

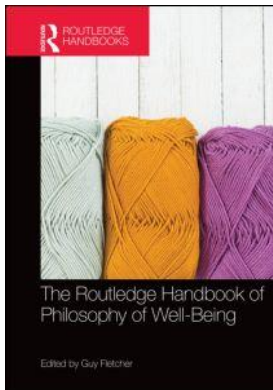
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### Aristotle on well-being

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## 2

# ARISTOTLE ON WELL-BEING

*Richard Kraut*

### **Does Aristotle have a theory of well-being?**

“Every craft and every line of inquiry, and likewise every action and decision, seems to seek some good” (I.1 1094a1–2).<sup>1</sup> Thus begins Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. It starts from an observation about “some good” as the object of all human striving, and soon turns to “the good,” that is, “the best good” (I.2 1094a21–22), which is then (I.4 1095a18) equated with *eudaimonia* (commonly translated as “happiness”). It is generally agreed, Aristotle notes at this point, that “living well and doing well are the same as being happy” (1095a19–20). But, he asks, what, more precisely, is this highest good? What do living well, doing well, and happiness consist in? After surveying answers that others have given to this question, he comes to the conclusion that the good he has been seeking is a certain kind of activity of the soul in accordance with virtue (I.7 1098a16–17). From that point on, the *Ethics* becomes a full-scale treatment of the virtues and several other goods (friendship and pleasure) that accompany the virtues.

It is generally assumed that in all of this Aristotle is talking about what we call “well-being.” Other expressions now used to express the same concept are “welfare” and “prudential value.” It is a concept that we employ when we talk about what is in someone’s interest, or what benefits him, or what is to his advantage, or what is good for him. Someone’s well-being or welfare, we assume, is non-instrumentally beneficial or advantageous. If someone acquires what is beneficial only when used as a means to something else, that acquisition does not by itself increase his well-being. How much well-being he has (more colloquially: how well off he is) is a matter of how he is faring with respect to what is non-instrumentally good for him. Well-being is not one benefit among others, but an overall measure of how someone is faring with respect to what is non-instrumentally good for him.

Back, now, to Aristotle: notice that the opening line of the *Ethics* says only that the object of each instance of human striving is “some good.” Notice as well how lacking in specificity this claim is. Aristotle has not said here that we aim, in all that we do, at some advantage to ourselves. He does not even say that we aim at what is advantageous to *someone or other*. He has other words that are correctly translated “advantageous” or “beneficial” (*ophelimon*, *sumpheron*)—but his word here is *agathon*, which is properly translated as “good,” but not “advantageous” or “beneficial”.

Perhaps it will be said that when Aristotle says that the highest good is *eudaimonia*, and equates this with living well and doing well, he must be understood to be talking about what

we call “well-being.” That is of course how he is commonly interpreted. But why ought he to be read in this way? The Greek word, *eu*, that is translated “well” is simply the adverbial form of the adjective, *agathon*, and we have already observed that this is a highly generic commendatory term, as contrasted with the greater specificity of Aristotle’s words for what is beneficial or advantageous to someone. If someone is doing something well, it does not immediately follow, from the meaning of those words, that he is doing what is beneficial to himself or to anyone else. Similarly for “acting well” and “living well.” When it is said that someone is living well, that merely means that he is living in a good way—that he deserves to be commended for the way he is living. He is living as he ought, and as is right for him to live. But to say that he is living in a way that is in his own interest is to make a different and more specific claim—a claim that need not even be intended as a commendation. (“He is doing that only for self-interested reasons” can be a form of criticism.) By contrast, to say that someone is living in a good way is necessarily to speak with approval of his way of life.

