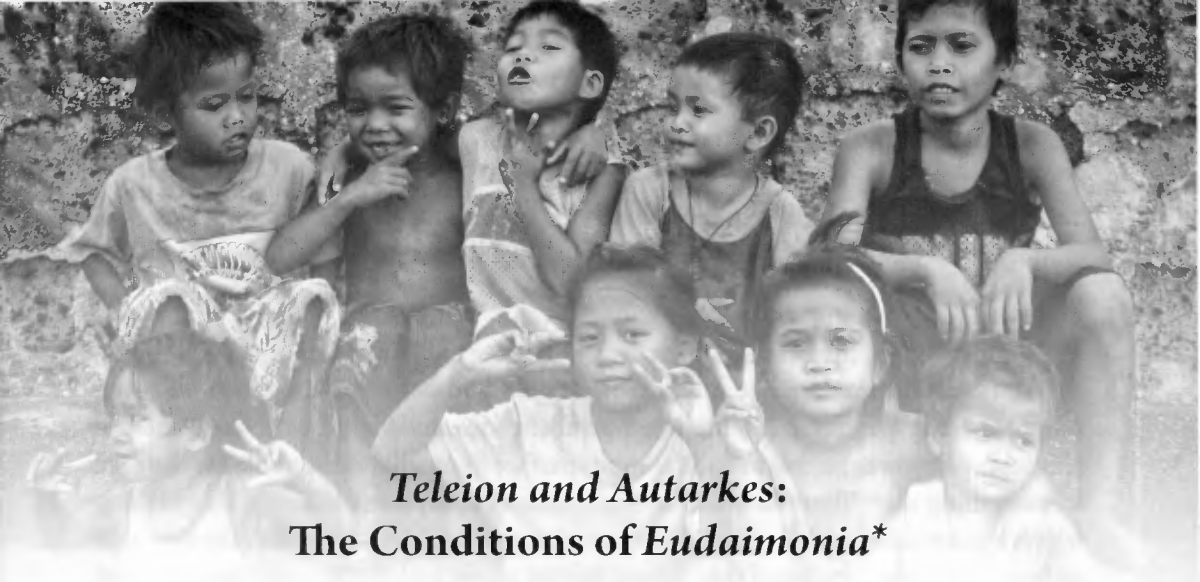

Teleion and Autarkes: The Conditions of *Eudaimonia**

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In Book I, Chapter 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle resumes his discussion of *eudaimonia* by expounding on the disputes about the end in question and about the life that is the successful candidate for being the final good. However, instead of taking a direct stand on the debate, he makes a fresh start on the matter.[1] He makes the observation that the dispute concerning the candidates for the *eudaimon* life raises preliminary questions about the conditions of *eudaimonia*. Aristotle seeks to clarify what sort of condition might help to clarify the dispute, whether the choice will be wealth, or honor, or pleasure, or contemplation. Our previous discussions dealt with the unresolved tension with regard the interpretation of Aristotle's *eudaimonia*. The present task will focus the issue on two formal conditions of *eudaimonia* – on *teleion* (complete/final) and the *autarkes* (self-sufficient), that the criteria for the final good must be satisfied first before being considered the *eudaimonia*. A more thorough discussion, apparently, on the criteria of happiness is presented by Aristotle to clarify his position with regard the present inquiry. In particular, his position hopes to examine the necessary implications resulting from the two formal conditions, as well as the further repercussions emanating on account of these criteria.

Finality And Completeness

In order to clarify further his arguments, Aristotle asserts that there is a gradation among ends with regard to their perfection and completeness. There are ends that are desired not on account of some formal goodness existing in itself but only as useful for something else. There we find also ends that are indeed desirable on

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[1] See *NE*, I, 7, 1097a15-25.

account of what it is; however, it is desired for something else. This is better than the first though, but the most perfect end is that which is so desired for its own sake and that is never desired for the sake of anything else.

Accordingly, the best end, namely the ultimate end, must be perfect. Therefore, if there is only one such end, it must be the ultimate end we are looking for. If, however, there are many perfect ends, the most perfect of these should be the best and the ultimate. What is desirable in itself is more perfect than what is desirable for the sake of something else. Therefore, the unconditionally complete (*τέλειον ἁπλως*) is that which is always desirable for itself and never for another. Now, Aristotle concedes that *eudaimonia* appears to be of this nature, for we never seek it for something else but always for itself. We do choose honor, pleasure, knowledge and virtue for themselves. We would choose them or have a desire for them even if no other good would come from them. However, we choose them also for happiness precisely because we think we will be happy in having them, but no one chooses happiness for them or for anything else.

For Aristotle, *eudaimonia*, therefore, is the most final good and consequently the most complete.

Two Notions of *Teleion*[2]

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 7, 1097^{a}25-^{b}6, the notion of pursuit for the sake of an end is used to generate degrees of finality, wherein ends are compared as being more or less *teleion* (*τελειον*). However, there has been much discussion with regard to the interpretation of the Greek word *teleion*.[3] The word literally means "endy."[4] In some contexts, the translations that have been offered for *teleion* include "end-like," "complete," "perfect" and "final."[5] Each of these translations is correct in its own way. "End-like" and "final" capture the cognate relation of *teleion* to *telos* ("end") and expresses the way which, for Aristotle, cases of *teleion* generally reflect the actualization of an end or it has attained its end.[6] The other two, "complete" and

[2] *Teleion* is cognate with *telos*, "end." It applies to something that has reached its *telos*, and hence to a mature, adult organism (see *Metaphysics*, 1021^{b}24). It also designates a whole, leaving nothing outside, and a unified whole, in contrast to a mere collection (see *EE*, 1219^{b}7-8; *Physics*, 207^{a}8-10; *Metaphysics*, 1021^{b}12-23, 1023^{b}26-34). Aristotle also attributes *teleion* to *eudaimonia* as a formal condition (see, *NE*, 1097^{a}25-21, 1098^{a}18, 1101^{a}13), and to the city (see *Politics*, 1252^{b}27-30, 1281^{a}1). For a brief discussion on teleion, see Terence Irwin and Gail Fine, *Aristotle Selections* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Complany, Inc., 1995), Glossary, 573; see also T. Irwin, trans. *NE*, Glossary, 391.

