

IN WHAT SENSE WRONG CONCEPTIONS OF *EUDAIMONIA* GET AT LEAST SOME THINGS RIGHT: ON THE PURPOSE OF *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS* I.8.*

Fernando Martins Mendonça
Universidade Federal de Uberlândia

Abstract: In a puzzling sentence, Aristotle claims in *Nicomachean Ethics* I.8 that proponents of unsuccessful accounts of *eudaimonia* have grasped if not many, at least some aspects of it correctly. This paper tries to explain in detail what this sentence means in the context by identifying what exactly was said correctly by the proponents of unsuccessful accounts. As a result, I submit, Aristotle has a rhetorical procedure, since Aristotle would be making some effort directed to convince people recalcitrant to his account of *eudaimonia*.

Keywords: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Eudaimonia, Method.

Resumo: Em uma frase de difícil entendimento, Aristóteles, em *Ética a Nicômaco* I.8, afirma que proponentes de concepções equivocadas sobre a *eudaimonia* compreenderam, se não muitos, ao menos alguns aspectos dela corretamente. Esse artigo tenta explicar o que essa frase significa em seu contexto identificando o que exatamente foi dito corretamente pelos proponentes das concepções equivocadas. Como resultado, eu defendo que Aristóteles apresenta um procedimento retórico, já que ele estaria se esforçando para convencer pessoas recalcitrantes em relação a sua concepção de *eudaimonia*.

Palavras-chave: Aristóteles, *Ética a Nicômaco*, *eudaimonia*, método.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* I.8 (hereafter, *NE*)¹, Aristotle is committed to some sort of effort to show that his definition of *eudaimonia*, advanced in the previous chapter, is compatible with some adversary conceptions of this subject. The whole chapter is divided into two sections by this sentence:

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¹ According to Bywater's chapters division of the *NE*.

T1: οὐδετέρους δὲ τούτων εὐλογον διαμαρτάνειν τοῖς ὅλοις, ἀλλ' ἔν γέ τι ἢ καὶ τὰ πλεῖστα κατορθοῦν. (1098b28-29)

T1: [A]nd it is not reasonable to suppose that either set of people are wholly wrong, but rather that they are getting it right at least in some one respect, or else in most respects. (1098b28-29; Rowe's translation²).

The first section is composed of an introductory paragraph and the first set of conceptions which, even if not equivalent to Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*, are seen as compatible with it. The second section is characterized by conceptions which seem to be more recalcitrant to Aristotle's doctrine, and nevertheless, their proponents are still said to get at least some aspects of it correctly, as seen in T1.

Some interpreters have defended that, in I.8, Aristotle is, in a way or another, implementing the method of *endoxa* or the dialectic method as depicted in *EN VII 1*³. According to this interpretation, Aristotle would be trying to save all or most reputed opinions (*endoxa*) on *eudaimonia*, since these opinions carry some truth in them, which implies that Aristotle reaches or proves his conception of *eudaimonia* through a regimented form of *aporia* solving that consists in disentangling conflicting reputed opinions. In recent years, however, alternative interpretations claimed, in a quite compelling way, that Aristotle's procedure in *EN I.8* is neither dialectical nor an implementation of the method of *endoxa* presented in *EN VII.1*. Instead of being concerned with saving opinions, Aristotle is investigating facts⁴, which is in accordance with some important aspects of his doctrine of scientific inquiry. I think that this kind of interpretation, which can be found for instance in Karbowski (2015; 2019), Devereux (2015), and Salmieri (2009) is fundamentally correct as it grasps the relation between ethics and scientific inquiry correctly and generally locates I.8 within that relation. However, my focus is not to discuss whether Aristotle's procedure is dialectical or not⁵, but to offer a closer reading of the whole chapter and a more detailed discussion for a more complete understanding of the meaning of T1. This is important because this account is missing in most of the

² Unless mentioned in contrary, all translated quotations of the *NE* are from Rowe's translation (2002).

³ E.g. Reeve (1995, p. 55), Barnes (1980, p. 495), Crisp (1991, p. 522), Irwin (1999, p. 186-187, 326-327), Scott (2015, p. 197).

⁴ I will specify and defend in the next sections a precise meaning of 'investigating facts'. For now, a general meaning of facts as what happens suffices.

⁵ My interpretation is compatible with some sort of dialectical reading [to be specified below] of the *EN* and with what I am going to call the scientific reading.

literature about I.8. In general, this chapter has not received as much attention as other methodological passages in *EN* I, and when it is discussed, some important exegetical aspects I try to highlight here are not even mentioned.

My aim in this paper is to detail what Aristotle does when he scrutinizes each mistaken conception of *eudaimonia*, why he would consider their proponents as getting right what *eudaimonia* is at least in some respect, if not in many, and what exactly he means by that. To achieve my aim, I will need to advance how I understand Aristotle's arguments in I.5 against some ways of life as being flourishing lives; the following step will consist in interpreting how and why Aristotle can affirm that the proponents of unsuitable candidates for a flourishing live somehow get things right in I.8. If my arguments are correct, I will end up with an interpretation that shows that Aristotle's procedure in analyzing opinions fulfills a rhetorical role in his inquiry concerned with facts intended as a means to convince people of his definition of *eudaimonia* in I.7.

I – *EN* I 5 and the failed candidates for the chief good.

In the *NE* I.1-2, Aristotle, in a controversial fashion⁶, concludes that the subordination chain of ends has its limit in an end that is desired for the sake of itself and never for the sake of other ends, and this ultimate end of our actions and choices is the final end and the highest human good (cf. 1094b7). This argument does not rely on opinions. No *endoxon* is needed to establish the premises of the argument or to ascertain that they are true. Aristotle relies on how ends are sought, and this suffices to conclude that there is a final end. But knowing that there is such an end is a different question from knowing what end it is. In I.4, Aristotle put this question forward:

Λέγωμεν δ' ἀναλαβόντες, ἐπειδὴ πᾶσα γνῶσις καὶ προαίρεσις ἀγαθοῦ τινὸς ὁρέγεται, τί ἐστὶν οὗ λέγομεν τὴν πολιτικὴν ἐπιεσθαι καὶ τί τὸ πάντων ἀρότατον τῶν πρακτικῶν ἀγαθῶν. ὀνόματι μὲν οὖν σχεδὸν ὑπὸ τῶν πλείστων ὁμολογεῖται τὴν γὰρ εὐδαιμονίαν καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ οἱ χαριέντες λέγουσιν, τὸ δ' εὖ ζῆν καὶ τὸ εὖ πράττειν ταῦτόν ὑπολαμβάνουσι τῷ εὐδαιμονεῖν περὶ δὲ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας, τί ἐστίν, ἀμφισβητοῦσι καὶ οὐχ ὁμοίως οἱ πολλοὶ τοῖς σοφοῖς ἀποδιδόσασιν. (1095a 15-22)

⁶ There is a long discussion whether Aristotle's argument is valid or fallacious. A brief but clear introduction to this problem can be found in Bostock (2000, p.9). As it is not important for my goal, I will not discuss it.

Let us then resume the argument: since every sort of knowledge, and every undertaking, seeks after some good, let us say what it is that we say political expertise seeks, and what the topmost of all achievable goods is. Pretty well most people are agreed about what to call it: both ordinary people and people of quality say 'happiness', and suppose that living well and doing well are the same thing as being happy. But they are in dispute about what happiness actually is, and ordinary people do not give the same answer as intellectuals. (1095a 15-22).

The highest good is almost uncontroversially called '*eudaimonia*', and it is acknowledged that *eudaimonia* is living and acting well, but it remains controversial what good is the highest of all, that is, what kind of goal-directed living is the best life. Wise people's answer to this question is different from most people's answer. If both groups were right on this matter, the highest human good would be different for different people. Some people identify this life-directing goal as palpable and visible things (cf. 1095a22), like pleasure, wealth, or honor, while other people assume that this goal is good in itself and cause of all other goods. Not all the myriad of conceptions of *eudaimonia* is worth discussing and Aristotle will take as more serious candidates those that are more clearly identified as such and those that seem to be backed by arguments (cf. 1095a29-30).

After a confessed digression (1095b14), Aristotle returns in I.5 to the scrutiny he initiated in I.4, assuming that it seems that people, not unreasonably, base their conceptions of *eudaimonia* on their way of living.

