

# The “Belonging to a Kind” Reading of the Eudemian *Ergon* Argument

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## I. Introduction

Aristotle’s *Eudemian Ethics* (EE) is a search for what *eudaimonia* is. Up to the end of EE I, the contours of this search are clear. The first six chapters make up a “proemium.”<sup>1</sup> Here Aristotle states the main questions of the treatise, canvasses a number of views about what *eudaimonia* is, and describes his methodology. Then, in I.7 he begins his search in earnest. He starts with the true but unclear statement that *eudaimonia* is the greatest and best of human goods (1217a21-22), and moves from this to clearer and clearer claims about what *eudaimonia* is. By the end of this chapter Aristotle concludes that *eudaimonia* is the best of goods that are achievable in action (*prakton*) for a human being (1217a39-40). At the end of I.8 he identifies *eudaimonia* as the *telos* of these goods (1218b11-12).

Aristotle’s search continues into the next book with the Eudemian *ergon* argument (1218b31-1219a39). As expected, Aristotle further sharpens his picture of *eudaimonia*. He concludes that *eudaimonia* is good life activity (1219a27-28); that it is activity of a good soul (1219a34-35); and that it is activity of a *teleia* life in accordance with *teleia* virtue (1219a38-39). But the force of these claims and, consequently, the conclusions of this argument, are unclear.

According to many scholars, Aristotle means to uniquely specify *eudaimonia* in his *ergon* argument. At least some of these conclusions pick out *eudaimonia* from everything else in the world. Indeed, it is often claimed that the *ergon* argument results in a *definition* of *eudaimonia*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See 1217a18. I take τούτων to refer generally to everything that has preceded chapter I.7. Unless noted otherwise, I follow the text of Walzer and Mingay 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Zeller 1880, 556, takes 1239a34-35 to be a definition, with whom Dirlmeier 1962, 226 concurs. Woods 1992, 91-2 tentatively suggests that 1219a27-28 is a definition. Karbowski 2019, 122 refers to 1219a34-35 as a definition.

The final conclusion of the *ergon* argument, 1219a38-39, has received the most attention. Dirlmeier, 1962, 226; Monan 1968, 123-4, n. 4; Rowe 1971, 25; Cooper 1986, 116; Hutchinson 1986, 43; Buddensiek, 1999, 64; Broadie 2010, 4-5; Karbowski 2015, 200; Simpson 2013, 238; Kenny 2016, 200; and Lee forth. all take these lines to

On such a view, the EE *ergon* argument is plausibly seen as the culmination of Aristotle's search for *eudaimonia*. Of course, afterwards he goes on to clarify important concepts relevant to this discovery. Thus, for much of the EE he examines what virtue is, what virtues there are, and how they themselves and their activities interrelate. But, fundamentally, the *ergon* argument completes his search for what *eudaimonia* is.

This interpretation is not without reason. Immediately after the argument, Aristotle says that the genus and *horos* of *eudaimonia* has been well said (1219a39-40). Surely, the thought goes, '*horos*' here means "definition." Thus, it seems, Aristotle takes himself to have defined, and, hence, uniquely specified, *eudaimonia* in the *ergon* argument. Relatedly, Aristotle's claims about what *eudaimonia* is result from dividing practicable human goods into various classes. This procedure is reminiscent of the method of division described in *Posterior Analytics* II.13, a method by which Aristotle thinks definitions can be found.

But although this view is plausible, it is mistaken. The Eudemian *ergon* argument is in fact a more modest step in Aristotle's search for *eudaimonia*. Rather than uniquely specifying what *eudaimonia* is, Aristotle argues merely that *eudaimonia* belongs to a certain kind. *Eudaimonia* is good life activity, or activity of a good soul, or *teleia* activity in accordance with *teleia* virtue in the way that jockeys are athletes: *eudaimonia* belongs to the kind specified by the predicates in these claims but need not be the only thing in this kind. This, at least, is all that his argument entitles him to, and despite appearances there is no reason to think that he is after anything more.

My interpretation has implications for how we interpret the EE more broadly. In particular, my reading affects our understanding of Aristotle's Eudemian theory of *eudaimonia*. The *ergon* argument is the central piece of evidence adduced for the "Inclusivist" reading of the EE, according

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define *eudaimonia*. Kraut 1989, 251, n.43 thinks that 1219a38-39 uniquely specifies *eudaimonia*, but he does not take a stance on whether these lines constitute a definition.

to which *eudaimonia* is a combination of all forms of virtuous activity performed over a suitable lifetime.<sup>3</sup> If I am right, Inclusivism is severely undercut, and other interpretations prove more tenable than previously thought. At the end of this paper, I shall briefly discuss how my argument clears the path towards an Intellectualist reading of the EE.

## II. Parts One and Two of the *Ergon* Argument

The Eudemian *ergon* argument has three parts. Part One is 1218b32-1219a28; Part Two is 1219a28-35; and Part Three is 1219a35-39. Each of these parts is an argument for a claim about what *eudaimonia* is. In this section and the next, I shall argue that Parts One and Two are best understood as arguments to the effect that *eudaimonia* belongs to a certain kind. In section IV, I shall argue for the same conclusion regarding Part Three.

Prior to the *ergon* argument, Aristotle concludes that *eudaimonia* is the best of the goods achievable in action for a human being (hereafter simply “goods”) (1217a39-40). In Parts One and Two, Aristotle clarifies what this best good is by arguing that good life activity, or activity of a good soul, is better than all other goods.

In both parts, Aristotle first divides the goods into goods in the soul and goods external to the soul, and argues that the best good must be a good of the soul.<sup>4</sup> He next exhaustively divides the of goods of the soul: goods of the soul are either states of the soul or activities produced by these states. Using this division, along with some principles about how the value of states compares to that of activities, Aristotle concludes in both arguments that the activity of the soul’s

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<sup>3</sup> Monan 1968, 123-5; Ackrill 1980, 27; Keyt 1983, 368, 385, n.9; Cooper 1986, 115-9; Whiting 1986, 76 and n.16; Kraut, 1989, 289 and n. 19; Lear 2004, 5, 27 and n.39; Broadie 2010, 4-5; Kenny 2016, 203-4.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this paper, I shall use the phrases ‘goods in the soul’ and ‘goods of the soul’ interchangeably.

virtue is better than its best state, virtue. On this basis, he concludes that *eudaimonia*, the best good, is good life activity or activity of a good soul.

*a. Part One: 1218b32-1219a28*

Aristotle begins Part One as follows (1218b32-36):<sup>5</sup>

All goods are either external to or in the soul, and of these the goods in the soul are more choiceworthy....For *phronēsis*, virtue, and pleasure are in the soul, of which either some or all of these seem to all to be a *telos*.

Aristotle has already concluded

(1) *Eudaimonia* is the best good.

In this passage Aristotle makes the following two moves:

(2) All goods are either external to or in the soul.

(3) The goods in the soul are better than the goods external to the soul.

Aristotle does not characterize either class of goods in (2). But he does offer *phronēsis*, ethical virtue, and pleasure as examples of goods in the soul. Items like these seem to contrast with goods external to the soul (e.g. bodily health, money) in that they are things of which the soul itself is the subject, or things which the soul plays an efficient causal role in bringing about.

After dividing the goods, Aristotle notes that the goods in the soul are more choiceworthy than those external to the soul.<sup>6</sup> But in making this point, he also means to claim that goods in the soul are *better than* goods external to the soul. After all, Aristotle aims to clarify what *eudaimonia*

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<sup>5</sup> For detailed, premise-by-premise reconstructions of Part One as well as the rest of the *ergon* argument, see Hutchinson 1986, 40-45; Woods 1992, 85-88; Simpson 2013, 233-238; and Lee forth.

