

Aristotle on Final Ends & Basic Terminology for Arguments

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1

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1, Ch. 7

Let us again return to the good we are seeking, and ask what it can be. It seems different in different actions and arts; it is different in medicine, in strategy, and in the other arts likewise. What then is the good of each? Surely that for whose sake everything else is done. In medicine this is health, in strategy victory, in architecture a house, in any other sphere something else, and in every action and pursuit the end; for it is for the sake of this that all men do whatever else they do. Therefore, if there is an end for all that we do, this will be the good achievable by action, and if there are more than one, these will be the goods achievable by action.

So the argument has by a different course reached the same point; but we must try to state this even more clearly. Since there are evidently more than one end, and we choose some of these (e.g. wealth, flutes, and in general instruments) for the sake of something else, clearly not all ends are final ends; but the chief good is evidently something final. Therefore, if there is only one final end, this will be what we are seeking, and if there are more than one, the most final of these will be what we are seeking. Now we call that which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more final than the things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call final without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else.

Now such a thing happiness, above all else, is held to be; for this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that by means of them we shall be happy. Happiness, on the other hand, no one chooses for the sake of these, nor, in general, for anything other than itself.

2

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What's the conclusion?

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Happiness is the final end.

4

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Digression...

- What do you think Aristotle means by 'happiness'?
- If there were a pill that could make you euphoric and contented all the time, would Aristotle endorse it as a shortcut to happiness?

5

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Digression...

- What do you think Aristotle means by 'happiness'?
- If there were a pill that could make you euphoric and contented all the time, would Aristotle endorse it as a shortcut to happiness?
- 'happiness' a potentially misleading translation of ***eudaimonia***
- Perhaps better translated as "thriving" or "doing well and faring well"

6

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Premises?

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What do we need to add to this to get the conclusion?

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Really only argument that it is A final end – might not be unique

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Further argument that there are no other final ends – so it is THE final end

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Now such a thing happiness, above all else, is held to be; for **this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else**, but honour, pleasure, reason, and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves (for if nothing resulted from them we should still choose each of them), but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that by means of them we shall be happy. Happiness, on the other hand, no one chooses for the sake of these, nor, in general, for anything other than itself.

- 1) Things desirable in themselves and as a means to something else
- 2) Things desirable in themselves, never as a means to something else
- 3) Things desirable only as means, never in themselves

Which does Aristotle seem to think is best?

Do you agree?

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Premises

- 1) E is a final end if and only if it is (a) always desirable in itself and (b) never desirable for the sake of something else.
- 2) We always choose happiness for its own sake
- 3) We never choose it for something else

