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[UNAM 2016. This is too long to be read in full, but the longer version may be clearer.]

Happiness and the Good: Does Aristotelian moral philosophy rest on a mistake?

1. The mistaken question ‘Why be moral?’

My title alludes to two well-known papers that provide my starting point. J.L. Austin wrote his paper ‘Agathon and eudaimonia in the *Ethics* of Aristotle’ in the 1930s, though he never published it, and it did not appear in print until 1968. He wrote it in reply to a paper of H. A. Prichard ‘The meaning of agathon in Aristotle’s *Ethics*’, which appeared in 1935. In this paper Prichard developed a line of criticism that he sketched for the first time in his extremely forthright and provocative paper ‘Does moral philosophy rest on a mistake?’, published in 1912. The dispute between Prichard and Austin is the starting point for a prolonged and fruitful discussion in the last half-century of Aristotle’s views on happiness. Many of the questions that they raise have been answered at length and in detail, and I will refer to some of these answers. But I will draw attention to one question that they raised that has not been answered as fully, and that seems to me to deserve further examination.

Before I discuss happiness, I would like to go back to Prichard’s original question. He believes that one type of moral philosophy rests on a mistake, because ‘... the subject [sc. moral philosophy], at any rate as usually understood, consists in the attempt to answer an improper question’.¹ The mistake is the belief that one major task of moral philosophy is to demonstrate that we are justified in doing what we are morally obliged to do. Some moral philosophers have taken the question ‘Why should I be moral?’ seriously. They have supposed that the Why question (as I will call it) is a fair question, and they should try to answer it. They have tried to explain, understand, and justify moral obligation, by showing that we have good reasons to recognize some things as morally obligatory. The relevant sort of explanation, understanding, and justification must connect moral obligation with something that can be recognized as rational by someone who does not yet accept morality as obligatory.

This type of moral philosophy rests on a mistake because it takes the Why question seriously, and does not see that it is an improper question. To suppose that the Why question either needs to be answered or can be answered is to misunderstand the character of moral obligation. Though philosophers who try to justify morality may say that they believe in moral obligation, they show that what they do not really believe in it; for what they try to justify is not moral obligation at all.

¹ Prichard, ‘Mistake’ = *MW* 7. I cite Prichard by the title of the essay and by the page in *Moral Writings* (=MW), or by the page alone. Most of the essays in *MW* were previously collected in *Moral Obligation*.

In Prichard's view, the misguided moral philosophers try to justify morality because they think they need to refute scepticism about moral obligation. They want to answer any critics who doubt that there is anything that they morally ought to do.

Any one who, stimulated by education, has come to feel the force of the various obligations in life, at some time or other comes to feel the irksomeness of carrying them out, and to recognize the sacrifice of interest involved; and, if thoughtful, he inevitably puts to himself the question: 'Is there really a reason why I should act in the ways in which hitherto I have thought I ought to act? May I not have been all the time under an illusion in so thinking? Should not I really be justified in simply trying to have a good time?' Yet, like Glaucon, feeling that somehow he ought after all to act in these ways, he asks for a *proof* that this feeling is justified. In other words, he asks, 'Why should I do these things?', and his and other people's moral philosophizing is an attempt to supply the answer, i.e. to supply by a process of reflection a proof of the truth of what he and they have prior to reflection believed immediately or without proof. ('Mistake' = MW 7)

A familiar attempt to answer doubt about moral obligation is an egoistic defence. Since morality seems to be open to objection because it frustrates our desires, we answer the objection if we show that it does not really frustrate them, but satisfies them on the whole. Though keeping a promise involves some loss, it benefits me on the whole because it secures some end I already want.

The tendency to justify acting on moral rules in this way is natural. For if, as often happens, we put to ourselves the question 'Why should we do so and so?', we are satisfied by being convinced either that the doing so will lead to something which we want (e.g. that taking certain medicine will heal our disease), or that the doing so itself, as we see when we appreciate its nature, is something that we want or should like, e.g. playing golf. The formulation of the question implies a state of unwillingness or indifference towards the action, and we are brought into a condition of willingness by the answer. And this process seems to be precisely what we desire when we ask, e.g., 'Why should we keep our engagements to our own loss?'; for it is just the fact that the keeping of our engagement runs counter to the satisfaction of our desires which produced the question. (MW 8)

According to the egoist, the relevant end is my own happiness. This is the answer that Prichard attributes to Plato, Butler, and others. He sometimes (though not always) attributes it to Aristotle.²

In Prichard's view, Plato and others are wrong to try to answer the sceptical doubt about morality. Their mistake is parallel to the mistake of epistemologists who try to answer doubt about whether we really know anything. In both cases Prichard believes that the urge to answer scepticism is natural and intelligible, but self-defeating.

² Prichard's attitude to Aristotle is carefully qualified.

This comparison with scepticism in epistemology is worth pursuing a little further to see how Prichard understands the question about morality.

We set out on the mistaken line of inquiry into knowledge because of doubts about knowledge that we had always assumed we possessed.

... at some time or other in the history of all of us, if we are thoughtful, the frequency of our own and of others' mistakes is bound to lead to the reflection that possibly we and others have *always* been mistaken in consequence of some radical defect of our faculties. In consequence, certain things which previously we should have said without hesitation that we *knew*, as e.g. that $4 \times 7 = 28$, become subject to doubt; we become able only to say that we thought we knew these things. ('Mistake' = MW 18)

In order to remove these doubts we look for a general criterion that will allow us to remove our doubts about knowing what we think we know.

We inevitably go on to look for some general procedure by which we can ascertain that a given condition of mind is really one of knowledge. And this involves the search for a criterion of knowledge, i.e. for a principle by applying which we can settle that a given state of mind is really knowledge. (MW 18)

We think that a putative item of knowledge can be shown to be knowledge only if it satisfies some general condition that separates genuine knowledge from everything that is not knowledge. But once we start looking for a general criterion, we find that we have no escape from an infinite regress:

if, in order really to know that *A* is *B*, we must first know that we knew it, then really, to know that we knew it, we must first know that we knew that we knew it. (MW 18)

Prichard assumes that the search for reasons to suppose that our knowledge was really knowledge must be a search for second-order knowledge, on the assumption that knowledge always requires higher-order knowledge. This is how he starts the regress.

To avoid this self-defeating line of argument, we affirm that the initial question was illegitimate and therefore deserved no answer. According to Prichard, the only sensible question we ask when we ask 'Do we really know that $7 \times 4 = 28$?' is the question 'Is it true that ...?'. Hence we treat our original putative knowledge as not really knowledge but as simple belief. But this is a mistaken treatment of it:

But as soon as we see that we are thinking of our previous condition as only one of belief, we see that what we are now doubting is not what we first *said* we were doubting, viz. whether a previous condition of knowledge was really knowledge. Hence, to remove the doubt, it is only necessary to appreciate the real nature of our consciousness in apprehending, e.g. that $7 \times 4 = 28$, and thereby see that it was no mere condition of believing but a condition of knowing, and then to notice that in our subsequent doubt what we are really doubting is not whether this consciousness was really knowledge, but whether a consciousness of another kind, viz. a belief that $7 \times 4 = 28$, was true. (MW 18)

Prichard argues that any attempted doubt cannot be directed to the claim that we really know something because we can see directly that our original condition was a condition of knowing, and that therefore no doubt can arise about whether it is a case of

knowledge, as long as we attend to it. Prichard avoids speaking of second-order knowing here. He confines himself to saying that our condition presents itself as a condition of knowing in such a way that no doubt can arise about it.

This supports his general conclusion about what is misguided and what is salutary in epistemology.

... if, as is usually the case, we mean by the 'Theory of Knowledge' the knowledge which supplies the answer to the question 'Is what we have hitherto thought knowledge really knowledge?', there is and can be no such thing, ... Nevertheless the question is one which we continue to put until we realize the inevitable immediacy of knowledge. And it is positive knowledge that knowledge is immediate and neither can be, nor needs to be, improved or vindicated by the further knowledge that it was knowledge. This positive knowledge sets at rest the inevitable doubt, and, so far as by the 'Theory of Knowledge' is meant this knowledge, then even though this knowledge be the knowledge that there is no Theory of Knowledge in the former sense, to that extent the Theory of Knowledge exists. (*MW 19*)

Prichard repeats his claim about the immediacy of knowledge. If we deny it, we are bound to fail in our search for an answer to our question whether it is really knowledge.

The usual approach to moral philosophy does not make exactly the same mistakes as we make if we try to refute scepticism about knowledge. But it is analogous, because it rests on a refusal to accept that we have immediate knowledge of moral obligation, and tries to show that we are sometimes justified in believing we are under a moral obligation.

With these considerations in mind, consider the parallel which, as it seems to me, is presented—though with certain differences—by Moral Philosophy. The sense that we ought to do certain things arises in our unreflective consciousness, being an activity of moral thinking occasioned by the various situations in which we find ourselves. At this stage our attitude to these obligations is one of unquestioning confidence. But inevitably the appreciation of the degree to which the execution of these obligations is contrary to our interest raises the doubt whether after all these obligations are really obligatory, i.e. whether our sense that we ought not to do certain things is not illusion. We then want to have it *proved* to us that we ought to do so, i.e. to be convinced of this by a process which, as an argument, is different in kind from our original and unreflective appreciation of it. This demand is, as I have argued, illegitimate. (*MW 19*)

The mistake involves a search for a general criterion of rightness that we could use to remove doubts about our initial sense of obligation. If we claim that our beliefs about moral obligations are true because they can be derived from more general principles about moral obligation, our claim takes for granted that we have direct knowledge of the more general principles. But why, we might ask, is this alleged knowledge any less liable to doubt than our initial sense of obligation was? If we try to avoid this prospect of an infinite regress by saying that our justification appeals to something other than knowledge of moral obligations, Prichard replies that such a justification cannot justify claims about moral obligation. Hence any attempted justification either forces us into an

infinite regress or is not about moral obligation at all. If he is right, his foundationalist views about direct knowledge of obligation are the only alternative to scepticism or nihilism about morality.

2. The wrong sort of answer

According to Prichard, Plato accepts the mistaken approach to moral philosophy because he tries to show that we are better off by being just than by being unjust, or, in other words, that justice rather than injustice promotes our happiness. Prichard argues that Plato's defence of justice fails. But this is not his most important objection to Plato. His basic objection is not that Plato fails to justify morality by appeal to happiness, but that Plato even tries. In Prichard's view, even if Plato had vindicated his claim about justice, he would not have chosen the right way to vindicate it, because any attempt to answer the Why question through an egoist argument is bound to fail.

The answer is, of course, not an answer, for it fails to convince us that we ought to keep our engagements; even if successful on its own lines, it only makes us *want* to keep them. And Kant was really only pointing out this fact when he distinguished hypothetical and categorical imperatives, even though he obscured the nature of the fact by wrongly describing his so-called 'hypothetical imperatives' as imperatives. ('Mistake' = MW 9)

The argument may be expanded in this way:

1. The egoist argues: Keeping our promises promotes happiness, and we want happiness; therefore we have a reason to keep our promises in so far as we want happiness.
2. The egoist's conclusion states a hypothetical imperative.
3. 'We ought to keep our promises' is not a hypothetical imperative, but a categorical imperative.
4. An argument from what we want cannot justify a categorical imperative.
5. Hence the egoist cannot explain why we ought to keep our promises.

An egoist could show at most that we have reason to endorse hypothetical imperatives about keeping promises and so on because of their effects on our interest. But this argument would not show why we ought to keep promises, if 'ought' refers to moral obligation. For our moral obligation to keep promises is a categorical imperative that holds irrespective of desired consequences. We cannot show that we have good reason to observe a categorical imperative by showing that observance of it has desired consequences.

And so, even if Plato had shown that we are better off being just, he would not have given us the appropriate sort of justification for being just. This is the fatal error that undermines any attempt to answer the Why question. On this basis Prichard concludes that the egoistic argument cannot tell us why we really ought to do what we think we ought to do. If we understand the character of the 'ought' in 'we ought to do', we see that we cannot support it through an argument that gives us a merely hypothetical imperative.

3. Categorical imperatives and external reasons

Prichard states this basic criticism of Plato by using Kant's division between hypothetical and categorical imperatives. We need to pause for a moment to see how he understands this division. He does not simply follow Kant, because (as he argues in 'Moral Obligation') he believes that Kant describes the division incorrectly. In Prichard's view, Kant is wrong to suppose that the two uses of 'ought' (in 'You ought to pay what you owe', and 'You ought to go to this film, if you like science fiction') correspond to two different types of imperatives. Kant does not see that the meaning of 'ought' is different in these two cases; he believes that 'ought' is univocal, and simply rests on different grounds.

Kant, here, in drawing his main distinction, viz. that between categorical and hypothetical imperatives, does not say that the term 'ought' has a different meaning in each of the two kinds of statement. Indeed, what he says suggests the contrary, for he uses the same term 'imperative' for both, and represents the difference as consisting solely in the difference of the grounds on which they are asserted—grounds which can only be ascertained from the context; so that when told, e.g., that we ought never to drive a hard bargain, we cannot tell whether the imperative is 'categorical' or 'hypothetical' unless we know whether the speaker is or is not attributing to us some purpose, such as increase of our business. Yet plainly Kant thinks that there is a difference of meaning, for he goes on to speak of categorical imperatives as *moral* imperatives, or imperatives of *morality*. ('Moral Obligation' = MW 166)

Prichard thinks that Kant at first suggests that 'ought' is univocal in the two cases, but then implies that it has two meanings, because categorical imperatives are – as Kant agrees – imperatives of morality.

