

EUDAIMONISM: A BRIEF RECEPTION HISTORY

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Eudaimonism, as we have seen, is almost universally accepted as *the* approach to ethical theory in Graeco-Roman moral philosophy. When we turn to later Christian developments we find that an affirmation of eudaimonism in no way obviously goes against Christianity's moral outlook. A range of positions have been held by different historical figures on this issue ranging from the view that Christianity and the Greek moral systems are mutually supportive (Origen, St. Augustine, St. Aquinas) via mutual compatibility without explicit support (possibly Luther) to outright conflict (Scotus, Ockham). The reasons for this varied reception are, I believe, at least partly due to the structural nature of ancient ethical theory on the one hand and Christian moral thinking on the other.

Ancient ethics constitutes what we termed *framework theories* of morality. This means that they were not put forth, at least not first and foremost, as sets of detailed and authoritative prescriptions but rather as systems that were capable of being interpreted and developed in a number of ways and consequently were not closed to external influence. This enables Christian reinterpretations of these systems. Christian moral thinking can, in a similar manner, be seen as an outlook in the sense that it comprises or presupposes different (potentially conflicting) theoretical stances, viewpoints and source material existent in works taken over from the Jewish Wisdom literature and other Jewish sources together with the Epistles, Gospels and other books of the New Testament. Indeed, some of these writings were influenced and informed, sometimes to a great extent, by Greek philosophy.¹ Christian moral thinking was not, seen in its totality, a uniform enterprise and therefore capable of being interpreted or stressed in ways both compatible with and in opposition to Greek moral philosophy. None of this implies that there does not exist within this corpus fundamental principles or prescriptions that, given a certain reading, would conflict with some or indeed all of the Greek moral systems. Neither do I wish to suggest that a thorough examination of the Christian position is incapable of generating a consistent moral philosophy. The point here is simply that such conflict between Christianity's moral outlook and Ancient moral philosophy is not obvious, given the complex nature of Christianity's moral outlook (if the term 'outlook' is here taken as a placeholder for the totality of possible readings given by the text and the tradition) and the framework nature of the Greek moral systems. Various aspects of the Christian moral outlook can be given more specific readings that potentially conflict, support or stand indifferent to specifications of the Greek ethical framework. It can therefore not be said that the various aspects of Christian influence had any uniform or unanimous impact on the reception of eudaimonism in western moral philosophy. To be sure, certain aspects of Christianity fit rather naturally with eudaimonism. The Mosaic Law, from which Christian moral principles are partially derived, makes frequent allusions to the effects of one's violation or observance upon one's own happiness.² In light of this it is

¹ For present purposes St. Paul's Stoic influences are of special interest. See, for example, Engberg-Pedersen, Troels, "The Relationship with Others: Similarities and Differences Between Paul and Stoicism" in *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*, no. 96, pp. 35-60, 2005, and Rasimus, Tuomas., Engberg-Pedersen, Troels & Dunderberg, Ismo (eds) 2010, *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

² "Do this, and you will live" is a frequent additional comment to the commandments, which is also echoed by Jesus (*Lk.* 10:28). See also *Px.* 19:11. There might be different accounts of the nature of the reward that the

hard to see how an understanding of morality as divine law would go obviously against eudaimonism, nor does there seem to be, for the reasons given above, any obvious close connection. There are thus no obvious grounds for assuming that Christianity's moral outlook by necessity postulates elements that goes against eudaimonism.³

What can, and should, be pointed out however is that various Christian thinkers have made important critical and constructive contributions to eudaimonism.