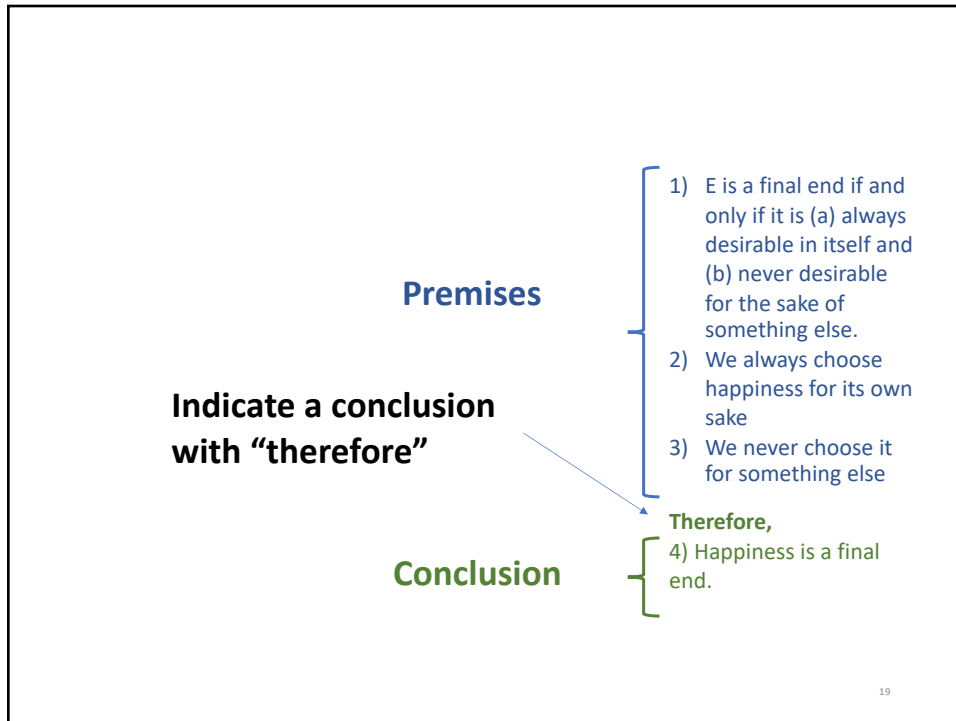
Conclusion

Therefore,

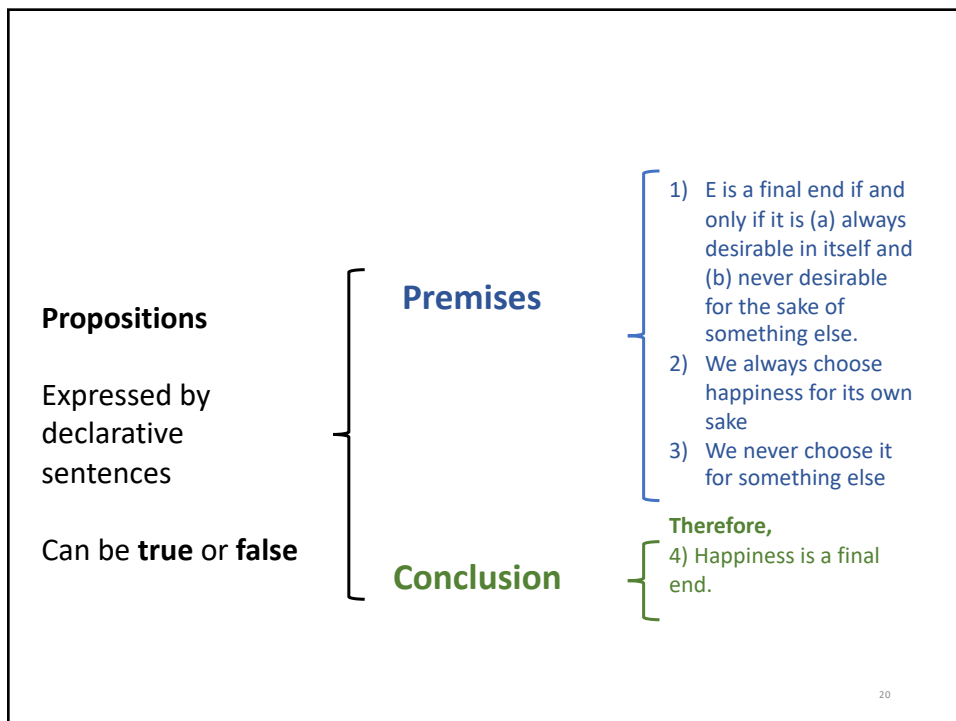
- 4) Happiness is a final end.

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Logical Structure of Argument

- Premises are to lend support to conclusions
- **A valid argument is one in which *if* the premises are/were true, the conclusion would have to be true as well**

Propositions

Expressed by declarative sentences

Can be **true** or **false**

Premises

- 1) E is a final end if and only if it is (a) always desirable in itself and (b) never desirable for the sake of something else.
- 2) We always choose happiness for its own sake
- 3) We never choose it for something else

Conclusion

Therefore,

- 4) Happiness is a final end.

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Logical Structure of Argument

- Premises are to lend support to conclusions
- **A valid argument is one in which *if* the premises are/were true, the conclusion would have to be true as well**

Propositions

Expressed by declarative sentences

Can be **true** or **false**

Premises

- 1) E is a final end if and only if it is (a) always desirable in itself and (b) never desirable for the sake of something else.
- 2) We always choose happiness for its own sake
- 3) We never choose it for something else

Conclusion

Therefore,

- 4) Happiness is a final end.

*About the relations **between** propositions, so a single proposition cannot be valid OR invalid!*

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What makes a proposition a premise or a conclusion is its role in a particular argument.

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1. All animals are mortal
2. All humans are animals

Therefore,

- 3. All humans are mortal**
4. Socrates is a human

Therefore,

5. Socrates is mortal

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Status as premise/conclusion relative to argument it is in.

Conclusion of *this* argument

1. All animals are mortal
2. All humans are animals

Therefore,

Premise of *this* argument

3. **All humans are mortal**

4. Socrates is a human

Therefore,

5. Socrates is mortal

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Status as premise/conclusion relative to argument it is in.

Conclusion of *this* argument

1. All animals are mortal
2. All humans are animals

Therefore,

Premise of *this* argument

3. **All humans are mortal**

4. Socrates is a human

Therefore,

5. Socrates is mortal

By itself – not in an argument – it is neither a premise nor a conclusion, just a proposition/assertion.

All humans are mortal.

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Ways of Characterizing Validity

- In a **valid argument**, the truth of the premises guarantees the truth of the conclusion.
- In a **valid argument**, *if* the premises were true, the conclusion must be true as well.
- In a **valid argument**, affirming the premises while denying the conclusion results in a contradiction.

1. All humans are mortal
 2. Socrates is a human
- Therefore,*
3. Socrates is mortal

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Valid?

1. All humans are mortal
 2. Socrates is a human
- Therefore,*
3. Socrates is mortal

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Ways of Characterizing Validity

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Valid?

1. All humans are made of granite
 2. Socrates is a human
- Therefore,*
3. Socrates is made of granite

One false premise, and false conclusion, but a valid argument

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Ways of Characterizing Validity

- In a **valid argument**, the truth of the premises guarantees the truth of the conclusion.
- In a **valid argument**, *if* the premises were true, the conclusion must be true as well.
- In a **valid argument**, affirming the premises while denying the conclusion results in a contradiction.

Valid?

1. All humans are Athenians
 2. Socrates is a human
- Therefore,*
3. Socrates is Athenian

One false premise, true conclusion, but a valid argument

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Ways of Characterizing Validity

- In a **valid argument**, the truth of the premises guarantees the truth of the conclusion.
- In a **valid argument**, *if* the premises were true, the conclusion must be true as well.
- In a **valid argument**, affirming the premises while denying the conclusion results in a contradiction.

Valid?

1. All humans are mortal
 2. Beyonce is human
- Therefore,*
3. Socrates is mortal

Premises and conclusion all true,
but premises do not prove
conclusion

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	Can be true or false	Can be valid or invalid
Propositions (which can play the roles of premises or conclusions in arguments)	YES	NO
Arguments	NO	YES

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So two questions to ask about arguments...

1. Is the structure of the argument valid?
 - I.e., if the premises were true, would this ensure that the conclusion must be true as well?

2. Are the premises true?
 - Even a valid argument with false premises gives us no reason to believe the conclusion!

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