We might not be immediately convinced by this argument. Why, we might wonder, does the recognition of moral imperatives seem to Prichard to imply that 'ought' has different senses? Why should we not suppose that 'ought' is univocal, but prudential and moral grounds give different sorts of reason?

Prichard answers with a more explicit argument to show that 'ought' has a different sense in hypothetical and categorical cases:

And, in fact, there is a difference and indeed a total difference of meaning. This difference becomes obvious if we consider instances. Thus, to borrow from Kant an instance of a hypothetical imperative, we say to a would-be poisoner: 'You ought to give a second dose'; the thought which we wish to convey is that if he does not, his purpose, viz. the death of his would-be victim, will not be realized. Indeed, this is what we really mean by our statement. At first, no doubt, the statement, 'If you do not give a second dose, your purpose will not be realized', seems to state our reason for our assertion, 'You ought to give a second dose', rather than what we mean by it. But this cannot be so, for if it were, we should in making the assertion be implying the idea that whenever a man has a certain purpose, no matter what the purpose be, he ought to do whatever is necessary for its realization, and no one has such an idea. Hence, to put the matter generally, whenever we use the term 'ought' thus, what we really mean by the

categorical statement 'I ought to do so and so' has to be expressed by the hypothetical statement: 'If I do not do so and so, my purpose will not be realized.' It may be noticed that this is the real justification for Kant's designating as hypothetical the imperatives which he distinguishes from imperatives of morality. (MW 166)

In Prichard's view, we cannot treat Medea's purpose as giving the reason why we tell her that she ought to give a second dose of the poison, because. If we treat it that way, we will have to say that everyone ought to do whatever will realize their purpose, which we would never say. The fact (according to Prichard) that all hypothetical imperatives have to be analysed as conditionals is 'the real justification' for Kant's calling them hypothetical.

This argument of Prichard's is also open to question. It is doubtful whether (1) 'You ought to give a second dose' should be analysed as (2) 'If you don't give a second dose, you won't realize your purpose'. If this were the right analysis, then (3) 'You ought to give a second dose if you want to kill your children' would have to be analysed (4) 'If you don't give a second dose, you won't realize your purpose, if you want to kill the children'. But the explicitly hypothetical imperative (3) does not simply seem to add a further conditional to a conditional. It seems to say that if you have a certain aim, you have a reason to give a second dose. If Medea asked (5) 'I want to kill my children, and I know that one dose won't kill them; but have I any reason to give a second dose?', (3) would be an appropriate answer to her question. (2) would also be an appropriate answer; it would assert that Medea has a reason, on the assumption that she wants to kill her children. Unlike (3), (2) is not explicitly conditional; it assumes that the antecedent of (3) is satisfied, and makes a claim about her reasons, on the basis of that assumption. Prichard is right to insist that hypothetical imperatives do not assert that everyone ought (categorically) to do whatever is necessary to realize any purpose, no matter how foolish or wrong the purpose may be. But we can agree with him on this point without accepting a conditional analysis of (1). To say that someone has a reason is not to say how strong the reason is, or that the reason would persist in the absence of the relevant purpose.³

But even if we reject Prichard's analysis of hypothetical imperatives, we can still accept the main point on which he agrees with Kant's distinction.

On the other hand, if we say to a man 'You ought to tell the truth' and mean by it what Kant evidently understood it to mean in calling it a categorical imperative, we do so, as Kant saw, without any reference to some purpose we may think he has, and if we are asked what we mean, we should, ordinarily at least, only answer by using what we considered a verbal equivalent such as 'should' or 'duty' or 'morally bound'. Indeed, as we cannot fail to allow on reflection, the difference in meaning is complete. And for this reason the distinction which Kant is formulating is really not, as he represents it as being, one between two statements containing the word 'ought' made on different grounds, but one

³ Prichard disagrees here with Sidgwick's account of the hypothetical imperative at *Methods*, 37-8.

between two statements in which 'ought' has a completely different meaning. Consequently the two kinds of statement should be referred to not by Kant's phrases 'categorical' and 'hypothetical imperatives' but rather by phrases indicating the difference in meaning borne by 'ought' in each. And for this purpose the least unsatisfactory phrases seem to be moral and non-moral imperatives. But if this be done, 'moral' must be understood not in its ordinary sense of morally good, but as simply the equivalent of 'duty' or 'morally bound'. (MW 166-7)

The first sentence ('On the other hand ... or 'morally bound'.') gives a clear statement of Kant's position, but it does not require Prichard's doctrine that 'ought' has two senses. Contrary to Prichard, we may say that 'ought' is univocal, but the reasons it introduces are of different sorts. One sort of reason depends on the agent's purpose; that is why judgments such as (1) do not remain true if the agent's purpose changes. Moreover, the reasons are of different degrees of importance and urgency. Medea's reason for giving her children a second dose of the poison is not good enough to justify her in giving the second dose, but the categorical 'ought' purports to introduce reasons that are sufficient by themselves to justify the relevant action.

We can now grasp the main point of Prichard's criticism of the philosophers who ask the Why question in order to justify morality. He believes that all such attempted justifications fail, because an answer to the Why question could only make us want to keep our promises and could not convince us that we ought to keep them. If we believe that keeping promises is a means to something we want, we will want to keep promises, but we will not be convinced that we ought (categorically) to keep them. Prichard presupposes his analysis of hypothetical imperatives here. We might object to his claim; if we are convinced that keeping our promises promotes some antecedent goal will we not be convinced that we ought to keep them? Can we not truly say that we ought to keep them because it will get us something we want? Prichard answers that Kant obscured the nature of the relevant fact by speaking as though his hypothetical imperatives were real imperatives. By this Prichard probably means that the 'ought' in 'You ought to cross the road here, to avoid getting knocked down' is a misleading way of saying 'If you cross the road here, you won't be knocked down'.

But we can state Prichard's main point without endorsing all his views about hypothetical imperatives. The sorts of reasons that support hypothetical imperatives refer to antecedent desires and preferences – that is to say, to desires and preferences that do not result from our accepting the hypothetical imperative itself. The persistence of these desires determines whether or not the 'ought' judgment is true or false. In this case we may say that the antecedent desires are sources of 'internal' reasons, in so far as the reasons come from the agent's antecedent desires and do not persist independently of them.⁴ Moral judgments about what we ought to do, however, do not depend on what we already want, and hence they do not rely on internal reasons. True

⁴ This description of internal reasons alludes to the questions discussed by, e.g., Williams, 'Internal and external reasons', and McDowell, 'External reasons?'

moral judgments depend on reasons that are independent of our antecedent desires. We may call these 'external reasons'; they would still remain even if the agent's antecedent desires were to change. When Prichard says that Kant's belief in a categorical imperative grasps the essential fact about moral judgments, he means that Kant takes moral oughts to introduce external reasons, and to be independent of on internal reasons.

To decide whether an ought-judgment states a categorical or a hypothetical imperative, it is not enough to see whether or not a desire is mentioned in giving the reason for the ought-judgment. We might say both 'You ought to buy a bigger car, because you will impress the neighbours' and 'You ought to give back the money you borrowed from him, because he needs it'. Neither 'because' clause mentions a desire of the agent who ought to act in the relevant way. None the less, we might argue that the first reason is a reason for you only if you care about impressing the neighbours. If we say that you ought to buy a bigger car because you will impress the neighbours, but we discover that you do not care about impressing the neighbours, or about anything to which impressing the neighbours would be a means, we will withdraw the 'ought' judgment. According to Prichard, the judgment about repayment does not rest entirely on internal reasons, but the relevant external reasons suffice to make the judgment true. In saying that someone from whom you have borrowed needs the money we explain why the situation requires paying the money. If you do not care about whether he needs the money, we do not withdraw the 'ought' judgment.

In Prichard's view, the main point of Kant's distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives is to distinguish true ought-judgments that are reducible to judgments that an action promotes a desired end from true ought-judgments that are not reducible in this way. This negative description of a categorical imperative does not capture everything that Kant believes about a categorical imperative; it does not say that there is only one categorical imperative, and that this is the supreme principle of morality and treats rational beings as ends. These further claims about the categorical imperative rest on further aspects of Kant's theory. In what follows, I will assume Prichard's description of a categorical imperative.

We now have a clearer idea of Prichard's basic objection to Plato and Aristotle. In his view, they do not treat true moral judgments as expressions of categorical imperatives that introduce external reasons, because they do not recognize external reasons, and so do not recognize that true moral judgments introduce external reasons. And so when Plato tries to justify morality, he takes himself to be justifying judgments that give internal reasons. If his argument succeeded (contrary to Prichard's view, as we have seen), it would at most justify judgments that give internal reasons; hence it cannot justify true moral judgments. In this respect Plato's moral philosophy rests on a mistake. Plato tells us that we really ought to do what we think we ought to do, because it promotes our happiness. Hence he tells us that we have an internal reason to keep promises and so on, in so far as we want our pleasure and these actions are a means to our own pleasure. Such an answer necessarily fails to tell us why we have an external reason to do what morality requires us to do. It has no room for categorical imperatives of morality.

This explanation of the mistake in the mistaken form of moral philosophy shows that Prichard's objection has a wide range. He objects explicitly to egoistic analyses and defences of morality, but his argument is not limited to egoism. The mistaken moral philosophers try to make morality rest on internal reasons. Internal reasons include egoistic reasons, but unless a psychological egoist account of desires is true, not all internal reasons are egoistic. A defence of morality that rests on altruistic internal reasons fails to answer the relevant question no less than an egoistic defence fails. Though Prichard does not point this out, the primary target of his argument is not egoism in itself, but egoism in so far as it provides internal reasons. If we could show that egoism is a source of external reasons, Prichard's objection to egoistic justifications of morality would collapse.

This feature of Prichard's argument explains why I do not discuss an aspect of Greek ethics that has often been discussed in connexion with questions about the presence or absence of a concept of morality. We might suppose that the egoism of Greek ethics matters in its own right, because it seems to give the wrong shape to an account of morality. Prichard does not discuss this objection; he believes that egoism is the wrong basis for morality not because egoism is about self-interest, but because self-interest can provide only internal reasons. My examination of Prichard considers only the question about external reasons. The further question about whether egoistic external reasons provide the wrong basis for morality certainly deserves discussion. But I do not discuss it here, because Prichard does not raise it. He does not argue that the egoistic character of Greek ethics is a sufficient reason, in its own right, to deny that Greek ethics has any concept of moral obligation.

4. Prichard and Sidgwick

Before I discuss Prichard's criticism of Plato and Aristotle, I would like to go back a little further, to Sidgwick's description of Greek ethics. In his view, Greek ethics is concerned with goodness, which he describes as an attractive standard for choice. The Greeks are not concerned with rightness, which implies a 'dictate or imperative of reason'.

It is, however, possible to take a view of virtuous action in which, though the validity of moral intuitions is not disputed, this notion of rule or dictate is at any rate only latent or implicit, the moral ideal being presented as attractive rather than imperative. Such a view seems to be taken when the action to which we are morally prompted, or the quality of character manifested in it, is judged to be 'good' in itself (and not merely as a means to some ulterior Good). This, as was before noticed, was the fundamental ethical conception in the Greek schools of Moral Philosophy generally, including even the Stoics, though their system, from the prominence that it gives to the conception of Natural Law, forms a transitional link between ancient and modern ethics. ...⁵

⁵ Sidgwick, *Methods* 105. It is instructive to compare this with Sidgwick's earlier statement, in his first edition: '... it is possible to take a view of morality which at any rate **leaves in the background** the cognition of rule and **restraint**, the imperative, **inhibitive, coercive** effect of the moral ideal. We may consider the action to which the moral faculty prompts us intrinsically 'good'; so that the doing of it is in itself desirable, an end at which it is reasonable to aim. This ... is the more ancient view of Ethics; it was

The attractive and the imperative are not essentially connected. Concentration on goodness as opposed to rightness marks a basic division between ancient and modern outlooks.

And this historical illustration may serve to exhibit one important result of substituting the idea of 'goodness' for that of 'rightness' of conduct, which at first sight might be thought a merely verbal change. For the chief characteristics of ancient ethical controversy as distinguished from modern may be traced to the employment of a generic notion instead of a specific one in expressing the common moral judgments on actions. Virtue or Right action is commonly regarded as only a species of the Good: and so, on this view of the moral intuition, the first question that offers itself, when we endeavour to systematise conduct, is how to determine the relation of this species of good to the rest of the genus. It was on this question that the Greek thinkers argued, from first to last. Their speculations can scarcely be understood by us unless with a certain effort we throw the quasi-jural notions of modern ethics aside, and ask (as they did) not "What is Duty and what is its ground?" but "Which of the objects that men think good is truly Good or the Highest Good?" or, in the more specialised form of the question which the moral intuition introduces, "What is the relation of the kind of Good we call Virtue, the qualities of conduct and character which men commend and admire, to other good things?" (*ME* 105-6)

Sidgwick's contrast would be suspect if he meant that imperative concepts include all imperatives or all judgments that include 'ought'. He knows very well that ancient moralists use 'ought' (*dein, chrênai, debere*), but he clearly does not regard this fact about them as a refutation of his claim that their outlook is basically attractive rather than imperative. He might maintain that in this case 'ought' or 'should' refers ultimately not to a dictate of reason, but to a hypothetical imperative about how one can achieve some end that one already wants and that is not the subject of a dictate of reason. Since hypothetical imperatives refer to some attractive end, they provide an attractive rather than an imperative standard. An imperative standard, then, relies on dictates of reason, because its judgments about what I ought to do are not explicable as hypothetical imperatives.

