WHY SO MANY PHILOSOPHERS ARE UNHAPPY ABOUT HAPPINESS VIA ARISTOTLE

OR THE RATIO AS THE TRUE PRINCIPLE OF THE ARISTOTELIAN EUDAIMONIA

The main issue of Aristotelian ethics is how to reach *eudaimonia* (happiness), and there is the endless argument in the modern Anglo-American interpretation of Aristotelianism regarding the principle of *eudaimonia* in Aristotle. The purpose of this paper is to resolve this endless argument. The interpreters are divided into two camps. The first camp argues that the principle of *eudaimonia* is one dominant or exclusive *telos* (end) of the *arete* (virtue) of *theoria* (contemplation of the divine). The second camp argues that the principle of *eudaimonia* is an inclusive or compounded *telos* containing this and all other Aristotelian virtues (a compound model), because, otherwise, if *eudaimonia* is only contemplation, the person engaged in contemplation will neglect moral virtues, if their exercising will destruct his contemplation. The textual references are so contradictory and there is so much evidence against the compound model that the most influential interpreters of Aristotle from both camps consider the account of Aristotelian ethics to be inconsistent and ambiguous.

For example, arguing against the inclusive model, W.F.R. Hardie thinks that Aristotle fails to think clearly about means and end, and confuses the "inclusive end" with the "dominant end". Being against the inclusive model, Thomas Nagel (NYU) also accuses Aristotle of "indecision", "ambivalence", and "uncertainty". Being also against the compound model, Anthony Kenny (Oxford) sides with the partial "inclusive interpretation", and is forced to characterize the Aristotelian account as being contradictory. Arguing for the inclusive model, J.L. Ackrill calls the Aristotelian answer to the question about *eudaimonia* "broken-backed", "ambiguous", "obscure and mysterious". Sarah Broadie (Princeton), arguing for the inclu-

sive model, falsifies Aristotelian teleology in her making the most final end manifold, and substituting *phronesis* (practical wisdom) for *theoria*.

I argue that Aristotelian *eudaimonia* is both not inclusive and exclusive – that it is a proportion consisting of two ratios (the solution never offered before). First, I analyze all Aristotelian arguments against *eudaimonia* being inclusive. Then I represent the textual evidence from Aristotle that *eudaimonia* in his ethics is a proportion.

1

The purpose of this paper[1] is to resolve the endless argument in the modern Anglo-American interpretation of Aristotelianism regarding the principle of *eudaimonia* in Aristotelian ethics. The interpreters are divided into two camps. The first camp argues that the principle of *eudaimonia* is one dominant or exclusive *telos* (end) of the *arête* (excellence or virtue) of *theoria* (contemplation of the divine). The second camp argues that the principle of *eudaimonia* is an inclusive or compounded *telos* containing this and all other Aristotelian virtues.

Aristotle indeed says that man cannot be happy without possessing virtue entire[2], and that without friends, love, children, pleasure, moral satisfaction, money, independence, social recognition, health, and most important, without moral virtues, – a man cannot be happy[3]. Aristotle gets even more specific and says that all these conditions should coincide with "the right opportunity", "right locality", should be "right in time" and "the like"[4]. Nonetheless, the textual references are so contradictory and there is so much evidence against the compound model that the most influential interpreters of Aristotle from both camps consider the account of Aristotelian ethics to be inconsistent and ambiguous[5]. My first objective is to analyze the

---

[1] *Nicomachean Ethics* will be referred to as NE, *Eudemian Ethics* as EE

[2] NE, 1177a; 1177a12; 1102a5-6; 1176b1; 1117b9-10

[3] "The man who is very ugly in appearance or ill-born or solitary and childless is not likely to be happy, and perhaps a man would be still less likely if he had thoroughly bad children or friends or had lost good children or friends by death", NE, 1099b5-8

[4] Ibid., 1096a27-28

[5] Arguing against the inclusive model, W. F. R. Hardie thinks that Aristotle fails to think clearly about means and end, and confuses the "inclusive" end with the "dominant" end. Hardie claims that Aristotle with his exclusive model of *eudaimonia* has an "occasional insight" that it is inclusive (W.F.R. Hardie, *The Final Good in Aristotle's Ethics*, Philosophy, 40, 1965, 277, 279; also Hardie's *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, Oxford, 1968, chap. 2). Gauthier and Jolif point out that, positing the exclusive model of *eudaimonia*, Aristotle stresses the "immanent character" of moral action, and so they find the Aristotelian model of happiness incoherent (R.A. Gauthier and J.Y. Jolif, *L'Ethique à Nicomaque*, Paris and Louvain, 1958-59, 2:5-7, 199, 574, 886). Being against the inclusive model, Thomas Nagel also accuses Aristotle

Aristotelian arguments against *eudaimonia's* being inclusive. Then I will argue that Aristotelian *eudaimonia* is both not inclusive and not exclusive – that it is a proportion consisting of two ratios.

