

PARMENIDEUM

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PARMENIDEUM

at Elea

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ENEKA TOY KAAOY

Timothy Chappell

Think of the glass itself, with its five grand colours stained right through. It was rougher than ours, thicker, fitted in smaller pieces. They loved it with the same fury as they gave to their castles, and Villars de Honnecourt, struck by a particularly beautiful specimen, stopped to draw it on his journeys, with the explanation that “I was on my way to obey a call to the land of Hungary when I drew this window because it pleased me best of all windows”.

Terence Hanbury White, *The Once and Future King* (London: Harper Collins 1996 [1958]), p. 577

C'est la beauté du monde qui force l'homme épuisé, l'homme qui a dépensé tout son patrimoine, toute son énergie, à se souvenir que les esclaves de son père ont plus de part au bien que lui qui est le fils. Le part des choses au bien, le salaire des esclaves du Père, c'est la beauté.¹

Simone Weil, *Cahiers XVI*, p. 264 in *Oeuvres Complètes*, eds. André Devaux et Florence de Lussy (Paris: Gallimard, 2006)

Kalou dê heneka ho andreios hypomenei kai prattei ta kata tèn andreian.²

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1115b23

Sage, was du willst, solange dich das nicht verhindert, zu sehen, wie es sich verhält. (Und wenn du das siehst, wirst du Manches nicht sagen.)³

L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* I, 79

¹ “It is the beauty of the world which compels the man who is exhausted, the man who has spent all his inheritance, all his energy, to remember that his father’s slaves have more of a share in the good than he who is the son. The share that things have in the good, the wages of the slaves of the Father—that is beauty.”

² “It is for the sake of the fine that the courageous man stays at his post in battle, and does the things that are in accordance with courage.”

³ “Say what you like, so long as it doesn’t stop you from seeing how things are. (And if you see that, there are plenty of things that you won’t say.)”

I shall here meditate on the first three of these epigraphs, in the light of the fourth. It develops an idea which I think is there in all of the first three passages. This is the idea that *tou kalou heneka*, “for the sake of The Fine”, or “The Beautiful”, is a name for one important kind of rational intelligibility. Or rather, several important kinds: there are plenty of complexities within the idea which it will be interesting to explore. One thing we can learn from these explorations is that our practical reasons are much less structured, much more piecemeal, particular, and bitty, than moral philosophers generally like to think. Another lesson is how to answer the familiar question “Why be moral?” It is with that question that I begin.

I Typically, when people ask us “Why be moral?”, they want us to effect an explanatory reduction of The Moral to The Prudential: to show that we have reason to do what is moral by showing that it is in our prudential interest. The question takes it as read that moral reasons are problematic in some way, whereas prudential reasons are not. Moral reasons require grounding, their force for us is somehow not obvious; whereas it *is* just obvious how prudential reasons are reasons for us. Their force and applicability is self-evident, or something like self-evident.

So far as I can see, we could just as well assume the inverse: that it *is moral* reasons that are obvious and unproblematic, and *prudential* reasons that require explanatory reduction. Then the pressing question would not be “What reason do we have to be moral?” – that is, what prudential reason. It would be “What reason do we have to be prudential?” – i.e., what moral reason.

Or, a third possibility, we could insist that *both* moral reasons and prudential reasons are obvious and unproblematic: in their different ways, both sorts of reason are perfectly rationally intelligible, so that no explanatory reduction is called for in either direction.

The first of these presumptions, that the moral requires explanatory grounding in the prudential if it is to be intelligible, we may call the *prudentialistic* presumption. It has probably been shared by enough moral philosophers to deserve to be seen as the usual or even the default presumption. It⁴ is there in Plato’s *Republic* in the mouths of his characters Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus; many interpreters think it is Plato’s own view. More recently the same presumption is there in Hobbes,

⁴ Or something like it; actually Plato’s concern in the *Republic* is with justice, not with “the moral”. More about the fissile nature of “the moral” as a category in due course.

in Hume, in the classical utilitarians, in Rawls and Gauthier, in Philippa Foot and Rosalind Hursthouse, and in swarms of other writers.

The second presumption, that on the contrary the prudential requires explanatory grounding in the moral if it is to be intelligible, we may call the *moralistic* presumption. I myself think, though not everybody does, that this is Kant's view; it is certainly Christine Korsgaard's.⁵ Very roughly, the idea is that moral reasons are the only real reasons there are. Prudential "reasons", even if they come first in the order of discovery, are nowhere near primary in the order of explanation. They are no more than a prolegomenon – to borrow a metaphor from elsewhere in Kant, a toddler-truck or *Gängelwagen* (CPuR A134/ B173-4) – to set us on the way to understanding what *real* reasons, moral reasons, are all about. In truth, until we understand the moral sort of reason, we will not have any genuine prudential reasons either.

The third presumption can be called the dualistic presumption. This is the presumption that moral reasons and prudential reasons are both in their different ways perfectly rationally intelligible, so that we do not need an explanatory reduction in either direction. Such is perhaps G.E. Moore's view in *Principia Ethica*, and Harold Prichard's view in "Does moral philosophy rest upon a mistake?". It is also, apparently, implied by Sidgwick's "dualism of practical reason", which here as elsewhere surely influenced both Prichard and Moore (whether they liked it or not). The idea is especially clear in Sidgwick: it is that The Moral and The Prudential – capitalisations deliberate – are the two great categories into which all practical reasons exhaustively and exclusively divide. Neither sort of practical reason is reducible to, or fully intelligible in terms of, the other sort. But, Prichard and Moore might insist, that is no licence for pessimism, of the sort that Sidgwick himself notoriously felt. After all, both sorts of reason are so well-known and familiar to us that there seems to be a sort of disingenuousness about both the prudentialistic and the moralistic presumption: a disingenuous philistinism on the prudentialistic side, and a disingenuous priggishness on the moralistic. (Disdain for philistinism, and for disingenuousness, is clearly one of Prichard's key-notes in "Does moral philosophy rest on a mistake?")

We might argue for the moralistic presumption, and against prudentialism, by pointing out that what prudentialists call "The Prudential" is a loose and inchoate ragbag of all sorts of different reasons (or "reasons").

⁵ Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*.

I think this is right, though I think it doesn't go far enough, because something similar is equally true of what moralists call "The Moral". More about this in section II.

We might argue for the dualistic presumption by appealing – as Prichard, Moore, and Sidgwick all do, in their different ways – to the intuitive immediacy of our understanding both of The Moral and The Prudential. I think this too is right but doesn't go far enough; there aren't just *two* categories of practical reason of which we have an intuitively-immediate understanding. More about this in sections **IV** and following.

We might argue for the prudentialistic presumption on evolutionary grounds. Prudential reasons, we might say, are the currency of evolutionary explanation, and moral reasons aren't. That's why moral reasons need explanatory reduction – to prudential reasons –and prudential reasons don't.

Consideration of this third line of argument I will *not* put off to a later section; it is easily separable from my main objectives here, and it is worth pausing briefly to note just what a bad argument this is, influential though it may be in current moral philosophy. For one thing, even if prudential reasons were the currency of an evolutionary explanation of how *in the past* we came to be what we now are, it would still be the genetic fallacy, naked and unashamed, to infer that all our real reasons *now* must either be prudential reasons, or be smoothly reducible to prudential reasons. For another, prudential reasons are not the currency of evolutionary explanation. Evolutionary explanation is not necessarily about *reasons* at all; it is about how creatures are the ways they are because selective pressures have adapted them to their environment so that they normally survive long enough to reproduce.⁶ Prudential reasons—at least as normally understood—are reasons of individual well-being, reasons that have to do with what promotes the individual's health, wealth, and happiness. Adaptation for reproduction-facilitating survival has nothing directly to do with *this*. As any male spider could tell you.

⁶ Agreeing with G.E.Moore makes me nervous, but here he seems right for once: "The survival of the fittest does *not* mean, as one might suppose, the survival of what is fittest to fulfil a good purpose... it means merely the survival of the fittest to survive... the value of the scientific theory [of evolution]... just consists in showing what are the causes which produce certain biological effects. Whether these effects are good or bad, it cannot pretend to judge." (*Principia Ethica* 48).

II Let us look now at the categories of The Moral and The Prudential (with or without capitals⁷), and at the reasons why philosophical suspicion about both categories might be appropriate.

Suspicion about the moral can take a number of forms. What I have labelled the prudentialistic presumption is itself one of them: here the suspicion is that moral reasons, to be made rationally intelligible, need to be explanatorily reduced to practical reasons in the other category, the category of the prudential. As will be clear already, I have my suspicions about this sort of suspicion. A different sort of suspicion about the moral is more to my present purposes. This is the sort of suspicion you get in Anscombe, MacIntyre, and Williams: the suspicion that “the moral” just isn’t the name of any unitary category that does much if any interesting work in justifying and explaining what actual good agents characteristically do. At the deliberative level, there may be *some* things that such agents do in which such agents are motivated by the thought “Because it’s moral”. But such agents have lots of other motivating thoughts – “Because fairness requires it”, “Because I promised”, “Because she’s my wife”, “Because we are friends”, “Because you are sinking”, “Because they are starving”, “Because otherwise he will be disgraced”, “Because it is in pain”, and so on indefinitely; the V-thoughts, as Hursthouse calls them. Clearly none of these is just another way of thinking the “Because it’s moral” thought; arguably many of them are not even consistent with that thought. So it isn’t clear why the “Because it’s moral” thought should be supposed to be a specially deep or important form of motivation for good agents.

Similarly at the criterion of rightness level, there may be a *few* things that good agents characteristically do in which such agents are justified simply and directly by the consideration “Because it’s moral”. But on the face of it, such agents can have lots of other justifications, many of them very different from this justification and nearly all of them more informative. As before, what they do may be justified by considerations about fairness, or promises, or someone’s being my wife, or a friendship, or shipwreck or famine or disgrace or pain – and so on indefinitely. Hence it is no clearer why the consideration “Because it’s moral” should be a particularly special or basic justification than it is why the thought “Because it’s moral” should be a particularly special or basic motivation for good agents. (Or should we take the domain of practical justification to be

⁷ I shall be risking a capitalisation of my own before too long. I beg the reader’s forbearance in advance.

theoretically unified in a way the domain of practical deliberation conspicuously isn't? Not without argument: more about that in section III).

At both the deliberative and the justificatory levels, to insist on the priority or basicity of appeals to The Moral looks like little more than stipulation. There is no obvious explanatory gain in this redescription. If it is taken (as it so often is) to be *the* right way to marshal the phenomena, to the exclusion of other ways of looking at them that may prove equally or even more fruitful, then there is a considerable risk of explanatory loss too: a risk that this insistence will simply obfuscate the real structure of our deliberative and justificatory practices.

By now these phenomena about the multifariousness of the moral have been extensively studied by ethicists and moral psychologists. The thought is quite familiar – and I believe it is true – at “the moral” is not really the name of any wide-ranging and sharply-defined category of practical reasons at all. What is perhaps not quite so familiar, but I believe equally true, is that the same applies to the prudential.

The prudential is supposed to be about what is advantageous, or beneficial, or in the agent's own interest, or what furthers the agent's well-being. But first, there are serious ambiguities about all of these notions. Patently, “advantage” and “benefit” and “interest” and “well-being” are concepts of which there are indefinitely many competing accounts, both philosophical and informal. Patently, the words can all mean lots and lots of different things, and there is no particular reason – aside from theory – to expect their extensions to converge at all neatly. In perfectly natural and ordinary senses of the words, we may say that forgoing a pay-rise to impress my boss may be to my advantage but it does not benefit me, while health-threatening and anxious dedication to my work as a novelist or a famine-relief worker may be in my interest but does not further my well-being. Secondly, there is no reason – again, aside from theory – to think that these notions can easily or conveniently be kept clear of what the proponent of the moral/prudential contrast would like to call *moral* connotations. This is especially obvious with “well-being”, but a similar “mixing of the prudential and the moral” can be imaginatively effected just by adding *real* on the front of the other terms – “real advantage”, “real benefit”, “real interest”. If the prudential is to be a category clearly distinct from the moral, having to do with the agent's individual well-being, this cross-infection of the moral and the prudential cannot be allowed to happen. But suppose well-being turns out to be a notion, which cannot be properly understood except when it is given a moral loading. I myself think this is very likely to be how things

turn out; I would be inclined to suggest that inquiring as to what to count as well-being is not a value-neutral anthropological enterprise, but a key part of constituting one's own moral character. If anything like this is true, the cross-infection of the moral and the prudential is inevitable. And so, to switch metaphors, the idea of an exclusive moral/ prudential distinction is already holed below the waterline.

