

CHAPTER I

How Can Useless Contemplation Be Central to the Human Good?

1.1 An Introduction to the Utility Question

For Aristotle, philosophical contemplation, or *theôria*, is, in some sense, the ultimate end for human beings. Contemplation is that for the sake of which our rational actions aim. The power to contemplate also has a special position in the human soul – for Aristotle, an integrated system of life-functions. Contemplation is the authoritative, or dominant, function for the sake of which the human soul’s subordinate functions (e.g., nutrition, perception, and practical reasoning) exist. As the *telos* of our rational actions and of our other life-functions, contemplation is, for Aristotle, the main organizing principle in our kind-specific good as human beings.

On standard readings of Aristotle, contemplation has another, striking feature: it is thoroughly useless. Choiceworthy for its own sake, and lacking subservience to any higher functions, contemplation is free and leisured. Its proper objects eternal and divine, contemplation does not concern itself with pressing issues in the contingent realm of human affairs. Unlike other life-functions, it seems, contemplation makes no contribution to human self-maintenance.¹

Standard readings of Aristotle’s remarks on contemplation’s uselessness are partly correct. On Aristotle’s account, contemplation’s objects *are* eternal and divine. Contemplation is *not* directly concerned with practical affairs. *Nor* does contemplation subserve any functions higher than itself. No higher functions exist in the human soul, after all, for contemplation usefully to subserve. So, Aristotle provides good reason to think that contemplation is, somehow, a useless activity.

¹ In referring to “standard readings,” I have in mind prominent interpretations of Aristotle on contemplation and its uselessness put forward, e.g., by Kathleen V. Wilkes, Thomas Nagel, Sarah Broadie, Jonathan Lear, John M. Cooper, Andrea Wilson Nightingale, and Martha C. Nussbaum, among others. I discuss these readings in Chapter 5, especially Section 5.1.

But consider some of Aristotle's other views. Nature, Aristotle insists repeatedly, does nothing in vain. Perishable living organisms possess only useful parts and functions, which benefit their lives as whole. In particular, the authoritative functions of plants and nonhuman animals both characterize the lives of these organisms and constitute a useful means by which these organisms maintain themselves. Such functions are authoritative by guiding and directing the lives – and self-maintenance – of such organisms. Plants and nonhuman animals *live by* these functions. In doing so, such perishable organisms maintain and activate themselves as the kinds of organisms they are. Such organisms thereby approximate the eternal persistence and activity of Aristotle's god, the Prime Mover.

By construing contemplation as altogether useless for human self-maintenance, then, standard readings have unattractive implications. Contemplation, on such readings, proves both troublingly inert and detached from the rest of human life. On such readings, Aristotle's remarks on contemplation stand in worrisome tension with the core commitments of his natural teleology. Aristotle's defense of the contemplative life, such readings imply, conflicts with his view that nature supplies organisms only with useful parts and functions – parts and functions that conduce to an organism's self-maintenance and enable the organism, as far as possible, to approximate god's imperishable, active way of being. Standard readings, in short, render Aristotle's account of the human good strangely discontinuous with his general account of the good for living organisms.

And standard readings leave us with questions. If contemplation offers no benefits for maintaining the whole system of psychic functions constitutive of the human soul, then why, on Aristotle's view, should human beings ever possess the power to contemplate in the first place? Does nature not operate in vain by providing human beings with useless contemplative capacities? Instead of benefitting human beings, might not such capacities count instead as psychic appendages that waste resources, and interfere with functions, necessary for our self-maintenance? If contemplation does not guide or direct our other life-functions, how – if at all – is it *authoritative* within the human soul?

One might hold, of course, that contemplation is simply the best activity in which we can engage. Hence, one might infer, when nature supplies us with contemplative powers, nature does not work in vain. And that inference could well turn out to be sound. But on Aristotle's view, I contend, that will be so only on the condition that contemplation fully

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enables us to approximate the divine – a task that includes contemplation’s facilitating the stable persistence of our all-too-mortal lives.

Aristotle’s remarks on contemplation generate *the utility question*: if contemplation is useless, how can it be central to the human good? In what follows, I explore and answer this question. In the first half of the book, I make a fuller case that the puzzle that I have just sketched indeed poses a real problem for Aristotle. In the second half, I offer a systematic response to the utility question, and I articulate a revisionary, broadly naturalistic reading of contemplation’s place in the human good. Against standard readings, I argue, contemplation of the eternal and divine actually *is* useful in the lives of rational animals. Contemplation is an integral function within the economy of human life-activities. Most controversially, I argue that, for Aristotle, contemplation actively guides and benefits the basic nutritive-reproductive (or threptic) functions required for self-maintenance. Aristotle’s defense of contemplation is consistent with his general account of the good for living organisms, and continuous with his account of the good for plants and nonhuman animals. His defense coheres, rather than conflicts, with his core teleological commitments.

