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In Book X.7 of the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle picks up from the discussion in Book I on *eudaimonia* ("What is it?"). In this continuation, he stuns us by showing how *eudaimonia* consists in *theoria*—this does not follow from Book I, where he seemed to be saying that *eudaimonia* consisted in our (as humans) function, namely the activities of the soul—*phronesis* and *theoria*. Two major strains of interpretation have come from this conundrum. Some say no, Aristotle can be seen as carrying through an inclusive end theory, whereby both activities are still present in *eudaimonia*, which he began in Book I. Others, however, hold that Aristotle held firmly to the idea of one dominant end for all people and that Aristotle, by showing *theoria* as supreme in Book X, is consistent with this. Aristotle runs into problems in the end not because he is unclear in the beginning, but because he changes some of his previous definitions at the end. While we may not be able to *prove* either the dominant or inclusive end theories, we can find a more complex notion of what it is that *makes* a human potentially hiding in Aristotle, and through this, begin to form a more interesting version of an inclusive *eudaimonia*.

It is necessary to examine the many possible translations and conceptions of the two terms which I use most in this paper, *phronesis* and *theoria*. *Phronesis* is traditionally translated "practical wisdom"; however, in his translation Irwin uses "intelligence" and adds that "prudence" might, in fact, be better in that it means "a good sense about one's welfare," though our tendency is to assume that it means "narrow-minded caution—not assuming the person is reflective" (Aristotle 1985, 412). Aristotle defines *phronesis* in Book VI, where he discusses the virtues of

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[1] I am most comfortable using Greek terms rather than translations, because translations pin the Greek down to one meaning when it is actually not that simple. I have chosen to keep the most ambiguous terms in Greek. Obviously *autarkes* ("self-sufficiency") and other terms do have more meaning than the English will admit; however, there is a point at which one has to decide whether the paper is going to be in English or Greek, and I feel that to keep any more terms in Greek would be to hit the point of absurdity. Rather than forcing the reader to divine the meanings of the original Greek, here are some various translations for the terms I do use:

ergon: "function" (literally 'work'), "characteristic task (or) activity"
eudaimonia: generally rendered "happiness"; Nussbaum suggests "human flourishing" in order for it not to be confused with our Utilitarian-colored notions of happiness (15). *Eudaimon* is the adjectival form.

I deal with the translations of the terms *phronesis* and *theoria* to a larger extent within the content of the paper itself. And finally, when I quote directly from *Ethics*, I keep the forms as translated by Irwin.

thought, as "a state grasping the truth, concerned with action about what is good or bad for a human being." Action, he continues, does not have an end beyond itself: "its end is doing well itself, and doing well is the concern of intelligence." He concludes: "intelligence must be a state grasping the truth, involving reason, and concerned with action about human goods" (1140b5-8). *Phronesis* is more concerned with everyday actions. Pericles and politicians and household managers are intelligent since "they are able to study what is good for themselves and for human beings" (1140b10). In this *way*, *phronesis* is connected to community—one is not intelligent merely as an individual, but in relation to others: since "one's own welfare requires household management and a political system" (1142a10), my life is tied into those around me, and *phronesis* allows me to make good decisions on behalf of us all.

Theoria, in contrast, defines a very different rational capacity, traditionally translated as "contemplation," and by Irwin as "study," particularly theoretical study. *Theoria* is the activity which expresses *nous*, "understanding." One understands origins—origins are not demonstrable, one cannot prove them syllogistically—however, everything *has* an origin, and it is through *theoria* that we know these. It does not lead to "an answer" to a problem. Aristotle does not see *theoria* as necessarily equivalent to philosophy, then—I can think philosophically about a number of things, however, rarely do I do *theoria*. I might, instead, wonder about various applications of ethics to problems in the real world, or about theoretical issues of translation, or what it means to have knowledge—but this is not *theoria*. From what Aristotle seems to be saying here, *theoria* would be strictly reflecting on the knowledge of origins—almost like meditating on the idea of a god.

