



Eudaimonia* as Dynamic and Integral

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After presenting Aristotle's outline discussion of *eudaimonia* in his *Ethics*,¹ some of his words suggest that *eudaimonia* is simply the proper ordering of those various goods which men desire; others that it consists in some one, paramount end. In speaking of the good for man, Aristotle seems to hesitate between an inclusive (or comprehensive) and exclusive (or dominant) formulation. However, our previous discussion on this matter tells us that both the inclusivist and exclusivist accounts fall short from the practical and well-rounded presentation of Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. Although the prior expresses some of the spirit of Aristotle, it still remains improbable and unpersuasive as the latter.² Thus, in order to clarify Aristotle's position with regard to human fulfillment, the two formal conditions of *eudaimonia* were already examined. The Philosopher asserts that *eudaimonia* is something final and complete (τελειον). It is self-sufficient (αὐτάρκες) since it is always chosen entirely for itself and never for the sake of something else and since by itself it makes life choice-worthy and lacking in nothing. However, although the formal conditions succeed in characterizing *eudaimonia* – a composite of goods – as the best good in life that is also open to improvement, they do not explicitly express how the essential goods or parts of *eudaimonia* are interrelated to each other as parts to whole.³ Hence, in order to illustrate this interconnection, the present chapter will generally discuss the thought elements – particularly, dynamism and integrality – that were necessarily suggested from Aristotle's discussion of *eudaimonia* in his ethical treatises. In particular, it will expose Aristotle's definition of happiness as “activity of the soul in conformity with excellence in a complete life,” taking into consideration his discussion on the function of man and the nature of action and activity in the human life.

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¹ See Chapter II, B of this paper.

² See the above discussion on the two accounts of *eudaimonia*, Chapter II.

³ See the above discussion on the two formal conditions of *eudaimonia*, Chapter III.

The Dynamism of *Eudaimonia*

"Dynamism," as well as its cognate adjective "dynamic," comes from the Greek word *dunamis* which means "capacity," "potentiality," "power" or "force." It would mean "a vigorously active, forceful and energizing quality, especially as the hallmark of somebody's personality or approach to a task."⁴ "Dynamic" may also mean "of or pertaining to forces not in equilibrium, or to motion as the result of force: as opposed to static;"⁵ or "marked by usually continuous and productive activity or change."⁶ Applied to the human life, a "dynamic life" may as well mean an active life marked by usually continuous and productive activity or change; a life which is not static and a life which is in a continual process. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 7, Aristotle defines *eudaimonia* to be "activity of soul in conformity with excellence [virtue], and if there are more than one excellence, in conformity with the best and most complete" and "in a complete life."⁷ Although Aristotle did not explicitly state a "dynamic life," he might be positing this active form of human existence. As is implied in his discussion of activity and the human function, it is improbable that such kind of characteristic is absent in his theories. The spectacular drama of motion, restless and changing entities, growth and development, and the transition of potentialities to actualities are instances of human dynamism that will never elude the keen observation of the Philosopher. According to Lawhead, "Aristotle's theories give us a picture of nature as a collection of dynamic processes all pointing to the fulfillment of various ends."⁸ This dynamism will always be, for Aristotle, an important aspect of human living.

If human life is dynamic, the happiness that flows from it might also be dynamic. For Aristotle, it is simply an activity (ἐνέργεια):

And a complete period of time will be as long as a man lives. For it is rightly said among the many that one ought to judge of the happy man in the longest time of his life, on the assumption that what is complete ought to be in a complete period and a complete person. But that it is an activity can be seen also from the following consideration. For supposing some one to be asleep all his life, we should hardly consent to call such a man happy. Life indeed he has, but life in accordance with the excellences he has not, and it was this that we made the activity to consist.⁹

⁴ "Dynamism," *Microsoft Encarta 2007: Encarta Dictionary* (Microsoft Corporation, 2006).

⁵ "Dynamic," *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language: Encyclopedic Edition* (Florida: Trident Press International, 1999), 394.

⁶ "Dynamic," *Merriam-Webster: Online* (Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2006-2007), www.m-w.com/dictionary/dynamic.

⁷ *NE*, I, 7, 1098^a16-19. See also *MM*, I, 4, 1184^b22-1185^a1; *EE*, II, 1, 1219^a28-39.

⁸ William F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: A History of Western Philosophy* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1996), 93.

⁹ *MM*, I, 4, 1185^a5-13.

In order to further illustrate the dynamism of *eudaimonia*, it is but necessary to further discuss Aristotle's philosophy of activity and action as well as his concept of the human function. All these concepts point to a kind of life and happiness that is active and progressive; a happiness that is realizing and gearing toward fulfillment.

Happiness as Activity

It is easy to see why Aristotle makes *eudaimonia* an activity rather than a state or disposition. On the one hand, the good or end of a thing, in his teleological world view, is its functioning well according to its nature, and functioning is activity. On the other hand, happiness cannot be a disposition, as virtue is, for a man can have a virtue without exercising it. The first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* sums up the Philosopher's position:

With those who identify happiness with virtue or some one virtue our account is in harmony; for to virtue belongs virtuous activity. But it makes, perhaps, no small difference whether we place the chief good in possession or in use, in state of mind or in activity. For the state of mind may exist without producing any good result, as in a man who is asleep or in some other way quite inactive, but the activity cannot; for one who has the activity will of necessity be acting and acting well. And as in the Olympic Games it is not the most beautiful and the strongest that are crowned but those who compete (for it is some of these that are victorious), so those who act win, and rightly win, the noble and good things in life.¹⁰

Aristotle, thus, agrees that *eudaimonia* involves virtue or excellence, but insists that it is an activity, not a state of mind. He comments that happiness could never be ascribed to a person, however virtuous, who slept away his life or out of inertia failed to realize his capacities. This is why Aristotle often says that εὐδαιμονία is εὐπραξία, living well and faring well.¹¹

Moreover, the activity that makes for *eudaimonia* is that of the soul for "it is by nothing else than soul that we live" and "excellence [virtue] is in the soul."¹²

¹⁰ Aristotle, *NE*, trans. W. D. Ross, I, 8, 1098^b30-1099^a3.

¹¹ See *NE*, 1095^a18, 1139^b3, 1140^a28.

¹² *MM*, I, 4, 1184^b22-23. Aristotle argues that the soul is substance because it is the form of a natural body, and that the body is the matter informed by the soul. But he rejects Plato's further claim that it is independent of the body. He claims that like the cutting and the seeing, the soul is inseparable from matter. Although the form is something beyond the matter, but we should not regard the form as some further immaterial element or constituent that must be added to the material constituents. Hence, the activity of the soul that means happiness is inseparable from the body and the body's needs. From this, it is clear that the soul is inseparable from its body, see *On the Soul*, 412^a20-413^a9. See also T. Irwin, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 131; Dion Scott-Kakures et al., *History of Philosophy* (USA: Harper Publishers, Inc., 1993), 58.

“Therefore, since the work must be one and the same both for the soul and for its excellence, the work of the excellence of the soul would be *eudaimonia*.”

Accordingly, Aristotle’s discussion on the activity of the soul is important when we come to consider the proper function of a human being which is “the soul’s activity that expresses reason [as itself having reason] or requires reason [as obeying reason].”¹³ For him, the purpose or function of something constitutes its real nature; moreover, this will constitute its virtue or the standard of its excellence as well.¹⁴ But before examining Aristotle’s comments on the human function, it is worthwhile to take into consideration his understanding of “activity” and “action” which brings into the fore his definition of *eudaimonia* as “activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.”

The Dynamism of Aristotle’s Concept of Activity

In his treatises, Aristotle seems to suggest three senses of *praxis*, commonly translated as “action.”¹⁵ In a wider sense, *praxis* (πραξις) as well as the cognate verb *prattein* (πρᾶττειν), usually translated as “to do” or “to achieve in action,” is used broadly for all intentional actions. What we can achieve by *praxis* is what we can achieve by our own efforts. In this sense children and non-human animals are capable of action or *praxis*. Such action has a desire for some end as its efficient cause; and it is a particular action that is done and that we are responsible for.¹⁶ More strictly, *praxis* is confined to rational action on a decision. This sense marks men off from other animals (and from children) because men are capable of rational choice (*prohairesis*). Only such beings, according to Aristotle, are capable of actions that are open to moral praise and blame.¹⁷ Lastly and the most strict sense of all, *praxis* is confined to rational action which is its own end and is not done exclusively for the sake of some end beyond it. In this sense, action (*praxis*) is contrasted with production or making (*poiesis*), in which the end is some product distinct from the action. It is also in this sense that *praxis* is said to be a complete activity and not just a movement (*kinēsis*).¹⁸

Although it is not always clear how strictly Aristotle uses *praxis*, it is, however, still evident that *praxis* is no ordinary action as the falling of the leaves.

¹³ Aristotle, *NE*, trans. T. Irwin, I, 7, 1098^a7-8.

¹⁴ *NE*, I, 7, 1097^b25-28.

