

# Naturalism and Virtue

Chapter 5.1 & 5.2

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# Hedonism Vs Eudaimonia

## Hedonism:

- "hedone" in Greek is pleasure
- Activities that produce pleasure are valuable
- The Pursuit of pleasure should be one's main purpose
- The happy man is one whose life is filled with pleasurable experience.

## Eudaimonia:

- "eu" & "daimon" in Greek is good and spirit
- Activities that are valuable produce pleasure
- Flourishing and excelling in activities should be one's main purpose.
- "The happy man is the person who excels at all those activities and aptitudes that are characteristic of human beings" (pg 47).
- Aristotle believed those who could lead good lives are "middle aged, well educated, financially secure, socially respected. Neither slaves, nor the poor, nor the ignorant, nor the stupid could lead good lives" (pg 49).

# Good For Vs Good

- Previous chapters have discussed various attempts to define good
  - Eg: Hedonism defines it as pursuit of pleasure, Egoism defines it as self interest, so on.
- Aristotle's view asserts that there are some things that are "good for"
  - Can be discovered rationally through reasoning (eg. Lions cannot subsist on Oats, so it is not "good for" lions)
  - Aristotle based it on what would allow a human to flourish
  - No such thing as an inherent "good"
  - However, evidently "flourishing" is an inherent good, why should a human being be of good health
- Again come to the question of who gets to determine "What sort of life ought we to want?" (pg 49).
  - Aristotle's "good for" requires a certain level of "correct" education, not attainable by everyone in actual society
  - How to compare short term to long term. For example consider a poor family who can only afford cheaper junk food versus more expensive healthy food. Which should the family choose according to Aristotle's view?


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- Let's take Aristotle's predicative definition of good life:
  - 'Good life is one in which we use our minds to make and act, and think the best possible ways'


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- Let's take Aristotle's predicative definition of good life:
  - 'Good life is one in which we use our minds to make and act, and think the **best** possible ways'
  - '**best**' is problematic

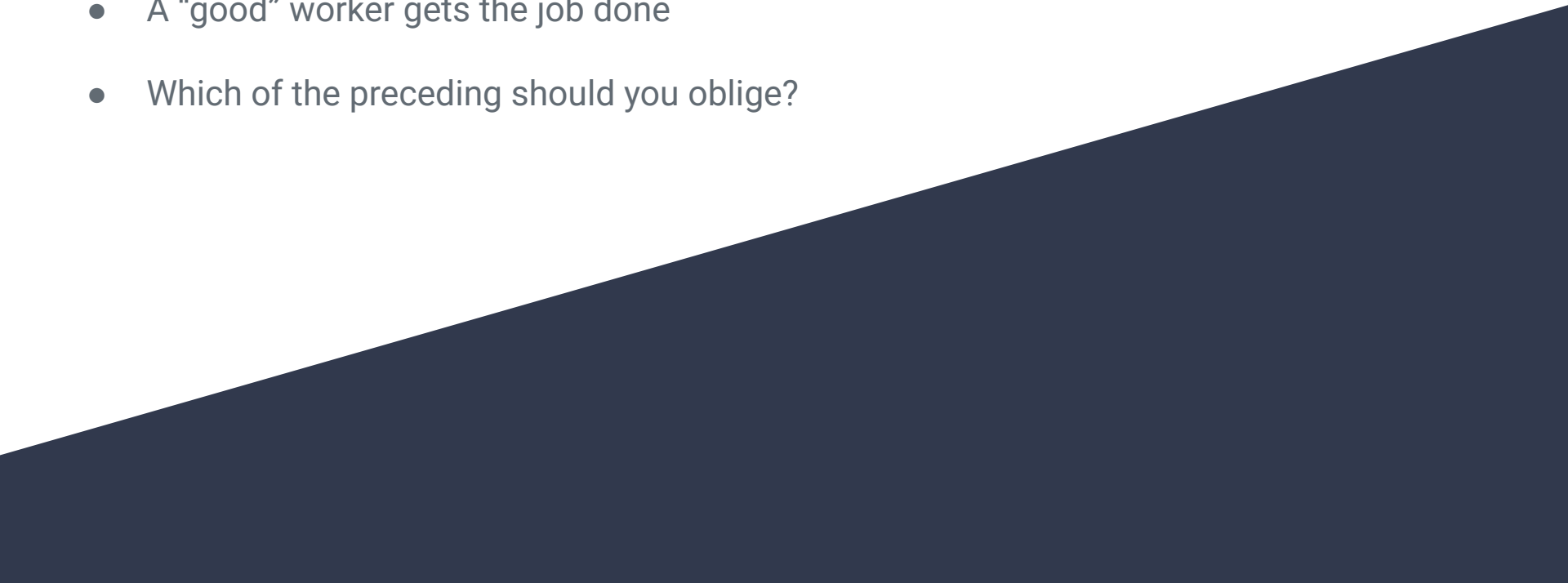
# The Good Human

- There is a problem of perspective
  - “good” is subjective
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# The Good Human

- A “good” citizen serves the nation
  - A “good” parent spends time with their children
  - A “good” worker gets the job done
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# The Good Human

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- Which of the preceding should you oblige?
- *Middle English (in the sense ‘bind by oath’): from Old French obliger, from Latin obligare, from ob- ‘towards’ + ligare ‘to bind’.*

# What is a Good Life?

*Nicomachean Ethics* - "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue"

**virtue:** excellence in thinking, choosing, and acting (courage, patience, modesty)

**soul** in greek is *psyche*: to the mind or rational faculty that a human possess rather than any spiritual essence

- Aristotle's view on a "good" life is:
  - To reach eudaimonia and to flourish
  - Well-rounded over a specialist (*phronesis*)
  - Only those who are:
    - middle aged
    - well educated
    - financially secure
    - socially respected
- Not **everyone** could lead a good life...
  - Aristotle believed those who are slaves, ignorant, uneducated, have disabilities
  - Pursuit of unworthy goals leads away from eudaimonia

# Discussion

In the textbook, Aristotle claims,

*“Neither slaves, nor the poor, nor the ignorant, nor the stupid could lead good lives, for to be any of these things is to be deficient as a human being, much in the way that a tree may be stunted or an animal deformed.”*

Do you think that having a good life is reserved only for a specific group of people? What about people who were born underprivileged (i.e. poverty, autism)?

- Oftentimes, people who are lower class feel more content than people who are middle or upper class.
- People who are not as privileged have a different desires and pleasures than those who were born privileged. Is their definition of “good life” different?

# Summary / Recap

- Pleasure is not the goal; flourishing is: Activities are valuable first, and pleasure follows when we excel in them.
- **Eudaimonia** means well-being through active engagement, not passive pleasure.
- “**Good**” is relative to nature, not subjective or inherent. What is “**good for**” a being (e.g., lions, humans) depends on what enables flourishing.
- Flourishing requires excellence in thinking, choosing, and acting. Practical wisdom (phronesis) guides real flourishing, not just intellectual brilliance.
- Ideal life is well-rounded, not hyper-specialized. Aristotle’s good life was attainable only by the educated, financially secure, socially respected – not accessible to all.