; it is not something to look forward to (like a contented retirement), it is a life, enjoyable and worth while all through. Various bits of it must themselves be enjoyable and worth while, not just means for bringing about subsequent bits. That the primary ingredients of *eudaimonia* are for the sake of *eudaimonia* is not incompatible

with their being ends in themselves; for *eudaimonia* is constituted by activities that are ends in themselves. More of this in a moment. The main point I want to make about *Nicomachean Ethics* I. 1 is that it is unreasonable to suggest that Aristotle is slipping into an inherited usage when in fact he is very obviously introducing and expounding distinctions vital for what follows. Hintikka, in the paper from which I have quoted, seems to assume that the word *telos* ('end') must mean an end produced by (instrumental) means, and that 'for the sake of' necessarily brings in the idea of an end separate from the action. But the word *telos* is by no means so narrowly confined, and it is absurd to rely on the implications (or supposed implications) of a translation rather than on the substance of what the philosopher is evidently saying. Why should Hintikka, in any case, identify having a 'well-defined end or aim' with doing something as a means to producing an outcome? If I play chess because I want to enjoy myself, is not that a well-defined aim? And can we ourselves not speak of 'doing something for its own sake'? Of course an action cannot be 'a means to performing itself'—but Aristotle's words are not, like these, nonsensical; and his meaning seems clear enough.

Unlike Hintikka, Gauthier and Jolif have no trouble over action being its own end. They recognize the importance of 'l'affirmation par Aristote, dès les premières lignes de l'*Éthique*, du caractère immanent de l'action morale', though they add regretfully that its force is 'limitée par les lignes 1094^{a}16–18 [quoted above, p. 6] et par la contradiction qu'elles incluent'. In their note on this last sentence they say: 'on ne voit pas . . . comment les actions morales, dont c'est la nature d'être à elles-mêmes leur propre fin, pourront ultérieurement être ordonnées à autre chose pour former une série hiérarchisée'. They call this one of Aristotle's 'incohérences foncières'. 'Au lieu d'être sa fin à elle-même, l'action morale devient un moyen de *faire* autre chose qu'elle-même, le bonheur.' I have tried to suggest that this offending sentence may in fact invite us to think of a kind of subordination which makes it perfectly possible to say that moral action is for the sake of *eudaimonia* without implying that it is a means to producing ('faire') something other than itself.

V

Aristotle's thought on this matter is more fully developed in the first part of chapter 7 (1097^{a}15–^{b}21), where he starts from points about 'good' and 'end' and 'for the sake of' which come

from chapter 1 and concludes with the statement that *eudaimonia* is something final and self-sufficient, and the end of action. In asking what we aim at in action, what its 'good' is, Aristotle says that if there is just one end (*telos*) of all action this will be its good; if more, they will be its good. Now, he goes on, there evidently *are* more ends than one, but some are chosen for something else, and so they are not all *teleia* ('final'). But the best, the highest good, will be something *teleion*. So if only one end is *teleion*, that will be what we are looking for; if more than one are *teleia*, it will be the one that is most *teleion* (τελειότατον).

No reader or listener could be at all clear at this point as to what is meant by 'most *teleion*'. The word *teleion* has been introduced to separate off ends desired in themselves from ends desired as means to other ends. What is meant by the suggestion that there may be degrees of finality among ends all of which are desired for themselves? Aristotle goes on at once to explain how, among ends all of which are final, one end can be more final than another: *A* is more final than *B* if though *B* is sought for its own sake (and hence is indeed a final and not merely intermediate goal) it is also sought for the sake of *A*. And that end is more final than any other, final without qualification (τέλειον ἁπλῶς) which is always sought for its own sake and never for the sake of anything else. Such, he continues, is *eudaimonia*: there may be plenty of things (such as pleasure and virtue) that we value for themselves, but yet we say too that we value them for the sake of *eudaimonia*, whereas nobody ever aims at *eudaimonia* for the sake of one of them (or, in general, for anything other than itself).

Surely Aristotle is here making a clear conceptual point, not a rash and probably false empirical claim. To put it at its crudest: one can answer such a question as 'Why do you seek pleasure?' by saying that you see it and seek it as an element in the most desirable sort of life; but one cannot answer or be expected to answer the question 'Why do you seek the most desirable sort of life?' The answer to the question about pleasure does not imply that pleasure is not intrinsically worth while but only a means to an end. It implies rather that pleasure *is* intrinsically worth while, being an element in *eudaimonia*. *Eudaimonia* is the most desirable sort of life, the life that contains all intrinsically worthwhile activities.

