

UTOPIANISM AND REALISM ABOUT *EUDAIMONIA*¹

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*² Aristotle identifies the final good with *eudaimonia* or happiness.³ Among the formal constraints that he recognizes on *eudaimonia* is that it must be complete. At one point, he glosses completeness as requiring that *eudaimonia* be self-sufficient, lacking in nothing, and most choiceworthy. It is natural to understand these aspects of completeness as implying that there is nothing that one could add to *eudaimonia* to make it better, or so I shall argue. If so, this suggests that *eudaimonia* must include *all possible goods* -- that is, all goods that would make a person's life happier. While desirable, that sort of completeness might seem unrealistic. The hobo's paradise described in *The Big Rock Candy Mountains* (see below) may lack nothing one could want, but it seems a ridiculously utopian standard by which to measure the quality of people's actual lives. Indeed, completeness may seem at odds with the realistic sensibility that Aristotle demonstrates elsewhere in his ethical and political writings.

The tension between utopian and realistic elements in Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* results from the fact that completeness and, hence, *eudaimonia* appear to be maximal concepts that only apply when the conditions for their application are fully realized. If so, no one has a reasonable prospect of a complete good or *eudaimonia*, because there will always be ways in which one's life could be improved. After explaining this tension, I explore different ways of trying to reconcile completeness and realism about *eudaimonia*. Some forms of reconciliation relax the maximalist constraints on completeness and *eudaimonia*, in effect, denying that completeness and *eudaimonia* are true maximal concepts. By contrast, the form of reconciliation I want to explore recognizes that completeness is a maximal concept but allows us to focus on and attach significance to reasonable success along a maximal scale.

My focus is on articulating this tension between utopian and realistic elements in Aristotle's conception of happiness and exploring his resources for reconciling them. I focus on Aristotle, rather than Socrates, Plato, or the Stoics, both because Aristotle's discussion of completeness and its role in *eudaimonia* is especially articulate, self-contained, and influential, and because his conception of completeness plays an important part in his refusal to accept the paradoxical claim that virtue is sufficient for happiness, which Socrates and the Stoics accept.

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² Three works on ethics are often attributed to Aristotle -- the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*), *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*), and the *Magna Moralia* (*MM*). I focus primarily on *EN*. For translation, I rely on *Nicomachean Ethics*, trs. T. Irwin, 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999). However, the *EE* and *MM* can supplement the *EN*. Though it is uncertain whether the *MM* is a work of Aristotle's or one of his students, that needn't prevent it from providing useful information about Aristotle's ethical views.

³ In equating *eudaimonia* and happiness, I assume that the subjective connotations that happiness may have for some modern ears is not an insurmountable obstacle to us understanding the ancient concept of *eudaimonia* as happiness. See Richard Kraut, "Two Conceptions of Happiness" *Philosophical Review* 88 (1979): 167-97. Those who are not persuaded are free to understand *eudaimonia* as the personal good, which may or may not be equivalent to happiness.

Though I focus on Aristotle, these issues are not purely historical or exegetical issues insofar as our own concepts of the personal good, well-being, and happiness, like Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*, are arguably maximal concepts. If so, our own axiological concepts, like Aristotle's, arguably exhibit a similar tension between inclusiveness and realism. If my reconciliation of utopian and realistic elements in Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* is successful, it may point the way toward a plausible reconciliation of the tension in our own axiological concepts.

1. THREE FORMAL CONSTRAINTS ON *EUDAIMONIA*

Aristotle claims that everyone agrees that *eudaimonia* is the final good; they disagree in their conceptions of *eudaimonia* (1095a17-21, 1097b22-3). Here, as elsewhere, his method is dialectical: he begins by examining the appearances (*phainomena*), especially common and respected beliefs (*endoxa*), including those of his predecessors. Employing this method, Aristotle begins (in *EN* I 5) by examining three common conceptions of *eudaimonia*. He notes that there are three lives that should be examined -- the life of enjoyment, the life of political activity, and the life of contemplation -- because these lives reflect common conceptions of happiness (1095b15-19). He goes on to discuss three conceptions of happiness -- pleasure, honor, and virtue -- though he indicates that he will need to examine the life of contemplation and its conception of happiness later (1096a5), presumably in *Ethics* X 7-8. Pleasure is the conception of *eudaimonia* embodied in the life of gratification, and both honor and virtue could be associated with a life of political activity or practical reason.

Though each conception provides part of a plausible conception, none is adequate by itself (1095b16-1096a4). The life of (pure) pleasure is fit for grazing animals, not for humans. The life of honor is too passive and is too much outside agent's control. Finally, the life of virtue is almost correct, but is not complete because it may lack various goods that are not fully within our control. These criticisms reflect three assumptions about *eudaimonia*.

1. The final good must be complete.
2. The final good must be an appropriate life for human beings.
3. The final good should be relatively, though perhaps not completely, stable and within our control.

Appropriateness explains why the life of gratification, while suitable for grazing animals, is not suitable for rational animals. Appropriateness, stability, and control explain why the life of honor is unsuitable, because it is too passive and too dependent on the recognitions of others. Finally, completeness explains why virtue is insufficient for happiness; even if virtue is the most important element of happiness, it does not guarantee against misfortune and so cannot secure a complete good. This discussion is incredibly compressed. If it were intended to be self-contained, it would be very unsatisfactory. But it is a summary of the argument to come and is not intended to be dispositive. These assumptions and their implications for the content of *eudaimonia* are elaborated in the rest of Book I.

