

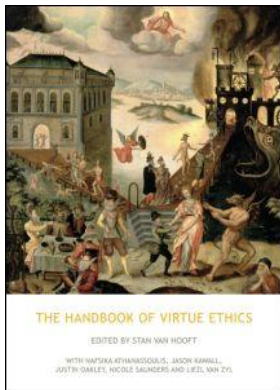
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## **The Handbook of Virtue Ethics**

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### **Eudaimonia in contemporary virtue ethics**

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## Normative theory

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## Eudaimonia in contemporary virtue ethics

Anne Baril

Eudaimonia and virtue ethics<sup>1</sup> are interwoven, many extant virtue-ethical theories being eudaimonist, and many (perhaps most) extant eudaimonist theories being virtue-ethical. The explanation for this is partly historical: the articles that heralded the mid-twentieth-century renewal of interest in the virtues – paradigmatically Anscombe’s “Modern Moral Philosophy” (1958) – did not endorse virtue ethics *per se*, but rather a return to the broadly eudaimonist and virtue-ethical framework of ancient Greek philosophers. Other non-eudaimonist virtue ethicists soon sought to establish their own non-eudaimonist virtue-ethical views, at which point they felt it appropriate to note that virtue ethics is in fact a genus, of which eudaimonist virtue ethics turns out to be just one species (e.g. Swanton 2003: 1; Slote 2010b). Yet despite its ubiquity in, and importance to, contemporary virtue ethics literature, eudaimonia is discussed far more often than the word is defined or the concept fully articulated. In this chapter, I will discuss the role of eudaimonia in contemporary virtue ethics, and propose an account of what makes a view eudaimonist.

### AN ANCIENT-INSPIRED UNDERSTANDING OF EUDAIMONIA

The notion of eudaimonia was introduced into the contemporary virtue ethics literature by philosophers who work in ancient philosophy and who are familiar with the work of ancient eudaimonists. (I will follow convention in calling the former group “ancient philosophers”, to distinguish them from the ancient eudaimonists – Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and so on.<sup>2</sup>) Yet, predictably, among ancient philosophers there is not consensus, but rather lively debate about what eudaimonia is: how the various ancient eudaimonists understood it, the role it played in their theories, and so on (e.g. Kenny 1966; Ackrill 1974; Wilkes 1978; Hardie 1979; Kraut 1979; Nakhnikian 1979; McDowell 1980, 1995a; Vlastos 1984; Cooper 1987; Heinaman 1988, 1993; Broadie 1991; Lawrence 1993; Lear 2004).

“Eudaimonia” is frequently treated as synonymous with “well-being”, “flourishing” or “happiness” (e.g. Haybron 2008: 29). Comparing eudaimonia to these other, more familiar notions can be a helpful way to give a reader a loose grip of the term, but it should not be seen as authorizing thinking of eudaimonia as akin to these notions, as perhaps something in between all of them. There are, to be sure, contemporary, ancient-inspired eudaimonists who argue that eudaimonia is fairly understood as happiness or well-being, but this is a view that does need to be argued for, since the notion of eudaimonia is different, in some important ways, from the modern notions of happiness, flourishing or well-being (von Wright 1963: 86–8; Ackrill 1974: 349; Broadie 1991: 29; Annas 1998; Sumner 2002: 37).

To get a grip on eudaimonia, as it is understood by eudaimonist virtue ethicists, we should begin with the remarks made by ancient eudaimonists about eudaimonia. I will begin, then, with a brief introduction to what I will call the “ancient-inspired” understanding of eudaimonia: an understanding of eudaimonia that is inherited from the ancient eudaimonists, and introduced into the virtue ethics literature by ancient philosophers. These ancient philosophers bring to the table their conclusions about what eudaimonia meant to ancient eudaimonists, the role it played in their thinking, and the structure of their eudaimonist views.

### The concept, or thin specification, of eudaimonia

Aristotle introduces the term “eudaimonia” in the course of introducing the question that will occupy him in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*). The question is: in what does the highest human good – which we all agree is properly called eudaimonia – consist? (*NE* 1095a17–22).

