## Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book II

PHIL 230, Fall 2014

**Human Soul** (I.13)

Rational Part (Reason) Nonrational Parts

*(appetitive)*  *(nutritive)*

###### Theoretical Practical appetites nutrition

Reason Reason feelings growth

pl/pain reproduction

nonrational

desires

*sophia phronesis*

**Virtues of thought** **Virtues of character**

Excellence in using Excellence in using

reason generally reason to guide action &

appetitive parts of soul

-- e.g., courage, temperance

**Two kinds of virtue**

1. virtues of thought, *of rational part of soul*

-- excellence in using reason, in several ways

-- e.g., practical wisdom (*phronesis/*prudence)—using practical reason to judge about action (VI.5, 9; assigned as optional for next week)

-- e.g., theoretical wisdom (*Sophia*/wisdom)—using theoretical reason to get knowledge about unchanging truths (VI.3-7; not assigned)

2. virtues of character, *guiding by reason the nonrational part of soul that can “listen” to reason—the appetitive*

-- excellence in guiding action by practical reason (through virtue of *phronesis*), (VI.9, 12-13; assigned as optional for next week)

-- can be described as lying in a “mean” in some way (II.6)

**What is required to have virtues of character**

1. Excellence in practical reason (virtue: *phronesis*, “prudence”)

-- ability to deliberate and decide well what should be done, how to aim at a “mean” relative to self (II.6)

-- because it is up to the agent to decide what is appropriate in one’s particular circumstances (II.2)

2. Must do actions in certain way for them to count as virtuous—state of agent crucially important to value of action (II.4)

-- know that the action is courageous, or generous, etc., choose it because of that, and do so from firm and unchanging state/disposition

-- have pleasure in doing them (or pain if don’t) (II.3)

3. Appetites and emotions must accord with what reason says:

-- The v. person will desire to do what practical reason says is virtuous, and will not have competing appetites pulling in other directions (Book VII; next week)

-- Also, many virtues have to do with having the right appetites and emotions given the circumstances—e.g., courage, temperance (Book III; next week)

**How to become a virtuous person?**

By habit, not by teaching/using arguments (II.1-II.2)

-- become virtuous person by doing virtuous actions; why/how might this be the case?

Through experience we could:

(1) get better at determining what the courageous, generous, etc. action is in particular circumstances,

(2) see that virtue really does lead to flourishing and pleasure,

(3) develop a stable disposition towards virtue by training your appetites, emotions, etc.

Also, Book X.9 (not assigned):

* Arguments are not enough to make people virtuous because if they have had little experience of living virtuously they won’t understand why doing so is part of *eudaimonia*
  + If you try to give them arguments about this, they won’t believe you
  + People’s ideas of living well correspond to the kinds of lives they lead (I.5; not assigned)
* “It is impossible, or not easy, to alter by argument what has long been absorbed as a result of one’s habits” (X.9; not assigned)

Need good political and educational institutions & practices to instill good habits in people, and thus create virtuous persons (II.1)