

MAN, THE GOOD AND
THE METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS OF
THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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NOMOSAE: Well, Aristae, it's about time that you got here. We've been waiting for you so that we could begin.

ARISTAE: I'm sorry dear Nomosae, but you know how gluttonous I am for a fine conversation. I got to talking to our old friend Zeugitae, and what a talk we had!

NOMOSAE: Why don't you tell us about it? If it's really that fine, then we'll all be blessed. If it isn't then maybe it will suggest something even finer.

ARISTAE: As I was on my way here, I met Zeugitae, our old friend who has turned so bitterly against our studies since he's inherited his father's estate. Our talk went like this:

ARISTAE: Well hello, Zeugitae! What are you up to?

ZEUGITAE: I'm just coming back from a business meeting and was on my way home to get ready for a luncheon. And you?

ARISTAE: I'm on my way to Nomosae's house to discuss philosophy.

ZEUGITAE: Are you still on that kick?

ARISTAE: I hope it's more than a "kick!"

ZEUGITAE: Come now, Aristae! You really ought to go out and have some fun every once in a while. All you do is spend your time pouring over old books and going to discussions. I'm glad that I've finally passed that stage.

ARISTAE: Why do you speak so harshly of knowledge and especially philosophy, Zeugitae?

ZEUGITAE: I don't speak so harshly against knowledge itself; only those who become fanatically involved with it as you have. Knowledge is a wonderful thing when it is put in its proper place.

ARISTAE: What is its proper place?

ZEUGITAE: Knowledge is important as providing the means whereby one can satisfy his desires. It helps one get what he wants. If he wants to save money, then a smart person will study tax laws to see how many loop holes he can find. If he wants to grow food then the smart person will study agriculture. And so on with any desire one might have.

ARISTAE: Then knowledge can't set ends?

ZEUGITAE: I suppose that some people can desire just knowledge. Just look at you! You're a slave to philosophy. These people just go overboard, though. An intelligent person will use knowledge to help him get what he wants.

ARISTAE: Have you decided what you're going to spend your inherited money on?

ZEUGITAE: Well, I think I've finally decided how to spend it. I'm going to invest it in ranching and related industries. I figure I can buy a ranch, a couple thousand head of cattle and a few horses and then be set for life. I'll be able to invest the profits I make by ranching in other related industries like packing and fertilizer plants. Also, I'll be able to get married and have some kids and get them whatever they want.

ARISTAE: Do you want something that really satisfies these desires or something that only seems to?

ZEUGITAE: I'm not sure what you mean.

ARISTAE: If one thought that raw pork was helpful for him, but he got tape worms from it so that he nearly wasted away, then would we want to say that the pork only seems to be helpful but really wasn't or that the pork was really helpful?

ZEUGITAE: Well, if the poor man almost wasted away, I don't see how we can say anything but that the pork only seemed to be helpful but really wasn't.

ARISTAE: How does one tell what only seems to be helpful from what is really helpful so that one can tell what to desire and what not to desire?

ZEUGITAE: I suppose one needs some sort of knowledge. In this case he needs some biological information on how to separate good pork from bad or harmful pork.

ARISTAE: So, it seems that knowledge plays an important part in deciding which desires to fulfill and which not to fulfill?

ZEUGITAE: Sure! It can show me when two or more of my desires conflict. Before I had knowledge of the consequences involved in eating pork, I didn't know that another desire, namely, good health, would be frustrated.

ARISTAE: So knowledge is important to you in the same way that an accountant is important for a business. It adds the profits and subtracts the deficits and by that means allows you to tell what to do and what not to do?

ZEUGITAE: Yes, that is very well put Aristae.

ARISTAE: Before knowledge can be an accountant, must not a particular end be decided upon?

ZEUGITAE: I'm not quite sure what you mean.

ARISTAE: We've agreed, haven't we, that once a particular end is chosen, knowledge is needed to balance the different desires that arise with respect to that end, that is, once a person has decided that pork is to be eaten, he can then proceed to balance the positive and negative desires that arise with respect to that end?

ZEUGITAE: Yes, we have.

ARISTAE: Let me ask you then can knowledge enter into the determination of this particular end?

ZEUGITAE: Not that I can see.

ARISTAE: What was it again that you're going to buy with your inherited money?

ZEUGITAE: I see your memory hasn't improved any. I said I wanted a rich ranch with plenty of cattle, a few horses, a wife and a couple of kids.

ARISTAE: I didn't know you were a horseman.

ZEUGITAE: Really, I'm not. I've just heard a lot about them from my friends and decided that a horse would be a nice thing to have.

ARISTAE: What kind of horse do you want?

ZEUGITAE: I don't know. I've not really had time to look into it. What kinds are there?

ARISTAE: Well, there's thorough bred racing horses, quarter horses, Tennessee walking horses and many other kinds. Why do you want a horse?

ZEUGITAE: I don't know exactly. I guess I want a pleasure horse.

ARISTAE: So, we need to know what kind of horse makes the best pleasure horse, don't we?

ZEUGITAE: Yes, I suppose.

ARISTAE: Didn't this depend upon knowledge about the kinds of horses, what functions you want the horse to perform and which type best fulfills this purpose?