First and foremost, this shows that ancient eudaimonists employ what we might call “thinner” and “thicker” specifications of eudaimonia in their reasoning. This point may perhaps best be made by looking at the way the word “eudaimonia” is used in ancient debates (Kenny 1966; Ackrill 1974: 341–2, 346; Hardie 1979: 35; Broadie 1991; Annas 1993; Crisp 2000). On the one hand, by “eudaimonia” one might mean something quite minimal – roughly, the very idea of the highest human good; “of all the good things to be done ... the highest” (*NE* 1095a18–20). This is the final and comprehensive end, towards which (eudaimonists believe) it is appropriate for human beings to strive. On the other hand, by “eudaimonia” one might mean something more robust – a *specification* of that general idea. Thus when Aristotle asks what eudaimonia consists in, he is asking what conception satisfies the concept or thin specification of eudaimonia; when he later tells us that eudaimonia consists in rational activity in accordance with virtue, he is answering that question.<sup>3</sup>

On the ancient-inspired understanding of eudaimonia, the concept of eudaimonia is that of the highest human good: the best, most choiceworthy, final and comprehensive good available to human beings. We might say that, as ancient-inspired eudaimonists understand eudaimonia, it is part of the concept *eudaimonia* that it is the realization of the highest human good: that the concept *eudaimonia* contains (and perhaps contains little or nothing more than) the concept highest human good.

If the concept *eudaimonia* contains the concept *highest human good* we see here an important way in which eudaimonia differs from a certain modern understanding of welfare. Welfare, as it is articulated in contemporary accounts, is explicitly narrower than

the idea of the highest good one can realize in one's life. Thomas Scanlon, for example, describes "the intuitive notion of well-being" as: "an idea of the quality of a life for the person who lives it that is broader than material and social conditions, at least potentially broader than experiential quality, *different from worthiness or value, and narrower than choiceworthiness all things considered*" (1998: 113, emphasis added). That the concept *welfare* does not contain the concept *highest human good* may be seen by considering that one may live a (in some sense) better life if we choose not to live the life that is best "for us" in the welfare sense. Consider, for example, a man who gives up his chances of a long, rich, rewarding life in order to work at a physically demanding and dangerous job so that he might provide a better life for his children, with the unhappy result that he dies an early and painful death after a life of hardship. It may be that his life realized the highest good that was available to someone in his position, but it would not be correct to say that he was well-off (in a sense that some recent philosophers have been concerned to articulate; example adapted from Overvold 1980; discussed in Heathwood 2011). As another example, consider a person who chooses to forego financial security and a loving family life to develop her talents as an artist, sacrificing her welfare in order to realize what is (at least possibly) a higher good in her life: the good of great artistic achievement (example adapted from Swanton 2003: 82–3). These examples illustrate how, even when we restrict our focus to the (in some sense) goodness instantiated in an individual's own life, the highest good one may achieve in one's life may, in principle, come apart from one's welfare. These examples are not offered as examples of lives that are eudaimon but not well-off in the modern sense – there may *be* no such examples (if, for example, the instantiations of the concepts *eudaimonia* and *welfare* are coextensive). What they show, rather, is that accounts of well-being are meant to be accounts of a concept that is narrower than that of "the best, most choiceworthy life". In the terminology established above: the concept *welfare*, unlike the concept *eudaimonia*, does not contain the concept *highest human good*.<sup>4</sup>

It is worth considering how exactly this modern notion of welfare is supposed to be narrower than this conception of "the best, most choiceworthy life". The difference between welfare and overall choiceworthiness-in-a-life is frequently brought out by saying that whatever conduces to a person's welfare is good *for* the person (said with that emphasis). The following passage by L. W. Sumner is illustrative:

Welfare [alternatively, "well-being"<sup>5</sup>] assessments concern what we may call the prudential value of a life, namely how well it is going *for the individual whose life it is*. This relativization of prudential evaluation to the proprietor of the life in question is one of the deepest features of the language of welfare: however valuable something may be in itself, it can promote my well-being only if it is also good or beneficial *for me*.  
(1996: 20, original emphasis)

This point, essential to getting at the very nature of what well-being is, is widely accepted by philosophers working on well-being.<sup>6</sup> In the language of concepts, the concept *welfare* is such that if G conduces to S's welfare, G bears the *good for* relation to S. Is this also true of the concept *eudaimonia*? If so, in what sense?

