

PHILOSOPHY

THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY

VOL. XL. No. 154

OCTOBER 1965

THE FINAL GOOD IN ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS

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I

ARISTOTLE maintains that every man has, or should have, a single end (*τέλος*), a target at which he aims. The doctrine is stated in E.N. I 2. 'If, then, there is some end of the things we do which we desire for its own sake (everything else being desired for the sake of this), and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (for at that rate the process would go on to infinity, so that our desire would be empty and vain), clearly this must be the good and the chief good. Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life? Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right?'¹ (1094a 18-24). Aristotle does not here *prove*, nor need we understand him as claiming to prove, that there is only *one* end which is desired for itself. He points out correctly that, if there are objects which are desired but not desired for themselves, there must be *some* object which is desired for itself. The passage further suggests that, if there were *one* such object and one only, this fact would be important and helpful for the conduct of life.

II

The same doctrine is stated in E.E. A 2. But, whereas in the E.N. the emphasis is on the concern of political science, statesmanship, with the human good conceived as a single end, the E.E. speaks only of the planning by the individual of his own life. 'Everyone who has the power to live according to his own choice (*προαίρεσις*) should dwell on these points and set up for himself some object for the good life to aim at, whether honour or reputation or wealth or culture, by reference to which he will do all that he does, since not to have one's life organised in view of some end is a sign of great folly. Now above all we must first define to ourselves without hurry or carelessness in

¹Here, and in quoting other passages, I have reproduced the Oxford translation. I refer to the *Nicomachean Ethics* as E.N. and to the *Eudemean Ethics* as E.E.

which of our possessions the good life consists, and what for men are the conditions of its attainment' (1214b 6-14). Here, then, we are told that lack of practical wisdom is shown in a man's failure to plan and organise his life for the attainment of a single end. Aristotle omits to say, but says elsewhere, that lack of practical wisdom is shown also in a man's preference for a bad or inadequate end, say pleasure or money. We learn in E.N. VI 9 that the man of practical wisdom has a true conception of the end which is best for him as well as the capacity to plan effectively for its realisation (1141b 31-33).

III

How far do men in fact plan their lives, as Aristotle suggests they should, for the attainment of a single end? As soon as we ask this question, we see that there is a confusion in Aristotle's conception of the single end. For the question confuses two questions: first, how far do men plan their lives; and, secondly, so far as they do, how far do they, in their plans, give a central and dominating place to a single desired object, money or fame or science? To both these questions the answer that first suggests itself is that some men do and some do not. Take the second question first. It is exceptional for a life to be organised to achieve the satisfaction of one ruling passion. If asked for examples we might think of Disraeli's political ambition or of Henry James' self-dedication to the art of the novel. But exceptional genius is not incompatible with a wide variety of interests. It seems plain that very few men can be said, even roughly, to live their lives under the domination of a single end. Consider now the first question. How far do men plan their lives? Clearly some do so who have no single dominant aim. It is possible to have a plan based on priorities, or on equal consideration, as between a number of objects. It is even possible to plan not to plan, to resolve never to cross bridges in advance. Hobbes remarked that there is no '*finis ultimus*, utmost aim, nor *summum bonum*, greatest good, as is spoken of in the books of the old moral philosophers. . . . Felicity is a continual progress of the desire, from one object to another, the attaining of the former being still but the way to the latter' (*Leviathan* ch. xi). But even such a progress may be planned, although the plan may not be wise. Every man has, and knows that he has, a number of independent desires, i.e. desires which are not dependent on other desires in the way in which desire for a means is dependent on desire for an end. Every man is capable, from time to time, of telling himself that, if he pursues one particular object too ardently, he may lose or imperil other objects also dear to him. So it may be argued that every man capable, as all men are, of reflection is, even if only occasionally and implicitly, a planner of his own life.

IV

We can now distinguish the two conceptions which are confused or conflated in Aristotle's exposition of the doctrine of the single end. One of them is the conception of what might be called the inclusive end. A man, reflecting on his various desires and interests, notes that some mean more to him than others, that some are more, some less, difficult and costly to achieve, that the attainment of one may, in different degrees, promote or hinder the attainment of others. By such reflection he is moved to plan to achieve at least his most important objectives as fully as possible. The following of such a plan is roughly what is sometimes meant by the pursuit of happiness. The desire for happiness, so understood, is the desire for the orderly and harmonious gratification of desires. Aristotle sometimes, when he speaks of the final end, seems to be fumbling for the idea of an inclusive end, or comprehensive plan, in this sense. Thus in E.N. I 2 he speaks of the end of politics as 'embracing' other ends (1094b 6-7). The aim of a science which is 'architectonic' (1094a 26-27; cf. E.N. VI 8, 1141b 24-26) is a second-order aim. Again in E.N. I 7 he says that happiness must be 'most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others since, if it were so counted, it would be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods . . .' (1097b 16-20). Such considerations ought to lead Aristotle to define happiness as a secondary end, the full and harmonious achievement of primary ends. This is what he ought to say. It is not what he says. His explicit view, as opposed to his occasional insight, makes the supreme end not inclusive but dominant, the object of one prime desire, philosophy. This is so even when, as in E.N. I 7, he has in mind that, *prima facie*, there is not only one final end: '. . . if there are more than one, the most final of these will be what we are seeking' (1097a 30). Aristotle's mistake and confusion are implicit in his formulation in E.E. A 2 of the question in *which* of our possessions does the good life consist (1214b 12-13). For to put the question thus is to rule out the obvious and correct reply; that the life which is best for a man cannot lie in gaining only *one* of his objects at the cost of losing all the rest. This would be too high a price to pay even for philosophy.