We find, for example, a strong resemblance between the philosophy of St. Augustine on the one hand and the Greeks on the other: we find agreement with the Stoics on the issue of the necessity of consent concerning the issues of freedom and responsibility (this is essential to Augustine's assertion of the primacy of the will)⁴ and the primacy of virtue⁵ for instance. Most importantly for present purposes, however, he accepts eudaimonism outright:

He who inquires how he may attain a blessed life is assuredly inquiring after nothing else than this: where is the highest good? In other words, wherein resides man's supreme good, not according to the perverted and hasty opinions of men, but according to the sure and immovable truth? [...] For every one is blessed when he enjoys that for the sake of which he desires to have all other things, seeing that it is loved for its own sake, and not on account of something else. And the supreme good is said to be there because at this point nothing is found towards which the supreme good can go forth, or to which it is related. In it is the resting-place of desire; in it is assured fruition; in it the most tranquil satisfaction of a will morally perfect.⁶

In a similar manner Origen argues⁷ that the moral excellence of the Christian moral outlook becomes more apparent seen through the lens of Greek moral philosophy.⁸ This line of reasoning finds its most fully elaborated form in St. Aquinas' Aristotelianism. The philosophy of Aquinas signifies the high water mark of the influence of eudaimonism in scholastic philosophy and attracts the critique of later scholars. Both Duns Scotus and William of Ockham attack Aquinas from the direction of Voluntarism.⁹

Psalmist speaks of however: we might either (i) think that God, in his all-knowing wisdom and kindness commands what promotes our good and that we therefore have reasons for obedience, or (ii) we might think that God's commands have a constituting function with regards to rightness etc., or yet again, (iii) we might think that it is the sanctions that accompanies the divine commandments that supply the actual reasons for us to obey. (i) sits remarkably well with an eudaimonistic conception of morality whereas (ii) rejects any such understanding since it supplies sufficient reason for obedience quite apart from any connection to our own good. It is hard to say with any certainty whether (ii) is actually held by any writer in either OT or NT. It is, however frequently asserted that we have reason to accept God's commands on the basis of his demonstrated goodness. Cf. the beginning of the Decalogue at *Dt.* 5:6-7. (iii) is open to Plato's objection from *Republic* II, that it does not make us care about morality "both because of itself and because of what comes from it" (*Republic* 358a) but such a reading sits uncomfortably with at least some OT writers since they tend to stress keeping the Law for its own sake. Cf. *Ps.* 19:9-11, for example. For a similar discussion that informs much of what is said above that, I take it, reaches a stronger conclusion see Irwin, Terence, *The Development of Ethics*, pp. 392-393.

³ For a different view that stresses the juridical aspects of the Christian moral outlook, see Sidgwick, Henry, *The Methods of Ethics*, pp. 2-4 (§ 2), and *Outline of the History of Ethics for English Readers*, pp. 110-114.

⁴ Cf. *Contra Academicos* I 11; III 26, 30-6, *De civitate Dei* IX 4f-g.

⁵ *De civitate Dei* XIX 3e.

⁶ *Epistulae* 118.13 Schaff, Philip (ed.), J.G. Cunningham (trans.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 1. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. One could hardly hope for a more confessional embrace of eudaimonism and the Aristotelian requirements of the human *telos* than what is expressed in this quotation.

⁷ Origen's argumentation is a response to the earliest known comprehensive, systematic, attack on Christianity, *The true word* (Λόγος Ἀληθῆς) by Celsus. Celsus' work is now lost but the stringency of Origen's argumentation gives good reason to regard his lengthy quotations of Celsus' work as accurate whereby a substantial reconstruction of the text is possible.

⁸ Cf. *Contra Celsum*, I 4, VI 15-16,

⁹ By the term 'voluntarism' I here mean what has been called 'medieval voluntarism' generally taken as the philosophical emphasis on divine will and human freedom as opposed to, for example, the metaphysical voluntarism of Schopenhauer or the epistemological voluntarism of Bas van Fraassen. Connected to this is the thesis that is nowadays most often referred to as divine command theory but that might be better described under the heading of 'theological voluntarism' (since some theorists in this field do not take the relevant attitude of the divine will to be that of commanding). Briefly put theological voluntarism is the thesis that (certain) acts of