<sup>6</sup> It is unclear what (3) means. (3) might mean that every good of the soul is better than any good external to the soul. But *Top.* III.2, 117b33-38 suggests a weaker interpretation. On this interpretation, (3) means merely that the best good of the soul is better than the best good external to the soul. Claim (4) will be validly inferred from (1)-(3) on either interpretation.

is by way of the fact that it is the *best* good, not the most choiceworthy good. Given what follows in the argument, (3), couched in terms of betterness, is the claim Aristotle needs for his argument.

From (1)-(3) follows

(4) *Eudaimonia* is a good of the soul.

*Eudaimonia*, like all goods, must be either in the soul or external to the soul. Since *eudaimonia* is the best good, and goods of the soul are better than goods external to the soul, *eudaimonia* must be a good of the soul. For the remainder of Part One Aristotle turns his attention specifically to these goods.

Aristotle's next move is as follows (1218b36-37):

And of goods in the soul, some are states or capacities, but others are activities and *kinēseis*.

Aristotle again offers an exhaustive division,<sup>7</sup> this time of goods in the soul. The distinction is initially one between states or capacities, and activities and *kinēseis*. As the argument continues, however, he operates with a simpler division between potentialities of the soul (states, dispositions, and capacities) and actualizations of these potentialities (activities, *kinēseis*). More simply, then, Aristotle claims

(5) All goods of the soul are either states or activities.

where 'states' refers broadly to the soul's potentialities, and 'activities' to their actualizations.<sup>8</sup>

After this, Aristotle turns to making evaluative comparisons among these goods. His first move along these lines is

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<sup>7</sup> Although the division is not explicitly exhaustive, this is required for the argument to work.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Woods 1992, 87-8. Aristotle is somewhat inconsistent with his potentiality and actuality language throughout Parts One and Two. But 'states' refers to potentialities broadly at 1219a7, where he states an important principle to be discussed later; and the division of goods of the soul in Part Two is presented as one simply between states and activities (1219a30-31). I follow Aristotle in these uses of 'state' and 'activity'. For a contrasting view, see Lee forth.

(6) The soul's best state is virtue.

This is argued for at 1218b37-1219a5. The best state of anything that has an *ergon* is its virtue. Something has an *ergon* if it has a characteristic activity or product whose sake it is for.<sup>9</sup> A cloak, for example, has an *ergon*, since it is meant to keep its wearer warm. Consequently, its best state is its virtue. Similarly, a house's best state is its virtue since it is for the sake of preserving one's goods and oneself. The soul too has an *ergon*, viz. life activity—activity such as nutrition and growth, perception, or rational activity.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, its best state will be the virtuous state.

In addition to things like cloaks, ships, and souls having *erga*, Aristotle allows for the states themselves of these things to have *erga* as well. The *ergon* of their states is their respective *ergon* qualified in some evaluative way. Aristotle illustrates this with the craft of shoemaking (1219a19-23). The *ergon* of shoemaking *per se* is a shoe. Hence, the *ergon* of the virtue of shoemaking (if there is such a thing) is an excellent shoe. Presumably, Aristotle also thinks that if one's shoemaking ability were poor, the *ergon* of this state would be a middling or even bad shoe.

With this clarification in mind, we can now understand Aristotle's next moves (1219a6-11):

And let the *ergon* of the better state be better. And as states stand in relation to one another, in this way let also the *erga* from these stand toward one another. And the *ergon* is the *telos* of each. Accordingly, it's clear from these things that the *ergon* is better than the state. For the *telos* is best as *telos*. For it was laid down that the *telos* is the best and the last thing, for the sake of which all the other things are.

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<sup>9</sup> That an *ergon* can be either an activity or a product is clear from 1219a13-18. See Baker 2015 for a good discussion of this point and of these lines.

<sup>10</sup> At 1219a23-24 Aristotle seems to identify the *ergon* of the soul as *producing* life activity. But 1219a25-27 suggest instead that Aristotle takes the *ergon* of the soul to be life activity itself. The *ergon* of the soul's virtue is excellent life activity. But since the *ergon* of the soul's virtue and of the soul are "the same" this implies that the *ergon* of the soul is life activity.

One important claim here is

(7) The *ergon* of a state is better than that state.

This is argued for on grounds that the *ergon* of a state is that state's *telos*, and that the *telos* of X is better than X.<sup>11</sup>

The second important claim in this passage concerns a correspondence between the betterness ordering of states and that of their corresponding *erga*. Assign to each of an item's possible states a name:  $S_1, S_2, \dots$ . Additionally, let these states' *erga* be assigned the corresponding name  $E_1, E_2, \dots$ . Aristotle claims

(8) Whatever betterness ordering  $S_1, S_2, \dots$  stand in relative to one another, their corresponding *erga*  $E_1, E_2, \dots$  stand in the same betterness ordering in relation to one another.

(6)-(8) have the following consequence:

(9) The *ergon* of the soul's virtue is (9a) better than all states of the soul and (9b) better than the *erga* that correspond to all other states of the soul besides virtue.

Clause (9a) follows from (6) and (7). (6) says that the best state of the soul is the soul's virtue. Since, as (7) indicates, the *ergon* of a state is better than that state, it follows that the *ergon* of the soul's virtue is better than the best state. *A fortiori*, it is better than all states of the soul. Clause (9b) follows from (6) and (8). The best state of the soul is virtue. Virtue, in other words, is at the top of the betterness ranking of states. Consequently, by (8) its *ergon* will be at the top of the betterness ranking of *erga* of those states.

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<sup>11</sup> One might be worried that (7) does not hold true for bad states, such as vices. But Aristotle is concerned with *goods* throughout the *ergon* argument. (7), then, should be understood with this implicit restriction in mind. The same point holds for (vi) below.

Aristotle's last step in Part One before drawing his conclusion is to determine what the *ergon* of the soul's virtue is. Aristotle claims

(10) The *ergon* of the soul's virtue is good life activity.

The soul's *ergon* is life activity. Consequently, the *ergon* of the soul's virtue will be life activity qualified in an excellent way.

Aristotle seems to think that the line of thought I have presented is sufficient to conclude

(Concl. 1) The greater good,<sup>12</sup> the very thing which *eudaimonia* was, is this [viz. good life activity, ζωὴ σπουδαία, 1219a27].

But it is unclear how this is so. (9) and (10) yield

(11) Good life activity is (11a) better than all states of the soul and (11b) better than the *erga* that correspond to all other states of the soul besides virtue.

In order to reach (Concl. 1), however, Aristotle needs to show that good life activity is better than all states of the soul and better than the *activities* that correspond to all other states of the soul besides virtue. This is not what (11) says.

Now, (11) *could* support (Concl. 1) if Aristotle additionally assumes that all the activities of the soul are *erga* of the states of the soul. For then he could reason as follows. All goods of the soul are either states or activities. By (11), good life activity is better than all states of the soul and (now relying on his assumption) better than all other activities of the soul. Since *eudaimonia* is the best good of the soul, it must be good life activity.

This additional assumption, however, is not something that Aristotle would endorse. Some activities of the soul are not *erga* of the soul's states. The housebuilding craft, a state of my soul,

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<sup>12</sup> I read the MSS πλέον at 1219a28 (though this is not crucial to my argument). The phrase *to pleon agathon* is admittedly odd, but I think that it is intelligible. *Eudaimonia* is "the greater good" in comparison to all other goods. This is another way of saying that *eudaimonia* is the best good or the greatest good.



is active when I engage in some housebuilding. But this activity is not the *ergon* of the housebuilding craft. The *ergon* of this craft is a house (1219a14-15).<sup>13</sup>

A better tack is to revisit (9). Clause (9a) in (9) was supported by (7). But Aristotle's argument for (7) at 1219a9-11 actually entitles him to a stronger claim:

(7\*) The *ergon* of a state is better than that state *and anything else that is for the sake of the ergon*.

