

Is Ancient Eudaimonism a Defensible Normative Ethical Position?

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Abstract

An overview of the nature of virtue ethics from Rosalind Hursthouse will be presented, alongside an account from Christine Swanton of the differentia which distinguish eudaimonism from virtue ethics in general. This will be followed by an account of Julia Annas' analysis of the structural features of Ancient eudaimonist theories of virtue ethics, focusing especially on the relationship between virtue and happiness. Three different accounts of the relationship between virtue and happiness according to Pyrrhonic Scepticism, Epicureanism and Stoicism will be discussed. Three objections to eudaimonism will then be presented. According to the first objection raised by the Kantian John Hare, eudaimonism is a self-centred theory which posits an improper relation of subordination between moral acts and personal happiness. A counter-argument from Christopher Toner will be examined, who argues that eudaimonism is concerned with being in the right relation to the good, not with egoistic self-inflation. According to the second objection raised by Hobbes and David Gauthier, eudaimonism relies on antiquated notions of final causality and objective goodness which are eliminated by modern science, making it too idealistic. A counter-argument from Jean Hampton to Hobbesian nominalism as being inherently irrational will then be examined. Julia Annas' remarks on these two issues will be examined at the end of each section. According to the third objection raised by Scotus and Christine Swanton, eudaimonism is insufficiently pluralistic and does not take account of the particularity and complexity of moral thinking. A counter-argument from Julia Annas which defends the thesis of the unity of the virtues will be examined. Taking account of the criticisms to Greco-Roman versions of eudaimonism, it will be argued that Ancient eudaimonism is a defensible normative ethical position, though a Medieval Thomist version of eudaimonism will ultimately be defended due to the limitations of Hellenistic ethics.

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i List of Abbreviations

Author	Abbreviation	Full Title
Aristotle	<i>Cat</i> <i>EE</i> <i>Int</i> <i>NE</i> <i>Pol</i> <i>Rhet</i>	<i>Categories</i> <i>Eudemian Ethics</i> <i>On Interpretation</i> <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> <i>Politics</i> <i>Rhetoric</i>
Cicero	<i>de Fin</i>	<i>On Moral Ends</i>
Epicurus	<i>Ep Men</i> <i>KD</i>	<i>Letter to Menoeceus</i> <i>Principal Doctrines</i>
Hobbes	<i>de Cive</i>	<i>On Man</i>
Plato	<i>Lach</i>	<i>Laches</i>
Scotus	<i>Quodl</i>	<i>Quodlibetal Questions</i>
Sextus Empiricus	<i>PH</i>	Outlines of Scepticism
Thomas Aquinas	<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa Theologica</i>

Introduction:

In what follows, I am going to examine Julia Annas' defence of 'eudaimonism', which is a type of virtue ethics first developed by the ethical thinkers of Ancient Greece. Annas' defence centres on the *classical* varieties of eudaimonism such as Aristotelianism, Stoicism and Epicureanism. However, eudaimonist theories were also common during the Middle Ages and have also experienced a revival of interest during the 20th century. Therefore, I will also take into account some of the later arguments and positions developed after antiquity, particularly when examining objections to eudaimonism. As a normative ethical position, eudaimonism accepts the following characteristic theses:

- An agent's life should be evaluated as a whole; the most basic *ethical* question they should ask is: 'how should I live?';
- Through such reflection, an agent will or should develop a goal in life – a *final end* – which helps guide their decisions and shape their life into a successful one;
- That goal or 'final end' is *happiness*;
- Happiness can only be pursued in accordance with *virtue* (happiness is not merely subjective contentment);
- Virtues are understood to be *dispositional*, *affective* and *intellectual* (that is, morality is rightly concerned with the character, emotions and reasoning of an agent);
- 'Prudence' (practical wisdom or intelligence) is the *primary* virtue necessary to live a happy life – it is the non-negotiable *sine qua non* of any plausible account of moral psychology;
- The normal situations, activities and common-sense patterns of thought which humanity engages in day-to-day is the 'matter' which ethics deals with – aspects of it may require revision if there is good reason to do so, but it cannot be arbitrarily rejected due to, for instance, the dictates of other fields of inquiry (i.e. 'morality is unscientific');

- Moral theories are *theories* which postulate theoretical *ideals* to be lived by; this is natural and to be expected, since the means of measuring the right or wrong for human activities is *reason* which operates with *concepts*.

In what follows, each of these theses will be examined further, though some will receive more treatment than others. For example, the thesis concerning an agent's 'final end' will be briefly discussed as part of Annas' defence and its rejection by Hobbes countenanced in the 2nd objection, whilst the identification of the final end as *happiness* will be examined in more detail and its rejection by Kant and Hare in the 1st objection constitutes a major challenge to eudaimonism as a whole.

I will begin by presenting Annas' analysis of the structure of eudaimonism, followed by three objections to eudaimonism:

- 1) it is *egoistic* (or 'self-centred');
- 2) it is too *idealistic* (i.e. unrealistic);
- 3) it is not sufficiently *pluralistic* (it is too 'one-size-fits-all').

These objections take issue with eudaimonism because: 1) the focus of the agent on their self, their own character, and especially their own happiness, implies that eudaimonism is essentially too selfish to provide a plausible moral theory, which ought to aim at what is *good for all*; 2) the use of 'pre-scientific' Aristotelian moral concepts renders eudaimonism implausible, since there are no verifiably true natural referents to which those terms refer, meaning that such theories are unscientific; 3) 'eudaimonia' is a single monolithic pattern of living which does not account for the differences between agents in terms of their experiences, their levels of moral development and the distinct kinds of moral actions they are able to perform, falsely entailing that all agents are wise *in the same manner*. Whilst each objection focuses on a particular area of eudaimonism which raises certain questions,

some of the counter-claims raised by the objectors are connected to each other – for instance, the deontologists criticism of eudaimonism as being self-centred presupposes the truth of Scotus’ metaethical thesis from objection 3, whilst Hobbes’ rejection in objection 2 of Aristotelian ‘objective good’ combined with his acceptance of Scotus’ prudential pluralism leads him to assert that good is subjectively measured. At the end of each objection, I will present a counter-argument in favour of eudaimonism.

Finally, once I have weighed up all the pros and cons, I will argue that Ancient eudaimonism *is* a plausible normative ethical position. However, since the best objections to eudaimonism I have discovered are all either rooted in or further developed by Scotus, I will also argue that the most plausible form of eudaimonism must take account of post-Hellenistic ethical arguments – especially from the Middle Ages. I argue that the most plausible form of eudaimonism is that which is presented by Thomas Aquinas, since it builds on the best features of several of the Ancient schools, including the action theory of Aristotle and the natural law theory of the Stoics, as well as some insights from the neo-platonists and St. Augustine which I cannot explore further here. Eudaimonism can answer the objections raised against it by other normative positions, though as far as the intellectual challenges of science and modernity go, a lot of work is yet to be done to bring ethics and science into a better harmony with each other than is presently the case. On this point I also maintain that the philosophical method of Aristotle and the Scholastics is the most suitable for the task.

Analysis of Eudaimonism – Prefatory Remarks:

In this section, I will explore the question of what eudaimonism is; what characteristics does it have and what differentiates it from other kinds of virtue ethical theories? I will start by presenting two complementary analyses from Rosalind Hursthouse and Christine Swanton concerning the nature of eudaimonism and virtue ethics. Then, I will proceed to examine Julia Annas' analysis of the structure of eudaimonist theories. Annas begins by pointing out that all eudaimonist theories begin with what I have termed the *basic question*, 'how ought I to live?', guiding the method of reflection which an agent employs, and with the Aristotelian idea that our lives have a 'final end'. Next, she discusses the role of *virtue* in living a good life, arguing that virtues have three key characteristics; they are: 1) *dispositional*, 2) *affective*, and 3) *intellectual*. Finally, she defends the concept of *happiness* or 'eudaimonia' which is especially characteristic of Ancient (and some Medieval) theories of virtue ethics. In the Greco-Roman world, each different ethical school had its own distinct understanding of what happiness is and what relationship our lives have to it. I will focus on Annas' account of three of these schools – *Scepticism*, *Epicureanism* and *Stoicism* – in order to see the internal features of particular eudaimonist theories up close. Whilst all the theories present relatively similar accounts of virtue, as far as happiness is concerned each of the Ancient schools disagreed with each other to a great extent. The point which Annas stresses here is that, as far as the *relationship between* virtue and happiness is concerned, some kind of order of priority between the two must be negotiated by reason. For example, the Sceptics argue that our concept of happiness should not be revised at all, whilst the Stoics argue that virtue demands severe revisions to our concept of happiness. In this subsection I will examine Annas' account of the structure of eudaimonism, whilst her arguments in its defence will be presented later in response to each of the objections.

Virtue Ethics and 'Eudaimonism':

In order to be able to present any defence of eudaimonism, it is first necessary to ask: what is eudaimonism? Further, it must also be asked: what is virtue ethics? Both kinds of theory employ concepts such as virtue, character, practical wisdom, and so on. Virtue ethics itself is a genus of normative moral theory, whilst eudaimonism is one species within that genus.¹ To begin with, I will present a simple 'skeletal' definition of virtue ethics from Rosalind Hursthouse and then analyse the characteristics which make that definition *eudaimonist* in character:

VE 1 – An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstances²;

This is a formal principle which establishes a conceptual link between *right action* and *virtuous agency*, with the latter further specified as follows:

VE 1a – A virtuous agent is one who has and exercises the virtues;

This specification is not circular – though it may seem to be since 'to exercise the virtues' just is what it means to be a 'virtuous agent' – as long as a separate specification of the virtues is included:

VE 2 – A virtue is a character trait that a human being needs to flourish or live well;

This last point establishes a conceptual link between *virtue* and *eudaimonia* (Hursthouse 2001: 219).

¹ There are a number of competing species of virtue ethics which diverge from eudaimonism in numerous ways, such as agent-based, target-centred, Christian, or Confucian virtue ethics. For detailed discussion of target-centred virtue ethics, see the section below on Christine Swanton (cf. Ivanhoe 2013; Porter 2013; Slote 2001; Swanton 2003).

² Note that 'the correct circumstances' is not specified in this context. This is a point which will need to be elaborated by a virtue theorist when considering the *appropriateness*, or *correctness* of virtuous activity in actual practical situations; for discussion of the applicability of virtue to real life, as well as the alleged problem of 'moral waste' in relation to developing the virtues, see: (Lovibond 2005: 100-5, 108-9, 111-2). Cf. Hursthouse's comments on hope and 'secular providence' in: (1999: 264-5).

In this definition of virtue ethics, there are two substantial points being made. Firstly, according to **VE 1** the *rightness* or normativity of actions is judged by virtue ethicists in terms of ‘what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstance’. This makes virtue ethics an *agent-centred*³ as opposed to an *act-centred* type of theory. For this reason, the most important question for many virtue ethicists is, following Plato: ‘how ought I to live?’⁴ This approach may be questioned; it may be asked: ‘how does a virtuous agent *know* what to do?’ Is it not the case that a so-called virtuous agent is virtuous *because* they do the right thing, and not vice versa? And if it is true that a given action is correct whether or not a given agent may be judged to be ‘virtuous’, then why ask what it is that makes a person a virtuous agent? In response to this, a virtue ethicist may concede that the agent is virtuous on account of their knowing what to do, whilst also arguing that such knowledge of what to do just *is* one of the virtues – it is *practical wisdom* (‘phronesis’) and is indeed a requirement for an agent to be virtuous (ibid: 224). As Hursthouse puts it:

Acting rightly *is* difficult, and *does* call for much moral wisdom, and the relevant condition of adequacy, which virtue theory meets, is that it should have built into it an explanation of a truth expressed by Aristotle, namely, that moral knowledge... cannot be acquired merely by attending lectures and is not characteristically to be found in people too young to have had much experience of life (ibid).

Next, **VE 1a** simply elaborates what a virtuous agent is, linking **VE 1** and **VE 2**. The second point expressed in **VE 2** is that virtues, the characteristic traits or dispositions of a virtuous moral agent, are *necessary* if that agent is to live well or flourish. It is at this stage that our virtue theory has become a *eudaimonist* theory, since a necessary connection between virtue and eudaimonia has been asserted. At this stage it should be noted that eudaimonia

³ But not necessarily ‘agent-based’ as in Slote’s account, which “treats motives or traits like benevolence as good or virtuous not because of their conduciveness to human happiness, but because of their intrinsic moral character” (Crisp & Slote 2001: 22).

⁴ “Hontina tropon chre zen” Plato, *Republic* I: 325d.

has not itself been specified, and its terminal position in ethical reasoning has not been secured by argument. Also, the exact nature of the virtues, how to acquire them, and the reason why they are viewed as *necessary* for the enjoyment of a happy life have all not yet been specified either. As we will see later on, articulating an ethical position which could provide a clear and persuasive account of each of these desiderata was the goal of all the major Hellenistic schools of thought, and any school which failed to do so was for that reason viewed less favourably.⁵

Now, whilst the above ‘skeletal’ account gives us the basic features of a eudaimonist position, Christine Swanton has provided a more detailed specification of the characteristic principles of eudaimonism. She cites the following claims as characteristic of eudaimonism:

- a) A necessary condition of a trait being a virtue is that it at least partially contribute to, or constitute, the flourishing of the possessor of the virtue⁶;
- b) Practical wisdom is necessary for excellence of character;
- c) The basic ‘thin’ concept in virtue ethics is excellence⁷ (2013: 320).

Swanton claims that b) and c) are debatable from the point of view of other virtue ethical positions – a ‘super soft’ virtue ethicist such as Michael Slote, for instance, would claim that “practical wisdom is not an essential part of any virtue”, or that ‘admirability’ rather than ‘excellence’ should be the goal of any virtuous agent (Swanton 2013: 323-5). Especially relevant in this context is her discussion about point a).

⁵ Cf. Cicero’s dismissal of Epicurean morality for providing a poor explanation of courageous self-sacrificial deeds *de Fin* I.23-4.

⁶ She quotes Daniel C. Russell on this point: “Eudaimonism identifies the virtues as those attributes of character and practical intelligence that are important for happiness” (2013: 17).

⁷ This point may be reasonably doubted; for Julia Annas, happiness itself is a ‘thin’ concept for eudaimonism. I will discuss this further below.

According to Swanton, a) can be further analysed as follows:

- a1) A virtue is an excellent⁸ human character trait;
- a2) Virtues make humans good qua human beings;

How does being 'good qua x' affect being 'good qua human'? For instance, a Nietzschean may argue that "the best life for a particular human being is a life as a passionate artist... [which] is [not] good qua *human* though it may be good *qua artist*" (ibid: 321). Despite this possibility, Swanton concedes that a2) may nevertheless be retained if we accept a premise such as this:

- a3) Virtues qua x may be differentiated according to their roles, and found to be compatible with 'goodness qua human beings';

For example, generosity will be manifested in different ways whether one is acting as a business partner, friend, or different type of acquaintance (ibid: 321-2). The "differentiated virtue" will be "constrained by the basic form of the virtue" – for example, a lawyer should not become 'hyper-zealous' and breach the demands of loyalty (ibid: 323). If we accept a2) in any case, then, we have finally:

- a4) Virtues are necessarily good for their possessors (at least characteristically)⁹ (ibid: 322).

The key point to make here is that a eudaimonist must establish a reasonable connection between a1) and a4), otherwise, the goal of developing a virtuous character would have to be viewed as independent to the agent's own happiness, placing pursuit of 'eudaimonia' itself in jeopardy.

⁸ Or admirable.

⁹ This premise may be questioned, following Hume's distinction between 'natural' and 'artificial' virtues.

Julia Annas' Account of Eudaimonism:

Now that I have examined the claims of virtue ethics as a whole and the particular differentia of eudaimonism, I will now proceed to examine Annas' analysis of the structural features of eudaimonism.

The 'Basic Question' and 'Final Ends':

To begin with it is important to reflect on what I call the *basic question* which each of the traditional eudaimonist thinkers sought to answer: 'How ought I to live?'¹⁰ Beginning with Socrates in Plato's *Republic*, and throughout the subsequent tradition of Hellenistic philosophy, this question has been taken to be the central question for anyone who has begun to reflect on their life. Everyone is born into this world and will spend their life performing certain activities and forming evaluative opinions about them. Before reaching the stage at which determinate ethical disputes become relevant, everyone may at times ask or reflect whether their life is on track: 'Is everything working out okay with ...?' 'Where do I see myself in ... years' time?' 'What is the point of doing that?'. Questions such as these can be understood as implicit attempts to gain partial answers to the *basic* underlying question 'how ought I to live?'. For the Ancient eudaimonists, this question represents the basic entry point into ethical enquiry asked by everyday people from all walks of life.¹¹ Eudaimonists take the life of a person as a whole to be the basic unit of evaluation for ethical thinking. Also, since it is *ethical thinking* which must be performed in order to correctly evaluate one's

¹⁰ Cf. Plato, *Republic* I.352d.

¹¹ This is not always viewed as the most basic question in ethics. Deontologists, for instance, claim that 'what should I do?' is the most basic question, since ethics is concerned with making right decisions. Answers to this question vary amongst deontologists. Deontological criticisms of eudaimonism will be examined in objection 1.

life, “the only answers” to the basic question “which will satisfy an intelligent and reflective person will come from ethical philosophy” (Annas 1995: 27)¹².

By assessing one’s entire life rather than discrete portions of it – such as individual acts or states of mind – it is possible to judge the praiseworthiness or blameworthiness of such smaller portions in terms of a ‘bigger picture’, thereby allowing one to judge whether one’s actions or states fit together or not. To refer one’s actions or states to a bigger picture in this manner should not be understood as a *reductive* enterprise. It is not necessary to take the concept of a ‘virtuous agent’ and attempt to reduce all other ethical concepts to it (cf. Hursthouse 2001: 221). Frankena, for instance, asserts that an ethic based on virtue “would take as basic aretaic judgements like ‘that was a courageous deed’” whilst insisting that “deontic judgements are either derivative from such aretaic ones or *can be dispensed with entirely*” (1973: 63).¹³ Annas argues against this, since it assumes that ethical theories must be *hierarchical* and *complete*. An ethical theory is ‘hierarchical’ if its concepts are linked by being derived one-from-another, terminating with the most basic; it is ‘complete’ if it can account for everything which an ethical theory relates to in terms of its basic concepts (Annas 1995: 8-9). Assuming that both of these criteria must be met, an ethical theory is refuted if it cannot account for its *derived* concepts in terms of more *basic* ones. Whilst this may lead to the formulation of ethical theories which strive for theoretical simplicity, arriving at conclusions based on the assumption of as few postulates as possible, the downside of this approach is that it leads to banishment or downgrading of “thoughts that have never left the lives of most people” – leading to the migration of serious questions about happiness, character, friendships and so on, to popular psychology rather than ethics (ibid: 10-1). Instead, ethical concepts are related to each other, with some such as virtue and happiness

¹² Rather than from religion, for example. This particular point is especially liable to separate Medieval eudaimonist theories from contemporary secular theories.