¹⁵ It is not always clear how strictly Aristotle uses *praxis*. The three uses specified above perhaps do not mark three different senses of the word. They may be more and less complete specimens of action; the first two types share some of the features of the third – the first is voluntary and goal-directed, the second is also rational, and the third is complete. For further discussion on the meaning of *praxis*, see T. Irwin, trans. *NE*, Glossary, 385; see also T. Irwin and G. Fine, trans. *Aristotle Selections*, Glossary, 564.

¹⁶ See *NE*, III, 1, 1110^b6, 1111^a26ff.

¹⁷ See *NE*, VI, 2, 1139^a18-20; *EE*, II, 8, 1224^a29.

¹⁸ See *NE*, 1139^a35-^b4, 1140^b6-7; *Metaphysics*, 1048^b18.

There is an obvious contrast between making something simply because one wants to use it subsequently and doing something for its own sake. Aristotle holds that the actions with which ethics is concerned, and thus *eudaimonia*, are not done to produce something and are not to be appraised, as technical performances are, as skillful or unskillful.¹⁹ They are done and valued for their own sake. The happy and virtuous man acts bravely and honorably not to win a prize, for an ulterior motive, or in order to enable himself to live well later; but because he sees that to act so is to live well and that is what he wants to do. *Praxis* then, is an act which is chosen for its own sake, viz., it is considered to be one thing that goes directly into the satisfactory life of activity and this is very much related to *eudaimonia*. When Aristotle adds the words “the end of action” with the conditions of happiness, his aim is probably to spell out that in summing up *eudaimonia* as something final and self-sufficient he is using it in connection with the end of action – *praxis*. Thus, in his concluding remarks with regard to *eudaimonia*’s finality and self-sufficiency, Aristotle states: “Happiness, then, is something complete and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.”²⁰ However, to say that happiness is “the end of *praxis*” does not mean that the end is different from the *praxis*; rather, the end of *praxis* is *praxis* itself for its end is *eupraxia*. In like manner, Aristotle defines the difference between *praxis* and *poiēsis* with the following words: “For while making (*poiēsis*) has an end other than itself, action (*praxis*) cannot; for good action (*eupraxia*) itself is its end.”²¹ Thus, *eupraxia* is *eudaimonia* because *eudaimonia* is excellent action itself. Since the concept of *εὐπραξία* (“living well” or “faring well”) is basically equivalent to that of *eudaimonia*,²² it therefore suggests that *eudaimonia* will consist in those particular actions – *praxis*. It is in action, “in doing,” that one becomes fulfilled – *eudaimon*. Arguing Kenny on this matter, J. L. Ackrill might be right in characterizing *eudaimonia* in this way:

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.²³

Since *eudaimonia* is “action,” it might well be dynamic and could never be static. However, it is hardly sufficient to define the dynamism of *eudaimonia* with the sole concept of *praxis*. Although it might well support the claim, the notion of *praxis* will rightly lead us to Aristotle’s own distinction between two general types of processes:

¹⁹ J. L. Ackrill, *Aristotle the Philosopher* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1981), 142.

²⁰ *NE*, I, 7, 1097^b20-21.

²¹ *NE*, VI, 5, 1140^b6-7. The Greek counterparts are appended by the researcher.

²² Aristotle claims that verbally there is a general agreement that *eudaimonia* is the highest of all goods achievable by action and identify it with living well and faring well (*eupraxia*). See *NE*, I, 2, 1095^a16-19.

²³ J. L. Ackrill, “Aristotle on Eudaimonia,” 24.

energeia and *kinēsis*.²⁴ The classic text for the distinction between these types of processes is in Book IX of *Metaphysics*, Chapter 6. Here, Aristotle distinguishes:

Of these processes, then, we must call one set movements, and the other actualities (activities). For every movement is incomplete – making thin, learning, walking, building; these are movements, and incomplete movements. For it is not true that at the same time we are walking and have walked, or are building and have built, or are coming to be and have come to be – it is a different thing that is being moved and that has been moved, and that is moving and that has moved; but it is the same thing that at the same time has seen and is seeing, or is thinking and has thought. The latter sort of process, then, I call actuality (activity) and the former a movement.²⁵

Broadly speaking, a subject's *energeia* (ἐνέργεια) realizes its capacity; hence the *energeia* of a craft, e.g. shoemaking, and the craftsman can include both the activities involved in the exercise of craft and the product that is aimed at in the exercise.²⁶ However, Aristotle draws a further contrast. For present purposes, it is sufficient to define the distinction as follows: "A process is a *kinēsis* if an explicit or implicit reference is contained in its description to a possible state of the world in which the process has stopped, other than the bare, negative state of the process's having stopped. Otherwise a process is an *energeia*. [...] Thus, 'living' is an *energeia* since, though it may perhaps said to contain a reference to the state of 'being dead', the latter state is just the bare, negative state of 'not-living'."²⁷ Furthermore, *kinēsis* is an incomplete process, since the degree of activity is consistent with the retention of the capacity realized in the activity. For example, the movement of house-building is going on when the bricks and stones have incompletely actualized their capacity to become a house; when they completely actualize that capacity and the house exists, they no longer possess that capacity, since a house is not still capable of becoming a house. However, *energeia*, does not imply the loss of the capacity that is actualized in the activity – e.g. seeing or living does not imply the loss of the capacity to see or live. A movement is incomplete because it aims at some end beyond itself whose achievement makes that movement impossible to continue, whereas a complete activity is its own end. Hence complete activity is identical to action (*praxis*) in

²⁴ *Energeia* is usually translated as "actuality," "actualization," "activity" or "realization." *Kinēsis*, on the other hand, is translated as "movement" or "change." For further discussion on the meaning of *energeia* and *kinesis*, see T. Irwin and G. Fine, trans. *Aristotle Selections*, Glossary, 565, 597-598; see also T. Irwin, trans. *NE*, Glossary, 385-386, 416.

²⁵ *Metaphysics*, IX, 6, 1048^b27-35.

²⁶ T. Irwin, trans. *NE*, Glossary, 385-386.

²⁷ T. Engberg-Pedersen, *Aristotle's Theory of Moral Insight*, 33.

Aristotle's narrowest sense. Furthermore, this is the type of process that virtue, pleasure, friendship and contemplation are said to be activities.²⁸

It is also in this sense that *eudaimonia* or "living well" is said to be a complete activity (*energeia*) and not just a movement (*kinēsis*). This is very clear in the *Metaphysic*, where Aristotle considers the distinction between the two processes:

Since of the actions which have a limit none is an end but all are relative to the end, e.g. the process of making thin is of this sort, [...] this is not an action or at least not a complete one (for it is not an end); but that in which the end is present is an action. E.g. at the same time we are seeing and have seen, are understanding and have understood, are thinking and have thought: but it is not true that at the same time we are learning and have learnt, or are being cured and have been cured. At the same time we are living well and have lived well, and are happy and have been happy. If not, the process would have had sometime to cease, as the process of making thin ceases: but, as it is, it does not cease; we are living and have lived.²⁹

Accordingly, it is then not appropriate to find one's existence in the production of some one thing, for what then shall we do when we have produced it? Although the future is uncertain, the good for man remains to be certain for it is something difficult to separate from the living self – clearly, for it is the living self. It is important therefore that *eudaimonia* is activity, desirable in itself and without natural term. Human fulfillment is above all an activity because it is a process that does not cease on any approximate end; we are living and have lived. It is an ongoing activity of virtue and excellence. It is a continuous and constant exercise of all human faculties geared towards the full realization of his potentials and capacities. However, it does not imply the loss of the capacity that is actualized in the activity since living does not imply the loss of the capacity to live. Although life as a whole may involve different sorts of *poiēsis* or production, it will not cease to be life when that *poiēsis* is attained. Living well is a complete activity since it is its own end. Thus, "Happiness must be equated neither with a (transitory) state of the highest well-being nor with an outstanding single achievement [...];" rather, it is something "that can be expected from a certain conception of life."³⁰ Life, indeed, is living; it is dynamic. Just as the acorn actualizes its unique potentiality by becoming an oak, people too actualize their distinctive or defining potentiality by living life well. Although there might be some problems and ambiguities in Aristotle's distinction between action and production, activity and movement, man's happiness still lies in his capacity for choice and action. To live well, we must do our own living.

²⁸ T. Irwin, trans. *NE*, Glossary, 386.

²⁹ *Metaphysics*, IX, 6, 1048^b18-27.

³⁰ Otfried Höffe, *Aristotle*, trans. Christine Salazar (Albany: State of University of New York Press, 2003), 148.

