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ARISTOTLE ON THE FINE DEATH*

ABSTRACT

*Aristotle's notion of the fine death (*καλὸς θάνατος*) confronts us with a serious difficulty: to what extent is a fine death, which involves dying courageously on the battlefield, consistent with his theory of* εὐδαιμονία*? This article responds to the challenge by bringing in two parts of Aristotle's ethics. It argues (a) that the theory of 'mixed actions' in* Nicomachean Ethics *3.1 offers us a good model for understanding the choice that the courageous soldier is confronted with; and (b) that the fine death is compatible with* εὐδαιμονία *on the basis of the discussion of* εὐδαιμονία *and misfortune in* Nicomachean Ethics *1.10.*

Keywords: Aristotle; death; courage; mixed actions; the fine; *eudaimonia*

The fine death (καλὸς θάνατος) is a celebrated concept in Greek literature.[1] Traditionally, it applies to male warriors who die on the battlefield as they fight for their city and gain long-lasting renown in return for their noble efforts.[2] The most famous example of a fine death is Achilles, who ends his life gloriously in the Trojan war and wins deathless fame among the Greeks.[3] Paradoxical as it may seem, the Greek heroes who ended their life violently in war were praised as 'blessed' (μάκαρες) and 'fortunate' (ὄλβιοι).[4] A fine death did not deprive these warriors of happiness; on the contrary, it seemed to be an important part of it.

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[1] Possible translations of καλός include 'noble', 'fine', 'fair', 'beautiful' and 'honourable'. Following the translations of the *Nicomachean Ethics* by Rowe (Oxford, 2002) and Irwin (Hackett, 1999), I employ 'fine'. For a discussion of the challenges that accompany different interpretations, see A. Kosman, 'Beauty and the good: situating the *kalon*', *CPh* 105 (2010), 341–62.

[2] For a discussion of the Homeric corpus, see J.-P. Vernant, 'A "beautiful death" and the disfigured corpse in Homer', in F.I. Zeitlin (ed.), *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* (Princeton, 1991), 50–74; and for an analysis of the Athenian funeral orations see N. Loraux (transl. A. Sheridan), *The Invention of Athens. The Funeral Oration in the Classical City* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1986). Furthermore, the idea of a fine death was reshaped in Greek tragedies, where it also applies to women. See N. Loraux (transl. A. Forster), *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1987); and S. Papastamati, 'The poetics of *kalos thanatos* in Euripides' *Hecuba*: masculine and feminine motifs in Polyxena's death', *Mnemosyne* 70 (2017), 361–85.

[3] Achilles expresses an ambiguity towards his fate and brings to light the contradictions of the heroic ideal: cf. Hom. *Od.* 11.488–503. Another later example is Tellus the Athenian, who on Herodotus' account 'crowned his life with a most glorious death' (τελευτὴ τοῦ βίου λαμπροτάτη ἐπεγένετο) and 'died finely' (ἀπέθανε κάλλιστα) as he fought for his city in war (1.30–1). As Papastamati remarks (n. 2), 363 n. 10, Tellus was probably an elder man and may represent a counterexample to the idea that the fine death is restricted to those who die young.

[4] E.g. Hom. *Od*. 11.482–3; Eur. *Tro.* 1170. In Hdt. 1.30, Solon praises Tellus as 'the most fortunate' (ὀλβιώτατον) person he has ever met.

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The concept of the fine death is also present in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, where it shows up in the discussion of courage.[5] While Aristotle's conception might be less glorifying than the Homeric ideal of deathless fame, it nevertheless confronts us with a serious challenge: to what extent is a fine death, which involves dying courageously on the battlefield, consistent with Aristotle's theory of εὐδαιμονία? As several scholars have pointed out, there is something deeply paradoxical in viewing the courageous soldier fighting on the battlefield as flourishing in the moment of death.[6] Yet the courageous person is engaging in virtuous activity, which is essential to εὐδαιμονία. How are we to unite these seemingly conflicting aspects of the fine death? Can a life that ends violently on the battlefield truly be understood as *flourishing*?

This article argues that it can, but that we need to bring together two different elements of Aristotle's ethics to understand why: his theory of voluntariness (3.1) and his reflections on how εὐδαιμονία is affected by misfortune (1.10). More precisely, my aim is to explain courageous acts as 'mixed actions' (μικταὶ πράξεις)—that is, as actions that are not choiceworthy in themselves but only in especially difficult situations. While mixed actions are most known for being performed out of fear of great evils, they can also be done because of something fine and involve the endurance of pain as the price of great and fine results. By coupling this interpretation with Aristotle's reflections on the importance of good and bad fortune in *Eth. Nic.* 1.10, where he claims that great and fine results enable a person to win back εὐδαιμονία if it has been lost, I argue that the fine death can be fully squared with the Aristotelian understanding of εὐδαιμονία. This approach makes an important difference to our interpretation of the fine death; it allows us to acknowledge the highly unfortunate circumstances of the soldier, while also explaining why he is not ultimately deprived of his εὐδαιμονία.

The structure of the article is as follows: the first part explains the problem in detail and how previous scholars have responded to it. The second part proposes a novel interpretation. It argues that Aristotle's idea of mixed actions offers a helpful model for understanding the dilemma that arises for someone who is confronted with the choice of risking their life in war. Furthermore, it brings in Aristotle's comments on how εὐδαιμονία is affected by strokes of misfortune and his idea that εὐδαιμονία also requires a perfect life, and it argues that great and fine achievements indeed matter for this perfect life. The most significant upshot of this reading is that we can resolve the apparent inconsistency between Aristotle's ideas on courage and εὐδαιμονία, but also explain why he does not embrace the fine death unconditionally. Part 3 addresses alternative interpretations and defends the proposed reading against potential objections.

1. THE PROBLEM

The problem of understanding the fine death arises from Aristotle's account of courage (ἀνδρεία), which, on his view, is most clearly exhibited when a person faces the prospect

[5] Henceforth all references to Aristotle not preceded by the name of a work are to the *Nicomachean Ethics* (= *Eth. Nic*). I quote Bywater's edition (Oxford, 1894) and Irwin's translation (n. 1), with some emendations.

[6] E.g. L.S. Pangle, 'The anatomy of courage in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*', *The Review of Politics* 80 (2018), 569–90, at 587; and J.J. Sanford, 'Are you man enough? Aristotle and courage', *IPQ* 50 (2010), 431–45, at 440–1. See also D.S. Hutchinson, *The Virtues of Aristotle* (London and New York, 1986), 71, who notes that courage 'raises a problem for Aristotle'; and W.F.R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory* (Oxford, 1980[2]), 331, who states that Aristotle's doctrine of self-love is 'not a complete failure, but … not a complete success'.