ZEUGITAE: Yes, so it seems.

ARISTAE: Thus, isn't knowledge closely tied with the ends of desire? Doesn't knowledge make desires by telling what there is that can satisfy the desire?

ZEUGITAE: Yes, I guess so.

ARISTAE: Then it looks as if your accountant is a miraculous man! Not only does he have foresight and the ability to manage and co-ordinate the advantages and disadvantages that arise with respect to a particular desire, but he also is a one man planning board who decides how in particular the aim of the company is going to be accomplished in every situation.

ZEUGITAE: Yes, I guess he has many jobs.

ARISTAE: Isn't there another way that knowledge can enter into one's desires?

ZEUGITAE: How is that?

ARISTAE: Didn't you say that you wanted a wife also?

ZEUGITAE: yes.

ARISTAE: Suppose, you were a very jealous man. Do you suppose that you would be happy if you married a very lovely woman who attracted many suitors? Wouldn't you more than likely be in a continual fever--now accusing her of encouraging this man, and then that one, following her to see if she is having an affair and other such things?

ZEUGITAE: Such a man would be miserable indeed.

ARISTAE: Thus, if you were going to take a wife wouldn't it also be important to know what kind of person you are, and how a person of your type would relate to the different kinds of women he could take to be his wife?

ZEUGITAE: Yes, I will grant you that. You've just shown me that the situation is a little bit more complicated than I at first thought. I don't see that you've really told me any more than plain common

sense would, for I grant that I do use knowledge in those ways but without really being conscious of it. Knowledge is still like an accountant, though, doing principally with the advantages and disadvantages of things.

ARISTAE: That is some talented accountant, you have, for now we see that besides all his other jobs, he must know the company inside and out to know what the company is so that he would know what type of activities to aim for, since surely the aims of a packing-house company wouldn't be the same aims that a fertilizer company would have.

ZEUGITAE: I suppose you're right. My accountant has many jobs that an ordinary accountant wouldn't have.

ARISTAE: Now, let's see if he has any more functions. Do you think that knowledge has any other role in a man's life than the ones we've already discovered?

ZEUGITAE: Not that I can see.

ARISTAE: Don't some say that a person can "overcome his desires" or "resist temptation?"

ZEUGITAE: Yes, that's commonly held.

ARISTAE: And isn't this used in cases like the following: an alcoholic proclaims to himself that he can't go on like this but has to quit drinking, or a man with an obsessive desire for sex proclaims to himself that he can't go on being driven like a slave as he has been in the past? In these cases, doesn't the person have a fight within himself and try to control himself?

ZEUGITAE: That seems to be what happens. But, it just means he has another desire that would be frustrated if he didn't control himself.

ARISTAE: Do you have in mind something like this--the alcoholic gives as his reason for quitting, the fact that he wants a job or some other such reason?

ZEUGITAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: But doesn't it also happen that a man will sometimes say that he can't go on like this because it is wrong?

ZEUGITAE: Yes, but that probably means that he has a desire for self-control which would be frustrated if he didn't change his ways.

ARISTAE: And does this desire for self-control check the other desires and rule over them?

ZEUGITAE: I suppose in some people it does.

ARISTAE: Does such a man act with knowledge or with ignorance?

ZEUGITAE: I guess he acts with knowledge.

ARISTAE: Then, would you grant that knowledge can be more than an accountant, and that certain desires can spring directly from knowledge?

ZEUGITAE: I suppose.

ARISTAE: And isn't this a remarkable kind of desire?

ZEUGITAE: How's that?

ARISTAE: Let's see if we'll agree with this account of the situation. Suppose, we took your remarkable accountant and said he was appointed by someone who inherited a whole conglomerate of industries as well as a large sum of money to put his industries in order, for the person who inherited them didn't know what kind of industries he inherited, nor how many. Then suppose, after he was given this job every one of the managers of the industries came to him asking for more investments, higher salaries and better equipment. Let's also suppose that the person from whom the heir received the gifts had put all his eggs in one basket, so to speak, and invested mainly in one industry to the neglect of the rest. Furthermore, the manager of this predominant industry is rather persistent in his demands that he continue to get most of the investment money. So, our accountant calls all these managers together and dictates, to each, what he is to do, and what he isn't to do, thus putting the whole array into order by issuing restraints on this and that company. Couldn't you then imagine our accountant saying the following words: "This conglomerate is in such a mess, I doubt if I'll ever be able to get the whole working again, unless I cut expenditures for the predominant company, upgrade the others that can be profitable, and get rid of the ones that are in terrible straights."

ZEUGITAE: Yes, that would be my natural reaction too.

ARISTAE: And isn't this desire for self-control a remarkable desire because it can rise above all the other desires, evaluate them, and bind them together into a whole that works for the common purpose?

ZEUGITAE: Yes, I must admit that that is a remarkable desire. But I don't see that that proves much, for that just shows that a normal person desires to get the maximum satisfaction of all his desires so that this type of knowledge helps one to achieve that. If I had time, I would show you this, but now I really must go home and get ready for my luncheon. We've talked an awfully long time and if I don't go now, I won't be able to make it on time.

ARISTAE: Well, if you must, but I'd like to talk to you sometime so you can show this to me.

