

From the Dilemmatic Problem to the Conjunctive Problem of Happiness

1.1 Introduction

How should we live? Aristotle's answer is, in broadest outline, that we do not have to choose between what is best, noblest, and most pleasant to do (*EE* 1.1, 1214^a7–8, *NE* 1.8, 1099^a24–25). We need not worry that in eschewing the pastimes of the voluptuary, for example, we are missing out on anything genuinely worthwhile. Plato had offered similar reassurance, but in contrast to him Aristotle argues, for reasons that will become clear, that if what is best, what is noblest, and what is most pleasant for humans are to coincide, they must converge on a characteristic *activity* of human beings. Such an activity, he thinks, is what is designated by the word 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*).¹ But Aristotle's theory of happiness, particularly as it is developed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, faces a well-known problem: It is not obvious how his remarks at different points in the treatise about how to understand that theory are supposed to fit together. Interpreters have proposed various types of solutions to this problem. But in this chapter I will argue that we should distinguish between two versions of the problem. I will begin by describing the traditional Dilemmatic Problem of Happiness and how existing views address it. Next, I will argue that the main strategies for addressing the Dilemmatic Problem feature mutually incompatible central commitments about the kind of activity that happiness is, and for this reason these strategies have remained dialectically resilient, their proponents steadfastly unpersuaded by the others' arguments. A dialectically satisfactory interpretation of Aristotle's theory

¹ Today we can ask: What kind of thing is happiness? Is it a feeling, a condition, something we do...? Ancient Greek philosophers raised such questions about *eudaimonia* and gave a variety of answers. Similar questions can be asked about well-being, flourishing, or other terms that one might employ as translations of '*eudaimonia*.'

of happiness must accommodate these central commitments despite their apparent incompatibility. This is, in outline, the Conjunctive Problem of Happiness. No existing interpretation solves it, or even attempts to solve it. This is not to say, preposterously, that no existing interpretation is aimed at persuading another interpretation's proponents, but rather that none attempts to take the position on the kind of activity that happiness is that a solution to the Conjunctive Problem would require. In fact, I will argue in Chapters 2–4 that three commitments common among proponents of each of the main strategies for responding to the Dilemmatic Problem make it impossible for them to solve the Conjunctive Problem. Those commitments, though, unlike the ones that figure in the Conjunctive Problem, are ones that they can, and should, give up.

1.2 The Dilemmatic Problem of Happiness

Aristotle advertises from the outset of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that the work will concern the nature of happiness. The fact that most of the work discusses such things as courage, temperance, justice, generosity, magnanimity, and friendship, and *NE* 6 treats of intellectual virtues and their relationship to ethical virtues,² encourages the idea that happiness consists in ethically and intellectually virtuous activities, which make a far more central contribution than do such prepossessing candidates as wealth, honor, favorable circumstances, or bodily pleasure (see, e.g., 10.6, 1176^a35 – ^b9, 1177^a9–11). But readers tend to be surprised upon being informed that happiness is contemplation (*theôria*), the manifestation of theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) in active reflection on a systematic grasp that one already has of the first principles of reality, such as the divine prime mover (10.7, 1177^a12 – ^b26).³ We are liable to feel bewildered: In pursuit of what end(s) are we to live? What activities are we to choose? In the terms that have characterized much of the literature for roughly the past half-century, does Aristotle think that the happy life features an inclusive end or a dominant end?⁴

² I use 'ethical virtue' and 'practical virtue' synonymously.

³ I will discuss the nature of contemplation later in this chapter and even more extensively in subsequent ones.

⁴ Hardie (1965, 279) is the one who puts this last question squarely on the agenda, but his formulation of it, and therefore the agenda, grows out of Austin's (1979) responses in the late 1930s and 1940s to Prichard (1935) about the distinction between analysis and specification of 'happiness' in the *NE*, as pointed out by Irwin (2012, 496 n. 4). Inwood (2014, 10) thinks that some of Aristotle's key ideas in his ethical works, including about happiness, exhibit "indeterminacy" and "basic tension" that allow subsequent ancient writers space to explore innovative and divergent ways of interpreting him.

Ackrill (1974, 339) gives a succinct and influential statement of the problem:

Most of the *Ethics* implies that good action is – or is a major element in – man’s best life, but eventually, in book x, purely contemplative activity is said to be perfect *eudaimonia*; and Aristotle does not tell us how to combine or relate these two ideas.

Numerous scholars, especially Hardie (1965), Ackrill (1974), Cooper (1975), and others of their generation and the following one, have maintained that two genuinely incompatible theories of happiness are presented in the *NE*: one in most of the work and the other in 10.7–8.⁵ Most subsequent interpreters, though, have taken the position that while the two theories are genuinely incompatible, Aristotle merely *seems* to offer evidence for both in the *NE*.⁶ In fact, they maintain, he subscribes to one or the other of the two incompatible theories and our interpretive problem is that of determining which one he favors and explaining away the apparent evidence that he holds the other. This is the Dilemmatic Problem.⁷

Dilemmatic Problem of Happiness

We must determine which of the following incompatible propositions about happiness Aristotle believes and explain away the apparent evidence that he believes the other:

- A) Happiness (the activity) is virtuous activity, a composite that includes not only contemplative activity, but also ethically virtuous activities as parts.⁸

⁵ Bostock (2000, 200–203) and Wilkes (1978, 566) think that Aristotle’s account of happiness is outright incoherent. Nagel (1972, 252), more gently, says that Aristotle “exhibits indecision between two accounts.” Moline (1983) regards the account of happiness as contemplation in *NE* 10.7–8 as so un-Aristotelian that it must be an expression of Anaxagoras’s view meant as a joke at the latter’s expense. Annas (1993, 216 n. 9), Barnes (1997, 58–59), and Nussbaum (2001, 375–377) contend that the text of the *NE* as we now have it contains two inconsistent theories, but they were never intended to coexist in one treatise by one author. Their allegation of textual disunity has been met with substantial counterevidence presented by, for example, Aufderheide (2020, 164), Natali (1989, 282), Roche (1988a, 193 n. 38), and Whiting (1986, 89). Such counterevidence includes various back-references from *NE* 10.7–8 to the other *NE* books and forward-references from other books to those chapters.

⁶ This is the position of Kraut (1989, 4), for example: “Of course, if Aristotle says in one place that happiness consists in contemplation alone, and says elsewhere that it consists in other goods as well, then he has contradicted himself. One of my main concerns will be to argue that the *NE* does not contain this internal conflict.”

⁷ I am grateful to David Charles, Gabriel Richardson Lear, and a referee for Cambridge University Press for especially helpful suggestions about how best to formulate the Dilemmatic Problem and the problem that I introduce later, the Conjunctive Problem.

⁸ Ackrill (1974, 343) cites the relation between putting and golfing as an instance of the relevant relation between part and whole where the part and whole are both activities and to be engaged in the part is to be engaged in the whole, though there is more to the whole than that part.

- B) Happiness (the activity) is contemplative activity, which does not include ethically virtuous activities as parts.

Various ways of addressing this problem have been explored. These are helpfully divided into the following groups, though other systems of categorization could be implemented:

Monism

Happiness (the activity) *is* contemplation. A life made happy in virtue of it is derivatively devoted to ethically virtuous activities insofar as they are for the sake of contemplation.⁹

Pluralism

Ethically virtuous activities and contemplation are parts of the composite essence of happiness (the activity). A life made happy in virtue of such happiness is devoted most of all to contemplation in the sense that special attention should be given to contemplation when reasonable.¹⁰

Relativism

Perfect happiness (the activity) is contemplation and the happiest life is devoted to that. Ethically virtuous activities are parts of another kind of happiness and another, inferior kind of happy life is devoted to that. Neither kind of happiness sets the standard for the kind of life characterized by the other kind of happiness, so there is no split devotion in any happy life.¹¹

⁹ Monists differ primarily over the nature of the *for-the-sake-of* relation that holds between ethically virtuous activity and contemplation and grounds the inclusion of ethically virtuous activities in happy lives. Proposals include, for example: instrumentality/causality (Cleemput, 2006), (Jirsa, 2017), (Kraut, 1989), (Reeve, 1992); centralizing relations, for example, approximation (Lear, 2004, 2014, 2015) or focality (Tuozzo, 1995); and being regulated/governed by (Aufderheide, 2015), (Cooper, 2004), (Meyer, 2011). Some monists are principally concerned to argue that Aristotle endorses pluralism in the *Eudemian Ethics* and/or in at least some parts of the *NE*, but endorses monism as the *NE*'s final and official view (Cooper, 1975), (Hardie, 1965), (Kenny, 1978, 1992). Others focus more on the startling nature of a monist account of happiness (Adkins, 1978), (Lear, 1988, 309–320), (Nagel, 1972).

¹⁰ Pluralist interpreters have often derived inspiration from Ackrill (1974), who, though like Hardie (1965) and others believes that Aristotle offers us genuinely inconsistent evidence, finds the pluralist conception more plausible in its own right and argues forcefully for a pluralist interpretation of *NE* 1–9. Pluralist interpreters include Broadie (1991), Cooper (1987), Crisp (1994), Dahl (2011), Herzberg (2016), Irwin (1978, 1980, 1985, 1991, 2012) and (1988, 608 n. 40 and 616–617 n. 24), Keyt (1983), Natali (1989), Pakaluk (2005), Price (1980, 2011, 2014), Roche (1988a, 2014a,b, 2019), Urmson (1988), Walker (2011, 2018), White (1992), and Whiting (1986, 1988). For my purposes it will be unnecessary to distinguish between versions of pluralism according to which goods other than ethically and intellectually virtuous activities (e.g., honor, money, good looks) count directly as parts of happiness and those according to which they do not.