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of death when fighting in war.[7] To explain the challenge of explaining how the fine death relates to εὐδαιμονία, we need to begin with his theory of courage.[8]

Aristotle comments on courage in *Eth. Nic.* 3.6–9. According to his account, courage constitutes a mean positioned between fear and confidence, and is the virtue that makes us endure what is frightening (3.6 1115a6–7, 3.7 1115b10–13). Now, there are many things to fear in life, not least poverty, ill health, bad reputation, friendlessness and death. But the truly courageous person is not concerned with all of these.[9] Courage has to do with the fear of death, which is the most frightening of all (3.6 1115a10–13, 24–7). Moreover, courage does not concern death under any circumstances. For instance, Aristotle rejects the view that death at sea or death from illness is the courageous person's concern (3.6 1115a28–9).[10] Instead, courage has to do with death in 'the finest circumstances', which Aristotle connects to war (3.6 1115a29–35):

> In what conditions, then, is death the courageous person's concern? Surely in the finest conditions. Now such deaths are those in war, since they occur in the greatest and finest danger … Hence someone is called fully courageous if he is intrepid in facing a fine death and the immediate dangers that bring death. And this is above all true of the dangers of war.

True courage involves risking one's life on the battlefield and enduring when confronted with the deadly dangers of war—that is, when one is facing a 'fine death' (καλὸς θάνατος). The courageous man has the possibility of running away from the danger, but he chooses to remain steadfast.[11] This, however, does not mean that courage consists in enduring *every* dangerous wartime situation. Courage specifically entails that the feelings and actions of the virtuous person accord with what something is worth, and we would be mistaken in viewing courage as a willingness to risk life for small gains (3.7 1115b19–20,

[7] The Greek ἀνδρεία literally means 'manliness' and Aristotle appears to have only men in mind when discussing true courage. Hence, I use the male pronoun when referring to the courageous person; but this should not be taken as a statement about how language should be used.

[8] My focus lies on the εὐδαιμονία of the courageous person. Yet Aristotle's account of courage gives rise to other puzzles. One such issue concerns the narrowness of the account: why does true courage seem to be limited to men fighting on the battlefield? And can the account of courage be extended so that it applies to people other than adult males fighting in war? For a discussion of these questions, see Sanford (n. 6). For a theory that there is a common principle that explains why Aristotle excludes women, slaves, and gods from the sphere of courage, see M. Deslauriers, 'Aristotle on *andreia*, divine and sub-human virtues', in R.M. Rosen and I. Sluiter (edd.), Andreia*: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden and Boston, 2003), 187–211. Two further puzzles are how courage works as a mean given that it involves both fear and confidence, and how courageous actions can both be undertaken for their own sakes and for the sake of winning a war; see D. Pears, 'Courage as a mean', in A.O. Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley / Los Angeles / London, 1980), 171–87.

[9] This does not mean that a good person does not care about such evils at all. The point is simply that Aristotle restricts the sphere of courage to a far more particular situation.

[10] Cf. also 1115a35–b6. It is no coincidence that Aristotle refers to these examples and rejects them as true candidates for courage. In Plato, *Laches* 191c7–e2, Socrates champions a more inclusive account of courage, specifically mentioning those who are courageous during trouble at sea or in sickness.

[11] Whether he has the possibility of avoiding the danger continuously is another question. The importance of remaining steadfast seemingly implies that the courageous person has the option of retreating. This proposal may explain why Aristotle rejects that the courageous person is concerned with the prospect of death from sickness or at sea; such situations do not leave us with any opportunities of escape (cf. 3.6 1115a28–9, 1115a35–b6). Still, Aristotle admits that the courageous soldier is not always able to avoid death, as he remarks that one may also display courage when it is 'fine to be killed' (καλὸν τὸ ἀποθανεῖν, 1115b5). One such example would be the Spartans fighting at Thermopylae, who ended up with no opportunity of escape. Given this latter remark, it seems too narrow to restrict courage to situations where soldiers can retreat to safety at any point during a battle.

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3.9 1117b19–20). The truly courageous person surely knows better than that—for life is not something he is willing to squander in vain.

Since this virtue involves serious danger, there is no surprise that the courageous person experiences pain. Although the end of courage appears to be pleasant, the circumstances obscure this pleasure (3.9 1117a35–b2). Aristotle compares the situation of the courageous person to athletes who are competing in contests. Just as boxers find the aim, namely the crown and honours, pleasant, it is also distressing and painful for them to take the punches and bear the hard work (3.9 1117b2–5).[12] The courageous person, however, is not only pained by the prospect of physical harm; the prospect of dying also hurts him. In fact, the more virtuous and happier he is, the more the awareness of death pains him (3.9 1117b7–16):

> And so, if the same is true for courage, the courageous person will find death and wounds painful, and suffer them involuntarily, but he will endure them because that is fine or because failure is shameful. Indeed, the truer it is that he has every virtue and the happier he is, the more pain he will feel at the prospect of death. For this sort of person, more than anyone, finds it worthwhile to be alive, and knows he is being deprived of the greatest goods, and this is painful. But he is no less courageous for all that; presumably, indeed, he is all the more courageous, because he chooses what is fine in war at the cost of all these goods. It is not true, then, in the case of every virtue that its active exercise is pleasant; it is pleasant only in so far as we attain the end.

Aristotle here tells us that the courageous man who faces death is greatly pained, both because of the wounds that are inflicted upon him and because it hurts him to know that he loses life and the various great goods that make it so valuable to him. He suffers death and wounds 'involuntarily' (ἄκοντι) but chooses to remain steadfast. Given these circumstances, it is hard to see how the courageous person could enjoy exercising the virtue of courage during a deadly fight. Still, this impression is moderated by what Aristotle later writes in *Eth. Nic*. In his account of self-love, Aristotle is clear that a person who sacrifices himself for others also obtains something (9.8 1169a18–26):

> It is quite true that, as they say, the excellent person labours for his friends and for his native country, and will die for them if he must; he will sacrifice money, honours, and contested goods in general, in achieving the fine for himself. For he will choose intense pleasure for a short time over slight pleasure for a long time; a year of living finely over many years of undistinguished life; and a single fine and great action over many small actions. This is presumably true of the one who dies for others; he does indeed choose something great and fine for himself.

Rather than only suffering a loss, the person who dies for others gains something great and fine for himself. This person is a self-lover in the truest sense; he aims at the great and fine at all costs, even when this means to give up on life. This idea accords well with what Aristotle writes about the courageous person, who is repeatedly said to be motivated by the fine in *Eth. Nic.* 3.6–9.[13] Yet one cannot but wonder: how does all of this relate to the εὐδαιμονία of the courageous person?