The Dynamic Function of Man

For Aristotle, to say that *eudaimonia* is the chief good does not fully tell us what it is. He, therefore, suggests that it may be appropriate to consider first the nature of man's function (*ergon*) to gain a clearer account of happiness.³¹

The *ergon* (ἐργον)³² of any thing is the function that it has; or, if it is the kind of thing that cannot readily be said to have a function, it is its characteristic activity.³³ This is the use that connects something's *ergon* with its essence and its virtue; in animate beings the *ergon* defines the type of soul.³⁴ Thus, 'life', 'soul' and *ergon* can all refer to the same features. So also can *telos*, for sight is also the *telos* of the eye (*De Gen. An.* 778^a33f). For the *ergon* is the end, and the activity the *ergon* (*Met.* IX, 1050^a22).³⁵ This is what the substance and the form³⁶ of every being mainly consist of. The importance of the *ergon*, thus, does not lie in its being part of an organic context, nor in its being valuable as a tool, but rather in the fact that it is mainly through its *ergon* that a being expresses what it is. In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle explicitly connects this doctrine to the idea of *eudaimonia*:

But where there is no other ἐργον except activity, it lies in the agents; for example, vision [is] in those who see, contemplation in those who contemplate, life is in the soul, and hence so is happiness, since it is a kind of life (ζωή γάρ ποιά τις ἐστίν). Obviously, therefore, the substance or form is actuality.³⁷

What, then, is the function, the characteristic activity, of a human being? Aristotle thus resumes the discussion starting from the biological concept of life, to identify the specifically human element:

³¹ NE, I, 7, 1097^b22-23.

³² *Ergon* has the range of uses of the English "work." It is applied to an activity ("this is hard work") as well as to the result ("a great work of art; see *Physics*, 202^a24; *Metaphysics*, 993^b21; *Poetics*, 1452^b30). Often "function" is suitable, e.g., NE 1097^b25, *Politics*, 1253^a23; sometimes "task" (*Met.*, 1029^b5) and "activity" (*Met.*, 1045^b35) are used. For a discussion on the definition of *ergon*, see T. Irwin and G. Fine, trans. *Aristotle Selections*, Glossary, 585; see also T. Irwin, trans. NE, Glossary, 404.

³³ Kathleen V. Wilkes, "The Good Man and the Good for Man in Aristotle's Ethics," in *Essays On Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, 343.

³⁴ T. Irwin, trans. NE, Glossary, 404.

³⁵ S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man*, 16.

³⁶ Aristotle's metaphysics was already a thorough dynamism, but it was a dynamism of the form. The form of the being-still-to-be was there, acting as both the formal law of its development and as the end to be reached by that development. See Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Canada: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949), 185.

³⁷ *Metaphysics*, IX, 8, 1050^a34-^b2. The Greek equivalents are based from Carlo Natali, *The Wisdom of Aristotle*, 147.

What then can this be? Life seems to be common even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man. Let us exclude, therefore, the life of nutrition and growth. Next there would be a life of perception, but it also seems to be common even to the horse, the ox, and every animal. There remains, then, an active life of the element that has a rational principle (of this, one part has such a principle in the sense of being obedient to one, the other in the sense of possessing one and exercising thought); and as this too can be taken in two ways, we must state that life in the sense of activity is what we mean; for this seems to be the more proper sense of the term.³⁸

Here, it would seem possible to interpret Aristotle's procedure as a progressive elimination of functions. In this sense, the one specifically human activity is the only one that he does not share with any other animal but one could object that this interpretation does not take account of the composite nature of man,³⁹ who is not pure, bodiless intellect. Thus, in this connection, commentators generally refer to the doctrine of Aristotle whereby the higher faculties potentially include within themselves the lower ones, as the triangle is included in the quadrilateral.⁴⁰ This means that the rational soul does not remain separate from the rest of the soul, but penetrates and informs the lower faculties, or at least some of them. In confining the human *ergon* to the activity of the rational part, Aristotle does not exclude all animal or vegetative activities. He assumes only that rational activity is the distinctive and essential feature of the human soul, and that this organizes the human being's other activities in the way perception organizes a non-rational animal's other activities.

Now the function of a lyre-player is to play the lyre and the function of a good lyre-player is to play the lyre well. So if we assume that the human function is that activity of the soul that expresses reason, then the good man's function is to do this well.⁴¹ Since the good and the "well" is thought to reside in the function, Aristotle argues that if the human function is "actualization of the soul according to reason or involving reason," the human good will be "actualization of the soul according to virtue or excellence." Here, "according to virtue" has to replace "according to reason," because particular human beings might exercise their rational capacities incompletely or perversely, even though, being essentially rational agents they exercise them to some degree. A good musician exercises his function as a musician completely and correctly, and so achieve his good *qua* musician; a similar restriction is needed to

³⁸ NE, I, 7, 1097^b33-1098^a7.

³⁹ For Aristotle, man is "composite" (*synthetos*) and the elements in the composition are body and soul (*psyche*). See *On the Soul*, II; see also W. F. R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, 68-93.

⁴⁰ See *On the Soul*, II, 3. See also C. Natali, *The Wisdom of Aristotle*, 148.

⁴¹ NE, I, 7, 1098^a7-18. See also MM, I, 4, 1184^b22-1185^a1; EE, II, 1, 1219^a24-39.

infer the human good from the human function.⁴² The fulfillment of it, that is to say, the proper use of the rational part of the soul, is *eudaimonia*, which is a certain kind of activity of the rational soul in accordance with virtue. However, human happiness cannot just consist of the activity typical of the habitual disposition that is only capable of obeying reason, e.g. obeying the orders given by other people. If this were the case, even children and slaves would be happy.⁴³

Rather, *eudaimonia* is living well a rational life for itself. It is living as man who exists for himself, who is free to live his life *qua* man. There may be some hereditary men – indeed there are – who are not free, or do not wish to be, but anyone engaged in Aristotle's inquiry cannot pretend not to be a man in the relevant sense. One who intends, or hopes, to run his life well is bound to admit that the good life for men, for us, is precisely running our lives well, for human life as he defines it is "virtuous activity of what has λόγος (*logos*)."⁴⁴ Living and living well are, in a way, the same, for not to live well is to draw that much closer to not living at all. "Man's *ergon*, his defining character, lies in his capacity for choice and action, so that his nature is not wholly determinate. To live well, being human, we must do our own living."⁴⁵ To live as a tool, an instrument, is not really to live oneself. One who is a man not by his own nature⁴⁶ but by another's is naturally a slave: a slave is in a way a part of his master.

⁴² A good carpenter does his work well when he does it effectively for the result to which his performance is an instrumental means; and this is his good *qua* carpenter. But since the function of a human being is not instrumental, his good is not success at performing some instrumental task; hence his goodness will not consist in efficiency in performing it, but in the best way of performing his characteristic activity. If we apply Aristotle's distinction, we can say that the human virtue will be a virtue in action (*praxis*) rather than production (*poiësis*). See T. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles*, 364, 608.

⁴³ Aristotle, *NE*, trans. T. Irwin, I, 9, 1099^b35-1100^a5. Children are said to be incapable of *eudaimonia*, insofar as reason in them is not sufficiently developed. Yet reason is developing in the child; rapid progress is being made. Similarly, the slave cannot be happy *qua* slave, that is, as long as he obeys his master's will, not his own. But Aristotle points out that slaves act freely on some occasions. Artisans and laborers are also excluded from happiness, insofar as they lack leisure and sufficient income. V. J. McGill, *The Idea of Happiness*, 241.

⁴⁴ *Logos* is cognate with *legein* ("say"). A *logos* is what is said, or the thought expressed in what is said. *Logos* as reason belongs to human beings as opposed to other animals, and to the rational part of the soul as opposed to the non-rational desires; hence an adult human being can be guided by reason rather than feeling. Reason makes human beings aware of the good, not merely of the pleasant. Awareness of the overall good requires comparison of present and future in a single appearance, and the estimate of one desire and possible aim against another to find the complete good; and this sort of deliberation is characteristic of reason. For further discussion on the main relevant uses of the term *logos*, see T. Irwin, trans. *NE*, Glossary, 422-423.

⁴⁵ S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man*, ix.

⁴⁶ Things that have a nature (*physis*) have an internal origin of change (movement or growth) and stability. Nature in general is discussed in the *Physics*; however, two important aspects appear in *NE*. 1. Something's nature is its original constitution or tendency apart from human intervention; hence it is contrasted with law and education (1094^b16, 1103^a19, 1106^a9, 1134^b18). 2. Something's nature indicates its function and the final cause or end to which it tends. In ethics our task is to develop the natural tendencies so that they achieve the appropriate natural end (1097^b11, 1103^a25, 1152^b13, 1153^a12-14). For further discussion on the uses of nature, see T. Irwin, trans. *NE*, Glossary, 416.