<u>The theological anti-compound argument</u> posits that only God(s) are truly happy[6]. Being blessed by their self-sufficiency, God(s) do not need morality[7], the activity of God(s) is contemplative[8]. Hence to become happy, men should imitate God(s) in contemplation[9] and identify themselves not with their complex human nature, but only with its intellectual element, which is divine[10]. Then a problem arises – if a man mimicks the God(s), in thinking of things immortal[11], then should he also ignore morality in his *mimesis* of God(s)? Anthony Kenny, from the anti-compound camp, formulated it thus: if *the contemplative* "really did everything else for the sake of contemplation, why would he rescue his neighbour from burning if it distracts from contemplation?"[12] J. L. Ackrill, from the pro-compound camp, formulated it a similar way: if *theoria* is one dominant end, "one should do anything however seemingly mon-

---

of "indecision", "ambivalence", and "uncertainty" (Thomas Nagel, *Aristotle on Eudaimonia*, Essays on Aristotle's Ethics, Ed. by Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, 1980, 7, 8, 12). He says: "It is because he is not sure who we are that Aristotle finds it difficult to say unequivocally in what our *eudaimonia* consists" (Ibid., 8). Being also against the compound model, Anthony Kenny sides with the partial "inclusive interpretation". He says that Aristotle "seems to be torn between two views" – "whether contemplation is a normal activity like the research of a mathematician, or a paranormal experience like the rapture of a mystic" (Anthony Kenny, *Aristotle on Perfect Life,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992, 106). He discerns *theoretikos* in the *NE*, preoccupied with *theoria*, from the *kalos kagathos* in the *EE*, preoccupied with *kalokagathia* (Ibid., 100-1), the combination of all virtues within perfect virtue, which is the whole of virtue (Ibid., 93). Kenny says that "the type of person whom many regard as the hero of the *NE*, turns out, by the standards of the *EE*, to be a vicious and ignoble person" (Ibid., 90; also: Kenny, A., *The Aristotelian Ethics*, Oxford, 1978, 214). Finally, Kenny is forced to characterize the Aristotelian account as being contradictory (Anthony Kenny, *Aristotle on Perfect Life,* 106), and to say that there is no such thing that one consistent Aristotelian ethics (Ibid., vii, 112, also: Anthony Kenny, *The Aristotelian Ethics: A Study of the Relationship between the Eudemian and Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978). Arguing for the inclusive model, J. L. Ackrill calls the Aristotelian answer to the question about *eudaimonia* "broken-backed" (J.L. Ackrill, *Aristotle on Eudaimonia*, Essays on Aristotle's Ethics, Ed. by Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, 1980, 33), "paradoxical" (Ibid., 32), "ambiguous" (Ibid., 29), "obscure and mysterious" (Ibid., 33) and "a circle of a blind alley" (Ibid., 31). He says, Aristotle does not give a satisfactory account of the nature of man, so that: "If the nature of man is thus unintelligible, the best life for man must remain incapable of clear specification even in principle. Nor can it now seem surprising that Aristotle fails to answer the other question, the question about morality" (Ibid., 33)

[6] NE, 1178b8-9
[7] Ibid., 1178b17-8
[8] Ibid., 1178b22-3
[9] Ibid., 1178b21-3
[10] Ibid., 1178b25-28; 1177a13-18
[11] Ibid., 1177b31-5
[12] Anthony Kenny, *Aristotle on the perfect life* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992), 91

strous if doing it has the slightest tendency to promote *theoria* – and such an act would on this view actually be good and virtuous"[13].

This is the main reason for pro-compound interpreters to deny that *eudaimonia* is one dominant end of contemplation, and insist that Aristotle was simply inconsistent in positing that *eudaimonia* is inclusive of other ends or is a compound or conjunction: Moral Virtues + All Intellectual Virtues including *Phronesis* (practical wisdom) on a par with *Theoria* = *Eudaimonia*. For example, Sarah Broadie posits that "in the ethics Aristotle's focus never ceases to be practical", and identifies Aristotelian *eudaimonia* as "practical excellence at its best" with *theoria*, being just the culmination of the same life or as "theoretical wisdom vis. a vis. practical virtue"[14]. She even says that the life of practical wisdom is itself the entire superlative[15].

In arguing for the inclusive model, Ackrill[16] calls it "a compromise and trading between *theoria* and virtuous action"[17] and "a whole made up of parts"[18]. Both he[19] and Broadie posit that Aristotle admits of the plurality of ends. Ackrill argues that, in Aristotle, a final end is sought for its own sake, but is nevertheless also sought for the sake of something else. So the most final end is that never sought for the sake of anything else because it includes all final ends"[20] or is lacking nothing. Ackrill formulates a compound in this way: "A is for the sake of B, [Aristotle] need not mean that A is a means to subsequent B but may mean that A contributes as a constituent to B"[21]. Broadie argues that Aristotle has "the horizontal teleological model" or *"the celebration model"*[22], as she calls it, while in making *theoria* "the celebration" of *phronesis*, Broadie actually makes *theoria* secondary to *phronesis*.