Appropriateness is elaborated in Chapter 7 in the function argument, which supports the conclusion that a good life must be one that realizes our nature as rational beings who can regulate their beliefs, passions, appetites, and actions by reasoning about what is fine or fitting (*kalon*). A life so regulated expresses the virtues, both theoretical and practical. But, as Aristotle explains in Chapters 8-11, *eudaimonia* must also be complete and lacking in nothing. Virtue, however important, cannot be a complete good. Some choiceworthy things, including our own

health and the well-being of loved ones, are not fully within our control and hence are fortuitous or external goods. Completeness requires such external goods in addition to virtue. In Chapter 10 Aristotle insists that the final good should also be something stable and not easily upset; it should be largely, albeit not completely, within our control. This constraint is reconciled with the other two by insisting that the virtues control (*kuriai*) *eudaimonia* (1100b11-22). Virtue is not sufficient for happiness, and it might come at the expense of other goods, but it is the most important element of happiness and is always a price worth paying. Here, Aristotle agrees with Plato's *Republic* II claim that the agent is always better off choosing virtue, regardless of the cost (1100b18-1101a15).⁴

Taken together, these constraints support a comprehensive or inclusive conception of *eudaimonia* that includes intellectual and practical virtues and a full life containing various external goods (1101a15-17). Though the intellectualism introduced in Book X raises questions about the overall consistency of Aristotle's claims about *eudaimonia*, the formal constraints in Book I support a comprehensive conception of *eudaimonia*, or so I shall assume.⁵

2. COMPLETENESS

Aristotle claims that *eudaimonia* is *complete* (*teleios*), *self-sufficient* (*autarkês*), and *choiceworthy* (*hairetos*) (1097a26-b21).⁶ Self-sufficiency and choiceworthiness appear to be further aspects of completeness.⁷

⁴ Daniel Russell, "Virtue and Happiness in the Lyceum and Beyond" *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 38 (2010): 143-85 offers a useful discussion of the apparent tension between Aristotle's claims that (1) happiness is pluralistic insofar as it contains both virtue and externals as independent components of happiness and that (2) virtue dominates or controls happiness, and he explores the different responses to this tension among Aristotle's successors. However, I think he overstates the difficulty of resolving this tension, which can be done by assuming that virtue is the most important single element of happiness, wins every contest with external goods, yet fails to secure a complete good (because of the maximal character of completeness). I am not saying that it is a simple matter to defend each of these three claims, only that together they resolve the apparent tension between (1) and (2). For instance, if virtue were lexically prior to external goods, this would be sufficient to resolve the tension.

⁵ For a contrary, intellectualist reading of Book I, see Richard Kraut, *Aristotle on the Human Good* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). My own view is that a comprehensive conception provides a better interpretation of the first nine books of the *EN* and better satisfies Aristotle's formal criteria for *eudaimonia* than does the strict intellectualist conception. However, it is worth noting that the same worry about reconciling completeness and realism about *eudaimonia* that I explore for the comprehensive conception of *eudaimonia* would also arise for the strict intellectualist conception. Contemplation is appropriate for divine beings (1177a13-18, 1177b27-1178a10, 1178b8-31), and rational animals could at most hope to approximate divinity. It would always be possible to approximate divinity more fully, with the result that few, if any, rational animals enjoy a complete intellectualist good.

⁶ Aristotle's discussion of that which is complete (*teleion*), self-sufficient (*autarkes*), and choiceworthy (*haireton*) echoes and develops Plato's formal criteria of the good in the *Philebus*, esp. 20d-22d, where Socrates insists that the good is complete (*teleon*), sufficient (*hikanon*), and choiceworthy (*haireton*) and concludes that neither pleasure nor intelligence is the good, since neither by itself is complete, self-sufficient, or most choiceworthy. For discussion, see John Cooper, "Plato and Aristotle on Finality and Self-Sufficiency" in John Cooper, *Knowledge, Nature, and the Good* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁷ See, e.g., John Ackrill, "Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*" reprinted in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. A. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) and Terence Irwin, "Permanent Happiness: Aristotle and Solon" *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 3 (1985): 89-124.

Complete goods are *final goods*, choiceworthy for themselves. By contrast, incomplete goods are not chosen for their own sakes. But completeness and finality are matters of degree. The *most* complete or final goods are *unconditionally complete* goods, which are chosen for their own sakes and not chosen for the sake of anything else. *Eudaimonia* is the only unconditionally complete good. Some goods are complete or final, but not completely or unconditionally so. Merely complete goods are choiceworthy for their own sakes but also are choiceworthy for the sake of *eudaimonia*, perhaps as parts are chosen for the sakes of the wholes of which they are parts (1097a26-b7).

It follows that there are two different ways in which something may be chosen for the sake of something else. Sometimes when *x* is chosen for the sake of *y*, *x* has no value itself and is a mere instrumental means to producing something else that is valuable. Here, *x* is an incomplete and instrumental good. However, in other cases, *x* is chosen for the sake of *y*, where *x* is valuable as constituent of *y*. Here *x* has contributory value and is good in itself.

This idea that something might be good both in itself and for the sake of the larger whole of which it is a part is not unfamiliar. My philosophy articles have structure; they defend larger aims by a series of arguments and so have constituent sub-aims. When I work on a particular sub-argument, I want to get that argument right both for its own sake and for or because of its constituent role in my larger argument. Aristotle claims that the virtues are fine (*kalon*) and choiceworthy for their own sakes (1105a32, 1144a19). In doing so, he makes explicit the sort of assumptions Plato must make about the relationship between justice and *eudaimonia* in *Republic* II when Socrates aims to show that justice is good for its own sake, as well as for its consequences, where being good for its own sake means contributing constitutively to the agent's own *eudaimonia*.

Individual goods are complete goods if they are chosen for their own sakes. The only unconditionally complete good is *eudaimonia* or a good life. Aristotle goes on to tell us that it is self-sufficient and most choiceworthy (1097b8-21). We might suppose that a self-sufficient good will be one which one can have all on one's own, independent of others. But Aristotle denies this, insisting that we are political animals and that our happiness depends upon family, friends, and fellow citizens (1097b10-11). Instead, he means that for a complete good to be self-sufficient is for it to contain everything within itself, to be lacking in nothing.

A good that is lacking in nothing must be most choiceworthy. Consider some putative final good {*x* and *y*}. If I can improve on that good by adding *z*, that shows that the putative final good was not in fact most choiceworthy. But then it was not lacking in nothing and, hence, it was not complete. A good that could be improved by adding other elements would not be complete and would not be most choiceworthy (1097b16-21; cf. *MM* 1184a7-29).

We might wonder how completeness is related to being self-sufficient and most choiceworthy. In particular, why must a final good be a maximally inclusive good? The answer seems to appeal to Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* as a most final or unconditionally complete good. To be unconditionally complete, *eudaimonia* must not be valuable as part of some larger, more valuable whole. But then *eudaimonia* must contain all genuine goods within it, which is to say that it must be self-sufficient, lacking in nothing, and most choiceworthy.