¹³ Italics are mine.

having a *primary* role. However, if the good of others, for instance, is related to one's own good, it does not follow that the good of others is ipso facto justified in terms of one's own good, since "we would be misconceiving what the good of others is" (ibid: 9). If an ethical theory such as Hobbesian contractarianism assumes that the good of others is reducible to one's own good, leading to a denial of the 'common good', then this theory has not provided a better conception of the good for others than rival theories have. In fact, it has simply eliminated such a conception from ethics.¹⁴ Ancient eudaimonism does not begin with such theoretical strictures in this way, meaning that it can attempt to account for a broad range of ethical principles in their own terms, without prejudging the type of connection which such principles will have to one another. An ethical theory of this nature does have a *structure* within which many distinct issues can be addressed, but the structure is not *exhaustive* in the sense that an entire field of ethical inquiry can be dismissed or explained away simply on the grounds that it does not fit the structure. This is an advantage for eudaimonist theories, since they can examine, for example, moral rules, consequences of actions, proposed duties or political arrangements, and ask what role *all* of these things play in a *good life*. Rival theories such as deontology or consequentialism, however, must focus on *some* of them and face inevitable difficulties when discussing the others. In short, eudaimonism takes as its starting point the moral agent who wishes to make sense of their whole life, who reflects on whatever kinds of experiences they have or decisions they make, seeking to figure out what kind of person they should be to live a good life. Such reflection is not meant to be a theoretically exhaustive enterprise from the outset, rather it is the process of trying to rationally define which character traits and moral ends can provide a more satisfactory way of living one's life overall. The theoretical aspect of this process may become more sophisticated and comprehensive as one tries to harmonise a bigger range of aspects of one's life into an overall pattern. However, the agent does not begin by arbitrarily adopting a theoretically narrow 'method' to determine which aspects of life should be treated as 'moral'

¹⁴ Hobbes' reasoning on this point will be examined in objection 2.

and which as 'non-moral'. Nor do they assume from the outset that concepts or principles which cannot be accounted for in presupposed terms may be eliminated ipso facto. Ethical theories should deal with ethical issues *in their own terms* and not seek to evade them.

Starting with the basic question, 'how ought I to live?', the agent will not focus solely on the individual constituents of particular moral decisions, rather, their reflection will involve taking their *whole life* into account. How can this be done? Following Aristotle on this point, eudaimonists distinguish between the distinct ends which all activities aim at, and the *final end* which your life as a whole aims at, and which includes and subordinates all the other ends:

Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and choice, is thought to aim at some good... Now, as there are many actions, arts, and sciences, their ends are also many... If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly *this must be the good and the chief good* (NE 1094a1-2, 7-8, 19-24).¹⁵

The distinction here between individual ends and the final end is one of *completeness* or *self-sufficiency*. All activities aim for goods which are pursued for the sake of something else – for instance, wealth is sought after, but only for the sake of what it can buy – whilst a final end is not sought for the sake of something else, since everything else is sought for its sake:

If there is only one final end, this will be what we are seeking, and if there are more than one, the most final of these will be what we are seeking... we call final

¹⁵ Italics mine.

without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else (ibid: 1097a28-30, 35-6).

Based on this distinction of ethical ends, Aristotle proposes that *happiness* is the obvious candidate for a final end, since “honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for itself... but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that through them we shall be happy”; happiness, however, is not sought after for the sake of anything else (1097b1-6).

Virtue:

Before proceeding to examine the nature of happiness, we must first examine the *means* by which is to be achieved, which is *virtue*. In the eudaimonist tradition virtue is defined by three characteristic aspects: 1. Virtues are dispositional; 2. Virtues have an affective aspect; and, 3. Virtues have an intellectual aspect (Annas 1995: 48-9).

1. *Dispositional*: According to a eudaimonist, virtues are to be understood as dispositions. When considering what a virtue might be, Aristotle states that a virtue is “found in the soul” (NE 1105b19-20).¹⁶ What type of state ‘in the soul’ could a virtue be? The three options which Aristotle considers are *passions* (‘pathe’) such as desire, anger or fear, *capacities* (‘dunameis’) which enable us to experience passions, and *states of character* (‘hexeis’) which account for whether we are ‘well or badly off towards the feelings’ – for instance, to be *intensely* angry means that we are more inclined anger than not (Annas 1995: 49). Virtues are not passions, Aristotle argues, since we cannot choose how things affect us (NE 1105b29-1106a1).¹⁷ Virtues are not capacities either, since “we have capacities by nature, but we are not made good or bad by nature” (ibid: 1106a7-10). Alongside our human

¹⁶ Can this point be fruitfully disputed? Not unless one’s own ‘person’ ‘self’ or ‘mind’ were not to be viewed as involved in making ethical decisions.

¹⁷ *Passions* in this context carry a connotation of passivity. Things ‘make you feel’ a certain way, in other words.

nature¹⁸, Aristotle reminds us, education cannot be ignored: humans are not born with a detailed understanding of moral action, rather they must learn virtuous *habits* ('ethos') (ibid: 1103a15-19).¹⁹ A virtue is therefore a *state* – a 'disposition' in modern terms (Annas 1995: 50). It is not a 'state of mind' or 'mental event', since dispositions are stable and not easily changed (cf. *Cat* 8b27-35).²⁰ Dispositions should not be understood as entirely unchangeable, however, implying that one is simply habitually inclined to act in a given manner *unthinkingly* – there would be no need to worry about acting brave, for example, if one happens to act bravely out of blind habit "without the thought ever occurring to them" (Moore 1903: 175-7). G. E. Moore claims on this ground that virtues have no intrinsic merit, however, Julia Annas counters this by pointing out that, whilst virtues are dispositional, they are not *solely* so. Virtues are not passive and unchosen but are intellectually-active *chosen* states (1995: 51). A point to be borne in mind is that "every action has both a past and a future", meaning that an agent's dispositions develop in response to past actions. Therefore, education and moral development are key processes for shaping an agent's future actions – exactly as Aristotle argues (ibid: 52). Furthermore, stable and developed dispositions should not be viewed as "rigid mechanical habits" passively constraining you to act correctly – as Kant views them - implying that a "developed rational self" cannot emerge from an "empirical habit-forming self". On this view, habits are governed by inclinations *instead* of reasons. This presupposes a strong distinction and opposition between what we *should* do and what we *want* to do, with correct actions being performed solely²¹ on account of the former. Annas argues that this cannot be correct, since "there thus seems no room for a developed, rational

¹⁸ The meaning and ethical salience of the term 'nature' in this context I will discuss further in response to objection 2.

¹⁹ To refute this claim it would be necessary to demonstrate that, for instance, a feral child growing up in complete detachment from society could act with the same level of intelligence and consideration as their morally-educated civilized counterpart would.

²⁰ "A state ('hexis') differs from a condition ('diathesis') by being more stable and longer-lasting. Such are kinds of knowledge and the virtues... Justice, temperance and the like seem not to be easily affected or easy to change."

²¹ This explains Kant's derivation of ethics from 'reason' instead of the 'passions'.

self in Kant's theory" (ibid: 52n.12).²² For eudaimonism, a virtue is a disposition to act in manner which is courageous or just, for example. It is a relatively stable feature of one's character, which is *developed* through good habits, but not entirely *determined* by them. This entails that one is responsible for having or acquiring virtues, otherwise one cannot be praised or blamed for having them, since they would essentially be *capacities* which Aristotle denied (NE 1106a7-10).

2. *Affective*: As we have seen, Aristotle argues that becoming virtuous requires a great deal of moral development through education. For a eudaimonist, moral education is essential as it is the means by which a person learns not to simply act on all their feelings, but to reflect on the appropriateness of those feelings and develop *self-control*. This learning process begins in childhood by "examples and sanctions", becoming "more conscious and autonomous with age" (1995: 53). There are two parts to this process: firstly, people must learn what is the correct thing to do and reject the alternatives, which involves the *intellectual* aspect of a virtue which will be considered shortly; secondly, one must become *habituated* to doing the right thing so that one takes pleasure in it. Aristotle argues that when one has developed a virtuous state of character, pleasure will supervene²³ upon their actions, since it would be contradictory for a just person, for example, to enjoy doing something unjust: "we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts" (NE 1103b1, 1104b4-8).

²² Annas points out that the origin of the alleged conflict between 'duty' and 'inclination' in Western philosophy can be traced back to the sceptic Carneades, who put forth the view that "virtue is not one of the natural goods sought, but a developed rational skill in dealing with the natural goods" and to Cicero's statement that there is a "disagreement which seems often to arise between things useful and things honourable" (1995: 183n.12; *On Obligations* III.56) The question which such a distinction and dispute between the two leaves untouched is whether people *necessarily* act in a non-moral way when acting out of 'inclination'. If this is so, then to act correctly will be *external* to what one wills to do, in which case a Kantian 'good will' is a contradiction in terms. If this is not so, and correct action can at least *possibly* be identical to what one is naturally inclined to do, then the separation of reason and motivation presupposed by Kant is undermined, and with it, the need to rely solely on impersonal 'non-empirical' reason to make correct moral decisions.

²³ This supervenient relation between virtue and pleasure should not be mistaken for an intentional *motivational rationale* – when I learn to perform just actions for their own sakes, I will *thereafter* enjoy performing them. But that is not the *reason* I do so. The issues raised by the previous note and this one are further discussed in objection 1.

Now, since one of the key claims of eudaimonism stated earlier (**VE 2**) is that there is a necessary connection between virtues and living well, it is important at this point to question Aristotle's argument. Will pleasure supervene on virtuous actions? Are virtues desirable or pleasant? Annas asserts that, following Kant, virtues are often viewed as "correctives to our feelings" which consist in the "strength of will to overcome feelings" – i.e. to be virtuous is to act contrary to one's normal inclinations.²⁴ This seems *prima facie* plausible, since it is admirable when people who are conflicted successfully struggle against their wrong inclinations and choose to act rightly instead – since non-agonised people do not have to do so, they are not admirable (Annas 1995: 54). For a eudaimonist, however, this misses the point: "we can admire someone overcoming a handicap without thinking it preferable to have that handicap" (*ibid*). Also, eudaimonists claim that argument alone is not sufficient to motivate someone to act correctly. One's ethical beliefs must be rooted in emotion to be effective: "argument and teaching... are not powerful with all men, but the soul of the student must first have been cultivated by means of habits for noble joy and noble hatred, like earth which is to nourish the seed" (*NE* 1179b23-6). In short, virtue necessarily has an affective or emotional aspect, which it is impossible to compensate for. This explains the difficulty of designing a set of rules for people to faultlessly obey. The *enjoyment* of acting morally should not be lightly dismissed. For eudaimonists, therefore, the admirable struggle of developing emotional self-control is a stepping stone to moral progress, not its terminal point. Eventually pleasure and enjoyment *will* follow from acting morally, instead of internal conflict.²⁵ As Annas puts it:

[our] emotions must be in harmony or agreement with [our] considered judgements about what... to do, rather than being neutral or in opposition and merely controlled or overridden by that judgement (1995: 63).

²⁴ See objection 1.

²⁵ This is a somewhat generalised point, however. The internal 'phenomenology' of a Stoic or an Aristotelian, for instance, should qualify it.

The importance of the emotions for eudaimonists is, as we can see, the fact that they help us distinguish between the *virtuous* and the *self-controlled* agent (ibid: 66). The *virtuous* agent will not simply do what is right, irrespective of whether they *want* to do so, rather they will strive to develop ‘right emotions/dispositions’ (*‘eupatheiai’*)²⁶ (ibid). They will not only do the right thing, but they will do it *willingly* since they rationally understand that it is right to do so *and therefore want to*.

3. *Intellectual*: For eudaimonism, virtues exhibit two forms of *unity* – that which each virtue has in itself, and that which holds between them.

Firstly, each virtue on its own is asserted to be unified – I shall call this *internal unity* – a point which is best grasped, in Annas’ view, by means of the *skill analogy*. To develop in a given virtue is analogous to learning a skill, such as learning to play an instrument (ibid: 67). In both cases, we often have a young inexperienced learner who “copies his elders or follows their advice” (ibid). He may begin by learning on the basis of models, cases or exercises. Moral principles are taught through stories featuring the kind of actions, consequences and types of character which agents can enact. The agent will soon develop “a sense of the *point* of doing these [things]” and will begin to gain an “understanding of what he is doing... [which] can be represented as a unified grasp of the principles that underlie his actions and decisions” (ibid).²⁷ A virtuous person does not demonstrate ‘blind obedience’ to ‘the rules’, rather they “understand the principles on which they act, and thus can explain and defend their actions” (ibid). Ancient eudaimonism is not a form of *particularism* as far as moral judgements are concerned – the virtuous agent should “try to achieve a theoretically unified basis for [their] moral judgements” (ibid: 68). For Aristotle, however, virtues are still

²⁶ I leave out of consideration the Stoic analysis of emotions from which this term derives. For more on ‘*propatheiai*’ (pre-emotions) and ‘*eupatheiai*’, see: (Annas 1995: 62-6).

²⁷ On the skill analogy and the model of *intellectual development* which it underlies, see Aristotle (*NE* 1143b11-4). Aristotle also stresses certain non-analogous features of virtues and skills, whereas the Stoics fully accept the analogy. See (Annas 1995: 68-73).

distinct from skills in certain respects: unlike skills which employ the use of *capacities* which may be either used or abused, virtues also require to be performed in the *right way* – which is assessed by the correct *dispositions* of the agent, as well as the intellectual capacities (ibid).²⁸ A virtuous person “has to make precise particular concrete decisions, about matters that do not fall under any expertise” (ibid). For the Stoics, virtues *are* skills whose intellectual unity is grounded by ‘apprehensions’ which “fit together in practice” (ibid: 69). To ‘grasp’ something which is apprehended is not “merely to have a belief”, it is to have “knowledge of a particular fact” – in terms of virtuous *practice*, this means that a virtuous agent is an agent who has *understood* that X should (or should not) be done. To understand things in this manner is to obtain *insights*, all of which are to be “practiced together to achieve virtue” (ibid). Further, the “relevant thoughts have to be brought together in the agent’s mind and put into practice in a variety of contexts” so that the agent will “act in the right way constantly and reliably” (ibid: 70). The agent will develop into a truly virtuous person to the extent that they “build up a body of organised and mutually supporting beliefs... [which] are tested and adjusted in practice” (ibid). Annas argues that there are three ways in which a virtue is *internally* unified: 1) a virtue will have a stable and fixed *field* for activity – a brave person will not “constantly shift [their] ground” on how and when to perform a brave action, or on what kind of action is brave; 2) a virtue conjointly employs both *intellect* and *affect* – an agent will not “become brave just by being argued into it... [they must] practise being brave, test and refine [their] views in actual life”, demonstrating a “growing coherence of [their] reactions and attitudes” – their intellectual judgements do not operate in isolation²⁹ from their emotional reactions, but ground and justify them – far from making “an impossible demand”

²⁸ The necessity for correct *dispositions* (affects in this instance) has already been mentioned. On this particular point, Aristotle and the Stoics differ from one another – the Stoics explain emotions as being (faulty) intellectual judgements, and so there is no distinction between a virtue and a skill *qua* intellectual activity.

²⁹ On the supposed isolation and, therefore, the unnecessary nature of the emotions in this context, Annas criticises Sidgwick’s contrast between virtue and duty: “either I act out of duty, doing what I should, or I go further and also have the right feelings: but since the latter is not up to me in the way that doing my duty is... [it is a] not morally required extra” – a line of reasoning which “misconceives the way in which having the right feelings is up to me”, Annas argues, since it starts depends upon characterising “a single occasion of acting” *in abstracto* (1995: 57).

to have certain emotions, the *means* by which virtue is developed in the agent presuppose the natural co-existence of both intelligence and emotion, excluding neither from consideration a priori; 3) a virtue will have a unified *basis* upon which its judgements and reactions are grounded – what the *good*³⁰ of bravery is will define what a brave action is judged to be – what worth or value bravery has, in other words, will help us locate the status and role which bravery should have in our lives, which in turn leads us to think about how our “overall goal in life” is to be correctly conceived (ibid: 70-1). Virtues, correctly understood, demonstrate an *internal unity* which links all the particular acts, contexts and ends of an agent’s activity to their life as a whole, giving them a wide-ranging and yet focused and intellectually demanding³¹ means of assessing how to judge what they should do (ibid).

The second form of unity, which exists *between* the different virtues, I shall term their *external unity*. The central thesis which is asserted in this respect is that, in order to have any of the virtues, one must have practical wisdom or intelligence:

PI – A moral agent necessarily has to have *practical intelligence* (‘phronesis’) (ibid: 73).

‘Practical wisdom’, ‘prudence’, ‘practical intelligence’, or whatever we wish to call it, is the *sine qua non* of any realistic account of the virtues; as the scope of such wisdom or intelligence applies “not in [a] particular sphere, but generally” (ibid). This virtue is demonstrated by someone who “reasons well about what is good and advantageous for him, not in one area but with regard to living well in general” (ibid). This concept of ‘prudence’ is

³⁰ Since this is the ‘good’ aimed at in acting, say, bravely, a deontologist may wish to argue that you should not *also* seek after supervenient pleasure or, ultimately, happiness as well. To do so, they argue, is to be *motivationally duplicitous*. See objection 1 as well as notes 22-3.

³¹ The demandingness of this level of reflection on one’s actions, their ends, and the circumstances of their performance, *is* a very time-consuming demand on an agent’s time. The question of who has the leisure to think their lives through to this extent should not be entirely evaded. However, it could be claimed that the *skill analogy* offers a more ‘common-place’ way of understanding the intellectual aspects of virtue as being akin to an ordinary practical craft which is based on daily experience and can be done better or worse. See: (Annas 1995: 72).

not contrasted with morality to denote ‘self-interest’ – interpreting it in this way would mean to illicitly import Kantian assumptions into the discussion – rather, it has the more commonplace meaning of being an intelligent³² person in practical terms. A practically intelligent person (a ‘*phronimos*’) is someone “whose attitudes and emotions are in harmony with his judgements; his judgements are the right ones, and correspondingly his attitudes are the right ones” (ibid: 74). Will an intelligent person necessarily do what is right? What about, for example, the cases of intelligent murderers who use their powers of reasoning to usurp the activities of the police? In this case, where virtue and intelligence are merely externally connected, Aristotle³³ replies by distinguishing cases like these where the agent demonstrates *cleverness*, but not intelligence (ibid). A practically intelligent person, who considers *all* the relevant data when assessing what action to perform; and since they are responsible for their life as a whole, the successful performance of *one* activity can never suffice for this. Therefore, they could not perform actions solely with regards to the short-term consequences immanent to the act in question – at the very least, there may be psychological or penal consequences which follow such acts (ibid). *Cleverness* is akin to intelligence in that it involves the use of reasoning and problem-solving, but it differs since the latter is also characterised by a realisation of and respect for “the right considerations”, as well as by the reliability of its judgements which are “reliably correct in moral matters” (ibid). Assuming that **PI** is true, it follows that none of the other virtues separately suffice to make the agent moral. Can this be correct? Is it not possible to be brave without being fair, or to demonstrate self-control without being brave? (ibid). Annas affirms the necessity of **PI**, arguing that “the virtuous agent [must] be able to articulate and defend her reasons for acting as she does... across the board” (ibid: 75). Since “each virtue contributes to my overall good”, in relation to each virtue the agent must be able to articulate and defend their actions. Therefore, to be a virtuous person on the whole, the agent must demonstrate intelligence in all the areas of their life in which their actions are morally assessed (ibid). To

³² Hence Annas’ preference of ‘intelligence’ as a translation of *phronesis*.