This is textually wrong. First of all, Aristotle says that *eudaimonia* is *contemplation*, and so *theoria* cannot be just a member of the compound of *eudaimonia*. Also about his teleology, Aristotle says:

---

[13] J.L. Ackrill, *Aristotle on Eudaimonia*, Essays on Aristotle's Ethics, Ed. by Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, 1980), 33
[14] Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford Univ. Press, NY, Oxford, 1991), 387, 389, 397
[15] Ibid., 414
[16] Other defenders of the compound model are Urmson, J.O., *Aristotle's Ethics* (Oxford, 1988), 66 and Cooper, "Contemplation and Happiness: A Reconciliation" (*Synthese*), 187-216
[17] J.L. Ackrill, *Aristotle on Eudaimonia*, 33
[18] Ibid., 29
[19] Ibid., 23
[20] Ibid., 23
[21] Ibid., 29

> **Since there are evidently more than one end, and we choose some of these (e.g. wealth, flutes, and in general instruments) for the sake of something else, clearly not all ends are final ends; but the chief good is evidently something final. Therefore, 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.[23]**

Hence there cannot be plurality of the most final ends in Aristotle. This can be called the teleological anti-compound argument. Aristotle defines the most final end or the end "without qualification" by finality -- it is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else[24], by superiority over other goods and by isolation ("not one thing among others" and "pursued even when isolated from [other goods]"[25]), so that it is self-sufficient and not accepting of additions[26], which are characteristic of a sum or compound. Aristotle says:

> **The self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think happiness to be; and further we think it most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others – if it were so counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods[27].**

Happiness is the final end because this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else, while honour, pleasure, reason and every virtue we choose for themselves, but we choose them also for the sake of happiness[28]. If, as Ackrill suggests, the relation between *eudaimonia* and other virtues is that of "part of whole"[29], then this means that if we take something out of *eudaimonia*, there will be less of *eudaimonia*, and so, contrary to Aristotle, *eudaimonia* becomes dependent on its constituents, and so not final. In Aristotle, just *end-in-itself* is different from *the final end-in-itself* and cannot be its constituent.

Ackrill primarily resorts[30] to the concept of *areten teletan* (complete virtue) in the *EE*, where it is said that a happy life is a life of complete virtue[31]. He argues for the compound as "a kind of subordination which makes it perfectly possible to say that moral action is for the

---

[22] Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 14, 396, 413
[23] NE, 1097a24-30
[24] Ibid., 1097a35-6
[25] Ibid., 1096b18-19
[26] Ibid., 1097b15-9; "The good cannot become more desirable by the addition of anything to it", 1172b32-3
[27] Ibid., 1097b15-9
[28] Ibid., 1097b1-7
[29] J.L. Ackrill, *Aristotle on Eudaimonia,* 19
[30] Ibid., 27-9

sake of *eudaimonia* without implying that it is a means to producing something other than itself"[32]. Basically, what Ackrill means here is that if I am moral, then I am happy, even if I am not contemplative, which is just textually wrong. The following argument by Aristotle can be called the structural argument. He says that reason, which is divine, is different structurally, or by its nature, from our human nature. Our human nature is composite or a compound, while divine reason is not composite and not a compound. And hence, *eudaimonia* as *theoria* cannot be a compound either:

> **The moral virtues belong to our composite nature; and the virtues of our composite nature are human; so, therefore, are the life and the happiness which correspond to these. The excellence of reason is a thing apart[33].**

Aristotle calls human happiness a happiness of "a secondary degree"[34], or not happiness as it is. It remains incomplete, even if it adds more and more new components. Aristotle says that a limit should be set to the compounding requirements, concerning "ancestors", "descendants" and "friends' friends" – "an infinite series"[35] – and this limit is not quantitative, but qualitative. Hence the structural argument supports the teleological argument in restating that the perfect good of happiness cannot become any better by addition of any other good, and is "the end of action"[36]. For Aristotle, to be complete does not mean "to be compounded". He says:

> **Human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete[37].**

Another Aristotelian anti-compound argument can be called the *Ergon* (function) argument. It states whether "honour, pleasure, reason and every virtue", which we choose for the sake of happiness, can be the parts of happiness as a whole on functional grounds. Not only is *eudaimonia*, in Aristotle, structurally different from other goods, but other goods can impede *eudaimonia*. A too moral person usually ends up being very unhappy. Being definitely not a moralist, Aristotle says:

---

[31] EE, 1219a35-39
[32] J.L. Ackrill, *Aristotle on Eudaimonia*, 20
[33] NE, 1178a20-4
[34] Ibid., 1178a8-9
[35] Ibid., 1097b13-4
[36] Ibid., 1097b17-23

> **Possession of virtue seems actually compatible … with the greatest sufferings and misfortunes; but a man who is living so no one would call happy, unless he were maintaining a thesis at all costs[38].**

Aristotle adds that practical activities are "even hindrances, at all events to … contemplation"[39].