Alongside these two problems, there is a third. The very idea of the prudential, as most commonly understood, appears to rest on an obvious falsehood. In its most typical form, the category of the prudential is meant to fit both of two criteria. (a) It is supposed to be about people acting in pursuit of their own interest (or welfare or advantage or whatever). (b) It is supposed to be definable by exclusion from the category of the moral: the moral and the prudential are supposed to be an exhaustive and exclusive pair of categories, which between them cover every case of having a practical reason. But (a) and (b) together imply that whenever someone acts on a non-moral reason, he acts in pursuit of his own interest. Since "non-moral reason" and "in pursuit of his own interest" are both extremely vague phrases, it is difficult to *conclusively* refute this. But on any commonsensical understanding of the words, it is plainly false. A man who works himself half to death to please his beloved, or to perfect his conducting of the Eroica Symphony, acts on a non-moral reason: his reason is romantic, or musical, or what you will. Does that mean that he acts "in pursuit of his own interest"? The natural thing to say is that what he is doing is *against* his own interest; he is making a great and dangerous sacrifice for his lover or his art. In this sense, then, it is quite obvious that not every non-moral reason is a reason of self-interest. So evidently not all practical reasons are either moral or else prudential—unless the prudential becomes so wide a category that it is obviously not really a *category* at all.

III The moral has no clear structural unity; nor does the prudential, which is also very hard to articulate without the covert or overt importation of moral elements which threaten the supposed exclusiveness of the moral/prudential distinction; the supposed exhaustiveness of that distinction seems highly questionable too.

These are the basic problems about "the moral" and "the prudential". As Plato in effect pointed out, they are not well finessed by a Thrasymachean cynicism about the moral, precisely because of the instability of the notion of the prudential – especially when that notion is not allowed to "cross-infect" with the moral in the way described above.

Nor are they well finessed by the kind of moralism we get in Kant, who could happily accept that the prudential is a shapeless mess, provided he is allowed to say that there is something that unifies the moral – namely the move to universalisability. Familiarly, the trouble with this, as I have argued elsewhere⁸, is that it isn't at all clear that the universalisable and (what we might intuitively call) the moral coincide.

In more recent philosophy, the same problem arises for Singer's moralistic proposal that the test of when you get to "the moral point of view" is when you get to the level of complete impartiality, i.e. of considering all interests equally important in your practical reasoning.⁹ There are many ways of being impartial, and not all of them are "the moral point of view" as that is normally understood: we might consider every interest whatever as of *zero* importance, or think that there are non-zero interests but that only works of art or numbers or exoplanets have them, and still count as "considering all interests equally important". So getting to the level of complete impartiality is not sufficient for adopting the "moral point of view". Nor is it necessary: plenty of people who are on any normal use of the words *paradigm* occupants of "the moral point of view" are also partial in their attitudes, and would be far less moral if they were not.

Other well-known accounts of how to characterise "the moral" often succumb even faster to even more obvious problems. William Frankena, for example, stipulates in one well-known discussion that one is not "taking the moral point of view" unless, *inter alia*, "one is willing to universalise", and one's "reasons for one's judgments consists of facts about what the things judged do to the lives of sentient beings in terms of promoting or distributing non-moral good and evil".¹⁰ Of course (see my

⁸ Refs: perfecting virtue, and the relevant bit of E & Exp.

⁹ See, for example, Singer, *How are we to live?*, Chapter 1.

¹⁰ "My own position, then, is that one is taking the moral point of view if and only if (a) one is making normative judgments about actions, desires, dispositions, intentions, motives, persons, or traits of character; (b) one is willing to universalize one's judgments; (c) one reasons for one's judgments consists of facts about what the things judged do to the lives of sentient beings in terms of promoting or distributing non-moral good and evil; and (d) when the judgment is about oneself or one's own actions, one's reasons include such facts about what one's own actions and dispositions do to the lives of other sentient beings as such, if others are affected. One has a morality or moral action-guide only if and insofar as one makes normative judgments from this point of view and is guided by them." (William K. Frankena *Ethics* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963), 113-4).

fourth epigraph) we can use the word “moral” however we like; but it is hard to see the point of using it in such a way that non-universalisable moral judgements, and moral judgements about the environment, are ruled out by definition. A similar objection can be made to Catherine Wilson’s more recent suggestion that “There is an anonymity requirement on moral theorising”; she is of course free to propose that we should see *any* endorsement of a partial norm as “ideology”, not as “moral theory proper”, but the problem with this proposal is that it just seems like a stretching of the sense of “moral” – and of “ideology”.¹¹

So if neither can be cleanly and exclusively defined, should we just junk the notions of the moral and the prudential? On the contrary, I think we should rehabilitate them. As I said above, there are some actions – not many, but some; perhaps handing in a lost tenner to the police station – that quite often really are motivated and justified by nothing else but the thought “Because it’s moral”. With these actions we find the legitimate scope of the notion of the moral. Similarly, there are some things that people do – not everything, not perhaps even all that many things, but some: perhaps applying for a stop-gap job to pay the mortgage “just till something better comes up” – in which what motivates them, and perhaps even justifies them, very often is solely and simply a concern with the agent’s own advantage or interest in some fairly clearly non-moral sense. With these actions we find the legitimate scope of the notion of the prudential. The notions of the moral and the prudential work just fine in these, their home territories. The question to the systematising moral theorist is why we should feel any impulse to insist that these are the only two basic-level notions that we can deploy to think about our practical reasons in *any* territory.

IV Recall the sheer variousness of the things that can appear explanatorily basic to people whose rationality is, we would normally say, indisputable. The more we understand this variety, the less we will be tempted by the thought that, in ethics, we face a large and pressing task set

¹¹ “Prescriptive proposals, even if they arise from within particular cultural settings and reflect the concerns of creatures known to be partial to themselves, presuppose a detached perspective. There is an anonymity requirement on moral theorizing. [...] The requirement implies that the endorsement and propagation of norms that differentially serve the interests of the particular reference class that endorses and propagates the norm qualifies as ideology, not moral theory proper.” (Catherine Wilson *Moral Animals: Ideals and Constraints in Moral Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004, p. 23).

for us by the opening question, “Why be moral?”: the task of providing an explanatory reduction of the moral to the prudential. As if the prudential were somehow the universal currency of practical reasoning; as if the prudential were an exchange for and a measure of every other sort of practical reason. If my argument so far is right, nothing of this sort can possibly be true. What we should pursue in the theory of practical reasons is not chimerical unificatory projects like this; it is an exploration and assessment of the diversity and *disunity* of our actual practical reasons.

One example, an example I have discussed at length elsewhere, is practical reasons having to do with glory.¹² Another example is humour. A third – the one that I want to discuss here: What if someone were to say “I did it because it was beautiful”? One form of this is in effect what Villars de Honnecourt is saying in my first epigraph above. The possibility of saying it, and saying it in many different ways, is something that both Simone Weil, in my second epigraph, and Aristotle, in my third, are affirming.

“In many different ways”: of course there is a difference between Villars de Honnecourt, who does what he does because some *object* (the window) is beautiful, and Aristotle’s *andreios*, with whom the point is, I take it, that what he does is to-be-done because it, his *action*, is beautiful or fine, *kalos*. Different again is the case that Weil describes, where someone changes his whole way of living (Weil is thinking of the gospel parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15.11-32) because he comes to see his present life in a new light that is cast over it by the illumination of something like the Platonic ideal of Beauty. Further cases, to be brought in in a moment, will introduce still further differences.

I do not want to discount these differences, but on the contrary to emphasise them. For it is of course *absolutely not* my intention to propose that, alongside the two familiar monolithic categories of practical reasons, The Moral and The Prudential, we should recognise a third monolithic, capitalised category, The Aesthetic. I am not saying that if any practical reason is neither Moral nor Prudential, then it must be Aesthetic. As far as I am concerned, the more other categories of practical reason there are besides these three, the merrier. And anyway, I would not want to take it for granted that “I did it because it was the beautiful thing to do” *is* an appeal to The Aesthetic. (Certainly it is an appeal to The Beautiful, but maybe we can

¹² Chappell, “Glory as an ethical idea”, *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* (forthcoming).

give good sense to the idea that not all beauty is aesthetic; at any rate I wouldn't want to rule this possibility out merely by definition).

For my own part, I generally feel much surer of my footing with "The Beautiful" than with "The Aesthetic". My doubts about the first two monolithic categories, The Moral and The Prudential, have close parallels regarding the monolithic category The Aesthetic. In the case of The Moral I see a small class of cases which are more or less exactly what theorists of The Moral want them to be – cases where we have reason to do something simply because it's right (just, obligatory, the matter of a stringent duty, or whatever), and go wrong both if we don't do it and if we do it for any other reason – and a very large penumbra of cases which are misleadingly assimilated to those few cases, because people feel themselves under a theoretical pressure to strive for uniformity. Similarly with The Prudential, there are just a few cases – cases where someone sees that something he can do will bring him some fairly down-to-earth, usually material advantage, and has reason to act to pursue that advantage – which fit exactly a template into which all sorts of other cases are then contorted even though they don't fit it at all. So again with The Aesthetic, I see just a few cases which are just what the theorist of The Aesthetic wants them to be: cases, say, of focused, detached, and disinterested delight in the relevant properties of some simply and directly presented artwork; and a whole range of other cases which are *a bit* like this central case – but not so like it that it makes sense to insist that there is only one ontological or otherwise classificatory¹³ pigeonhole for any of them, namely the aesthetic one.

V These caveats aside, the idea that the beautiful can give us reasons is – as my first to third epigraphs demonstrate – of course not new. In a classical Greek context, it is not even, so far forth, a controversial one. Aristotle, Pericles, and Plato disagree about many things, but they do not disagree about this. With Aristotle's thesis, in my third epigraph, that the brave man does his brave deeds *kalou heneka*, "for the sake of the fine" (or "the beautiful" or "the noble", as it is also sometimes translated), compare Socrates' claim at *Gorgias* 477c8 that what is worst (*aiskhiston*) is also what is ugliest, and Pericles' famous words in the Funeral Oration:

They resigned to hope their unknown chance of happiness; but in the face of death they resolved to rely upon themselves alone. And

¹³ "Metaphysics is the shadow of grammar" (in Peter Hacker's Wittgensteinian phrase). In the theory of practical reasons, it often seems that ontology is the shadow of classification.

when the moment came they thought it more beautiful (*kallion hêgêsamenoi*) to stand firm and die, rather than to fly and save their lives; they ran away from the word of dishonour (*to men aiskhron tou logou*), but on the battlefield their feet stood fast, and in an instant, at the height of their fortune, they passed away from the scene, not of their fear, but of their glory (*doxês*). (Thucydides 2.42, tr. Jowett, with alterations)

The ideas that “I did it because it was beautiful” can be a rationally intelligible motivation, and that the beauty of ways of acting can be an important aspect of their goodness, are not exclusively pagan Greek ones either. If Plato speaks of the beauty of good people’s actions (*Symposium* 210c), so too does Aquinas:

Aquinas thinks the medium of *claritas* – light or resplendence –which enables us to see and take pleasure in beauty is a central feature of the form of the object itself... Aquinas follows Pseudo-Dionysius in holding that *claritas* is rooted in reason, which he describes as ‘the light that makes beauty seen’ [ST 2.2.180.2]. There is a ‘clarity of reason’ which gives a *spiritual beauty* to our actions when they are well directed towards reason.

(Hayden Ramsay, *Beyond Virtue* (London: Macmillan 1997), 135)¹⁴

More recently, from Malcolm Muggeridge’s significantly entitled book *Something Beautiful for God*, here is Muggeridge’s description of how he felt when he had just met Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Arrestingly enough, this description invokes (whether knowingly or not) something very like the Thomistic idea of *claritas*:

When the train began to move, and I walked away, I felt as though I were leaving behind me all the beauty and all the joy in the universe. Something of God’s universal love has rubbed off on Mother Teresa, giving her homely features a noticeable luminosity; a shining quality. She has lived so closely with her Lord that the same enchantment clings about her that sent the crowds chasing

¹⁴ See also ST 2.2.145.2c: Pulchritudo spiritualis in hoc consistit quod conversatio hominis, sive actio eius, sit bene proportionata secundum spiritualem claritatis rationem. (“Spiritual beauty consists in this, that a man’s behaviour or his action should be well-proportioned, in line with the spiritual sense of ‘clarity’.”) It is greatly to Hayden Ramsay’s credit that his book on virtue ethics makes so much of beauty – a topic sadly neglected by most ethicists, no doubt because of the kind of theoretical pressures that this paper describes the better to resist them.

after him in Jerusalem and Galilee, and made his mere presence seem a harbinger of healing. Outside, the streets were beginning to stir; sleepers awakening, stretching, and yawning; some raking over the piles of garbage in search of something edible. It was a scene of desolation, yet it, too, seemed somehow irradiated. This love, this Christian love, which shines down on the misery we make, and into our dark hearts that make it; irradiating all, uniting all, making of all one stupendous harmony. Momentarily I understood; then, leaning back in my American limousine, was carried off to breakfast, to pick over my own particular garbage-heap. (MM SBfG (London: Harper One 1986 [1971], 17-18)

What I want to suggest is that the answer to “Why be moral?” is quite often “Because that is the beautiful thing to do”. It’s not that the moral act is itself prudentially disastrous, but just happens to be, unfortunately enough, one of a class to the whole of which we are somehow committed, if we are committed to any part of it – as theories like rule-consequentialism and Gauthier’s contractualism too often tend to suggest. Nor is that the moral act is prudentially advantageous in *some* way – just a very obscure way, one which is consistent with the fact that the moral act is attended with terrible penalties like those that Hans and Sophie Scholl faced, or those described by Callicles at *Gorgias* 486b. We need not think that there is *any* prudential advantage, in *any* sense, in the gravely-sacrificial moral act. At least in some cases, that simply isn’t the point. It is rather that the moral act demands to be done even if it *does* involve a grave sacrifice – just because it is beautiful.