³³ See (NE 1143b18 - 1145a7).

be a good person on the whole is to act in the right way in *all* the different areas of your life – intelligence in this sense requires a *unified* understanding of the moral demands which present themselves in any circumstance, whichever of the particular virtues may be required. Thus, to have any of the virtues necessarily requires having ‘phronesis’ (**PI**), which governs or subsumes *all the other virtues*.³⁴ One cannot have any virtue without “grasping what it contributes to the good of one’s life” (ibid: 77). Epicurus expresses the point by stating that all the virtues “have by nature come from intelligence”, the latter of which he calls “the beginning of all pleasant living and the greatest good” (cf. *Ep Men* 132). Intelligence is the “practical disposition which results from studying and internalising philosophy” – that is, intelligence is developed through the pursuit of genuine wisdom, and is naturally oriented towards whatever course of action is reasonable in any circumstance (cf. Annas 1995: 79). If we see ‘phronesis’ in this way, it can be seen that none of the other virtues in isolation would be of much use in practice. As Plato³⁵ argued, bravery without wisdom or intelligence is little better than blind foolhardiness; a fortiori, the same must be true for *all* the virtues. An interesting question which arises here is, *how* are the virtues distinct? If all the virtues are unified on the basis of intelligence, and intelligence is the means of understanding the correct action demanded in any circumstance, then what differentiates the virtues? Annas argues that “in everyday life we identify and name distinct virtues by areas of action; but our reflective theoretical account identifies what virtue really is... intelligence which is differently applied” (ibid: 80). The use of one or another virtue may have a common intellectual or emotional³⁶ basis: “the virtues share their ‘principles’... [but have] an intellectual difference... of priority rather than that of content” (ibid: 82). Each virtue, on this view, presents a distinct focus or consideration within the same body of intellectual principles, each of which must be

³⁴ A classic form of eudaimonist reasoning which entails **PI** on this point is Plato’s *Laches*, where Socrates asks what courage is – it is *not* simply defined by running headfirst into danger, since that may be undertaken out of unjustified fearlessness instead. True courage *knows* the dangers which it stands up to. (cf. *Lach* 197a – 199e). See: (Plato 2009: 35-66).

³⁵ See previous note.

³⁶ The emotional differentiation of the virtues is differently regarded depending upon the particular theory in question – the Stoics, for example, reduced emotions to intellectual judgements. See: (Annas 1995: 82-3).

drawn on to a greater extent as the situation demands it. They each have “distinct areas of application and distinct behavioural expressions” (ibid).

In conclusion, eudaimonists assert that fully developed virtues exhibit two forms of unity. They are *internally unified* which means that the different kinds of action, justification and emotional demands which each virtue make form a coherent whole. They are *externally unified* as well which means that each virtue cannot operate properly to the exclusion of the others. All of the virtues depend upon the same faculty of intelligence or wisdom, without which each virtue may develop in a lopsided manner and lead to false choices and actions in certain cases. Both of these forms of unity depend upon the basic notion of ‘my life as a whole’, since it is by reflecting on the overall direction and success (so far) or my life overall, and any projected improvements I may have to make therefore, that I will see the value and necessity of all the virtues. The nature of the virtues as *dispositional*, *affective* and *intellectual* is assumed and accepted by all the Ancient eudaimonist schools.

Happiness:

Now that we have examined virtue as the *means* to happiness, it remains for us to examine the *end* of happiness itself. One of the characteristic eudaimonist claims stated by Swanton earlier is:

a4) Virtues are necessarily good for their possessors (at least characteristically).

Happiness is the final goal of eudaimonism since it is viewed as the most plausible candidate goal for which other activities are performed. The question now is: what is happiness? Eudaimonists do not assume that an individual’s happiness is necessarily *contrary* to virtuous action. In fact, the key claim which eudaimonism accepts is that to be happy and to be virtuous are necessarily connected. *Prima facie*, these two distinct states do

not seem to be necessarily connect – does it not require sacrificing happiness to be truly moral? Or vice versa? By arguing that they in fact are connected, eudaimonism requires that one's pre-theoretical notion of happiness is to some extent revised so that the role of virtue in its attainment is ensured. Annas claims *ex hypothesi* that happiness is a 'thin specification' of one's final end (1995: 329). This means that happiness *in some sense* is aimed for, though different distinct specifications of what it is *in particular* may be offered. Since happiness is our 'final end', it is understood to be the most complete and all-inclusive goal which all of a person's actions may be directed towards (ibid). Unlike the other schools, the Cyrenaics viewed a human's final end to be "the maximizing of intense present pleasure" and therefore rejected eudaimonia since it requires reflection on one's whole life rather than individual moments within it (ibid: 329-30). However, their view is an exception to the rule: eudaimonists argue that happiness must be based on one's *whole life* being lived *virtuously*, rather than simply seeking to enjoy only the most pleasant aspects of it, without necessarily being virtuous. Virtue is essential for living well since we do not live in isolation from other people, and it is frequently immoral to pursue one's own good without the slightest consideration of other people's good as well. This point accounts for the revisionary, even counter-intuitive nature of eudaimonist accounts (ibid: 331). Whilst it is perfectly possible that people may initially seek their own happiness by means of pleasure, wealth or honour, it is not a position which one can justify after reflecting on the validity of our initial assumptions. Eudaimonists make this clear by emphasising the distinction between *nature* and *convention*.³⁷ Whilst a conventional position in life may be that wealth will make you happy, a moment's reflection can lead you to realise that many wealthy people are, in fact, *unhappy*. That we must revise our concept of happiness can evidently be seen from the fact that, "we would not, after all, have needed ethical reflection if things had been fine the way they were" – a fact which even Epicurus, whose conception of happiness is the 'most intuitive', recognises (ibid: 332). To what extent does our concept of happiness need revision? In

³⁷ 'Phusis' and 'nomos' in Greek. For more on the issues of 'conventions' in ethics, see objection 2.

response to this question, I will examine three answers provided by the *Sceptics*, *Epicureans* and the *Stoics*.

1. *Scepticism*: Unlike the Epicureans and the Stoics, the Sceptics maintained that a change of beliefs occasioned by philosophical reflection will not lead to an improvement of one's happiness, since "they hold that... continued genuine enquiry will face the thinker with situations where there is no option but to suspend belief" (ibid: 351). The result is that "intellectual enquiry is thus self-abolishing... since all serious disputes are unsettle-able" and the best outcome is, therefore, "detachment from the original questions" (ibid). If we grant this point, will it not be the case that anyone is as happy as anyone else? This is not what follows from a suspension of belief³⁸ in Sextus Empiricus' view; rather, a sceptic will attain "tranquillity in matters of opinion and moderation in matters forced upon us" unlike their 'dogmatist' opponents who "take themselves to be persecuted by natural evils" and who "experience more troubles" (*PH* xii.25-7).³⁹ At this point, Sextus has asserted that sceptics aim for tranquillity – "the causal principle of scepticism we say is the hope of becoming tranquil" ('*ataraxia*' – i.e. untroubled, free from disturbances) – which is an aim shared by the other ethical schools as well (*PH* vi.12). Scepticism does not involve simply ignoring the beliefs and aims of the other schools. In fact, Sextus states that "Sceptics began to do philosophy in order to decide among appearances... apprehend which are true... so as to become tranquil"; the motivation for such inquiring is to find "that for the sake of which everything is done or considered... the final object of desire" (*PH* xii.25-6).⁴⁰ What a Sceptic does *not* do is "pursue anything with intensity" due to their belief in its goodness, since two problems will arise: 1) by lacking what is believed to be good, the agent will think evil has

³⁸ 'Epoche'.

³⁹ See: Sextus Empiricus, (2000) *Outlines of Scepticism*, Annas, J. & Barnes, J. (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁴⁰ This is effectively a 'standard definition' in eudaimonism which each of the schools agrees upon, differing in their proposals as to how to identify and obtain it.

befallen them; and 2) when obtaining what is good, a fear will arise that it may be lost (*PH* xii.27). The Sceptic is immune to such worries, Sextus says, since they “neither avoid nor pursue anything with intensity” (*PH* xii.28). A Sceptic’s happiness is not established through *disciplined* pursuit of a *reasonably established* pattern of living, rather it follows “fortuitously as a shadow follows a body” (*PH* xii.29). Is this a *reason* for becoming sceptical, the fact that tranquillity contingently *happens to follow* from abandoning the search for a reasonable pattern of living that guarantees happiness? Is the search for happiness itself the main reason why people are *not* happy? Whether or not Scepticism is ultimately satisfactory in this manner, there is one point which must be noted in this context. According to Julia Annas, *if* we grant Sextus’ claim that tranquillity does happen to follow from the suspension of belief, then Scepticism indeed might be the right path to follow. But, if asked *why* tranquillity should be our aim, the sceptic cannot answer that question without lapsing into ‘dogmatism’ (1995: 210). The Sceptic may retort that it is not their job to convince anyone else that they are correct through positive *argument*, in fact, they can be content merely to state that they have found tranquillity in this manner and that they have attained their final end thereby. They are not arguing their case positively, they are simply “recording what they find natural to accept... [it is] natural... to live by appearances, and in the case of intellectual appearances, this means actively holding to them and living by them” (ibid: 210-1). So, in the case of Scepticism, our *concept* of happiness does not truly need revision at all. Our *attitude* to happiness should be altered, since it is this which introduces unnecessary dogmatism and anxiety into our lives. The Sceptic follows what seems naturally good, abstaining from trying to refine and justify their beliefs in this context.

2. *Epicureanism*: Whilst the Sceptical view of happiness is non-revisionary, the Epicurean position involves a certain degree of revision of beliefs. Firstly, our final end in life is identified by Epicurus *pleasure*. Epicureanism is a form of *hedonism*, but it is unlike Cyrenaicism since its account of pleasure is intended to meet Aristotle’s criteria of

completeness and self-sufficiency, as well as being actively pursued rather than passively acquiesced to (ibid: 188). To provide a plausible account of what pleasure is, as well as to persuade us that it is a *virtuous* end to pursue at all, Epicurus distinguishes between different kinds of pleasure, in order that we should only pursue the correct ones.⁴¹ Pleasures are distinguished between *kinetic* and *static*⁴². Static pleasures, such as having drunk water, are those which are felt as a result of a pain or need being removed (Annas 1995: 188; cf. Cicero *de Fin* II.9). Kinetic pleasures, such as drinking water, may be important in life, but their purpose is directed towards the lacks or needs which they relate to. Ultimately, it is the static pleasures which are sought after (ibid). What will result from the successful attainment of static pleasure? The overarching goal in each case is the attainment of *ataraxia*.

Epicureanism has the same aim as Scepticism does, but its means are different. Epicureans aim for *natural* goods, since those are the goods viewed as worth aiming for. However, they do not simply act in whatever manner happens to seem good, rather, they begin with the “intuitive appeal to the idea that pleasure is right for us” (ibid: 189). Natural human instinct is the basis for ethical decision, however, since people are unhappy so much of the time it must be the case that people often try to fulfil desires which are *unnatural*. So, Epicurus further distinguishes pleasures like this: “Of our desires, some are natural and necessary, some are natural but not necessary, and some are neither natural nor necessary but come about dependent on empty belief” (*KD* 29).⁴³ Annas states that the fundamental cleavage between natural and *empty* desires should not be understood simply to signify “a factual error” in the latter case, but “a mistake which renders your efforts pointless, side-tracking your life away from the right way to happiness”; such beliefs and desires are therefore “harmful and dysfunctional for the agent” (1995: 190). One problem Annas highlights with Epicurus’ account, however, is that it is based on “widespread intuitions” concerning what is natural for humans, rather than “a careful discussion of scientific concepts like those of

⁴¹ A similar strategy is pursued by Mill, who distinguished ‘higher’ from ‘lower’ pleasures.

⁴² ‘Katastematic’ in Greek.

⁴³ See: Epicurus, (1994) *The Epicurus Reader*, Inwood, B. & Gerson, L. (ed.), (Indiana: Hackett).

nature and change” provided by Aristotle (ibid: 190-1). Further, since Epicurus was an atomist, which entails an *anti-teleological* view of nature, on what grounds can he distinguish what is natural or what is necessary for a human agent, assuming that nature itself is not teleological but is driven solely by chance?⁴⁴ Also, a more fundamental question may be asked: is pleasure a suitable goal in life, even the final and most complete goal an entire human life may be directed towards? Whatever the answers to these questions may be, what we can see in the case of Epicureanism is a greater degree of revision of one’s beliefs than is the case for Scepticism. Also, one’s *behaviours* are expected to be changed on the basis of the newly adopted beliefs inherited from Epicurus. Unlike Scepticism, it is asserted that there is a *correct* way to behave, which is based on explicit ‘dogmas’.⁴⁵

3. *Stoicism*: Finally, we have the most revisionary of the three theories. Some of the many aspects of life which the Stoics expect us to revise our beliefs towards include: loyalty to one’s birthplace⁴⁶; the sufficiency of virtue⁴⁷ for happiness; the denigration of natural goods such as health, strength and wealth as ‘indifferent’⁴⁸; the reasonableness of suicide⁴⁹; the irrelevance of an external outcome in determining the worth of a moral action⁵⁰. Of all the Ancient eudaimonist theories, Stoicism is overall the most counter-intuitive. The Stoics, who reject Aristotle’s view that one needs ‘external goods’⁵¹ alongside virtue to be happy, argue

⁴⁴ Obscurity concerning this matter presents difficulties for Epicurus, whose theory is meant to be “empiricist and common-sensical, yet views self-sufficiency as so valuable that even family life – surely a ‘natural’, and perhaps necessary, good *par excellence* – is treated with ambivalence” (Annas 1995: 196-7).

⁴⁵ The ‘fourfold remedy’ in the case of Epicurus.

⁴⁶ For discussion of the ‘cosmopolitan’ ideal in Stoicism, see (Annas 1995: 302-11).

⁴⁷ All eudaimonists consider virtue to be *necessary* for happiness, but the Stoics go much further in claiming that it is also *sufficient* for happiness (cf. ibid 388-9, 393-7).

⁴⁸ Albeit ‘preferred’ indifferents, though what the basis for such preference may be if such things are not good is somewhat unclear (ibid: 167-8).

⁴⁹ (Ibid: 408).

⁵⁰ Virtue and happiness are “internal to the agent” – it is *doing* the right thing that counts, since it is the agent’s psyche that they are *responsible* for (ibid: 405).

⁵¹ Aristotle’s position is not as simple as the above paragraph would have it. For instance, assertions which he makes concerning luck/fortune (EE 1247b18-28) require consideration in their own right, in order to see how plausible his view of external goods is. Also, he points out that there are frequent pointless disputes concerning what happiness consists in, due to the fact that “some treat as parts of happiness what are really necessary conditions for it” (Annas 1995: 377, EE 1214b14-27). To what extent is that true or false of

that “virtue alone is complete and self-sufficient” (ibid: 392). Aristotle stated his position on external goods like this:

Everyone thinks that the happy life is pleasant, and weaves pleasure into happiness, and this is reasonable; for no activity is complete which is hindered, and happiness is complete. Hence the happy person has need of the goods of the body and external goods and luck, so as not to be impeded in these ways. Those who assert that the person broken on the wheel and falling into great misfortunes is happy, if only he is good, are, willingly or unwillingly, talking nonsense (*NE* 1153b14-25; cf. Annas, pp. 372-3).

Fundamentally, what the Stoics deny is that virtue is sought *both* for its own sake *and* for the sake of happiness, which is commonly assumed to include bodily goods, fortune and external goods. For the Stoics, virtue is both *necessary* and *sufficient* for happiness. Whilst people may initially begin by seeking their own natural advantage, reasoning perhaps in a similar manner to how Aristotle says they do, the Stoics claim that something further does (or should) happen – *oikeiosis*.⁵² To truly understand virtue and give it the correct role in one’s life means to be prepared to view *anything* which conflicts with it as having a secondary and indifferent ethical value. By this logic, only virtue is truly beneficial (Annas 1995: 266). Compared to its rivals, Stoicism makes thorough revisionary demands of our conception of happiness; ‘happiness’ can only be morally legitimate as a final end in life if it is practically synonymous with ‘virtuous conduct’. Whilst Sceptics may be content to treat conflicting accounts of a happy life as morally equivalent, and Epicureans may allow that

Aristotle’s own arguments? Annas asks “are health, friends and the like included in happiness, or are they merely what needs to be present for happiness?” (ibid).

⁵² This means ‘familiarisation’ and refers to the developmental process whereby, through starting from one’s own concern for and affinity to one’s own interests, through reason, one learns that “what matters to us as rational beings is something which is distinct in kind from these, namely the moral point of view” (Annas 1995: 392, cf. Cicero *de Fin* III). The good which a virtuous action produces, since all who are virtuous may appreciate it, is beneficial to everyone who thereby appreciates it for being virtuous since they share the moral point of view (ibid, 266). For a description of how the moral point of view is arrived at according to the Stoics, see *de Fin* III.16, 20-1. This view entails that *philia* – which held great significance for Aristotle – is ethically problematic since it is insufficiently impartial, and must be overridden by virtue.

certain desires are perfectly natural and morally acceptable though others are not, the Stoics will settle for nothing less than a complete subordination⁵³ of all desirable activities to the demands of virtue. However, something paradoxical seems to follow from this view. Assuming that an action is performed for the end which it is directed towards attaining, then to *successfully* perform that action should lead to *attaining* that end. Yet, if virtue is a *sufficient* as well as necessary component of a correct action, then where does the end itself come into the picture? Doesn't the *result* of an action affect how successful or correct the agent is or has been in performing it? On the Stoic view, a correct action is an action which is reasonable and does not conflict with matters of principle – it is not the kind of action an unjust, intemperate and unwise person would perform. But the *contingent results* of an action themselves depend upon factors which are *external* to the virtuous person's reason.⁵⁴ For a Stoic, virtue is not valuable as a means to an end, rather it is valuable *in itself* – in fact it is the only thing which has *true* value. This is the reason why natural goods, which are the objects that a virtuous action is performed to attain – and rightly so, Aristotle argues – are ethically *indifferent* for the Stoics. Whether you happen to gain the natural goods which your action was directed towards or not, as long as you acted virtuously, nothing has been truly lost by acting in that way.⁵⁵ The point which we should especially dwell on here is that, the more thorough and rigid a position about the necessity (and even sufficiency) of virtue which a eudaimonist wishes to make, the more their conception of happiness must be altered to suit the demands which virtue makes on us as agents. If a Stoic wishes to claim that we can

⁵³ What the Stoics *do not* do, however, is deny the role of happiness in a moral life. Unlike Kant, there is no attempt to banish all traces of one's 'empirical self' and its interests from ethical decisions. Rather, a Stoic 'Sage' will *identify* their own interests with those of virtue. The difference between these two positions will be clearer once Kant's position is examined in objection 1.