Aristotle's assumptions here about the nature of completeness and the constraint it imposes on the content of *eudaimonia* or happiness do not seem unreasonable. *Eudaimonia* seems to be our conception of a good life. A good life is the life that is good in itself for the person who lives it. We might conceive of a good life as the sort of life I would want for someone insofar as I care about her for her own sake. But then a good life seems subject to

Aristotle's completeness constraint, because it should include all and only those goods that contribute intrinsically to the value of the life of the person in question. I might initially judge that the sort of life I want for another for her own sake is {x, y}. But if, on reflection, I judge that her life would be in itself better still if it includes z as well, then I should conclude that the good life for her is a more inclusive good {x, y, z}. If so, we should expect any conception of the personal good or a good life to exhibit completeness.

3. COMPLETENESS AND EXTERNAL GOODS

Because a complete good is self-sufficient, it is lacking in nothing and most choiceworthy. For this reason, completeness requires the recognition of external goods.

Further, deprivation of certain [externals] -- e.g. good birth, good children, beauty -- mars our blessedness; for we do not altogether have the character of happiness if we look utterly repulsive or are ill-born, solitary or childless, and have it even less, presumably, if our children or friends are totally bad, or were good but have died [1099b2-5].

One doesn't have to agree with all of the things Aristotle recognizes as external goods or evils or with the importance he attaches to different ones to agree that there are some things -- such as the well-being of family and friends and health -- that are outside the agent's control and yet affect the completeness of her happiness. He says that only a philosopher concerned to defend his theory would deny the value of external goods (1096a1-3).

That is why the happy person needs to have goods of the body and external goods added, and needs fortune also, so that he will not be impeded in these ways. Some maintain, on the contrary, that we are happy when we are broken on the rack, or fall into terrible misfortunes, provided that we are good [virtuous]. Whether they mean to or not, these people are talking nonsense [VIII 3 1153b17-21].

Presumably, Aristotle has Socrates in mind here and his belief that virtue is sufficient for happiness -- that is, a complete good. But in this respect Aristotle's position also contrasts with the Stoic position that identifies virtue and happiness, implying that virtue is sufficient for happiness and famously treating goods of fortune as preferred indifferents.⁸

But it is important to be clear about different ways that externals affect happiness. Aristotle assigns two kinds of value to externals.⁹ One kind of value that he sometimes assigns externals is as a necessary condition for the realization of virtues that are parts of happiness, as, for example, both generosity and magnificence require resources for redistribution

⁸ See Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 2 vols., R.D. Hicks (Cambridge: Loeb, 1925) vii 89, 102, 107, 127 and Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, trs. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Loeb, 1914) iii 11, 20-39. For useful comparisons of Aristotelian and Stoic conceptions of happiness, see Terence Irwin, "Stoic and Aristotelian Conceptions of Happiness" in *The Norms of Nature*, ed. M. Schofield and G. Striker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), and Russell, "Virtue and Happiness in the Lyceum and Beyond."

⁹ See Irwin, "Permanent Happiness," esp. pp. 95-97.

(1099a31-33).¹⁰ Here, externals may be necessary for developing the capacity for virtue or for the practice of a virtue. But when Aristotle argues against Socrates in these passages, he claims that some externals contribute directly to one's happiness by embellishing or marring it (1099b1-7, 1100a6-8, 1100b27). Here, externals make a direct contribution to *eudaimonia*, enhancing or diminishing it in themselves. I want to focus on this second kind of value that externals have as constituents, rather than necessary conditions, of *eudaimonia*.¹¹

Among the externals that Aristotle discusses are some beyond the agent's capacity to recognize (1100a20). He doesn't suggest what these might be, but it is not hard to imagine. If I have already lost contact with a loved one, and then unbeknownst to me she dies, it seems I have suffered a loss, whether I realize it or not. Or suppose my friend or spouse is secretly unfaithful to me. Isn't this a misfortune that a complete life would not contain? These are things one would choose to do without. They are examples of what we might call *contemporaneous* unrecognized external goods and evils.

But their recognition and the completeness constraint suggest the possibility of posthumous goods and harms. Solon tells us that we should not pronounce on a person's happiness until after he is dead, for only then will he be beyond misfortune (1100a10-19; cf. *EE* 1219b4-8 and *MM* 1185a5-9). But the possibility of posthumous goods and misfortunes suggests that pronouncements even at the graveside may be premature. My children and projects may succeed or fail, and why shouldn't these successes or failures, like contemporaneous unrecognized harms, add or detract from the significance and value of my life? Certainly, one would choose to do without them. Aristotle treats the issues surrounding recognition of posthumous goods and harms as raising a puzzle, and he warns against making a person's fate depend too much on such goods (1100a23-30). But he thinks we ought to recognize such goods, provided we don't assign them too much importance. Posthumous benefits and harms may be of comparatively less significance and presumably will diminish in proportion to the strength of their connection with the activities and relationships engaged in during the agent's life, but they are real benefits and harms (1100a19-23, 1100a30-1, 1101a23-30).

4. COMPLETENESS, UTOPIANISM, AND THE BIG ROCK CANDY MOUNTAINS

Because completeness implies that the final good is lacking in nothing and most choiceworthy, it has a *utopian* element. Some demands of completeness are more utopian than others. So far, we have considered external goods required by completeness that are *comparatively realistic* -- good health, modest material resources, freedom from torture, the fidelity of one's loved ones, and the health and safety of one's family members. As externals, these goods are outside our control, but they are not uncommon or unrealistic. They are parts of familiar, normal lives.

But because a complete good is lacking in nothing and most choiceworthy, we must apparently also recognize external goods that are more exotic and less realistic. Though

¹⁰ The dependence of some virtues, such as magnificence, on a level of external goods not required by the other virtues, may raise a question about whether Aristotle can defend either the unity or the inseparability of the virtues.

¹¹ Some commentators emphasize the important connection between externals and virtue. See, e.g., John Cooper, "Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune" *Philosophical Review* 94 (1985): 173-96 and Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), esp. chs. 11-12. However, recognizing this kind of value that externals can have should not lead us to ignore their constitutive value.

unrealistic to take for granted or plan around, they would add to the value of the lives in which they occurred. Winning a lottery ticket, living an unusually long, healthy, and productive life, having one's life projects culminate later in world-changing discoveries, and having children that turn out to lead exemplary lives are goods that one would prefer whose presence in one's life would presumably improve it. These externals are choiceworthy -- one would choose a life that includes them over one that does not if one had the opportunity. But that means that a life without them is not most choiceworthy. So these are goods without which a life is not complete and, hence, without which one cannot be happy.