Thereupon, Zeugitae left our conversation dangling and me in a state of puzzlement. Therefore, I want to present the problem here so that I might know what I should do. Is knowledge just a tool to allow one to achieve maximum satisfaction of every desire or is it more than this?

NOMOSAE: I'm somewhat perplexed by your speech.

ARISTAE: In what way? Maybe we can clarify your problem.

NOMOSAE: It seems to me that you certainly don't want to say that all one's ends come from non-rational desires.

ARISTAE: That was what I thought I showed to be mistaken.

NOMOSAE: Do you want to hold, then, that all one's ends come from reason or that some ends come from reason and some from non-rational desires?

ARISTAE: That is a most difficult problem! Would you agree that to answer this fully it would be necessary first to see if we can find the way that ends themselves enter into one's life?

NOMOSAE: Most assuredly. Unless one first knows the general case, how would he be able to discern the particular cases in their appropriate places.

ARISTAE: Don't you think that even bodily functions can be improved by reason which can prescribe proper diets and exercise for it's well-being?

NOMOSAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: And what type of reason would that be?

NOMOSAE: A reasoning about means.

ARISTAE: Isn't this reasoning also used in other ways, such as, when a man who has the aim of building a bridge uses engineering to make that bridge?--Or when a doctor who has the aim of curing a disease uses his knowledge to find the disease and cure it?

NOMOSAE: Yes, and many other examples could be given. A pilot has the aim of guiding a ship across the waters, and he uses his knowledge for this end. The same holds true for all the arts.

ARISTAE: In each case though, is the end given or is it chosen?

NOMOSAE: I don't quite understand what you're getting at.

ARISTAE: Insofar as one is a doctor, does he choose to cure or is curing given to him qua doctor, that is, insofar as one is a doctor, he doesn't reason about whether he should cure or not but only about how he should cure? Similarly, with the other technical sorts of reasoning, isn't the end given from without in the case of the engineer, the pilot and the mechanic?

NOMOSAE: Yes, indeed.

ARISTAE: Thus, they don't have to consider ends in this type of reasoning, but only means?

NOMOSAE: That's the way it seems to me too.

ARISTAE: Further, doesn't this also happen in relation to some of man's ends?

NOMOSAE: Explain that please.

ARISTAE: Doesn't psychology proceed something like this: there is a certain end given, now what types of techniques can get a man to do those ends? Like one can know from studying organisms that all animals respond to rewards so that if an end is given then the psychologist will use his reason to find out how rewards can be used to further the end given to him. But, insofar as he is a psychologist, though, he doesn't reason about ends does he?

NOMOSAE: It seems not.

ARISTAE: Don't you think that there is a difference between this type of reasoning and the type of reasoning dealing with ends?

NOMOSAE: I don't know.

ARISTAE: Didn't we agree that technical reason is of the form, "If a certain end is to be done, then y is to be done to achieve that end," where the y is given from outside of the reasoning?

NOMOSAE: Yes, we did.

ARISTAE: Would you say that when one talks about reasoning about ends, one is talking about "guiding conduct," that is, deciding whether to seek this end or not?

NOMOSAE: I'm somewhat confused! It seems to me that even a doctor can decide whether to perform a certain act or not. Suppose, I were a doctor who was ordered to cure a tyrant who had caused all sorts of turmoil and bloodshed. In such a case it seems that I should reason about the end and refuse to cure him.

ARISTAE: Would you agree that an individual can decide whether to perform the function of a doctor or not, but that insofar as he is a doctor he doesn't decide what a doctor does?

NOMOSAE: I'm not sure what you mean.

ARISTAE: Would you agree that the aim of a doctor qua doctor is to cure?

NOMOSAE: Yes, the art of medicine is devoted to curing.

ARISTAE: Then, insofar as a person is using medical knowledge and being a doctor, he is reasoning only about how to cure this particular type of disease.

NOMOSAE: So it seems.

ARISTAE: But in any particular situation can't one decide whether he is to be a doctor or not; that is, he can refuse to be a doctor and instead be a resister of tyrants or any other of a number of things.

NOMOSAE: Now, I see! You are saying that there are certain categories of human art and that each one of these categories has an aim necessarily associated with it and that what a person does is to decide which category he is going to place himself in, but insofar as he is already in the category he doesn't decide about the end but only the means to the ends.

ARISTAE: That's correct. Now do you also agree that when one considers an end, one is deciding what to seek and what not to seek?

NOMOSAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: So doesn't it tell you "Such and such is to be sought" instead of saying "If x is to be sought, then y must be done."

NOMOSAE: Yes, it must be an imperative--either "Do this" or "Don't do this"--for these deal with commands and prohibitions which in turn guide conduct.

ARISTAE: Isn't there another condition that has to be satisfied?

NOMOSAE: What?

ARISTAE: Suppose a man who was a grocery clerk sat down at a desk wrote down, "Stealing is not to be done," and argues that if he were to cheat little children, he would be stealing so that he, as a consequence, won't cheat little children. Now, if after writing this down, the man crumpled the paper and threw it into the wastepaper basket and if he never was in a situation so that he was confronted with this situation and furthermore, if he never thought of this again, would such a man be reasoning in the appropriate sense necessary to guide conduct?

