

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE STRUCTURE OF EUDAEMONISM**

### *4.0 Introduction*

Much of philosophic theory construction consists of the building of intellectual bridges between premises and conclusions, but neither in philosophy nor in engineering is the best strategy always to begin on one side and proceed to the other. Construction may proceed more fruitfully, working from both ends. Were we confident that we had all the right premises in place and could unerringly develop their logical and evidential bearing upon any conclusions that might be of interest, there might be little point in looking ahead to see where we might end up. Realistically, however, we often begin with some sense of where our premises will lead and work back and forth between premises and conclusions, trying to identify plausible premises for the conclusions we think are correct, as well as adjusting the conclusions in the light of what plausible premises can be found to support.

In the last chapter, I developed an account of instrumental reasoning that I think is

well-adapted to provide part of the support for a kind of eudaemonism. In the present chapter, I begin construction from the other side, by trying to explicate the general features of eudaemonist theories. In the next chapter, I will try to establish the linkage between the two.

Eudaemonist theories form a family, united by resemblances, rather than a natural kind for which we might hope to provide an illuminating set of necessary and sufficient conditions. What is common to all eudaemonist theories, the normative centrality of living well or having a good life, can, with only a little ingenuity, be construed to apply to virtually any other moral theory as well.<sup>1</sup> But adding conditions to rule out non-eudaemonist theories does not help, for the plausible candidate-conditions would also exclude some theories normally understood as eudaemonistic. For example, if it is held that eudaemonists agree that the goodness of a life comprehends more than just its moral goodness, the Stoics are a significant exception. Or if the proposed condition is that eudaemonists agree that the importance of the virtues is not just instrumental to living well, the Epicureans are a significant exception.<sup>2</sup>

I take it that the project of coming up with a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for eudaemonist theories is fruitless. It may be impossible in principle, and,

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<sup>1</sup> Other theorists would just differently specify what it is to live well.

<sup>2</sup> Julia Annas (1993, 339ff.) offers useful discussion and suggests that, on balance, it is not clear that Epicurus assigned a purely instrumental role to the virtues. However, it is sufficient here to note two points. First, there are passages that can readily be interpreted as assigning a purely instrumental role to the virtues – indeed, that are difficult to understand in any other way. Annas quotes, *inter alia*, “It is because of pleasure that we choose even the virtues, not for their own sake, just as we choose medicine for the sake of health” (p. 339). Second and more directly to the point, nobody takes Epicurus’s supposed endorsement of a purely instrumental account of the virtues as a reason not to classify him as a eudaemonist.

even if not, the analytical gains to be reaped from its completion are almost certainly not proportional to the effort that would have to be devoted. What I shall try to do instead is to develop an account of the structural features of eudaemonism at its best.<sup>3</sup>

#### *4.1 Some Preliminaries*

For eudaemonism, the central moral conception is *eudaemonia*, where that is understood as an inclusive ultimate end of living well or having a good life,<sup>4</sup> and the moral virtues are understood as constitutive means to the achievement of that end. Though itself short, almost every clause stands in need of further explication, first, to forestall misunderstandings and second, to clarify more positively what the position is and involves. I shall first address three possible misunderstandings and then proceed to more substantive characterization.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I take my cue largely from Aristotle, though not, I hope, to the disregard of other eudaemonists, and when I seek quotes and arguments, illustrative of ancient eudaemonism, it will almost always be to Aristotle that I recur. Partly, this is due to familiarity and partly, is a matter of how I assess the relative importance of different versions of eudaemonism. Any who disagree with that assessment are free to take my discussion as outlining a possible structure for a eudaemonist theory. In any event, I shall hereafter employ the term, ‘eudaemonism,’ to denote the structure I delineate and will cease to qualify it as ‘a version’ or ‘the best version’ of the theory.

<sup>4</sup> Many eudaemonists and perfectionists have understood the ultimate end as something to be maximized – as living as well as possible or as having the best kind of life (see Hurka 1993, 55-57, for some references). For reasons discussed in Chapter Two, I think that is a mistake: maximizing is not a reasonable requirement.

<sup>5</sup> Since I am concerned to avoid certain misunderstandings of what eudaemonism is or must be, I shall in the next three sections frequently cite the ancient eudaemonists. This is for illustrative purposes, not because I suppose that all of them (which would hardly be possible) or any one in particular is entirely correct in moral theory. Rather, the citations serve as evidence that the misunderstandings I identify are indeed misunderstandings, since paradigmatic eudaemonists do not share them.

#### 4.11 ‘Eudaemonia’ and ‘Happiness’

The Greek eudaemonists, including Aristotle, the Stoics and the Epicureans, posited eudaemonia as the over-arching aim in terms of which a good life was to be structured. The term has most often been translated as ‘happiness,’ though other renderings, such as ‘flourishing,’ ‘well-being’<sup>6</sup> and ‘success’<sup>7</sup> have been favored by some.

On the whole, I think the traditional translation, ‘happiness,’ is unfortunate, though I would not go so far as to call it a mistranslation. The reasons can be brought out by attending to certain features of the way that we typically understand happiness, of how the ancients typically understood eudaemonia and the ways in which these contrast with each other.

The most basic of the contrasts – the remaining points amount to elaborations upon the theme – turns upon the fact that moderns often take happiness to be subjective, a matter of how one feels. Approximately since the time of Locke, it has been common to construe happiness as some function of pleasure (Locke,<sup>8</sup> Bentham,<sup>9</sup> Mill<sup>10</sup>) or as comprehensive satisfaction of inclinations (Kant<sup>11</sup>). Two near-corollaries are (1) that the

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<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., Nussbaum 1986, 6, and Richard Kraut’s comments in Aristotle 1997, 52.

<sup>7</sup> Austin 1970, 18-19.

<sup>8</sup> “*Happiness* then in its full extent is the utmost Pleasure we are capable of, and *Misery* the utmost pain: And the lowest degree of what can be called *Happiness*, is so much ease from all Pain, and so much present Pleasure, as without which any one cannot be content.” Locke 1975, Book II, Ch. XXI, §42, 258.

<sup>9</sup> “By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or (what comes again to the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness....” Bentham 1973, 18.

<sup>10</sup> “By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain, by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure.” Mill 1965, 281.

<sup>11</sup> Kant speaks of the “concept of the sum of satisfaction of all inclination under the name of happiness” and says that “all people have ... the strongest and deepest inclination to happiness because it is

question whether one is happy or not is something about which one cannot be or is at least most unlikely to be mistaken,<sup>12</sup> and (2) that happiness is or may be a relatively transient state – one may be happy *briefly*.<sup>13</sup>

By way of contrast, eudaemonia, as the ancients conceived it, though it was not of course divorced from pleasure or enjoyment, was more objective. It would make sense in their terms to say of someone, “he thinks he is eudaemonic, although he is not.” And saying this would not just signal that he was unsuccessful in introspection and had misidentified his psychological state – which would be the most likely interpretation of our saying, “he thinks he is happy, although he is not.” Rather, a person could be mistaken about whether he is eudaemonic in circumstances in which there is no question whether he has misidentified his psychological state. He might be correct about it but still mistaken in thinking it to be or to be part of being eudaemonic.

One of the ways in which it is clear that, for the ancients, eudaemonia includes more than subjective states is that it may be affected by events occurring after one’s death:

... both evil and good are thought to exist for a dead man, as much as for

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just in this idea that all inclinations unite in one sum.” Kant 1998, 399.

<sup>12</sup> Since being happy is a matter of one’s own feelings, the only barriers that can stand in the way of knowing whether one is happy are the barriers, if any, to successful introspection.

<sup>13</sup> A third feature of happiness, insofar as it is conceived by moderns in terms of pleasure, enjoyment or satisfaction, is that it is essentially a *passive* state, a matter of what happens to one. On the other hand, eudaemonia is conceived as an active state, as itself active or essentially involving activity. Aristotle, for example, argues in several places that conceptions of eudaemonia not involving activity are defective (e.g., *Nicomachean Ethics* [hereafter *NE*] 1095b 31-1096a 1, 1099b 18-24), defines eudaemonia in terms of “activity of soul in conformity with excellence” (1095a 16), and regularly assumes “that acting well is identical to happiness [eudaemonia]” (*Politics* 1325a 22).

one who is alive but not aware of them; e.g., honours and dishonours and the good and bad fortunes of children and in general of descendants .... [F] or though a man has lived blessedly up to old age and has had a death worthy of his life, many reverses may befall his descendants .... It would be odd ... if the fortunes of his descendants did not for *some* time have *some* effect on the eudaemonia of their ancestors.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, the more objective meaning of ‘eudaemonia’ (as compared to ‘happiness’) is evident in the fact that the former applies to a whole life, or at least to a substantial portion of it: “we must add, ‘in a complete life.’ For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and eudaemonic.”<sup>15</sup> Whether a person is eudaemonic at a time depends in part on what happens at other times. Again, by way of contrast, it does not sound out of place to speak of happiness as transient, to say of someone that she was happy (or unhappy) yesterday, without carrying implications about her happiness today.

Now, it would be going too far to say that ‘happiness,’ as moderns use the term, *cannot* be construed more objectively and therefore more in line with the ancient usage of ‘eudaemonia.’ The materials for an objective conception of happiness are as available to

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<sup>14</sup> NE 1100a 18-31. I have substituted ‘eudaemonia’ for ‘happiness.’ Even if the particular example is not found compelling, it is still evidence that the ancients did not conceive eudaemonia as entirely subjective. Consider also the second clause, “as much as for one who is alive but not aware of them,” and the further arguments it suggests about ways in which one’s life may go worse apart from one’s awareness that it is going worse.