This idea, that takes up the thought suggested in the last sentence of chapter 1, is expressed again in the following lines, where the term 'self-sufficient' is introduced. That is self-sufficient

(ἄυταρκες) in the relevant sense which, taken alone (μονούμενον), makes life desirable and lacking in nothing (μηδενὸς ἐνδεᾶ). *Eudaimonia* does just that. For, Aristotle says, we regard it as the most worth while of all things, *not* being counted as one good thing among others (πάντων αἱρετωτάτην μὴ συναριθμουμένην)—for *then* (if it *were* simply the most worth while of a *number* of candidates) the addition of any of the other things would make it better, more worth while—and it would *not* have been lacking in nothing. He is saying, then, that *eudaimonia*, being absolutely final and genuinely self-sufficient, is more desirable than anything else in that it *includes* everything desirable in itself. It is best, and better than everything else, not in the way that bacon is better than eggs and than tomatoes (and therefore the best *of the three* to choose), but in the way that bacon, eggs, and tomatoes is a better breakfast than either bacon or eggs or tomatoes—and is indeed the best breakfast without qualification.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this emphatic part of chapter 7 in connection with Aristotle's elucidation of the concept of *eudaimonia*. He is not here running over rival popular views about what is desirable, nor is he yet working out his own account of the best life. He is explaining the logical force of the word *eudaimonia* and its relation to terms like 'end', and 'good'. This is all a matter of report and analysis, containing nothing capable of provoking moral or practical dispute. Aristotle's two points are: (i) you cannot say of *eudaimonia* that you seek it for the sake of anything else, you can say of anything else that you seek it for the sake of *eudaimonia*; (ii) you cannot say you would prefer *eudaimonia* plus something extra to *eudaimonia*. These points are of course connected. For if you could say that you would prefer *eudaimonia* plus something extra to *eudaimonia*, you could say that you sought *eudaimonia* for the sake of something else, namely the greater end consisting of *eudaimonia* plus something extra. The first point is that *eudaimonia* is inclusive of all intrinsic goods; and if that is so by definition it is unintelligible to suggest that *eudaimonia* might be improved by addition. This ends and clinches one part of Aristotle's discussion, and he marks quite clearly the transition to the different and more contentious question to be dealt with in what follows: '*eudaimonia*, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action. However, while the statement that *eudaimonia* is the chief good probably seems indisputable (ὁμολογούμενόν τι), what is still wanted is a clearer account of *what it is*'.

It is not necessary to claim that Aristotle has made quite

clear how there may be 'components' in the best life or how they may be interrelated. The very idea of constructing a compound end out of two or more independent ends may rouse suspicion. Is the compound to be thought of as a mere aggregate or as an organized system? If the former, the move to *eudaimonia* seems trivial—nor is it obvious that goods can be just added together. If the latter, if there is supposed to be a unifying plan, what is it? For present purposes it is enough to claim that Aristotle understands the concept of *eudaimonia* in such a way the *eudaimonia* necessarily includes all activities that are valuable, that he applies the notion of *A*'s being for the sake of *B* to the relation between any such activity and *eudaimonia*, and that it is in this sense that he holds that good actions are for the sake of *eudaimonia*.

Commentators have not, I think, given due weight to these interlocking passages about the finality and self-sufficiency of *eudaimonia*. Gauthier and Jolif follow Burnet in giving a correct account of the latter passage, and they say: 'le bonheur ne saurait *s'additioner* à quoi que ce soit pour faire une *somme* qui vaudrait mieux que lui; il est en effet lui-même la somme qui inclut tous les biens.' Unfortunately they fail to connect this with the earlier passage in which Aristotle speaks of ends that are indeed final yet subordinate to one supreme end, *eudaimonia*. Nor do they refer to this text when considering (and rejecting) the suggestion that Aristotle's general idea of *eudaimonia* is of a whole composed of parts.