Aristotle is entitled to (7\*) because states aren't necessarily the only things that are for the sake of their *ergon*. In the case of housebuilding, both the craft and the activity of housebuilding are for the sake of the house. Consequently, both the housebuilding craft and its activity will be inferior to the *ergon*, the house.

With (7\*) on the table, Aristotle can actually claim

(11\*) Good life activity is (11a) better than all states of the soul, (11b) better than the *erga* that correspond to all other states of the soul besides virtue, and (11c) better than anything else that is for the sake of those corresponding *erga*.

(11\*) supports the conclusion Aristotle wishes to draw. All other activities of the soul besides good life activity fall into one of two classes. Some are *erga* of the soul's states. Good life activity is better than these by clause (11b). Others are activities done for the sake of the *erga* of the states, such as the housebuilding done for the sake of the house. Good life activity is better than these by clause (11c).

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<sup>13</sup> One cannot avoid this objection by pointing out that a house is not a good of the soul. The point is that there are some activities of the soul that are not *erga* of states of the soul. Because of this, clause (11b) does not address the question of how good life activity evaluatively compares to these activities.

(11\*) entitles Aristotle to the claim that good life activity is better than all other goods of the soul. And because *eudaimonia* is both a good of the soul and the best good, Aristotle can draw (Concl. 1).

*b. Part Two: 1219a28-35*

Part Two runs as follows:<sup>14</sup>

And it's clear from the things laid down (for *eudaimonia* was the best, and the *telē* in the soul are also the best of goods, and this is either a state or an activity), since the activity is better than its disposition, and the best activity is of the best state, and virtue is the best state, that the best (*ariston*) is activity of the virtue of the soul.

And the best was also *eudaimonia*. *Eudaimonia*, then, is activity of a good soul.

The beginning steps of this argument are similar to, and to some extent rely on, those of Part One:

(i) *Eudaimonia* is the best good.

(ii) *Telē* in the soul are the best goods.<sup>15</sup>

So, (iii) *eudaimonia* is a *telos* of the soul.

(iv) All *telē* of the soul are either states or activities.

So, (v) *eudaimonia* is either a state or activity.

Thereafter, Part Two diverges from Part One in a crucial respect. Aristotle does not make any claims about *erga*. Instead, he makes claims that compare the value of activities and states:

(vi) The activity of a state of the soul is better than that state.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Commentators disagree about how Part Two relates to Part One. Woods 1992, 87-8 takes 1218b31-1219a18 of Part One plus Part Two to be the argument for (Concl. 2), and 1219a18-28 to be a “subsidiary” argument for (Concl. 1). Hutchinson 1986, 42-45, by contrast, divides the arguments for these conclusions as I have divided them.

<sup>15</sup> I take *telē* in Part Two to be goods that are choiceworthy for their own sake. This is how *telē* are characterized at EE VIII.3, 1248b18-19. Thus, (iii) is a special case of (4) in Part One, and (iv) is a special case of (5).

<sup>16</sup> The provenance of this principle is unclear. Aristotle does not argue for or assert (vi) in Part One. Nor does (vi) follow from anything that Aristotle claims in Part One.

(vii) The best activity of the soul is activity of the best state of the soul.

From (vi) and (vii), Aristotle is entitled to

(viii) The activity of the best state of the soul is (viii a) better than all states of the soul and (viii b) better than the activities that correspond to all other states of the soul besides the best state.

Clause (viii a) follows from (vi) and (vii). The soul's best activity is the activity of its best state. Consequently, by (vi) this activity is better than the best state. But if it is better than the best state, it is *a fortiori* better than all states. Clause (viii b) follows simply from (vii). If the soul's *best* activity is of the best state, then this activity must be better than the activities of the other states of the soul.

As in Part One,

(ix) virtue is the best state.

Consequently, Aristotle is entitled to

(x) The activity of the soul's virtue is (x a) better than all states of the soul and (x b) better than the activities that correspond to all other states of the soul besides virtue.

From (x), Aristotle may obtain his desired conclusion. According to (v), *eudaimonia* is either a state or an activity. Then, according to (x) the activity of the soul's virtue is better than all states of the soul and better than all other activities of the soul besides that of the soul's virtue. Since (i) *eudaimonia* is the best good, Aristotle may conclude

(Concl. 2) *eudaimonia* is activity of a good soul.

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The closest Aristotle comes to defending such a principle is at the beginning of *Metaphysics* Θ.9, where he seems to defend the claim that an activity is better than its capacity. But the argument there cannot show that the activity of every state is better than its corresponding state in the broad sense of 'state' outlined earlier. Aristotle defends the idea that an activity is better than its capacity on grounds that the activity's capacity is a capacity for opposites: "the same capacity is for being healthy and being sick; and being at rest and moving; and housebuilding and demolition" (1051a8-10). But not all states are capacities for opposites. (See, e.g., NE V.1/EE IV.1, 1129a11-17). In particular, one cannot use one's virtue to engage in vicious activity.

Clearly, ‘activity of a good soul’ is just another name for activity of the soul’s virtue.<sup>17</sup>

### III. The “Belonging to a Kind” Interpretation of (Concl. 1) and (Concl. 2)

I have now rehearsed Aristotle’s arguments for the following conclusions:

(Concl. 1) The greater good, the very thing which *eudaimonia* was, is this [viz. good life activity].

(Concl. 2) *eudaimonia* is activity of a good soul.

These conclusions can be construed in two different ways. Aristotle might be saying that *eudaimonia* is to be uniquely specified as life activity, or as activity of a good soul. If so, (Concl. 1) and (Concl. 2) state what all and only *eudaimonia* is. Alternatively, he might instead be saying that *eudaimonia* belongs to the kinds *good life activity* and *activity of a good soul*.<sup>18</sup>

In this section, I shall argue that the latter construal is the better interpretation.

Supposing that Aristotle were uniquely specifying *eudaimonia* in (Concl. 1) and (Concl. 2), it is not obvious what he would be uniquely specifying *eudaimonia* as. Several options are available. I shall discuss the three most plausible candidates and show that none of them makes good sense of the arguments just rehearsed.

To get a handle on the first uniquely specifying construal of (Concl. 1) and (Concl. 2), consider that Aristotle has clarified what *eudaimonia* is by way of dividing goods into more and more specific kinds. He first divides goods into goods external to the soul and goods in the soul.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. 1219a21-22.

<sup>18</sup> The demonstrative pronoun τοῦτ’ poses no problem for the “belonging to a kind” construal of (Concl. 1). Cf. *Meteor.* III.4, 375a20-22. The most plausible interpretation of τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶν τὸ φοινικοῦν is that red belongs to a particular kind. Thus, Webster 1984 translates, “So, just as fire is intensified by added fire, black beside black makes that which is in some degree white look quite white; and red is like that.” Lee 1952 translates similarly: “For as fire increases fire, so dark placed by dark makes a dim light (like red) appear clear and bright.”

He then divides goods of the soul into states and activities. Finally, he singles out one form of activity, activity of the soul's virtue, and claims that *eudaimonia* is this.

According to the *Infima Species* reading, Aristotle can uniquely specify *eudaimonia* as activity of the soul's virtue because this activity is an *infima species* of goods. In terms of the kinds of goods there are, activity of the soul's virtue admits of no further division. Since Aristotle is after the best good, and since he has arrived at an *infima species* which is better than all other goods, he is entitled to uniquely specify *eudaimonia* as this species.