Another way to see how completeness has utopian implications is to consider the hobo's paradise described in the folk song *The Big Rock Candy Mountains*.¹²

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains,
 There's a land that's fair and bright,
 Where the handouts grow on bushes
 And you sleep out every night.
 Where the boxcars all are empty
 And the sun shines every day
 On the birds and the bees
 And the cigarette trees
 The lemonade springs
 Where the bluebird sings
 In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains
 All the cops have wooden legs
 And the bulldogs all have rubber teeth
 And the hens lay soft-boiled eggs
 The farmers' trees are full of fruit
 And the barns are full of hay
 Oh I'm bound to go
 Where there ain't no snow
 Where the rain don't fall
 The wind don't blow
 In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains
 You never change your socks
 And the little streams of alcohol
 Come trickling down the rocks
 The brakemen have to tip their hats
 And the railroad bulls are blind
 There's a lake of stew
 And of whiskey too

¹² *The Big Rock Candy Mountains* was written and performed by Harry McClintock in the 1890s and first recorded in 1928. I quote it here in significant part. An audio version is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovKk_kPmAk4.

You can paddle all around them
 In a big canoe
 In the Big Rock Candy Mountains

In the Big Rock Candy Mountains,
 The jails are made of tin.
 And you can walk right out again,
 As soon as you are in.
 There ain't no short-handled shovels,
 No axes, saws nor picks,
 I'm going to stay
 Where you sleep all day,
 Where they hung the jerk
 That invented work
 In the Big Rock Candy Mountains.

The worry here is that completeness is a utopian requirement on *eudaimonia* that makes happiness an unrealistic objective that could only be achieved in The Big Rock Candy Mountains or perhaps Aristotle's own Isles of the Blessed, mentioned in the *Politics* (1134a30-34). Since the Big Rock Candy Mountains are fictional, this means that no one's good is ever complete and, hence, no one is ever *eudaimōn* or happy.¹³

One might dispute the assumption that adding external goods makes a good more complete. For instance, one might claim that Aristotle appeals to completeness only to decide between a small number of different kinds of lives, such as the life of gratification, the life of honor, and the life of virtue, not to construct an optimal good. But, as we have seen, Aristotle does appeal to completeness to show that lives similar in virtue might nonetheless be differentially complete and, hence, differentially happy based on their different allotments of fortune and misfortune. If A and B lead similarly virtuous lives, but A leads a long life and prospers whereas B leads a shorter life, is less successful, and is tortured on the rack, then A's good is more complete than B's and A is happier than B. But why should the value of external goods only be relevant when comparing A and B? If A+ is significantly more fortunate than A in ways that make it more choiceworthy, why shouldn't we judge A+'s good as more complete than A's?

Alternatively, one might deny that Aristotle thinks that adding external goods always produces a more complete good. For instance, he claims that an excess of good fortune can impede happiness (VII 13 at 1153b22-23) and that too many friends won't lead to a more complete good (IX 10 at 1170b20-1171a21). But neither claim is inconsistent with the idea that external goods that improve one's life make it more complete and, hence, more happy. For these are cases in which additional fortune or additional friends either are not in fact good or perhaps

¹³ We might wonder if completeness implies that *eudaimonia* is not just utopian but impossible. For purposes of illustration, consider longevity. It's not just that completeness seems to demand an unusually long life. For a life of any finite length, it is always metaphysically (if not physically) possible for it to be a little longer. But then no finite life, however long, could be complete, because it would always be possible for it to be longer and, other things being equal, better. If so, it appears immortality would be an external good. But even if immortality is not literally (metaphysically) impossible, it seems a ridiculously utopian requirement to be happy.

are but nonetheless fail to improve one's life overall. Too much good fortune might make one complacent and less likely to persevere in difficult but virtuous causes, and too many friends might dilute the number, intensity, and quality of the interactions one has with one's friends. If the life without these additional externals is $\{x, y\}$ and the life with them added is $\{x, y, z\}$, then we may doubt that $\{x, y, z\}$ is an improvement on $\{x, y\}$. In such cases, there are *interactive effects* between elements in the initial set and the new element in the expanded set rendering the new whole less valuable than the old whole. But then these are cases in which the addition either are not good or else are good but produce a net reduction in the value of the whole in which they occur; if so, they are not counterexamples to the claim that adding goods that do improve the value of the life in which they occur makes that life more complete and, hence, happier.

5. ARISTOTELIAN REALISM

Aristotle seems committed to this kind of utopianism by the logic of completeness. But utopianism sits uneasily alongside a kind of realism that Aristotle insists upon elsewhere. For instance, in discussing the appropriate sort of political constitution in the *Politics* Aristotle's chief concern is with a special kind of non-ideal theory that aims at the best feasible constitution.

We have now to inquire what is the best constitution for most states, and the best life for most men, neither assuming a standard of excellence which is above ordinary persons, nor an education which is exceptionally favored by nature and circumstances, nor yet an ideal state which is an aspiration only, but having regard to the life in which the majority are able to share, and to the form of government which states in general can attain [1295a25-32].¹⁴

This kind of political realism recognizes aspirational goods but requires that the aspirations be reasonable or feasible, not utopian. At least, if Aristotle's political focus is utopian, the standard he appeals to is that of a *reasonable utopia*.¹⁵ Moreover, this sort of realism is attractive insofar as we might be reluctant to claim that the central ethical concept -- *eudaimonia* -- is purely aspirational. Realism implies that if all actual and feasible lives fail a putative ethical standard that gives us some reason to rethink that standard.

Though Aristotle's ethical and political theory are continuous with each other in important ways, the logic of the completeness constraint seems to require treating any set of goods that could be improved as incomplete. Insofar as *eudaimonia* is a complete good, people cannot be happy in a non-ideal world. Since no one lives in an ideal world, no one can be happy.