Given the tight connection between welfare and goodness-for, answering this question is important for understanding how the concepts *eudaimonia* and *welfare* are related – which, in turn, is important for a proper understanding of eudaimonia, not to

mention various charges against eudaimonism, for example, that it is egoistic (Baril 2013). Unfortunately the question admits of no easy answer. For now I will confine myself to the following few remarks.

First, eudaimonists tend to eschew “good for” language, repeatedly calling eudaimonia “a good life”, “the good of a human”, the “human good”, “goodness in the living of a human life”, “a good, flourishing life”, “the overall goal of life”.<sup>7</sup> Second, when eudaimonists *do* use “good for” language, it is quite frequently meant in another sense of “good for”. To adapt an example from Fletcher (2012: 2): consider the claim “it would be good for X to run the department”. The speaker may mean that X’s running the department would be good, or that X would be good to do so, rather than that doing so would be good for X herself, in the sense connected to well-being.<sup>8</sup> Finally, although *some* eudaimonists may draw a sharp distinction between what is good for a person and what is good as a person, and give an account of the former in terms of the latter (see Irwin 1995), for the most part, their views are far more sophisticated than this (see e.g. Hardie 1965).

All things considered, although eudaimonia is, in the thought of ancient-inspired eudaimonists, clearly the best, most choiceworthy life, how it relates to welfare, in a certain modern sense, in the thought of various eudaimonists, is a difficult matter worthy of further consideration.

### Towards a more substantive account of eudaimonia

There is, then, an ancient-inspired use of “eudaimonia” that admits of thinner and thicker specifications – the thinnest specification meaning little more than “the highest human good”. How, then, does one arrive at an *account* of this “highest good”?

From remarks made by Aristotle and others, we see that they accept certain “constraints” on an account of eudaimonia: features that, they think, it stands to reason eudaimonia will possess (and thus features which are such that, if a certain specification of eudaimonia does *not* possess it, we have *prima facie* evidence that this specification is not correct).

Some constraints are more formal than others in that they seem to articulate part of the very meaning of eudaimonia – what it *is* for something to be the “highest human good”. The most important such constraint – and the one about which there is the greatest consensus – is *completeness*. Eudaimonia is complete in that it is, in Aristotle’s words, “worth choosing in itself and never for the sake of something else” (NE 1097a). Eudaimonia, then, is what we would call a proper final aim – properly pursued just for its own sake – and thus akin to such proper final aims as art and friendship. But it is also special in a way that art or friendship are not: whereas art or friendship are properly pursued for their own sakes, they are also properly pursued as part of a good life. Eudaimonia, by contrast, is properly pursued for its own sake, and not for the sake of anything else, and thus is (in Aristotle’s terminology) more complete than these other final aims. Another formal constraint emphasized by Aristotle (and given at least some mention by other ancient eudaimonists) is *self-sufficiency*. Eudaimonia is “that which on its own makes life worthy of choice and lacking in nothing” (NE 1097b). These constraints are quite formal in that, together, they provide little more than an articulation of what it is to be the highest good that is available to a person (Broadie 1991: 58).

Eudaimonia, then, is, on this ancient-inspired understanding, the highest good available to a human being; it is instantiated in a complete human life; and whatever, more

specifically, it turns out to be – a life of wealth, honour, contemplation or something else – it is *complete* and *self-sufficient*.

But a full answer to the question of what eudaimonists think it is the central task of ethics to answer – the question “How should I live?” – requires that we give a more specific account of eudaimonia. And we might be sceptical that reflection on such formal characteristics as completeness and self-sufficiency will be enough to help us determine which of the substantive accounts of eudaimonia that have been proposed is correct. Can we really arrive at a substantive conception of eudaimonia, such as “activity in accordance with (Aristotle’s particular list of) virtues”, merely by considering whether this conception is the most complete and self-sufficient of all the candidate specifications of eudaimonia we might consider?

The task of providing support on behalf of one’s own conception of eudaimonia is a big one, and eudaimonists attempt to meet it in a number of ways. Here I will briefly mention just a few resources that eudaimonists have at their disposal and which may be employed to help them “close the gap”.

