

Aristotelian happiness defined in aristotle's book nicomachean ethics

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Critique of Aristotelian Happiness

The purpose of Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics" is to define a number of ethics he found important. The subject of Books 1 and 2 is to clarify the definition of happiness. To Aristotle, happiness is the "highest good", and the good is defined as "what all things aim for" (Aristotle 1 & 2). Aristotle means that the goal of human life is to achieve and sustain happiness. In anything and everything humans do, they aim to achieve the good in those tasks. This good is then subordinate to another good, that good subordinate to another, and then even that good subordinate to another, continuing this chain until the "final" or "highest" good is achieved (Aristotle 1 & 4). As stated above, happiness is that final good; therefore, happiness is what we are ultimately trying to achieve in everything we do. Happiness is the "end which we desire for its own sake and because of which we desire other ends" (Aristotle 1). The goal of achieving happiness is the fuel behind all human action. Aristotle believes happiness must be "final" and "evidently something self-sufficient" (Aristotle 5). He means to say that happiness is an entity all by itself; it alone "makes life desirable and lacking nothing" (Aristotle 5). It is "the most desirable of all things we might choose, without counting it as just one more good thing among others" (Aristotle 5). He means that happiness is done for itself and nothing else. Another way saying it would be that happiness is attempted to be acquired with no further goal wanted. Aristotle believes that man has a function just as a flute player or a sculptor do (Aristotle 5). He believes everything in existence has some type of function. The function of man is "a certain form of life and state that this life is the exercise of the soul's activities in accordance with rational

principle" (Aristotle 5). Another point tied along with that idea is that " the good of man is the active exercise of his soul in accordance with excellence or virtue" and this must all be done " over a complete lifetime" (Aristotle 5). He is conveying the point that happiness is found in actions that are carried out in accordance with virtue and are inherently pleasurable, or doing virtuous acts automatically makes a person happy. Pleasure is found in virtue. There are people that find pleasure in non-virtuous things, but these things only lead to temporary pleasure, not long-lasting happiness. Aristotle said " with most people, the things they find pleasurable are in conflict with each other because such things are not pleasant by nature, but those who love what is noble derive pleasure from things that are pleasant by nature" (Aristotle 7). He believed doing noble things and being happy is what made a man good. He concluded that " happiness is the best, the noblest, and the most pleasurable of things" (Aristotle 7). Aristotle believed that external goods were required to achieve happiness. He said it is hard " to perform many noble acts" if " the lack of some things mars one's happiness, like good birth, fine children, and personal beauty" (Aristotle 7). All of his ideas lead to the idea that happiness must have function and virtue for it to be correct happiness.

I personally had a different view on happiness. I defined it as the contentment of the mind at that moment, what is actually in the mind at the moment didn't matter. A person could be thinking about past, present, or future but the only thing that matters is that he is enjoying the thought. I stated that happiness can be defined but what causes it is much more abstract. I believe that there is nothing that should make everyone in the

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world. This statement also works in the reverse, in which I believe that there isn't anything in the world that shouldn't make someone happy. I believe that there is no denying that someone who believes that he is happy is truly happy. Ignorance of their own problems shouldn't hold them back from being considered happy. I believe happiness doesn't rely at all on our standard of living. A happy person living in a life most would consider miserable because of their lack of wealth, family, or anything else associated happiness should not be immediately considered unhappy by others.

Aristotle and I differ in our opinions on happiness on more aspects than we agree on. My definition of happiness is what he would use for the definition of pleasure. He believes it is ignorant not to spend our time delving into the deeper aspects of life and still consider ourselves happy. He condones those who live for pleasure, saying " they prefer a life fit for cattle" (Aristotle 3). He believes that these people cannot fully understand or experience happiness because of their lack of a desire to find pleasure in noble acts. I disagree with the notion that the ignorant majority cannot experience happiness because of their lack of philosophical oversight on life. I believe Aristotle is assuming his own causes of happiness are what cause happiness in everyone else. The majority choose to spend their lives doing other things because they do not have the mental capabilities to think of the deep reasons as to why things make them happy, instead choosing to just enjoy the happiness that is experienced because of these things. Aristotle sees happiness as the ultimate goal in life. I see happiness as an effect of pursuing and reaching numerous goals in life. Aristotle believes man has a set function, just as a flute-player or sculptor. I don't believe a function can be placed on man.

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Humans and the human mind are more complex than anything else. We as humans are what place functions on everything else. We cannot place a function on something that has such a far-reaching ability. Humans have the abilities and talents to function as whatever they would like to in life.

Aristotle believes that external goods are needed in order for someone to experience happiness. I believe that a person can be happy regardless of their standard of living. *The sole point I find that we both agreed on was that there are subjective and objective aspects to happiness. My view of happiness is that is the effect of something else. Aristotle believes that enjoyment and pleasure are subjective experiences of objective facts.

Aristotle would think it to be possible that a man think that he is happy but not actually be. He believes that there are numerous kinds of people who feel this way. He believes that “ there are three main sorts of life: the one just mentioned [a life of enjoyment], second, the political life, and, third, the contemplative life” (Aristotle 3). The people contained in these sorts of life are pursuing things that bring them a false and temporary happiness. A member could be found from each of these sorts that would say that is absolutely filled with happiness and living life exactly how it should be lived. Aristotle also believes that anything not virtuous is wrong to make a man happy. He believes only a life dedicated to virtuous things can be considered a good one (Aristotle 7). He would argue that what they are defining as happiness is just pleasure.

Aristotle’s take on happiness has had an overall positive effect on my take, despite disagreeing on numerous smaller ideas concerning it. I considered

happiness to be more of an emotion than he did. As stated earlier, his definition of pleasure would match up with my original definition of happiness. I disagree with the idea that happiness needs to be over an entire lifetime to make it true. There are many things done to sustain happiness over a lifetime, like getting an education or maintaining relations with people one cares about, but there are multiple things in life that make men happy just for the sake of being happy, like eating a delicious pie or watching a funny television show. All happiness isn't required to have a long-lasting effect on our lives. I also disagree with the notion that external goods are needed for a man to live life to their fullest. I believe happiness can be attained no matter what situation a man is born into. I still don't believe a person can mistakenly believe he is happy but not actually be. There are many examples of ignorant people who experience, whether it is a baby hearing his mother making funny noises or a drunken fan celebrating because his favorite team won a game; happiness shouldn't be reserved for those who understand the intricacies of it and are pursuing it through noble acts. On a broader and more positive note, I now agree that happiness is the final good in all acts of life. It is what men try to achieve with every action they perform. I know believe that the function of man is to achieve happiness in their lifetime.