τὸ γὰρ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν οὐκ ἀλόγως εἴοικασιν ἐκ τῶν βίων ὑπολαμβάνειν οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ καὶ φορτικώτατοι τὴν ἡδονὴν διδὼν καὶ τὸν βίον ἀγαπῶσι τὸν ἀπολαυστικόν. τρεῖς γάρ εἰσι μάλιστα οἱ προύχοντες, ὁ τε νῦν εἰρημένος καὶ ὁ πολιτικός καὶ τρίτος ὁ θεωρητικός. (1095b.14-19).⁷

⁷ Is the adverbial expression 'οὐκ ἀλόγως' modifying 'εἴοικασιν' or 'ὑπολαμβάνειν'? Translators disagree about it. On the one hand, Rowe (2002) and Crisp (2014) make the option for the former alternative, on the other hand, Natali (1999), Irwin (1999), Reeve (2014), Bartlett and Collins (2011) and Beresford (2020) make the option for the latter. I cannot see how the first alternative is philosophically viable. The verb 'εἴοικα', which in this context means "it seems", modified by the adverbial expression, would be taken as "it not unreasonably seems" and the adverbial expression would lose its strength, since 'εἴοικα' carries the sense of seeming reasonable or probable. Besides, Aristotle has already said that he would not take into consideration but promising opinions, excluding already unreasonable ones (1095a28-30). Modifying 'ὑπολαμβάνω', the adverbial expression makes the sentence be taken as claiming that people not unreasonably form their conception of *eudaimonia* based on their lives, what preserves the force of this expression and makes good philosophical sense. Another question is what the subject of 'εἴοικασιν' is. One

On the good and happiness, people seem not unreasonably to judge from their lives; most people, i.e. the most vulgar suppose it to be pleasure; that is just why they favour the life of consumption. The kinds of lives that stand out here are especially three: the one just mentioned; the political life; and the life of reflection. (1095b.14-19) (Rowe's translation modified.)

The three forms of life people conceived as being the best life fulfill the condition of being the ones most clearly identified (*cf.*1095a29-30) and they are not mere opinions about what life is the best. In fact, an important aspect of the chapter is that these conceptions are not sets of well-thought articulated beliefs about *eudaimonia*, but kinds of lives articulated around a good taken as architectonic, that is, a good that supposedly stops the series of subordination of goods (EN I 2 1094a18-22). Aristotle is not consulting an inventory of opinions; he takes the way people actually live to identify the good that has that salient feature of stopping the subordination series of goods⁸. For him, it is a matter of fact that lives are lived with eyes on such a good⁹. Then, the identification of the three forms of lives is important because it allows Aristotle to pinpoint what good is taken as the chief good in each form of life and assess this good in accordance with some criteria it must fulfill as a candidate for the highest good. Having a good as the chief-good means that it controls and subordinates all other goods. In a more precise way, once a kind of good is assumed as the highest, it becomes the end for the sake of which all decisions are made. No matter whether it is taken under the umbrella of inclusivist or dominant interpretation of *eudaimonia*, the point is that a kind of good must stop the subordination series of goods and this good will be the most important in

option is to take 'οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ φορτικώτατοι', following Rowe (2002), Bartlett&Collins (2011) and Gauthier&Jolif (2002). Another possibility is to read the sentence with an hidden subject and supply one in the translation, as Natali (1999), Irwin (1999), Reeve (2014), Crisp (2014), and Beresford (2020) did. The second possibility introduces a symmetrical treatment of all candidates for the highest good as goods that people do take as the most important of all in their lives. The first option creates a somewhat strange scenario where Aristotle takes the life of pleasure from how some people live, and we are left with no reason why Aristotle picked the other kinds of lives.

⁸ This is also clear at the opening sentence of the *Politics*: τοῦ γὰρ εἶναι δοκοῦντος ἀγαθοῦ χάριν πάντα πράττουσι πάντες "for everyone performs every action for the sake of what he takes to be good" (I.1 1252a2-3 – Reeve's (1998) translation).

⁹ In the *Eudemian Ethics* I.2 1214b6-11, the argument is slightly different, since Aristotle does not commit himself to the stronger claim that all people have such a chief good, but only who is capable of organizing her life in accordance with her decision (προαίρεσις) for the sake of a goal in which the good life consists.

the sense of being the one sought for the sake of itself and never for the sake of other good.

By being the good that stops the subordination series of goods, the chief good has some formal features, that is, by being so, it implies some features. In fact, if it stops this series, it must not be decided upon for the sake of something else. A further implication is that this kind of good requires a certain way of organizing the pursuit of other goods according to the priority determined by deliberation, which means that one's flourishing life may demand her to postpone or deny satisfaction of some desires or attainment of some goods in order to promote the highest good¹⁰.

Equipped with this conception of the chief-good, Aristotle goes forward and tries to advance the reasons for not taking neither the life of enjoyment, nor the political life as fulfilling these formal conditions embedded in the notion of the chief-good.

The many and the most vulgar people live the life of enjoyment, having pleasure as their highest good. Aristotle dedicates no more than a few words to dismiss pleasure as fulfilling the requirements for being the chief good. It goes as though it was obvious for his audience that pleasure is not the highest good, despite being elected by most people, who take as examples of this sort of life some people in high-profile public positions. No argument is advanced for this dismissal. It would certainly be strange dismissing the most common conception of good live with no reason given for that. Aristotle, when depicting how people living like that behave, says only: οἱ μὲν οὖν πολλοὶ παντελῶς ἀνδραποδώδεις φαίνονται βοσκημάτων βίον προαιρούμενοι “Now most of the utterly slavish sort of people obviously decide in favour of a life that belongs to grazing cattle” (1095b19-20). Why does living like that not fulfill the requirements to be the chief good? The answer to this question is not explicitly given, but it seems that it consists in that having pleasure as the chief good is not consistent with the organization and hierarchy of goods presented in the first chapters of *EN*. In fact, grazing cattle are animals that follow immediate pleasures irrespectively of any kind of structure based of a priority of some goods in relation to others. Prioritizing goods is such an important aspect of *eudaimonia* that Aristotle makes it a condition for one to be a suitable listener of his lessons of ethics: ἔτι δὲ τοῖς πάθεισιν ἀκολουθητικὸς ὢν ματαίως ἀκούσεται καὶ ἀνωφελῶς, ἐπειδὴ τὸ τέλος ἐστὶν οὐ γνῶσις ἀλλὰ πρῶξις. “What is more, because they have a tendency to be led by the emotions, it will be without point or use for them to listen, since

¹⁰ This is the reason why Aristotle demands his audience to be capable of not following affections if they want to take his lessons profitably (cf. *EN* 1.3 1095a3-5)

the end is not knowing things but doing them.” (1095a4-6). Then, life of pleasure as the highest good has no structured direction. If this is so, there is a good argument based on the notion of the chief good to dismiss the life of enjoyment as the best life, which, it is worth noting, does not rely on the value of such pleasures in themselves.

The second form of life is the political life, which takes honor ($\tau\bar{\iota}\mu\eta$) as the highest good. This is the life held by people who are more refined and dedicated to action. The argument against honor as the highest good has some steps not completely clear, but the gist of it is clear enough. Honor, besides being more superficial than *eudaimonia*, is not something that results from one’s action, since it is bestowed by another people. No matter how often one acts well, she will not be honored if a different person does not honor her. *Eudaimonia*, however, is an achievable good (1095a16-17), which implies that it depends in a relevant way on the agent and is difficult to be taken away, differently from honor. Another reason to not take honor as the chief good is that many people seeking it attribute to it a relative value, since they rather prefer being honored by good and excellent people than by bad ones. If honor were taken as something valuable in itself, it would not be more or less valuable in relation to who bestows it¹¹. After dismissing honor as the highest good, Aristotle takes the hypothesis of excellence ($\acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\tau\eta$) as the highest good. However, one can be excellent and still not be active or suffer significant infortunes, but *eudaimonia* is acting and living well. Therefore, excellence cannot be the chief good (1095b30-1096a1). The life dedicated to money is easily dismissed as a candidate for the best life because of the instrumental value of money, albeit *eudaimonia* is the final end and never instrumental to any other good (1096a5-10). As Aristotle does not consider the theoretic life in Book I, it plays no role in the chapters we are concerned with.

Now, Aristotle does refute, on the basis of the merely formal features of the notion of *eudaimonia*, pleasure, honor, virtue and wealth as the good that stops the subordination series of goods. However, none of his arguments is based on their value as goods. Aristotle never ever questions in I.5 whether they are goods or are somehow present in the best life. This is an important aspect of *EN* I 5, and it plays a relevant role in Aristotle argumentative strategy in Book I. These goods are taken under scrutiny again in I 8, as we are going to see.

¹¹ In some passages, as for example in I.7 1097b1-5, Aristotle is committed to honor as having intrinsic value. I do not need to deal with the intricacies of his conception of honor. All I need is to pinpoint that in I.5, some people who take it as the highest good attribute a relative value to honor even if agreeing that *eudaimonia* has no relative value.

II – Reassessment of the goods that failed as candidates for the chief good.