Furthermore, purely human activities pursue only relative goods and their "accounts are distinct and diverse"[40]. Particular good depends on "fluctuation of opinion" and "bring harm to many people"[41]. It has "no fixity"[42], and is "destroyed by defect and excess"[43]. It depends on personal circumstances:

> **Often even the same man identifies [happiness] with different things, with health when he is ill, with wealth when he is poor[44].**
> **There is no natural object of wish, but only what seems good to each man. Now different things appear good to different people, and, if it so happens, even contrary things[45].**
> **There is no natural object of wish, but only what seems good to each man. Now different things appear good to different people, and, if it so happens, even contrary things[46].**

Therefore, Aristotle defines moral virtues as means or as "intermediate relatively to us … which is neither too much nor too little – and this is not one, nor the same for all"[47], so that moral virtue is a kind of a compensation for the incompleteness[48] (we are brave only to the extent we can be brave; and we change our degree of fortitude depending on circumstances), while Aristotle says that "none of the attributes of happiness is incomplete"[49], so that happiness is not so easily moved or removed[50], nor is the happy man "many-coloured and change-

---

[37] Ibid., 1098a17-9
[38] Ibid., 1095b32-1096a2
[39] Ibid., 1178b4-5; Aristotle also says that some of the lower animals have practical wisdom, Ibid., 1141a29; "Practical wisdom will be of no use to those who are good", 1143b29-31; "It would be thought strange if practical wisdom, being inferior to philosophic wisdom, is to be put in authority over it", 1143b32-4; "It would be strange to think that the art of politics, or practical wisdom, is the best knowledge, since man is not the best thing in the world", 1141a20-2
[40] Ibid., 1096b25
[41] Ibid., 1094b16-8
[42] Ibid., 1104a5
[43] Ibid., 1104a12
[44] Ibid., 1095a23-5
[45] Ibid., 1113a21-3
[46] Ibid., 1113a21-3
[47] Ibid., 1106a25-b7)
[48] "Straightening sticks that are bent", Ibid., 1109b7
[49] Ibid., 1177b24-5
[50] Ibid., 1101a6

able"[51]. That is why the mean also cannot be a principle of *eudaimonia* – it constantly changes. But for the same reason, the mean cannot be a compound, for a compound can combine only constants, while moral virtues are not constants. Also the same circumstances, the same habits of character, the same passions can be vices or virtues depending on the means for the particular man:

> **Not only are the sources and causes of their origination and growth [moral virtues] the same as those of their destruction, but also the sphere of their actualization will be the same[52].**
> **From the same causes and by the same means that every virtue is both produced and destroyed[53].**

Had we identified happiness with a compound, we would be unable to explain why the same compound of circumstances, states of character, and such makes one man happy, and another one miserable.

Actually, Aristotle had rejected the principle of compounding already on the level of moral virtues, and offered the concept of moral virtue as a mean precisely to avoid the fallacy of compounding. In his *chameleon argument*, Aristotle proves that if we compound happiness from deeds and their benefits in the form of natural goods (the constants), then we are forced to call the same man "happy and again wretched", depending on "his fortunes"[54], and this will make "the happy man out to be a chameleon and insecurely based"[55]. The compounding constitutes a paradox, says Aristotle. If we are to compound, then "we do not wish to call living man happy, on account of the changes that may befall him"[56]. Aristotle's solution to the paradox is his rejection of compounding:

> **… Is this keeping pace with his fortunes quite wrong? Success or failure in life does not depend on these, but human life, as we said, needs these as mere additions[57].**

Also Aristotle says that "[virtues] are not faculties"[58], so are not structural elements and cannot be compounded. In an attempt to make Aristotle more moral-looking, the compound-

---

[51] Ibid., 1101a9
[52] Ibid., 1104a27-9
[53] Ibid., 1103b7-8; "Not only are the sources and causes of their origination and growth the same as those of their destruction, but also the sphere of their actualization will be the same", 1104a27-9
[54] Ibid., 1100b5-8
[55] Ibid., 1100b5-11
[56] Ibid., 1100b1-2

promoters try to make Aristotelian happiness a compound in order to be able to include the moral virtues into happiness on a par with *theoria*, or as essentially equal structural units. But the Aristotelian moral virtues are not compounds themselves – so the compound-promoters try to make the Aristotelian *eudaimonia* the compound via the compounding of something that cannot be compounded. The sense of the *Ergon* argument is that it is not the structure (a compound) itself, which determines excellence but the functioning of the structure or its "state". So moral virtue is a state or function of character[59] (a mean), and *eudaimonia* is a state or function of the entire soul.

Besides *the chameleon argument*, Aristotle has a simpler functional argument that happiness is not a compound. He says that there is no happiness in sleep[60]. If we make happiness a compound (a structural concept), and not a function, as Aristotle wants it (a functional concept), we would not be able to explain why a compound ceases to exist in sleep for "half our lives". And the last functional argument against *eudaimonia* being a compound, is that contrary to *phronesis* and moral virtue, happiness as *theoria*, in its self-sufficiency, is defined by its *uselessness*: "nothing arises from it apart from the contemplating"[61]. Something completely useless evidently cannot be constituted by particularly useful activities.