[3] Anthony Kenny, *Aristotle on the Perfect Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 16.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Henry S. Richardson, "Degrees of Finality and the Highest Good in Aristotle," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, ed. Rudolf A. Makkreel, vol. XXX, no. 3 (USA: Journal of the History of Philosophy, Inc., 1992), 332.

[6] See *Metaphysics*, V, 16, 1021^{b}24-25.

"perfect," translations capture senses of *teleion* set out by Aristotle in the first part of Chapter 16, Book V of the *Metaphysics*: something is *teleion* if it contains all the relevant parts and outside which it is not possible to find even one of the parts proper to it.[7]

"In application to virtue (*aretĕ*), this adjective and especially its superlative form have come under intense scrutiny because of the way in which the latter figures in the defining stretch of the good for man that concludes the *ergon* argument later in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 7 (that the good for man turns out to be activity of the soul in conformity with virtue, and if there are many virtues in accordance with the best and the most *teleion* [the *teleiotaton*]: 1098a16-18)."[8] It is hard to resist the connection of this phrase with the characterization in Book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, requiring the life of contemplation as the perfect or final *eudaimonia*. Nonetheless, Ackrill and others seeking to characterize *eudaimonia* as an inclusive good with a constitutive place for the moral virtues have sought to interpret *teleion*, in application to virtue or excellence, as implying inclusiveness.[9] This has been much disputed between the supporters of the comprehensive and the dominant interpretation of Aristotle's eudaemonism. On the one hand, adherents of the comprehensive theory say that Aristotle is here talking about complete virtue, moral plus intellectual; on the other hand, adherents of the dominant theory say that Aristotle is talking about the supreme or most final, i.e. intellectual, virtue.[10] What then could be the most plausible interpretation of *teleion*?

Teleion as Final

In the *Metaphysics*, one connotation of the term *teleion*, according to Aristotle, is that beyond which one cannot lay hand on any part outside of it and that which have attained a good end.[11] "For that is greatest which cannot be exceeded, and that is complete (final) beyond which nothing can be found. For the complete (final) difference marks the end (just as the other things which are called complete [final] are so called because they have attained an end), and beyond the end there is nothing."[12] It seems clear that Aristotle intends this definition in the sense of that beyond which one can no longer lay hand on anything. In other words, *teleion* is to be understood as the terminus of a chain that consists in constantly going beyond what was first taken as final. "Thus, *teleion* is essentially relative to what lies before the thing that is called final."[13]

[7] *Metaphysics*, V, 16, 1021^{b}13-23.
[8] H. S. Richardson, "Degrees of Finality and the Highest Good in Aristotle," 332.
[9] See J. L. Ackrill, "Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*," 20-29.
[10] A. Kenny, *Aristotle on the Perfect Life*, 17.
[11] *Metaphysics*, V, 16, 1021^{b}23; V, 17, 1022^{a}4-13.
[12] *Ibid.*, X, 4, 1055^{a}10-13. The emphasis on the word "final" is from the author.
[13] Troels Engberg-Pederson, *Aristotle's Theory of Moral Insight* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 12.

If *teleion* is translated this way, clearly this explication confirms the remark and tells in favor of finality rather than completeness. Without specifying any objective constraints on what kinds of goals actually are suited to be sought by themselves, Aristotle here focuses simply on the structure of desire and choice by stating that an end that is final without qualification is sought only for its own sake.

> Appealing to the way in which people subordinate some pursuits of others, he invokes the binary relation of choosing A for B, without expressly limiting either term to items that contribute to happiness: for any goal A, if A is chosen not only for itself but also for B, then B is more *teleion* than A. The initially puzzling notion of degrees being *teleion* thus finds a straightforward explication in terms of the hierarchy of goals.[14]

This means that so long as nothing else requires completeness, the highest goal may be some single item or type of thing. To be sure, this supreme goal might generally include some other goals, even some sought also for their own sake, namely those involved in its pursuit, but it certainly would not need to include all final goals; a single goal may be everything worth pursuing at all. In this sense, the term *teleion* seems to have a somewhat exceptional sense when applied to goals; and since happiness is a goal, then, the sense of "most *teleion*" that will most likely apply to it is "finality."

With this sense of *teleion*, therefore, it will be difficult to deny that in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the view of *eudaimonia* as the most *teleion* goal will strongly suggest a dominant one. In Chapter 7 of Book X, the argument goes to suggest that if *eudaimonia* is activity which is the exercise of virtue, it is reasonable that it should be activity which is the exercise of the most excellent virtue: and this will be that of the best thing in us. This is either the understanding or something like it, so the activity of this in accordance with its proper virtue will be final (*teleion*) happiness.[15] In this passage, whichever sense we give to *teleion*, we are presented with a dominant, intellectualist interpretation. Aristotle then goes on to show in the last book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that theoretic contemplation possesses all the qualities which, according to Book I, were properties of happiness. Thus, it is the best activity, the most continuous and durable, the pleasantest and the most self-sufficient; it is loved for its own sake and therefore the most *teleion* in the sense of final.[16]

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[14] Stephen A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life?," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Julia Annas, vol. VIII (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 110.

[15] *NE*, X, 7, 1177^{a}12-18.

[16] *NE*, X, 7, 1177^{a}19-^{b}24.

