In his paper, R. Renehan addresses the difficult problem of the relationship in the *Nicomachean Ethics* between the βίος θεωρητικός, which consists in the solitary activity of the intellect (νοῦς), and the βίος πρακτικός (οἱ πολιτικοί), which is marked by civic and social duties. Renehan isolates the central problems concerning the precise meaning of Aristotle’s terminology as well as the philosophical difficulties in Aristotle’s account of human goodness. He chooses to limit his remarks to an attempt to “determine Aristotle’s meaning as he himself intended it to be understood by the original audience of contemporary Greeks” (p. 65). This approach, which may seem to be an elementary step in understanding Aristotle’s thought, is often overlooked by contemporary philosophers, who may be more interested in what Aristotle should have said, rather than what he actually wrote. Renehan’s careful and thoughtful reading of the most relevant texts on the meaning of εὐδαιμονία, or happiness, forces us to re-examine the meaning of Aristotle’s most significant ethical doctrine in light of the philosophical and literary works of the age. His remarks provide us with a wealth of material for discussion, but because of limitations on time, I shall restrict my comments to the relationship between human and divine intellectual activity, and the problem of the conceptual unity of the two treatments of happiness in books I and X of the *EN*.

Renehan’s discussion of the language, context, and significance of book X, chs. 7 and 8, of the *EN* highlights the central concepts of contemplation (θεωρία), the divine element in human beings (θείον τι), and the intellect (νοῦς). These themes indicate the importance of understanding the description of human intellectual activity in conjunction with Aristotle’s unreserved enthusi-
asm for the completely self-sufficient contemplative existence of divine beings. In book X Aristotle clearly subordinates the more practical concerns of the previous nine books to an ideal of intense self-absorbed introspection. His eloquent plea for man to surpass human limitations and make himself immortal can only be understood as an expression of Aristotle's confidence in the human intellect to raise human beings to a state of god-like bliss (EN X 7, 1177b31-1178a8). Aristotle's model life is not specifically human, but one which is divine, untouched by the cares and vicissitudes of earthly existence. Aristotle realizes, however, that such a life lies beyond the capabilities of all human beings, whose intellectual life must always be balanced by more mundane concerns, such as the need for external goods, the provision for family and friends, and the duties within the political structure.

Renehan clearly indicates the protreptic nature of Aristotle's discussion of the contemplative life, which demands human self-transcendence. He also draws attention to parallel passages in the Aristotelian corpus, especially those places in the Metaphysics where Aristotle describes the ideal existence of the

1. This exhortation to seek immortality and to ignore human matters seems out of place in a treatise on the practical science of ethics, and may, at first glance, be understood as a merely over-enthusiastic expression of Aristotle's regard for the life of the philosopher. Although there is a strong protreptic element to this passage, it should not be viewed as an exhortation to pursue an unattainable ideal, like Plato's perfect city (Rep. 473a). Aristotle clearly believes in the ability of νοος to bring men to a state of god-like bliss.

2. The addition of the phrase, ἐπ' ἵσον ἐνδεξεσθαι (1177b33), shows Aristotle to be aware of the limitations that accompany even the noblest of human accomplishments. His boldest statements concerning the god-like activity of contemplation contain the cautionary note that human beings should remember their own mortal nature.

3. That God is the ultimate object of human desire and thought is never seriously questioned by Aristotle, since there is nothing in the EN that contradicts the position in the EE, where contemplating God is made the ultimate standard of human conduct (EE VIII 3, 1249b14-25). In the Metaphysics Aristotle indicates that the proper object of the intellect must be that which is without qualification the best thing in the universe (K 7, 1072b18-20: ἡ δὲ νόησις ἡ καθ' αὐτὴν τοῦ καθ' αὑτὸ ἀρίστου, καὶ ἡ μάλωσις τοῦ μάλωσι). Although Aristotle is speaking of the activity of the prime mover in the Metaphysics, he also attributes to man the same ability to perceive in some way the highest objects of knowledge (EN X 7, 1177a20-21). Aristotle would probably agree with Plato's statement concerning