V

The ambiguity which we have found in Aristotle's conception of the final good shows itself also in his attempt to use the notion of a 'function' (*ἐργον*) which is 'peculiar' to man as a clue to the definition of happiness. The notion of function cannot be defended and should not be pressed, since a man is not designed for a purpose. The notion which Aristotle in fact uses is that of the specific nature of

man, the characteristics which primarily distinguish him from other living things. This notion can be given a wider interpretation which corresponds to the inclusive end or a narrower interpretation which corresponds to the dominant end. In E.N. I 7, seeking what is peculiar to man (1097b 33-4), Aristotle rejects first the life of nutrition and growth and secondly the life of perception which is common to 'the horse, the ox and every animal' (1098a 2, 3). What remains is 'an active life of the element that has a rational principle' (1098a 3-4). This expression need not, as commentators point out, be understood as excluding theoretical activity. 'Action' can be used in a wide sense, as in the *Politics* VII 3 (1325b 16-23), to include contemplative thinking. But what the phrase specifies as the proper function of man is clearly wider than theoretical activity and includes activities which manifest practical intelligence and moral virtue. But the narrower conception is suggested by a phrase used later in the same chapter. 'The good for man turns out to be the activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue in accordance with the best and most complete' (1098a 16-18). The most complete virtue must be theoretical wisdom, although this is not made clear in E.N. I.

VI

The doctrine that only in theoretical activity is man really happy is stated and defended explicitly in Book X 7 and 8. Theoretical reason, the divine element in man, more than anything else is man (1177b 27-28, 1178a 6-7). 'It would be strange, then, if he were to choose not the life of his self but that of something else. And what we said before will apply now; that which is proper to each thing is by nature best and most pleasant for each thing' (1178a 3-6). Man is truly human only when he is more than human, godlike. 'None of the other animals is happy, since they in no way share in contemplation' (1178b 27-28). This statement makes obvious the mistake involved in the conception of the end as dominant rather than inclusive. It is no doubt true that man is the only theoretical animal. But the capacity of some men for theory is very small. And theory is not the only activity in respect of which man is rational as no other animal is rational. There is no logic which leads from the principle that happiness is to be found in a way of living which is common and peculiar to men to the narrow view of the final good as a dominant end. What is common and peculiar to men is rationality in a general sense, not theoretical insight which is a specialised way of being rational. A man differs from other animals not primarily in being a natural metaphysician, but rather in being able to plan his life consciously for the attainment of an inclusive end.

VII

The confusion between an end which is final because it is inclusive and an end which is final because it is supreme or dominant accounts for much that critics have rightly found unsatisfactory in Aristotle's account of the thought which leads to practical decisions. It is connected with his failure to make explicit the fact that practical thinking is not always or only the finding of means to ends. Thought is needed also for the setting up of an inclusive end. But, as we have seen, Aristotle fails to make explicit the concept of an inclusive end. This inadequacy both confuses his statement in E.N. I 1 and 2 of the relation of politics to subordinate arts and leads to his giving an incomplete account of deliberation.

VIII

I have represented Aristotle's doctrine as primarily a doctrine about the individual's pursuit of his own good, his own welfare (*εὐδαιμονία*). But something should be said at this point about the relation between the end of the individual and the 'greater and more complete' end of the state. 'While it is worth while to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation or for city-states' (E.N. I 2, 1094b 7-10). This does not mean more than it says: if it is good that Smith should be happy, it is even better that Brown and Robinson should be happy too.

IX

What makes it inevitable that planning for the attainment of the good for man should be political is the simple fact that a man needs and desires social community with others. This is made clear in E.N. I 7 where Aristotle says that the final good must be sufficient by itself. 'Now by self-sufficient we do not mean that which is sufficient for a man by himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife and in general for his friends and fellow-citizens, since man is born for citizenship' (1097b 7-11). That individual end-seeking is primary, that the state exists for its citizens, is stated in Ch. 8 of E.N. VI, one of the books common to both treatises. 'The man who knows and concerns himself with his own interests is thought to have practical wisdom, while politicians are thought to be busybodies. . . . Yet perhaps one's own good cannot exist without household management, nor without a form of government' (1142a 1-10). The family and the state, and other forms of association as well, are necessary for the full realisation of any man's capacity for living well.