Teleion as Complete

Another signification of *teleion* is its meaning of being "complete." This is clearly delineated in the first part of Chapter 16, Book V of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* where he describes a thing *teleion* as "outside which it is not possible to find even one of the parts proper to it and because they lack nothing in respect of goodness."[17] In this sense, *teleion* is interpreted as a complete whole that which lacks nothing and "that from which is absent none of the parts of which it is said to be naturally a whole."[18]

Reading *teleion* as "complete," one could therefore infer that Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics,* seems to assert that if we claim to pursue pleasure, honor, understanding and virtue for their own sakes only in all our actions, we also pursue them for the sake of happiness, the complete good, so that really only one end satisfies the condition for unconditional completeness – *eudaimonia.*[19] One could assume that a rational agent wants her life to be a whole, not simply a collection of ends without further structure. "If we agree about this, we will agree that only one end is unconditionally complete and that it must cover the whole of a person's life; any less global end would have to be chosen for the sake of a whole life that includes it as a part."[20]

In the *Eudemian Ethics'* definition of *eudaimonia,* the word *teleion* does not betray the same ambiguity as it does in the *Nicomachean Ethics.* In the second book of the *Eudemian Ethics,* we are told:

> But since happiness was something complete, and living is either complete or incomplete and so also virtue – one virtue being whole, the other a part – and the activity of what is incomplete is itself incomplete, therefore happiness would be the activity of a complete life in accordance with complete virtue.[21]

Here *teleion* must have the sense of "completeness." We are explicitly told that perfect virtue is whole virtue and imperfect virtue is partial virtue; similarly, perfect and imperfect life must be complete and incomplete life. *Eudaimonia* therefore must be a complete whole: and indeed, a few lines later we are explicitly told that nothing imperfect is happy, because it is not complete.

> We find confirmation also in the common opinion that we cannot ascribe happiness to an existence of a single day, or to a child, or

[17] *Metaphysics,* V, 16, $1021^{b}12$, $1021^{b}31$.
[18] *Ibid.,* V, 26, $1023^{b}26$-27.
[19] See *NE,* I, 7, $1097^{a}34$-$^{b}6$.
[20] T. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles,* 362.
[21] Aristotle, *EE,* trans. J. Solomon, in *The Works of Aristotle,* II, 1, $1219^{a}35$-39.

> to each of the ages of life; and therefore Solon's advice holds good, never to congratulate a man when living, but only when his life is ended. For nothing incomplete is happy, not being whole.[22]

The complete whole which is happiness is the activity of complete virtue in a complete life. So that when Aristotle goes on to list examples of moral and intellectual virtues, it is clear that the activities of these virtues are all supposed to be parts of *eudaimonia*. The soul's virtue whose activity is the supreme good is a virtue which is constituted by the several virtues of the different parts of the soul. "And just as general good condition of the body is compounded of the partial excellences, so also the excellence of the soul, *qua* end."[23]

This complete virtue, whose exercise in a complete life constituted *eudaimonia* according to the second book of the *Eudemian Ethics*, is the sum total of the virtues discussed in the central books of the *Eudemian Ethics* and is treated again as a unified whole in the first part of the final chapter of the *Eudemian Ethics*, Book VIII, under the description nobility-and-goodness. Aristotle asserts that anyone who deserves the description noble-and-good must have all the individual virtues, just as a body can only be healthy if all, or at least the main parts of it, are healthy. The language of this passage echoes closely that of Book II of the *Eudemian Ethics* and makes clear that nobility-and-goodness is the perfect or complete virtue whose activity was described as *eudaimonia*.

This interpretation of *teleion* can be summed up, then, by asserting that *eudaimonia*, being complete is more desirable than anything else in that it includes everything desirable in itself. It is best and better than everything else, not in the way that bacon is better than eggs and than tomatoes, but in the way that bacon, eggs and tomatoes, is a better breakfast than either bacon or eggs or tomatoes – and is indeed the best breakfast without qualification.[24]

Teleion: A Synthesis of Finality and Completeness

Aristotle's *teleion* suggests both a popular ideal of complete and total fulfillment of all our wishes and a more philosophical notion of something sought for itself, the final end of all our choices.[25] Thus, on the former translation, the term would imply something comprehensive: the most complete goal is simply the most inclusive one and attaining it would require attaining all other *teleion* goals. The latter, which derives from the sense of *telos* as "end" or "goal," has no implications for completeness, although it is compatible with completeness: the most final goal would be that single

[22] *Ibid.*, II, 1, 1219^{b}1-8.
[23] *Ibid.*, 1220^{a}3-4.
[24] J. L. Ackrill, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia," 21.
[25] S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 108.

goal which we consider superior to all others, in that we pursue the others only so far as their pursuit either leads to it, or at least does not interfere with its pursuit. Hence, Aristotle distinguishes two basic senses of *teleion*, one is quantitative and the other is qualitative.[26] We mean by quantitative when it has all its parts and qualitative when it is an excellent specimen of its kind. Although these two senses suggest, respectively, inclusiveness and finality, we would need some reason to prefer appealing to one another rather than to the other to explicate Aristotle's point about *eudaimonia* and human ends. In fact, as a brief remark, neither of the two seems appropriate when taken singly since the term *teleion* seems to have an exceptional and interlocking sense.

> Thus, although something is quantitatively *teleion* when it has all its parts (*Met.*, 1021^{b}12-14), it would beg our question simply to assume that other goals are parts of the most *teleion* goal. Similarly, if something is qualitatively *teleion* when it is an excellent specimen of its kind (b15-23), our question is precisely what kind of thing happiness is, what kind of good counts as *teleion* goal. Further, the formulas leaves it unclear whether there may be degrees of excellence, and whether utter perfection or something more modest is required.[27]

The puzzle here, however, centers on how we can choose something for itself when we also choose it for happiness. One explanation, advanced by J. L. Ackrill, is that in choosing honor and our other final ends in the belief that they make us happy, we consider them as parts of happiness.[28] On this account, Aristotle would invoke the notion of inclusion to explain his claim that we choose *eudaimonia* always and only for itself: we choose virtue both for itself and for happiness simply because we believe that virtue is a basic part of happiness, and in choosing the parts of something, we choose them both for themselves and for the whole. In an analogy used by Ackrill, golfers both putt for its own sake and also play golf for its own sake, since putting is simply a constitutive part of playing golf; and choosing to play golf for a good holiday involves choosing golf both for itself and also as a part of the more comprehensive good of a holiday.[29] Thus Aristotle's exposition of the "most *teleion*" by parts would imply both completeness and finality.

[26] See *Ibid.*, 109.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] See J. L. Ackrill, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia," 19-27.
[29] *Ibid.*, 19.