6. THE TENSION BETWEEN COMPLETENESS AND REALISM

So there is an apparent tension between the completeness constraint on *eudaimonia* in the *Ethics* and the attractive form of realism recognized in the *Politics*. That tension depends on the assumption that completeness is a *maximal concept* that doesn't apply unless its conditions are fully realized. A maximal concept <F> presupposes a scale of degrees of F-ness and only applies to things that are 100% F. Maximal concepts permit suboptimal comparisons: one thing

¹⁴ Revised Oxford Translation in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2 vols., ed. J. Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

¹⁵ Aristotle's kind of non-ideal political theory might be compared with Rawls's remarks about a realistic utopia in John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 5-7, 11-12, 127-28.

can be more F than another, even though neither is F. So, if <F> is a maximal concept, something that could become more F is not F simpliciter. Being full or straight are maximal concepts in this sense. A vessel is not full unless it has no unoccupied volume, and it is not full if it can be made fuller. A straight line is a line of zero curvature, and a line is not straight if it could be straighter. Similarly, completeness appears to be a maximal concept, because a complete good must be lacking in nothing and most choiceworthy. If a life could be made better, it is not complete. *Eudaimonia* must be a complete good. So if completeness is a maximal concept, then *eudaimonia* or happiness must also be a maximal concept.¹⁶

As a maximal concept, completeness is utopian and unrealistic, because very good lives - - ones that display the virtues and contain reasonable amounts of external goods -- can still be improved by the addition of other external goods. Such lives are not lacking in nothing and are not most choiceworthy, from which it follows that they are not complete and, hence, not *eudaimōn* or happy. Socrates led a long life, presumably manifesting both intellectual and practical virtues, and containing a great many external goods. Nonetheless, he did not enjoy a complete good. One reason Socrates did not enjoy a complete good is that his life contained unnecessary misfortune, including the misfortune of being unjustly accused and convicted. But even if his life had contained no unnecessary misfortune, it could have been improved by the addition of good fortune, such as living in the Big Rock Candy Mountains. But this means that no one can have a complete good if his or her *eudaimonia* or happiness could be improved. But this means that no one is in fact *eudaimōn* or happy and that no one has a reasonable prospect of achieving *eudaimonia* or happiness. That seems like a very unrealistic standard by which to measure the happiness of actual lives.

7. MAXIMAL AND NON-MAXIMAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT COMPLETENESS AND EUDAIMONIA

We may find the utopian implications of treating completeness and, hence, *eudaimonia* as maximal concepts sufficiently hard to accept that we conclude he could not have treated them as maximal concepts.¹⁷ In support of this, we might appeal to passages that seem not to treat completeness and *eudaimonia* as maximal concepts. For instance, when summarizing how the formal constraints on *eudaimonia* lead him to endorse a comprehensive conception of *eudaimonia*, Aristotle describes the comprehensive conception in these terms.

Then why not say that the happy person is the one whose activities accord with complete virtue, with an adequate supply of external goods, not just for any time but for a complete life [1101a15-17]?

¹⁶ My idea of a maximal concept that permits suboptimal comparisons is treated in linguistics as an absolute gradable predicate employing a maximum standard. See Christopher Kennedy and Louise McNally, "Scale Structure, Degree Modification, and the Semantics of Gradable Predicates" *Language* 81 (2005): 345-81 and Christopher Kennedy, "Vagueness and Grammar: The Semantics of Relative and Absolute Gradable Adjectives" *Linguistics and Philosophy* 30 (2007): 1-45.

¹⁷ Stephen White, "Is Aristotelian Happiness a Good Life or the Best Life?" *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 8 (1990): 103-43 usefully distinguishes maximalist, minimalist, and moderate conceptions of *eudaimonia*'s demands en route to defending a moderate conception. However, I think that at crucial junctures he just assumes that a maximalist reading is too utopian to take seriously and does not provide a clear alternative to the maximalist reading of completeness. By contrast, I want to see how Aristotle can reconcile his realism with a maximalist conception of completeness and *eudaimonia*.

In describing the person who is completely virtuous and has an *adequate* (*ikanös*) supply of external goods as happy, Aristotle may seem to imply that *eudaimonia* is not a maximal concept, because one can be happy provided that one is virtuous and has enough external goods even though one could presumably be happier still if one had more external goods. If so, he implies that one can be happy despite the possibility of being happier.

But this non-maximalist reading of the passage is problematic. Here completeness modifies virtue, not happiness, and Aristotle is discussing the degree of external goods that are required for virtue, rather than happiness. As we saw, external goods can have two different sorts of value -- as necessary conditions of virtue and as goods in themselves that are choiceworthy. Aristotle seems to be addressing the first role here, not the second. He could then be read as saying that happiness requires, among other things, complete virtue and a level of external goods necessary or adequate for virtue. He needn't be denying that complete happiness requires more than an adequate supply of external goods that are themselves elements of happiness.

However, there is another passage in which Aristotle appears to deny that completeness is a maximal concept. In describing the role that completeness assigns to external goods within happiness, Aristotle says this.

However, many events are matters of fortune, and some are smaller, some greater. Hence, while small strokes of good or ill fortune clearly will not influence his life, many great strokes of good fortune will make it more blessed [*makariotera*], since in themselves they naturally add adornment to it, and his use of them proves to be fine and excellent. Conversely, if they are great misfortunes, they oppress and spoil his blessedness, since they involve pain and impede many activities [1100b23-30].