[12] Aristotle leaves some doubt about the proper end of courage. Are courageous acts indeed solely undertaken for the sake of the fine? Or are they also undertaken with a view to victory and honours, as this comparison suggests? For a discussion of this issue, see L. Ward, 'Nobility and necessity: the problem of courage in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*', *American Political Science Review* 95 (2001), 71–83.

[13] E.g. 1115b12–13, 1115b23, 1116a11–12, 1116a28, 1116b2–3, 1116b30–1, 1117a8, 1117b7–9, 1117b13–15.

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When it comes to the happiness of the person who ends one's life nobly in war, there is no clear agreement among scholars.[14] One proposal is that the fine death simply involves giving up one's own εὐδαιμονία.[15] Others maintain that the courageous person ends life in happiness, although the circumstances of his life are far from ideal.[16] Still others admit that the short life of the courageous person is happy, but they describe it as *less* happy than a long and good life would be.[17] Some commentators further conclude that Aristotle's account is simply too vague on this point.[18]

To clarify the relation between the fine death and εὐδαιμονία, it is essential to turn to Aristotle's theory of voluntary and involuntary actions in *Eth. Nic.* 3.1. More precisely, the idea is this: fighting courageously and dying on the battlefield count as what Aristotle calls 'mixed actions'. These actions are painful to endure and are never choiceworthy in themselves, but are still worth committing under certain conditions, since the great and fine especially result from harrowing circumstances. This move allows us to not only acknowledge the highly unfortunate conditions of those fighting in war, but also see how good people manage to engage in virtuous activity in times of hardship. To settle on whether such activity is enough for the fine death to be considered consistent with εὐδαιμονία, I finally turn to Aristotle's discussion of fortune in *Eth. Nic.* 1.10 and his claim that εὐδαιμονία requires both perfect virtue and a perfect life. I argue that fineness and greatness matter to the perfection of life and that the courageous soldier does not give up his own happiness when dying finely in war. Consequently, we can explain both how fine actions can be squared with εὐδαιμονία and why Aristotle does not praise the fine death unreservedly.

[14] Part 3 returns to a discussion of previous scholarship. At the outset, one might reply that the courageous person does not die in εὐδαιμονία because he has not yet lived long enough to attain εὐδαιμονία at all. But let us, for the sake of argument, assume that this is the case: as is clear from 3.9 1117b7–16, Aristotle accepts that the courageous person may be virtuous and happy before he dies.

[15] D. McKerlie, 'Friendship, self-love, and concern for others in Aristotle's ethics', *AncPhil* 11 (1991), 85–101 argues that Aristotle should be labelled an 'altruistic' eudaimonist and at 92 holds that fighting courageously on the battlefield '[makes] my own life stand worse with respect to *eudaimonia*, but its consequences for the *eudaimonia* of other people would make it the best thing to do'.

[16] Sanford (n. 6) at 440 proposes that 'the courageous man is happy in his beautiful and noble death' and at 442 that he 'flourishes in his death by bringing to perfection his nature in the best way open to him'. K. Rogers, 'Aristotle on the motive of courage', *SJPh* 32 (1994), 303–13 argues that Aristotle 'fails to synchronize' fineness (or, in her words, 'nobility'), εὐδαιμονία, and virtue explicitly, though she maintains that some steps may be taken to clarify their relation to one another. She suggests that self-respect is the connection of fineness to εὐδαιμονία and concludes that the courageous soldier does indeed die happily. M. Jimenez, 'Aristotle on enduring evils while staying happy', in P. Kontos (ed.), *Evil in Aristotle* (Cambridge, 2018), 150–69, at 168 claims that, since 'sacrificing one's life for a noble goal is virtuous, this kind of action is always a contribution to the agent's happiness, even when it results in premature death'. J. Milliken, 'Aristotle's aesthetic ethics', *SJPh* 44 (2006), 319–39 also appears to belong to this group and suggests that a fine death can be 'aesthetically pleasing' at 332.

[17] G. Pearson, 'Courage and temperance', in R. Polansky (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's* Nicomachean Ethics (New York, 2014), 110–34, at 122 maintains that that a young and courageous person would have been happier if he lived a full life, owing to Aristotle's statement that εὐδαιμονία requires a 'perfect life'. Furthermore, R. Kraut, *Aristotle on the Human Good* (Princeton, 1989), 122–3 suggests that the life of the courageous person is less happy than the life of those he saves, since a long and happy life is better than a short and happy life. Part 2 discusses how the fine death relates to the perfect life.

[18] J. Tutuska, 'Aristotle on the noble and the good: philosophical imprecision in the *Nicomachean Ethics*', *AncPhil* 33 (2013), 159–79 argues that Aristotle's notions of the 'noble' (καλόν) and the 'good' (ἀγαθόν) are philosophically imprecise throughout the *Eth. Nic.* At 164 and 171–2, he maintains that there is a gap between what is noble and what is good in *Eth. Nic.* 3.6–9, whereas there is no gap in 9.8. Cf. also Hardie (n. 6), 331; Pangle (n. 6), 587–8.

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2. THE FINE DEATH RECONSIDERED

What evidence is there that Aristotle's philosophy leaves room for understanding the fine death as being consistent with εὐδαιμονία, while also not embracing the fine death unconditionally? Let us start by looking at how 'mixed actions' can be a fruitful model for explaining why the fine death is not worth striving for under any circumstances, before considering why it still does not deprive a courageous person of εὐδαιμονία in the end.

a. Mixed actions

Aristotle discusses how we are to define an action as voluntary (ἑκών) or involuntary (ἄκων) in *Eth. Nic.* 3.1. It is important for him to settle this question, since voluntary actions are those that should receive praise and blame, whereas involuntary actions can be pardoned and sometimes even pitied (1109b30–4). Before approaching the category of 'mixed actions', let us clarify how he separates involuntary from voluntary actions.

An action is defined as voluntary when the principle of the action lies within the agent and when the agent is aware of the circumstances that constitute the action (1111a22–4). Involuntary actions, by contrast, are either forced or caused by ignorance of particular facts. That something is forced entails that the principle of the action lies outside the agent, who is passive and contributes nothing (1110b15–17). Imagine, for instance, a person physically shoved to the ground by someone else, thereby breaking a precious vase in the fall. The breaking of the vase was not a voluntary action by the person because the principle of the action was external. The other possibility is that an involuntary action happens 'because of ignorance' (δι' ἄγνοιαν) of particular facts, that is, an unavoidable lack of information about the circumstances. Put differently, the agent chooses to perform some action without having all the relevant information about the particular facts surrounding it. It is, however, not the case that he acts 'in ignorance' (ἀγνοῶν), as when his ignorance is triggered by a state of anger or drunkenness for which the agent is in fact responsible (1110b24–7). To count as involuntary, the action needs to be caused by ignorance of particular facts that have nothing to do with the moral quality of the agent. Finally, it is important that an involuntary action always makes the agent feel pain (τὸ ἐπίλυπον) and regret, otherwise the action would only be 'non-voluntary' (1110b18–19).

