

**I. Preliminary Class Discussion**

- a. What is happiness?
- b. How do we achieve the happy life? What is required to achieve happiness?
- c. What types of lives are there? How much happiness does each consist?
- d. The good lies within the function. What is the human function?

**II. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. I, II, X**

**a. Book I: Happiness, the Chief Good**

**i. Section 1: The Good is That at Which All Things Aim**

1. Everything is aimed at some good.
2. There are different ends:
  - a. The end goal can be the activity or the product resulting from the activity.
  - b. Examples
    - i. “[T]he end of medical art is health, that of shipbuilding a vessel, that of strategy victory, that of economics wealth” (1094a7-8).
3. The master arts is preferable over subordinate ends.
  - a. The latter is pursued for the sake of the former.

**ii. Section 2: The End Goal is Desired for Its Own Sake**

1. The end goal is desired for its own sake, and everything else is desired for the sake of this.
2. Everything is desired for the sake of something (the good or the chief good), otherwise the process would go on to infinity.
3. We should aim for the chief good like an archer aiming for the target.
  - a. “Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what we should do?” (1094a24-25).

**iii. Section 4: Happiness as the Good. What is Happiness?**

1. It is thought that happiness is the end at which all things aim.
2. But what is happiness?
3. There are different interpretations.
4. No consensus as to what happiness is.
5. Some may say it is pleasure, wealth, or honor.

**iv. Section 5: Three Conceptions of the Best Life**

**1. The Life of Gratification**

- a. The mass of mankind prefers the life of pleasure.
- b. Problem: This sort of life is fit for an animal and is described as beast like.
- c. “Here they appear completely slavish, since the life they decide on is a life for grazing animals... (S, 131).

**2. The Political Life**

- a. The political life involves honor and virtue/excellence.
- b. Honor
  - i. More refined people such as politicians will conceive the good as honor.
  - ii. Problem: This is superficial because it depends on those who honor than those being honored; honor is not for its own sake and it is external.
  - iii. “[W]e believe that the good is something of our own and hard to take from us” (Ibid.).
- c. Virtue / Excellence
  - i. Problem: The life of virtue is also incomplete because a person can be virtuous and yet still be inactive in life.

**3. The Contemplative Life (will be explained later)**

**v. Section 7: Characteristics of the Good**

1. The good is that which all things aim.
2. Examples
  - a. “In medicine this is health, in strategy victory, in architecture a house, in any other sphere something else...” (1097a19-20).
3. Not all ends are complete ends:
  - a. There are more than one end.
  - b. If there is more than one, the most complete is what we are looking for.
  - c. The most complete is the chief good.
4. Happiness meets the criteria for completeness, but other goods do not:
  - a. Happiness is desired for its own sake and for nothing else.
  - b. Honor, pleasure, understanding and every pleasure are chosen for themselves, but they are also chosen for the sake of happiness.
5. The complete good is self-sufficient:
  - a. Something is self-sufficient when it lacks nothing and this is what happiness is.
6. Human Function
  - a. A flute-player, a sculptor, or any artist has a function.
  - b. “[T]he good and the “well” is thought to reside in the function...” (1097b26-28).
  - c. What is the human function?
    - i. Life?
      1. Problem: It cannot be life since it is common to plants and animals.
      2. We are trying to find what is unique to humankind.

3. Nutrition and growth is therefore excluded.

ii. Perception?

1. Problem: It cannot be perception because this is also found among animals.

iii. Reason?

1. The only things that remain is the active life involving reason.

2. “[H]uman good turns out to be activity of soul in conformity with excellence, and if there are more than one excellence, in conformity with the best and most complete” (1098a16-18).

d. Excellence is to perform the function well and it involves a complete life.

#### **vi. Section 8: External Goods Required to Achieve Happiness**

1. Resources

a. Fine actions require resources.

b. We use friends, wealth, and political power.

2. Good Health, good family, children, good looks, and friends.

a. “Further, deprivation of certain [externals] – e.g. good birth, good children, beauty – mars our blessedness; for we do not altogether have the character of happiness if we look utterly repulsive or are ill-born, solitary or childless, and have it even less, presumably, if our children or friends are totally bad, or were good but have died” (134-135).

3. Good Fortune

a. Happiness would seem to need prosperity, which is why some associate happiness with good fortune.

b. The virtuous person can also lose happiness due to misfortune.

