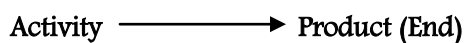


Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics Book 1

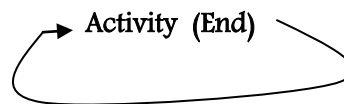
Aristotle begins the study of Ethics by focusing on the *purposive* nature of human activity – of all sorts

Art – <i>Techne</i>	Inquiry – <i>Methodos</i>	Action – <i>Praxis</i>	Pursuit – <i>Prohairesis</i>
Ordered disciplines that one can learn and which produce or do something(s) characteristic	Ways of trying to learn or understand something, to arrive at truth, knowledge, a decision or conclusion	Actions and activities that are done by human beings	Deliberate choices made by human beings, reflective or productive of character

In each of these – and they overlap with each other to some extent – some sort of goal or *end* is being aimed at. There are many different ends -- really as many as there are types of activity – and perhaps even more, since the same thing can be done for several different ends. There are several different possibilities for the relation of activity and end.



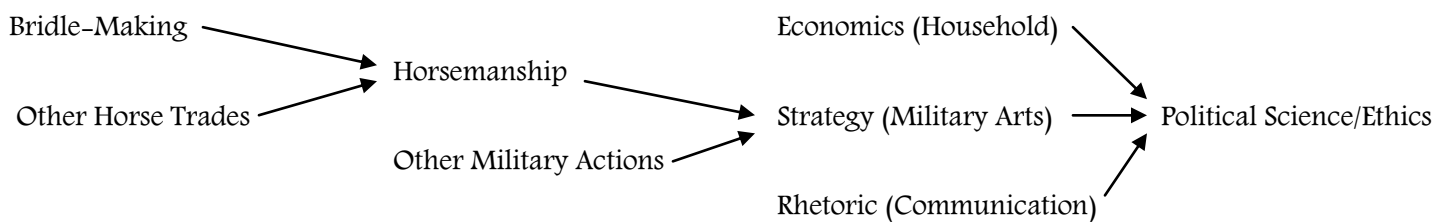
The goal in this case is something outside of the activity.
The end is better, or of higher value than the activity, which is just a means to produce that end.



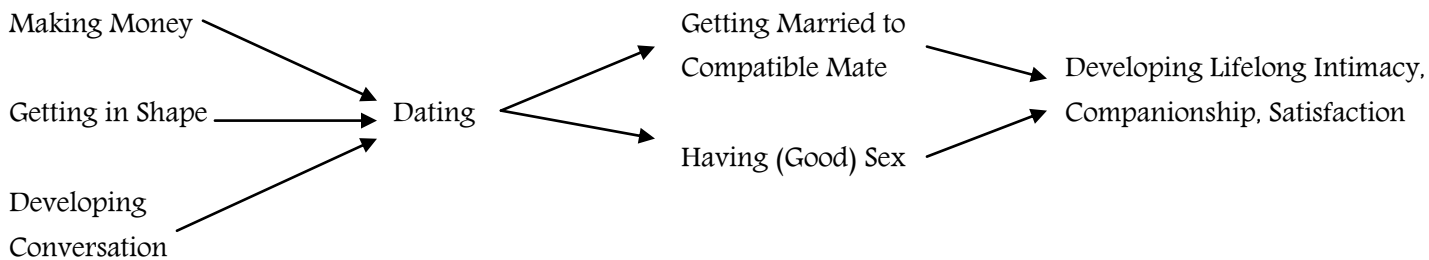
In this case, the goal is to be doing the activity
The activity is of a high enough value to be worth doing for its own sake.

Different activities can be arranged in relation to each other in terms of their ends and the values of their ends.

Aristotle's Example – dealing with disciplines.



An (Amusing) Example From Ordinary Life.



Notice that in this example, one might dissociate the goals and activities of Getting Married and Having Sex. Another person might do Getting Married precisely in order for Having Sex. Activities can be ordered differently.