This reference to dictates of reason gives us an approximate idea of what Sidgwick means when he speaks of an imperative standard. He implies that an imperative standard does not imply literal commands, but implies rational requirements. His idea of an attractive standard has to be explained by contrast with dictates of reason. When Mill explains what he means by speaking of one pleasure as more valuable as another, he says:

taken exclusively by all the Greek schools of Moral Philosophy except the Stoics; and even with them 'Good' was the more fundamental conception, **although in later Stoicism the quasi-jural aspect of good conduct came into prominence.**' (1st edn., 93) I have put the significant differences from the Seventh Edition in bold type. The reference to coercion and inhibition is similar to Grant's remarks on the concept of duty.

Sidgwick's distinction is discussed by White, 'The attractive and the imperative', esp. 316-18.

Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure.⁶

This is probably what Sidgwick has in mind when he speaks of something's being attractive without any dictate of reason. If we substitute 'rational requirement' for 'moral obligation' in Mill's explanation, this is what Sidgwick seems to mean by speaking of an attractive standard. As we will see later, this is not an adequate account of Sidgwick's contrast between the imperative and the attractive, but it will suffice for the moment.

I have mentioned Sidgwick because his contrast between the attractive and the imperative corresponds to the contrast that Prichard draws when he argues that Plato and Aristotle lack any conception of duty and moral obligation. Sidgwick expresses this point in less polemical terms. He does not say that the lack of any conception of moral obligation is a defect in Plato and Aristotle; it is simply a result of the fact that they treat goodness as the fundamental ethical property. For reasons that will appear later, examination of Sidgwick's contrast will also help us to evaluate Prichard's claims.

5. Prichard on the good

Prichard examines and criticizes Plato's argument to show that the just person is happier than the unjust. To show that this whole argument rests on the mistaken demand for justification, Prichard tells us how he interprets Plato's claim that justice is good for, or beneficial for, the just agent, or promotes the happiness of the just agent. His interpretation relies on his account of Plato's use of 'good'. He sets out this account briefly in his discussions of Plato, but he expounds his views fully in his essay on Aristotle on '*agathon*', and it will be helpful to refer to that essay.⁷

Prichard distinguishes the substantival and the adjectival senses of 'good' in English:

... in English there are two usages of the word 'good' and ... in these there is a complete difference of meaning. The term 'good' is used both as an adjective, as in the statement 'courage is good', and also as a part of a substantival phrase, as in the statement 'having friends is a great good', or 'the goods of life are numerous'. (MW 172)

When we use the term adjectivally, we attribute a non-relational and indefinable quality to a subject. When we use it substantivally, we attribute a relational property to the subject, and we mean 'a good to someone'.⁸ Analysis of 'good to someone' shows that we mean 'something which pleases' (MW 174), or, more precisely 'something which directly or indirectly excites pleasure in us' (174). Plato uses '*agathon*' in the relational

⁶ Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 2 §5.

⁷ Prichard, 'Meaning' = MW, ch.7.

⁸ This phrase of Prichard's corresponds usefully to the Greek dative. We might explain it as 'good from the point of view of someone' or 'good for someone'. I will leave it unexplained.

sense of 'good', so that if justice is an *agathon*, it is a good, and hence promotes the just agent's pleasure.

... wherever Plato uses the term *agatha* (goods) elsewhere in the *Republic* and in other dialogues, such as the *Philebus*, the context always shows that he means by a good a good to oneself, and, this being so, he must really be meaning by an *agathon*, a source of satisfaction, or perhaps, more generally, a source of happiness. ('Duty and Interest' = MW 33)

When Plato argues that justice is *agathon*, he means that it is a good, and hence something that promotes the just agent's pleasure.

The division between the adjectival and the substantival use of 'good' is difficult to apply to Greek.⁹ The neuter adjective '*agathon*' may be used either as a noun or as an adjective. Hence '*x estin agathon*' may mean either 'x is a good' or 'x is good'. If the subject of a sentence is a masculine or feminine noun and the predicative adjective '*agathon*' is neuter, we may reasonably translate it as 'a good thing', but if the subject is neuter, we cannot decide without further information how to render it. Moreover, the neuter adjective with the definite article may be used for a class, for a property, or for a member of the class. Hence we do not know whether '*to agathon*' refers to the class of good things, to the property of goodness, or to a good thing, or to a good. Only the last matches the substantival use that Prichard explains as 'a good to someone'. He defends an apparently more extreme thesis: 'Aristotle really meant by *agathon* conducive to our happiness' (102), so that, apparently, one ought not even to translate 'agathon' by 'good'.¹⁰

The question is really: 'What is the character which Aristotle considered we must think would be possessed by something if we are to desire it, independently of desiring anything else to which we think it will lead, that character being what Aristotle used the word *agathon* to refer to?' Here it seems hardly necessary to point out that the answer cannot be 'goodness'. ('Meaning' = MW 109)

Prichard gives two arguments to show that '*agathon*' in Aristotle does not mean 'good': (1) If by '*agathon*' Aristotle had meant 'good', he would not have supposed that every *agathon* promotes the agent's happiness and is desired by the agent who calls it *agathon*. (2) Aristotle believes that every *agathon* is *agathon* for someone (109). According to Aristotle, '*agathon*' introduces a characteristic that arouses desire for the thing believed to be *agathon*. This characteristic is the tendency of a given thing to promote one's own 'feeling of enjoyment or gratification, or, to put it generally,

⁹ Carritt, 'Ambiguity' 52, notices this point, though without explicit reference to Prichard's distinction in 'Duty and interest'.

¹⁰ Prichard describes this extreme thesis as a 'conclusion so heretical that the mere acceptance of it may seem a proof of lunacy' (MW 102). Though this is the main thesis that Prichard argues for, he also qualifies it. For he believes that even apart from the discussions of pleasure, some of Aristotle's remarks are inconsistent with the thesis. I will not consider these qualifications of Prichard's main thesis. (Austin '*Agathon*' discusses them well.) Prichard quotes Greek in Greek font, and omits inverted commas when he mentions Greek words. In quoting Prichard I transliterate the Greek without inverted commas. But in my remarks I use inverted commas to mention Greek words.

pleasure' (110). The meaning of *'agathon'*, therefore, is 'promoting one's pleasure'. This account of the meaning of *'agathon'* commits Aristotle to psychological hedonism (113).

This use of *'agathon'* makes Moore's objection against a hedonist analysis of the meaning of 'good' irrelevant to Aristotle. If the hedonist analysis is right, 'What promotes my pleasure is good' means 'What promotes my pleasure promotes my pleasure', so that it misrepresents a non-tautologous claim (that what promotes my pleasure is good) as a tautology. Moore believes that this implication refutes the hedonist analysis. But according to Prichard, Aristotle believes that 'What promotes my pleasure is *agathon'* means exactly the same as 'What promotes my pleasure promotes my pleasure', and so does not concede that the first claim is non-tautologous. If *'agathon'* in Aristotle had meant 'good', Aristotle would have been open to Moore's objection, but Prichard has already shown (in his view) that Aristotle does not use *'agathon'* to mean 'good'.

Prichard's argument depends on his understanding of *'eudaimonia'*, usually rendered 'happiness'. He takes Aristotle to be a rational eudaemonist who supposes that all rational action aims at one's own *eudaimonia*. Prichard also supposes that Aristotle is a hedonist about *eudaimonia*, so that he is a rational hedonist as well. And so, whenever Aristotle asserts that if something is good for me, it promotes my *eudaimonia*, he connects goodness with the agent's pleasure.

6. The concept of *eudaimonia*

We now come to Prichard's main criticism of Plato. He believes that Plato fails to prove that justice is good for just agents in so far as it promotes their happiness. His criticism depends on his explication of the English 'good for', and of *'agathon'* in Plato and Aristotle. Study of his explication helps us to raise some of the right questions about Plato's and Aristotle's views on goods and goodness.

In Prichard's view, 'x is good for S' should be explicated as 'x promotes S's satisfaction'. But this explication does not even capture the extension of 'good for S'. If 'satisfaction' refers to the satisfaction of desires that S actually has, what promotes S's satisfaction may be bad for S. Though x may please or satisfy S, we may still ask whether x not only satisfies S, but is also really good for S. This question implies that 'good' in 'good for' does not mean 'pleasant' or 'satisfying'. Moreover, the answer to the question 'Is what satisfies S good for S?' is sometimes No. Hence what promotes S's satisfaction is not even coextensive with what is good for S.

Can we say the same about Plato and Aristotle? Prichard relies on a hedonist analysis of *'agathon'*, which rests on two further claims: (1) All *agatha* contribute to happiness (*eudaimonia*). (2) *Eudaimonia* is a state of enjoyment, of being pleased, or of having one's desires satisfied. According to Prichard, eudaemonism makes explicit the implicit assumption in egoism that what is one's own interest is whatever promotes one's own pleasure. Prichard argues for the first claim, but not for the second. If we concede the first claim for the moment, what about the second?

We might understand the second claim as a claim about the sense of the term ‘*eudaimonia*’, or about its reference.¹¹ Plato and Aristotle use a concept of *eudaimonia* that they share with other philosophers, and with ordinary people who reflect on how their lives are going or might go, or on what they might hope for. Aristotle remarks that everyone agrees that the highest good is called *eudaimonia*, and all take living well and doing well to be the same as *eudaimonein* (being *eudaimôn*) (*EN* 1095a17-20). He does not say that everyone agrees that being *eudaimôn* is the same as being pleased, though he suggests that *eudaimonia* requires satisfaction of desire.

Now about many other things also it is not easy to judge finely, but especially about that on which it seems to everyone to be easy and a matter for every man to find out, which one of the things in living is choiceworthy, and getting which one would fulfil one’s appetite.¹² (*EE* 1215b15-18)

Aristotle takes being choiceworthy (*haireton*) and fulfilling desire to be two distinct conditions. He goes on to suggest that a life devoted to certain sorts of pleasures would satisfy one’s appetite, but would not be choiceworthy (1215b30-1216a10). He does not suggest, therefore, that ‘pleasure’ gives the sense of ‘*eudaimonia*’. Different people identify *eudaimonia* with the different states and conditions that they regard as success in their lives.

These assumptions about the sense of ‘*eudaimonia*’ do not make it obviously unreasonable to argue for hedonism about happiness. Aristotle is familiar with a widespread tendency, both among ordinary people and among philosophers, to identify happiness with pleasure. Socrates in the *Protagoras* may defend hedonism; Aristippus, Eudoxus, and Epicurus defend it. But they all take it to need some argument, and none of them suggests that we would not have grasped the sense of ‘*eudaimonia*’ if we did not take *eudaimonia* to be identical to pleasure. Hence we might be inclined to render the Greek term by ‘well-being’ ‘or living well’ rather than by ‘happiness’, if we took the English word ‘happiness’ to refer exclusively to feelings of pleasure and contentment.

The close connexion between *eudaimonia* and the correct way of life leaves room for a conception of *eudaimonia* as a composite that embraces all the states and activities that are non-instrumentally good and deserve to be pursued. If we agree with Plato’s view that the just person is necessarily happier than the unjust, no matter what else is true of each of them, we do not necessarily affirm that justice is identical to or sufficient for happiness; we may simply affirm that justice is an element in happiness that is to be preferred above the other elements. Aristotle speaks in similar terms of the parts of happiness (*EE* 1214b11-27; *MM* 1184a18-190).¹³ If we pursue these states and activities for the sake of *eudaimonia*, we need not choose them as having ulterior products that promote happiness (as justice, say, promotes security, which removes

¹¹ Austin discusses these questions in ‘*Agathon*’ 9-20. See also Ackrill, ‘*Eudaimonia*’, 17-18.

¹² The term rendered by ‘appetite’ here (*epithumia*) is Aristotle’s normal term for the lowest part of the Platonic tripartite soul, but he may be using it (as Plato also does) in a more general sense here.

¹³ Not in *EN*.

anxiety). We may also choose them as parts of happiness, so that they determine our conception of happiness.¹⁴

7. The nature of *eudaimonia*

I have said so far only that the concept of *eudaimonia* ‘leaves room for’ a conception of *eudaimonia* as a composite of non-instrumental goods. It is a further question whether and where Plato and Aristotle actually hold such a conception. The *Philebus* gives us a good reason to attribute a composite conception to Plato. Socrates argues that neither pleasure nor intelligence (*phronêsis*) includes enough to be the good, because it leaves out something that is clearly desirable in a human life (Plato, *Phil.* 20b6-22b9). Similarly, the *Eudemian Ethics* and *Magna Moralia* display the same composite conception in Aristotle. The main texts that concern Prichard, the *Republic* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, are less explicit on this point, but in these cases also it is most plausible to ascribe a composite conception to Plato and Aristotle.¹⁵ This is the best way to understand Aristotle’s claims about non-final non-instrumental goods.

