The Best is the *Telos*: an Argument in *Eudemian Ethics* I.8

Abstract: This paper examines Aristotle's argument in *Eudemian Ethics* I.8 that *eudaimonia*, the best practicable good, is the *telos* of the practicable goods. Aristotle defers to the Platonists in thinking that the best practicable good is the first practicable good and the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness (though he also has his own reason for thinking this). But, on his view, it is the *telos* of the practicable goods which has these two properties. Aristotle's argument for this latter claim is supported by his view, more fully discussed in *Posterior Analytics* II.11, of how final causes explain normative conclusions.

In both the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle claims that the best practicable good, *eudaimonia*, is the *telos* of the practicable goods.[1] This claim is key to his argument in both works for what *eudaimonia* is. In the NE this thought gives rise to the idea that *eudaimonia* is "final" (*teleion*) without qualification (I.7, 1097a28-b6). Since *eudaimonia* is the *telos* of all the practicable goods, it isn't choiceworthy on account of anything else but always only for its own sake. This criterion, in turn, is used in X.7 to argue that theoretical contemplation is *teleia eudaimonia* (1177b1-4, 15-26). Similarly, in the EE Aristotle makes use of the finality of *eudaimonia* to argue that it is a certain kind of virtuous activity (II.1, 1219a35-9). The claim that the best practicable good is the *telos* of these goods is also important for Aristotle's view that *eudaimonia* is the concern of *politikē*. As the *telos* of the practicable goods, *eudaimonia* falls in the remit of the most architectonic, or authoritative, science.[2] It is this telic conception of *eudaimonia* that blends ethics into politics for Aristotle.

[1] NE I.2, 1094a18-22, along with I.4, 1095a14-7; EE I.8, 1218b10-2.
[2] NE I.2, 1094a26-8; EE I.8, 1218b12-4.

There are glimmers of an argument for this claim in NE I.1-2. There, Aristotle seems to suggest that if *x* is a *telos* for *y*, *x* is better than *y*.[3] It follows from this that the *telos* of all practicable goods (if it exists) is better than the other practicable goods and, hence, the best such good. But it is only in EE I.8 where Aristotle mounts an explicit defense of this important claim. My aim is to lay out this argument and explain the rationale behind its premises.

This understudied argument is worth examining in detail not merely because it is Aristotle's most sustained defense for this key ethical claim.[4] As we shall see, in EE I.8 he displays a large amount of agreement with, and even deference to, the Platonists regarding what the best practicable good is. Studying this argument, then, contributes to our understanding of Aristotle's debt to his predecessors. Doing so will also highlight the importance that the *Protrepticus* holds for interpreting Aristotle's more mature ethical thought: Aristotle's likely justification for one of his premises, I shall argue, is an implication of his view from the *Protrepticus* about how to make comparisons in homonymous contexts. Finally, my examination of this argument will shed some light on how Aristotle thinks final causes explain normative conclusions such as *x* is good, or *x* ought to be done.

I. The Argument

EE I.8 is part of an inquiry begun in I.7 into what *eudaimonia* is. The initial starting point for this inquiry is the generally agreed-upon statement that *eudaimonia* is "the greatest and best of human goods" (1217a21-2). In the chapters and books that follow Aristotle then clarifies this

[3] 1094a5-6, 14-6.

[4] Important, though brief, discussions of this argument include Allan 1961, 308-9, and 1963, 276-80; Dirlmeier 1962, 194-5, 213-6; Rowe 1971, 20-4; Woods 1992, 78-9, 82-4; Buddensiek 1999, 78-81, 95-7; Simpson 2013, 219, 223-4, 227-9; and Kenny 2016, 197-8.

characterization of *eudaimonia*. The argument that Aristotle advances in EE I.8 is an important step in this clarification.

In the previous chapter, I.7, Aristotle concludes that "*eudaimonia* must be posited to be the best of goods practicable for a human being" (1217a39-40). Two types of things count as practicable for a human being, or, for convenience, simply "practicable": things for the sake of which we act (e.g. health, wealth), and the actions that we undertake for the sake of those things (1217a35-9). Although Aristotle sometimes uses 'action' (*praxis*) in the narrow sense of something done that has no end beyond itself,[5] his examples indicate that here he intends for 'action' to have a broad sense that includes cases of productive doings too. The result of I.7, then, is that *eudaimonia* is best within the set of goods that includes both goods that we act for the sake of (in a broad sense of 'act') and the actions or doings undertaken for these goods. Having so characterized *eudaimonia*, Aristotle then begins EE I.8.

a. The Main Argument of EE I.8

This chapter begins as follows:[6]

> Let us examine, then, what the best is, and in how many ways it is said. Indeed, [what the best is] appears especially to be in three beliefs. For they say [a] that the best of all is the good itself, and [b] that the good itself is that to which belong being the first of goods and being the cause by means of presence for the other goods being good; and [c] that both of these things belong[7] to the Idea of the Good. (By 'both' I mean being the first of goods and being the cause for the other goods being good by means of presence.) (1217b1-8)

Aristotle first states two questions to be examined. The first is what the best is. Given the immediately preceding result in I.7, the context strongly suggests that Aristotle means to ask what

[5] NE VI.5/EE V.5, 1140b6-7
[6] Unless otherwise noted, I read the text of Walzer and Mingay 1991.
[7] I defer to Walzer and Mingay 1991, and Rowe ms. in reading *huparchein* rather than the manuscripts' *huparchei*.

the best *practicable good* is. The second question concerns in how many ways this good is said. For the remainder of the chapter he directs his attention only to the first question.[8]

Next Aristotle indicates that what the best is "appears especially to be in three beliefs." He justifies this claim (*gar*, 1217b2) by reporting something that "they," presumably Platonists, say. Given this, the "three beliefs" in which the best good appears would seem to be located somewhere in the Platonists' [a]-[c].[9] These claims are [a] the best good is "the good itself"; [b] the good itself is the first of goods (i.e. prior to the other goods in some sense) and the cause, or explanatory item (*aition*), by means of presence for the other goods' goodness; and [c] the Idea of the Good has these two features. Again, given the context, and, as we shall see shortly, given what follows in EE I.8, the goods at issue in [a]-[c] are the practicable goods. The best *practicable good* is the good itself; and this good is the first of the *practicable goods* and the cause of the other *practicable goods*' goodness.

It is unclear what, precisely, the three beliefs are. They could be each of the three claims [a]-[c]. After [c], however, Aristotle indicates that he considers being first and being the cause of goodness to be two distinct properties (*amphotera*, 1217b6-7). This raises the possibility that the three beliefs are just [a] and [b]. The best practicable good would seem to appear in the three beliefs on either option. [a]-[c] compose an argument for the view that the best practicable good is the Idea of the Good. Clearly, then, the best appears in all three of them. But [a]-[b] by themselves tell one what to look for in order to identify the best practicable good. The best

[8] The end of I.8 makes this clear. Aristotle repeats the claim that we must examine in how many ways the best of all is said (1218b26). This implies that he did not examine this question in I.8.

[9] I agree with Woods 1992, 63 that the three beliefs referred to here are stated somewhere in 1217b2-8. Other scholars (e.g. Dirlmeier 1962, 194; Inwood and Woolf 2013, 11, n.19; Simpson 2013, 219; Dalimier 2014, 301) maintain that three beliefs are the beliefs about the good itself being either the Idea of the Good, the common good, or the *telos* of the practicable goods. But since a set of three beliefs immediately follows the *gar* at 1217b2, and the second candidate for the good itself isn't first mentioned until much later, at 1218a38, it is more plausible that the three beliefs are located at 1217b2-8.

practicable good appears in [a]-[b] alone in that, according to these two claims, this good is the first good and the cause of goodness, whatever that proves to be. Consequently, I shall remain neutral on which of these two options is right.[10]

Although the Platonists think [a]-[c], Aristotle does not wholly accept their view. As the chapter continues, he makes a number of critical observations about the Idea of the Good. For example, Aristotle alludes to and presents arguments against existence of the Idea of the Good.[11] He also denies that the Idea of the Good is practicable (1218b7-9). In making these sorts of arguments and claims, Aristotle rejects [c]. If the Idea of the Good isn't practicable, or if it doesn't exist at all, it cannot be the first of the practicable goods or the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness. Consequently, it cannot be the good itself. Other candidates for the good itself, such as The One or the common good, are also considered and rejected.[12] Beliefs [a] and [b], however, remain unscathed.[13]

Having rejected several candidates for the good itself, Aristotle turns to identifying his own candidate. On his view, the good itself is the *telos* of the practicable goods (1218b10-2).[14] This *telos* is the "aim" or "end" that all other practicable goods have. Of course, the various practicable goods have other diverse aims too. A good house has the end of keeping its occupants and their

[10] The *hparchein*/*huparchei* question (fn. 7) does not settle the matter. Suppose we read *huparchein* at 1217b6. One might think that since there would then be three claims made in indirect statement before Aristotle's parenthetical remark in first person, the three beliefs are [a]-[c]. Given the *amphotera* point, however, the three beliefs could still be just [a]-[b]. Alternatively, suppose we read *huparchei*. On this reading, one might be tempted to say that the three beliefs must be [a]-[b] since [c] would no longer be in the mouths of the Platonists. But this reasoning is specious. Whether or not [c] is in indirect statement, it is still clearly a belief that Aristotle attributes to the Platonists. After all, the reasons for thinking [c] are stated in indirect discourse (1218b8-16).