Mr. Hardie also recognizes that the self-sufficiency passage suggests an inclusive end, yet he offers the previous sections as part of the evidence that Aristotle's main view is different. Aristotle's explicit view, he says, 'as opposed to his occasional insight, makes the supreme end not inclusive but dominant, the object of one prime desire, philosophy. This is so even when, as in E.N. I. 7, he has in mind that, *prima facie*, there is not only one final end'; and Hardie then quotes: 'if there are more than one, the most final of these will be what we are seeking.' I do not think that '*prima facie*' does justice to 'if more than one, then the most final'. It seems to imply that Aristotle is saying that though there may seem at first sight to be several final ends there can really be only one final end, and the others must really be only means to it. But there is, of course, no 'seems'. The hypothesis is that there *are* several final ends. When Aristotle says that if so we are seeking the most final he is surely not laying down that only one of them (*theoria*) is *really* a final end.

What he has in mind with this use of 'most final' must be discovered by considering the explanation he immediately gives (an explanation which Hardie, very remarkably, does not quote). For certainly the idea of degrees of finality calls for elucidation. The explanation he gives introduces the idea of an objective that is indeed a final end, sought for its own sake, but is nevertheless also sought for the sake of something else. So the *most* final end is that never sought for the sake of anything else because it includes all final ends. That there *is* such an end whenever there are several final ends is not then a piece of unargued dogma; it follows naturally from the very idea of an 'inclusive' end. Such, Aristotle immediately continues, is *eudaimonia* (not, we note, *theoria* or *nous*)—and he then passes to the self-sufficiency point which, as Hardie himself recognizes, implies the inclusive approach.

Dr. Kenny, on the other hand, in his paper 'Happiness', actually reverses the sense of the passage about self-sufficiency. He attributes to Aristotle the remark that 'other goods added to happiness will add up to something more choiceworthy', and he says that this 'makes it clear that Aristotle did not consider happiness an inclusive state made up of independent goods'. This interpretation will not, I am convinced, survive a careful consideration of the immediate context (especially Aristotle's description of the 'self-sufficient' as 'lacking nothing' and his statement that *eudaimonia* is best 'not being counted as one good thing among others'). Nor are other passages in which the quite special character of the concept *eudaimonia* is dwelt upon compatible with this interpretation of *eudaimonia* as happiness. It is indeed only if one is willing, with Kenny, to treat 'happiness' as a fair translation of the word *eudaimonia* that one can feel the slightest temptation to take the self-sufficiency passage as he does. This willingness is the fatal flaw in his paper considered as a contribution to the understanding of Aristotle. The point is important enough to deserve a brief digression.

It may be true, as Kenny says, that happiness is not everything, that not everyone seeks it, and that it can be renounced in favour of other goals. What Aristotle says, however, is that *eudaimonia* is the one final good that all men seek; and he would not find intelligible the suggestion that a man might renounce it in favour of some other goal. Nor is Aristotle here expressing a personal view about what is worth while or about human nature. It is in elucidation of the very *concept* that he asserts and emphasizes the unique and supreme value of *eudaimonia*

(especially in I. 4, I. 7, I. 12). The word *eudaimonia* has a force not at all like 'happiness', 'comfort', or 'pleasure', but more like 'the best possible life' (where 'best' has not a narrowly moral sense). This is why there can be plenty of disagreement as to what form of life *is eudaimonia*, but no disagreement that *eudaimonia* is what we all want.

Kenny points out that someone might renounce happiness because the only possible way to achieve his own happiness would involve doing wrong. He writes: 'In such a case, we might say, the agent must have the long-term goal of acting virtuously: but this would be a goal in a different way from happiness, a goal identified with a certain kind of action, and not a goal to be secured by action.' How would the situation envisaged be described by Aristotle? If I find it necessary to undergo privation or suffering in order to do my duty I shall have to recognize that my life will fall short of *eudaimonia*. But what I *renounce* is comfort in favour of right action, not *eudaimonia* in favour of right action. Nor could Aristotle possibly contrast *eudaimonia* with acting virtuously on the ground that *eudaimonia* is 'a goal to be secured by action' while acting virtuously is 'a goal identified with a certain kind of action'. Comfort and prosperity may be goals to be secured by action, but *eudaimonia* is precisely *not* such a goal. It is doing well (εὐπραξία), not the result of doing well; a life, not the reward of a life. Nearly everything Kenny says about happiness goes to show that the word 'happiness' is not a proper translation of the word *eudaimonia*.

VI

On what other grounds, then, may it be contended that Aristotle's idea of *eudaimonia* in book I is the idea of a 'dominant' end, a 'single object of desire'? Hardie takes the notorious first sentence of chapter 2 as expressing this idea—not indeed as asserting it, but as introducing it hypothetically. The sentence and following section run as follows in Ross's translation:

> If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good. Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life? Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right?