X

The statesman aims, to speak roughly, at the greatest happiness of the greatest number. He finds his own happiness in bringing about

the happiness of others (E.N. X 7, 1177b 14), especially, if Aristotle is right, the happiness of those capable of theoretical activity. Speaking in terms of the end as dominant Aristotle, in E.N. VI 13, sets a limit to the authority of political wisdom. 'But again it is not supreme over philosophic wisdom, i.e. over the superior part of us, any more than the art of medicine is over health; for it does not use it but provides for its coming into being; it issues orders, then, for its sake but not to it' (1145a 6-9). This suggestion that science and philosophy are insulated in principle from political interference cannot be accepted. The statesman promotes science but also uses it, and may have to restrict the resources to be made available for it. If the secondary and inclusive end is the harmonisation and integration of primary ends, no primary end can be sacrosanct. But, even if Aristotle had held consistently the extravagant view that theoretical activity is desired only for itself and is the only end desired for itself, he would not have been right to conclude that there could be no occasion for the political regulation of theoretical studies. For the unrestricted pursuit of philosophy might hinder measures needed to make an environment in which philosophy could flourish. It might be necessary to order an astronomer to leave his observatory, or a philosopher his school, in order that they should play their parts in the state. Similarly the individual who plans his life so as to give as large a place as possible to a single supremely desired activity must be ready to restrain, not only desires which conflict with his ruling passion, but the ruling passion itself when it is manifested in ways which would frustrate its own object.

XI

In E.N. I 1 and 2 Aristotle expounds the doctrine that statesmanship has authority over the arts and sciences which fall under it, are subordinate to it. An art, A, is under another art, B, if there is a relation of means to end between A and B. If A is a productive art, like bridle-making, its product may be used by a superior art, riding. Riding is not a productive activity, but it falls under generalship in so far as generals use cavalry, and generalship in turn falls under the art of the statesman, the art which is in the highest degree architectonic (1094a 27, cf. VI 8, 1141b 23-25). Thus the man of practical wisdom, the statesman or legislator, is compared by Aristotle to a foreman, or clerk of the works, in charge of technicians and workmen of various kinds, all engaged in building an observatory to enable the man of theoretical wisdom to contemplate the starry heavens. In the *Magna Moralia* the function of practical wisdom is said to be like that of a steward whose business it is so to arrange things that his master has leisure for his high vocation (A 34, 1198b

12-17). Perhaps the closest parallel to the function of the statesman as conceived by Aristotle is the office of the Bursar in a college at Oxford or Cambridge.

XII

This account of statesmanship as aiming at the exercise of theoretical wisdom by those capable of it is an extreme expression of the conception of the end as dominant and not inclusive. The account, as it stands, is a gross over-simplification of the facts. When he speaks of a subordinate art as pursued 'for the sake of' a superordinate or architectonic art (1094a 15-16), Aristotle should make explicit the fact that the subordinate activity, in addition to serving other objects, may be pursued for its own sake. Riding, for example, has non-military uses and can be a source of enjoyment. Again two arts, or two kinds of activity, may each be subordinate, in Aristotle's sense, to the other. Riders use bridles, and bridle-makers may ride to their work. The engineer uses techniques invented by the mathematician, but also promotes the wealth and leisure in which pure science can flourish. Aristotle does not fail to see and mention the fact that an object may be desired both independently for itself and dependently for its effects (E.N. I 6, 1097a 30-34). He was aware also that theoretical activity is not the only kind of activity which is independently desired. But he evidently thought that an activity which was never desired except for itself would be intrinsically desirable in a higher degree than an activity which, in addition to being desired for itself, was also useful. It is, so to say, beneath the dignity of the most godlike activities that they should be useful. Aristotle is led in this way, and also by other routes, to give a narrow and exclusive account of the final good, to conceive of the supreme end as dominant and not inclusive.

XIII

Aristotle describes deliberation, the thinking of the wise man, as a process which starts from the conception of an end and works back, in a direction which reverses the order of causality, to the discovery of a means. Men do not, he asserts, deliberate about ends. 'They assume the end and consider how and by what means it is to be attained; and if it seems to be produced by several means they consider by which it is most easily and best produced, while, if it is achieved by one only, they consider how it will be achieved by this and by what means *this* will be achieved, till they come to the first cause, which in the order of discovery is last' (E.N. III 3, 1112b 15-20). Such an investigation is compared to the method of discovering by analysis the solution of a geometrical problem. Again in

VI 2 practical wisdom is said to be shown in finding means to a good end. 'For the syllogisms which deal with acts to be done are things which involve a starting-point, viz. "since the end, i.e. what is best, is of such and such a nature" . . .' (1144a 31-33).