This brings us to the idea of 'mixed actions' (μικταὶ πράξεις). These cover a range of actions whose voluntariness is difficult to adjudicate. Such actions may be performed out of fear of great evils, or because something fine is at stake (1110a4–5). Aristotle offers us two examples. First, he mentions a person who is told to do something shameful by a tyrant who is threatening to kill the family of that person (1110a5–8). Second, he mentions the necessity of throwing cargo overboard in storms. While no one would willingly (ἑκών) throw away goods without qualification (ἁπλῶς), anyone with sense would do so in a storm to save himself and his shipmates (1110a8–11). Neither of these two examples, I take it, refers to mixed actions that are done 'because of something fine' (διὰ καλόν τι, 1110a4–5), but to those that are done from fear of greater evils. But they underscore a basic feature of mixed actions: we would never wish to do them for their own sakes, but reason nevertheless bids us to do them under certain difficult and hard circumstances. This is, properly speaking, what makes them 'mixed'. On the one hand, they are in a sense voluntary (ἑκούσιοι). The agent may be said to do them voluntarily

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because the principle of the action is within him. On the other hand, such actions are involuntary (ἀκούσιοι) without the appropriate qualifications; no one would ever choose such acts under normal conditions.[19] Put differently, mixed actions are never in themselves choiceworthy but only on specific occasions. The circumstances make such actions similar to involuntary actions, but, unlike the latter, they are up to the agent and therefore voluntary. As a result, Aristotle considers mixed actions to be closer to voluntary than to involuntary actions (1110b1–7).

For our purposes, it is significant that some mixed actions are connected to the fine (τὸ καλόν). This is a recurring point throughout the chapter, as is attested in the following passage (1110a19–23):

> For such [mixed] actions people are sometimes actually praised, whenever they endure something shameful or painful as the price of great and fine results. If they do the reverse, they are blamed; for it is a base person who endures what is most shameful for nothing fine or for only some moderately fine result.

In cases where people endure something painful (λυπηρόν) for great and fine results (μεγάλων καὶ καλῶν), we heap praise (ἐπαινοῦνται) upon them.[20] This statement echoes a familiar line in Aristotle's account of courage: that the courageous person endures something painful (λυπηρόν) when being deprived of the greatest goods, but still chooses what is fine (καλόν) at the cost of these goods in war (3.9 1117b12–15). Courage is also said to be justly praised (ἐπαινεῖται), since it is harder to endure something painful than merely refrain from doing pleasant things (3.9 1117a33–5). Furthermore, his description of the perseverance involved in both cases is no less striking. When it comes to mixed actions, certain people 'endure' (ὑπομένωσιν) something painful as the price of great and fine results, while, in the exact same manner, the courageous person is said to 'endure' (ὑπομένειν) things that are frightening on numerous occasions.[21] In short, the accounts of courage and mixed actions are strikingly similar.[22]

[19] It is important to be clear about the sense in which such actions are 'mixed'. As argued by K.M. Nielsen, 'Dirtying Aristotle's hands? The analysis of "mixed acts" in *Nicomachean Ethics* III, 1', *Phronesis* 52 (2007), 270–300, at 273, they are not mixed because they are simultaneously 'right, even obligatory' and 'wrong, shameful, and the like', but because they are both voluntary and involuntary.

[20] Aristotle refers to μεγάλων καὶ καλῶν without specifying whether they are 'achievements', 'objects' (i.e. material resources) or something else. Yet the context strongly suggests that they are achievements rather than things: the defining feature of these mixed actions is that people are praised for them, and Aristotle specifically attributes praiseworthiness to fine and virtuous actions (1.12 1101b31–2 and 2.5 1106a1–2; cf. also 3.9 1117a32–4 and 9.8 1169a6–8). Should someone accept something shameful or painful to secure material goods, by contrast, it is hard to see why we would praise them. For an analysis of the fine and the praiseworthy see K. Rogers, 'Aristotle's conception of τὸ καλόν', *AncPhil* 13 (1993), 355–71, at 358–60. See also n. 29.

[21] E.g. 2.2 1104b1–3; 2.3 1104b7–8; 3.6 1115a25–6; 3.7 1115b11–13, b17–19, b23–4, b32–3, 1116a10–12; 3.8 1117a16–17; 3.9 1117a32–5, b7–9; 3.11 1118b28–30; 10.8 1178b12–13.

[22] One might object that the two accounts also significantly differ. Aristotle presents the unwelcome choice of throwing cargo overboard to avoid death in shipwreck as one of two paradigmatic cases of mixed action (3.1 1110a8–11). But the account of courage rejects the idea that perishing from a shipwreck is the brave person's concern (3.6 1115a28–9, 1115a35–b6). Given how differently he assesses this case, one may wonder whether the dialectical flow of the two accounts speaks against bringing them together. In response to this worry, I underline the importance of distinguishing between mixed actions done to avoid greater evils, and those undertaken also because of something fine (3.1 1110a4–5, 19–22). The latter is clearly the case for courageous acts, given the current interpretation; but this feature is not shared by every mixed action, and it does not seem to obtain when one throws cargo overboard in storms. In fact, Aristotle's statement that death by shipwreck is not an occasion when being killed is fine (καλὸν τὸ ἀποθανεῖν, 3.6 1115b4–6) strongly suggests that fineness is not a feature of the actions undertaken in this situation.

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A closer reading of the account of courage at *Eth. Nic.* 3.6–9 strengthens this suggestion. On the one hand, Aristotle is clear that courage is tied to voluntary action: the courageous person must be moved by the fine and not by compulsion (οὐ δι' ἀνάγκην, 3.8 1116b2–3). Neither can ignorant people (οἱ ἀγνοοῦντες) be courageous since such people run away after realizing the truth of the matter (3.8 1117a22–6). The elimination of both compulsion and ignorance as causes of courage stands in line with Aristotle's belief that voluntary actions can neither be forced nor be caused by ignorance of particular facts (3.1 1109b35–1110a1). Additionally, we praise (ἐπαινοῦμεν) courageous people because of their actions and achievements (cf. 1.12 1101b14–18), which only makes sense given an element of voluntariness. On the other hand, there is some element of involuntariness involved in courage: the courageous person suffers the wounds that are inflicted upon him in war 'involuntarily' (ἄκοντι, 3.9 1117b8). The courageous soldier on the battlefield would never choose risking such evils under normal circumstances and he only does this at 'the right time'—that is, when reason bids. To put it in the words of Aristotle, he only risks his life for the right end, in the right way, at the right time, and following what reason prescribes (3.7 1115b17–20).