First, one might consider how, for a human being, given our natures and worldly circumstances, a life could be complete and self-sufficient. Kathleen Wilkes, for example, suggests that since we are finite beings of a certain sort, eudaimonia involves an amount of *organization*, all worthwhile items having their proper weight and role, organized into a coherent whole (see Wilkes 1978: 554).

Second, a eudaimonist might draw on other intuitions that we share about eudaimonia or the person living the eudaimon life.<sup>9</sup> Aristotle employs this strategy at various points in the *Ethics*, for example when he says that eudaimonia cannot be something that is bestowed on us by others (*NE* 1095b25).<sup>10</sup>

Finally, one might appeal to facts about humans *as a species*. This is perhaps the most common way for eudaimonists to bridge the gap between a quite formal understanding of eudaimonia and a more specific account of it. Most commonly, this is done by way of appeal to the kind of Aristotelian naturalism developed by Foot, for example. This is itself a development of Aristotle’s own method of answering the question “In what does human good consist?” by appealing to the *ergon*, or characteristic activity (see Kenny 1966: 96; Clark 1972: 272), of human beings.<sup>11</sup> According to Aristotelian naturalists such as Foot, the “goodness of” a person (to understand it in Lawrence’s neutral way) is to be found in the standards of our life form or species (see Foot 2001). This understanding of goodness as human goodness, and human goodness as a matter of being well fitted to achieve the characteristic aims of one’s species, gives the naturalist eudaimonist a way of moving from a more formal understanding of eudaimonia as the highest good, that which is complete and self-sufficient, to a specification of eudaimonia as, for example, virtue or virtuous activity (see e.g. Wallace 1978: 15; Hursthouse 1999: 202, 222).

These, then, are some of the ways eudaimonists close the gap between the very idea of eudaimonia and accounts of it. I now turn to those accounts.

### **The conception, or thick specification, of eudaimonia**

As I said, ancient eudaimonist theories mainly took it for granted that we should organize our lives so that they are eudaimon; their question was: What *is* eudaimonia? The question was important because ancient eudaimonists took eudaimonia to be the central,



structuring concept of our lives, the core of an answer to what is, for them, the central question of ethics: How should I live? Ancient eudaimonists concluded that eudaimonia consisted in (or at least required) virtue or virtuous activity,<sup>12</sup> and thus that the answer to the question “How to live?” is “Live virtuously”. Virtually all extant contemporary eudaimonists are eudaimonist virtue ethicists. I take the clearest examples of contemporary eudaimonists to be those self-described eudaimonists who develop and defend their own eudaimonist view in a contemporary way, and in a way that engages with other contemporary ethical philosophies (rather than, for example, explaining eudaimonism in the context of the project of elucidating ancient eudaimonist philosophy).<sup>13</sup> The less clear cases of contemporary eudaimonists fall, generally speaking, into two camps. First, there are those philosophers who develop eudaimonism in the context of articulating and defending ancient views.<sup>14</sup> Second, there are those philosophers who offer their own contemporary accounts, but whose accounts are less clearly eudaimonist.<sup>15</sup> In the remainder of this section, I will give an overview of some of the main features that tend to be shared by the substantive accounts of eudaimonia offered or assumed by contemporary eudaimonist virtue ethicists.

As explained above, eudaimonists share the idea that there is some human good, called eudaimonia, and that we should strive to realize it in our lives. And the way we do this, according to most extant eudaimonists, is by developing and exercising the virtues. There are a number of commonalities (and some differences) among eudaimonists about: which traits are the virtues; what kind of trait the virtues are (what structure they have); the role of practical wisdom in virtue; and what makes a trait a virtue.

First, regarding which traits are the virtues: eudaimonists tend to endorse a list of virtues that includes versions, or at least close cousins, of the traits endorsed by Aristotle (though they frequently differ in the details), notably courage, temperance, honesty, generosity and justice (see e.g. Wallace 1978; Hursthouse 1999: 34).