Aristotle distinguishes between two kinds of activities – activity "where there are products apart from the actions" and activity which is its own product or is an end in itself. Regarding the first kind of activities, "it is the nature of the products to be better than the activities"[62]. He speaks of action as always being an activity of the first kind: "actions are for the sake of things other than themselves"[63] (and so Aristotle distinguishes between the activity and the action). Then how could the *eudaimonia*, as the activity of the second kind, be composed of the inferior activities of the first kind, i.e., actions? Furthermore, the presence of the mimesis of God makes the compound impossible, because the human and the divine are incompatible and incomparable – they couldn't be placed next to each other on one and the same plane. All this makes it very difficult to call Aristotle an action theorist.

---

[57] Ibid., 1100b8-11
[58] Ibid., 1106a3-4; 1106a10-1
[59] Ibid., 1106a14
[60] "The happy are no better off than the wretched for half their lives", Ibid., 1102b78
[61] Ibid., 1177b2-3
[62] Ibid., 1094a5-7
[63] Ibid., 1112b33-4

Hence, the functional argument also supports the teleological argument, restating that perfect happiness cannot become any better by adding moral virtues and *phronesis*, which are functionally different from *eudaimonia* and cannot be parts of it. That is why Ackrill realizes his own "circle of a blind alley", when he finishes his article on Aristotelian happiness, evidently not being happy with his own arguments:

> **The need for Aristotle to give a rule for combining *theoria* with virtuous action in the best life is matched by the impossibility of his doing so, given that *theoria* is the incompatibly more valuable activity[64].**

2

Though Aristotle does not say directly that *eudaimonia* is a proportion, there are more than enough indirect proofs that it is so for Aristotle. In *NE,* Aristotle says that justice is virtue entire[65]:

> **[Justice] is complete virtue in its fullest sense, because it is the actual exercise of complete virtue. It is complete because he who possesses it can exercise his virtue not only in himself but towards his neighbour also … Justice in this sense, then, is not part of virtue but virtue entire.[66]**

At the same time, in the *EE*, he says that *eudaimonia* is virtue entire[67], and in the *NE* that: "The more [man] is possessed of virtue in its entirety, … the happier he is"[68]. Aristotle considers equality to be a principle of justice. According to Aristotle, "since the equal is intermediate, the just will be an intermediate"[69], and "the just … is a species of the proportionate"[70]. He says that the geometrical proportion consisting of two ratios is a principle for distributive justice[71], for the justice of reciprocity[72], and for political justice in general[73], and the arithmetical proportion for rectificatory justice[74]. This clearly shows that if Aristotle interprets

---

[64] J.L. Ackrill, *Aristotle on Eudaimonia*, 32
[65] NE, 1130a9-10
[66] Ibid., 1129b30-1 … 1130a9-11
[67] Happiness is the activity of a good soul (EE, 1219a35). Virtue can be perfect (complete) and imperfect (incomplete). Perfect virtue is the whole of virtue, and happiness is the perfect life possessing the virtue entire, or the perfect virtue, EE, 1219a37
[68] NE, 1117b9-10
[69] Ibid., 1131a13-4
[70] Ibid., 1131a30
[71] Ibid., 1131a30
[72] Ibid., 1132b31-5; 1133a1; 1133a10-2
[73] Ibid., 1134a26; 1134b2-4
[74] Ibid., 1132a1-3

virtue entire in the case of justice as a proportion, not a compound, he cannot interpret virtue entire in the case of *theoria* as a compound. And if, as I proved above, man cannot, in Aristotle, possess virtue entire in a form of both a compound and a mean, it should be a functional principle close to the one offered by Aristotle for justice.

In concise form my argument is: (a) the principle of justice as virtue entire is a proportion; (b) eudaimonia is virtue entire; (c) the principle of eudaimonia should be proportion. One can rebut that Aristotle calls phronesis also virtue entire[75], and why could not we make the principle of phronesis the principle of eudaimonia, which was, actually, done by Broadie. Moreover, justice is the highest form of *phronesis* – "managing households or states"[76]. My answer is that Broadie's model is functionally and structurally incorrect. She takes the content of *phronesis*, with its plurality of final ends and interest in things mortal, and attributes it to virtue entire, while, as I mentioned before, Aristotle unambiguously says that *phronesis* "is not superior over philosophic wisdom, i.e. over the superior part of us"[77]. I believe that the correct solution is that we can indeed look to *phronesis* for the principle of *eudaimonia* – precisely because Aristotle uses the principle of the intermediate, including proportion, throughout his ethics, as a means of achieving the unity or equality between contradictory incomparable elements, which, in principle, cannot be united in a compound according to the law of excluded middle. Nonetheless, only in *eudaimonia*, does the human soul realize the principle of proportion in its full.