These qualifications shed light on why it is possible to participate in war both virtuously and viciously, and it is important to understand exactly when one should find it appropriate to fight.[23] Aristotle is clear that actions in war require the existence of various troubles and are never choiceworthy as a rule. In *Eth. Nic.* 10.7 1177b9–10, he states that 'no one chooses (αἱρεῖται) to fight a war' or 'makes war for the sake of fighting a war'. He makes a similar point in the *Politics* (7.13 1333a35–b3): war is for the sake of peace, and even though men must be able to go to war, peace is better. In other words, the virtuous person would never freely choose to fight a war without qualification. But in which situations would he do so? To answer this question, we need to bring in Aristotle's account of greatness of soul (μεγαλοψυχία). Greatness of soul entails that a person has the right attitude to his own worth; moreover, it does not arise without the other virtues (4.3 1124a2–3). Although this feature is not unique to greatness of soul, the description of this virtue adds important nuances to our understanding of courage. For instance, Aristotle claims that it would not befit the great-souled person to run away from danger like a coward (4.3 1123b31). Thus the features of the great-souled person may also tell us something about courage. Consider the following passage (4.3 1124b6–9):

> He [that is, the great-souled person] does not face dangers in a small cause; he does not face them frequently, since he honours few things; and he is no lover of danger. But he faces dangers in a great cause, and whenever he faces them he is unsparing of his own life, since he does not think life at all costs is worth living.

[23] A more general difficulty about morally virtuous actions is this: while they are said to be choiceworthy for their own sakes (e.g. 10.6 1176b6–9), they are also naturally aimed at external ends. After all, no one would risk their life and limbs in war, or choose to donate a substantial portion of their fortune, if these actions were not expected to promote certain good consequences. How are we to explain these conflicting features? One strategy is to consider whether they point to different ways in which virtuous actions can be valuable. If that is correct, an action may be chosen both for its own sake and for the sake of further ends. See S. Hirji, 'Acting virtuously as an end in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*', *BJHP* 26 (2018), 1006–26, who distinguishes between virtuous actions and what she labels 'acting virtuously': the former are motivated by ends beyond themselves, while the latter involves performing a virtuous action through exercising one's virtuous character and is itself an end. Since 'acting virtuously' depends on virtuous actions, it will involve both features. For other similar proposals see J. Whiting, 'Eudaimonia, external results, and choosing virtuous actions for themselves', *Ph&PhenR* 65 (2002), 270–90; and Y. Luthra, 'Aristotle on choosing virtuous action for its own sake', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 96 (2015), 423–41.

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The great-souled man is no lover of danger but is unsparing of his own life when there is a worthy cause. This attitude towards danger implies that he is courageous. What is more, the passage sheds additional light on the motivation for being unsparing of one's life: because life is not worth living at all costs. This information underscores that the courageous person does not risk his life only for the sake of other people. He also does it for himself, because his own life is valuable to him. In other words, the courageous man is confronted with the need to do something deeply painful to protect the life he cherishes the most. He may abstain from doing what is painful; but in that case his εὐδαιμονία will most definitely be lost. Should the city-state be defeated by the enemy, he would face a serious risk of being enslaved, plundered or even killed—and so would his loved ones.[24] The possibility of maintaining his happiness is only open to him in so far as he does something painful. This distressing situation, I take it, renders it paradigmatic of mixed actions that are done because of something fine: the fine is available to him only to the extent that he can endure the frightening and deeply painful circumstances affecting him.

To sum up, the account of mixed actions equips us with a fruitful model for understanding the choice that the courageous soldier is confronted with. Yet this picture needs to be filled out. Aristotle repeatedly claims, both in the discussion of mixed actions and in the account of courage, that the virtuous person acts because of something 'fine'.[25] Exactly how does this feature relate to the εὐδαιμονία of the virtuous person? Evidence for answering this question can be found in Aristotle's reflections on Solon's dictum in *Eth. Nic.* 1.10.

b. The perfect life

Aristotle's reflections on Solon's dictum in *Eth. Nic.* 1.10 constitutes a valuable supplement when discussing whether the fine death is consistent with εὐδαιμονία, as he there considers how strokes of bad fortune can ruin the εὐδαιμονία of a virtuous man and relates it to the need to live a perfect life (τέλειος βίος). While it is outside of the scope of this article to offer a full analysis of Aristotle's reflections in this chapter, it is necessary to clarify whether a fine death can be squared with the perfect life requirement. To demonstrate that this is indeed possible is my aim in what follows. More precisely, I examine what Aristotle says about our chances of regaining εὐδαιμονία if many serious misfortunes should strike us. His answer proves especially useful when reflecting upon how the fine death relates to happiness and how it relates to the perfect life more specifically.

Aristotle's overall concern in *Eth. Nic.* 1.10 is to discuss Solon's dictum, which advises us to count no-one happy while they are alive.[26] Our fortune is deeply unstable and liable to shift, and Solon therefore claims that it is necessary to withhold any conclusions about someone's happiness until their life is over. Thus, Aristotle takes up the question: can someone be considered happy while they are still alive? Or should we

[24] Consider, for instance, the devastating effects that the Trojan war had on the εὐδαιμονία of Priam: his sons were killed, his family was brought into slavery, and the once glorious city of Troy was sacked and set on fire. Priam is also mentioned by Aristotle, who notes that no-one who shares his fate would be counted happy (1.9 1100a5–9; cf. also 1.10 1101a6–8).

[25] E.g. 3.1 1110a4–5; 3.6 1115b12–13, b23–4; 3.7 1116a11, a15; 3.8 1116b3, b31, 1117a17; and 3.9 1117b9.

[26] Solon's dictum was well known in Greek literature. The story behind the dictum is explained in Hdt. 1.30–3, where Solon argues that we need to see the end of life before pronouncing someone happy. For other formulations of the dictum, cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 928–9; Soph. *OT* [1524–30]; Eur. *Andr.* 100–3, *Tro.* 509–10, *Heracl.* 863–6, *IA* 161–3.

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withhold any judgement about someone's εὐδαιμονία until they are dead and can no longer be affected by the shifts of fortune?

To understand his ultimate answer to this quandary, we need to recall the initial account of εὐδαιμονία in *Eth. Nic.* 1.7. There Aristotle famously defines the human good as 'the activity of the soul in accord with virtue and, if there are more virtues than one, then in accord with the best and most perfect' (1098a16–18).[27] Immediately after having described εὐδαιμονία as virtuous activity, he adds that it only arises in a 'perfect life' (βίῳ τελείῳ, 1098a18). This notion is not clearly defined throughout the ethics and has been interpreted in various ways.[28] The perfect life requirement also underlies Aristotle's reflections on εὐδαιμονία and fortune in *Eth. Nic.* 1.10. In the final lines of the preceding chapter, which triggers the discussion of Solon's dictum, Aristotle once again states that εὐδαιμονία requires a perfect life, as life includes many reversals of fortune and even the most prosperous person may fall into great disasters in old age (1.9 1100a4–9). Thus we may examine his response to this challenge and investigate whether the perfect life is compatible with a fine death.