<sup>15</sup> NE 1098a 16-19. I have substituted ‘eudaemonic’ for ‘happy.’

us as to the ancients.<sup>16</sup> With the necessary explanation, there need be no problem in referring to happiness in the explication of eudaemonism. My present point is only that, in order to understand what the classical eudaemonists meant, the additional explanation is indeed *needed*; otherwise, we risk distorting their meaning by importing and tacitly attributing to them more subjective conceptions which were foreign to their thought.<sup>17</sup>

For my purposes, I think the spirit if not the letter of the meaning of ‘eudaemonia’ is well-captured by the phrase, ‘comprehensively successful living.’ A life is eudaemonic to the extent that it is successful in all the ways in which a life can reasonably be expected to be successful. It would, however, be cumbersome to introduce that phrase or variations upon it into any discussion of eudaemonia or the eudaemonic life. I shall normally just speak of living well or having a good life.<sup>18</sup>

#### *4.12 Eudaemonism and Egoism*

A second way in which eudaemonism risks being misunderstood may be encouraged by the first – that is, by the translation of ‘eudaemonia’ as ‘happiness’ without due attention to the fact that these terms must not be understood simply subjectively.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Murray, for example, suggests “lasting and justified satisfaction with one’s life as a whole.” (1988, 44)

<sup>17</sup> Though I altered translations of Aristotle above to replace ‘happiness’ with ‘eudaemonia’ and ‘happy’ with the coined adjectival form, ‘eudaemonic,’ I will not continue to do so. I assume I have said enough about the importance of understanding ‘happiness’ or ‘eudaemonia’ (if they are taken to be equivalent) objectively that there is no risk of distortion.

<sup>18</sup> Nussbaum suggests ‘living a good life for a human being,’ but often prefers to leave the Greek untranslated. (1986, 6)

<sup>19</sup> Even with a subjective construal of happiness, the inference from ‘each person should guide herself by the pursuit of happiness’ to egoism is not straightforward. Whether pursuit of one’s own happiness is egoistic or not depends both on what counts as being in one’s interests and upon what makes

Since eudaemonism takes the conception of the agent living well as its central moral notion, it is sometimes suspected of or charged with being a version of egoism. But that, most philosophers think (and I agree), would disqualify it as a plausible moral theory.<sup>20</sup>

[A]ncient ethical theory begins with the agent's concern for her own life as a whole. Modern moral theories, by contrast, often begin by specifying morality as a concern for others; morality is often introduced as a point of view contrasting with egoism. If a basic and non-derivative concern for others is taken to be definitive of morality, then this contrast may be taken to show that ancient ethics is really a form of egoism; and this is indeed a frequent charge, and one that is often extended to modern versions of virtue ethics. (Annas 1993, 127)

There are at least two ways of expressing the concern here. One is a short argument, already suggested above, that eudaemonism must be essentially egoistic. The

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one happy.

<sup>20</sup> It might be urged that if the right content is assigned to interests, then, in the first place, eudaemonism can appropriately be classified as a form of egoism, because it will simply identify comprehensively successful living, including whatever that turns out to involve, with the agent's interests. In the second place, it may be urged that there is no objection to egoism so understood, at least not *because* it is egoistic; whether it is objectionable will depend (among other things) upon the actual content assigned to interests once the theory is fully worked out.

In the end, I do not think this response is adequate, for it trivializes the notion of interests upon which any theory deserving to be classified as a form of egoism must rely. Of course, if a theorist has a completely free hand in specifying the content of interests, action in accordance with *any precept whatsoever* can be represented as in accordance with the agent's interests. But surely, more than that is wanted: it will not do to identify all moral theories as varieties of egoism.

This need not be adjudicated here, however. My concern is to argue that there is no reason a eudaemonist theory *must* be a form of egoism, not that it cannot be. It is not a response to that argument to defend the moral propriety of some version of egoism, since I did not claim to be showing that egoism is mistaken.

eudaemonist agent is concerned, first and foremost, as an ultimate end, with *her own life* going well. Anything she ought to do has to be explained in those terms; anything that it is wrong for her to do must in some way connect to its making *her life* go badly (or, at least, not as well as it otherwise might have).

That certainly sounds egoistic. Still, it is not sufficient to make the case. It fails to attend to the fact that, for eudaemonists, what it is to live well is an objective matter. And, to put it at its simplest, what it is objectively to live well may include not being an egoist. (And conversely, being an egoist may objectively make one's life worse.) Briefly, the egoist reads the concern with having a good life as "having a life that is good for the agent." But it may also be understood as "the agent having a life that is good;" that a good life is necessarily one that serves only or is directed only to the service of the agent's interests is not settled by any definitional arguments about the commitments of eudaemonism.

A more specific concern is that eudaemonism does not leave room for the right kind of concern for others; it does not, in Annas's words, leave room for "basic and non-derivative concern for others". Any concerns for others will have to be mediated through their role in facilitating a good life for the agent. Again, the key move in response appeals to an objective conception of a good life:

There is no reason, *prima facie*, why the good of others cannot matter to me independently of my own interests, just because it is introduced as

something required by my final good. The thought that is frequently suggested is that the good of others must matter to me just because it is the good of others, not because it forms part of my own good. However, there is no reason why this should be incompatible with its in fact forming part of my own good. For an ethics of virtue, the good of others matters to me because it is the good of others, and it is part of my own final good. It is quite unwarranted to think that the second thought must undermine the first. (Annas 1993, 127f.)

Here, I think Annas may slightly understate her case.<sup>21</sup> Her conclusion makes it sound as if she is only arguing that direct concern for others may be compatible with one's own good, which is certainly true. But a stronger thesis is open to the eudaemonist. It may be held that the agent can acquire a direct concern for the good of others *because* it is part of her own good to do so. The fact that she had a reason, other than the good of others, for acquiring a direct concern does not mean that she has not really acquired that direct concern. To *have* the concern is one thing; the reason for acquiring it is not necessarily the same thing.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> I'm not sure whether she *does* understate it. That depends upon whether emphasis is placed on "required by my final good" or upon direct concern for others not being "incompatible with ... my own good."

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, it hardly could be. If it is a concern one does not already have (if one *did* already have it, it would be inappropriate to speak of acquiring it), then, if one has any reason at all for acquiring it, that reason will have to be in terms of something other than the concern to be acquired. (Of course, it may be that one comes to have a concern without acquiring it for a reason.)

#### 4.13 Centrality and Reductionism

There is a third way in which eudaemonism is liable to be misunderstood. I have spoken frequently of the normative centrality, for eudaemonism, of living well or having a good life. The term, *centrality*, was selected advisedly in contrast to saying that, for eudaemonism, living well is the *basic* or *fundamental* moral conception. The latter terms suggest, as the former need not, that all moral conceptions can be reduced to or explained entirely in terms of some prior notion of what it is to live well, a position that I call *reductionism*.

The contrast between centrality and reductionism is closely related to the well-known contrast between conceiving eudaemonia as a dominant or as an inclusive end.<sup>23</sup> Conceived as a dominant ultimate end (corresponding to reductionism), eudaemonia is something single and independently specifiable to which all other objectives are subordinate, presumably because they are means to eudaemonia. Any other end has a role in a good life only by virtue of its service to eudaemonia and may – indeed, should – be abandoned if it ceases to be of service. However, conceived as an inclusive ultimate end (corresponding to centrality), eudaemonia includes other ends which at least in part constitute it. It is what it is in part because of the other ends it includes. Given that there are other ends which partially constitute it, abandoning one of them may *itself* spoil or detract from eudaemonia apart from any contribution that the abandoned end would make

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<sup>23</sup> Hardie 1968, Ackrill 1980. See Broadie 1991, 198ff., for argument that it is not plausible to interpret Aristotle as holding a dominant end view. The distinction between dominant and inclusive ends focuses upon the relation, for the agent, between the ultimate end and action in its service. The distinction between reductionism and centralism is more theoretical, focusing upon the way that different ends or values are to be *understood* in their relations to one another.

to something independently specifiable.<sup>24</sup> (To illustrate, if wearing a tie is in part constitutive of being well-dressed and so is wearing a belt, I can't make up for not wearing a belt by wearing a nicer tie. Being well-dressed isn't something independently specifiable apart from the various things that constitute it.)

The important point is not that one *couldn't* adopt a reductionist or dominant-end model of the relation between eudaemonia and any other objectives, but that there is no necessity, simply because eudaemonism posits a single ultimate end as appropriate for the guidance of one's life, to do so. The ultimate end, instead of being dominant, may be *central* – it may be that in terms of which other ends and commitments are organized, integrated and understood. It need not, however, be the only thing that matters normatively, nor need it be the case that we cannot have some grasp of what matters normatively until we see those things in the light of their contribution to a life well-lived.<sup>25</sup> (For example, people surely have some understanding of the importance of virtues such as honesty, generosity or courage before they are able to think about their lives as wholes or

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<sup>24</sup> There is a point on which I shall not dwell here, but which, I think, weighs in favor of centralism. If there are multiple ends that partially constitute living well, it cannot be ruled out *a priori* that, in particular circumstances, there may be conflict among them and that, therefore, hard choices will have to be made that cannot or cannot unambiguously be said to be required or favored by considering what contributes to having a good life. On a dominant-end view of the human good, there can be psychologically hard choices (if it is difficult to bring oneself to act in the way one knows to be best) and epistemically hard choices (if it is difficult to figure out what is best). But *morally* hard choices, exemplified by Sartre's young man who must choose between joining the Free French and caring for his aging mother (Sartre 1975/1946, 354ff.), are not possible, for it will always be true either that one of the available options is best or that there is a tie for which is best. In morally hard choices, it appears that neither of (say) two available options (a) is better than the other, nor (b) are they equally good, nor (c) is there one which is not, for one reason or another, morally dubious. Such hard choices are neither as convenient for the theorist nor as comfortable for the agent, but seem to be a real feature of our moral experience.