[11] 1217b16-23; 1218a1-15.

[12] 1218a24-33; 1218a38-b7.

[13] Simpson 2013, 223 takes Aristotle to criticize [a] at 1218a9-15. But Aristotle does not criticize [a] itself in these lines. He criticizes a reason one might have for accepting [a]. His point is that an entity which is F is not more F than other F things on grounds of it being eternal and separate. This is consistent with the good itself being best for some other reason.

[14] It is intriguing that Aristotle use the Platonists' term 'the good itself' in stating his own view. I discuss why he might adopt the term and what it means in his usage at pp. 16-7.

possessions secure. A good medical procedure aims at health. But security and health are not their only ends. We may ask, "What's the point of being safe and secure?" or "What's the point of being healthy?" and receive some further answer. It is Aristotle's view that every chain of aims or ends of the practicable goods will bottom out in some one good, viz. the *telos* of the practicable goods. This good is consequently the end at which all other practicable goods aim.[15]

The passage in which he makes this identification merits some discussion. Here is Walzer and Mingay's text and a representative translation:[16]

> τὸ δ' οὗ ἕνεκα ὡς τέλος ἄριστον καὶ αἴτιον τῶν ὑφ' αὑτὸ καὶ πρῶτον πάντων. ὥστε τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθὸν, τὸ τέλος τῶν ἀνθρώπῳ πρακτῶν.
>
> And the "that for the sake of which," as *telos*, is best, the cause of the things under it, and the first of all. Hence this would be the good itself, the *telos* of the goods practicable for a human being.

On this construal, Aristotle first claims that the *telos* of the practicable goods is best, the cause of things under it, and the first of all.[17] He does not specify the domain of goods in which the *telos* is best or first, but, in keeping with what we saw at the end of I.7, he presumably has in mind the practicable goods.[18] Similarly, the goods "under" the *telos* are the goods that are for its sake, i.e. the other practicable goods. Additionally, Aristotle makes clear a few lines later that this *telos* is the cause of things under it specifically in that it is the cause of goodness (1218b16-20). Just as in the Platonists' argument, being the best practicable good, the first practicable good, and the cause of goodness for the other practicable goods all play a key role in Aristotle's own argument. As

[15] This conception of the *telos* of the practicable goods is articulated in NE I.1-2, but I shall not defend this claim here. In EE I.8 Aristotle does not justify its existence. Instead, he assumes that his audience is familiar with it and believes in it.
[16] Rowe ms. reads the same text. Susemihl 1884 has virtually the same reading, except that he doesn't print a comma after *agathon*.
[17] This is how Rackham 1935, Dirlmeier 1962, Solomon 1984, Woods 1992, Buddensiek 1999, Inwood and Woolf 2013, and Simpson 2013 all translate 1218b10-1. Dalimier 2014 translates similarly, though she takes the *kai* at 1218b11 epexegetically.
[18] Cf. EE I.8, 1218b24-5.

this construal would have it, Aristotle uses these properties to infer that the *telos* of the practicable goods is the good itself.

So understood, Aristotle's argument is odd. The aim of EE I.8 was to determine what the best practicable good is. But here, the *telos*'s being best appears as a *premise* in the argument. He infers that the *telos* of the practicable goods is the good itself from the fact that this *telos* is the cause of things under it, the first of all, and *best*. Aristotle, then, appears to assume what he was meant to argue for in the service of a conclusion different from his target as announced at the beginning of the chapter.

The root of this problem lies in taking *kai* at 1218b10 to be a conjunction linking *ariston* with *aition tōn huph' hauto*. This καὶ should instead be understood epexegetically.[19] Additionally, the period after *pantōn* should be replaced with a comma. On this reading, the translation of 1218b10-2 is:

> And the "that for the sake of which," as end, is best—i.e. (*kai*) it is the cause of the things under it, and the first of all, with the result that this would be the good itself, the end of the goods practicable for a human being.

On this construal, the *telos*'s being best is no longer a premise of the argument. Instead, it is the conclusion of an argument found in the *id est* clause. That argument, moreover, mirrors the Platonists' argument for their candidate good and relies on their [a] and [b]. The *telos* of the practicable goods is the cause of goodness of the other practicable goods and first such good. Conjoined with [b] it follows that this *telos* is the good itself. And given [a], it follows that the *telos* of the practicable goods is the best practicable good.

[19] Kenny 2016, 197 takes the *kai* this way, but he keeps the period after *pantōn*.

Aristotle's argument for the claim that the best practicable good is the *telos* of the practicable goods, then, runs as follows:[20]

(1) The best practicable good is the good itself.

(2) The good itself is the first of the practicable goods and the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness.

(3) The *telos* of the practicable goods is the first of the practicable goods and the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness.

So, (4) the *telos* of the practicable goods is the good itself. [(2) and (3)]

Thus, (5) the best practicable good is the *telos* of the practicable goods. [(1) and (4)]

There is a slight discrepancy between the Platonists' [b] and Aristotle's (2). According to the Platonists, the good itself causes goodness *by means of presence* (*tē(i) parousia(i)* 1217b5). Aristotle, however, does not claim that the *telos* of the practicable goods so causes goodness. Indeed, he does not specify the way in which the *telos* operates as a cause. But it is false that the *telos* of the practicable goods must be present in order for the other practicable goods to be good. Money, honor, and health are good regardless of whether their ultimate *telos*, *eudaimonia*, has come about. We can imagine a community in which every member leads a materialistic, money-making life. Nobody would be *eudaimōn* in such a community. Nevertheless, people in this society would have all kinds of (misused) practicable goods.[21] The *telos* of the practicable goods, then, isn't the cause of the goodness *by means of presence*, since its presence is irrelevant to its

[20] Allan 1963, 279 and Rowe 1971, 20 say that Aristotle's overall argument in EE I.8 is an argument from elimination. This is misleading. Aristotle argues directly that the *telos* of the practicable goods is the best practicable good. Although he explains why other candidates aren't to be identified as this best good, his argument does not rely on his having eliminated them.

[21] To be clear, misused goods needn't be good *for those who misuse them*. At EE VIII.3, 1248b26-34 Aristotle says that people who misuse goods like money, honor, and health can be harmed by these goods. Nevertheless, these things are still good "by nature," and so are still practicable goods even if they are misused.

causal activity. If Aristotle were implicitly claiming that this *telos* operates in this way, he would be mistaken.

There is another way to go. Presence enters the picture at the beginning of I.8 because the Platonists have a causal theory according to which causes exercise their causal powers by means of presence.[22] *In the mouths of the Platonists*, then, the good itself is said to have the property of causing goodness by means of presence because for a Platonist this is the only way that goodness can be caused. But the notion of the good itself *per se*, common to both the Platonists and Aristotle in this chapter, need not include a presence condition. Consequently, it is no problem that Aristotle's candidate for the good itself doesn't cause goodness in this way. He is still identifying the good itself, since he, unlike the Platonists, does not make the additional assumption that the cause of goodness operates by means of presence.

b. The Practicability of the Good Itself

On my reading, as Aristotle reports it he and the Platonists agree about a fair bit when it comes to the best practicable good. They agree that this good is the good itself, and that the good itself is the first practicable good and the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness.[23] Their disagreement concerns the identity of the good itself and, hence, the best practicable good.