NOMOSAE: In a way, yes, and in a way, no. In a sense it seems he was just theorizing because it never led him to do anything. But in another sense, it seems to be the appropriate reasoning, for if he were put in such a situation, it could guide his action by providing him with the appropriate conduct.

ARISTAE: And what would make this reasoning be different in the case in which the imperative influences his action then in the case where it didn't?

NOMOSAE: Well, it seems as if he must make the end his own, for the appropriate conclusion for a particular situation wouldn't be "Do such and such act," but "He immediately walked away and performed the act." For the action to become a part of the conclusion, the end must be taken as the person's own end, so that the aspect of guiding conduct (which is the particular aim of this kind of reasoning) will become more apparent.

ARISTAE: Exactly! So, we agree that a man must not only figure out the just thing to do, but that he must do it, i.e., make the end his own, for him to do the type of reasoning concerned with guiding conduct?

NOMOSAE: Yes, we do.

ARISTAE: Now, do we also agree that every man acts for some end?

NOMOSAE: Yes, you can assume that, since our reasoning now is a good example of it.

ARISTAE: Is there, though, one end for which all men strive?

NOMOSAE: No. Some men desire knowledge. Some men desire wealth. Others desire sex. There are many ends for which different men may strive.

ARISTAE: Then you don't believe that all men seek the good?

NOMOSAE: I must say you shock me more each day with all these things you say! What you say is going to be hard to swallow but if you lead me to water, I'll promise you that I'll drink.

ARISTAE: Hopefully, I can make the drink sweet and not bitter.

NOMOSAE: You can try.

ARISTAE: Now, insofar as a person desires good, then we have no problem. But, would you say that it seems as though people do desire things other than good things?

NOMOSAE: It's more than seems with me. Unless you can show me otherwise, I'm bound to say that people do desire things other than good things!

ARISTAE: Now, when they desire evil things do they think they are good or do they think they are evil?

NOMOSAE: Some, one; and some the other.

ARISTAE: So we can say with regard to those who desire evil things but think that they are good, that they really seek good things, but are confused about what is actually good.

NOMOSAE: That seems a fair conclusion. But what can you say about those who seek evil, knowing it to be evil?

ARISTAE: Well, we must see if they really seek evil. Would you say that evil things are harmful?

NOMOSAE: In some cases, yes, and in other cases, no.

ARISTAE: Do you think that in the cases where the evil isn't harmful, it is thought to be evil?

NOMOSAE: I suppose not really.

ARISTAE: But, you do hold that men can seek what is harmful to them knowing it to be harmful?

NOMOSAE: Yes, it happens all the time.

ARISTAE: When a person seeks what is harmful, does he do it willingly or not?

NOMOSAE: Some do it willingly, and some do it unwillingly.

ARISTAE: Insofar as one does it unwillingly, are we to say that he seeks evil knowing it to be evil or that he is forced to seek evil?

NOMOSAE: Obviously, he is forced.

ARISTAE: Do you agree that if a mode of action or a desire is forced on a person, then he is only the partial source of that action, and hence, that if the person did evil, it wouldn't be correct to say that he really desired evil but instead that he was forced to do evil?

NOMOSAE: Your point is well taken.

ARISTAE: Now, why do we say that the things they desire will produce harm?

NOMOSAE: I'm not sure.

ARISTAE: Let's consider some examples. Now, isn't the prime example of someone who desires something harmful knowing it to be harmful someone like this: a man goes to a party and everyone

keeps offering him one drink after another which he accepts even though he says something like, "I'll regret this tomorrow." Now, let's ask, why would a man act like this?

NOMOSAE: In most cases, he wanted to be a part of the party and to impress everyone and be friendly.

ARISTAE: Would he really think that his drinking is harmful though? Or would he instead think it was good since it made him the life of the party?

NOMOSAE: I suppose I would have to say he really didn't think that it was harmful when he did it.

ARISTAE: Wouldn't another case arise when some one admitted that cigarette smoking was harmful to him, yet still continued to smoke one right after another.

NOMOSAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: And why do you think that the person would continue to smoke?

NOMOSAE: If asked he would probably say that it decreases his nervousness or some such thing.

ARISTAE: And do you think that they think that nervousness is helpful or harmful?

NOMOSAE: Harmful.

ARISTAE: So again, it seems that this person doesn't really seek harmful things, but only helpful things. In this case, what helps get rid of nervousness.

NOMOSAE: So it seems.

ARISTAE: Now, let's consider one final case. Aren't there many people on drugs who admit that what they are doing is harmful, and yet persist in doing it?

NOMOSAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: And if you asked one of them why he takes drugs, wouldn't he probably answer that it is a means of escape or that's the way he gets his kicks or some other such answer?

NOMOSAE: Most likely.

ARISTAE: Then, would you say that he really thought that what he was doing was harmful?

NOMOSAE: I must admit not, for in one case he would be saying that facing reality would be harmful to him, while in the other case he would be saying that what gives one his kicks would not be harmful.

ARISTAE: Isn't there another answer that a person might give if he were asked why he took drugs?

NOMOSAE: Yes, I myself was wondering what you would say about a person who was addicted to a drug.

