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Natural Goods in the *Eudemian Ethics*

In this paper, I reconstruct the notion of natural goods as Aristotle develops it in the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*). I explain that natural goods are simple goods for human beings. And I propose that natural goods are good for agents in a standard state. The standard state is the state in which human beings are for the most part or by nature, which Aristotle explains as the state of an adult, healthy human being with unaltered capacities.

Scholars read Aristotle's ethics, more often than not, as a form of naturalism.[1] In this paper, I explore the notion of natural goods (τὰ φύσει ἀγαθά) as it is presented in the *Eudemian Ethics*. This notion is philosophically interesting insofar as it is a first step toward an unexplored form of naturalism that is defended in the *EE* and that I call Natural Goods Naturalism (NGN). An exploration of NGN exceeds present purposes. For the moment, it is sufficient to say that NGN shares ideas with other formulations of Aristotelian naturalism: it endorses basic premises that are familiar from other versions of Aristotelian naturalism. Specifically, it shares the appeal to a human ἔργον - something we do, a work or job, translated in unsatisfactory and yet deeply ingrained ways as "function" - and it shares a commitment to not appealing to anything supernatural in one's account of the good and the bad. It goes beyond other versions of naturalism, however, by developing these ideas with a view to Aristotle's notion of natural goods.

Natural goods, as I interpret this notion, are natural insofar as they are good for human beings as we are by nature; and they are good insofar as they help fulfil the function of the human soul at the best, which is living a happy life. Natural goods are good for what I call the human being in a standard state - that is, an adult, healthy human being with unaltered capacities. The notion of the agent in a standard state captures desiderative attitudes that are characteristically human: human beings in the standard state desire natural goods. At the same time, this notion captures normative dimensions that Aristotle expresses in two idiomatic terms: how human beings are for the most part and how they are by nature.

In the Aristotelian corpus, the expression "natural goods" (τὰ φύσει ἀγαθά) figures eight times in the *EE* (1237b31, 1238a17, 1248b27, 1248b40, 1249a1, 1249a7, 1249a26, 1249b17). Aristotle speaks of "what

[1] In the literature, Aristotle's ethics is characterised as naturalistic for example because there are connections between Aristotle's ethics and physics (see Reeve 2015). Others take Aristotle to be a naturalist because his ethics starts from a premise about human psychology, namely that human beings desire happiness and happiness is the final goal of human life (see Kallhoff 2010. For criticisms of similar positions to the one defended by Kallhoff, see Williams 1985; Nagel 1985, 351-360; Annas 1989). Yet others argue that Aristotle's ethics is naturalistic because for Aristotle, the human function is connected to the human essence, which is a whole and a system (see Irwin 2015, 141). Others argue that it is naturalistic because of the teleological structure of his ethics, including the claim that human beings have a function (see Cooper 1982); and because of the idea that there is a life-form proper to human beings, a life-form that can be contrasted with that of other animals (Thompson 2008).

is good by nature" (τὰ τῇ φύσει ἀγαθα) a few times in the *NE*[2] and in the *Rhetoric* (1359a34, 1366b38, 1387a13, 1388a33), but he does not discuss this notion or employ it in ways that are crucial to his theorising. In the *EE,* I submit, the notion of natural goods plays a fundamental role. If there were "merely" eight occurrences, this might appear too far-reaching a claim. However, natural goods figure prominently in the final part of the *EE,* where Aristotle discusses καλοκἀγαθία, the most complete virtue, and θεωρία, contemplation. That is, natural goods have a role in promoting virtuous activity and contemplation. Moreover, I argue that natural goods are simple goods (τὰ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθά) for human beings.[3] The notion of being simple good occurs frequently in the text. This is an additional reason to attend to the notion of natural goods.

Far more scholarly work has explored the *NE* than the *EE* and its particular ethical outlook. Aristotle's conception of natural goods in the *EE* is exemplary of this trend; so far, there is little analysis devoted to it. Moreover, the *EE*'s conception of natural goods is especially hard to understand. Other themes of the *EE* at least have parallels in the *NE.* Aristotle's conception of natural goods cannot be reconstructed by comparing it to corresponding discussions elsewhere. Thus, though scholars such as Sarah Broadie recognise that this is an interesting notion, it is still largely unexplored (Broadie 2010).

The first step in my argument is to posit a hypothesis: that natural goods are simple goods for human beings and that for present purposes, we can use the two expressions as referring to the same goods (section 1). I then discuss what natural goods are (section 2), and for whom they are good (section 3). Next I explore the notion of "for the most part regularities" and I explain how it relates to Aristotle's notion of something being "by nature" (section 4). I conclude with a minimal account of the notion of the agent in a standard state (section 5).

1. Natural goods and simple goods

The first step in my analysis of the notion of natural goods is to clarify the relation between τὰ φύσει ἀγαθά - natural goods - and τὰ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθά, which I translate as simple goods. The notion of simple goods

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[2] In *NE* 1169b20, Aristotle says that the happy person has what is good by nature; in 1148a29, he speaks of what is desirable by nature and he mentions what is good and beautiful by nature. Cf. also 1170a14, 1170a22, 1170b1, 1170b15.

[3] Scholars translate τὰ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθά as "goods without qualification" or "goods *simpliciter"*. I translate "simple goods" insofar as I do not think that the Latin translation clarifies the Greek original expression. I believe that what is simple good has some qualifications insofar as it is good for human beings. The connection between natural goods and simple goods has been suggested also by Fritzsche. In his commentary on the *EE,* when commenting on the notion of natural goods that occurs at *EE* vii 2.1237b31, Fritzsche refers to *EE* iv 1.1129b2-5, where Aristotle speaks of simple goods. Cf. Fritzsche 1851.

is familiar to the reader of the *NE,* though its interpretation is contested. Dirlmeier and Kenny examine the notion of simple goods in the *EE* and in the *NE*: Dirlmeier argues that natural goods are simple goods.[4] Kenny argues that simple goods are goods objectively or absolutely (Kenny 1978, 2016). With respect to the *NE,* scholars tend to hold one of two views about Aristotle's notion of simple goods. They either take it that simple goods are absolute goods, or that they are good for the excellent individual.[5] The idea that simple goods are good absolutely is sometimes also expressed in terms of their intrinsic quality: what is absolutely good is good by itself, or intrinsically. According to Vogt, scholars have often interpreted the distinction between simple good and good-for as a distinction between non-relative goodness and relative goodness. However, this is misleading given that Aristotle conceives of the simple good as also good-for.[6] My analysis in the next sections will clarify for whom simple goods are good.

