

Ch.5: Naturalism and Virtue

Kylie Lallak, Asise Bhinder, Neha Anadure, Hanson Lau, Mitee Su, Camila Orozco

5.1 Hedonism vs Aristotle's View

Is pleasure the ultimate good?

Hedonists	Aristotle
"Activities are good because they produce pleasure"	<p>"Pleasure follows from valuable activity - it does not define value"</p> <p>Uses example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Playing golf isn't good because its pleasurable, but because it's a worthwhile activity done well.- So pleasure doesn't make golf good, but exercising skill and excellence in a worthwhile activity naturally produces pleasure.

Pleasure is not the goal

- Aristotle does not **reject** pleasure
 - Pleasure is a byproduct, not the aim of life
 - Focusing directly on pleasure leads to bodily gratification and psychological diversion
 - The good life instead focuses on engaging in worthwhile activities
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- Claim:
A good human life aims at eudaimonia, not mere pleasure (hedone).

What is eudaimonia?

- Usually translated to happiness, but that's misleading.
- Better known as:

Well-being, human flourishing, living/doing well

Activity

Imagine two people who both feel “happy” in their friendships.

Person A has friends who are fun to be around when things are easy, but the relationship is based mostly on convenience and entertainment.

Person B has a friend who challenges them, supports them during hard times, and whom they act honestly and loyalty toward, even when it's uncomfortable.

Aristotle would say Person B is flourishing.

The happiness in Person B's friendship comes from practicing virtue (honesty, loyalty, care, and mutual respect) over time. The pleasure isn't just emotional comfort; it arises from being the kind of person who relates well to others.

Person A experiences pleasure, but it's shallow and fragile because it isn't grounded in virtue.

5.3: Ethics, Ethology, and Evolution

- Aristotle believed everything had a telos (ultimate aim)
- Human good determined with biological knowledge
- Ethology (study of animal behavior in natural environment)
- Studying animals in natural environment enables us to find conditions where they cannot thrive and natural behavior changes negatively
 - Ex. Fish armed with a stinger moved to a small tank with no predators
 - Stinger originally used to protect egg-carrying female from predators
 - In tank, stinger used on female
 - Unnatural conditions (tank) lead to destructive behavior

Humans' Natural Environment

- Difficult to determine humans' natural environment
 - They inhabit wide geographical range, population densities
- Solitary confinement gives insight to aspect of natural environment
 - Lack of socialization leads to psychological damage
 - Suicide, self-mutilation, aggression towards others common
 - Isolation is unnatural condition for humans and leads to destructive behavior
- Natural environment consists of human connection
- Similar to fish in tank, unnatural condition leads to harmful behavior

Virtue Theory

- Thick vs thin morals
 - Thick: courage, generosity, cowardice, prudence, kindness, etc.
 - Verifiable factual behavior
 - Not subjective
 - Thin: good/bad, right/wrong
 - approval/disapproval
 - vague
- Virtue = fact + value
 - Generosity is a virtue because it is part of survival
 - Helping others/community

Evolutionary

- Evolutionary Psychology has evolved instincts like
 - Fear as a response for danger
 - Competition for status
 - Aggression to protect
- These conflict with Aristotle's virtues
 - Justice
 - Temperance

- Example: Ingroup bias
 - Ingroup Bias helped to protect tribes and groups
 - Now ingroup bias behavior can lead to racism and prejudice
- Natural instincts does not always mean the instinct is moral
- Some evolutionary behaviors contradict virtuous values
- If natural instincts can be harmful, then morality cannot stem from just what is natural

Question:

Do animals have a will?

**Why do people need a will
in order to have a reason to
live?**



2.2.7 From Becoming to Will

Becoming who we are is **not a passive process**. It involves a **desire or drive to become something**, often called “the will.”

Example Wills

Kierkegaard focuses on a **will to faith**

Schopenhauer describes a **will to live**

Sartre emphasizes a **will to freedom**

Nietzsche argues for a **will to power**

Freud highlights a **will to pleasure**

Viktor Frankl talks about a **will to find meaning**

John Stuart Mill focuses on a **will to maximize happiness**

Karl Marx emphasizes a **will to connect and build community**



My Opinion: There is a fundamental difference in humans, that is not comparable to other animals, people have a “will” and are aware of their own existence and can make choices. This awareness causes a need for purpose beyond just surviving thus people have and need wills to be fulfilled.

Faith as a Form of Will

- Faith is understood as an **active expression of will**, not blind belief
- It reflects a **commitment to meaning before certainty**

Philosophical foundations:

- **Augustine of Hippo** — faith precedes understanding
- **Søren Kierkegaard** — the *leap of faith* transcends reason

Faith in practice:

- A child learning to walk despite repeated failure
- Starting college without guarantees