Second, regarding the structure of a virtue – what kind of trait it is: contemporary eudaimonists typically understand the virtues as *character traits*, where a character trait is understood as a set of deeply entrenched and systematically interrelated dispositions to act (and to act in a certain manner, for certain reasons); to respond (behaviourally, attitudinally, emotionally); to reason, feel, desire, value, choose, perceive, and so on (see e.g. Hursthouse 1999: introduction; 2012: section 2). This understanding of a virtue is less frequently found among non-eudaimonist virtue ethicists.<sup>16</sup>

Third, regarding the importance of practical wisdom in virtue: like ancient eudaimonists, contemporary eudaimonists give a central role to *phronēsis* – practical wisdom, “sketchily” described as “good deliberation and sensitivity to salient factors” (Kamtekar 2013) or “the ability to reason correctly about practical matters” (Hursthouse 1999: 154).<sup>17</sup> The virtuous person is practically wise – she “gets things right” (*ibid.*: 13).<sup>18</sup> This sounds strange to some – could not the 9/11 terrorists have been courageous though callous? Is not the person who tells the truth at all costs honest though sometimes unkind? Hursthouse’s reply to this point is indicative of the general eudaimonist virtue-ethical line of reply: “to think of the ‘virtues’ in this way is not to think of the character traits in question as virtues at all. They are not excellences of character, not traits that, by their very nature, make their possessor good and issue in good conduct” (*ibid.*: 154). This is another point on which non-eudaimonist virtue ethicists frequently differ.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, regarding (to put it roughly) what makes a trait a virtue: a virtue “makes its possessor good and enables her to act well” (*ibid.*: 13), where being “good” and “acting

well” is understood in terms of eudaimonia: “A virtue is a character trait a human being needs for eudaimonia, to flourish or ‘live well’” (*ibid.*: e.g. 167). This general statement is one with which eudaimonists more or less agree. The reader will notice that it glosses over some important issues. What is meant by “needs”? (See e.g. Hursthouse 1999: 172; Foot 2001: 15.) What is meant by “living well” (living a life that is good *for* a person, good *as* a person, something else)? (Again, see e.g. Lawrence 2009; C. H. Toner 2010.) And is the relation a virtue bears to eudaimonia what *makes* a trait a virtue, or might it be something else that *makes* a trait a virtue? These are important questions we must answer for every eudaimonist philosopher if we are to fully understand their view.

Eudaimonists generally believe, then, that there is a highest human good, and that it is constituted by activity in accordance with the virtues; that the virtues are systems of dispositions to think, act and feel; that they are in accord with practical wisdom; and that they include canonical virtues such as honesty, charity, courage, and so on. (Some eudaimonists, such as Hursthouse (1999: 28–9), accept the modern demand that an ethical theory give an account of right action, but she is unusual in this respect.)

### EUDAIMONISM

There are many differences among the eudaimonists discussed above. Eudaimonists all give eudaimonia a central role, but many deny that eudaimonia is the “foundational” notion of the theory.<sup>20</sup> Eudaimonists all understand eudaimonia as the highest human good, but disagree about what, in essence, eudaimonia *is* (e.g. whether it corresponds to *welfare*, in a certain modern sense). Many eudaimonists are wedded to a kind of Aristotelian naturalism, but again we can imagine a eudaimonist who does not take this direction.<sup>21</sup> Most, if not all, extant eudaimonists are virtue ethicists (thus Richard Parry (2009) has suggested that “eudaimonism” describes a range of views about the relation between virtue and happiness).<sup>22</sup> Yet intuitively it seems that non-virtue-ethical eudaimonist accounts are possible: that one might be a eudaimonist even while denying that eudaimonia consists in, or is identical with, virtuous activity. Even if we believe eudaimonia consists in a kind of activity, perhaps it is vicious activity – or something altogether different, like acting in accordance with certain principles. What, then, is the core of eudaimonism, the commitment or commitments eudaimonists share?

I propose that what is most distinctive about eudaimonist views is their structure. Eudaimonism holds that eudaimonia provides the proper standard for the structuring of an individual person’s life: that individuals should live the best life available to us, as the kind of beings that we are. Eudaimonism’s central recommendation (ECR) may be stated as follows:

ECR: A human being ought to organize his or her life so that it realizes eudaimonia.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, many philosophers would accept ECR as a kind of *pro tanto* recommendation. What distinguishes eudaimonism, I propose, is that it endorses ECR as an *all-things-considered* recommendation: one that “overrides” (or, more accurately, subsumes) all of one’s other recommendations (see Becker 1998: 20). What distinguishes eudaimonism from other, non-eudaimonist, views is a commitment to giving eudaimonia a certain

organizing role, such that our commitments to others' welfare and the like are found *within* eudaimonia, rather than introduced as *competitors with* it.