The problem with this interpretation is that activity of the soul's virtue *does* admit of further division. There are different subkinds of this form of activity, each of which counts as a distinct kind of good. When Aristotle says that *eudaimonia* is good life activity or activity of a good soul, he cannot be uniquely specifying *eudaimonia* as an *infima species*.

As the EE continues, it emerges that the soul's best state is composite. Soon after the *ergon* argument, Aristotle says that "just as good health is composed of (*sugkeitai ek*) the virtues of the parts, so too is the virtue of the soul *qua telos*" (1220a3-4). In particular, the soul's virtue is a composite of the intellectual virtues—the virtues of the properly rational part of the soul—as well as the ethical virtues—the virtues of the part of the soul that is obedient to reason (1220a4-5). This composite virtue is later identified as "fineness and goodness" (*kalokagathia*) (1248b8-16).

To be sure, the various individual virtues such as justice, temperance, and so on are virtues. Strictly, however, they are virtues of certain *parts* of the soul. The virtue of the *whole* soul—the soul's best state—is the composite of these individual virtues, viz. fineness and goodness.

Yet although the soul's virtue is a composite of the individual virtues, instantiations of its *ergon* needn't be a corresponding composite of different virtuous activities. In particular, the *ergon* of the soul's virtue is constituted by the performance of *individual forms* of virtuous activity.

Just as bravery is the disposition to perform brave activity, or justice the disposition to perform just actions, fineness and goodness is the disposition to act in ways that are fine and good. But Aristotle identifies individual forms of virtuous activity as fine and good. He offers both acts of justice and acts of temperance as examples of fine and good actions (1248b18-22). These kinds of action all on their own count as fine and good activity. In other words, each is itself an instance of the *ergon* of the soul's virtue. The *erga* that stem from the individual virtues of justice and temperance also count as instances of the *ergon* of fineness and goodness, since justice and temperance are part of fineness and goodness.

Of course, there is nothing special about just and temperate action. Indeed, Aristotle considers each individual type of virtuous action to be fine and good (1248b36-37).<sup>19</sup> Thus, each individual form of virtuous activity is an instantiation of fineness and goodness's *ergon*, and, hence, the *ergon* of the virtue of the soul.

In claiming that the individual forms of virtuous activity are fine and good, Aristotle additionally indicates that each such form is a kind of good in its own right. Goodness is predicated of just or temperate activity all by itself. Elsewhere, in Bk. III, Aristotle is happy to say that brave activity, i.e. "withstanding the fearful things," is itself fine, and, consequently, good (1230a29-32). If Aristotle were to draw up a list of the kinds of goods there are, each individual form of virtuous activity would feature on it.

Good life activity, then, or activity of a good soul is not an *infima species* of goods. At the very least, this kind can be further divided into the individual forms of virtuous activity, understood as activations of the soul's composite virtuous state. Because of this, the Infima Species reading cannot be the right reading of (Concl. 1) and (Concl. 2).

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<sup>19</sup> Aristotle says simply that the virtues and the *erga* from virtue are fine. But being fine implies being good (1248b18-20).

In light of the fact that activity of the soul's virtue is multiply instantiated, two other unique specification readings are worth considering.

The first is the *Divisible Kind* reading. On this interpretation, *eudaimonia* is uniquely specified as activity of the soul's virtue, where this is not an *infima species*. Instead, it is a form of activity that admits of further division. Aristotle is certainly permitted to identify *eudaimonia* as a divisible kind. On this view, it would simply turn out that there are various species of *eudaimonia*. Brave activity all by itself would be one species; temperate activity another; and so on, provided that these activities are performed by the *kalos kagathos*. The Divisible Kind reading would entail a pluralistic view of *eudaimonia*.

According to the second reading, Aristotle uniquely specifies *eudaimonia* as *all* the members of the kinds *good life activity* or *activity of a good soul*, taken collectively. On this *Combination* reading, *eudaimonia* is brave activity *plus* temperate activity *plus*..., where Aristotle refers to the combination of all forms of activity of the soul's virtue by way of the kind to which they all belong. This view would be an Inclusivist view of *eudaimonia*, in that *eudaimonia* would include all forms of activity of the soul's virtue.

While both these interpretations do justice to the fact that there are multiple forms of fineness and goodness's activity, Aristotle is not entitled to these positions either. (Concl. 1) and (Concl. 2) construed in either of these ways do not follow from the arguments in Parts One and Two.

Consider what Aristotle would need to argue for if he wanted to uniquely specify *eudaimonia* along either of these lines. According to the Divisible Kind interpretation, Aristotle concludes that *eudaimonia* is any form of activity of the soul's virtue. *Eudaimonia*, however, is the best good. So if each species of fineness and goodness's activity counts as *eudaimonia*, each

species must be the best. Importantly, this would mean that no species of such activity could be better than any other species. If, say, the *kalos kagathos*' brave activity were better than his temperate activity, temperate activity would not be the best good. Brave activity, another good, would be better than it. If Aristotle is entitled to (Concl. 1) and (Concl. 2) according to the Divisible Kind interpretation, he had better establish that each species of activity of the soul's virtue is equally best.

Likewise, according to the Combination interpretation, Aristotle uniquely specifies *eudaimonia* as all the species of activity of the soul's virtue in combination. If Aristotle is entitled to (Concl. 1) and (Concl. 2) so construed, he had better establish that this combination is the best good.

Neither of these points is made in Parts One or Part Two, however. In Part One, Aristotle says nothing about how the different instantiations of the same *ergon* compare to one another, nor anything about how the combination of these instantiations compares to other goods. Recall the key comparative principles Aristotle lays out in Part One:

(7) The *ergon* of a state is better than its state.

(8) Whatever betterness ordering  $S_1, S_2, \dots$  stand in relative to one another, their corresponding *erga*  $E_1, E_2, \dots$  stand in the same betterness ordering in relation to one another.

(7) says nothing at all about how *erga* compare.<sup>20</sup> (8) is a claim about how the *erga* of *different* states stand towards one another. The sentence from which (8) is derived is: “as states stand in relation to one another ( $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\eta}\lambda\alpha\varsigma$ ), in this way let also the *erga* from these stand toward one

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<sup>20</sup> The same holds for (7\*).



another” (1219a6-8). It would be bizarre if among the cases that fall under this principle are cases in which one state stands in relation to *itself*. Thus, (8) does not address the question of how different instantiations of the same *ergon*, which stem from the same state, evaluatively compare to one another. Nor do these claims refer to combinations of an *ergon*’s instantiations.

The same point holds for the argument in Part Two. In this argument, the key comparative principle is

(vi) The activity of a state is better than its state.

Like (7) and (8), this principle is silent about how to compare the value of an activity’s different instantiations, or the value of the combination of such instantiations to that of other goods.

Parts One and Two, then, do not contain any resources by which Aristotle could reach (Concl. 1) or (Concl. 2) construed along the lines of the Divisible Kind or Combination readings.

In response to this observation, it might be thought that Aristotle makes use of some implicitly assumed premise to draw these conclusions. A proponent of the Divisible Kind interpretation might say that although Aristotle does not explicitly state any principles by which the values of the different instances of the *ergon* of the soul’s virtue are to be compared, he assumes that they are of equal value, and, hence, all equally best. Similarly, a proponent of the Combination interpretation might say that although Aristotle does not go into the matter, he assumes that the composite of all forms of fine and good activity is the best good. If either of these proposals is right, Aristotle would be entitled to uniquely specify *eudaimonia* as activity of the soul’s virtue.

