

Philosophy 609. Handout 15. BOOK I. The book is tentative and questioning, but we've already seen the answers.

METHOD:

- a. concerning the kind of exactness required:
 - we must seek the appropriate precision; ch. 3, p. 4: –the noble & the just fluctuate
–goods can inflict harm [see also ch 7]
 - for ethics you need experience and maturity (chapter 3, pp. 4-5)
“Young men, whom Aristotle thought / unfit to hear moral philosophy” – *Troilus and Cressida* II 2.
- b. concerning procedure:
 - we must ask whether we are moving *toward* or *away from* the first principles (chapter 4, last ¶)
 - what comes first, the *that* or the *why* (the reason)? in ethics the *that* is the first principle (same ¶)
 - how do you get ethical principles: by induction, perception, or habit? (same ¶; also chapter 7 last ¶)

THE PROBLEM OF THE FINAL GOOD:

- a. there exist different kinds of good (chapter 1):
 - 1. some goods are products, some are activities;
 - 2. some goods are subordinated to others
- b. if there is a final good, *politics* aims at it; the life encompassed by politics is the whole for man (chapter 2)
- c. all agree on the name for the final good ("happiness," *eudaimonia*) but differ about the meaning (chapter 4)
 - it's something plain; the opinion of ordinary people (pleasure, wealth, honor, or some mysterious thing)
 - it's something exotic; the opinion of intellectuals
- d. possible lives for human beings (chapter 5); lives centered on
 - 1. base pleasure [low level people]
 - 2. honor, virtue [gentlemen]
 - 3. theoretic life
 - 4. economic life
- e. the opinion of intellectuals: the good subsists in itself (chapter 6)

INITIAL RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM:

- a. whatever happiness may be, all agree that it is final (it is not *for* anything) and self-sufficient (chapter 7). I.e.,
 - there is nothing *beyond* it (it is not a *means* to anything) and
 - there is nothing *beside* it (it is not just a *part* of our end).
- b. the specific function of man (chapter 7): not vegetative life; not merely perceptual life; rational life.
- c. general features of happiness that are generally admitted: it is an activity, it is pleasant, external goods are conditions for it (chapter 8)
- d. origin: does it come from learning and habit, or from the gods, or from luck? (chapter 9)
[All these issues are left vague and unanswered here; the rest of the work gives us the resolutions to them.]

OTHER TOPICS:

- a. the temporality of human happiness; at best we are happy (blessed) *men* (chapters 10-11)
- b. is happiness something praised or blessed? (chapter 12)
- c. the parts of the soul (chapter 13). This is where our course began. We have closed the circle.