One implication of my reading is that Aristotle portrays the Platonists as committed to the view that the good itself is practicable. This calls for explanation. After all, the good itself proves to be the Idea of the Good for the Platonists, and this, as Aristotle himself points out, isn't

[22] See, e.g., *Lysis* 217e1-4 and *Gorgias* 498d2-3. In commenting on 1217b5, Dirlmeier 1962, 195 and Décarie 1978, 67, n.80 cite *Phaedo* 100d3-6 as evidence for this assumption. But it should be noted that in this dialogue Socrates is not insistent (οὐ γὰρ ἔτι τοῦτο διισχυρίζομαι, 100d6-7) that the Idea of Beauty causes other things to be beautiful by means of presence.

[23] As Allan 1961 charmingly puts it, Aristotle "joins with enthusiasm in the search [for the good itself] and is in full agreement about the description of the bird that is being hunted" (309).

practicable (1218b8-9). What sense does it make, then, for Aristotle to so ventriloquize the Platonists?

As it turns out, the Platonists do sometimes talk in ways that commit them to just this. In EE I.8 Aristotle considers a Platonist "proof" that the One is the good itself at 1218a24-33.[24] The proof seems to have run something like this:

> (a) All beings aim at (*ephiesthai*) some one thing, viz. the good itself. (1218a30-31)[25]
> (b) Numbers aim at The One. (1218a25-26)
> (c) What numbers aim at all beings aim at. [Implicit]
> So, (d) The One is the good itself.

Premise (a) is of particular interest. This premise implies that human beings aim at the good itself. But as Aristotle notes in EE I.7 things at which human beings aim—i.e. things for the sake of which human beings act—are practicable. Thus, in Aristotle's eyes the Platonists who subscribed to this argument would be committed, at least implicitly, to thinking that the good itself is practicable.

The practicability of the good itself is also suggested from passages in Plato like the following:

> Then, at the age of fifty, those who've survived the tests and been successful both in practical matters and in the sciences must be led to the goal and compelled to lift up the radiant light of their souls to what itself provides light for everything. And once they've seen the good itself (*to agathon auto*), they must each in turn put the city, its citizens, and themselves in order, using it as a model (*paradeigmati*). (*Resp*. VII, 540a4-b1; Grube/Reeve trans. slightly modified)

[24] See Brunschwig 1971 and Woods 1992, 76 for discussion about whose proof this is. I take this proof to belong to the unspecified subject of *phasi* at 1218a27, and I assume that this is the same subject as that of the *phasi* back at 1217b2, i.e. the Platonists.

[25] This premise admits of two interpretations. On a weaker interpretation, it says that there exists one thing, viz. the good itself, that all things aim at. On a stronger interpretation, it says that there exists *exactly* one thing, viz. the good itself, that all things aim at. The latter, but not the former, renders the argument (a)-(d) valid. For my purposes I needn't determine which interpretation is to be favored. (I thank an anonymous reviewer for alerting me to these two interpretations.)

The philosopher kings are meant to use the good itself as a model, or paradigm, for ordering their own lives and the lives of their fellow citizens. That the good itself is conceived of here as a model suggests that the philosopher kings attempt to approximate or emulate the good itself in their actions.[26] But, as scholars have argued,[27] Aristotle recognizes approximating something as a way of acting for the sake of that thing. Again, given his account of practicability in I.7, it makes sense that Aristotle would read passages like this and conclude that Plato and his followers conceive of the good itself as something practicable.

The Platonists, then, do seem to treat the good itself as something practicable in Aristotle's sense. Where they run into trouble is in identifying the good itself with the Idea of the Good. For as Aristotle sees it this latter entity isn't practicable. This doesn't mean, however, that they aren't committed to thinking that the good itself is practicable. Rather, on Aristotle's view the Platonists simply make a mistake in identifying something non-practicable as the good itself.

c. The Domain of Goods

Consider again Aristotle's introduction of the good itself in the mouths of the Platonists:

[26] Broadie 2021, 56-8 argues against this interpretation as follows. According to *Resp*. VI, 484c4-d2 and 500b1-501c4 the philosopher-kings use the forms of the various virtues (the forms of justice, moderation, etc.) as paradigms to emulate or approximate in their actions. But according to 540a4-b1 the philosopher-kings use the good itself as a paradigm. Now, says Broadie, suppose that they use the good itself specifically as a paradigm to approximate and emulate in their actions. If the good itself is so used by them, then, to be consistent with the earlier passages, the good itself must be identified with the set of the various virtue forms. This identity, however, leads to problems. For example, it hard to see how the good itself enables the philosopher-kings to grasp the individual virtue forms if the good itself is identical to them. Thus we shouldn't think that the philosopher-kings use the good itself as a paradigm to approximate or emulate.

Broadie's objection is unconvincing. The earlier passages in *Resp*. VI do not say or imply that the individual virtue forms are the *only* paradigms that the philosopher-kings try to emulate. Similarly, if one reads 540a4-b1 to say that the philosopher-kings use the good itself as a paradigm for approximation, one is not forced to think that this is the *only* paradigm that they use in this way. All of these passages are consistent with the view that the philosopher-kings make use of *both* the various virtue forms *and* the good itself, something distinct from those forms, as paradigms to emulate and approximate.

[27] Kraut 1989, 87-8; Lear 2004, 72-92.

> For they say [a] that the best of all is the good itself, and [b] that the good itself is that to which belong being the first of goods and being the cause by means of presence for the other goods being good. (1217b2-5)

Earlier, I claimed that the relevant domain of goods at issue is merely the practicable goods. One reason to think this was the context in which we find these lines, following upon the end of I.7. Now seeing how the rest of the chapter plays out, we can also see a second reason to think this. Aristotle seems make use of the Platonists' [a] and [b] in identifying his own candidate for the good itself at 1218b10-2. But clearly Aristotle is after the best practicable good, the first practicable good, and the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness. Thus, Aristotle's use of the Platonists' views also suggests that the domain of these claims is restricted to just the practicable goods.

The fact that Platonists are being ventriloquized at 1217b2-5, however, suggests another possibility for the relevant domain of goods in these lines: all goods whatsoever. Indeed, this is the domain that naturally comes to mind when we consider the vocabulary of "the good itself" being used by Platonists. Surely, for a Platonist the good itself is the best of *all goods whatsoever*. Similarly, the good itself would be the first of *all goods whatsoever* and the cause of *all other goods whatsoever* being good. My reading, then, might be thought to incorrectly identify the domain of goods at issue at 1217b2-5.

The problem for this alternative proposal is that it cannot make good sense of Aristotle's argumentative approach in I.8. As we saw, Aristotle argues that the *telos* of the practicable goods is "the good itself." There are two possibilities for what Aristotle tries to show in making this argument. Either the *telos* of the practicable goods is the good itself as understood by the Platonists at the beginning of the chapter; or it is the good itself according to some different understanding. Neither of these options is tenable according to the reading under consideration.

To take the first option first, Aristotle cannot be arguing that the *telos* of the practicable goods is the good itself that corresponds to this wider domain of goods. This is surely not his view. The *telos* of the goods practicable for a human being does not explain, say, the goodness of the stars' circular motion. Relatedly, Aristotle's argument that the *telos* of the practicable goods is the good itself at 1218b10-2 would be insufficient. Aristotle would be inferring from the fact that this *telos* is the cause of the goodness of the goods under it, i.e. the practicable goods, that it is the good itself with reference to all goods whatsoever. But this does not follow. On this option, Aristotle argues invalidly for a conclusion that he shouldn't believe anyway.[28] That makes this reading quite unattractive.

The second option avoids this problem. On this view, there are really two different goods themselves in EE I.8. There is the initial good itself characterized by the Platonists at the beginning of the chapter, to which the domain of all goods whatsoever applies. But there is also a second good itself at the end of the chapter which corresponds to the more limited domain of the practicable goods.[29] It is with this second good itself that Aristotle identifies the *telos* of the practicable goods. On this reading Aristotle never tries to show that the *telos* of the practicable goods meets the criteria for the Platonists' good itself.