Simple goods are mostly mentioned in the so-called common books, books that the *NE* shares with the *EE* (*NE* v-vi-vii = *EE* iv-v-vi).[7] That is, even though this notion is familiar via the study of the *NE,* it is plausibly considered an integral part of the *EE.* Together with a growing number of scholars, I consider the common books as originally written for the *EE*. As I show in the paper, an analysis of the passages that discuss natural goods and simple goods shows that natural goods are simple goods for human beings. For the moment, let us hypothesise that the two expressions - natural goods and simple goods - refer to the same goods.

Aristotle explicates both notions - natural goods and simple goods - by specifying for whom these goods are good, or in another formulation, for whom they are beneficial. Though in other contexts we may want to address the nuances of both notions, for current purposes I shall stipulate that the good is the beneficial (Cf. Kraut 2011, 210). In the passages that interest us, Aristotle often speaks of what is good for some people, and he expresses this idea in a range of interrelated terms, including terms that are well-translated as "beneficial" (συμφέρον). In *EE* vii 2.1235b33-1236a3, Aristotle says that what is simple good is

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[4] Dirlmeier 1962. This hypothesis is shared also by Irwin 2000, 112.

[5] Scholars tend to interpret simple goods as good without qualification. They understand "good without qualification" along the same lines as Kant's good will, which is good without qualification. For Kant, the good will has intrinsic goodness. Cf. Aufderheide, Bader 2015; White 1981, 225–46. Of course this is not the only way in which "good without qualification" can be read.

[6] On good-for cf. Vogt 2017, ch. 2 and 4. Jacquette 1998, 301–24; in favour of intrinsic goodness see Shields 2015*,* 84-110.

[7] τὰ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθά appears eleven times in the *Eudemian Ethics* (1235b32, 1236b37, 1236b39, 1237a5, 1237a13, 1237a17, 1237a32, 1238b7, 1249a12, 1249a18, 1249b25), five in *Magna Moralia,* seven in the common books of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1129b3, 1129b5, 1134a34, 1134b4, 1134b27, 1137a26, 1152b27), once in the *Rhetoric* (1366a23), once in the *Topics* (116b8), and once in the *Politics* (1332a23).

what is good for a healthy body, for someone who is not drunk, and for adults. In *EE* vii 2 Aristotle explicitly says that simple goods are goods by nature for human beings.

> (T1) What is not good for oneself is nothing to oneself, but what we are seeking is this, that what is simple good is good in this way. For what is simple good is choiceworthy (αἱρετόν) and what is good for oneself is choiceworthy for oneself. These things should (δεῖ) harmonise and that is what virtue brings about. Political expertise is in charge of this process, so that those not yet in this state will acquire it. As a human being, one is well placed to make progress (*for things that are simple goods are by nature good for a human being*).[8]

Aristotle explains that simple goods should be good for human beings, and that political expertise and virtue aim to make simple goods good for human beings. Aristotle says explicitly that simple goods are by nature good for human beings. Insofar as simple goods should be good for human beings, the notion of being simple good and the notion of natural goods have a normative dimension. The normative dimension is stressed by the use of αἱρετόν ("choiceworthy") and by δεῖ ("should"): what is simple good is to be chosen; what is simple good should be good for us. Aristotle says that what is not good for a given agent is "nothing for her." Minimally, this confirms the relational nature of goodness. When we ask what is good, we are concerned with what is good for agents. What virtue and political expertise seek, then, is not the sort of thing that does not stand in any kind of relation to us. Instead, they are seeking that which is good for us, and that is, what Aristotle takes to be simple good. The idea that what is simple good is by nature good for us is supported, in Aristotle's next sentence, by the fact that both are what is worth choosing. Note further that Aristotle conceives of what is good "for us" in desiderative terms. What is nothing for an agent is not worth choosing for her; what is good for us is the kind of thing that is worth choosing.

The simple good may not be good for someone because of particular conditions of this agent. One of the aims of political expertise is to make the simple good good for the individuals in the community. We need to be in certain conditions in order for the simple good to be good for us. In section 4, I explain that these conditions are minimal. Political expertise takes into account these conditions and how human beings are: Aristotle says that human beings are "well placed" to make this kind of progress. For the moment, let's hypothesise that the identification suggested in T1 - that natural goods are simple goods - is valid for the rest of the *EE.* In the paper, I will substantiate this hypothesis by bringing further evidence in its favour.

Before moving to the specifics of the relation between natural goods and simple goods in the *EE,* I turn to two passages - respectively in the *Politics* and in the *Topics* - where Aristotle offers some

[8] *EE* vii 2.1236b38-1237a5. All translations of the *EE* are by B. Inwood and R. Woolf modified by the author.

clarifications of what simple goods and natural goods are. In *Politics* 1332a9-17, Aristotle distinguishes what is good ἐξ ὑποθέσεως (conditionally) from what is good ἁπλῶς (simple):

> (T2) Happiness is a complete activity or use of virtue, and not conditionally (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως) but simple (ἁπλῶς). By conditionally I refer to things necessary, by simple I refer to things nobly. For example, in the case of just actions, just retributions and punishments spring from virtue, but are necessary, and are noble only in a necessary way, since it would be more choiceworthy if no individual or city-state needed such things. On the other hand, actions that aim at honours and prosperity are simple noblest. The former involve choosing something that is somehow bad, whereas the latter are the opposite: they construct and generate goods.[9]

Things that are noble or just ἐξ ὑποθέσεως are noble or just only if we find ourselves in a situation that is not choiceworthy. Aristotle uses the example of retributions and punishments to illustrate what is good ἐξ ὑποθέσεως. Retributions and punishments are necessary given the situation, but they would not be choiceworthy if certain conditions were not present. Conversely, actions that aim at honour and prosperity are simple good: they are not necessary, but they are choiceworthy if we find ourselves in certain conditions. My analysis of natural goods and of simple goods will provide clarifications on what these conditions are. Let's turn to the passage in the *Topics* where Aristotle discusses what is naturally good and what is simple good:

