

Wicked Misery According to Aristotle

For Aristotle (Barnes 1984), virtue (*arête*) is a necessary but not sufficient condition for happiness (*eudaimonia*) (Annas 1993). Virtuous people equipped with certain external goods flourish (Nussbaum 1986). Those who are not so fortunate still fare better than others when faced with misfortune, presumably because the virtuous enjoy internal harmony of the soul (Annas 1993; Anton and Preus 1991; Everson 1998). However, if this is the case for the virtuous, why not for the vicious (Müller 2015; Meyer 1989; McDowell 1998)?

Like the virtuous agent, the vicious person has an idea of the good, believes that she is pursuing it, and receives pleasure from achieving her goals (Irwin, 2001; Lorenz 2006; Moss 2012; Tuozzo 1991). Supposing that internal harmony helps the virtuous deal with misfortune, why wouldn't a similar harmony do the same for the wicked? Aristotle is clear that, while the vicious man's beliefs, desires, and actions may be in accordance with one another, his soul experiences the worst kind of disharmony, and he is miserable (Roochnik 2007; Müller 2015).

In this paper, I consider the following explanations for Aristotle's claims: 1) subjective harmony is not true harmony since it is in discord with actuality (Burnyeat 1980; Moss 2012) 2) subjective harmony is not true harmony when "the notes," so-to-speak, are subject to sudden and radical key changes (Brickhouse 2003; Ineke and Rosen 2008; Lorenz 2006; and Pakaluk and Pearson 2010) and 3) even when the wicked person gets what she thinks she wants, the pleasure that follows is short-lived (Kosman 1980; Roochnik 2007). I argue that there is a way in which all three are correct for different reasons when we take into account Aristotle's observation that while there is only one mean (correct behavior) there are infinitely many ways to miss the mark (Curren 2000; Jacobs 2001; Jacobs 1997; Vasiliou 1996).

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