Perhaps this is something like what Rai Gaita is getting at when he talks, in a justly famous discussion (*Good and Evil* xvi ff.), of actions that display “a goodness to marvel at”. Perhaps this appeal to *to kalon*, The Beautiful, is the answer to the puzzlement expressed by the person who said of Sophie Scholl and those who suffered with her that “the fact that five little kids, in the mouth of the wolf where it really counted, had the tremendous courage to do what they did, is spectacular to me. I know that the world is better for them having been there, but I do not know why.”¹⁵ Perhaps it is also the best answer to the difficulty that Philippa Foot is struggling with in the following two paragraphs:

¹⁵ Lillian Garrett-Groag, quoted in the Wikipedia article on Sophie Scholl. The remark is quoted and discussed by Eleonore Stump *Wandering in Darkness*, pp. 149 and 549.

One may think that there was a sense in which the Letter-Writers did, *but also a sense in which they did not*, sacrifice their happiness in refusing to go along with the Nazis. In the abstract what they so longed for – to get back to their families – was of course wholly good. But as they were placed [facing imminent execution for involvement in the German resistance to Hitler] it was impossible to pursue this end by just and honourable means. And this, I suggest, explains the sense in which they did not see as their happiness what they could have got by giving in.¹⁶ Happiness in life¹⁷, they might have said, was not something possible for them... Yet this is not the heart of the matter. For supposing that they had been offered a ‘Lethe-drug’ that would have taken from them all future knowledge of the action [of giving in to the Nazis]? They would not have accepted. And there would have been a way in which *they would not have felt that happiness lay in acceptance*. ((To see it as happiness they would have to have changed, and would not have accepted the prospect of such a change... one would not wish for the sake of friends one loved that ‘in the tight corner’ they would be able to forsake their virtue in time.))¹⁸ ...Happiness isolated from virtue is not the only way in which the concept is to be found in our thoughts. The suggestion is, then, that humanity’s good can be thought of as happiness, and yet in such a way that combining it with wickedness is *a priori* ruled out.

¹⁶ Foot presumably means “giving in at some earlier stage”. Nothing the Letter-Writers could have done at the time when they wrote their letters would have made any difference.

¹⁷ “Happiness *in life*”: Foot hints here at the thought what really mattered for the Letter-Writers was *eternal* happiness, or happiness in the after-life. As a Christian myself, I would say that thoughts about the after-life are merely a distraction in this context. If the point is to do something beautiful, the point has to be to do something that is beautiful *here and now* – just as it will have to be in the after-life. Acting for the sake of the beautiful-here-and-now is not easily consistent with acting primarily for the sake of a later reward. I think Thucydides’ Pericles deals well with this problem when he, apparently, goes out of his way to insist that those he is praising in the Funeral Oration simply ceased to be when they died, and have *no* prospect of a future reward: “in an instant, at the height of their fortune, they passed away” (*hama akmei tes doxes... apellagesan*).

¹⁸ Foot puts what I have double-bracketed into a footnote, but I think it is an integral part of her main argument.

Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 95-6

Throughout her philosophical career, Foot maintained an underlying commitment to the thesis that the virtues benefit their possessor. In the first of these paragraphs she questions that commitment: perhaps the Letter-Writers were not really after *happiness* at all, since what they would have counted happiness was not accessible to them without surrendering something else that mattered more than happiness. Then in the second she apparently has, though she does not quite make it explicit, a different thought: perhaps there is a sense in which the Letter-Writers *achieved* happiness, since *for them* happiness could not be isolated with virtue, but is bound up with it, even if virtue means death in a Nazi prison.¹⁹

One problem with this is that the most it shows is that the happiness of the good martyr is *one sort of* happiness, not the only sort. In which case you do not need to be Polus to wonder what the martyr's sort of happiness has going for it, compared with other possible sorts: the happiness of a comfortable tyrant like Perdiccas, for example. That is why Socrates in the *Gorgias*, sharing as he does Foot's basic eudaimonism, finds that he has to insist against Polus on a much stronger position than Foot's – that the good martyr's happiness is (an extreme case of) the only sort of happiness, namely “education and justice”, whereas Perdiccas' or the Persian emperor's position is not truly happiness at all.

Polus. Then it's clear, Socrates, that you'll say you can't even tell that the Great King [of Persia] is happy.

Socrates. Yes, and I'll say what's true. For I don't know how he is off for education and justice (*paideia kai dikaiosynê*).

Polus. What? Is the whole of happiness in that?

Socrates. Yes, so I say, Polus. For I say that the fine and good (*kalon*²⁰ *kagathon*) man and woman is happy, and the unjust and base (*adikon kai ponêron*) is wretched.

(*Gorgias* 470e4-11)

¹⁹ Compare my own remark, above, that deciding what to count as happiness is not value-neutral anthropology, but an act of moral self-constitution. As we shall see, it does not follow from this remark that happiness is always what is in question in our key moral decisions.

²⁰ There is another complexity lurking in these words, because they point us towards Socrates' campaign of argument, in the *Gorgias*, to show that whatever is (as we would say) morally good, *agathon*, is *also* beautiful, *kalon*. I will not attempt to unravel this here.

When eudaimonism is forced into such extremes as these, or into the difficulties that we have just seen Foot struggling with, it seems to me reasonable to wonder whether eudaimonism is better not given up altogether. Maybe the point about the saintly martyr is not that he acts on an imperative of *happiness* at all. It is that he acts on a quite different kind of imperative: the imperative that Aristotle expresses by *heneka tou kalou*.

VI Suppose then that we can, sometimes, justify an action by appeal to The Beautiful: by saying that the action deserves to be done because it is concerned with a beautiful object, like Villars de Honnecourt's, or because the action itself displays intrinsic beauty in one way or another, like the deeds of Foot's Letter-Writers or Aristotle's or Pericles' *andreioi*. Then is that *all* we can say about the action? A dilemma seems to face me here. If I can say no more to justify the action than that it is beautiful, or is done for the sake of the beautiful, then my position looks obscurantist; it seems to run us very quickly into a philosophical and explanatory dead-end. If on the other hand I *can* say more to justify the action than this appeal to beauty, then the suspicion will be that it is this "more" that does the real explaining. And then my alleged category of practical reasons to do with The Beautiful will turn out to be reducible to some other category after all.

Neither horn of this dilemma is at all threatening. On the one side, there is often plenty more we can say to illuminate the justification of some action as beautiful. For instance: "it's beautiful because of what it expresses", "it's a beautiful action because of its symbolic power"; "it's a beautiful action because of the pure courage that it displays"; "it's a beautiful action because of its appositeness, its wittiness almost"; "it's a beautiful action because of its *grace*". (And what a fertile notion *grace* is, incidentally. Colloquially, being graceful is, as just said, one way among others of being beautiful; theologically, grace is a gratuitous generosity which transfigures its recipient. We should not think of colloquial grace and theological grace as merely accidental homophones.) It is a mistake to think that remarks like these subsume the beautiful under some more basic justificatory category, rather than teaching us "our way about"²¹ the justificatory category of the beautiful itself.

On the other side, sometimes that an action is beautiful *is* all that we need to say, simply because that justification applies, and none of its indefinitely possible defeaters has been activated. No doubt in such cases we could, in principle, rephrase "The deed was the thing to do because it was

²¹ LW: a philosophical problem has the form: I don't know my way about.

beautiful” as “The deed was the thing to do because it was beautiful, and the justificatory power of the beautiful was not defeated by any other considerations in this context”. In cases where the justificatory force of the beautiful *isn't* defeated, it will normally be superfluous to say so: just as, if you want to explain why something falls to the ground, it is typically enough to say “Because of gravity”, and superfluous to add “...and because nothing overrides gravity in this case”.

None of this is to say that the justificatory force of the beautiful is never defeated. Of course it is, sometimes: an action can fail to be justified, beautiful though it is or seems, for indefinitely many reasons. Perhaps the action's cost in some other currency is simply too high; or perhaps the action involves an aspect-blindness about cruelty or some other vice that cannot be ignored in the deed; or perhaps the action is not, in fact, beautiful at all – it is graceless or exaggerated or twisted in some way; or perhaps the action has the symbolic or expressive force of expressing something *false*, or rests on some sort of misunderstanding – and so on indefinitely. My thesis is not that the beautiful always justifies, only that it sometimes does. And when the justificatory force of the beautiful *isn't* defeated, we usually can add something about why it isn't defeated, as and when occasion demands.

One case where occasion so demands comes in a well-known Gospel story:

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a beautiful work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. And

Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them.²²

According to Jesus the justification of the woman's action lies simply and straightforwardly in its beauty. (*Kalon ergon êrgasato en emoi*, mis-translated in the King James Version as "she hath wrought a *good* work on me". That the deed's beauty is the point, as we would expect from the word *kalon*, is underlined by a detail that St John adds in his version of the story: "the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume", Jn 12.3.) The objection to the woman's action is a form of the objection that its cost is too high; an objection that we will probably hear a lot against actions motivated by beauty. The objection is that the action – in which the woman would of course have been making a huge financial sacrifice – is wasteful and inefficient from the point of view of public utility. Jesus responds that there are cases where beauty overrides public utility. And this is one of them, because of the grace (both theological and colloquial) and the exactly apposite symbolic value of the woman's action. And so the passage gives us a concise, but rather rich, example of how a debate about the relative justificatory powers of beauty and utility might be intelligible: for what Jesus says to justify the woman's deed is perfectly intelligible, even if we do not accept it. (To many today Jesus' justification of the action as a symbolic preparation for what was about to happen to him will no doubt be a scandalous one, just as it seems to have scandalised some of his hearers at the time: Judas, for instance, for whom "the poor you have always with you" seems to have been the last straw that provoked that good utilitarian into betrayal.)

VII On the picture of the theory of practical reasons that I am recommending, rationally-intelligible practical reasons can take all sorts of forms that have nothing much to do with, and are not easily assimilable to, either The Moral or The Prudential. On this picture, there is no general philosophical pressure towards the unification of all our practical reasons under one, or two, or any small number of types. Certainly to understand any agent or practical reasoner as practically rational, we must be able to see her reasons as falling under *some* rationally-intelligible type of reason. But to think that "For every practically rational action, there is some intelligible reason-type" entails "There is *one* intelligible reason-type for every practically rational action" is to commit a simple scope-fallacy. Setting that

²² Mk 14.3-10; KJV with one word altered—as explained in the main text, I have changed "good" for *kalon* to "beautiful". Cp. Mt 26.6-13, Lk 7.36-50, Jn 12.1-8.

fallacy aside, we can see how to replace a “deep and narrow” theory of practical reasons, such as the moralism or prudentialism described in section I, with a “wide and shallow” account. On this sort of account – if a name is wanted, call it pluralism – our concern is still to find the intelligibility of practical reasons. It’s just that we deny the moralistic or prudentialistic assumption that there is only one place to find this intelligibility, and that we must dig deep in order to find it. Rather, intelligibility can be found in all sorts of places in the landscape of practical rationality. Very often – more often than not, in fact – the intelligibility of a deed is right in front of our eyes, and no digging at all is necessary.

Is anything important lost if we adopt this sort of pluralism about practical reasons? I don’t see that it is. Certainly the pluralist must abandon the ambition to unify all practical reasons under a single narrowly-defined type of intelligibility, such as “the moral” or “the prudential” in one of the usual senses. But this ambition, as I have already argued, is misleading and chimerical anyway: it’s not clear either that the project of tracing every justification back to some prudential or moral bedrock can be completed, or even if it is, that what we will have hold of then will really be *intelligibility*. So we are better off without it. (The ambition certainly gets no encouragement from the case of science, which is not necessarily about theoretical unity either: on at least one perfectly respectable way of thinking about it, “The ideal end of science is not unity but absolute plethora” (Ian Hacking *Representing and Intervening* 218).