In Duns Scotus we find a rejection of eudaimonism. In opposition to standard medieval eudaimonism, according to which our affection for *eudaimonia* is the only basic one, Duns Scotus posits two separate such affections as fundamental inclinations in the will: the affection for the advantageous (*affectio commodi*) and the affection for justice (*affectio iustitiae*). The first is identified with intellectual appetite in direct reference to Aquinas, but where, for Aquinas intellectual appetite is the same thing as will, for Scotus intellectual appetite is only part of what constitutes the will. The underlying reason for postulating a second affection of the will (and thus a second constituent) for Scotus has to do with his understanding of freedom as essential to morality and his particular understanding of freedom formulated in direct opposition to Aquinas. For Scotus intellectual appetite could not be genuinely free since he sees genuine freedom as requiring multiple options at the moment of choice and not just over time (as is the case given Aquinas Aristotelian account).¹⁰ Therefore the will must have an additional component: the affection for justice. Scotus consequently does not deny that the will involves intellectual appetite, and since intellectual appetite is aimed at *eudaimonia*, it still has a part to play in our moral psychology but the moral law is not determined solely by ultimate reference to the agent's own *eudaimonia*. Scotus thus rejects the idea that moral norms are ultimately tied to human nature and *eudaimonia* – the commands of God and of morality are not restrained by their connection to, compatibility or incompatibility with our *eudaimonia* – and consequently if the will were merely intellectual appetite (as Aquinas takes it to be) we would be incapable of choosing in accordance with the moral law, since the moral law itself is not determined by any considerations about human happiness. Concerns about *eudaimonia* are thus related to the *affectio commodi* whereas that which is properly moral concerns the *affectio iustitiae*. Paradoxically enough, then, for Scotus true freedom can only be obtained by the subjugation to the moral law.

Ockham voices similar criticism against eudaimonism. He argues both that there are instances where we cannot achieve *eudaimonia* and therefore cease to will attainment of it and that it could be the case that we do no longer wish to stay alive, and consequently that we no longer wants a life that is *eudaimon*.¹¹ However NE1111^b20-30 makes it clear that it is not the relevant sense of 'will' that the first argument depends upon that is the relevant attitude when it comes to eudaimonism:

But further, it is not wish either, though it is apparently close to it. For we do not decide on impossible things – anyone claiming to decide on them would seem a fool, but we do wish for impossible things – for immortality, for instance – as well as possible things. Further, we wish [not only for results we can achieve], but also for results that are [possible, but] not achievable through our own agency – victory for some actor or athlete, for instance. But what we decide on is never anything of that sort, but what we think would come about through our own agency. Again, we wish for the end more [than for the things that promote it], but we decide on things that promote the end. We wish, for instance, to be healthy, but we decide to do things that will make us healthy; and we wish to be happy, and say so, but we could not appropriately say we decide to be happy, since in general the things we decide on would seem to be things that are up to us.¹²

The eudaimonist position does not claim, then that we always believe *eudaimonia* to be an attainable goal for us. But we, as Aristotle says always wish (*boulesthai*) for this end. When it comes to the second argument, that there are instances where one will one's own non-existence, it in no way goes against eudaimonism to recognise that there are cases where one would fare better dead than to carry on living with one's life marred and ruined. None of these arguments threaten eudaimonism, but Ockham also has another argument concerned with the freedom of the will that fares better. He objects that freedom of the will implies the freedom to refuse

divine will are relevant to determining moral facts.

¹⁰ Scotus is in effect postulating something akin to “the principle of alternate possibilities”. See Frankfurt, Harry, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”, *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 66 No. 23, 1969, pp. 829-39.

¹¹ *Quaestiones in quattuor libros sententiarum* 4 q16=*Opera philosophica et theologica* VII 350.5-14.