The problem with this interpretation is that Aristotle's argumentative strategy in EE I.8 is no longer clear. Indeed, this interpretation seems to saddle Aristotle with equivocation. On this view, Aristotle first presents the Platonists' conception of the good itself, argues that the Idea of the Good, the One, and the common good fail to be the good itself in this sense, and then concludes that the *telos* of the practicable goods is the good itself *now in his own, distinct sense*. An objector

[28] Cf. Woods 1992, 82. Woods thinks that the good itself was introduced at the beginning of EE I.8 with reference to the domain of all goods whatsoever, and seems to think that it is to be understood in relation to this domain throughout the chapter. Thus, on his view, Aristotle isn't entitled to claim of his candidate that it is the good itself.
[29] Dirlmeier 1962, 213; Simpson 2013, 223-4, 227-8.

would be well within her right to say that Aristotle's conclusion at the end of the chapter is not relevant to the search for the good itself taking place throughout the rest of EE I.8.

This reading could be sustained if there were evidence that Aristotle puts the Platonists' good itself aside as something incoherent or irrelevant to his inquiry. The thought would be that Aristotle first presents the Platonists' good itself, criticizes this very concept as not what he is looking for, and then proceeds to look for his own "good itself" that matches the original Platonist concept to some degree. I see two such potential pieces of evidence. Both are wanting.

First, after advancing several arguments against the Platonists, Aristotle seems to conclude at 1218a33-4 that there is no good itself. This *could* mean that there is no good itself in the sense of the Platonist's good itself. But this denial is the result of the arguments that have preceded in EE I.8, and in none of these does Aristotle challenge the coherence or usefulness of this concept. The main results of these arguments are as follows: Ideas, including the Idea of the Good, don't exist (1217b16-23); even if the Idea of the Good existed, it wouldn't be useful for life or action (1217b23-1218a1); there can't be something that is common, separable, and prior to a series of goods (1218a1-9); Ideas aren't better than particulars on grounds of being eternal (1218a9-15); the Platonists demonstrate the good itself backwards from how they ought to do so (1218a15-24); The One is not the good itself (1218a24-33). Aristotle does not argue against the coherence or utility of the Platonists' conception of the good itself *per se*. His focus is clearly on rejecting candidates that they put forth for the good itself, such the Idea of the Good or The One. It is more plausible, then, to understand his denial of the existence of the good itself at 1218a33-4 as the denial of the good itself *if it is to be identified as either the Idea of the Good or as The One*.[30] That is all that Aristotle is entitled to.

[30] Cf. Rowe 1971, 23.

Second, at 1218b8 Aristotle refers to "the good itself being sought for" (*to zētoumenon auto to agathon*) and denies that both the Idea of the Good and the common good are this. Up to this point in the chapter Aristotle has spoken of simply "the good itself." Perhaps the addition of the phrase "being sought for" flags the introduction of a new, distinct "good itself." This good itself, so the thought goes, is the one being sought for *by Aristotle, and not by the Platonists,* and would be the first, best, and the cause of merely the practicable goods. But we are not forced to understand "the good itself being sought for" in this way. It could just as easily be the good itself that is being sought for by both parties alike throughout the chapter. Indeed, there is reason to favor this latter reading. 1218b7-9 seems to be a summary remark about the key take away from the preceding arguments:[31] neither the Idea of the Good nor the common good is the good itself being sought for, since neither is practicable.[32] But if this is right, "the good itself being sought for" is not a new, distinct good itself but the one that has been at issue all along since the beginning of the chapter.

I conclude, then, that taking the domain of goods at issue at 1217b2-5 to be all goods whatsoever leads to readings which saddle Aristotle with either confusion and invalidity or equivocation. Such disasters can be avoided if we instead take the relevant domain to be simply the practicable goods. In EE I.8, the Platonists' good itself is restricted to this more limited domain. Aristotle adopts this concept for his own purpose, and then argues that the *telos* of the practicable goods is what fits the bill.

Still, even if at 1217b2-5 Aristotle portrays the Platonists as claiming only that the good itself is the best practicable good, the first practicable good, and the cause of the other practicable

[31] This is especially so if editors are right to insert an *oun* at 1218b7.
[32] This has been claimed earlier at 1218a38-b2. 1218b2-7 constitute an argument that the common good isn't practicable; arguably, one upshot of 1217b23-1218a1 is that the Idea of the Good isn't practicable.

goods' goodness, the good itself has more going for it in their eyes. It is nevertheless true on their view that it is the best of all goods whatsoever, the first of all goods whatsoever, and the cause of the goodness of all other goods. Aristotle must no doubt be aware that they would think this. How, then, are we to account for Aristotle's adoption of "the good itself" and his attribution of the more minimal claims to the Platonists?

Speculatively, I suggest the following. It is important to Aristotle's argument that being the best practicable good, being the first practicable good, and being the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness all converge in some one entity. He finds a precedent for this in the Platonists' philosophy. For they unify these three properties in some one thing, viz. the good itself. On their view, the best practicable good does prove to be the good itself; and the good itself is indeed the first practicable good and the cause of the goodness of the other practicable goods. The Platonists and Aristotle agree on all of this, and he takes this to be sufficient for appropriating "the good itself" and for presenting himself as engaged in a joint inquiry with the Platonists for the entity in which these three properties converge.

Of course, for the Platonists the good itself has other properties that Aristotle does not ascribe to this entity. Indeed, the very term they use to refer to it, 'the good itself', connotes things like being good *per se*, or being in no way not-good. But the Platonists have no entity that is the best, first, and cause of merely the practicable goods. The good itself, equivalent to the Idea of the Good on their theory, is the cause of all goodness practical or otherwise. As far as Platonic entities that serve his purposes go, the best Aristotle can find is the good itself. That said, these other features of the good itself are not relevant for his argument and are not to be thought of as part of the agreed-upon conception of the good itself in EE I.8. As Aristotle uses the term, whether in his own voice or when ventriloquizing the Platonists, 'the good itself' does not connote any additional,

weighty Platonic properties. For him it is simply a name he borrows for the entity that proves to have the three properties he's interested in.

Aristotle's appropriation of the good itself, then, is his way of indicating a fair amount of agreement with the Platonists. In his eyes, all parties agree that there is some one entity which is the best practicable good, the first practicable good, and the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness. Following the Platonists, he calls this entity 'the good itself', even if there is disagreement behind the scenes (and irrelevant to the argument at hand) as to what other properties the entity that bears this name has.

II. Premises (1) and (2)

a. Aristotle's Reason in the EE for Accepting (1) and (2)

For the remainder of this paper I shall discuss why Aristotle accepts the premises of his argument. In doing so, I shall also clarify what they mean.

Premise (4) is a consequence of premises (2) and (3). The conclusion of the argument, (5), results from (1) and (4). Thus, I shall focus on the justification for premises (1)-(3), since they are not consequences of any premise in the argument.

Let's begin with (1) and (2). Recall that these are:

(1) The best practicable good is the good itself.

(2) The good itself is the first of the practicable goods and the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness.

These premises are similar in that each characterize the good itself in some way. They differ in how they characterize the good itself.

It is possible, of course, that Aristotle has some substantive notion of the good itself that goes beyond being the best practicable good, the first practicable good, and the cause, or

explanatory item, of the other practicable goods' goodness. That said, we don't learn anything about the good itself in EE I.8 beyond it having these three properties. For this reason, these premises are best treated together as claiming, in effect, that the best practicable good also has the other two properties. Our question, then, is why Aristotle should think this.

I shall offer two answers to this question. The first answer is that some or all of the Platonists' [a]-[c] constitute a *phainomenon*, and it is a key feature of his Eudemian methodology that he relies on *phainomena* in his arguments. The second answer is that Aristotle has a particular view about how things that are F are to be compared when they are not all synonymously F. This view implies that the best practicable good is also the first practicable good and the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness.

In EE I.6 Aristotle describes the methodology that he employs in his inquiry into *eudaimonia*. The details of this method are controversial,[33] but such issues needn't concern us. For our purposes, the crucial claim is that "we must try…to seek conviction through arguments, making use of *phainomena* as testimony and as examples" (1216b26-8). As elsewhere,[34] Aristotle notes here that he will use *phainomena*, or "things that appear," in his inquiry. In particular *phainomena* will play one of two roles: they will serve as paradigms, or models, for him to follow; alternatively, they will serve as witnesses, i.e. as corroborating evidence for some claim.