Some, perhaps, may resist the thought that Aristotle faces the puzzle that I have just articulated. Yet even these readers can accept the account of contemplation’s usefulness that I develop. Even if such readers deny that contemplation *must be* useful in the way I argue, they can still accept that contemplation *can be* useful. For these readers, I offer a textually grounded account of how contemplation can play a more active role in human affairs than standard readings have proposed.

In the 1970s, Thomas Nagel and Kathleen V. Wilkes first saw that Aristotle’s defense of contemplation generated something like the utility question.² Both noticed that Aristotle’s remarks on contemplation’s uselessness raise puzzles about contemplation’s benefits for human beings. Both Nagel and Wilkes proposed, however, that Aristotle had theological resources to defend contemplation as authoritative and beneficial. They thought that Aristotle could defend contemplation’s centrality to the human good simply on the basis of contemplation’s status as a divine activity, one that the gods enjoy. Nevertheless, they agreed, Aristotle’s resulting account of contemplation’s contribution to the human good was discontinuous with his account of how the authoritative functions of other organisms benefited those organisms.

² See Nagel ([1972] 1980) and Wilkes ([1978] 1980).

Since then, debates concerning Aristotle's views on contemplation have centered on whether contemplation is happiness's sole constituent.³ While this question about Aristotle is important, it is nevertheless not the only question. In my view, scholars have yet to appreciate the full significance of Nagel's and Wilkes's insights concerning the tensions and puzzles that Aristotle's remarks on contemplation's uselessness introduce into Aristotle's account of the human good. Regardless of whether one thinks that contemplation is happiness's sole component, or whether one thinks that contemplation is only one of many goods constitutive of happiness, one faces – and must address – the utility question.

Hence, I revisit the issues that Nagel and Wilkes first opened up, yet which have since been neglected. I build on Nagel's and Wilkes's insights, but defend a novel account of contemplation's beneficial value. Contemplation, I argue, benefits human beings just as nutrition and reproduction benefit plants, and just as perception and locomotion benefit non-human animals. Contemplation, for Aristotle, contributes authoritative guidance over a human being's other life-activities – including the basic self-maintaining functions of nutrition and reproduction. Contemplation is how human beings live – well. On my reading, human beings *live by* contemplation in a rich and robust sense.

1.2 Some Matters of Method

My account of Aristotle on the uses of contemplation departs from two main approaches that initially tempt the Aristotle interpreter. The first approach doubts that any account of the human good that gives pride of place to contemplation could cohere well with Aristotle's biological and psychological commitments. Highlighting Aristotle's claims for contemplation's uselessness, this approach holds that one would be hard pressed to identify any role for contemplation in human self-maintenance. True, Aristotle admits that some goods are choiceworthy for their own sakes as well as for the sake of higher goods. And so, he allows some goods to be both ends and instrumentally useful for the sake of higher goods. But contemplation, unlike these other goods, is an ultimate end lacking choiceworthiness for the sake of any higher goods. Further, contemplation does not concern itself with human goods. Such an approach, then, would say little about how Aristotle's claims for contemplation's centrality to the

³ These debates were sparked by Hardie (1965). I address these debates in passing throughout Chapter 2, but most fully in Walker (2011).

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human good cohere with Aristotelian claims concerning the ways in which the authoritative functions of other organisms benefit those organisms. Instead, this first approach would examine Aristotle's remarks on contemplation's value within a delimited context, perhaps appealing to aspects of Aristotle's theology (viz., the thought that god contemplates and that contemplation is incomparably valuable) to understand why Aristotle thinks contemplation so beneficial.

A contrasting, second approach would situate Aristotle's account of the human good precisely within its biological and psychological contexts. Yet this second approach would say little about contemplation and its orientation toward the divine – again assuming that contemplation of divine objects would have to be useless and irrelevant for self-maintenance. On this second approach, Aristotle's claims about contemplation and its objects either would have to be swept under the rug or explained away. Such an approach would give pride of place to practical wisdom in the human good, while trying to bracket Aristotle's embarrassing remarks on contemplative wisdom.