It is commonly supposed that Aristotle is guilty of a fallacy in the first sentence, the fallacy of arguing that since every purposive activity aims at some end desired for itself there must be some end desired for itself at which every purposive activity aims. Hardie acquits Aristotle. He writes:

> Aristotle does not here prove, nor need we understand him as claiming to prove, that there is only *one* end which is desired for itself. He points out correctly that, if there are objects which are desired but not desired for themselves, there must be *some* object which is desired for itself. The passage further suggests that, if there were *one* such object and one only, this fact would be important and helpful for the conduct of life.

It is, however, not so easy to acquit Aristotle. For what would be the point of the second part of the protasis—the clause 'if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else' together with the proof that we do not—unless it were intended to establish as true the first part of the protasis—'there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this)'? If the second part were simply a correct remark—irrelevant to, or a mere consequence of, the first part—it would be absurdly placed and serve no purpose.

The outline structure of the sentence is 'if *p* and not *q*, then *r*'. Nobody will suggest that the not-*q* is here a condition additional to *p*. The one natural way to read the sentence as a coherent whole is to suppose that *q* is mentioned as the only alternative to *p*. In that case a proof of not-*q* would be a proof of *p*. So when Aristotle gives his admirable proof of not-*q* he is purporting to prove *p*; and the sentence as a whole therefore amounts to the assertion that *r*.

This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that in what follows Aristotle does assume that *r* is true. Hardie attributes to him the suggestion that if there *were* only one object desired for itself, this fact *would* be important. But what Aristotle says is that knowledge of it '*has* (ἔχει) a great influence'; and he says we must try 'to determine what it *is* (τί ποτ' ἐστί), and of which of the sciences or capacities it *is* the object'; and he proceeds to try to do so.

There is, then, a fallacious argument embedded in the first sentence of chapter 2. But further consideration of the context and Aristotle's general approach may help to explain and excuse. What, after all, is the conclusion to which Aristotle's argument is directed? That there is some end desired for itself, everything else being desired for it. This need not be taken to mean that

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

Enough has been said about other passages to suggest that this notion is indeed central to Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia* in book I. The sentence at the beginning of chapter 2 precedes a passage that points to the inclusive conception. It immediately follows (and is connected by an inferential particle with) the remark I discussed earlier to the effect that activities that have no separate product can nevertheless be subordinate to and for the sake of higher activities—a remark which itself invites interpretation in terms of 'inclusive' or 'embracing' ends. This being the context and the drift of Aristotle's thought it is perhaps not so surprising that he should commit the fallacy we have found it impossible to acquit him of. For the fallacy would disappear if an extra premiss were introduced—namely, that where there are two or more separate ends each desired for itself we can say that there is just one (compound) end such that each of those separate ends is desired not only for itself but also for *it*.

VII

Up to the middle of I. 7, then, Aristotle has explained that the concept of *eudaimonia* is that of the complete and perfectly satisfying life. He has also mentioned various popular ideas as to what sort of life would fulfil that requirement, and he has accepted without discussion some fairly obvious views about certain goods that presumably deserve a place in the best life. Next, in the second part of chapter 7, he develops the *ergon* argument, thus beginning to work out his own account. Something must now be said about the way in which this argument terminates.

Consideration of man's *ergon* (specific function or characteristic work) leads Aristotle to the thesis that *eudaimonia*, man's highest good, is an active life of 'the element that has a rational principle'. This would of course cover practical as well as

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

Aristotle does have his arguments, of course, for regarding *theoria* as a higher form of activity than practical thought and action guided by reason. He will even come to say that though it is not *qua* man (but *qua* possessing something divine) that a man can engage in *theoria*, yet a man (like any other system) is most properly to be identified with what is best and noblest in him. But it is clear that these arguments and ideas are not stated in the *ergon* argument and involve quite different considerations. The only proper conclusion of the *ergon* argument would be: 'if there are more than one virtue, then in accordance with all of them.' This is precisely how the conclusion is drawn in the *Eudemian Ethics* (1219ª35–9): 'Since we saw that *eudaimonia* is something complete [*teleion*], and life is either complete or incomplete, and so also virtue—one being whole virtue, another a part—and the activity of what is incomplete is itself incomplete, *eudaimonia* must be the activity of a complete life in accordance with complete virtue (κατ' ἀρετὴν τελείαν)'. The reference to whole and part makes clear that by 'complete virtue' here is meant all virtues.

