

Aristotle

Three levels of soul: nutritive and reproductive, sensitive, rational

1. What does it mean to be a good human?
 - a. Nicomachean Ethics looks to answer this question.
 - b. Being a good human is connected to being a virtuous human.
2. Phronesis - Practical Wisdom
 - a. Rough Definition: A field of study, pretty much the study of Ethics
 - b. Unlike natural science
 - i. Science deals with material facts which are of a different variety than the type of facts found in Ethics
3. Humans are special creatures
 - a. Rational beings
 - b. Born with certain capabilities and into certain class structures
4. Teleology - Going towards
 - a. Pursuits, actions, desires
 - b. Everything we do has some end and we judge someone to be excellent based upon the quality of their work
 - i. Bridlemaking is concerned with equipping a horse
 - ii. Shipmaking - building ships
 - iii. Teacher - furthering the education of students
 - c. The chief concern of humanity is happiness
 - i. Usually identified with physical pleasure, but this is false.
 1. Equated with beasts. Too vulgar for the human mind.
 - ii. Honor
 1. Dependent upon others. Will fade with time.
 - iii. Virtue
 1. One could act virtuously and be miserable
 2. Could be virtuous and be inactive
 - iv. Wealth
 1. Just a means to attain other things
 - v. All of our actions are done for the sake of happiness
 - d. Bigger picture: Is happiness the purpose of human life?
 - i. Aristotle: Yes, but we have to learn how to be truly happy.
 - ii. Life = Activity
 - iii. humans are rational and active beings.
 - iv. "The function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle"
 1. Rational principle = Virtue
 2. We cannot truly be happy without being virtuous. It is easy to be mistaken about whether one is truly happy.

3. Because animals and children are not rational, they cannot be virtuous. Thus, they cannot be happy.
5. 3 Qualities of the human soul (or human experience)
 - a. Passions - emotions...anger, fear, confidence, envy
 - b. Faculties - senses
 - c. States of character - temperament - this is where virtue lies
 - i. A good temperament puts one in good conditions etc...
6. We must learn to be virtuous
 - a. "Happiness comes as a result of virtue and some process of learning or training"
 - b. Ethos = Habit
 - i. Very important to form the proper habits in our education
 - c. Virtue is a rational temperament
 - i. Moderation is key
 - ii. The mean between two extremes

Aristotle thinks the way we approach these concepts is unique. He says that understanding ethics concerns "practical wisdom" (Phronesis).

Practical wisdom is not like the natural sciences, in fact, it would be misleading to classify ethics as a science.

Ethics isn't a type of subject where there are material facts. It would be foolish to expect more than the subject can handle.

In Nicomachean ethics, we find three main concepts: an idea of moral responsibility, an explanation of virtue and vices, and how one may achieve happiness in life.

"...what it is that we say political science aims at and what is the highest of all goods achievable by action. [the general consensus is that] it is happiness,..but with regard to what happiness is they differ..."

Aristotle says that happiness is the greatest achievable good in life. Because humans have access to the special faculty of reason, it follows that the good life is one which is lived in accordance with reason.

But what is happiness?

Is it pleasure? No, that is for beasts - it is too vulgar.

Is it honor? No, because that is dependent on other people.

Is it virtue? No, because one could be virtuous and miserable.

Is it money? No, because money is merely a means to attain other things.

Aristotle is big on ends. There is an end to every type of pursuit - a flute player wants to develop dexterity in her fingers in order to play symphonies. A soccer player wants to have stamina and quick feet and lead their team to victory.

every activity has an end, so the ends of living a good life, according to Aristotle, is what? Happiness is that final end for humanity: "For this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that by mean of them we shall be happy..."

every activity has an end, and since there cannot be an infinite regress of goods, there must be a final end. "happiness is an activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue"

So happiness is an activity in accordance with something else, it is something we do, and we do it virtuously. Lets talk about this..

We come to find perfect virtue through reason:

There are two types of virtue, intellectual virtues and moral (character) virtues, we are mostly concerned with moral virtues...

Moral virtues are developed through habitual practice and observing other virtuous individuals

"Virtues aim at the intermediate, at the mean between excess and deficiency (which are both vices)"

"Not every action or passion admits of a mean, for some have names that already imply badness.."p 57

How do we know which things have means and which things don't

- Excesses and deficiencies can never have means/be means.

- Same with some actions, ie.
- There will never be a mean to murder
- We use our reason, but we also use virtuous role models We look around to see virtuous acts

Virtues of Character (moral) are divided into 3 classes

1) Those that deal with feelings

with respect to acting in the face of danger, courage is a mean between the excess of rashness and the deficiency of cowardice;

with respect to the enjoyment of pleasures, temperance is a mean between the excess of intemperance and the deficiency of insensibility;

2) Those that deal with external goods

with respect to spending money, generosity is a mean between the excess of wastefulness and the deficiency of stinginess;

magnificence is a mean between the excess of vulgarity and the deficiency of stinginess

magnanimity is a mean between the excess of vanity and the deficiency of pusillanimity

3) Those that deal with social life (where the elipses are, p 58).

Mildness irascibility and inrascibility

Truthfulness boastfulness and self-deprication

Wit buffoonery and boorishness

Of course, one must live virtuously, but they also must engage in rational pursuits. For aristotle, the greatest rational pursuit is contemplation. Contemplation is self-sufficient and does not rely on anyone else. It is an exercise of our greatest faculty - reason. This

is the highest good, the greatest activity - it brings us beyond the scope of human possibility and into the region of the divine.