EN I.8 elaborates on the conception of *eudaimonia* defined in chapter I.7. The well-known definition of *eudaimonia* as the activity of the soul in accordance with the most complete and best excellence determines how the subordination series of goods is properly stopped (cf. I.7 1098a16-18)¹². All subordinate goods are sought for the sake of the best accomplishment of the human function. It means that one must organize her life in such a way that she must prioritize some goods over others, or postpone the achievement, or enjoyment of some goods in order to achieve a better and more complete good. The problem an agent must face is what goods are part of this kind of life. Aristotle himself seems to touch on this point immediately after defining *eudaimonia*, saying that once the conception of the best life is sketched correctly, one can fill in the details¹³. This overall picture seems to be true for most interpretations of Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia*. EN I.8 is, even still in broad lines, an attempt to specify goods that are part of the best life.

The first lines of this chapter refer back to the definition of *eudaimonia* and states that the investigation must tackle what is said about it in addition to the premises and conclusions of Aristotle's argument:

Σκεπτόν δὲ περὶ αὐτῆς οὐ μόνον ἐκ τοῦ συμπεράσματος καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τῶν λεγομένων περὶ αὐτῆς τῷ μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεῖ πάντα συνάδει τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, τῷ δὲ ψευδεῖ ταχὺ διαφωνεῖ τάληθές. (1098b9-12).

But we must check over it not only on the basis of our conclusion and the premisses of our argument, but also on the basis of the things people say about it: for a true view will have all the characteristic properties¹⁴ in harmony with it,

¹² I will not discuss the intricacies involved in the definition of *eudaimonia*. What is important for me is that Aristotle sees his definition as the highest good that subordinates all other goods and is not subordinated by any good.

¹³ Περιγεγράφθω μὲν οὖν τάγαθὸν ταύτη· δεῖ γὰρ ἴσως ὑποτιπῶσαι πρῶτον, εἴθ' ὕστερον ἀναγράψαι. δόξειε δ' ἂν παντός εἶναι προαγαγεῖν καὶ διαρθρῶσαι τὰ καλῶς ἔχοντα τῇ περιγραφῇ, καὶ ὁ χρόνος τῶν τοιοῦτων εὐρητῆς ἢ συνεργός ἀγαθός εἶναι· "Let the good, then, be sketched in this way; for perhaps we need to give an outline first, and fill in the detail later. To develop and articulate those elements in the sketch that are as they should be would seem to be something anyone can do, and time seems to be good at discovering such things, or helping us to discover them" (1098a20-24)

¹⁴ In section III I offer a justification for translating 'τὰ ὑπάρχοντα' as 'the characteristic properties'.

while a false one quickly finds itself in discord with what is true. (1098b9-12 – Rowe’s translation modified).

What is said about *eudaimonia* is easily grasped reading the chapter. Aristotle will cope with some conceptions of *eudaimonia* that are quite transparent throughout the text. What is interesting about these conceptions is that some of them have been dismissed in I.5 as good candidates for being the chief good and, in I.8, they are reassessed, and nonetheless Aristotle will say that it is not reasonable that who have proposed them are completely mistaken about *eudaimonia*.

In the first section of I.8, the first conception Aristotle considers is the ancient one and agreed-upon by philosophers which take the end as certain actions and activity and among the goods of the soul¹⁵. How it agrees with the definition of *eudaimonia* is clear. In the *ergon* argument, Aristotle says that the human function is an activity of the soul and in I.4, he affirms that it is agreed that the meaning of the word ‘*eudaimonia*’ (cf. I.4 1094b19) is acting well and living well. Now, it is noteworthy what exactly Aristotle means by using the adverb ‘ὁρθῶς’ (1098b18). What is said correctly (ὁρθῶς) is that the end (τὸ τέλος), i.e. *eudaimonia*, is some sort (τινῆς) of actions and activities. In this context, there is no further specification of what sort of actions and activities *eudaimonia* consists in except that these actions and activities must relate to human soul, since *eudaimonia* is a good of the soul (cf. 1098b14-16). Thus, this conception is said correctly, but should ‘correct’ here be taken as ‘equivalent’ or as ‘adequate account’? ‘Correct’ in this context should rather be taken as ‘compatible’. Such a conception *is not equivalent to Aristotle conception of eudaimonia*, which has some qualifications of great relevance. *It is correct only in a much vaguer sense in which both Aristotle’s conception and this opinion are true because the latter is a very generic statement about eudaimonia* and as such it encompasses the former, which is, according to Aristotle, the correct specification of the actions and activities in which

¹⁵ ὥστε καλῶς ἂν λέγοιτο κατὰ γε ταύτην τὴν δόξαν παλαιὰν οὔσαν καὶ ὁμολογουμένην ὑπὸ τῶν φιλοσοφούντων. ὀρθῶς δὲ καὶ ὅτι πράξεις τινὲς λέγονται καὶ ἐνέργειαι τὸ τέλος· οὕτω γὰρ τῶν περὶ ψυχῆν ἀγαθῶν γίνεται καὶ οὐ τῶν ἐκτός· “So what we have been said will be right at any rate according to this view, which is an old one, and has the agreement of those who reflect philosophically. The account will be right too in so far as certain actions and activities are being identified as the end; for in this way the end turns out to belong among goods of the soul and not among external goods.” (1098b16-20 – Rowe’s translation modified.).

eudaimonia consists. However, the correctness in such a generic level is little enlightening about the nature of the actions and activities *eudaimonia* requires¹⁶.

After these opinions that agree straightforwardly with Aristotle's conception, there is a second set of opinions, which are in a way or another recalcitrant to it. How Aristotle regards them is important and deserves a closer look.

T2 – Φαίνεται δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐπιζητούμενα τὰ περὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ἄπανθ' ὑπάρχειν τῷ λεγθέντι. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ἀρετὴ τοῖς δὲ φρόνησις ἄλλοις δὲ σοφία τις εἶναι δοκεῖ, τοῖς δὲ ταῦτα ἢ τούτων τι μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἢ οὐκ ἄνευ ἡδονῆς ἕτεροι δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐκτός εὐετηρίαν συμπαλαμβάνουσιν. τούτων δὲ τὰ μὲν πολλοὶ καὶ παλαιοὶ λέγουσιν, τὰ δὲ ὀλίγοι καὶ ἔνδοξοι ἀνδρες· (1098b22-28).

T2 – Also all the things that are looked for in relation to happiness appear to belong to what was said it is. For some people think it is excellence, others that it is wisdom, others a kind of intellectual accomplishment; others think that it is these, or one of these, together with pleasure or not without pleasure, while others include external prosperity as well. Some of these views have been held by many people from ancient times, while some belong to a few people of high reputation. (1098b22-28. Rowe's translation modified).

T2 marks off the change from the first set of things said about *eudaimonia* to the second. The things searched or required (τὰ ἐπιζητούμενα) for the best life and believed to belong to it are listed in T2's second sentence. In the first sentence, however, there is no clear indication of what kind of predicative relation holds between *eudaimonia* and τὰ ἐπιζητούμενα. All Aristotle says is that a relation between them exists. The following sentence presents an important step in which Aristotle lists the things searched (τὰ ἐπιζητούμενα) for *eudaimonia* as proposed conceptions of what *eudaimonia* is. Their proponents comprehended some of the aspects of the best life that are being searched (τὰ ἐπιζητούμενα) as what *eudaimonia* is¹⁷. To some people, it is excellence; to others, *phronesis*; while others affirm that it is *sophia*. Some say that they all are required,

¹⁶ More than that could be said. Even different and competing accounts can be in agreement in a very generic level. The proposition "*Eudaimonia* consists in some sort of actions and activities" is true for both Aristotle's account and for one's defending that pleasure is the highest good, but how it is going to be cashed out inside each account will be different. In syllogistic structure, the same conclusion can be explained by different premisses, so that the same sentence present in the conclusion would be held as true for competing syllogisms, but explained differently. I do not need to discuss this any longer here, since my interest is only to show that the same sentence can be part of competing and irreconcilable accounts.

¹⁷ Note that 'εὐδαιμονία' in line 23 is the subject of the verb 'εἶναι' in line 24.

some say that one of them, but pleasure must follow them. Some people, in turn, affirm that it is prosperity, in terms of external goods. Some of these conceptions are held by many people of ancient time, while the others are held by few reputed people. It is noteworthy that these goods in a way or another are involved in the conceptions of good lives Aristotle refuted in I.5. In fact, honor and wealth are external goods and present in a prosperous life. Excellence, *sophia* and *phronesis* can all be encompassed by excellence in general, and pleasure is the key component of a life of enjoyment. Before tackling with each of these goods, Aristotle claims that people holding these conceptions are not completely wrong, since they have gotten some aspect, if not many, in the right way, as we read in T1. The question that arises from T1 is how it is possible that people who advocated for conceptions of *eudaimonia* Aristotle refuted are now said to grasp at least some, if not most, of its aspects correctly.

As Aristotle is definitely trying to indicate how his conception of *eudaimonia* is compatible or in agreement with common or the relevant conceptions about it. Before jumping to a hastily conclusion that I.8 is or is not implementing the methodological remarks of *EN VII.1*,¹⁸ I will go through how Aristotle tackles each of these opinions in I.8. This is important because it is the way he actually proceeds that should inform us about the methodology he applies in a given context. As I will claim in the next section, I.8 can hardly be seen as an implementation of *EN VII 1*, but my interpretation is compatible with some weaker conceptions of dialectics.