In order to begin talking about *eudaimonia*, we need to understand Aristotle's *ergon* argument.[2] The argument is developed in Book I.7; by this point we have found that *eudaimonia* is the best good (because it is complete, self-sufficient and most choiceworthy)—now we just need to define what we mean by *eudaimonia*, and Aristotle thinks that this can best be done if we can figure out what the *ergon* of a human being is. The *ergon* of an x is what that thing does—it is the characteristic activity of the x. A good x, then, performs the *ergon* of the x well: hence, the good person will do the *ergon* of humans well. Aristotle concludes that the *ergon* of humans "is some sort of life of action of the part of the soul that has reason" (1098a2) and by application, the human good is "the soul's activity that expresses virtue" (1098a16). While this seems to imply that there is only one activity of the soul, Aristotle, in fact, distinguishes two: *phronesis* and

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[2] One could debate for hours on end whether Aristotle is correct in basing *eudaimonia* on the idea of an *ergon* for humans, and whether it is possible to speak of humans as having one *ergon*, but that is not my concern here. Rather, I wish to see how his conception fits in with what he holds in the rest of the *Ethics*.

sophia (philosophical wisdom) (1143b15). After showing this, Aristotle spends the next few books describing what he means by virtue, and then moves on to talk about the importance of friendship. All these studies have in common their emphasis on humans in the world (and the polis) as political animals.

In Book X.7, Aristotle picks up on this question of "what is *eudaimonia*?" with an argument he has developed in Book I. *Eudaimonia* is an activity choiceworthy in itself, it lacks nothing, and it is self-sufficient—all three of these criteria fit the character of actions expressing virtue. Hence, *eudaimonia* is a life-expressing virtue. Having said this, however, Aristotle then jumps and states: "it is reasonable for it to express the supreme virtue, which will be the virtue of the best thing" (1177a10-13). As the best virtue is understanding *(nous)* and the activity which expresses this virtue is *theoria*, then, "understanding is the supreme element in us," (1177a20) and *theoria* is the supreme activity. He then goes on to try to justify this claim of supremacy by showing how *theoria* is the most continuous, the most pleasant, and the most self-sufficient activity.

Aristotle is right in some way by seeing *theoria* as the most continuous activity. Continuity is important to Aristotle because in searching for *eudaimonia*, we are interested in finding a *life* of virtue—not one virtuous occasion here, another there. In Book I.10, Aristotle, in discussing how and when we say a person is happy, comes upon this question of continuity: "We hesitate out of reluctance to call him happy during his lifetime because of the variations and because we suppose happiness is enduring and definitely not prone to fluctuate" (1100b1-4). A bit later he says, "The happy person has the stability we are looking for and keeps the character he has throughout his life" (1100b18). *Theoria*, more so than any of the individual virtues, seems to fit this definition of continuity (1177a22). And this makes sense. The other virtues seem to require little spurts of activity in order to be that virtue; and through performing many of these little spurts of virtuousness, which all lead to the same end, one maintains her/his virtuousness. A person is brave by fighting bravely in a battle once or twice, or perhaps more; one is continent by saying "no, thanks" to another glass of wine or slice of chocolate cake. These are all confined activities; there is a definite beginning and end to each virtuous exercise. That is, we strive for something in particular—we have a motive in mind when we begin these activities. *Theoria*, by contrast, just *is thought*. *Theoria* is, after all, the activity of the gods—it is *all* that the gods ever do. Because we, as humans, have both animal and divine characteristics in us, we are able to, sometimes (as a species, that is), reach this divine element and thus have the potential for *theoria*. This stability and enduringness are qualities of *theoria*—the ones who study constantly (namely, the gods) are the least changing, most constant beings. So, in order to keep in a relatively non-fluctuating state, it would be best to do as the gods do—that is, *theoria*.

