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Practical *Eudaimonia*: Notes Toward a Neo-Aristotelian Social Theory

Nancy E. Snow

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Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues
University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT United Kingdom
T: +44 (0) 121 414 3602 F: +44 (0) 121 414 4875
E: jubileecentre@contacts.bham.ac.uk W: www.jubileecentre.ac.uk

Introduction

What might a neo-Aristotelian social theory look like? By 'neo-Aristotelian social theory,' I mean a theory of social relations and social life according to which people strive to live virtuously and flourish in a social context, and that is largely inspired by or broadly consistent with Aristotelian conceptions of virtue, flourishing, and ethical naturalism. I especially want to clarify a theoretical alternative to communitarian accounts, such as those attributed to Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Sandel, who maintain that Aristotelian or neo-Aristotelian virtue and flourishing can be achieved only in a *polis* that is united by a shared conception of the good. In short, my question is, "Can there be a theory of the good life that is broadly compatible with Aristotelianism, yet suitable for contemporary liberal democratic societies, that is, for societies characterized by citizens' holding a multiplicity of specific conceptions of the good life, with the government remaining neutral about their value?" If so, what would such a theory look like?

With this question in mind, I began reading the psychological literature on eudaimonic well-being. What I encountered in my literature review was theoretically disappointing in its use of Aristotle, but more promising as potential (suitably revised and theoretically situated) components of a neo-Aristotelian social theory. Let me begin with brief remarks that will give you a glimpse into this larger project and situate the present paper in that context. After that, I will present the work of psychologist Carol Ryff on eudaimonic well-being as a possible component of a larger theory.

Notes Toward a Neo-Aristotelian Social Theory

Why craft a neo-Aristotelian social theory? One reason is that the social dimensions of Aristotelian virtue have been underexplored in the philosophical literature.[1] A second reason is that communitarian accounts of society do not mesh well with the value neutrality of liberal democratic government. Yet commitment to liberal democracies and their stance on value neutrality need not prevent us from recognizing the value of what Aristotle has to say about virtue and living flourishing lives. We need an account of how this can be done within a liberal democratic framework. Given the situationist critique of Aristotelian virtue ethics, we also need to be mindful of the fact that any account of how flourishing can be achieved should be empirically justifiable. The deeper point, I take it, is that any account of neo-Aristotelian flourishing and social relations must be realistic and available to people. It must show how we can in fact flourish in the context of liberal democracies. This is where psychological theories of eudaimonic well-being can be useful, for both self-determination theory and Ryff's theory have received considerable empirical support. To be clear, I am not contending that theoretical work should be driven by empirical concerns. I maintain that if empirical support can be found for some aspects of the theory, that is an advantage not to be overlooked.

An initial step in crafting a neo-Aristotelian social theory is to review conceptions of eudaimonia, including empirical ones, to see whether they are a good fit for the kind of

conception of flourishing that could be compatible with liberal democratic values. Doing this in a meaningful way, I believe, requires a theoretical structure and a theoretical stance on content. The theoretical structure is this:

Highest level: Level of political commitment. At this level, we find liberal democratic values: e.g., liberty and equality, tolerance, mutual respect, commitment to diversity, commitment not to harm, possible commitment to welfare of citizens.

Abstract level of personal flourishing. At this level is the Aristotelian conception of flourishing, namely, virtue plus external goods. The virtues as well as the external goods should be amended to suit our day and age. For example, we no longer view noble birth or being good-looking as goods that are essential for flourishing, but I suggest we should view goods such as clean water, adequate health care, and being and feeling safe and secure as necessary for it. The list of virtues, too, should be expanded. Humility, a virtue not on Aristotle's list, should be included, and I believe a case can also be made for resilience.

More concrete level of personal flourishing. This is where psychological conceptions of eudaimonia come in. Deci and Ryan advance three factors of self-determination theory that are constitutive of eudaimonic well-being: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Ryff advances a six-factor model. These factors can be seen as intermediate level personal goods that are constitutive of eudaimonia andgive content to Aristotle's abstract and indefinite conception. In addition, considering these accounts provides insight into how human flourishing changes over the course of the lifespan, how encounters with adversity affect and can strengthen the personal qualities needed to flourish, and the kinds of social factors, such as economic inequality, that destroy, impede, or diminish the chance to have a flourishing life. Studying these factors can enable philosophers to expand their theorizing from abstract conceptions of eudaimonia to what I call 'practical' eudaimonia – conceptions of eudaimonia that take into account the goods and virtues which, in the practical contexts in which we live our lives, have been shown to promote and enhance human flourishing.