Not a Maximalist[30] Combination

However, neither of the two accounts of *teleion* entails maximalism," that is to say, a life of perfect satisfaction.[31] While both accounts allow more than one end to count as parts of *eudaimonia,* neither says anything about how many parts are necessary or how many would be sufficient and both leave us wondering how complete the final good must be. Whether it be a composite life or a single life of honor, Aristotle is not clear enough to specify the distinctive composition of the *eudaimon* life. Nevertheless, maximalism seems not an answer. After all, maximalism taken literally would be absurd because something that includes all the goals anyone ever seeks would be utterly impossible to attain. *Eudaimonia,* obviously, must consist of some parts; but nothing in the condition of being most *teleion* requires any specific parts, not even all goals sought for their own sake. In fact, all it requires is the almost trivial condition that *eudaimonia* is a composite consisting of those goals sought for their own sake and that are also sought for the sake of *eudaimonia.* To be sure, Aristotle lists four things that he calls good by themselves and that typically are parts of *eudaimonia*[32] but nothing he explicitly says in the *Ethics* requires the presence of them all or even of any one of them; nor is there any suggestion here that any of them would be sufficient, singly or jointly.[33] In short, this explication says nothing precise about how comprehensive the ultimate goal must be. Provided there is more than one end that someone could choose always for itself and never for anything else, the condition of *teleion* by itself would allow any one of them by itself to be *eudaimonia.* It allows, for example, that people may find happiness in a life devoted to public service, though they may have little time or inclination for study and reflection; but it also allows the contrary, that others find happiness in reflection, without subjecting too much of themselves to the burdens and risks of public life. Thus, the formal condition, *teleion,* suggests a life of either moral virtue or contemplation to qualify as *eudaimonia;* however, it never alludes that happiness consists in reflection alone since it would conflict with the formal condition.[34]

[30] Maximalism here would mean a kind of life that entail complete satisfaction of all human desires, see S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 107-115.

[31] *Ibid.,* 113.

[32] The four includes: honor, pleasure, reason and every excellence, see *NE,* I, 7, 1097^{b}1-2.

[33] In a discussion meant to characterize the kinds of views that win popular assent, Aristotle lists over a dozen "parts" of happiness (see *Rhetoric,* I, 5). Several of these parts, most notably health and friends (according to *NE,* VIII, 1, friends are "most necessary"), are missing from his discussion in *NE,* I, 7; and neither in the *Rhetoric* nor in the *Ethics* does he claim that any one end is necessary.

[34] See White's note in "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," note no. 11, 114.

An Integral and Dynamic Combination

The analogy of golf, used by Ackrill, also shows how even the essential constituents need not be present at all times.[35] No golfer would really be satisfied with hitting holes in one on each and every hole; such good luck would undermine the whole point of the game. In the same manner, no basketball player would certainly find satisfaction on merely shooting all goals; the whole game would basically include excellent passes and defense. In short, the composite whole consists of a variety of parts; each of them must be integrally present to some degree, but need not be maximized. Take Aristotle's own examples of intrinsic goods: if a life utterly devoid of any honor and respect is scarcely worth living, the ultimate goal hardly requires constant and abundant honor or if it must be pleasant, there is no need for us to enjoy ourselves immensely, or at every moment.[36] While he thinks that the life of understanding offers the finest happiness, he also recognizes that uninterrupted thought lies beyond human capacity.[37] The point of these examples is to show that even if the condition of being *teleion* suggests a comprehensive goal that includes some of a number of major intrinsic goods, it does not require the maximalist extreme, which would be implausible in any case. Rather, an integral and dynamic interdependence of these goods might be plausibly construed. Taking for instance the basketball game, satisfaction of the game would necessarily include the proper execution of defending, passing and shooting; and by proper would mean in the right manner, at the right time and in the right place. Hence, an excellent player will not only focus himself on making every shot, rather he will also defend and provide good passes to his teammates as the circumstance calls for. However, the first formal condition leaves unanswered how much of which goods would be necessary or sufficient for happiness. His discussion invokes not only the condition of being *teleion* but also the second condition, self-sufficiency, to which we should now turn.

Depending, therefore, on different interpretations of what Aristotle means, *teleion* has been translated either as "perfect" in the sense of "complete" or inclusive of other things, or as "final" in the sense of an end or goal, that for the sake of which other things are desired. The two translations both express important aspects of what Aristotle means by the term. However, as some commentators have argued, what is desired as most final can include all of what is desired for its sake.[38] Hence, translating *teleion* as a combination of "finality" and "completeness" better captures both the final and inclusive character of Aristotle's understanding of *eudaimonia* as the supreme good and most final end of human action.

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[35] S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 114.

[36] See *NE*, Books III and IV on the different kinds of virtue and vices.

[37] See *NE*, 1177^{b}25-30; 1178^{b}25-30.

[38] See Sherman's note on the interpretation of *teleion* in Thomas P. Sherman, S. J., "Human Happiness and the Role of Philosophical Wisdom in the *Nicomachean Ethics*," note no. 2, 467-468.

Self-Sufficiency

Prior to elaborating the discussion of human function in the seventh chapter of Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle lays down another formal condition which *eudaimonia* must fulfill other than that of being *teleion*. It must also be self-sufficient (*autarkes*).

> The same conclusion [that happiness is complete] also appears to follow from self-sufficiency, since the complete good seems to be self-sufficient.[39]

Aristotle introduces self-sufficiency as implied by the condition of being *teleion*. In making self-sufficiency a requirement of *eudaimonia*, he defines the self-sufficient (*αὔταρκες*) as that which is not sufficient for a solitary person by himself, living an isolated life; rather it is that which taken alone makes life desirable and lacking in nothing. He regards it as the most worthwhile of all things, not being counted as one good thing among others for then the addition of any of the other things would make it better and more choice-worthy.

> The self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think happiness to be; and further we think it most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others – if it were so counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods; for that which is added becomes an excess of goods, and of goods the greater is always more desirable.[40]

However, to say that *eudaimonia* is self-sufficient does not free it from ambiguities. Aristotle is not that clear in delineating the implications of *αὔταρκες* (*autarkēs*)[41] or the condition of self-sufficiency. For instance, he does not explicitly tell us whether *eudaimonia* as self-sufficient involves the importance of social concerns for happiness or not. Without much argument at the outset of his discussion, Aristotle simply denies both that people can be happy all by themselves and that their happiness requires well-being for all their friends and relatives.[42] In short, he simply tells us that neither maximalism nor minimalism meets the social implications of

[39] Aristotle, *NE*, trans. T. Irwin, I, 7, 1097^{b}7-8.

