

Why aristotle's view on ethic in the book nicomachean ethics are inapplicable in ...

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Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics is an ancient work that goes into explicit details on what it is to be a virtuous person and on how to reach eudaimonia, a kind of happiness that makes you feel as though you flourished. Though Aristotle displays great points on how to be a virtuous person, in the 21st century, I do not think that Aristotle's views on ethics would be applicable. Specifically in America, a selfish society, things are different compared to when Aristotle was alive. People nowadays often make decisions based on their own personal desires, things that please them. Often times, they do this at the expense of others, regardless of repercussions or whom it affects. People rarely embody ethics that would lead one to, as Aristotle would say, a virtuous life. With that being said, it would be very difficult for one to meet all of Aristotle's standards to leading a virtuous, happy life thus making it nearly impossible.

In order to be happy and virtuous, one must find a mean between the excess and deficiencies. For example, one ought to not eat an excessive amount of food or too little, as just the right amount is enough. With all actions this is necessary to lead a virtuous life. To have moral virtue, you must "feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue" (Book II, Chapter 6). In today's time, this would just not be possible. If you look at a man's everyday life, he would not even be able to follow Aristotle's standards for just one day. For instance, one is on their phone an excessive amount, one probably eats too often, and one would perhaps sleep too little. Along with this idea, Aristotle says that one must be held responsible for the actions one

makes with their own free will. I believe many times people make decisions based on what pleases them. This would not make you eligible to reach eunaimonia. Depending on the person, one will decide what to do based on how it will please them either immediately or in the long run. Therefore, pleasing oneself is far more common than doing a “morally right” thing.

One is supposed to be temperate in order to be virtuous. Stated on page 49, “We have said that temperance is a mean with regard to pleasures”. This brings forth the question whether fetishes would be or would not be intemperate. As I will state again, if your fetish does not severely tamper with another person’s happiness, then it is okay to take pleasure in whatever that may be. I believe our will to do anything is rooted within us and our strongest desires that sometimes one cannot make go away no matter how “wrong” it may be. As long as it is not impending on another’s life, it should be okay to do as one pleases as long as it leads to one’s own happiness. In today’s society, people follow this thinking often. For example, homosexuals are still not completely accepted in today’s society yet they still continue with their relationship regardless of thinking about whether or not it is deemed as right or not. Pleasure is one of the reasons why people do the things they do, not necessarily always because it is right.

Why does anybody do anything that they do? They do the things they want because it eventually ends in happiness for them. Again, this is very selfish thinking that was probably not as common back then as it is now. Now, Aristotle would contradict my points by stating that the happiness that you get from your pleasures is not the same as it is to actually flourish. But when

one does things that make them happy, even if it is only short term, that happiness will eventually stick. If one is extremely passionate about something and it makes them happy, despite them perhaps not being good at it, it is best to do that. Aristotle would disagree and say that you should only do what brings you knowledge. Indeed, one may be awful at chemistry initially but with practice, they could become a very successful chemist, which ultimately is their life goal. Aristotle would consider them to be vain for the end result was action. Though I do agree that some decisions may be vain, but if it makes them happy, is that necessarily bad? This roots back to Aristotle's idea about finding the point between excess and deficiencies. If one does not find that point for every single action, it is still possible to be a virtuous person as long as they are happy with themselves and their decisions. A person who steals money from another to make sure their child can go to the doctor because they are extremely ill may be overly courageous in doing so, but they are benefiting themselves and that is the only way to survive in a world like we live in.

With Aristotle's intensive ideas on how to lead a virtuous life and to reach eunaimonia, it seems almost impossible to obtain this. One cannot reach utter happiness with his very specific ways on how to do this. To flourish, one must take pleasure in doing things that one feels like they ought to do. One person's idea of how to be virtuous and to reach eunaimonia is not ideal for every single person. It is not truly possible for every person to be able to reach one point by doing the same things. If we lived in a perfect world with a perfect society, perhaps this would work, but within our minds, we all possess flaws that make it impossible to create a perfect society. Therefore,

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especially today, it is not possible for everybody to follow Aristotle's ethics and to reach the same outcome.