Concrete level of personal virtues. For Aristotle, we attain eudaimonia by living virtuous lives. Given the introduction of intermediate level personal goods (empirically supported factors) as providing content to what it means to flourish, we can attempt to identify the virtues that best promote specific goods -- in general, at different developmental stages of the lifespan, and in the context of various social, environmental, and economic conditions -- and so can be more precise about how specific virtues can help us to lead flourishing lives.

Completing the first step of crafting a neo-Aristotelian social theory – the review of conceptions of flourishing -- requires settling on the conception of practical eudaimonia that best meshes with the values of liberal democracy. This brings me to the theoretical stance on content I mentioned a moment ago. During the question and answer period of a talk at a conference I recently attended, a questioner advanced the view that "thick" communitarian values have a logical priority over "thin" liberal values. I am not sure what this means or how it could be true, but the question prompted me to think both logically and psychologically about

values and how we learn them. In liberal societies, we are most likely to encounter thick communitarian values at the concrete levels of personal virtue and personal flourishing that are part of the overall theoretical structure mentioned above. A key part of my larger project is to acknowledge and explicate the social dimensions of personal virtue and personal flourishing, and communities and thick community values will loom large in this discussion. In other words, many of the personal goods at the level of concrete personal flourishing as well as the virtues that conduce to them, are pursued by individuals within the context of communities that foster distinctive sets of values – cultural and religious communities, ethnic communities, and so on – with traditions, beliefs, and practices that give content and purpose to the notion of a flourishing life. These are situated within larger liberal political structures. Except in the most extreme cases in which specific communities and families seek to completely withdraw from surrounding societies, it is reasonable to assume some degree of porosity between the thick values endorsed by specific communities and families and the thinner values that inform the societies as wholes.

From a developmental perspective, I see no necessary logical or psychological priority of "thick" communitarian values over "thin" liberal values. When children learn basic values, such as the value of sharing or of gentle, non-violent behavior in interacting with others, they do so within the context of a thicker set of values endorsed by their families and larger communities. Thin "liberal" values are embedded within "thicker" values. There is no logical or psychological priority, though at some point, the thinner values will need to be picked out from among the sets of values that children learn and identified as such. What I have in mind is something like this. Little Johnny will first be taught to share his toys and to be gentle and kind in playing with his siblings at home, then these values will be expanded to other relatives, neighborhood children, classmates, and so on. These thinner values might be embedded within certain cultural or religious traditions to which his family adheres. At some point, possibly in public school, if Johnny attends one, these thinner values should be identified as parallel with, or even as encompassing, liberal values such as equality, distributive justice, tolerance, and mutual respect. So I think a case can be made (though this brief sketch is by no means satisfactory) that liberal values or something like them are compatible with, and even embedded within, the thicker values endorsed by and taught within specific cultural communities. As mentioned, a proviso is that these communities exist within liberal democratic societies or societies that are otherwise deeply structured by liberal values. So there is no logical or psychological priority of thick communitarian values to thinner liberal values, such that one learns thick values first and only later becomes acquainted with thinner values. One learns both thick and thin values concomitantly, since the thin are embedded within the thick.

A caveat must immediately be made. Sometimes communities imperfectly instantiate values or distort them in immoral ways. For example, some communities incorporate ideas of patriarchy and gender inequality, and some teach the legitimacy of discrimination. One can identify communities or families in which girls and boys are not allowed to play with the same toys or play the same kinds of games, in order to be socialized into community-sanctioned gender roles in which men are privileged over women. One can also easily imagine parents instructing a child, "Share your toys, but not with the Muslim kid down the street." In these

kinds of cases, thin liberal values of equality and mutual respect can function as needed correctives to prejudice and bias. But that does not imply that one type of value – thin liberal or thick communitarian – necessarily has a logical or psychological priority over the other type. What it shows is that values should be used in a "check and balance" way to ensure that bias and discrimination does not privilege the flourishing of some people at the expense of others.[2]

