

# Aristotle and the realm of ethics

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



An examination of the Nichomacean Ethics is a task that contains the dichotomy of examining Aristotle's simple, basic definitions along with the great complexity that is present in the underlying meaning behind the simplicity.

Aristotle believed the ultimate goal of a human being was (is) to seek happiness and that only a virtuous person can truly achieve happiness. The acceptance of these notions centers on the perception of the definitions of "virtue" and "happiness". In Aristotle's words, "We are now in a position to define the happy man as one who is active in accordance with complete virtue." In other words, happiness without ethics is a near impossibility..

Eudemonia is a particularly complex situation when trying to understand the importance of it in regards to ethics because eudemonia generally refers to "happiness or pleasure." Unfortunately, as the history of human behavior has shown, there will be those individuals who derive their happiness from actions that can be somewhat harmful to people. This type of behavior is, essentially, a pleasure principle based on perversion as opposed to one that is based on ethical behavior.

So, it becomes important to separate Eudemonia from perversion or anti-social behavior in because, ultimately, while there may be some pleasure present in such conduct, this does not lead to overall happiness because there might exist a situation where such behavior leads a person down a road of a damaged life. Drugs may bring happiness, but this will exist only for the short term. Ultimately, they will lead to a damaged life that is devoid of happiness. As such, the happiness that Eudemonia represents must not be

transitional happiness, but happiness that is everlasting. In order to achieve this, the happiness must be based on ethical approaches to the pursuit of happiness.

Ultimately, virtue breeds ethics and a disposition that is virtuous will further perpetuate ethical behavior. The reason for this is simple: a person who acts with purity can not act unethically as a lack of ethics and a preponderance of virtue are, essentially, mutually exclusive. A disposition of virtue will, in effect, cancel out any unethical or immoral behavior.

Now, a virtuous person can also be a person who is rife with internal conflict. To seek happiness does not mean that the person will achieve happiness no matter how hard he or she tries. Often, there will be conflicted internal struggles that pit virtue, honesty and “the good life” against the frailties of the human psyche and soul. This internal conflict often will eat away at the ability to achieve happiness. However, if a person lives a life that is ethical, a great deal of conflict and stress will be removed from a person’s life. This, in turn, will allow the person a semblance of happiness or, at the very least, a lessening of conflicting tensions that prey on the mind.

Prescribing to a balance of ethics and happiness hinge on the need for virtuous actions and, while this is not possible all the time, it is possible a great deal of the time and can be achieved if an individual concentrates on it enough. This is a core tenant of Aristotle’s principles of ethics, ethical behavior and virtue.