If, then, the *Nicomachean Ethics* addition—'if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete' —is a reference by Aristotle to a 'monolithic' doctrine, the doctrine that *eudaimonia* is really to be found in just one activity,

theoria, it is entirely unsupported by the previous argument, part of whose conclusion it purports to be. Moreover, it is not called for—and has not been prepared for—by the conceptual clarification of the notion of *eudaimonia* earlier in the book and chapter; for it has not there been said that the end for man must be 'monolithic' (or even contain a dominant component). Thus such a restriction will be an ill-fitting and at first unintelligible intrusion of a view only to be explained and expounded much later. Now this is certainly a possibility, but not, in the circumstances, a very strong one. For we are not dealing with a work that in general shows obvious signs that marginal notes and later additions or revisions have got incorporated but not properly integrated into the text. Nor is the case like that of the *De Anima*, in which there are several anticipatory references to 'separable reason' before that difficult doctrine is explicitly stated. For there the remarks do not appear as part of conclusions of arguments; they are the lecturer's reminders of a possibility later to be explored, they keep the door open for a new character's later arrival. Here, however, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, something is being affirmed categorically, and at a critical stage of the work, and as a crucial part of the conclusion of a carefully constructed argument.

Is there not any alternative to construing 'the best and most complete virtue' as an allusion to *sophia*? After all it must be allowed that the meaning of the expression 'most complete virtue' or 'most final virtue' (τελειοτάτη ἀρετή) is not perfectly obvious. An alternative may suggest itself if we recall that earlier passage in the same chapter, concerning ends and final ends. For there too there was a sudden baffling use of the term 'most final'—and there it was explained. 'Most final' meant 'final without qualification' and referred to the comprehensive end that includes all partial ends. One who has just been told how to understand 'if there are more than one end, we seek the most final' will surely interpret in a similar or parallel way the words 'if there are more than one virtue, then the best and most final'. So he will interpret it as referring to total virtue, the combination of all virtues. And he will find that this interpretation gives a sense to the conclusion of the *ergon* argument that is exactly what the argument itself requires.

This suggestion is confirmed by two later passages in book I, where Aristotle uses the term '*teleia arete*' and clearly is not referring to *sophia* (or any one particular virtue) but rather to comprehensive or complete virtue. The first of these passages

(I. 9. 10) is explicitly taking up the conclusion of the *ergon* argument—'there is required, *as we said*, both complete virtue (*aretes teleias*) and a complete life'. The second (I. 13. 1) equally obviously relies upon it: 'since *eudaimonia* is an activity of soul in accordance with complete virtue (*areten teleian*), we must investigate virtue'. And the whole further development of the work, with its detailed discussion of moral virtues and its stress upon the intrinsic value of good action, follows naturally if (but only if) the conclusion of the *ergon* argument is understood to refer to *complete* and not to some one *particular* virtue.

VIII

It is evidently not possible here to survey all the evidence and arguments for and against the thesis that Aristotle's account of *eudaimonia* in book I is decidedly 'inclusive'; but one question should be touched on briefly. If such is indeed Aristotle's account it may well be asked why he does not state it more plainly and unambiguously, using the terminology of parts and whole as in the *Eudemian Ethics*. One possibility worth considering is that he realizes in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that the notion of *parts* is really much too crude. To say that *eudaimonia* is a whole made up of parts does indeed make it quite clear that you are expounding an 'inclusive' and not a 'dominant' or 'monolithic' end. But it leaves quite unclear what kind of partition can be meant and how such 'parts' are put together. Plato already brings out in the *Protagoras* the difficulty of understanding the suggestion that there are different virtues which are 'parts' of complete virtue. Aristotle is particularly conscious of the variety of ways in which different factors contribute to a good life, and also of the fact that the distinguishable is not necessarily separable. So it may be that the reason why he does not speak of parts of a whole in *Nicomachean Ethics* I is not that he now sees *eudaimonia* as other than inclusive, but that he now has a greater awareness of how difficult it is to say exactly how the notion of 'inclusion' is to be understood. It may have seemed less misleading to speak (rather vaguely) of 'contributing to a final end' than to use an expression like 'parts of a whole' which sounds entirely straightforward but is not really so.