... honour, pleasure, understanding, and every virtue we certainly choose because of themselves also – for we would choose each of them even if nothing resulted - had but we also choose them for the sake of happiness, supposing that through them we shall be happy, but happiness no one ever chooses for their sake, or because of anything else at all. (1097b2-5)

These goods are non-instrumental, because we choose them for their own sakes, but non-final, because we choose them for the sake of happiness. Goods of this sort are those that the *Eudemian Ethics* describes as parts of happiness.¹⁶

In this passage Aristotle sets out conditions for happiness that will allow him to answer those who identify it with pleasure or honour or virtue, three candidates that he has already mentioned (in *EN* i 5). These are not complete enough to constitute happiness, and so have to be rejected (cf. 1095b31-2. Not only, therefore, does he not take the concept of happiness to be the concept of pleasure or satisfaction, but he also does not take pleasure to be the sole constituent of happiness. Pleasure is a non-instrumental good, but it is not the complete good, and so it is not happiness.

¹⁴ Prichard discusses questions relevant to non-instrumental non-final goods in ‘Mistake’= *MW* 11-12. He argues that only motives, and not actions, can be non-instrumentally good.

¹⁵ This claim about the *Republic* and *EN* is briefly explained and defended, with reference to Prichard, by Vlastos, *Socrates*, 204-8. He comments on Prichard as follows: ‘Earlier in the present century leading lights in Oxford were strongly inclined to believe, and some of them did believe, that if Plato and Aristotle were eudaemonists, they would have had to be utilitarians: H.A. Prichard, a stubborn Kantian, so argued with conviction. What he and others had failed to understand is how it was possible for Plato and Aristotle to hold that everything is chosen for the sake of happiness *and* that some things are chosen for their own sake ...’ (205)

¹⁶ The question of whether *EN* i defends a composite conception of happiness has been discussed in great detail, which I omit here. Some idea of the contributions to this discussion can be gathered from Lear *Highest Good*; Irwin, ‘Conceptions of happiness’.

This part of Aristotle's argument does not fit into Prichard's view of what Aristotle must mean by '*eudaimonia*', and so he has to say that Aristotle is not really doing what he says he is doing:

Here it has to be admitted that Aristotle is expressing himself in a misleading way. ... His answer to this question [sc. 'What is the ultimate end?'], if taken as it stands, is undeniably absurd. For, so understood, it is to the effect that, though all men, when asked 'What is the ultimate end?', answer by using the same word, viz. *eudaimonia*, yet, as they differ about what *eudaimonia* is, ... they are in substance giving different answers, some meaning by the word *eudaimonia* pleasure, others wealth, and so on. But of course this is not what Aristotle meant. He certainly did not think that anyone ever meant by *eudaimonia* either *timê* or *ploutos*. ... What he undoubtedly meant and thought others meant by the word *eudaimonia* is happiness. Plainly too, what he thought men differed about was not the nature of happiness but the conditions of its realization. ('Meaning' = MW 111-12).

Prichard is right to say that the different candidates for *eudaimonia* are not different attempts to give the meaning of the word '*eudaimonia*', but he is wrong to suppose that this is what Aristotle's question would mean if it were 'taken as it stands'. He is also wrong to suggest that Aristotle's answer does not tell us what happiness is, but what the conditions of its realization are. It is more difficult to say whether he is right to say that what Aristotle meant and thought others meant by '*eudaimonia*' is 'happiness'. If we took 'happiness' to be simply the English translation of '*eudaimonia*', this remark would be tautological. The rest of Prichard's argument, however, shows that Prichard means that, in Aristotle's view, the meaning of '*eudaimonia*' is 'pleasure'. This is why he agrees that it follows from his interpretation that Aristotle is a psychological hedonist.

Prichard overlooks the fact that Aristotle tells us something about what '*eudaimonia*' means. As we have seen, it is equivalent to '*eu zên*' and '*eu prattein*', 'living well' and 'doing well' (1095a19-20). Whether or not these are meant to be synonymous with '*eudaimonein*', they are part of what everyone agrees about. Since these expressions, rather than 'pleasure', give us the sense of '*eudaimonia*', it is easy to see why they raise a further question about what happiness is. This is not a question about the sense of 'happiness', nor simply a question about 'the conditions of its realization', but a question about the essential properties that determine those conditions. If Prichard were right to say that Aristotle is only looking for the conditions of the realization of pleasure, Aristotle's question 'Is happiness pleasure or honour or virtue or something else?' would be a question about the instrumental means to pleasure. But since he is wrong, and Aristotle has not yet identified happiness with pleasure, he has not yet found its the essential properties of happiness, and it is reasonable to look for them.¹⁷

¹⁷ Austin, '*Agathon*' 9-12, has a good discussion of Prichard's account of Aristotle's questions. I do not entirely agree with Austin's view of the questions that Aristotle is really asking.

Though some ancient moralists defend hedonism as an account of the essential nature of *eudaimonia*, as distinct from the meaning of '*eudaimonia*', both Plato and Aristotle disagree with them. They do not believe that *eudaimonia* essentially consists wholly in pleasure. Hence they do not believe that if we ask 'What is *eudaimonia*?', our answer should mention only pleasure. In their view, *eudaimonia* is not a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction; it belongs to a way of life in relation to one's conception of it. Rational agents are happy to the extent that they have the correct conception of how to live, and live in accordance with it.

These points about *eudaimonia* refute Prichard's argument. According to Prichard, Aristotle is a hedonist about *eudaimonia*, and since pleasure is something we want, *eudaimonia* is the good for us because it is something we want. Hence an appeal to *eudaimonia* gives us internal reasons, since pleasure is an obvious source of internal reasons. If, however, Aristotle is not a hedonist about *eudaimonia*, Prichard's argument collapses. He has no good reason to maintain that when Aristotle connects *agathon* and *eudaimonia*, he connects *agathon* with pleasure. And so he has no good reason to maintain that Aristotle answers the Why question by trying to show that we ought to do what justice, temperance, etc. require of us because keeping them is a means to what we already want, namely pleasure. For the same reasons, Aristotle's belief that all rational action aims at the agent's happiness does not imply the denial of unselfish action.

8. A defence of Prichard

The recognition of Prichard's mistakes about Plato and Aristotle on happiness is only the first step in an answer to his argument to show that they cannot recognize categorical imperatives. If we agree that neither Plato nor Aristotle holds a hedonist conception of happiness, we cannot argue from the mere fact that they are eudaemonists to the conclusion that they cannot recognize external reasons. Nor, however, have we shown that they recognize external reasons. For we can state the main point of Prichard's argument without reliance on the assumptions that we have questioned. Hedonic reasons are not the only internal reasons. If a non-hedonist conception of *eudaimonia* offers only internal reasons, Prichard is still right to affirm that it cannot support the categorical imperative of morality, and therefore cannot support claims about genuine obligation.

Let us set aside Prichard's view that Aristotle is a hedonist about happiness. For the sake of argument, let us concede that, as some but by no means all readers suppose, Aristotle takes happiness to be a composite of non-instrumental goods. Let us further grant that virtue of character, expressed in virtuous actions, is to be chosen for its own sake as a part of happiness, and not simply as an instrumental means to it. If we concede all these points, we can still ask Prichard's question: why does this fact about virtue matter to our choice of virtue? Prichard notices that the misguided Why-question can be answered by showing that the activity about which we raise the question is something that we want for its own sake:

... if, as often happens, we put to ourselves the question 'Why should we do so and so?', we are satisfied by being convinced either that the doing so will lead to

something which we want (e.g. that taking certain medicine will heal our disease), or that the doing so itself, as we see when we appreciate its nature, is something that we want or should like, e.g. playing golf.¹⁸

If happiness is relevant only because we already want it, our proof that virtue is a component of happiness shows that virtue promotes something we already want. If we ought to choose virtue because it is a component of something we already want, we have found only a hypothetical imperative. Hence an appeal to happiness does not explain why we ought categorically to do what we ought to do. Prichard's conclusion still seems to be correct.

The point is clear in simple examples similar to Prichard's example of playing golf. If the breakfast I want includes bacon, eggs, and tomato, I may initially be reluctant to choose the *Petit Déjeuner Complet* from a French menu. But if further inquiry assures me that this item on the menu consists of bacon, eggs, and tomato, I will choose it without reluctance, because, despite the unfamiliar description, it gives me what I want. Is this the right way to understand the discovery of components of happiness? Does Aristotle mean that different states and activities initially appear unappetizing, but on closer acquaintance turn out to be more appealing, and for that reason appear choiceworthy? He believes that we all want happiness, and that we want it as our ultimate end. What then, could be the point of showing that something promotes happiness except to show that we have reason to choose it in so far as it contributes to what we already want?

Aristotle's eudaemonism still seems to invite Prichard's criticism, therefore, if he uses it to justify morality to people who are not already convinced that they ought to practise morality.

9. Different roles for happiness

But we might doubt whether Aristotle really intends the sort of justification that Prichard criticizes. For it seems difficult to show that the virtues, as Aristotle conceives them, are justified by their contribution to some end that we already want. When we spell out the components of happiness, understood as what we already want, we might wonder how such an argument could justify the outlook of the brave or just person, as Aristotle conceives it, and we might wonder how Aristotle could overlook this objection.

Doubts of this sort persuade John McDowell that Aristotle does not offer such an argument.¹⁹ In his view, Aristotle believes that a life of morally virtuous activity is the most desirable life, and therefore believes that activity in accordance with virtue is identical to happiness.

¹⁸ Prichard, *MW* 8.

¹⁹ See McDowell, 'Role' 15; someone engaged in a naturalist project 'risks being accused of missing the point of moral thought; that the demand is a mistake is a well-known doctrine of H. A. Prichard.' McDowell interprets Aristotle's views so that they do not violate Prichard's doctrine. His attitude to the doctrine in 'Naturalism' is more complex.

When Aristotle says that activity in accordance with excellence is *eudaimonia*, what he says can be paraphrased as the claim that two prima facie different interpretations of phrases like 'doing well' coincide in their extension: doing well (sc. in accordance with excellence, living as a good man would) is doing well (sc. as one would wish: living in one's best interest). (14-15)²⁰

But this identification may be understood in two sharply different ways:

1. The reductive account. We may 'make our way into the equation [i.e., activity in accordance with virtue = happiness] at the right-hand side' [i.e., happiness] (15), by relying on some prior idea of the most desirable life. We claim that life in accord with moral virtue satisfies this prior idea of the most desirable life. Hence Aristotle's formula means: Activity in accordance with virtue is identical to happiness (as we already understand it).
2. The moralizing account. If we enter the equation at the left-hand side [i.e., virtue], our conception of virtue determines our conception of *eudaimonia*. We claim that our prior conception of moral virtue determines the judgments about our good, interest, welfare, and so on, that form our judgments about happiness. Hence Aristotle's formula means: Activity in accordance with moral virtue (as we already understand it) is identical to the life that (from the moral point of view) we correctly count as happy.

McDowell objects to the reductive account on the ground that it exposes Aristotle to Prichard's objection. He prefers the moralizing account because it avoids the sort of argument that Prichard attacks, and he also, with qualifications, prefers it as an account of Aristotle. According to McDowell, then, Aristotle believes that virtuous people's conception of *eudaimonia* is different from other people's conceptions, but that is not because virtuous people have deliberated correctly about questions that are prior to their endorsement of the virtuous outlook.

According to the moralizing account, an appeal to happiness does not give us a reason to acquire or to practise the virtues. Such an appeal cannot show us that virtuous people are correct to act as they do because they achieve something that we have some reason to value without already being virtuous. Their conception of happiness expresses their convictions about what matters most, but it does not give us a reason to be virtuous.²¹ And so it does not seem to give an answer to the Why-question.

In this respect, however, the moralizing account does not fit Aristotle. In his view, appeals to happiness have some reason-giving force.

Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life? Shall we not, having a target as archers do, be more likely to hit upon what is right? If so, we must try, in outline at least, to determine what it is, and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object. (1094a22-6)

²⁰ I will not discuss McDowell's reasons for introducing morality into the discussion. See 15-16.

²¹ Hills, *Self*, 70-2, describes the moralizing view as 'formal egoism', as opposed to substantive egoism, and refers to Hursthouse and Foot for further discussion.

He assumes that that we can grasp this reason-giving force without yet having endorsed a particular conception of happiness.²² Our grasp of the character of happiness should make a practical difference, by giving us a mark to aim at. But it would not do this if the moralizing account were right; for according to this account, our grasp of virtue gives us the mark to aim at, and our grasp of happiness simply reflects this prior grasp of virtue. In contrast to the moralizing account, Aristotle suggests that reflexion on happiness should help us to see which goods are parts of happiness (*merê tês eudaimonias*, *EE* 1214b26-7). Grasping the character of happiness is a basis for organizing our lives correctly.

But if we doubt the moralizing account, should we accept the reductive account? We cannot answer this question until we face the familiar ambiguity in ‘desirable’ between what is desired and what deserves to be or ought to be desired. If the desirable is the desired, the reductive account of happiness and virtue leads us back to the Why-question, as Prichard interprets it. In his view, appeals to happiness have some reason-giving force because happiness is something we all want. Appeals to happiness give reasons for an action by showing the connexion between that action and what we already want. These appeals lead us to internal reasons, and support only hypothetical imperatives. But if the desirable is what is appropriately desired or what ought to be desired, the reductive account does not necessarily lead us back to purely internal reasons. The desirable may offer external reasons, and hence may support categorical imperatives.