An especially informative point in the response to Solon concerns what it possibly takes to become happy again if someone should lose εὐδαιμονία after heavy strokes of misfortune. For our purposes it is striking that Aristotle explicitly claims that greatness and fineness play a decisive role in such returns. This is not to say that εὐδαιμονία makes quick shifts or that it is connected to brief moments within a lifetime. Yet this point implies that life becomes perfect and happy before death and that greatness and fineness deeply matter for this perfection. Let us investigate this argument in *Eth. Nic.* 1.10.

After having stressed the importance of virtuous activity, Aristotle proceeds to acknowledge that a happy person is not immune to serious misfortune (1101a8–12). He first reminds us that the happy person will not be shaken from εὐδαιμονία easily. It will only happen after many great misfortunes and from there a return to εὐδαιμονία will take no short time. 'If at all', Aristotle writes, 'it will take a long and perfect length of time in which he achieves great and fine deeds' (1101a12–13).[29] This point is significant when

[27] The questions of what he means by 'if there are more virtues than one, then in accord with the best and most perfect', and how the account of εὐδαιμονία in *Eth. Nic.* 1 compares to the account in *Eth. Nic.* 10, have triggered a flourishing debate among scholars; I will not enter into a detailed discussion of these issues here.

[28] Alternative translations are 'complete' or 'end-like life'. The idea is mentioned at 1.7 1098a18–20; 1.9 1100a1–9; and 1.10 1101a6–21; cf. 10.7 1177b16–26. Two main groups of interpretation have been offered. The first understands a perfect life as a whole lifespan, although there is some disagreement whether it must last into old age to qualify as perfect (or if the lifespan only needs to be over). Cf. E.K. Emilsson, 'On happiness and time', in E.K. Emilsson, H. Fossheim, Ø. Rabbås and M. Tuominen (edd.), *The Quest for the Good Life: Ancient Philosophers on Happiness* (Oxford, 2015), 222–40; H. Small, *The Long Life* (Oxford, 2007), 53–88; J.S. Purinton, 'Aristotle's definition of happiness (*NE* 1.7, 1098a16–18)', *OSAPh* 16 (1998), 259–97. The second holds that we need to reach some aim within our lifetime to render life perfect, and there are different proposals as to what this aim is (e.g. external goods, rational or ethical maturity). Cf. S. Broadie, 'Aristotle on luck, happiness, and Solon's dictum', in I.M. Church and R.J. Hartman (edd.), *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy and Psychology of Luck* (New York, 2019), 25–33; G.R. Lear, 'Aristotle on happiness and long life', in E.K. Emilsson, H. Fossheim, Ø. Rabbås and M. Tuominen (edd.), *The Quest for the Good Life: Ancient Philosophers on Happiness* (Oxford, 2015), 127–45; P. Farwell, 'Aristotle and the complete life', *HPhQ* 12 (1995), 247–63; T.H. Irwin, 'Permanent happiness: Aristotle and Solon', *OSAPh* 3 (1985), 89–124; R.A. Gauthier and J.Y. Jolif, *L'éthique à Nicomaque. 2,1. Commentaire; Livre I – V* (Louvain, 1970^2), 59–60.

[29] Aristotle speaks of achieving μεγάλων καὶ καλῶν. This leaves it open whether we should understand them as great and fine 'results', 'deeds', 'successes' or 'things', as he does not include a noun. Since he speaks of them as some sort of achievement, and not as material possessions, I have preferred 'deeds' in the translation. Cf. also n. 20.

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considering how the fine relates to happiness: although it takes much time, the required span to return to εὐδαιμονία is a time in which the virtuous agent succeeds in accomplishing great and fine actions. The use of εἴπερ ('if at all') makes it unclear whether he thinks that there would be enough time left in a life for such retrievals. What tips the scales and ultimately makes the difference, however, is the achievement of great and fine results.

Aristotle's thoughts on how one might lose and possibly regain εὐδαιμονία have two important upshots. First, it would be wrong to assume that greatness and fineness involve forsaking one's own happiness; on the contrary, such results prove essential for winning εὐδαιμονία back and for recovering from serious misfortunes. This idea clearly has consequences for how we should interpret courageous deaths in war, which Aristotle repeatedly connects to the great and fine. As shown above, the excellent person who dies for others 'chooses something great and fine for himself' (9.8 1169a26). In general, he will sacrifice money, honours and contested goods 'in achieving the fine for himself' (9.8 1169a20–2) and prefers to perform 'a single fine and great deed' over many small actions (9.8 1169a24–5). This echoes the account of courage in *Eth. Nic.* 3.9, where Aristotle states that the courageous person 'chooses what is fine' in war at the cost of other goods (1117b14–15) and frequently links courage to the fine.[30] In short, it is beyond doubt that the efforts of the courageous soldier qualify as great and fine. Since the achievement of such results is the ultimate test for whether a person manages to win happiness back, it seems plainly wrong to conclude that εὐδαιμονία is lost for a courageous soldier, whose actions stand out in greatness and fineness. Evidently, the courageous person would never wish for such actions to be necessary or choose to endure such danger freely. Mixed actions are only choiceworthy in extremely trying situations, and they may then be undertaken as the price of great and fine results. This is exactly what the courageous person is doing: he finds himself in harrowing circumstances but succeeds in performing something great and fine. This achievement does not ruin his εὐδαιμονία, given the argument in *Eth. Nic.* 1.10; instead, it is fully in line with it.[31]

Second, Aristotle's train of thought proves that he cannot entirely agree with Solon. For, given Solon's view, happiness cannot be predicated of a person until their lifetime is over. If we were to attribute the same idea to Aristotle, there would be no purpose behind his explanation of how εὐδαιμονία can be lost and possibly retrieved within a lifetime. Instead, εὐδαιμονία gains its stability through virtuous activity. If this is correct, one might reasonably ask: how are we to explain the importance of a perfect life? When Aristotle speaks of the possible retrieval of εὐδαιμονία in *Eth. Nic.* 1.10, he states that this requires 'a long and perfect length of time' in which a person performs great and fine deeds (1101a12–13). But he does not explicitly mention the need for a certain life in this context. Consider, however, the lines that directly follow this statement (1101a14–19):

> Then why not say that the happy person is the one whose activities accord with perfect virtue, with an adequate supply of external goods, not for just any time but for a perfect life? Or should we add that he will also go on living this way and will come to an appropriate end, since the future is not apparent to us, and we take happiness to be the end, and altogether perfect in every way?