Or must pluralists about practical reasons succumb to quietism, lose their critical edge, subside into admitting that “anything goes”? I see no reason to think that. As I argued in section VI, to accept that there is not just one form (or two, or any small number of forms) that criticism of anyone’s practical reasoning must take is not to give up any sort of critique of practical reasoning. On the contrary, if I am right that restrictiveness about the types of practical reasoning is a mistake, it is to remove an important obstacle to doing such criticism well. To say that there are *many* legitimate and intelligible forms of practical reasoning is not to say that “anything goes” in practical reasoning. Neither quietism nor anarchy is any kind of threat to pluralism.

But perhaps the threat in pluralism is not quietism but intuitionism? I say that our theory of practical reasons should be “wide and shallow”, not “narrow and deep”: that very often, in critically considering practically rational actions, we reach their fundamental genus of practical intelligibility pretty well straight away – “the action is funny”, “the action is beautiful”,

for instance. How then, in general, do we *know* when we have got to a basic characterisation of practical intelligibility? Mustn't the answer be that our ability to recognise such characterisations is just that – recognitional – and therefore a matter of murky and mysterious intuition?

Others who have explored this terrain before me may have thought that this was the moral to draw. Prichard's conclusion, for example, is that the basic reason why it is a mistake to try and explain why we should be moral is because moral obligations are, quite generally, self-evident, so that attempting such an explanation involves "the mistake of supposing the possibility of proving what can only be apprehended directly by an act of moral thinking" (*Mind* 1912, p.11). But I simply reject the last paragraph's last "therefore". To say that our ability to identify basic characterisations of practical intelligibility is recognitional is one thing – and, I think, at least sometimes a true thing. To say that the epistemology of practical reasons is *therefore* murky, mysterious, and intuitive is quite another thing. And, I think, it is false. In a certain sense – given that we are all practical reasoners, and all have at least some grip on the difference between a good and a bad practical-reason claim – nothing could be *less* murky and mysterious than practical reasons; nothing could be more familiar.

We have no doubt suffered enough already from that little word "intuition": it means too many different things to be much real use in philosophy. (Keeping score during a fine Berlin conference on Intuition in Ethics last September, I counted thirty.²³) Maybe we would do better to

²³ The ones on my list were: (1) Quasi-sensory perception; (2) directly quasi-sensory-perception-based belief; (3) belief that is in fact not inferred from any other belief; (4) belief that is in fact not inferred from anything; (5) belief that in principle could not be inferred from any other belief; (6) belief that in principle could not be inferred from anything; (7) disposition to believe; (8) belief authoritatively implanted by God; (9) belief that strikes us as plausible independently of other beliefs; (10) belief that strikes us as plausible independently of other evidence; (11) belief that strikes us as plausible independently of anything else; (12) gut feeling or hunch; (13) considered judgement; (14) platitude; (15) guesstimate; (17) prejudice; (18) belief we hold to be axiomatic; (19) belief that we should hold to be axiomatic; (20) belief that we hold at least as certainly as any other belief that we hold; (21) belief that we should hold at least as certainly as any other belief that we hold; (22) hinge proposition; (23) heuristic; (24) default belief for me; (25) default belief for my society; (26) belief based on experience not on abstract reasoning; (27) self-evident truth; (28) a seeming-reason for believing; (29) a belief that is inferred, but in restricted ways; (30) a group belief. I doubt my list was complete.

learn to do without the word “intuition”, given this ambiguity, and given also that, as Timothy Williamson has pointed out, there is usually nothing particularly epistemologically special or peculiar about what philosophers call intuitions.²⁴ In particular, I want to suggest here, there is nothing particularly special or peculiar about our recognitional capacities. We have such capacities. We exercise them. They are not infallible. Mostly we go right with them. Sometimes we go wrong; then we have to figure out *how* exactly we went wrong, which can be puzzling. Like our ability to say when an arithmetical sum has been adequately checked, our ability to say when someone has stated a genuinely and basically intelligible practical reason is just such a recognitional ability – and little, if at all, more mysterious. In ordinary English, the claim that an action is to be done because it is the beautiful thing to do is perhaps not a very natural or colloquial thing to say. But if ethical philosophy is to add anything to our ordinary vocabulary (and there is no *a priori* reason why it shouldn’t), this addition might be a more illuminating and more useful one to make than the addition that an action is to be done because it is, say, optimific or universalisable.²⁵

²⁴ “Metaphilosophical talk of intuitions obscures our real methodological situation in at least two ways. First, it feeds the methodological illusion of an incontestable starting-point, if not of intuited facts, then of facts as to what we intuit. There is no such starting-point; evidence can always be contested. Second, it conceals the continuity between philosophical thinking and the rest of our thinking. So-called intuitions involve the very same cognitive capacities that we use elsewhere, but deployed in contexts in which scepticism about judgement is salient. If we want to identify what is genuinely distinctive in philosophical thinking, we should stop talking about intuition.” Timothy Williamson, “Philosophical ‘intuitions’ and scepticism about judgement”, *Dialectica* 58 2004, 109-152, at p.145.

²⁵ Thanks for comments to Sarah Broadie.

Happy Man vs. Unhappy Beast: A Platonic Response to J.S. Mill

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I. Introduction. In Plato's *Timaeus*, we are offered a cosmogony – one, we are warned, that is only a likely tale (*εἰκόσ μυθος*, *eikos muthos*).¹ It is explained to us that dealing in such speculative matters can really only ever render an account that is probably true, and this makes sense.² But, what was Plato's intention in writing the *Timaeus*? Or, rather, how can we read the *Timaeus*? In Plato's time, was it considered to be an honest account of the cosmos's origins? Or, was it a story-line used primarily to advance Platonic doctrine, *i.e.* his theory of forms and the immortality of the soul? According to remarks in two of Aristotle's treatises, Plato probably did believe the story that he was telling.³ At the very least, Aristotle considered him to be the one person who believed that time was created.

It is possible that Plato's *Timaeus* recounts what was believed to be a true account of the cosmos. But, parts of the dialogue give us pause to think otherwise. In particular, the devolution schemes Plato advances in the *Timaeus* (42a-d and 90e-92c), as a complement to his argument for the immortality of the soul, calls into question the earnestness of Timaeus's story. What did Plato gain in arguing that the souls of unjust (*ἀδίκος*, *adikos*) men devolve to inhabit the bodies of women, and if still lacking in virtue, to the bodies of non-human animals?

While it will be outside the scope of this paper to answer this last question, we can use it as a jumping off point to consider the central topic of this conference, *i.e.* whether J.S. Mill was right to conclude in chapter two of *Utilitarianism* that it is “Better to be an unhappy human than a happy pig,”⁴ or rather, what does it even mean to think such a thing. Over the course of this paper, then, we will mine Plato's devolution schemes, primarily as presented in the *Timaeus*, but with help from the *Phaedo* and

1 *Timaeus*, 29d.

2 cf. Ronald Polansky on non observables in his unpublished notes on the *Timaeus*, and his reference to Vlastos on the topic.

3 cf. Ursula Coope *Time for Aristotle: Physics IV.10-14*, pages 146 n. 8 and 163 n. 11.

4 *Utilitarianism*, page 14.

Republic,⁵ in an effort to respond to these concerns, discovering that Mill's choice to privilege the unhappy human over the happy non-human may be an impossible choice for Plato, a false dilemma.

II. Defining Happiness. Four key premises allow Mill to privilege the unhappy human over the happy pig. The first is that “happiness” means “pleasure itself, together with exemption from pain.”⁶ The second, is that whatever this happiness is, it is applicable both to humans and to non-humans. Mill acknowledges that less complicated beings require less to experience pleasure. So, both humans and non-humans have the capability of happiness, but the road to that happiness, or what qualifies as pleasure, is different for each. The third, to put it broadly, is that many humans are unhappy because they are suffering in some way and non-humans are generally happy because they are not suffering. The fourth is that humans are suffering because they are overwrought with some sort of desire and non-humans are not suffering because their desires are too simple to be overwrought.⁷ I will discuss these last two at length in the third section of this paper.

If we were to take Mill's conclusion out of context, we could take issue with his first two premises. Specifically, we could agree to understand happiness as *eudaimonia*, stipulating this understanding of the term, even if Mill would not have, in order to consistently consider Mill's claim within a Platonic context. For Plato in the *Timaeus*, the soul implanted (*emphuteutheien*) in a mortal body is confronted with various emotions, e.g. fear, desire, pleasure, pain, anger.⁸ Accordingly, if the souls “master (*κρατήσοιεν*, *kratesoieiv*) these, they shall live justly (*dikē*),⁹ but if they are mastered (*κρατηθέντες*, *kratethevtes*), unjustly (*adikia*).”¹⁰ The reward of a life lived justly, we are then told, is a departure from a mortal body, a return

5 It is widely accepted that the ideas in *Timaeus* and the *Republic* are consistent because it is believed that the *Timaeus* dialogue takes place the day after the *Republic*. I do not make any such claim here. For the purposes of this paper, I consider each dialogue on its own terms.

6 *Utilitarianism*, page 8.

7 My understanding of the connection between different levels of desire in humans and non-humans is indebted to Ronald Polansky.

8 *Timaeus*, 42a-b.

9 I follow the common translation of *dike* here as “just,” but it likewise could be read to mean “in accordance with custom or law” or “satisfaction”. I will not be able to entertain these alternative readings here.

10 *Timaeus*, 42b.

to the soul's native star – whence he began prior to implantation, and a happy life (*bios eudaimonos*). Thus, the reward for a life well lived is happiness. This implies a life in compliance with the three Platonic virtues, which correspond to the three parts of the soul (*ψυχή γένος, psuche genos*): temperance (*epithumia*), courage (*θυμός, thumos*), and rationality (*vous*).¹¹ An important caveat, however, is that it is only when the soul is inhabiting the human male body that this outcome can come about. In fact, when the opposite outcome arises, *i.e.* that the soul has been “mastered” by the appetites, cowardice, or irrationality, and he has not lived a just life, then his soul will subsequently be implanted into what Plato explains to be a lesser body¹² – either the body of a woman or the body of one of the three categories of non-human animals. Thus, we find a fatal problem for Mill's claim when considered in the context of Plato's devolution scheme in the *Timaeus* – happiness as *eudaimonia* does not apply to either humans or to non-human animals. It applies only to souls, and specifically to souls that have lived well as human men. In one sense, then, this outcome renders Mill's statement a non-issue as well. If the terms “unhappy” and “happy” cannot even apply to our subjects, *viz.* to humans and to non-humans, then we have a false dilemma.

On the other hand, however, and this is the path I would like to pursue in the duration of this paper, were we to accept Mill's definition of happiness as “pleasure” – and unhappiness as lack thereof – we could see past the apparent false dilemma in order to put Mill and Plato into conversation. I am not suggesting, however, that we merely turn the tables – resigning to accept a basic utilitarian understanding of happiness. Instead, I will argue that understanding happiness as “pleasure” (*ἡδονή, hedone*) aligns with the basic premises of *eudaimonea*, *i.e.* that happiness comes from taking pleasure in habitual virtuous and/or in intellectual actions.¹³ And taking that a step further, it should become apparent that, when combined with a devolution scheme, the tenets of *eudaimonia* for the living being become part of a consequentialist ethics for the immortal soul.

I shall address the possibilities in Plato that would allow for the condition that humans and non-humans experience pleasure in the fourth section of this paper.

11 *Timaeus*, 73c and p. 192 n. 1 in Loeb edition.

12 cf. *Timaeus* 42a, wherein we are told that man is the superior sex.

13 cf. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* on *αριτε (arite)*, *φρονεσις (phronesis)* (*Book VI*), *eudaimonia* (I.1-10), and *ακρασια (akrasia)* (VII.1-10).

III: Reading the Devolution Schemes. There are two devolution schemes in the *Timaeus*; each serves our project here, and we will deal with them each in turn. In addition, Socrates presents a devolution scheme in Plato's *Phaedo*, which has similarities to each of the two accounts in the *Timaeus* while maintaining differences from both. Finally, Socrates introduces the Myth of Er in Book X of the *Republic*, which discusses yet another version of devolution. In this final case, the pragmatics of devolution (i.e. into what sort of body a soul is implanted) is a decision made by the soul being reincarnated. I will look at the details of these two schemes in an effort to underscore what I understand to be the “take away” from the schemes in the *Timaeus*. What is more, in these latter two accounts, I will point out the emphasis on *eudaimonia* as something experienced while embodied, as opposed to merely experienced by the immortal soul following a successful life in the mortal realm.

