



Leadership and the Liberal Arts

With Dr. Christopher Perrin

Lecture 8:
Nicomachean Ethics,
Book 2

Outline:

Nicomachean Ethics, Book II

- Aristotle, like Plato, is interested in humans being formed to be good.
- In book two Aristotle is going to describe what moral goodness is and how we can attain it.
- He defines moral virtue as that which is formed by habit.
- The moral virtues are always a kind of mean between two vices (a vice of excess and a vice of defect, deficiency).
- It is important, if possible, that we are formed when we are children. Character means to receive an impression. What has been stamped into your life morally?
- The way we acquire morally virtuous habits, we must practice them. The just man acts justly.
 - At first these acts may not be enjoyable, but eventually they will be enjoyable.
- It takes a while for students to develop habits of learning that we want.
- We have to exercise a choice to perform moral acts. It is not a passion or a desire, it is an activity.
- Qualification:
 - You finding your virtuous center might be different from others.
 - It takes wisdom to know what to do in various circumstances.
 - The way we perceive the golden means takes experience and time through prudence. Children and teenagers do not have enough experience yet to have this kind of wisdom.
- When we know how to find the golden mean in the right way, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, that is moral goodness. It is rare but it is attainable.
- It is hard to find the mean, and this is how you get to the center:
 - Know yourself from past experience.
 - Incline yourself to the error in the opposite direction.
- How might you help students to grow in moral virtues? How do we help them get through pain to make progress and acquire habits that make them virtuous.