The question I am raising can be put this way: when Aristotle’s inquiry into the good culminates in the conclusion that it consists of virtuous activity (1.7 1098a16–17), should we take him to be arguing there that such activity is the most beneficial thing for someone to have? Is he arguing that virtuous activity is the highest good *of* a human being, or instead that virtuous activity is the highest good *for* a human being? The first of these claims (using “of”) means that virtuous activity is the best good that any human being can possess. The second (using “for”) means that virtuous activity is what benefits a human being most of all. We cannot assess the merits or deficiencies of Aristotle’s argument unless we know which of these two conclusions he is trying to reach. And to do so, we have no choice but to trace the progress of his discussion of goodness throughout Book I, beginning with the first line of his treatise.<sup>2</sup>

Aristotle, as I have said, does not start with the observation that *advantageousness* is on everyone’s mind when they act, but with the more general observation that *goodness* is on everyone’s mind. Are there grounds for supposing that at some point in Book I he moves from the generic idea of goodness to the more specific idea of advantageousness? If he *has* moved from one to the other, is some fallacy involved in this transition? Should we, out of charity, read him as making no claims about the advantageousness of a virtuous life, but only claims about the goodness of such a life—because to read him otherwise would open him to the charge that he has illicitly changed the subject?

Here is one way of defending Aristotle against this charge: we can say that when he writes, in his opening line, that goodness is on everyone’s mind, he is speaking elliptically.<sup>3</sup> What he has omitted to say, but should be taken to mean, is that every craft (etc.) aims at what is good *for someone* (*tini*). And to speak of what is good for someone is of course to speak of what is advantageous. Thus read, the *Ethics* begins with an observation about the ubiquity of advantageousness in our practical thinking. This allows us to take all of the other statements that Aristotle makes in the remainder of Book I about goodness to be elliptical statements about what is good for someone. And in this way, we can vindicate the widely held belief that Aristotle has a theory of well-being.

But there is an alternative interpretation that I think should be preferred. When Aristotle says that every craft (and so on) seems to aim at some good, we should take him to mean that when a builder (for example) makes a house, he has an answer to the question, “why are you doing that?” There is, in other words, a reason why he is building it. Saying that he is aiming at some good when he builds a house is simply a way of saying that he is doing so for some reason. Were the builder to say, “I am building this house because its coming into existence is good,” that would mean: “I am building this house because there is a reason why it should come into existence.” But what is that reason? He has (according to this interpretation) not yet

said so. Similarly, the opening line (thus read) means that whenever we decide to act, we have a reason for acting. But no restriction has been placed in this line on what that reason is. It may be some advantage that the agent sees for himself, or for someone else. But it may be some other reason—a reason that does not advert to advantage but some other factor.<sup>4</sup>

What other sorts of considerations besides advantageousness does Aristotle think relevant to making decisions? He says in Book II, Chapter 3 (1004b30–32) that there are three “objects of choice” (*eis tas haireseis*): the *kalon* (what is fine, beautiful, noble), the advantageous (*sumpheron*), and the pleasant (*hêdu*); and three opposite “objects of avoidance”: the shameful (*aischron*), the harmful (*blaberon*), and the painful (*lupêron*). So, according to the interpretation I am proposing, the first line of the *Ethics* leaves it open that sometimes we make decisions on the basis of pleasure but not on the basis of advantage, or on the basis of the *kalon* but not advantage. (This does not mean that, according to Aristotle, people do sometimes choose in this way—only that *his opening sentence* does not rule out this possibility.)

Here is one reason for preferring this reading to the one that says that Aristotle is speaking elliptically in his opening line: it would have been quite easy for Aristotle to say that every craft (etc.) aims at some advantage. He need only have used *sumpheron* or *ophelimon* instead of *agathon*. And yet he does not choose these words. If we read him as speaking elliptically (saying “good” where he means “good for someone”), we can offer no explanation for why he did not express himself more clearly.

Second, as we have seen, Aristotle himself points out (*NE* II.3) that there are *several* types of reasons, not just one, for making decisions: they come under the headings of the advantageous, the fine, and the pleasant. It would be strange, then, for him to write an opening line in which he asserts that all of our endeavors have just one of these (advantageousness) as their object.