ARISTAE: Why don't we take a specific example. Would you agree that many people get addicted to heroine?

NOMOSAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: How does this come about?

NOMOSAE: Well, the person would probably begin taking the drug for the reason you gave above, and then they would become dependent on it.

ARISTAE: Does everyone who uses the drug become addicted?

NOMOSAE: Probably not, only those who use it for a sufficient length of time.

ARISTAE: Would you agree that a person doesn't decide that his body needs food, but instead a person's body notifies him that it is hungry by means of stomach pains and such?

NOMOSAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Would you say then that in general the needs of the body have a certain independence of the wishes and desires of the person?

NOMOSAE: Yes, I suppose.

ARISTAE: Would you agree then that insofar as one can't decide about these things (except in an indirect way) that they are voluntary acts or involuntary?

NOMOSAE: Well, they're just natural bodily functions, and I guess they are involuntary since they seem to occur automatically.

ARISTAE: Then would you admit that the need of an addict is something like this, that is, a person starts out using the drug with a certain desire, but that slowly this desire recedes into the background and in its place there sprouts the desire for the drug as an end in itself which if it isn't satisfied leads to all sorts of physical and mental disabilities, so that the desire for the drug is like the desire for food and becomes a "necessity" for the person.

NOMOSAE: I suppose.

ARISTAE: So, would you agree that it turns out that even when people (as long as their acts are voluntary) seek things harmful to themselves, they always do so because they believe it is helpful to them?

NOMOSAE: So it seems.

ARISTAE: And then doesn't it follow that all men necessarily seek the good and that no one voluntarily does evil, since necessarily those who seek what is really good seek the good and those who seek what is evil or harmful only do so because they think it is advantageous to them, and hence good?

NOMOSAE: What you say seems true.

ARISTAE: Thus, doesn't it seem that in the case in which a person adopts an end, he must have judged that it was good for him?

NOMOSAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: And thus, doesn't it follow that one should necessarily reason about an end insofar as he adopts that end?

NOMOSAE: Yes, for he must see if his judgment is true or false.

ARISTAE: Doesn't it also follow that insofar as I don't reason about ends that my reason is in conflict with itself?

NOMOSAE: I don't see that.

ARISTAE: Didn't we make a distinction between technical reasoning and the reason concerned with deciding what is and is not to be sought and say that the former doesn't concern itself with an end while the other one necessarily does?

NOMOSAE: Yes, we made that distinction.

ARISTAE: Thus, when a person accepts an end he should be reasoning about the end because he always needs to see if his judgment about the end is true or false. That is, whether it is good or not, but insofar as he merely accepts the end and does technical reasoning, he is saying that he shouldn't concern himself with the end so that at the same time, he is saying both that he should reason about the end and that he shouldn't.

NOMOSAE: So it seems.

ARISTAE: Can't we also say that in one sense there is no such thing as technical reasoning--that is, except in a theoretical sense--for as soon as one adopts an end he should reason about the end to see if it is true or false to say that it is good?

NOMOSAE: I'm not sure I follow you.

ARISTAE: Would you agree that one can reason about things like the perfect crime or some such thing, and yet not intend to do it?

NOMOSAE: Yes, one can also dream about doing all sorts of things and yet not intend to really do them.

ARISTAE: But, if a person attempted to do any one of those things, then musn't he have already judged that that end is desirable?

NOMOSAE: Yes, we've agreed to that.

ARISTAE: Thus, doesn't it follow that the person insofar as he has judged that the end is desirable, should have done the type of reasoning concerned with guiding conduct?

NOMOSAE: Yes, it does.

ARISTAE: Then, do we now agree that when one accepts an end for action that a judgment concerning the end must always come before the judgment which deals with means?

NOMOSAE: Yes, we do.

ARISTAE: Thus, can't we say that in one sense there is really no such thing as technical reasoning except in a theoretical sense?

NOMOSAE: Yes, that seems to follow.

ARISTAE: Finally, can't we declare that reason can't be only an accountant to the passions? Instead, one must always (insofar as he is deciding what to seek and what not to seek) start with reason and the truth or falsity of the judgment that something is or isn't good, and thus not with a desire external to reason?

NOMOSAE: Yes, so it seems.

ARISTAE: Thus, one can't start with a principle such as pleasure, utility or the maximum satisfaction of all one's desires, since one can't ask why are these good because they don't seem to be necessarily connected with reason.

NOMOSAE: Correct. Reason must proceed them all.

ORPHISAE: We've been talking now for a long time about "good" things and the good. But, what is the good? Unless we can understand that, I don't see how we can even carry on a conversation about it! So tell me what kind of knowledge is it that one needs to decide if an end is really good or not?

ARISTAE: Patience, my friend, and maybe we can attain to this too.

ORPHISAE: Can you see a path?

ARISTAE: I'm not sure but we can follow it and see where it leads. Now, we've agreed that to keep one's reason from being in conflict with itself, one needs to see if the judgment that something is good is true?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Thus, it would seem that if we can find the way in which the good is understandable, we might be able to see what constitutes the good.

ORPHISAE: I'm not sure, but we can try.

ARISTAE: Tell us, Orphisae, in how many ways can a thing be understood?