Moreover, if we hope to live well as men we must attend to those capacities which make us able so to attend. If we hope to run our lives well, we must get on with it. It is this recognition, that “living well” is something we must do, not merely something to enjoy. Since the human *ergon* is dynamic – actualization of the soul according to virtue – a given individual may clearly be said to actualize its (potential) nature to a greater or a lesser degree, may be said (for example) to be more or less actively human. The real nature of humanity is seen in those who actualize their potential most clearly. Aristotle says that it is the same *ἐργον*: the difference between an ordinary shoemaker and the best one in town does not lie in the fact that the one makes shoes and the other makes something better than shoes; rather, the best shoemaker will obviously make the best shoes in town. In the same way, man is said to actualize his life as man, not a god nor a superman. Children are human because they can grow into men. In the case of adult men this potential is such that it is we who must actualize it. Man, as a rational agent selects from possible realizations of capacities those that are less likely to impede others, those that are more likely to encourage others and those that allow the fuller exercise of rational agency. In short, man has to become what he is: his perfection is not given to him but acquired. Beasts grow up, whether they will or not, and so do we, at some levels, but it is up to us to grow up fully.⁴⁷ All men, it will be remembered, are capable of happiness insofar as they are not “maimed in their potentialities for virtue.”⁴⁸

An Active Life

In isolating rational activity as the defining character or function of humanity, Aristotle is identifying the free man as the subject of an active life. It is the free and rational man who asks the question “what shall I do?” and it is he who must decide and act for life and for *eudaimonia*. The pursuit of happiness is therefore no movement valued for its separate end; it is an activity whose end is itself. It is life, not life’s consummation, to which Aristotle assures: “happiness is an activity; and activity plainly comes into being and is not present at the start like a piece of property.”⁴⁹ What one is, is inseparable from oneself and one, is one’s activity. This activity necessarily consists of the activity of one’s own self, one’s kinship with others and one’s relation to the truth. Life and happiness will always be a dynamic activity – a constant unfolding of oneself, a constant interaction with others and a constant appreciation of the truth – in accordance with reason and virtue. It is a continuous process from oneself, to others and to the transcendent.

⁴⁷ S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle’s Man*, 26-27.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *NE*, trans. T. Irwin, I, 9, 1099^b18.

⁴⁹ *NE*, IX, 9, 1169^b29-30.

The Dynamism of the Virtuous Self

Aristotle remarks that men tend to identify *eudaimonia* with the good they lack at a particular time and feel the greatest need for. Impoverished men will see their happiness in wealth; slaves, theirs in freedom. Even the same person identifies it with different things, since in sickness he thinks it is health, in poverty wealth.⁵⁰ For Aristotle, the happy man is one who mobilizes all his resources and operates at the top of his abilities. For this reason, the Philosopher insists greatly on the pre-eminent importance of activities as opposed to states and dispositions.

Moreover, Aristotle claims that *eudaimonia* is the good of the soul and is composed of parts, which are actions that one performs. As a complex group of virtuous actions, the happy life is a set of goods that is always changing in the personal history of each single individual; and to conceive happiness as “activity in accordance with virtue” means to link it closely to the actual life situations of each individual. An organic set of actions is strictly tied to the events of life, even though such actions may be partly habitual and thus relatively repetitive or often similar to one another. It is therefore much more dynamic than a subjective state of mind, which may remain imperturbable and untouched by actual happenings. “From this point of view Aristotle’s conception of happiness is very different from more ‘static’ theories, such as those of the Academy or the Stoics, which point that, in a certain sense, the wise man is happy no matter what happens.”⁵¹

On the basis of the various remarks made by Aristotle in the course of his arguments, it is possible to analyze the components of the set of goods called “happy life.” The happy life is based on internal and external necessary conditions, which stand in special relations with what happiness is, i.e. virtuous action. External conditions, such as health and material goods, stand to virtuous activity as the means to stand to the end. They are to be procured to the extent needed to reach the end; hence they should be neither too many nor too few, but the principle of their goodness does not lie in themselves. The internal conditions, i.e. the possession of virtues, understood as habitual states that give rise to actions, stand to virtuous actions, roughly speaking, as power stands to act. However, Aristotle often repeats that to be happy does not mean simply to possess virtues, but to put them into practice. One who possesses virtues that he never practices is not happy, but is wasting his capabilities, like a mechanism, a tool, or even a living organism that has been perfectly conceived but has never been set in operation.

Between happiness and virtuous actions there is neither the relation of end to means, nor the relation of “power” to “act.” Virtuous actions are not the means for

⁵⁰ NE, I, 4, 1095^a24.

⁵¹ Carlo Natali, *The Wisdom of Aristotle*, 172.

happiness, nor are they concrete actualization of the human capacity to be happy; rather their activity is *eudaimonia* – human fulfillment. It is good to perform acts of courage, generosity and affability or to choose wisely or to contemplate the causes of reality, even if, owing to the accidents of human existence and for any particular individual who performs them, because by these acts one becomes fulfilled and finds pleasure in them.

On Aristotle's view, having a virtuous character implies having a complete virtue.⁵² However, the pattern of unified virtues might be different in different persons. So one individual might be especially honest, this virtue seeming to gain pre-eminence over others, while another individual is especially generous, her interactions being marked, above all, by a sense of kindness and bounty. Each individual has all the other virtues and exercises them appropriately, as external conditions allow. As a result of nature, development and resources, certain virtues have gained greater expression and prominence in each individual's life. There is implicit evidence for something like this in Aristotle's view at *Politics*. There he argues that different virtues or character traits gain pre-eminence at different times in an individual's life:

It remains therefore that both functions should be entrusted by the ideal constitution to the same persons, not, however, at the same time, but in the order prescribed by nature, who has given to young men strength and to older men wisdom.⁵³

Furthermore, in every βίος⁵⁴ there might be one kind of virtuous activity that prevails over the others and, in some way, subordinates them to itself. However, this particular virtuous activity does not exhaust the βίος, nor is it the end of every other good activity, but it does give a distinctive trait to that particular way of life and makes it possible to judge a person who devotes himself to it, using the social institutions Aristotle calls "praise and blame." Thus, there may be bad, good or middling βίοι; but the happy βίος put into practice the human virtues.

It should be remembered, however, that for Aristotle, the happy man is one who mobilizes all his resources and operates at the top of his abilities. The doctrine of the mean which is virtue for Aristotle is not a kind of average behavior, a fainthearted compromise between too much and too little and a cautious retreat before the hazards involved in a fuller and richer experience. The mean that is observed in one kind of human activity sets the individual free to employ his energies in other

⁵² See *NE*, I, 7, 1098^a16-18; I, 9, 1100^a1-5. See also *MM*, I, 4, 1185^a1-8 and *EE*, II, 1, 1219^a35ff.

⁵³ *Politics*, VII, 9, 1329^a9ff.

⁵⁴ Usually dictionaries distinguish between two Greek words meaning life, βίος and ζωή, holding that the latter refers mainly to biological life, and the former to one's manner of living, as in the expression "a risky life." See C. Natali, *The Wisdom of Aristotle*, 135. A further discussion regarding one's βίος will be exposed below.

directions. Moderation maintained in eating, drinking, liberality, amatory affairs and with respect to self-esteem and indignation, can provide the time and disposition for an all-round development of abilities and talents. The mean is also determined in relation to the situation and what is involved. When the stakes are high enough or nobility is the goal, the sky is the limit. Thus, the noble mean of giving can be pushed to the uttermost limits when abilities and the cause are proportionately great and the ultimate in “self-sacrifice,” may be at once, the most virtuous and rewarding of actions.⁵⁵

The virtuous self, therefore, performs the right action in the right way, at the right time, on the right objects. Getting the timing, the tempo and the manner right requires a well-formed character, the right desires and beliefs embodied in habits.⁵⁶ Although he may not develop some of the virtues at present, a virtuous man constantly forms and molds himself further – imbibing in time new virtues. Moreover, although some misfortunes and mistakes brings him down, he never loses his capacity to rise up. In other words, the virtuous self is not static, a given fact; rather it is constantly molding according to virtue and excellence. It involves a dynamic formulation and reformulation of one’s being in time and in experience. It is a self-actualizing self.

The Dynamism of Friendship

However, the self-actualization of an individual does not only end up on his own self, rather it extends towards other selves. *Eudaimonia* is not living in isolation; rather it is relational. Aristotle asserts that happiness or good living for an individual necessarily includes the happiness of others. Shared happiness entails the rational capacity for jointly promoting common ends as well as the capacity to identify with and coordinate separate ends. This extended notion of happiness presupposes the extension of self through friends:

Surely it is strange, too, to make the blessed man a solitary; for no one would choose to possess all good things on condition of being alone, since man is a political creature and one whose nature is to live with others. Therefore even the happy man live with others; for he has the things that are by nature good. And plainly it is better to spend his days with friends and good men than with strangers or any chance person. Therefore the happy man needs friends.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ V. J. McGill, *The Idea of Happiness*, 227-228.

⁵⁶ NE, II, 6, 1106^b36ff.

⁵⁷ NE, IX, 9, 1169^b17-21.