Third, we can easily understand why an author might begin a treatise with a statement that presupposes as little as possible. The weaker the premise one starts from, the less vulnerable to objection it is. If Aristotle begins by taking goodness to be what practical thinking has in mind, and this means merely that when we engage in craft activities, or pursue some investigation, or make some decision, we have a reason for doing so, he makes no commitment to what sorts of reasons we have. This is as it should be—the question of what sorts of reasons we have can be postponed momentarily. By contrast, if Aristotle says nothing in favor of the idea that advantageousness lies behind all practical thinking, he is beginning with a premise that cries out for defense.

If these considerations convince us that the opening sentence of the *Ethics* adverts to reasons for action but not to advantageousness as a reason, ought we to say that even when he reaches the conclusion, in *NE* I.7, that virtuous activity is the greatest good, he means, not that it is more advantageous to the agent than anything else, but that what we have most reason to seek and sustain is such activity? That would be an implausible way to read him. Aristotle cannot be non-committal about whether it is better (more advantageous) for someone to be a good human being or a bad human being. He cannot be read to mean that although in *some* respect (e.g., the *kalon*) a virtuous life is superior to the life of someone who lacks virtue, it is not the case that the virtuous life is more *beneficial*. That would leave unanswered the question: “In that case, why should we be virtuous?”

The best interpretation, then, is one that takes Aristotle to be moving from an opening claim about goodness (not advantageousness) to a further claim about which goods *benefit* us most—and doing so without committing some logical fallacy. To read him in this way, we need only observe that every activity Aristotle mentions, after his opening line, can plausibly be understood as an endeavor that seeks some goal on the assumption that it brings some advantage to someone. He is, in other words, implicitly offering an inductive argument for a narrower and stronger claim than the one with which his treatise begins. “Health is the end of medicine, a

boat of boat building, victory of generalship, and wealth of household management” (1094a8–9). In each case, it is advantageousness that motivates a pursuit. Similarly for all of his remaining examples: bridle making, horsemanship, generalship. The doctor is not aiming at pleasure (his own or that of his patient) or at something beautiful, fine, and noble. He is trying to benefit a sick individual. Similarly, each of the other activities mentioned is obviously designed to bring about some beneficial consequence.

So, Aristotle is not changing the subject, even though he begins with a claim about goodness, and then moves to claims about advantageousness. He has done something to earn the right to assert not only that we seek what we take to be good, but also that we seek what we take to be advantageous.

I suggest that, by the end of Book I, Chapter 1, all of Aristotle’s further statements that employ the term *agathon* (“good”) are best understood as assertions about advantageousness. For example, when he says, in the opening lines of Book 1, Chapter 2, that “the good”—that is, “the best good”—is something that we “wish for because of itself,” all else being sought for its sake, we should take him to be asserting that what stands at the top of this hierarchy of ends is something that is more *advantageous* than (and in that respect, better than) everything subordinate to it. Aristotle’s inductive argument has come to an end in Chapter 1; Chapter 2 tacitly adopts its conclusion, and so, although we could not understand *agathon* in terms of advantageousness in the opening line, at this point in his exposition we can and should so interpret it.<sup>5</sup>

What counts in favor of this suggestion is that, when we reach Book I, Chapter 3, it is clear that Aristotle is using *agathon* to advance claims about what is advantageous. Since that is the manner in which he is addressing his audience in I.3, and he has completed his inductive argument for moving from goodness to advantageousness in I.1, there is no good reason to refuse to interpret the occurrences of *agathon* in I.2 as assertions about advantageousness.

Here is the passage in I.3 that I have in mind:

Fine things [*kala*] and just things, about which politics inquires, have many differences and variations, and so they seem to exist only by convention and not by nature. But good things [*agatha*] also have that kind of variation, because of the harms [*blabas*] that result from them for many people (1094b14–18).