**vii. Virtue/Excellence is the Most Enduring [Section ?]**

1. Virtue is the most enduring human state.
2. The happy person has a stable character.

**viii. Section 13: Irrational Element of the Soul**

1. Excellence is an activity of the soul not of the body.
2. Elements of the Soul
  - a. Rational Element
    - i. Reason, understanding
  - b. Irrational Elements
    - i. Vegetative element: responsible for nutrition and growth.
    - ii. Appetitive and desiring element: some rationality in the sense that it follows and obeys.

**b. Book II: Virtue of Thought and Virtue of Character**

**i. Virtue of Thought / Intellectual Excellence**

1. Arises mainly from teaching.
2. Time and experience is required for this.
3. Intellectual Excellence, What it is
  - a. Philosophical wisdom
  - b. Understanding
  - c. Practical wisdom

**ii. Virtue of Character / Moral Excellence**

1. Moral Excellence, What it is
  - a. Liberality [1. giving, unselfish, 2. fair, broad-minded, unbiased, 3. flexible, lenient, casual]
  - b. Temperance
2. Does not come to us by nature but by habituation.
3. If something is natural, it cannot be changed by habituation.
  - a. The Stone
    - i. “For if something is by nature [in once condition], habituation cannot bring it into another condition. A stone, e.g., by nature moves downwards, and habituation could not make it move upwards, not even if you threw it up ten thousand times to habituate it; nor could habituation make fire moves downwards, or bring anything that is by nature in one condition into another condition” (135).
4. Pleasure and pain are important in habituation.
  - a. Examples of achieving temperance
    - i. Bodily Pleasure
      1. “For if someone who abstains form bodily pleasures enjoys the abstinence itself, then he is temperate, but if he is grieved by it, he is intemperate” (138).

ii. Courage

1. “Again, if he stands firm against terrifying situations and enjoys it, or at least does not find it painful, then he is brave, and if he finds it painful, he is cowardly” (Ibid.).

5. Gaining virtue requires practice.

**iii. A Virtue of Character is a State Intermediate Between Two Extremes**

1. Excellence is a form of mean, the mean between two extremes – excess and deficiency.
2. The intermediate is relative to the person.
3. It is not that case that every action has a mean:
  - a. “[S]ome have names that already imply badness, e.g. spite [feeling of ill will, malice], shamelessness, envy, and in the case of actions adultery, theft, murder; for all of these and suchlike things imply by their names that they are themselves bad, and not the excesses or deficiencies of them” (1107a9 – 11).

4. Examples of Excellence

a. Pleasure and pain

- i. Excess: self-indulgence
- ii. The mean: temperance
- iii. Deficiency: insensible

b. Confidence:

- i. Excess: rash
- ii. The mean: courage
- iii. Deficiency: coward

c. Anger:

- i. Excess: irascible [irritable]
- ii. The mean: good temper
- iii. Deficiency: inirascible

d. Pleasantness in the giving of amusement:

- i. Excess: buffoonery and the person characterized by it a buffoon.
- ii. The mean: ready-witted
- iii. Deficiency: boor and state characterized as boorishness.

**iv. Definition of Virtue**

1. “Virtue, then, is (a) a state that decides, (b) [consisting] in a mean, (c) the mean relative to us, (d) which is defined by reference to reason, (e) i.e., to the reason by reference to which the intelligent person would define it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency” (141).

**v. Practical Advice on Ways to Achieve the Mean**

1. Avoid the more opposed or contrary extreme.
2. Avoid the easier extreme.
3. Be careful with pleasures.

**c. Book X: Life of Contemplation is the Best Life**

i. Happiness is an activity rather than a state.

**ii. Theoretical Study is the Supreme Element of Happiness**

1. Understanding is supreme.

2. It is the most continuous form of activity.

3. It is the most pleasant:

a. “It is agreed that the activity expressing wisdom is the pleasantest of the activities expressing virtue” (S, 145).

b. “Philosophy seems to have remarkably pure and firm pleasures...” (Ibid.).

4. It is a god-like life.

5. It realizes the supreme element in human nature – reason/ understanding.

**iii. The Relation of Study to the Other Virtues in Happiness**

1. The virtues are human, not divine.

2. Beliefs about the gods support the supremacy of study:

a. We suppose that gods are happy than anyone else, but what sort of action do they engage in?

b. “Just actions? Surely they will appear ridiculous making contracts, returning deposits and so on.... Generous actions? Whom will they give to? And surely it would be absurd for them to have currency or anything like that....When we go through them all, anything that concerns actions appears trivial and unworthy of the gods” (146).

3. Animals cannot be happy since they do not engage in studying.