It would, however, be odd for Aristotle to assume either of these views without comment given the dialectical context of the *ergon* argument. Aristotle is keenly aware that some people would allow that *eudaimonia* is *some* form of the activity of the soul’s virtue but balk at the suggestion that it is *any* such form, or that it is *the combination of all* forms of such activity. In

EE I.5 (1216a10-27), Aristotle puts on the table two popular views of what *eudaimonia* is. The first view is maintained by people like Anaxagoras, who think that *eudaimonia* is philosophical activity. The second view is held by people who think that the political life is the best life, and that *eudaimonia* consists not in philosophy but in performing ethically virtuous activity. The idea that *eudaimonia* is not just any virtuous activity or all of it in combination, but instead a more specific form of virtuous activity to the exclusion of others, is not a mere conceptual possibility. It is a widely-held view which Aristotle himself alludes to in the previous book. To assume without argument, and to fail even to assert, a key premise that runs contrary to these views would be a glaring omission, to say the least.<sup>21</sup>

It is always possible that Aristotle has drawn hasty, unwarranted conclusions. But a more charitable interpretation of Parts One and Two is available. According to these arguments activity of the soul's virtue is better than all other goods. Since *eudaimonia* is the best good, it must fall somewhere within the sphere of this activity. But Aristotle offers no principles by which he can determine what more precisely within this sphere *eudaimonia* is. Thus, while the arguments do not entitle him to uniquely specify *eudaimonia*, they do entitle him to claim that *eudaimonia* belongs to the kinds *good life activity* and *activity of a good soul*.

#### IV. Part Three of the *Ergon* Argument

The *ergon* argument continues for a few lines more (1219a35-39):

And since *eudaimonia* was something *teleon*, and life activity is both *telea* and *atelēs*, and virtue similarly (for some is whole, and some is partial), and the activity

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<sup>21</sup> To be clear, there is no evidence that either Anaxagoras or the politically minded conceive of their favored candidates for *eudaimonia* as activity of the composite virtue fineness and goodness. My point is simply that there are prominent popular views that conflict with the Divisible Kind and Combination views, and come much closer to the idea that *eudaimonia* is some but not all activity of the soul's virtue.

of *atelē* things is *atelēs*, [(Concl. 3)] *eudaimonia* would be activity of a *teleia* life<sup>22</sup>

in accordance with *teleia* virtue.<sup>23</sup>

In Parts One and Two Aristotle made use of the fact that *eudaimonia* is “the best” to clarify what it is. Here, in Part Three, he clarifies what *eudaimonia* is by way of the fact that it is something *teleon*.<sup>24</sup> In (Concl. 3), Aristotle specifies both the kind of state in accordance with which, as well as the kind of life in which, *eudaimonia* is performed.

*Teleia* virtue has already been at play in the *ergon* argument, albeit implicitly. Near the end of the EE, Aristotle argues that this virtue is fineness and goodness (1249a16-17). *Eudaimonia* is the activation of this particular state of the soul. That *eudaimonia* is “of a *teleia* life,” however, is a new thought. In claiming this, Aristotle has in mind the length of time over which the activity constituting *eudaimonia* occurs.<sup>25</sup> As he points out shortly after the *ergon* argument (1219b4-8), no one can be happy over a single day, or over any single stage of one’s life. Indeed, he approves of Solon’s thought that we shouldn’t call anyone living ‘happy’, but must wait until their life is completely over. For my purposes I do not need to characterize precisely the timespan over which *eudaimonia* is performed. The important point is that *eudaimonia* being of a *teleia* life is a matter of it taking place over a certain length of time.

Just like (Concl. 1) and (Concl. 2), (Concl.3) admits of two construals. Aristotle might be uniquely specifying *eudaimonia* as activity of a *teleia* life in accordance with *teleia* virtue.

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<sup>22</sup> ζωή here refers to a life in which *eudaimonia* takes place, rather than to life activity, as it did in Part One and again at 1219a36. That life activity is now picked up by ἐνέργεια at 1219a38.

<sup>23</sup> Aristotle switches between spelling τέλειος with and without an iota. I follow his spellings in my transliterations.

<sup>24</sup> The word τέλειος has several different meanings, such as “complete,” “final,” and “perfect.” It is disputed what it means here. Since it isn’t necessary for me to take a stance on this question, I shall leave τέλειος and its cognates untranslated.

<sup>25</sup> For a recent defense of understanding a *teleia* life in temporal terms, see Lear 2015, 128-130. The NE provides some indirect evidence for this interpretation. In the NE Aristotle says that *eudaimonia* must be “in a *teleios* life” (I.7, 1098a18). This is cashed out explicitly in terms of taking place over a certain timespan at 1098a19-20; I.10, 1101a14-16; and X.7, 1177b24-26.

Alternatively, he might be claiming that *eudaimonia* belongs to this kind. Here too, the latter interpretation is better, since this is all that the argument in Part Three entitles him to. Aristotle argues that because *eudaimonia* is something *teleon*, it must be an activity that has certain features, viz. being performed over a *teleia* life and in accordance with *teleia* virtue. The claim that *eudaimonia* is something *teleon*, however, entails that *eudaimonia* has other features which go unmentioned and which are not implied by those mentioned in (Concl. 3). These features distinguish *eudaimonia* from things that aren't *eudaimonia*. Because of this, the description "activity of a *teleia* life in accordance with *teleia* virtue" underspecifies *eudaimonia*. Were Aristotle to uniquely specify *eudaimonia* with this description, he would include too much. (Concl. 3), then, is more charitably understood as claiming merely that *eudaimonia* belongs to a certain kind.

One feature of *eudaimonia* left unmentioned and not implied is that of being *unimpeded* activity. Aristotle argues for this at NE VII/EE VI, 1153b14-21:

And on account of this everyone thinks that the *eudaimōn* life is pleasant, and they entwine pleasure into *eudaimonia*, reasonably. For no activity is *teleios* when it is impeded, and *eudaimonia* is of *teleia* things. That is why the *eudaimōn* person needs in addition goods of the body and external goods and fortune, in order that he not be impeded with respect to these things. And those who say that the person who is tortured on the rack or who falls into great misfortune is happy if he is good, are either willingly or unwillingly saying nothing.

The first half of this passage is strikingly similar to the argument in Part Three. Both arguments make use of the idea that *eudaimonia* is of *teleia* things in order to conclude that *eudaimonia* has some feature. Instead of concluding that *eudaimonia* is in accordance with *teleia* virtue or of a

*teleia* life, however, Aristotle here concludes that it is unimpeded. This is why people reasonably entwine pleasure into *eudaimonia*. Pleasure, at least according to NE VII/EE VI, is unimpeded activity (1153a14-15).

Aristotle does not detail what it is for an activity to be unimpeded. But he does offer some examples of impediments. One kind of impediment are pleasures that are “foreign” (ἀλλότριοι) to the activity in question (1153a20-23). In the extreme case, foreign pleasure prevents one from performing the activity at all. Nobody can think seriously while in the throes of passion (1152b16-18). But the impediment from foreign pleasure can be less severe. To take an example from NE X, Aristotle allows that someone who enjoys *aulos* music could well still think about a philosophical argument. But they would not be able to think about it attentively (1175b3-4), and their philosophizing would be “corrupted” (φθείρει, 1175b6).

Pain is similarly an impediment.<sup>26</sup> It might be impossible to philosophize if one were on the rack. At the very least, it would not be easy to do. The physical pain would make it very difficult to think clearly, and such philosophizing would be much less enjoyable than the uninterrupted, tranquil sort of philosophizing one does when not being tortured.

In the passage above, Aristotle also notes that one needs to be furnished with an adequate supply of external goods, as well as good fortune, so that one is not impeded in performing the activity or activities that constitute *eudaimonia*. Again, in the extreme case, a lack of resources, or bad luck, will simply prevent one from acting. One can’t be generous without money, nor can one have much opportunity to philosophize if constantly beset by grief. But a lack of such goods and good luck might simply make activities much more difficult to do. In these cases, one will be

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<sup>26</sup> So Aristotle suggests at 1153b1-3.

met with challenges, difficulties, and frustrations that could be avoided if one had an adequate supply of external goods and good luck.