At this point we can ask four very important questions:

- 1) How are our activities actually ordered? What do the ways in which we act – even more than what we say or think – reveal to us about our priorities and values – the priorities and values we give to activities and their characteristic goods in relations to each other?
- 2) How are other people’s activities actually ordered? What do the ways they act reveal about their own priorities and values – what they view as goods? What they desire? What they view as the highest or best good?
- 3) Are our priorities and evaluations really as they ought to be? As it would be best for them to be for us? Is there any disconnect between what we say we think good and desire and what our actions really reveal to us?
- 4) Granted that there are lots of different goods and different activities, what is the final good -- the most important, the most deeply and consistently desired good – for our lives?

The answer to #4 will help to put the other 3 questions and their answers into context – so what is the final good?

Happiness (*eudaimonia*) – or the Good Life, Doing Well, Being Happy

What is Happiness? There are many different opinions on this – and each will affect the life you live out

The (highest) Good is.	What kind of Life?	Any Problems with This?
Wealth / Money	Life of <i>Money-Making</i>	Yes. This kind of life is forced upon people. Money is just a means to more desirable ends, not the end itself – we desire this mainly when we don’t have it
Pleasure	Life of <i>Enjoyment</i>	Yes. It is a kind of slavish, animal life, not engaging or developing what is distinctive and best in human beings.
Honor / Power	(Political) <i>Life of Activity</i>	Yes. Honor really dependent on what other people think. Honor also dependent on being virtuous – or appearing so
Virtue	(Political) <i>Life of Activity</i>	No. good candidate – except virtue could be possessed without actually being used, and one could suffer even if virtuous
Knowledge / Wisdom	Life of <i>Contemplation / Study</i>	No. good candidate – except that the many seem to think this means “some great ideal that is above their comprehension”
(Health)	(Life pursuing Health)	Yes. (just mentioned as possible end) Health is a means allowing us to attain or enjoy more desirable ends.
Other opinions are out there, but Aristotle does not consider them worth discussion, since they are very unlikely to provide the right answer to the important questions		

Another possible good which might orient a person’s life which Aristotle does discuss elsewhere: **Friendship**

None of these ends or final goods are really Happiness itself, according to Aristotle.

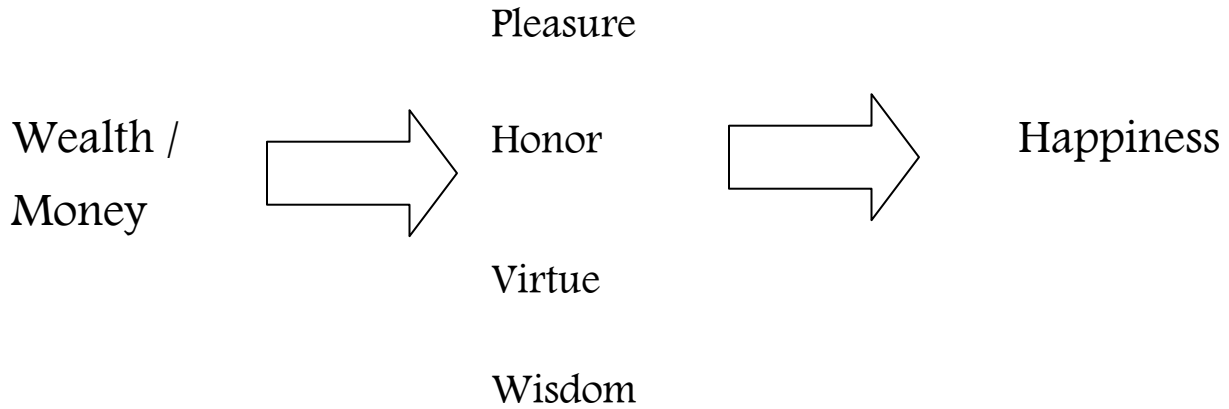
- Happiness is desired for its own sake. These other things are desired for the sake of Happiness
- Happiness is going to involve several different things (of course, it is possible to combine these to some extent)
 - A life of (morally) virtuous activity **or**
 - A life of contemplation – intellectually virtuous activity
- Happiness has to be self-sufficient -- including friends and family, since human are social beings

What is Desired on Account of What Else?

Desired for sake of something else

Desired for own sake but also sake of something else

Desired for own sake



Aristotle's Own View of Happiness and its Constituents