[40] *NE*, I, 7, 1097^{b}8-20.

[41] Something is *autarkēs* if it can supply what it needs without resort to anything outside itself. Aristotle speaks of *autarkēs* (1) of HAPPINESS as a self-sufficient good, because it is complete, *EN* 1097b6, *Pol.* 1280b34, *Rhet.* 1360b14, 24, (2) of the CITY as the complete and self-sufficient COMMUNITY, *Pol.* 1252b27, 1261b11, and (3) of some people or cities as more self-sufficient than others insofar as they are less dependent on external supplies, *Pol.* 1326b3, 24, see T. Irwin and Gail Fine, trans. *Aristotle Selections*, Glossary, 612.

[42] *NE*, I, 7, 1097^{b}8-14.

self-sufficiency. Thus we might ask: If self-sufficiency is neither what suffices for a solitary person by himself nor what suffices for all, how much is Aristotle willing to allow as self-sufficient?

On the Two Notions of Self-Sufficiency[43]

More than Mere Minimalism

By minimalism, we would mean a life devoted to the satisfaction of a very narrow list of desires, if not a single one.[44] It denotes a life lived with a very minimal number of goods, thereby fulfilling only the most basic of human needs. When Aristotle defined the self-sufficient as simply that which "when all by itself it makes life choice-worthy and lacking nothing,"[45] it seems that he is positing a minimalist connotation. "The first thing to observe is that two demands are made here, each pointing towards minimalism"[46] The first requires very little, only that one follows a way of life that is choice-worthy. It does not require, for example, that one follows the most choice-worthy way of life, or even an especially choice-worthy life. Rather, the criterion would seem to be satisfied by any whose goals are genuinely choice-worthy, so long as their pursuits and circumstances fare well, enough for their lives to remain worth living. After all, life need not be the best we can imagine, or even the best we can manage in our circumstances, for it to remain worth living; and only in extraordinary circumstances does the pursuit of an ultimate goal lead people to sacrifice their lives.[47] In short, a life could be self-sufficient and still be better, even much better, provided there is a good reason to continue leading that kind of life, rather than change one's way of life or quit it altogether. Aristotle emphasizes the same point when he limits what makes the life self-sufficient to something "all alone" or "isolated."

> What sort of goods would one call good in themselves? Is it those that are pursued even when isolated from others, such as intelligence, sight, and certain pleasures and honors? Certainly, if we pursue these also for the sake of something else, yet one would place them among things good in themselves.[48]

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[43] These notions are based from White's distinction between a maximalist, a minimalist and a modest conception of happiness, see "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 116-124. Terence Irwin, however, proposes another distinction between a conative and normative conception of the good, see T. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles*, 362-363.

[44] For further discussion on this remark about minimalism, see S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life, 107."

[45] Aristotle, *NE*, trans. T. Irwin, I, 7, 1097^{b}14-15.

[46] S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life, 117."

[47] *Ibid.*, 117.

[48] *NE*, I, 6, 1096^{b}16-19.

It is clear in his examples here that thinking and seeing and even some pleasures and honors, are worth pursuing each on its own and not just for their consequences. Hence, the reference to "all alone" or "isolated" in connection with self-sufficiency may seem not by itself entail a composite, much less a comprehensive goal. However, neither does the criterion entail that sight alone, nor any of the examples mentioned, would be sufficient to make a whole way of life choice-worthy. All it does assert is that whatever can all alone make a whole life choice-worthy is self-sufficient. Since sight is not enough to meet the demand, the criterion is compatible with the obvious truth that we are not happy just because we can see. Indeed, while this criterion does seem to suggest a single good rather than a composite goal, it does not rule out considering a composite "all alone" in isolation from any further goods. As Aristotle's following remarks show, more is at stake here than what standard of living is necessary for happiness.[49]

Against Maximalism

He further delineates the self-sufficiency of *eudaimonia* as "the most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others – if it were so counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of good; for that which is added becomes an excess of goods, and of goods the greater is always more desirable."[50] If the discussion at the previous point has verged on minimalism, Aristotle now goes on to add what is often taken to imply the maximalist view. By maximalism, we would mean a kind of life that entails the complete satisfaction of all goods, so as to leave nothing to be desired of.[51]

The crucial phrase here is "being counted," which evidently envisages a list of goods, something like "parts" of happiness enumerated in *Rhetoric*, I, 5, but it is not obvious from the above passage what Aristotle would really like to postulate. Does "being counted" entail treating *eudaimonia* as a single item, such as honor or virtue or pleasure, or does it allow for some sort of composition of other items on the list? If happiness is a composite, then it would be absurd to count it together with its parts, since that would be to count its parts twice over.[52] "On the other hand, taking the passage indicatively so as to allow for the possibility of counting happiness together with other goods does not entail that it is a single good. Happiness could consist of a subset of the goods on the list; and unless it includes everything good, counting it together with lesser goods does not entail counting its parts twice over, as it could

[49] S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 118.

[50] *NE*, I, 7, 1097^{b}16-20.

[51] For further discussion on this remark with regard to maximalism, see S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 107.

[52] J. L. Ackrill, "Aristotle on Eudaimonia," 22.

be counted together with other goods that are not included in it."[53] Moreover, while Aristotle claims that adding more goods to happiness would yield a "surplus," he immediately goes on to say that the resulting greater good is more desirable.[54] Thus, all he evidently means is that the resulting greater good would be more than the minimum required for *eudaimonia*, not that it would be excessive or too much. The aim of his discussion of self-sufficiency is to characterize the peculiar fact that, while *eudaimonia* is the best sort of life, it can still be improved. Happiness can be counted together with other good things; further goods can be added to it and it can be made better.

In support of this interpretation, other texts bear out similar understanding of the passage. One elucidation can be traced in the *Rhetoric*. In a survey of the various ways in which to show that one good is better than another, Aristotle observes that necessarily, more goods are greater than the one or the fewer, when the one or the fewer are counted together.