By friendship (*philia*)⁵⁸ Aristotle typically means the mutually acknowledged and reciprocal relation of good will and affection that exists among individuals who share an interest in each other on the basis of virtue, pleasure or utility. (*NE* VIII, 2) Also included among friendships are the non-chosen relations of affection and care that exist among family members and fellow citizens. (*NE* VIII, 12; VIII, 9; IX, 6) In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 8, Aristotle argues that virtue, as a good, is alone insufficient for happiness and requires in addition certain external goods. The argument is roughly this:

Yet evidently, as we said, it needs the external goods as well; for it is impossible, or not easy, to do noble acts without the proper equipment. In many actions we use friends and riches and political power as instruments; and there are some things the lack of which takes the luster from blessedness, as good birth, satisfactory children, beauty; for the man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary and childless is hardly happy, and perhaps a man would be still less so if he had thoroughly bad children or friends or had lost good children or friends by death.⁵⁹

However, a friend is not just an instrumental good but more so an intrinsic one, though of course it may also have good results. Like the exercise of virtue, the exercise of friendship will be pleasant in itself according to nature “since it is an excellence or implies excellence, and is besides most necessary with a view to living.”⁶⁰ While friendship has intrinsic worth, it does not in the sense of having some isolated value, like that of an adventitious pleasure which might be added to happiness as one more separate constituent. Rather, its intrinsic worth is of a much more pervasive sort, providing the very form and mode of life within which an agent can best realize her virtue and achieve *eudaimonia* or human fulfillment. To have intimate friends and family is to have interwoven in one’s own life, in a ubiquitous way, persons toward whom and with whom one can most fully and continuously express one’s goodness.⁶¹

A true friend, if he is another self, would seem not to be simply external to oneself but, in a deep sense, intertwined with one’s own soul; a true friend, that is

⁵⁸ Friendship is the best single translation of *philia*, but it does not sound equally natural for all the different types of cooperative relations that Aristotle classifies as types of *philia* (for the cognate verb *philein* “love” has to be used); see *NE*, VIII-IX. *Philiai* include business partnerships and family relations that we might not readily recognize as constituting friendships in their own right. For further discussion on the meaning of *philia*, see T. Irwin, trans. *NE*, Glossary, 403-404.

⁵⁹ *NE*, I, 8, 1099^a31-^b5.

⁶⁰ *NE*, VIII, 1, 1155^a1-3.

⁶¹ Nancy Sherman, “Aristotle on Friendship and the Shared Life,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 47, no. 4 (Michigan: Brown University Braun-Brumfield, Inc., 1987).

the virtuous friend, is far more secure than goods that depend chiefly on fortune or public opinion. One could possibly offer his life for a friend.⁶² Most importantly, having a friend means at bottom not having a possession but engaging in an activity of the soul for friendship, like other virtuous activities, is more an activity than a state of character. As the Greek commentator Michael Ephesus says in discussing *Nicomachean Ethics* 1169^b29, friendship and the other components of happiness are not static objects that one possesses, as houses and cloaks are, but rather consist in activity, as sight does. People who wish to pile up friends as they do possessions seem more interested in providing the equipment for life, or making a display of their lives, or perhaps building up walls to protect themselves against evils that are really inescapable, rather than bending their efforts to being active in the best possible way during the time that they have.⁶³

Now individuals that come together as character or virtuous friends might be similar yet different in the sense that while they share virtue as an overall end, they express it at times in ways that are distinct yet complementary. They are not mere look alikes of one another. Aristotle suggests this thought at the *Eudemian Ethics*, VII, 12. In assessing the truth of the claim that a friend is another self, he comments:

We must see the truth from what follows: a friend wants to be, in the words of the proverb, 'another Heracles,' 'a second self;' but he is severed from his friend, and it is hard to find in two people the characteristics of a single individual. But though a friend is by nature what is most akin to his friend, one man is like another in body, and another like him in soul, and one like him in one part of the body or soul, and another like him in another.⁶⁴

The notion that another self may not realize all of one's ends or interests leads Aristotle to remark further that while friends desire to promote shared ends, they however choose most of all to promote each other's separate good when the promotion of shared ends fails.⁶⁵ This means that differences in character trait and point of view, while not precluding a life of consensus and coordination, may nonetheless enable each individual to grow and learn from one another. Friendship is a dynamic co-actualization. The supposition here is that character friends realize to a different degree and in a different manner particular virtues. Each is inspired to develop himself more completely as he sees admirable qualities, not fully realized in himself, manifested in another whom he esteems. Through another who are just

⁶² NE, IX, 1169^a19-20.

⁶³ Michael Ephesus, *Commentary on the Ethics*, 20:511. This source is cited by Lorraine Smith Pangle, in *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 184.

⁶⁴ EE, VII, 12, 1245^a30-34.

⁶⁵ EE, VII, 12, 1245^b7-9.

like us, yet numerically different, we can see ourselves from a point of view outside ourselves and so at a distance. If another self need not be exactly similar, then self-knowledge might also involve contrasting oneself with another and considering how another would have acted in the same circumstances given that individual's different point of view.⁶⁶

In sum, while observing and admiring the life of another who is good and akin is very pleasant, taking part in that life is even better. It is above all in shared thought and conversation that two people truly can partake in and enjoy each other's activity. The life that Aristotle calls the happy life is also the life most capable of being shared. Thus the vital sap of friendship is found in dynamically living together; and as Aristotle says, living together for human beings means above all conversing together, not feeding in the same place, as it does in the case of cattle.⁶⁷ Furthermore, however good and pleasant excellent activity is, by oneself it is not easy to be continually active, but with others and toward others it is easier.⁶⁸ In the face of the unfortunate human tendency to flag easily even in the activities we care most about, it is most helpful to have the spur that an excellent companion in the activity can provide, whose energy and enthusiasm can reinforce our own, whose accomplishments can inspire a desire to rival them and whose approval can confirm for us the validity of our own thoughts and accomplishments.

Thus the friendship of good men is good, being augmented by their companionship; and they are thought to become better too by their activities and by improving each other; for from each other they take the mould of the characteristics they approve – whence the saying 'noble deeds from noble men.'⁶⁹

The Dynamism of Contemplation

If the happy life is the actualization of all human capacities, it will also be the actualization of the capacity to do θεωρία⁷⁰ and to contemplate. Man's fulfillment

⁶⁶ Nancy Sherman, "Aristotle on Friendship and the Shared Life," 610-611.

⁶⁷ NE, IX, 9, 1170^b10-14.

⁶⁸ NE, IX, 9, 1170^a5-6.

⁶⁹ NE, IX, 12, 1172^a7-14.

⁷⁰ *Theōria* and *theōrein* (study, observe, attend to) are cognates with *theasthai* ('gaze on') and indicate having something in clear view and attending to it. The *theōria* of a question or subject is looking at it, examining it carefully and seeing the answer (1098^a31; 1100^b19, 1104^a11). *Theōrein* is the activity of the capacity of knowledge. I may know Pythagoras's theorem even if I am not thinking of it; Aristotle regards that as knowing in capacity. The capacity is actualized when I consciously observe or attend to (*theōrein*) the theorem (1146^b33). In Aristotle's most specialized use *theōrein* refers to the contemplative study that he identifies with the important part or the highest element of happiness for a human being. This is study in the sense in which I study a face or a scene that I already have in full view. Aristotle is not thinking of the inquiry needed to find answers one does not already have. For further discussion on the uses of *theōria*, see T. Irwin, trans. NE, Glossary, 427; see also T. Irwin and G. Fine, trans. *Aristotle Selections*, Glossary, 615.

does not end up relating to a friend; rather, his quest will lead him further towards the transcendent – towards truth. Hence, he contemplates, but the presence of the highest intellectual virtue in the happy life is not without its consequences for the other virtues and activities. Theoretical reflection, by its very nature, requires certain conditions for its existence – a certain degree of comfort and leisure time and a certain type of study (σχολή). It therefore imposes a particular kind of organization on the other virtues, which must somehow give way before it and limit themselves in its presence, as it is of greater dignity and worth. As we have said, this does not mean that virtues such as “affability” or “justice” become means for contemplation, but it does pose limitations on the realization of these other virtues. One will therefore have to curb, for instance, one’s affability in order to have leisure to reflect on first principles and contemplate basic realities.

Aristotle’s ‘happy life’ is a weighted equilibrium of components that have different degrees of importance and dignity. A man realizes himself most fully if he gives the greatest play to the most worthy and laudable capacities he possesses.⁷¹ Aristotle argues that the activity which brings the greatest happiness to men must be the activity which most closely resembles that of the gods. No one else is regarded as more blessed and happy than the gods who are considered alive and active, but the acts assigned to them are not those of justice, bravery, courage, temperance or generosity; it is rather the activity of contemplation. Thus, the human activity closest to this must also be the most conducive to a happy and blessed life for man.⁷² This activity possesses all the attributes ascribed to the happy life – unweariedness, leisureliness, self-sufficiency. Hence, man’s complete happiness will be this activity, if it receives a complete span of life, since nothing incomplete is proper to happiness.⁷³ However at the end of Chapter 7 of Book X, Aristotle is human enough to admonish that such a life would be too high for man.⁷⁴ Commenting on this, St. Thomas writes:

He says first that the kind of life that has leisure for the contemplation of truth is higher than the human level. Since man is composed of soul and body with a sensitive and intellectual nature, life commensurate to him is thought to consist in this, that he directs by reason his sensitive and bodily affections and activities. But to engage solely in intellectual activity seems proper to the superior substances possessing only an intellectual nature that they participate by their intellect.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Carlo Natali, *The Wisdom of Aristotle*, 175.

⁷² *NE*, X, 8, 1178^b7ff.

⁷³ *NE*, X, 7, 1177^b16-25.

⁷⁴ *NE*, X, 7, 1177^b26.

⁷⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, X. L.XI: C 2105, 913.