Aristotle’s point is that we should not move from (a) the variation of the *kalon* (what is often *kalon* in some circumstances is not) to the conclusion that (b) the *kalon* is a mere matter of convention; for if we did, we would also have to move from (c) variation in what is good (what is generally good is sometimes harmful) to the conclusion that (d) goodness too is conventional. The words *kalon* and *blaberon* are drawn from his three categories of choice-worthy goals and three opposite categories of objects to be avoided (recall the taxonomy of II.3, cited above). He is saying that that just as nothing is good (*agathon*) or bad just as a matter of convention, so nothing is *kalon* or shameful just as a matter of convention. What is significant for our purposes is his use of *agathon* as a term that expresses the concept of advantageousness. Here it is legitimate to substitute for the generic commendatory term *agathon* the more specific way in which something can be *agathon*: by being advantageous. Aristotle is now advancing claims about what is advantageous by using the term *agathon*.

This gives us sufficient reason to read his theory of goodness as a theory of well-being. When he says, in I.4, that the ultimate end that everyone seeks is *eudaimonia* (living well), we have strong textual grounds for taking him to mean that at the top of the hierarchy of goods is something that is most *advantageous* for the individual who has that good. And so, when he argues in I.7 that this is virtuous activity, we are justified in taking this to mean that such activity is not merely the good of a human being, but also something that is good *for* the virtuous person.

If further evidence for this interpretation is needed, it can be found by combining Aristotle's statement, in *NE* I.2, that the subject that studies the supreme *good* is political science (1095a24–27), and his later statement (VIII.9) that what political science studies is the common *advantage*.

The political community seems to have come together from the beginning and to abide for the sake of advantage [*sumpherontos*]. For it is at this that the lawgivers aim, and justice, they say, is the common advantage [*sumpheron*]. So the other communities aim at some portion [*kata merē*] of what is advantageous [*sumpherontos*] . . . but the political community does not aim at the present advantage [*sumpherontos*], but at the whole of life (1160a11–23).<sup>6</sup>

Each of the subordinate disciplines and crafts mentioned in *NE* I.1 (medicine, boat-construction, military strategy, household management, bridle making, horse riding) has what is advantageous to someone as its goal; and the degree to which each of their subordinate ends is to be pursued is determined by the political leader, who regulates the city by looking to the highest goal of all—the advantage of each of the citizens. That advantage is the same for all: a happy life, or, to put it in our terms, a life full of well-being.

### ***Eudaimonia* and happiness**

Now that we can be sure that it really is well-being that Aristotle is talking about, let us ask what his theory of well-being says.

As I noted earlier, Aristotle says that the highest good is *eudaimonia* and he adds that “living well and doing well are the same as being *eudaimon*” (I.4 1095a19–20). It is important not to be misled by the common practice of using the word “happiness” to render his *eudaimonia*. The Greek word is unmistakably a term of evaluation, as Aristotle's statement here indicates. It is composed of two segments: *eu*, meaning “well”; and *daimon*, which refers to a less-than-omnipotent divine being who oversees one's life. To be *eudaimon*, then, is to have, as it were, a guardian angel who is doing well in guiding one's life. Or, as we might put it, it is to be smiled upon by Lady Luck—if we personify Luck as a force that takes a personal interest in one's life. But Aristotle pays no attention, in his ethical theorizing, to the *daimon* element in the etymology of *eudaimonia*. He is guided instead by the widely accepted assumption of Greek speakers that when one asks whether someone is *eudaimon*, one is asking whether she is living well. And that of course depends on what kind of life she has. One cannot assess how well someone's life is being lived unless one knows what good things or bad things are in it.