These examples of impediments suggest that an activity's being unimpeded is, at the very least, its being performed smoothly, without obstruction, and with full concentration. Because *eudaimonia* is something *teleon*, it must be unimpeded in this sense.<sup>27</sup>

A second feature of *eudaimonia* unmentioned in and not implied by (Concl. 3) concerns the kind of use or activity of virtue it is. In the *Politics*, Aristotle says (VII.13, 1332a7-21):<sup>28</sup>

And we say (and we demarcated<sup>29</sup> it in the *Ethics*, if anything of those accounts is helpful) that [*eudaimonia*] is *teleia* activity and use of virtue, and this is not conditional but unqualified. And by “conditional” [activity and use] I mean what is necessary, and by “unqualified” [activity and use] I mean [virtue being active and used] finely. For example in the case of things concerning just actions, just penalties and punishments are from virtue, but they are necessary and have their fineness in a necessary way (for it is more choiceworthy if neither a man nor a city has need of any of these sorts of things), but the actions which aim at honors and abundance are the finest unqualifiedly. For the former are a choice<sup>30</sup> for something bad, but these sorts of actions are the opposite. For they are preparatory to and

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<sup>27</sup> At least in the cases of sensation and thought, an activity's being unimpeded might also involve the capacity responsible for the activity being in the best condition and being active in relation to the best objects. This is suggested by Owen 1986, 342; and van Riel, 1999, 212. (Cf. Gosling and Taylor, 1982, 252, who take an activity's being impeded to imply that the object a state engages with while active is non-defective.) Relatedly, being unimpeded might be equivalent to an activity's being *teleia* as discussed in NE X (as Stewart, 1892, 237 and Harte 2014, 310 suggest). These are, however, distinctly Nicomachean ideas, and for my purposes it is unnecessary to determine whether they inform us about what unimpeded activity is in NE VII/EE VI.

<sup>28</sup> See also 1328a37-38.

<sup>29</sup> I translate διωρίσμεθα as “we demarcated” rather than “we defined” for reasons that will become clear in section V.

<sup>30</sup> I retain the MSS αἴρεσις.

productive of goods. And the excellent man could make use of poverty, sickness, and other kinds of bad luck. But blessedness depends on the opposite.

Aristotle first claims that *eudaimonia* is *teleia* activity and use of virtue, and refers to a demarcation in “the *Ethics*” in support of this. The precise claim that *eudaimonia* is such activity and use of virtue is not found in either the *Nicomachean* or *Eudemian Ethics*. But it is a straightforward consequence of the EE *ergon* argument.<sup>31</sup> There, Aristotle thinks of *eudaimonia* as both an activity and as a use (χρησις) of virtue (1219a15-18, b1-2). Additionally, as we’ve seen, *eudaimonia* is something *teleon*. In this *Politics* passage, Aristotle draws the obvious conclusion: *eudaimonia* is *teleia* activity and use of virtue.

For the rest of the passage, Aristotle elaborates on what *teleia* activity or use of virtue is. Such a use or activity is an unqualified, rather than a conditional, use or activity. It is controversial what precisely this distinction amounts to,<sup>32</sup> and whether it is philosophically sound.<sup>33</sup> But two basic points emerge. First, unconditional uses or activities of virtue are those for which it *isn’t* more choiceworthy that they don’t take place. Meting out justice is virtuous. But it would be better if this kind of just action didn’t need to be performed in the first place. Meting out justice contrasts with just actions that aim at abundance, such as equitably and justly distributing the fruits of a bountiful harvest. Second, a conditional use of virtue involves choosing something bad.<sup>34</sup> In punishing someone, individuals or societies choose to harm the individual being punished. They choose to cause them bodily pain, say, or to reduce their liberty. The punishers might well be justified in doing so, of course. But, nevertheless, there is a clear sense in which the person being

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<sup>31</sup> Cooper 1986, 72-73, n. 99 and Kraut 1997, 101, 125 likewise understand the reference to “the *Ethics*” as a reference to EE II.1.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, the contrasting readings of this passage in Heinaman 1993, 46-51 and Hirji 2021, 35-42.

<sup>33</sup> Kraut 1997, 126-127 raises some worries about the distinction.

<sup>34</sup> If, with Ross, we instead read ἀναίρεσις at 1332a17, conditional uses of virtue are those which are the mere removals of bad things, as opposed to actions that positively brings about a good.

punished is the victim of something bad. An unconditional use or activity of virtue, by contrast, involves no such choice.

(Concl. 3), then, fails to mention or imply two other distinguishing features of *eudaimonia*, both of which follow from the fact that it is something *teleon* and, hence, of *teleia* things. (Concl. 3) specifies only the kind of virtue and timespan required for *eudaimonia*. It does not say anything about *eudaimonia* being unimpeded or being an unconditional use of virtue. Consequently, if (Concl. 3) uniquely specified *eudaimonia*, it would include too much. So understood, (Concl. 3) would imply that impeded activity stemming from fineness and goodness, as well as conditional uses of this virtue, are constitutive of *eudaimonia*. But such activity is not constitutive of *eudaimonia*, as we've just seen.

This unwelcome result can be avoided if we instead interpret (Concl. 3) to mean simply that *eudaimonia* belongs to the kind *activity of a teleia life in accordance with teleia virtue*. For, on this interpretation, Aristotle is not committed to all such activity being constitutive of *eudaimonia*. Instead, (Concl. 3) specifies only some of the conditions under which an activity is to be performed if it is to be *eudaimonia*. On grounds of charity, then, we should accept the “belonging to a kind” reading of (Concl. 3).

## **V. Evidence for a Definition?**

I have argued that Aristotle's arguments for each of (Concl. 1)-(Concl. 3) do not entitle him to a unique specification of what *eudaimonia* is. Rather, these arguments give him the more limited conclusion that *eudaimonia* belongs to a certain kind.

That said, one might think that there is evidence that Aristotle means to have argued for a definition of *eudaimonia* in the *ergon* argument. If there is such evidence, this is a problem for



my reading. Definitions uniquely specify their *definienda*. A definition says that all and only the instances of its *definiendum* are such-and-such.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, if any of (Concl. 1)-(Concl.3) is a definition, Aristotle has uniquely specified *eudaimonia* in the *ergon* argument (even if his arguments don't entitle him to have done so).

The first bit of putative evidence is as follows. Immediately after the *ergon* argument, Aristotle says “that we say well the genus and the *horos* of this [i.e. *eudaimonia*], the things seeming to everyone are witnesses for us” (1219a39-40). Aristotle takes himself to have stated the *horos* of *eudaimonia* in the course of the argument. Many scholars take this to mean that Aristotle has stated its definition.<sup>36</sup> After all, “definition” is a standard translation of ‘*horos*’, and the *ergon* argument appears in the context of an inquiry into what *eudaimonia* is. If this is right, at least some of (Concl. 1)-(Conc. 3) are definitions.<sup>37</sup>

A *horos* needn't be a definition, however. ‘*Horos*’ also admits of the alternative translation “demarcation.” A demarcation of X says *something* about what X is. To pick up the original meaning of ‘*horos*’ as “boundary,” a demarcation locates X within some bounds and distinguishes it from things that aren't X. So understood, a *horos* is a specification of a boundary within which X falls. But a demarcation is not necessarily a definition, since other things that aren't X can be included within the boundary it specifies.

A nice example where ‘*horos*’ means “demarcation” is found in the *Politics* (IV.15, 1300a9-14):<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Top.* I.8, 103b7-19.