> It follows, then, that a greater number of goods is a greater good than one or than a smaller number, if that one or that smaller number is included in the count; for then the larger number surpasses the smaller and the smaller quantity is surpassed as being contained in the larger.[55]

As ensured by the condition that the goods be counted together, the claim is not that A&B&C will always be better than D or D&E, but that A&B&C is better than A or A&B. In similar but longer list of commonplaces for deliberative argument discussed in the *Topics*, Aristotle tells us that a greater number of goods is more desirable than a smaller either absolutely or when the one is included in the other; however, an objection may be raised if in some particular case the one is for the sake of the other, for then the two together are not more desirable than the one. So getting healthy and health are not better than health, since we choose to get healthy for the sake of health.[56] By analogy then, to count happiness together with anything that is simply a means to happiness, or already presupposed by it, would not yield a more choice-worthy whole. "But that does not mean that happiness cannot be improved by the addition of some other goods not presupposed by it; and since the final end does not have to include all choice-worthy ends, there do exist other goods to be added."[57]

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[53] S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 119-120.

[54] *NE*, I, 7, 1097^{b}19-20.

[55] *Rhetoric*, I, 7, 1363^{b}18-20.

[56] *Topics*, III, 2, 117^{a}16-21.

[57] *S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 121.*

What, therefore, has been disclosed so far from the discussion regarding self-sufficiency is the peculiar fact that while *eudaimonia* is the most desirable sort of life, it seems to suggest that it is more than a life of mere satisfaction of basic needs. Neither does it imply that it includes all sorts of desirable ends nor has completely satisfied all human desires. Rather it suggests a sufficient whole that can still be further enriched.

Improvable Self-Sufficiency

Not Tokens but Essential Goods

If both the minimalist and maximalist notions of self-sufficiency fail to solve the problem concerning Aristotle's conception of the self-sufficient (*autarkēs*), an especially subtle approach to this problem is to say that "the complete good is composed of a sufficient number of tokens of some determinate types of each of the determinable types of good."[58] This means that among the possible types of goods that may compose *eudaimonia,* there is a sufficient list of representatives on each of the possible types. Thus, for instance, if health is a determinable type of good, one could enumerate that balance diet, proper exercise and enough sleep are its tokens. Although this formula does not totally solve the issue on sufficiency, "it does succeed in characterizing a good that can both be attained and improved."[59] Moreover, it also avoids the implications of both maximalism and minimalism. However, the limitation of both maximalism and minimalism remains. The formula still follows the same quantitative approach as they do; and that neglects what Aristotle emphasizes, the principle of unity that can make an aggregate of goods sufficient for happiness, namely, what is most choice-worthy by itself.[60] In particular, the fundamental issue is how the several goods are related to one another and to the most final end, not what number of tokens is sufficient. If one good friend is an essential part of happiness, presumably a second would be also; but Aristotle argues that good friends are few,[61] so there must be a basis for setting some limit to the aggregate.

The happy life may, of course, include other goods, such as good fortune and various external advantages and it may even require some of these other goods but the formal condition of self-sufficiency asserts that those additional goods are not part of the essence of happiness, since only what suffices to make a way of life choice-worthy

[58] This conception is originally advanced by T. Irwin in "Permanent Happiness," 99 and cited by S. A. White in his paper to illustrate that such conception still has internal problems of its own, see "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 124.

[59] S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 124.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] See *NE*, IX, 10, 1170^{b}30ff.

in the first place is essential in the strict sense.[62] This implies that while the above formulation is an accurate description of a happy life, it neglects the fundamental point of the formal condition and emphasizes instead some of its accidental features. What it merely suggests are tokens instead of how these tokens are said to be choice-worthy. Moreover, it leaves all differences of type equal and none any better or worse than any other. This proves that there are indeed some components in life that may or may not be satisfied sufficiently. Although these components are important, however, one may live well even in want of them since they are not necessarily essential. Also, it should not leave all differences of type equal and none any better or worse than any other. Although Aristotle would assert that happiness evidently needs external goods since without them we cannot easily do excellent actions,[63] this does not necessarily mean that the two are equally essential. Thus for instance, one could not possibly play basketball without the passing, dribbling, defending and shooting, although one may not be playing in a covered court. In the same manner, for those who lead a reflective life, the absence of the former entails an absence of happiness, whereas the absence of extra resources has no effect on the happiness of anyone, since they are neither necessary nor essential. "In short, the fundamental distinction for Aristotle is not between determinate and determinable types of goods, but essential and non-essential types."[64]

Improvable but not Simple

"Avoiding the paradoxes generated when we look for the best possible good, Aristotle's discussion points to a more modest standard for happiness: it does include several goods, but its essence is something that can still be improved."[65] Although the account found in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is ambiguous, the *Magna Moralia* might give a considerable discussion on the said issue. Whatever might be the status of the work,[66] its greater attention to the composite nature of *eudaimonia* can shed further light on our exposition. After introducing the notion of goals and characterizing happiness as "the *teleion* goal," the *Magna Moralia* restates the thesis that happiness is

[62] White noted D. Devereux's necessary distinction between the essence of happiness on theone hand, and other goods that may be implied by the essence without being part of the essence; see S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," note 34, 125.

[63] *NE*, I, 8, 1099^{a}30-^{b}7.

[64] S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 124-125.

[65] *Ibid.*, 126.