XIV

This is Aristotle's official account of deliberation. But here again, as in his account of the relation between political science and subordinate sciences, a too narrow and rigid doctrine is to some extent corrected elsewhere, although not explicitly, by the recognition of facts which do not fit into the prescribed pattern. Joseph, in *Essays in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, pointed out that the process of deciding between alternative means, by considering which is easiest and best, involves deliberation which is not comparable to the geometer's search (pp. 180-181). But he remarks that Aristotle does not 'appear to see' this. What the passage suggests is that the agent may have to consider the intrinsic goodness, or badness, of the proposed means as well as its effectiveness in promoting a good end. A less incidental admission that there is more in deliberation than the finding of means is involved in Aristotle's account of 'mixed actions' in E.N. III 1. Aristotle recognises that, if the means are discreditable, the end may not be important enough to justify them. 'To endure the greatest indignities for no noble end or for a trifling end is the mark of an inferior person' (1110a 22-23). 'It is difficult sometimes to determine what should be chosen at what cost, and what should be endured in return for what gain' (1110a 29-30). Alcmaeon's decision to kill his mother, on his father's instruction, rather than face death himself is given as an example of a patently wrong answer to a question of this kind. This kind of deliberation is clearly not the regressive or analytic discovery of means to a pre-conceived end. It is rather the determination of an ideal pattern of behaviour, a system of priorities, from which the agent is not prepared to depart. It is what we described earlier as the setting up of an inclusive end. It is a kind of practical thinking which Aristotle cannot have had in his mind when he asserted in E.N. III 3 that 'we deliberate not about ends but about means' (1112b 11-12).

XV

I have argued that Aristotle's doctrine of the final human good is vitiated by his representation of it as dominant rather than inclusive, and that this mistake underlies his too narrow account of practical thinking as the search for means. But to say that the final good is inclusive is not to deny that within it there are certain dominant ends corresponding to the major interests of developed human nature.

One of these major interests is the interest in theoretical sciences. Of these, according to Aristotle, there are three; theology or first philosophy, mathematics and physics (*Metaphysics* E 1, 1026a 18-19, cf. E.N. VI 8, 1142a 16-18). His account of contemplation in the *Ethics*, based on the doctrine of reason as the divine or godlike element in man (E.N. X 7, 1177a 13-17; 8, 1178a 20-23), exalts the first and makes only casual mention of the other two. Elsewhere, in the *De Partibus Animalium* I 5, he admits that physics has attractions which compensate for the relatively low status of the objects studied. 'The scanty conceptions to which we can attain of celestial things give us, from their excellence, more pleasure than all our knowledge of the world in which we live; just as a half-glimpse of persons that we love is more delightful than a leisurely view of other things, whatever their number and dimensions. On the other hand, in certitude and in completeness our knowledge of terrestrial things has the advantage. Moreover their greater nearness and affinity to us balances somewhat the loftier interest of the heavenly things that are the object of the higher philosophy' (644b 31-645a 4).

XVI

I cannot here discuss the theological doctrines which led Aristotle to place 'the higher philosophy' on the summit of human felicity. But there is an aspect of his account of the theoretic life which has an immediate connection with my main topic. He remarks in E.N. VII 14 that 'there is not only an activity of movement but an activity of immobility, and pleasure is found more in rest than in movement' (1154b 26-28). This doctrine that there is no 'movement' in theoretical contemplation, and the implication that its immobility is a mark of its excellence, is determined primarily by Aristotle's conception of the divine nature. The latest commentators on the E.N., Gauthier and Jolif, say, with justification, that he here excludes discovery from the contemplative life. 'On pourrait même dire que l'idéal, pour le contemplatif aristotélicien—et cet idéal le Dieu d'Aristote le réalise—ce serait de ne jamais étudier et de ne jamais découvrir . . .' (855-856). In E.N. X 7 we are told that 'philosophy is thought to offer pleasures marvellous for their purity and their enduringness' and that it is 'reasonable to suppose that those who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who enquire' (1177a 25-27). It is not reasonable at all. It is a startling paradox. I shall now suggest that Aristotle's apparent readiness to accept this paradox, like his confusion between the dominant and the inclusive end, is to be explained, at least in part, by his failure to give any explicit or adequate analysis of the concept of end and means.