This all-too-brief sketch needs to be articulated in considerably more detail. For now I wish to note that this theoretical stance on content has methodological implications for how we construct a neo-Aristotelian social theory. To see this, note that, in deciding upon a specific set of intermediate level personal goods that will be part of our neo-Aristotelian social theory, we must be mindful of four theoretical desiderata. The first is how well the goods express a commitment to the spirit, if not always the letter, of Aristotelian theory. Our question here will be whether a life lived in pursuing and to some extent attaining these intermediate level goods can be viewed as truly *eudaimon* in a recognizably Aristotelian way. The second is the degree to which the goods have received, or could receive, empirical support. That is, are they realistic for creatures like us? The third desideratum, which relates to the theoretical stance on content, is their compatibility with thick communitarian values. Are the goods proposed by this part of the theory compatible with thick communitarian values? This is an important question, given that intermediate-level goods and accompanying virtues are parts of everyday life, and as, our stance on content claims, are likely to be embedded within various communities that espouse different sets of thick values. Finally, are the goods proposed by this part of the theory also compatible with thin liberal values?

It should be clear that the set of intermediate level goods plays a pivotal role in the construction of a neo-Aristotelian social theory, and that I envision them as forming a kind of bridge between thick communitarian values and thinner liberal values. It should also be clear that there are various candidates for the set of intermediate level goods. Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory and Ryff's six-factor model are but two options. In my view, any adequate neo-Aristotelian social theory should also include a good that we might call 'Aristotelian civic friendship.' That good, and how it emerges and is sustained in liberal societies, will need to be explicated and defended.

I should conclude this section by noting that there is another part of this overall project. That is defending the theory of intermediate level goods that emerges as the heart of the neo-Aristotelian social theory against competitors. Supporters of communitarian theories of the good might claim that Aristotelian social theory requires a communitarian commitment to a thick set of values, and contend that it is either not possible or not necessary to seek an intermediate level of goods that is compatible with liberal values. On this view, trying to reconcile Aristotelian social theory and liberal values is a lost cause and a fool's errand. Another possible competitor is the capabilities approach, advanced by Martha Nussbaum and expanded by Amartya Sen. The capabilities approach can be seen as Aristotelian in inspiration and has the advantage of being widely implemented and empirically studied.

Having set out the parameters of the larger project, let us now turn to a candidate for the intermediate level of goods – Carol Ryff's six-factor model of eudaimonic well-being.

Ryff's Six-Factor Model of Eudaimonic Well-Being

In a trajectory of psychological work beginning in the mid-1980's and continuing to the present day, Carol Ryff has presented and empirically tested a six-factor model that she regards as a 'eudaimonic approach to psychological well-being' (Ryff and Singer 2008). In an early paper, Ryff (1989) critiqued the psychological formulations of well-being of the day. Bradburn (1969)'s work provided an initial distinction between positive and negative affect. The aim of this work was to learn how macrolevel social changes affected peoples' sense of psychological well-being (see Ryff 1989, 1069-1070). Another trend, pursued by various psychologists, focused on psychological well-being as life satisfaction. Both streams of thought viewed psychological well-being in terms of subjective mental states, and both, according to Ryff, lacked a firm theoretical basis. Bradburn, according to Ryff, made reference to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, using 'happiness' as a translation of 'eudaimonia.' Ryff (1989, 1070) lamented this translation, writing: "Had Aristotle's view of eudaimonia as the highest of all good been translated as realization of one's true potential rather than as happiness, the past 20 years of research on psychological well-being might well have taken different directions."

In the same paper, Ryff (1989, 1071) offers her own six-factor model of psychological well-being. This model has not changed in essential respects and has received considerable empirical support. Ryff (2018, 243-244) notes that:

> . . . Ryan and Deci (2001), in a review marking the new millennium, partitioned the field of well-being into two broad traditions, one dealing with happiness (hedonic well-being) and the other dealing with human potential (eudaimonic well-being). Both were traceable to the ancient Greeks. Contemporary psychological research had thus transformed ancient philosophical ideas into empirically tractable science. Using data from a national sample of Americans, Keyes et. al. (2002) provide the first evidence that the two approaches were, indeed, empirically distinct.

This empirically validated Ryff's original idea that earlier studies of affect and life satisfaction had missed important components of psychological well-being.