This does not mean to show that man should only exert to know the things of this world as mortals do. Rather, he should strive to attain immortality as far as possible, and exert all his power to live according to the best thing in him – the intellect. “Therefore, just as the intellect compared to man is something divine, so the contemplative life, which is based upon the intellect, is compared to the life of moral virtue as divine to human life.”⁷⁶

With regard to the nature of *theōria*, there is a recent tendency to exclude scientific and philosophical inquiry from it, limiting its scope to the contemplation of truth already acquired. Those who do so rely solely on the sentence from the *Nicomachean Ethics* that “it is to be expected that those who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who inquire.”⁷⁷ However, it is always dangerous with Aristotle to pin one’s faith on a sentence without looking at it in the light of his more general usage, which may provide weighty evidence against it.⁷⁸ Primarily θεωρεῖν meant “to see” or “to observe.” Θεά was a spectacle and θεωρός (among other things) a spectator. This also applies for Aristotle’s concept of θεωρία and θεωρεῖν since “observation” and “observe” would sometimes be a better translation than “contemplation” and “contemplate.”⁷⁹ This means that the philosopher, in this restricted sense of the term, is entirely concerned with knowing or understanding. He plays the part of a spectator who observes the truth of things around him. He neither desires, nor is able, to alter the truth of things. When the objects of his study are subject to change – when, for example, he is investigating natural phenomena – he tries to watch the process, not to modify it, except in so far as experimental modification helps him to understand. Even St. Thomas would comment that of the two parts of contemplation, the second is more perfect since it is the term and end of investigation. Thus, greater pleasure is found in the consideration of truth already known than in its investigation.⁸⁰ However, this does not mean that *eudaimonia* only concerns in the observation of truth; rather, it also includes man’s lifetime quest for it. This is so for the sole reason that he can not attain fully and absolutely that truth in his lifetime. Obviously the pleasure in research depends on the hope that it will lead to further discoveries in the inexhaustible field of knowledge and he rejoices in each little advance as he makes it; but the pleasure would vanish no less in the inconceivable event of there being no more realms to conquer. This is the dynamism of his contemplation. Man is in constant search for truth. His chief good or happiness

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, X. L. XI: C 2106, 913.

⁷⁷ *NE*, X, 7, 1177^a26-27. To illustrate the tendency, W. K. C. Guthrie made mention of J. Barnes, Ross, Gauthier and Jolif in his book. See *A History of Greek Philosophy: Aristotle an Encounter*, vol. VI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 396.

⁷⁸ W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Aristotle an Encounter*, vol. VI (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 396.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 398.

⁸⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, X. L.X: C 2092, 908.

depends on a continual striving for what lies beyond, but not necessarily on the success of his striving.

As for Aristotle, though man's *nous* makes him partly divine, and it is dedicated to the search for truth, he is not wholly absorbed in the godhead. If θεωρία only meant the contemplation of all knowledge, viz., the sole activity of watching it closely, neither he could practice it nor would Aristotle approve of his resting on his oars to contemplate such knowledge as he has already achieved. In fact, however, 'contemplation' in that sense is a travesty of the word θεωρία. "For this reason he adds that it is better for the philosopher to have fellow workers in the study of truth because sometimes one sees what does not occur to another, who is perhaps wiser."⁸¹ True, *eudaimonia* lies not in having obtained any external good, however spiritual, but in our continued approximation to that unobtainable, inimitable divinity. Men cannot, physically and logically, obtain that which is best for more than a moment and therefore it is not this best which is man's good, but the living of a life in which he sometimes does.⁸² In living a life that is fully human, man fashions himself in the image of the divine. Hence, in the *Eudemean Ethics* Aristotle says:

What choice, then, or possession of the natural goods...will most produce the contemplation of god, that choice or possession is the noblest standard.⁸³

The Integrality of Eudaimonia

It has been illustrated above that *eudaimonia* is an activity, a dynamic self-actualization. Man is in a continuous journey – moving from himself, extending towards others and contemplating the things that lies beyond him. Likewise, we must also keep in mind that Aristotle does not specify the happiness of the gods, but such as can be ascribed to human and mortal life. Hence, in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* he states: "We will say that a living person who has, and will keep, the goods we mentioned is blessed, but blessed as a human being is."⁸⁴ In like manner, the *Eudemean Ethics* confirms: "Now this is admitted to be the greatest and best of human goods – we say human, for there might perhaps be a happiness peculiar to some superior being, e.g. a god."⁸⁵ Since man is a composite of body and soul with a sensitive and intellectual nature, the life commensurate to him is thought to consist also in this – a life that involves his whole being. Consequently then, his fulfillment is also integral as it is dynamic.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, X. L.X: C 2096, 909.

⁸² S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man*, 161.

⁸³ *EE*, VII, 15, 1249^b16-19.

⁸⁴ Aristotle, *NE*, trans. T. Irwin, I, 10, 1101^a20.

⁸⁵ *EE*, I, 7, 1217^a21-24.

A Whole Life

The idea that the happy life is a complex set of different activities is suggested by the term βίος or “life” used by Aristotle in his treatises. This is evident in his definition of *eudaimonia* in which Aristotle adds “in a complete life” “for one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy.”⁸⁶ Usually dictionaries distinguish between two Greek words meaning life, βίος and ζωή, holding that the latter refers mainly to biological life and the former to one’s manner or way of living. It is mainly human beings who possess a βίος, but the word can also be used of animals, as happens, for example, in Aristotle’s biological works. However, the texts of the *Ethics* that we are now examining show that Aristotle uses the two terms interchangeably and attributes to ζωή the meaning “manner of living” as used in the *Eudemian Ethics*, 1215^a4-5. It is less common, however, to find in Aristotle the word βίος used to mean biological life and when he discusses the traditional subject of “modes of life” he speaks of βίοι and not of ζωαί.⁸⁷

Now, a person who conducts a certain kind of life does not thereby perform only a single kind of action. Nomadic or herbivorous animals do not devote every single minute of their day to wandering around or chewing grasses; in the same way, neither hunters only hunt nor do fishermen only fish. At a higher level, a civil community such as the πόλις of the Spartans is characterized by a βίος στρατιωτικός, a military life,⁸⁸ but this does not mean that the Spartans devote every minute of their lives to marches, military exercises and battles. They also sing and take part in symposia, pray to the gods, marry, listen to the lectures of the sophist Hippias and do many other things. Nonetheless, in some way their lives are organized around war as their principal activity. It is thus that a βίος is a way of life and as such, it is composed of a series of different activities, but it is characterized by one predominant type of action, which to some extent determines all the rest, and enables us to distinguish one βίος from another. Moreover, a βίος may be chosen out of fidelity to tradition, because of one’s social condition, or owing to a personal inclination; although it is better if the choice is a result of deliberation and educated awareness. In any case, it always indicates the organization of all activities around a particular class of actions that have a predominant role and, like a general light, illuminate the other activities. Furthermore, the notion of βίος enables us to evaluate the kind of happiness chosen by an individual, when the activities characterizing the various forms of life are compared. For example, one who devotes his life to caring for lepers, and is happy in doing so, is better and more worthy of esteem than one who organizes satisfactorily his life around poker games. The βίοι, then, can be

⁸⁶ NE, I, 7, 1098^a18-19. See also MM, I, 4, 1185^a1-9; EE, II, 1, 1219^a35-40.

⁸⁷ Carlo Natali, *The Wisdom of Aristotle*, 135.

⁸⁸ See *Politics*, II, 9, 1270^a5.

arranged on a scale of increasing value, depending on the value of the actions that characterized them.⁸⁹

In a similar fashion to what he says in his biological treatises and in the *Politics*, and even in the *Ethics*, Aristotle considers the βίος to be a way of living characterized by a predominant kind of activity. Thus many βίοι are possible and each of them will be characterized by a different predominant activity. It is, however, impossible for the same person to live more than one βίος at a time; furthermore, the idea of βίος seems to imply a certain duration. It is thus just possible that the same person may, in the course of his existence, devote himself to more than one βίος but there are sound reasons for doubting that he can seriously lead different types of life simultaneously.⁹⁰

This means that a person can choose to live a life that is most akin to him. He can live as an athlete, a politician or a philosopher; but this does not mean that he is incapable of doing things other than the particular life he chose to live. Time will also come that he will shift from one mode of life to another mode of life depending upon the factors affecting his life, such as, age, experience and fortune. This shows that within a given individual's life are choices (*prohairesis*) that articulate the ends of character in some unified and comprehensive way over time. His deliberation reflects a sense of planning, and an ability to make choices that best promote not a single end, but a coherent system of ends. His choices of action are with regard not merely to the parts of good living but with regard to the whole and the unity of ends that it entails. Aristotle would think that a man who made no effort to make a unity of his life, being free, was very foolish. Thus in the *Eudemian Ethics*, the Philosopher enjoins every one who has the power: "To live according to his choice to set up for himself some object for the good life to aim at since not to have one's life organized in view of some end is a mark of much folly."⁹¹ To live as a channel or as a tool for another's life is not truly to live: to be only a part is to be derivative. An eye is not a real whole, for it can only be an eye if it is part of an organic and living body. It is dynamic but its dynamism is derived from an integral whole and from a complete being who uses it. "Nature's purposiveness is of the same order as the functioning of a living entity, the dynamic wholeness of independent organisms. We only see 'what there is' in the world if we are aware of such dynamic wholes and that it is in our awareness of the chief whole, the universe itself, that we find the being of being."⁹² A chair is only a chair because there are people to sit in it: apart from this functional aspect there is only an oddly formed piece of wood, steel or plastic. Furthermore, entities take

⁸⁹ Carlo Natali, *The Wisdom of Aristotle*, 137.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 137-138.