<sup>25</sup> On the theme I've been discussing in this section, I've found much that is useful in Hurley 1989, Chapter 2. Unfortunately for purposes of casual comparison, what I call 'reductionism,' she calls 'centralism.'

in terms of what a good life is.)

#### *4.2 Thinking about What it is to Live Well*

If we set aside subjectivist, egoist and reductionist conceptions of eudaemonia,<sup>26</sup> how should the eudaemonist approach be understood? I shall try to begin to answer this in three stages. The first stage will treat of understanding in the most general way what it is to live well or to have a good life. For the next stage, I will pursue a more detailed account of the ways that eudaemonists have conceived of and classified the various kinds of ends and means and their inter-relations. Third, I will try to show how the moral virtues are understood and what their place is in the overall structure of eudaemonist thought.

Where should we begin in thinking about ethics? For eudaemonists, we begin with thinking about our own lives and raising the question, What is it for a person (for me) to live well or to have a good life?<sup>27</sup>

We all think in retrospect about actions we have done and feelings we have had. For me to think about my life as a whole requires something further –

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<sup>26</sup> My point in insisting on this, again, is not that no eudaemonist theory could properly be classified under one or more of these headings, but that none of them is a necessary feature of a eudaemonist theory. If we do not see that they are not necessary, we may find ourselves unable to recognize and appreciate what eudaemonism at its best can be.

<sup>27</sup> “Now it is thought to be a mark of a man of practical wisdom to be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself, not in some particular respect, e.g. about what sorts of things conduce to health or strength, but about what sorts of things conduce to the good life in general.” (*NE* 1140a 25-28)

I have to step back to some extent from my immediate present and projects, and think about my past and future. How have I come to have the projects I now have, and the attitudes I now have to these projects, and to many other things and people? To think about my life as a whole is to ask how I have become the person I now am, how past plans, successes and failures have produced the person who now has the present projects and attitudes that I have. And it is also to think about the future. How do I see my present plans continuing? Am I happy to go on living much as I have done, or do I hope, and perhaps intend, to change my commitments and attitudes?

Ancient ethics gets its grip on the individual at this point of reflection: am I satisfied with my life as a whole, with the way it has developed and promises to continue? For most of us are dissatisfied with both our achievement and our promise, and it is only the dissatisfied who have the urge to live differently, and hence the need to find out what ways of living differently would be improvements. (Annas 1993, 28f.)

This may seem a minimal starting point for thinking about ethics, but, spare as it is, it can serve to make at least two important points<sup>28</sup> relevant to further thought and investigation

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<sup>28</sup> A third point of interest has to do with the relation between moral cognition and moral motivation. A person for whom a moral question arises may be seeking an answer to either of two different questions. She may, on the one hand, want to know how to tell what the right thing to do is, either in general or for a particular case. On the other, her question may pertain not to figuring out what is morally right, but to what reason she has, if any, to do what has been determined in some way to be morally right.

within a eudaemonist framework.

The first point to note is that *eudaemonia*, the notion of living well or having a good life, is introduced as a *thin* conception.<sup>29</sup> It is a conception of what (if anything) will satisfactorily answer to concerns about living well. It is, at the beginning, no more than that – a place-holder for something more richly specified that will, insofar as the inquiry is successful, take its place.<sup>30</sup> This is why it can both be “a platitude” that eudaemonia is the end (*NE* 1097b 21-23) and also a matter for dispute what eudaemonia is: “Verbally there is very general agreement, for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify living well and faring well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is they differ ....” (1095a 17-20)

One cannot, however, guide one’s actions or life by a thin conception. Saying that one will do whatever it takes to live well is empty unless one also has some idea what it *does* take. In other words, what is needed is a *thick* conception of eudaemonia. This can be approached in two ways. In the first place, we can inquire as to what theoretical

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On the plausible internalist view that what an agent has reason to do must be connected somehow to what she is motivated to do (see especially Williams 1990 and Korsgaard 1996a), the second question is in part asking what motivation the agent has to do what is right.

If the approach sketched above is an appropriate way to begin thinking about ethics, then the framework provides at least the beginnings of an attractive response to the motivational question. The motivation to do what is right, at least *some* such motivation, is implicit in the starting point since ethical reflection begins from and is itself motivated by dissatisfaction with how one’s life is going (or at least by a concern to find out if one’s life could be going better).

<sup>29</sup> “... [We] must presumably first sketch it roughly, and then later fill in the details.” *NE*, 1098a 20-21.

<sup>30</sup> And understanding “eudaemonia” as a place-holder for something to be more richly specified does not even rule out the possibility that the inquiry will be *unsuccessful* – that there will not turn out to be anything that satisfactorily answers to the relevant concerns. It may be that, even if improvement is possible on one or more dimensions, any improvement along a given dimension will be matched by non-comparable losses elsewhere.

constraints there are on the notion. We can ask in effect: If there is anything suitable for specifying what eudaemonia is, what would it have to be like?

And it appears that we can make some progress along these lines. For example, whatever it is to live well, it would have to be sought, valued or desired for its own sake. If it were not, then either living well would not be sought, valued or desired at all (which is false by virtue of the starting point from which the question arises) or else it would be, whether directly or not, for the sake of something else that was in turn sought, valued or desired for its own sake. Then, questions would arise as to how to achieve that something else, whether what we *call* 'living well' is necessary to or supportive of achieving it, and why achieving that something else instead is not a *better* candidate to be identified with living well. Similar arguments can be adduced to show that living well must not only be valued for its own sake but must also be, in relevant senses, complete, final and inclusive.<sup>31</sup>

This much, and perhaps more, can be done in the way of formally constraining the conception of eudaemonia. Formal constraints, however, are not enough in at least two respects. First, they only specify conditions that would have to be met for something to count as eudaemonia or living well. They provide no assurance that anything *does* satisfy the conditions.<sup>32</sup> Second, at best, they operate as a filter for selecting among candidates

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<sup>31</sup> For arguments on all these points, see *NE* 1097a 15 – 1097b 21. I think these arguments are, by and large, defensible (or can be made defensible), but I will not devote time here to their defense. First, to do so would require considerable discussion peripheral to my present concerns, and second, it will be more evident just how a defense might proceed once we have in hand the distinctions related to the classification and inter-relation of ends to be introduced in the next section.

<sup>32</sup> It is an interesting question what the appropriate response would be if one candidate satisfied all but one of the formal conditions we thought it reasonable to impose, while no other did as well. Should we

that are generated in some other way. How might candidates for what it is to live well be generated?<sup>33</sup>

Here, we can derive some further lessons from the eudaemonist story about the starting point of ethical reflection. It is, in the first place, a story of a person who finds her life, considered as a whole, either unsatisfactory or doubtfully satisfactory. Anything presented as a candidate *to her* will have to promise to be more satisfactory. Eudaemonia, then, has to motivationally engage the beginner as a beginner. That means, of course, that somehow it has to make contact with motivations she actually has.<sup>34</sup> It can't tell her to systematically frustrate everything she wants or cares about – on the grounds that such frustration is what a good life 'really' amounts to. If it does, she will rightly ask, "If *that* is what a good life is, why should I care about having one?"

The initial motivational engagement begins with the agent's dissatisfaction with (or doubts about the satisfactoriness of) her life. However, it need not be supposed that her dissatisfaction is all there is to the motivational constraint, as if the agent were saying

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keep looking for a better candidate, give up on the idea that anything satisfies all the conditions (and therefore that anything counts as eudaemonia), rethink whether the unsatisfied condition is really necessary or reinterpret the condition so it can be satisfied after all? More generally, when is something that is, though imperfect, the best realization of or the best approximation to a realization of a concept, *good enough* to count as a realization of that concept?

<sup>33</sup> Part of the answer will appeal to what the agent already believes about how a person ought to live, about what kinds of actions, aims and character traits are good, right, admirable or acceptable. This is not a way of saying that these beliefs are sacrosanct or beyond criticism or revision, but it is a fact that the agent addressed by a eudaemonist theory typically already possesses such moral beliefs, and, in ethics as elsewhere, we must start where we are. This is an important theme, but not one I shall treat here. I discuss it somewhat further in talking about the socially embedded character of the virtues in Chapter Five.