The first good Aristotle scrutinizes is excellence. This position is described as: τοῖς μὲν οὖν λέγουσι τὴν ἀρετὴν ἢ ἀρετὴν τινα συνωδός ἐστιν ὁ λόγος· ταύτης γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ κατ' αὐτὴν ἐνέργεια. “Well, our account is in harmony with those who say that happiness is excellence, or some form of excellence; for 'activity in accordance with excellence' belongs to excellence.” (1098b30-31). This is quite a vague presentation, which can be read more or less stringently. As the context is determined by T2, in which the things that are required or searched for the best life fluctuates as belonging to *eudaimonia* either with a definitional relation, or without a manifest predicative relation, it might be read as:

- a) *Eudaimonia* is [an] excellence, that is, the end that stops the subordination chain of goods is [an] excellence, or

¹⁸ E.g.; Berti (2010, p.321), Owen (1986), Nussbaum (2001), Irwin (1988). Natali (2017, p.49–50) also claims that Aristotle is deploying a dialectical procedure in I.8, but, according to him, dialectic is not the method Aristotle’s use to define *eudaimonia* (which is achieved by scientific methodology), but only to seek confirmation of it.

- b) *Eudaimonia* requires [an] excellence, that is, whatever the best life is, it must contain [an] excellence.

It is clear that a) implies b) but b) does not imply a) and that they are not equivalent statements. Under Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* displayed in the conclusion of the *ergon* argument, b) is true. As an activity of the rational part of the soul according to excellence in a complete life (cf. 1098a16-18), *eudaimonia* necessarily requires excellence, but excellence is not the good that stops the chain of subordination of goods. But b) is true in a rather generic reading and under some specifications it will not be consistent with Aristotle's conception. In the following lines, Aristotle details how b) should be specified in order to be more in line with his own conception of *eudaimonia*. His train of thought starts from the same point he mentioned in I.5 against the identification of excellence as the highest good, since one can be an excellent person and be inactive or have a life full of infortunes. In I.8, Aristotle highlights that there is a relevant difference between, on the one hand, having and being disposed to excellence and, on the other hand, using and being active toward excellence, since not only action, but good action is necessary for the best life (1099a3). This is justified by the general agreement that *eudaimonia* is living well and acting well. Then, the conception scrutinized here under b) agrees with Aristotle's conception, but it needs to be read in a certain way and with the addition of some qualifications. As a) implies b), the vague and unspecified formulation '*eudaimonia* requires [an] excellence' is also true for the proponents of a), but b) is not enlightening about the nature of *eudaimonia*. In I.5, on the other hand, excellence is scrutinized according to a) above, and dismissed as the highest good, the good that stops the series of subordination of other goods.

Phronesis and *sophia*, mentioned in T2, are never object of scrutiny in I.8. Presumably, Aristotle is considering them under the umbrella of excellence, since they are kinds of intellectual excellence¹⁹. If it is the case, the same specification applied to excellence must also apply here. In a very general and vague level, it is true that *eudaimonia* requires these intellectual virtues. In fact, already in the *ergon* argument, Aristotle divides the human soul into two rational parts and, as we can see in I.13, *sophia* and *phronesis* are excellences of one of these parts. As *eudaimonia* is the activity of these parts according to excellence, it requires both *sophia* and *phronesis* being used or in activity, since their possession alone is not what makes one live and act well. Again, who claims that *phronesis* or *sophia* is *eudaimonia* grasps correctly one aspect of the truth to the extent that

¹⁹ It does not make any difference for my interpretation whether '*phronesis*', in this context, has the non-technical meaning of thinking, and not of the intellectual virtue of the calculative part of the rational soul.

a life with *eudaimonia* includes *phronesis* and *sophia*. However, this is true at the same vague level as excellence in general is required for the best life. In a more specific formulation, Aristotle is committed to the activity of them as required for the best life.

The next claim Aristotle deals with is that *eudaimonia* is a pleasant life²⁰. In I.5, pleasure was shown as an unsuccessful candidate for the highest good, but no argument is advanced for it, except that Aristotle compares the lives dedicated to pleasure to how grazing cattle or slavish people live. One reason that possibly explain it is that one, when driven by immediate pleasures, is not capable of following any structure of subordination of goods, which demands some pleasures being postponed or not satisfied so that other pleasure can be satisfied. In short, living as grazing cattle and slavish people means that one is not capable of living in accordance with a structured life. In I.5, Aristotle does not say any word about the lack of intrinsic value of pleasures, whether they have a place in his conception of *eudaimonia* or whether they are something bad²¹. Simply, there is no hint about the value of pleasure in one's life. What is at stake (and this is relevant) is that pleasure cannot be the highest good.

In I.8, pleasure is vaguely advanced as floating between two possible claims:

- a) *Eudaimonia* is [a] pleasure, that is, the end that stops the subordination chain of goods is [a] pleasure, or
- b) *Eudaimonia* requires [a] pleasure, that is, whatever the best life is, it must contain [a] pleasure.

Aristotle is not taking pleasure as a candidate for the highest good, according to a), since it is false for him. Again, as in the case of excellence, Aristotle is trying to show that people who claim that *eudaimonia* is pleasure are right to the extent that pleasure is part of the best life. This is what they grasped correctly in a vague sense that demands further qualification. On the other hand, they are mistaken by suggesting that pleasure is the highest good. Then, it is true that in a vague sense pleasure has a place in the best life, and Aristotle tries to reach the qualifications he needs. As I shall explicate later, his main interest in I.8 is to make clear that his conception of *eudaimonia* keeps some resemblance to how people conceive the best life so that they can be persuaded of it, and that

²⁰ In I.8, Aristotle always mentions pleasure as a quality of the best life rather than what the best life definitionally is. He does so either by saying that it has some pleasant good or actions or that some actions have pleasure in themselves. This formulation is important because it allows for the vague presentation Aristotle advances in order clarify how pleasure is present in the flourishing life.

²¹ The first hint about the intrinsic value of pleasure occurs only in I.7 1097b1-3, where Aristotle claims that pleasure (along with intelligence, excellence and honor) is chosen for itself and for the sake of *eudaimonia*.

is why his argument here does not rely on a well-developed theory of pleasure. Aristotle's full-blown theory of pleasures is both complex and deep, and it is linked with his conception of moral development, but no profound account of it is necessary for Aristotle's intention in I.8. He only needs a general account of how pleasure is present in the best life without any further explanation.

This account is more carefully delivered as the subject seems to be more difficult than the previous. In I.5, pleasure is proposed as the highest good which subordinates all other goods, while in I.8 Aristotle depicts pleasure as something that follows some actions. One finds pleasure in things one is fond of (ἐκάστῳ δ' ἐστὶν ἡδὺ πρὸς ὃ λέγεται φιλοτιοῦτος "and to each person that thing is pleasant in relation to which he is called 'lover of that sort of thing'" (1099a8-9)), so that pleasure is not presented as something sought for its own sake, but as some psychological event which follows the satisfaction of a given affect. The examples Aristotle gives are illuminating: horses are pleasant to people who love them, spectacles are pleasant to whom loves them, and excellence is pleasant to people who love acting excellently. What all these examples suggest is that one loves what is pleasant to her (note the compositions with the verb *philein* which are examples filling the gap-sign 'φιλοτιοῦτος' (1099a11)).

As all he needs in I.8 is to show that pleasure has a place, arguably an important one, in his conception of the best life, whatever pleasure means in a more fine-grained detail for his ethical theory. But even considered in this broad approach, pleasure is a complicated psychological event. Differently from excellence, which is always something good in itself (cf 1097b2-3), since it is the best disposition of that it is excellence, people might have pleasure for different things, included bad ones. If Aristotle were committed to the claim that pleasure *simpliciter* is present in the best life, consequently he would have to accept that any pleasure has its place in the best life, and, for the same reason, the best life would include all sorts of actions that satisfy any sort of affection followed by pleasure. To avoid this kind of difficulty, Aristotle advances, without any rationale in I.8, a thesis that people fond of the noble (φιλόκαλοι) find pleasure in things that are naturally pleasant. These things are excellent actions and for these actions pleasure is not something that comes in addition to them, but they are pleasant in themselves. Who finds no pleasure in noble actions is not a good person. As excellent actions are noble, a good person finds pleasure in them, and this is true for any sort excellence (cf. 1099a20). As proper human excellence is twofold, moral and intellectual, Aristotle is assuming that both kinds of excellence are pleasant in themselves and their activity is noble [εἰ δ' οὔτω, καθ' αὐτὰς ἄν εἶεν αἱ κατ' ἀρετῆν πράξεις ἡδεῖαι. ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἀγαθαὶ γε

καὶ καλὰ “If that is so, actions in accordance with excellence will be pleasant in themselves. But they will be good, too, and fine” (1099a21-22)]. Aristotle concludes that *eudaimonia* is what is best, noblest, and most pleasant.