We learn early in the *Timaeus*, in the context of the creation of the world soul, that the soul is older than the body (34c).¹⁴ It is the body's master. This applies at the level of human soul as well. For Plato, the body and soul were distinct entities. The soul, as we have aforementioned, is implanted into the body. Once in the body, it must deal with the afflictions of being embodied, which are many. Plato describes some of these challenges beginning at 42a, when he asserts the necessity of embodiment for souls:

And when by virtue of Necessity, they should be implanted in bodies, and their bodies are subject to influx and efflux, these results would necessarily follow, – firstly, sensation that is innate and common to all preceding from violent affections; secondly, desire mingled with pleasure and pain; and besides these, fear and anger and all such emotions as are naturally allied thereto, and all such as are of a different and opposite character.¹⁵

When the soul becomes embodied, it suddenly has to deal with various challenges. It is everlasting, while the body is mortal. The body needs air, nutrition, and encounters stimuli, sensation, interacts with other beings – plant, non-human animal, and human. It takes a lot in. It also releases air, waste, and response to these stimuli and interaction. It lets a lot out. But, as the saying goes, “it isn't what happens to you in life, but how you deal with it.” All souls have to deal with influx and efflux as a condition of

14 Cf Loeb edition where we are referred to Plato's *Laws* 892 a-b; 896 a-ff; 714 e.

15 *Timaeus*, 42a-b.

embodiment. The way that the soul manages that which comes in and thus, how it allows things to come out, however, is what Plato calls attention to here. This is the soul's "test," so to speak, and the result of its managing will be judged when the body eventually dies.

After Timaeus explains that the soul who masters the conditions of embodiment will live justly and he who does not will live unjustly, he discusses the consequences of both; "And he that has lived his appointed time well (*eu ton proseikonta chronon biou*) shall return again to his abode in his native star, and shall gain a life that is blessed (*bios eudaimonos*) and congenial; but whoso has failed therein shall be changed into woman's nature at the second birth."¹⁶ There are three important connections Plato makes here. The first is between outside stimuli and resulting desires and passions, these mixed with pleasure and pain. The second is between the way that the soul manages (*dikē* and *krateiv*) these desires and living well (*eu*). The third is between either living well (*eu*) and the soul's departure from mortality and eternal rest in blessedness (*eudaimonia*) at his native star or in not living well, and thus the soul's return to mortality in a less perfect body.

As we saw, Timaeus tells us at 42a that the male human body is the superior body. Imagining a scale of best to worst, we now see that the female human body is in second position from the top. We are not told specifically why the male human body is superior to the female body. In addition, we are not provided information as to how the experience of embodiment may be different for the soul, having now gone from male to female body. Given the correlations we made above, we might assume one of two things: (1) that devolution to the female body provides a greater challenge to the soul in living well, i.e. in mastering desire; or, (2) that devolution to the female body provides less of a challenge to the soul in living well, i.e. mastering desire. What is Plato implying here – after failing to live well in a male human body, does the soul need an easier time of it? Or, after having failed once, does the soul need an even larger struggle in order to prove himself? Before trying to evaluate which of these may have been Plato's intention here, let us look at the rest of the devolution scheme.

Timaeus goes on to explain that if the soul is still unable to live well, i.e. "doesn't stop from doing bad," in the female human body, then "he shall be changed every time, according to the nature of his wickedness, into

16 *Timaeus*, 42b.

some bestial form after the similitude of his own nature.”¹⁷ When the soul continues to be mastered by desire while implanted in the female human body, it is moved further down the line. This time, we are not given any information about engendered embodiment. Presumably, for Plato, male and females bodies are undifferentiated when we are talking about non-humans. What seems to separate the human body from the non-human body, then, is its capacity for desire. As we move down the devolution scheme, desire seems to become more concentrated, although perhaps also less far-reaching. According to Ron Polansky, non-humans experience less complicated desires than humans do. This sounds right, but at the same time, Plato is telling us here that of the wide class of non-human animal, there are animals who have proclivities to some desires while others are inclined to others. Thus, when the soul is unable to master all of the desires of the human body, it devolves into the body of the animal best known for exploiting the type of desire that the soul has trouble mastering.

Returning then to our question about whether Plato meant the devolution to be from high desire to decreased desire, i.e. from difficult to manage to easier to manage or the reverse, we have a tentative answer. It looks that he meant that desire would increase in intensity, yet decrease in diversity. The soul has to increasingly come face to face with his biggest weakness while simultaneously getting a break from dealing with other – perhaps what are for him more manageable – desires. In all, this seems to be a good plan for overcoming desire – Plato just may have developed the “face your fears” method of rehabilitation.

The second account of the devolution scheme comes at the very end of the *Timaeus*. Here, it is explained that certain vices trigger one devolution path, while others initiate another process all together. Specifically, “all those creatures generated as men who proved themselves cowardly and spent their lives in wrong-doing were transformed, at their second incarnation, into women.”¹⁸ The emergence of woman by way of the transgressions of man, then gives rise to the dual nature of human beings. This account, thus, returns to a question left unanswered by the first scheme, regarding the coming into being of the dual nature (42a), i.e. woman, or the second (inferior) nature, comes into being when the soul implanted in the male body proved itself to be cowardly. Women, we are led to believe, come into being if and only if souls originally implanted in male bodies

17 *Timaeus*, 42c.

18 *Timaeus*, 90e-91a.

cannot live out completely virtuous lives. Again, we have to wonder whether life in the female body provides more or less opportunities for the soul to encounter situations in which he must show himself to be courageous. Does the female body allow the soul to practice courage, or does it give the soul an opportunity to work on other virtues, since there is less of an opportunity? Timaeus continues his account of the devolution of man to woman with an explanation of sexual reproduction. Once there are both men and women, desire for copulation arises. The men find themselves wanting to emit their seed (91b), and women take ill if their wombs do not bear children (91d). “In this fashion, then, women and the whole female sex have come into existence (*to thely pan outō gegone*).”¹⁹

When the immortal soul is mastered by fear, it is re-implanted into a female body. When the immortal soul is mastered by irrationality or stupidity, however, it returns to mortal life inside of a non-human body. This scheme does not offer the top-down approach that we saw with the first devolution scheme in the *Timaeus*. It is not the case that women are the second rung in a vertical ladder of superior natures. Instead, man remains the superior nature, and women and non-human animal natures are all a step down in some way. Women, by nature, are more fearful or cowardly than men, and non-human animals are less intelligent. This second devolution scheme amends the path of devolution, but it retains the main idea behind the devolution. When the immortal soul cannot master all of the desires, emotions, and impulses stemming from the influx of the male human body, it comes back to inhabit the type of body most inclined to experience the type of temptation it gave into during the first incarnation.

Naturally, women are just as intelligent as men, so the soul who has difficulty with philosophizing, being rational, or keeping his wits about him devolves to a non-human animal body. On the other hand, many non-human animals are just as courageous as men, so the weak soul reincarnates as a woman. In all scenarios, the soul is enabled intensive practice at overcoming his vices.

Regarding the devolution of the soul from man to non-human, Timaeus puts forth four distinct possibilities: (1) “And the tribe of birds are derived by transformation, growing feathers in place of hair, from men who are harmless but light-minded”,²⁰ (2) “And the wild species of animal that goes on foot is derived from those men who have paid no attention at all to

19 *Timaeus*, 91d.

20 *Timaeus*, 91d

philosophy nor studied at all the nature of the heavens”;²¹ (3) “And inasmuch as there was no longer any need for feet for the most foolish of these same creatures...the gods generated these footless and wriggling upon the earth”;²² (4) “And the fourth kind, which lives in the water, came from the most utterly thoughtless and stupid of men.”²³ When a man is a bit of a “bird brain,” then, his soul reincarnates as an animal of the sky. These type of animals, as it was for the now devolved souls, believe that the truths about the world are acquired by way of the sense of sight. When a man refuses philosophical pursuits, and allows the courageous aspect of his mortal soul to master any rational pursuits, his soul reincarnates to a land animal – the worst of which devolve into a footless slithering land animals. These types of animals reside closer to the earth, since they do not stand upright. Their head, where any capability for rationality would have been, is not pointed toward the heavens, but straight ahead and close to the ground. The prominent aspect of their souls is the spirited part of the mortal soul. Finally, the men for whom stupidity is so offensive that the soul has been mastered by injustice, devolve into animals who do not breathe air. Their immortal souls are so unclean that they are sent to breathe water instead, in what Timaeus calls the most extreme of environments (92b). The point of the devolution is eventual evolution, or so we are told in the last lines of the *Timaeus* dialogue. “Thus, both then and now,” concludes Timaeus, “living creatures keep passing into one another in all these ways, as they undergo transformation by loss or by the gain of reason and unreason.”²⁴

In Plato’s *Phaedo*, we get a similar devolution scheme. The context of the *Phaedo* is well-known: Socrates is in jail, convicted of worshiping false idols and corrupting the youth, awaiting execution. On the day before he is to drink the fatal Hemlock, he speaks with friends about death, ultimately advancing his doctrine that the soul is immortal. The *Phaedo* dialogue takes place after Socrates’s death and is reported by Phaedo, an eyewitness (57a). At one point in the dialogue, we learn the fates of souls after they depart from their first incarnation. We are told that “they are likely to be imprisoned (*endountai*) in natures which correspond to the practices of their former life.”²⁵ The examples provided, however, differ

21 *Timaeus*, 91e

22 *Timaeus*, 92a

23 *Timaeus*, 92a-b

24 *Timaeus*, 92b-c

25 *Phaedo*, 81e

from both devolution schemes in the *Timaeus*. Women are not included in this scheme, and the non-human animals are not classified according to element, i.e. air, earth, and water. Finally, happiness (*eudaimonia*) is no longer excluded from the embodied soul. In fact, it is no longer limited to the perfectly just. The *Phaedo* devolution scheme includes: (1) “those who have indulged in gluttony and violence and drunkenness and have taken no pains to avoid them, are likely to pass into the bodies of asses and other beasts of that sort”; (2) “those who have chosen injustice and tyranny and robbery pass into the bodies of wolves and hawks and kites”; (3) “the happiest (*eudaimonestatoi*) of those, and those who go to the best place, are those who have practiced, by nature and habit, without philosophy or reason, the social and civil virtues which are called moderation and justice...they pass again into some such social and gentle species as that of bees or of wasps or of ants, or into the human race again...” It is only the souls who were philosophical in their incarnation who are able to leave mortal life all together, “...allowed to enter into the communion of the gods.”²⁶ This conclusion reportedly allowed Socrates to reason that the best life is not the life of satiated desire or of acting in accordance with virtue and custom. Instead, the best life is the one given completely to the philosophical, where, “...those who truly love wisdom refrain from all bodily desires and resist them firmly and do not give themselves up to them.”²⁷

Despite the inconsistencies in these three devolution schemes, the point of the devolution remains – the soul must devolve to the body whose nature matches his. And, ultimately, the soul will learn to master the desire that has a history of having mastered him. In theory, when this has occurred, the soul evolves. And, while it is unclear at which point the soul will be able to cease mortal incarnation all together, all three schemes suggest that it will happen eventually. At some point, the soul will have re-evolved to inhabit a male body, will live a just – or, according to the *Phaedo*, philosophical – life therein, and at the end of that body's life will return to his native star.

Plato's *Republic* helps us to shed additional light on these devolution schemes. Famously, in the last pages of the dialogue, Socrates rehearses the Myth of Er. The myth helps to advance the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and does so from the perspective of Er, an eye-witness to the evolution and devolution of immortal souls. It describes the

26 *Phaedo*, 82b

27 *Phaedo*, 82c

way that the souls end up choosing the body in which they will be implanted,²⁸ a decision we learn is greatly affected by the embodied life most recently experienced by the soul (620a). One example tells of Orpheus, who was killed by women, thus his soul chooses to be re-born a swan so as to avoid being born from a female in his next life.²⁹ The Myth of Er does not provide a strict devolution, scheme, however. On the one hand, it explains that the souls will learn various realities about embodiment, whence they will be able to “to reason out which life is better and which worse and to choose accordingly, calling a life worse if it leads the soul to become more unjust, better if it leads the soul to become more just...”³⁰ Because the souls have a limited number of bodies from which to choose, some souls must choose non-human embodiment. This is not necessarily a bad thing, according to Socrates’ tale. Contrary to what one might suppose, we are told – albeit third hand, i.e. The Speaker in the other world said it, Er heard it, and Socrates repeats it – that any life chosen rationally and lived seriously can live satisfactorily (*bios agapetos*).³¹ Further, we learn that the soul is encouraged to live a life of balance, in accordance with the mean, and to avoid extremes. But, curiously, it is then concluded that this is how a “human being becomes happiest (*eudaimonestatos gignetai anthropos*).”³² If we can take anything from the *Republic* to help our understanding of the devolution schemes in the *Timaeus*, then we might assume that a soul mastered by a given desire in one life, occasionally makes the rational choice to live a life filled with the desire again. The soul choosing a life conflicted by the same desire that he was previously unable to master knows where he went wrong and makes a move to confront that mistake head-on. This would explain why a cowardly soul might choose embodiment as a woman, or a “bird brain” the life of a pigeon. And, through the subsequent life, may or may not learn to master said desire – living satisfactorily in the former case, not doing so in the latter case. According to the myth, “Still other souls changed from animals into human beings, or from one kind of animal into another, with unjust people changing into wild animals, and just

28 It is interesting to note that Mill claims that even an unhappy human would not choose to become a happy non-human animal, cf *Utilitarianism* page 13.