> (T3) Also, that which is simple good is more worthy of choice than that which is good for an individual, e.g., the enjoyment of health than a surgical operation; for the former is simple good, the latter is good only for an individual, namely, the man who requires an operation. Also, that which is good by nature is more worthy of choice than that which is not so by nature, e.g., justice rather than the just man; for the former is good by nature, whereas the goodness of the latter is acquired. Also what belongs to that which is better and more highly honoured is more worthy of choice, for example, that which belongs to God than that which belongs to man, and that which belongs to the soul than that which belongs to the body.[10]

The simple good is distinguished from what is good for a particular individual; the good by nature is distinguished from the good not by nature. For example, justice is a natural good, as also stated in *EE* iv 7.1134b27. Conversely, the just man is good, but he is not good by nature. In other words, nature is not the cause of his being just. The just man becomes just through habituation, training, obedience to the laws, and so forth, but not by nature. These passages provide a preliminary understanding of what is simple good. The simple good is good for a larger group of individuals as opposed to what is good for the particular individual. Similarly, the natural good is what is good and comes about by nature, as opposed to what is good not by nature. The simple good and the natural good are not good for every kind of being in the cosmos. In this sense, we need to specify that we are considering one kind of being: human beings.

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[9] *Politics* vii 13.1332a 9-17, trans. by C.D.C. Reeve with changes by the author.

[10] *Topics* iii 116b 8-17, trans. by E.S. Forster with changes by the author.

2. Natural goods, dependent goods and external goods

In *EE* viii 2, Aristotle provides a list of paradigmatic natural goods. He says that honour, wealth, bodily excellences, pieces of good luck and power (*dunameis*) are natural goods.[11]

> (T4) For the goods we fight for and those which are thought to be greatest (honour, wealth, the bodily excellences, pieces of good luck and power) are good by nature, but they can be harmful to some people because of their dispositions.[12]

Assuming that the goods listed here are paradigmatic natural goods, we can ask how we should think of the metaphysics of these goods. Not any kind of good is a natural good. In T4, Aristotle ascribes two desiderative properties to natural goods: we fight for them, and people consider them the greatest. These two specifications offer criteria for detecting what counts as a natural good: a natural good is typically desired by human beings to the point that we may even fight for them. People consider natural goods to be the greatest goods for a good human life. Aristotle disagrees on this insofar as virtue and virtuous actions are greater than natural goods. This desiderative side of natural goods will occupy us in detail later. For now, I want to offer a minimal observation. What counts as a natural good has to be determined via a relation between the particular good we are considering - honour, wealth, and so forth - and the motivations and attitudes of the agent. This brings us to the metaphysics of natural goods. In brief, their metaphysics is relational. It means that non-relational reconstructions are not compelling. Let me introduce six ways in which one may conceive of natural goods/simple goods. This list is not exhaustive: I believe that these options are worthy to be engaged with insofar as (1) and (2) are familiar from discussions of Plato's and Aristotle's ethics, and (3)-(5) have been defended with respect to the *NE.* (6) is the interpretation that I propose:

(1) The natural good/simple good is good only if used with wisdom.

(2) The natural good/simple good is what Aristotle calls external good.

(3) The natural good/simple good is the absolute good, and that is, good in a sense that is not relative to any person or kind of person, but that is good insofar as, using an expression of Korsgaard, it "makes the world a better place."[13]

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[11] The Greek term *dunameis* is plural. Cf. Inwood and Woolf translate "power;" Donini translates "la potenza." I do not translate *dunameis* as "capacities" insofar as unaltered capacities are some of the conditions that the agent needs to have in order for natural goods to be good for her.

[12] *EE* viii 3.1248b29: τὰ γὰρ περιμάχητα καὶ μέγιστα εἶναι δοκοῦντα ἀγαθά, τιμὴ καὶ πλοῦτος καὶ σώματος ἀρεταὶ καὶ εὐτυχίαι καὶ δυνάμεις, ἀγαθὰ μὲν φύσει ἐστίν, ἐνδέχεται δ' εἶναι βλαβερά τισι διὰ τὰς ἕξεις. In *NE* 1168b19, Aristotle describes money, honours and bodily pleasures as περιμάχητα.

[13] Korsgaard 1983, 169. Shields argues that for Aristotle, there is intrinsic goodness. Shields 2015, 84-110.

(4) The natural good/simple good is good for the particular individual (τινί).

(5) The natural good/simple good is good as seen by the *phronimos* or by the *kalos kagathos*, and thus, the good-for or good relative to the best agent.

(6) The natural good/simple good is good for human beings as they are by nature or for the most part, namely as Aristotle puts this, for adults, healthy individuals in normal conditions.

Options (1) and (2) draw on traditional conceptions familiar from the discussion of Greek ethics; I discuss them in this section. Options (3), (4), (5) and (6) have an important common feature: they ask whether natural goods are good for specific persons; I discuss these options in the next section. (3) is not a serious option, simply because the notion of natural goods involves a good-for relation. As I explained in section 1, natural goods as Aristotle discusses these goods in the *EE* are good for human beings. And yet it is helpful to consider (3), because natural goods are goods of a quite fundamental kind, and here it might be tempting to think of absolute goodness—but we shall see that this would be a misunderstanding. (4) is easily refuted as Aristotle says that the natural good is not what is good for the particular individual, but I say more below. (5) and (6) are, as we will see, the most serious contenders for getting things right. Here the thought that natural goods are good for certain agents is explored. The crucial question, then, will be to specify how we ought to conceive of these agents.

Let us start, however, with option (1). Given the list of goods in T4, and in the light of modes of argument that are familiar from Plato, one may suspect that natural goods are conditions or states of affairs that can be both good and harmful. For example, according to the *Euthydemus*, so-called goods are good and beneficial only when used with wisdom (Plato, *Euthydemus,* 278e3–281e). Applied to Aristotle's notion of natural goods, this would mean that natural goods are beneficial and harmful in a derivative and conditional fashion - if used with wisdom, or if used foolishly. I call this the Dependent Goods Interpretation. However, Aristotle does not say that natural goods are harmful if not used with wisdom. Instead the criterion he advances is that these things can be harmful for someone in a given disposition (and once we see, below, how he conceives of what I call the standard state, we also see what would be involved in significant departure from this state).