⁵⁴ The role of *providence* and *determinism* in Stoic philosophy, which I cannot examine here, affect the scope of human responsibility in a significant way compared to, for instance, Aristotle (cf. *Int* 18b23).

⁵⁵ If, for instance, I freely give up my time to help coach someone for an exam, but they do not pass the exam, my action will not be therefore rendered immoral. Their own abilities, the degree of impartiality which the examiner shows, and factors such as luck or nerves will help account for the pupil's success. The question arises though, if the time and effort I have volunteered has actually hindered them, then have I still acted morally in offering such help? The response here would be, 'you were not well equipped in that subject, so your offering to coach someone in it demonstrates a lack of wisdom' – so a Stoic will appeal to rationality of an act, as well as the unity of the virtues, in order to answer this point, since a Sage would not offer help they are unequipped to give.

be happy even if we are under torture or are utterly and unjustly despised by everyone around us, so long as we are virtuous and do what is right at all costs, then it is only natural for us to ask: what do you mean by the word 'happy'?

Three Objections to Eudaimonism

First Objection: Egoism

For our first objection, one major question arises concerning eudaimonism: is it selfish or egoistic to seek your own happiness as the main (final) end of your life? This problem is known as the 'egoism' or the 'self-centredness' objection and has both religious and secular exponents (following either Scotist or Kantian lines of argument). As I will be examining Scotus' arguments against eudaimonism in the third objection, I will approach this objection instead from a Kantian position as represented by John Hare. Hare identifies eudaimonism as a *single-source account of motivation* in contrast to the *double-source account* which Kant, following Scotus, adopts. Since the source of motivation for an agent to act in the prior account is their own happiness and perfection, and eudaimonism is committed to the claim that this is the correct final end for an agent, Hare argues, eudaimonism must be egoistic since the good of others is not truly valuable in itself for the eudaimonist. I will then examine Christopher Toner's response to Hare in which he argues that eudaimonism can plausibly be viewed as a non-self-centred position if it is the case that the motivation of the agent's life is that of standing in *the right relation to the good*. Finally, I will examine Julia Annas' claim that Aristotle's position can be understood in such a manner and that his concept of 'true self-love', which offers a prima facie reason for accepting Hare's argument, need not be construed in such a way either.

Hare's Argument:

Hare begins his argument by stating Immanuel Kant's definition of eudaimonism⁵⁶:

When a thoughtful human being has overcome incentives to vice and is aware of having done his often bitter duty, he finds himself in a state that could well

⁵⁶ Which, he states, may possibly be the origin of the use of the term 'eudaimonism' in normative ethics.

be called happiness, a state of contentment and peace of soul in which virtue is its own reward. – Now a *eudaimonist* says: this delight, this happiness is really his motive for acting virtuously. The concept of duty does not determine his will *directly*; he is moved to do his duty only *by means of* the happiness he anticipates. – But since he can expect this reward of virtue only from consciousness of having done his duty, it is clear that the latter must have come first, that is, he must find himself under obligation to do his duty before he thinks that happiness will result from his observance of duty and without thinking of this (*Metaphysic of Morals*, 6: 377-8).⁵⁷

In this passage, Kant acknowledges that we have incentives both to do our duty for its own sake and to pursue our own happiness, whilst rejecting either a subordination of the first to second or a construal of the second as a precondition to the first (Hare 2019: 16; cf. *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 6: 36).⁵⁸ Of these two errors, the *subordination* relation is identified by Kant as the move typical of eudaimonist theories. He rejects any attempt to reduce either happiness into duty or duty into happiness as the Stoics and Epicureans respectively did, on the grounds that such a reduction overlooks the fact that virtue and happiness are both, though rightly pursued, distinct from each other (*Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 111).⁵⁹ The main focus of Kant's objection here is to what he sees as a falsely inverted set of motives: "the eudaimonist says that the dutiful person is dutiful in order to be happy, whereas actually, Kant says, the dutiful person is happy because he is dutiful" (Hare 2019: 16). Kant does not object to desire to be happy per se – actions undertaken with such a motive are understood in terms of "the order of nature" (*Metaphysic of Morals*, 6: 378).⁶⁰ The 'order of nature' is to be distinguished, in Kant's view, from the *moral order*, which delineates those types of actions which are to be taken in accordance with "the principle of the freedom of internal lawgiving" (Hare 2019: 17). This principle is understood

⁵⁷ See: (Kant 1996a: 510-1).

⁵⁸ See: (Kant 1996b: 83).

⁵⁹ See: (Kant 1996a: 229).

⁶⁰ See: (ibid: 511).

by Kant as one that is wholly distinct from any principle of activity that is governed in accordance with *desire*.⁶¹ At this point, Hare does concede that Kant's dichotomy between the 'pathological love' and 'practical love' which constitute these distinct motives for action is too strict, and would be applicable only if the conception of happiness with which we are concerned referred to experienced pleasure as opposed to the 'classical conception of happiness' which eudaimonists advocate (ibid; cf. Porter 2019: 35). Nevertheless, Hare states that there is still a distinction between goods which are *self-indexed* and goods which are not – e.g. the greatest good for the greatest number and God's glory (ibid). This distinction has significant implications for ethics if we distinguish human motivations in accordance to it, as Scotus does with his theory of the will.⁶² On this theory, there are two types of motivation which a human agent can act in accordance to: the affection for advantage and the affection for justice – in the case of the latter, Scotus argues that we can love God for his own sake, without consideration of our own salvation (*Ordinatio* II, d.6, q.2).⁶³ The affection for justice is, on Scotus' account, that which distinguishes free agents from natural agents, the latter of which can only act for the sake of ends which their natural desires determine for them (Hare 2019: 18). A significant corollary of this view is that morally cannot be deduced from human nature. In other words, there is a distinction between *facts* and *values* as far as ethics is concerned. If we grant this distinction, then the source of obligation for an agent's acts cannot be identified with the *fact* that the act in question would lead to the consequent attainment of an end that is *natural* to the agent.⁶⁴ Rather, whether or not a moral act happens to lead to the attainment of a good that is natural to the agent is of merely secondary importance in comparison to that which makes the act itself moral – which on this account is whether it is in accordance with *God's will* or *the moral law*. In Kant's view,

⁶¹ Kant's theory, in other words, stands apart from the empiricists such as Hobbes or Hume, who explain human motivations in terms of desire. For more on the relation between Kant's moral theory and Hume's account of the passions, see: (Guyer 2008: 161-97).

⁶² I will examine that theory in more detail when examining Scotus' own position on eudaimonism in the third objection below.

⁶³ See: (Williams 2017: 109-22).

⁶⁴ As I will discuss later on, the *source* of moral obligation which Scotus identifies instead will be *God's will*. That is why his theory is 'voluntarist'.

to identify your ‘chief interest’ as becoming a better person means to become the sort of person who cares most not about yourself but about others (*Critique of Practical Reason*, 5: 83).⁶⁵ You can reach what is good only by *transcending* yourself, not by remaining bound to it (Hare 2019: 20). To perform actions with an affection or motivation that is *self-indexed* or *self-regarding* is perfectly natural for an agent; yet it provides an inferior ground for action in comparison to the affection or motivation for justice, which is *non-self-indexed* or *other-regarding* by nature, and is the mark of a truly free human act. To perform actions of the latter type for the sake of happiness would be to subordinate one’s affection for justice to one’s affection for advantage and would therefore entail that the agent is doing the right thing for the wrong reason. In short, eudaimonism is a problematically self-regarding (or ‘egoistic’) theory, which cannot give an account of *right actions* that respects their other-directed nature.⁶⁶

Toner’s Response:

To begin with, Toner claims that Hare’s argument depends upon two theses:

S1 – Eudaimonism recognises the claim of others based on *affinity* or *similarity*, not as *other*.

S2 – The agent’s concern for the other’s happiness is incorporated through *prior concern for their own happiness* (Toner 2006: 603; cf. Hare 2000: 37-8).

Eudaimonism is problematic for Hare, according to **S1**, because the moral concern which the agent starts from is directed towards their self as the centre and is subsequently extended to others as they are related to that self (ibid). Even if later eudaimonists extended Aristotle’s

⁶⁵ See: (Kant 1996a: 207).

⁶⁶ Whether or not Stoicism plausibly escapes this criticism is an interesting question. Stoicism certainly does place a superordinate value on virtue itself, defining happiness in terms which respect the *absolute* demand which the virtues place on an agent. Yet, the pursuit of happiness is not ruled out in the process. If a Kantian were to argue against the Stoic on this point, it would be requisite for them to argue *against* the Stoic’s identification of virtue with happiness, not simply to assume that they are distinct *and* claim thereafter that the agent is simultaneously inclined towards both. The Stoic could claim that the agent who is motivated *both* to do what they want *and* what they should simultaneously is not yet fully rational.

sphere of concern further than fellow aristocratic males to include women, manual workers or foreigners, for instance, the starting point is still the same and the others are still viewed as 'other selves' to the agent. This makes the concern for others conditional on their relation to the original agent. According to **S2**, the agent may be concerned for the other's happiness, yet that is done by making their happiness partly constitutive of the agent's own happiness and, therefore, by making the other's happiness *secondary* to their happiness which forms their prior concern. Again, the happiness of the other is sought after on the condition that it is constitutive of their own happiness. Both **S1** and **S2** indicate that eudaimonism has an underlying *conditionality* built into its premises regarding other concern. From these theses, it follows that:

SC – Nothing is loved truly for its own sake, except the agent (ibid: 605).

To begin with, Toner argues that Hare does not correctly distinguish between excellence and welfare (ibid). According to Toner, *excellence-prior* and *welfare-prior* eudaimonism are distinguishable on the ground that, if a moral theory is self-regarding due to the *excellence* of the agent playing a key role in determining the normative content of the theory, then the *self* which the agent aspires to realise will be morally *excellent*. This allows eudaimonism to approve the inherent praiseworthiness of the actions of an excellent agent, without implying that their self-development is selfish in motivation. If the *welfare* of the agent is substituted for excellence in the theory, then the charge of egoism will successfully apply, since the agent's moral motivation is substantially *self-directed* – an error which classical utilitarianism, for instance, suffers from. Can Toner accept **S1** and **S2** in some form and yet demonstrate that **SC** does not follow? Toner claims that he can defend both Aquinas and Aristotle from Hare's criticism, so I will begin by examining his defence of Aquinas, moving onward to his defence of Aristotle, whose position seems more problematic on this point.

Beginning with Aquinas, then, Toner cites the *Summa Theologica* in which Aquinas argues that rational beings love God more than themselves, since “God is the universal good” under which good the good of all creatures is comprised, from which it follows “that from natural love angel and man alike love God before themselves and with a greater love” (*ST* I. 60. 5). This way of interpreting the natural good of rational agents, which will be further examined later on, is described by MacDonald as the ‘participation’ or ‘creation’ approach.⁶⁷ On this view, our true good is not radically distinct from God or the good of others, since the good of all created beings are *parts* of the good as whole⁶⁸. As Aquinas puts it:

Now it is evident that all who are included in a community, stand in relation to that community as parts to a whole; while a part, as such, belongs to a whole, so that whatever is the good of a part can be directed to the good of the whole. It follows therefore that the good of any virtue, whether such virtue direct man in relation to himself, or in relation to certain other individual persons, is referable to the common good, to which justice directs: so that all acts of virtue can pertain to justice, in so far as it directs man to the common good (*ST* II-II. 58. 5).

For Aquinas, **S1** is not problematic since the kind of similarity or affinity which justice demands of us is that we treat others as rational moral agents *like* ourselves. Were we to treat other agents as similar to us on the basis of *immorality*, then the common good would be violated anyway – but that is to be expected, since only an agent who has not developed the virtues would be attracted towards immorality in any case. So **S1** can be interpreted in a way which does not undermine eudaimonism. What about **S2**? If Toner is right that we should interpret ‘happiness’ in *excellence-prior* rather than *welfare-prior* terms, then **S2** is not problematic for Aquinas either. For Aquinas, the common good of all people which constitutes their happiness is God; their excellence as agents, to which the proper acts of moral virtues are directed, is what leads them to be happy; so, as long as our love for our

⁶⁷ For more on this notion, see objection 3.

⁶⁸ ‘Summum bonum’ in Latin.

neighbours is rooted in a love of God, then both our and their happiness can be identified with each other: “it is specifically the same act whereby we love God, and whereby we love our neighbour” (*ST II-II. 25. 1*). Our own ‘prior concern for our own happiness’ which **S2** refers to can be understood simply as the natural desire of our souls for God in whom we have our hope: “every human act is good, which attains reason or God Himself... by means of Divine assistance, our hope attains God himself, on Whose help it leans. It is evident therefore that hope is a virtue, since it causes a human act to be good and to attain its due rule” (*ST II-II. 17. 1*). For Aquinas, it matters a great deal that we correctly identify God as being our ultimate happiness, since we thereby may know the final end of human activity, thus ruling out the mistaken pursuit of merely ‘worldly goods’ as being self-sufficient. But also, though a human agent may begin their moral adventure as a selfish person, they are not *stuck there*. The *infused virtues* play a key role in this regard. Our natural desire for happiness will be frustrated without hope, due to the inhibiting effect of sin and fear of punishment for it. But, as our sin is pardoned, we are “led to love God”, meaning that “hope leads to charity” as man “is encouraged to love God and obey His commandments”⁶⁹ (*ST II-II. 17. 8*). Obviously, a lot of what Aquinas argues for in this context would require a large excursion into theology, yet the key point is that **SC** does not necessarily follow as Hare argues it does. Assuming that we interpret **S1** in terms of an affinity between the agent and the other which is morally just, such as their shared rationality and dignity as a human, and that we interpret **S2** not in terms of individual welfare, but in terms of moral excellence and Divinely-infused hope and charity, then **SC** is in fact false. The *conditionality* which Hare refers to should not be seen as a reductive relation between two terms A and B, such that the pursuit of B depends upon a prior pursuit of A, from which it is inferred that the pursuit of B is reducible⁷⁰ to the pursuit of A. Rather, for Aquinas the relation between the two pursuits is that of an *order of precedence*. Where generation and matter are concerned “the imperfect

⁶⁹ Cf. “This commandment we have from God, that he, who loveth God, love also his brother” (1 John 4:21) cited at (*ST II-II. 25. 1*).

⁷⁰ NB. For Aquinas, the ‘hierarchical and complete’ assumptions which govern modern ethical theories do not apply. So, a reductive relation between relata A and B is *not* an assumed factor of Aquinas’ theory.

precedes the perfect”, whilst as far as perfection and form are concerned “the perfect naturally precedes the imperfect” (*ST II-II. 17. 8*). Our love for God and our neighbours (which constitute the ultimate and proximate ends of our happiness), on this view, exhibit an order of generation from imperfect to perfect as we extend our concern from ourselves to others. They exhibit, however, an order of perfection which goes from perfect to imperfect as they *inform* our material acts with love and perfect the hope we have in our friends and, ultimately, in the salvation of our souls as well. A and B are related, therefore, but neither is subsumed within the other such that one is reducible into the other.

Toner also argues that a non-egoistic reading of Aristotle may be defended, though his theory is *prima facie* self-centred on some level (2006: 609). Aristotle may also be interpreted in *excellence-prior* terms, such as when he argues that:

Since every sense is active in relation to its object, and a sense which is in good condition acts perfectly in relation to the most beautiful of its objects... it follows that in the case of each sense the best activity is that of the best-conditioned organ in relation to the finest of its objects. And this activity will be the most complete and pleasant (*NE 1174b15-20*).⁷¹

Whilst the ‘And this activity...’ clause at the end can lead us to infer that Aristotle’s theory is a form of hedonistic egoism in disguise – that his theory is in fact *welfare-prior* – Toner argues that the real point of what Aristotle is saying here is that *eudaimonia*⁷² is about standing in the “right relation to the good” (2006: 609). Aristotle is not praising the subjective

⁷¹ Incidentally, Aristotle goes on to argue that pleasure completes such activity as he is referring to, but not “by its immanence, but as an end which supervenes as the bloom of youth does on those in the flower of their age”. What motivational role such ‘supervenient’ pleasure is meant to play or not play is not clear, since pleasure itself is not a reliable (complete, self-sufficient, etc.) end of activity, but it does in a sense ‘complete’ the activity which it ‘attends’ (*NE 1174b32-4, 1175a20*).

⁷² Put simply, ‘*eudaimonia*’ should be understood less as ‘happiness’, which sounds implicitly too individually self-regarding, rather it should be understood as ‘the good life’. It is more about living ‘properly’ than ‘enjoyably’.

faculties of the agent in question for being in good condition, as if the condition of the agent and their organ(s) were that which is 'most beautiful' or 'finest'. Rather, he is pointing out that the agent and their organ(s) can be attributed with being in 'the best condition' only where they *relate to* the finest or most beautiful objects. The conditionality works the opposite way around than Hare claims, since it is the very beauty or fineness of the sought-after objects that the agent aims for which determines their own condition, as well as the pleasure which supervenes on such activity. Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of superiority: "there is the way in which medical science is superior, and the way in which health is superior; the latter is the *raison d'être* of the former" (*EE* 1249b10-2; cf. 1238b18). As Toner argues, eudaimonia is determined by features of both the *relata* (agent and activity), many of which are independent of the agent (*ibid*). Aristotle, it should be remembered, may be a eudaimonist interested in the individual's pursuit of happiness, but he is also a celebrator of the 'polis' and of the social virtues of human being, who he defines as a 'political animal' (*NE* 1.7, X.7; cf. *Pol* 1253a). The nature of a rational agent on a non-self-centred theory "does involve the capacity and tendency to possess and enjoy, and to express their self and pursue ambitions; but also to respect, to honour, to love and to serve" (Toner 2006: 612). On this view, "standing in the right relation to the good means [sometimes] standing aside" (*ibid*: 611). One's attachment to others is not secondary, rather it is "of the essence of flourishing" (*ibid*: 613). In short, this view is neither predominantly altruistic or egoistic, it is in fact 'activity-centred' since it is the virtuous pursuit of objects in accordance with their goodness (*ibid*: 615).

One passage of Aristotle's thought, on Toner's own admission, does offer *prima facie* support for Hare and for Kant. Let us recall Hare's point that, in Kant's view, to identify your 'chief interest' as becoming a better person means to become the sort of person who cares most not about yourself but about others (1996a: 207). In the *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.8, Aristotle presents an analysis of 'true self-love', which is not identified as a form of

wickedness and treated therefore as “an epithet of disgrace” (1168a30). A good man *should* be a “lover of self”, Aristotle asserts – or, a *good man* should be a lover of self – since “he will both himself profit by doing noble acts, and will benefit his fellows” (1169a12-3). For a good man’s actions, unlike a wicked man’s, will not “clash with what he ought to do... for reason in each of its possessors chooses what is best for itself, and the good man obeys his reason” (1169a17-8). Further, a good man would willingly “throw away both wealth and honours and in general the goods that are objects of competition, gaining for himself nobility” – the choice of ‘nobility’ is to be chosen “above all else” (1169a21-2, a32). In conclusion, Aristotle remarks that “in all actions, therefore, that men are praised for, the good man is seen to assign to himself the greater share in what is noble – in this sense... a man should be a lover of self” (1169a34-b3). How should this passage be interpreted? Does it not reveal, as Kant said all along, the selfishness hidden behind the purported claim to be virtuous which a eudaimonist is truly committed to? Julia Annas argues that we should not rush to this conclusion. In this particular passage (concerning friendship), Aristotle “is not concerned to demonstrate that concern for others for their own sake is possible... that he simply takes for granted” (1995: 249). Aristotle states elsewhere what he takes to be our normal view of concern for others, which is presupposed by any two friends:

A friend (‘philos’) is someone who loves (‘philon’) and is loved in return, and those that think that this is how they relate to each other think that they are friends; granted this, it is necessary that someone is a friend if he shares someone else’s pleasure in good things and pain in distressing things, for that person’s sake and not for any other reason” (*Rhet* 1380b36-1a5).