¹¹ Relativists include Bush (2008), Cooper (2013, ch. 3), Curzer (1990, 1991, 2012), Devereux (1981, 2014), Heinaman (1988), Lawrence (1993, 2005), Long (2011), Scott (1999), and Thorsrud (2015). The view of Charles (1999, 2014) resists categorization as monist, pluralist, or relativist as I have

Debates rage on about whether the passages relied upon by each group have been correctly interpreted. Monists think that the happy life is devoted most of all to contemplation in a straightforward way: The activities that figure in the happy person's life are devoted to contemplation because they are performed for its sake. Other goods are not directly included in the activity of happiness, but are choice-worthy within a happy life because they are for the sake of happiness, contemplation. These other goods, including ethically virtuous activities, are choice-worthy as parts of the happy life only to the extent that they are related to contemplation as being for its sake, even if they are choice-worthy in their own right. This way of including ethically virtuous activities makes pluralists suspect it of reflecting too dimly Aristotle's enthusiasm about ethically virtuous activities.¹²

Pluralists, who think that ethically and intellectually virtuous activities are parts of a composite activity, happiness, say that the happy life is devoted to such activities because they are parts of what makes such a life happy. They can add that among the virtuous activities that happiness comprises, the one to which special attention, for example, celebration (Broadie, 1991, 413–414), should be given, when reasonable,

described those positions, but I think that this taxonomy is still useful for revealing points at which I and others differ from Charles. His account resembles the monism of Lear (2004, 2014, 2015) insofar as it appeals to a centralizing relation between contemplation and other virtuous activities. Whereas in Lear's case this is the relation of approximation, in Charles's it is analogy. But Charles's appeal to a centralizing relation does different work from what Lear's does. Charles thinks that virtuous activity is made a case of happy activity by instantiating fineness in the particular way that it does, and that fineness is paradigmatically instantiated in contemplation, to which paradigmatic instantiation the fineness of other virtuous activities is analogically related. He would thus affirm only a weakened version of (B), according to which happiness is *paradigmatically* contemplation. As later arguments will indicate, I think that this would be too weak to do justice to the evidence for (B). Charles differs from pluralists in denying that virtuous activities are parts of happiness and from relativists in denying that virtuous activities are parts of any separately available kind of happiness. I am grateful to him for clarification about the relationship of his view to others. Baker (2021), who distinguishes between the human good and *eudaimonia* for beings more generally, gives an account of the latter that is similar in certain respects to Charles's account of the former. Baker thinks that divine *eudaimonia* is the paradigm case of *eudaimonia* and other cases of it, such as human contemplation or general justice, are gradably related to the paradigm case. When it comes to the human good specifically, Baker favors monism. I thank him for helpful conversations about his account.

¹² For such expressions of pluralists' suspicions, see, for example, Irwin (1991, 385), Keyt (1983, 364–366), Natali (1989, 281), and Whiting (1986, 92 n. 48), who argue that if ethical activities are for the sake of contemplation, then they will not satisfy the criteria for fully virtuous activity as expounded in *NE* 2.4 or the description of fine activity (*eupraxia*) in 6.5. Whiting argues, more specifically, that even if ethical activities are performed for their own sake as well as for the sake of contemplation, they will fail to conform to the stricture in 2.4 that fully virtuous activities be performed reliably.

is contemplation, though monists will accuse them of attenuating the devotion to contemplation on which Aristotle insists.¹³

The third type of interpretation, relativism, has arisen as a reaction to pluralists' and monists' attempts to address the Dilemmatic Problem. Relativists claim that the apparently discrepant bits of textual evidence that correspond to (A) and (B) apply to two different kinds of happiness that are separately achievable, depending on one's circumstances or endowments. Happiness consisting in contemplation is open to those who are especially well-situated, while happiness consisting in ethically virtuous activity is the best achievable by those who are less fortunate. Relativists typically think that it is possible to be happy without ethically virtuous activity or without contemplation, but not if one lacks both. This possibility would be denied by monists and pluralists. Relativist interpretations aim to accommodate the textual evidence that has seemed problematic for monists, on the one hand, and pluralists, on the other, by sorting it into two boxes: Aristotle's two incompatible theories of happiness are not both meant to be true of any one agent; rather, one theory, that encapsulated by (B), is about the kind of happiness that is possible for agents with certain circumstances or endowments, the other, that encapsulated by (A), about another.

Several features of the dialectic between these groups of interpreters are important to mention at this point. The first is that pluralists and monists have been persistently dissatisfied with relativism for good reasons. Relativists think that the two sets of textual evidence (viz., that for happiness comprising virtuous activities generally and that for happiness consisting in contemplation) apply to two different kinds of happiness that are separately achievable, depending on one's circumstances or endowments. This of course requires that Aristotle countenance two kinds of happiness to which the two sets of evidence corresponding to (A) and (B) can be relativized *and* that he relativizes precisely one of them to each kind. There are several reasons why this claim does not gain dialectical traction. First, pluralists think that the best kind of happiness that an agent can enjoy must consist in intellectually and ethically virtuous activities. Relativists, though, must deny precisely this if they are to pursue the strategy of relativizing the evidence corresponding to (B) to the best kind of happiness, which in

¹³ For criticisms of pluralists along these lines, see, for example, Charles (1999, 209–211) and Lear (2004, 25–46). Urmson (1988, 125), a pluralist, certainly invites such responses: “There is surely no solution to all these difficulties. We must agree that Aristotle has let his enthusiasm get the better of him in his discussion of the theoretical life and replace his extreme claims with the more moderate view that the life of the scholar is the most choiceworthy, only in the sense that it is the best career to choose, not as the sole constituent in the good life.”

turn they must do on pain of their view being immediately unacceptable to monists. In short, pluralists have no more reason to accept relativism than they do to accept monism, so from their point of view relativism offers no dialectical advantage.¹⁴ In the absence of any new hope offered by relativism for convincing pluralist opponents, monists in their turn see no reason to retreat to relativism.

Second, pluralists and monists, unlike relativists, maintain that Aristotle gives several reasons to suggest that his claims are true of one and the same kind of happiness: Prior to *NE* 10.8, and indeed after 10.8 and even in the *Politics*, Aristotle offers no hint that there are two kinds of happiness. His introduction to the inquiry in book I strongly suggests that there should be a unique answer to the question of what happiness is. After all, his stated objective is to discover *the highest* good for human beings achievable in action (I.2, 1094^a18–26, I.4, 1095^a14–17), and it is this highest good that he takes himself to have given “in outline” in the *ergon* (function) argument of I.7 (1098^a20–21). The first line of 10.7, as well as back-references at 10.5, 1176^a3–4 and 10.6, 1176^a30–32, indicate that he intends his remarks on happiness in book 10 as a resumption of the outline account of happiness from I.7, a resumption that he foreshadowed in I.7.¹⁵ The immediately ensuing lines of 10.7 argue that happiness, as he here twice explicitly says he described it before and as he now describes it, is highest, most continuous, most pleasant, most self-sufficient, most perfect, and most leisurely. Pluralists and monists find it scarcely credible that there could be more than one kind of happiness with these properties, most of which were announced in book I as properties that the correct theory of happiness must show to belong to happiness.¹⁶

¹⁴ Charles (1999, 209) offers a series of arguments that relativism fails to avoid problems typically associated with monism. He also contends that relativism’s key distinction is ungrounded in the text.

¹⁵ Various forward and backward references linking books I and 10 are enumerated by Aufderheide (2020, 164), Bostock (2000, 190–191), Natali (1989, 282), Roche (1988a, 193 n. 38), and Whiting (1986, 89).

¹⁶ Irwin (2012, 519–520) thinks that 6.12, 1144^a29–36 gives evidence against two kinds of happiness, though his specific reasons for thinking so are contested by monists. Pakaluk (2005, 322) and Whiting (1986, 93–94 n. 50) argue that if there are the two possibilities for happiness upon which relativists insist, then at least one of them will not meet Aristotle’s stated criteria for anything that could count as happiness: perfection and self-sufficiency. Lear (2004, 195) alleges that relativism encounters an obstacle at 10.8, 1178^b20–32: “One might suggest that we read Aristotle as saying here that contemplation is responsible for the happiness of only the philosophical life. But this cannot be correct either. The utter failure of the beasts to participate in contemplation in any way is supposed to explain why they cannot be happy. If the presence of contemplation is just one way to grasp happiness, his claim that the beasts do not participate in contemplation would be insufficient to rule out the possibility of their happiness.”

It is no accident that upon first exposure to the *NE* many have reacted with bewildered astonishment to the suggestion that the life in accordance with theoretical intellect is happiest and “the life in accord with the other kind of virtue (i.e., the kind concerned with action) (is happiest) in a secondary way” (10.8, 1178^a9, Irwin 2019 trans.). This is the passage that relativists claim as evidence that Aristotle delivers two kinds of happiness to readers who had been led by the entirety of what had preceded to expect only one. Irwin’s translation makes clear that ‘(is happiest)’ is a proposal for an elided predicate. The Greek indicates only that the practical life is secondary in some respect, but does not specify the respect.¹⁷ Irwin proposes ‘happiest’ merely because it occurs in the previous line. But, as I will argue in Chapter 3,¹⁸ understanding the elided predicate as ‘proper to a human being’¹⁹ from the line preceding the one to which Irwin looks makes better sense of Aristotle’s argument in the immediate context. Doing so also exhibits him following up on a related claim with which he ended 10.5 (with very similar wording) rather than committing him to an unanticipated announcement in 10.8 that there are two kinds of happiness. This proposal also renders intelligible the fact that he resumes speaking, for the rest of the *NE* and throughout its sequel, the *Politics*, as if there is only one kind of happiness. Indeed, Aristotle says on the next Bekker page (10.8, 1179^a29–30) that the person who manifests theoretical wisdom (*sophia*), the one who relativists think enjoys the superior kind of happiness, is most of all (*malista*) such as to act rightly (*orthôs*) and nobly (*kalôs*). But one who is most of all such as to act rightly and nobly is, according to relativists, the one who exemplifies the secondary kind of happiness. So, this passage gives us reason to doubt that Aristotle is, as relativists allege, relativizing the two sets of evidence to two kinds of happiness. There is, then, plenty of standardly recognized textual evidence against relativism, and even the one line alleged to support it is most conservatively interpreted as doing no such thing. But even if there were good evidence that Aristotle countenances two kinds of happiness (the activity), we could not safely say that the two sets of evidence, those corresponding to (A) and (B) of the Dilemmatic Problem, are true of precisely one kind of happiness each. While relativists have made important contributions to understanding Aristotle’s theory of happiness, often sharpening the terms of the debate or offering

¹⁷ Δευτέρως δ’ ὁ κατὰ τὴν ἄλλην ἀρετὴν

¹⁸ This argument has its origin in Reece (2020a). Aufderheide (2020, 194–198) offers additional commentary on how the argument that follows 1178^a9 should be viewed in light of that proposal.