But while *theoria* might fit the bill in terms of continuity, it does not work in terms of self-sufficiency. While Aristotle's definition of self-sufficiency in Book X may point toward *theoria*—"The wise person is able, and more able the wiser he is to study even by himself; and though he presumably does it better with other colleagues, even so he is more self-sufficient than any other virtuous person" (1177a33-34)—he changes his definition of the term from how he has previously used it. Both earlier in the *Ethics* and in other works (particularly the *Politica*), Aristotle defines self-sufficiency not in the way we think of it—sort of as a hermit living on her own, tending her garden, eating nuts and berries, not having to go to the outside world for things—but rather in terms of a community. Part of Book I's definition runs:

> Now what we count as self-sufficient is not what suffices for a solitary person by himself, living an isolated life, but what suffices also for parents, children, wife and in general for friends and fellow citizens, since a human being is naturally a political animal (1097b8-11).

Likewise, in the *Politica*, he states:

> . . . the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state (1253a26-29).

But he changes in Book X, and says:

> For admittedly the wise person, the just person and the other virtuous people all need the good things necessary for life. Still, when these are adequately supplied, the just person needs other people as partners and recipients of his just actions. . . . The wise person is able, and the more able the wiser he is, to study even by himself; and though presumably he does it better with colleagues, even so he is more self-sufficient than any other virtuous person (1177a28-b1).

Granted, the wise person still needs food, and other essential things, but here she becomes self-sufficient through her ability to study by herself—it is an activity that has the possibility to be acted not in relation to others. This simply does not make sense in terms of Aristotle's previous definitions.

Aristotle's treatment of friendship, a commonly ignored section of the *Ethics*, adds to the discussion by tying together the two concepts of continuity and self-sufficiency when he talks about the connection of *eudaimonia* and pleasure:

> Further, it is thought that the happy person must live pleasantly. But the solitary person's life is hard, since it is not easy for him to be continuously active all by himself; but in relation to others and in their company it is easier, and hence his activity will be more continuous (1170a5-7).

This conception of continuity is seen in light of one's friendships. If we have friends, if we conceive of life in relation to others, we will exercise virtues more continuously; that is, we will do more virtuous activities over the course of our lives because we don't have to worry about doing everything ourselves. Here, unlike the last quote (1177a28-b1), self-sufficiency is again regarded as not solitary, but as necessarily seen in relation to others, namely our friends, and this relationship will help us be *eudaimon*.

I turn (in slight desperation) to J. L. Ackrill to (hopefully) shed some light on this problem. Ackrill points out a thought in I.7 which runs: "we regard something as self-sufficient when all by itself it makes a life choiceworthy and lacking nothing" (1097b15). Here, I think, perhaps this will shed another light on this problem. Aristotle, at this point, is talking about *eudaimonia* in general. Ackrill uses this as a basis for an inclusive end argument: Aristotle here says that nothing can be added to *eudaimonia* since by its very nature, *eudaimonia* is complete, and that "being absolutely final and genuinely self-sufficient, *[eudaimonia]* is more desirable than anything else in that it *includes* everything desirable in itself" (Ackrill, 21). But does this actually get us out of the jam? If we see Aristotle using this definition of self-sufficient in the Book X usage, he might seem somewhat more coherent—whether the wise person is alone or with others, because she is practicing *theoria*, she is more complete. However, I still do not see how the two terms fit with each other: on the one hand, self-sufficient=complete; on the other, self-sufficient=that which suffices for a community. There might be a way for the two possibilities to be used interchangeably, but not here if *eudaimonia* consists in *theoria*, which by its very nature, excludes community.

But at this point Ackrill must interject: what do we mean by "consists in"? Ackrill thinks this should be seen *not* as "*theoria* is the sole part of *eudaimonia*," but *rather* as "*theoria* contributes as a constituent of *eudaimonia*" (*Ibid.*, 29). This interpretation allows for *phronesis* and other forms of life other than strictly that of the wise person to be seen as *eudaimon*. This is lovely and beautiful—I'd love it if this was what I thought Aristotle was saying. But I think this is a pipe dream,

and that Ackrill, while being beautifully *Aristotelian*,[4] misses Aristotle's point—that in calling it the supreme activity, he's trying to base *eudaimonia* in *theoria*—other things might be necessary in order to allow someone to study (house, food, someone to clean the house and make the food . . .), but *theoria* is what counts.

