

Aristotle's views on the purpose of life



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Why need to talk about “ being human”? What makes a person’s life meaningful? What will I gain from my activities? What is the ultimate purpose of my life? I don’t know when people started to look for answers to these questions. Those are issues that are not made by anyone, but for everyone. Aristotle was one of the first philosophers to try to present his moral views on these issues. however, the “ purpose of life” is a question that many philosophers have tried to explain but have yet to agree on a convincing statement. So in this article, I will not intend to present a perfect meaning for this problem. and I think it doesn’t matter whether or not to find a full definition, just contemplating it on the journey of life makes life more meaningful.

Following Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics argued that man is a living animal. His life is only meaningful when he is always aiming and striving for his purpose of life (Cambridge University Press, 2004). According to Stanford’s philosophical dictionary (2017), Plato is another great philosopher who thinks that “ People are a creature that always seeks meaning” (of life, of everything ...). Indeed, perhaps no creature is always concerned about the existence of himself or the meaning of everything, of all actions like humans. Only mankind always ask Living for what? Where does the meaning of our life lie? Thus, it can be understood that what makes people different is ideal of life – which is what he always wanted to do, which lacked it, he was just a lifeless creature in the form of a human. There is another thing that only humans understand and fight for, it is “ right”. Aristotle argued that every human activity and pursuit has a purpose or a function to accomplish. It is this purpose that people do everything else to achieve. And when people

have the end goal, it is Good. From the very beginning of moral doctrine, Aristotle argued that all things act and choose to rationalize some good. The ultimate purpose of man is to aim at the highest good.

But what is the highest good? for Aristotle it's happiness. The highest good (happy) is capable of self-sufficiency. It is always a good choice for itself. How to achieve the highest good? He thinks that people will find supreme goodness when they find their true function. For example, trees are useful because they create shade and provide oxygen to other species when standing under a shade of trees people always feel comfortable and fresh. However, it is not the true function of a tree. The true function of the tree when it creates shading and produces oxygen is for it to catch more sunlight and develop more sustainably. In other words, its highest purpose is to maintain life, but it is a good thing for other organisms in itself. It is like a human being, living happily is the highest good. An example is director James Cameron's movie Avatar. The film is a story that takes place in the future, with the main character being a veteran sent to join the army to conquer a rich planet named Pandora. In the process of spying to gather information about this planet, he realized the meaninglessness of the invasion campaign and he worked side by side with the inhabitants of Pandora to fight the earth and tell protect indigenous people. This may sound contrary to what we think when he was against his own fellow people to do the right thing. that is the highest purpose of his life and his abandonment of his kind to achieve it does not make him regret but happy with it.

However, this problem raises another question, what is happiness. For each different person, there will be a different happiness definition. This depends on what people feel they lack and want to achieve. For the poor, happiness is wealth, with sick people being healthy, with aspiring people being fame, with lonely people being true love. However, these things are not really happy, if it is considered the highest happiness, people will become slaves to that lifestyle. Along with that people will feel their worth will no longer be if those material pleasures disappear. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2018), the conclusion of Aristotle about the nature of happiness is that happiness is not morality but moral activity. Good living requires something that is not merely a state or condition. The achievement of happiness depends entirely on the process of promoting the potential and the heavenly nature of each individual. That cognitive process brings a happy life. Moreover, a vision of happiness is brighter. On the contrary, when the potential for yourself is abandoned, oversleeping and limping, the individual will inevitably suffer from a life of self-torment, suffering, and depression. As mentioned above each person has a different purpose like any creature. Without realizing their purpose, people will never feel satisfied with life; To realize and realize that purpose, people find fulfillment, happiness, and beauty of life. In order to know that, human contemplation is an indispensable process. The supreme power of human intellect is thought, so contemplative reflection is the greatest source of pleasure of man.

In conclusion, for a person to achieve a good or happy life he must begin to act according to virtue and towards the highest action of understanding or contemplating the truth. He must practice virtues and form good habits. In

the process of implementation, he will be rational to help choose the behavior, which is the function of the soul in accordance with virtue. And when he is in the highest act, that is, the act of contemplation, he no longer wants anything more and only contemplates what is achieved. Through this doctrine, Aristotle somewhat awakens people to find themselves more consciously by looking for the purpose of life and how to achieve it.

References

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