¹² NE1111^b20-30 trans. Irwin.

happiness.¹³ Here again we are dealing with a libertarian conception of free will similar to Scotus'. It is on these grounds that Ockham goes against Aquinas: He argues that Aquinas position implies that the choice of the will is determined by the judgement of the intellect about means to the *telos*. Aquinas assertion that the will is free to the pursuit of subordinate ends given its capacity for contrary actualities in relation to these does not suffice for Ockham since he takes free will to be dependent upon indifference and contingency,¹⁴ and hence requires metaphysical indeterminism.¹⁵

The discussion over medieval voluntarism, involving such issues as whether the *Euthyphro* dilemma, "Is the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?"¹⁶, is a genuine dilemma or not or whether it requires a qualified version of voluntarism, questions concerning whether such radically underdetermined choice is really to be considered a choice at all, etc. need not detain us here. Rather, what is important is how this voluntarist philosophy sets up the debate that is to come. Before we move on a few things must be noted however.

Firstly, it is noteworthy that we are here dealing with the first real rejections of eudaimonism in the history of western thought.

Secondly we must note the way in which these rejections come about on the basis of considerations having to do with freedom of the will. The importance of this becomes apparent once we recognize how these considerations regarding freedom of the will ties in with reason responsiveness of agents. For Scotus morality comes down to us not as principles that it would be irrational for us not to abide by but rather in the form of a natural law positing a range of requirements that we have reason to follow on the condition that we choose to follow our affection for justice. This is due to the fact that the voluntarist position looses the possibility of basing these reasons in natural reason in the way that Aquinas' intellectualism could. The voluntarist basis is thus internal reasons conditional upon the relevant sort of affections.¹⁷

Thirdly we must dwell a little on the implications of this internalism for what is to come. Even though Hobbes' position in no way is entailed by medieval voluntarism and certainly not a continuation of it in any way we are nevertheless in a better position to understand some of his starting assumptions in the light of Ockham's and Scotus' critique of Aquinas. If reasons are based in some form of inclination or affection of the will and a choice to act upon this inclination then, if our basic affection is that of self-preservation, it follows that any derivable obligation must be based upon this affection. Thus it is voluntarist arguments against Aquinas' Aristotelian intellectualism that paves the way for the Hobbesian assumption of the incomprehensibility of external reasons.

It is in the reaction Hobbes received by his contemporaries that we find the next point of development in the story of the reception of eudaimonism. It is primarily as a way of answering the challenge put forth by Hobbes that the idea arises that there must be moral obligations that are justifiable, and indeed justified, without reference to inclinations of the will.

Ralph Cudworth, with a customary nod towards Hobbes, argues that it would not be an "obligation truly moral"¹⁸ if it were an obligation grounded in the agent's animal free will and inferior reason since such an obligation would not appeal to morality as such but only to an external law that "could not otherwise operate or seize upon them but by taking hold upon their

¹³ *Quaestiones in quattuor libros sententiarum* 1 d1 q6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 1 d1 q6.

¹⁵ *Opera philosophica et theologica* IX 87.12-15 and *Quaestiones in quattuor libros sententiarum* 1 d1 q6.

¹⁶ *Euthyphro* 10a, Trans. G. M. A. Grube.

¹⁷ The stressing of internal reasons is due to the fact that a potential conflict arises the moment external reasons is brought into the picture: there exists at least the logical possibility of a conflict between the commands of God on the one hand and the rational principles of morality on the other.

¹⁸ Cudworth, Ralph, Manuscripts on freedom of the will. British Library, Additional Manuscripts, nos. 4978-82. 4980.9. Cited in Darvall, Stephen, *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought' 1640-1740*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995: XXX.

natural selfish passions”¹⁹ and to “allow of no other moral obligation than this utterly destroys all morality”²⁰.