¹⁹ <οἰκείος> τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ

formidable arguments with which all parties must contend, relativism is not a strategy for addressing Aristotle's claims in a way that can satisfy pluralists or monists. Neither does it feature any textually motivated fundamental commitment that pluralists or monists should feel any dialectical pressure to accept. If a way of accounting for the evidence were to emerge that respected the fundamental commitments of pluralists and monists alike, relativists should be prepared to accept it.

The second feature of the dialectical landscape that we should observe is that pluralists and monists are most charitably interpreted as having a genuine disagreement with each other, that is to say, disagreeing about the same thing rather than talking past each other. This is why I have formulated the Dilemmatic Problem not in terms of the happy *life*, but rather of happiness, which Aristotle thinks is an activity.²⁰ (From now on when I use 'happiness' unmodified I refer to the activity unless otherwise specified and I use 'happy life' to refer to the life made happy by happiness.) On his view, happiness is what makes a life a happy one. If pluralists thought that ethically virtuous activities were parts of the happy life, but not of happiness, then they would not continue to raise the objections to monists that they in fact raise. Put another way, a real disagreement between pluralists and monists requires that they be pluralists or monists *about the same thing*. Both groups tend to be pluralists about the happy *life*, so a real disagreement between them cannot be about what that consists in.

Reeve (1992, 158–159) is a prominent early adopter of the distinction between happiness and the happy life who leverages it in an effort to soften the blow of monism for pluralists. Many others have subsequently appealed to the distinction. However, pluralists hold their view not because Aristotle lists ethically virtuous activities as parts of the happy *life* (along with external goods, etc.), but because they think that he discusses ethically virtuous activities for much of the *NE* as an elaboration of the conclusion of the *ergon* argument in *NE* 1.7.²¹ Pluralists and monists tend to agree that the conclusion of the *ergon* argument is about happiness rather than the happy life. That is because the argument explicitly excludes as candidates for the human *ergon* (work, function, characteristic activity) elements that the life includes, such as perception and nutrition. Put another way, whatever the *ergon* argument identifies as the human *ergon*, even

²⁰ Thanks to David Charles for discussion about the relationship between the happy life and the activities that it includes.

²¹ Ackrill (1974, 353–354) cites 1.9, 1100^a4–5 and 1.13, 1102^a5–6 as evidence for this, and Irwin (2012, 519) adds 2.6, 1106^b15–24.

merely in outline, it excludes elements that pluralists and monists would agree are included in the happy life. The *ergon* argument is not meant to identify the components of the happy human life, but rather to identify, at least in outline, what happiness is.

Another indication that the conclusion of the *ergon* argument is about happiness rather than the happy life is that Aristotle intends his statement of the human *ergon* to be an answer to the same question to which he ruled out virtue (the state) as an answer. He ruled out virtue (the state) for the reason that a state is not an activity. One might retort that a happy life is an activity. The problem then would be that we would have eliminated much of the motivation for distinguishing between the happy life and happiness (the activity).

Further evidence that the conclusion of the *ergon* argument is about happiness rather than the happy life is that otherwise his way of situating that conclusion among the reputable opinions in *NE* 1.8 would make little sense. For one thing, happiness is a good of the soul, comprising action(s) rather than external goods. Since external goods are part of a happy life, this restriction would be unmotivated if Aristotle means to be saying that the conclusion of the *ergon* argument was about a happy life. For another, why take the trouble of stressing at this stage that happiness, as it has just been specified, is not a virtuous state, but rather a virtuous activity? Also, why add ‘in a complete life’ (1.7, 1098^a18) if the excellent performance of our *ergon* is already a life?

The persistent disagreement between pluralists and monists is best interpreted as a genuine disagreement. They genuinely disagree about that in which happiness (the activity) consists, but need not disagree about what the happy life includes. So, I have stated the Dilemmatic Problem in terms of happiness rather than of the happy life.

The third feature of the dialectical situation will motivate the rest of the present chapter: Pluralists and monists have been persistently dissatisfied with each other’s approach, but each has strong, principled reasons to resist the other’s attempts to explain away the apparent evidence for (A) or (B). That is what has prevented solving the Dilemmatic Problem in a dialectically satisfactory way.

1.3 The Conjunctive Problem of Happiness

I will begin this section by identifying the factors that explain the dialectical resilience of pluralism and monism. Pluralists are reluctant to accept the monist account for several reasons. I will focus on the ones that I think

are the strongest. For now, I merely list these; I will later explain them in detail. Not every pluralist would offer all of these reasons, but each is prevalent in the literature in some form or other. First, pluralists tend to interpret Aristotle as saying explicitly that happiness is an activity with intellectually *and* ethically virtuous activities as parts, whereas monists deny this. Second, they tend to believe that without affirming that happiness has such parts, one cannot show how contemplation brings ethically virtuous activities into the frame of happiness in a way that differs from how it brings in external goods (e.g., health, wealth). Third, pluralists tend to think that since monists deny that happiness has such parts, they face the immoralist objection. This objection is that if happiness is simply one activity, contemplation, then happiness could come at the expense of ethically virtuous activity. Such a result, in addition to being disturbing, would seem at odds with Aristotle's emphasis on the importance of ethically virtuous activity throughout his ethical works. These objections that pluralists have long maintained against monists support viewing (A) of the Dilemmatic Problem as a fundamental and non-negotiable constraint on a way of accounting for the textual evidence:

Pluralist Constraint

Happiness (the activity) is virtuous activity, a composite that includes not only contemplative activity, but also ethically virtuous activities as parts.

Monists are unsatisfied with pluralist accounts primarily because they think that without affirming that happiness is a single activity, contemplative activity, one cannot give a plausible explanation of Aristotle's argument in *NE* 10.7–8, which monists interpret as saying that various features that belong uniquely to happiness belong uniquely to contemplation. It is in the course of this argument, monists standardly think, that Aristotle explicitly claims that happiness is contemplation. This compelling monist objection to pluralism supports viewing (B) of the Dilemmatic Problem as a fundamental and non-negotiable constraint on a way of accounting for the textual evidence:

Monist Constraint

Happiness (the activity) is contemplative activity, which does not include ethically virtuous activities as parts.

It is standardly believed that a theory that meets the Pluralist Constraint would violate the Monist Constraint and vice versa: If, as the Monist Constraint says, happiness is contemplative activity and this does not include

ethically virtuous activities as parts, then happiness is not a composite that includes contemplative and ethically virtuous activities as parts, contrary to the Pluralist Constraint, and conversely. In other words, as I have already said, Aristotle is standardly regarded as providing a confusing body of evidence that might be taken to support either of two genuinely incompatible theories. The Dilemmatic Problem of Happiness is that of determining whether Aristotle's theory of happiness affirms (A) or instead (B) and explaining away the apparent evidence that his theory affirms the other.

Discussions of Aristotle's theory of happiness typically proceed in this way. Interpreters muster evidence in favor of monism or pluralism and then explain why the evidence that has been taken to favor the other interpretation does not favor it as strongly as has been supposed or should be downplayed. This way of proceeding has generated many valuable insights about the structure and content of the *NE*. However, we must take the present dialectical situation very seriously: Each party has given compelling reasons in favor of a fundamental constraint on an acceptable explanation that the other party has been unable to meet. Pluralists are persistently dissatisfied with putative solutions to the Dilemmatic Problem that do not affirm (A), monists with those that do not affirm (B). We should gather from this that an interpretation of Aristotle's remarks about happiness that would satisfy both groups must meet both the Pluralist Constraint and the Monist Constraint. That is to say, it must affirm (A) *and* (B). Furthermore, it must affirm them of the same kind of happiness (the activity). Otherwise, pluralists, monists, or both will think that their constraint has not been met. Nobody has successfully attempted this. Doing so is what I call "the Conjunctive Problem":

Conjunctive Problem of Happiness

We must explain how Aristotle can consistently believe both of the following propositions about the same kind of happiness:

Pluralist Constraint

Happiness (the activity) is virtuous activity, a composite that includes not only contemplative activity, but also ethically virtuous activities as parts.

Monist Constraint

Happiness (the activity) is contemplative activity, which does not include ethically virtuous activities as parts.

I regard solving the Conjunctive Problem as important because I believe that pluralists and monists have stood their ground for good textual and theoretical reasons. Their most fundamental concerns need to be accommodated by a satisfactory interpretation. I will now spell out in detail what I regard as the strongest considerations that pluralists and monists, respectively, have tended to adduce in favor of the claims that the Pluralist Constraint and Monist Constraint, respectively, underpin. I will sometimes devote more systematic attention to a point than existing literature does when I believe that it has been merely stated in the literature and not sufficiently elaborated, and less when it has been thoroughly discussed. The aim of this section is not to rehearse all of the considerations that pluralists and monists offer in support of their interpretations. Rather, the aim is to lend conviction to the thesis that pluralists and monists will not and should not be satisfied by any interpretation that stops short of saying that Aristotle has precisely one theory of happiness and it is one that satisfies the Pluralist Constraint and Monist Constraint for the same kind of happiness.

