Aristotle Guide II
PHIL301

*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, Chapters 1-5, 7-9, 13, Book II, Chapters 1-6; 1094a1-1100a9, 1102a5-1107a27: *RAGP*, pp. 832-852

Notes:
- The *Nicomachean Ethics* is one of two studies of moral philosophy extant in Aristotle's corpus. We suppose his son, Nicomachus, to have taken the notes constituting this work – thus its name.
- As a study of ethics, Aristotle's chief concern is to define the human good. That is, he seeks to answer these questions: What makes human life "good"? Under what conditions do we call a human act "good" (or "right")? Under what conditions do we call a human being "good"? Etc.
- In Book I, Chapters 1-3, Aristotle sets out the general scope and method of his inquiry. He proceeds to more specific accounts of the human good, concluding (our reading) with a definition of *virtue*, which is the key concept in his ethical theory.

Study Questions (by chapter)

I.1 What is the good? How are various goods distinguished? In what way are some goods subordinate to others?
I.2 How does Aristotle go about identifying a “best” or highest good? Why is knowledge of the highest good of value, according to Aristotle?
I.3 What “degree of clarity” should we expect of a study of the human good, and why?
I.4 What is the highest good, generally speaking? Why is it, according to Aristotle, that a good up-bringing is important to the study of this question?
I.5 On what grounds does Aristotle reject pleasure, honor, and wealth as constituting happiness?
I.7 By what general parameters does Aristotle suggest identifying the good? Why does Aristotle turn his attention to the “function” of humans? What is the function of a human?
I.8 What are “external goods” and what is their role in the happy life, on Aristotle’s account?
I.9 What does Aristotle mean by saying that happiness “needs a complete life”? Who was Priam, and was he a happy man?
I.13 What “parts” of the human “soul” does Aristotle identify? What basic distinction among virtues does he draw?

II.1 How are character and thought virtues developed? What is the importance of “breeding”, for Aristotle?
II.2 What are “excess” and “deficiency”, where virtue is concerned? How does Aristotle come to this view? What does Aristotle mean by saying that virtue is “preserved by the mean”?
II.3 What further conditions does Aristotle make on being virtuous?
II.4 How does Aristotle respond to the puzzle concerning the relative priority of virtue and virtuous action?
II.5 What kind of thing is virtue, according to Aristotle?
II.6 What is Aristotle’s final definition of virtue?