When considering a correlation between moral virtue as a state of character and *phronesis* as deliberation, Aristotle offers a continuous proportion A / B = B / C:

> **Since moral virtue is a state of character concerned with choice, and choice is deliberate desire, therefore both the reasoning must be true and the desire right.[78]**

In this proportion, moral virtue is to choice, as choice is to the deliberation of the practical reason. Furthermore, when Aristotle speaks of friendship as patterns, which run from households to political constitutions[79], he defines friendship as a kind of justice[80] with equality as a

---

[75] "With the presence of the one quality, practical wisdom, will be given all the virtues", Ibid., 1145a1-3
[76] Ibid., 1140b11
[77] Ibid., 1145a7-8
[78] Ibid.,1139a22-4
[79] Ibid., 1160b23-4
[80] Ibid., 1162a29-31

major principle[81], and says that equality is a principle of proportion, and love is proportional to merit when there is initial inequality of parties[82]. Moreover, there is a direct indication that Aristotle allowed for applying the principle of proportion to the interrelation between the parts of the soul. Considering the question "can a man treat himself unjustly"[83], Aristotle says:

> **Metaphorically and in virtue of a certain resemblance there is a justice, not indeed between a man and himself, but between certain parts of him … For these are the ratios in which the part of the soul that has a rational principle stands to the irrational part.[84]**

Proportion is another kind of intermediate from the mean of moral virtues, because an arithmetic mean cannot correlate the heterogeneous elements, as proportion does, like in "a ratio of builder to shoemaker"[85] in *NE*, concerning the justice of reciprocity. A mean correlates pairs of opposites, while a proportion correlates the parts of the whole. The fact that a proportion is applied to a whole and its parts does not make a proportion a sort of a compound. The compound or conjunction does not give a unity to the conjoined elements, while a proportion organizes the parts of the whole in such a way that the whole becomes structurally and functionally different from its parts and their conjunction. The other difference between a mean and a proportion is that a proportion can be fixed, while a mean is constantly changeable.

Let me now analyze how the Aristotelian principle of proportion is applied to eudaimonia, and, particularly, how it can be fixed. Ackrill, Nagel, Broadie, Kenny, in accusing Aristotle of pursuing an exclusive dominant end in one place and an inclusive end in other places, seem to ignore the fact that Aristotle offered a sound argument against one dominant end in the Platonic sense (some one good predicable of goods[86] or some common element answering to one Idea[87]). So instead of blaming Aristotle for what he was not guilty of, it is much more happiness-rewarding to analyze why and in what way his ethics was *teleological* and so not "compounded", while not being teleological in the Platonic sense.

---

[81] Ibid., 1159b2-3; 1157b36; 1158b1
[82] Ibid., 1158b24-9
[83] Ibid., 1138a28
[84] Ibid., 1138b5-9
[85] Ibid., 1133a20, 1133a23
[86] Ibid., 1096a22-9; 1096b33-5
[87] Ibid., 1096b25-6

Arguing against Plato, Aristotle states both that (a) the good is relative to the right localities, opportunities, time and the like[88], and that his concern is how "a weaver or a carpenter", "a particular man", could get "benefited … by knowing this 'good itself'"[89], and (b) that his end is not "some good" or particular good, which "clash with the procedure of the sciences"[90]. That is why Aristotle says both that (a) *theoria* is useless and isolated contemplative activity and (b) it has "no refuge in theory"[91] and should harmonize with the facts[92]. Hence, the Aristotelian principle of *eudaimonia* should tie together both the universal and the particular good. This principle cannot be on the same plane with particulars -- the more particulars are brought by Aristotle under consideration, the stronger his unifying principle appears to be. This principle should deal with functionally diverse and structurally incompatible elements, like the divine and the human in the soul, and the moral and the intellectual virtues, because Aristotle says that "virtues do not exist in separation from each other[93]. Actually, Aristotle directly says that the intuitive reason (the highest faculty of reason[94]) deals both with the universal and the particular:

> **Intuitive reason is concerned with the ultimates in both directions … and the intuitive reason which is presupposed by demonstrations grasps the unchangeable and first terms, while the intuitive reason involved in practical reasonings grasps the last and variable fact, i.e, the minor premise[95].**

So that "intuitive reason is both beginning and end"[96].