Alternatively, at least some items on the list may suggest that what Aristotle discusses here are what are elsewhere called external goods (2) (cf. Jost 2013, 241-265). The Peripatetic tradition considers Aristotle's division among external goods, goods of the soul, and goods of the body a cornerstone of his

ethics.[14] Goods of the body are goods that pertain to one's physical condition: for example, health, bodily excellence, and strength. Goods of the soul include the virtues and knowledge, and arguably all activities of the soul relevant to a well-lived human life. External goods are goods that do not belong to our body or to our soul. Wealth and political power can count as examples.[15] In spite of the prevalence of this tripartition in later Aristotelian authors, Aristotle himself is rather tentative in his classifications. Some goods seem to show up in two classes. For example, friendship can appear to be a good of the soul on the one hand, and an external good on the other hand. From the point of view of Aristotle's theorising, this seems just fine, for he distinguishes between kinds of friendship. However, it does not seem that it is a primary concern of his to neatly categorise each good as falling into one of the three classes. Moreover and more importantly, the notion of natural goods cuts across the distinction among external goods, goods of the soul, and goods of the body.

The proposal that natural goods are external goods, however, can also be developed by reference to a bipartite (as opposed to tripartite) distinction. On this approach, we take all goods to fall into two classes. Everything soul-related counts as "internal," and everything that is not soul-related as external. Broadie argues that natural goods are external goods in this sense.[16] This interpretation, however, undersells the very notion of *nature* that Aristotle applies. Natural goods, as I shall argue, are such that by nature we have characteristic desiderative attitudes to them. If we put things this way, it becomes clear that not only the internal-bodily-external distinction, but also the internal-external distinction is an ill fit for the notion of natural goods. Our nature as human beings includes physiological and psychological dimensions. And insofar as natural goods are defined as relative to our nature, their domain cuts across the internal-external distinction.

In addition to these arguments that specifically refute the Dependent Goods Interpretation and the External Goods Interpretation, one may notice that neither of them is plausible if for Aristotle, the natural good is simple good for human beings. This should suffice to show that natural goods are not dependent or derivative. Moreover, natural goods are a mix of external goods, goods of the body and soul-related goods.

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[14] *NE* 1098b13; *Politics* 1323a21-b12. Irwin 2007, 144; Inwood 2014, 256-279.

[15] *NE* 1099a31–b8, 1100 a18–21, 1123b17–22. See also *Rhetoric* i 5–6.

[16] If we stipulate a bipartite (rather than tripartite) distinction, according to which everything soul-related falls into one class and everything that is external to the soul into another class, natural goods may seem to be external goods. Cf. Broadie 2010. But as will become clear, even though this classification is possible, Aristotle does not discuss natural goods as we would expect him to discuss external goods, precisely because natural goods include also goods of the soul and goods of the body.

T4 shows that wealth - a paradigmatic external good - is a natural good, as well as bodily excellence and honour - which may be considered goods related to the body and to the soul. Natural goods include goods of all these kinds: bodily-related goods, soul-related goods, and natural goods.[17]

3. Who are natural goods good for?

Now that we have excluded options (1) and (2), let's look at options (3)-(6). They are more fundamental than (1) and (2), for they ask a question that is crucial for the interpretation of Aristotle's ethics: they ask *who* these goods are good for. According to (3), natural goods are absolute goods. That is, (3) asks who these goods are good for in the negative sense that, according to (3), there is no such restriction. "Absolute" here contrasts with relative, though not with "relative" in the sense of relativism; rather, it contrasts with the idea that there is a relatum, to the effect that what is good is good by being good for someone or something. Absolute goods, the thought goes, are good in every circumstance and for everyone. However, there is evidence that natural goods are not good in every circumstance and absolutely. First of all, Aristotle says that natural goods can be harmful for certain people (T4). Hence, whatever else needs to be said it is clear that they are not good for everyone. The agent must meet certain conditions in order to benefit from natural goods. Second, Aristotle says that natural goods are a particular kind of good-for insofar as they are good for human beings (T1). This provides a preliminary account of the relevant relatum: natural goods are good for human beings. This is in need of further specification, as we will see in a moment, because natural goods are good for human beings in certain conditions. One thing, however, is clear: natural goods are not absolute goods because they are not good for an animal or for a divine being, but they are good only for specific relata.

Let's move to (4), the option that natural goods are good for a particular individual. This option has prima facie little plausibility. The very notion of natural goods indicates that we are talking at a greater level of generality. For reasons of completeness, however, I consider also this option. (4) is, as it were, a step away from (3), the absolutist reading. Rather than moving immediately to the ideal person (5) or to some group of persons (6), (3) stipulates that natural goods are good relative just to any particular person. Along the same lines, Aristotle addresses the contrast between what is good for a particular person (τινί) and what is simple good in *EE* vii 2:

[17] In *NE* 1098b12-17, Aristotle divides the goods in external goods (wealth, power, honour, friends,…), goods of the body (health, physical strength, beautiful appearance,…) and goods of the soul (virtue, knowledge,…). Monan 1968 argues that *EE* viii 3 is an effort to express the relationship between external goods and the goods of the soul, namely both character virtues and virtues of thought, which form *kalokagathia*.

(T5) For what is good for an individual and what is simple good are distinct, and it is the same for states of character as it is with the useful: the simple useful is different from what is useful for particular individuals, just as training is different from being treated by drugs. So too for the state of character (human virtue). Suppose that human beings are excellent by nature; the virtue of someone who is excellent by nature is simple good, but the virtue of someone who isn't is good only for himself. It is also the same for the pleasant.[18]

The passage occurs within the discussion of the different types of friendship (friendship based on utility, pleasure or virtue) and it presents a number of interpretative challenges (Cf. Dirlmeier 1962, 394). What is most relevant for my analysis is that Aristotle says that what is good for a particular individual and what is simple good are not the same. (4), then, is not a serious contender, but its consideration establishes some important distinctions.