⁹¹ *EE*, I, 2, 1214^b7-10.

⁹² S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man*, 52.

time. There is neither motion nor rest at an instant.⁹³ As human thought, or that of composite individuals, is in a certain period of time, similarly a certain amount of time is needed for a man to have achieved *eudaimonia*.⁹⁴ Man would certainly grow and find fulfillment in time because he is subject to it.

Eudaimonia therefore is an integral act. Since man is composed of body and soul, living in a world, and is subject to time, his fulfillment will necessarily include these factors as he continuously decide and act in accordance with reason and virtue. He is a whole and complete being living in a complete life; in like manner will also be his happiness. "Thus, the paradigmatic *ousiai* (entities) are wholes; the paradigmatic wholes are living entities; living entities exist dynamically in such a way that they are wholes at any point in their existence (so that their parts exist by differentiation rather than the whole by combination) but that their growth and nature is completed over a period of time."⁹⁵

An Interactive Life

It should be pointed out that this integral whole is not something static. Its parts are not pasted and separated from one another; rather, they interact with one another as the parts of the body do. Human life is an interactive activity and hence his fulfillment. Man will never be happy if every second of his life will be utilized to contemplation or do hard work. For this reason, it seems proper for a person to amuse himself for a time so that later he may work harder. The reason is that relaxation and rest are found in amusement, but since men cannot work continuously, they need rest.⁹⁶

Now, acts of virtue and contemplation are not independent from the natural processes of the body. Man needs his body to perform virtuous actions and to contemplate for it is true that both the contemplative and active forms must have the necessities of life, like food, drink, and so on. Thus, in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asserts: "But the man who is contemplating the truth needs no such thing, at least with a view to the exercise of his activity; indeed they are, one may say, even hindrances, at all events to this contemplation; but in so far as he is a man and lives with a number of people, he chooses to do excellent acts; he will therefore need such aids to living a human life... But, being a man, one will also need external prosperity; for our nature is not self-sufficient for the purpose of contemplation, but our body also must be healthy and must have food and other attention."⁹⁷ Man, then, must first of all have a healthy body in order to contemplate and do virtuous acts

⁹³ *Physics*, V, 3, 234^a24.

⁹⁴ *NE*, I, 7, 1098^a18.

⁹⁵ S. R. L. Clark, *Aristotle's Man*, 58.

⁹⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, X. L.IX: C 2077, 904.

⁹⁷ *NE*, X, 8, 1178^b2-7, 33-35.

because the sensitive powers he uses are weakened by sickness; and the mind is also diverted from attention.

Furthermore, as human happiness is a life of virtuous activity consisting in contemplative activity, filial activity and ethically virtuous activity, Aristotle's happy man is the fully virtuous man – one whose human function is completely realized in a lifetime of exercising all the virtues of that function for the sake of the best and most final: *eudaimonia*. It should not be understood that these activities are detached and isolated from each other. They are interconnected and they complement each other. The philosophically wise man, for instance, will engage in contemplative activity as much as he can since the exercise of philosophical wisdom makes him fulfilled. Yet he also knows that, as a human being with physical and social needs, the opportunity he has for contemplative activity depends on living with others in a political community. Hence, he will take time from his contemplative activity to help someone in distress because that activity is necessary and virtuous – a good and end in itself – and done ultimately for the sake of *eudaimonia*. In like manner, a virtuous man could not find any meaning to his actions if he will not take time for contemplation since “it is by the exercise of the intellectual virtue of philosophical wisdom that the human good of happiness as final end and object of character virtue in ethically virtuous activity is rationally apprehended.”⁹⁸

It follows, then, that the happy person has the stability we are looking for and keeps the character he has throughout his life. For always, or more than anything else, he will do and contemplate the actions expressing virtue and will bear fortunes most finely, in every way and in all conditions appropriately, since he is truly ‘good, foursquare and blameless.’⁹⁹

Eudaimonia, therefore, is an interactive and interconnected activity. It is living a virtuous life whose components are integrally woven to one another – intertwining each other. It is basically a way of planning one's present and future with reference to a series of desires and preferences, which vary from time to time and from person to person. The function of this plan is to divide the main human resources of time and energy in pursuing the various ends, in accordance with the intensity of needs that such ends satisfy. Here one tries to make room for those ends that are more compatible with all the other ends that are actually desired and to exclude those that prevent one from obtaining other satisfactions. The purpose of this is the harmonious realization of the main aspirations of an individual which is based on certain principles of efficacy and practical rationality.

⁹⁸ Thomas P. Sherman, S.J., “Human Happiness and the Role of Philosophical Wisdom in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,” 483.

⁹⁹ NE, I, 10, 110^b18-21.

Summary

Discussed is Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia* which is dynamic and integral. This is evident in his own definition of happiness which is "the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue" as well as his concepts of *energeia* (activity) and *praxis* (action). For Aristotle, human happiness or human fulfillment is an activity and not just a state. It involves a continuous process of realizing and actualizing one's capacities as a human being. It is not an end of life but is life itself, hence, it is definitely similar with "living well" or "doing well." Since the *ergon* or function of man is to act in accordance with reason and virtue, his happiness will also be to live a life in accordance with reason and virtue in a complete life. Now, man's activity or dynamism will necessarily include the dynamism of his own self. He begins his stage as a child but definitely he will grow and mature in age and character. He will gradually learn to live his own life, independent from others' admonition because he has his own freedom and decision. However, his life will certainly not end on its own; he will certainly find another being whom he sees himself into, calling him a friend. Gradually he will learn to contemplate the things around him as well as the things that lies beyond him – transcending his own self. This dynamic life will also be his happiness, his fulfillment, his realization, his actualization; but as a man, a human being who is subject to time and space. Since his nature is a composite of body and soul, his *eudaimonia* will also be in accord with it. His life as well as his happiness will be something complete and integral; each part will contribute to the well being of the whole as the parts of the body do. Thus, whatever kind of life he will choose to live, he will definitely need to develop his own self, relate with others and contemplate his own life in a proper place, in a proper time, and in a proper manner.

Eudaimonia and the Two Accounts

The Greek word *eudaimonia* (ευδαιμονία) and the corresponding adjective *eudaimōn* (ευδαίμων) are derived from *eu*, "good, well" and *daimōn*, "spirit," giving the literal sense "having a good guardian spirit," hence being blessed, having the life of one who enjoys divine favor. In ancient Greek popular usage, the term has strong connotations of material prosperity and physical capacity, traditionally regarded as one of the signal marks of divine favor. Hence, a traditional conception of *eudaimonia* finds its ideal life in a Homeric hero, displaying strength and bravery in battle, leadership in political life and receiving honor as his reward. However, this life is dangerous; its success is precarious, liable to the sort of reversal of fortune. More so, the Greek moralists want to encourage justice and concern for others as a virtue that is no less fine and admirable than bravery and strength. In Aristotle's usage, *eudaimonia* does not carry any such supernatural connotation, but it does imply meeting an objective ethical standard. To achieve *eudaimonia* is

to have a life which is objectively desirable and thereby to have achieved the most worthwhile of conditions available to humans. It thus overlaps substantially with the modern concept of happiness since it (*eudaimonia*) is conceived, not just as an episode of feeling, but as a condition characterizing a whole life. In any case, it seems that Aristotle's notion is rather close in meaning to what we call today as "human fulfillment."

According to Aristotle, everyone agrees that *eudaimonia* is the highest human good and that the word is identical with "doing and living well;" but there are substantive disagreement on what kind of life counts as doing and living well. Some thinks that it is in pleasure, others in political affairs and still others in study. Consequently after taking into consideration the conditions of happiness, Aristotle asserts that while certain external goods and preconditions of *eudaimonia* depend to some extent on chance, happiness itself is defined as an activity of the soul and as such it is not a matter of chance but something that arises from human effort. *Eudaimonia*, therefore, is the "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue [excellence] and if there be several virtues, then in conformity with the best and most complete," and "in a complete life." However in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he claims that the most *eudaimon* life is the activity of contemplation while the life of practical action is *eudaimon* in a secondary degree.