It will be noticed that in what follows I refrain from addressing how the *ergon* argument of *NE* 1.7 should be understood in light of Aristotle's claim that happiness is something perfect (*teleion*) and self-sufficient (*autarches*) (*NE* 1.7, 1097^b20–21). I will have more to say about other aspects of the *ergon* argument in subsequent chapters, especially the fourth.

Aristotle says this about happiness's perfection and self-sufficiency:²²

[We call] perfect (*teleion*) without qualification that which is always desirable (*haireton*) in its own right and never because of something else. Happiness seems most of all to be like this. (1.7, 1097^a33–34)²³

We posit that the self-sufficient (*autarches*) is that which on its own renders life desirable (*haireton*) and lacking in nothing. We think that happiness is like this. (1.7, 1097^b14–16)

²² There is of course more that can be said and more context that can be given, but nearly anything else about perfection and self-sufficiency would be laden with controversy. I say only enough here to provide a very basic orientation to the denotation of these terms and to direct attention to relevant passages.

²³ Translations are mine unless otherwise noted. I translate '*teleion*' as 'perfect,' the comparative '*teleioteion*' as 'more perfect,' and the superlative '*teleioteion*' as 'most perfect.' Other common translations of the superlative are 'most complete' or 'most final.' 'Most complete' is more commonly preferred by pluralists, 'most final' by monists. None of my points hangs on this translation. Charles (2015, 68–69) argues, on the basis of *Metaph.* 5.16, for understanding '*teleioteion*' as 'most perfect.'

The conclusion of the *ergon* argument in *NE* 1.7 and its recapitulation in 1.8 are as follows:

[I]f all of this is so, then the human good turns out to be activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are multiple virtues, then in accordance with the best (*aristên*) and most perfect (*teleiotatên*). (1.7, 1098^a16–18)

For all of these [being most noble, most desirable, and most pleasant] belong to the best activities, and these activities, or one of them (the best), we say to be happiness. (1.8, 1099^a29–31)

Pluralists think that Aristotle must mean that the various virtuous activities are parts of a best and most perfect activity, the *ergon* of a good human (hereafter abbreviated as ‘human *ergon*’). Monists, by contrast, think that he takes there to be one particular kind of virtuous activity, which we later discover is contemplation, to be the best and most perfect, and therefore the human *ergon*. Their disagreement, I think, is fundamentally about whether the human *ergon*, and therefore happiness, has multiple kinds of virtuous activities as parts. Each group maintains that only its preferred interpretation of the conclusion of the *ergon* argument respects Aristotle’s claim that happiness is something perfect (*teleion*) and self-sufficient (*autarches*), as these features are understood by each. Though pluralists and monists frequently use their preferred interpretations of perfection and self-sufficiency to score points for their chosen account of Aristotle’s theory of happiness, I do not view these as arguments that disproportionately favor either the Pluralist Constraint or the Monist Constraint. Rather, these are part of the contested territory that the arguments that I will discuss are used to seize.²⁴

1.3.1 *Motivating the Pluralist Constraint*

Pluralists’ typical reasons for dissatisfaction with monists’ responses to the Dilemmatic Problem indicate that pluralists view (A) as a constraint on an acceptable interpretation. Pluralists tend to interpret Aristotle as saying explicitly that happiness (the activity) has parts and as making points about happiness that require it specifically to have ethically virtuous activities as parts.

²⁴ Charles (2015) and Baker (2019) argue that from one point of view (namely, that of meaning rather than of reference for Charles and of speaker’s reference rather than semantic reference for Baker) the claims are neutral. Charles is a neutralist about the formulations of perfection and self-sufficiency, Baker about the conclusion of the *ergon* argument. For a current discussion of the *ergon* argument with an extensive bibliography, see Baker (2021).

The Claim That Happiness Has Parts

Aristotle speaks of happiness as including virtues or virtuous activities as parts in *Eudemian Ethics* (combining 1.2, 1214^b26–7, 1.5, 1216^a39 – ^b2, 2.1, 1219^a29–39, ^b11–13, 1220^a2–4) and *Protrepticus* (ap. Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* ch. 7, 43.12–14). So does whoever wrote *Magna Moralia* (1.1, 1184^a14–28). Even in *Rhetoric* (1.5, 1360^b4–30), where such a claim more closely reflects reputable opinions (*endoxa*) about happiness, it is clear that the idea of happiness (the activity) having ethically virtuous activities as parts is one that is intelligible to Aristotle and his original audience. What is of most acute interest to pluralists, though, is that Aristotle speaks directly of happiness's parts in the *NE*:²⁵

5.1, 1129^b17–19

So, in one way the things that we call “just” are those that produce and preserve happiness and its parts for the political community.

ὥστε ἕνα μὲν τρόπον δίκαια λέγομεν τὰ ποιητικά καὶ φυλακτικά εὐδαιμονίας καὶ τῶν μορίων αὐτῆς τῆ πολιτικῆ κοινωνία.

²⁵ Thanks to Gabriel Richardson Lear, Anthony Price, and Christopher Shields for discussion of these various passages. Monists might argue for the immediate dismissal of the *NE* 5.1 passage since it comes from one of the books common to the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. Pluralists would be unmoved by such an argument for at least the following reasons. First, and most simply, monists readily draw on passages from the common books in motivating their interpretations of Aristotle's theory of happiness as articulated in *NE* 1 or 10. It is, after all, difficult to describe what contemplation is without adverting to the virtue of which it is a manifestation, theoretical wisdom, which is discussed in detail only in *NE* 6. Monists also look to *NE* 6, especially chapter 13, for guidance in spelling out the kind of *for-the-sake-of* relation that they think holds between theoretical and practical wisdom. They also appeal to Aristotle's remarks on justice in *NE* 5 and on political wisdom in 6 to fill out their account of the practical or political life in 10. Second, if one's objection to considering passages from the common books is based on the thought that Aristotle's theory of happiness changed between the writing of the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, that simply pushes the problem of coherence encapsulated by the Dilemmatic Problem back a step: What alleged discrepancies between the two works motivate this thought, are they the discrepancies that we find in this passage, and are they in the end genuinely discrepant? Irwin (2012, 520) argues that pushing the problem back in this way is a mistake, on the grounds that since either Aristotle included the common books among the *NE* books or an early editor did, we should not discount the authority of this ancient person's opinion that they presented no problem of consistency for Aristotle's theory of happiness. Even pluralists who think that the editorial history of the common books is sufficiently complicated to damage Irwin's argument might be persuaded by Frede's (2019) contention that any passage that presupposes a distinction between general and particular justice (which this one does) is more *Nicomachean* than *Eudemian*. Third, pluralists are likely to believe that unless we interpret Aristotle as saying in the *NE* that happiness has no parts, which is simply the monist position, we would have no good reason to think that his view on the subject of whether happiness has parts differs between the *EE* and the *NE*. But without such a reason, according to pluralists, dismissing a claim in the common books about parts of happiness as being purportedly un-*Nicomachean* is question-begging.

Aristotle's primary contention in *NE* 5.1–2 is that things might be called “just” in two ways, namely in accordance with general justice or with particular justice. General justice comprises every virtue insofar as each of these virtues relates to other people. Particular justice is one among the ethical virtues and has to do with proportional distribution or retribution. In this passage that speaks of parts of happiness, Aristotle is referring to general justice rather than particular justice. That is the intended contrast marked by ‘in one way.’²⁶ The claim is that the things that general justice (rather than particular justice) comprises, namely all of the virtues or virtuous activities as related to other people, produce and preserve happiness and its parts for the political community.^{27, 28}

²⁶ Burnet (1900, 207) and Stewart (1892, vol. 1, 391) argue that ‘*men*’ in this line corresponds to ‘*de*’ in 5.2, 1130^a14, which introduces particular justice.

²⁷ *NE* 1.2, 1094^b7–8 and *Pol.* 7.1, 1323^b21–36 indicate that happiness for the individual and for the political community have the same structure.

²⁸ Those who have a monistic interpretation of the entire *NE* are remarkably silent about this passage. Among recent commentators who do address it, all but two identify the parts of happiness mentioned in this passage as virtues and virtuous activities, which Aristotle proceeds to list in the immediately succeeding lines. This majority view is held by Austin (1979, 15–16), Bostock (2000, 22), Broadie (2002, 337), Engberg-Pederson (1983, 54–55), Gauthier and Jolif (1970, vol. 2.1, 340), Kenny (1978, 59, 66), Lee (2014, 109–113), Nussbaum (2001, 375), Stewart (1892, vol. 1, 392), and Urmson (1988, 13). Every early commentary and scholium on this passage of which I am aware agrees that happiness has ethically virtuous activities as parts: Anonymous (*In EN* 209.13–18), Michael of Ephesus (*In EN* 6.33–7.1), Georgios Pachymeres (*In EN* 182.11–12), a scholium in the hand of the anonymous twelfth-century copyist of cod. Parisiensis 1854 f. 71r, who Rose (1871) argues transmits an interpretive tradition independent from that of Anonymous and Michael of Ephesus, possibly that of Aspasius, who is presumed to have made comments, now lost, on *NE* 5, and a remark *supra lineam* in cod. Laurentianus 81.18 f. 35r, which has been re-dated to the twelfth century by Brockmann (1993, 46), partially collated by Vuillemin-Diem and Rashed (1997), and fully collated by Panegyres (2020). (I am grateful to Konstantine Panegyres for assistance in deciphering this last scribe's difficult hand.) Aspasius (*In EN* 8.17–30, 19.7–8, 21.33 – 22.1, 22.14–34, 24.3–5) and Alexander of Aphrodisias (*Eth. Prob.* 150.10–12) attribute to Aristotle the view that ethically virtuous activities are parts of happiness, whereas external goods have some non-parthood relation to happiness, on the basis of passages in *NE* 1 and 2. Doxography C (ap. Stobaeus, *Anth.* 2.7.17.1 – 2.7.18.86), commonly (though not uncontroversially – see Inwood 2014, 78 and 129 n. 25) dated to the first century BC, identifies this as the view of Aristotle and other Peripatetics without reference to particular passages. These ancient commentators, doxographers, and scholiasts think that “What are the parts of happiness?” is a sensible, controversial, and interesting question. They would not regard it as such a question if it were merely about the ingredients of the happy life. Aspasius (*In EN* 24.3–5), for example, would not see any difficulty in claiming that external goods are parts of the happy *life*, though he rejects the notion that external goods are parts of happiness.