XVII

Aristotle states in E.N. I that an end may be either an activity or the product of an activity. 'But a certain difference is to be found among ends; some are activities, others are products apart from the activities that produce them. Where there are ends apart from the actions, it is the nature of the products to be better than the activities' (1094a 3-6). The suggestion here is that, when an activity leads to a desired result, as medicine produces health or ship-building a ship or enquiry knowledge, the end-seeking activity is not itself desired. As he says (untruly) in the *Metaphysics*, 'of the actions which have a limit none is an end' (Θ 6, 1048b 18). But an activity which aims at producing a result may be an object either of aversion or of indifference or of a positive desire which may be less or greater than the desire for its product. It is necessary to distinguish between 'end' in the sense of a result intended and planned and 'end' in the sense of a result, or expected result, which, in addition to being intended and planned, is also desired for itself while the process of reaching it is not. It is true that travel may be unattractive, but it may also be more attractive than arrival. A golfer plays to win. But, if he loses, he does not feel that his day has been wasted, that he has laboured in vain, as he would if his only object in playing were to win a prize or to mortify his opponent or just to win. Doing cross-word puzzles may be a waste of time, but what makes it a waste of time is not the fact that we rarely get one out. It would be a greater waste of time if we never failed to finish them. In short, the fact that an activity is progressive towards a planned result leaves quite open the question whether it is the process or the result which is desired, and, if both, which primarily. If Aristotle had seen and said this, he might have found it more difficult than he does to suggest that the pleasures of discovery are not an essential element in science as a major human interest. Philosophy would be less attractive than it is if only results mattered. God's perfection requires that his thinking should be unprogressive. But men, who fall short of perfect simplicity, need, to make them happy, the pleasures of solving problems and of learning something new and of being surprised. For them the best way of life leads, in the words of Meredith,

'through widening chambers of surprise to where
throbs rapture near an end that aye recedes'.

XVIII

We have seen that Aristotle's doctrine of the final human good needs clarification in terms of a distinction between an end which is inclusive, a plan of life, and an end which is dominant as the satisfaction of theoretical curiosity may be dominant in the life of a

philosopher. No man has only one interest. Hence an end which is to function as a target, as a criterion for deciding what to do and how to live, must be inclusive. But some men have ruling passions. Hence some inclusive ends will include a dominant end. I shall now try to look more closely at these Aristotelian notions, and to suggest some estimate of their relevance and value in moral philosophy.

XIX

It will be best to face at once and consider a natural and common criticism of Aristotle; the criticism that his virtuous man is not moral at all but a calculating egoist whose guiding principle is not duty but prudence, Bishop Butler's 'cool self-love'. Aristotle is in good company as claiming that rationality is what makes a man ideally good. But his considered view, apart from incidental insights, admits, it is said, only the rationality of prudent self-interest and not the rationality of moral principle. Thus Professor D. J. Allan, in *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, tells us that Aristotle 'takes little or no account of the motive of moral obligation' and that 'self-interest, more or less enlightened, is assumed to be the motive of all conduct and choice' (p. 189). Similarly the late Professor Field, a fair and sympathetic critic of Aristotle, remarked that, whereas morality is 'essentially unselfish', Aristotle's idea of the final end or good makes morality 'ultimately selfish' (*Moral Theory*, pp. 109, 111).

XX

When a man is described as selfish what is meant primarily is that he is moved to act, more often and more strongly than most men, by desires which are selfish. The word 'selfish' is also applied to a disposition so to plan one's life as to give a larger place than is usual or right to the gratification of selfish desires. But what is it for a desire to be selfish? Professor Broad, in his essay 'Egoism as a theory of human motives' (in *Ethics and the History of Philosophy*), makes an important distinction between two main kinds of 'self-regarding' desires. There are first desires which are 'self-confined', which a man could have even if he were alone in the world, e.g. desires for certain experiences, the desire to preserve his own life, the desire to feel respect for himself. Secondly there are self-regarding desires which nevertheless presuppose that a man is not alone in the world, e.g. desires to own property, to assert or display oneself, to inspire affection. Broad further points out that desires which are 'other-regarding' may also be 'self-referential', e.g. desires for the welfare of *one's own* family, friends, school, college, club, nation.

XXI

A man might perhaps be called selfish if his other-regarding motives were conspicuously and exclusively self-referential, if he showed no interest in the welfare of anyone with whom he was not personally connected. But usually 'selfish' refers to the prominence of self-regarding motives, and different kinds of selfishness correspond to different self-regarding desires. The word, being pejorative, is more readily applied to the less reputable of the self-regarding desires. Thus a man strongly addicted to the pursuit of his own pleasures might be called selfish even if his other-regarding motives were not conspicuously weak. A man whose ruling passion was science or music would not naturally be described as selfish unless to convey that there was in him a reprehensible absence or failure of other-regarding motives, as shown, say, by his neglect of his family or of his pupils.