Against both of these approaches, I explain contemplation's role in the human good in a way that reconciles Aristotle's account with the core commitments of Aristotle's metaphysics, psychology, biology, and theology. Thus, I engage with, and defend my reading by reference to, the full Aristotelian corpus. My argument takes advantage of the full range of available textual evidence, including surviving fragments of Aristotle's lost *Protrepticus*, which recent scholarship has authenticated.⁴

In focusing principally on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but in approaching Aristotle holistically, I integrate insights from various works throughout the Aristotelian corpus. In doing so, I address certain interpretive issues more briefly (and less deeply) than might an atomistic approach, which would focus on specific problems and texts in isolation from the larger corpus. Although I focus more on the forest than on particular trees, a holistic approach to Aristotle is reasonable on three main grounds. (1) Aristotle himself invites a holistic approach by explicitly introducing key metaphysical, psychological, and biological principles in the *Nicomachean Ethics* itself, especially in I.7's function argument. Theological themes also pervade the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Likewise, Aristotle explicitly appeals to metaphysical and natural philosophical principles in his *Politics*.⁵ Yes, as interpreters, we can understand the *Nicomachean Ethics* by itself – on a first reading, at least

⁴ See Hutchinson and Johnson (2005) and unpublished work A.

⁵ See, e.g., *Politics* I.2, 1252a26–b5; 1252b31–1253a1; 1253a9; a20–26; I.5, 1254a21–33; I.8, 1256b20–22; II.5, 1263a41–b1; III.3, 1276b4–13; VII.8, 1328a21–25.

to some extent – without appealing to Aristotle’s views in other works. Yet an appeal to other parts of Aristotle’s corpus, I argue, is nevertheless necessary for the *fullest* understanding of Aristotle’s ethical views.⁶ (2) Aristotle does not present his works as parts of a wholly worked-out system. But Aristotle’s occasional cross-references to his other works (e.g., *EN* I.6, 1096b7–8; I.13, 1102a16–28; X.4, 1174b2–4) suggest that he sees his works mutually supporting one another, at least on some points.⁷ (3) As a practical matter, the holistic approach enables us to make sense of Aristotle’s most puzzling remarks on contemplation and its place in the human good. Hence, this approach is useful for the discoveries it yields.

In *An. Post.* I.7, Aristotle holds that the various sciences are autonomous, and that one may not apply principles from one science to another science. Such a claim might seem to militate against a holistic approach. Perhaps Aristotle denies that one may fruitfully apply principles from metaphysics or psychology to ethics and politics.⁸ Yet Aristotle also grants that principles that apply to one science may also apply to another science, provided that one science (e.g., geometry) encompasses another (e.g., optics) (*An. Post.* I.7, 75b14–17; I.13, 78b34–79a16). Human beings, however, are composite substances and living organisms. Hence, insofar as the objects studied by ethics and political science are the same objects studied by metaphysics and natural science, metaphysical and natural-scientific principles can still apply to ethics and political science. The claims of ethics and political science should at least not conflict with more encompassing metaphysical and natural-scientific principles. Further, as noted, Aristotle in practice appeals to metaphysical, psychological, and theological principles in his ethics and politics. Therefore, Aristotle accepts only a limited autonomy for the sciences, and allows for a holistic approach to his corpus.⁹

⁶ On the systematic, or holistic, approach to Aristotle’s ethics, see the programmatic remarks in Irwin (1980), developed more fully in (1988). See also Reeve (2012: ix). On how attending to metaphysics can deepen our understanding of the *EN*, see Achtenberg (2002: ch. 3). On Aristotle’s ethics in relation to his biology, especially, see Henry and Nielsen (2015), and the essays in their collection.

⁷ Note Aristotle’s references to other works (including the *Analytics*) at *EE* I.6, 1217a16–17; I.8, 1217b16–23 and 1217b26–29; II.6, 1222b37–38; II.10, 1227a9–11; VIII.3, 1249b15. Aristotle refers to his ethical works, in turn, at *Metaphysics* A.1, 981b25.

⁸ See Roche (1988a: 53–54), who argues that Aristotle’s method in the *EN* is wholly dialectical. Others (e.g., Scott [2015: ch. 7] and perhaps Kraut [2016: Section 3.2]) argue that appeal to metaphysical and psychological principles is, at best, optional. I address such issues, as well as worries about the differing kinds of precision appropriate the theoretical and practical sciences, further in Chapter 7. But for general replies to such worries, see Shields (2015) and Leunissen (2015).

