Nichomachean Ethics: My Opinion Essay

Desire is a want or something people believe they need, it can cloud their judgment and make them think that their only true happiness will come from their desire. Instead of happiness, eudaimonia is a better word to describe the ultimate desire as happiness is a blanket term that cannot fully describe how people feel. Eudaimonia is closer related to the idea of human prosperity, an example we used in class was the “happy warrior” the happy warrior helps show why happiness is not the proper word as a warrior fighting during a war wouldn’t necessarily be happy, to call them that might be weird or even insulting as they are dealing with traumatic events. Courageous would be the word you would look for in the warrior which is one of the virtues that Aristotle says creates eudaimonia. The other two virtues that create a eudemonic life are temperance and justice, these three virtues are important yet without reason and rational thought they are not possible. In order to understand why the true student of politics desires to make his fellow citizens good and obedient to the laws, we must understand what human virtues are and how they can make people reasonable and rational and therefore lead to a eudemonic life.

Aristotle believes in order to find “happiness” we must examine the soul in conjuncture with complete virtue. “it is clear that the virtue we must examine is human virtue since we are also seeking the human good and human happiness. By human virtue we mean virtue of the soul…” (Nicomachean Ethics Book I, chap. 13). Nevertheless, in order to find the virtues of the soul, you must examine the rational and non-rational parts of the soul. The non-rational part can be called plant-like as it deals with nutrition and growth and can also be split into two parts. “For while the plantlike part shares in reason not at all, the part with appetites and in general desires shares in reason in a way, insofar as it both listens to reason and obeys it” (Nicomachean Ethics Book I, chap. 13). Therefore, although the non-rational part of the soul is not reasonable in ways of being content, part of it shares reason through telling you to eat, drink, sleep, use the bathroom, etc., all things that your body needs to do to exist. So, although within the non-rational part there is a reasonable and not reasonable side, the reasonable side shows reason when your body listens to the general desires and acts them out. “The non-rational part also obeys and is persuaded in some way by reason, as is shown by correction, and by every sort of reproof and exhortation (Nicomachean Ethics Book I, chap. 13). The rational part of the soul however praised for pushing people to do/ towards what’s best, is at a constant class with something within the mind. Aristotle states that incontinent people have impulses in contrary directions (Nicomachean Ethics Book I, chap. 13). This means that continent people listen to reason and do what is considered good or just and incontinent people while they may reason they may not be rational as they have a clash within themselves pulling them in directions opposite of reasonable desires. “At any rate, in the continent person it obeys reason; and in the temperate and the brave person it presumable listens still better to reason, since there it agrees with reason in everything” (Nicomachean Ethics Book I, chap. 13). The rational and non-rational parts (although non-rational now being partially reasonable) are important to human virtue or virtue of the soul because in order to be virtuous you must be reasonable and rational, and if you are all of these then you can live a eudemonic life.

Laws are obligatory rules put in by our government to ensure that people are safe, healthy, do not bother others/ are not bothered ourselves. That is a very broad definition but a basic one to

describe the overall reason for laws. As discussed above, people who are virtuous listen to reason and therefore are rational. According to Aristotle political science is the best science as stated here “Political science aims at and what is the highest of all goods achievable by action” (Nicomachean Ethics Book I, chap. 4). This shows that since political science and politics, in general, are the highest of all goods achievable therefore they create eudaimonia. As the question states that “given that the ultimate object of rational desire is eudaimonia, why, according to Aristotle, does the “true student of politics” desire “to make his fellow citizens good and obedient to the laws”? the true student of politics desires to make his fellow citizens good and obedient to the laws because they will be rational if they listen to the laws. “if this is so, is it clear that the politician must in some way know about the soul… hence the politician, as well as the student of nature, must study the soul. But he must study it for his specific purpose, far enough for his inquiry into virtue” (Nicomachean Ethics Book I, chap. 13). For example, the non-rational part of the soul has a reasonable side to it because it obeys the basic commands in order for the body to survive as well as in the rational part if you are a continent person and do what’s best then you are also reasonable. These are the aspects that a student of politics would desire in his citizens as they would all be virtuous and therefore listen to the laws. Overall the student of politics wants them to listen because if they listen and obey laws then they are rational and reasonable which means the people are virtuous and therefore that means they are eudemonic. One thing to remember though is that you cannot force people to listen and obey the laws as that would be removing people's free will, people can make their own decisions, and therefore if they are rational, they will listen, if they aren’t rational they won’t. In my opinion, this is debatable as to if the laws are wrong and harmful in themselves then it would not be rational to follow them but in the example of a good society then if you are a rational being you will listen to the laws.