XXII

The classification of desires which I have quoted from Broad assumes that their nature is correctly represented by what we ordinarily think and say about them. *Prima facie* some of our desires are self-regarding; and, of the other-regarding desires, some are and some are not self-referential. But there have been philosophers who have questioned or denied the reality of these apparent differences. One doctrine, psychological egoism, asserts in its most extreme form that the only possible objects of a man's first-order independent desires are experiences, occurrent states of his own consciousness. Thus my desire to be liked is really a desire to know that I am liked; and my desire that my children should be happy when I am dead is really a desire for my present expectation that they will be happy. The obvious criticism of this doctrine is that it is preposterous and self-defeating: I must first desire popularity and the happiness of my children if I am to find gratifying my thought that I am popular and that my children will be happy. To most of us it seems that introspective self-scrutiny supports the validity of this dialectic. We can, therefore, reject psychological egoism. *A fortiori* we can reject psychological hedonism which asserts that the *only* experiences which can be independently desired are pleasures, feelings of enjoyment. This further doctrine was stated as follows by the late Professor Prichard. 'For the enjoyment of something which we enjoy, e.g. the enjoyment of seeing a beautiful landscape, is related to the thing we enjoy, not as a quality but as an effect, being something excited by the thing we enjoy, so that, if it be said that we desire some enjoyment for its own sake, the correct statement must be that we desire the experience, e.g. the seeing of some beautiful landscape, for

the sake of the feeling of enjoyment which we think it will cause, this feeling being really what we are desiring for its own sake' (*Moral Obligation*, p. 116). Surely most of us would be inclined to say that we *can* desire for its own sake 'the seeing of some beautiful landscape' and that we do not detect a distinct 'feeling of enjoyment'.

XXIII

Was Aristotle a psychological egoist or a psychological hedonist? A crisp answer would have been possible only if Aristotle had explicitly formulated these doctrines as I have defined them. So far as I can see, he did not do so even in his long, but not always lucid, treatment of friendship and self-love in E.N. IX. This being so, he cannot be classed as a psychological egoist in respect of his account of first-order desires. When Aristotle confronts the fact of altruism, he does not refuse to accept benevolent desires at their face value (E.N. VIII 2, 1155b 31; 3, 1156b 9-10; 7, 1159a 8-12). But he shows acuteness in detecting self-referential elements in benevolence. Thus he compares the feelings of benefactors to beneficiaries with those of parents for their children and of artists for their creations. 'For that which they have treated well is their handiwork, and therefore they love this more than the handiwork does its maker' (E.N. IX 7, 1167b 31-1168a 5).

XXIV

The nearest approach which Aristotle makes to the formulation of psychological hedonism is, perhaps, in the following passage in E.N. II 3. 'There being three objects of choice and three of avoidance, the noble, the advantageous, the pleasant, and their contraries, the base, the injurious, the painful, about all of these the good man tends to go right and the bad man to go wrong, and especially about pleasure; for this is common to the animals, and also it accompanies all objects of choice; for even the noble and the advantageous appear pleasant' (1104b 30-1105a 1). But there are passages in his discussion of pleasure in E.N. X which show that, even if he had accepted psychological egoism, he would not have accepted psychological hedonism. 'And there are many things we should be keen about even if they brought no pleasure, e.g. seeing, remembering, knowing, possessing the virtues. If pleasures necessarily do accompany these, that makes no odds; we should choose them even if no pleasure resulted' (1174a 4-8). This reads like a direct repudiation of the doctrine in my quotation from Prichard. In E.N. X 4 he asks, without answering, the question whether we choose activity for the sake of the attendant pleasure or *vice versa* (1175a 18-21). The answer which his doctrine requires is surely that neither alternative can be accepted,

since both the activity and the attendant pleasure are desired for their own sake. But it is open to question whether, when we speak of a state or activity, such as 'the seeing of some beautiful landscape', as pleasant, we are referring to a feeling distinct from the state or activity itself.

XXV

The charge against Aristotle that his morality is a morality of self-interest is directed primarily against his doctrine of the final good, the doctrine which I have interpreted as a conflation of the distinct notions of the 'inclusive end' and the 'dominant end'. But the critic may also wish to suggest that Aristotle overstates the efficacy of self-regarding desires in the determination of human conduct. To this the first answer might well be that it is not easy to overstate their efficacy. The term 'self-regarding' applies, as we have seen, to a wide variety of motives; and there is a 'self-referential' factor in the most potent of the other-regarding motives. Altruism which is pure, not in any way self-regarding or self-referential, is a rarity. The facts support the assertion that man is a selfish animal. But the criticism can be met directly. Aristotle does not ignore other-regarding motives. Thus, while he points out that the philosopher, unlike those who exercise practical virtue, does not need other men 'towards whom and with whom he shall act', he admits that the pleasures of philosophy are enhanced by interest in the work of colleagues. 'He perhaps does better if he has fellow-workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient' (E.N. X 7, 1177a 27-b1). When, in the E.E., Aristotle speaks of philosophy as the service of God, he seems to imply that the love of wisdom is not directed merely to the lover's own conscious states (1249b 20). Again, in E.N. IX 8, he can attribute to the 'lover of self' conduct which is, in the highest degree, altruistic and self-sacrificing. 'For reason always chooses what is best for itself, and the good man obeys his reason. It is true of the good man too that he does many acts for the sake of his friends and his country, and, if necessary, dies for them; for he will throw away both wealth and honours and in general the goods that are objects of competition, gaining for himself nobility (*τὸ καλόν*); since he would prefer a short period of intense pleasure to a long one of mild enjoyment, a twelve-month of noble life to many years of humdrum existence, and one great and noble action to many trivial ones. Now those who die for others doubtless attain this result; it is, therefore, a great prize that they choose for themselves' (1169a 17-26).