Aristotle offers no characterization of the *phainomena* he has in mind here. But in the EE, at least, *endoxa* ("reputable opinions") seem to number among these *phainomena*.[35] After the *ergon* argument in EE II.1, Aristotle says that "the things that seem true to all of us serve as

[33] For detailed discussion of the methodology described in EE I.6, see Allan 1961, Karbowski 2015, Angioni 2017, and Falcon 2019.
[34] E.g. *APr*. I.30, 46a17-27; NE VII.1/EE VI.1, 1145b2-7.
[35] See Owen 1961 for a classic defense of the view that Aristotle considers *endoxa* as *phainomena* more generally in his philosophy.

testimony (*marturia ta dokounta pasin hēmin*) that we say well the genus and *horos* of [*eudaimonia*]" (1219a40-b1). Things that seem true to us all are invoked here as testimony, one of the two ways in which Aristotle said he would use *phainomena* in I.6. But these are also one of the categories of *endoxa* mentioned in the *Topics*: "*Endoxa* are the things that seem true (*ta dokounta*) to everyone, or to the majority, or to the wise, and to these, either to all [of the wise], or to the majority, or to the most well-known and reputable" (I.1, 100b21-3).

The Platonists' beliefs presented at the beginning of EE I.8, I suggest, are yet another *endoxon* that counts as a *phainomenon*. These are beliefs that the Platonists, eminently wise people, hold. Furthermore, Aristotle says at the beginning of EE I.8 that what the best is *appears* (*phainetai*, 1217b2) especially in the Platonists' three beliefs. This use of '*phainetai*' indicates that Aristotle treats the Platonists' position—either [a]-[c] or merely [a]-[b]—as a *phainomenon*. As per the method described in I.6, Aristotle is entitled to make use of them in the course of his argument.[36]

As we saw, Aristotle does not claim merely that he will make use of *phainomena*, but that he will do so as either testimony or examples. Given these options, the Platonists' beliefs are better considered as an example. Testimony (*marturia*) for Aristotle seems mainly to serve as corroboration for claims that are established on independent grounds. This is certainly how the *marturia* are used after the *ergon* argument. A similar pattern is found where *marturia* are invoked in the scientific works.[37] But Aristotle does not use the Platonists' beliefs in this way. These beliefs instead supply some important premises for his own argument. They do not corroborate a

[36] Karbowski 2015, 211-2 denies that beliefs of philosophers are among the *phainomena* Aristotle uses as witnesses and examples in the EE. Indeed, he thinks that the Platonists' views about the best good are "foil *endoxa*," in that they serve as useful contrasts with Aristotle's view (211, n.47). I hope to have shown in section I that Aristotle accepts at least some of these *endoxa*.

[37] See, e.g., *Phys*. IV.6, 213b21-2; PA III.4, 666a22-2; GA I.17, 721b28; I.18, 725b4-5; I.19, 727a30-2.

claim that has been argued for already. Furthermore, the Platonists' beliefs are in fact being used as an example for how to determine what the best good is. If the three beliefs are just [a]-[b], Aristotle follows the Platonists' example completely (barring the issue of presence I discussed above). If the three beliefs are [a]-[c], Aristotle follows the Platonists' example only partially, balking at the suggestion that the Idea of the Good is to be identified as the good itself. In either case, Aristotle clearly follows the Platonists' lead.

b. Another, Aristotelian Reason

Still, one might wonder whether Aristotle has any reason to accept (1) and (2) beyond this appeal to authority. I shall argue that he does, given his views of how to compare things that are F when they aren't all synonymously F with one another.

Homonyms, according to Aristotle, are things "whose name alone is common, but the account of being in accordance with the name is different" (*Cat.*1, 1a1-2). Thus, if *a* and *b* are F homonymously, the account of the property in virtue of which we call *a* 'F' and the account of the property in virtue of which we call *b* 'F' differ. The F-ness of *a* and the F-ness of *b* are different properties, despite the fact that *a* and *b* are called by the same name.[38]

In EE I.8, Aristotle argues that many practicable goods are homonymously good with one another. In arguing that the Idea of the Good is useless for action and living, Aristotle claims that "good is said in many ways and in as many ways as being is said" (1217b25-6). More precisely, being, and therefore goodness, is said in different ways according to the different categories of

[38] I do not take a stance on whether two things being homonymously F implies that there is a multiplicity of senses of the word 'F' (as defended generally by Shields 1999, and in the context of the NE and EE arguments for the homonymy of goodness by Ackrill 1997 and Woods 1992, 65); or rather a multiplicity of essences signified by the word 'F' (as defended generally by Irwin 1981 and in the context of the NE and EE arguments by MacDonald 1989).

being.[39] As a result, the goodness that a member of one category of being has is not the same property as the goodness that beings in any other category have. A good state of the soul exhibits a different form of goodness than does, say, a virtuous activity, or the opportune moment at which to do something. Since the practicable goods fall into different categories, there is no one property of goodness that they all exhibit, even though they are all called 'good'.

Ostensibly, this homonymy poses a problem for Aristotle's attempt to hit upon the best practicable good. After all, comparison seems to require synonymy: *a* can, it seems, be more than, less than, or as F as *b* only if *a* and *b* have the same property of F-ness.[40] If the best practicable good really is better than all other practicable goods it ought to be synonymously good with them. Yet this is something Aristotle would deny. The best practicable good is homonymously good with goods that fall outside its category of being.

Happily, in a passage from the *Protrepticus* Aristotle describes how comparisons of F-ness can be made even among things that are homonymously F. He moreover correlates being more F, priority, and causation in a way that would explain his endorsement of (1) and (2):

> Whenever, then, the same thing is said in respect of each of two things, and the one is said either because of acting or because of being acted upon, we assign the thing said belonging to this more. For example, the one making use [of their knowledge] knows more than the one who possess knowledge, and the one applying their sight sees [more] than the one capable of applying [their sight]. For we do not say 'more' (*mallon*) only in accordance with the excess of things of which the account is one, but also in accordance with one thing being prior and the other posterior. E.g. we say that health is more good than healthy things, and that the thing choiceworthy in respect of its own nature is more good than the productive thing. Yet we see that it is not because *the* (*ton ge*) account is predicated of both that each thing is good in the case of the beneficial things and virtue. And consequently the person who is awake must be said to be more living than the sleeping person, and the person exercising his soul more living than the one who merely has it. For we say that this

[39] 1217b26-34.

[40] Interestingly, Aristotle himself sometimes seems to claim that two things must be synonymously F in order for them to be compared in their F-ness. In *Physics* VII.4, for example, Aristotle claims that "as many things as are not synonymous, all these are incomparable (*asumblēta*)" (248b6-7). For discussion of the problems this poses for Aristotle's interest in comparing goods, see Shields 2015, 89-92, 102-7.

> one lives too on account of (*dia*) that one, since he is such as to act or be acted upon, like that one. (Düring, B81-3)

This passage comes from a section of the *Protrepticus* in which Aristotle is keen to claim that a person who is awake is more living, or more alive, than someone who is asleep. On his view, the awake person and the asleep person are not alive synonymously. The former is alive in that they are exercising certain soul capacities, while the latter is alive in that they are capable of doing so. Nevertheless, these two people can be compared in terms of their being alive. For Aristotle denies that synonymy is required for comparison. 'More' is said not only when two things are F synonymously, with one of them exhibiting F-ness to a greater degree. 'More' is also said "in accordance with one thing being prior and the other posterior." As his examples of health and healthy things, and virtue and beneficial things indicate, this second form of comparison does not require synonymy: "*the* account," i.e. the same account of the predicate 'good', does not apply to health and to the healthy things, nor to virtue and things beneficial for virtue. Instead, these goods are comparable because of some sort of priority and posteriority that obtains between them. Similarly, Aristotle continues, the awake person really is more alive than the sleeping person.[41]

That comparisons are made in accordance with priority and posteriority suggests a picture on which things that are F (not necessarily synonymously) fall into a ranking of some sort, with things higher in the ranking being more F than things lower in the ranking.[42] The active knower

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[41] Owen 1960, 183-4 and de Strycker 1968, 608-10 argue that Aristotle distinguishes different senses of '*mallon*' in B81-3. When comparing things with respect to a univocal property, '*mallon*' means "more," i.e. "to a greater degree." When comparing things in respect of a homonymous property, it means "rather" (de Strycker) or "in a stricter sense" (Owen). Such a view, however, would lead to a serious problem for Aristotle. Aristotle wishes to say that *eudaimonia* is more choiceworthy than any other practicable good. But in his eyes being more choiceworthy (*haiterōteron*) is tied to being *better* (*beltion*) i.e. good *to a greater degree*, as the comparative form of the adjective indicates. (See, e.g. *Top*. III.1, 116a3.) If Owen and de Strycker were right, *eudaimonia* would, at best, be more choiceworthy than only other things in its own category. (Cf. Morrison 1987, 400 n.60.) Consequently, I follow Morrison 1987, 397-401 in thinking that Aristotle's point in B81-3 is not to distinguish two different senses of '*mallon*' but rather two kinds of cases to which '*mallon*' meaning "more" applies.