These remarks seem to foreshadow a form of critique of eudaimonism that is to be found in Kant. Kant’s critique of eudaimonism is complex and a matter of debate amongst scholars but it is not necessary for us to delve into the depths and intricacies of this exegetical debate at this stage.²¹ It is, for our purposes enough to notice that Kant, as one of the first²² ethicists in the western tradition takes a definitive stance against eudaimonism (or what he understood it to imply) by arguing (in a manner similar to Cudworth) that ancient moral philosophers had misunderstood the relation between happiness and virtue:

This remark, which concerns only the method of ultimate moral investigations, is important. It explains at once the occasioning ground of all the errors of philosophers with respect to the supreme principle of morals. For they sought an object of the will in order to make it into the matter and the ground of law (which was thus to be the determining ground of the will not immediately but rather by means of that object referred to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure), whereas they should first have searched for a law that determined the will a priori and immediately, and only then determined the object conformable to the will. Now, whether they placed this object of pleasure, which was to yield the supreme concept of good, in happiness, in perfection, in moral feeling, or in the will of God, their principle was in every case heteronomy and they had to come unavoidably upon empirical conditions for a moral law, since they could call their object, as the immediate determining ground of the will, good or evil only by its immediate relation to feeling, which is always empirical. Only a formal law, that is, one that prescribes to reason nothing more than the form of its universal lawgiving as the supreme condition of maxims, can be a priori a determining ground of practical reason. The ancients revealed this error openly by directing their moral investigation entirely to the determination of the concept of the *highest good*, and so of an object which they intended afterwards to make the determining ground of the will in moral law, an object which can much later – when the moral law has first been established by itself and justified as the immediate determining ground of the will – be represented as object to the will, now determined a priori in its form; and this we will undertake in the Dialectic of pure practical reason. The Moderns, with whom the question of the highest good seems to have gone out of use or at least to have become a secondary matter, hide the above error (as in many other cases) behind indeterminate words; but one can still see it showing through their systems, since it always reveals heteronomy of practical reason, from which an a priori moral law commanding universally can never arise.²³

In the above passage Kant claims that ancient ethics openly makes the mistake of subordinating practical reason to “that object referred to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure” and that his contemporaries covertly makes the same blunder. The question of whether Kant is correct in ascribing this feature to ancient thought must be postponed until later. Two observations are important for our immediate purposes of striving to understand the shift in reception of this idea in the modern period of western thought: Kant’s explicit rejection of eudaimonism and his observation of a shift taking place between “the ancients” and “the Moderns” with regards to “the question of the highest good”.

The development hinted at by Kant continues throughout the history of western ethics until the very idea that virtue should be in any way connected to happiness seemed, to many if not all, grossly untenable.

¹⁹ Ibid. 4982.19. Cited in Darvall, Stephen, *The British Moralists and the Internal ‘Ought’ 1640-1740*: XXX.

²⁰ Ibid. 4980.9. Cited in Darvall, Stephen, *The British Moralists and the Internal ‘Ought’ 1640-1740*: XXX.

²¹ For some accessible yet well informed discussions of this matter see Irwin, Terence, “Kant’s Criticism of Eudaemonism”, and Engstrom, Stephen, “Happiness and the Highest Good in Aristotle and Kant”, both in Engstrom, Stephen, and Whiting, Jennifer, (eds.) *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 63-101 and 102-140 respectively, and Wood, Allen W. “Kant vs. Eudaemonism” in Predrag Cicovacki (ed.), *Kant’s Legacy: Essays Dedicated to Lewis White Beck* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2001).

²² In addition to Cudworth should here be mentioned Joseph Butler and Thomas Reid. The views concerning eudaemonism of both Butler and Reid, together with the criticism voiced by Kant will be discussed at length below. FIX THIS

²³ Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Practical Reason* 5: 64-65 in *The Cambridge edition of the works of Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy* (ed./Trans.), Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