By contrast, our term “happiness” is most often used as a description of someone's state of mind, some mood or emotion that she is feeling. One can be in a “smiley” mood, or feel a sudden joy or sense of well-being. When used in this common way, it is part of our empirical vocabulary, not a term by which we assess how well someone's life is going for her. We can criticize someone for being joyous when that response is inappropriate, or for being happy with herself when she should be dissatisfied. Even so, we do sometimes use “happy” in an evaluative context. We can say that a plant is not happy in a dark corner, meaning simply that it is not doing well there; or we can criticize someone's writing by noting his unhappy choice of words. Furthermore, happiness is often regarded not as a shallow and passing feeling, but as a uniquely valuable state of mind—something elusive and deep, and worthy of being one's ultimate end (even if it is best achieved by aiming at other goals). We should distinguish this deep and meaningful happiness from a shallow and fleeting feeling of pleasure.<sup>7</sup> It is, as I said, elusive: many people wonder whether they are happy in the way that matters most. In doing so, they

implicitly assume that a life is not truly happy unless it is devoted to what does not merely seem good but really is so. So understood, our term “happiness” is evaluative as well as descriptive, and like the term *eudaimonia* it conveys the idea of well-being and of a healthy state of the soul.

### Is *eudaimonia* a dominant or an inclusive end?

Aristotle puts good (advantageous) things into one of three categories: (a) those chosen only because of the other things they bring; (b) those chosen for themselves as well as for what they bring; (c) those that bring nothing else but are chosen only for themselves (I.7 1097a25–34). Happiness, he claims, goes into the third of these categories.

It is tempting to object: “can’t one seek happiness in part because one’s own *unhappiness* would make one less eager or able to help others become happy?” But there is a way to interpret Aristotle that protects him against this objection: we can take him to mean that my happiness leads to no further advantage that *I* could have; it is therefore not to be sought for the sake of something else that benefits *me*. If it were desirable for the sake of some further good, that other good would be even better than happiness (I.1 1094a14–16)—and Aristotle holds that there can be no such good.

This allows some well-lived lives to be better than others; Aristotle argues, in fact, that a political life is happy in a secondary way (X.8 1178a7–9), and that it is the life devoted to philosophical theorizing that is happiest (X.7–8). In that sense, there can be something better than this or that happy life—namely, an even happier life. But there is no good, X, not identical to happiness, such that X plus happiness is better for someone to possess than happiness alone.

Because *eudaimonia* is the supreme good in this sense, it might be regarded as a composite made up of several parts. That would help explain why Aristotle thinks that one can do no better for oneself than to be *eudaimon*. Suppose we make a list of all the things rightly chosen for themselves: A, B, C, and D. To be *eudaimon*, we might say, is simply to have all of these goods. It is an inclusive end—inclusive of all intrinsic goods. It is the supreme good because nothing can be better than having A, B, C, and D. Surely it would not be better to *lack* some of these goods.<sup>8</sup>

Aristotle appears to be saying precisely this:

We think happiness is most choiceworthy of all goods [since] it is not counted as one good among many. [If it were] counted as one good among many, then, clearly, we think it would be more choiceworthy if the smallest of goods were added; for the good that is added becomes an extra quantity of goods, and the larger of two goods is always more choiceworthy (1097b17–20).

But there is a different way of reading this passage, one that does not commit Aristotle to the idea that happiness is a plurality, containing all the intrinsic goods there are.<sup>9</sup> According to this second interpretation, Aristotle means that the supreme goodness of happiness does not consist in its simply being the best single item on a list of intrinsic goods. Its supremacy does not consist in its being better than A, better than B, better than C, and so on. For if it merely had that kind of supremacy, it might still be inferior to some combination of itself and something else. Instead, its special supremacy must consist in this fact: once you have seen that someone’s life is as happy as a life can be, because it has X (the good in which happiness consists), then you are committed to saying not merely that X is better than any other single good, but also that “X plus A” or “X plus B” (and so on) do not name something better than “X” alone. The goodness of a life that is happy (the benefit to oneself of having such a life) is accounted for solely by the presence in it of a full

amount of the good that happiness consists in. That is what it means to say that *eudaimonia* is “most choiceworthy of all goods . . . not counted as one good among many.” (An analogy: What makes it the case that team A beats team B is that A has more points than B. Of course, A needs better players than B, in order to get more points. But having better players is not what constitutes winning. Similarly, if X is what happiness consists in, it might be case that one cannot have X unless one has other goods as well. Even so, being happy consists simply in having X.)