[42] For this interpretation of '*mallon*' understood in terms of an ordering, see Morrison 1987, 383-4 and Pakaluk 1992, 118-21. Pakaluk applies this to B81-3 at p. 123.

comes "before" the merely capable knower in the ranking of knowers, and hence is more of a knower. Virtue comes "before" things beneficial to virtue in the ranking of goods, and hence is more good. At the end of this passage Aristotle gives us a clue as to how this ranking is established. In the case of living, it is *on account of the awake person* that the sleeping person is said to live. In particular, it is on account of the fact that the sleeping person is capable of doing what the awake person actually does that the sleeping person is said to be alive. The awake person is prior to the sleeping person in that the awake person serves as the explanatory item, or cause, for why the sleeping person is said to be alive.

Causal priority is a form of priority that Aristotle recognizes elsewhere.[43] More importantly, this form of priority nicely accounts for Aristotle's other examples in B81-3. Virtue is good, as are things beneficial for virtue. But virtue is also something that explains why, say, an educational process is good. Because this bit of moral training promotes virtue, a good thing, we deem it good. Similarly, this or that medical regimen is good because it leads to health, a good thing. In both of these cases, the things that are more good, and higher in the ranking of goods, are also things that are explanatory of the goodness of the less good things. Causal priority applies equally well to Aristotle's rather odd case of knowledge. The person who knows the Pythagorean theorem more is prior to the person who is merely capable of actively thinking about the theorem, since the latter is said to know in virtue of the fact that he is able to do what the former actually does.[44]

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[43] *Cat*. 12, 14b11-22. Corkum 2008, 75; Beere 2009, 298-9; Peramatzis 2011, 241-3; and Katz 2017, 37, along with n.34 all take *Cat*. 12, 14b11-22 as evidence that Aristotle recognizes causal priority as a form of priority.

[44] Owen 1960, 184 and Robinson 1971, 188-9 take the second form of comparison in B81-3 to involve core dependent homonyms. E.g. the account of the goodness of things that are beneficial to virtue will refer to (the account of) the goodness of virtue, but not vice-versa. Relatedly, these commentators take the priority at issue in the second form of comparison to be (at least in part) definitional priority. While B81-3 might be consistent with this thought, nothing in the passage forces us to think that Aristotle specifically has core dependent homonyms in mind. (And 993b24-6 speaks against this reading, since the heat caused by fire is synonymous with the heat that the fire itself possesses.)

Aristotle, then, allows for comparisons to be made among things that are homonymously F, provided that a causal priority ranking obtains among them. To be clear, the *Protrepticus* passage does *not* imply that comparisons in terms of causal priority are made only among homonymously F things. Indeed, elsewhere Aristotle compares things that are synonymously F in terms of causal priority. In *Metaphysics* α.1, Aristotle writes, "And each thing is most of all this (*auto*) of the other things in virtue of which the synonymous thing (*to sunōnumon*) belongs to the other things. E.g. fire is the hottest thing, for this is the cause of heat for the other things" (993b24-6). Fire is hotter than all other hot things on the grounds that it is causally prior to the other hot things in terms of heat. But Aristotle is explicit here that fire and the things that fire makes hot are *synonymously* hot. Synonymously and homonymously F things alike can be compared by way of causal priority.

This view of Aristotle's offers an attractive explanation for why he would endorse premises (1) and (2). The best practicable good is more good, or better than, all other practicable goods. While the best practicable good may well be synonymously good with some other practicable goods in its own category, it is definitely homonymously good with goods in other categories. Because of this, the practicable goods are to be compared according to the second use of 'more'. The best practicable good is better than all the other practicable goods in that it is causally prior to the other practicable goods in terms of goodness. It will consequently be the cause of goodness for the other practicable goods and will be first among them.

c. Two Worries about Priority in EE I.8

On my reading, Aristotle has causal priority in mind in EE I.8 when he claims that the best practicable good is the first good. Does this reading make sense of how priority is treated in EE I.8?

One might worry that my proposal fails to take seriously the fact that Aristotle treats being first among all practicable goods and being the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness as separate properties. They are distinguished in the mouths of the Platonists (1217b3-6), and Aristotle refers to these two properties as "both" in his own voice (1217b6-8). Similarly, they are both listed as properties that the *telos* of the practicable goods has (1218b10-11). Yet if being first among the practicable goods is a matter of being at the top of a causal ranking, it is less clear what distinguishes these properties.

Although closely related, these properties are at least intensionally different. It's one thing to be the cause of goodness for the other practicable goods. It's another thing to appear at the top of a causal ranking of the practicable goods. The former property consists in being the cause of the goodness for practicable good 1, and for practicable good 2, and so on. The latter property consists in being neither causally on a par with nor beneath any other practicable good. This intensional difference is sufficient for Aristotle to treat these as distinct properties. That said, he seems to recognize their logical proximity. While he provides an argument for the claim that the *telos* of the practicable goods is the cause of goodness for the other practicable goods, he offers no independent argument for the claim that it is the first practicable good.[45] This makes sense if, although distinct properties, one can infer that the *telos* is first from it being the cause of goodness.

[45] Woods 1992, 82 and Simpson 2013, 228 suggest that 1218b22-4 might be Aristotle's argument that the *telos* of the practicable goods is first. The *eti* at 1218b22 makes this unlikely, however. These lines instead seem to supplement Aristotle's argument that the *telos* is the cause of goodness.

A second worry might be this. Recall that it is the ventriloquized Platonists who initially say that the good itself is first among the practicable goods. This claim should cohere with the other claims that they make about this good being first. Among these claims is the following:

> And [the Idea of the Good] is the first of goods. For with the thing being participated in being taken away, the things participating in the Idea are also taken away, things which are called [sc. good] in virtue of participating in that (*tō(i) metechein ekeinēs*), and the first stands in this way in relation to the posterior. (EE I.8, 1217b11-3)

Some commentators take this passage as evidence that for the Platonists, the good itself is first among goods in that it is *existentially* prior to all the other goods.[46] The Platonists argue that the Idea of the Good is first among goods in that the Idea can exist without any other practicable good existing, but (implicitly) not vice versa. This seems to imply that the firstness of the good itself is a matter of existential, not causal, primacy.

That said, this passage seems just as well suited for justifying the firstness of the Idea of the Good along the lines I have suggested. In this passage, Aristotle emphasizes the fact that this Idea is the cause of the goodness of the participants ("things which are called [sc. good] *in virtue of participating in that*"). Aristotle points out that if one takes *this cause* away, all the other good things are removed. No good participant remains. The Idea of the Good, then, is at the top of the causal order of the practicable goods. 1217b11-3 also makes sense as an argument for the causal primacy of the Idea of the Good.[47]

There are no obstacles to understanding the priority that the good itself exhibits in EE I.8 as causal priority. And since there is good reason to do so, we should.[48]

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[46] Fine 1984, 38; Woods, 1992, 62-3; Peramatzis 2011, 214-5.

[47] In fact, there is good reason to think that being first should not be understood in existential terms in EE I.8. As I have suggested, we need to understand the Platonists' [a] and [b] in such a way that Aristotle can accept them and use them for his own argument. But the *telos* of the practicable goods is not existentially prior to all other practicable goods. Other practicable goods would be good even if no *eudaimonia* existed.

[48] Berti 1971 and Robinson 1971 both take the priority at issue in EE I.8 to be (at least in part) priority in definition. As with our *Protrepticus* passage, I see no good reason to read this into EE I.8.