ORPHISAE: I don't quite know what you mean by that question.

ARISTAE: Would you say that the end of the art of medicine is curing or something else?

ORPHISAE: I would have to say that it must be curing.

ARISTAE: And why do you say that?

ORPHISAE: Because that's what medicine is!

ARISTAE: Then would you say that this, that is, the fact that the aim of the art of medicine is curing, is understood in virtue of itself or do you have to know something else in order to grasp it?

ORPHISAE: I guess it's understood by means of itself, since if one knows what medicine is one understands it.

ARISTAE: And can't these examples be multiplied? The art of building has the aim of building, the art of the lawyer has the aim of furthering justice. In each case, when one understands what it is, doesn't he also understand what it does?

ORPHISAE: So it seems.

ARISTAE: Now, if I take two billiard balls and roll them toward each other so that they collide, and one goes off to the left and the other off to the right, is the motion of either understandable in virtue of themselves or in virtue of the other one?

ORPHISAE: If I understand what you say, I'm forced to say that the motion is understandable not through the motion of just one of the balls, but instead, it will be a result of the velocity, the mass and the manner in which the two balls collide.

ARISTAE: Thus, the motion of any one billiard ball is not understandable in and of itself, but requires other sorts of things to be understood before it is understood?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: And do you think that there are any other ways of understanding things besides through themselves and through another?

ORPHISAE: Not that I can see.

ARISTAE: Now, we've agreed that there are two ways to understand something--through itself alone and through a combination of the thing and certain other external factors.

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Now, in what sense is the good understandable?

ORPHISAE: I don't really know.

ARISTAE: Didn't we agree that one can be forced to do evil, that is, that the only time that one seeks evil really believing it to be evil is involuntarily?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Then don't you think if we came to understand the involuntary then we could also come to understand the voluntary, and hence, the good, or at least something like the good from which we could find the good?

ORPHISAE: Yes, that would seem to be the correct path to take.

ARISTAE: Now, do you think a voluntary action is understandable in itself or through another?

ORPHISAE: I'm not sure.

ARISTAE: Would you agree that if I picked up this pebble and threw it, I would be either the mover or the source of the motion?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: And the pebble would be the moved because it depended upon something else for its movement?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Further, if I were to take a stick and hit the pebble, then I would still be the mover and pebble would still be the moved, but a new element has entered the situation, that is, the stick which is between the mover and the last thing moved.

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: And don't we call this an instrument of motion?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: And isn't the instrument of motion really something moved too because it isn't the source of the whole movement, but only a carrier of the motion?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Isn't it common to say that a man moves himself?

ORPHISAE: Yes, that is said by the many.

ARISTAE: Now, would you agree that this can't mean that a person is, in respect to the same thing, a moved and a mover, for that would give the person contrary attributes which is impossible?

ORPHISAE: I would accept that.

ARISTAE: Then, must not we say that what this really means is that there is one part of the person that is the mover and another part that is moved, and that in respect to the person that the mover is moved only accidentally when the person is moved?

ORPHISAE: Yes, that does seem to make more sense.

ARISTAE: Would you also agree that it is one's desires that move a person?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Would you also hold that to see what desires were most truly voluntary or free, we must first understand what the voluntary is?

ORPHISAE: Yes, that seems correct.

ARISTAE: Would you also agree that the best way to do this is to consider what a voluntary action is so that we can see what is meant by a person being forced to desire something involuntarily?

ORPHISAE: Yes, I would.

ARISTAE: Would you agree that a voluntary action must be the result of a mover that doesn't depend upon anything else for its movement?

ORPHISAE: I'm not sure.

ARISTAE: Let's consider an example to see. Suppose that a man did an action, and it could be explained by the fact that a man pointing a gun at the person's back made him do it. Now, was the desire that was the source of the agent's action itself a mover or was it only the instrument of motion?

ORPHISAE: That particular act was involuntary, and hence, the desire must have been only an instrument of motion.

ARISTAE: Now, let's consider even a harder case. Suppose a man hooked up some wires into another's brain and by this could control his actions. Would any of this man's desires in and of themselves be a mover or would they just be an instrument of motion?

ORPHISAE: Just an instrument, because the man at the switchboard is making all the decisions, and he has to be included in any account of the desire or the desire would be totally inexplicable.

ARISTAE: Now, in each of these cases, would you agree that the desires involved were just instruments of motion?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Would you also agree that these actions then would be involuntary?

ORPHISAE: Yes, for the person had no control over them whatsoever. In each case the action is explicable only by reference to something else--to a man with a gun or what not.

ARISTAE: Thus, would you say that an involuntary action is understood through something else, and thus, not by means of itself?

ORPHISAE: Yes, indeed.

ARISTAE: And would you agree that to contrary causes one ought to assign contrary effects?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Then, it looks as if a voluntary action must be explained through itself, and hence, be a mover that is itself unmoved.

ORPHISAE: So it does.

ARISTAE: Now, keeping this in mind, let's see how it might help us to understand what the good is.

ORPHISAE: That's fine with me.

ARISTAE: Would you agree then that since a voluntary action is understood through itself, that a desire which isn't forced upon a person must be chosen for its own sake, for if it isn't then it's not understandable in itself?