This is reiterated in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: “to a friend we say we ought to wish what is good for his sake” (1155b31-2). Aristotle, then, does accept that we can and *should* demonstrate concern for others for their own sakes – though it is not something extended to a wide range of others – and his account of the three kinds of friendship is developed in order to argue that “the best or perfect kind of friendship is one in which each person is

friends with the other because of that person's goodness, specifically his good character" (Annas 1995: 249-50). The inferior kinds of friendship – friendship of 'utility' and friendship of 'pleasure' – are both candidates for criticism in Hare's terms, since the other in each case is not loved "for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other... what is good *for themselves*... [or] pleasant *to themselves*" (1156a12-15).⁷³ Annas argues that, for eudaimonists like Aristotle or even the Stoics, whilst our moral character may have "been developed in a specific social context", this does not preclude that, when developed, such character can "recognise the force of unrestricted other-concern" (1995: 251). So, for Aristotle (or the Stoics), whilst we may begin with a negative form of self-love characterised by the pursuit of wealth, honour, status, etc., the *point* of reflecting on our final end just is to realise the role of reason and virtue for living a good life, which leads us to see the value and status of other agents in order to develop positive *dispositions* towards them, and thereby have the correct motivation to act on their behalf, not simply our own (ibid). Annas also argues, on behalf of Aristotle against the Stoics⁷⁴, that, as far as for political activity is concerned, for instance, it is vital to have at least some degree of *partiality* in one's concern for others, as "human life is made up of activities, and a context of shared and joint activities enables people to achieve a level of... ethical activity which would otherwise be beyond their reach" (ibid: 252). In conclusion, Annas argues that Aristotle's conception of 'self-love' should not be understood as the "agent's immediate aim" for the sake of which they perform good actions, but should be seen as "an expression of their love for the life of actively virtuous practical reasoning, which is what they most deeply feel their self to be and [wish] to be identified with" (ibid: 260).

⁷³ It is debated whether all three forms of friendship really do involve 'disinterested concern' nonetheless. See: (Cooper 1980 & Price 1989 chap. 5) for more on this issue.

⁷⁴ For the Stoics, a more radical form of other-concern *at the expense* of what is 'local' is demanded – the theory of 'cosmopolitanism' as it is called. However, this outlook can only be reached by means of *oikeiosis*, that is 'familiarisation', where we develop an increasing sense of *affinity* with the whole world, not just with our local 'polis'. The dispute between the Stoics and Aristotelians on this point is complex; see: (Annas 1995: 262-90). Annas herself sees the difficulty of deciding between the two positions, for both are strongly plausible in one way or another – Cicero, for instance, demonstrated a wavering approval of one and then the other position (ibid: 442, 452).

So then, I argue that **SC** does not follow for either Aristotle or Aquinas. The arguments from the latter are more thoroughly developed in terms of other-concern and say a greater deal about the relationship between the agent and virtue, accounting for, in fact, a broader range of virtues available to the agent. This will not be viewed as a strength for forms of eudaimonism which are ontologically *naturalistic*, since the concept of an ‘infused virtue’ is essentially theological. However that may be, I argue that eudaimonism is *not* fatally egoistic or self-concerned. In fact, eudaimonism in my view offers a more plausible normative ethical position than deontology since it presents a realistic *means* by which agents can come to value others, by identifying with them as being *similar* to one’s self, rather than simply doing what ‘the rules tell you to do’.⁷⁵

Second Objection: Idealism

According to this objection, which I shall describe as the problem of ‘idealism’, eudaimonism is too idealistic since it does not present a plausible *realistic* description of the sphere of human ethics. In examining this claim, I will focus especially on Thomas Hobbes, whose rejection of Aristotelian and Scholastic philosophy was hugely influential for modern thought.⁷⁶ I will examine David Gauthier’s defence of Hobbes as providing a viable moral theory which actually accounts for the *reality* of human nature. Then I will examine Jean Hampton’s argument that an ethical naturalism of the kind offered by Hobbes – a ‘no-nonsense’ moral theory, as she terms it – cannot escape the charge of irrationality. Finally, I will examine Julia Annas’ argument that the Hellenistic ethical theories are naturalistic in so far as they argue on the basis of facts about human nature, but are not naturalistic in the

⁷⁵ Deontologists, inevitably, will object to this last comment as being simplistic and unfair, but I argue that the burden of proof is on them to show *how* an agent can be/become motivated to follow the rules, assuming that they are in place.

⁷⁶ For the historical influence of Hobbes on modernity, see: (Gillespie 2008 chap. 7 & Pfau 2015 III.8).

sense in which ethics can be deduced⁷⁷ from non-ethical natural facts. I will conclude by arguing that, since the idea of nature plays an essential normative and descriptive role in eudaimonist theories, questions relating to the reliability of Ancient Greek descriptive knowledge of human nature cannot be avoided by detaching questions of ethics from natural philosophy. However, I will argue that the relationship works both ways, and any attempt to present a 'scientific ethics' which dispenses with what positive moral knowledge we do have is misguided. As Hobbes' anti-idealist strategy does just this, I argue that it fails.

Hobbes' Position:

There are several key claims underlying Thomas Hobbes' position, which I will outline before presenting the arguments for or against his position. Firstly, he adopted a *mechanistic* conception of the natural world, according to which human actions can be understood reductively in terms of motion⁷⁸:

Life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principle part within; why may we not say, that all *automata*... have an artificial life? For what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints, but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body (*Leviathan*, introduction).

Secondly, he rejected the idea of *final causes*, which he claimed were really *efficient causes* that were misinterpreted (Peters 1967: 133). This is hugely significant for the concept of 'happiness', which constitutes our final end for eudaimonism:

Continual success in obtaining those things which a man from time to time desireth, that is to say, continual prospering, is that men call *felicity* (happiness); I

⁷⁷ As I stated earlier, Annas strongly opposes the alleged necessity of a 'hierarchical and complete' ethical theory.

⁷⁸ Cf. (Peters 1967: 87).

mean felicity of this life. For there is no such thing as perpetual tranquillity of mind, while we live here; because life itself is but motion, and we can never be without desire, nor without fear, no more than without sense (*Leviathan*, 1.6).

Our 'motivations' for or against objects – desires and aversions – are occasioned by *endeavours* which are located in the muscles or 'vital spirits' of the agent (Peters 1967: 129). They operate within sense and the will and provide the link between mechanics and ethics (ibid: 84-5).

Thirdly, he denied the existence of *universals in re*⁷⁹. Hobbes' view of universals, like Ockham's, was *nominalist* or *conceptualist*.⁸⁰ A universal concept is not a name for a *thing* qua member of a group, as realists assert, rather it is a sign which refers to our *cognitions* employed for the sake of reasoning about things, without any extra-mental reality (ibid: 115, 117). The act of reasoning requires words which are used as signs for the objects they point to, but the attribution⁸¹ of any particular sign to any particular object is *arbitrary* (ibid). In Hobbes' words:

Of names, some are *proper*, and singular to one only thing, as Peter, John, this man, this tree; and some are *common* to many things, man, horse, tree; every of which, though but one name, is nevertheless the name of divers particular things; in respect of which... it is called an *universal*... One universal name is imposed on many things, for their similitude in some quality, or other accident (*Leviathan*, 1.4; cf. 4.46).

⁷⁹ Universals in re ('in things') are the *inherent natures* which entities have in common with each other, or 'common natures'. So, for Socrates and Plato to both be human would mean that they both have a 'human nature' alongside their identity as Socrates or Plato. This view is associated with Aristotle and some of the Medieval Scholastics.

⁸⁰ The distinction between these terms is not essential here.

⁸¹ But is the act of *attribution* of a sign to an object arbitrary? If so, how can nominalists *validly* argue with words? See: (Feser 2014; esp. chapter 4).

Fourthly and finally, Hobbes held a *subjectivist* view of ethical judgement. Beginning with a distinction between ‘prudence’ and ‘sapience’, Hobbes maintained that prudence (‘phronesis’) is based upon experience and necessarily *uncertain*: signs of prudence are all uncertain; because to observe by experience, and remember all circumstances that may alter the success is impossible” (*Leviathan* 1.5). If our ethical understanding cannot yield certain knowledge, as we can obtain rather through deductive science, it follows, Hobbes claims, that:

In any business, whereof a man has not infallible science to proceed by; to forsake his own natural judgement, and be guided by sentences read in authors, and subject to many exceptions, is a sign of folly” (ibid; cf. 4.46).

From each of these points taken together, Hobbes arrives at a definition of *good* and *evil* which is ‘no-nonsense’⁸² and relies upon no dubious metaphysics whatsoever:

Whatsoever is the object of any man’s appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth *good*; and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*... these words good [&] evil... are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves (*Leviathan* 1.6).

An agent has an appetite or desire (a *passive* internal motion, on the mechanistic view), which moves them toward an object which is their end (in efficient causal terms, not final), which, due to the fact the agent has a *desire for* rather than *aversion to*, is named (i.e. arbitrarily categorised) good or evil by the agent (based on the *subject who judges it*, not the (supposedly) real *inherent nature of the object*), and is thereafter pursued.

⁸² Cf. Hampton 1992: 333.

Such is the basic structure of a human action according to Hobbes. If true, it puts into question several key features of human nature, or nature overall, without which a eudaimonist theory would have a hard time being defended. These include: *rational desires/dispositions, final ends, phronesis (practical wisdom), objective good and evil*. I will examine the consequences following from denying these further on, but for now we must turn to Gauthier's defence of Hobbes.

Gauthier's Defence:

Hobbes' theory is *realistic*, according to Gauthier, because it accepts three truisms which economists take for granted:

H1 – Value is utility.

As Hobbes puts it: "whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth *good*; and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*" (*Leviathan* 1.6).

H2 – Rationality is maximization:

Hobbes identifies what is 'against reason' with what is "against... benefit" (*Leviathan* 1.15).

Gauthier states that "the measure of the reasonableness of an action is the extent to which it conduces to the agent's ends; what is this but the maximizing conception of rationality?" (1979: 549).

H3 – Interests are 'non-tuistic'⁸³:

⁸³ This term was originated by the marginalist economist Philip H. Wicksteed, who distinguished non-tuistic from egoistic motives, arguing that business relationships should not be interpreted in terms of altruism or egoism, but as a form of mutual self-empowerment which can allow people to benefit from relationships with others that are impersonal. See: (Wicksteed 1933: 175-81).

An agent must take account of the interests of other people qua agents, and he must “accommodate their interests to attain his own”, but the other people’s interests per se do not specifically concern him. If other people stand in one’s way, Hobbes argues, they are considered therefore as enemies (cf. *Leviathan* 1.13).

The *natural* condition of men’s lives is, therefore, for Hobbes, a state of “war... of every man, against every man” which consequently entails that “nothing can be unjust; the notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place... Force, and fraud, are in war the two cardinal virtues” (ibid). Justice and injustice are “faculties neither of the body, nor mind [for] if they were, they might be in a man that were alone in the world... [rather,] they are qualities, that relate to men in society, not in solitude” (ibid). Justice can be maintained, Hobbes argues, but not on the basis of ‘natural’ traits of individuals qua individual. The necessity of a sovereign whose *will* is the determining factor in a polity is asserted by Hobbes as the means “of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war, which is necessarily consequent... to the natural passions of men, when there is no visible power to keep them in awe”; as he colourfully puts it: “covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all” (*Leviathan* 2.18). If Hobbes’ thesis concerning the ‘state of nature’ is correct, then his theory of governance in book 2 of the *Leviathan* offers us a *contractarian* theory of how to establish a commonwealth in which legality and social stability are the product of a voluntary consent by potential citizens to the authority of their sovereign, to which they are united by the fear of death to begin with, or fear of punishment once they have consented to live in society. As Gauthier points out, for Hobbes, the fear of death is not an irrational fear since the desire for self-preservation is “neither absurd nor reprehensible, neither against the dictates of true reason” (*de Cive* 1.7). Hobbes asserts that “what is right is what accords with reason, and the connection between right and reason is found in the crucial conception of *right reason*... in the natural condition of mankind, each man must take his own reason for right reason” (Gauthier 1979: 550). For Hobbes, “my right of nature constitutes a license for me... it determines what I *may* do... the right of nature is

an unlimited permission, a blank check” (ibid). There is no notion of ‘duty’ that nature provides for an agent; since “there are no *moral* distinctions within the state of nature”, it can only be within *society* that an agent’s right is in any way limited in moral terms (ibid). If self-preservation is the primary underlying motive shared by all mankind which is simultaneously a *rational* motive, yet all other human motives displayed within their lives – assuming that their lives are safeguarded – are by no means necessarily moral but lead to chaos and strife, then we must arrive at peace in some other manner. Morality as Hobbes understands it is “neither individual nor natural, but mutual and conventional” (ibid: 552). The term conventional may be understood either in descriptive or normative terms, Gauthier argues, in which case Hobbes’ notion of convention is *normative* (ibid). Morality is, in other words, “a uniquely dominant set of conventions, or regularities of behaviour, for men who, seeking their own preservation, must seek peace” (ibid: 552-3). Peace is a “common instrumental good” valued as a means to achieve any other good men wish for (ibid).⁸⁴ For Gauthier, the key point to note about Hobbes theory is that, however minimal its starting points may be, the possibility of morality can be demonstrated whilst accepting the “three dogmas of the economists” – the subjective instrumental desire for peace (**H1**), based on the natural fear of death, offers a rational and maximising criterion (**H2**) for decision making that can be conventionally agreed to and followed by all citizens alike, whereby the interests of other agents are accommodated into their own (**H3**) (ibid: 559). Gauthier remarks that, of these three dogmas, the third (**H3**) may be relaxed to some degree in order to prevent an overly economic conception of human life as a whole, but the kinds of sympathies which he has in mind are not based on “a fictitious universal sympathy, but real particular sympathies (ibid). What Hobbes does show us, however, is that even *impersonal* relations, such as exist within the marketplace, can be accommodated by a conventionalist ‘realistic’ theory such as he offers us. What he also shows us is how to provide a moral theory which makes no

⁸⁴ Due to lack of space I omit discussion of Gauthier’s argument concerning ‘Hobbes’ Foole’ who denies that there is such a thing as justice on pp. 553-8. The ‘motivation problem’ generated by Hobbes’ view of reason can be avoided if we deny his contention that humans are *solely* selfish and concerned to preserve their own interest, without any genuine concern for others that is reducible to self-concern.

reference to ‘final ends’, ‘objective good’, ‘phronesis’, or any of the other ‘queer entities’ handed down by the Greeks which are ruled out on ontological grounds.⁸⁵

Hampton’s Reply:

As we have seen, Hobbes’ position is a form of ethical *naturalism*, which provides reductive explanations of typically ‘moral’ phenomena in terms of naturally perceivable natural entities or states of entities. For instance, Hobbes denies the existence of “any *summum bonum*, the prescriptive entity that his academic contemporaries were most likely to embrace”, providing instead a “‘science’ of moral philosophy that he viewed as the equal of scientific theories in the physical sciences advanced by Galileo, Kepler and Harvey” (Hampton 1992: 333). His theory was intended, in Hampton’s words, to be a ‘no-nonsense theory’ which refuses any appeal to “queer objects” or any attribution of “strange powers to human reason”, which can be harmonised with “a physicalist metaphysics” (ibid). Hampton’s contention, on the other hand, is that Hobbes indeed *does* covertly import “the very metaphysical nonsense it claims to eschew” (ibid).

To begin with, the way in which we understand the world, according to Hobbes, is by the *proper* use of reason (ibid: 334). It is true as Gauthier argues that Hobbes’ understanding of reason is that it is employed for the purposes of maximization of benefit to its user – aka, it is *instrumental* (H2). Mental activity is undertaken for “some desire or design”, as Hobbes puts it (*Leviathan* 1.3). However, Hobbes distinguishes between true reasoning and prudence, the latter being demonstrated, for example, by a man “endued with an excellent use and dexterity in in handling his arms”, whilst the former is demonstrated by a man who has “added to that dexterity, an acquired science” – the beliefs of prudence are limited to

⁸⁵ For more on the ‘argument from queerness’ which rejects moral theories that posit entities which are “too far-fetched to be taken seriously”, see: (Mackie 1977: 38; Joyce 2015).

experience and are not reliable, unlike true reasoning which is generally reliable (*Leviathan* 1.5). For Hobbes, true reasoning in this sense is characterised by conclusions which are *logically necessary* (Hampton 1992: 334). Hampton argues that Hobbes does not eliminate *normative* claims from his position, thus rendering his theory “little more than an anthropological study”; on the contrary, Hobbes claims that “all men agree on this, that Peace is good” (ibid: 336; *Leviathan* 1.15). This type of good is a ‘common good’: it is possible to “talk of a good for everyone, like health: but this way of speaking is relative” (*De homine* 11.4).⁸⁶ Peace is in fact a ‘real’ common good, as it leads to the furtherance of what people truly want – their self-preservation (Hampton 1992: 336). The laws of nature and “co-operative forms of behaviour” are *causally* linked “because these forms of behaviour effect peace and peace in turn helps to effect longer life” (ibid: 337). So, for Hobbes, “moral imperatives are certain cause-and-effect statements connected with appeals to certain kinds⁸⁷ of desire” – which is what (**H1**) affirms (ibid).

As a moral *science*, if Hobbes seeks to provide a “naturalistic explanation of norms”, the success of his theory will depend on the success of such explanations (ibid). Hampton defines norms in the following manner:

A norm is something that is taken to have authority over our decision-making in the sense that it gives us a reason to act, choose, or believe as the norm directs, no matter what other reason or motives we have, where this reason is supposed to be decisive in some circumstances (ibid; this is denoted **HN** hereafter).

For Hobbes, as Gauthier has shown us, the condition of war and death which is imposed by the ‘state of nature’ is a conditioned *to be feared*, which meets the three ‘economist’s criteria’ mentioned below. The unifying nature of such a fear is subjectively grounded in an agent’s

⁸⁶ See: (Hobbes 1991: 47).