III. Premise (3)

I shall conclude by discussing Aristotle's reason for premise (3).

Recall that this premise is:

> (3) The *telos* of the practicable goods is the first of the practicable goods and the cause of the other practicable goods' goodness.

While premises (1) and (2) say that the best practicable good is causally primary among the practicable goods, these premises do not specify what this causally primary good is. This is the job of premise (3). According to this premise, the end or aim that all the practicable goods have is causally primary. This entity is what one appeals to in order to explain why any other practicable good is good.

As I mentioned earlier, Aristotle offers no independent argument for the primacy of the *telos* of the practicable goods. He seems to think that arguing that this *telos* is the cause of goodness suffices to show that it is also first. Here, then, is his argument for (3):

> [i] And that the *telos* is the cause for the things under it teaching makes clear. [ii] For having defined the *telos* they demonstrate (*deiknuousin*) that each of the other things is good. For the "that for the sake of which" is the cause. [iii] E.g. since being healthy is this (*todi*), it is necessary that this (*tode*) is the beneficial thing for it [i.e. health].[49] (1218b16-20)

In [i] Aristotle states the conclusion that he argues for in this passage. [ii] constitutes his argument for this conclusion. Finally, in [iii] he provides an example of a demonstration that a teacher would offer to teach someone why something is good.

[i] is a general claim about *telē* and the things "under them," i.e. the goods that are for their sake. Indeed, Aristotle's example in [iii] is one in which health, rather than the *telos* of the practicable goods, is the *telos* of interest. Premise (3), then, is justified by way of a more general

[49] Woods 1992 translates *tode einai to sumpheron pros autēn* as "such-and-such must exist, which is beneficial for it." This translation is mistaken. 1218b19-20 is supposed to be an example of the teacher's procedure of first defining the *telos* and then showing that something is good, not that something good exists.

claim which applies not only to the *telos* of the practicable goods, but to other *telē* as well. It follows from [i] that the *telos* of the practicable goods is the cause of the goodness for all the other goods that are for its sake—i.e., all the other practicable goods.

To argue that the *telos* of a set of goods is the cause of their goodness, Aristotle appeals in [ii] to the practice of teaching someone that the things under the *telos* are good. A teacher demonstrates (*deiknuousin*) why things which are for the sake of a *telos* are good by (in part) defining this *telos*. The teacher proceeds in this way because "the 'that for the sake of which' is the cause." It is because the *telos* is the cause of goodness that they demonstrate the goodness of things in the way that they do.

If this is right, the gist of Aristotle's argument for [i] is clear enough: we can see that the *telos* of a good is the cause of that good's goodness by looking at the demonstration proffered for the claim that it is good. When we look at these demonstrations, we see that the *telos* features as the cause or explanatory item for the goodness of the good in question. That is how teaching makes clear that the *telos* is the cause of goodness for the things under it.

One encounters problems, however, when moving beyond the gist. One would like to know how, precisely, demonstrations of this sort go. But Aristotle presents merely a partial example consisting of one premise ("being healthy is this"—presumably the definitional step alluded to in [ii]) and a conclusion. Worse still, certain features of this example do not accord with the line of thought just rehearsed. The example ought to be a demonstration of the conclusion that something is good. Its conclusion, however, is, "This is the beneficial thing for health," or, more simply, "This is beneficial for health." Furthermore, if Aristotle really were presenting a demonstration in which the *telos* of the good in question is the explanatory item for why that good is good, the *telos* ought to be the middle term of the demonstration. Middle terms do not feature

in the conclusions of the demonstrations in which they are middle terms. Yet being healthy, the *telos*, features in the conclusion of the example.[50] Its conclusion is that some "this" bears a relation to health. The example demonstration, then, does not seem to have the appropriate demonstrative form.

Fortunately, EE I.8 is not the only place where Aristotle demonstrates a normative conclusion by way of a final cause. He also does so in *Posterior Analytics* II.11, where his discussion of this kind of explanation is more detailed. In that chapter Aristotle provides a complete example of what is partially illustrated in EE I.8. Additionally, some of the puzzling features I've noted about the example in [iii] prove less perplexing once *APo*. II.11 is in view.[51]

In *APo*. II.11 Aristotle aims to show how the four causes he mentions at the beginning of the chapter are "indicated (*deiknuntai*) through the middle term" (94a23-4), i.e. how each of these four causes serves as the middle term of a demonstration.[52] After illustrating how necessitating[53] and efficient causes serve as middle terms,[54] Aristotle then turns to the case of the final cause:

> [I] Of as many things whose cause is the "that for the sake of what"—e.g. why does one walk around? In order that he may be healthy. Why does a house exist? In order that his possessions may be preserved. The former is for the sake of being healthy, the latter for the sake of things being preserved. [II] And why he ought (*dei*) to walk around after dinner and for the sake of which he ought [to walk around after dinner] differ in no way. [III] A walk after dinner C, food not floating at the surface B, being healthy A. Let causing food not to float at the mouth of the stomach inhere (*huparchon*) in walking after dinner, and let this be healthy. For it seems that food not floating, B, inheres in walking, C, and A, the healthy thing, inheres in this [i.e. in B]. What is the cause, the "that for the sake of which," of A inhering in C? B, the food not floating. And this [B] is, as it were, an account of that [A]. For A will have been defined (*apodothêsetai*) thus. And on account of what is B the cause for C? Because this, holding thus, is being healthy. [IV] And

[50] That being healthy, or health, is the *telos* of the good whose goodness is being demonstrated is supported by the fact that the claim "being healthy is this" at 1218b19 is an example of the definitional step described in [ii], where Aristotle says that the *telos* is what is defined.
[51] Fortenbaugh 1966, 192-3 also notices the relevance of *APo*. II.11 to Aristotle's argument for (3) in EE I.8.
[52] Ross 1957, 638; Barnes 1993, 225; Detel 1997, 65; Johnson 2005, 49; Corcilius 2019, 355; and del Junco 2019, 911-2 all understand 94a23-4 in this way. For a contrasting interpretation, see Leunissen 2007.
[53] I.e. the cause characterized as, "with certain things being, necessarily this is" (94a21-2).
[54] 94a24-b8. See especially 94a32-3 and 94b7-8.

> one ought to substitute the things said (*metalambanein tous logous*), and in this way each thing will be more apparent.

This passage is difficult. I shall confine my observations to what is relevant for understanding Aristotle's argument for (3).

The *APo*. II.11 discussion of the final cause begins with [I], in which Aristotle provides some examples of this cause. Important for our purposes is that he identifies health, or being healthy, as walking after dinner's *telos*. Given the rest of the passage, this is best understood specifically as something like *digestive* health, rather than overall bodily health.

Next, in [II] Aristotle introduces the *explanandum* that the syllogism in [III] explains. The demonstration in [III] is meant to explain why one *ought* to walk. It is to this normative *explanandum*, not the descriptive claim in [I] of why someone walks, that the demonstration in [III] corresponds.[55] After all, it is hard to see how the demonstration in [III] explains why someone in fact walks.[56] The demonstration in [III] does not, for example, show why walking inheres in, say, Socrates, or a dummy "someone."

This demonstration runs as follows:

(i) Food not floating at the mouth of the stomach inheres in walking after dinner.

(ii) Being healthy inheres in food not floating at the mouth of the stomach.

(iii) Being healthy inheres in walking after dinner.

These inherence relations can be further specified given other things Aristotle says in [III]. The B-term, food not floating at the mouth of the stomach, is a definitional account of the A-term, being healthy (94b19-20).[57] (ii), then, is to be understood as a premise in which being (sc.

[55] That Aristotle means to explain the *explananda* in [II] by way of the syllogism in [III] is well-emphasized in Bolton 1997, 113; and Law ms.
[56] Barnes 1993, 229. Ross 1957, 643 seems to concede this as well.
[57] I take the *gar* clause at 94b20 to indicate that, for purposes of the example, the B-term defines the A-term (cf. Peramatzis 2019, 342). That said, at 94b19-20 Aristotle makes the more qualified claim that the B-term is "as it were"

digestively) healthy is defined by food not floating at the mouth of the stomach.[58] Furthermore, since this syllogism is meant to be one in which the middle term, or B-term, is a final cause, the inherence relation in (i) can be unpacked accordingly. Thus, food not floating at the mouth of the stomach inheres in walking after dinner in that walking after dinner is for the sake of food not floating at the mouth of the stomach.[59] The demonstration in [III], then, can be more precisely rendered as:

> (i*) Walking after dinner is for the sake of food not floating at the mouth of the stomach.
>
> (ii*) Being healthy $=_{def}$ food not floating at the mouth of the stomach.
>
> (iii*) Walking after dinner is for the sake of being healthy.