But a commitment to ECR (understood as an all-things-considered recommendation<sup>24</sup>) is not sufficient to make a view eudaimonist. To illustrate, recall how very open "eudaimonia" has been left (indeed, *must* be left, if we are to continue to understand some paradigmatically eudaimonist views as eudaimonist – including Aristotle's, on a plausible interpretation). If the eudaimonist's recommendation is "realize eudaimonia", where realizing eudaimonia can involve just *anything*, then it would be hard to see how any view can possibly be considered *non*-eudaimonist.

First, recall that an important constraint on eudaimonia is that it must be realized in *your* life. It is, in this sense, "formally egoistic" (see B. Williams 1985: 32; Annas 1993: 127). Thus even in a commitment to ECR – however openly we understand eudaimonia – one already takes a stand, since one might deny that the appropriate answer to "How to live?" is to realize *anything at all* in one's own life.

Second – and this I take to be the heart of the matter – eudaimonists give a kind of priority to eudaimonia, such that it imposes an "unconditioned condition" (to adapt a phrase from Korsgaard [1986]). This general idea is one that can be developed in a number of ways (e.g. eudaimonia may impose a condition on the *value* of any item, or the appropriateness or rightness of action, etc.). While I will offer a specific development here in order to give some flesh to the proposal, I do not think it is a commitment to *this particular development* of the general idea, but rather a commitment to the general idea, that makes a view eudaimonist.

I will illustrate this development with eudaimonist virtue ethics (though I mean to illustrate a general schema that can be applied to any kind of eudaimonist view, not only eudaimonist virtue ethics). A eudaimonist virtue ethicist, let us say, accepts the following three tenets:

1. We ought to organize our lives so that they realize flourishing, eudaimonia (ECR).
2. We do this (at least in large part) by developing and exercising certain character traits.
3. These include the canonical moral virtues.<sup>25</sup>

Eudaimonist theories, I have proposed, endorse ECR. A eudaimonist *virtue ethicist* also believes that a certain account of virtuous activity will (at least partly) satisfy ECR. That is: there is some system of character traits, understood as deeply seated systems of dispositions to think, act, feel, and so on, which are governed by practical reason, and whose exercise is the major part of thriving, flourishing as a human being (2), and, moreover, among the traits constituting this system are the canonical moral virtues: traits such as honesty, temperance, courage, charity and a number of other traits (3). (We can see here the schema for a categorization of non-virtue-ethical eudaimonist views depending on whether, and in what sense, the theorist accepts (2) or (3) – perhaps she believes eudaimonia requires non-canonical moral virtues, non-moral virtues [e.g. epistemic virtues], or vices, or even [rejecting both (2) and (3)] something other than character traits at all.) The eudaimonist virtue ethicist, then, accepts not only ECR, but also the following more particular recommendation:

PR1: Human beings ought to develop and exercise certain character traits.

PR2: (More specifically) human beings ought to develop and exercise the canonical moral virtues.

What makes eudaimonist virtue ethics eudaimonist, I suggest, is that PR1 and PR2 are endorsed *on the condition* that satisfying them also (at least partly) satisfies ECR. Were it the case that exercising the virtues did *not* realize eudaimonia (or, alternatively, that exercising the virtues impeded the achievement of eudaimonia, or made it impossible), eudaimonists would withdraw the recommendation that one should develop and exercise the virtues. And likewise for any particular recommendation a eudaimonist theory may make: according to eudaimonism, any particular recommendations are endorsed on the condition that satisfying them also satisfies ECR. Recommendations to  $\phi$  are made *on the condition* that  $\phi$ -ing is (alternatively) conducive to, or at least compatible with, the realization of eudaimonia.