⁸⁷ There is insufficient room here to pursue further Hobbes’ analysis of different kinds of pleasure and goodness. See: (Olsthoorn 2020).

desire (**H1**), and is both maximizable (**H2**) and ‘non-tuistic’ (**H3**), since it is based on a common evil which must be avoided in *all* cases in which an agent would pursue their own goods, irrespective of whether they are a friend or an enemy. This ‘common evil’ which all agents wish to avoid *is* understood by Hobbes as authoritative – it does not negate **HN**. But this leads to a dilemma for Hobbes: either such a common evil does exist, or it does not; if it does not exist, then whence comes the authority which his political theory presupposes? – and if it does exist, just how ‘subjective’ is such a desire? If we recall the presuppositions of Hobbes’ philosophy as a whole, he denied the existence of *universals in re* – a major part of his rejection of Scholastic Aristotelianism and a key reason for denying the ‘summum bonum’ or common good which eudaimonists assert. On what grounds can a nominalist like Hobbes assert that the fear of death is an evil that is *commonly* feared by all – any such characteristic posited as a state of mind or disposition common to all agents cannot be a real feature of their natures – it is a *social construct* instead (ibid). This answer can be and is accepted by some ethical naturalists such as Mackie who is more consistent on this point – ethical ‘entities’ are not objects recognised by physical science, so they are in fact “non-existent entities” – to which an ‘error theory’ of normative discourse must be the correct response (ibid; cf. Mackie 1977). For an ethical theory to be *eliminative* in this manner would entail the abolition of moral terminology – concepts such as ‘virtue’, ‘vice’, ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ would be removed rather than reinterpreted. However, Hobbes in fact “accepts the standard definition and authority of the traditional virtues”, and his “nineteen laws of nature are really norms of cooperative behaviour and individual human excellence” (ibid: 338). If Hobbes does accept **HN**, avoiding the first horn of the dilemma concerning the actual existence of moral authority of some kind, then what about the second horn: the *subjectivity* of desire? Let us recall the first of Gauthier’s economic theses:

H1 – Value is utility.

As Hobbes puts it: “whatsoever is the object of any man’s appetite or desire, that is it which he for his part calleth *good*; and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*” (*Leviathan* 1.6).

Hampton argues that from this thesis it is incoherent for a subjectivist to say “that the effective pursuit of any good defined by desire is contrary to reason”⁸⁸ (ibid: 339). As she puts it: “a true subjectivist is barred from attributing to reason a goal that is taken to be objectively valuable and which can be opposed to the goals of desire” (ibid). For Hobbes to derive the normativity of moral imperatives from non-normative ‘ingredients’, he cannot arbitrarily accept or reject some of these ingredients as being to be pursued or not pursued, otherwise he either puts **H1** in jeopardy since *anything* that an agent desires could provide adequate grounds for normativity. Any desires whatsoever, however much they may be spoken of – at least by those employing ‘folk psychology’ or ‘ordinary language’ – as being ‘healthy’, ‘sick’, ‘normal’ or ‘abnormal’, would be equally normative on the basis of Hobbes’ ontology, since no non-subjective ‘good’ can validly determine as correct the action of a given agent (ibid: 346). In conclusion, Hampton argues that Hobbes’ theory begs the question, since the very ‘metaphysical non-sense’ which he claims to dispense with is in fact assumed by his theory, without which the normative authority which he claims for it would not hold (ibid. 339). If Hobbes wanted to actually and thoroughly dispense with metaphysics and provide a ‘no-nonsense theory’, he would have to accept a complete revision of his theory of *reason* wherein *no* unselfish motives whatsoever could be appealed to on any level of the theory. But since he retains a great deal of the terminology of Aristotelian virtue ethics, and concepts of natural law and right reason, his theory is inconsistent with its own anti-metaphysical premises. Ethics cannot be reduced to a ‘science’ as Hobbes understands it.

Annas’ Counter-argument:

According to Julia Annas, the Hellenistic schools of ethics do not represent different forms of ‘ethical naturalism’ as that is understood in contemporary metaethics (1995: 135). For one thing, the ancients did not separate ‘normative’ and ‘meta’-ethics from each other, but

⁸⁸ Cf. Hume: “’Tis as little contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my little finger...” (*Treatise*, II. iii. iii).

provided arguments concerning all aspects of ethics alongside each other, without any presupposed reductive relation between theses from one domain to the other. The Greek word *nature* ('physis') referred simply to 'what there is', as opposed to, for example 'the ensemble or aggregate of powers and properties' which empiricists such as Mill adopted (ibid: 137). A common objection to Greco-Roman theories which can be found in Hobbes⁸⁹ or Sidgwick⁹⁰ for instance is that, if 'nature' means 'the natural world', then, since everything which we observably do is 'natural', we have not got a principled way of distinguishing between natural and 'unnatural' impulses (ibid). This objection, however, presupposes a solely *descriptive* account of what nature is, whilst for the Greeks, nature is also *normative*. Another way of putting this is to say that a strong fact/value distinction is not presupposed by eudaimonist theories – as it is by deontological theories, for instance – and so to cite an ethical ideal for an agent to strive towards is not problematic, nor too 'idealistic', since on this view to charge a theory with being idealistic is trivially true. Only an ontology which views 'ideals' as non-factual or non-existent entities of some kind would be able to remove them from an ethical theory. A theory of that sort would have to provide a different account of what we are speaking about when describing something as 'natural' in a normative sense, or claiming that a certain pattern of life is 'ideal', since neither a normative sense of the word 'natural' nor a factual sense of the word 'ideal' can be provided. Hobbes' theses concerning universals, subjective evaluation of good and evil, and materialist conception of the universe just are attempts to provide alternative answers to those questions. Yet, as we have seen, the paradoxical result of Hobbes' own theses is that he provides an ethical theory which *explains away* reasonable accounts of how to live, leaving ethics as a matter of arbitrary decision – albeit a decision which is made by a sovereign and is binding, as opposed to a battleground of individual wills. As Annas argues, by starting one's ethical inquiries with the

⁸⁹ "Their moral philosophy is but a description of their own passions... they make rules of good and bad, by their own liking" (*Leviathan* 4.46).

⁹⁰ "Those who have occupied themselves with this distinction" – between 'natural' and 'unnatural' – "seem generally to have interpreted the Natural to mean either the *common* as opposed to the rare and exceptional, or the *original* as opposed to what is later in development... But I have never seen any ground for assuming broadly that Nature abhors the exceptional, or prefers the earlier in time to the later" (Sidgwick 1907: 80-2).

basic question concerning 'my life as a whole', larger questions about reality as a whole are, at least initially, bypassed, since the primary unit of evaluation and field of intellectual inquiry is yourself (ibid: 220). The notion of 'nature' which is of primary concern is therefore *human* nature, since it is what is going right or wrong with your own life as a human which leads to ethical reflection in the first place. The notion of 'natural' (physis) is distinguished from what is 'conventional' (nomos), since one of the most evident sources of bad practice is false *beliefs*. People who have not questioned the grounds or rationality of their own beliefs are liable to retain whatever beliefs their parents or society have taught them. If a belief could be justified, however, by arguing that, if true, it does not conflict with what we generally agree is the case concerning humans on the whole, then that belief can be called 'natural' rather than merely conventional, since it agrees with our nature. On this view, the concept of 'nature' being employed is not necessarily a theoretically precise and narrow concept explicable only to sophisticated professionals, instead it is something which is in fact generally quite obvious – something which is grasped by having common sense. If we take a case such as that of a promising youth who is talented and enthusiastic but finds it hard to control his temper, so much so that he continually gets fired from each job that he works in and ends up bitter and disillusioned, the obvious point we would bring home to him is that he should control his anger or he will suffer for it. The 'ideal' non-angry person who does not get fired from his job is able to live a more 'natural' life uninhibited by the adverse consequences of being angry. The notion of 'convention' which serves as the antithesis to nature in Greco-Roman theories implicitly demands some kind of error theory to explain why people believe false or damaging beliefs in the first place – bad education and training in virtue is the primary candidate for this (cf. *NE* 1103b23-5). For a eudaimonist theory to provide a plausible account of ethics on the whole, it would have to justify its own normative claims in terms of the *practical* results which follow from its chosen postulates concerning human nature and virtuous education. In conclusion, Annas argues that nature is a 'constraint' but not a passive acquiescence (1995: 214). Virtues are not simply passive unintellectual dispositions, rather they are active intellectual dispositions and are arrived at through critical reflection and

correction of previous merely conventional activities: “only reflection, argument and theory can lead us to fruitful ethical practice” (ibid: 450). If the advantage of banishing any ‘ideals’ from one’s ethical theory is to make that theory more scientific and strictly ‘factual’, then the cost is that that theory will no longer be an ‘ethical’ theory, since any notion of how you *should* (and *can*⁹¹) live is swallowed up by mere description of how you *do* live. There is no ‘objectively true’ way of living, there are simply the ways in which people observably live’; there is no ‘free will’ determinable by a ‘rational agent’, there is simply a mechanical agent obeying whatever ‘impulses’ happen to drive them; there is no ‘matter of fact’ judgement concerning a ‘good life’, nor ‘practical wisdom’ based upon ‘moral insight’, there are simply individual agents pursuing their own preferences and making calculated inferences concerning their probable success in doing so. Ethics may not be a precise science, but that does mean that science can replace ethics. For this reason, ‘naturalism’ in a Hobbesian sense must be rejected, and eudaimonist theories must be properly considered on their own merits as *ethical theories*, rather than rejected as unscientific premodern world-pictures.⁹²

Third Objection: Pluralism

As we have seen, eudaimonism argues that happiness is the essential characteristic goal which orders and unifies the activities of humans. As a concept, happiness is to be understood as a ‘thin’ concept, i.e. it specifies the general characteristics which any potential style of living must meet to be a plausible overall goal, but it is not by itself a particular prescription for how to live. In order to determine *how* to be happy, we must use our practical

⁹¹ This parenthetical term is inserted to guard against deontological connotations concerning the word ‘should’. A eudaimonist’s interpretation of how I ‘should’ live is based on what is natural, and therefore is achievable on the basis of my human nature, whereas a deontologist’s interpretation is *not*, leaving a problematic gap between what I should do and what I can do.

⁹² This argument does not entail that any theses concerning human nature which eudaimonist theories argue for should not be aligned with what we know about nature overall from other disciplines such as the sciences. What it does entail, on the other hand, is that any argument which attempts to undermine an ethical theory simply by rejecting the terms or phenomena which that theory starts from, does not therefore invalidate that theory – it is more likely that it is committing the *inverse fallacy* than disproving anything substantive about the original argument. It simply changes the subject and therefore misses its target.

reason ('phronesis') to reflect on the successes and failures of our lives so far, and to assess how we could do better in accordance with the virtues. On this view, we need each of the virtues to help us act correctly, depending on the circumstances of our actions. However, each of the virtues is different to each of the others. We do not need one virtue in all situations, rather, we need *all* of them. How do these virtues relate to each other? How does each virtue relate to the set of circumstances in which its use is necessary? And if we accept the virtues, however they are to be understood, what about happiness: what is happiness? Is it a single phenomenon, or is there a plurality of potential forms of happiness, each wholly distinct from the others? In what follows, I will examine two challenges to eudaimonism on the basis of *plurality*: 1) Duns Scotus' thesis regarding two distinct inclinations of the will, which undercuts the connection between *goodness* and *happiness*, and, 2) Christine Swanton's thesis about the irreducible plurality of the *virtues* and their *primary focal points*. I will argue with regards to 1) that Scotus raises some serious questions for eudaimonism which a follower of *Ancient* eudaimonism⁹³ cannot ignore if their theory is to be plausible, especially if they wish to defend their position against deontology. However, I will argue that Scotus' thesis about the will is not defensible, and that he does not therefore defeat eudaimonism. I will argue with regards to 2) that Swanton's thesis is not acceptable as it leads to relativism. I agree with her that the virtues are distinct from each other, and that a rich understanding of virtuous activity cannot afford to be too methodically reductive or practical reasoning is not likely to be very nuanced or realistic. However, I argue that her approach is too oriented towards psychological and circumstantial description and fails to provide normative evaluative criteria which are sufficiently distinct from such description not to be reducible to it. I will conclude this section with an examination of Julia Annas' replies to these objections concerning the unity of virtue and the distinction between character and circumstances.

⁹³ I.e. One whose theory is exclusive Greek or Greco-Roman, such as an Epicurean, Stoic, or Aristotelian, for instance.

Scotus' Objection:

1) In order to understand Duns Scotus' thesis about the will, we will first examine two metaethical theses which St. Thomas Aquinas accepted as part of his eudaimonist position. In any ethical theory there will be some sort of relationship between being and goodness, whether it is one of identity, distinction, or separation. Two significant approaches to their relation exist: i) *participation* and ii) *nature* (Williams 2003: 332-3; cf. MacDonald 1988: 272-3, 1991: 4-5).⁹⁴ i) According to the *participation approach*, all beings are good insofar as they participate in 'Good' itself.⁹⁵ Goodness in this account is *extrinsic* or *relational*, meaning that a particular being's goodness depends upon its relation to something else. ii) According to the *nature approach*, good is identified with an 'end'. A being is good to the extent that it has attained its end – to be a good x is to attain the characteristic x-end or -ends which are *intrinsic* to it (Williams 2003: 332).⁹⁶ Of these approaches, i) requires a cosmological or theological⁹⁷ basis, whilst ii) does not.⁹⁸ Both approaches generate a 'universality thesis' according to which *all* things are good in virtue of their being. Also, both share an 'appetition thesis' according to which all things aim at the good (ibid: 334). A difference exists between i) and ii) in relation to the appetition thesis where *rational* agents are concerned – in the case of i) appetition is not self-evidently significant, since whatever is aimed at is good independently of the agent, whilst in the case of ii) appetition is hugely significant, since whatever is chosen is taken to be good *for us*, or, perfective of the agent (ibid). Hence "an elaborate moral psychology" is necessary in order to explain how "all human appetites are aimed in some way at human perfection" (ibid). In the context of eudaimonism, Aristotle's normative theory is a clear instance of ii), whilst Aquinas' view represents a synthesis of i)

⁹⁴ I leave out of discussion here any other potential relations which may exist between being and goodness.

⁹⁵ The *locus classicus* for this view is Plato's *Republic* VI.

⁹⁶ The *locus classicus* for this view is Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Bk 1.

⁹⁷ In the context of Judeo-Christian theology, this approach may be termed the *creation approach* due to the rejection of Platonic 'emanation' in favour of a doctrine of creation.

⁹⁸ Though it could be argued that to discuss the class of x's and their x-ends in terms of what is 'natural to them', cannot be defended without leading onto questions of cosmology or theology to ground them.

and ii) based on a teleological understanding of *creation* – “God’s creative activity is itself aimed at an end, and God brings into being creatures who are defined by their characteristic ends” (ibid). The importance of Scotus’ theory here is his *ontological* revision of ii).⁹⁹ As we will see, Scotus denies the moral value of those natural goods which Aristotle describes as knowable and attainable by us (ibid: 335). If Scotus is correct, then eudaimonism is in serious trouble since it is predicated on the connection between goodness and happiness.

‘Goodness’ and Perfection:

As we saw earlier on, eudaimonist theories all accept this premise:

VE 1 – An action is right iff if it is what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstances.

This is a premise which Scotus denies: “he thinks natural happiness has nothing at all to do with morality” (ibid: 338). He asserts instead that:

SP 1 – An action is right because God has freely commanded it (ibid).

Scotus’ view is *voluntaristic* as opposed to *intellectualistic*. In order to convince us to accept

SP 1, Scotus’ rejects the nature approach ii) which defines goodness in terms of the characteristic natural end of an agent, defining goodness instead in terms of the obligatory nature of God’s commandments which provide an end (telos) for man that is *supernatural* but not on account of his nature (Hare 2019). He has three grounds for rejecting the nature approach which I will consider¹⁰⁰ here:

⁹⁹ Scotus’ position with regards to i) will not be explored here, as neither the participation view of Plato and his followers, nor the combined view of Aquinas are the focus of my arguments overall. The key point about eudaimonism in the ancient Greco-Roman tradition is their focus on *human nature* and its relevance for morality.

¹⁰⁰ I will not examine the exact nature of his theological voluntarism here. See: (Hare 2019; Murphy 2019).

1) Scotus' first argument is *epistemological* – we cannot produce a normative ethical theory on the basis of natural knowledge of the human good, because we cannot know¹⁰¹ by natural reason what the human good is (Williams 2003: 335). Scotus has two reasons to assert this. Firstly, for an agent to act for an end they need to have an appetite for it – this appetition thesis is accepted by those who follow the nature approach, as we have seen – which in the case of humans is an intellectual appetite (ibid: 336). For humans to act for an end, they need to act based on an intellectual cognition of it. But humans cannot have a clear cognition of their end by natural means; Scotus' proof for this point is as follows:

The Philosopher, following natural reason, either asserts that perfect felicity consists in the acquired cognition of the separated substances, as he appears to say in Books I and X of the *Ethics*; or, if he does not definitely assert that this is the supreme felicity of which we are capable, he does not conclude by natural reason that anything else is. Thus, in relying solely on natural reason either he erred regarding the precise character of the end, or he remained in doubt about it (*Ordinatio*, prol. pars I, q. un., n. 14).¹⁰²

According to Scotus we have no knowledge of the proper end for any substance, and even if our natural reason were sufficient to establish what our natural end is it could not tell us much about it: “natural reason cannot tell us that the vision and enjoyment of God will last forever, or that it will involve human nature in its entirety” (Williams 2003: 336). Secondly, in order to act for an end, one must know: 1) how the end is acquired, 2) what the necessary conditions are for the agent to acquire it, and, 3) that the necessary conditions are sufficient to attain it. 1) is true since, if one did not know how to acquire something, one could not suitably dispose oneself to do so. 2) is true since, if anything necessary to attain an end were overlooked or not known about, one could fail to attain it. 3) is psychologically rather than logically important, as if we suspected that doing everything necessary to attain an end

¹⁰¹ As opposed to the contrary claim of the ‘intellectualist’ position.

¹⁰² Cf. (Wolter: 1951).

could still fail to result in its attainment, we will be less likely to wholeheartedly do so (ibid: 337). Scotus argues that none of these requirements is met by natural reason alone: how to attain happiness is unknown due to the *contingent* relationship between our activity and happiness; only God can grant happiness as a reward (ibid).¹⁰³ We cannot know which actions are necessary or sufficient for producing happiness either, due once more to the contingent relation which holds between activity and happiness on Scotus' view (ibid). Our initial premise claimed that:

VE 1 – An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstances.

However, Scotus' view entails that this is not necessarily true. Whether or not a virtuous agent happens to perform what God commands is indifferent to the truth of the premise, since the agent's natural knowledge of the good which that act serves is insufficient to base the action on. The premise must be revised therefore:

VE 1* - An action is right iff it is what God commands, whether a virtuous agent would do it or not.

The disjunct at the end of the premise does not determine the truth of the premise itself, and so is effectively a logically redundant variable which may be removed from the premise, giving us:

VE 1** - An action is right iff it is what God commands.