This second reading is the one that best fits the text, for Aristotle’s theory of well-being holds that the human good is this and only this: virtuous activity of the rational soul. Happiness consists in just that one type of good, for only one end is at the top of the hierarchy of goods. Lesser goods are to be pursued for the sake of others that are more valuable, and these may in turn be sought because they lead to still others that are better, but the chain of goals must terminate somewhere. That is a fundamental thesis of Book I, Chapters 1 and 2; and that idea culminates (in I.7) in the conclusion that the ultimate end is virtuous activity. That is the good at the top of this pyramid: it is the “dominant” end. It is supremely good in a special way: not only is it better than any other single good, but in addition, “a lifetime of unimpeded virtuous activity plus honor,” “a lifetime of unimpeded virtuous activity plus friendship,” and so on, do not name a good superior to the one named by “a lifetime of unimpeded virtuous activity.”<sup>10</sup>

Of course, Aristotle believes that *human beings* do need honor and friendship in order to achieve *eudaimonia*. But that is because their virtuous activity would be impeded were they to be dishonored and friendless; it is not because honor and friendship are themselves components of the highest good. This, Aristotle believes, is confirmed by the recognition that the living substance that has a better life than anything else in the universe is not a human being but a god who engages in just one activity and who can do so without needing friends, honor, or anything else external to its mind. The rest of the universe depends on a single unmoved mover that unceasingly and forever engages in unimpeded virtuous activity of the best sort, namely the exercise of theoretical wisdom (*NE* X.7–8, *Metaphysics* XII.9, *Politics* VII.1 1323b21–26). It lacks every other good available to human beings, but it is no worse for that, because the one good it does have is the greatest happiness.

There is no passage in which Aristotle says: the good for the sake of which every decision must be made is a composite of virtuous activity, honor, friendship, health, and so on (all of these being things that should be chosen for themselves). Rather, he says: “the human good proves to be activity of the soul in accord with virtue, and indeed with the best and most complete virtue, if there are more virtues than one” (I.7 1098a16–18). Of course, for a human being to live a happy life involves pursuing all of the goals in the hierarchy, the lower ones for the sake of the higher. A happy human life must have many good things in it—not a jumble, but a structure of ends, with one type of end at the top. But when Aristotle says that “the happy person is the one whose activities accord with complete virtue, with an adequate supply of external goods, not for just any time but for a complete life” (I.10 1101a14–16), he is describing the happy human being, not naming the good at the top of the hierarchy of ends.

Because happiness consists not only in *having* the habits, skills, and wisdom of a virtuous person, but the unimpeded *activation* of those qualities of mind on a regular basis over a substantial period of time, it is vulnerable to fortune. Those mental properties cannot be taken from us by others, but the opportunity and wherewithal needed to exercise them can be lost. One cannot exercise the virtues in the political arena if one’s city has been destroyed (I.10 1101a8), and one cannot contemplate the basic truths of the world if one lacks the leisure to do so. The Stoics, of course, disagree; they turn away from Aristotle and from common sense and join Socrates in saying that a good man cannot be harmed (*Apology* 41c–d). Aristotle’s theory of well-being, by contrast, is an effort to accommodate both the plausible idea that no human being is invulnerable



to misfortune and the plausible idea that qualities such as wisdom, justice, and courage do not merely belong on a list of goods, but are in some way on a higher level than others.

