



Aristotle's View of Happiness and Its Significance to Contemporary College Students

Qingqing He

Zhijiang College of Zhejiang University of Technology, Shaoxing, 312000, China

E-mail: 1752709137@qq.com

Abstract: Aristotle's concept of happiness has had a profound influence on later generations. The emergence of happiness view is influenced by the background of The Times and the theories of different people. Aristotle's concept of happiness basically includes that happiness is the highest good, speculation is the highest happiness and happiness is the realistic activity of the virtuous soul. Although Aristotle's concept of happiness originated in ancient Greece, it is still of positive significance to contemporary college students. His happiness view not only points out the direction for contemporary college students to pursue happiness, but also provides reference for their future planning and guides them to link their personal happiness with national happiness.

Keywords: Aristotle; Happiness; Contemporary College Students; Meaning

1. Background of Aristotle's concept of happiness

1.1 The historical background of Aristotle's happiness theory

Aristotle lived in the polis of ancient Greece when the slave society was in serious crisis. On the one hand, slave owners accumulated a great deal of wealth, which was contrasted with the extreme poverty of slaves. On the other hand, the struggle between the free poor and the class represented by slave owners became increasingly fierce. Faced with such a situation, Aristotle tried to find a reasonable way to resolve the conflict. It was in this context that his conception of happiness came to him.

1.2 The theoretical background of Aristotle's happiness theory

Before Aristotle put forward his concept of happiness, the ancestors had already thought about what happiness was. Democritus, as a representative of happiness theory, advocated that happiness was the combination of spiritual and physical happiness. Socrates, as a representative of the concept of happiness of virtue, put forward that "virtue is knowledge", that all actions in accordance with virtue are good, and all people who do good are happy. Plato went on to say that virtue and wisdom are true happiness. Aristotle critically absorbed and inherited the essence of these theories, and then improved and put forward his own view of happiness.

Aristotle's concept of happiness is due to the excessive gap between rich and poor and the fierce struggle between classes at that time. Aristotle then put forward his happiness view under the influence of hedonism and virtue theory.

2. The basic content of Aristotle's concept of happiness

2.1 Happiness is the highest good

There is a saying in The Nicomachean Ethics, "Every art and every study, and likewise every practice and choice of man, is aimed at some kind of good. So it has been said that all things are for good. People will do a lot of things in life,

and these things always have a purpose.”For Aristotle, such an end is the good, the purpose and intention of the activity of a person or thing. At the same time, for Aristotle, among all the good, there is the highest good, and that is happiness.

Critical thinking is the highest happiness

Aristotle had three different ideas about happiness. The first kind of happiness is the pleasure of satisfying physical desires. But this kind of pleasure, happiness is animal, no reason, low. The second kind of happiness is political, the pursuit of honor. Honor, wealth and status are people’s external pursuit, but this pursuit of happiness is superficial and floating. The third kind of happiness is the highest happiness -- speculative, this is Aristotle’s ideal of happiness. Although speculation can not bring material material, but can bring spiritual pleasure, this pleasure is also the satisfaction of the soul.

Happiness is the practical activity of the virtuous soul

Aristotle discusses happiness from the aspects of human functions and activities and finally thinks that happiness belongs only to the realistic activities of the virtuous soul of human beings. Man has a rational activity that no other creature has. Reason is that man knows that he should do something on his own initiative, which is the quality that makes a man good and makes his practice good. Human virtue can be reflected in specific behaviors. Therefore, only when people do something voluntarily can they truly judge whether it is good or bad as well as whether it is good or bad. If a man has no conception or consciousness of what he does, he cannot judge his good and evil, and he cannot acquire virtue.

Man does all things with a purpose, which is goodness. Of all the good things, happiness is the highest. And the best way for people to achieve happiness is to think, which can bring spiritual satisfaction. The other person has to do something consciously before they can evaluate whether it makes them happy or not.

3. The significance of Aristotle’s happiness theory to contemporary college students

3.1 Point out the direction for college students to pursue happiness

Everyone is in the pursuit of happiness, college students are not surprised. But what is happiness for college students, they need to have a clear thinking. But more people are still confused about what happiness is. Aristotle’s view of happiness points out the direction for college students. If they want to pursue happiness, they can try to speculate and pursue spiritual happiness. External happiness, or the enjoyment of the senses or the satisfaction of desires, is not as profound as stepping into a profound state of mind. When speculation becomes a part of life and thoughts enter a higher realm, people will no longer be easily hampered by external happiness and vanity, but pay more attention to their own inner world.

3.2 Provide reference for college students’ future planning

Every college student begins his or her new life when he or she enters college. A brand new life requires more planning for the future. Aristotle’s view of happiness can provide reference for the future of college students. No matter which path they choose, college students should consciously decide by themselves instead of blindly following the opinions of others. At the same time, college students should pursue their future goals and ideals, or happiness, through efforts and practice. In addition, college students should also pay attention to their moral cultivation. There is a high probability of happiness if one is diligent in real life, and diligently strives to realize his good virtue in morality.

3.3 Guide college students to associate personal happiness with national happiness

Man is an animal living in society, often in one kind of social relationship or another. In this society and this country, college students are closely related to the society and the country. It should be said that college students’ life and practice cannot be separated from the society and the country. Only with the development and progress of the society and the prosperity of the country can individual needs be met, favorable conditions and platforms for individual development can be established, and individuals can reap happiness. Aristotle’s concept of happiness leads college students to associate personal happiness with national happiness. While learning to improve their skills, college students should consider the reality of their own country, combine personal honor and disgrace with the country, and strive to

serve the country and do what they can for the country.

College students not only pursue the external, but also seek for the spiritual self through thinking, which can help them get a better sense of satisfaction. No matter what their future plans are, college students should practice and strive to take their destiny into their own hands. While grasping their own destiny, college students should also think about the destiny of their country and devote themselves to national construction actively.

Aristotle's concept of happiness is that he saw the gap between the rich and the poor in people's lives and the conflicts were finally influenced by different people's concept of happiness. The basic contents, such as happiness is the highest good, speculation is the highest happiness and happiness is the realistic activity of the virtuous soul, still have a profound meaning for people, especially for contemporary college students.

References

1. Wang Chengguang, Liu Baili, Wang Liping. On Aristotle's happiness view and Contemporary Significance [J], Journal of Sichuan University (Philosophy and Science edition), 2010(2):34-38
2. Hu Xiaoheng. On Aristotle's ethics of Happiness and its contemporary Significance. Journal of Zhejiang University of Media and Communications [J], 2016(3):120.
3. Yang Yanfei. Aristotle's Outlook on Happiness and its Enlightenment to the Contemporary Era [J]. Journal of Liaoning University of Governance, 2013(11):42-44.
4. Zhang Ke. A Brief Analysis of Aristotle's Happiness View [J]. China Collective Economy, 2019(17):81-83.
5. Liu Fanghong. On Aristotle's concept of happiness and its practical significance. The bridge, 2008 (2) : 70.
6. Zhang Yongyan, Liu Zifei. Aristotle's View of Happiness and its Value [J], Yangtze River University Journal (Social Sciences), 2019(2):114.
7. Aristotle. Nicomachean ethics [M]. Trans. Liao Shenbai. Beijing: Commercial Press, 2005.
8. Zhino Wang. Aristotle's View of Happiness [D]. Shenyang: Shenyang Normal University, 2005.
9. GUI Qin. On Aristotle's Concept of Happiness [D]. Kunming: Yunnan University, 2010.
10. Zhong Mei GUI. Aristotle's Concept of Happiness and its Contemporary Enlightenment [J]. Shenyang University Journal, 2008(3).