The six factors comprising Ryff's model are: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff 1989, 1071). She elaborates on each of these in a number of places (e.g., Ryff (1989, 1071), Ryff and Singer (2008, 20-23); Ryff (2017, 162-164), and illustrates them in Figure 1, "Core dimensions of psychological well-being and their theoretical foundations" (Ryff 2017, 161):

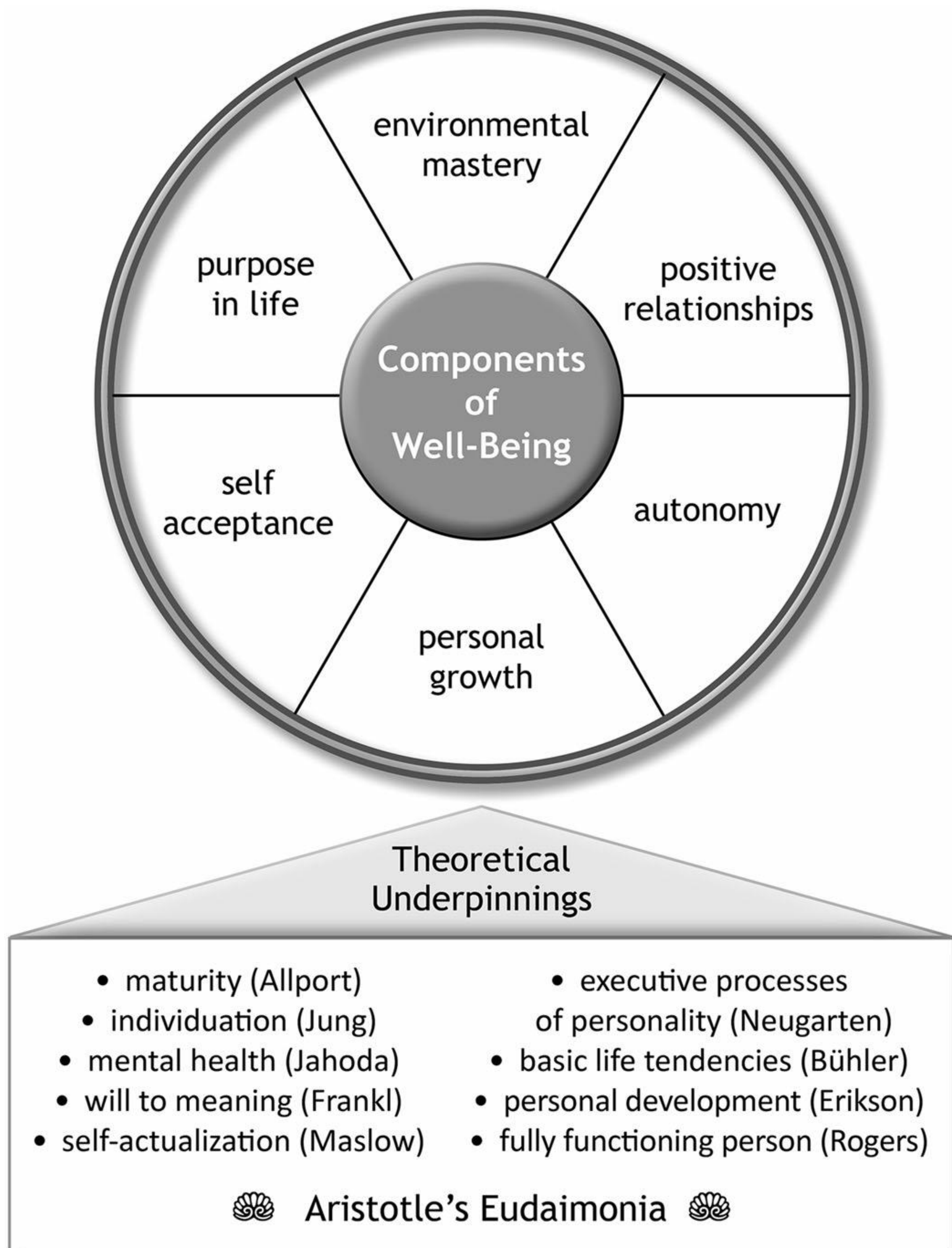

Figure 1. Core dimensions of psychological and their theoretical foundations.