We are now able to understand how who proposed that pleasure is the highest good has grasped at least some aspect of *eudaimonia* correctly. As in the case of excellence, pleasure cannot be the highest good, but the best life must be pleasant, and even apolaustic pleasures have a place in it. Who claimed that the highest good is a life which has pleasure as the good that stops the subordination chain of goods is not correct, but they got something right inasmuch as *eudaimonia* involves pleasure. But this is still too vague and little enlightening, since Aristotle would not concede that any pleasure whatsoever has a place in the best life. An important specification is needed in terms of the kind of pleasure that must be sought in the best life, as pleasure is not a good in itself. Aristotle narrower conception makes clear that noble actions are naturally pleasant, and this is the kind of pleasure present in the best life.

Now, one can raise an objection to my interpretation asking about how this position about pleasure in I.8 relates to what Aristotle says about pleasure in I.5. Can it be the case that Aristotle is operating with two non-equivalent conceptions of pleasure in these chapters and, thus, he is not trying to show how the conception presented in I.5 has a place in the best life? In I.5, what is at stake is the apolaustic life, whereas in I.8 he is concerned about the pleasure of the noble life²². If this is true, I.8 cannot be construed as an effort to show that the proponents of the candidates for the highest good in I.5 have grasped at least some aspects of the best life correctly and Aristotle would be targeting different people in these two chapters.

The construal I am advancing can, nonetheless, accommodate well these different conceptions of pleasure. Aristotle’s point would, then, be that the noble life which has activities and actions that are pleasant in themselves also involves some apolaustic pleasures, provided that these pleasures are not sought as the end of one’s actions. A temperate person might very well enjoy good food, sophisticated drinks, and sex, and certainly these pleasures must have a place in the best life. What is important is that the noble person will not seek apolaustic pleasures for their own sake. She can enjoy them as they follow her noble and excellent actions. There are a few passages supporting this claim in both *NE* and *Eudemian Ethics* (hereafter, *EE*).

²² See, e.g., Devereux (2015, p.142) on this.

a) τῶν δὲ περὶ τὰς σωματικὰς ἀπολαύσεις, περὶ ἃς λέγομεν τὸν σόφρονα καὶ ἀκόλαστον, ὁ μὴ τῷ προαιρεῖσθαι τῶν ἡδέων διώκων τὰς ὑπερβολάς (NE VII.4 1148a4-7)

But of those types having to do with bodily enjoyments that we say are the sphere of moderation and self-indulgence, the one who pursues excess in what is pleasant without its being a matter of decision. (NE VII.4 1148a4-7)

b) ἀπολαύσειέ τ' ἄν τῶν σωματικῶν ἡδονῶν ὁ τυχὼν καὶ ἀνδράποδον οὐχ ἧττον τοῦ ἀρίστου (NE X.6 1177a6-8)

Again, just anyone can enjoy bodily pleasures, and a slave no less than the best kind of person. (NE X.6 1177a6-8)

c) πάντες γὰρ τοῦτοις φύσει τε χαίρουσι, καὶ ἐπιθυμίας λαμβάνουσι, καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν οὐδὲ λέγονται ἀκόλαστοι (οὐ γὰρ ὑπερβάλλουσι τῷ χαίρειν μᾶλλον ἢ δεῖ τυγχάνοντες καὶ λυπεῖσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ δεῖ μὴ τυγχάνοντες), οὐδ' ἀνάγγητοι (οὐ γὰρ ἐλλείπουσι τῷ χαίρειν ἢ λυπεῖσθαι, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ὑπερβάλλουσιν).

By nature everyone enjoys these pleasures, and conceives an appetite for them, without either being or being called undisciplined, given that they neither enjoy themselves excessively when they find them nor get excessively pained when they do not. They are not insensible either, since they are not deficient in their enjoyment or pain, but if anything tend to excess. (EE III.2 1231a28-34; Inwood & Woolf's (2013) translation)

d) ὅταν γὰρ μηθενὸς ἐνδεεῖς ᾖμεν, τότε τοὺς συναπλουσομένους ζητοῦσι πάντες, καὶ τοὺς εὔπεισομένους μᾶλλον ἢ τοὺς ποιήσοντα.

For when we are in need of nothing then we all look for people to join us in our pleasures and for beneficiaries rather than benefactors. (EE VII.12 1244b16-18; Inwood & Woolf's (2013) translation)

e) διὸ <δεῖ> συνθεωρεῖν καὶ συνευχεῖσθαι, οὐ τὰ διὰ τροφὴν καὶ τὰ ἀναγκαῖα αἰ τοιαῦται ὁμιλίαι δοκοῦσιν εἶναι, ἀλλὰ ἀπολαύσεις.

These kinds of association seem not to focus on mere nourishment and the necessities of life, but on the enjoyments. (EE VII.12 1245b5-7, Inwood & Woolf's (2013) translation.)

Passages a) and b) unequivocally claim that bodily pleasures are sought both by virtuous and vicious agents. Passage c) does not have the word ‘ἀπόλαυσις’, but is focused on bodily pleasures resulting from the sense of touch. Passages d) and e) show that genuine friendship, which occurs between virtuous people, involves the enjoyment of apolaustic pleasures. These passages seem to be enough to ground my claim that the best life must include the enjoyment of this sort of pleasures and, then, Aristotle needed to account for their presence in his conception of the best life in I.8. Consequently, who proposed that *eudaimonia* requires this sort of pleasure is correct, but who claimed that it consists in an apolaustic life is wrong.

After pleasure, external goods are the next to be scrutinized. In I.5, honor and wealth are proposed as candidates to be the highest good and all the other goods would be sought for their sake. Aristotle’s argument to dismiss them as candidates is grounded in the instrumental value of wealth, and as such it cannot be the final end. On its turn, honor is not something an agent achieves by herself, but from someone else granting it to her, but *eudaimonia* is something doable and achievable by the agent. In I.8, Aristotle is quite clear about how external goods relate to *eudaimonia*. They are needed in addition (προσδεομένη) since they are like instruments for good actions [πολλὰ μὲν γὰρ πράττεται, καθάπερ δι’ ὀργάνων “For in the first place many things are done [...] as if by means of tools” (1099a33-b1)]. Deprived of the necessary resources to act excellently, one’s actions that depend on these resources will not take place. If she does not have wealth to promote certain kinds of goods to her City, she cannot be magnificent. In order for one to be temperate, she needs to have access to food or drink. This much is clear enough, but there is another aspect concerning external goods, besides being instrumentally necessary to good action. *Eudaimonia* is the best life, and it would be odd to call *eudaimon* someone inflicted with relevant misfortunes. Then, some external goods are necessary not only as instrumental to virtuous action, but for the good life itself [ἔνιων δὲ τητῶμενοι ῥυπαίνουσι τὸ μακάριον “there are some things the lack of which is like a stain on happiness” (1199b2)], as being well born, having good offspring and friends. One’s life characterized with the deprivation of such kinds of goods will unlikely be considered good (cf. 1099b3).

The conclusion of this argument is important because Aristotle explains the source of confusion people make when they think that *eudaimonia* is the possession of external goods. These goods are necessary in some extent for one who have a good life and it amounts to saying that all good lives are well supplied with them. In face of that, some people take external goods to be the end that stops the chain of subordination. Here, we see the same pattern we saw in the other conceptions of *eudaimonia*.

- a) *Eudaimonia* is [an] external good[s], that is, the end that stops the subordination chain of goods is [an] external good[s], or
- b) *Eudaimonia* requires [an] external good[s], that is, whatever the best life is, it must contain [an] external good[s].

Who proposed external goods as the end that stops the subordination chain of goods confused a necessary condition with a sufficient condition [καθάπερ οὖν εἶπομεν, ἔοικε προσδεῖσθαι καὶ τῆς τοιαύτης εὐημερίας· ὅθεν εἰς ταῦτ' ἅπτουσιν ἔτιοι τὴν εὐτυχίαν τῇ εὐδαιμονίᾳ “As we have said, then, one seems to need this sort of well-being too and this is the reason why some people identify good fortune with happiness” (1099b6-8)]. Not surprisingly, Aristotle mentions in the last line of the chapter that the same happens to people who take excellence as being the highest good [ἔτεροι δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν “others [identify with] excellence.” (1099b8)], which is exactly how we interpreted Aristotle’s treatment of excellence at the beginning of I.8.