Does Aristotle rely on this sort of desirability? He believes that we all want happiness, so that it is a source of internal reasons. But it does not follow that he believes that the only reasons based on happiness are internal reasons, referring to what we already want. Happiness is not only the ultimate object of desire, but also the ultimate good. We have good reason to reject Prichard’s view that the good is what promotes happiness, because happiness is pleasure. Can we give a better account of the good, as Aristotle conceives it?

10. Is good attractive or imperative?

To ask the right question about Aristotle on happiness, we should return to Sidgwick’s contrast between the imperative and the attractive. Some complications in this contrast are relevant to Aristotle. Sidgwick suggests that if we present the moral ideal as attractive rather than imperative, the idea of a dictate of reason may be ‘only latent or implicit’ (105, 112). We may wonder how an imperative concept or property is implicit in an attractive concept. Sidgwick’s discussion of goodness raises this question more precisely. He asks whether goodness is a purely attractive property, or has some imperative element. In favour of the latter view, we might observe that people sometimes desire what is bad for them, so that good cannot be simply attractive.

To answer this objection Sidgwick introduces an idealization in his account of the good, but he denies that he needs to introduce an imperative element.

²² Or perhaps ‘like archers who have a target’.

To avoid this objection, it would have to be said that a man's future good on the whole is what he would now desire and seek on the whole if all the consequences of all the different lines of conduct open to him were accurately foreseen and adequately realised in imagination at the present point of time.
(111)

Though it may seem implausible to suppose that whenever we judge truly that something is good or bad for someone, we have this rather complex counterfactual about someone's desires and beliefs in mind, Sidgwick none the less defends it as an appropriate philosophical analysis.

This hypothetical composition of impulsive forces involves so elaborate and complex a conception, that it is somewhat paradoxical to say that this is what we commonly mean when we talk of a man's 'good on the whole.' Still, I cannot deny that this hypothetical object of a resultant desire supplies an intelligible and admissible interpretation of the terms 'good' (substantive) and 'desirable,' as giving philosophical precision to the vaguer meaning with which they are used in ordinary discourse: and it would seem that a calm comprehensive desire for 'good' conceived somewhat in this way, though more vaguely, is normally produced by intellectual comparison and experience in a reflective mind. The notion of 'Good' thus attained has an ideal element: it is something that *is* not always actually desired and aimed at by human beings: but the ideal element is entirely interpretable in terms of *fact*, actual or hypothetical, and does not introduce any judgment of value, fundamentally distinct from judgments relating to existence;--still less any 'dictate of Reason'. (Sidgwick, *ME* 111-12)

In the last sentence ('The notion of ...') Sidgwick explains why this is still a purely attractive account of the good, since he explains 'my good on the whole' as what I would desire and choose if I were clearly aware of all the consequences of my choice.

Why, one might ask, is this account an 'intelligible and admissible' account of goodness? One might defend it by arguing that, though it is more complex than anything that we might have in mind, it none the less explains our apparently reasonable judgments about goodness, if in fact they are the judgments that we would result from the idealizing but attractive account of goodness. But Sidgwick sees that this defence would be open to objection.

It seems to me, however, more in accordance with common sense to recognise--as Butler does--that the calm desire for my 'good on the whole' is *authoritative*; and therefore carries with it implicitly a rational dictate to aim at this end, if in any case a conflicting desire urges the will in an opposite direction.(112)

If this is so, the counterfactual analysis is mistaken, because it might be satisfied by an action that we believe we ought not to aim at, and therefore is not good.

Sidgwick accepts this objection to his counterfactual analysis, but he defends a modified counterfactual analysis that he takes to be immune to the objection.

Still we may keep the notion of 'dictate' or 'imperative' merely implicit and latent,--as it seems to be in ordinary judgments as to 'my good' and its opposite--by interpreting 'ultimate good on the whole for me' to mean what I should practically desire if my desires were in harmony with reason, assuming my own

existence alone to be considered. On this view, "ultimate good on the whole," unqualified by reference to a particular subject, must be taken to mean what as a rational being I should desire and seek to realise, assuming myself to have an equal concern for *all* existence. (*ME* 112)

In Sidgwick's view, this second counterfactual analysis still make goodness a purely attractive property, because the reference to a dictate of reason is merely 'implicit' and 'latent'.²³

This is a puzzling conclusion. The second counterfactual analysis differs from the first by including the references to reason ('if my desires were in harmony with reason; what as a rational being I should desire').²⁴ The references to reason replace the predictions about counterfactual desires in the first analysis. What do they add to it? Sidgwick might say that they add nothing, because the predictions in the first analysis exhaust the content of rational desire. But if he says this, the first analysis is still open to the objection he derives from Butler.

Alternatively, then, he might say that to be in harmony with reason is to follow the dictates of reason, and hence to do what I ought to do, whether or not I want to do it, or would want to do it in counterfactual conditions. In that case the second analysis is quite different from the first because it is not 'interpretable in terms of fact', as the first analysis was said to be.

Sidgwick seems to believe that, despite this difference between the first and the second analysis, the second analysis is still purely attractive, because it does not speak of dictates of reason, and the reference to them is only implicit and latent. But this is not a good reason to treat goodness as purely attractive. Sidgwick admits that his first analysis introduces counterfactuals that are only implicit in judgments about goodness. If that is so, the reference to counterfactual desires is no less implicit and latent than the reference to dictates of reason. Moreover, the first analysis was introduced in order to explain judgments about goodness, but it failed because it lacked any imperative element. If the second analysis avoids the objections to the first analysis, it includes an imperative element. The reference to dictates of reason, therefore, is not entirely latent; it has to be recognized if the second analysis is to be any better than the first.

These arguments about goodness, therefore, cast doubt on Sidgwick's conclusion. He supposes that they show that goodness is purely attractive. But in fact they tend to show that it is imperative. If this is the right conclusion to draw from his arguments, Sidgwick has undermined his case for the view that Greek ethics relies on attractive rather than imperative properties. The view of Greek ethics might still be correct, but the mere fact that the Greeks make the good fundamental does not make their outlook purely attractive, since the good itself not be purely attractive.

²³ See Broad, *Five Types* 175. As he understands Sidgwick's eventual view, goodness 'is purely positive; it involves in its analysis no reference to obligation or fittingness'. White, *Individual* 328n13, may misunderstand Broad on this point.

²⁴ In this passage Sidgwick uses 'should' to express a counterfactual (where a less scrupulous speaker of contemporary English might use 'would'), not as equivalent to 'ought to'.

These arguments about the good tell us more about Sidgwick's conception of the imperative. As we have already seen, he does not take all judgments containing 'ought', nor all utterances and thoughts in the imperative mood, to express imperative judgments. Nor are imperative judgments confined to judgments containing 'ought' or grammatical imperatives. Imperatives express 'dictates of reason', and Sidgwick considers the possibility that some judgments about good express these dictates. For present purposes, then, we may follow Sidgwick's usage, and assume that all non-hypothetical deontic properties and rational dictates of reason are imperatives, even if they do not express commands.²⁵

These questions about Sidgwick's discussion of goodness raise a useful question: when Aristotle speaks of happiness and the good, does he treat them as purely attractive or as imperative properties or states? We have seen that Prichard's reason for taking Aristotle's outlook to be purely attractive is mistaken, since he wrongly attributes a hedonist view to Aristotle. But we have also noticed that Prichard might still be right, if Aristotle treats the good as purely attractive. Our examination of Sidgwick shows that goodness is not obviously a purely attractive property, and that a purely attractive analysis of it faces serious objections, which Sidgwick partly acknowledges. We need to look more closely to see whether Aristotle treats goodness as purely attractive.

11. The connexion between happiness and the good

Does happiness matter, then, in Aristotle's ethical theory because it is purely attractive? It is at least an attractive end, because it is something that we all want irrespective of any belief that we ought to pursue it or that it deserves pursuit.²⁶ This aspect of happiness makes it a source of internal reasons. But is this aspect of happiness the only one that matters?

Happiness is not only the ultimate object of desire, but also the ultimate good. How are these facts connected? Three answers might be offered:

1. Goods are to be explained by reference to happiness, and happiness is to be understood as the ultimate object of desire without any prior understanding of goods.
2. Goods are to be explained without reference to happiness, and happiness is to be understood as the ultimate good.
3. Neither happiness nor goods can be explained without reference to the other.

²⁵ Sidgwick's division is not the same as the division between deontological and teleological accounts of the right or of 'ought'. On the latter division see Broad's comments on Sidgwick at *Five Types*, 162. Both conceptions of the right involve imperative concepts.

²⁶ 'Practically every individual and all people in common have some target that they aim at in their choosing and avoiding; this target, to state it in summary, is happiness and its parts. Let us then, by way of illustration, grasp what happiness is, speaking without qualification, and what things constitute its parts. For all advice for or against <a course of action> is concerned with happiness and the things relevant to it, or with their contraries. For we ought to do what provides happiness or some part of it, or produces a greater part at the cost of a smaller; and we must avoid whatever destroys or impedes a part of happiness or produces its contrary.' (*Rhetoric* 1360b4-13)

We might defend the first answer by claiming that happiness is the ultimate object that we actually desire, and goods are shown to be good by their contribution to this ultimate object of desire. In that case, happiness gives only internal reasons. If the first answer is right, happiness is purely attractive, and its being the ultimate good makes no difference to its purely attractive character. But if the second or the third answer is right, happiness may not be purely attractive.

It may be relevant that the three Aristotelian ethical treatises differ about the initial topic of inquiry. In the *MM* the starting point is goods and the good. The *EE* starts from happiness. In the *EN* the two topics are combined. How do these approaches differ, and why does Aristotle use them?

In the *EE* he introduces happiness because he is concerned not simply with particular actions, but with lives. We try to make our actions and aims fit together in an appropriate sort of life. A life is not merely a series of times at which we are alive, but also has a certain structure. We seek success not simply in this or that action or sequence of actions, but in our actions as a whole. This is why we recognize some overall aim for our life that guides our more specific decisions.

Having noticed about these things that everyone who has the power to live according to his own decision (*prohairesis*) sets up (*thesthai*) some goal of living finely (whether honour or reputation or wealth or culture), with reference to which he will then do all his actions (since not to have one's life organized towards some end is a sign of much folly (*anoia*)), we ought above all first to define in oneself without hurry or laziness in which of the things of ours living well is, and what are the things without which it cannot belong to human beings; for being healthy is not the same as the things without which it is not possible to be healthy, and the same is also true in many other cases, so that living finely and the things without which it is not possible to live finely are not the same. (*EE* 1214b6-17)²⁷

We already look at our lives from the point of view of some longer-term aim (honour, reputation, etc.). And so the moral philosopher does not try to persuade people to pursue some long-term aim, but he tries to identify the correct long-term aim. To do this, we need to examine the different possible objects of pursuit, to see which of them are parts of happiness, and which of them are only necessary conditions of it.

This inquiry is needed because many people are wrong in their judgments about instrumental and non-instrumental goodness. Virtue, wealth, and pleasure are all worth having for the sake of happiness, but many people are wrong about the value and the status of these goods. They believe, for instance, that the virtues have no more than instrumental value, as means to wealth and pleasure, whereas pleasure, irrespective of its sources, is the only non-instrumental good. Aristotle argues against these views.

²⁷This is a controversial passage. A less probable translation and text is this: 'Now that we have noticed these things, everyone who has the power to live according to his own decision ought to set up (*dei thesthai*) some goal of living finely (whether honour or reputation or wealth or culture), with reference to which he will then do all his actions, since not to have one's life organized towards some end is a sign of much folly. We ought, then, above all first to define ...'

His argument might correct our confusions about which things we actually pursue for their own sakes and which we regard as purely instrumental. We would display this confusion if we preferred honour to wealth for its own sake, but devoted ourselves to the unlimited accumulation of wealth without regard to honour. Once we clarify our views, we see what we wanted all along, and we now have a perspicuous conception of the internal reasons we act on.

Aristotle's main aim, however, is not to correct confusions about what we want. He invites us to ask not only what people actually desire for its own sake as a component of happiness, but also what they should desire for its own sake. To find this, we need to find what is non-instrumentally good. Since the discussion of happiness leads us to this inquiry into goods, Aristotle does not seem to conceive happiness as a purely attractive state. It is not simply a source of internal reasons.

In the *EN* his argument goes in the other direction. After he has introduced the hierarchy of goods, and identified the supreme good with happiness, Aristotle illustrates his claims through the three lives that embody different views about the character of the good (i 5). Each life concentrates on a specific type of non-instrumental good and makes it the supreme good. Aristotle argues that none of these goods is the supreme good, because none of them is appropriate for a human life. Both pleasure and virtue are too incomplete to be the good for a human being.

In the first part of *EN* i 7, Aristotle argues that the human good is happiness, because happiness has the crucial features (completeness and self-sufficiency) of the human good. But his main argument is not about happiness, but about the good. The definition that he reaches is a definition of the human good, not of happiness. Happiness is relevant to the argument because it is the ultimate good. The good, however, is relevant in its own right, not because it is happiness. Happiness, therefore, seems to give reasons not only because it is what we already want, but also because it is appropriately connected with the good.