Aristotle argues that we can compare virtue with the useful insofar as both virtue and the useful are in some way goods. In order to make sense of this claim, I follow Dirlmeier's interpretation. Dirlmeier starts from the observation that goods can be ἁπλῶς (simple) or τινί (for a particular individual). This distinction applies to any good. That is, the useful is a good and therefore it can be simple good or good for a particular individual. Virtue too is a good and it can be simple good or good for a particular individual. According to Dirlmeier, virtue and the useful can be compared insofar as they can be simple good or good for a particular individual.[19]

For someone who is excellent by nature, virtue is simple good. It is conceivable that Aristotle speaks of the individual who is excellent by nature in a loose sense: this individual seems to have all the natural virtues. According to this minimal sketch, the idea is that what is best for the individual who is not excellent by nature seems good only for her. It seems good for her, but it is not good by nature. Setting aside the specifics of what it means to be excellent by nature, for present purposes T5 shows that what is simple good

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[18] *EE* vii 2.1237a12-18: διχῶς γὰρ ἔχει τὸ τῳδὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθόν. καὶ ὁμοίως ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὠφελίμου, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἕξεων. ἄλλο γὰρ τὸ ἁπλῶς ὠφέλιμον καὶ *τὸ καλὸν τοιοῦτον* (obelized by Bonitz 1844, 62-63, Apelt 1894, 731, Jackson 1900, 11-12, Arnim 1927, 105 - I translate the text as Dirlmeier proposes on the basis of Jackson's emendation) γυμνάζεσθαι πρὸς τὸ φαρμακεύεσθαι. ὥστε καὶ ἡ ἕξις ἡ ἀνθρώπου ἀρετή. ἔστω γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῶν φύσει σπουδαίων: ἡ γὰρ τοῦ φύσει σπουδαίου ἀρετὴ ἁπλῶς ἀγαθόν, ἡ δὲ τοῦ μὴ ἐκείνῳ. ὁμοίως δὴ ἔχει καὶ τὸ ἡδύ.

[19] Another interpretive challenge concerns the supposition, seemingly simply presupposed in T5, that some individuals are excellent by nature. To readers of the *NE,* this is an unfamiliar claim. In the *NE,* as in the *EE,* Aristotle distinguishes natural virtues from virtues proper. However, in the *NE,* there is no reference to being excellent by nature. One may think that the agent who has natural virtues is excellent by nature. In the *EE,* I submit, an agent is excellent by nature if she has natural virtues. Cf. the discussion of natural virtue in the common books: *EE* v=*NE* vi 13.1144b5. In *EE* iii 7.1234a27, Aristotle explains how natural virtue becomes virtue in the true sense. Regarding the *NE*, there is much scholarly interest in the idea that the virtues of character are acquired by habituation. In *NE* 1113b6-20, Aristotle considers the hypothesis that there is a natural disposition in human beings to choose what is good. Aristotle says that whether one's view of the end is partially determined by nature or not, virtue is still voluntary. However, this seems the only reference to the idea of excellence by nature in the *NE.* It is noteworthy, and indeed surprising, that there is no explicit discussion of virtue acquisition via habituation in the *EE*. The only reference to habituation occurs in *EE* ii 2.1220b1, where Aristotle says that character develops from habituation. This reference to habituation is not further explored in the treatise. Cf. Donini 2014.

is not what is good for the particular individual. The difference between the particular individual and the agent for which the simple good is good is further elucidated by the comparison with the body that needs training and the body that needs drugs. As Aristotle says, training is simple good or simple useful in the sense that it is good for human beings as human beings generically are, namely healthy. Conversely, being treated with drugs is not simple good or simple useful insofar as it is good or useful only for the particular sick individual.

Let's turn to (5), the view that considers the best agent as the relevant relatum of goodness. Given that much of the relevant scholarly debate is about the *NE*, this position has not been specifically proposed as a reading of the *EE*. Before discussing how it applies to the *EE,* let me provide a minimal sketch of the debate on this issue in the *NE.* The debate focuses on the claim that the virtuous person is the measure of how we should act.[20] This position has been put forward by McDowell as well as others. McDowell asserts that Aristotle is what he calls an internal realist, by which he means, among other things, that there is such a thing as what "really" is good, even though what really is good involves the attitudes of an agent (McDowell 1998, 107-129). What is truly good is what the virtuous person finds good.[21] My aim here is not to explore this position, either in its own right or as an interpretation of the *NE.* For the moment, it is enough to say that in the *EE,* what is simple good is good for the agent in the standard state, and not only for the virtuous person.

Scholars who defend the view that the virtuous agent is the measure of how we should act often find support for their view in *NE* 1113a23-35. In this passage, Aristotle argues that the good agent is the standard and measure (κανὼν καὶ μέτρον) of things beautiful and pleasant. *NE* 1113a23-35, however, does not establish reading (5). Instead, it permits two interpretations. Either, and this is how the passage tends to be read, we assume that all value is on par. If the good agent is the measure of the beautiful and of the pleasant, the thought goes, she is also the measure of the good. And yet, in *NE* 1113a23-35*,* Aristotle does not say that the good agent is the standard and measure of good things (Cf. Wilkes 1978, 553-571). This observation is important for the difference between the *NE* and the *EE*. The *EE* is explicitly concerned with three kinds of

[20] The terminology of "measure" is specifically explored by Vogt, who calls her position Measure Realism (Vogt 2017); cf. McCready Flora 2015, 71-127. Other scholars speak in terms of how the world looks to the best agent, of the perceptions of the best agent, and so on.

[21] This kind of position is at times called Aristotelian realism. For critical assessment of a purely epistemic version of this position, according to which what really is good is constituted by what the ideal agent *sees* as good, cf. Vogt 2017 ch. 4.

value, the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant; this is clear from the very first lines of the treatise.[22] That is, the reader of the *EE* is primed for a type of consideration that is not in the forefront of the *NE*: how the good, the beautiful, and the pleasant may come apart. Within this context, it is conceivable that the view defended in the *NE* that the good agent is the measure of what is beautiful and pleasant - and derivatively of the good - does not hold for the *EE*. Further reason to doubt that the virtuous agent is the measure of natural goods is provided by a passage in *EE* iii 1:

> (T6) Perhaps, then, the fearful, like the pleasant and the good, has two senses. Some things are pleasant and simple good, and others are such to some individual, but not simple; on the contrary they are bad and unpleasant, like the things that are beneficial to wicked people or pleasant to children insofar as they are children. Similarly some things are simple fearful, others to some individual. Of the things that are fearful to the coward qua coward, some are fearful to no one, others mildly so. What is fearful to most people, and to human nature, we say is the simple fearful, and it is with regard to this that the courageous person is fearless, and these are the kind of fearful things that he endures. In one sense they are fearful to him, in another not; they are fearful insofar as he is a human being, but not fearful, or slightly so if at all, insofar as he is courageous.[23]

Aristotle says that what is fearful, pleasant or good for the individual differs from what is simple fearful, simple pleasant, or simple good. He then focuses on what is fearful. He explicitly says that what is fearful for human nature is the simple fearful. Human nature (on human nature, I will say more below) is the measure of things that are simple fearful. In a similar way, human nature is the measure of what is simple good. In T6, Aristotle argues that what is pleasant for children is not simple pleasant. He then says that what is fearful for the courageous is not simple fearful insofar as things that are fearless for the courageous may be fearful for human nature. This suggests that the virtuous agent - in this case, the courageous agent - cannot be the measure of things that are simple fearful. Fighting in battle is fearful for human nature. And yet, it is not fearful for the courageous agent. As the courageous agent is not the measure of the simple fearful, the virtuous agent is not the measure of what is simple good.