29 *Republic*, 620a and CF footnote 30 on page 290 of the Grube translation regarding Orpheus’s death.

30 *Republic*, 618d-e.

31 *Republic*, 619b.

32 *Republic*, 619b.

people into tame ones, and all sorts of mixtures occurred.”³³ Because there is choice involved in the *Republic*'s scheme, not all reincarnations will be chosen wisely. In these cases, no progress will be made for the soul.

IV: Platonic Conclusions. The “take away” from the four accounts of devolution we have considered here, appears indeed to be a statement about the relationship of pleasure to happiness and to living justly, *viz.* mastering desire.³⁴ While *eudamonia* is left to the just souls departed from the mortal realm in the *Timaeus*, it is in some sense achievable by human beings in the *Phaedo* and in the *Republic*. Man can achieve *eudaimonia* in the former when he lives in accordance with custom, and in the latter, when he lives a life of balance. It is only in the *Republic*, however, that we see any concern whatsoever for the possibility that non-human animals experience happiness. Here, recall we are told that they can live a satisfactory life.³⁵ It only makes sense to understand “satisfactory life” to mean a life where the soul has tamed desire in a non-human body. So, the life has been lived well, but not as well as it could be lived, and the soul is not yet able to depart from mortal life. Thus, the question, “is happiness even achievable in mortal life?” is explored exclusively for the male human. That this is the case points us back to the first devolution scheme in the *Timaeus*, where we learn that the only way for a soul to depart mortal life all together is directly from a life lived well in a male human body.

What is the connection between the ability of a non-human to live a satisfactory life, the ability of a human to live a happy life, and pleasure?

Regarding the possibilities in Plato that there is a correlation between pleasure and mastering desire in male humans, I posit four:

- (1) A man feels pleasure because he has been mastered by desire; his soul devolves into a female or non-human animal body.
- (2) A man does not feel pleasure because he has been mastered by desire; his soul devolves into a female or non-human animal body.
- (3) A man does not feel pleasure because he has mastered desire, (an unlikely pair in an eudaimonist scheme, but consider Thrasy-

33 *Republic*, 620c-d.

34 Although we will not examine them here, see *Phaedo* 60b-d, and Book IX of the *Republic*, 580d-592b, for discussions on pleasures and pains. In both cases, talk of pleasures and pains is immediately followed by the argument for the immortality of the soul.

35 We cannot be sure from any of the devolution schemes that happiness is available to female humans.

machus's argument in the *Republic* and Aristotle on *akrasia* in *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.1-10); no devolution occurs.

- (4) A man feel pleasure because he has mastered desire; no devolution occurs and evolution may occur.

When we take happiness to mean “pleasure,” then, we end up with two possibilities for there to be happiness in male humans. A man can find pleasure – thus happiness – in mastering desire, or he can find pleasure when desire has mastered him. When the latter happens, we really cannot say that the man is happier than the non-human, for reasons that will become clearer imminently. While the person may experience pleasure in the moment, the true or higher form of pleasure comes in a favourable path for the soul after mortal death. This is to say that if the person living wants true happiness for his soul, he must decide to find pleasure in what is not imminently pleasing, *i.e.* we escape the false dilemma when we see that happiness for the immortal soul follows causally from happiness in the living being. In order for there to be a causal connection between happiness for the living creature and happiness in the immortal soul, however, the living being must find pleasure in mastering desire.

Regarding the possibilities in Plato that there is a relation between pleasure and mastering desire in non-humans, there are two – although, it is not clear that there is a connection between non-human pleasure and soul evolution or devolution:

- (1) A non-human animal feels pleasure because his desire has mastered him.
- (2) A non-human animal does not feel pleasure because his desire is not satisfied.

Since desire is less complicated for non-human animals, pleasure comes when these desires are temporarily quelled – *e.g.* the pleasure a wolf seems to have at meal time, the pleasure a horse seems to have when he can run. Whether or not meeting only appetitive desires can make any type of being happy is up for debate.³⁶ In any case, the non-human is not cognizant of a system of rewards and punishments. This is to say that the non-human cannot adapt feelings of pleasure from being mastered by desire to feeling pleasure because he is mastering desire; he cannot decide to stave off imminent pleasure in an effort to reap the benefit in reincarnation. Instead,

36 Cf. Peter Singer *Animal Liberation*, where Singer has done an excellent job arguing that non-human animals should be given equal consideration in ethics because of their ability to suffer.

the non-human being lives only for this life, *i.e.* for the current embodiment. It is in the bodies of non-humans, after all, where the immortal soul is faced head-on with intense desire for whatever he had not been able to master in the human body.

Therefore, happiness for both humans and non-humans in the context of a devolution scheme, is not just about embodied happiness, but about the future of one's soul, and thus the life it will have to lead in the next incarnation.³⁷ This is the reason why only human beings, according to Plato, experience happiness. As we have seen, male humans may desire any number of appetitive satiation, but they may learn to find pleasure in leaving these natural desires of embodiment – the results of influx – unsatisfied. Man can set his sights on future rewards, or in fear of future punishments, and train himself to live in accordance with the custom/law of his society and/or to search for philosophical knowledge. On the other hand, non-human beings probably only have the first kind of desires. When the non-human being experiences unmet desire, he consequently experiences displeasure that cannot be simultaneously lightened by the promise of a future reward.

Returning to Mill's conclusion that the unhappy man is better off than the happy pig, we can concede it – with a caveat about terminology – on behalf of Plato. If “unhappy” means unmet appetitive desires or displeasure, and happy means both (1) satiation of appetitive desires or pleasure, with regard to the non-human, and (2) living a life that is balanced, in line with custom, or in pursuit of philosophical truths, with regard to men, then this claim is true in accordance with all four devolution schemes discussed in this paper. However, according to Plato, it should be the case that the man “unhappy” because of current unmet desire should be at the same time “happy” because he is cognizant that delaying pleasure now will result in true pleasure in the form of a blessed life for his immortal soul – in the future.

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37 The correlation to this same type of idea in a religious context is obvious – when we know that God will judge us for our good or bad works in this life, we learn to find pleasure in delayed happiness.

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A possible Aristotelian response to the dictum “*Better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied*”

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The nature and desirability of human happiness has been one of the major philosophical concerns ever since philosophy takes a more anthropocentric stance with Socrates’ moral intellectualism. Even in the Pre-Socratic thought we find elements of the search for happiness in both Heraclitus’ aphorisms as to what would constitute a happy political community and Democritus’ exhortation for good governance.¹ It is with Socrates however that the pursuit of happiness becomes the centre of moral philosophy around which many ethical theories will revolve ever after. In some of these theoretical perspectives, happiness has been connected to an aretaic approach, such as the Aristotelian one, while in some others, to a hedonistic account, such as the Epicurean or the Utilitarian one. Whatever approach is taken, the question has always been as to what extent these views can serve human needs and interests at both a personal and an interpersonal level. I shall here try to explore the view that it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied in an attempt to confirm the truth of Mill’s dictum. To that extent, I shall examine particular aspects of Aristotle’s ethical theory, with emphasis on his teleological approach to morality as well as on the concept of *προαίρεσις*, with a view to showing

¹ Kirk, Raven & Schofield (1990), pp. 210-2, 430-3.

that there is a comparative advantage between a human being and any other sentient being based on the capacity of making a moral choice, right or wrong. I shall also argue that in the end what matters is an ongoing strife for making the most of what is best in us, even if we fail to do so. I shall also make use of particular areas from the sphere of moral action, such as business ethics, to further support this position. Finally, I shall argue that Aristotle's eudaimonistic ethics can better serve human strife for self-perfection and general happiness as opposed to a more self-centered hedonistic approach, bearing in mind that growth is the real end in life.

Before examining Aristotle's response, it would be useful to refer to the utilitarian aspects of Socrates' views, who is taken to be the intellectual forerunner of Mill's dictum. In Plato's *Gorgias*, Socrates states that all things fine, such as bodies, colours, shapes, sound, habits or pursuits, are so called either in view of their usefulness for some specific purpose or because they give pleasure.² Similarly, in other dialogues he tends to connect moral excellence to something advantageous or useful,³ since all good things are useful, or to whatever brings about pleasure.⁴ As Guthrie rightly indicates, Socrates tried to show that the essence of a thing should be closely connected with its function, that is, to know what something is, is to know what it is for.⁵ In other words, the essence of *arete* cannot be dissociated from its usefulness, i.e. the practical significance it possesses for human well-being, and in particular for the human "*psyche*". What we would like to stress here is that our interpretation of Socrates' utilitarian approach is based on his belief that the goodness of anything lies in its fitness to perform its proper function,⁶ and it is devoid of any hedonistic element.⁷ What follows, is that for Socrates, living an unexamined life is not worth living for a human being,⁸ because even if the whole process of truth-seeking is a difficult one, it is at least what links a human being with what constitutes its proper function. Thus, to be satisfied in a Socratic sense is to possess knowledge of what justice, for example, means and how this can be used in practical affairs.

² *Gorgias* 474 d.

³ *Meno* 87 d – e.

⁴ *Protagoras* 358 b.

⁵ Guthrie (1997), pp.146-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.144.

⁷ This interpretation is also in agreement with R. Crisp (ed.), in his commentary on Mill's *Utilitarianism*, pp.111-2.

⁸ *The Apology of Socrates* 38 a.

Let me now focus on Aristotle's possible position regarding the above dictum taking into account that he promotes a teleological approach to human happiness. According to Aristotle, the nature of a being is defined in relation to the purpose (*τέλος*), this being serves. For example, if this being is an instrument, that is, an inanimate object, its purpose is interconnected to the function it performs. If this being is a non-sentient or a sentient being, its purpose is embedded in it and relates to growth for the non-sentient beings and to growth, reproduction as well as their capacity of satisfying their pleasures for the sentient ones, that is, the animals.⁹ In general, for him, all beings are defined in terms of the function they perform and their capacity of doing so (*τω έργω ώρισται και τη δυνάμει*)¹⁰, and it is necessary that they accomplish their purpose (*το τέλος άπαντα δέον απαντών*).¹¹ So, for Aristotle, the nature of every being is defined by means of the purpose that each of those beings performs.¹² The purpose of each being functions as the *ου ένεκα* (the final cause) attributing to it its *ειδος* (form), so that when a being reaches this state of affairs defined by its purpose, we say that it is actualized, hence it is self-sufficient.¹³ Thus, the nature of a being can be better understood not only by studying its genetic makeup but even more so by examining it in terms of all its potentialities that could be actualized in the future.

According to Aristotle, both the human being and other sentient beings are combinational beings,¹⁴ simply because they tend to form communities and live with others without which they cannot live.¹⁵ Even more so, the human being creates a family, which is the first social unit,¹⁶ and is guided by reason,¹⁷ which helps him make moral judgments and decide about moral actions as opposed to animals. In other words, the human being is characterized by an intellectual and moral makeup that allows him to engage in ethical decision-making with a view to making a moral choice about what to do, as well as it equips him with the capacity of determining what is morally right or wrong, fair or unfair. In this way, it

⁹ *Politics* 1252 a 28 – 34, 1253 a 10 – 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1253 a 23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1258 a 14.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1252 b 33.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1253 a 1.

¹⁴ *Nicomachean Ethics* Θ12, 1162 a 17-19.

¹⁵ *Politics* 1252 a 26 – 27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1253 a 26.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1253 a 9 – 10.

enables him to actualize his nature, that is, his purpose, which is human happiness in both a personal and an interpersonal sense. Such a teleological approach to human happiness also implies the need for the existence of a political community that serves as the right context within which a person can actualize what is best in him. To that extent, a political community should help a person cultivate moral goodness, which is a fundamental prerequisite for happiness.