IX

I have argued with respect to *Nicomachean Ethics* I that when Aristotle says that *A* is for the sake of *B*, he need not mean that *A* is a means to subsequent *B* but may mean that *A* contributes

as a constituent to *B*; that this is what he does mean when he says that good actions are for the sake of *eudaimonia*; and that he does not argue or imply that *eudaimonia* consists in a single type of activity, *theoria*. This is a defence of Aristotle against the charge that in book I a confusion about means and ends leads him to hold that action has value only as a means to *theoria*. But the original questions are now, of course, reopened: what, according to Aristotle, does make virtuous actions virtuous? and how are action and *theoria* related in his final account of the best life for man? I shall conclude with some exceedingly brief remarks on these questions.

It might be suggested that Aristotle's answer to the first question is that actions are virtuous in so far as they promote *theoria*, even if that answer is not argued for or implied in the first book. But although book X, using new arguments, certainly ranks *theoria* above the life of action as a higher *eudaimonia* it does not assert roundly—let alone seek to show in any detail—that what makes any good and admirable action good and admirable is its tendency to promote *theoria*. Nor can this thesis be properly read into Aristotle's statement in book VI (1145^{a}6–9) that practical wisdom does not use or issue orders to *sophia* but sees that it comes into being and issues orders for its sake. He is here concerned to deal with a problem someone might raise (1143^{b}33–5): is it not paradoxical if practical wisdom, though inferior to *sophia*, 'is to be put in authority over it, as seems to be implied by the fact that the art which produces anything rules and issues commands about that thing'? Aristotle's reply does not amount to the unnecessarily strong claim that *every* decision of practical wisdom, *every* correct judgement what to do, is determined by the single objective of promoting *theoria*. It is sufficient, to meet the difficulty proposed, for him to insist that since *theoria* is an activity valuable in itself the man of practical wisdom will seek to promote it and its virtue *sophia*, and that *that* is the relation between practical wisdom and *sophia*. To say this, that practical wisdom does not control *sophia* but makes it possible, is not to say that making it possible is the only thing that practical wisdom has to do.

It has sometimes been thought that the last chapter of the *Eudemian Ethics* offers an explicit answer to our question. Aristotle says here that whatever choice or acquisition of natural goods most produces 'the contemplation of god' is best; and any that prevents 'the service and contemplation of god' is bad. However, Aristotle is not addressing himself at this point to the

question what makes good and virtuous actions good and virtuous. Such actions he has described earlier in the chapter as praiseworthy and as done for their own sake by truly good men. It is when he passes from good actions to things like money, honour, and friends—things which are indeed naturally good but which are nevertheless capable of being misused and harmful, and which are not objects of praise—that he raises the question of a criterion or test (ὅρος). The test is only to determine when and within what limits natural goods should be chosen or acquired, and it is to provide this test that the promotion of contemplation is mentioned. So while here, as in *Nicomachean Ethics* X, the value of contemplation is emphasized, it is clearly not put forward as the foundation of morality or as providing the ultimate criterion for the rightness of right actions.

Aristotle does not then commit himself to the thesis that actions are valuable only in so far as they promote *theoria*. But no alternative answer to our first question seems to present itself. He holds no doubt that good actions spring from and appeal to good states of character, and that good states of character are good because they are the healthy and balanced condition of a man. But it will be obvious sooner or later that this is a circle or a blind alley. Again, it is no doubt true and important that the good man does what he does 'because it is noble' (ὅτι καλόν) and that the right thing to do is what the good man would do. But such remarks do not begin to reveal any principle or test whereby the man of practical wisdom can decide what *is* the noble or the right thing to do. Perhaps indeed he can 'see', without having to work out, what to do; and that will make him an admirable adviser if we want to know what to do. But if we are inquiring about the 'why?' rather than the 'what?' references to the good man's settled character and reliable judgement are not helpful.

The other question—what is the best life for a man to lead—also remains without a satisfactory answer. A life of *theoria* would certainly be the best of all lives—and such indeed is the life Aristotle attributes to his god. But, as he himself allows, *theoria* by itself does not constitute a possible life for a man. A man is a sort of compound (*syntheton*), an animal who lives and moves in time but has the ability occasionally to engage in an activity that somehow escapes time and touches the eternal. So you do not give a man a complete rule or recipe for life by telling him to engage in *theoria*. Any human life must include action, and in the best life practical wisdom and moral virtue

will therefore be displayed as well as *sophia*. But then the question is unavoidable: if *theoria* and virtuous action are both valuable forms of activity—independently though not equally valuable—how should they be combined in the best possible human life? What really is, in full, the recipe?