[66] The *Magna Moralia*, in spite of its title (*Great Ethics*), is relatively short work which offers a succinct account of Aristotle's ethical views. Scholars are in disagreement on the question whether it was written, or at least written in part, by Aristotle himself. However, it is not within the scope to discuss the authenticity and date of this work. For further discussion about the *Magna Moralia's* authenticity and date, see W. F. R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, 1-11; see also W. Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of His Development*, 229-258; and D. Ross, *Aristotle*, 14-15.

good such that, when it is present, we have no additional need.[67] Proceeding then to the crucial question, it states:

> The next point is how we are to look for the best good. Is it itself to be reckoned in with other goods? Surely that is absurd. For the best is the complete end, and the complete end, roughly speaking, would seem to be nothing else than happiness, and happiness we regard as made up of many goods; so that if, in looking for the best, you reckon in itself also, it will be better than itself, because it is itself the best thing. For instance, take the means to health and health, and raise the question which is the best of all these. The answer is that health is the best. If then this is the best of all, it is also better than itself; so that an absurdity ensues. Perhaps then this is not the way in which we ought to look for the best. Are the other goods then to be separated from it? Is not this also absurd? For happiness is composed of certain goods. But to raise the question whether a given thing is better than its own components is absurd. For happiness is not something else apart from these, but just these.[68]

Though the passage is less than obvious, good sense can be made of it. On the first point, the author starts by asserting the composite nature of *eudaimonia*; but his aim is to rule out looking for happiness as the very best good possible. He proposes that granting *eudaimonia* is the best, if we count it together with further goods, then it is made better but this improved sum now will be the best, since it will be better than the best with which we started, that is, *eudaimonia*. Since that contradicts the original hypothesis that happiness is the best, it is mistaken to look for happiness simply as the greatest aggregate, as that which nothing can be better. Although happiness is composed of many goods, there is no need to add more goods and it would be misconceived to require it to contain all goods as illustrated by an analogy with health. As can be seen in this case, there is no contradiction in saying both that health is the best physical condition and that it can be improved. Rather, when we all recognize what health is, it would be absurd to argue that health must be the best possible condition, simply because we call it the best condition. Once you are healthy, the addition of further healthy things may increase your health, but that scarcely shows that you are not healthy in the first place. Similarly, if you are happy, the possibility of making your life better does not entail that you are not happy now as you are. In short, it is not that happiness cannot be improved, but that it is wrong to require that it be so good that it cannot be improved. Though happiness is a composite, there will also be other goods

[67] *MM*, I, 2, 1184[a]8-14.
[68] *MM*, I, 2, 1184[a]15-29.

not essential to it, the addition of which would make happiness better.[69] Thus, St. Thomas Aquinas comments:

> In this sense, happiness, the subject of our present discussion, has self-sufficiency because of itself, it furnishes everything that is absolutely necessary, but it does not supply everything that can come to a man. Man can be made better by an additional good. But a man's desire for this does not remain unsatisfied because a desire controlled by reason, such as a truly happy man should have, is undisturbed by the things that are unnecessary even though attainable. Happiness, therefore, has this quality above everything else; it is desirable even when not augmented by other goods. However, if it does receive an addition, be it ever so small, surely that is even more desirable.[70]

This shows that there are other goods and those may be added so long as the essential composite remains and they do not conflict with it. The argument implies that the best is attained when a certain threshold is attained, but any further goods that are consistent with the essential constituents can still be added beyond that threshold. "In other words, happiness is set up like a qualifying race rather than a championship race: all those who meet a certain standard qualify for happiness, even though some qualifiers do better than others. The correct way to seek the best good, then, is to look for the systematic complex of goods that is better than anything inconsistent with it or outside it."[71] However, this should not mislead us into looking for the best single type of good. Thus, the *Magna Moralia* appends:

> But perhaps the right method of inquiry may be by comparison of the best somewhat as follows, i.e. by comparing happiness itself, which is made up of these goods, with others which are not contained in it, would this be the right way of inquiring into the best thing? But the best of which we are now in search is not of a simple nature. For instance, one might say that wisdom is the best of all goods when they are compared one by one. But perhaps this is not the way in which we ought to seek for the best good. For it is the complete good we are in search of, and wisdom by itself is not complete. It is not, therefore, the best in this sense, nor in this way of which we are in search.[72]

Thus, whatever its principal part may be, *eudaimonia* does not consist in that part all alone since no part is sufficient by itself. If a single part were the object of our search, then we would isolate intelligence, since that is the best of all goods when

[69] S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 128-129.
[70] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, vol. 1, (Lecture X, 116), 50.
[71] *Ibid.*, 131.
[72] *MM*, I, 2, 1184ª30-38.

they are compared one by one with one another, each in isolation from all others. As a simple good all on its own, intelligence is not self-sufficient and complete, since it is desirable both for itself and also for the sake of *eudaimonia*. Even if intelligence contributes the most to a happy life and even if its presence entails the presence of the other virtues, "the best" still consists in all of them together, for only the composite is *teleion*, only the composite is a goal for the sake of which we want all other goods, including even the best single one.[73]

Eudaimonia: Final and Self-Sufficient

Aristotle, then, would conclude his discussion on the two formal conditions by claiming that "happiness, then, is something complete and self-sufficient and is the end of action."[74] After establishing the basic principle that happiness consists in a life of virtuous activity, he goes on to show that such activity presupposes a range of other goods, from money and health to family and friends.[75] *Eudaimonia*, thus, consists of a composite of virtue and other goods; no element alone would constitute it since none is entirely *teleion* and self-sufficient (*autarkes*). Together, these several goods can form a composite that is entirely *teleion* and self-sufficient. It is entirely *teleion* because it is chosen entirely for itself. Since it consists in the organized pattern of preferences and pursuits that makes up a virtuous life, it is not only what the virtuous want more than anything else, but it also includes the goods that they would choose each for its own sake, even without regard to the contribution they each make to happiness. The composite is also self-sufficient because, first, it makes life entirely choice-worthy all by itself and second, so long as the essential needs are met, it enables one to pursue the goals central to one's lives. Moreover, the virtuous find their way of life the most choice-worthy of all, that is, more choice-worthy than any other way of life. None of this, however, implies that the composite can never be improved. Additional resources or better circumstances could well offer more or better opportunities for the virtuous pursuits they most enjoy and success in their projects would add to their satisfaction.

What types of goods happiness must include and how much of each would be enough, are substantive questions that lie beyond the scope of the formal conditions.[76] These conditions do succeed in characterizing the way in which happiness is both the best good in life, yet also open to improvement. Aristotle's account does yield the kind of general solution appropriate to the inherently imprecise subject of practical affairs. Although the formal conditions are neutral on the further question of what constituents are essential for *eudaimonia*, they do require at least a modestly inclusive

[73] S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 131.

[74] *NE*, I, 7, 1097^{b}20-21.

[75] *NE*, I, 8-11.