To sum up, the gist of I.8’s second section is that all proponents of the conceptions Aristotle mentions have made an important mistake. They identify some good as the highest good based on how people live and by doing this, they pick as such one or another good they understand as subordinating all others and that are present in any instance of the best life. All these conceptions are wrong at their face value, i.e., as conceptions of *eudaimonia*. Aristotle himself argues against them in I.5. However, it can be said that their proponents grasped something right since they imply a true, but little enlightening proposition. A false proposition such as ‘*eudaimonia* is by definition pleasure/excellence/external goods’ implies a true proposition such as ‘*eudaimonia* requires pleasure/excellence/external goods’. The way this true proposition is cashed out by Aristotle is completely different from how the other proponents presented in I.8 specify their conceptions. Any instance of the best life, according to Aristotle conception in I.7, must involve excellence, pleasure and external goods, but *eudaimonia* does not consist in any of these alone or jointly taken. Then, as regarding the second set of opinions, our T1 should be understood as claiming that who proposes these mistaken conceptions are not completely wrong since they grasped that the best life must include excellence, or pleasure or external goods.

III – Methodological remarks.

Some interpreters influentially claimed that Aristotle is deploying his dialectical method in I.8. The characterization of this method in detail is not

consensual among these interpreters, but there seems to be an agreement about the general aspects of this method. The paradigmatic description of its steps is the widely known passage in *NE* VII.1 1145b2-7²³:

In broad lines, this passage is read as a three-steps dialectical method or procedure: 1 – laying down a set X of *phainomena*, *i.e.*, the reputed opinions (τὰ ἔνδοξα) about a given subject; 2 – examining all the reputed opinions of the set X through *aporiai*; and 3 – proving all reputed opinions or, at least, the most authoritative of the set X. The result of the implementation of the methodological steps would consist in a “sufficient demonstration” [δεδειγμένον ἄν εἴη ἱκανῶς. (1145b7)] of the opinions that survives the exam, since “the solution of the *aporia* is the discovery” [ἡ γὰρ λύσις τῆς ἀπορίας εὐρεσις ἐστίν. (1146b7-8)].

There are different possible readings of the details of this passage, but its core is more or less accepted by any interpreter who reads the passage as providing a dialectical method²⁴. In order to read in these lines a dialectical methodology, an interpreter assumes that the scrutiny of *endoxa* is a sufficient condition to identify a dialectical context and that the *diaporía* is a privileged dialectical devise. Also, this procedure has a kind of proof as its outcome. Even if this is the true reading of VII.1²⁵, and the assumptions are justified²⁶, it is hardly what happens in I.8. In VII.1, the *diaporía* must be implemented among the set of *endoxa* picked in the first step. Whatever criterium used to choose the most authoritative among them, the scrutiny should take only these *endoxa* and solve inconsistencies they may raise when one tries to make them compatible. The most authoritative *endoxa* are the metric to measure how correct are the conflicting *endoxa* and to put aside the recalcitrant propositions from the *endoxa* that can be restated in a better and compatible fashion. This is not what Aristotle does in I.8. To begin with, the gauge against which the popular views on *eudaimonia* are measured is not an *endoxon*, but Aristotle’s own position, which is evidently at odds with the relevant popular views about it. Aristotle has no interest in proving that the relevant *endoxa* form a set of compatible or true

²³ “As in other cases, we must set out what appears true about our subjects, and, having first raised the problems, thus display, if we can, all the views people hold about these ways of being affected, and if not, the larger part of them, and the most authoritative; for if one can both resolve the difficult issues about a subject and leave people’s views on it undisturbed, it will have been clarified well enough.” (*NE* VII.1 1145b2-7).

²⁴ E.g. Barnes (1980), Jost (1991, p.30) and Kraut (2006, p.77–84), who understands this three-steps method as “Aristotle’s proposed method for testing the truth of ethical propositions” (2006, p. 77)

²⁵ For a recent and very compelling defence that Aristotle is not prescribing a dialectical methodology in *NE* VII 1, see Zillig (2018).

²⁶ I have argued against this interpretation in Mendonça (2014, 2017).

propositions after the diaporía. In I.8, there is no *aporia* raised and the *endoxa* are not compared with other *endoxa*. What happens, instead, is that Aristotle has come to his definition of *eudaimonia* in I.7 by an argument grounded on human nature, not on *endoxa*, and in I.8 Aristotle has a much more modest goal (which is by no means a proof or a demonstration) that consists in showing that his conception of the best life involves the goods the competing views indicated as the highest good, and then, as I will argue below, it is not completely alien to people who propose these conceptions.

Aristotle is not saying that who takes either pleasure, or excellence, or external goods as the highest good is stating something true. That these conceptions are not correct we know since I.5. In I.8 he points to the fact that their proponents are not completely wrong and have grasped something right. If the construal I advanced in the first part of this paper is right, what they saw correctly is that the best life must involve the mentioned goods.

One major point still deserves attention. Aristotle is not simply comparing propositions in terms of coherence. He is discussing these opinions in terms of their adequacy to relevant facts²⁷. In an already quoted passage, he says:

Σκεπτόν δὲ περὶ αὐτῆς οὐ μόνον ἐκ τοῦ συμπεράσματος καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐκ τῶν λεγόμενων περὶ αὐτῆς τῷ μὲν γὰρ ἀληθεῖ πάντα συνάδει τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, τῷ δὲ ψευδεῖ ταχὺ διαφωνεῖ τάληθές. (1098b9-12).

But we must check over it not only on the basis of our conclusion and the premisses of our argument, but also on the basis of the things people say about it: for a true view will have all the characteristic properties in harmony with it, while a false one quickly finds itself in discord with what is true. (1098b9-12 - Rowe's translation modified)

²⁷ One can object to my interpretation by claiming that facts and all possible experience after all are kinds of representations that need a conceptual scheme for events and state of affairs to be taken as facts, then they would inescapably be *endoxa*, what would be in line with Nussbaum's interpretation of Aristotle methodology (2001, p. 254). Another objection could be raised by saying that Aristotle is grounding his discussion on facts, but moral facts depend on how people have or acquire moral knowledge of how to act, and it would be acquired as *endoxa*, which encompass values, legal and social norms, etc., so that they are inescapable. My interpretation holds against both objections. The metaphysical assumptions about what is a fact for Aristotle is not the relevant aspect in *EN* I.5 and 8. The important thing is that Aristotle takes peoples' lives and properties of *eudaimonia* as facts and not as opinion and this is important to his inquire in I.8 as he is not concerned about coherence among propositions. It might well be the case that facts are after all reducible to *endoxa*, but in the context, Aristotle are focusing on them as facts. By claiming that this is the important aspect of Aristotle's procedure, my interpretation does not preclude a dialectical reading of this chapter provided that by 'dialectics' we understand a kind of test or scrutiny of propositions and not the much more demanding procedure of VII.1.

Aristotle's point in this passage is that what is said (τὰ λεγόμενα) about *eudaimonia*, i.e. *endoxa*, should be confronted with its characteristic properties (τὰ ὑπάρχοντα), and what is true is in agreement with *eudaimonia*'s characteristic properties. But what does it mean *exactly*? Aristotle uses 'τὰ ὑπάρχοντα' in many ways. Karbowski (2015a, p.123) and Salmieri (2009, p.330) highlighted the importance of taking it as facts generally taken. Recently, Angioni (2019, p.154–157) has shown that 'τὰ ὑπάρχοντα' can be read with more precise meaning than simply facts. This more precise reading of this expression is not incompatible with the more general reading, since a characteristic property of something is a fact about it but it picks up the relevant aspect for a given account. Certainly, many things can be true of *eudaimonia*, and consequently be a fact about it, but many of them are simply not relevant in an account that seeks a better understanding of the nature of *eudaimonia*²⁸. Of course, a correct account of a given subject must be in agreement with all facts about this subject and I am not denying that. My point is that Aristotle is picking up some salient properties of *eudaimonia*, as they are more important to get to grips with the nature of *eudaimonia*²⁹. Whatever the best life is, some properties are more characteristic of it than others, and when it comes to get a more enlightening account of the best life, these salient properties must be taken into consideration. Taken according to this sense, the passage is not saying the trivially true sentence that all facts are in agreement with a true account, but setting the agenda for the following steps in the chapter. Aristotle needs to single out salient properties of the best life and, then, clarify how they can be accounted for in his conception of *eudaimonia*.

If this is correct, my reading makes 'τὰ ὑπάρχοντα' equivalent to 'τὰ ἐπιζητούμενα' in T2. The things searched or required for the best life are properties or features that are not only true of or necessary for this life. They are also and more importantly salient features that identify the best life, that is, important aspects a flourishing life must display. What people say about *eudaimonia* is true if it agrees with the facts understood as relevant properties or features that belong to the best life. As said above, facts, now understood as the

²⁸ For instance, appreciation of Sophocles' works, or being attentive to not take undue advantage in transactions are true of and necessary for the best life, but they are not salient features of it and do not contribute to a better understanding of the nature of *eudaimonia*.