Since, as noted above, ECR is endorsed by eudaimonists as an all-things-considered, rather than *pro tanto*, recommendation, we may say that the condition it imposes on any particular recommendation is a final, or unconditioned, condition: a condition that admits of no other conditions. For example, a view might endorse the virtues on the condition that they conduce to, or are at least compatible with, eudaimonia, but then impose a condition on ECR, such that one may pursue eudaimonia only on the condition that doing so (for example) respects others' humanity, or promotes good consequences. Such a view would not be eudaimonist (or would be only weakly eudaimonistic), but rather deontological or consequentialist.

My proposal here, in short, is that what makes a view eudaimonist is, first, acceptance of ECR as an all-things-considered recommendation, and, second, acceptance of ECR as imposing an unconditioned condition on any more particular recommendations (or, to put it generally, acceptance of eudaimonia as imposing an unconditioned condition, whether on the value of an item, or the rightness of action, and so on – there are a variety of ways of developing this general point that stay true to the spirit of eudaimonism). This standard gives a helpful way to approach the question of whether a view is in fact eudaimonist, and generates plausible results about the views discussed above. It also gives a way of distinguishing eudaimonism from other views. Neither utilitarianism nor Kantianism, in their classical forms, will accept ECR as an *unconditioned* condition of the rightness of any action, since (roughly) for utilitarianism, ECR will be true on the condition that satisfying it is compatible with maximizing utility, while for Kantianism, it will be true on the condition that satisfying it is compatible with treating others as ends in themselves, and so on.<sup>26</sup> The same can be said for non-eudaimonist virtue-ethical views that give a role to eudaimonia.

The question of what makes a view eudaimonist admits of no simple answer. I hope this proposal elicits some useful discussion that will further help clarify precisely the role eudaimonia plays in the thought of contemporary virtue ethicists.

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## NOTES

1. Although this chapter is on eudaimonia in *virtue ethics*, the question of what virtue ethics is unfortunately admits of no simple answer. (For some proposals, see D. Solomon 1988; Schneewind 1990; Trianosky 1990; Oakley 1996; Santas 1997; Watson 1997.) Here I will note only that by virtue ethics I shall mean not “the project of basing ethics on virtue evaluation” (Driver 1996: 111) or theories that define other ethical concepts, such as the right, in terms of virtue (Snow 2010: 1–2) – an understanding that is narrow enough to exclude most theories that are fairly considered virtue-ethical – but rather (to put it roughly) that area of enquiry, concerned with the virtues, that is prescriptive and consists primarily in the advocacy of the virtues (Crisp 1996: 5; see also Russell 2009: ix).
2. Indeed, all major systems of moral philosophy in ancient Greece are thought to be eudaimonist in structure (Cooper 1995: 588). See Annas (1993) for helpful discussion of many of these positions.
3. Crisp, for example, distinguishes between the “concept” of eudaimonia, and various “conceptions” (2000: xi); Annas distinguishes between the “thin specification of our final end” and more “substantial specifications” (1993: 43–6); Broadie distinguishes between “the formal features” of eudaimonia and “what it substantially is” (1991: 36), and later the “formal conception” and its “interpretation” (*ibid.*: 58).
4. Contrast Haybron (2008: 38), who identifies eudaimonia with welfare, as just one dimension of the good life.
5. As Sumner alternatively phrased it in 2002.
6. For example, the first sentence of the entry on well-being in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* reads: “Well-being is most commonly used in philosophy to describe what is non-instrumentally or ultimately good for a person” (Crisp 2008). Haybron (2008: 29) writes: “The concept of well-being is a normative or evaluative concept that concerns what *benefits* a person, is in her *interest*, is *good for* her, or makes her life *go well for* her”.
7. See especially Pakaluk (2009: 374). In ancient philosophy, see Ackrill (1974), Nagel (1980), Cooper (1981), Broadie (1991), Lawrence (2009); in developments of contemporary views, see Hursthouse (1999), Foot (2001) and Annas (2011). (NB: Foot and Hursthouse do use the language of “benefit”.) Such philosophers do occasionally use “good for” language, e.g. “the best life for a man to lead” (Ackrill 1974: 339); “the best, the happiest, the most worthwhile sort of life for human beings” (Broadie 1991: 3).
8. Christopher Toner (2010), for example, argues that the phrase often means not “good for”, but rather “good for”: “well being” not in the sense of welfare, but in the sense of *being good*. It is this sense of “good for” that, Toner argues, rightly has a kind of priority in eudaimonist thought.
9. For discussion of the distinction between eudaimonia and the eudaimon life, see Broadie (1991: 26–7, 51–2).
10. As a modern example of this strategy (one which is suggestive of a way that eudaimonism may find partial confirmation or disconfirmation through empirical studies), see Kraut (1979: 171–5). See also Roberts & Wood (2007: 251–2).
11. This Aristotelian naturalism is developed in Wallace (1978), Hursthouse (1999), Foot (2001) and Thompson (1995, 2008).
12. Whether eudaimonia is a matter of being in a virtuous state, or of acting in accordance with the virtues, was a matter of dispute among ancient eudaimonists, Plato apparently taking virtue, and eudaimonia, to be a state (Plato, *Philebus* 11d), Aristotle taking it to be an activity (*NE* 1098b30–1099a6). Eudaimonist virtue ethicists might follow either Plato or Aristotle on this matter, but in this chapter, for simplicity, I will describe eudaimonist virtue ethicists as believing eudaimonia consists in virtuous activity, but ask the reader to keep in mind that a eudaimonist virtue ethicist might, alternatively, believe eudaimonia consists in possession of virtue.
13. This group includes Rosalind Hursthouse (1999) and Lawrence C. Becker (1998).
14. This group includes Julia Annas (1993, 2011), who articulates and defends ancient eudaimonism in Annas (1993), and develops her own virtue account (presupposing, but not emphasizing, eudaimonism) in Annas (2011).
15. This group includes Wallace (1978), Foot (2001), Kraut (2007) and Haybron (2008).
16. For example, Hurka (2001) understands virtue as an “intentional relation” (alternatively, “attitude”: p. 20) to good and evil (*ibid.*: 11), and thus as “atomistic”: virtue “exists in occurrent desires, actions, and feelings regardless of their connection to more permanent traits of character” (*ibid.*: 42).