Here, Aristotle assumes that happiness must be complete and that completeness implies that external goods will affect one's happiness. In particular, great good fortune will increase one's happiness, and severe misfortune will not only decrease one's happiness but prevent one from being happy, even if one is virtuous, which is the controlling ingredient in happiness. Nonetheless, he implies that small good fortune and small misfortune will not influence one's life. Presumably, he is saying that these small gains and losses would affect exactly how complete one's good is and how happy one is but would nonetheless not determine whether one's good is complete or one's life happy. If this is what he is saying, then he is not treating completeness or *eudaimonia* as a maximal concept.¹⁸

If so, then Aristotle combines maximal and non-maximal assumptions about completeness and *eudaimonia*. Perhaps this shouldn't be too surprising. There are other maximal concepts that can be deployed in non-maximal ways. As we saw, the concept of being full can function like a maximal concept in which a vessel does not count as full if it contains any unoccupied volume or if it can be made fuller. Nonetheless, the ordinary language concept of being full is often deployed in non-maximal ways. We might judge each of two glasses of ale to be full if there is little unoccupied volume in either, while recognizing that one is a little fuller

¹⁸ This passage involves a non-maximal reading of the adjectival form <*eudaimōn*>. It's been suggested to me that Aristotle might treat <*eudaimonia*> as a maximal concept but <*eudaimōn*> as a non-maximal concept. But the adjective <*eudaimōn*> is presumably derivative from the noun <*eudaimonia*>. If so, it's hard to see how the former could be non-maximal while the latter was maximal.

than the other and that a small amount of ale could be added to either. Similarly, we might judge a line to be straight provided that it has little curvature, while acknowledging that it could be straighter still. In these ordinary uses, concepts that can function maximally do not always do so. Here, we relax maximalist assumptions that would otherwise be in play. The concepts apply in non-maximal cases, provided the case falls near enough to the maximal point on the scale.

In this second passage, the one suggesting that happiness is invulnerable to small changes of fortune, Aristotle may relax his maximalist assumptions about completeness and, hence, *eudaimonia* or happiness. This would allow him to eschew utopianism and embrace realism if he can say that completeness and, hence, *eudaimonia* apply in cases in which an agent is reasonably near the maximal point on the completeness scale. In particular, he would have to claim that we can reasonably aspire to be near enough to the maximal point and that an agent who was fully virtuous and had reasonably good fortune would count as near enough to the maximal point.

This provides a rationalization of Aristotle's various claims about completeness and *eudaimonia*, in particular, both his utopian and realistic assumptions about happiness. Though it explains his various claims, it does not provide a fully satisfactory reconciliation of them. This is because it represents Aristotle as inconsistently embracing maximal and non-maximal assumptions about completeness and *eudaimonia*. When he explains completeness in terms of a good that is self-sufficient, lacking in nothing, and most choiceworthy, he treats it as a maximal concept. But at one other point he treats it as a non-maximal concept that applies when the agent is close enough to the maximal point on the happiness scale. This explains an inconsistency, rather than removing it.¹⁹

8. RECONCILING COMPLETENESS AND REALISM ABOUT *EUDAIMONIA*

Others have recognized the maximalist tendencies of completeness about *eudaimonia* and offered ways of reconciling completeness and realism. Perhaps the clearest such reconciliation is offered by Terence Irwin. In his article "Permanent Happiness" Irwin resolves this tension by a providing a reading of completeness that is maximal in one sense and non-maximal in another. In particular, he distinguishes between both determinables (e.g. exercising) and determinates (e.g. playing hockey) and between types (e.g. playing hockey) and tokens (e.g. playing hockey now). He then suggests that "Aristotle probably believes that the complete good is composed of a *sufficient* number of tokens of *some* determinate types of *each* of the determinable types of good."²⁰ If the main determinable types of goods are intellectual and practical virtue and external goods, then completeness requires a sufficient number of tokens of some of these three types of goods, but no more. Irwin's suggestion is that a complete good is maximal insofar as it must include all determinable types goods, but it is non-maximal insofar as it requires only a sufficient number of tokens of some (perhaps a sufficient) number of determinate types of each

¹⁹ I have been asked whether this inconsistency or ambiguity is semantic or pragmatic, that is, (a) whether there are two concepts or senses of completeness, one maximal and one non-maximal, or (b) whether there is one concept or sense and strict (maximal) and lax (non-maximal) uses. This is an interesting issue. Unfortunately, I don't know how to decide it in the abstract or in light of Aristotle's claims. I would note that if the inconsistency or ambiguity is semantic and not pragmatic, it is a case of polysemy, because the two concepts would be anchored in the same scale and their extensions would overlap significantly but imperfectly.

²⁰ Irwin, "Permanent Happiness," p. 99 (emphasis added).

determinable good. This would provide a kind of reconciliation of maximal and non-maximal elements in Aristotle's conception of happiness.²¹

But it is not clear that Aristotle does or could limit the maximalist elements in his view in this way. On this reading, completeness requires each of the main determinable kinds of goods, but only a sufficient number and variety of each. Aristotle never seems to make this qualification on the reach of completeness's maximalism explicitly. Moreover, it's not clear that he could or should, because it's not clear that we can limit the reach of maximalism to determinables and not determinates or the number and variety of determinates. The same demands that apply to the one would seem to apply to the other. A good that is complete must be lacking in nothing or most choiceworthy. Suppose that A+ and A are lives that each contain all of the relevant determinable kinds of goods but that A+ contains greater number or variety of determinate goods or a greater magnitude of particular determinate goods. If one could choose between A+ and A for oneself or another, one would choose A+. That would make A+ more choiceworthy than A. Since an unconditionally complete or final good is most choiceworthy, and *eudaimonia* is an unconditionally complete good, this implies that *eudaimonia* must include the greatest number and magnitude of tokens of each determinate type of each determinable type of good. If so, this would seem to block Irwin's route to reconciliation.

But even if we can't have one conception of completeness that is both maximal and non-maximal, Irwin's appeal to sufficiency is an idea worth developing. To remove the inconsistency, Aristotle would have to revise either his maximalist claims or his non-maximalist claims. He could give up his maximalist analysis of completeness and *eudaimonia*, or he could revise some of his non-maximalist (realist) judgments about who has a complete good and is *eudaimōn*. One strategy that would allow Aristotle to reconcile completeness and realism about *eudaimonia* appeals to the idea of a *submaximal satisficing threshold*. This basic idea can be understood in either non-maximalist or maximalist terms.

As we have noted, even with maximal concepts, it is possible to make *submaximal comparisons*. Neither of two glasses of ale might be full, because either could be fuller, but one might be more full than the other. Neither of two lines might be straight, because either could be straighter, but one might be straighter than another. Similarly, neither of two lives might be complete, because each lacks some possible external goods. Nonetheless, one might be more complete than the other if it has more or lacks fewer external goods than the other. For instance, neither you nor I have a complete good, because, among other things, neither of us lives in the Big Rock Candy Mountains. Nonetheless, my good may be more complete than yours if, despite our comparable virtue, my community projects turn out to be more successful than yours, my health is better than yours, and my children fare better than yours do. What is true of completeness is true of happiness. Though neither of us is happy, because happiness requires completeness, nonetheless, other things being equal, I would be happier than you.