ORPHISAE: Yes, I think so.

ARISTAE: Now, what kinds of things can be chosen for their own sake?

ORPHISAE: Well, it seems to me all sorts of things could. Take pleasure for instance. Many people would claim that they seek that for its own sake.

ARISTAE: Now, what would they mean by that?

ORPHISAE: I'm not quite sure what you mean by that question.

ARISTAE: Suppose we asked such a person, "Why do you seek pleasure?" or "Why is pleasure such a thing that it should be sought for its own sake?" What do you think his answer would be?

ORPHISAE: Well, some people would probably say they didn't know, and others might say that they just do.

ARISTAE: Now, if a person said he doesn't know, then isn't he like the man whose reason is in conflict with itself because he has made the judgment that something is good, and yet hasn't taken the time to see if that judgment is true, i.e., isn't he saying both that he should and he shouldn't reason about the end?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: And a seeker of truth goes to the wise man and not to the ignorant man?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Then must we not call the man over who gives a reason why pleasure is to be sought for its own sake and ask him to explain this to us?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Then, what do you suppose the man who says "he just does" would say when we asked him why "he just does" seek pleasure?

ORPHISAE: Well, some might say, "Well, there's no reason, that's just the way things are."

ARISTAE: And if a person said that there's "no reason," are we to take him seriously?

ORPHISAE: No, because such a person is like the man whose reason is in conflict with itself, for he's not giving a rational reason for his act which we saw as being a necessary part of the type of reasoning concerned with guiding conduct. Instead, he's made the judgment that pleasure is good, yet he hasn't taken the time to see if that judgment is true.

ARISTAE: Now, what is one to make of this "that's the way things are?"

ORPHISAE: Well, I guess he could be saying that man is of such a nature that he must seek pleasure, that is, that he's a pleasure seeking animal.

ARISTAE: What kind of answer is this, though? Does it really tell us why pleasure should be sought for its own sake?

ORPHISAE: No, he seems to be saying that pleasure must as a matter of fact be sought by every human, since man is a pleasure seeking animal.

ARISTAE: Now, didn't we hold that a thing can't be good if it is involuntary or like the involuntary?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Now, when one states that man must seek pleasure does this make man act like a voluntary or an involuntary agent?

ORPHISAE: Well, since his biological nature is such that he must do it, it seems like he doesn't have any choice, so I must say it makes man act like an involuntary agent.

ARISTAE: Then, to find the good, must we not find something that would be analagous to a voluntary action and be its own reason for seeking it, that is, something that can be sought for its own sake?

ORPHISAE: Yes, so it seems.

ARISTAE: Now, what could such a thing be?

ORPHISAE: I don't think I know.

ARISTAE: Wouldn't it be something such that it wouldn't make sense to ask why this is to be sought for its own sake?

ORPHISAE: Yes, it would, but I still don't know what it is.

ARISTAE: Didn't we say that one keeps his reason from being in conflict with itself, if he judges truly that what he is going to seek is good?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: And what is it that allows one to judge truly?

ORPHISAE: Reason does.

ARISTAE: And didn't we say that to be sought for its own sake, one must be able to answer the question, "Why is this to be sought for its own sake?" because we've agreed that the good must be something that is its own reason for doing it?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: And what is it that allows one to answer this question truly?

ORPHISAE: Reason.

ARISTAE: Now, does it make sense to ask why is reason to be sought for its own sake, or, why is reason the good?

ORPHISAE: I'm not sure.

ARISTAE: Isn't it like saying "show me rationally why I should seek reason," or "show me rationally why reason is the good?" Because one is presupposing reason in asking the question so that it seems he has already answered his own question, for he's already judged that reason is to be sought when he asks "what is the good?", and to act otherwise than by reason, would be to act in such a way that the person's reason would be in conflict with itself.

ORPHISAE: Yes, that seems to be true, but aren't you saying that this person must seek reason, and hence, isn't this like an involuntary act as was pleasure?

ARISTAE: Let me ask you now in what sense is this "forced" on the person? Is he "forced" in the sense that nature would be what forced a pleasure seeking organism to seek pleasure?

ORPHISAE: No, not quite like that, because when a pleasure seeking organism seeks pleasure, he must do so by instinct or some other type of natural necessity. One would say that the reason he acted the way he did was because his parents conceived him and he was born as a biological organism which must seek pleasure. In the case of reason, though, one would have to say that a person was forced by a process of rational inference, and to explain rational inference, one doesn't need to go outside the rational inference itself.

ARISTAE: Exactly! Isn't it more like the person forcing himself, for he comes to see what he had been seeking all along to keep his reason from being in conflict with itself?

ORPHISAE: So it seems.

ARISTAE: Then would this man be most like the man performing a voluntary act or one who was performing an involuntary act?

ORPHISAE: A voluntary one, for the action seems to be understandable in itself and not through anything else.

ARISTAE: Then must we not assert that the development of reason is the good since it must of necessity be the only thing sought for its own sake since by its very nature it depends upon nothing but itself?

ORPHISAE: Yes, that we must.