The difficulty of the inquiry with regards to Aristotle's understanding of the concept of *eudaimonia* is not that he fails to discuss it or that he fails to answer it, but that he seems to give two answers. Contemporary analyses of the Aristotelian concept of "happiness" are dominated by a distinction which is universally known as the distinction between an "inclusive" and a "dominant" conception of happiness. The inclusive conception has been viewed as one that makes *eudaimonia* a complex set of goods that includes the full range of human life and action while the dominant account has always been viewed as that which identifies happiness with philosophical contemplation. However, as is well known, the terms inclusive and dominant are not to be found in Aristotle's text and Aristotle never conducts his discussion of *eudaimonia* on the basis of this distinction. Although both accounts have pointed out reasonable arguments with regard to their respective claims, still they remain to be unpersuasive. On the one hand, Aristotle never says that the life of study and contemplation is the only life that accounts for *eudaimonia*. Though chapters 7 and 8 of Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* explicitly states that happiness primarily involves the life of study, "but such a life would be too high for man" "for our nature is not self-sufficient for the purpose of contemplation."¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, though the inclusive account expresses some of the spirit of Aristotle, they do not account for the letter of the text since they fail to account the relationship between the components of happiness.

¹⁰⁰ NE, X, 7, 1177^b26-29.

Eudaimonia is not just a combination of all the goods in life; it involves more than a mere collection.

What, then, could be a resolution with regard to the interpretation of Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*?

The Two Conditions

In order to shed further light on the nature of *eudaimonia*, Aristotle posited two formal conditions in Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as well as in his two other ethical treatises, the *Magna Moralia* and the *Eudemian Ethics*. Accordingly, the Philosopher asserts that human happiness is apparently something complete or final (*teleion*) and self-sufficient (*autarkēs*), since it is the end of the things pursued in action. It is *teleion* because it is "always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else." It is *autarkēs* because it is, "when isolated, makes life desirable and lacking in nothing." However to say that *eudaimonia* is something always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else, and when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing does not fully illustrate the conditions of finality and self-sufficiency. Hence, the discussion on the implications and repercussions of the two formal conditions. As pointed out, there has been much discussion with regard to the interpretation of the Greek word *teleion*. It could mean something "final" as in the end of something or it could also mean something "complete" as in being composed of the essential elements. However, as some commentators have argued, there is no real opposition between the two interpretations. What is desired as most final can also include all the essential components that are desired for its own sake. Hence, *eudaimonia* is something final and complete; it is an inclusive end that is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else.

Self-sufficiency on the other hand does not necessarily mean accumulating all the goods in life resulting to absolute self-sufficiency, viz., totally lacking in nothing nor in satisfaction of a very narrow list of desires, if not single one. The reason for this is that the prior would be improbable while the latter would be improvable. This proves that *eudaimonia* is self-sufficient not because it is absolutely lacking in nothing but because it involves the satisfaction of the essential needs of man on the one hand and it can still be improved on the other hand. *Eudaimonia* could not just be limited to a single good; rather it grows as the human person grows.

Nonetheless, to say that it is inclusive and final, essential and improvable, the formal conditions still leaves unanswered vital questions such as the essential definition of happiness, the types of goods happiness must include and the connection or the relationship between these types of goods.

Dynamic and Integral *Eudaimonia*

The essential definition of *eudaimonia* and the relationship between its components were discussed. The dynamism of Aristotle's concept of action (*praxis*) and activity (*energeia*); and continues to expose the dynamism of his concept of the human *ergon* were tackled. Accordingly, Aristotle defines *eudaimonia* as the "activity of the soul in conformity with excellence [virtue]." He claims that happiness is an activity since it is the final end and is identified with living or doing well. Here, Aristotle made an important distinction between action (*praxis*) and production (*poiēsis*), activity (*energeia*) and movement (*kinēsis*). *Eudaimonia* is *praxis* and not *poiēsis* because while making (*poiēsis*) has an end other than itself, action (*praxis*) cannot; for good action (*eupraxia*) itself is its end. In like manner, human happiness is *energeia* and not *kinēsis* because it does not imply the loss of the capacity when it is actualized in the activity as seeing or living does not imply the loss of the capacity to see or live. Human fulfillment is an activity because it is a complete process that does not cease on any approximate end; it is an ongoing activity of virtue and excellence. Since *eudaimonia* is an activity, it could never be static but dynamic. It is a continuous actualization of one's life; it is "living well and doing well."

The same is true with regard to the human *ergon* or function. For Aristotle, the good of a being lies mainly in the activity and being-in-act of the being itself "for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the 'well' is thought to reside in the function." Now, the function of man is "activity of the soul in accordance with reason;" and if any action is well performed when done in excellence, the human good turns out to be activity of the soul in conformity with excellence. *Eudaimonia*, therefore, is "activity of the soul in accordance with excellence or virtue." The human *ergon* therefore is simply to live life well in accordance with reason; and living is an activity, a dynamic process.

Since *eudaimonia* is living and doing, a dynamic activity, it is not plainly present at the start as a piece of property. It is an activity composed of activities, constantly unfolding every second of man's life. His life will necessarily involve the activity of his own self, gradually extending toward others and contemplating the things that lie beyond him. Man should cultivate his own self, acquire stability through his virtues and mold his life according to his own decisions. To live as an instrument, a slave, for the rest of one's life is not to "live." Although he may acquire external goods and may need good fortune, his own living would still remain to be the prevailing factor since an activity that control life, but life does not necessarily end in one's own self, it extends the other self. For Aristotle, this is friendship and friendship is an activity. It is simply living virtuously with others, mutually leading each other toward

actualization. When the need arises in that friendship to sacrifice one's life, then a friend dies for his friend "since he would prefer a short period of intense pleasure to a long one of mild enjoyment." Again life is not just limited to relationship; it further extends to the transcendent. This is the activity of contemplation. Man's quest for truth would always lead him to something that which is beyond space and time. Although he might not achieve absolute knowledge of the truth, his fulfillment depends on his continual striving for what lies beyond, not necessarily on the success of his striving. And although such a life would be too high for us, we should still strain every nerve to live in accordance with the divine in us; "for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything." This is the dynamism of human living and this is also the dynamism of human happiness for it is identical with living and doing well.

It is also important to point out that the dynamism of human life is not a one way process. Rather, it is an interactive one. One aspect of living is as vital as the other aspect in the whole of life. Man is a composite whole, composed of body and soul. He is integral, he is complete. His *eudaimonia* is also integral and complete. Hence, Aristotle adds to his definition: "and in a complete life. For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy." Although he may live a certain kind of life (*bios*), but that life would still need to be complete. All its activities are necessarily intertwined with each other, each contributing towards life's fulfillment. Man lives and he lives in time and in this world. His happiness would also be in these, it is integral and complete since "living is either complete or incomplete."

Conclusion

As is well known, the terms inclusive and dominant or comprehensive and intellectualist are not to be found in Aristotle's text and Aristotle never conducts his discussion of happiness on the basis of this distinction. It is evident in his discussion that he passes indifferently from one to the other, showing no opposition between the two proposed accounts of *eudaimonia*. It may be because there is indeed no real distinction between the two accounts. Human happiness is not a dichotomized reality since life, the principle of happiness, is a matter of living. It is an activity. As Aristotle would put it the *Magna Moralia*: "Being happy, then, and happiness, consist in living well, and living well is living in accordance with the excellences. This, then, is the end and happiness and the best thing. "Happiness therefore will consist in a kind of use and activity. For we found that where there was having and using, the use and exercise are the end."¹⁰¹ *Eudaimonia*, therefore, is neither a passive state we achieve nor a partial account of life; rather it characterizes what we do and how we do it in a complete life. It is something dynamic and integral as human living is dynamic and

¹⁰¹ *MM*, I, 4, 1184^b28-32.

integral. It is a continual process of self-actualization and self-fulfillment. It is man living well a complete life.

The problem with the two accounts of *eudaimonia* is their emphasis on the kind of life that makes man *eudaimon*. The dominant conception claims that it is the life of intellectual virtue; while the inclusive asserts it to be a comprehensive organization of all the goods in life without taking into account their relations. They fail, however, to accentuate that *eudaimonia* is foremost an “activity;” it is a living, and living will should not just be about collection of all the goods in life nor will it be about a lone activity of contemplation. It is rather a dynamic and integral unfolding of oneself; a continuous process of self-actualization and self-realization in a complete life. Although man is in full possession of the essential principles in virtue of which he is man, he still lacks many of the qualities and attributes required if he is to become fully human. He must refine his moral sense. He must share himself with others in friendship and participate in political community. He must develop his mind by learning about himself, his world and the life beyond. As pointed out by the concepts of *energeia*, *praxis*, *ergon* and *bios*, human fulfillment is a continuous process of living in excellence and virtue. It is a gradual process that essentially includes transforming the self, building relations with others and gazing toward the transcendent and the divine. Nonetheless, it should be emphasized that these component activities of happiness are not to be taken singly or separately; they are interactive and interconnected as parts of the body to the whole body. *Eudaimonia* is living a complete life; it is not the consummation of life. Although no man can exhaust his potency for development, or even his desire for improvement, he may still be happy to just the extent that his development has been freely realized through the exercise of reason and of the virtues, which perfects its operations and those of the appetites. This end is not literally terminative in the sense that it comes at the end of a certain progression of activities, or at the end of one’s life; rather it consists instead in actually living one’s life as a free, rational agent in a complete life. *Eudaimonia* therefore is dynamic and integral; it is living well a complete human life.