What follows from the above is that in Aristotelian terms a human being is dissatisfied if he does not actualize his nature, the very function he is meant to perform, that is, if he does not reach the desirable *ευδαιμονία* (ultimate happiness). But what does it take for a person to accomplish *ευδαιμονία*? Who would be a satisfied person? Aristotle's response is provided throughout his ethical treatise of *Nicomachean Ethics*: a person should develop those moral excellences (*αρεταί*) that define his well-being, as well as those intellectual capacities and strengths, such as *φρόνησις* (practical wisdom) that help the moral agent transform his advanced moral knowledge and endowment into right action. So, a person needs to be both virtuous in a deep moral sense, as well as capable enough to exercise advanced reasoning skills and a well-trained moral perception. In particular, the Stagirite defines *ευδαιμονία* as the activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue.¹⁸ It is an activity which must occupy a complete lifetime, since, as he points out, a brief period of happiness does not necessarily render a person happy.¹⁹ Thus, what Aristotle seeks is a kind of *τέλος* that characterizes the purposeful conduct,²⁰ it is the most complete end and it is sufficient for itself.²¹ Both as an activity of the soul and as an end *ευδαιμονία* makes life meaningful, since it is not only based on a single moment or a brief period of happiness. It is a kind of process that although

¹⁸ *Nicomachean Ethics* A13, 1102 a 5 – 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, A7, 1098 a 18 – 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, A7, 1097 b 21.

²¹ *Ibid.*, A7, 1097 b 14 – 20. Concerning the interpretation of this passage, Kenny (1992) indicates that *ευδαιμονία* cannot be taken to be a comprehensive good, a kind of inclusive goal, since then it would not be choice-worthy for itself. This, however, does not mean that happiness cannot be improved by the addition of some other goods not presupposed of it (23-42). White (1990) points out that there is a distinction between *ευδαιμονία* as comprehensive and *ευδαιμονία* as inclusive; it is inclusive in that it includes more than one component; it is not only contemplation. But by being inclusive it is not comprehensive, as it does not necessarily contain all goods, and it cannot be improved by the addition of further goods (103-4).

may be troubled by life's misfortunes,²² it sustains a sense of an organized whole; it is what actualizes the inbuilt purposefulness of human existence as long as one lives; it is what provides the complete performance of man's proper function.²³ But one should also add that *εὐδαιμονία* is the kind of fulfilment that should not just be the end-point of life's activities; it's an ever-fulfilling process of making the most of a person's capabilities given the choices a person has made. Through a series of proper choices, a person actualizes what is best in him, and what is best in us is virtue, which prepares us for a higher spiritual activity of the intellect, that is, a life of contemplation.

Therefore, what we notice is that the teleological character of Aristotle's ethics is an important component that can serve as part of what would constitute the essence of human existence, of what makes life satisfactory. It is however up to the moral agent himself to identify the way of making the most of the inbuilt organizational purposefulness and achieve it through the proper means. So, a person has to make those choices that would make a satisfactory life possible. But why would a dissatisfied person be better than a satisfied pig? The above analysis has already provided us elements of the answer, which we need to further explore. One important reason for considering an unhappy man better than a happy pig is the very fact that even though this person has not actualized his potential, he is still in a position to do so through a series of right actions. One could even say that growth is the real end for the Aristotelian moral agent. As the philosopher indicates, *man is the origin of his own actions*,²⁴ the one whose *προαίρεσις* will prove a life meaningful or not. In fact, *προαίρεσις* is regarded as a cause and principle of action, as the efficient cause,²⁵ and in that sense, it is what determines the means to be used for the attainment of the end of volition.²⁶ As the philosopher indicates, *moral choice involves both desire and reasoning directed to some end*²⁷, rendering *προαίρεσις* the free choice of a moral agent. In any way, the exercise of *προαίρεσις* involves both a deliberative and a volitional aspect.²⁸ It is a deliberative syllogistic process

²² *Nicomachean Ethics* A10, 1100 b 12 – 16.

²³ Patsioti-Tsacpounidis (2006), pp.133-5.

²⁴ *Nicomachean Ethics* Γ3, 1112 b 28, b 31 – 33. Cf. Γ5, 1113 b 19 – 21.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Z2, 1139 a 31 – 32.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Γ2, 1111 b 26 – 27.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Z2, 1139 a 32 – 33.

²⁸ Cf. Papadis (2006), pp. 152-5. D. Papadis in his article also examines whether there exists the concept of volition in Aristotle's *προαίρεσις*. His position is that it

of choosing the right means. At the same time, in an indirect way, it is desire, since the means chosen are directed to an end that is identified with some good, which is the object of desire. But as Aristotle is eager to add, *If the moral choice is to be good, both the reasoning must be true and the desire right.*²⁹ And that is why in order to choose the right means a person would need the capacity of practical wisdom, which would affirm that the means chosen are the suitable ones for the particular end to accomplish, since it functions as a clear moral perception.³⁰

As opposed to humans, however, animals are not in a position to make a moral choice. Even from the first book of his *Nicomachean Ethics*³¹ the philosopher indicates that in distinguishing between the rational and the irrational part of the soul we attribute the irrational one to all the beings that partake in a nutritive capacity, which lacks rationality. The desirative and irrational part of the soul may possess some kind of apprehension, which however relates to the capacity of obedience and not to that of mathematical reasoning.³² Animals – as well as children – are also capable of a voluntary choice, say, for example, of food or mate, but they lack that of a deliberative choice.³³ This means that since an animal does not possess the capacity of propositional thought and oral speech, it also lacks the capacity of going through a deliberative process with a view to making a moral choice. This is why Aristotle adds in the seventh book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that there is no distinction between virtue and vice where animals are concerned.³⁴ Moreover, a person develops into a wicked one through habituation into doing wrong actions, whereas animals are by nature vicious.³⁵ Likewise, animals cannot be claimed to be incontinent in the same way that we talk

does exist, since, for Aristotle, moral action is the outcome of a conscientious and autonomous choice, given that the moral agent is aware of the circumstances and all the relevant conditions under which an action takes place, as well as he knows the end this action is set to accomplish. Hoeffe (2003) argues that there are certain volitional characteristics in Aristotle's concept of *προαίρεσις*, but it does not reach as far as the dimension of will (pp.143-145), a point with which Papadis disagrees. We shall not be concerned with this issue here, as it exceeds the scope of this paper.

²⁹ *Nicomachean Ethics* Z2, 1139 a 23 – 25.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Z9, 1142 b 31-33.

³¹ *Ibid.*, A13, 1102 a 34 – 1102 b 5, 1102 b 29 – 30.

³² *Ibid.*, 1102 b 29 – 1103 a 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, Γ2, 1111 b 7 – 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, H1, 1145 a 25 – 27.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, H8, 1154 a 32 – 34.

about an incontinent man (*ακρατής*), since they lack the right reason which the incontinent man possesses but fails to exercise due to his irrational desire or moral failure. Animals can only possess the cognitive faculties of imagination and memory.³⁶

Furthermore, Aristotle points out that all sentient beings seek pleasure and avoid pain, even though there are some differences between the human being and other sentient beings in terms of the kind of pleasures they experience.³⁷ He also acknowledges that even though we think we experience pleasure differently from other animals, all sentient beings are by nature inclined to pursue whatever maximizes their happiness, given that all of them share an element of divinity (*πάντα γὰρ φύσει ἔχει τι θεῖον*).³⁸ Nevertheless, in the tenth book of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, where he further resumes the discussion of *εὐδαιμονία* as the supreme state of happiness, he indicates that every sentient being experiences a different kind of pleasure due to the different kind of function it performs. This applies to humans as well, since a particular situation may be conducive to happiness for one person, but lead to unhappiness or be rather neutral for another one.³⁹ On the basis of this analysis, Aristotle reaches the conclusion that as opposed to the human being the lower animals are not capable of accomplishing *εὐδαιμονία*, given that they lack the capacity of contemplation, that is, the advanced theoretical activity of the intellect based on both intellectual and moral capacities, which would enable them to achieve true happiness.⁴⁰

Thus, what we notice is that in Aristotelian terms a human being is better off than any other animal, the pig included, because despite any inadequacies or failures in accomplishing ultimate happiness he can still exercise his capacity of reasoning and make moral choices. The human being is able to face a moral situation, engage in a decision-making process, make a moral choice, and convert a decision into action. There is the element of purposeful action, which may – or may not – be conducive to happiness, not as experience of mere pleasure or an accumulation of goods, but as an advanced intellectual and moral state that renders the human being self-sufficient, even if bad fortune hits him. This is the most perfect and the

³⁶ Ibid., H3, 1147 b 4 – 8.

³⁷ Ibid., H8, 1153 b 25 – 30.

³⁸ Ibid., H8, 1153 b 32.

³⁹ Ibid., I5, 1176 a 3 – 12.

⁴⁰ Ibid., I8, 1178 b 25 – 28.

most private activity of man, what characterizes him ontologically and distinguishes him from other species. And this is what animals really lack.

But what if the exercise of *προαίρεσις* as the result of our deliberation is not directed to a good end? Aristotle calls this *wickedness*, which also presupposes an advanced state of deliberation-intelligence, but it lacks virtue.⁴¹ A person who is not virtuous, lacks the relevant pleasure that relates to the psychic activity of happiness. Man desires something, because it is or seems to be conducive to pleasure. Thus, the pleasure of a virtuous activity is morally good, while that of a bad one wicked.⁴² We would also say that a person may be dissatisfied but not wicked. In the latter case, such a person has voluntarily made a choice that is inconsistent with reason and right desire, as in the case of an incontinent man, while in the former he may possess some good qualities of character but lacks the capacity of practical wisdom that can guarantee a wise choice. In fact, the action of an incontinent person is voluntary given that it is not the outcome of coercion or ignorance, but that of a free choice, which has been hindered by extreme passion or false reasoning.⁴³ So, even though such a person knows what is morally right, he acts wrongly.

At this point it would be useful to provide some examples from the domain of business ethics with reference to people who exercised an autonomous choice but failed in their moral reasoning, and as a result they may have experienced unhappiness. I shall refer to four such cases. In the first case, the moral agent knows what is right and what should be done under the circumstances but fails to act accordingly, since he lacks those qualities of character that would enable him to do so; in other words, he is not virtuous enough. In the second case, the moral agent knows what should be done but he is an incontinent person, so he fails to act accordingly. In the third case, the moral agent voluntarily chooses to do a wrong act, while in

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Z12, 1144 a 24 – 28.

⁴² *Ibid.*, I5, 1175 b 26 – 28. Cf. I4, 1174 b 19 – 23, 1175 a 5 – 6.

⁴³ Joachim (1951), pp.223-5. Concerning the passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* H3, 1146 b 35 – 1147 a 10, he argues that even though the incontinent man possesses knowledge of the moral principle, he fails to apply it to the particular case at hand. In other words, he does not perform the syllogistic process in a way that the logical inference leads to a certain conclusion. We would accept the view that in the case of *ακρατής* man, there is a combination of an irrational desire that hinders the process of reasoning and an intellectual failure by the moral agent to discern the good of the situation, even though he knows what is generally good, i.e. fail in his syllogistic process.

the last case, the moral agent knows what should be done and voluntarily chooses to act in accordance with the objectively valid rules of conduct even at the loss of profit.

Starting with the first case, we would refer to an employee who is aware of some unethical conduct in the organization he works in. In particular, he knows that the chief engineer of the company, which is a car manufacturer, promotes a defective car that may suffer from engine explosions and cause serious car accidents. This employee, however, is reluctant to disclose this information to senior management, even though he knows that human lives could be endangered, as well as that the organization would face a serious crisis even to the point of bankruptcy. This person avoids to use the practice of internal whistle-blowing through the relevant policy that the organization provides, on the assumption that he may face the negative comments of his fellow employees or the accused party. Even though he knows that the organization reassures every prospective whistle-blower against retaliation,⁴⁴ he chooses to remain silent and let things take their way. Such a person would lack the moral courage necessary for the above act; he is also not virtuous enough in so far as he chooses to be a passive viewer of a dishonest business conduct that can risk human lives. Not to mention that he lacks practical wisdom, since he fails to understand that his inertia does not serve either his personal or the corporate interests. What follows is that this person would be unhappy, because his reluctance to do anything will cause him frustration, alienation from the others and himself, loss of self-respect, and inefficiency in the workplace.