⁹ See Karbowski (2012: 324–325) and Henry and Nielsen (2015: 2). M. Johnson (2015: 178–186) argues that political science (as a practical science) must be subalternate to theoretical sciences. Cf. Salkever (1990: 115).

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At a local level, I also read the *Nicomachean Ethics* itself holistically. I examine the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a unified work with a unified argument. Those who approach the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a patchwork treatise might view my approach as worrisome and naïve. Skeptical about the *Nicomachean Ethics*' unity, they contend that perhaps a later editor, say, Andronicus of Rhodes, compiled the work in its current form. Such readers deny the work to be a “book” in anything like the modern sense.¹⁰ Some such readers insist that the *Nicomachean Ethics* offers an obviously incoherent picture of happiness, one that first portrays happiness as an inclusive end in *EN* I–IX, but later – inconsistently – depicts happiness as an exclusive end in *EN*X. For further signs of the treatise's patchwork nature, other such readers point to the treatise's inclusion of two allegedly independent books on friendship (*EN* VIII–IX) and its two apparently different, and allegedly inconsistent, accounts of pleasure (in *EN* VII and X). Finally, they note that Books V–VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are identical to Books IV–VI of the *Eudemian Ethics*. Hence, if the *Eudemian Ethics* was written first, then the *Nicomachean Ethics* contains three “common” books culled from an earlier work.

In response, I note, first, that any conjectures that Andronicus himself put together the *Nicomachean Ethics* are highly speculative. Jonathan Barnes, who has questioned the work's unity, himself admits that the evidence for Andronicus' editorship of Aristotle's works is “meagre.”¹¹ As Barnes notes, Plutarch – a key source for the view that Andronicus compiled the works of Aristotle – says only that Andronicus “published” Aristotle's manuscripts. Likewise, Barnes advises caution with Porphyry's claims that Andronicus “divided the works of Aristotle into treatises, collecting related material into the same place.” Such reports need not imply that Andronicus *constructed* the works in their current form.¹² Second, claims for the *Nicomachean Ethics*' patchwork incoherence have been much exaggerated. The alleged incoherencies in the *Nicomachean* text, as multiple other scholars have argued, result from overly hasty readings of the work as we now have it.¹³ The *Nicomachean* text shows a ring-composition, an organizing feature shared by other unitary ancient texts,

¹⁰ See, e.g., Annas (1993: 216n1) and Barnes (1995: 11).

¹¹ Barnes ([1997] 2015: 435). For doubts about the *EN*'s unity, see Barnes ([1997] 2015: 466n252).

¹² Barnes ([1997] 2015: 447). I have benefitted from Roochnik (unpublished).

¹³ Pakaluk (2011) offers a particularly acute – and, I believe, generally correct – analysis of the *EN* as a unity. Pakaluk explains (1) the two discussions of happiness (in Books I and X); (2) the coherence of the different accounts of pleasure in Books VII and X; and (3) the place of Books VIII and IX on friendship within the whole. In different ways, the work of, e.g., Kraut (1989) and G. Lear (2004) shows the general implausibility of simply assuming that Book X is inconsistent with the rest of the

including Plato's *Republic*.¹⁴ And later parts of the *Nicomachean* text include probable back references to significantly earlier parts of the text, displaying another kind of textual unity.¹⁵

Therefore, I adopt, as a defeasible methodological assumption, the view that the *Nicomachean Ethics* is best read as a whole.¹⁶ (And in the absence of any specific reason to think otherwise, I assume, as a default, that Aristotle composed it as such.) Nor is my choice to read the work as a whole idiosyncratic: I join most other recent commentators in reading the *Nicomachean Ethics* this way. Ultimately, any unity in the *Nicomachean Ethics* should be discovered and explained. Yet the same follows for any disunity or incoherence. We must look and see. If a later editor did compile the *Nicomachean Ethics*, however, this editor knew what he was doing. As Carlo Natali contends, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is “a skillful construction, the fruit of a mature intelligence.”¹⁷ As for the alleged challenge posed by the *Eudemian Ethics*, one can assume for argument's sake that the *Eudemian* treatise dates from before the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Even then, however, nothing prevents the *Nicomachean Ethics* from constituting a unity. For nothing prevents an author from using material originally composed for one work and finding an integral place for it within another. In our own day, academic books regularly repurpose material originally intended for academic conferences and professional journals. Although including material from disparate sources, such books need not thereby lack structural, argumentative, or generic unity.