The contingent relationship between our activity and happiness, which explains the absence of reliable natural knowledge concerning it, is due to God's omnipotence. It should be noted here, from a theological perspective, that Scotus' interlocuter here – Thomas Aquinas – also accepts the necessity of obedience to God's will and, a fortiori, the dependence on human agents upon supernatural revelation to know how to live correctly. However, Aquinas also distinguishes between *perfect* and *imperfect* happiness, the latter of which is knowable by

¹⁰³ Cf. Aquinas: "human beings become happy by the action of God alone" (ST I-II, 5.6).

natural reason, and the former by supernatural revelation (ibid: 338). For Scotus, however, natural reason is not viewed with such confidence as is the case with Aquinas. The reason for this is that during the late 13th century when Scotus was active, the incompatibility of certain aspects of Aristotelian philosophy with Christianity had caused a great deal of theological controversy. In particular, numerous propositions held by Latin Averroists¹⁰⁴ were officially condemned as heretical by the Bishop of Paris Etienne Tempier in 1270 and in 1277 (Gilson 1955: 405-8). The propositions in question, which included psychological, metaphysical and theological positions, were traced back to their common root: “the Aristotelian identification of reality, intelligibility and necessity, not only in things, but above all in God”; on the contrary, it was maintained: “the Jewish and Christian God was not only able to create at a single stroke the world with the multiplicity of beings it holds, he still could intervene in it freely at any instant... to act miraculously and without the intervention of secondary causes” (ibid: 407). The philosophical importance of this historical event was twofold: firstly, metaphysical or ‘natural’ reason was viewed with suspicion – especially when applied to theological matters – and, secondly, the free will of God was increasingly viewed as absolute. Whatever God decides to do is possible, except if it is logically self-contradictory: “in virtue of his infinite power, God can replace any created order with another, provided only that there is nothing self-contradictory about his action” (Möhle 2003: 318; cf. Williams 2017: 95-8).¹⁰⁵ Scotus’ epistemological arguments, as we can see, are based on an underlying ontological supposition about God’s will, which entails simultaneously an

¹⁰⁴ That is, Latin Christian adherents to the Averroist interpretation of Aristotle, such as Siger of Brabant or Boetius of Sweden. See: (Gilson 1955: 387-402).

¹⁰⁵ The concept of ‘order’ in this statement is not to be understood as arbitrary, for God’s commandments are understood by Scotus in terms of ‘*consonantia*’ or coherence (Möhle 2003: 319-21). The reasonableness of God’s acts is ascertainable in reference to his will, which is divine and transcendent, yet the reasonableness of human acts cannot be similarly understood due to contingency and createdness of humans (cf. ibid: 320). What God is *not* obliged to do, in the eyes of Scotus, Ockham and their contemporaries, is to *obey* the rules which govern nature, which ex hypothesi he is the creator of anyway. If he creates such rules, he could easily overturn them – Gilson describes this line of thought as follows: “Scotism and Ockhamism are dominated by the desire to insure the freedom of the Christian God with respect to the worlds of things. Greek necessitarianism is the Carthage they are eager to destroy” (1955: 409). Whilst Gilson views this as ultimately disastrous for the future of scholasticism – as the beginning of a ‘disintegration’ (1955: 471), Oberman argues that the later Middle Ages/Early Modern period in fact represented a great advance for theology, as well as natural philosophy (1994: vii-viii, 6-11).

elevation of God's causal power over nature and a devaluation of the natural ends of human action. By distinguishing perfect from imperfect happiness, Aquinas makes normative claims which do not entirely depend upon revelatory theological premises – natural reason can intuit what is good 'by nature'. This path is not available to Scotus, since he does not distinguish forms of happiness in this manner, meaning that we cannot have a natural intellectual appetite for the good which is guaranteed to lead to happiness. How are goodness and happiness connected for Scotus? That question brings us to our next argument.

2) Scotus' second argument is *ontological* – Scotus' next argument concerns the relationship between goodness and being.¹⁰⁶ If human actions are not judged with reference to natural¹⁰⁷ happiness, but to God's will¹⁰⁸, then a strong distinction between goodness and happiness is a key part of Scotus' position. What kind of distinction is this, and how is it justified by Scotus? As Williams points out, according to the nature approach ii) good and being are convertible or coextensive ontological terms, which means that the content of normative ethics is defined by a "concrete conception of happiness and the ways it is attained" (2003: 339). On this account, happiness is a state of full being¹⁰⁹ which is defined in terms of the nature of the species of the being in question. For humans, who are rational animals, our happiness is defined ex hypothesi by whatever activity or activities conform to our reason (cf. *NE* 1098a12-13). Scotus rejects the idea, however, that happiness generates moral norms and so must reject that moral goodness is a particular case of goodness as convertible with being. Goodness can have two meanings according to Scotus. It can mean: 1. 'Primary goodness' or essential intrinsic perfection – this refers to a lack of intrinsic deficiency, a lack of nothing necessary to the sort of being it is. This goodness is convertible with being. Evil is

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Ordinatio* II, d. 7, q. un., nn. 28-39. Cited in: (Williams 2017: 123-5).

¹⁰⁷ In what follows, I refer exclusively to natural happiness as opposed to supernatural. What is discussed in terms of imperfect happiness in Aquinas' theory is described simply as happiness by the Ancient Eudaimonists.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Ordinatio* III, d. 37, q. un. Cited in: (Wolter 1986: 269-87).

¹⁰⁹ The more actual a being is, the happier it is by nature.

not its contrary due to its convertibility with being, since evil would thereby not exist (Williams 2003: 340).¹¹⁰ This form of goodness is, however, irrelevant for moral theory since nothing can be without it, whilst an agent can exist without being moral; goodness must be a property it is possible to be without (ibid).¹¹¹ Goodness can also mean: 2. ‘Secondary’ or accidental goodness – this form of goodness is analogical to beauty, as it is not “some absolute (nonrelational) quality in the object, rather it is the aggregation of all the qualities that befit the object... together with the suitable relationship of those qualities to the object and to each other” (ibid). If all the relevant qualities are present, the object is perfectly good, if all are lacking, it is utterly bad.¹¹² Scotus identifies moral goodness with the “secondary perfection of an act elicited freely by an agent possessing will and intellect” (ibid: 342). The role of reason on this account is to judge the appropriate object, end, form, time and place of an act, but not to *constitute* the appropriateness of any of these factors – which are determined by God’s will. In summary, Scotus has separated the concepts of goodness and happiness from each other, arguing that the kind of happiness which is defined by our human nature is not relevant where questions of morality are concerned.¹¹³ The defining feature of human acts which must be examined in order to establish their rightness or wrongness is the *will*.

3) Scotus’ third argument is *psychological* – now that Scotus’ positions regarding epistemology and ontology have been established, it is time to examine his most characteristic thesis concerning the *will*. If Scotus is correct about the will, the appetite thesis described earlier – “all things aim at the good” (ibid: 334)¹¹⁴ – does not apply to *moral* acts (ibid: 343). In the previous sections, we saw that Scotus separated natural from moral

¹¹⁰ Cf. *Reportatio* 2, d. 34, q. un., n. 18. Cited in: (Wadding 1639, vol. 23).

¹¹¹ Cf. *Reportatio* 2, d. 34, q. un., n. 3. See: (ibid).

¹¹² Cf. *Quodl.* Q. 18, n. 3. Cited in: (Alluntis & Wolter 1975: 399-417).

¹¹³ Cf. *Ordinatio* 2, dd. 34-7, qq. 1-5; sin is described as a ‘privation of actual justice’, where justice is not defined in terms of the *agent*. See: (Wolter 1986: 195-207, 293-4).

¹¹⁴ Cf. *Ordinatio* 3, d. 33, q. un., n. 6. Cited in: (Wolter 1986: 319-47).

good and defined the latter solely in terms of God's will (barring logical self-contradictions). The difference which these metaethical theses have for human agents affects the way in which Scotus thereby conceives of human agency. Since the natural goods which agents characteristically intuit and pursue due to their membership of a specific species of being (humanity) do not prescribe moral activities for humans, there must be a distinct manner or means by which humans are able to perform moral acts. The characteristically human feature of moral activity distinguishing it from activity in general, for Scotus, is *freedom*.¹¹⁵ As Josef Pieper puts it, "he holds that being 'free' is more essential to the will than its wanting, seeking, desiring 'something'" (2001: 142). So how does Scotus understand the will?

To begin with, Scotus does not reject everything which other scholastics such as Aquinas accept. He accepts a great deal of what Williams calls the 'nature psychology' – that is, the cognitive and appetitive faculties of the soul which function in manner corresponding to the 'appetition thesis' and 'nature approach' noted earlier (2003: 343) Scotus accepts that all things have an appetite for their end, he accepts the distinction between sense and intellect as well as the corresponding distinction between sensory and intellectual appetites. He also accepts that sense cognition concerns particulars whilst intellectual cognition concerns universals (ibid). Scotus views both the sensitive and intellectual appetites to be *passive powers* which are moved by external objects.¹¹⁶ The general inclination of the intellect to good is likewise a passive process in Scotus' view, akin to blushing when embarrassed (ibid: 344). Since he rejects the determination of good acts by the relation of acts to their objects, since this is a *passive* process for Scotus, he must explain *how* an agent can choose a good action. Scotus therefore distinguishes two inclinations of the will: *affection for the*

¹¹⁵ It is his 'watchword' and 'battle cry' according to Josef Pieper (2001: 139). A moral act must be performed *because* it is right and is *freely chosen* – which is impossible if the will is a passive response to intellectual cognition. See: (Williams 2003: 345; cf. *Ordinatio* 2, d. 40, q. un., n. 3. Cited by: Wolter 1986: 225-9).

¹¹⁶ Scotus does further distinguish the inclinations of the appetites in terms of 'concupiscible' and 'irascible' passions, though this does not affect my discussion here. See: (Williams 2003: 344).

advantageous ('affectio commodi') and *affection for justice* ('affectio iustitiae').¹¹⁷ The former inclination is identical to the 'nature psychology' described above and whose ends are the natural goods which humans characteristically intuit as good and seek after. The latter on the other hand is the "ultimate specific difference of a free appetite" (*Reportatio* 2, d. 6, q. 2, n. 9).¹¹⁸ The affection for justice has the role of restraining or moderating the affection for advantage (Williams 2003: 345).¹¹⁹ Scotus discusses the fall of Satan in these terms as follows:

If one imagines an angel that had the *affectio commodi* and not the *affectio iustitiae* – i.e. one that had an intellective appetite merely as that sort of appetite and not as free – such an angel could not refrain from willing advantageous things or from willing them in the highest degree... Insofar as the will is merely intellective appetite it would actually be inclined in the highest degree to the greatest intelligible good. But insofar as the will is free, it can control itself in eliciting its act so that it does not follow its inclination, either with respect to the substance of the act, or with respect to its intensity, to which the power is naturally inclined. Therefore, that *affectio iustitiae*, which is the first controller (*moderatrix*) of the *affectio commodi* with respect to the fact that the will need not actually will that to which the *affectio commodi* inclines it, or will it to the highest degree, is the innate liberty of the will... It is clear that a free will is not bound to will happiness in every way in which the will would will it if it were an intellective appetite without freedom. Rather, in eliciting its act the will is bound to moderate its appetite *qua* intellective appetite that is, to moderate its *affectio commodi* so that it does not will immoderately (*Ordinatio* 2, d. 6, q. 2, nn. 8-9).¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ This distinction is derived from St. Anselm *De Casu Diaboli* 12-14.

¹¹⁸ Williams points out the seemingly circularity of this definition – it is defined as "whatever distinguishes a free appetite from an unfree appetite" (ibid: 345). See: (Wadding 1639, vol. 23).

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Ordinatio* 2, d. 6, q. 2, n. 8; 2, d. 25, nn. 22-3; 2, d. 39, q. 2, n. 5 & 3, d. 26, q. un., n. 17. See: (Wolter 1986: 179-81, 197-205, 463-77).

¹²⁰ See: (Wolter 1986: 463-77)

Scotus explains the rebellion of the fallen angels in terms of a failure of the affection for justice to moderate the inclination to obey the affection for advantage at God's command (Williams 2003: 346).¹²¹ One has a reason to moderate one's intellectual appetite in the pursuit for happiness if it would be immoral not to do so. In effect, therefore, morality represents a higher law which humans must voluntarily obey even if it is contrary to their rational appetites.¹²²

Pluralism in Scotus' Account:

Now that we have examined Scotus' metaethical commitments, it remains to see why Scotus' ethical view is pluralistic. As we have seen, for Scotus the moral content of an act is determined with relation to the will; virtue is insufficient to make an action good (Williams 2003: 346). Further, he does not view virtues as necessary conditions either on the grounds that, to become virtuous one must do good, but what makes such actions good at this point? If it is claimed that an action at this point is virtuous because it is what a virtuous person would do, then this reasoning is circular (Kent 2003: 359).¹²³ A virtue may perfect its possessor, but it does not make an action good. What a virtue does determine is *how*¹²⁴ an action is performed: it "inclines the will in the right direction, enabling it to act more promptly, more easily, and with greater pleasure than it would otherwise be able to" (ibid: 362).¹²⁵ A virtuous disposition, then, is essentially a psychological by-product which follows from the attempt to moderate one's passions (ibid: 369). This point in particular has big implications

¹²¹ Even if it were rational to act in given way, where our inclinations are (normally) right to desire that we do so, God could still choose to command otherwise and that would have overriding authority over the agent.

¹²² This principle was highly influential in the development of Kantian ethics. See objection 1.

¹²³ Cf. *Ordinatio* 1, d. 17, pars 1, qq. 1-2, nn. 60-2; *Quodl.* Q. 18, nn. 3-6. See: (Wolter 1986: 207-9; Alluntis & Wolter 1975: 399-417; Ingham 1989: 153-7, 185-96, 217-27).

¹²⁴ Cf. *Ordinatio*, 3, suppl. d. 33. See: (Wolter 1986: 506).

¹²⁵ Something interesting follows from this: to act morally without such ease promptness and pleasure is more difficult to do, however, it is therefore more praiseworthy than acting correctly out of habit. This view would also prove to be highly influential to Kant. Bonnie Kent asserts that for Scotus, the "best human behaviour combines the free choice of the will and the natural causality of dispositions" (2003: 363; cf. *Ordinatio* 1, d. 17, pars 1, qq. 1-2, nn. 69-70. See: Ingham op. cit.).

for moral psychology, since, if true, it undermines the plausibility of the thesis of the unity of the virtues. If virtues are *by-products* of attempts to correctly dispose the will at act justly in *different* circumstances and in relation to different acts, and if what makes such acts morally right in the first place is God's free will, then the virtue of *prudence* is not a unified virtue.¹²⁶

The kinds of reasons which prudence is concerned with will not be ascertained by considering the good of the agent as a whole, as eudaimonism dictates, since the natural goodness of my life is not morally normative, only obedience to God's will is. The unit of evaluation for normative reasoning is the *act* rather than the *agent*. If I perform correct actions then I am in the right, whether or not I have developed all the virtues. Scotus agrees that prudence is necessary for goodness but does not view its lack in one area of life as a lack elsewhere, since moral virtues are *separately acquired* (ibid: 371). So, there are a plurality of forms of prudence which differ depending which kind of action or circumstance they are defined by. The distinct prudences can combine to form a 'macro-prudence', but this does not make them an indivisible organic unity as Aristotle, for instance, requires (*Ordinatio* 3, suppl. d. 36).¹²⁷ What Scotus' argument here calls into doubt is the alleged relevance to morality of an account of a virtuous person. Supposing that we can conceive of a truly virtuous person who does the right thing in the right circumstance and has the right character traits or dispositions, and so enjoys doing what is right – unless we want to rule out the likelihood of such an ideal in practice, we must somehow account for how someone becomes virtuous like this. If virtues are developed psychologically in response to performing correct actions (whose normative content is separately grounded), and agents seem to be able to improve distinct areas of their lives (which distinction is real, not merely logical), then it follows that virtues will not all be co-exemplified in a single agent due to the specificity of the range of scenarios and actions which the agent has experience of. Each agent will develop through a range of correct actions in distinct circumstances their own 'macro-

¹²⁶ Cf. *Ordinatio* 3, suppl. d. 36. See: (Wolter 1986: 392-412).

¹²⁷ See note 126.

prudence' or aggregate of forms of prudence¹²⁸ defined by the causal particularities of their own life experiences. This is what *pluralism* asserts. There is a range of virtuous dispositions which an agent could exemplify, but *no universal pattern* in which they are developed, and therefore no single type of character which can define *how* to live morally.

Swanton's Target-Centred Account:

Christine Swanton also argues that there is a plurality of goals and ends which human lives can be directed towards. Her account stresses the necessity of the virtues in a good life, but she argues that the virtues should be understood in a much broader and inclusive manner than they have been understood by eudaimonists. We should not permit any arbitrary exclusion of virtue concepts from non-eudaimonist thinkers such as Hume, Nietzsche or Confucius, for instance, if those concepts can offer "a broader range of solutions or approaches to moral problems... than those supplied by narrower concepts of virtue ethics" (2013: 333, 336). By doing so, 'inherited problems' which eudaimonism suffers from such as the charge of egoism can be avoided, she alleges (ibid: 336). In what follows, I will examine her theory as it stands, and then argue that the gains in inclusivity which her theory makes come at the expense of making it normatively *relativistic*.

The first premise which Swanton's theory builds on is derived from a distinction which Aristotle made between *acting from virtue* and a *virtuous act*:

... virtuous acts are not done in a just or temperate way merely because they have a certain quality, but only if the agent also acts in a certain state, viz. (1) if he knows what he is doing, (2) if he chooses it, and chooses it for its own sake, and (3) if he does it from a fixed and permanent disposition (*NE* 1105a9-b2).

¹²⁸ For more on the role of prudence in Scotus, see: (Ingham 1996).

This distinction allows Swanton to bracket out motivations when defining right actions – if someone can perform a right action without exhibiting the correct state, how can it be right? (2001: 37). According to Swanton, “an action can be just or temperate if it hits the target of the virtues of justice or temperance, and an action may hit those targets without exhibiting a just or temperate state” (ibid). This premise is a denial of the ‘primacy of character thesis’ which features in certain agent-centred virtue ethics theories¹²⁹:

PC - the appraisal of action is derivative of the appraisal of character;

The conditions for appraising **PC** are disputed (Swanton 2013: 325-6; cf. Garcia 1990 & Slote 2001). Swanton’s first premise is therefore:

T1 – An action is virtuous in respect V (e.g. benevolent, generous) iff it hits the *target* of virtue V (e.g. benevolence, generosity).

The premise defines the nature of a *virtuous act*, considered in isolation from whether the agent acts *from virtue* (van Zyl 2013: 188). What is it, then, that defines an agent who is *acting from virtue*? According to Swanton, the prerequisite for this is having “fine motivation (including having fine ends), fine emotions, practical wisdom, and the possession of a stable *disposition* of fine emotions, feelings, and other affective states” (2003: 238). One can perform virtuous acts without having these traits, yet one can also act on the basis of these traits and miss the *target* of the act as well (van Zyl 2013: 188). The second premise of the target-centred theory, which connects virtue and rightness is:

T2 – An action is right iff it is overall virtuous (ibid).