<sup>34</sup> The motivations she already has, of course, need not be entirely self-interested. There are reasonably well-understood evolutionary reasons that our original motivational complement includes some measure of direct concern for the well-being of others, especially of close kin. Additional other-directed concerns are generally inculcated and reinforced in the processes of maturation and socialization.

only: “I want something different; *this* is something different; so I’ll pursue it.” The motivational pre-conditions may be relevant to her selection in at least two further ways. First, she may find some particular proposal for a conception of eudaemonia implausible, to amount to saying that she must, to achieve it, systematically frustrate what she wants or cares about. For instance, she may think that Epicureanism, in affirming that only pleasure is good and that only pleasure and what is conducive to pleasure is desired in the ideal eudaemonic life, demands too drastic a change in what she already thinks worthwhile. Or to take another instance, she may say, with Aristotle, that any theory, such as the Stoic, which holds that a truly virtuous person can be eudaemonic even under torture, is something that could only be held by someone “maintaining a thesis at all costs.” (NE 1095b 31-1096a 2)<sup>35</sup> Second, as will be discussed somewhat more fully below, eudaemonist theories must provide some developmental account of the process by which one comes to embody a conception of eudaemonia, and the agent may find the developmental account motivationally implausible – which is to say that she cannot see how *she* could follow through on the prescribed steps alleged to lead to living well. Implausibilities of these types may or may not be decisive, for they might be overcome by further considerations, but that does not imply that they are not real motivational constraints bearing upon the acceptability of particular eudaemonist theories. Where relevant, they *need* to be overcome.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, of course, is not thinking about the Stoics, who came later. Presumably, he has in mind the Socratic doctrine that no genuine harm can come to a good man (and therefore that anything that can happen to a good man, such as torture, cannot be a genuine harm).

<sup>36</sup> In addition, the acceptability of a eudaemonist theory may be constrained in other ways than motivationally. As mentioned above, there are formal constraints, and there are also constraints derived

Now, it is not likely that there will be some simple, obvious and readily takable step that will lead immediately to the more satisfactory state sought by the agent. If there were, she would already have taken the step or at least would be preparing to take it and so would no longer be in search of a conception of living well. Additionally, though I have spoken of the state or conditions she is seeking as satisfactory or more satisfactory, there is no reason for her to suppose that it will satisfy her *as she is now*. As she is now, she is not satisfied, and none of her options lead immediately to being satisfied with her condition. She must expect that the content of her satisfactions – that is, what would satisfy her if it were realized – will itself change if and to the extent that she finds and embodies in her life an adequate conception of eudaemonia.

These points suggest three further requirements. First, there must be some developmental or transformative process<sup>37</sup> that will lead the agent from where she is now to the kinds of motivations she would have if she were in fact living well.<sup>38</sup> Second, the content of her satisfactions in that envisioned condition must be such that achieving or having whatever would then satisfy her appears feasible. There would be little point in deliberately undergoing a developmental process that would alter one's motivations and responses so that, with the altered motivations, one could not be satisfied with what one

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from prior belief, especially widely shared prior belief. See *NE* 1145 b1ff. and note 33.

<sup>37</sup> For discussions of the developmental processes envisioned by ancient eudaemonist theories (and of much else), see Nussbaum 1994.

<sup>38</sup> For this reason, I do not think it needs to be true that the seeker must, at the initial stage, clearly see (what is said to be) the realization of eudaemonia as attractive. On one hand, it must be attractive in some sense or to some degree – otherwise, it would appear only as a way of telling her that she must systematically frustrate what she cares about, but on the other, the motivations of the practically wise person may be, at least partially, opaque to the beginner.

could then reasonably expect to achieve or have. Third, given that, due to the accidents and risks of ordinary life, the developmental process may or may not be completed,<sup>39</sup> she must see the steps to be taken as worthwhile, either because of the attractiveness of the terminus of the developmental process (which is identified with eudaemonia or living well) or in terms of what she sees to be desirable at the stage at which the steps must be taken (or, of course, some combination).

The general lesson to which these considerations point is two-fold. Any credible eudaemonist theory will have to meet certain motivational conditions and will have to propose, perhaps sketchily, a plausible developmental account, subject to whatever motivational requirements are relevant at any given stage, of the way in which one may move from the position of the beginner toward something that can be identified with living well. There is room for variation in the details and in the relative emphasis accorded to practice, habituation, imitation of others (presumed to be more advanced), participation in social and political life, and to reflection and discussion, but however the details are worked out, the (motivationally constrained) developmental story must be present. We must begin from where we are, cognitively, motivationally and affectively. Anything that we will be able to recognize as living well must be reachable or approachable by addressing what we care about and what concerns us as we are.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> I abstract here from two further questions about the completion of the developmental process. The first has to do with ways in which the agent may be at fault for its non-completion and the second with whether the end-point is conceived as realistically achievable or instead as an ideal to be approached. With regard to the latter, note that if eudaemonia is conceived only as an approachable ideal, the question about the desirability of the intermediate steps becomes more urgent.

<sup>40</sup> I do not think this begs any questions against the possibility of purely rational motivation. If we are such that we can be motivated independently of particular desires, wants or preferences that we only

### 4.3 *The Classification of Ends and Means*

There are ways of acting, objectives that are sought, states of affairs that may be achieved, as we say, *for their own sakes*. We find these to be somehow worthwhile, desirable, satisfying, enjoyable, even without any appeal to something beyond them to which they are thought to contribute. These, I shall call *ends*. There are also ways of acting, objectives sought, states of affairs that may be achieved through action that are engaged in or sought for the sake of something else. These can be called *means*. For each person, it is in terms of the network of his ends and means, combined with what he believes about their relations to the world and to one another, plus any reasoning that may be brought to bear, that his actions are shaped.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, unless our ordinary understanding of action and motivation in ourselves and others is radically mistaken, this must be the case. So long as we are reflective beings and so long as the ways in which we act are subject to reflective control, we can ask of any particular objective or action why we seek it, engage in it or practice it. To ask the question is to ask whether the objective or activity is an *end*, and so does not require any further justification or rationale, or whether it is a *means*, and so is warranted (or not) in terms of something to which it contributes. Broadly, there are three possible answers. We can appeal to something else as supplying our reason, in which case we can repeat the

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happen to have, then that is a fact about “where we are” and therefore about what we have to work with in addressing our concerns or what we care about.

<sup>41</sup> Other kinds of action, such as the merely habitual, may be possible, but even the merely habitual, for normal adults at any rate, is under at least counterfactual control in terms of the agent’s ends: it could be altered if some reason were recognized for the alteration.

same question with respect to that. We can fail to find any reason, in which case, since what is being considered is something that (we are supposing) is subject to reflective control, we will cease to act in that way.<sup>42</sup> Or we can conclude that no further and distinct reason is needed – that the action, objective or practice is worthwhile for its own sake.

This may suggest an overly simple picture, though, in which means and ends are neatly dichotomous. It needs explication and complication in more than one direction. Here, I shall offer a classification of ends and means that reflects the richer structure explicit or implicit in eudaemonist theories. It is best to begin by presenting relevant distinctions quickly and then back-tracking to fill in details.<sup>43</sup>

- An *objective* is something sought, aimed at or to be performed.
- An *end* is an objective sought, aimed at or to be performed for its own sake.
- A *means* is an action taken or state of affairs selected or brought about for the sake of some objective.
- An *external means* is a means adopted for the sake of its expected causal contribution to an independently specifiable objective.

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<sup>42</sup> We could, perhaps, fail to find a reason but also fail to find any reason for changing. I can see four interpretations: (1) It could mean that one is indifferent between a pair of options. But then we can repeat the question with respect to the disjunction of the pair: why do or aim at *either*? (2) It could mean that the two are thought to be non-comparable, in the sense that they are not equally good, but also that neither is better than the other. But this is to say that there are reasons for each that we either cannot rank or do not know how to rank against one another, rather than that there is no reason for the aim or activity at all. (3) It could mean that the two are equally good specifications of something else sought or aimed at. Again, this would not, except in a Pickwickian sense, be a case of there being no reason, but rather one in which the available reason underdetermines which is best. (4) It might be an expression of some kind of nihilism or skepticism which denies that there are any reasons for any action. That, I take it, is not a possibility admitted by our ordinary understanding of action and motivation.

<sup>43</sup> All of the terms distinguished here are to be understood as applying within the network of means and ends that characterizes the action, motivation and deliberation of a single agent.

- A *constitutive means* is a means adopted because it is taken to at least partially constitute the objective to which it contributes. The objective cannot be adequately specified entirely independently of the constitutive means.
- A *final end* is an end that is not sought or aimed at for the sake of any further objective.
- An *ultimate end* is a final end to which all other objectives are means.<sup>44</sup>

Using this terminology, three simple and fairly obvious points can be rehearsed quickly.

First, an objective can be either a means or an end. An objective is just an object of intentional action which, in one direction, may or may not be sought or performed for its own sake, and in the other, may or may not anchor further deliberation with regard to the means suitable for realizing it. Second, there can be indefinitely lengthy chains or series of means linking action to some end that it serves. Third, being a means and being an end are not mutually exclusive. An objective may both be aimed at for its own sake and for

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<sup>44</sup> Eudaemonists have often not distinguished sharply between final and ultimate ends, but ignoring the distinction leads to trouble. For example, in *NE* I.7, Aristotle says:

Since there are evidently more than one end, and we choose some of these (e.g. wealth, flutes, and in general instruments) for the sake of something else, clearly not all ends are complete ends; but the chief good is evidently something complete. Therefore, if there is only one complete end, this will be what we are seeking, and if more than one, the most complete of these will be what we are seeking. Now we call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more complete than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more complete than the things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call complete without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else. (1097a 25-35)

This seems to admit that more than one end might be complete without qualification (that is, that more than one might be final in the sense I indicated above), but if more than one end is sought only for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else, then the condition of self-sufficiency (“that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing” 1097b 15-16), that Aristotle also thinks applies to the chief good, will not be met. There might be two final ends, each sought for its own sake and not for the sake of anything else. To nominate one of these to the exclusion of the other as the chief good would leave the life lacking in something, namely, in whatever is comprehended under the other final end.

the sake of something further to which it contributes.<sup>45</sup> There are further issues, however, that are not so quickly settled and that require additional consideration. These have to do with final ends, with ultimate ends and with the distinction between constitutive and external means.