The task of reconciling Aristotle's views on contemplation in the human good with his general views on the good for living organisms has led me, as it has led others, to reassess Aristotle's relationship with his teacher, Plato. A certain traditional view of this relationship – which I call, after Raphael's painting, the “School of Athens picture” – portrays Aristotle in fundamental conflict with Plato.¹⁸ One finds a version of this view in Werner Jaeger's influential narrative of Aristotle's career as a progressive series of steps away from Plato.¹⁹ Yet unitarian readers – who attribute a fairly

EN. On the compatibility of the *ENVII* and *ENX* accounts of pleasure, see, e.g., Shields (2011). I say more about the place of the friendship books in Chapter 8.

¹⁴ See Natali (2007: 369; 374–375) and Lockwood (2014).

¹⁵ See, e.g., *EN* IX.3, 1165a12–14; IX.9, 1169b28–30; b30–33; 1170a14–16; X.6, 1176b24–26; X.7, 1178a4–6. Cf. Irwin (2007: 151).

¹⁶ Cf. Kraut (1989: 20). ¹⁷ Natali (2007: 381).

¹⁸ Or perhaps “the vulgar School of Athens picture.” Hare (2007: 7–12) emphasizes Raphael's harmonized portrayal of Plato and Aristotle.

¹⁹ See Jaeger (1962), which I discuss in Section 7.5. In his own developmental story, Owen (1965) portrays the early Aristotle as an anti-Platonist.

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consistent doctrine to Aristotle throughout all stages of his career – can also accept this conflictual view of Aristotle and Plato.

Aristotle does, to be sure, criticize Plato on multiple issues. But the similarities between Plato and Aristotle are, to my mind, usually more interesting than their differences, and I believe that one should not overstate Aristotle's differences with his teacher.²⁰ Hence, I often attend to how Aristotle engages with particular Platonic views, especially on key issues in moral psychology and ethics. When we do so attend, we will typically see Aristotle developing Platonic views, though sometimes in surprising new directions.

1.3 A Quick Stroll down the *Peripatos*

As Aristoxenus, a late fourth-century Peripatetic, wrote, “[a] foreknowledge of the road we must travel will enable us to recognize each stage as we reach it, and so lighten the toil of the journey.”²¹ Here, then, is a map of what follows.

Chapter 2 spells out Aristotle's views on theoretical contemplation and its status as a highest good. Scholars have long debated whether Aristotle's account of happiness is an exclusive or an inclusive one (i.e., whether contemplation is the sole component of happiness, or whether happiness includes goods other than contemplation). The debate between exclusive and inclusive interpreters of Aristotle on happiness, alas, shows no sign of abating. Thus, I adopt a stance that remains neutral on some aspects of the traditional debate. No matter how this debate turns out, I argue, contemplation will, *in some sense*, be an ultimate end within a human life. Hence, exclusivists and inclusivists have good reason to take the utility question seriously. Along the way, I sketch the nature and proper objects of contemplation. I focus especially on Aristotle's claims for contemplation's uselessness and leisureliness in his “aristocratic” defense of contemplation's status as an ultimate end.

In Chapter 3, I begin to situate Aristotle's account within the broader context of his views on the good for living organisms. In particular, I examine the self-maintenance requirements, and nutritive-reproductive functions, of perishable living organisms. These functions, I suggest,

²⁰ For work that emphasizes continuities between Plato and Aristotle, see, e.g., G. Lear (2004: 5); Gerson (2005); Sheffield (2006). As Linck (2006: 44n1) notes, such an approach was common among medieval Arabic philosophers. See, e.g., Alfarabi's *The Harmonization of the Opinions of the Two Sages, Plato the Divine and Aristotle*.

²¹ Aristoxenus, *Elementa Harmonica* II.1 (quoted by Natali [2007: 371]).

address a fundamental set of needs that Aristotle's account of the good for any mortal beings – including human contemplators – must consider.

Chapter 4 builds on these claims by examining perception, the defining power of nonhuman animal life. For Aristotle, perception is the authoritative function in animal life, and *authoritative* in two senses. Perception is the power *subservied* by an animal's lower-level threptic functions. Perception, however, also *guides* an animal's lower-level threptic activity. On the basis of Aristotle's remarks on plant and animal life, I provide a generalized account of Aristotle's views on the good for living organisms as such, and of how such organisms attain their good by approximating the divine. On my reading, living organisms approximate the divine and attain their good by persisting and being active *as* the kinds of beings they are, i.e., by exercising their authoritative functions as part of a full, self-maintaining pattern of life-activity.