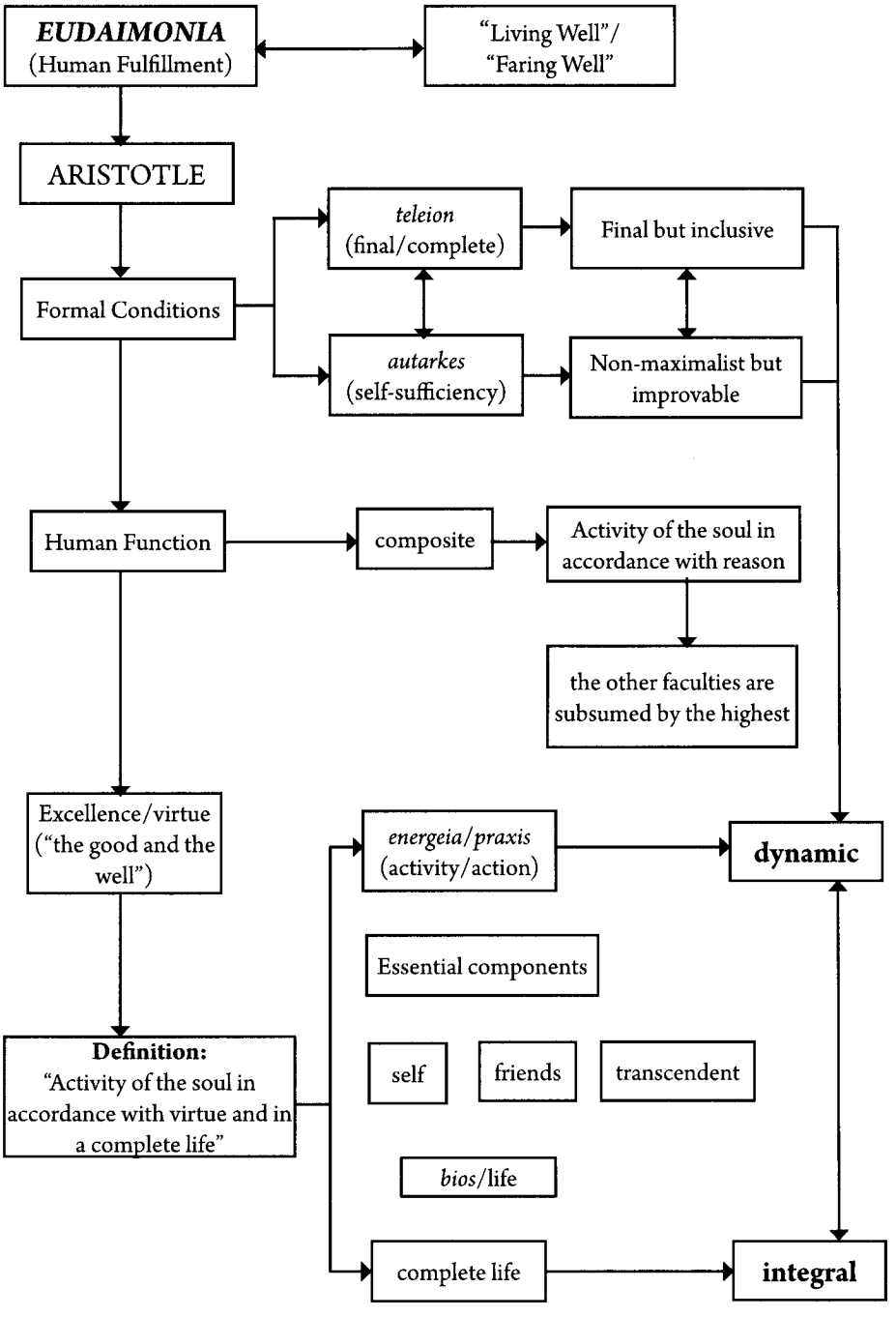
[76] S. A. White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life," 125.

good. Those who lead a life dominated by the pursuit of the essential goods, as the virtuous do, pursue the happy life. Compared with one another, some happy lives are better than others; some fare better in their pursuits, some have more opportunities to do what they value and some are simply engaged in better activities. However, all lead the *eudaimon* life. So *eudaimonia,* therefore, need not be the best possible; rather, "it is found in a good life, not only in the very best life."[77]

Summary

In the seventh chapter of Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle suggests that the ultimate human good, *eudaimonia,* must meet two formal conditions. He asserts that *eudaimonia* is apparently something complete or final (*teleion*) and self-sufficient (*autarkēs*), since it is the end of the things pursued in action. On the one hand, *eudaimonia* is the most *teleion* goal because we always choose it for itself and never for the sake of something else. However, to say that *eudaimonia* is the most final, does not necessarily imply that it consists of the single best goal. Examining Aristotle's discussion in the *Ethics* and the *Metaphysics,* the most final would also suggest the most complete goal, inclusive of other things. Thus, *eudaimonia* as the most *teleion* involves an integral and dynamic synthesis of finality and completeness. On the other hand, *eudaimonia* is self-sufficient because by itself it makes a life choice-worthy and lacking in nothing not only for a solitary person by himself, living in isolated life, but *also* for others. However, to claim that *eudaimonia* is self-sufficient does not necessarily imply a minimalist or maximalist connotation. *Eudaimonia* involves the satisfaction of essential needs and not just the basic needs of man. Nevertheless, though self-sufficient, it can still be improved. These formal conditions, therefore, succeed in characterizing the way in which *eudaimonia,* composed of essential goods, is both the best good in life, yet it is also open to improvement. What types of essential goods happiness must include, how much of each would be enough, and how are they to be connected or related are substantive questions that lie beyond the scope of the formal conditions. ❑

[77] *Ibid.*, 136.


EUDAIMONIA
(Human Fulfillment)
"Living Well"/
"Faring Well"
ARISTOTLE
Formal Conditions
teleion
(final/complete)
Final but inclusive
autarkes
(self-sufficiency)
Non-maximalist but
improvable
Human Function
composite
Activity of the soul in
accordance with reason
the other faculties are
subsumed by the highest
Excellence/virtue
("the good and the
well")
energeia/praxis
(activity/action)
dynamic
Essential components
Definition:
"Activity of the soul in
accordance with virtue and in
a complete life"
self
friends
transcendent
bios/life
complete life
integral