#### *4.31 Final Ends*

We can begin by addressing the question whether, for a given agent, there must be any final ends. An argument was provided earlier that, given our ordinary understanding of our action and motivation, we must regard some objective (at least one) as an end. That does not settle the current question because an objective may be both an end and a means. So, it might be that all ends are also means and thus, that none are final.

There are two salient possibilities here: Action might be structured in the service of an infinite sequence of ends,<sup>46</sup> or there might be some finite cycle of ends, each of which contributes to and is contributed to by some other. The first can be ruled out for finite agents such as ourselves. Even if, in some sense, an infinite sequence of ends is possible, it is not possible for us: we would be unable to guide our actions in terms of such a sequence.

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<sup>45</sup> To hold that some objective, which is a means, is also an end is to be committed at least to the claim that it would *still* be aimed at, under some relevant counterfactual conditions, even if it did not contribute to something further.

<sup>46</sup> Aristotle, at 1094a 19-21, briefly alludes to a different infinite sequence: "... we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain)." I think this is best read as envisioning an infinite series of means unconnected to any end. In the next section, I discuss somewhat further the argument in which this passage appears.

The more interesting possibility is that an agent might guide his action in terms of some finite cycle of ends. Perhaps he eats to work and works to eat. It is not altogether easy to be clear just what is supposed to be envisaged here. It cannot mean that the agent eats only in order to work and works only in order to eat, for then, eating and working would not be *ends*. Nor can it mean that eating and working jointly constitute what he thinks is worthwhile for its own sake, for that, even if he has no name for what the two jointly constitute, would itself be an end that is not part of the cycle. Perhaps, each of the two is valued both as an end and as a causally necessary (or useful) means, as one may drive, both to reach some destination and also because one enjoys driving. He would still eat if it weren't necessary to work and would still work if it weren't necessary to eat.

Perhaps, this condition in which there are mutually supporting ends which are not viewed as constitutive of any further end can appropriately be described as meeting both conditions, so the agent does have a finite cycle of ends but does not have any final ends. If so, there is still an important point to be made. The kind of life shaped by a finite cycle of ends, even if possible, is not one that can be recommended to anyone whose life cannot *already* be so characterized. No one who does not already guide himself by exactly that cycle of ends will be able to see such a life as desirable.<sup>47</sup> It fails the most basic

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<sup>47</sup> That is, no one who does not already share exactly that cycle of ends will be able to see it as desirable unless he sees that cycle of ends as means to or constitutive of something else that he finds desirable, but, to the extent to which that is true, his ends will differ from those of the agent whose life is shaped entirely by that cycle of ends.

Perhaps, there is a loophole here. Consider a *definitively achievable end*, where that is an end that, upon being achieved, ceases to be an end. My end might be to take a walk. When I have taken the walk, I no longer have that end; it has been definitively achieved. Now, suppose that an agent has a definitively achievable end of coming to have a mutually supporting set of ends, such as eating and working. Then, that agent, whose action is not already shaped entirely by a given cycle of ends, could have a reason for coming to shape his action entirely in terms of some finite cycle of ends. Conceivably, an account of eudaemonia

motivational condition for an account of eudaemonia, that it be such as to engage the beginner as a beginner.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4.32 *Ultimate Ends*

So, it is practically inescapable for beings such as ourselves that we have or at least think in terms of final ends. There are objectives aimed at for their own sake and not for the sake of anything further. Must there also be, for a given agent, an ultimate end, some final end to which all other objectives are related as means?<sup>49</sup> Now, this question might be understood in at least two ways. The question might be whether, as a matter of human psychology, there must be an ultimate end,<sup>50</sup> or it might be whether having or coming to have an ultimate end is normatively necessary.

Aristotle offers an argument that appears to bear on the first question. It occurs in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.2:

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couched in terms of a finite cycle of ends could in this way appear desirable to someone whose actions were not already shaped by that finite cycle. However, it must, in the first place, be judged unlikely that there is anyone with the requisite definitively achievable end, and in the second, the possibility depends upon any such person having a different structure of ends, albeit a structure to be superseded, that does include final ends.

<sup>48</sup> Arguably, it may fail first-personally as well, even for the agent whose cycle of ends it is. If he is sufficiently reflective to imagine possible alternative structures of end-pursuit, he will be able to wonder why he guides his life by just these ends and will not be able to find an answer along the lines that they make up or contribute to a better or more worthwhile life. Should he pose to himself the question why he guides his action by just this cycle of ends, the most he could say, it appears, is that he just does and sees no reason to change. (See note 42.)

<sup>49</sup> If an agent does have an ultimate end, then that will also be her only final end; she may have other ends, but no others that are final.

<sup>50</sup> Having already addressed this in Chapter One, I shall set aside here the question whether the having of an ultimate end is a matter of human nature in some sense distinct from saying that it is a matter of human psychology.

If, then, there is some end of the things that we do, which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly, this must be the chief good. (1094a 18-22)

On the face of it, the form of this argument is:

- (1) If P then Q
- (2) Not R (because S)
- (3) Therefore, Q

That's puzzling unless there is an unstated premise to the effect that R is the only relevant alternative to P. So, filling in, the best reading of the argument appears to be along the following lines:

- (1) If there is some end of the things we do, this must be the chief good.
- (2) Either there is some end of the things we do or we choose everything for the sake of something else.
- (3) We do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate ...)
- (4) Therefore, this must be the chief good.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> This is based on Ackrill 1980, 25-26. There are further complications in the interpretation of this passage which, not being relevant to my present concerns, I omit.

If this reconstruction is correct,<sup>52</sup> then the argument is fallacious. In the sense in which it is plausible that the second premise is true, there being some end of the things we do has to mean that there is some end for each of the things we do – that is, that we do not act without some end or other. That, of course, is consistent with our different actions having different ends in view. But it is not plausible that the first premise is true unless the existence of some end of the things we do means that there is some *single* end of all the things we do. (Otherwise, what does “this” mean in the consequent?) So, if the second premise is true, the antecedent of the first may be false. Since the truth of the antecedent isn’t insured by anything else in the argument, the conclusion that “this must be the chief good” does not follow. This argument, then, does not show that there must, as a matter of human psychology, be an ultimate end.

Nor is it obvious how any other argument could provide support for that conclusion. It might be asserted that if an agent has two ends, then he has a further end constituted by the compound of the two.<sup>53</sup> If that were correct, then, for any agent who has any end at all, there would have to be also an ultimate end (if he has only one end, then the same one). This would make the existence of an ultimate end definitional, and the

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<sup>52</sup> It is difficult to find a reading that is both illuminating and non-fallacious. In particular, there is a problem understanding the role of the clause denying that we choose everything for the sake of something else. But if that clause is omitted, it is not clear what argument is being offered other than the trivial passage from “if P then Q” to “if P then Q”. Additionally, it is plain that Aristotle means to get more than a conditional assertion of the existence of a chief good.

<sup>53</sup> Ackrill suggests, in mitigation of (though not exoneration from) the charge that Aristotle is guilty of a fallacy in the passage quoted above, that Aristotle may have accepted such a premise. (1980, 26)

ultimate end would have no more or different normative force than the ends that constitute it. In terms of a pair of ends, *A* and *B*, when those alone are relevant, we can already say that there is a consideration in favor of any action that advances one without damaging the other, in favor of any action that advances both, against any action that damages both, and against any action that damages one without contributing to the other. But if the presence of some compound end is supposed to follow definitionally from the presence of any other ends, the *A-B* compound does no more than *A* and *B* separately did. For the compound to have any independent normative force, it must be more than just a compound; it must, for example, establish some kind of trade-off or priority relations (at least for some range of cases) that apply when actions in the service of *A* are actions in the disservice of *B*. If the compound has independent normative force, its presence cannot be guaranteed definitionally; if it does not, there is no point in introducing it.

As already mentioned, however, we can understand differently the claim that there must be, for each agent, an ultimate end. It might be that one ought to have or come to have some ultimate end. That is a claim any eudaemonist theory is committed to, for eudaemonia is conceived as just such an ultimate end. Accordingly, any eudaemonist is committed to the more modest psychological claim (than that each agent must have an ultimate end) that it is possible for an agent to have or come to have an ultimate end, or at least to approach having one.<sup>54</sup> Second, the eudaemonist, if he does not take the presence of an ultimate end to be guaranteed by the psychology of his addressees, is committed to the normative claim that there are reasons supporting the acquisition of or the approach to

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<sup>54</sup> See note 39.

having an ultimate end. For the present, I only note that this must be part of the eudaemonist case and suggest that the obvious normative necessity of an ultimate end for a eudaemonist theory may be the reason that some eudaemonists, such as Aristotle, were too quick to conclude that an ultimate end must be present as a matter of psychology.

#### *4.33 Constitutive and External Means*

Also important for understanding the eudaemonist classification of ends and means is the distinction between *constitutive means* and what I have called *external means*. The distinction received some discussion in the last chapter and has also been deployed above in the discussion of centralism and reductionism, but it has further-reaching import and will repay more careful consideration. We need to address both the relation of constitutive and external means to one another and the relations in which they may stand to ends – in particular, whether external and constitutive means may themselves be ends.