Aristotle continues to undermine any chance of an inclusive view when he talks about activities of the gods, humans and other animals. Gods, as the most *eudaimon* beings, are studiers—*theoria* is all they do. Animals, on the other hand, are totally excluded from *theoria* (and as a result, from *eudaimonia*, too). Humans, however, have elements from both animals and the gods, and as a result have access to *theoria*, but not constantly, since we have things like our lives to take care of. Because we are not able to do *theoria* all day, we are not able to achieve true *eudaimonia*. "Hence happiness extends just as far as study extends, and the more someone studies, the happier he is, not coincidentally, but in so far as he studies, since study is valuable in itself" (1178b29-30). This is a problem. When we began the *Ethics*, I thought we were trying to figure out how humans should act—which would end, then, in *eudaimonia*. Indeed, Aristotle remarks in the beginning of the *Ethics* that since this "investigation aims at these goods, for an individual and for a city, it [the good, which is *eudaimonia* discovered by reason, *logos*] is a sort of political science" (1094b11). What we now have instead is *eudaimonia*, to be sure, but here we have a philosophy which tells us how the gods act and which tells us we'll only achieve *eudaimonia* insofar as we are like the gods. But while humans are hybrid creatures, they are themselves a separate group—distinct from both gods and animals—and what is best for humans should be different from what is best for gods. If the *ergon* of human beings is complex and is both *phronesis* as well as *sophia*, *eudaimonia* ought to reflect on both aspects.

It would make life a great deal simpler if these were all of Aristotle's problems. But while it is easy to show how the inclusive end interpretation does not hold when looked at beside what Aristotle says at the end, Aristotle does not consistently argue for the case of the dominant end interpretation, either.

An often quoted example where Aristotle says something which is taken to be strictly "dominant end" is at the beginning in Book I.2. While talking about the importance of the study so that we can conduct our lives properly, he states: "if, like archers, we have a target to aim at, we are more likely to hit the right mark" (1094a23). The goal of the work, at this point, is to find what the good is (that is, that end toward which we aim our lives), and which science is concerned with it. Aristotle concludes the chapter by showing that political science, which is concerned with the goods for an individual and a city, is the body of knowledge in

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[4] Disclaimer: I have no problem with being Aristotelian, but Ackrill here is trying to show *Aristotle* as having favored an inclusive end—and I think he's putting words into Aristotle's mouth to do this.

which he is interested. If the first quote is to be used to show Aristotle as working toward a theory of a dominant end, the end which Aristotle deems important to the study changes drastically from that which is concerned primarily with individuals and cities, to that which sees only the individual insofar as she is able to do *theoria*, and the city only as it allows for individuals to try to become god-like. While here he may be looking at one main end toward which we aim our lives, the conceptions of what this end might be seen as has changed so radically between the two that it is difficult to see this first dominant end quote as bearing the same meaning on the later result.

Aristotle fails in the end by placing too much emphasis on the god-like aspects of humans. It is as a result of the same problem that his definition of self-sufficiency must change, and it also shows how we need to re-examine his use of continuity (which I let go by earlier in the paper) as applying to our concept of *eudaimonia* (as opposed to *eudaimonia* for the gods). While he defines humans in relation to both gods and animals (with bits of each) he forgets that humans are a species unto themselves. *Theoria* might be part of the make-up of a human, but it cannot be taken as separate from the practical wisdom which is also present in us. It seems unreasonable for us to want, as humans, to become gods—by calling *theoria* the most important aspect of humans as well as gods, Aristotle seems to be hovering on a dangerous edge. *Theoria* is such a specific activity which cannot be confused with what we regard as philosophical thought, it seems to be defined as an action which one would not want to devote too much time to—yes, we understand the origins of things, but can't we go further than this?