So far, then, we have a reason to disagree with Prichard. Happiness seems to give reasons not only because it is what we already want, but also because it is appropriately connected with the good. Hence it does not seem to offer only internal reasons, and it does not seem to be purely attractive.

12. The priority of the good

But this argument against Prichard is not conclusive. For we saw earlier that Sidgwick treats the concern of Greek moralists with the good as a proof that their basic approach is attractive rather than imperative. Prichard agrees with him about Aristotle. And we can see why their view is plausible. Even if we substitute good-based reasons for happiness-based reasons, we may not have escaped internal reasons. For even if Aristotle does not reduce goods to means to happiness, he may still explain goods by reference to desire. If he does not also explain desire by reference to good, the reasons that appeal to good may still rely wholly on antecedent desires, and so may still be purely internal reasons.

Aristotle's remarks in the chapter I have referred to (*EN* i 7) may seem to support this account of good. For he seems to identify the good in an action or craft with the end

for which we perform the action or craft (1097a15-22). if we appeal to good-based reasons. If the good is reduced to the object of desire it is purely attractive. The very beginning of *EN* i 1 raises the same familiar question. Aristotle says:

Every craft and every line of inquiry, and similarly every action and decision, seems to seek some good; that is why they did well (*kalôs*) to describe the good <as> what all things aim at. (1094a1-3)

We reach Prichard's conclusion if we suppose that Aristotle offers a reductive definition of the good as what everything aims at. According to this view, we find out what the good is by finding out what we aim at, and we achieve the good by getting what we aim at. But if Aristotle does not offer a reductive account of good as object of desire, this route to Prichard's conclusion is blocked.

Does Aristotle offer a reductive account? In this context Austin remarks that 'the relation between "being *agathon*" and "being desired" is one of the most baffling puzzles in Aristotle's, or for that matter Plato's, ethical theory'.²⁸ Austin is right, since Aristotle does not explain the relation between being good and being desired, and in particular he does not explain what it means to say that the good is an object of choice (*hairesis*) or desire (*orekton*) or wish (*boulêton*). It is often difficult to fix the modality that belongs to these '-ton' endings in different contexts. Is the good what is desired, or what can be desired, or what ought to be desired? 'Desirable' and 'eligible' display the same ambiguity in English. We need to resolve some of these ambiguities if we are to fix the relation of goods to desire and choice, and hence to see whether Prichard is basically right.

Aristotle's remarks about ends and goods do not commit him to a reductive account. If the good in a given activity or craft is its end, goods are to be found in ends. When we engage in an activity or craft as good, we do it for some end that we take to be good. These remarks do not require Aristotle to agree that to be good is simply to be an object of desire.

We can attribute a more definite view to Aristotle on the basis of his remarks about desire, even though they are inexplicit. If we desire some things as good, we do not desire them as desired, but we desire them because we take them to have some characteristic in the light of which they are appropriately desired. Aristotle takes at least some desires to be essentially for the good. When he speaks of the highest good, he does not simply say that we desire it for its own sake, but that we wish for it for its own sake (1094a19, *ho di' hauto boulometha*). He alludes without explanation to his division between wish (*boulêsis*), which is rational desire for an object as good, and spirit and appetite (*thumos* and *epithumia*), which are non-rational desires that do not aim at the good. Though Aristotle does not explain this division in the *EN*, he relies on it.²⁹ He describes decision (*prohairesis*) as a deliberative desire for the means to an end that is desired (1113a9-14). Not every desire, however, can initiate a decision; the only type of

²⁸ Austin, 'Agathon' 31.

²⁹ We have some further detail at *EE* 1223b28-36.

desire that Aristotle allows in this role is wish, as opposed to non-rational desire (1111b12-19). The end that is appropriate for decision, therefore, has to be an object of wish (1113a15, b2). The end for practical thought is doing well (*eupraxia*, 1139b3), and the desire for this end has to be wish rather than the other types of desire.

What does Aristotle mean by his claim that wish is for ‘the good’ or for ‘the end’? We might give this claim a minimal sense, so that it means that we wish for something as being good to some degree, or as a suitable end for action. But the minimal sense is less than Aristotle intends. In his view, *boulêsis* is essentially connected with reasoning (*logismos*, *De Anima* 433a23-5), and the relevant reasoning is about the greater good (434a5-10). We form our wish for the end, therefore, in the light of deliberation about the greater good. That is why the primary object of wish is the ultimate good.

This is a very brief statement of the relevant aspects of Aristotle’s conception of wish. I have passed over many difficulties of interpretation. But, however these difficulties are resolved, they do not undermine the central point that he takes wish to be essentially connected to the good. This connexion would fail to distinguish wish from other types of desire if the good were simply what we actually desire. If ‘the good’ were replaced by ‘happiness’, we would introduce an uninformative circle in definition or explication; for we have just seen that happiness is the ultimate end by being the ultimate good, so that the good is prior in definition to happiness. Aristotle has a consistent position, however, because he takes wish to be essentially for the good; he does not cause incoherence in his position by offering a reductive explication of the good through desire. The goodness of the good is the character that makes it an appropriate object of desire.

But if this is really Aristotle’s view, why, we might ask, does he not say so? The answer is that he does say so. In *Metaphysics* xii he discusses some of the relevant relations between being good and being desired.

And the object of desire and the object of thought move in this way; they move without being moved. The primary objects of desire and of thought are the same. For what appears fine is the object of appetite, and what is really fine is the primary object of wish. But we desire because it seems <good> rather than its seeming good because we desire; for the thinking is the starting-point. (*Met.* 1072a26-30)

Aristotle here affirms the relation between desire and the good that he assumes in his remarks on rational desire. He does not explain good as simply an object of desire. I do not know why he does not say this in his ethical works, where it would have been especially appropriate. But this is not the only case in which Aristotle leaves us to infer one of his fundamental doctrines from remarks in which he takes it for granted. Fortunately, this explicit remark on the relation between desire and thinking good fits readily into the view that we have inferred from the *Ethics*.

I have argued that Aristotle holds that we wish for things because they are good, and that this reference to the good is intended to introduce an explanation or ground of rational desire. If this is true, he does not reduce being good to being desired. It does not follow that he treats goodness as a fundamental explanatory property. He might

hold either (1) that we rationally desire things because they are good, or (2) that things are good because they are desirable, i.e., ought to be desired, and hence are appropriate objects of rational desire. If he holds the first view, he takes 'good' to be fundamental and to allow no further explication. If he holds the second view, he accepts some deontic or axiological concept ('ought', 'appropriate') as fundamental. A third non-reductive view would hold that (3) we ought to choose things because they are good, and things are good because we ought to choose them, but neither one of 'good' and 'ought' is more fundamental than the other.

Any of these three non-reductive accounts of good and desire gives a better account of Aristotle's view than we can reach through Prichard's reductive view. None of them attributes a purely attractive view of good to Aristotle. Hence he does not suppose that reference to the good and to happiness introduces purely internal reasons. Hence he does not treat all practical principles as purely hypothetical imperatives. Hence we have found no reason to suppose that his moral philosophy rests on a mistake.

13. Relational and non-relational goodness

These observations about desire and the good answer Prichard's objections. But it may be useful to strengthen them by exploring Aristotle's claims about goodness a little further. Prichard's objections rely on two premisses: (i) When Aristotle speaks of the good he always means the good for someone. (ii) He defines the good for me as my happiness. I have argued against the second claim, but have not yet disputed the first. The truth of the first claim is compatible with the falsity of the second, but if the first claim is false, further doubt is cast on the second.

When Aristotle claims that the appropriate object of rational desire is the good, does he only intend the good for the agent? To answer this question, it is relevant to notice that he sometimes uses 'good' non-relationally; that is to say, he uses it without any explicit reference to any beneficiary. This fact about usage does not show that he uses 'good' to make a metaphysical claim about non-relational goods, that some things are goods, but not good for any beneficiary. But does he none the less intend this metaphysical claim?³⁰

He affirms that the contemplative life is superior (*kreittôn*) to a merely human life, and that it belongs to the better element in a human being.³¹ Similarly, he argues that prudence (*phronêsis*) is not the most excellent science (or 'the one to be taken

³⁰ See Carritt, 'Ambiguity'. I have discussed some related questions in 'Misunderstanding'. On the other side see Kraut, *Absolute*, esp. 210-11 (on Aristotle).

³¹ 'Such a life would be superior (*kreittôn*) to the human level. For someone will live it not in so far as he is a human being, but in so far as he has some divine element in him. And the activity of this divine element is as much superior (*diapherei*) to the activity in accord with the rest of virtue as this element is superior to the compound. ... as far as we can, we ought to ... go to all lengths to live a life in accord with our supreme (*kratiston*) element; for however much this element may lack in bulk, by much more it surpasses everything in power and value (*timiotês*). And a person (*hekastos*) would seem to be this, if <he is> the controlling and better (*to kurion kai ameion*).' (EN 1177b26-1178a2)

more seriously' *spoudaiotatên*), because human beings are not the best among living beings, but are inferior to divine beings.³² This goodness in which the human falls short of the divine is not goodness for a human being or for anyone else. When Aristotle claims that the contemplative life is better than a purely human life, he is not saying that it is better for a human being. On the contrary, the fact that it is better supports, and does not simply repeat, the claim that it is better for a human being. Since it is good for a human being to live the best kind of life of which he is capable, the fact that the contemplative life is best makes it the best for a human being to live.

One might reply that the best life is best because it is best for the gods, and so that the relevant sort of goodness is relational goodness after all. But this reply only postpones the admission of non-relational goodness. For why should we consider what is good for the gods, except because the gods are better than other things in the universe? Some appeal to non-relational goodness is unavoidable.

Similarly, the goodness of a human being in the universe does not consist in being good for a human being. Aristotle's contrast between prudence and theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) rejects any purely anthropocentric outlook on the world. Whereas prudence is legitimately anthropocentric, wisdom concerns itself with the best things in the universe apart from a human point of view. Prudence does not control wisdom, but provides the conditions for its exercise (1145a8-9) because it is good for human beings to acquire knowledge of the best things in the universe.

One might reply that these passages on non-relational goodness reflect metaphysical and theological views that are extraneous to Aristotle's strictly ethical theory. This reply underestimates the role of non-relational goods in Aristotle's ethical argument. For he introduces non-relational goods at the very beginning of the *EN*, when he explains why the science that considers the good for a human being is politics. This is the supreme discipline that assigns a place to other disciplines by connecting them to an end that includes their ends. This end is the human good, not simply the good for an individual, but the good for a city.

For even if it <sc. the human good> is the same for one person and for a city, still the <good> of a city appears greater and more complete both to acquire and to preserve. For it is satisfactory <to acquire and to preserve the good> even for one person alone, but it is finer and more divine <to acquire and to preserve it> for a people and for cities. The discipline <that we engage in>, therefore, aims at these <goods>, being a <sort of> politics. (1094b7-11)

The good of (or for) an individual person and the good of (or for) a city or a people are relational goods. But Aristotle does not say only that they are relational goods. He also affirms that the good of the city is a greater good, and is therefore better, than the good of an individual, and that it is finer to aim at the good of a people than to aim at the

³² 'For it would be absurd for someone to think that political science or prudence is the most excellent science, if the best (*beltiston*) thing in the universe is not a human being.' (1141a20-2) 'It does not matter if the human being is the best (*beltiston*) among the animals; for there are other beings of a far more divine nature than human beings - most evidently, for instance, the beings composing the universe.' (1141a33-b2)

good of an individual. These comparative claims are not about relational goodness. The pursuit of the good of the city is 'greater and more complete' and 'finer and more divine' than the pursuit of the good of the individual; hence the goodness belonging to the good of a city is greater non-relational goodness. We ought, then, to try to realize the goodness of the greater good rather than the goodness of the lesser good. The relevant type of goodness is realized in relational goodness, since it is the good of (for) a city or a people. But it is not wholly constituted by or reducible to relational goodness. Aristotle's comparative claims require non-relational goodness that is not identical to the good, benefit, or interest of anything.

The role of the good in reasons for action, therefore, is less simple than it would appear if we confined ourselves to Aristotle's eudaemonism. We have good reason to choose relational goods; these are the actions, states of character, and so on, that promote our good, which is identical to our happiness. But what is good for us is not the only type of good that gives us a reason for action and choice. We also have a reason to choose and to promote what is non-relationally good. That is why political science aims at the good for an individual and the greater good that is the good for a city. Both of these goods are non-relationally good.

How are relational and non-relational good related to rational desire? Does Aristotle take them to provide two independent grounds for desire, so that I desire some things ultimately because they are good for me, and other things ultimately because they are non-relationally good? Or does he take the ultimate basis of desire to be non-relational goodness? In that case my good is an appropriate object of my rational desire because it is non-relationally good.

We need not suppose that Aristotle has a clear answer to these questions. Non-relational goods are worth our attention in connexion with Prichard because they provide further reason to believe that Aristotle does not take rational desire to rest on purely attractive properties of some end. Though happiness is attractive, it is not purely attractive; we have a reason to pursue it because it is good, both good for us and non-relationally good. Even if we were to concede, contrary to fact, that what is good for us is good for us because desired, we would still have good reason to deny that what is non-relationally good is good because desired. Since non-relational goods are sources of reasons for action, not all reasons for action have a purely attractive basis.