Intuitively, the distinction is easy to illustrate. I may decide to take exercise for the sake of my health. Here, the exercise is an external means to health. It is something that causally contributes to my health. I may also settle upon tennis as the form of exercise I will take. In some sense, that is taking means to get exercise. Tennis can be compared with other options (volleyball, walking, swimming, thumb-twiddling, etc.) as a better or worse form of exercise. But this is a very different sense of taking means to some objective than is the taking of exercise for the sake of health. The playing of tennis *constitutes* the exercise that I get rather than simply causally contributing to it. Or, here is

another example: I may purchase a tie as a means to being well-dressed,<sup>55</sup> but *wearing* a tie is not in the same sense a means to being well-dressed; it is part of what it is to be well-dressed.<sup>56</sup>

On the face of things, we can distinguish the two in terms of whether the relevant objective can be independently specified. When something is an external means to some objective, the objective can, in principle, be fully specified independently of reference to the means.<sup>57</sup> We know what health or being well-dressed is without talking about exercise or the purchasing of ties. A doctor could determine whether I am healthy without knowing what, if any, exercise I engage in. Someone suitably sensitive to the conventions that define being well-dressed could determine whether I am well-dressed without launching any inquiries about where or whether I had purchased a tie. I might be healthy without taking exercise, and a borrowed rather than a purchased tie might contribute to my being well-dressed. An external means contributes causally to its objective, and even if it is, in the circumstances, the only way to achieve or promote the objective, it could, if circumstances were different, be replaced by some other means without detriment to the objective.

When, by contrast, something is a constitutive means to some objective, it is not possible, even in principle, to fully specify the objective independently of the means.

What the objective is is at least in part constituted or made what it is by the means

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<sup>55</sup> I am speaking of being well-dressed in accordance with certain conventions. That those conventions are not universal does not affect the point.

<sup>56</sup> I owe this example to Roderick Long.

<sup>57</sup> In practice, of course, objectives are rarely, if ever, fully specified.

adopted. The contribution of the means to the end is not, or is not just, causal. If wearing a tie is constitutive of being well-dressed, there is no adequate way of saying what it is to be well-dressed that does not refer to tie-wearing. When a means is constitutive of some objective it stands in some logically or conceptually necessary relation to that objective<sup>58</sup>: Its necessity for the objective is not, as may be the case when an external means is necessary to some objective, a matter of the absence of some other causally effective or useful means to promote or achieve the objective. The constitutive means is necessary for the objective to be what it is.

There are at least two further important points of comparison between external and constitutive means. First, an external means may be sufficient to achieve the relevant objective if enacting or adopting the means is, relative to the situation in which it is adopted, all that is needed to achieve the objective. The parallel, for constitutive means, is that some constitutive means may entirely constitute the objective to which it is a means as playing tennis constitutes a way of taking exercise. An external means may also be necessary to its objective if it is not causally possible to achieve the objective without adopting that means. However, an external means need not be either necessary or sufficient for its objective. Taking regular exercise, for example, is not sufficient for health because things can go wrong with health that exercise does not prevent. (Some

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<sup>58</sup> The conceptual connection may be very attenuated, as in the relation between playing tennis and taking exercise, since so many different activities, including ones not yet conceived, may be forms of exercise. Nonetheless, it is real; some things, such as taking a nap, cannot count as ways of taking exercise. Also, as exemplified in the case of the various different activities that may constitute taking exercise, the necessity in question may be the necessity for doing *something* that constitutes the objective without, in the absence of further considerations, ruling out the possibility that other things could equally well constitute the objective. The fact that I could swim rather than play tennis as a form of exercise does not imply that playing tennis does not constitute my taking of exercise.

forms of exercise might even damage a person's health.) Nor is it necessary, for, however unlikely it might be, a person might be in good health without taking any regular exercise. The most that can be said is that regular exercise increases the probability of good health. For a constitutive means, though, matters are different. A constitutive means may not be sufficient for its objective – when it only partially constitutes it, as wearing a tie only partially constitutes being well-dressed – but it is always necessary: It does not *merely* increase the probability of its objective. Of course, wearing a tie *does* increase the probability of my being well-dressed, but it increases it from zero – the probability that I will be well-dressed without a tie – to something greater than zero, not from a lesser to a greater positive value.<sup>59</sup>

This is connected to a second important point, that external means admit of trade-offs or substitution<sup>60</sup> in a way that constitutive means do not. If my objective is to begin to invest a certain sum every month, then, in order to have that sum available each month, I may either reduce other expenditures or attempt to increase my income. Either of these courses of action is an external means to having the sum available for investment. So far as that is the only relevant objective, one may be substituted for the other or they may be combined in various ways. I can compensate for not having increased my income sufficiently by reducing expenditures elsewhere. For constitutive means, this is not the case. If, to use an earlier example, wearing a tie and wearing a belt are both constitutive

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<sup>59</sup> See the qualification in note 58. What is necessary may be that some constitutive means or other be adopted.

<sup>60</sup> There is not a sharp distinction between substitution and trade-off: Substitution is just the limiting case of trade-off.

of being well-dressed, then I cannot make up for not wearing a belt by wearing a nicer tie (substitution fails), nor can I compensate for wearing an ugly tie by wearing a nicer belt (trade-offs are not possible).<sup>61, 62</sup>

Now that we have a better sense of the contours of the distinction between external and constitutive means, we can begin to address the relation that either may have to ends. It is obvious that neither can be a final end; being any kind of means precludes that, for a final end is one that is not sought, pursued or performed for the sake of something else.

It is almost as obvious that either can be an end. As an example of an external means that is also an end, I may mention again the case of driving to reach a destination, both in order to reach the destination and because one enjoys driving for its own sake. Driving is an external means to reaching the destination; we can certainly understand what it is to be at the destination without knowing or referring to the way in which one arrived there, and there may be alternative ways to reach the destination, such as taking a bus. Still, driving may not be selected over its alternatives solely because it is more efficient or faster or the like (even if it is), but because it is enjoyed for its own sake.

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<sup>61</sup> This does not imply that no comparisons are possible. Of two beltless persons, one might be better dressed because he is wearing a nicer tie, though it would be improper to say of either, without qualification, that he is well-dressed. Or, though again neither could be said without qualification to be well-dressed, one who wears no belt and a nice tie might be better dressed than someone who wears a nice belt and no tie, because a tie is a more prominent constituent of attire.

<sup>62</sup> There is additional complexity which, though it does not require any alteration of the analytical points already made, is worth mentioning. Just as external means can be arranged in series or chains, with a given means becoming in its turn an objective to which further means are sought, so constitutive means can be nested within one another. Playing tennis may be constitutive of the exercise I take, and lobbing the ball across the net constitutive of the tennis I play. Moreover, constitutive means may serve an external means as their objective, as in the selection of tennis as the form that my exercise, itself an external means adopted for the sake of health, takes, and constitutive means may also serve as objectives to which further external means are anchored, as when I reserve a court to play tennis.

Constitutive means can also themselves be ends. Playing tennis may constitute the exercise I take, but may also be or come to be found worthwhile for its own sake. Though it may be that I would not have taken up tennis except as a form of exercise or determined upon exercise except insofar as it was expected to contribute to my health, it may be that in the playing of tennis, I come to enjoy the game itself in addition to caring about the health-related benefits. If, for example, some study were to show that tennis, contrary to prior opinion, had no significant positive impact upon health, I would not then give it up. For, though health benefits were the initial reason for taking up the game, they are not the only reason for continuing to play.

So, either external or constitutive means may be ends. As means, they may be related to objectives that are themselves ends or to objectives that are not ends. Plainly, there is nothing about an external means, simply insofar as it is an external means, that requires that it also be an end, whether or not its objective is an end.<sup>63</sup> There are more interesting questions, however, connected with whether constitutive means may or must be ends. It is also fairly obvious that a constitutive means may be an end when the objective of which it is constitutive is itself only an external means (and not also an end) to something further. I may take a job solely because of the way the particular job satisfies various parametric conditions such as salary. Had some other position offered a better salary, while not being worse in terms of other conditions (such as proximity to my residence), I would have taken it instead. Taking the job is an external means to receiving a certain salary. Once I have taken the position, though, I may find that something

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<sup>63</sup> An external means *may* be an end, though, even if its objective is not an end.

constitutive of the job I am expected to perform is itself something I find worthwhile for its own sake.<sup>64</sup>

But suppose that the objective of which the means is constitutive is itself an end. Must the constitutive means *then* also be an end? (Call this the Constitutive End Thesis.) I think the Constitutive End Thesis is initially plausible, but I do not think it is entirely obvious. It is uncontroversial and obvious that such a constitutive means *may* be an end. I shall quickly, and without discussion, give two examples to make that point. At greater length, I shall examine three possible counter-examples, and consider whether they are genuine.

It is not difficult to present examples in which a constitutive means to something aimed at or performed for its own sake *does* function as an end also. There is, say, playing tennis well, enjoyed for its own sake, and there is also, constitutive of it, the gracefully executed return. Or there is a friendship, sustained for its own sake, and there are also, constitutive of it, various shared activities, such as conversation.

It is not so easy to find plausible examples in which a constitutive means to something aimed at or performed as an end is not itself an end. But consider again the case of a genuine and close friendship, sustained for its own sake. Part of what is essential to such friendship is that each friend care about the other's well-being for its own sake.

What happens when one friend learns that disaster or serious harm has befallen the other?