In his proportions in *NE* concerning justice, Aristotle gives an example of the way in which to make "somehow comparable" diverse and opposite things as natural and legal or conventional[97]. So Aristotle does not need any aid from compound theorists. He brilliantly takes care of uniting diverse elements without destroying analytic clarity. In the *NE*, Aristotle says

---

[88] Ibid., 1096a22-9
[89] Ibid., 1097a9-13
[90] Ibid., 1097a3-4
[91] Ibid., 1105b13
[92] Ibid., 1179a21-3
[93] Ibid., 1144b32-3; "It is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, nor practically wise without moral virtue", 1144b30-2
[94] "It is intuitive reason that grasps the first principles", Ibid., 1141a7-8
[95] Ibid., 1143a35-43b4
[96] Ibid., 1143b10
[97] Ibid., 1134b18

that "the proportional is intermediate, and the just is proportional"[98]. Let us extract from Aristotle's *NE* the rules of proportion:

1. **"A proportion is equality of ratios, and involves four terms at least"[99];**
2. **"The ratio between one pair is the same as that between the other pair; for there is *a similar distinction between the persons and between the things*"[100] (emphasis – IC);**
3. **"The whole is to the whole as either part is to the corresponding part"[101].**

An example of the geometrical proportion is: A / B = C / D, which is the same is A / C = B / D. Or as Aristotle puts it: "As the term A … is to B, so will C be to D, and therefore, *alternando*, as A is to C, B will be to D"[102]. The point of applying a proportion to justice is to divide honour or reward or compensation into parts, which are to one another as are the merits of the persons who are to participate.

Using the principle that "the whole is to the whole as either part is to the corresponding part", one can construct the proportion of *eudaimonia* as H / D = T / M (H=human component of the soul; D=divine component of the soul; T= *theoria* or contemplation; M=moral virtues or any other component of the soul in relation to *theoria*). This proportion correlates the human and the divine components of the soul as wholes, on the one side of the equation, and it correlates the moral and the intellectual virtues, as their corresponding parts, on the other side of the equation. The human component of the soul is moral virtues, virtues of love and friendship. The divine component of the soul is *logos* (intellect) with all its five intellectual virtues. The last three of the intellectual virtues, being combined, are called contemplation[103] and concern the facts about being that cannot be altered: scientific knowledge, intuitive reason, philosophic wisdom, which is the combination of the first two[104].

Aristotle says that "continuous proportion … uses one term as two and mentions it twice"[105] and that for justice, "proportion is not continuous; for *we cannot get a single term standing for a person and a thing*"[106] (emphasis – IC), and it is geometrical. So, analogously for *eudaimonia* as a proportion, we cannot indeed acquire any constant to use in its formula-

---

[98] Ibid., 1131b11-2
[99] Ibid., 1131a30-3
[100] Ibid., 1131b4-6
[101] Ibid., 1131b15
[102] Ibid., 1131b6-7
[103] Ibid., 1139b18-36; 1140b31-41b8
[104] Ibid., 1141a17-8
[105] Ibid., 1131a34-5 – 1131b1-2

tion. There couldn't be any fixed value, or norm, or prerogative, or thing to guarantee happiness for somebody. Hence there is nothing palpable to compound. Instants of the equation constantly change, while, to guarantee happiness, the proportion should stay the same – "unchangeably good". Aristotle calls it "cross-conjunction"[107] in the coupling of the distribution effects[108]. For justice, as virtue entire, equality means the harmonious distribution of wealth in the society. For *theoria*, as virtue entire, equality means the harmonious correlation of the parts in the soul of man. Also there is no too small or too much in the proportion – too much of contemplation, too little of the moral deeds, or too much of the moral deeds, too little of contemplation – because the balance is always preserved. Aristotle calls this equality as "the intermediate between the greater and the less"[109].

This proportion H / D = T / M is to be read: to be happy, man should have as much of *theoria* in correlation to his moral actions as he has the human element of his soul in correlation to the divine element of his soul. This means that the contemplative would indeed go and help his neighbour burning in fire, and not only because this will give him some comfort in not listening to desperate yelling and smelling burning flesh, but because the moral variable is an integral part in the equation of his happiness. In this equation (H/D=T/M), the more of the divine, the less of the human; and the more of the moral, the less of the contemplative. Let's say, somebody in order to be happy can be less divine and more human, if, and only if, his moral actions are more developed than his contemplative activity. This explains why Aristotle is so preoccupied with moral action and with satisfying the moral specifics of the definite place, definite time and definite character for achieving happiness.

Nonetheless, moral norms are not imperatives, but instants of a variable. And everyone is doing the instantiation on his own, depending on his circumstances and state of character -- the interrelation of the divine and the human as wholes on the one side of the equation preserves objectivity (universality), while the other side of the equation allows for moral particularity. On the other hand, the divine element of the soul is not some constant either. One cannot claim the holy scripture of any religion as some unconditional prescription for happiness. This proportion also means that there can be different ratios between *theoria* and the

---

[106] Ibid., 1131b16-7
[107] Ibid., 1133a5
[108] Ibid., 1131b8
[109] Ibid., 1132a14-5

moral virtues in the soul – some people can be more engaged in the activity of contemplation, and some can be more engaged in moral action. How much to get involved is not determined by some norm, tradition or habit, but is determined by how much the divine element is developed in this or that human soul in comparison to the human element.