For Swanton, **T2** entails that her account is a virtue theory not consequentialist, as the target of an action cannot be pursued except by virtuous means. But **T1** is a denial of the primacy of character thesis (**PC**), meaning that the aims of virtuous actions are not derived from the

¹²⁹ Such as (Watson: 1990), for instance.

dispositional states of the agent, rather the dispositions of the agent are defined by whatever their relevant target is – this is important for Swanton, as it means that her theory is able to account for the normative content of both agent-centred and non-agent-centred positions, reconciling, for instance, insights from Aristotle and Hume. How is that possible? Swanton's revised definition of a virtue can be formulated like this:

VR – An act is virtuous if it hits the target feature(s) X 'in virtue of which' that act is describable as an X-act (2013: 329-30).

The phrase 'in virtue of which' here refers to the relationship which holds between an action and its characteristic 'modes of responsiveness' to the item(s) in its field, and the nature of each virtue is distinguished from the others by its own 'constellation' of such modes, forming its specific 'profile' (2003: 233). Swanton's definition of virtue can accommodate five features of ethical life which are each understood pluralistically: 1) the *bases* of responsiveness, 2) the *modes* of responsiveness, 3) what *makes* a trait virtuous (i.e. benefitting the agent, or promoting good states of affairs), 4) standards of *excellence* of the agent's responsiveness (fully healthy specimen of human nature), and, 5) conception of *rightness* (2003: 2). I will examine each of these aspects in turn:

1) A *basis* of moral responsiveness is "a morally significant feature of the item responded to or acknowledged", such as its value – whether it be life-affirming (Nietzsche) or a state of affairs worth promoting (consequentialism) – or its status – such as the inherent worth of a human being (Kant) (ibid).

2) A *mode* of responsiveness is the form which the agent's responses to 1) will take, such as "love, respect, creativity, and promotion", and in Swanton's view the 'profiles' of the virtues are all complex, characteristically involving several modes (ibid: 3).

3) What *makes* the traits of a character virtuous will not be the same in each instance, given 1) and 2). Any notion of "*the* rationale of *all* the virtues being needed for the flourishing (good) of the agent" is off the table (ibid).

4) The *standard* of excellence by which an agent is assessed is not that of an ideal complete and perfect specimen of human nature, which is too difficult to attain due to bad circumstances, catastrophes and misfortune. The standards of virtue, rather, must vary contextually and reflect “the individual’s own capacities”, making virtue a ‘threshold concept’ (ibid).

5) The conception of *rightness* as determined by actions hitting their targets will be plural, since 2) asserts that the profiles of the virtues are complex, yielding several appropriate ways to respond to the salient moral features of the targets of the actions (ibid).

If we grant that 1) – 5) are correct, then Swanton’s theory recommends itself as the best way to account for each of these aspects of our ethical life, as it is able to unite the wide variety of correct judgements which an agent will be inclined to make in response to a wide variety of real life situations, and which the agent is able to strive realistically to achieve without requiring superhuman natural abilities in the process. Eudaimonism is especially vulnerable with regards to 3) since it is a position with a commitment to a single inclusive concept of flourishing which gives the agent an underlying rationale to all their decisions, and to 4) since it is also committed to the pursuit of practical wisdom (phronesis) which allows an agent to make the right decisions whatever the context happens to be, something which is on its own admission very difficult to attain.¹³⁰ If 3) is correct no single rationale underlying all the virtues can be asserted, so there is no unified concept of a ‘virtue’ which applies to all the relevant character traits, nor of the resultant happiness or flourishing which they enable which can guide an agent’s decisions on the whole – a consequence which is partially concealed by the notion of an ‘*overall* virtuous’ action. If 4) is correct there can be no ideal specimen of human nature which provides the correct pattern for how to live, rather there will be different standards in different times and places which may inspire different people to develop their

¹³⁰ With regards to this last point, see objection 2 which charges eudaimonism with being too ‘idealistic’ to be lived out.

lives in numerous ways. Before moving on and examining Annas' replies, it should be noted that the distinction underlying the major premise **T1** of Swanton's argument – between *acting from virtue* and a *virtuous act* – depends for its plausibility on theses which Scotus also asserted. The virtues are separately acquired, and their successful acquisition depends upon the circumstances of the particular agent in question; and the rightness of an act may be understood separately from the virtuous agent. Scotus equates logical distinctions with real natural separation, based on a post-1277 thesis concerning divine omnipotence, which Swanton does not even discuss. A question which may be asked therefore, is, what is the principle according to which Swanton distinguishes the 'bases' and 'modes' of morality from each other? Further, what kind of distinction do virtuous acts and virtuous agents have? If an agent demonstrates their virtues *in action*, can the act itself be understood normatively without reference to the agent? In Scotus' case the answer is yes, since he locates the normativity of the act in God's will, yet Swanton cannot answer this question in a determinate manner since she *does* argue that the virtue of the agent is at least some of the time morally relevant, just not necessarily and exhaustively so. The metaethical principles of her view are, therefore, somewhat indeterminate to say the least.

Annas' Reply:

Now that we have examined the pluralists' objections to eudaimonism, I will examine Julia Annas' reply. Once I have done so, I will highlight the aspects of Scotus' position which remain problematic for eudaimonism. To motivate a pluralist account of virtues, both Scotus and Swanton distinguish each of the virtues in terms of the distinct areas of life in which they are developed.¹³¹

PV 1 – The virtues are developed in distinct circumstances.

¹³¹ I.e. In Scotus' account, the agent develops a 'macro-prudence' which is an aggregate of forms of prudence which they develop in local circumstances. In Swanton's account, the virtues are differentiated in terms of their 'modes', 'bases', 'profiles', and so on.

The circumstances in which virtues are attained vary widely from context to context, since the particular acts which an agent may perform in such circumstances will vary as well, depending on those circumstances.¹³²

PV 2 – The demands which different circumstances make upon an agent are distinct, depending on the nature of those circumstances.

From these premises, the pluralist must conclude:

PV C – The virtues are not unified.

According to **PV 1**, the *circumstances* or areas of life in which the virtues are developed (and therefore apply to) are different from each other. According to **PV 2**, the virtues make different *demands on the agent*. So, the virtues do not form a *unity* with each other, as they do not share the same external or internal structures to each other.

To this form of argument, Julia Annas argues that the virtues do form a unity. She agrees that, as **PV 1** asserts, the virtues are *developed* within distinct circumstances to each other, which entails the possibility of developing some virtues more than others (2011: 96-8). That does not mean, however, that the virtues therefore *mirror* or *represent* the viewpoint of one's circumstances. Whilst the agent's circumstances may present distinct arenas within which to act, they will not therefore demand different *kinds* of action, as **PV 2** asserts. In fact, different circumstances may demand the *same* type of action. The viewpoint which the virtues *mirror* is, in Annas' words, defined by the 'invisible community' of fellow practitioners "with whom

¹³² I.e. For Scotus, as we have seen, the 'primary' or intrinsic goodness of human beings (that which is convertible with being qua humans) is not morally relevant; instead the 'secondary' goodness of acts as judged by the *aggregate* of its morally relevant features defines the rightness of the act. For Swanton, the virtues are 'threshold concepts' since they have complex 'profiles' depending on their circumstances.

what you share is not physical space, but rather common concerns and ideals” (ibid: 55).

This point can be understood by means of the *skill analogy*: two fellow chess players from different times and places can learn more from each other about how to play chess than either could by speaking to contemporaries in their immediate vicinity.¹³³ Different ways of acting courageously may be demanded of an agent with regards to an economic depression, a war or in the face of a relative’s death, but it does not follow that courage itself is not a single virtue to be pursued in each case. Further, if practical wisdom or prudence means knowing how and when to do what should be done whatever the circumstances, then its possession will, by definition, entail that one knows when to be courageous or temperate, for example. In Annas’ view, the wise agent (‘phronimos’) is one who has reflected on their life as a *whole* and decided to develop their character in accordance with each of the virtues, having reasoned that a life which is lacking in any of the virtues will not be good *overall* (ibid: 115-6). The error which the pluralists fall into is that they fail to see one way in which skills and virtues are *dis-analogous*: skills are *local* whilst virtues are not (ibid: 113-4).¹³⁴ To assert that the virtues cannot be unified, and a fortiori that an agent cannot shape their life in such a way that the conflicting aims of their actions may be resolved, entails that the pursuit of a good life *overall* is misguided. If that is so, how should we then live? For Scotus the answer is: in accordance with God’s will. In Swanton’s case, the answer is not especially clear since she does defend the necessity of virtues in any case.

In conclusion, I argue that Swanton’s theory leads to relativism, since her account of the virtues fails to provide good grounds for ruling out practically any behaviour which is ‘virtuous’ in some context or other. Her inclusion of non-agent as well as agent- based notions, her multiplicity of bases and modes of responsiveness, her account of the profile of

¹³³ There is, in other words, a somewhat *ahistorical* or context-independent relationship between skilled practitioners which undermines the normative restrictions which *locality* places on patterned behaviour.

¹³⁴ Scotus’ theory falls into this error due to its thesis about divine omnipotence and metaphysical separability, as I have already discussed. Swanton’s theory has more than a superficial resemblance to Scotus’ where distinctions are concerned.

virtues as complex overall, each lead to a consequent indeterminism concerning *what are* the virtues. According to her position, as long as ‘virtue notions’ (however defined) play enough of a role (somehow) in one’s actions, one has done the right thing. If one wishes to be a good person overall, there are numerous competing visions of how such a life will look and what it will take to get there, but no good grounds to decide between them.¹³⁵ With regards to Scotus’ position, I argue that he raises serious concerns for a eudaimonist theory. His distinctions between primary and secondary goodness and between the two motivations of the will should be examined carefully by anyone who advocates a eudaimonist position. I argue that the will should not be distinguished as he does. The will is a single faculty in my view, which may be inclined towards a plurality of apparent goods, but it is not literally two separate wills with two distinct kinds of motivations – only if God’s will is not for the ‘good’ as right reason understands it is this distinction plausible. I do not follow Scotus’ view that what is right ‘by nature’ for humans *could* be contrary to God’s will, such that his will would necessarily override it. If God created humans in accordance to an essential intrinsic pattern of perfection which is universal to them all, then to reject sin and follow reason (as well as revelation) in determining how to attain it *is* what God wills for humans. Whilst eudaimonism can be defended against Scotus’ voluntarist theses, a strong and robust response to his metaethical arguments is necessary, especially to undercut the objections of deontological theories to the concepts of happiness and flourishing.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Swanton’s theory would fit the criterion of an ‘expressivist’ theory on this view, since no single persuasive rational account of how to live can be given. One must simply choose how to live but cannot be offered conclusive reasons for or against the choice they happen to make. See: (MacIntyre 2011: 27-41).

¹³⁶ In my view, the best response to the kind of metaethical objections which Scotus (and later Ockham) raised is to deny that ‘good’ must be a univocal term used in the same exact way, or that it is an equivocal term and cannot be legitimately predicated of many distinct objects. For further discussion of analogical predicates, see: (Feser 2014: 256-63).

Conclusion:

Now that we have seen what is distinctive about eudaimonism as an ethical theory, as well as some of the key criticisms which have been brought against it, I will now answer the question of whether it is a defensible normative ethical position or not. I will elaborate what my own judgement on the matter is, as soon as I have made some final preliminary remarks.

Firstly, an *historical* point must be borne in mind. The original eudaimonist theories developed by the Hellenistic schools – by the Stoics, Aristotelians, Epicureans, and so on – each took for granted certain assumptions about ethics which entailed that there was a structural similarity between each of their theories. Each of the schools took it for granted that there must be a final end for which human lives are lived, that happiness is that end, that virtue and happiness are not mutually exclusive but that the one will lead to the other, and that normative ethics cannot work without featuring a robust concept of character or a normative account of what is natural. However, each of these assumptions has since been criticised by generations of later philosophers, which means that they must be, to some extent at least, thought through and justified *independently* of the first-order theories of the Hellenistic schools themselves. There are questions and problems which the Greeks and Romans themselves did not foresee, but which must be addressed to render eudaimonism a plausible contemporary theory. It is my contention with regards to this issue that the most important constructive criticisms of eudaimonism and virtue ethics overall derive from the *Medieval era* in particular.¹³⁷ Aside from the issue of the role which theology should or should not play in normative ethics – a complex and highly disputed question in itself – in terms of ethics *sensu stricto*, many of the detailed objections and issues concerning staple eudaimonist concepts such as ‘virtue’, ‘disposition’, ‘nature’, ‘happiness’, ‘good/end’, and so on, were first raised by Augustine or Scotus or Ockham. For this reason, to assess the

¹³⁷ I use the word ‘Medieval’ in a rather broad sense, to include figures from Late Antiquity such as Augustine, Boethius, etc. alongside Anselm, Aquinas and Scotus.

contemporary plausibility of eudaimonism, I argue that it is necessary to examine eudaimonist (or contra-eudaimonist) arguments and theses from the Middle Ages as well as Hellenistic period. In the case of Aquinas, for instance, the strengths of Aristotelianism are employed within his theory, but not without a recognition of the merits and insights of Stoic Natural Law theory and Augustinian neo-platonism. Indeed, I find Thomist ethics to be a more robust and plausible *version* of eudaimonism than that of any of the Ancient schools on their own, since it builds on all the strengths local to each of the Hellenistic theories. However, I accept that this does not automatically absolve Thomas Aquinas of the difficulties which his particular system raises on different grounds – for instance, I have not discussed the wide-ranging *theological* claims which Aquinas accepts as a Catholic Christian. Also, having examined some of the counter-theses of Duns Scotus, I concede that Thomism is not self-evidently true even to Christians. Yet I still maintain that the main structural features of Aquinas' theory *qua* eudaimonism can account successfully for a larger number of the features of moral life than any of the Ancient theories could.

Second, a *scientific* point must also be borne in mind. Since the Modern¹³⁸ period, a rapid and unprecedented increase in the development of both science and technology has been experienced by mankind. The scale of such a change and the impact which it is having on humans has led people to thoroughly question anything and everything which has been taken for granted in past centuries and millennia. In relation to ethics, there are new possibilities for action and new moral dilemmas which need to be carefully thought about within all normative ethical traditions. In this respect, I argue that the revival of virtue ethics, as well as that of Scholastic and Aristotelian philosophy in general – after centuries of being eclipsed – has had a big impact on normative ethics. Some of the thinkers which I

¹³⁸ Approximately, from the 17th to the 20th centuries. I leave the 21st out of consideration here, mainly since so many years yet are to be lived through before we can judge the most dominant intellectual trends characteristic of this century.

mentioned, such as J. S. Mill and Henry Sidgwick, may have thought that the *scientific method* could yield similar results within ethics than it did within physics and chemistry, for instance. However, this is a point I emphatically deny. Ethics and science should not be viewed as being completely foreign to each other – a point which advocates of the ‘fact/value’ distinction fail to accept – since the result of doing so is to generate a notion of science as being completely *evaluatively neutral*. That may have its merits, in that scientific hypotheses can be tested solely with regards to their truth or falsity, without being encumbered by the nagging voice of any ‘subjective’ or ‘sentimental’ ethical complaints. However, the *practical* results of this form of detachment which have played such havoc in the 20th century should lead us to question such a separation. Also, another result of doing so is to encourage the idea that ethical reasoning is not *factual* reasoning – there just is no ‘matter of fact’ as far as ethical decisions are concerned. Again, in practice this has disastrous consequences for human civilisation. As far as a statement such as ‘murder is wrong’ goes, for instance, to call this ‘non-factual’ or a merely ‘emotive judgement’ is a dubious claim to say the least. Out of all the Ancient eudaimonist theories, Aristotelianism and Stoicism presented the most impressive attempts to systematically harmonise the various truth claims which they argued for. In this respect, they both set a good precedent for future ethical theories, since they saw the need to try and carefully harmonise their ethical claims with the wider body of knowledge and science as they knew it. As I said before, my own reason for advocating Thomism over the Ancient schools relates largely to this very point. By taking account of the strengths of each of the Ancient schools, as well as those of Augustinian theology and the key scientific developments within the Medieval period as well, Thomas Aquinas, in my view, presented the most harmonious and plausible ethical and metaphysical system which has so far been defended. The *holistic* and *systematic* nature of his ‘synthesis’ demonstrates for us the extent to which eudaimonism can be interpreted favourably in relation to other fields of human knowledge. I argue that, even in the case of theories such as the Stoics – theories which are notable for their demandingness and rigorism – eudaimonism demonstrably allows for a healthier interaction between ethics and

science than, for instance, Kantian deontology does. Both the Stoics and Kant view virtue in *absolute* terms – their theories are less favourable to what is ‘human all too human’ than Aristotle, for example. However, Stoicism is less *conceptually* rigid and does not have to theoretically rule out *a priori* any ‘merely empirical’ conditions of human nature as Kant does; though it may entail a great deal of revision concerning *how* to live nonetheless. The Stoics’ view of reason is much more plausible than Kant’s view, which makes ‘reason’ essentially alien to human nature whilst simultaneously relying solely on it to deduce ethical conclusions. I argue that any ethical theory which accepts the fact/value distinction leads to insoluble problems as far as practical application in the real world is concerned.

In conclusion, I argue that eudaimonism *is* a plausible and defensible normative ethical position. That applies to eudaimonism in any context. Once the historical particularities of the Hellenistic world are taken account of, and the more demanding intellectual requirements which the Modern scientific world present us with are acceptably accommodated for, eudaimonism is the most plausible *kind* of normative ethical theory available. It avoids, in my view, the Scylla of consequentialist theories – which cannot offer a reliable *moral* standard by which to judge which ends an agent should aim for – and the Charybdis of deontological theories – which cannot successfully specify the kind of *human agent* which is likely and able to obey the commands it proposes. I argue that an ethical theory must account both for what is *right* and what is *good*. Deontology and consequentialism, ultimately, force us to choose between the two; eudaimonism, on the other hand, does not attempt to remove the two from each other and bid us choose between them. Instead, it asserts both that we must develop a character that is *moral* – a character that is oriented towards what is right, honourable, just, decent, good, and so on – as well as a moral *character* – since we are *humans*, we need to find the correct *way* to be (or become) moral. This is where the *virtues* come in; our habits or dispositions must be morally developed, otherwise we will not be motivated to act morally at all, in which case we will be inclined to disobey moral rules in any case. Yet, this is not to be

understood as an exercise in blind mechanical routine obedience. Rather, by taking noble people as our models, by seeing the kind of moral or psychological failings they strenuously avoid, we can learn to see that being virtuous *also* means being (truly) happy. Once we see that our own true happiness cannot and should not be sought after in any and every manner whatsoever, we will see that it is *inherently and necessarily worthwhile* to be morally virtuous. And once we correctly understand that no *truly moral person* will be unhappy that they live in a virtuous fashion, we will begin to see that virtue and happiness are not truly separate and foreign to each other – in fact, we will see that they are either identical in some way, or at least co-extensive¹³⁹ over the agent who possesses both.

(Word Count: 31,789).

¹³⁹ I leave it open *how* they may be so. Perhaps as two ‘properties’ or ‘qualities’ of the agent, or one as means and the other as end, or *conceptually* or ‘virtually’ distinct predications of the same subject.

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