XXVI

But it is not enough, if we are to do justice to the criticism that Aristotle makes morality selfish, to quote this passage, or the passage

in E.N. I 10 where Aristotle speaks of the shining beauty of the virtue shown in bearing disasters which impair happiness (1100b 30-33). Such passages, it may be said, show Aristotle's moral sensibility and moral insight. But the question can still be asked whether their commendation of the ultimate self-sacrifice, and of endurance in suffering, is consistent with Aristotle's doctrine of the final human good. Perhaps he is speaking more consistently with his own considered views when, again in E.N. IX 8, he makes the suggestion (or is it a joke?) that a man may show the finest self-sacrifice, the truest love, by surrendering to his friend the opportunity of virtuous action (1169a 33-4). Perhaps Aristotle's commendation of the surrender, in a noble cause, of life itself needs to be qualified, from his own point of view, as it was qualified by Oscar Wilde:

And yet, and yet
Those Christs that die upon the barricades,
God knows it I am with them, in some ways.

To this question I now turn. My answer must and can be brief.

XXVII

We have found two main elements in Aristotle's doctrine of the final good for man. There is, first, the suggestion that, as he says in E.E. A 2, it is a sign of 'great folly' not to 'have one's life organised in view of some end'. Perhaps it would be better to say that it is impossible not to live according to some plan, and that it is folly not to try to make the plan a good one. The inevitability of a plan arises from the fact that a man both has, and knows that he has, a number of desires and interests which can be adopted as motives either casually and indiscriminately or in accordance with priorities determined by the aim of living the kind of life which he thinks proper for a man like himself. But in an agent naturally reflective the omission to make such a plan is not completely undesigned: the minimal plan is a plan not to plan. To this side of Aristotle's doctrine I have applied the term 'inclusive end', inclusive because there is no desire or interest which should not be regarded as a candidate, however unpromising, for a place in the pattern of life. Wisdom finds a place even for folly. The second element which we have found in Aristotle's doctrine is his own answer to the question what plan will be followed by a man who is most fully a man, as high as a man can get on the scale from beast to god. Aristotle's answer is that such a man will make theoretical knowledge, his most godlike attribute, his main object. At a lower level, as a man among men, he will find a place for the happiness which comes from being a citizen, from

marriage and from the society of those who share his interests. I have called this the doctrine of the dominant end. The question whether Aristotle's doctrine of the final good can be reconciled with the morality of altruism and self-sacrifice must be asked with reference both to the inclusive end and to the dominant end.

XXVIII

To say that a man acts, or fails to act, with a view to an inclusive end is to say nothing at all about the comparative degrees of importance which he will ascribe to his various aims. His devotion to his own good, in the sense of his inclusive end, need not require him to prefer self-regarding desires to other-regarding desires, or one kind of self-regarding desire to another. All desires have to be considered impartially as candidates for places in the inclusive plan. To aim at a long life in which pleasures, so far as possible, are enjoyed and pains avoided it is a possible plan, but not the only possible plan. That a man seeks an inclusive end leaves open the question whether he is an egoist or an altruist, selfish or unselfish in the popular sense.¹

XXIX

While a man seeking his inclusive end need not be selfish, he can be described as self-centred in at least three different ways. First and trivially his desire to follow his inclusive plan is his own desire; it is self-owned. Secondly, a man can think of a plan as being for his own good only if he thinks about himself, thinks of himself as the one owner of many desires. His second-order desire for his own good is self-reflective. Thirdly, this second-order desire, being a desire about desires, an interest in interests, can be gratified only through the gratification of his first-order desires. Even the martyr plans to do what he wants to do. We can express this by saying that the pursuit of the final good is self-indulging as well as self-reflective. But 'self-indulgence' as applied to a way of life in which pleasures may be despised and safety put last carries no pejorative sense. That action in pursuit of an inclusive end is self-centred in these ways does not mean that the agent is self-regarding or self-seeking in any sense inconsistent with the most heroic or saintly self-sacrifice.

¹I owe this point, and less directly much else in my discussion of the criticism of Aristotle's ethical system as egoistic, to Professor C. A. Campbell's British Academy Lecture (1948), 'Moral Intuition and the Principle of Self-Realisation' (especially pp. 17-25). Professor Campbell's lecture discusses the ethical theory of T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley, and I do not know whether he would think of his arguments as being relevant to the interpretation of Aristotle. But I have found his defence of 'self-realisation' as a moral principle helpful in my attempt to separate the strands of thought in Aristotle's doctrine of the final good.