## Flourishing

Aristotle's deep interest in biology stands behind his conception of well-being. He thinks of the development of our cognitive, affective, and social powers as the analogue in human life to the development of lesser powers in plants and animals. All living things have the potential to live well, each according to its endowment. For plants, a flourishing life is simply a matter of nutrition, growth, and reproduction. For non-human animals, living well also involves locomotion, perception, and (in some cases) a certain kind of sociability. His argument for identifying happiness with virtuous activity in *NE* I.7 rests on the assumption that the human soul gives us the potential to do better than other forms of life. As we might put it, our emotional repertoire and cognitive powers enable us to achieve a life of greater richness and depth than is available to plants and other animals. To exploit these greater possibilities, however, requires a long process of habituation and learning, culminating in the acquisition of practical and theoretical wisdom. Aristotle's best insight, I believe, is that we should think biologically about what is beneficial for living things. Living well—living to one's best advantage—is the flourishing of one's inherent powers.<sup>11</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Unless noted otherwise, the translation used is that of Irwin, T.H. (1999) *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., Indianapolis: Hackett.
- 2 My thinking about this issue has been stimulated by Gavin Lawrence (2006) "Human Good and Human Function," in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp. 37–75. He takes success at something to be the central concept that Aristotle exploits in Book I of the *Ethics*. But if succeeding at something is simply doing it well (as success in life is living well), and doing something well is doing it in a way that is good, we must ask: good for whom?
- 3 This is the interpretation I proposed in *Against Absolute Goodness* (2011), Oxford: OUP, pp. 210–211.
- 4 To use Scanlon's phrase, this is a "buck-passing" interpretation of the first sentence of the *Ethics*. See Scanlon, T.M. (1998) *What We Owe to Each Other*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, pp. 95–100.
- 5 Stoic ethics is similarly advantage-centered. According to the synopsis found in Diogenes Laertes, good is "that from which some advantage (*ophelos*) comes." See *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 2 (transl. R.D. Hicks) (1925), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. VII.94. On my reading, Aristotle works towards this thesis; the Stoics posit it.
- 6 My translation.
- 7 For the idea that "happiness" can designate a deep affective condition, see Haybron, D.M. (2008) *The Pursuit of Unhappiness: The Elusive Psychology of Well-Being*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 128–133 (and elsewhere). He also notes that "what is happiness?" can be understood either as a question about what a certain mental state is, or as one that asks what it is for a life to go well (pp. 29–32). But I doubt that these two senses are, as he suggests (p. 31), as distant from each other as are the two senses of "bank" (for a river bank and a financial institution) (p. 31). For happiness is an elusive state of mind in part because we seek to understand it in a way that explains its great value. (Contrast the ease with which we can keep apart questions about the nature and value of certain other states of mind—anger, for example.)
- 8 The terms "dominant end" and "inclusive end" were used by Hardie, W.F.R. (1965) "The Final Good in Aristotle's Ethics," *Philosophy* 40. He argues that Aristotle often thinks of happiness as a dominant end, but sometimes as an inclusive end. See too Ackrill, J.L. (1980) "Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*," in A. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, pp. 15–34. He argues that it is only in Book X that a dominant end conception of happiness can be found. For the view that Aristotle consistently conceives of happiness as a plurality of goods, see Irwin, T.H. (2012) "Conceptions of Happiness in the *Nicomachean Ethics*," in C. Shields (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Aristotle*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 495–528.

- 9 I defend this interpretation more fully in *Aristotle on the Human Good* (1989), Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 197–266.
- 10 I take Aristotle to be assuming, when he says (I.7 1098a16–18) that the human good is virtuous activity of the rational soul, that one cannot be happy if this activity is a rare occurrence in one's life, because one is often impeded by a lack of resources. He spells out this assumption at NEVII.13 1153b15–18.
- 11 I exploit these ideas in my defense of an Aristotelian conception of well-being in *What is Good and Why: The Ethics of Well-Being*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (2007), pp. 131–204.

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