What Ryff does is to select various factors from different branches of psychology, then combine them into six factors, which together, comprise psychological well-being (in more recent work, Ryff also uses the terminology of 'eudaimonic' well-being or the 'eudaimonic approach to well-being.' See (Ryff 2018,2017, 2016, 2014, 2013). This figure, or something quite like it, appears in many of her publications (see, e.g., Ryff 2016, 2014, and 2008). Discussions of the six factors and their theoretical underpinnings occur in various publications, too, but an especially useful one can be found in Ryff and Singer (2008). In that article, the authors discuss what they see as the Aristotelian pedigree of the model, and refer to other philosophers, such as Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, and John Stuart Mill.[3] The invocation of Aristotle appearing in that article is quite a bit more robust than the relatively brief discussion of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in Ryff's earlier work (1989), leading one to conjecture that she has only gradually come to see possible connections between the six-factor model and Aristotelian themes. Yet even Ryff's later attempts to connect Aristotelian themes with the six factors are quire thin. For example, Ryff and Singer (2008, 20) begin their discussion of the factor of self-acceptance by writing: "The Greeks admonished that we should know ourselves; that is, strive to accurately perceive our own actions, motivations, and feelings." Of positive relations with others, they contend, "Aristotle's Ethics, for example, included lengthy sections on friendship and love," and go on to mention John Stuart Mill and Bertrand Russell (Ryff and Singer 2008, 21). Their commentary on personal growth asserts: "Of all the aspects of well-being, it is personal growth that comes closest in meaning to Aristotle's eudaimonia, as it is explicitly concerned with the self-realization of the individual" (Ryff and Singer 2009, 21). Except for a general discussion of Aristotle (Ryff and Singer (2008, 15-18) entitled, "Aristotle and Eudaimonia: Whatever Was He Saying?," this is about as much information as we are given about the theoretical connections or parallels of the six factors to Aristotle's conception of eudaimonia (see also Ryff (2016, 98-100), which mainly repeats the discussion of Aristotle in Ryff and Singer 2008).

At this point, we have two options. We can abandon Ryff's work as too theoretically thin and confused in its assemblage of various conceptual elements from diverse sources to be useful for the project of identifying intermediate level goods that could form part of a neo-Aristotelian social theory. Alternatively, we could note that Ryff's view has received considerable empirical support, and has identified interesting practical dimensions along which philosophical thinking about eudaimonia could be expanded (e.g., investigations of what it means to flourish at different stages of the lifespan, roles for adversity and resilience in strengthening our capacities to flourish, and the effects of inequality on capacities to flourish). If we opt for the latter course, it is up to us to examine the six factors and flesh out ways in which they express, are compatible with, or diverge from, Aristotelian ideas. This is the tack I propose to take in the rest of the presentation.

Though Ryff has provided explanations of each factor in various publications, concise explanations of each of these factors are found in tables of what she calls "Definitions of theory-guided dimensions of well-being" (see Ryff 2008, 25-26, and Ryff 2014a, 12). I have reproduced the table here from Ryff and Singer (2008, 25-26).

TABLE I

Definitions of theory-guided dimensions of well-being

Self-acceptance
High scorer: Possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life
Low Scorer: Feels dissatisfied with self; is disappointed with what has occurred in past life; is troubled about certain personal qualities; wishes to be different than what he or she is

Positive relations with others
High scorer: Has warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of other (sic) others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships
Low scorer: Has few close, trusting relationships with others; finds it difficult to be warm, open, and concerned about others; is isolated and frustrated in interpersonal relationships; not willing to make compromises to sustain important ties with others

Personal growth
High scorer: Has a feeling of continued development; sees self as growing and expending (sic); is open to new experiences; has [a] sense of realizing his or her potential; sees improvement in self and behavior over time; is changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness
Low scorer: Has a sense of personal stagnation; lacks sense of improvement or expansion overtime (sic); feels bored and uninterested with life; feels unable to develop new attitudes or behaviors

Purpose in life
High scorer: Has goals in life and a sense of directedness; feels there is meaning to present and past life; holds beliefs that give life purpose; has aims and objectives for living
Low scorer: Lacks a sense of meaning in life; has few goals or aims; lacks sense of direction; does not see purpose of past life; has no outlook or beliefs that give life meaning

Environmental mastery
High scorer: Has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controls [a] complex array of external activities; makes effective use of surrounding opportunities; [is] able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values
Low scorer: Has difficulty managing everyday affairs; feels unable to change or improve surrounding context; is unaware of surrounding opportunities; lacks sense of control overexternal (sic) world