So far, this provides imperfect reconciliation of completeness and realism. We get a fuller reconciliation of completeness and realism if we recognize a submaximal satisficing threshold of being *complete enough* or *reasonably complete*. This will allow us to construct the notion of being *happy enough* or *reasonably happy*. What's important to the reconciliation of

²¹ Exactly how demanding Irwin's conception of Aristotelian completeness is depends, in part, on how finely he individuates determinable types. For instance, are there just two determinable types of virtue, intellectual and practical, or are there as many determinable types of virtue as there are distinct virtues? The answer to this question may interact with Aristotle's attitude toward the inseparability and unity of the virtues. But the question also arises for how many determinable types of external goods there are.

completeness and realism about *eudaimonia* is that the submaximal threshold be high enough without being too high. This Goldilocks threshold must be one that can be reached, at least under feasible but favorable circumstances. Perhaps the threshold would be set, as Aristotle suggests, at reasonably complete virtue with a fortunate but non-utopian supply of external goods. Presumably, this threshold would be marked by a fuzzy line, rather than a sharp or bight line.

The concepts <complete enough>, <reasonably complete>, <happy enough>, and <reasonably happy> would be non-maximal concepts. The concepts would apply even when their conditions of application were not maximally realized, provided they were realized sufficiently. So one's good could be complete enough or reasonably complete even if it could become more complete. Similarly, one could be happy enough or reasonably happy even if one could become happier. What makes these non-maximal concepts different from some others is that the application of the concepts is relativized to a standard of sufficiency or adequacy.²² This appeal to a submaximal satisficing standard can fund a reconciliation of completeness and realism about *eudaimonia* in one of two somewhat different ways.

First, one might interpret completeness and, hence, *eudaimonia* as non-maximal satisficing concepts. On this interpretation, we should view any maximalist assumptions Aristotle makes about completeness and, hence, *eudaimonia* as mistaken. Or, perhaps more charitably, the suggestion might be that we should interpret what might otherwise appear to be maximalist claims about completeness and *eudaimonia* as involving an implicit reference to a standard of sufficiency or adequacy. So when Aristotle claims that *eudaimonia* is complete and self-sufficient -- containing all goods within itself -- we should understand him to claim that *eudaimonia* contains all reasonable or feasible goods within itself. When he glosses self-sufficiency as lacking in nothing, we should understand him to claim that it is lacking in nothing reasonable or feasible. When he says that to be lacking in nothing is to be most choiceworthy and not improvable, we should understand him to claim that the good cannot be realistically or feasibly improved.

Alternatively, one might embrace both maximalist and satisficing concepts. Maximizing and satisficing standards are contrasting standards. For instance, a satisficing form of prudence or utilitarianism can be contrasted with a maximizing form of prudence or utilitarianism. Doing good enough is a rival demand to doing what is best. But though one concept cannot be both maximal and satisficing, we can have two concepts, one of which is maximal and one of which is satisficing. Here, we take one unmodified predicate <F> and create a derivative modified predicate <reasonably F> or <F enough>, where the original predicate is maximal and the derivative predicates are non-maximal and satisficing. On this proposal, completeness and happiness remain maximal. One's happiness is only complete if one is lacking no imaginable goods and cannot be improved, and one is only happy if one's good is complete and one cannot be happier. Since no one enjoys a complete good, no one is happy. Nonetheless, some people's good is more complete than others, and so some people are happier than others. Moreover, the good of some may be complete enough or reasonably complete if it contains all the goods that one could reasonably or realistically hope for. Though such people would not be happy, they would be happy enough or reasonably happy. This proposal requires that we understand Aristotle's judgment that a complete good is invulnerable to small changes of fortune (100b23-

²² My addition of a submaximal satisficing threshold turns the unmodified <F> into the modified <reasonably F> or <F enough>. In effect, this converts an absolute gradable predicate with a maximum standard <F> into a relative gradable predicate with an implicit reference to a satisficing standard of comparison <reasonably F> or <F enough>.

30) as mistaken. Or, perhaps more charitably, we might read the claim that a complete good is invulnerable to small changes in fortune as the claim that a reasonably complete life that is happy enough is invulnerable to small changes of fortune.

These are two different ways of rendering a common idea. The common idea is that on a scale of completeness and, hence, happiness we attach special significance to reasonable approximation to the maximum via a satisficing threshold. Even if <F> is a maximal concept, the derivative concepts <reasonably F> and <F enough> are non-maximal and satisficing. The first interpretation of this common idea insists that <F> is not a true maximal concept but rather is equivalent to the non-maximal satisficing derivative concept. The second interpretation treats the original concepts as maximal concepts and the derivatives as non-maximal satisficing concepts.

Either interpretation provides a kind of reconciliation of completeness and realism within Aristotle's claims about *eudaimonia*. However, my sympathies lie with the second interpretation. Taken at face value, Aristotle's analysis of the concept of completeness as what is self-sufficient, lacking in nothing, and most choiceworthy implies that it is a maximal concept. We saw only one passage that suggested a non-maximal satisficing reading -- the one claiming that a complete good is invulnerable to small changes in fortune. I find it easier to read this one passage as implicitly invoking reference to a reasonably complete life or life that is complete enough or as being an anomalous concession on Aristotle's part to ordinary lax usage than I do to read the entire analysis of completeness as liberally seasoned with unstated but implicit references to a satisficing standard. The second interpretation allows us to accommodate Aristotelian realism while acknowledging the maximalist tendency of completeness. Socrates may not have had a complete good and, hence, may not have been happy, because he did not live in the Big Rock Candy Mountains, but he might still have been reasonably happy and happy enough.

9. BEYOND *EUDAIMONIA*

Earlier (§2), I noted that Aristotle's maximalist assumptions about completeness and the constraint it imposes on *eudaimonia* do not seem unreasonable. I would like to conclude by sketching how his assumptions about completeness and *eudaimonia* might apply to some of our own modern axiological concepts, in particular, the concepts of the good for a person and a good life. Not surprisingly, applying Aristotelian assumptions to these concepts gives rise to a tension between utopianism and realism. But if my reconciliation of utopian and realistic elements in Aristotle's conception of *eudaimonia* is successful, it points the way toward a plausible reconciliation of the tension in our own axiological concepts.