Assume, then, that the good agent is not the measure of natural goods. This is compatible with a weaker claim: natural goods are good for the best agent, insofar as the best agent belongs to a larger set of agents. They are good for, but not *only* good for the best agent. This is how I reconstruct the relation between natural goods and the good person. In *EE* viii 3.1248b27, Aristotle says: "A good person is one for whom the

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[22] *Kalon* and *kalliston* occur in the first lines of the *EE*. I translate *kalon* as "beautiful" and *kalliston* as "the most beautiful": with these translations I want to render transparent in English the Greek term (if *kalon* is translated "the noble" or "the fine" and if *kalliston* is translated "the noblest" or "the finest" the difference between *kalon* and *agathon,* as well as the difference between *kalliston* and *ariston* may not be evident for the reader who does not have access to the original Greek text).

[23] *EE* iii 1.1228b18-30.

natural goods are good."[24] The relation between the best person and goodness, as Aristotle conceives of it, is sometimes construed as if the best person's attitudes were constitutive of it; in other words, as if goodness was in some sense constituted by the best person's perspective and set of attitudes. It is conceivable that some such account applies to what, according to Aristotle, truly is beautiful and truly is pleasant. However, if natural goods are good for the best agent as well as for (to be specified) others, then this type of account cannot apply to natural goods. Instead the good person is the person who finds natural goods good, but the goodness of natural goods does not depend on this.

This interpretation has the virtue to accommodate what may otherwise appear to be inconsistent strands in Aristotle's view. Namely, on the one hand, in T1, Aristotle says that virtue brings about a condition according to which the simple good is good for the individual. On the other hand, in T4, Aristotle says that natural goods are goods for which we fight. This desiderative dimension is normative and it is characteristics of how human beings are: it is a feature of our psychology that we desire natural goods. We may even say that perceptual, desiderative and cognitive attitudes that are characteristic for human beings make natural goods appealing to us.[25] As I will explain in section 4, this holds for the most part and not always. To clarify that this does not hold always, Aristotle says that natural goods are bad for some people because of their dispositions.

It is a desideratum for a compelling interpretation that it accommodates these two dimensions of the account: natural goods are good for the virtuous person; and they are good for a larger group of persons. This is what my proposal, option (6), says. More precisely, natural goods are good for human beings in a standard state. It is not sufficient to be a human being in order to benefit from natural goods. One needs to be in a standard state in order to desire natural goods and to benefit from them. The standard state is not to be confused with the particulars about given persons that Aristotle discusses elsewhere, for example, when he observes that a moderate amount of food for the athlete differs from a moderate amount of food for a beginner (*NE* 1106b6). Everyone is in some condition or other in myriad respects at a given moment, and these conditions matter for the minutiae of what is, at a given moment, the right thing to do. When we ask what it means to be in a standard state, however, we are concerned with conditions of a more general sort. For example, and as I will explain in more detail, it counts as non-standard to be sick; this is compatible with

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[24] *EE* viii 3.1248b27: ἀγαθὸς μὲν οὖν ἐστιν ᾧ τὰ φύσει ἀγαθά ἐστιν ἀγαθά.

[25] Berryman 2018, 137-150, emphasises, as I do here, the role of conceptions of a good life. However, my position differs from hers insofar as she argues that human nature cannot be the standard to determine what is good for human beings, and that human beings control the normativity of action. In this paper, I argue that there is a distinctive psychological human nature: this psychological nature is the standard of what is good for us in the sense of the natural good. Already the characterisation of natural goods as "goods for which we fight" speaks in favour of this. On psychological human nature, cf. Vogt 2017.

a wide range of states that are "more or less" healthy, and that fall, broadly speaking, into the range of what is "standard."

As (6) suggests, the notion of natural goods is normative. The normative dimension is suggested by the characteristic human desiderative attitudes toward natural goods. In addition, Aristotle says that these goods should be good for human beings and that virtue and political expertise should make them good for everyone. At this point, we need to get clear about the standard state, namely, the state in which human beings need to be in order for natural goods to be good for them. This does not mean that natural goods are good conditionally (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως) because the standard state captures how human beings are for the most part and by nature.

4. For the most part and by nature

Two notions - the notion of being "for the most part" (ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολύ) and the notion of being "by nature" (φύσει) - have pivotal roles in the definition of what I call the human being in a standard state. This state is representative of how human beings are for the most part or by nature. Scholars debate whether the notion of being for the most part is normative or statistical. According to the statistical interpretation, what holds for the most part holds in the majority of the cases. According to the normative view, what holds for the most part captures natural facts about human beings.[26] In certain circumstances, natural facts about human beings may not correspond to how the majority of human beings is. This is why we need to distinguish what holds in the majority of the cases from what holds for the most part. Irwin discusses the notion of being "for the most part" within his analysis of what is usual; he distinguishes between two senses of the usual: what is frequent and what is natural. What is frequent is what happens in the majority of the cases. What is natural captures the phenomenon according to which the natural way for F to be is G. Irwin argues that for the Aristotle of the ethics, there is a natural and normal condition in which human beings should be in order for things to be good for them (*EE* iv 7.1134b33, *PA* 666b35). Irwin uses the example of wealth: wealth is not good for everyone, but it is usually good in the sense that it is good for human beings in normal conditions. In this sense, what may seem generalisations are in fact normative regularities. These normative regularities do not hold always but they hold in what Irwin calls "normally favourable circumstances" or in "normal situations". On the view that I defend, the notions of being for the most part and of being by nature are normative: what is for the most part or by nature for human beings captures

[26] Henry 2015, 169-191 argues that it is a statistical concept used to express the frequency of a given event. Irwin 2000, 100-130 argues that it is a normative concept. For an analysis of natural phenomena as phenomena that occur for the most part, see Segev 2017, 177-210.

normative regularities for human beings. In *Prior Analytics,* Aristotle distinguishes what is for the most part from what is necessary*:*