Autonomy
High scorer: Is self-determining and independent; able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards

Low scorer: Is concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others; relies on judgments of others to make important decisions; conforms to social pressures to think and act in certain ways

Let us begin our discussion by examining what it means to be a low scorer on each of the six factors. It seems to me that with respect to five of the six, Ryff has gotten it right. Even a quick glance at what a low scorer says about herself on the factors of self-acceptance, positive relations with others, personal growth, purpose in life, and environmental mastery shows that a person who thinks of herself in these ways is unlikely to be flourishing. What it means to be a low scorer on the autonomy factor, in my view, requires further clarification. That one is concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others, relies on others' judgments to make important decisions, and conforms to social pressures to think and act in certain ways does not necessarily indicate a lack of autonomy. The reasons why one exhibits these qualities matter. In other words, one can display these qualities and still be autonomous provided that one's concern, reliance, and conformity respond to the right reasons. One might rightly be concerned about the expectations and evaluations of one's boss because one wants to be a good worker; one might rely on the judgments of one's spouse or parents in making important career or health care decisions because one values their opinions and realizes they have an interest in what one decides; and one might conform to social pressures to think and act in certain ways out of a well-reasoned respect for and endorsement of the values and norms of one's community. So Ryff's account needs to be refined to get to the bottom of what it means to be a low scorer on autonomy.

Let us turn now to what she thinks it means to be a high scorer on the six factors. Consider self-acceptance: "Possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life." All is well here until we get to the very last clause: "feels positive about past life." Perhaps what Ryff is aiming for by including this clause is consistent with Aristotle's notion that judgments of eudaimonia should take into account an entire life. Here again, however, clarification is needed, for there are multiple ways in which one might look back upon one's past and feel positive about it, some of which do not seem to be good candidates for inclusion in a genuinely flourishing life. For example, an individual might look back on her past gloatingly, with smug satisfaction at her accomplishments, and dismissive unconcern about her failures. One might also take an unduly rosy view of one's failures, blithely condoning them without really holding oneself to account. One might feel positive about negative episodes in the past because one is in denial, refusing to face up to their implications. In short, the kind of positive feeling about one's past life that is truly suggestive of eudaimonia needs to be more precisely specified. I suggest that looking back on one's past life with admission and acceptance of failings, viewing negative episodes as learning experiences that contribute in some way to an overall positive trajectory, forgiving oneself for failures, and seeking to improve, are all components of an attitude toward one's life that can enable one to have morally worthy positive feelings about a past that includes failings and errors.[4] This can at least allow for some kind of partial eudaimonia in cases in which we cannot judge that someone's life was eudaimon overall. A reformed drug addict, for example, could not have the problematic feelings just mentioned and

still be judged eudaimon during the reformed stage of her life (even if all else is going well for her), for she has not truly come to grips with her flaws. Only by adopting the more robust perspective of one who comes to terms with past failings does she exhibit a character that approaches that which is needed for eudaimonia. A final caveat here is that the positive feelings of the self-accepting person can include satisfaction, but not smug satisfaction or gloating over what she has achieved. This is because one who gloats or is smug likely gives herself too much credit for her accomplishments, ignoring the contributions of other people, chance, or luck. Gloating is, in short, a lack of humility.

What about positive relations with others? Here is what Ryff has to say. The high scorer: "Has warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of other (sic) others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships." For the most part, Ryff gets this right, but two corrections are needed. First, as Aristotle notes in his discussion of friendships of character, there are some people with whom one cannot be friends. Ryff would surely agree – one cannot have warm, satisfying and trusting relationships with immoral people or with those who would take advantage of one, nor should one have empathy, affection, or intimacy with those of bad character. In other words, what counts as a positive relationship with another depends on the character of the other person. Sometimes one simply has to distance oneself from a toxic person for one's own good. This is underscored by Aristotle's acknowledgement that external goods, essential for eudaimonia, include other people. The presence of immoral people in one's life – especially those close to one, for example, family or friends -- can undermine one's chances for happiness.