I know of two alternatives to the majority interpretation of the *NE* 5.1 passage. Reeve (2014, 261 n. 341) suggests that Aristotle means these parts of happiness to be external goods. This is presumably a specification of his (1992, 122) claim, made in defense of his overall monistic account of happiness, that the passage does not foreclose the possibility that the parts of happiness are the sorts of things that happiness limits and measures. External goods, according to Reeve, fit this bill. I regard the suggestion that the parts of happiness in this passage are external goods as implausible since, aside from the fact that the idea is not derivable from the context, it is unlikely that Aristotle

What does it mean for virtues or virtuous activities to produce and preserve happiness and its parts? In general, manifestations of virtues, namely virtuous activities, produce and preserve those virtues, which continue to be manifested in virtuous activities.²⁹ In other words, virtue is productive and preservative in the sense that virtuous activities are self-reinforcing in the way just mentioned. The whole of virtue, which in its other-regarding aspect is general justice, has parts: virtues. According to pluralists, the parts of the whole of virtue, virtues, produce happiness in the sense that their self-reinforcing actualizations, virtuous activities, are the parts of happiness.

The Difference between Parts of Happiness and External Goods

Another motivation for the Pluralist Constraint has been a tendency to believe that without affirming that happiness has parts, a solution to the Dilemmatic Problem cannot respect the fact that Aristotle sees a difference between how ethically virtuous activities and external goods are related to happiness. Put another way, making them all for the sake of contemplation, as monists do, rather than making ethically virtuous activities parts of happiness along with contemplation, prevents us from being able plausibly to say in what that difference consists. The evidence that Aristotle sees such a difference, according to pluralists, is as follows.

One kind of evidence is that the relevance of external goods to happiness depends asymmetrically on the relation of ethically virtuous activities to happiness. External goods are related to happiness *to the extent that* ethically virtuous activities are related to happiness and require, or are enabled

would want to *contrast* general justice with particular justice in respect of producing and preserving external goods. Burger (2008, 93–94, 167) thinks that the parts of happiness are individual citizens' happiness, on the supposition that this passage is anticipating *Politics* 2.5, 1264^b15–25, where Aristotle says, objecting to Plato, that the happiness of the state depends on the happiness of individuals from all classes (not only the lawmakers). The first problem with this suggestion is that, as I have already mentioned, Aristotle thinks that happiness for individuals and for the political community have the same structure. See Jagannathan (2019) on this point. Relatedly, if indeed Aristotle is here anticipating *Pol.* 2.5, we need to ask what Aristotle thinks makes individuals from all classes happy. His view throughout the *Politics* is that happiness includes ethically virtuous activities (see especially 7.1, 1323^b21–36). So, if Burger's interpretation of parts of happiness in *NE* 5.1 is correct, we would need an account of *how* general justice, the whole of virtue as it relates to others, produces and preserves virtuous activities, and thereby happiness, for individuals. The explanation given on behalf of pluralists in what follows in the main text does precisely this. So, even if Burger's interpretation is correct, it presupposes the availability of an explanation like the one that pluralists would give for the truth of the more typical interpretation of this passage, the interpretation that the parts of happiness are virtuous activities. Since Burger's interpretation presupposes this, but goes beyond it, the interpretation that nearly all other commentators advocate is preferable.

²⁹ *NE* 2.1, 1103^a26–^b8; 2.2, 1104^a11–^b3; 2.4, 1105^b5–12; 3.5, 1114^a9–10; 6.5, 1140^b11–20; 7.8, 1151^a15–20.

by, such goods (*NE* 1.8, 1099^a31–33, 1.10, 1100^b8–11).³⁰ Pluralists think that if this is true, then external goods and ethically virtuous activities cannot have the same kind of relation to happiness. They think that Aristotle has a distinction between being needed as a sort of auxiliary or enabler dispensable in principle, and being constitutively determinative of the thing in question, and that such a distinction holds between external goods and ethically virtuous activities with respect to happiness.³¹

A second kind of evidence is that ethically virtuous activities share certain properties with happiness that external goods do not share. For example, virtuous activities, as well as happiness, are more strictly goods than external goods are (Broadie, 1993, 53). This is because whereas external goods can be used well or badly, this is not true of happiness, or of virtuous activities.

Another property that happiness shares with virtuous activities, but not with external goods, is being a good of the soul. Aristotle says that it is because virtuous activities are goods of the soul that we can infer that happiness is a good of the soul, as it should be if certain popular opinions about it are to be vindicated, whereas external goods are not goods of the soul (*NE* 1.8, 1098^b12–20, *EE* 2.1, 1218^b32 – 1219^a39). We can infer that happiness has a particular property, namely being a good of the soul, from the fact that virtuous activities are goods of the soul. We cannot draw any such inference about this property of happiness from facts about external goods since they lack the property. Pluralists can say that this situation is easily explicable if virtuous activities are the parts of happiness and external goods are related to those activities in some other way, perhaps as instruments or preconditions (*NE* 1.9, 1099^b25–28), but difficult to explain otherwise. In addition to this, it is natural to think that the difference between ethically virtuous activities and external goods with respect to happiness is that the former, but not the latter, are *parts* of happiness because Aristotle's standard contrast class for instruments and preconditions is parts.³²

³⁰ See Brown (2006), Crisp (1994, 122), and Roche (1988a, 189 n. 27). See also Curzer (2012, 417), who, though I categorize him as a relativist rather than a pluralist, offers this as an argument against monism. Whiting (1986, 91–93) gives a related, but slightly different, argument based on *NE* 10.8.

³¹ Indeed, one might suppose, though the point does not depend on this, that such a distinction is in view in his mysterious pronouncement in *Pol.* 7.13, 1332^a7–10 that in the “ethical works” he has said that happiness “is complete/perfect/final (*teleian*) activity and use of virtue, and this not from a hypothesis, but unqualifiedly” (ἐνέργειαν εἶναι καὶ χρῆσιν ἀρετῆς τελείαν, οὐκ ἐξ ὑποθέσεως ἀλλ’ ἀπλῶς).

³² *Pol.* 7.8, 1328^a21 – ^b4, 7.9, 1329^a34–39, *EE* 2.1, 1214^b24–27. Keyt (1983, 368) mentions this.

The Immoralist Objection

According to pluralists, unless ethically virtuous activities are partially constitutive of happiness, then happiness could come at the expense of ethically virtuous activities, a result that pluralists deem un-Aristotelian and unpalatable in its own right. This is the immoralist objection to monism.³³ Another way of formulating the objection is this: If, as monists think, happiness is contemplation and ethically virtuous activities are for the sake of contemplation, then for any case in which contemplation is available, it is possible that the agent has sufficient reason to choose it over any other course of action. After all, why choose an activity that is merely instrumental for, or an approximation of, happiness if happiness is directly available?³⁴

Pluralists' reason for thinking that immoralism is un-Aristotelian is that, according to them, Aristotle thinks that happiness and ethically virtuous activities covary in such a way that the happiest person will be the most ethically virtuous: The more one has every virtue (courage is the star example in the context), the more one's life will be worthwhile and happy (*NE* 3.9, 1117^b7–13).³⁵ The happiest person is the one who is most of all (*malista*) such as to act rightly (*orthôs*) and nobly (*kalôs*) (10.8, 1179^a29–32). This is why Aristotle can say that happiness is in accordance both with theoretical wisdom and with practical wisdom (1.8, 1098^b22–25).³⁶ If happiness and

³³ See, for example, Ackrill (1974, 358), Bostock (2000, 203), Keyt (1983, 368–371), Pakaluk (2005, 322), Roche (1988a, 176), and Whiting (1986, 94). There is also an immoralist objection to relativism, a point noticed by, for example, Charles (1999, 209). Relativists think that one kind of happiness, the best kind, is contemplation and this activity does not include ethically virtuous activities (though on at least some relativist views the happy *life* does). On their view, then, the best kind of happiness comes at the expense of ethically virtuous activities, which, again, pluralists will see as un-Aristotelian and unpalatable.

³⁴ Some monists, such as Adkins (1978, 313), Cooper (1975, 164), Kenny (1978, 214), and Lear (1988, 314–316), admit that on their interpretation of the *NE* Aristotle is an immoralist. Whiting (1986, 94) argues that at least some monists – her paper specifically targets Cooper (1975) – make Aristotle a particularly strong immoralist, one who thinks that we are *required* in every case to maximize contemplation at the expense of ethically virtuous activities. Kraut (1989) thinks that although “the more [contemplation] one engages in, the better off one is” (9), it will usually turn out that pursuing further opportunities for contemplation will not conflict with justice, but cases of unjust pursuit of contemplation *can* occur (181). Kraut, then, contends that his monistic view does not commit Aristotle to such a strong immoralism, but a pluralist might argue that he still makes him an immoralist of a weaker sort, one who thinks that one is *permitted* to maximize contemplation at the expense of ethically virtuous activities, and that even this weaker immoralism is not in keeping with Aristotle's view that happiness and ethically virtuous activities covary, which view I discuss in the main text below.