Chapter 5, then, reconsiders Aristotle's remarks on contemplation's role in the human good against the backdrop of Aristotle's general account of the good for living organisms, and spells out the utility question in fullest detail. For contemplation – if inert, useless, and incapable of guiding lower life-functions – will prevent human beings from fully approximating the divine. I explore, but reject, some initial responses to the utility question. In particular, I explore the proposal that contemplative *nous* offers a legitimate exception to the principle that the authoritative functions of living organisms should play some useful role in guiding those organisms' other life-functions. I argue that, for Aristotle, the human possession of contemplative *nous* is properly constrained by the “nature does nothing in vain” principle, and that contemplative *nous* is an integral function of the human soul. The utility question persists.

Chapter 6 begins my response to the utility question. I temporarily bracket Aristotle's distinction between contemplative and practical intellect. Instead, I examine what role Aristotle thinks reason as a *general* power of the human soul plays in guiding perceptive and nutritive-reproductive functioning. I focus on reason's guidance of *epithumia* (appetite) and *thumos* (spirit). These two forms of nonrational desire, which Aristotle's moral psychology borrows from Plato, both directly and indirectly help maintain rational and nonhuman animals. But these forms of nonrational desire seek immediate satisfaction. So, for *epithumia* and *thumos* to function well in human beings, reason as a general power must regulate them so that they harmonize with reason's assessment of what provides for long-term benefit within a complete life. Thus, reason as a general power indirectly guides good nutritive-reproductive activity by regulating

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nonrational desire. Aristotle highlights the *practical* intellect's role in regulating human nonrational desire (and hence, in guiding nutritive-reproductive activity). Yet his remarks on reason as a general power provide clues toward solving the utility question. If the contemplative intellect perfects the practical intellect, then the contemplative intellect has an indirect role in guiding a human being's lower life-functions – including, fundamentally, a human being's nutritive-reproductive functions.

But what sort of indirect guidance role? Chapter 7 examines Aristotle's remarks on the role that one's articulate understanding of the human good plays in one's possessing *phronêsis*, or practical wisdom. If contemplation provides such understanding, then contemplation can perfect the practical intellect in a way that will resolve the utility question. To show how contemplation plays this guidance role, I examine a neglected, but crucial, argument in Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, which addresses worries about contemplation's uselessness. This *utility argument* exhorts its audience to pursue contemplation on the basis of its usefulness for deriving "boundary markers" of the human good, standards by reference to which human beings can judge well. After defending the propriety of appealing to the *Protrepticus* to address the utility question, I spell out the *Protrepticus*' proposal. Further, I defend the consistency of Aristotle's utility argument with Aristotle's aristocratic defense of contemplation.

Exactly how can contemplation of eternal and divine objects provide useful cognitive access to boundary markers of the distinctively human good? Chapter 8 tackles this question. In response, the *Protrepticus* suggests that contemplating the divine clarifies the upper and lower limits of the human good (as distinct from the good for gods and for nonhuman animals). The *Nicomachean Ethics*, I contend, implicitly commits itself to a similar view. I examine Aristotle's views from *EN IX* on how contemplating friends elicits self-awareness, and point out limitations that friends have in this respect. By contemplating the divine, I propose, *theôroi* have access to another source of self-awareness free from these limitations. Aristotle's account of contemplation's role in self-awareness concludes in Book X, not in Book IX. Contemplation of the divine, I argue, completes a human agent's self-awareness: it reveals key similarities between the divine and the human, while elucidating essential human limitations.

Chapter 9 shows how the boundary markers of the human good to which contemplation provides cognitive access are useful in practical reasoning. I show how the boundary marker of the human good that contemplators derive through contemplation explains the notions of excess and deficiency at play in Aristotle's accounts of each of the ethical virtues.

I conclude, in Chapter 10, by responding to some remaining questions and worries that my interpretation generates.

In sum: even if contemplation has the divine objects Aristotle explicitly insists it does, contemplation still has a role in meeting basic vital human needs. Even if contemplation is useless in a certain sense, contemplation can still be useful in the way that Aristotle's broader views suggest it should be. Ultimately, I contend, Aristotle's account of the human good is fully at home in Aristotle's larger vision of the world.