> (T7) The expression "to be possible" is used in two senses: (1) to describe what is for the most part, but falls short of being necessary, e.g., a person's becoming grey-haired or growing or wasting away, or in general that which belongs to someone in virtue of being brought forth by nature.[27]

In the passage, what is for the most part is described as what is not necessary, but what occurs with a certain regularity. Aristotle uses the example of grey hair to illustrate the notion of "for the most part:" by nature human beings have grey hair when they age. However, not everyone has grey hair.[28] Aristotle says that what is "for the most part" is what can be "by nature" applicable to the subject. In a similar fashion, in talking about the agent in a standard state, I refer to how human beings are "for-the-most-part." The proposal is not that, quantitatively, most human beings are in the standard state. When Aristotle employs the notion of "for the most part," he discusses normative regularities.[29] The life of a human being, then, has a life cycle comparable to that of other natural entities. This is one dimension of the notion of nature that Aristotle brings to bear when he talks about natural goods. In *EE* ii 8*,* Aristotle defines how, for present purposes, he understands the expression "by nature" (φύσει):

> (T8) We pretty much define what is by nature with reference to these two criteria, that is, whatever arises for everyone as soon as they are born, and whatever comes about for us when our development is allowed to continue on, including grey hair, old age, and so forth.[30]

On this account, two kinds of features of human beings count as natural. First, features we have at birth. An example might be having two legs. Second, features that come about as a human being grows up and ages, such as grey hair. These features are "by nature." Of course, some human beings may be born with only one leg, and some human beings may not come to have grey hair when they age. Human life, according to Aristotle, belongs to a for-the-most-part domain. Whether one's hair grows grey, say, is contingent; nevertheless, it is natural insofar as it is for the most part the case.[31] This diachronic notion of human nature matters to ethics, it would seem, because human agents change over time. A plausible kind of naturalism

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[27] *Prior Analytics* 32b4-9, trans. by H. Tredennick with changes by the author.

[28] On the notion of being "for the most part," see Henry 2015, 169-191.

[29] Vogt 2017, 167. In metaphysics, say, we are concerned with necessary regularities. In the domain of ethics, however, we only find for the most part regularities. In her account of this feature of Aristotelian ethics, Vogt picks up Aristotle's notion of the "sublunary" sphere: like the lives of trees and animals, human lives play out in a sphere that does not display necessary regularity.

[30] *EE* ii 8.1224b31-35.

[31] For a discussion of for-the-most-part domain see Judson 1991, 71-100; Segev 2017, 117-209; Vogt 2017, 166-190. Cf. *NE* 1094b 11-27, 1104a4 -10.

should capture this dimension. The notion of nature, then, is normative in the sense that there are characteristics that human beings have and that vary depending on age. Children have certain characteristics that adults do not have. And yet, there is a sense in which it is natural for an adult to be able to walk, and this is compatible with the idea that it is not natural for a one-month baby to be able to walk.

The relevant notion of nature, however, is normative also in a more familiar sense, a sense that scholars of ancient philosophy often explore. What is natural for some being, here, is a matter of what this being is—in more technical terms, the "what it is" or essence of this being. To see in which sense "for the most part" is not a statistical notion, we also need to appeal to this way of thinking about nature (or natures, in the plural). Namely, according to Aristotle human beings are a certain kind of being. For present purposes, this is best illuminated by drawing on the function argument and the account of the soul that comes with it (*EE* ii 1.1219a24-39). We are beings for whom such-and-such activities are characteristic. On this conception, it is conceivable that human beings who live in greatly deprived circumstances—say, after a severe disaster—do not perform those activities that are characteristic of human nature. In the terms of the *Politics* there are conditions where all we want is survive, rather than live a good human life (*Politics* 1252b32). Insofar as it is conceivable that very many people live under greatly deprived circumstances, very many people are not active in ways that are characteristic for human beings.

The role of for the most part regularities in understanding natural goods brings to light an important dimension: namely, though a number of features of the standard state can appear to be descriptive, ultimately we are considering a notion where seemingly descriptive features are tied up with a normative framework. Throughout, Aristotle is concerned with what is characteristic for human beings, in a sense that relates to a normative notion of human nature.

5. A minimal notion of the standard state

With standard state, I wish to capture those normative regularities that characterise human beings for the most part or by nature. The following passage in *EE* vii 2 clarifies that for Aristotle, the human being in a standard state is an adult, healthy individual in normal conditions:

> (T9) Some good things are simple good, and others are good for a particular person but not simple; and the same things are simple good and simple pleasant. For we say that what is beneficial for a healthy body is simple good for a body, but we do not say this about what is good for a sick body (for example, medication and surgery). Similarly, what is pleasant for a healthy and sound body is simple pleasant for a body, for example, seeing in light, not in darkness is pleasant for someone with healthy eyes, yet, it is the opposite for someone with eye disease. And it is not the wine enjoyed by someone whose palate has been ruined by excessive

> drinking that is more pleasant (since those people adulterate it with sour wine) but rather the wine which is pleasant to uncorrupted tastes. The situation is similar with the soul, and it is not what children and wild beasts find pleasant but rather what mature people find pleasant, at least, when we remember both we choose the latter. The relationship of a base and foolish person to a decent and wise one is like the relationship of a child or a wild beast to a mature human being. What is pleasant for them is what matches their states - and for the latter that is good and beautiful things.[32]

Aristotle distinguishes the simple (ἁπλῶς) good from the good for the particular individual (τινί) (Cf. *EE* vii 1236b37, 1237a5, 1238b7). I discussed this distinction as option (4). Aristotle says that the same things that are simple good are also simple pleasant. Then he introduces a comparison with healthy and sick bodies. Some things are simple good for the body: these things are good for the healthy body. However, they are not good for the sick body. Similarly, the things that are simple good for the healthy body are also simple pleasant for this body. But they are not pleasant for the sick body. The simple good and the simple pleasant go hand in hand when the body is healthy. The comparison with the healthy body suggests that what is simple good is not what is good for an ideal or exceptional individual. Conversely, the comparison with the healthy body suggests that what is simple good is good and pleasant for the individual in a standard state. As Aristotle says in the passage, what is simple good is good for an adult with healthy and sound body.[33] These conditions are not exceptional for human beings. Rather, they capture how we are for the most part and by nature.