³⁵ Whiting (1986, 73) cites this passage to make this point.

³⁶ Saying that happiness is activity in accordance with theoretical and practical wisdom is his way of partially accommodating two *endoxa*: one that happiness is theoretical wisdom and another that it is practical wisdom. Thanks to Anthony Price for urging clarity about this.

ethically virtuous activities indeed covary in this way, then we see again that ethically virtuous activities cannot have the same relation to happiness that external goods have, for Aristotle indicates that external goods lack this covariation with happiness: Past a rather low limit, additional external goods are not needed for happiness (10.8, 1178^b33 – 1179^a17) and indeed can become impediments to contemplation (10.8, 1178^b3–5). Instead, pluralists think, ethically virtuous activities must be parts of happiness.

1.3.2 *Motivating the Monist Constraint*

Monists likewise have compelling reasons for dissatisfaction with pluralists' responses to the Dilemmatic Problem and thus for regarding (B) as a constraint on an acceptable interpretation. Monists tend to interpret Aristotle as saying explicitly that happiness is a single activity, contemplation, and as making points about happiness that require it specifically to be such an activity.

Contemplation's Superlative Features

Monists think that without affirming that happiness is a single activity, contemplation, an interpretation cannot account for Aristotle's argument in *NE* 10.7–8, which they interpret as saying that various features that belong uniquely to happiness belong uniquely to contemplation.³⁷ Aristotle begins the argument as follows:

But if happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest (*kratistên*) one, and this will be the virtue of the best (*aristou*) part. Whether, then, this part is intellect (*nous*) or something else that seems naturally to rule, lead, and understand what is noble and divine, whether by being itself something divine or by being the most divine part in us – this part's activity in accordance with its proper (*oikeian*) virtue will be perfect (*teleia*) happiness. We have already said that it is contemplative (*theôrêtikê*) activity. (10.7, 1177^a12–18)

³⁷ See, for example, Kenny's (1992, 88) memorable simile: "In book 1 and book 10 of the *NE* Aristotle behaves like the director of a marriage bureau, trying to match his client's description of his ideal partner. In the first book he lists the properties which people believe to be essential to happiness, and in the tenth book he seeks to show that philosophical contemplation, and it alone, possesses to the full these essential qualities." Bostock (2000, 192) states forcefully that "Chapter 7 [of book 10] can only be understood, it seems to me, as offering arguments for the claim that *eudaimonia* is to be *identified* with the activity of the highest of the virtues, namely contemplation" (emphasis in original). He then proceeds to rehearse these arguments for contemplation's superlative features.

Monists interpret this passage as saying that happiness is the activity of our highest, most divine virtue, which is the virtue of our highest and most divine part. They standardly believe the following: According to Aristotle our highest and most divine part is theoretical intellect, the virtue of it is theoretical wisdom, and its manifestation is the activity of contemplation. This is why he says that happiness is contemplative activity. Contemplative activity does not have ethically virtuous activities as parts. Neither does theoretical wisdom have ethical virtues as parts, nor theoretical intellect any other parts of the soul. In short, happiness is a single, contemplative activity. This is precisely what we should expect since happiness is the single highest and most divine activity of our single highest and most divine part.

According to monists, Aristotle then offers a series of arguments in 10.7–8 meant to show that the conclusion that happiness is a single activity, contemplation, is “in agreement both with what was said before and with the truth” (10.7, 1177^a18–19).³⁸ The purport of each argument is that contemplation, and only contemplation, has the features that happiness is supposed to have. Such arguments, monists think, rule out the pluralist claim that happiness has ethically virtuous activities as parts. According to monists, Aristotle believes that happiness is contemplation because it alone among activities has the features that happiness (the activity) must have: It is the activity that is highest (1177^a19–21), most continuous (^a21–22), most pleasant (^a22–27), most self-sufficient (^a27 – ^b1), most perfect (^b1–4), most leisurely (^b4–15), in accordance with what is a human being most of all (1178^a2–8), and most divine (10.8, 1178^b7–32). Aristotle takes particular care to argue that ethically virtuous activities lack these properties. Monists infer from this that happiness is contemplation and not ethically virtuous activities.³⁹

According to monists, Aristotle has indirectly prepared the way for such a conclusion in *NE* 10.6, where he argues that happiness should be sought among virtuous activities rather than among amusements:

But the happy life seems to be in accordance with virtue, and this is one that involves seriousness (*spoudês*) and does not consist in amusement. And we say that serious things are better than comical ones and those that involve amusement, and that in every case the activity of what is better, whether

³⁸ For a recent detailed analysis of these arguments, see Aufderheide (2020).

³⁹ Cleemput (2006, 155) thinks that even in *NE* 1 Aristotle is committed to the idea that while happiness is divine, no composite activity, such as a composite of ethically virtuous activities, could be divine.

of a part or of a human being, is more serious. But the activity of what is better is higher and for this reason is more characteristic of happiness (*eudaimonikōtera*). (1177^a1–6)⁴⁰

Amusement cannot be happiness because happiness is the best activity and amusement is not, for virtuous activities are better than it is. That is at least in part because virtuous activities are activities of that which is better in a human being, and activities in accordance with what is better in a human being are themselves better, and therefore better candidates for happiness. This latter, general principle is what Aristotle applies in 10.7–8 to arrive at the conclusion that among virtuous activities one stands out as best: contemplation. Just as happiness could not be amusement because amusement is not the best activity, happiness could not be ethically virtuous activities because these are not best. Rather, happiness is the best activity: contemplation.⁴¹

Various ways of resisting such an interpretation of Aristotle's argument in *NE* 10.7–8 have been suggested. These are most relevant to the last two of the arguments in the series of arguments in 10.7–8 that Aristotle gives. Monists think that in the first of these, T1, Aristotle argues that since theoretical intellect is what is a human being most of all, and happiness is activity in accordance with what is a human being most of all, happiness must be activity in accordance with theoretical intellect:

T1 (10.7, 1178^a2–8)

Each ⟨human being⟩ would in fact seem to be ⟨intellect⟩, since it is the determinative and better ⟨part⟩. So, it would be bizarre if one did not choose a life characteristic of oneself, but rather a life characteristic of something else. What was said previously applies now, too. For what is proper by nature to each thing is best and most pleasant to each thing. Indeed, life in accordance

δόξειε δ' ἄν καὶ εἶναι ἕκαστος ^{a2}
τοῦτο, εἴπερ τὸ κύριον καὶ ἀμει-
νον. ἄτοπον οὖν γίνοιτ' ἄν, εἰ
μὴ τὸν αὐτοῦ βίον αἰροῖτο ἀλλά
τινος ἄλλου. τὸ λεχθέν τε πρό-
τερον ἀρμόσει καὶ νῦν. τὸ γὰρ
οἰκείον ἐκάστω τῇ φύσει κράτι-
στον καὶ ἡδιστόν ἐστιν ἐκάστω.
καὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ δὴ ὁ κατὰ τὸν

⁴⁰ I translate '*eudaimonikōtera*' as 'more characteristic of happiness,' following Irwin's (2019) 'has more the character of happiness.' Some other possibilities include 'more of the nature of happiness,' 'more conducive to happiness,' or 'more productive of happiness.' None seems ideal to me, but none of my points depends on the translation. Thanks to Christopher Shields for discussion of this issue.

⁴¹ Note that I am not saying that Aristotle's argument that happiness is not to be sought in amusement has, in its own right, any direct bearing on whether one virtuous activity stands out as best. Rather, a general principle implicit in that argument is used to address that question in 10.7–8. Thanks to Anthony Price for urging clarity on this point.

with intellect is proper to a human being, since (intellect) is a human being most of all. So, this (life) also is happiest.

νοῦν βίος, εἴπερ τοῦτο μάλιστα ἄνθρωπος. οὗτος ἄρα καὶ εὐδαιμονέστατος.

8

According to monists, the second of the two passages, T₂, argues that happiness is contemplation because contemplation is the most divine activity:

T₂ (10.8, 1178^b7–32)

It would appear from the following considerations, too, that perfect happiness is a contemplative sort of activity. We suppose the gods most of all to be blessed and happy. But what kind of actions ought to be ascribed to them? Actions that are just? Or will they not appear ridiculous entering into contracts, returning deposits, and all such things? Courageous actions, enduring fearful things and facing danger because doing so is noble? Or generous actions? To whom will they give? It would be odd for them to have money or anything of that sort. And what would their temperate actions be? Or would not such praise be cheap since they do not have base appetites? If we were to go through all of the things concerned with such actions, it would appear that they are trivial and unworthy of gods. But all suppose them to be alive and therefore active, for surely they cannot suppose them to be sleeping like Endymion. So then, if acting (and still more, producing) is removed from living, what is left besides contemplation? The result would be that the activity of the god, exceeding in blessedness, is contemplative. And indeed, among human activities the one that is most akin to this is the most characteristic of happiness.⁴² An indica-