In the second case, we would refer to a CEO who violates the employee evaluation policy and uses discriminatory tactics and preferential treatment in a decision about promotion only because he is passionately in love with one of the candidates. Although he should follow certain job related criteria for employee promotion, he allows his strong feelings for the other person to determine the corporate choice. Even worse, the particular employee that he favours lacks essential qualifications and expertise required for a senior position. In this case, the moral agent exhibits an incontinent conduct, since he knows what should be done, but he is both overwhelmed by his emotions as well as he fails to identify the right choice under the circumstances. He fails to apply the principle of fairness as described in the corporate code of conduct to the particular moral situation. This person may seem to be a happy one, because he tries to satisfy his

⁴⁴ Boatright (2009), pp.103-5.

personal feelings, but in reality he is a “dissatisfied” one, since he does know that he has acted unjustly and unwisely. He does know that the individual interest is in actual conflict with the corporate one, as well as that those employees that were not promoted would feel resentment, mental distress for being undervalued, and de-motivation. Above all, he knows that his employment decisions are not based on due process. John Stuart Mill could be relevant here when he states the following: *Men often, from infirmity of character, make their election for the nearer good, though they know it to be less valuable...They pursue sensual indulgences to the injury of health, though perfectly aware that health is the greater good.*⁴⁵

In the third case, we would refer to a company, which is an airplane manufacturer and has spent a lot of money developing a new airplane. The company badly needs cash because it is financially overextended, so the president tries to get some large orders. He has been trying to interest the government of a foreign country in a large purchase, when he finds out that one of the key governmental ministers is heavily in debt because of gambling. He quietly contacts the minister and offers him a big amount of money if he awards the contract for five planes to his firm. The money is paid and the contract is awarded.⁴⁶ In a utilitarian sense, one could say that this president acted correctly, since he served the corporate interest, the employees kept their jobs, and the minister managed to pay his debts. So, in the hedonistic and consequentialist sense, this president would be a happy person, for he managed to bring about the best results for most of the people concerned with the above act. But the act itself was wrong. It was an act of bribery that shows the use of unethical and illegal practices on behalf of the senior management for the resolution of the corporate problems.⁴⁷ It also exhibits a cultural relativist approach promoting the view that a company can adopt societal practices of the host country it operates in regardless of whether these practices are consistent with its corporate code of conduct. On top of that, this act does not necessarily guarantee the financial rigour of the airline company in the long run. And it is quite questionable as to what extent this president is a “satisfied” or a happy one knowing that he based the company’s profitability on a dirty act, which could always haunt him in the future.

⁴⁵ Mill in R. Crisp (ed.), chapter 2, p.58.

⁴⁶ De George (2006), pp.55-63.

⁴⁷ Cf. Boatright (2009), pp.431-3, where he discusses the issue of bribery in international business conduct.

In the fourth case, we refer to a company that operates in the U.S. and produces fibreglass. Part of the regulations is to indicate on the product label that this product is possibly “carcinogenic”.⁴⁸ The company intends to export this product to Japan and the CEO is in negotiations with the government officials, who tell him that there is no such regulation in their country, as well as that he should consider carefully whether to affix the relevant label or not given how sensitive to carcinogenic products the Japanese public is. The question that arises now is what this CEO should do. The CEO decides to affix the label despite everything. Eventually, the company lost 40 percent of its usual sales to Japan in only one year, but some of its Japanese business was later rebuilt. In this case, the senior management of the company acted in accordance with fundamental principles of morality, such as honesty, fairness, respect for human dignity, and moral responsibility. The CEO exhibited both an aretaic and a practically wise approach, bearing in mind that it is wrong to deceive the public even if this may result in some unhappiness, at least for the short run. The whole company also exhibited corporate social responsibility and diligence, even though both the senior management and its employees may have experienced some dissatisfaction due to financial losses.

In all the above cases, we notice that all the moral agents involved performed a reasoning process with a view to making a business ethics decision. Also, they acted in a voluntary manner, exhibiting a will to act without any form of coercion or violation of their moral autonomy. In the Kantian sense, they acted as rational agents that are ends-in-themselves,⁴⁹ or in an Aristotelian sense, they exhibited a clear *προαίρεσις* that following a deliberative process led to a particular action, right or wrong. What is more, regardless of whether they exhibited a virtuous disposition or not, they experienced some sort of dissatisfaction or unhappiness that was the outcome of their choice. And yet they are better off than any other sentient being exactly because they have the capacity to understand the rightness or the wrongness of the action they have done, and the pleasure or pain they have brought about, if they are willing and sincere enough to do so. As John Stuart Mill also states *It is indisputable that the being whose capacities of enjoyment are low, has the greatest chance of having them fully satisfied;*

⁴⁸ The title of this case scenario is “Product Labels and Human Labels”, and it is taken from the book *Business Ethics for the 21st century*, by Adams and Maine (eds.), 1998, pp.106-7.

⁴⁹ Rachels (2010), pp.136-9.

*and a highly endowed being will always feel that any happiness which he can look for, as the world is constituted, is imperfect. But he can learn to bear his imperfections, if they are at all bearable; and they will not make him envy the being who is indeed unconscious of the imperfections, but only because he feels not at all the good which those imperfections qualify.*⁵⁰

Finally, I would like to indicate that Aristotle's teleological and eudaimonistic ethics would go beyond a hedonistic account offered by a Utilitarian, who would examine happiness within the scope of pleasure, for at least two reasons: (a) Aristotle considers pleasure as an instrumental and not as an intrinsic value, hence he cannot identify it with happiness. On the contrary, *ευδαιμονία* is an end-in-itself, an intrinsic value; and (b) Despite the self-engaging process of a moral agent en-route to ultimate happiness, Aristotle does not provide a selfish or even a self-centred account of happiness. As Julia Annas rightly observes, "Eudaimonistic theories are formally self-centred, because they develop from the agent's reasonings about her own life. But this need not make them self-centred in content...Hedonistic theories do prima facie face a problem in giving the interests of others intrinsic value in the agent's life; if the final goal of my life, which sets all my other priorities, is pleasure, then how can I care about the good of others unless it contributes to my pleasure?"⁵¹ In fact, we would add that an ethical theory which bases the attainment of happiness on the virtuous disposition of an agent and his ability to reason well, would serve human good, since it expects the moral agent to act independently of his personal desires, pleasures, or wishes. It also ensures that within the context of society at large the moral agent learns to prioritize his interests and tries to achieve a balance between self-regarding and other-regarding. And if such a moral agent is presented as a "dissatisfied" one who lives for the good of others, say, for example, his family, even to the extent of neglecting the satisfaction of his own pleasures, he has at least made a conscientious choice, which is based on what is best, i.e. virtue, and directed towards a good end. After all, in the utilitarian conception of virtue, Mill himself appreciates its significance for human affairs and considers it as a good in itself, which is "above all things important to the general happiness".⁵²

In conclusion, I have argued that the Aristotelian ethical theory can help us further explore the implications raised with Mill's dictum and come

⁵⁰ Mill in R. Crisp (ed.), chapter 2, p.57.

⁵¹ Annas (1992), pp.134-5.

⁵² Mill in R. Crisp ed., chapter 4, p.84.

to appreciate the complexity of human morality. We have also accepted that whether we take a hedonistic or an eudaimonistic approach to happiness, a moral agent who is unhappy, or has been failing to attain the desirable end, would still be better off than any other animal exactly because he is capable of being virtuous or vicious, morally weak or temperate, merely intelligent or practically wise. By that I do not wish to promote any speciesist⁵³ position concerning animal rights but to emphasize the important role that the process of making a virtuous moral choice has for happiness, as well as that in the end what matters for a human being is to sustain an ever-growing effort for self-improvement.

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⁵³ “*Speciesism*” is defined by Peter Singer (1990) as a prejudice or attitude of bias toward the interests of members of one’s own species and against those of members of other species. Cf. Cohen (2002), pp.461-3, who takes a speciesist approach regarding animal rights, according to which animals do not possess a moral status, hence they do not have rights, since they lack the capacity of moral reasoning and choice.

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Who said 'I must be cruel only to be kind'? Perhaps Socrates?

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As correctly reported by the organizers, John Stuart Mill begins with the words *It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied*; he continues, however, by recapitulating: *better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied*. So he casts Socrates as a 'tragic' hero who may not feel himself at ease. How might one explicate from this?

Why Socrates should be dissatisfied and nevertheless happier than a number of different persons is indeed a good question. It is captivating to try to expand this proposition, perhaps by suggesting that the unhappy Socrates was at least able to live his life with uncommon intensity, and thereby gain the impression of having done his best; as well as considering that at least there were some young people who felt themselves very grateful for what he had done for them.

One is unsure that this would be an appropriate way of explicating the statement, however, since the aged Socrates directed most of his energies towards making his interlocutors feel seriously dissatisfied with their way of life. And perhaps felt a sense of satisfaction in seeing a number of interlocutors becoming seriously troubled by his talks. One might continue by stating that Socrates was notable in transforming a number of people from happy pigs into unhappy humans, i.e. in making them

somewhat unhappy, and if so, this sort of practice could well be deemed worse, much worse, than the ideas suggested by Mill.

Now the problem is that we are accustomed to perceiving Socrates as a rather good and generally innocuous person, the bearer of various doctrines resulting in a modest appeal for us. But we should be rather defiant in face of these kinds of commonplaces, for there is another side to Socrates that is amply attested to by his former friends and students, yet it is seldom acknowledged by the general public or by most historians of Greek philosophy. Essentially, Socrates was accustomed to affecting the world through words alone, especially through making people anxious by making them aware of latent problems within.

Happily enough, to spare ourselves a long and ineffective talk on this topic the reader may be referred to Chapter 2 of Book 4 (*Mem. IV 2*) of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.¹ This is a relatively long chapter where Socrates' encounter with the young Euthydemus is portrayed in some detail, the encounter ends with a Socrates probably satisfied with having 'destroyed' Euthydemus' self-esteem, obliging Euthydemus to reconsider all his hitherto supposed wisdom and competence. So, it is a rather 'cruel' Socrates that happens to be portrayed here (whence the title of my paper).

What Xenophon really portrays is difficult to describe and categorize, and one should first try to appreciate the serious drama taking place in Euthydemus' mind. Fortunately, to read *Mem. IV 2* is a very special experience, much as if you were sitting silently in a coffee shop overhearing two people loudly discussing with one another, to the point that you're tempted to address them and offer your opinion on certain topics, though of course you resist. In a like manner Xenophon's account is a rather rewarding one and you notice that in the beginning Socrates seems rather unattractive, somewhat aggressive, applying quite an incredible number of objections from start to end, while Euthydemus seems somewhat too yielding, being unable to resist the fundamentally innocuous objections Socrates relentlessly poses to him. In his description Xenophon therefore offers the portrayal of a young man becoming lost in an undeserved manner, to the point that one's sympathy is for him rather than for Socrates.

The question is, then, is Socrates' method of attack – which is designed to undermine his interlocutor – actually in the interlocutor's favor? Is Socrates' "cruelty" in causing people to doubt their beliefs and to become dissatisfied with them, and subsequently to become unhappy, something that

¹ Available free at gutenberg.org/ebooks/1177; and bit.ly/mnyrJ3

Socrates has a right to do, given that at least before the assault they may in fact have been happy? Who is Socrates to judge that such cruelty is in fact kindness? It may be granted from Xenophon's account that at least one man, Euthydemus, was apparently grateful; yet from the same account the majority "refused to come near" Socrates again once he had finished with them, resulting in Socrates looking upon them as "dolts and dullards". In view of this, it is perhaps more easily argued that it would have been kinder for Socrates to leave people alone, let them continue in the happy stupor in which he may have found them, rather than making them unhappy.

Or maybe not? I shall not give the sort of solution I have in mind immediately. The above is meant to encourage you to read that particular chapter in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and ruminate upon it.²

Bradley's Criticism of Mill

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In *Ethical Studies* (1962) Bradley sharply criticizes utilitarian ethics. He opposes hedonistic utilitarianism, egoistic utilitarianism, and the common good utilitarianism. One of his main arguments is targeted against Mill's formula "It is better to be a human dissatisfied than a pig satisfied" (*Utilit.* (1861), Ch. II). Mill employs the dilemma in order to support his argument for the definition of a moral goal in terms of utility. Bradley wants to prove Mill's project unsatisfactory. According to Bradley, Mill's mistake is not in preferring the dissatisfied human to satisfied pig, and therefore not in the distinction between the higher and lower pleasures. Mill is wrong in considering this dilemma as moral. The comparison of pleasures is morally irrelevant. Pleasure cannot be considered as a moral goal, because it is not universalisable. I shall review Bradley's argument against Mill's claim that the pleasure-preferences dilemma contributes to the support of moral utilitarianism.

² Based on "L' *Eutidemo* di Senofonte: *Memorabilia* IV2", read in Palermo in 2006 (published in *Il Socrate dei dialoghi*, 2007, in French *Le dialogue socratique*, Paris 2011).