It should be noted that the period we are dealing with here, roughly the period spanning 1750-1890, is one that is marked by conceptual change on a myriad of levels and in a range of different spheres. This is the period that conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck has labelled the *Sattelzeit*: a period marked by profound change in western society that warranted novel conceptualizations and the emergence of central notions in modern political theory. Seen in this light it is by no means surprising that shifts should occur in the moral vocabulary also. Most important with regards to the reception of the eudaimonistic axiom are the shifts that occur with regards to the key notions of ‘virtue’ and ‘happiness’ in this period. On a very general level one could say that ‘happiness’ becomes more of a psychological, subjective and less moralized notion than it was for the Ancients whereas ‘virtue’ becomes more self-sacrificing and other-regarding. It should be pointed out that what we are dealing with here is not a complete overhaul of the ancient conceptualisations but rather a shift of focus from one component of our understanding of the particular concepts to another. There still remain objective elements in our understanding of happiness. Take for instance the assertion made at the very beginning of Richard Kraut’s seminal article “Two Conceptions of Happiness”:

In this paper I want to contrast two ways of judging whether people are leading happy lives: Aristotle’s and our own. I will argue that there are some striking similarities between these two conceptions of happiness. To live happily, for both Aristotle and for us, is to have certain attitudes towards one’s life, and to measure up to certain standards. Where we and Aristotle sharply disagree is over the standards to be used in evaluating lives. Roughly, he insists on an objective and stringent standard, whereas our test is more subjective and flexible.²⁴

Within the context of German scholarship Kant’s critique was influential. In his *On the Basis of Morality* Arthur Schopenhauer puts the point thus:

It is Kant’s great service to moral science that he purified it of all Eudaemonism. With the ancients, Ethics was a doctrine of Eudaemonism; with the moderns for the most part it has been a doctrine of salvation. The former wished to prove that virtue and happiness are identical; but this was like having two figures which never coincide with each other, no matter how they may be placed.²⁵

One of Kant’s students has the following to say on the subject of eudaimonism’s shortcomings:

How often he moved us to tears, how often he agitated our hearts, how often he lifted our minds and feelings from the fetters of selfish eudaemonism to the high consciousness of freedom, to unconditional obedience to the law of reason, to the exaltation of unselfish duty!²⁶

Nietzsche goes further and attributes a form of self-deception to the proponents of eudaimonism, thereby, presumably, seeking to uncover a psychological explanation to what he sees as the errors of past thinkers:

Such assertions and promises as those of the antique philosophers concerning the unity of virtue and happiness, or the Christian ‘But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you’ have never been made with total honesty and yet always without a bad conscience: one has advanced such propositions, which one very much desires to be true, boldly as the truth in the face of all appearance and has felt in doing so no religious or moral pang of conscience – for one had transcended reality *in honorem majorem* of virtue or of God and without any selfish motive! Many worthy people still stand at this *level of truthfulness*: when they *feel* themselves selfless they think they are permitted to *trouble themselves less* about truth. Notice, however, that *honesty* is among neither the Socratic nor the Christian virtues: it is the youngest virtue, still very immature, still

²⁴ Kraut, Richard, “Two Conceptions of Happiness”, *The Philosophical Review* Vol. 88, No. 2 (April, 1979), pp. 167-197, p. 167.

²⁵ Schopenhauer, Arthur, *On the Basis of Morality: Translated with an Introduction by Arthur Brodrick Bullock, M. A. Trinity College Cambridge*, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd: London: 1903, p. 23

²⁶ From the recollections of R. B. Jachmann, in *Immanuel Kant: Ein Lebensbild*, ed. A. Hoffman, Halle: Hugo Peter, 1902, p. 23. Quoted in *Kant: Lectures on Ethics*, trans. L. Infield, New York: Harper & Row, 1963, p. ix.

often misjudged and taken for something else, still hardly aware of itself – something in process of becoming which can advance or obstruct as we think fit.²⁷

It should be noted that Nietzsche with his training as a classical philologist at Germany's then top ranking Classics institution was well aware of the intricacies of eudaimonism—after all a notion of human flourishing is central to Nietzsche's own moral philosophy²⁸—and his problem is not with notion of *eudaimonia* as such but rather with its supposed close connection to ethical virtue.