(i*) and (ii*) are the precisified versions of (i) and (ii). (iii*) is the conclusion that validly follows from (i*) and (ii*).

It is not hard to see how Aristotle would think that (i)-(iii), or its precisified version, demonstrates that walking after dinner is for the sake of digestive health. His thought would be that this is so because walking after dinner is for the sake of food not floating at the mouth of the stomach, which is (it turns out) precisely what digestive health amounts to. The syllogism, then, is explanatory of the conclusion in that it illuminates what walking after dinner's aim really is. Once one grasps this, one can then see why walking after dinner is for the sake of digestive health.[60]

(*hōsper*) an account of the A-term. On my reading, this qualification flags that this particular B-term is simply a sample definition of digestive health rather than his considered view. (But an alternative that I am open to, which Peramatzis suggests, is that *hōsper* should instead be translated as "just as," and that the B-term really does define digestive health in Aristotle's eyes.)

[58] I take "being healthy" to inhere in "food not floating at the top of the stomach" along the lines of the second form of *per se* predication that Aristotle outlines in *APo*. I.4. According to this form of *per se* predication, the subject is "in" the definition of the predicate (73a37-b3). (The word 'in' here does not exclude the subject from being the whole definition of the predicate.)

[59] Corcilius 2019, 359-60 and del Junco 2019, 915 both understand the inherence relations in both the minor premise and the conclusion to be "for the sake of" relations. Bolton 1997, 113 so understands the inherence relation of the conclusion. Cf. Ross 1957, 643 and Peramatzis 2019, 331-2, n.3 who allow inherence relations in syllogisms to be causal relations.

[60] Cf. Bolton 1997, 115.

The more pressing question is how Aristotle could think that (i)-(iii) constitute a demonstration for why one ought to walk. After all, that one ought to walk is not this demonstration's conclusion. While a full answer to this question would take us too far afield, I can provide a basic answer. For Aristotle, some *explananda* are demonstrated by syllogisms whose conclusion is not verbatim the *explanandum* in question.[61] One example of this is found earlier in the *Posterior Analytics* (II.8, 93b8-12). Aristotle asks the impersonal question, "Why does it thunder?" But the syllogism meant to answer this question has as its conclusion either that thunder inheres in the clouds or that noise inheres in the clouds.[62] The explanation for why thunder or noise inheres in the clouds is an explanation for why it thunders. [II] and [III] are another instance of this phenomenon: the explanation for why walking after dinner is for the sake of digestive health is also the explanation for why one ought to walk. This is perhaps controversial, but not implausible. Upon seeing why a constitutional is for the sake of some good thing (e.g. digestive health), one just as well understands why one ought to walk. It would be intelligible for someone to say, "Oh yes, now I see why I ought to walk," upon being presented with (i)-(iii).

Indeed, Aristotle's cryptic remark in [IV] that one ought to substitute the things said might be his way of alerting us to the fact that there is a mismatch between the *explanandum* in [II] and the conclusion of the syllogism in [III].[63] On this suggestion, the "things said" are the questions asked in section [II]. We are to substitute them with the question, "Why is walking after dinner for the sake of health?" In doing so, "each thing"—perhaps the terms of the demonstration, or

[61] On this point, see Stein 2011, 140.
[62] Oddly, Aristotle identifies both thunder and noise as the A-term for this syllogism.
[63] On the meaning of *metalambanein* at 94b22 see Leunissen 2007, 162-6. I agree with her that this word is best rendered as "substitute," but the range of possible substitutends needn't be limited to different formulations of terms in the syllogism, or to words and their definitions.

perhaps the premises—will be more apparent, in that it will be more apparent how they bear on the *explanandum* initially put forward.

Now having worked through Aristotle's discussion of final causation in *APo*. II.11, we can see that (i)-(iii) is a full example of the kind of explanation Aristotle presents in only a partial, schematic form in EE I.8. The arguments in both passages are offered in the service of a normative conclusion: in EE I.8, the example in [iii] explains why something is good, while in *APo*. II.11 (i)-(iii) explains why one ought to do something. Both arguments include a definition as one of its premises. The conclusions of both syllogisms take the form of some item bearing a relation to health, or being healthy. In *APo* II.11, I've argued, the relation is a "for the sake of" relation. In EE I.8, it is the "beneficial for" relation, which is plausibly a kind of "for the sake of" relation.[64] Perhaps most importantly, given Aristotle's overall thesis in *APo*. II. 11, the *APo* II.11 syllogism is meant to be an example in which the middle term is a final cause—precisely the kind of syllogism that Aristotle needs to make his point in EE I.8.

Aristotle's *APo*. II.11 discussion of final causation also sheds some light on the puzzling features I observed about Aristotle's argument in EE I.8. First, the mismatch between the stated *explanandum* in EE I.8 and the conclusion of the example syllogism offered in [iii] is paralleled in *APo*. II.11. This suggests that such mismatches are simply a feature of explaining normative conclusions by way of final causes. One may ask, "Why is this good?" or "Why ought I to do this?" But the proper, demonstrative answer take the form of a demonstration whose conclusion is, "This is for the sake of that."

Second, *APo*. II.11 makes clear that although the *telos* of the good whose goodness or "oughtness" is being demonstrated appears as the demonstration's major term, this is no cause for

[64] See *Phys*. II.8, 199a23-6 for another instance in which being beneficial for an end is clearly a way of being for the sake of something.

trouble. For, as it turns out, the major premise is a definition of the *telos*, with its *definiens* serving as the middle term. The *telos* of the good in question, then, effectively serves "double duty" in the demonstration, in some sense playing the role of both the major and middle terms.[65]

Aristotle's thought in EE I.8, then, is that by looking at the demonstration for why any other practicable good is good, one can see that the *telos* of the practicable goods is the cause of its goodness. Based on the health examples in EE I.8 and *APo*. II.11, the demonstrations that explains the goodness of any other practicable good whatsoever will take the following form:

> (α) *x* is for the sake of blah-blah (e.g. theoretical contemplation; virtuous activity generally).
>
> (β) The *telos* of the practicable goods $=_{def}$ blah-blah.
>
> (γ) *x* is for the sake of the *telos* of the practicable goods.

A teacher would offer this kind of demonstration to explain why any other practicable good is good, since demonstrations with the form of (α)-(γ) are proper responses to questions like, "Why is *x* good?" And one can see from such a demonstration that the *telos* of the practicable goods is the middle term of this demonstration, and, hence the cause of goodness, because its *definiens* is the middle term.

To be clear, what is important about (α)-(γ) is not that it is the only demonstration for why a practicable good is good. When it comes to, say, the goodness of walking after dinner, we see that Aristotle thinks that (i)-(iii) is an acceptable demonstration as well. Rather, what is key is that (α)-(γ) is the only demonstration that will pertain to *any other practicable good whatsoever*. While a syllogism like (i)-(iii) explains why something that is subordinate to (digestive) health is good, such a syllogism can't explain why something that is instead subordinate to, say, victory in battle is good. For in the latter case, the good in question won't be for the sake of health. When it comes

[65] Johnson 2005, 53-4; Peramatzis 2019, 336-8.

to the *telos* of the practicable goods, however, every other practicable good is for its sake. Because of this, the *telos* of the practicable goods alone lays claim to being the cause for the other practicable goods' goodness.[66]

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[66] This commits Aristotle to a view on which the goodness of a practicable good can be explained by multiple demonstrations. Making sense of this is an issue beyond the scope of this paper. But such a view seems coherent. The *telos* of the practicable goods causes other, subordinate *telē* to be good in the first place. Health, after all, is a practicable good that is other than the *telos* of the practicable goods. Given this, it seems sensible to say that both health and the *telos* of the practicable goods cause the goodness of walking after dinner. For, on this picture, the *telos* of the practicable goods causes the goodness of walking *by way of* health.

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