

Some Questions about Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Work and the Human Condition, Fall 2008

A general question: Who is Aristotle's audience? Who is he speaking/writing to?

Book I.

(Skip I.6, unless you're particularly interested in and know something about Plato's doctrine of the Forms. You may also skip I.10-12, though these deal with interesting puzzles that arise from Aristotle's view.)

Goods.

1. What does Aristotle *mean* by the term "the highest good"? (I.2)
 2. What does Aristotle say *is* the highest good? (I.4)
- NOTE: These are different questions!
3. What are Aristotle's *reasons* for his answer to what is the highest good? (I.4)
 4. What are the "three lives"? Why do you suppose he singles these out? (I.5)

Functions.

5. What is a thing's *function*, and what does this have to do with its *good*? (I.7)
6. What does Aristotle say is the function of a human, and why? (I.7)
7. How does this function relate to virtue? (I.8)
8. What is happiness, and how is it related to the human function and to virtue? (I.8,9)

Virtue.

9. What are the parts of the soul, according to Aristotle? (I.13)
10. What does Aristotle mean by "virtue," and specifically by human virtue? (I.13)

Book II.

Virtue.

11. What is the relation between virtue and function? (II.1)
12. How does Aristotle think we can become virtuous? (II.1,2)
13. What is Aristotle's idea of the "mean"? (II.6)

Book III.

Actions.

14. What is it for an action to be voluntary, according to Aristotle? (III.1)
15. What are the roles of deliberation and decision in action, according to Aristotle? (III.2,3)
16. In what sense are the virtues within our power, according to Aristotle? (III.5)