

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

# 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
- 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