<sup>36</sup> Rackham 1935, Dirlmeier 1962, Décarie 1978, Solomon 1984; Woods 1992, Kenny 2011, Dalimier, 2013, Inwood and Woolf 2013, and Simpson 2013 all translate ‘*horos*’ at 1219a39 as “definition.”

<sup>37</sup> Chiba 2010, 217-227 argues that in the *Topics* a *horos* is a defining-phrase—a sub-sentential phrase describing the *definiendum*'s essence—rather than a definition. The same problem would arise for my reading if Aristotle has said well the defining-phrase of *eudaimonia*.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. 1300b15.

[C]oncerning the appointment of offices, let us try to go through these things from the beginning. The varieties (*diaphorai*) depend on three *horoi*, it being necessary that all the modes [of appointment] have been taken up with these being combined. One of these three [sc. *horoi*] is who makes the appointments, the second is from whom, and the third is in what manner.

Aristotle identifies three *horoi* on which the various varieties or modes of appointing officers depend: who appoints, the group of people from which officers are appointed, and how they are appointed. Together, these *horoi* jointly determine the varieties or modes of appointing officers. Thus, every citizen selecting from every citizen by means of voting is one such variety; selecting from some citizens by means of lot (and, hence, by luck rather than by anyone in the *polis*) is another. By themselves, however, none of the *horoi* uniquely specifies any of these varieties or modes. The *horos* “every citizen selecting” distinguishes my first example of a variety from my second. But it fails to uniquely specify the former variety, since it does not distinguish this variety from others in which the group of people appointing is the same, but the manner of appointment or the possible candidates differ. These *horoi*, then, are not definitions of their respective modes of appointment. Each merely demarcates its respective modes from some others.<sup>39</sup>

Taking Aristotle to claim at 1219a39-40 that he has stated well the demarcation of *eudaimonia* fits with my reading of (Concl. 1)-(Concl. 3). This interpretation is further supported by a passage from EE I.4 (1215a20-25):

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<sup>39</sup> Bonitz 1870 cites 1300a11 as a place where *horos* “signifies that by which the nature of something is constituted and defined.” Newman 1902, 264 translates ‘*horoi*’ as “determining factors,” while Reeve 1998 has “defining principles.” Bonitz, Newman, and Reeve offer yet a third option for what a *horos* can be. On their views, while a *horos* can fall short of a definition, it must nonetheless play some role in the definition of the thing of which it is a *horos*. My demarcation interpretation, however, does not imply that a *horos* plays such a definitional role. This alternative view is consistent with my interpretation. But determining whether it is to be preferred over my interpretation will require more work than I can do here.

Most of the things disputed and puzzled about will be clear if what one ought to think *eudaimonia* is is demarcated (ὁρίσθῃ) well—whether it is merely in the soul being of some sort, just as some of the older, wise people thought, or whether it is necessary for one indeed (καὶ) to be of some sort, but more importantly (μᾶλλον) for one’s actions to be of some sort.

ὁρίσθῃ, a verb derived from the noun ‘*horos*’,<sup>40</sup> is often translated here as “is defined.”<sup>41</sup> But it ought not to be. The πότερον clause beginning at 1215a22 stands in apposition to the τί ἐστὶ question, the object of ὁρίσθῃ. This clause details what the τί ἐστὶ question means. But the πότερον clause does not ask what *eudaimonia*’s essence is. Instead, it asks whether *eudaimonia* is merely a quality of the soul, or rather a matter of one’s soul<sup>42</sup> having a certain quality *and* performing actions that also have a certain quality. This question is simply about whether *eudaimonia* is a state or an activity. The τί ἐστὶ question at 1215a21-22, then, is *not* a standard, definitional question. Consequently, ὁρίσθῃ should not be translated as “is defined.”

In raising this particular τί ἐστὶ question, Aristotle instead wishes to *demarcate* whether *eudaimonia* is a state or activity of the soul. Answering this question will tell us something important about what *eudaimonia* is. But it would fall short of giving an account of *eudaimonia*’s essence. ὁρίσθῃ should instead be translated as “is demarcated.”

Aristotle clearly thinks that the quality/activity issue is important to address, given that doing so will solve the majority of disputes and puzzles surrounding *eudaimonia*. It is expected, then, that he will tackle the issue head-on at some point in the EE. He flags that he has done so

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<sup>40</sup> ὁρίσθῃ is a form of ὁρίζω which is formed by adding the -ίζω verbal suffix to ‘*horos*’.

<sup>41</sup> A notable exception is Rackham, who instead opts for “is determined.” Dirlmeier has *bestimmt ist*, which seems ambiguous between “is defined” and “is determined,” but he is clear that the τί ἐστὶ question at issue in this passage asks for the essence (*Wesen*) of *eudaimonia*.

<sup>42</sup> Strictly, the two options are whether one’s soul is of a certain quality and whether one *oneself* (*auton*) and one’s actions are of a certain quality. But I do not think anything important hangs on the shift from speaking of one’s soul to speaking of oneself in this passage.

when he says that he has stated well the *horos* of *eudaimonia* at 1219a39-40.<sup>43</sup> ‘*Horos*’ picks up ὁρισθῆ at 1215a21. With (Concl. 1)-(Concl. 3) Aristotle comes down firmly on the “activity” side of the question he raises at 1215a20-25.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to what Aristotle says about the *ergon* argument, one might think that he offers a definition of *eudaimonia* because of how he argues for (Concl. 1)-(Concl. 3). In the *ergon* argument, Aristotle clarifies what *eudaimonia* is by way of a process of division. Aristotle first divides (διαπούμεθα, 1218b33) goods into goods of the soul and goods external to the soul; then goods in the soul into states and activities; and, finally, activity into activity of either a virtuous or non-virtuous soul. In Part Three, he makes an additional division between *teleon* and *ateles* forms of such activity. Now, in *APo.* II.13 Aristotle describes a method of division by which definitions can be discovered.<sup>45</sup> *Prima facie*, then, one might think that Aristotle is employing this very method in the *ergon* argument. If so, Aristotle would seem to be after a definition.<sup>46</sup>

My interpretation of the arguments of Parts One through Three, however, shows that Aristotle does not abide by the strictures of this method in the *ergon* argument. Consequently, even if he uses divisions to clarify what *eudaimonia* is, we should not take him to be employing the definitional method of division described in *APo.* II.13.

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<sup>43</sup> Aristotle calls it *the horos* because it is the demarcation made salient by the question he raises earlier in I.4 and one which he flags as important to answer.

<sup>44</sup> Does the conjunction of ‘*horos*’ with the word ‘*genos*’ suggest that ‘*horos*’ means “definition” at 1219a39? These terms are found together in the *Topics* (e.g. I.4, 101b23-25; I.5, 101b37) where ‘*horos*’ means “definition.” And indeed, a genus is predicated in the “what it is” of something (*Top.* I. 5, 102a31-35), the full statement of which is the *horos*, i.e. the definition, of that thing. That said, 1219a39 is the only place where Aristotle uses the specific phrase ‘the genus and the *horos*’. There are no parallel uses showing that Aristotle uses this phrase to indicate that he has given a definition. Furthermore, if ‘*horos*’ means “definition” here, the conjunction of this term with ‘*genos*’ is odd, if ‘*genos*’ too is to be understood as it is in the *Topics*. After all, a definition of something includes a reference to that thing’s genus. Why, then, would Aristotle mention that the genus has been well-stated, if he also says, more strongly, that the definition has been well-stated?

<sup>45</sup> The method of division in *APo.* II.13 is Aristotle’s answer to the question of “how one ought to hunt (θηρεύειν) for the things predicated in the what it is” (96a22-23). The metaphor of hunting indicates that this method is meant to be used for discovering definitions (Balme 1987, 70; Bronstein 2016, 196-197).

