

Politics and Christian Civilization: Class Thirteen

Introduction to Ethics as an Conduit to Politics

Review:

- Sign Language
- Symbolic Language
- How is a word a symbol and symbol of what
- Pictogram, Ideogram
- Phonetic language
- How is language of child and chimp a difference of degree
- When does it become a difference of kind?
- Is there a continuum in human language? Animal?
- Why do humans need a symbolic language?
- Why do animal need only sign language?
- Does perceptual thought require sign language or symbolic language?
- Why does it need one and not the other?
- Explain the “Terrible Twos”
- How does case of Helen Keller demonstrate the need for symbolic language?
- How does case of Helen Keller demonstrate animals do not think rationally?

ETHICS

STUDY OF GOOD LIFE FOR MAN

FIRST SELF EVIDENT PRINCIPLE OF ETHICS, ALL MEN SHOULD SEEK THAT WHICH IS REALLY GOOD FOR THEM.

Human potential Latent in human as oak tree is latent in acorn.

INTELLECT = PURPOSE IS TO KNOW THROUGH ABSTRACTION. WHAT IS KNOWN AND SOUGHT FOR IS THE TRUTH. HIGHEST TRUTH = WISDOM.

WILL = PRINCIPLE OF ACTION. PURPOSE IS FREE ACTION = TO FREELY DO THE TRUTH WHICH THE MIND APPREHENDS.

ANIMALS HAVE FREEDOM OF **“VOLUNTARY MOVEMENT”** BUT NOT **“FREEDOM OF CHOICE”**

In Aristotle's words:

"Choice, then, seems to be voluntary, but not the same thing as the voluntary; the latter extends more widely. For both children and the lower animals share in voluntary action, but not in choice, and acts done on the spur of the moment we describe as voluntary, but not as chosen" (Book, III, Chapter II, Ethics).

WHAT IS THE END OF LIFE? THAT WHICH IS AN END IN ITSELF AND A MEANS TO NOTHING ELSE.

HAPPINESS

ARISTOTLE

“**L**et us resume our inquiry and state, in view of the fact that all knowledge and every pursuit aims at some good, what it is that we say political science aims at and what is the highest of all goods achievable by action. Verbally there is very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify living well and doing well with being happy” (Ethics, Book I, Chapter IV)

JOHN ADAMS

“**W**e ought to consider what is the end of government, before we determine what is the best form. Upon this point all speculative politicians will agree, that happiness of society is the end of government, as all divines and moral philosophers will agree that the happiness of the individual is the end of man.”

ARISTOTLE

“**T**o judge from the lives that men lead, most men, and men of the most vulgar type, seem (not without some ground) to identify the good, or happiness, with pleasure; which is the reason why they love the life of enjoyment.... Now the mass of mankind are evidently quite slavish in their tastes, preferring a life suitable to beasts, but they get some ground for their view from the fact that many of those in high places share the tastes of Sardanapallus. A consideration of the prominent types of life shows that people of superior refinement and of active disposition identify happiness with honour; for this is, roughly speaking, the end of the political life. But it seems too superficial to be what we are looking for” (Ethic, Book I, Chapter V).

Since we are looking for human happiness, it must be part of our human nature or that which is the same in all of us, our essence or person.

There are two levels of need, **physical** and **spiritual**. We are looking for those needs that are in our human nature by which we are distinct from all other animals. We have a body that has needs but those needs are also required by other animals so they are not unique. We are looking for the uniquely human ones.

ARISTOTLE

"Now if the function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle... and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case, human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete.

But we must add 'in a complete life.' For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy" (Ethics, Book I, Chapter VII).

TOTUM BONUM:

Biological sustenance, health, wealth, friendship, love, truth, pleasure, liberty, civil peace, political participation, free time (for leisure, rest, and play) fortune and wisdom

"But, being a man, one will also need **external prosperity**; for our nature is not self-sufficient for the purpose of contemplation, but our body also must be **healthy** and must have **food** and other attention. Still, we must not think that the man who is to be happy will need many things or great things, merely because he cannot be supremely happy without external goods; for self-sufficiency and action do not involve excess, and we can do noble acts without ruling earth and sea; for even with moderate advantages one can act virtuously, ... and it is enough that we should have so much as that;... for one can with but moderate possessions do what one ought" (Book X, Chapter 8).

Good versus Perfect: Jesus came to lead us to perfection. Aristotle knew only of the good. He was limited to "**natural wisdom**" acquired by reason. He did not have gift of faith or "**supernatural wisdom.**"

"If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us" (Aristotle, Ethics, Book X, Chapter VII).

Summum Bonum = Wisdom