ἡ δὲ τελεία εὐδαιμονία ὅτι θεωρητική τις ἐστὶν ἐνέργεια, καὶ ἐντεῦθεν ἂν φανεῖται. τοὺς θεοὺς γὰρ μάλιστα ὑπειλήφμεν μακαρίους καὶ εὐδαιμόνας εἶναι· πράξεις δὲ ποίας ἀπονεῖμαι χρεῶν αὐτοῖς; πότερα τὰς δικαίας; ἢ γελοῖοι φανοῦνται συναλλάττοντες καὶ παρακαταθήκας ἀποδιδόντες καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα; ἀλλὰ τὰς ἀνδρείους * * ὑπομένοντας τὰ φοβερὰ καὶ κινδυνεύοντας ὅτι καλόν; ἢ τὰς ἐλευθερίους; τίνοι δὲ δώσουσιν; ἄτοπον δ' εἶ καὶ ἔσται αὐτοῖς νόμισμα ἢ τι τοιοῦτον. αἱ δὲ σώφρονες τί ἂν εἶεν; ἢ φορτικὸς ὁ ἔπαινος, ὅτι οὐκ ἔχουσι φαύλας ἐπιθυμίας; διεξιούσι δὲ πάντα φαίνοιτ' ἂν τὰ περὶ τὰς πράξεις μικρὰ καὶ ἀνάξια θεῶν. ἀλλὰ μὴν ζῆν γε πάντες ὑπειλήφασιν αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐνεργεῖν ἄρα· οὐ γὰρ δὴ καθεύδειν ὥσπερ τὸν Ἐνδυμίωνα. τῷ δὴ ζῶντι τοῦ πράττειν ἀφαιρουμένου, ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον τοῦ ποιεῖν, τί λείπεται πλὴν θεωρία; ὥστε ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνέργεια, μακαριότητι διαφέρουσα, θεωρητικὴ ἂν εἴη· καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων δὴ ἡ ταύτη συγγενεστάτη εὐδαιμονι-

b₇

10

15

20

⁴² See my p. 22 n. 40 on the translation of 'eudaimonikōtera,' the comparative form of the adjective that here appears in superlative form.

tion of this is that the other animals do not share in happiness, being completely deprived of this sort of activity. For in the case of the gods the whole of life is blessed, whereas in the case of human beings this is so only so far as there is some semblance of this sort of activity. But among the other animals none is happy since none shares in contemplation in any way. Indeed, happiness extends as far as contemplation does, and to those to whom it more belongs to contemplate, it more belongs also to be happy, not accidentally, but rather in accordance with the contemplation, for this is valuable in itself. The result would be that happiness is a type of contemplation.

κωτάτη. σημεῖον δὲ καὶ τὸ μὴ με-
τέχειν τὰ λοιπὰ ζῶα εὐδαιμονίας,
τῆς τοιαύτης ἐνεργείας ἐστερη- 25
μένα τελείως. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ θεοῖς
ἅπας ὁ βίος μακάριος, τοῖς δ' ἀν-
θρώποις, ἐφ' ὅσον ὁμοίωμα τι τῆς
τοιαύτης ἐνεργείας ὑπάρχει· τῶν
δ' ἄλλων ζῶων οὐδὲν εὐδαιμονεῖ,
ἐπειδὴ οὐδαμῇ κοινωνεῖ θεωρίας.
ἐφ' ὅσον δὴ διατείνει ἡ θεωρία,
καὶ ἡ εὐδαιμονία, καὶ οἷς μᾶλλον 30
ὑπάρχει τὸ θεωρεῖν, καὶ εὐδαιμο-
νεῖν, οὐ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς ἀλλὰ
κατὰ τὴν θεωρίαν· αὕτη γὰρ καθ'
αὐτὴν τιμία. ὥστ' εἴη ἂν ἡ εὐδαι-
μονία θεωρία τις.

A standard monist interpretation of Aristotle's argument in T1 is as follows:⁴³ In its beginning and penultimate sentences, Aristotle affirms that human beings are their theoretical intellect most of all (*malista*), which is to say that a human being is more appropriately identified with theoretical intellect than with anything else. The final sentence of T1 tells us that the happiest life for a human being will be that of theoretical intellect. When the argument of T1 is understood in light of the other arguments for contemplation's superlative properties throughout 10.7–8, including the arguments that contemplation is best (10.7, 1177^a19–21) and most pleasant (^a22–27), to which the final sentence of T1 refers, we can see that such a life will be happiest because the activity of happiness is theoretical intellect's virtuous activity: contemplation. In short, according to monists, the happy life is a theoretical one because human happiness is contemplation, and human happiness is contemplation because human beings are theoretical intellect most of all.

Monists typically understand T2 as adding to Aristotle's previous arguments that contemplation is the activity that is highest (10.7, 1177^a19–21) and most pleasant (^a22–27) the further argument that it is the activity that is most divine. According to ^b23 of T2, happiness must be that activity which is most akin to what divine beings do. In our case, the activity

⁴³ I discuss this passage further in Chapters 4–5.

that is most akin to the divine is contemplation. One reason for thinking so is furnished by his previous argument that contemplation is the most self-sufficient of our activities (10.7, 1177^a27 – 1177^b1). For humans, contemplation is most self-sufficient because it requires less involvement with other people than, say, just, courageous, or generous actions require.⁴⁴ For a divine being, T2 tells us, those kinds of acts are not even possible in the first place, so such a being's contemplation is obviously his most self-sufficient activity. The superlative self-sufficiency of an activity, Aristotle thinks, is a mark of its divinity. Having thus added 'most divine' to the list of superlative properties that uniquely qualify contemplation as happiness, in 1177^b28–32 of T2 Aristotle gives a restatement of the overall claim that he has made in various forms throughout 10.7–8 that happiness is contemplation. The inference in 1177^b28–32 from the non-accidental coextension of happiness and contemplation to the claim that happiness is a type of contemplation explicitly depends on Aristotle's invocation, at the end of the sentence, of the conclusion of a previous argument that contemplation, like happiness, is preeminently loved for its own sake (10.7, 1177^b1–4). This passage, monists think, is a keystone for the stacks of arguments that Aristotle has given in 10.7–8 for contemplation's claim to be happiness.

But, as I have said, various ways of resisting these interpretations of T1 and T2 have been proposed. One strategy is to claim that Aristotle is not expressing his own view in these passages. Moline (1983), for example, thinks that the account of happiness as contemplation in *NE* 10.7–8 is so discordant with the rest of the *NE* that it must be an expression of Anaxagoras's view meant as a joke at the latter's expense. Whiting (1986, 86–87), highlighting the fact that Aristotle's claims in the beginning and penultimate sentences of T1 are grammatically conditionals, argues that it is possible to avoid imputing to Aristotle the acceptance of the antecedents of these conditionals, and thus also to avoid committing him to the conclusion that contemplation is the activity of what is most of all a human being. Rather, according to Whiting (1988, 37–38), we should think that theoretical intellect is only one part of a composite human essence, and thus is not most of all what a human being is.

⁴⁴ Brown (2014) describes this as "solitary self-sufficiency," which he thinks differs from the "political self-sufficiency" described in book 1. Bostock (2000, 24 n. 42) and Kenny (1992, 36) also think that the meaning of 'self-sufficiency' shifts between books 1 and 10. Gasser-Wingate (2020) offers a response, arguing instead that self-sufficiency in books 1 and 10 should be understood as a certain sort of "independence from external contributors to our activity."

I think that the general suspicion about the arguments in *NE* 10.7–8 that Moline expresses, stripped of his proposal about Anaxagoras, is at bottom an insistence on the Pluralist Constraint, a constraint that Moline thinks cannot possibly be met by monistic interpretations of these chapters. But what about Whiting's composite essence proposal? Charles raises a problem for it in his (2017a, 107) and (2017b, 96), a problem that is partially anticipated by Nagel (1972, 259): The view that humans have a composite essence gives no principled way of including theoretical intellect in the composite essence, and therefore contemplation as part of the excellent performance of the composite *ergon* of such an essence, without also including the perceptive part of our soul in our essence and perceptual activity in our *ergon*. Interpreters ought to have a principled explanation for such an exclusion, though, since Aristotle decisively excludes perception from our *ergon* (*NE* 1.7, 1098^a1–3). A proponent of the composite essence view might respond that the human essence is restricted to the rational soul and excludes perceptual capacities for that reason, but monists would presumably regard such a response as unprincipled and as complicated by Aristotle's discussion of practical intellect in perceptual terms in *NE* 6.8 and 6.11.

One who attempts to avoid monism by arguing that Aristotle disbelieves the conclusion of T1 faces pressure to say that he also disbelieves the conclusion of T2, the claim that “happiness would be a type of contemplation.” Such an interpreter might take the first part of ^b32 of T2, ‘the result would be,’ to indicate that such a claim *would* follow if, counterfactually, the argument that precedes it were correct. But monists see the mere possibility of this as no principled reason to think that the argument of T2 is meant as anything other than Aristotle's genuine statement of what he takes to be the fact of the matter, for it is at least as plausible that this construction is used to flag a claim as a conclusion of a series of premises that Aristotle accepts,⁴⁵ or simply as an optative of politeness.⁴⁶

Another strategy for resisting monistic interpretations of T1 and T2 is to suppose that Aristotle's conclusions in these passages are relativized to

⁴⁵ See, for example, *DA* 2.2, 414^a13–14, *NE* 1.2, 1094^b6–7, 5.4, 1136^b1–3, 6.5, 1140^a30–31, 6.7, 1141^a18–19.

⁴⁶ For a similar use of the optative, see *Metaph.* 12.7, 1072^a20–21 (λύοιτ' ἂν ταῦτα), where Aristotle means to say that the difficulties that he had been addressing in the previous chapter have indeed been resolved. Laks (2000, 211) identifies the optative in *Metaph.* 12.7 as an optative of politeness. Natali (2010, 315), comments as follows about an optative construction in the *ergon* argument in *NE* 1.7, which presumably no pluralist would want to view as counterfactual: “The conclusion, formulated in a slightly dubitative form (οὐτῶ δόξειεν ἂν), but only as a rhetorical device, can be found at lines 1097^b27–28: ‘so it would seem for the human being.’”

one kind of happiness rather than another. But, as I have already mentioned, the case for relativism is not strong and has not persuaded monists or pluralists.