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<sup>64</sup> I might even have foreseen that this would be the case, so long as having foreseen it did not play a role in the decision. Also fairly plainly, when the objective is not an end, it is possible for the constitutive means not to be an end either. Whatever job I take, there will be something or other constitutive of what I am expected to perform, and I may not find that worthwhile for its own sake.

No doubt, she will do what she can to help. But also, she will feel sorrow or grief over what has happened. This sorrow is not just some external means or accidental accompaniment of her concern for her friend. It is essential to and constitutive of the concern for a friend's welfare that is part of what it is to be a genuine friend. If she did not feel the sorrow, she would not be a genuine friend. Surely, though, it might be argued, that does not mean that she values the sorrow or grief for its own sake.

Even on its own terms, I do not think this is entirely clear. To say that something is an end is neither equivalent to nor does it imply that it has a certain affective quality.<sup>65</sup> And the grieving friend may well say that she of course does not *enjoy* sorrow or grieving, but that it is not something she would do without, even if she could. But though I think this may have considerable merit, I will not pursue this line of response. Instead, I will point to a distinction that applies even if the case cannot be made that sorrow over harm to one's friend is an end.

The key distinction is between what is constitutive of an end and the special case in which something is a constitutive *means* to an end. Whenever there is an end, or more generally any objective, there is some state of affairs (which is not normally fully specified) that is conceived to be possible or at least possible to approach. Of course, there must be *something* that constitutes this state of affairs. But constitutive means to an objective need only partially constitute it. There may be other features of the envisioned state of affairs that also partially constitute it without being constitutive means.

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<sup>65</sup> Certain affective qualities may, however, make it extremely unlikely for something to be adopted or pursued as an end.

This distinction provides the needed tool for considering sorrow as constitutive of concern for a friend's well-being. The first point to notice is that it is misleading to speak, as I just did and as in the initial description of the case, of the friend's sorrow as constitutive of her concern for another's well-being.<sup>66</sup> The right way to describe the case is that being such as to feel sorrow or grief at harms to the well-being of a friend – that is, having a certain dispositional state of character – is constitutive of being concerned with the friend's well-being. But this, being such as to be grieved at serious harm to a friend's well-being, is not a constitutive *means* to having the concern. One does not take it as one's objective to come to have that dispositional feature in order to care for a friend's well-being. It is rather that, *in* caring for or coming to care for the well-being of another for its own sake, one is such or comes to be such that one would feel sorrow at harm to the other.

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<sup>66</sup> It is doubtful that it is intelligible at all, and if it is intelligible, it sounds nasty. (If my sorrow is constitutive of my aiming at your well-being, then, in aiming at your well-being, I aim at my own sorrow. But since my sorrow is at harms to your well-being, then, in aiming at your well-being, I aim for you to be harmed.)

Consider a different and more difficult case. Suppose that one considers one's job worthwhile for its own sake. One is engaged in work that one considers important and valuable. But constitutive of performance of the job is dealing, sometimes, with a corporate bureaucracy. That is indeed a means – one must deal with the bureaucracy in order to perform the job – and it is indeed constitutive of the job one has – the job would not be the same if dealing with the bureaucracy were not required. But it seems intelligible that dealing with the bureaucracy is not among one's ends; it is, from the standpoint of the job-holder, an unfortunate concomitant.

Since dealing with the bureaucracy is undeniably both constitutive of and a means to performing the job, there are only two possible tacks for reconciling the case with the Constitutive End Thesis. It might be that dealing with the bureaucracy really is an end or else that performing the job is not.

The more plausible is that performing the job is not an end. It might be said that there is some aspect or component of doing the job, such as creative work involved, that is found worthwhile for its own sake and that, though initially one might have been inclined to say that it was the performance of the job itself that was valued as an end, on further reflection, so describing the case is a misreading of the relevant motivations. Instead, though both the creative work and dealing with the bureaucracy are constitutive of the job, dealing with the bureaucracy is not constitutive of the creative work, and it is only the creative work that is performed for its own sake.

This seems possible, but it is not enough to make the case for compatibility with

the Constitutive End Thesis unless we can rule out the alternative hypothesis that it really is the job that is taken to be an end, but that its being an end is not a simple function of and does not imply that its constituents, considered apart from their place in the end they constitute, are ends. The status of the job performance as an end is, for the agent, a property of its constituents standing in certain relations to one another. I do not see how this can be ruled out. It is, for example, arguably a familiar feature of works of art that they have or are taken to have value as wholes (often referred to as a matter of their organic unity) that is not reducible to (say) the value of the separate brush-strokes in a painting or the notes in a musical composition. It is how the parts are put together that is at least partially responsible for the value of the whole, not the value of the parts considered separately. This is, perhaps, only an analogy, but I do not see how to argue that ends and the value of works of art must be disanalogous in this respect.

The other attempt at reconciliation with the Constitutive End Thesis involves the claim that performance of the job was an end and that dealing with the bureaucracy, as a constitutive of job performance, is also an end. This seems much less plausible. For, to treat something that is a constitutive means as an end also is to imply that one would, for at least some relevant range of counterfactual cases, still perform it if it were no longer necessary to or constitutive of some other end that one had. But surely it is possible that one would have not even the slightest disposition to deal with the corporate bureaucracy if it were not part of the job. And if that is so, then dealing with the bureaucracy is not an end, and so, the analysis does not effect a satisfactory reconciliation of the case with the Constitutive End Thesis.<sup>67</sup>

Consider a third case.<sup>68</sup> Suppose that one's end is to play the violin. Constitutive of that and means to it are both using one arm to hold the violin against one's chin and making certain movements with a bow with the other hand. But neither of these alone are ends. The violin-player would not recognize anything worthwhile, certainly not anything worthwhile for its own sake, in holding the violin against his chin without playing it or in making various stroking motions with the bow if no violin were present to stroke.

Perhaps, this case can be reconciled with the Constitutive End Thesis, but it looks unlikely to the point of desperation. The same kinds of options as were available in the

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<sup>67</sup> As applied to the present case, the Constitutive End Thesis implies that the conditional, "if job-performance is an end, then so is dealing with the bureaucracy," always holds. To deny that requires that there be some possible case in which job-performance is an end, but dealing with the bureaucracy is not. The considerations of the last two paragraphs are, in different ways, meant to suggest that this is a real possibility.

<sup>68</sup> This was suggested by Fred Miller.

case of dealing with a corporate bureaucracy are available here. Since stroking (with the bow) and holding (the violin) are both constitutive of and means to playing the violin, a friend of the Constitutive End Thesis would have to maintain either that playing the violin is not an end or that stroking and holding are ends.

The problem with the former is that there does not seem to be anything into which playing the violin can be decomposed (as job-performance could be decomposed into creative work and dealing with the corporate bureaucracy), so that some part or aspect of the violin-playing can be regarded as the end, while the stroking and holding can be viewed as constitutive means to some other part or aspect of violin-playing which is not an end. The problem with the latter is that there appears to be no relevant range of counterfactual cases such that one would still hold the violin or still stroke with the bow if they were not constitutive of violin-playing.<sup>69</sup> There may be some way to avoid these conclusions and thus maintain the Constitutive End Thesis, perhaps by way of some account of how acts can properly be individuated, but unless that is further spelled out and defended, I think the case of holding and stroking as constitutive means to violin-playing has to be accepted as a genuine counter-example to the Constitutive End Thesis.

With cases of this sort in mind, it seems to me that it is at most *barely possible* that the Constitutive End Thesis is true. But so long as we have only such examples and analyses upon which to base a judgment, I do not see that we can say more for it. The

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<sup>69</sup> One might do one or the other by itself in the course of practice – say, to accustom oneself to the way the violin feels cradled in one's arm or to the range of motions required to draw the bow across the strings – but that does not seem to be a relevant case in which one would adopt the means apart from their contribution to the end of violin-playing; instead, these would be activities adopted only for their expected contribution (as external means) to violin-playing.

general form of any proposed counter-example would be that there is some plausible case in which a means constitutive of an end is not itself an end, and the general form of any alternative analysis offered in reply would be that there is some *more* plausible reading of the case such that it is not a genuine counter-example.<sup>70</sup> There seems to be no reason to think this will always be true, and for some cases, such as violin-playing, it appears to be false, so it will be hard to construct any general argument that the comparative plausibility judgments invoked will always favor the thesis. If we work only with alleged counter-examples and their respective analyses, we will have to proceed case by case, and the thesis will be more or less credible depending on the outcome of the particular analyses. For present purposes, I think that we cannot confidently affirm the Constitutive End Thesis; only the more limited claim, that constitutive means to an end *may* themselves be ends, is warranted.

However, this is not quite the end of the matter. There is also to be considered the special case of constitutive means to an end in which the end of which the means are constitutive is a final end. Here, I think we can argue for what might be called the Restricted Constitutive End Thesis, that a constitutive means to a final end must itself be an end. For what made it possible to maintain that a constitutive means to an end might not itself be an end was that if the end could be altered so as to remain the same but for that constitutive means, there might be reasons for altering it – that is, for replacing it with the altered end – in terms of other ends (such as avoiding distasteful activities like dealing

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<sup>70</sup> Counter-examples might fail to be genuine along several dimensions – the alleged constitutive means to an end might not be constitutive of an *end*, might not be constitutive, might not be a means or might, despite appearances, be an end.

with a corporate bureaucracy). But if the end of which the means is constitutive is final, then it is sought, aimed at or performed for its own sake and not (at all) for the sake of anything else, so there are no further ends which bear on the acceptability of pursuing or aiming at it. One could not have reason to alter a final end so as to omit or replace something constitutive of it unless it were no longer final.