Attention to non-relational goods may also strengthen our argument about relational goods. We might be inclined to hold that Aristotle must have had a reductive view about good and desire, or at least must not have held a non-reductive view, because he has not considered the possibility of a non-reductive view, or because he dismisses it as a Platonic aberration. This inclination must be abandoned in the face of Aristotle's acceptance of a non-reductive view of non-relational goods. Once we see that we must in any case allow him to recognize goods that are not reducible to objects of desire, we may reasonably be less reluctant to accept the reasons for attributing to him a non-reductive view of relational goods as well. A non-reductive conception of goods is firmly entrenched in Aristotle's ethical argument.

14. Why does happiness matter?

I have emphasized the essential reason-giving force that Aristotle attributes to goodness rather than desire. He does not give us an account of goodness and good things by reference to an independent account of happiness. On the contrary, our account of happiness is correct only if it captures all genuine non-instrumental goods. Since we can use this condition to choose between conceptions of happiness, we need some antecedent conception of goodness and goods.

This emphasis on the priority of the good to happiness may lead us to suspect that happiness does relatively little work in Aristotle's argument. Apparently the most important task is to discover the goods that will belong to our conception of the ultimate good, which we can then identify with happiness. The distinctive reason-giving force of appeals to goodness may suggest that appeals to happiness are unhelpful. And they are indeed unhelpful, if we were hoping that some independent conception of happiness would provide an effective method for discovering non-instrumental goods. Should we, then, conclude that Aristotle treats happiness as simply an aggregate of independently-recognized goods? Or does he take it to have some structure that gives some further reason beyond the reasons given by its component goods?³³ What, then, is the further reason?

With some over-simplification, we may say that the argument from happiness and the argument from goods correct each other, in so far as they prevent a one-sided concentration on happiness or on goodness. A one-sided concentration on happiness would allow us to adjust our desires to each other, but would not allow us to discriminate better from worse ends. A one-sided concentration on goods would neglect the way in which goods have to fit into a human life. While these are not two separate lines of argument in Aristotle, it is useful to distinguish the two threads in his conception of the one ultimate end that he calls both happiness and the final good. Aristotle expects our views about happiness to make some difference to our choices and actions, and hence it should make some difference to our beliefs about goods.

The connexion between beliefs about happiness and beliefs about non-instrumental goods may be found in Aristotle's views about the actions and states that are appropriate for human nature. His conception of human nature and its fulfilment is not altogether independent of convictions about goods and about virtues. Nor, however, is it simply a reflexion or summary of convictions about particular goods. Happiness is not a mere aggregate, but an organized system. The unifying plan is to be sought in the nature of human beings. Our views about non-instrumental goods are partly shaped by the fact that happiness is the good for a human being. The different elements in human nature interact, and their interaction explains the systematic connexion among goods.

³³ 'The very idea of constructing a compound end out of two or more independent ends may rouse suspicion. Is the compound to be thought of as a mere aggregate or as an organized system? If the former, the move to *eudaimonia* seems trivial. If the latter, if there is supposed to be a unifying plan, what is it?' (Ackrill, 'Eudaimonia' 22)

Now that I have tried to clarify the claim that happiness is a compound of non-instrumental goods, I would like to connect this clarification with Aristotle's views about the way in which happiness is composite. The *MM* and *EE* speak freely of parts of happiness, as we would expect if happiness is a compound of goods. The *EN* speaks of parts of happiness only in Book V (1129b18), where the reference to parts may reflect the origin of this book in the *EE*. But this relative silence about parts may not reflect any doubt about the compound character of happiness.³⁴ If what I have said about a unifying plan is right, we can see why Aristotle might want to emphasize the holistic character of happiness rather than its composite character, without wanting to deny that it has parts.

His eventual account of the human good as an activity of the soul is meant to specify the initial claim that the human good is a certain kind of life, and in particular the life of a rational agent. A creature that has a soul has one soul, not many souls, even though some of its functions would be sufficient for a type of soul if they stood alone. A human being, for instance, has a rational soul, not a rational soul plus a sensory soul plus a nutritive soul, even though he performs, in virtue of his rational soul, the vital functions that include sense-perception and nutrition. Similarly, he has a single life, not simply a combination of vital activities, and this life seeks to embody a single good, not simply a combination of goods. A human life is not simply a place where one can realize non-instrumental value; it seeks to realize the non-instrumental value appropriate for a human being. Aristotle's appeals to human nature explain not only why some things are non-instrumental goods, but also why they constitute a single good.

Our account of happiness and the good explains why Prichard is wrong to claim that eudaemonists cannot justify morality, and that they give us 'an answer that is not an answer'.³⁵ In his view, an appeal to happiness can give us only an internal reason, and therefore cannot explain why we should accept a categorical imperative of morality. We have found, however, that, according to Aristotle, appeals to happiness give reasons not only because they refer to what we already want, but also because they refer to the good. Since Aristotle does not reduce goodness to being desired, reasons that appeal to the good are external reasons. If categorical imperatives are those that rest on external reasons, Aristotle's conception of happiness and the ultimate good supports categorical imperatives.

Aristotle's appeals to happiness certainly offer internal reasons. He affirms that we already want happiness, and he takes this desire to give us a reason for choosing the actions that promote our happiness. But his appeals to happiness offer more than internal reasons. They also offer reasons based on good. The good is also something we desire, and so it is a source of internal reasons. But being good does not consist in being desired. In so far as something is good, it deserves to be desired, and we ought to desire

³⁴ 'One possibility worth considering is that he realizes in the *EN* that the notion of *parts* is really much too crude ... Aristotle is particularly conscious of the variety of ways in which different factors contribute to a good life, and also of the fact that the distinguishable is not necessarily separable.' (Ackrill 29)

³⁵ Prichard, 'Mistake' = *MW* 9.

it. This 'ought' does not express a purely hypothetical imperative. According to Prichard's conception of a categorical imperative, external reasons all support categorical imperatives. Since the good gives reasons in its own right, and not simply in so far as it is desired, it gives external reasons, and so it is a source of categorical imperatives.³⁶

We have found no reason, therefore, to believe that Aristotle treats happiness as a purely attractive end; for we have found that, in his view, the good is an appropriate object of desire because it is good, and that it is not good because it is an actual object of desire. If, therefore, virtue and virtuous actions are choiceworthy because of happiness, they are choiceworthy because of an end that we ought to desire because it is good. We have not eliminated deontic elements from the account of the ultimate good. Since Aristotle's account of the good does not make it purely attractive, the imperatives that it supports are not purely hypothetical, but categorical.

This discussion has allowed us to answer Prichard's criticisms of Aristotle. But his remarks on Aristotle are incidental to his attack on Plato as the source of the mistake that underlies one conception of moral philosophy. We should now return to this attack on Plato, to see whether our discussion of Aristotle has shown how Prichard can be answered.³⁷ His criticism turns on his interpretation of Plato's claims about happiness, and in particular on his view that Plato takes happiness to consist in pleasure and the satisfaction of desire. In his view, Plato takes on the task of connecting justice and happiness because he is a psychological hedonist, and so believes that we cannot be sufficiently motivated to act justly unless we also believe that justice maximizes our pleasure. Psychological hedonism, however, can be shown to conflict with evident instances of disinterested action.

We have seen why Prichard is wrong to regard eudaemonism as psychological hedonism. He may still be right to regard Plato and Aristotle as psychological egoists, but the version of psychological egoism that they maintain is compatible with the desire to act justly for its own sake, and so it is not subject to the counter-instances that Prichard adduces against psychological hedonism.³⁸ When Plato claims that the just person is happier and better off than other people, he does not mean that just people gain more pleasure or satisfy their strongest desire. He believes that they gain most pleasure (as we see from *Republic ix*), but this is a consequence of their being happiest;

³⁶ I have not argued that these appeals to happiness can explain why we ought to keep promises and carry out the other obligations that belong to morality. If what I have said so far is right, principles of prudence, as Aristotle understands them, express categorical imperatives, in so far as they refer to what is good for us, and not to what we want.

³⁷ Prichard is mistaken to suppose that Plato agrees that the philosophers sacrifice happiness to justice. Socrates reminds Glaucon that the ideal city is not designed for the exclusive happiness of the philosophers, but for the happiness of the whole city (519de). Plato does not concede the point that Prichard thinks he concedes. I have discussed this question in *Plato's Ethics* §204-5.

³⁸ A full discussion of eudaemonism as a version of psychological egoism requires an examination of Prichard's critique of this doctrine in the version maintained by Green.

it is not what their happiness consists in. If we use Aristotle's claims about happiness and the good to clarify Plato, his claims about justice and happiness are not open to Prichard's objections.

15. Aristotle and the Scholastics on the good

I have argued that Aristotle says enough to justify the conclusion that he holds an imperative conception of the good. But I have also acknowledged that his remarks on these questions are not as full as we might prefer them to be. This is often true of fundamental elements in his position. An expositor of Aristotle has the task of trying to capture the implications of Aristotle's relatively brief remarks.

Fortunately, the Scholastic expositors of Aristotle are equal to this task, and it will be useful to see how they expound the Aristotelian view. Their views are just as relevant as Aristotle's views to the main questions that we have discussed. Prichard does not make a purely historical claim about Plato and Aristotle. He makes a philosophical claim about what is open to someone who accepts a philosophical position with a specific character. In Prichard's view, anyone who takes the Why-question seriously and tries to justify morality by reference to happiness cannot understand moral obligation. To decide whether Prichard is right or wrong, we can consider Aristotelian views (i.e., views held by Aristotle and his successors) that accept the connexion that Prichard rejects between morality and happiness.

It is especially relevant to consider some Scholastic discussions of goodness and desire. They accept the priority of good to desire that Aristotle accepts, and, unlike Aristotle, they affirm it clearly and explore some of its implications. By doing so they strengthen our earlier arguments to show that, contrary to Sidgwick, goodness is an imperative rather than an attractive property.

Aquinas begins from a feature of Aristotle that we have already discussed, the connexion between good and desire. He notices that one might take the beginning of the EN to define the good as the desired, but he rejects this interpretation.

He clarifies the claim put forward, through the definition of good.³⁹ About this one should keep in mind that good is counted among the first things ... According to the truth of the matter, good is converted with being. Now first things cannot be clarified though any prior things, but they are clarified through posterior things, as causes are by their proper effects. Now since good is properly mover of desire, good is described through motion of desire, just as moving power is usually clarified through motion. (Aquinas, in EN §9)

Aquinas believes that Aristotle clarifies the prior notion of good by explaining its connexion to desire. The good is not simply the desired, but is necessarily a mover (motivum) of desire, and that is why it can be clarified by reference to desire. But it is

³⁹ The Leonine edn. reads 'diffinitionem'. The Marietti edn. reads 'effectum'.

1. manifestat propositum per diffinitionem boni. Circa quod considerandum est, quod bonum numeratur inter prima ... Prima autem non possunt notificari per aliqua priora, sed notificantur per posteriora, sicut causae per proprios effectus. Cum autem bonum proprie sit motivum appetitus, describitur bonum per motum appetitus, sicut solet manifestari vis motiva per motum. (Aquinas, in EN §9)

not simply the object of desire. It is the mover of desire because the good perfects whatever has it, and the good is the end that perfects desire.

A being is perfective of another not only according to the character of its species, but also according to the being it has in the nature of things. And in this way the good is perfective; for the good is in things, as the Philosopher says. But in so far as one being is in accordance with its being perfective and complete of another, it has the character of an end with respect to the thing that is perfected by it. And hence it is that all who define good correctly include in its character something that refers to its condition as an end. Whence the Philosopher says in Ethics Book I that they defined good excellently by saying that good is what all things desire. (Ver. q21 a1)

Since the character of good consists in this, that something is perfective of another as an end, whatever is found to have the character of an end also has the character of good. (Ver. q21 a2)

We can grasp the character of good by reference to desire not because good is to be defined as the desired, but because good perfects and completes whatever acquires it. Since completion and perfection are appropriate ends for desire, the good is an object of desire. In this explanation of the character of the good, the connexion to desire is indirect.

Aquinas, therefore, does not mean that the good is to be defined as whatever is actually desired, he intends the good to be prior to desire. This claim about priority appears to Cajetan to need some explanation. To provide the explanation, he compares the relation of goodness to desirability with the relation of colour to visibility.

What is said about something in the second way of saying per se is not included in the account (ratio) of that subject, but the converse is true, as is clear from Posterior Analytics I. But desirable is said about good in the second way of saying per se. Therefore good does not have the account of desirable, but the converse. The minor is proved. First because something is desirable because it is good, and not conversely. Secondly because good is the formal object of desire, but desirable is an extrinsic denomination taken from desire, and the relation is that of colour and visible; now it is established that visible is said about colour in the second way, from De Anima II.

To this one can say two things, corresponding to two ways in which something is taken to have the account of desirable, namely formally and fundamentally. If the desirable is taken formally, then good is said to have its account not as intrinsic, but as an attribute (passio). If, however, it is taken fundamentally, then good is said to have the account of desirable intrinsically, since a proper account of good is the foundation and proper cause of desirability, as colour is of visibility. And granted that each gloss is true without qualification, and that the first is derived from the beginning of St Thomas on the books of Ethics, still the second is directly intended in the claim put forward, since the question is about the intrinsic account of good.

