

SIMPLE ESSAY

Aristotle said perfect life is perfect balance. But, of what...? It all depends how you use your virtues at any given moment. Or, as I say, how you use your emotions.

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COMPLEX ESSAY

If you haven't yet been told in my class that you came up with an old fart (an old man long dead) thought, then be prepared to undergo a compliment reading this essay.

Aristotle, an old fart, was born over two thousand years ago in Greece.

He was a moralist. That is, he categorized his thinking into good and bad.

If he saw a play there were only good and bad characters. When he lived life, there were only good and bad actions.

Simple enough to understand. After all, when we played sports in recess there were only those who hogged the soccer ball and those who learned to share it. There was bad and good in recess.

But what about the human condition? That is, what is the human given experiences and time? In simple terms the answer is this: everything that makes a human are emotions.

(For clarification, Aristotle called the human condition virtues. I, however, call them emotions. It is more fitting to me to call virtues emotions since emotions convey the fleeting aspect of the human condition better than things, like virtues, that imply something never changing).

These emotions are on a scale. At either extreme is another emotion. In the middle is the mean, or the average, resulting emotion. That is, there are really only one of three emotions someone can experience when experiencing the human condition at any one given time. Of course, many emotions are felt over the course of time, say even the course of a day.

We don't know which experience of the human condition is the best, just read my "Thinking at Extremes" Mini Lecture to know that. It might seem that extremes are actually better; however, consider what Aristotle says, "Justice is all virtues in sum." That is to say, we need all of them in order for justice to exist. What better way to have justice than to live in a state of chaotic medium between two extremes. In that state, nothing can truly be said of how someone is living. Just that they are living more due to their average emotion being that with the most of good and bad.

Everyone wants good emotions, but do we really?

If you've read my mini lecture "Yin and Yang" you will know that even good things have bad things.

Think of courage, if we had too much of it we'd be overly courageous... or rash as Aristotle said it.

Think of selflessness, if we had too much of it we'd be overly selfless. We'd become The Giving Tree with nothing left to give. We would not exist and anything that did exist about us would be given to someone else. However selfless a belief that is, even if we were okay being that selfless, could we trust others that our sentiment in giving away ourselves completely would result in good to those we gave ourselves to? No, we cannot trust others when we give ourselves completely to them. That is why parents lie to each other and that is why The Boy from *The Giving Tree* didn't end up spending his old man years with his family. We ultimately don't know the people we trust completely. Now, if you're thinking that at least The Giving Tree was trusted and the boy went back to it, then you must know this: The Giving Tree does not exist in the capacity it wishes it could. It wants to give the old man apples, but there is nothing left to give. All it has is a selfless resting place for a completely selfish old man who couldn't learn the selfless principles of The Giving Tree well enough to have anything to give to anyone else. The Giving Tree is the homeless shelter at its worst... a free place for life with only the least amount of free things to give.

Is it selfless to trust someone we shouldn't with our gifts of life?

Only when we can fully trust someone should we give ourselves selflessly. But you gotta ask yourself: what type of world do we live in? One with good and bad. Every good action will lead to bad results at some point. Even the selfless Giving Tree is bad for not knowing who to trust.

Now, if it were possible The Boy became as selfless as The Giving Tree, then sure you could have an extreme form of selflessness become the common emotion that our lives try to mold onto. However, because we've already been proven otherwise, we must believe that a healthy combination of selfishness and selflessness is the emotion we should feel.

BONUS POINTS: How have we already proven ourselves otherwise? (The world is a place with bad... and good).

Here are the emotions Aristotle thinks we need to have balance between:

The Virtues

Vice (Deficiency)

Cowardly
Addictive
Stingy
Self-deprecating
Boorish
Quarrelsome
Melancholy
Depraved
Envious
Mean
Lazy

Virtue (Mean)

Brave
Temperate
Generous
Truthful
Witty
Friendly
Spirited
Conscientious
Indignant
Benevolent
Industrious

Vice (Excess)

Rash
Ascetic
Extravagant
Boastful
Buffoonish
Bootlicking
Boisterous
Deferential
Retributive
Self-sacrificing
Single-minded

Here are the binary emotions I think we need emotion between:

Selflessness and Selfishness

Vanity and Humility

Love and Hate

Hedonism and Abstinence

Passive (Sloth) and Active (Energy)

Sympathy and Indifference

Duty and Relaxedness

Discipline and Neglect

NONEMOTIONAL BINARIES

Art and Science

Good and Evil

Truth and False

Structure and Chaos

Life and Death

Yes... these will be our units... I say for the moment.