Again, there can be an infinite number of instantiations for the variables in the proportion of the Aristotelian *eudaimonia*. Nonetheless, the fact that the proportion equates two ratios allows for happiness to remain unchanged. It is not some quality or quantity that should be preserved in *eudaimonia* – but the equality of ratios, the harmonious interrelation of the parts of the soul. In the same way, when something is cooked, one can take more or less of the constituents, but the ratio should be preserved. And let me stress again, the fact that the proportion also operates with constituents does not make it a compound. Proportion is a much higher function than a mere conjunction.

That is why in Aristotle, actually, there are two kinds of happiness – the way of justice for the political ruler and the way of contemplation for the philosopher. The philosopher and the ruler are *both* happy, and both have *one* and *dominant* end of their happiness, and it is not a contradiction for Aristotle, because this one and dominant end is the equation of variables, which are instantiated by everyone on his own. The political rulers, and especially the philosophers, differ from other folks[110] just by the fact that their equations are instantiated in a most harmonic way of everything being not too much and not too little.

As Aristotle points out, the geometrical proportion can be rewritten[111]. So let us rewrite the geometrical proportion of happiness: H / T = D / M. This proportion is to be read: to be happy, a man should have as much of the human element in his soul in correlation to his *theoria* as he has the divine element of his soul in correlation to his moral actions. So the more of the contemplative, the less of the human; and the more of the moral, the less of the divine. Let's say, somebody in order to be happy can be more divine and less moral, if and only if the human element of his soul (with its other parts, different from morality, e.g., love, friendship) is developed enough in comparison with contemplating. There always should be a balance between the human and the divine, the contemplative and the moral – not too much, not too little of anything – otherwise the proportion will be destroyed.

[110] Ibid., 1178a24-5;1178a29-34; 1178b2-3
[111] Ibid., 1131b6-7

My conclusion is that the Aristotelian division of goods into two kinds of ends – self-sufficient, "in themselves", and not-self-sufficient, "for the sake of something else", clearly shows that Aristotle accordingly divides the good into the good and "the perfect" (or "the best"). The human good is a lack of something and only a relative approximation to the good – that is why it is a stimulus for action. Beatitude of Gods, "the best", is not good at all in the human sense of the good, because Gods do not lack anything, and so do not distinguish between the good and the no-good, and so do not need to be virtuous. I believe that all previous interpreters of Aristotle failed in distinguishing these two different kinds of the good. Trying to resolve the contradiction between contemplation and moral action, they argued that Aristotle has a contradiction between the human good as moral action in the form of a compound and some "perfect good" as contemplation in the form of a dominant end. But Aristotle himself clearly distinguishes between these two goods, and opposes the beatitude of Gods to the complex nature of the human soul.

Defining human nature as a compound and divine reason in the soul, as some "thing apart", Aristotle was quite conscious that the soul is contradictory. Nonetheless, it is a final end of the soul to overcome this contradiction and find a balance between its elements, especially between two major components – the divine and the human. And this balance is Aristotelian happiness, definable in no other way than as a geometrical proportion. Again, it is a geometrical proportion, not a compound, because the human and the divine cannot be compounded – these are categories not comparable on one plane; they cannot be put one next to the other, cannot coexist on one and the same level. And it is not an arithmetical mean for the same reason -- in the arithmetic mean, only the human characteristics of the situation are considered (excess and deficiency of some human qualities), while *eudaimonia* as a qualitatively new entity, superior to purely human qualities, actions, etc., and does not depend on the fluctuations of the particulars. Later on, in Hellenism, the Aristotelian *theoria* will become *ataraxia*, which added to any combinations of the complex human nature, will allow a man to be happy notwithstanding any misfortunes. The Aristotelian mean can be called the content intermediate, while the Aristotelian proportion can be called the formal intermediate.

And the last thing to be said is that morality as a component of this equation finally acquires some objective basis, so that there is not at all any contradiction between Aristotelian *eudaimonia* and the Aristotelian account of moral action. Being an arithmetical mean, Aristo-

telian moral virtue is a variable, not a constant (or, in other words, Aristotle is not a value theorist, at all). Aristotelian moral virtue is not some didactic formulation, a definition in virtue of meaning, which can give an automatic indulgence or sanction. Aristotelian moral virtue cannot be bestowed upon or be added to a man or a situation to make the man and the situation virtuous. And it is essential to understand, that had the mean been the final Aristotelian word on virtue, this would have opened his account to fluctuation of opinion and to relativism. And the mean definitely is not all of the Aristotelian account of moral virtue.

Only the geometrical proportion can explain the seeming inconsistency of Aristotle's saying that happiness is "something final" and "the end of action"[112] and that practically defined happiness is "a sort of good life and good action"[113]. Also, even being defined in isolation, happiness according to Aristotle is indeed "the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing in the world"[114]. So nobility and pleasure, being not compounded with happiness, are nevertheless the variables in its proportion. Only the geometrical proportion can explain, how after entering the equation of ratios, pleasure and nobility qualitatively change to become the components of something, which is qualitatively different from pleasure and nobility per se.

[112] Ibid., 1097b21-2
[113] Ibid., 1098b21-2
[114] Ibid., 1099a24-5