Aristotle on Final Ends
&
Basic Terminology for Arguments

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Aristotle, *Nichomachean 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 **honor, 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.**

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

Therefore,

4) Happiness is **a** final end.

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

Compare with Plato's *Symposium* 204d-205a, where Diotima cross-examines Socrates:

"So far I [Diotima] have been explaining the character and the parentage of Love. Now, according to you [Socrates], he is love for beautiful things. But suppose someone asks us: 'Socrates and Diotima, what is the point of loving beautiful things?' Or perhaps it's clearer this way: 'The lover of beautiful things has a desire; what does he desire?'"

"That they become his own," I [Socrates] said.

"But that answer calls for still another question, that is, 'What will this man have, when the beautiful things he wants have become his own?'

I said there was no way I could give a ready answer to that question.

Then she said, "Suppose someone changes the question, putting 'good' in place of 'beautiful,' and asks you this: 'Tell me, Socrates, a lover of good things has a desire; what does he desire?'"

"That they become his own," I said.

"And what will he have, when the good things he wants have become his own?"

"This time it's easier to come up with the answer," I said. "He'll have happiness (*eudaimonia*)."

"That's what makes happy people happy, isn't it — possessing good things. There's no need to ask further, 'What's the point of wanting happiness?' The answer you gave seems to be final."

"True," I said.

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

Indicate a conclusion with "therefore"

Therefore,
4) Happiness is a final end.

Conclusion

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

**Indicate a conclusion with "therefore"
Or logical notation ∴**

Conclusion

∴ 4) Happiness is a final end.

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**

Premises

Propositions

Expressed by declarative sentences

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

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

Therefore,
4) Happiness is a final end.

Conclusion

What <u>makes</u> a proposition a premise or a conclusion is its <u>role</u> in a particular argument.