[30] Cf. n. 13. Similarly, Aristotle states that among actions which accord with virtue 'those in politics and war are preeminently fine and great' (10.7 1177b16–17).

[31] One might object that the courageous soldier is brought further away from εὐδαιμονία in another sense, since death hinders him from performing any more virtuous acts. Yet this objection does not fully take into consideration Aristotle's understanding of εὐδαιμονία as a perfect activity, fully realized once it begins. Part 3 elaborates on this response.

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The passage makes it clear that εὐδαιμονία will not arise in the very instant when a person acts virtuously and is sufficiently equipped with external goods. This must continue to be the case for at least a perfect life, which is not an arbitrary length of time. Given Aristotle's emphasis on the difference that great and fine results make in the preceding lines, we are now able to grasp how much time might be enough for the perfect life: namely, the time it takes to perform great and fine actions with the help of perfect virtue and a sufficient supply of external goods. Furthermore, the use of τέλειος βίος in these lines once again indicates that a perfect life cannot be an entire lifespan. That a τέλειος βίος is shorter than a whole lifetime is simply a premise for asking the second question.[32] Rather than referring to an entire lifetime, the implication is that the perfect life is achieved through the use of external goods in the performance of virtuous deeds which are outstanding in their fineness and greatness. This is entirely consistent with what the courageous soldier on the battlefield is doing; he does not overestimate the value of external goods but proves willing to give them up to perform a preeminently fine and great deed. The situation of the courageous person can thus be fully squared with the perfect life requirement.[33]

To be clear, there are also other and less grievous ways to perform great and fine deeds. In *Eth. Nic.* 10.7, Aristotle makes the point that actions of virtue in politics and war 'stand out in fineness and greatness' and distinguishes these from contemplative activity (1177b16–20), thereby suggesting that great and fine actions are typical of certain moral virtues. A similar idea is found in *Eth. Nic.* 1.2, where Aristotle links both greatness and fineness to the acquisition and preservation of the common good—that is, the good for a people and for cities (1094b7–10). In these cases fineness and greatness seem to be found in deeds that not only benefit the εὐδαιμονία of a single individual but also that of friends, family and the city-state. And while some clear candidates of great and fine actions, such as risking one's life in war or sponsoring a feast for a city, certainly come across as exceptional, fineness and greatness are found in more mundane cases, such as giving an inexpensive gift to a child (4.2 1123a14–16) or passing on the opportunity to do an action to a friend (9.8 1169a32–4). In other words, there is a certain variety among these actions. But while people of virtue may choose different ways to

[32] Another question is whether Aristotle draws a distinction between being 'happy' (εὐδαίμων) and 'blessed' (μακάριος) in the final lines of *Eth. Nic.* 1.10. There are good reasons for believing that he does. On the one hand, Aristotle concludes the chapter with the following statement: 'Given these facts [about the future and about happiness], we shall say that a living person who has, and will keep, the goods we mentioned is blessed, but blessed as a human being is. So much for a determination of this question' (1101a19–21). This statement implies that blessedness cannot be spoken of until a life has come to a chronological end. On the other hand, Aristotle has just argued that one may lose and possibly regain εὐδαιμονία within a lifespan. Thus we may draw the following distinction: while happiness arises within our lifetime and may be lost in case of great misfortune, blessedness is reserved for those who live out the rest of their lives in happiness, including dying happily. If we do not distinguish between happiness and blessedness in the conclusion, we will make nonsense of the arguments that Aristotle has just offered. For a solid defence of this interpretation, see A. Kenny, *Aristotle on the Perfect Life* (Oxford, 1992), 33–6.

[33] Does this entail that the fine death guarantees εὐδαιμονία, even if the soldier has not yet achieved it before entering the battlefield? Since Aristotle speaks of 'great and fine deeds' (in plural) when discussing the retrieval of εὐδαιμονία, while the person who dies for others is said to choose 'something great and fine' (in the singular, 9.8 1169a26), there is some ambiguity whether a fine death alone secures the achievement of εὐδαιμονία. Given the limited textual evidence, it is hard to draw a precise limit for how much greatness and fineness secures perfection in life. At any rate, it would only make sense to consider this hypothetical scenario if the soldier has already fulfilled the perfect virtue requirement, so that perfection in life is the only thing lacking. As mentioned (n. 14), the conclusion does not apply to soldiers too young to obtain εὐδαιμονία to begin with.

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perform great and fine deeds under normal circumstances, the courageous soldier does not have such a choice; the imminent danger will render these other options unavailable.

In short, Aristotle's discussions of mixed actions and the perfect life allow us to explain how the fine death and εὐδαιμονία can cohere. On the one hand, the theory of mixed actions explains why the fine death is not something to embrace unconditionally; it presupposes that one risks life when expressing the virtue of courage, which is shown in circumstances that no sane person would ever wish for. On the other, the idea of a perfect life explains why the fine death still does not deprive the courageous soldier of εὐδαιμονία in the end; perfection in life is intimately connected to greatness and fineness, which is something that the virtuous person certainly achieves through courageous actions.

3. ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

How does the reading advocated here compare to previous scholarship on the fine death? One proposal is that a fine death cannot be squared with the perfect life requirement.[34] Although the courageous person engages in virtuous activity on the battlefield, he will nevertheless be less happy, or not happy at all, seemingly because his life is cut short and, consequently, imperfect. But as argued above, there is no reason to conclude that a fine death *in principle* excludes a perfect life. While there is no reason to disagree that people who die in war often do so before they have been given enough time to develop either virtue or life,[35] Aristotle's notion of a perfect life is compatible with ending life finely. Thus it cannot be pointed to as an explanation of why the fine death requires the courageous person to forsake his own happiness. Similarly, I object to the view that the life of the courageous person is less happy than it could have been, since a long and happy life is better than a short and happy life.[36] If the life of the courageous agent is already perfect, then there is no reason to claim that a long life would make his life happier. Once perfect, a short life may be just as happy as a long life.

Why does the length of a life not matter, as long as it is perfect? To answer this question satisfactorily, we need to bring in Aristotle's idea that εὐδαιμονία is a perfect (τελεία) activity.[37] Such activities have their end (τέλος) present in them, and they are wholly realized at any moment. We might prefer to engage in them over a protracted span of time. But this does not affect their perfection; such activities are fully achieved once they start. They are 'a whole in the now' rather than consisting of separate parts extending in time.[38] Thus the idea that εὐδαιμονία is a perfect activity does not entail that a life needs to remain happy for a certain length of time, nor that a long life is happier than a short life.