Aristotle's failure to tackle this question may be due in part to the fact that he often considers a philosopher's life and a statesman's life as alternatives, following here a traditional pattern of thought, the 'comparison of lives'. They are indeed alternatives, if (as is presumably the case) concentration on *theoria* is incompatible with concentration on great public issues. But the philosopher's life here in question as one alternative is not a life simply of *theoria*, any more than the statesman's is a life of continuous public action. To contrast the philosopher with the statesman is to leave out of account the innumerable activities common to both. But it is precisely the relation, in the best life, between *theoria* and such activities—the ordinary actions of daily life—that requires elucidation. In so far then as he is concerned to pick out the philosopher's life and the statesman's life as the two worthiest ideals and to rank the former higher than the latter, Aristotle is not obliged to ask how in the philosopher's life the distinctive activity of *theoria* is to be combined with humbler practical activities—any more than to ask how in the statesman's life domestic claims are to weigh against public ones.

However, there must surely be some deeper explanation why Aristotle so signally fails to attempt an answer to the question how *theoria* and virtuous action would combine in the best human life. The question is theoretically crucial for his project in the *Ethics*, and must also have been of practical importance for him. The truth is, I suggest, that the question is incapable of even an outline answer that Aristotle could accept. For he does not wish to claim that actions have value only in so far as they (directly or indirectly) promote *theoria*; and it would have been desperately difficult for him to maintain such a claim while adhering reasonably closely to ordinary moral views. But if actions can be virtuous and valuable not only in so far as they are promoting *theoria*, the need for Aristotle to give a rule for combining *theoria* with virtuous action in the best life is matched by the impossibility of his doing so, given that *theoria* is the incommensurably more valuable activity.

It may seem that one could say: maximize *theoria*, and for the rest act well; and Aristotle's own famous injunction 'to make ourselves immortal as far as we can' (ἐφ' ὅσον ἐνδέχεται ἀθανατίζειν)

might be understood in this way. Such a rule, giving absolute priority to *theoria*, would certainly avoid conflicting claims: it will only be if and when *theoria* cannot be engaged in and nothing can be done to promote *theoria* in any way that the other value will enter into consideration. However, the consequences of such a rule would be no less paradoxical than the consequences of the outright denial of any independent value to action. For the implication of the denial is that one should do anything however seemingly monstrous if doing it has the slightest tendency to promote *theoria*—and such an act would on this view actually be good and virtuous. The implication of the absolute priority rule is also that one should do anything however monstrous if doing it has the slightest tendency to promote *theoria*—though such an act would on this view actually still be monstrous.

The only way to avoid such paradoxical and inhuman consequences would be to allow a certain amount of compromise and trading between *theoria* and virtuous action, treating the one as more important but not incomparably more important than the other. But how can there be a trading relation between the divine and the merely human? Aristotle's theology and anthropology make it inevitable that his answer to the question about *eudaimonia* should be broken-backed. Just as he cannot in the *De Anima* fit his account of separable reason—which is not the form of a body—into his general theory that the soul is the form of the body, so he cannot make intelligible in the *Ethics* the nature of man as a compound of 'something divine' and much that is not divine. How can there be a coalition between such parties? But if the nature of man is thus unintelligible the best life for man must remain incapable of clear specification even in principle. Nor can it now seem surprising that Aristotle fails also to answer the other question, the question about morality. For the *kind* of answer we should expect of him would be one based on a thesis about the *nature* of man, and no satisfactory account of that kind *can* be given while the nature of man remains obscure and mysterious.

Aristotle is, of course, in good company—in the company of all philosophers who hold that one element in man is supremely valuable, but are unwilling to embrace the paradoxical and extremist conclusions about life that that view implies. And a parallel difficulty is felt in many religions by the enthusiastic. How can the true believer justify taking any thought for the future or devoting any attention to the problems and pleasures of this mortal life? *Sub specie aeternitatis* are not such daily concerns

of infinitely little importance? In fact compromises are made, and theologians explain that nobody need feel guilty at making them. But the suspicion remains that a man who really believed in the supreme importance of some absolute could not continue to live in much the same way as others.