Aristotle also considers the case of the drunk person: what is good for this person is not simple good. This supports the idea that what is simple good is good for an agent when her capacities are not altered. This dimension of the standard state is continuous with health. Extreme alterations of our capacities—say, through strong drugs—seem comparable to illness. Finally, Aristotle says that we are not considering what is good for children or wild beasts, but what is good for mature individuals. Again, this is presented as continuous with the earlier dimensions. Presumably, being adult is also a physical and mental condition, a state in which we are, say, strong in ways in which children are not and in which our capacities for perceiving and thinking are developed in ways in which they are not during childhood. The notion of natural goods, then, takes a diachronic perspective. It does not identify features of human beings that would manifest differently throughout life. Rather, it identifies features of human beings that culminate and are especially manifest during adulthood.

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[32] *EE* vii 2.1235b30-1236a6

[33] In the view that I defend, the agent in a standard state is healthy. Aristotle says that bodily excellences are natural goods. Examples of bodily excellences are strength, having athletic capacities, and so forth. Even though Aristotle does not specify whether health is a natural good or not, in *EE* viii 3.1248b22-5, health is closely connected to strength.

The analysis of natural goods does not aim to give us a criterion on what the best life is or on the goal of a good human life: as Aristotle says in *EE* ii 1.1219a39, the life of complete virtue is the best life. Natural goods provide us with basic conditions for our life to go well. As I showed, these goods are good for the agent in a standard state. They are good also for the virtuous agent if this agent is in a standard state. If someone is virtuous, natural goods can promote our best activity, namely contemplation. This is clear from what Aristotle says at the end of the *EE:*

> (T10) Whatever choice and acquisition of natural goods (either goods of the body or money or friends or other goods) will most effectively produce (ποιήσει) contemplation of god, that is the best and this is the most beautiful limit; and whatever choice and acquisition of natural goods impedes, whether by deficiency or by excess our cultivation and contemplation of god, is base. And this applies to the soul, and it is the best limit for the soul when one is least aware of the irrational part of the soul as such.[34]

As Aristotle says, the choice and the acquisition of natural goods that produce the contemplation of god is the most beautiful limit. This claim is in need of clarification. Contemplation is the highest and most beautiful activity that human beings can engage in.[35] As Aristotle puts this, natural goods promote contemplation only if they are chosen and acquired in the right way. For example we cannot acquire natural goods through vicious actions (for example, via deception and lying). According to Broadie, contemplation is the most beautiful activity and it is the best limit for the soul: while engaged in this activity, the soul perceives the irrational part as little as possible (Broadie 1994, 385). According to her interpretation, virtue allows the agent to choose and acquire natural goods with a view to what would contribute to a good life. In agreement with Broadie, I think that natural goods can help us engage in contemplation provided that they are carefully chosen and acquired in the right measure. That is, an excessive amount of natural goods, or the lack of natural goods may impede the contemplation of the divine. But if someone has just the right amount and the right mix of natural goods, these goods provide the perfect conditions for contemplation.

To sum up, natural goods have a high level of generality. Human beings relate to them with characteristic desiderative attitudes. Natural goods are competitive goods for which we fight. And their account involves attention to health, unaltered capacities and adulthood. The claim that I am considering here - the natural good is what is good for the human being in a standard state - is not a relativist claim. Good has

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[34] *EE* viii 3.1249b18-24.

[35] For present purposes, I set aside the question of whether happiness consists in virtuous actions and contemplation or whether there are two kinds of happiness, one that consists in virtuous actions and another that consists in contemplation. The problem of whether happiness consists only in contemplation or also in virtuous actions has been raised by Hardie 1967. Among others, Kenny, Cooper, and Kraut defend the dominant interpretation of happiness in the *NE*; Ackrill defends the inclusive interpretation. Cooper and Kenny argues that in the *EE,* happiness is activity according to all the parts of the soul.

a relatum, and is relative in that sense. But the natural good is not relativist, where this would mean that whatever appears good to someone really is good. That is, the formulation that what seems to X is how things are for X leaves room for the possibility that one's own seeming, or in other words one's own belief, can be false.[36] This makes all the difference: according to relativism, all "seemings" or beliefs are true; each of them is true for the subject who holds it. For a position to differ from relativism it must permit falsity. Falsity shows up from a third-person perspective. Falsity also shows up from a first-person perspective. It may appear good to a person with a cold to stay in bed all day. The agent herself can be aware that what appears good to her appears good to her *qua* someone who has a cold. In other words, to stay in bed all day is good for someone who is not in a standard state. But it is not simple or natural good. The natural good is what is good for human beings in a standard state. The agent in the standard state is adult, healthy and in normal conditions; this state captures the normative regularities characteristics of human beings as we are by nature or for the most part. This analysis does not exhaust what is good for human beings. And it is only the first step toward a more detailed investigation of Aristotelian naturalism in the *EE*. But it attends to a fundamental kind of good: natural goods. It argues that these goods—qua goods we desire—are basic to human life.

Conclusion

In this paper, I offered an interpretation of the distinctive Eudemian notion of natural goods and of the agent for whom natural goods are good. I argued that the notion of natural goods cuts across the distinction among external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul. Honour, wealth, bodily excellences, pieces of good luck and power are genuine goods. These goods have a particular relation to how we are for the most part or by nature.

The notion of natural goods is philosophically interesting insofar as it is the first step toward an unexplored version of ethical naturalism that I call NGN. As I hope to have shown, natural goods are what are better known as *simple goods*. The two expressions pick out the same goods. The expressions are not fundamental for the distinctively Nicomachean proposals. In the Eudemian account of goods, however, the notion of natural goods plays a fundamental role. I considered six options to interpret the notion of natural goods: natural goods are good only if used with wisdom, natural goods are external goods, natural goods are good absolutely, they are good for the particular agent, they are good for the the best agent, and they are good for the agent in a standard state. I provided evidence in favour of the last claim. The best agent as well

[36] For a discussion of seemings as beliefs see Vogt 2017, 95.

as many other agents are in the standard state. Though natural goods have a relatum, there is nothing relativist about Aristotle's account of natural goods. The standard state involves characteristic desiderative attitudes. The standard state involves normative dimensions: health, unimpeded capacities, and adulthood. In sum, the notion of natural goods cuts across the distinction between the descriptive and the normative. Aristotle's theory is one about how human beings are for the most part and by nature. This, however, is not a statistical notion, but one that latches on to Aristotle's thought about the nature of things, and thereby to normative notions of what it is for something to be what it is.[37]

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