²⁹ Angioni (2019) furnishes (with no intention of exhaustivity) a list of six uses of 'ὑπάρχειν' and 'τὰ ὑπάρχοντα'. The use I am proposing here is the sixth in his list, which he explains as "Sometimes the verb 'ὑπάρχειν' (or the participle 'τὰ ὑπάρχοντα') used with a dative complement has the force of "being (most) characteristic of", "being a feature that is important to characterize something as it is (as to distinguish it from its neighbours)" (p.156). In I.8, 'τὰ ὑπάρχοντα' has no dative complement, but 'ὑπάρχειν' in line 1098b23, in our T2, has 'τῷ λεχθέντι' as complement, which I take as what Aristotle said about *eudaimonia*.

salient features that identify or characterizes something, are the gauge to measure the accounts given in I.8. Consequently, Aristotle argumentation in I.8 does not limit itself to seek for coherence among *endoxa/legomena*.

If this is true, ‘τὰ ὑπάρχοντα’ should not be taken as having the same reference as ‘τὰ λεγόμενα’. The latter refers to the conceptions Aristotle mentions and will scrutinize. On the other hand, the former refers to the salient properties of *eudaimonia*. This distinction is important. The salient properties should be present in any account of *eudaimonia*, but how they are accommodated from account to account changes and this makes an account more or less adequate than its competing ones. A true and general claim about pleasure being required in a flourishing life, as we saw in the last section, can be cashed out in different ways and some accounts will do this inadequately, being a false account. With ‘τὰ λεγόμενα’, Aristotle is mentioning some specific ways people cashed out what is taken as ‘τὰ ὑπάρχοντα’. If these expressions are not taken as having the same reference, the passage is more directly read as a general claim according to which all salient features or properties can be articulated and accommodated inside a correct account, and that is what ‘ἀληθής’ seems to mean in the passage³⁰. Aristotle is not primary concerned with truth values of propositions, but with how salient characteristics of *eudaimonia* can be treated in an account. True propositions are, of course, necessary for a true account, however a true account requires more than only the truth of its propositions. One cannot reach a true account about the nature of *eudaimonia* on the basis of very general although true propositions. Aristotle wants to reach an account in which one can grasp how and why the relevant features or properties attributed to the subject belong to it. His goal to reach an account by which he can make clear how the salient characteristics of the best life are in agreement with his conception of *eudaimonia*, which is the true conception for him. Consequently, ‘ψευδής’ means an account that does not accommodate all the salient characteristics, since they do not properly fit in the account. All the *λεγόμενα* need to face these characteristics of *eudaimonia* and this process is what will determine what fits in the account.

In Aristotle’s perspective, his conception of *eudaimonia* is what best corresponds to the facts, especially to the best condition of the human nature. He surely thinks his conception of *eudaimonia* fulfills all the requirements for a life to be the best, most complete and self-sufficient. In I.8, Aristotle assumes that his theory is located on the facts’ side as the account which articulates and

³⁰ Rowe (2002) and Reeve (2014) translate ‘ἀληθής’ into ‘true view’, and Irwin (1999) into ‘true account’. These translations are in line with my suggestion.

accommodates the relevant facts about *eudaimonia*. Therefore, in I.8 Aristotle is not concerned with an effort to clarify or prove *endoxa*. As we can see, his argumentative path along chapters I 1-7 culminating in his definition of *eudaimonia* has led him to defend a conception which has no resemblance with ordinary or erudite conceptions of *eudaimonia*. This amounts to saying that his conception is the best account of the relevant facts and that the ordinary or erudite conceptions are at odds with the facts.

Bearing this in mind, I.8 introductory paragraph could be paraphrased as follows: once *eudaimonia* has been defined on the grounds of premises and conclusions which best apprehend its nature, we should now also investigate it starting from what is said about it. Its salient features agree with an adequate account, which, in turn, disagree with an inadequate one. The passage here paraphrased sets Aristotle's procedure for the whole chapter, which is strongly grounded on relevant aspects of *eudaimonia* Aristotle himself established along the last chapters. Besides, on Aristotle's perspective, the only way to verify whether an account is true is its correspondence with facts. An adequate account certainly must be coherent, but coherence alone does not entail the correspondence with facts. An account can be coherent and inadequate to articulate facts.

If this is true, what is Aristotle's goal in I.8? Salmieri (2009) suggests that from I.8 to I.12 Aristotle is seeking for supplemental confirmation of his definition of *eudaimonia* in I.7³¹. It is supplemental because Aristotle has reached a solid conception of *eudaimonia* and gives no hint that it needs to be confirmed. In the course of I.8, Salmieri says, Aristotle finds new *huparchonta* which contributes to fleshing out his conception in I.7, as, for instance, discussing how *eudaimonia* relates to pleasure and external goods. I think Salmieri's interpretation is in the right direction, but it can be further developed to reach a clearer comprehension of the chapter. In the first place, fleshing out an account does not sound the same as giving supplemental confirmation of this account. In I.8, what looks like as needing confirmation is each of the conceptions about the best life referred by 'τὰ λεγόμενα', not Aristotle's conception. Furthermore, in Salmieri's reading, it remains unclear what Aristotle means by saying in our T1 that it is not reasonable that who proposes the *legomena* discussed in I.8 is completely mistaken.

In the previous section, I advanced my interpretation of Aristotle's argumentative effort in I.8. and I have defended that the first set of *legomena* are straightforward compatible, but not equivalent, with Aristotle's conception if

³¹ Salmieri (2009 p. 331).

provided with some qualification, and their proponents probably are who grasped most things right. On the other hand, the second set of *legomena* are deeply mistaken at their face value. In T2, when describing the second set of *legomena*, the predicate of the verb ‘εἶναι’ in 1098b24, although implicit in this line, is ‘εὐδαιμονία’. What is at stake, then, are ordinary or erudite conceptions of what *eudaimonia* is. As such, i.e. at their face value, all these *legomena* are utterly mistaken and they cannot be taken as consistent with Aristotle’s conception, even under some qualification, as it is possible for the first set.

In order to understand Aristotle’s point, it is important to read the participle ‘κατορθοῦν’ not as referring back to ‘ἀληθής’ in 1098b11, at the beginning of I.8, as if Aristotle were saying that the proponents he envisages in T2 stated partial truths. If the reconstruction of the argumentative steps we have developed above is right, Aristotle can hardly have in mind something as partial truths. He never says that the proponents’ conceptions are true or that it fits his account. His argumentative effort does not make the second set of *legomena* right after a *diaporía* or the addition of some qualification to them. Aristotle’s goal is to show that their proponents grasped correctly some component or necessary condition of the best life, but they were astray when it comes to the correct definition of *eudaimonia*.

Now, the question about what exactly is Aristotle’s intention in I.8 is still unanswered, and should be, finally, addressed.

If we consider the *NE* as a whole, Aristotle has no need to get to grips with how pleasure, external goods and virtues relate to *eudaimonia* in i.8³². He covers all these subjects in depth in this work. Additionally, he is not testing or making compromises regarding his own conception of *eudaimonia*, which he regards as correct, in order to accommodate different conceptions³³. The fact that Aristotle believes his conception of *eudaimonia* is the correct one does not imply that it is his last word on this topic. His account needs both to be filled in detail and some explication. Aristotle’s conception of *eudaimonia*, as we saw, deviates away from both popular and erudite conceptions. His lectures on ethics do not have as audience fully developed virtuous people versed in Aristotle’s

³² External goods are nowhere dealt with as such in the *NE*, except in I.8, but some external goods are subject of discussion in many contexts, as honor in virtue of magnanimity, wealth in the virtue of magnificence and liberality or friendship in book VIII and IX.

³³ Aristotle’s approach in I.8 is, then, neither based on some coherentism methodology, as defended, for instance, by Reeve (1995, p.137), nor applying something similar to the Rawlsian principle of reflective equilibrium, as proposed by Mäkinen & Kakkuri-Knuutila (2013), since what is at stake is not the coherence among different moral intuitions.

moral philosophy, but people who intend to become good³⁴. It is not unreasonable to think that for them, a definition of *eudaimonia* such as the activity of the soul according to the best virtue would sound not only unfamiliar, but also odd³⁵. If we remind how Aristotle delimitates what *eudaimonia* is in the *Rhetoric* I.5³⁶, it is nothing remotely similar to *NE* I.7 definition. This is important, since in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle is concerned with *endoxa* about *eudaimonia*, which is supposed to capture how people conceive it.