To explain a philosophical position in terms of the sensibilities of the person(s) forwarding it is a characteristic move by Nietzsche (Plato gets a similar treatment in §43 and §448 of *Daybreak* for instance) inspired by German Materialism.²⁹ The remarks above tie in with Nietzsche's critique of morality and the "revaluation of all values" a theme that were to receive its fuller and more famous explications in *Beyond Good and Evil*³⁰ and the *Genealogy*.³¹

Similar qualms about the connection between happiness and virtue are to be found in an Anglo-American academic context also. Bentham, in response to being imposed by his father the task of translating portions of *Tusculanae disputationes* into English, asserts:

To the possession taken of his mind by this principle [the greatest happiness principle], no sort of opposition was made by the trash with which, at a very early age to his no small annoyance, he had been bored by the so-stilted philosophical works of Cicero. He had not completed his thirteenth year when, at Queen's College Oxford, the task was imposed upon him, not indeed by his academical instructors but by a not less irresistible authority, of rendering into English that work of his which is known by the title of *The Tusculan Questions* or *Tusculan Disputations*. Pain, he there learnt, was no evil. Virtue was, and is, of itself sufficient to confer happiness on any man who is disposed to possess it on those terms. What benefit in any shape could be derived from impregnating the memory with such nonsense? What instruction from a self-contradictory proposition or any number of such propositions?³²

If Bentham only considers it nonsense and self-contradiction Henry Sidgwick takes on yet another, less arrogant, stance, seeing the notion of *eudaimonia* as too hopelessly vague to be the object of philosophical theorizing or analysis:

On the whole, then, I conclude that the notion of Self-realisation is to be avoided in a treatise on ethical method, on account of its indefiniteness: and for a similar reason we must discard a common account of Egoism which describes its ultimate end as the 'good' of the individual; for the term 'good' may cover all possible views of the ultimate end of rational conduct. Indeed it may be said that Egoism in this sense was assumed in the whole ethical controversy of ancient Greece; that is, it was assumed on all sides that a rational individual would make the pursuit of his own good his supreme aim: the controverted question was whether this Good was rightly conceived as Pleasure or Virtue or any *tertium quid*. Nor is the ambiguity removed if we follow Aristotle in confining our attention to the Good attainable in human life, and call this Well-being (Εὐδαιμονία). For we may still argue with the Stoics, that virtuous or excellent activities and not pleasures are the elements of which true human Well-being is composed.³³

²⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality (Morgenröthe)*, ed. Clark, Maudemarie, and Leiter, Brian, trans. Hollingsdale, R. J., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 456. (Italics in original). References to Nietzsche's texts will henceforth use the standard English-language acronyms: D=*Daybreak*; HA=*Human, All Too Human*; BGE=*Beyond Good and Evil*; GM=*On the Genealogy of Morality*; EH=*Ecce Homo*. Roman numerals refer to chapters or parts; Arabic numerals following a section sign refer to sections.

²⁸ Cf. D §9, BGE I.

²⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality (Morgenröthe)*, ed. Clark, Maudemarie, and Leiter, Brian, pp. x-xi.

³⁰ Cf. BGE §260.

³¹ Indeed, Nietzsche asserts that the ground for this philosophical project is provided by *Daybreak*. See EH III subsection 1 of section on *Daybreak*.

³² Bentham, Jeremy, *Deontology, together with A Table of the Springs of Action and the Article on Utilitarianism*, ed. Amnon Goldworth, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 300.

³³ Sidgwick, Henry, *The Methods of Ethics*, London: Maximilian, 1907, pp. 91-92.

The backdrop of remarks such as these forces us to tread slowly if we are to understand the intuitive appeal that lies at the heart of the eudaimonist tradition, and understanding this intuitive appeal is important for at least two reasons. Firstly, we need to grasp the way that eudaimonism is capable to get at and make sense of everyday experiences if we are to give it a fair chance as a genuine possibility in ethics. Secondly, we need to get a full grasp of the starting-point of we are to understand how theories of this kind develop out of this intuitive base to make the bold claims that was spoken of as so outrageous by Kant, Bentham, and Nietzsche.