ARISTAE: Thus, we can also see how ends relate to a person's life. But, now we must consider if all one's ends are dictated by reason or only some; and if only some, how these are able to overcome the others.

ORPHISAE: That is a very hard problem.

ARISTAE: Isn't it obvious that not all one's ends are dictated by reason?

ORPHISAE: Yes, for most people are driven forward by passion alone.

ARISTAE: Don't be so harsh, Orphisae, for surely these people are not to be blamed for their ignorance. Doesn't their ignorance come about because man is finite, but the other forces of the universe are infinitely large when compared to man, so that man's power of action or reason is easily enslaved to these more powerful forces?

ORPHISAE: So it seems.

ARISTAE: And even when these people are for the most part overcome, no one is completely overcome.

ORPHISAE: Now, this you will have to show to me.

ARISTAE: Do we agree that in some sense everything is determined?

ORPHISAE: Yes, I hold that.

ARISTAE: And on the basis of what we have already agreed on, can't we say that this could mean either that everything is determined by external forces, or that everything is determined by internal forces or that things are determined by a combination of both factors?

ORPHISAE: Yes, those are the possible meanings.

ARISTAE: Now, what could it mean for everything to be determined by forces external to a thing? Wouldn't it have to be the following type of entity: no matter what it did all its actions would be explained totally by things external to it so that the thing itself could never be mentioned in explaining anything?

ORPHISAE: So it seems. But this seems a strange entity for I don't see how it could be any different than not-being since it never effected anything nor made any difference whatsoever to any situation.

ARISTAE: Exactly! But don't we find that even things like billiard balls have a certain nature by which they can contribute to what happens in the world? Suppose we made a billiard ball out of steel instead of wood, wouldn't the whole game of billiards be altered? Stronger cues and even different kinds of tables would have to be made as well as many other sorts of adjustments--all of which depend upon the nature of the billiard balls.

ORPHISAE: Yes, that would be some game!

ARISTAE: So since man is something this must not be the sense in which everything is determined.

ORPHISAE: No, indeed.

ARISTAE: Now, didn't we agree that a desire is the source of a man's action?

ORPHISAE: Yes, we did.

ARISTAE: Would you further agree that in whatever one desires one always must have previously judged the thing desired to be good?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Then doesn't it follow that a judgment must be involved in whatever I do.

ORPHISAE: Yes, that follows.

ARISTAE: Then, must we not say that there is an extreme difference between the nature of man and the nature of a billiard ball, since the way the billiard ball influences the world is by its physical structure, while the way a man influences the world is by his judgment?

ORPHISAE: No greater difference could be found!

ARISTAE: Then must it not follow that man is a judgment forming animal?

ORPHISAE: Yes, it must, since the nature of a thing is the factor which enters into the interaction of the thing with other things.

ARISTAE: Now, what does a judgment forming animal do?

ORPHISAE: Well, it decides whether something is true or false.

ARISTAE: We've already agreed, haven't we, that there is a great difference in saying man is a pleasure seeking animal and man is a truth seeking animal?

ORPHISAE: Yes, we've agreed to that.

ARISTAE: Would such a thing voluntarily make an error?

ORPHISAE: No, for he would seek what is good, and hence, he would be most interested in not making errors, but instead in finding out if his judgment is true or not.

ARISTAE: Then a pure judgment animal, that is, one which is in no sense overcome by external factors, would form true judgments?

ORPHISAE: Yes, most assuredly.

ARISTAE: And true judgments are rational judgments?

ORPHISAE: Yes.

ARISTAE: Then must not the very nature of man be rationality?

ORPHISAE: Most assuredly, yes.

ARISTAE: Then, all of man's actions when he is overcome must involve some use of reason if he is to be at all?

ORPHISAE: Yes, it does, and I guess I was too hard on those people.

ARISTAE: Thus, since man's nature is to be rational and rationality is the only end that can be sought for its own sake, then all other desires must depend upon both reason and causes external to reason.

ORPHISAE: Yes, that is so. Now that we have these two types of desires, what is the relationship between the two and which is stronger?

ARISTAE: Orphisae, your questions are as unrelenting as the fall rains! Maybe I can relate my thinking on this to you through the following story. Picture a fight between mercenaries and a people inside a city whose existence depends upon fighting the mercenaries. Furthermore, picture also that the mercenaries are laying siege to the town to starve it out by bolting the door to the city and not letting anyone out to get supplies. Now, the rational desires would be like the people inside the city, for they are fighting for the very existence of the city. They, then, would always be at the door pushing with all their strength trying to get out. The mercenaries on the other hand will sometimes be able to hold them in and sometimes not.

Since these mercenaries have no vested interest in the city, they easily get bored and leave so that the rational desires can push out through the door and drive the others away. But then again when other mercenaries hear about the battle, they will come to reinforce the others and if the people haven't had time to extend the walls of their city, or to build fortifications around the fields that provide them with subsistence, these people will be driven back into the city. But with unrelenting strength, the rational desires or the people will continue pushing against the door and since they are always present as long as the city is in existence and because they are concerned with the survival of the city don't you think that given enough time they will be able to extend their fortifications and finally triumph over the mercenaries or passions?

ORPHISAE: The truth must not be far from that. But let me have time to digest this story and maybe we can meet again.

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