[34] McKerlie (n. 15), 92 maintains that Aristotle 'believes that *eudaimonia* requires a complete life … and death in battle prevents me from fully satisfying that condition'. He does not offer further remarks on how life reaches perfection (or in his words, 'completeness'), but seems to rely on an understanding of the perfect life as being significantly longer than what a fine death would allow for.

[35] Pearson (n. 17), 122 and Hardie (n. 6), 330 are sensitive to the importance of the perfect life requirement, though they both mention the case of a soldier who is too young to fulfil this requirement to begin with. While I agree with their assessment of such cases, it is less clear how they would consider the situation of someone who has fulfilled the criteria for εὐδαιμονία before entering the battlefield.

[36] Kraut (n. 17), 122–3.

[37] *Metaph*. Θ.6 1048b18–35.

[38] *Eth. Nic.* 10.4 1174b9.

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This is not to say that happiness comes easily or that it is fleeting. Consider what it takes to rise to the level of εὐδαιμονία: it requires the steady effort to develop virtue and, furthermore, the achievement of certain external goods, including the long-lasting formation of friendship.[39] These factors contribute to explain why εὐδαιμονία only comes about after a long span of time. Time is also essential for regaining εὐδαιμονία, should we meet with serious and repeated misfortunes. While our virtuous disposition will remain intact, it will take much time to form new friendships, acquire the necessary range of external goods and establish a way of life in which we can express our virtuous character. This makes εὐδαιμονία something different from a sheer moment of bliss. It requires a long time to arise, although it does not need to persist for any certain length of time to qualify as εὐδαιμονία. While that is very likely to happen, given the stability of virtue, it is not a strict requirement.

Some readers might still be sceptical about this conclusion, however. The fine death involves *dying*. This permanently blocks the courageous person from any future opportunities of virtuous activity. How can such an outcome possibly be understood as being consistent with Aristotle's notion of εὐδαιμονία? Three clarifications are worth making in response to this worry. First, death is not what the courageous soldier is aiming for. When entering the battlefield, he does not know how the situation will develop and he acts courageously by aiming at the fine.[40] To present him as aiming at death itself would therefore be grossly misleading. He chooses to risk his life by going to war, but this risk is taken in order to protect the conditions under which he and his community may live happily. Courage is therefore something different from deliberately seeking death or committing suicide. Second, the courageous soldier does not have the choice between risking life, or doing one shameful act (that is, fleeing), and then continuing his life happily. Mixed actions do not allow for such choices: they are fundamentally ambivalent and include an element of involuntariness. If the soldier retreats and the battle is lost, then εὐδαιμονία will most certainly be lost, too. In such harrowing circumstances, leaving the war to remain happy and pursue another course in life is, regrettably, not an option.[41]

Third, it is important that we avoid conflating Aristotle's theory with modern assumptions about the nature of happiness. At its most basic level, Aristotelian happiness—that is, εὐδαιμονία—is an activity (ἐνέργεια).[42] Contrary to what is often held today, Aristotle did not mainly consider happiness to be a feeling of pleasure or state of contentment. If we assume such views on happiness, then it is evident that someone risking and losing their life on the battlefield is unhappy. Still, the criteria for deciding whether such a scenario allows for εὐδαιμονία are different. What matters is whether someone succeeds in engaging in the right sort of activity.[43] From this point of view, the person who manages to

[39] E.g. 8.3–4 1156b25–34.

[40] This point is indebted to Rogers (n. 16), 310. Yet I depart from her claim that the courageous soldier 'does not yet know whether he will live or die' even when he is up against the enemy. That seems too strict: as mentioned (n. 11), Aristotle explicitly notes that a person may be courageous on occasions when it is 'fine to be killed' (καλὸν τὸ ἀποθανεῖν, 1115b5). This implies that the courageous soldier may be aware that he is facing a certain death while fighting.

[41] I therefore disagree with Tutuska (n. 18), 171, who claims that courageous people 'have to face the choice between dying nobly in battle or living a supremely happy and virtuous life' on grounds of *Eth. Nic.* 3.

[42] See 1.8 1099a29–31; 1.9 1099b26; 1.10 1100a13–14, 1100b8–11; 1.13 1102a5–6, 1102a17–18; 7.13 1153b10–11; 9.9 1169b28–9; 10.6 1177a9–11; 10.7 1177a16–17.

[43] Though not mainly concerned with courage, S. Hirji, 'External goods and the complete exercise of virtue in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*', *AGPh* 103 (2021), 29–53 argues that εὐδαιμονία involves the complete exercise of virtue and that such exercise aims at ends that are unqualifiedly good. This is

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express his virtues and perform great and fine actions can still be considered happy in times of misfortune. This might indeed challenge how we tend to think about happiness in everyday terms but is the result of differences between ancient and modern views on happiness rather than shortcomings of this article's interpretation of Aristotle's philosophy specifically.

4. CONCLUSION

The fine death was considered one of the most secure routes to fame among the Greeks. Aristotle's implied view is to dismiss one central premise of this ideal: the virtuous soldier is not motivated by praise which he will never hear, but by the value of his own way of life. Thus the interpretation forwarded in this article should under no circumstances be taken to mean that we should spend our days seeking a glorious death—for this sort of death is only fine under exceptional circumstances which no one should wish for. Still, this does not entail that the εὐδαιμονία of the courageous soldier who falls on the battlefield is ruined. By fighting in war, the virtuous person shows that how he spends his days genuinely matters to him, even when this might mean the end of his life. In this case, it will be true that the virtuous person has given up life for his friends, family and political community. But it will not be true that he has given up on his way of life. On the contrary, he proves that he is unwilling to do so by risking life for it. By doing great and fine actions in the best way open to him, the virtuous person is able to remain happy on Aristotle's account. From this perspective, giving up on life does not always imply that one also gives up on happiness.

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different from the 'mere' exercise of virtue, which aims at ends that are only conditionally good and does not constitute εὐδαιμονία. She draws the distinction by using *Politics* 7.13–14 as a touchstone and presents mixed actions as an instance of the 'mere' exercise of virtue. One could therefore object that the mixed actions of a courageous soldier cannot be constitutive of εὐδαιμονία. While agreeing with Hirji's interpretation of the *Politics*, I depart from her interpretation of mixed actions. On her reading, mixed actions are generally undertaken to avoid greater evils and are only conditionally good. This does not always seem to be the case, however; Aristotle is explicit that some mixed actions are related to the fine (3.1 1110a19–22; cf. 1110a4–5). This observation makes a difference: after linking εὐδαιμονία with the complete and unqualified exercise of virtue in the *Politics*, Aristotle proceeds by stating that 'unqualified' refers to that which is fine (τὸ καλῶς, *Pol*. 7.13 1332a11). The implication is that some mixed actions—such as courageous actions motivated by the fine—may pass as the complete exercise of virtue and constitute εὐδαιμονία. Thus, we may set the objection aside.

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