

Key questions about Aristotelian Ethics

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Università degli Studi di Padova

Magdalena BOSCH
UIC Barcelona, mbosch@uic.es

I. INTRODUCTION:

- I. 1. The enormous presence of Aristotelian Ethics in Contemporary thought and Academia
- I. 2. Most important Ethical works of Aristotle

II. THE STRUCTURE OF NICOMACHEAN ETHICS

Book I: End, Ergon, Final End, Happiness
Book II: Virtue
Book III: Voluntary action
Book IV: Practical Virtues
Book V: Justice
Book VI: Intellectual Virtues
Book VII: Incontinent
Book VIII: Friendship
Book IX: Friendship
Book X: Contemplative life

III. MOST COMMON INTERPRETATION

- III. 1. An Ethics of teleology: The End (τέλος): teleology (Aquinas)
- III. 2. An Ethics of Virtue: Virtue (ἀρετή): McIntyre 1984: *After Virtue*, Habituation: Bowditch 2008
- III. 3. An Eudaimonian Ethics: (εὐδαιμονία), Academia context: different kinds of Ethics

IV. SOME OTHER KEY CONCEPTS

IV. 1. The Ultimate End / Final End

If therefore among the ends at which our actions aim there be one which **we will for its own sake**, while we will the others only for the sake of this, and if we do not choose everything for the sake of something else (which would obviously result in a process ad infinitum, so that all desire would be futile and vain) , it is clear that this one ultimate End must be the Good, and indeed the Supreme Good. NE 1094a

εἰ δὴ τι τέλος ἐστὶ τῶν πρακτῶν ὃ δι' αὐτὸ βουλόμεθα, τᾶλλα δὲ διὰ τοῦτο, καὶ μὴ πάντα δι' ἕτερον αἰρούμεθα (πρόεισι γὰρ οὕτω γ' εἰς ἄπειρον, ὥστ' εἶναι κενὴν καὶ ματαίαν τὴν ὄρεξιν), δῆλον ὡς τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη τάγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἄριστον. NE 1094a

IV. 2. The Ergon

...if we declare that the function of man is a certain form of life, and define that form of life as **the exercise of the soul's faculties and activities in association with rational principle**, and say that the function of a good man is to perform these activities well and rightly, and if a function is well performed when it is performed in accordance with its own proper excellence—from these premises it follows that the Good of man is the active exercise of his soul's faculties in conformity with excellence or virtue, or if there be several human excellences or virtues, in conformity with the best and most perfect among them. NE 1098 a

εἰ δ' ἐστὶν ἔργον ἀνθρώπου **ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου**, τὸ δ' αὐτὸ φαμεν ἔργον εἶναι τῷ γένει τοῦδε καὶ τοῦδε σπουδαίου, ὥσπερ κιθαριστοῦ καὶ σπουδαίου κιθαριστοῦ, καὶ ἀπλῶς δὴ τοῦτ' ἐπὶ πάντων, προστιθεμένης τῆς κατὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν ὑπεροχῆς πρὸς τὸ ἔργον: κιθαριστοῦ μὲν γὰρ κιθαρίζειν, σπουδαίου δὲ τὸ εὖ: εἰ δ' οὕτως, ἀνθρώπου δὲ τίθεμεν ἔργον ζώην τινα, ταύτην δὲ ψυχῆς ἐνέργειαν καὶ πράξεις μετὰ λόγου, σπουδαίου δ' ἀνδρὸς εὖ ταῦτα καὶ καλῶς, ἕκαστον δ' εὖ κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ἀρετὴν ἀποτελεῖται: εἰ δ' οὕτω, τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ἀγαθὸν ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια γίνεται κατ' ἀρετὴν, εἰ δὲ πλείους αἱ ἀρεταί, κατὰ τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ τελειοτάτην. NE 1098 a

IV. 3. The intellectual desire

Now there are three elements in the soul which control action and the attainment of truth: namely, Sensation, Intellect, and Desire.

Of these, Sensation never originates action, as is shown by the fact that animals have sensation but are not capable of action.

Pursuit and avoidance in the sphere of Desire correspond to affirmation and denial in the sphere of the Intellect. Hence inasmuch as moral virtue is a disposition of the mind in regard to choice,⁵ **and choice is deliberate desire**, it follows that, if the choice is to be good, both the principle must be true and the desire right, and that desire must pursue the same things as principle affirms. We are here speaking of practical thinking, and of the attainment of truth in regard to action; with speculative thought, which is not concerned with action or production, right and wrong functioning consist in the attainment of truth and falsehood respectively. The attainment of truth is indeed the function of every part of the intellect, but that of the practical intelligence is the attainment of truth corresponding to right desire. 1139 a

θηρία αἴσθησιν μὲν ἔχειν πράξεως δὲ μὴ κοινωνεῖν. ἔστι δ' ὅπερ ἐν διανοίᾳ κατάφασις καὶ ἀπόφασις, τοῦτ' ἐν ὀρέξει δίωξις καὶ φυγή: ὥστ' ἐπειδὴ ἡ ἠθικὴ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετικὴ, ἡ δὲ προαίρεσις ὄρεξις βουλευτικὴ, δεῖ διὰ ταῦτα μὲν τὸν τε λόγον ἀληθῆ εἶναι καὶ τὴν ὄρεξιν ὀρθὴν, εἴπερ ἡ προαίρεσις σπουδαία, καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ τὸν μὲν φάναι τὴν δὲ διώκειν. αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἡ διάνοια καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια πρακτικὴ: τῆς δὲ θεωρητικῆς διανοίας καὶ μὴ πρακτικῆς μηδὲ ποιητικῆς τὸ εὖ καὶ κακῶς τάληθές ἐστὶ καὶ ψεῦδος (τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶ παν τὸς διανοητικοῦ ἔργον) : τοῦ δὲ πρακτικοῦ καὶ διανοητικοῦ ἀλήθεια ὁμολόγως ἔχουσα τῇ ὀρέξει τῇ ὀρθῇ. πράξεως μὲν οὖν ἀρχὴ προαίρεσις—ὅθεν ἡ κίνησις ἀλλ' οὐχ οὗ ἕνεκα—προαιρέσεως δὲ ὄρεξις καὶ λόγος ὁ ἕνεκά τινος. διὸ οὐτ' ἄνευ νοῦ καὶ διανοίας οὐτ' ἄνευ ἠθικῆς ἐστὶν ἕξεως ἡ προαίρεσις: εὐπραξία γὰρ καὶ τὸ ἐναντίον ἐν πράξει ἄνευ διανοίας καὶ ἠθους οὐκ ἐστίν. διάνοια δ' αὐτὴ οὐθέν κινεῖ, ἀλλ' ἡ ἕνεκά του καὶ πρακτικὴ. 1139 a

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SOKOLOWSKI, R. (2002), 'Phenomenology of Friendship', *Review of Metaphysics*, 55.3, p. 459. This is perfectly logical, but also the only way to assume the friend's good as good for me is to love good for itself.