The second correction is that Ryff's view of positive relations must be expanded to include what I earlier called 'civic' friendship. Clearly, her description of positive relations with others is meant to extend to those close to us, but not far beyond. Yet she offers hints, which I will not pursue here, of how her account might be expanded: we should explore what it would mean to live in a liberal society characterized by trust, satisfaction, concern for the welfare of others, and true give and take. Civility in political discourse and respect for others are also important parts of civic friendship.

Ryff's third factor is personal growth. The high scorer: "Has a feeling of continued development; sees self as growing and expending (sic); is open to new experiences; has [a] sense of realizing his or her potential; sees improvement in self and behavior over time; is changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness." Ryff seems to have "hit the nail on the head," in the alignment of this factor with Aristotelian eudaimonia. As I've suggested, some of her other work is valuable for amplifying how philosophers might think of eudaimonia. For example, Ryff (1989, 1074ff) investigates age and sex differences in well-being; this work is expanded and the importance of resilience, health factors, and income inequality are explored in Ryff (2003, 2013, 2014b, 2017) and Ryff and Singer (2003). Attending to this work can lead philosophers in the direction of crafting a conception of what I call 'practical' eudaimonia – this is a move away from purely abstract conceptions of eudaimonia into conceptions that include goods and virtues, which, in the practical order, have in fact been

shown to contribute to flourishing.

Purpose in life is the fourth factor on Ryff's list. The high scorer: "Has goals in life and a sense of directedness; feels there is meaning to present and past life; holds beliefs that give life purpose; has aims and objectives for living." On this factor, too, Ryff seems very close to capturing something important about eudaimonia. The obvious caveat here is that one cannot have immoral goals and still be considered eudaimon; one's purpose in life cannot, for example, be to be the best Mafia don in the state of New Jersey. Aside from the rather obvious exclusion of immoral goals and purposes from what can count as parts of a flourishing life, other goals and purposes, though not intrinsically immoral, seem such as to lend themselves to certain forms of vice, if adequate care is not taken in their pursuit. In capitalist societies, pursuing careers in the corporate world or politics can foster a level of ambition that can lead to callousness, cruelty, selfishness, greed, and the lust for power. Other goals seem trivial, or in other ways misdirect our capacities and potential for self-realization. Consider someone whose main purpose in life is counting the blades of grass in her yard, or, less fancifully, someone who dedicates herself to the pursuit of shopping or to playing online video games. Counting blades of grass is hardly a challenging use of our rational capacities, and shopping and playing online video games, though perhaps more robustly engaging of a wider range of our abilities, seem myopically to focus them on pursuits of little or no moment. The answer here is to embrace what Rawls calls, 'the Aristotelian principle,' in the purposes that shape our lives (see Rawls 1971, 424ff). According to that principle, humans are challenged by activities at a certain level of complexity. When we do not engage our capacities at those levels, we become stunted and fail to flourish. So we would do well to conjoin the factor of purpose in life with that of personal growth: our purposes and goals should enable personal growth. When they fail to do so, they cannot be part of a flourishing life.

We should note, too, that Ryff's empirical work on health, lifespan development, income inequality, and adversity and resilience is a salutary reminder that our goals and purposes in life can change, depending on our life circumstances, and are often deeply affected by factors over which we have little or no control. Is some form of flourishing possible for an athlete or a dancer who has suffered a debilitating physical injury? To what extent do our abilities to cope with adversity contribute to our capacities for flourishing? How is purpose in later life shaped by the goals and experiences that went before? Are the goals and purposes of the elderly restricted because of how they are viewed in western societies? Has pervasive income inequality stunted the capacities for personal growth and eudaimonia of people who might otherwise lead flourishing lives as contributing members of society? More broadly, how do structural and systemic factors affect our abilities to flourish? Psychologists and some philosophers have already grappled with these questions – they are live areas of research for anyone interested in practical eudaimonia.

Ryff's fifth factor is environmental mastery. The high scorer on this factor "Has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment; controls [a] complex array of external activities; makes effective use of surrounding opportunities; [is] able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values." On this factor, too, Ryff seems to

capture an important good that is partly constitutive of human flourishing – the ability to exert effective agency in order to create an environment conducive to personal flourishing. Again, a caveat is necessary: the kind of flourishing that arises from virtuous behavior is incompatible with immoral or nefarious uses of one's agency. For example, seeking to manipulate others in order to advance oneself at their expense, though an exercise of agency that could be conducive to personal success, would not be an admissible use of the good of environmental mastery in an Aristotelian-inspired account of practical eudaimonia.