17. See also Wallace (1978), Becker (1998: 140), Annas (2011), and (arguing the point with respect to virtue-ethical views, more generally) Russell (2009) and Snow (2010).
18. This is true not only of the virtuous person's judgements, but also of her emotions. See Hursthouse (1997: 108–12). Even the individual virtues – honesty, charity, courage, etc. – will not issue verdicts that are incompatible with what we have most reason to do overall. See Foot (2001: 12, 14)
19. For example, according to Julia Driver, a virtue is a trait that systematically produces more good than not: what makes a trait a virtue is its tendency to produce beneficial effects (Driver 2001: 36, 82).
20. e.g. Annas: “What is a eudaimonist account? An account of how to live, one in which happiness, eudaimonia, is central. ... Here, happiness is a central concept (not, and this is important, the basic or foundational concept)...” (Annas 2011: 120). Eudaimonist virtue ethicists such as Annas also deny that virtue is a basic or foundational concept. It is thus unclear how, if at all, objections to virtue ethics that understand it as treating virtue as foundational (e.g. Loudon 1984) apply to eudaimonist virtue ethics.
21. LeBar's (2008) development of Aristotelian constructivism and Haybron's (2008) self-fulfilment view are suggestive.
22. i.e. that virtuous activity is *identical with* happiness, that it is *the most important constituent of* happiness, or that it is the *only means to* happiness.
23. I restrict myself here to a discussion of eudaimonism as a prescriptive, rather than descriptive, position.
24. This qualification will be assumed hereafter.
25. Or some subset of the canonical moral virtues, or some group of traits very like them – a eudaimonist virtue ethics need not be wholly non-revisionary.
26. Given how very open eudaimonia has been left, there might, however, be room for (what we might call) utilitarian-eudaimonist or Kantian-eudaimonist views: views that accept ECR as imposing an unconditioned condition on any particular recommendation, but take eudaimonia to consist in my acting so as to promote utility, or in accordance with the categorical imperative. My loose definition of eudaimonism does count such views as eudaimonist (a result that some readers may find unwelcome) but they are at least unusual and borderline cases – like versions of virtue ethics that have a highly revisionary understanding of a virtue.