A central axiological concept in any plausible kind of moral theory is that of the personal good -- what is good for a person. Other important normative concepts, such as beneficence, prudence, harm, and individual rights, seem to depend upon the personal good. We might identify the concept of the personal good with the idea of a good life, that is, the life that is good in itself for the person who lives it. Indeed, we might well identify Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia* with our concept of personal good.

How should we conceive of the personal good? If the personal good is a life that is good in itself for the person who lives it, we might conceive of it as the sort of life I would want for someone insofar as I care about her for her own sake.²³ We might call this the *concern test*. A special case of concern test is the *crib test*, which asks what sort of life I would want for my

²³ See Stephen Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) and Fred Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).

newborn child insofar as I care about her for her own sake.²⁴ The crib test makes especially salient the idea implicit in the concern test that we are asking what sort of life as a whole is choiceworthy for someone. But if we adopt the concern and crib tests, then a good life seems subject to Aristotle's completeness constraint, because it should include all and only those goods that contribute intrinsically to the value of the life of the person in question. I might initially judge that what passes the crib test for my child or the concern test for some other loved one is a complex good $\{x, y\}$. But if, on reflection, I judge that her life would be in itself better still if it includes z as well, then I should conclude that the good life for her is a more inclusive good $\{x, y, z\}$. If so, we should expect any conception of the personal good or a good life to exhibit completeness.²⁵

But this yields a conception of the personal good that may seem unrealistic. Should we say that a person has a good life only if she has a life that cannot be improved? That may seem ridiculously utopian. We might think that the personal good should be a satisficing, rather than a maximal concept. Perhaps we should judge how good lives are for those who lead them by whether they are reasonably good or good enough, provided the satisficing threshold meets the Goldilocks standard of being high but not unrealistically high.

But a pure satisficing conception of the personal good is problematic. First, thresholds are always arbitrary, making too much of differences immediately below and above the threshold. Why should small differences just below the threshold affect one's happiness, whereas large differences above do not? Moreover, even if we do identify a Goldilocks threshold, we will want to be able to compare different options above the threshold. Suppose the threshold for a good life is A-. Even if an A- life for one's child is good enough, one would naturally prefer an A or A+ life for her. These are better lives for her than an A- life. Moreover, applying the concern test in one's own case, one might identify several life courses, each of which promises to be at least an A-. But if A or A+ options are within one's reach, it would be rational to prefer these options, even though they are above the threshold. Indeed, it would be rational to aim at what is best, even if we recognize that A- is good enough.

These considerations suggest that our concept of the personal good and the related concept of a good life have both maximal and non-maximal dimensions. By treating these

²⁴ Fred Feldman endorsed the crib test in "On the Advantages of Cooperativeness" *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 13 (1988): 308-23. However, Feldman now has qualms about the crib test, because he worries that one's preferences for another's life might be moralistic. For instance, I might want my loved one to lead a life of virtue or to be a martyr for a moral cause. See Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life*, p. 10. But either such moralistic preferences do not reflect what one wants for another *for her own sake*, in which case they don't pass the crib test, or they do, in which case they reflect a partly moralistic conception of the other's good that deserves to be taken seriously as a conception of the personal good. If so, the crib test is a defensible test for conceptions of the good life and the personal good.

²⁵ It is perhaps worth noting that the personal good could be complete in my Aristotelian sense (a good that cannot be improved) without being complete in the decision-theoretic sense. An ordering of goods is complete in the decision-theoretic sense just in case for any pair of alternatives x and y , x is always determinately better than (preferred to) y or vice versa. But a good is complete in the Aristotelian sense of being unimprovable just in case there is no alternative that is determinately better than it. But then we can see that there can be a fact of the matter about whether a given life L involves a complete (unimprovable) good even if there is not a complete ordering of lives in the decision-theoretic sense. If there is no alternative life that is a determinate improvement on L , then L embodies a complete good, and if there is an alternative that is determinately better than L , then L embodies an incomplete good. Neither of these conditions assumes that there must be a complete ordering of good lives.

concepts as maximal concepts, we can discriminate among the value of options above the satisficing threshold. We can acknowledge that the personal good is a maximal concept that only applies to lives that include all possible goods, while recognizing and attaching normative significance to reasonable approximations to the maximum. We can introduce derivative non-maximal and satisficing concepts <reasonably good> and <good enough> and assess the quality of actual lives in terms of these concepts.

This analysis of the personal good and a good life might generalize to other axiological concepts, such as well-being and happiness, as well. We could provide parallel arguments for understanding these concepts as maximal and constructing derivative, non-maximal satisficing concepts <reasonably well-off>, <sufficiently well-off>, <reasonably happy>, and <happy enough>. Of course, our analysis of *eudaimonia* will require, and not just permit, this analysis of these other axiological concepts if we identify *eudaimonia* with well-being or happiness, as well as with the personal good and a good life. Whether these identifications are plausible will depend on whether it is plausible to identify the content of a life that is good in itself for the sake of the person who lives it with her well-being or happiness. Insofar as well-being and happiness pass the concern and crib tests, this will be reason to offer the same analysis of their maximal and non-maximal dimensions.

10. CONCLUSION

Aristotle's commitment to understanding *eudaimonia* as a complete good explains his important claim that virtue is insufficient for happiness, despite being the dominant or controlling part of happiness. In explaining completeness, he treats it as a maximal concept that only applies when its requirements are fully met and happiness is lacking in nothing. So understood, completeness and, hence, *eudaimonia* are utopian concepts that only apply in conditions that cannot be improved. However, Aristotle can accommodate an attractive form of realism, which he endorses in his political writings, by attaching normative significance to reasonable approximation to maximum goodness. This requires him to introduce derivative concepts that are non-maximal and satisfying -- <reasonably complete>, <complete enough>, <reasonably happy>, and <happy enough>. Employing both maximal and derivative non-maximal concepts would allow Aristotle to reconcile utopian and realistic elements in his ethical theory. Moreover, this analysis and resolution of the tension in Aristotle's ethics suggests ways in which we might address and reconcile a similar tension in our own axiological concepts that have both aspirational and realistic dimensions.