Another observation is worth making. Focusing on environmental mastery as a good constitutive of flourishing affords us a vantage point from which to critique existing social structures. Societies today are rife with bureaucracies. Frequently these bureaucracies are created and evaluated on how well they advance the goals of corporate entities, and not on how well they contribute to the personal well-being of individuals who must conform to them. For example, many corporations and businesses seem to view the well-being and agency of their employees as of little or no importance compared with the overall aim of maximizing profits. In such companies, employees' freedom to exercise mastery over their environments is severely limited. Health care bureaucracies can routinely stunt the abilities of patients to make their own, informed choices about which doctors they will see, what procedures they will have, and so on. The good of environmental mastery reminds us that flourishing agents need to have some control of the circumstances under which they live, and enables us to see the extent to which corporatization can undermine effective agency in important spheres of life, such as work and health care.

Autonomy is Ryff's sixth and final factor. We have already seen that her description of low scorers needs to be modified to truly "get at" the meaning of autonomy. As for high scorers, she writes that the high scorer "Is self-determining and independent; able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates social pressures to think and act in certain ways; regulates behavior from within; evaluates self by personal standards." Autonomy, so construed, obviously needs to be considered in relation to the good of personal relations. It is unclear how one can be warm, intimate, and trusting with others, yet be self-determining and independent. One's 'self-determination' is often done in collaboration with others, and people are rarely, if ever, completely independent of those around them. In other words, a certain measure of interdependency is required for normal social relations and a flourishing life. Aristotle, of course, understood this, recognizing that we are deeply social beings. Ryff would like not disagree, but care needs to be taken in spelling out just what autonomy looks like in the context of social interdependency.

This observation about autonomy and personal relations leads me to a more general comment about Ryff's six factors. They are presented and considered independently of each other, yet, in a flourishing life, factors will not appear independently of each other, but will intersect and entwine in interesting and unique ways. For example, what counts as the good of autonomy in someone's life will depend in large part on the contours of her personal relations, and both will depend on her level of self-acceptance. What counts as personal growth will depend on her purposes in life, and her degree of environmental mastery will influence both

her growth and her choice of purpose, and vice versa. In other words, it is likely that all six factors will mutually influence the others in the context of individual lives, with some goods taking pride of place and others more in abeyance. Thus, it makes sense to talk about people's 'eudaimonic profiles,' which would measure the extent to which each of the factors contribute to, or is most salient in, a person's overall eudaimonia at any given stage of her life. We could expect both that there would be differences between people in their profiles, as well as differences in what a person's profile would look like over the course of her lifespan. Ryff would agree (see, e.g., Ryff (1989, 1076, Figure 1).

Conclusion

In conclusion, even a cursory examination of Ryff's six-factor model, such as that presented here, shows it is a promising candidate for the set of intermediate level goods that might comprise part of a neo-Aristotelian social theory that advances a conception of practical eudaimonia. Despite the tenuousness of the Aristotelian pedigree that Ryff claims on its behalf, her account can be shored up in ways broadly compatible with a neo-Aristotelian perspective. Much work needs to be done to make good my promissory note on the larger project. This presentation has afforded me the opportunity to take first steps.

Notes

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[1] I have recently become aware that several philosophers are now interested in this topic.

[2] In this example, thin liberal values function as possible correctives to immoral or discriminatory instantiations of values by members of communities that endorse thicker conceptions of the good. But thick values from within these communities can be used in the same way. E.g., exhortations to compassion, kindness, and generosity might be used to correct discriminatory bias.

[3] A book by David L. Norton, *Personal Destinies: A Philosophy of Ethical Individualism* (PrincetonUniversity Press), was apparently influential not only with Ryff but with another eudaimonic psychologist, Alan Waterman (see, e.g., Ryff and Singer (2008, 17-18) and Waterman (2013, 11).

[4] I should note that certain kinds of activities can contribute to a positive retrospective on one's past, e.g., being able to look back and see that one has made good on one's failings, perhaps by apologizing to or seeking forgiveness from those whom one has wronged. When one has not been able to do this, either through one's own failing or because of factors beyond one's control, e.g., the wronged person has died, regret or even remorse, though not happy feelings, would be morally appropriate responses.

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