Aristotle and Happiness

Name:

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According to Aristotle, every act that an individual endeavors to do is aimed at producing some good, even though these aims differ between persons and contexts. Aristotle reveals this assertion in his writing of Nicomachean ethics, where he raises noteworthy questions regarding how people should live their lives (Cahn&Vitrano, 2007). According to him, humans must act in line with their reasons, where their actions produce more good than bad. This 'good' is what Aristotle refers to as the ultimate purpose of human beings. For instance, politics can dictate how people live and act; however, its result is to achieve the good for the city by enhancing individual welfare and safety. Every action bears some good in it because it is the usual final and self-sufficient result. He goes on to assert this good that every man seeks is happiness or what he refers to as eudaimonia.

Aristotle's philosophy of eudaimonia is a moral notion that is very much about living according to one's virtues. Happiness is about living a virtuous life, even though these virtues are individualistic. For instance, for one to be a gardener, they must understand what it takes to become one. Human beings have a distinctive capacity to reason, unlike animals. Thus, for an individual to lead a happy life, they must be able to act according to their reason. Happiness, which is the supreme good, involves leading a life that enables one to be rational, unlike pleasure and amusement, which animals can enjoy; happiness is an activity that is profound and enduring. The happiness that a person experiences from drinking a refreshing beer or having funs with friends is different from what Aristotle implies. It is the ultimate end of a mission that encompasses the totality of an individual's living (Cahn&Vitrano, 2007).

Aristotle's notion of happiness differs from that of Epicurus. According to Epicurus, pleasure is the ultimate form of happiness where mental disturbances and pain are absent. Attaining satisfaction is the purpose of human beings, and it is the beginning and the ending of a happy life. He suggests every human tries to seek for pleasure after birth to enjoy life and does everything to avoid pain. The highest form of happiness is a pleasure because pain is absent. It is through pleasure that people make choices, and the more people can limit their pleasures to the most desirable and natural, the more they can become happy. Aristotle's idea of happiness offers an implicit rejection of epicurean views because it focuses more on virtue and reason than on pleasures (Cahn&Vitrano, 2007).

Aristotle's view regarding happiness is compelling, unlike the Epicurean idea because it centers on virtue instead of pleasure as the superior form of happiness. A person can be happy if they measure the virtue of rationality behind their deeds by directing their actions towards reasons, which is the highest of ethical virtues and consisting of the greatest good. Yes, people can indeed derive happiness from material goods, one's position in society, and even looks. However, people should direct their life towards living as rational beings, and they shall become happy regardless. For instance, an individual can attain happiness by volunteering at a children's home, helping the needy, listening carefully to other's opinions, and expressing gratitude. It is as simple as that, and this type of person can never say they are unhappy because they understand how to balance their pain (Cahn&Vitrano, 2007).

Reference

Cahn, S., & Vitrano, C. (2007). *Happiness: classic and contemporary readings in philosophy*. Oxford University Press.