Neither *theoria* nor *phronesis* can be said to be more important than the other; both play a part in our humanity. Perhaps because they are seen as parts of one, the parts become changed in their relation to each other. That is, perhaps by putting them together, we change the constitution of each (e.g., when two people are in a room together, rather than each alone, they must be viewed differently, as in a relation with each other). *Theoria*, when defined for humans rather than gods, might 'react' with our capacity for *phronesis*—we cannot do pure *theoria*, since that is defined as something for gods. However, as a result of our hybridity, we do *something*—and that something is also a hybrid which relates to both rational capacities. As humans we are made up of bits of gods and bits of animals, but we are our own species—neither god, nor animal, but <u>human</u>. Our rational abilities would then reflect this: being related to the gods, but nevertheless being thoroughly human. While at first this seems to be a much more complex view of human nature than Aristotle allows for, it is actually not too radical a leap. There might be an analogue to the *ergon* argument in that we can assume that like other animals and things, humans too have a function; however, our function will be our own, unique to our species. Beyond this, Aristotle saw self-sufficiency as bound up in a community, as in the first two quotes above. Had he used this view, I think

an interesting inclusive view of *eudaimonia* would have followed. Being Aristotelian now, *eudaimonia* might consist of a life, which would have a general plan to it, made up in relation to the many people with whom we are associated. *Theoria* might play a part, but here too, it would be in relation to others—the gods might be able to think by themselves about unchanging objects, but here on earth, things change, it would be nice to reflect on these changes—not constants, not merely origins—talking with others in the process. This view of *eudaimonia* would allow for a great deal of diversity, because its emphasis of community requires that there be a number of people (presumably) with differing opinions.[4]

The largest problem in the *Ethics* is not that Aristotle is being inconsistent in terms of being inclusive or dominant, but rather that in Book I he says that the goal of his study is to investigate the human good. What he winds up seeing as his goal in Book X is not the same—now he is discovering the good for gods. Perhaps the lecture notes got screwed up in the 2500 years of their existence—we can't know, and I don't think this can get us out of the conundrum. What we can ask, instead, is how to make Aristotle become more interesting—how can we put him back together? I think there are a number of connections between the way I have presented Aristotle in this paper, and care ethics: in defining 'self-sufficiency' as relating not just to the good of an individual, but to people within a community.

If, from this point, we accept a version of the inclusive view, one in which we allow for a different version of *theoria* (which is discussed above) which is seen as being necessary in a *eudaimon* life along with *phronesis*, I think we will be close to accepting a really neat version of ethics. In this view we would allow for differences between what individuals choose as their forms of life—different people like different things, some people just prefer geography to political science, others prefer mathematics and still others, philosophy. In this view, the philosopher would not be the only person among this bunch who might have a *eudaimon* life. In addition, it makes us question our conception of "the arm-chair philosopher"—if all we do is sit in our La-Z-Boys and think, how are we related to the rest of society? Shouldn't we step outside and check to see what is going on—check and see how this might affect our philosophies? The two concepts of the relational self and multiple ways of having a *eudaimon* life come together in myriad ways; they bounce off each other and affect our typical way of seeing an individual who is, by herself, living a good life. We are forced to see these connections between people, and these connections may perhaps lead to complexities in how we see life. But

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[4] This claim might run up against some of Aristotle's views on friendship, namely his view of virtue friendships as being between two people who are very, very much alike. However, even Aristotle notes that this sort of friendship is very rare (1156b25), and other friendships are still important.

seeing ourselves as relational, we can examine these complexities, acknowledging the difficulties. Perhaps through the examination of these difficulties—which is most certainly as continuous a thread that can be followed—we approach an Aristotelian conception of *eudaimonia*. At the very least, we can lead a much more interesting life than fretting that we are not yet close enough to gods.

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