<sup>46</sup> Lee forth. Cf. von Fragstein 1974, 53-59.

In *APo.* II.13 Aristotle lays out the following conditions for what ought to happen in order to discover a definition by way of division (97a23-26):

In order to establish a definition through divisions, it is necessary to aim at three things: taking up the things predicated in the what it is; ordering these things as first or second; and apprehending<sup>47</sup> that these are all.

The third point is of particular interest. Aristotle details what this requires as follows (97a35-39):

And that these are all is clear from taking up the first thing in accordance with division, viz. that every animal is either this or that, and that this belongs to it, and in turn taking up the differentia of this whole, and apprehending that there is no longer a differentia of the ultimate whole, or that straightaway with the ultimate differentia this does not yet differ from the whole in respect of form.

Aristotle's third requirement is a requirement to apprehend that one has divided sufficiently for one's definitional purposes. One does this either by seeing that one has arrived at an *infima species* in one's division, or by seeing that though further divisions can be made, they are irrelevant to defining the *definiendum*.

One way of putting my criticisms of the unique specification readings of (Concl. 1)-(Concl. 3) is that Aristotle apprehends neither of these things in the *ergon* argument. In Parts One and Two, Aristotle claims that *eudaimonia* is good life activity, or activity of a good soul. But he offers no reason for why he ought to stop his dividing at these points. Nothing in Parts One and Two shows that he has hit upon an *infima species* or that further division would be irrelevant to defining *eudaimonia*. In Part Three, Aristotle underspecifies *eudaimonia* as activity of a *teleia* life

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<sup>47</sup> I understand λαβεῖν from 97a24. This verb often takes a ὅτι clause as its object. Barnes 1993 supplies "ensuring," but it is unclear what warrants this supplement.

in accordance with *teleia* virtue. Given the argument of Part Three, Aristotle must divide further if he wishes to hit upon *eudaimonia*'s definition.

Although the *ergon* argument clarifies what *eudaimonia* is by way of division, Aristotle fails to meet one of his requirements in *APo.* II.13 for defining by way of division. Because of this, we ought not to think that he employs the method of division in this argument.

Neither Aristotle's claim about what he's accomplished in the *ergon* argument nor the way in which the argument proceeds supports the idea that he has hit upon a definition of *eudaimonia*. These facts further cement my thesis that Aristotle does not uniquely specify *eudaimonia* in the *ergon* argument.

## **VI. Implications for Aristotle's Eudemian Account of *Eudaimonia***

Aristotle is often thought to hold an Inclusivist theory of *eudaimonia* in the EE.<sup>48</sup> The main piece of evidence put forth for this interpretation is the *ergon* argument. Aristotle, so the thought goes, uniquely specifies *eudaimonia* as activity of a *teleia* life in accordance with *teleia* virtue. It is then claimed that this activity is the combination of all forms of virtuous activity, performed over a *teleia* life.<sup>49</sup>

If my interpretation is sound, however, Aristotle does not uniquely specify *eudaimonia* in the *ergon* argument. All we learn from this argument is that *eudaimonia* falls somewhere within the kind *activity of a teleia life in accordance with teleia virtue*. *Eudaimonia* must be the activity

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<sup>48</sup> See n. 3 for references.

<sup>49</sup> Some version of this argument is advanced explicitly by Monan, Cooper, Kraut, Broadie, and Kenny. Keyt cites Cooper's argument approvingly.

Strictly, an Inclusivist reading of the EE *ergon* argument does not require a "unique specification" reading of (Concl. 1)-(Concl. 3). The *ergon* argument would also imply Inclusivism if (a) *eudaimonia* belongs to the kind *activity of a teleia life in accordance with teleia virtue*; but (b) the only members of this kind are composites of all forms of virtuous activity. My argument in this section and section III speaks against this view, however.

of *teleia* virtue, or *kalokagathia*; and this activity must be performed over a *teleia* lifetime. But what more specifically *eudaimonia* is within this kind is left open.

To be clear, my interpretation does not imply that the Inclusivist interpretation of the EE is false. Plausibly, the combination of all forms of virtuous activity performed by the *kalos kagathos* over a *teleia* lifetime falls under the kind *activity of a teleia life in accordance with teleia virtue*. The Inclusivist interpretation is compatible with the conclusions of the *ergon* argument as I have interpreted it. But so too are non-Inclusivist interpretations of the EE. In particular, *eudaimonia* could be just *one* form of virtuous activity. As I argued in my discussion of the Infima Species reading, *teleia* virtue's *ergon* is realized by individual forms of virtuous activity. Thus, among the things that count as activity of a *teleia* life in accordance with *teleia* virtue are, say, the temperate activity that the person with *teleia* virtue performs throughout a *teleia* life; or her courageous activity so performed. These activities too belong to the kind *activity of a teleia life in accordance with teleia virtue*.

This point is significant. Intellectualist readings of the EE, according to which *eudaimonia* is just theoretically intellectually virtuous activity, have occasionally been defended on the basis of the prominent role Aristotle gives to the contemplation of God at the very end of the work (VIII.3, 1249a21-b25).<sup>50</sup> The major obstacle to Intellectualism, however, has been the Inclusivist-sounding conclusion of the *ergon* argument. If I am right, there is no such obstacle. Given that the contemplation of God is an intellectually virtuous activity, it too will fall in the kind *activity of a teleia life in accordance with teleia virtue* provided that the *kalos kagathos* engages in such contemplation over a suitable lifetime.

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<sup>50</sup> Berti 1971, 182-184; Tuozzo 1995.

Indeed, there are some signs that Aristotle is thinking of the contemplation of God in EE VIII.3 with just these provisions in mind. At the end of the EE, Aristotle argues that the contemplation of God is the *horos* of the choices and instances of possession of the natural goods, and, arguably, the *horos* of the soul. When Aristotle identifies the contemplation of God as these *horoi*, he identifies them as *horoi* specifically for the excellent person (τῷ σπουδαίῳ, 1249a24). This person is the “fine and good” individual discussed earlier in the chapter (1248b26-1249a17). In other words, Aristotle has in mind this activity performed as the *kalos kagathos* would perform it, i.e. as an exercise of *teleia* virtue.

Aristotle also seems to be thinking of this activity as it is performed over the course of a lifetime. The contemplation of God is identified as these *horoi* in a context where Aristotle has noted the importance of *leading one’s life* (ζῆν) in relation to one’s ruling element (1249b6-7). One consequence of this is that the contemplation of God ought to take center stage in one’s life plans. The contemplation of God, then, is conceived in the EE’s final lines as something achieved in a properly organized life—a *teleia* life, however precisely this is to be interpreted.<sup>51</sup>

Of course, the question of whether Aristotle identifies *eudaimonia* with the contemplation of God so performed is a question for a different paper. But I hope to have shown that it is a question worth pursuing. If I am right, the *ergon* argument is hardly Aristotle’s last word on what *eudaimonia* is. Indeed, it does not uniquely specify *eudaimonia* at all. Inclusivists and Intellectualists alike can embrace the modest conclusions of the Eudemian *ergon* argument.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> What about the other necessary conditions I argued *eudaimonia* has? (i) Just before Aristotle begins his discussion of the *horoi*, he says that the unqualified goods are pleasant, with pleasure arising only in action (1249a18-19). The contemplation of God is clearly both an unqualified good and an action, so it should be pleasant. But if it is pleasant, it is unimpeded according to the doctrine of NE VII/EE VI. (ii) It is obvious that the contemplation of God does not involve any choosing anything bad, and that it isn’t more choiceworthy that one not perform it. So the contemplation of God will also be a *teleia* use of virtue.

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