XXX

To the question whether the pursuit of the human good, understood in terms of Aristotle's conception of the dominant end, can be reconciled with the morality of altruism, and in particular the extreme altruism of the man who gives his life for his friends or his country, a different answer must be given. Here reconciliation is not possible. In order to see this it is necessary only to reflect on Aristotle's definition in E.N. I 7 of the dominant end, which he calls happiness, and to compare this definition with what is said about the self-love of the man who nobly gives up his own life. 'Human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete. But 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 happy' (1098a 16-20). How then can the man who, to gain nobility (*τὸ καλόν*) for himself, gives his life for his friends or his country be said to achieve happiness? Aristotle's answer, as we have seen, is that such a man prefers 'a short period of intense pleasure to a long one of mild enjoyment, a twelvemonth of noble life to many years of humdrum existence, and one great and noble action to many trivial ones' (1169a 22-25). But the scales are being loaded. For why should it be supposed that the man who declines to live the final, if crowded, hour of glorious life will survive to gain only 'mild' enjoyments and a 'humdrum' or 'trivial' existence? If such existence is, or seems, humdrum *because* the 'intense pleasure' of self-sacrifice has been missed, then Aristotle's thought here is circular and self-stultifying. The intensity of the brief encounter, it is suggested, is such that by contrast the remainder of life would be humdrum. But, unless the alternative would be humdrum in its own right, the encounter would not be intense enough to compensate for the curtailment of life and happiness. A 'complete life' either is, or is not, a necessary condition of happiness. Aristotle as a theorist cannot justify the admiration which, as a man, he no doubt feels for the 'one great and noble action'. Confronted with the facts he would have to admit that the man who, whether by good fortune or design, survives a revolution or a war may live to experience intense enjoyments and to perform activities in accordance with the best and most complete virtue. He may become a professor of philosophy or at least a prime minister. We must conclude, therefore, that Professor Field was right: the doctrine of the good for man, as developed by Aristotle in his account of the dominant end, does make morality 'ultimately selfish' (*Moral Theory*, pp. 109, 111).

Aristotle offers us in his *Ethics* a handbook on how to be happy though human. To some it may seem that a treatise on conduct with an aim so practical and so prudential can do little to clarify the concepts with which moral philosophy is mainly concerned, the concepts of duty and of moral worth. 'He takes little or no account', Professor Allan tells us, 'of the motive of moral obligation' (*The Philosophy of Aristotle*, p. 189). Perhaps not. The topic is too large for a concluding paragraph. Certainly most men feel moral obligations which cannot be subsumed under the obligation, if there is one, to pursue their own happiness by planning for the orderly satisfaction of their self-regarding desires. But 'obligation' and 'duty' are words with many meanings, meanings variously related to the concept of moral worth. Perhaps Aristotle is not wrong, as he is not alone, in connecting the concept of moral worth with the fact that man is not just the plaything of circumstance and his own irrational nature but also the responsible planner of his own life. This aspect of Aristotle's teaching is what I have called his doctrine of the 'inclusive end', and I have argued that there is no necessity for the doctrine to be specified and developed as a recommendation of calculated egoism. Aristotle himself, as we have seen, does not adhere consistently to his own exaltation of self-regarding aims. He is, indeed, always ready to notice facts which are awkward for his own theories. Thus in E.N. I 10 he recognises that the actual achievement of happiness, virtuous activity, is largely outside a man's control. 'A multitude of great events if they turn out well will make life happier . . . while if they turn out ill they crush and maim happiness; for they both bring pain with them and hinder many activities' (1100b 25-30). He adds that, even when disaster strikes, 'nobility shines through, when a man bears with resignation many great misfortunes, not through insensibility to pain but through nobility and greatness of soul' (1100b 30-33). 'The man who is truly good and wise', he goes on to say, 'bears all the chances of life becomingly and always makes the best of circumstances as a good shoemaker makes the best shoes out of the hides that are given to him' (1100b 35-1101a 5). The suggestion of this passage is that a man's worth lies not in his actual achievement, which may be frustrated by factors outside his own control, but in his striving towards achievement. In an earlier chapter (5) of E.N. I he speaks of the good as something which 'we divine to be proper to a man and not easily taken from him' (1095b 25-26). Aristotle's doctrine of the final good is a doctrine about what is 'proper' to a man, the power to reflect on his own abilities and desires and to conceive and choose for himself a satisfactory way of life. What 'cannot be taken from him' is his power to keep on trying

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to live up to such a conception. Self-respect, thus interpreted, is *a* principle of duty. If moral philosophy must seek *one* comprehensive principle of duty, what other principle has a stronger claim to be regarded as *the* principle of duty?

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