However, if we consider *EE* I.6, another methodological possibility opens. In this chapter, Aristotle distinguishes the philosophical inquiry from the non-philosophical by arguing that philosophers, even in political inquiry, must look for causes and argue on the basis of argument. This discussion is preceded by a not entirely clear passage quoted at length:

πειρατέον δὲ περὶ πάντων τούτων ζητεῖν τὴν πίστιν διὰ τῶν λόγων, μαρτυρίοις καὶ παραδείγμασι χρώμενον τοῖς φαινομένοις. κράτιστον μὲν γὰρ πάντας ἀνθρώπους φαίνεσθαι συνομολογοῦντας τοῖς ῥηθησομένοις, εἰ δὲ μὴ, τρόπον γέ τινα πάντας, ὅπερ μεταβιβάζόμενοι ποιήσουσιν· ἔχει γὰρ ἔκαστος οἰκεῖόν τι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἐξ ὧν ἀναγκαῖον δεκνόναι πως περὶ αὐτῶν· ἐκ γὰρ τῶν ἀληθῶς μὲν λεγομένων οὐ σαφῶς δέ, προῖτοῦσιν ἔσται καὶ τὸ σαφῶς, μεταλαμβάνουσιν αἰεὶ τὰ γνωριμώτερα τῶν εἰωθότων λέγεσθαι συγκεχυμένως. (1216b26-35)

In all these matters we must try to seek conviction through argument, using the appearances as witnesses and examples. The best situation is that everyone be in

³⁴ Cf. *NE* I.3 1095a5-6, II.2 1103b26-29.

³⁵ See, e.g., Schuh (2019).

³⁶ *Rhet.* I.5 is a long chapter, but its two first paragraphs are enough to clarify how the notion of *eudaimonia* is broadly conceived. The first important note is that *eudaimonia* and its parts are the goal for individuals and for all people that direct their choice: Σχεδὸν δὲ καὶ ἰδίᾳ ἐκάστω καὶ κοινῇ πᾶσι σκοπὸς τις ἔστιν οὗ στοχαζόμενοι καὶ αἰρούνται καὶ φεύγουσιν· καὶ τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐν κεφαλαίῳ εἰπεῖν ἢ τ' εὐδαιμονία καὶ τὰ μόρια αὐτῆς: "Both for each private individual and for all people in common there is pretty much a sort of target they aim at in what they choose and avoid" (1360b4-7, Reeve's (2018) translation). All exhortative and dissuasive discourses are about *eudaimonia* or its contrary (cf. 1360b9-11). After this, *eudaimonia* is defined thus: "ἔστω δὴ εὐδαιμονία εὐπραξία μετ' ἀρετῆς, ἢ αὐτάρκεια ζωῆς, ἢ ὁ βίος ὁ μετὰ ἀσφαλείας ἤδιστος, ἢ εὐθηνία κτημάτων καὶ σωμάτων μετὰ δυνάμειος φυλακτικῆς τε καὶ πρακτικῆς τούτων. σχεδὸν γὰρ τούτων ἐν ἡ πλείω τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ὁμολογοῦσιν εἶναι ἅπαντες. "Let happiness, then, be doing well in action involving virtue, or self-sufficiency for living, or the pleasanter life involving security, or as abundance of possessions and bodies, involving the capacity to guard these and make use of them in action. For pretty much everyone agrees that happiness is one or more of these." (1360b14-18, Reeve's (2018) translation). The last sentence shows that almost everyone agrees that *eudaimonia* is one or many of the things listed in this definition.

manifest agreement with what we are going to say; failing that, that everyone should in some fashion agree, as they will do when they have had their minds changed. Each person has some affinity with the truth, and it is from this that one must prove one's case on these issues in one way or another. If we start from what is truly but not enlightening spoken, as we make progress we will speak in an enlightening way, continually substituting what is more intelligible for what is usually spoken of confusedly. (1216b26-35 – Inwood & Woolf's (2013) translation modified)

I am not going to comment this passage in detail here³⁷. My focus is rather on the italicized sentence according to which each one holds some aspect adequate to truth from where explanations of them in some way must begin. In the course of these explanations made philosophically, what is not enlightening may become enlightening³⁸. This explanatory process is what will make it possible for people to change their position. Undoubtedly, the change Aristotle seeks is made towards his account, and his goal is not to reach an equilibrium among different positions by making them coherent. The gist of this passage is the displaying of a strategy to conduce people to agree with Aristotle. If people do not agree with Aristotle's account on the basis of his arguments, they can agree somehow if a change is produced in their conceptions. The particle “γάρ” in line 1216b31 introduces a justificative for this change. *It leads us to a picture where this change is initiated by showing that these people have captured at least some aspect of the subject under discussion as it occurs in the reality.* As Aristotle cannot be saying that who disagrees with him has offered a true account, he must be saying that they have in some respect said something true of *eudaimonia*, but not enlightening to grasp the nature of *eudaimonia*³⁹.

My suggestion is that in *NE* I.8, Aristotle has the same sort of attitude. For those recalcitrant towards his account, he tries to show that the common and erudite accounts have grasped something correct about *eudaimonia*. Along the ten books of the *NE*, he will explain why and how the salient features present in these accounts do belong to a true account of the best life. In this

³⁷ The main points of this passage have been recently explained by Angioni (2017), Devereux (2015), Karbowski (2014; 2015b), and Mendonça (2017).

³⁸ About how Aristotle conceives this enlightening process, see Angioni (2017).

³⁹ At the end of *EE* I.6, Aristotle says that one way of being wrong is having a true proposition and an incorrect explanation (cf. 1217a14-17). In the present topic, one could correctly say that pleasure/excellence/external goods have a place in the flourishing life, but give a false explanation of it.

sense, I.8 plays a rhetorical role⁴⁰. It is a chapter in which Aristotle is focused not on introducing explanations or solve *aporiai*, but in convincing people by making clear that his conception does not exclude the goods people think as the ultimate end that gives a direction to the good life⁴¹. In I.8, he wants to secure some confidence from his audience not completely convinced by his arguments in I.7. For his audience, there are some aspects of this concept that are necessary to be present if one is referring, by using '*eudaimonia*', to the same thing they do. That is, someone who thinks that a life of pleasure is the best life, would probably refuse or not be sympathetic towards a conception of the best life which is formulated in such a way that pleasure has no evident place in it. Accordingly, if Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* does not involves in a way or another the salient features or properties commonly thought of the best life, then people could not understand Aristotle as meaning the same thing as they do by using this term. In another words, if Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* is so detached from the usual way people use this term, his theory could be envisaged as based on a kind of homonymy so that, despite the same word is being used, its meaning or definition is different from the ordinary use. That is why Aristotle needs to grant that the conception of *eudaimonia* he put forward in I.7 accounts for the main aspects people think of as belonging to the best life, which amounts to saying that he is using the term to signify something people can relate to. Not complying with this procedure would be similar to use the term 'courage' to refer to actions that are neither dangerous, fearsome nor daring, which are salient characteristics of the actions people refer to with 'courage'. Any theory of courage based on such strange use of the term would be regarded as meaning something different from the ordinary use of the term.

IV – Conclusion.

In this paper, my main focus was an attempt to cash out T1, especially when it comes to the understanding of the sentence that it is not reasonable to suppose that the people Aristotle targeted in T1 were completely mistaken regarding their conception of *eudaimonia* and that they would have grasp most, or at least some, aspect of *eudaimonia* correctly. His intention is to prepare is

⁴⁰ I am using the terms 'rhetoric' and 'rhetorical' in the same way Natali (2007) proposed: "The rhetorical aspects of the *NE* derive from a strong intention to convince, that is embedded in the work." (Natali 2007, p. 371)

⁴¹ Natali (2007), although he does not mention I.8 as of rhetorical interest, has convincingly argued in favour of taking some passages as of rhetorical interest and distinguished from the *NE* main explanatory focus.

audience toward his conception of *eudaimonia*, which he envisages as the best account for the relevant facts, what makes his rhetorical strategy highly valuable for his goal. The interpretation I have portrayed fits some sorts of dialectical readings of I.8, as well as scientific readings. My discussion is focused on the attempt to offer an informative and enlightening account of what and why Aristotle said that proponents of mistaken conception of *eudaimonia* have grasped at least some things right, which is not provided in the literature.

Why, one could ask, would Aristotle proceed in way? Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* as the excellent activity of the rational part of the soul could sound odd and quite different from popular views on the subject. Someone not used to Aristotle practical philosophy could wonder if she and Aristotle are talking about the same thing. Even a person who fits the profile of Aristotle's audience he depicted in *NE* I.3, which means that she will not follow pleasures unrestrainedly and is capable of organizing her life according to a higher good, might find his definition somewhat unconvincing, and since he has refuted the most common conceptions of *eudaimonia* in I.5, it could not be evident for his audience how his conception fits the ordinary use of the term, and therefore he needs to display how his theory accounts for things required for *eudaimonia*. Chapter I.8, as construed here, is an important step for Aristotle to show how his conception is not a philosopher's extravagant theory, but a conception that makes sense in ordinary life and is better and more complete than its alternatives. In another words, as the use of the term '*eudaimonia*' in ordinary language involves goods easily identified as at least part of the best life, Aristotle's needed to show that his conception also involves all these goods and that it is not a fanciful armchair reverie abstracted from practical life. If Aristotle's intention in his ethics is to help people live and act better, his theory must be understood by ordinary people.

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Email: mendoncaphilosophos@gmail.com

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