

ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS

Fall 2009

PH 381 & GK 390 – meets Th 3:30-6:30 in WAG 10

Steve White (sawhite@uts.cc.utexas.edu); mailbox in Classics Office, WAG 123

Office hours: MW 1:30-3 in WAG 123B (475-7457) and by appointment

The seminar will focus on two topics: pleasure and *philia* (aka friendship), each both in its own right and in relation to other issues, including virtues of character and thought. We'll devote the first half of the term to examining the structure of Aristotle's ethical theory, principally his eudaimonism and analysis of virtue. The rest of the seminar will examine a) his analysis of pleasure, b) how this analysis informs his evaluation of pleasure, c) his analysis of friendship, and d) how this analysis underwrites -- or fails to underwrite -- the special status of friendship, including its relation to pleasure.

Texts. I asked the COOP to order the translations I think are most successful in balancing accuracy and clarity, but you're welcome to use others, and it can be instructive to consult others on key passages.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (tr. Rowe – alternatively Irwin or revised Ross; beware the Loeb ed.)

Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* I-II and VIII (tr. Woods – or Revised Oxford; beware the Loeb ed.)

Greek texts (optional): Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* (ed. I. Bywater)

Aristotle, *Ethica Eudemia* (ed. R. Walzer and J. Mingay)

Assignments

1. Presentations: registered students will present material to the seminar; time and class size permitting, everyone twice. Presentations should be 20-30 minutes and accompanied by an outline or handout (typically including key passages); please email me a draft by 5 p.m. on the Monday before you present. You should pose and address a central question concerning material in Aristotle and relevant discussions in the literature; you may focus on either, and the emphasis may be exegetical or critical, as you see fit. You may invite questions as you proceed, or postpone discussion until you finish.

2. Working papers: three short papers (2-5 pp) addressing issues in the assigned readings. The topics are up to you: analyze a passage or section in Aristotle, criticize or defend an argument (Aristotle or a critic), discuss issues in the literature – or translate a passage (roughly a Bekker page). Papers are due by 5 p.m. Tuesdays (by email) and must address material on the agenda for either the next or prior session. You'll receive comments but no grade; any unsatisfactory work won't count; all 3 must be done by 11/19.

Note: students registered for GK 390: at least 1 paper must be a translation, at least 1 not.

3. Seminar paper: a substantial study (10-25 pp) due on or before Fr. Dec. 11. You may develop a seminar presentation or working paper, or address another topic with my approval. An abstract is due by 11/5.

Grading policy: overall contribution, presentations, research paper (provisionally 30-20-50%)

Greek reading: An optional (καλοῦ ἕνεκα) “satellite group” will meet weekly to read passages in Greek.

Schedule by weeks: topics and core reading

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Orientation (8/27) | ad libitum |
| 2. Eudaimonism (9/3) | NE 1 and 10.6-8; cf. EE 1 |
| 3. No class (9/10): make-up date TBA (in Dec.) | NE all |
| 4. Human nature (9/17) | NE 1.7, 2.4, EE 2.1 |
| 5. Virtue (9/24) | NE 2; cf. EE 2.2-5, NE 6 |
| 6. Rational agency (10/1) | NE 3.1-5, 7.1-4; cf. EE 2.6-11 |
| 7. Virtues of character (10/8) | NE 3.6-12 and 4; cf. EE 3 |
| 8. Pleasure: round one (10/15) | NE 7.11-14; cf. 10.1-3 |
| 9. Pleasure: round two (10/22) | NE 10.1-5 (esp. 4-5); cf. 7.12-14 |
| 10. Pleasure: evaluation (10/29) | NE 10.4-8, 9.9, 9.12 |
| 11. Friendship: problems of definition (11/5) | NE 8 (esp. 1-6); cf. EE 7.1-5 |
| 12. Self-love (11/12) | NE 9 (esp. 4-8); cf. EE 7.6 |
| 13. Other selves (11/19) | NE 9.9-12, 8.12-9.3; cf. EE 7.12 |
| 14. No class: Thanksgiving (11/26) | |
| 15. Open mike: your papers (12/3 + TBA) | TBA |