#### 4.4 *The Virtues: Their Place within Eudaemonism*

For eudaemonism, the moral virtues or excellences<sup>71</sup> are pivotal both to understanding what it is to live well and to actually living well. Traits of character such as honesty, loyalty, fairness, compassion, generosity, conscientiousness, tolerance, kindness, courage and, most generally and importantly, practical wisdom<sup>72</sup> are invoked as essential to living well<sup>73</sup>:

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<sup>71</sup> There are also, according to Aristotle, intellectual virtues or excellences. In outline, the distinction works like this. The human soul – roughly, the functional organization of a human being – is divided into several parts. There are both rational and non-rational parts. Among the non-rational parts are the desiring and appetitive functions. Though they are non-rational (perhaps *inarticulate* captures much of the sense, here), they respond to reason and have “a tendency to obey [it] as one does one's father.” (NE 1103a 2-4). The moral virtues or excellences of character are properties of this non-rational part when it is disposed to behave and respond rightly to the situations with which a person is confronted. By contrast, the intellectual virtues are excellences of the rational parts of the soul, but apart from *phronesis* or practical wisdom, which is classed with the intellectual virtues, I shall not be concerned with them.

<sup>72</sup> Practical wisdom differs from other virtues in that the other virtues involve appropriate action and responsiveness to particular situation-types – honesty being correlated with communicative situations, courage with dangerous situations, and so on. But practical wisdom is, so to speak, a master-virtue, having to do with when honesty or courage or something else is called for and also qualifying the claims of each in light of whatever other virtues or other considerations may be relevant. The practically wise person is, quite generally, responsive to whatever is relevant to right action in a particular situation and prepared to act accordingly. It is only through the inclusion of practical wisdom in the catalogue of the virtues that it is plausible that the person who has all the virtues will always act and respond properly.

<sup>73</sup> The list of virtues of course differs somewhat in different thinkers and as conceived in different, socially embedded, traditions. For the present, I am concerned with issues that abstract from these differences – with the way in which the virtues fit into eudaemonism, not with the threat of relativism that the differences might be thought to present. Put differently, I am concerned here with the concept of virtue

For no one would maintain that he is happy who has not in him a particle of courage or temperance or justice or practical wisdom, who is afraid of every insect which flutters past him, and will commit any crime, however great, in order to gratify his lust for meat or drink, who will sacrifice his dearest friend for the sake of half a farthing, and is as feeble and false in mind as a child or a madman. These propositions are almost universally acknowledged as soon as they are uttered ... (*Politics* 1323a 26-35)

The first, and in one sense the easiest, issue to address is the question as to the sense in which the virtues are essential to living well. The virtues are, at least partially, constitutive of the ultimate end, eudaemonia, and as such are ends themselves and must be practiced for their own sakes, not just for the sake of something further to which they contribute. With the possible exception of the Epicureans,<sup>74</sup> this is the uniform position of the ancient eudaemonists. At one extreme, the Stoics held that possession of the virtues was both necessary and sufficient for eudaemonia, that they entirely constituted it. But more moderate positions, such as Aristotle's, while denying that the virtues alone were always sufficient to live well, also held that they were necessary and practiced for their own sakes. For "good action itself is its end", (*NE* 1140b 6) and

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rather than with different conceptions of virtue. (On the concept-conception distinction, see Rawls 1971, 5 and Dworkin 1978, 134-136.)

<sup>74</sup> See note 2.

The agent also must be in a certain condition when he [performs acts that are in accordance with the excellences]; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. (*NE* 1105a 28-1105b 1)

That is not only the traditional answer but also, I think, the most defensible in its own right.<sup>75</sup> And though this goes some way toward saying what the place of the virtues within eudaemonism is, to leave matters at this would omit a great deal that is important both for understanding the virtues and for understanding what eudaemonia is taken to be. For the present, I shall highlight one further feature of the virtues as they figure within eudaemonism, their pedagogical role.<sup>76</sup>

Whatever a virtue is, it is, as indicated in the quote above, a stable trait of character. A person is not, for example, honest just because she tells the truth on some occasion, not even if the occasion is one upon which it is for some reason tempting not to be truthful. (It may, of course, be good evidence for her honesty.) To say that she is honest is to say at least that her character is such that she could be expected to be truthful in some class of cases in which the situation calls for it.<sup>77</sup> A virtue involves acting in a

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<sup>75</sup> It is not my purpose, however, to defend it here, just to present it as part of the eudaemonist position.

<sup>76</sup> There is, of course, much more to be said about the virtues, some of which is addressed in Chapter Five.

<sup>77</sup> The situation may not call for it. She is not dishonest, for example, to abstain from giving a full medical report in response to a casual question about her health.

certain way, being intelligently responsive to the situation that calls for that kind of action, and being motivated and feeling appropriately.<sup>78</sup> As stable traits of character, the virtues, taken separately, can be recognized in others (and sometimes ourselves), and are admired and praised in those who possess them. Taken together, the practice of the virtues (not necessarily limited to the list above) comprises the ways in which a morally good person acts, responds and is motivated in the issues and situations with which she is concerned.

That a virtue is recognizable presupposes at least some body of discourse or linguistic practice which picks out, on the one hand, some range or class of cases, and on the other, a certain kind of response thought appropriate to cases within that class. This recognizability of a virtue allows it to play a kind of pedagogical role within a eudaemonist theory.

There are several related points here. First, as discussed above, eudaemonia is introduced as a thin concept, a concept of something that will satisfactorily answer to concerns about what it is to live well. To be embodied in practice, it stands in need of specification; we need to say what it is concretely to live well. The virtues provide a beginning in that direction. In terms of recognized virtues, it can be said that *this* – being honest in communicative situations, courageous in the face of danger, generous when the wants or needs of others can be met at modest cost<sup>79</sup> and so on – is what is involved in or required by living well.

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<sup>78</sup> This presupposes that our emotional responses are, at least in part, cognitive and therefore educable. For discussion, see Solomon 1976 and Nussbaum 1994 and 2001.

<sup>79</sup> If and when meeting needs is required by justice is, of course, a different matter, not within the province of generosity.

Second and also important, the specification does not have to be limited to some verbal formulation. For the particular virtues, there are models or exemplars who already embody the character traits in question. The beginner who, for the first time explicitly and with practical intent, is approaching the question of how to live well, can be pointed to those who exemplify a virtue, to those who are, for example, honest or courageous or generous. The availability of such exemplars has the two further functions of providing proof by example that the recommended traits of character are possible, that they can be acquired and embodied in one's life, and of providing occasion for assessment as to whether and how the traits really do fit into and are required by a desirable life. Theoretical arguments about the content and desirability of the virtues can only go so far; practical demonstration can go much further.<sup>80</sup>

Third, though a virtue is not just a habit, it is still true that "moral excellence comes about as a result of habit .... we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts" (*NE* 1103a 16, 34-1103b 1). This provides at least the beginnings of the developmental account that the eudaemonist needs.<sup>81</sup> In recognizing that virtue is formed through habit, steps that can be taken by the beginner towards becoming virtuous and thus towards living well can be identified. As she learns, her responses will no doubt be refined and become more sensitive to the important features of the situations in which the practice of a virtue is called for, but refinement

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<sup>80</sup> One advantage, on the score of realism of assessments, is that, when a virtue is actually embodied in persons' characters, it is subject to all the shocks, surprises and unforeseen consequences that the world can throw at it, but not to those that occur only in thought-experiments.

<sup>81</sup> I do not, of course, mean that habituation is all that is needed.

presupposes something to be refined and, to be of use for the developmental account, something that is immediately, without further preparation, accessible to the beginner.

#### *4.5 Summary*

For eudaemonism, the central moral conception is living well or having a good life. This is easily misunderstood in at least three ways: by identifying eudaemonia with happiness, construed as a subjective or purely experiential state, by taking ‘living well’ to mean ‘having a life that serves one’s interests,’ and by trying to reduce all other moral or normative conceptions to their role as contributions to eudaemonia, conceived as an end capable of being understood independently.

When these misunderstandings are avoided, we are in a position to see that eudaemonia is introduced as a thin term, a place-holder for something that will satisfactorily answer to concerns about what it is to live well, that something that will answer to those concerns amounts to an inclusive ultimate end for action, and that it stands in need of further specification. Further specifying what eudaemonia is involves at least three things. First, there are formal constraints upon the notion that must be satisfied by anything that might count as eudaemonia. Second, there are developmental and motivational constraints, for coming to have eudaemonia as one’s ultimate end (or to approach doing so) must, if it is to answer to the concerns that motivate the search for an acceptable conception of eudaemonia, be something that the searcher can see as answering to those concerns. Third, since eudaemonist theories characteristically account for their

prescriptions in terms of ends recommended and what is thought to contribute to those ends, a framework for thinking about the relations and inter-relations of means and ends, and about the different types of means and ends there can be, is needed in order to avoid over-simplifying and therefore misrepresenting the kinds of considerations that can properly figure in deliberation.

In terms of this kind of (still very abstract) account of what eudaemonism is and involves, and especially by relying on the discussion of the relations of ends and means, we can see what kind of place the virtues have within the eudaemonist framework. They are, first, constitutive means to eudaemonia, practiced both for their own sake and because they are necessary to eudaemonia, and second, they figure in the pedagogical and developmental story upon which eudaemonist theories must rely.