

ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΗΣ ΘΟΙΚΑ ΕΥΔΗΜΕΙΑ ΠΕΡΙ ΕΥΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑΣ

[1214a] [1]

The man¹ who at [Delos](#) set forth in the precinct of the god his own opinion composed an inscription for the forecourt of the temple of Leto in which he distinguished goodness, beauty and pleasantness as not all being properties of the same thing. His verses are:

“ Justice² is fairest, and Health is best,
But to win one's desire is the pleasantest.
”

Theog. 255f.

But for our part let us not allow that he is right; for Happiness³ is at once the pleasantest and the fairest and best of all things whatever.

About every thing and every natural species there are many views that involve difficulty and require examination; of these some relate only to our knowledge of the thing, others deal also with modes of acquiring it and of acting in relation to it. As to all those views therefore that involve only speculative philosophy, we must say whatever may be proper to the inquiry when the suitable occasion occurs. But we must consider first what the good life consists in and how it is to be obtained—whether all of those who receive the designation 'happy' acquire happiness by nature, as is the case with tallness and shortness of stature and differences of complexion, or by study, which would imply that there is a science of happiness, or by some form of training, [20] for there are many human attributes that are not bestowed by nature nor acquired by study but gained by habituation—bad attributes by those trained in bad habits and good attributes by those trained in good ones. Or does happiness come in none of these ways, but either by a sort of elevation of mind inspired by some divine power, as in the case of persons possessed by a nymph or a god, or, alternatively, by fortune? for many people identify happiness with good fortune.

Now it is pretty clear that the presence of happiness is bestowed upon men by all of these things, or by some or one of them; for almost all the modes in which it is produced fall under these principles, inasmuch as all the acts that spring from thought may be included with those that spring from knowledge. But to be happy and to live blissfully and finely may consist chiefly in three things deemed to be most desirable: some people say that Wisdom⁴ is the greatest good, others Goodness⁵ and others Pleasure. And certain persons debate about their importance in relation to happiness, [1214b] [1] declaring that one contributes more to it than another—some holding that Wisdom is a greater good than Goodness, others the reverse, and others that Pleasure is a greater good than either of them; and some think that the happy life comes from them all, others from two of them, others that it consists in some one of them.

Having then in regard to this subject established that everybody able to live according to his own purposive choice should set before him some object for noble living to aim at⁶—either honor or else glory or wealth or culture—on which he will keep his eyes fixed in all his conduct (since clearly it is a mark of much folly not to have one's life regulated with regard to some End), it is therefore most necessary first to decide within oneself, neither hastily nor carelessly, in which of the things that belong to us

the good life consists, and what are the indispensable conditions for men's possessing it. For there is a distinction between health and the things that are indispensable conditions of health, and this is similarly the case with many other things; consequently also to live finely is not the same as the things without which living finely is impossible. And in the latter class of things some that are indispensable conditions of health and life are not peculiar to special people but common to practically all men—both some states and some actions—for instance, without breathing or being awake or participating in movement we could not possess any good or any evil at all; whereas others are more peculiar to special types of natural constitution— [20] for instance, eating meat and taking walking exercise after dinner are not closely related to health in the same way as the conditions mentioned. And these facts must not be overlooked,⁷ for these are the causes of the disputes about the real nature of happiness and about the means of procuring it; for some people regard the things that are indispensable conditions of being happy as actual parts of happiness.

Now to examine all the opinions that any people hold about happiness is a superfluous task⁸ For children and the sick and insane have many opinions which no sensible man would discuss, for these persons need not argument but the former time in which to grow up and alter and the latter medical or official chastisement (treatment with drugs being chastisement just as much as flogging is). And similarly it is also superfluous to examine the opinions of the multitude⁹ either;

1219b And that our classification and definition of it are correct is evidenced by opinions that we all hold. [1219b] [1] For we think that to do well and live well are the same as to be happy; but each of these, both life and action, is employment and activity, inasmuch as active life involves employing things—the coppersmith makes a bridle, but the horseman uses it. There is also the evidence of the opinion that a person is not happy for one day only,³ and that a child is not happy, nor any period of life⁴ (hence also Solon's advice holds good, not to call a man happy while he is alive, but only when he has reached the end), for nothing incomplete is happy, since it is not a whole. And again, there are the praises given to goodness on account of its deeds, and panegyrics describing deeds (and it is the victorious who are given wreaths, not those who are capable of winning but do not win); and there is the fact that we judge a man's character from his actions. Also why is happiness not praised? It is because it is on account of it that the other things are praised, either by being placed in relation to it or as being parts of it. Hence felicitation, praise and panegyric are different things: panegyric is a recital of a particular exploit, praise a statement of a man's general distinction, felicitation is bestowed on an end achieved. From these considerations light is also thrown on the question sometimes raised—what is the precise reason why the virtuous are for half their lives no better than the base, since all men are alike when asleep? [20] The reason is that sleep is inaction of the spirit, not an activity

ΜΕΤΑΦΡΑΣΗ:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0050%3Abook%3D1>