But notice here that, though any of those <properties> assumed in the deduction of the account – namely good, perfect, being in act, and being – introduces a

foundation and cause of desirability, and for that reason the real identity between them is concluded, still only good introduces the proximate foundation of desirable, because only good signifies that thing that founds desirability in such a way that it founds and causes it.⁴⁰

Colour is not properly defined as visible, because its definition includes the facts about colour that explain its being visible; these are the features of colour that make it suitable to be seen. Similarly, the good is not to be defined as the desirable, because its definition should include the features that make the good suitable for being desired. Good is the proximate foundation of desirability because it explains desirability. Cajetan's view does justice to Aristotle's claims about the relation of the good to rational desire. If Cajetan is right, the identification of the ultimate good with happiness does not reduce the good to an object of desire. The identification implies that reasons derived from happiness are not limited to internal reasons, because reasons based on the good are external reasons.

Capreolus adds some detail to this sketch of an explanation, by trying to describe the feature of the good that explains desirability. In his view, perfection is the basis of facts about desirability. Being desirable is an attribute (*passio*) that follows the formal character (*ratio formalis*) of good, which is perfection.

And to the extent that one being is perfective of a second in accordance with its being, and is consummative, it has the character of an end with respect to the thing that is perfected by it. And hence it is that all correctly defining good put in its character something that bears on its relation to an end. Hence the Philosopher ... says that they have defined the good best [excellently?] saying that good is what all things seek. Thus, therefore, what is primarily and principally said to be good is a being that is perfective of another through the mode of an end.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Cajetan on Aquinas, *ST* 1a q5 a1. *illud quod dicitur de aliquo in secundo modo dicendi per se, non clauditur in ratione illius subiecti, sed e converse, ut patet I Poster. Sed appetibile dicitur de bono in secundo modo dicendi per se. ergo bonum non habet rationem appetibilis, sed e converso. – Minor probatur. Tum quia ideo aliquid est appetibile, quia bonum; et non e converso. Tum quia bonum est obiectum formale appetitus; appetibile autem est denominatio extrinseca sumpta ab appetitu; et habet se sicut color et visibile; constat autem quod visibile dicitur de colore in secundo modo, ex II de Anima [cap 7, n1] Ad hoc potest dici dupliciter, iuxta duos modos quibus accipitur aliquid habere rationem appetibilis, scilicet formaliter et fundamentaliter. Si sumatur ly appetibile formaliter, tunc bonum dicitur habere rationem eius, non ut intrinsecam, sed ut passionem. Si vero sumatur fundamentaliter, tunc bonum dicitur habere rationem appetibilis intrinsece; quoniam propria ratio boni est fundamentum et causa propria appetibilitatis, sicut color visibilitatis. – Et licet utraque glossa sit absolute vera, et prima ex principio s. Thomae super libros Ethicorum habeatur, secunda tamen in proposito esst directe intenta; quoniam de intrinseca boni ratione sit quaestio. Sed adverte hic quod, quamvis quodlibet horum quae in deductione rationis assumpta sunt, scilicet bonum, perfectum, ens in actu, et ens, importet fundamentum et causam appetibilis; et propterea concluditur identitas realis inter ea: **solum tamen bonum importat proximum fundamentum appetibilis; quia solum bonum significat rem illam quae fundat appetibilitatem, ut fundat et causat eam ...***

⁴¹ Capreolus, *in 1Sent* d3 q3 a1 concl.3 = *Defensiones* i, 481b. In quantum autem unum ens est perfectivum alterius secundum suum esse, et consummativum, habet rationem finis respectu illius quod

Since the character of good consists in being perfective of something, those who make desirability (appetibilitas) part of the character of good are explicating good by something posterior (iv 387b).

Suarez presents a similar account of how goodness explains desirability. He argues that good includes fitness (convenientia) to desire.

From what has been said about the character of good, we can understand how good and desirable are related. For some think that the same thing is signified formally and synonymously by these words, and that consequently good adds to being a reference to the desirable ... Others distinguish between good and desirable, as Cajetan does ..., where he says that desirable is taken in two ways, fundamentally and formally. In the first way, he says, good and desirable are the same, and in this way he expounds St Thomas there; for the primary character because of which a thing is such that it can move desire is the goodness that it has with reference to the desiring agent, in which is included not only being and perfection of the thing in itself, but in so far as it has some fitness with the desiring agent. But in the second way, he says, good is distinguished from desirable, at least in character or designation, because desirable as such introduces a reference to desire and an extrinsic designation coming from it, or arising from fitness and proportion between good and desire. Therefore desirable explicates something formally that good as such does not say, because of which this causal <statement> is true - because a thing is good, it is thereby desirable; just as this causal <statement> is also true – because a thing is illuminated and coloured, it is thereby visible. For in this way desirable is compared to good as visible to illuminated. ...⁴²

ab eo perficitur. Et inde est quod omnes recte diffinientes bonum ponunt in ratione eius aliquid quod pertinet ad habitudinem finis. Unde Philosophus ... dicit quod *bonum optime diffinierunt dicentes quod bonum est quod omnia appetunt*. Sic ergo primo et principaliter dicitur bonum ens perfectivum alterius per modum finis. (481b).

⁴² Suarez, *DM* x 1.19. Ex his quae de ratione boni dicta sunt, intelligere licet quomodo se habeant bonum et appetibile. Aliqui enim existimant idem formaliter et synonyme his vocibus significari et consequenter aiunt bonum supra ens addere respectum ad appetibile ... Alii distinguunt inter bonum et appetibile, ut Cajetan., I, q. 5, a. 5, ubi ait appetibile sumi dupliciter, scilicet, fundamentaliter et formaliter. Priori modo ait esse idem bonum et appetibile, et ita exponit D. Thomam ibi; nam proxima ratio ob quam res habet ut possit movere appetitum est bonitas eius quam habet respectu appetentis, in qua includitur non sola entitas et perfectio rei secundum se, sed prout habet aliquam convenientiam cum appetente. Posteriori autem modo dicit distingui bonum ab appetibili saltem ratione seu denominatione, quia appetibile ut sic importat respectum ad appetitum et denominationem extrinsecam provenientem ab illo, seu consurgentem ex convenientia et proportione inter bonum et appetitum; aliquid ergo formaliter explicat appetibile quod non dicit bonum ut sic, ratione cuius haec causalis vera est: quia res est bona, ideo est appetibilis; sicut haec etiam causalis est vera: quia res est lucida et colorata, ideo est visibilis; ita enim comparatur appetibile ad bonum sicut visibile ad lucidum.

Capreolus 481b cites Aquinas, *Ver* q21 a6 and a1. See also *Defensiones* iv 380b.

Suarez asserts that Capreolus is the first to explain Cajetan's thesis that goodness is prior to desirability.⁴³ The reference to perfection maintains an explanatory asymmetry between good and fitness to be desired. Facts about good are the basis of its fitness to be desired, but facts about its being desired do not make it good.

16. 'Good' and 'ought'

This explication of goodness in relation to desire introduces fitness to explain desirability. Suarez can reasonably claim support for this explication in Aquinas' claims about the connexion between goodness and fitness.

For hence it is evident that every agent acts because of an end, because any agent at all tends towards something determinate. Now that towards which an agent tends determinately has to be fitting to it; for it would not tend towards it unless because of some fittingness to itself. But what is fitting to something is good for it. Therefore every agent acts because of a good. (Aquinas, ScG iii 3)⁴⁴ Similarly, Aquinas connects goodness with what is 'due' (debitum) to the good thing, or what it ought (debet) to have.

Now something is good in so far as matter is perfected through form and a potentiality through a proper act; but something is bad in so far as <a potentiality> is deprived of the act it ought to have. (ScG iii 4).⁴⁵

As Sylvester of Ferrara explains, Aquinas understands what is proper or fitting to something with the actualization that ought to belong to it.

Notice that St Thomas is careful to add the 'proper'. Because the good of a potentiality is not being under any old act whatever, but only under the act that is proper and that ought to be for it, just as it is not the good of water to be under heat, but under cold, which is the perfection that ought to be for it. For, granted that every form and act in its own right is a sort of perfection, still it is not the good or the perfection of each thing, taking perfection as what is due (debetur) to <its> nature, and in accordance with which nature is said to be complete in its being.⁴⁶

⁴³ The reference that Suarez gives is incorrect.

⁴⁴ Aquinas, ScG iii 3. Inde enim manifestum est omne agens agere propter finem, quia quodlibet agens tendit ad aliquod determinatum. Id autem ad quod agens determinate tendit, oportet esse conveniens ei: non enim tenderet in ipsum nisi propter aliquam convenientiam ad ipsum. Quod autem est conveniens alicui, est ei bonum. Ergo omne agens agit propter bonum.

⁴⁵ ScG iii 4. Bonum autem est secundum quod materia est perfecta per formam, et potentia per actum proprium: malum autem secundum quod est privata actu debito.

⁴⁶ Sylvester ap. Aquinas, ScG Leonine edn., xiv 12a. Adverte ... quod caute addit Sanctus Thomas *ly proprium*. Quia potentiae bonum non est esse sub quocumque actu, sed tantum sub proprio et sibi debito; sicut non est bonum aquae esse sub caliditate, sed sub frigiditate, quae est perfectio sibi debita. Licet enim, omnis forma at actus secundum se sit perfectio quaedam, non tamen est bonum aut perfectio uniuscuiusque, accipiendo perfectionem pro eo quod naturae debetur, et secundum quam dicitur natura in suo esse completa.

This Scholastic account is a plausible expansion of Aristotle's claim that we desire something because it seems good rather than the reverse. Rational desire (*voluntas*, *boulêsis*) aims at the good because the good has the properties that make it reasonable for us to desire it. This is the object that we try to find in order to focus our rational desire correctly.

If the Scholastic account expands Aristotle plausibly, we can answer a question that we raised about Sidgwick. We saw that Sidgwick treats goodness as an attractive property. Though he recognizes that an imperative analysis that introduces a dictate of reason might appear preferable, he believes that this appearance is misleading, and prefers an attractive analysis. We have now found that Aristotle and the Aristotelian tradition do not agree with Sidgwick, because they prefer an imperative analysis. Sidgwick's reference to a dictate of reason captures the Scholastic claim that goodness is the proximate foundation of desirability and that it makes something fit to be desired. Since it is the foundation of desirability, goodness needs some feature that makes it fit for desire. To be fit for desire is to have some feature that deserves desire or makes desire reasonable. It is hard to explain these terms without saying that the good ought to be desired and pursued. Hence the good seems to have an imperative character.

Aquinas assumes that good has this imperative character when he explains the fitting by reference to what ought to be. In his discussion of evil he describes the good as what makes the matter perfect through the form and makes the potentiality perfect through its proper actuality, whereas evil is what deprives something of the actuality it ought to have. Similarly, Suarez explains something's goodness as the perfection that it ought to have in itself.

And in this way good and perfect are converted; indeed they are altogether the same in so far as what is called good is what is good in itself or <in other words> has the goodness, that is to say, the perfection due to it; but this is nothing other than having the essence or entity that is due to it. (Suarez, *DM* x 1.15)⁴⁷

This relation between goodness and desirability implies that good is a source of external reasons. It does not give us a reason to pursue something to satisfy a desire. It also gives us a reason to act for the sake of an end that we ought to pursue.

Still, they take the basic facts relevant to choice and action to be essentially imperative. Appeals to happiness give reasons not only because they refer to what we already want, but also because they refer to the good. Since Aristotle does not reduce goodness to being desired, reasons that appeal to the good do not appeal to a purely attractive end. They appeal to an end that ought to be pursued, deserves to be pursued, and is an appropriate object of pursuit for rational agents.

⁴⁷ Atque hoc modo bonum et perfectum convertuntur, immo sunt omnino idem prout bonum dicit id quod in se bonum est seu quod habet bonitatem, id est, perfectionem sibi debitam; hoc autem nihil aliud est quam habere essentiam vel entitatem sibi debitam ... (Suarez, *DM* x 1.15)

17. Reply to Prichard

We can now return to Prichard's objection that eudaemonists cannot answer the question that we want them to answer. In his view, an appeal to happiness can give us only an internal reason, and therefore cannot explain why we should accept a categorical imperative of morality. We have found, however, that, according to Aristotle, appeals to happiness give reasons not only because they refer to what we already want, but also because they refer to the good. Since Aristotle does not reduce goodness to being desired, reasons that appeal to the good are external reasons. If categorical imperatives are those that rest on external reasons, Aristotle's conception of happiness and the ultimate good supports categorical imperatives.

I do not deny that Aristotle's appeals to happiness offer internal reasons. He affirms that we already want happiness, and he takes this desire to give us a reason for choosing the actions that promote our happiness. But appeals to happiness offer more than internal reasons. They also offer reasons based on good. The good is also something we desire, and so it is also a source of internal reasons. But being good does not consist in being desired. In so far as something is good, it deserves to be desired, and we ought to desire it. This 'ought' does not express a purely hypothetical imperative. Since the good gives reasons in its own right, and not simply in so far as it is desired, it gives external reasons, and so it is a source of categorical imperatives.

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