Yet another strategy for resisting the standard monist interpretation of these passages is to claim that Aristotle here employs a notion of ‘contemplation’ so capacious that it includes the activities that pluralists view as parts of happiness. Curzer (2012, 401) takes “the objects of contemplation to be primarily the matters of ordinary human life.” He reports that Aristotle uses ‘contemplation’ in multiple ways, one of which does refer to practical affairs. The problem is that, however he uses ‘contemplation’ elsewhere, in these passages Aristotle clearly means contemplation to be the manifestation of theoretical wisdom, and Aristotle explicitly denies that theoretical wisdom is concerned with human things (*NE* 6.7, 1141^a16 – ^b14). Curzer, realizing this, says that such passages have been overemphasized by medieval philosophers with religious interests and should therefore perhaps be “backgrounded” (397). Monists presumably have not experienced any strong temptation to background such passages in accordance with Curzer’s suggestion.

Guthrie (1981, 396–398), Jirsa (2017), Roochnik (2009), and Walker (2017) take a different type of liberal view of contemplation according to which it can sometimes be virtuous *inquiry*. I doubt that this could be what Aristotle has in mind in *NE* 10.7–8. Expanding on the evidence of 10.7, 1177^a26–27, which appears to deny that contemplation could be inquiry, two main arguments are given for interpreting Aristotle as having a more restrictive view of what contemplation is:⁴⁷ First, an inquiry takes time to develop toward completion, but since contemplation is an *energeia* (activity) and an *energeia* is fully complete at all times, contemplation could not be an inquiry. Second, contemplation is supposed to be “for its own sake alone” (10.7, 1177^b1–4), but since an inquiry is valuable at least for the sake of that for which it is conducted, an inquiry is not valuable in the same way, so contemplation could not be an inquiry.⁴⁸ I will add another argument to these: Given the way in which Aristotle opens *NE* 10.7, contemplation ought to be the manifestation of a virtue, but inquiry is not the manifestation of any virtue recognized by Aristotle. At most, it would be

⁴⁷ These are given by Aufderheide (2020, 124 and 172), Bostock (2000, 198), Gauthier and Jolif (1970, 855–856), Kenny (1992, 103), Kraut (1989, 68 n. 48), Lawrence (2005, 135), Nightingale (2004, 208–209), and Urmson (1988, 121).

⁴⁸ The point here does not depend on whether “αὐτῆ μόνῃ δι’ αὐτήν” is translated as “for its own sake alone” or “alone for its own sake.” Either way, contemplation will be valued differently from how inquiry is valued. Thanks to Anthony Price for discussion of this point.

part of *developing* a virtue, perhaps theoretical wisdom. But Aristotle says that pleasures do not arise when we are acquiring some capacity, but when we are manifesting it (7.12, 1153^a10–11). Yet the sort of contemplation at issue in *NE* 10.7–8 is supposed to be “most pleasant” (10.7, 1177^a22–27). This point about pleasure would explain *why* Aristotle would deny, as he appears to do (^a26–27), that the sort of contemplation that he is discussing could be inquiry, making it more difficult for commentators to downplay the relevance of that remark.

Broadie (1991, 415) suggests yet another liberal view of contemplation that avoids at least the first and the third of the arguments that I have just listed against the view that contemplation can be an inquiry. She proposes, with some hesitation, that contemplation (*theôria*) is not the manifestation of theoretical wisdom, but rather of a nameless ethical virtue, love of *theôria*, and the activity amounts to practical wisdom celebrating itself. Monists think that it is far more likely that Aristotle intends contemplation to be the manifestation of theoretical wisdom than of a nameless ethical virtue. This is evidenced by the way in which Aristotle sums up the discussion at 10.8, 1179^a31–32: “In this way, too, the result would be that the *theoretically* wise person most of all is happy.”⁴⁹

Lear (2004, 194–196), though she is a monist, offers another possibility for assigning an expansive meaning to ‘contemplation’ in ^b32 of T2. She thinks that in the context of T2 ‘*theôria*’ unmodified by ‘*tis*’ refers to the manifestation of theoretical wisdom, Aristotle’s technical use, but in ^b32 ‘*tis*’ makes a difference: A manifestation of *practical* wisdom is *theôria tis*, “contemplation of a sort.” She cites three passages (*NE* 6.1, 1139^a6–8, 6.4, 1140^a10–14, and 6.7, 1141^a25–26) supporting the idea that there is a use of ‘contemplation’ according to which the kind of thinking involved in practical deliberation about variable particulars or the kind involved in the manufacture of products of art would count.⁵⁰ But, as she recognizes, these passages are unrelated to Aristotle’s account of happiness. Most monists think that here, at the culmination of his account of happiness, Aristotle is unlikely to mean ‘contemplation’ in any but his technical sense, namely as the manifestation of *sophia*, theoretical wisdom, as evidenced by the way in which he sums up the discussion at 10.8, 1179^a31–32, a passage that I have already mentioned, and by the similarity of ^b32 and ^b7–8 of T2, which indicates that the argument to follow is another way of showing what he

⁴⁹ ὥστε κἀν οὕτως εἶη ὁ σοφὸς μάλιστα εὐδαίμων.

⁵⁰ Price (2011, 77 n. 67) cites additional passages, but concedes that “it is true that generally, in that chapter [10.7], [*theôria*] specifically connotes ‘the activity of *sophia*’ (1177a24).”

has already shown, namely that contemplation has a higher status than ethically virtuous activities have.⁵¹ Lear (2004, 194) insists that manifestations of practical wisdom *should* be accommodated by Aristotle's claim in ^b32 of T₂ since he has already said that the practically wise person is happy. But this is better seen as a way of stating that it would be desirable to reconcile the Pluralist Constraint and Monist Constraint than as a principled reason for drawing any particular conclusion about the significance of '*tis*.'

It is more probable that '*tis*' is used in ^b32 of T₂ in a classificatory sense, encoding in this case a contrast between the type of contemplation of which humans are capable and the types, whatever they are, that might be possible for other beings.⁵² Aristotle has just been arguing that there is a divine type of contemplation that is the highest divine activity and that there is no type of contemplation of which animals are capable. Wherever we see contemplation (of whatever type), we see happiness of the corresponding type. It is, then, informative to say that human happiness is a type of contemplation: the type proper to humans.

Most monists think that in T₁ and T₂ Aristotle genuinely means to say that happiness is theoretical contemplation: He is not distancing himself from this conclusion, suggesting its limited applicability, or signaling a use of 'contemplation' other than his technical notion of theoretical contemplation. In short, monists standardly think that Aristotle's various arguments throughout *NE* 10.7–8, including T₁ and T₂, for the superlative properties of contemplation place what I have called "the Monist Constraint" on any acceptable interpretation. An acceptable interpretation

⁵¹ Greenwood (1909, 76–78) systematically presents evidence that Aristotle uses 'contemplation' in *NE* 10.6–8 to denote the manifestation of theoretical wisdom. Frede (2020, 973) adds another reason for doubting Lear's proposal: The inference to ^b32 of T₂ runs through ^b22–23 and ^b25–27, which require that the activity in which human happiness consists be one that bears some semblance, indeed the greatest semblance, to the divine activity, but the preceding sentences argue that no ethically virtuous activity is characteristic of the divine.

⁵² See *Phys.* 4.11, 219^b5 for a clear example of classificatory '*tis*.' Aufderheide (2020, 212) offers reasons in favor of a "determinate" (as opposed to indeterminate) reading of '*tis*' in ^b32 of T₂ according to which it marks an implicit classification of kinds, but he does not consider my specific version of a determinate/classificatory reading. Something similar is true of Zingano (2014, 152 n. 31), who sees as options "contemplation of divine as opposed to human things" or "scientific as opposed to other forms of contemplation, such as theatrical contemplation" and prefers the second. Lear (2004, 195–196 n. 43) briefly considers translating '*theōria tis*' as "a kind of contemplation," but her way of parsing this and her reasons for finding it misleading are specific to the possibility that the relevant kinds implicitly distinguished would be theoretical contemplation and practical contemplation. I am proposing instead that the kinds implicitly distinguished are human contemplation and divine contemplation. Herzberg (2013, 115) thinks that '*tis*' here marks a difference in degree between divine and human contemplation. I argue in Chapter 4, as in Reece (2020b), that for Aristotle the difference between divine and human contemplation must be a difference not merely in degree, but in type.

must square with what they view as Aristotle's insistence that happiness is a single activity, contemplation. This constraint is the Monist Constraint.

1.4 Conclusion

The Conjunctive Problem reveals why a dialectically satisfying solution to the Dilemmatic Problem has proven elusive. Both the Pluralist Constraint and Monist Constraint rest on firm textual foundations and important philosophical intuitions. Pluralists have good reasons for their constraint, the claim that happiness is a composite that includes not only contemplative activity, but also ethically virtuous activities as parts, monists for theirs, the claim that it is contemplative activity, which does not include ethically virtuous activities as parts. Both groups have held their ground and have given compelling arguments for doing so. The best explanation for this stalemate is that Aristotle really is committed to the Pluralist Constraint *and* the Monist Constraint. The Conjunctive Problem, rather than the Dilemmatic Problem, is the one that interpreters need to be trying to solve. As I have said, it is standardly believed that an interpretation of Aristotle's remarks about happiness cannot simultaneously meet the Pluralist Constraint and the Monist Constraint. I think that it is possible to do so, but not if one labors under the crippling weight of certain false assumptions. In the next three chapters I will argue that three theses thwart the project of solving the Conjunctive Problem. These are the Divergence Thesis, the Duality Thesis, and the Divinity Thesis. Most interpreters hold at least two of these. Some hold all three. I argue that all three are false. The considerations that emerge in the course of discussing these three theses will come together in the final chapter in a solution to the Conjunctive Problem.