

NOTE ON END OR PURPOSE OF MAN

The end of man can be reasoned out by the syllogism and by the two common kinds of compound syllogism (the if-then syllogism and the either-or syllogism).

The first way by syllogism is after an induction which establishes the major premise. The induction is preceded by two definitions, the definition of a thing's own act and the definition of end (in the sense of purpose).

A thing's own act is *the act which that thing alone can do or, at least, do better than other things*. Thus, for example, if we see only through our eyes seeing is the eye's own act. And walking is the legs' own act for, although some can walk on their hands, one cannot walk on one's hands well as one can walk with legs.

End is *that for the sake of which* (something is or is done).

The induction of the major premise of the syllogism can proceed in two steps. First we show by an induction that a tool's own act is its end. And then we show by another induction that an organ's own act is its end. And finally we show by yet another induction that an occupation's own act is its end. And then in a second stage, we can induce from these three universal conclusions an even more universal conclusion that a thing's own act is its end.

The first induction proceeds thus:

A knife's own act is to cut and to cut is the end of a knife

A pen's own act is to write and to write is the end of the pen

A screwdriver's own act is to screw and to screw is the end of the screwdriver

And so on for each tool which has its own act and is for the sake of that act

The second induction proceeds thus:

The eye has its own act which is to see and to see is the end of the eye

The ear has its own act which is to hear and to hear is the end of the ear

The heart own act is to pump blood and to pump blood is the end of the heart

And each organ of the body has its own act which is also its end

And the third induction proceeds thus:

The cook's own act is to cook and to cook is the end of the cook

And the pianist's own act is to play the piano and to play the piano is the end of the pianist

And the teacher's own act is to teach. And to teach is the purpose of the teacher.

And likewise each occupation has its own act which is the purpose of that occupation.

We can then make an even more universal induction from the three universal statements already induced. If a tool's own act is its end and an organ's own act is also its end and an occupation's own act is the reason for that occupation, then in general a thing's own act is its end.

We can then syllogize that the act with reason is man's own act and man's own act is his end, and conclude that the act with reason is man's end.

We say the act *with* reason rather than the act *of* reason because man is not reason, but an animal with reason. Every act of reason is an act with reason, but other acts of man can be with reason, or be reasonable, with out beings acts of reason. Love or anger, for example, can be reasonable. Likewise, eating moderately can be reasonable and even walking can be a reasonable thing to do. Whether the end of man consists more in the act of reason itself or in some other act directed and measured by reason is something we find out later in a longer study of the virtues and their acts.

We can also be more precise going through this whole proceeding.

The knife's purpose is not just to cut, but to cut well. And the pen's purpose is not just to write, but to write well. And in general, a tool's end is to do its own act well.

Likewise the purpose of the eye is not just to see, but to see well, and so on for each organ.

And the purpose of the cook or the pianist is not just to cook or play the piano, but to do so well.

And then we induce the more precise statement that a thing's own act *done well* is its end or purpose.

And then we syllogize that man's own act, the act with reason, *done well* is man's end.

We could come back once more and go through the proceeding adding that the end of each thing having its own act is to do that act well for the life of that thing. We want to see well, not just for a day or month or year but for life. And thus the end of man is the act with reason done well, throughout life.

One can substitute for *done well* the words *according to virtue* or *by virtue*. In order to understand this, we should recall what virtue is in general. In general, virtue and vice can be spoken of in whatever has its own act. Virtue is the disposition of a thing which makes it good and its own act good. Thus, the virtue of a knife is sharpness for this enables the knife to cut well and makes it a good knife. And dullness would be the vice of a knife for the dull knife cuts badly.

One needs to know what a thing's own act is before one can know what is its virtue or vice. Unless one knew that the knife's own act is to cut, one would not be able to figure out that its virtue is sharpness and its vice, dullness.

Human virtue is, of course, more difficult to discover than the virtue of a knife. So after we conclude that man's end is the act with reason according to human virtue through life, we must investigate what human virtue is, which Aristotle does in Books Two through Six of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

And just as we ask what is a knife's own act (to cut) before we seek to know what is its virtue (sharpness) and what is its virtue before we ask how to acquire that virtue (how to sharpen a knife), so likewise we ask what is man's own act before we investigate what is his virtue and the latter before we ask how man can acquire his virtue (or virtues).

A shorter way to see the end of man is by seeing a proportion (a likeness of ratios) and from this getting the if-then statement in an if-then syllogism.

What is to man as seeing is to the eye? Is there an act which is to man as seeing is to the eye? The act with reason is to man as seeing is to the eye.

If seeing is the end of the eye, then the act with reason is the end of man. But seeing is the end of the eye. Therefore, the act with reason is the end of man.

One could reason in the same way from a ratio in a tool and its own act. What is to man as cutting is to the knife? The act with reason is to man as cutting is to the knife. If then cutting is the end of the knife, the act with reason is the end of man. But cutting is the end of the knife. Therefore, the act with reason is the end of man.

Likewise, one could reason from the ratio of an occupation's act to that occupation. What is to man as cooking is to the cook? The act with reason is to man as cooking is to the cook. If therefore cooking is the purpose or end of the cook, then the act with reason is the purpose or end of man. But cooking is the end or purpose of the cook. Therefore, the act with reason is the end of purpose of man.

It is more known to us that cutting is the end of the knife and seeing, of the eye and cooking, of the cook than that the act with reason is the end of man (which you can see if you ask the man in the street what is the end of each of these. He will say right away what is the end of the eye or the knife or the cook, but hesitate about the end of man. Hence, we reason from the more known ratio to the less known ratio. We can reason in this way from countless proportions from every tool in our house and every organ in our body and every occupation of man.

And as in the first argument, we can be more precise in our reasoning once the way it proceeds has been grasped. We can ask what is to man as seeing *well* is to the eye. One can no longer say just the act with reason, but one is forced to preserve the likeness of ratios to say that the act with reason *done well* is to man as seeing *well* is to the eye. Since then seeing well is the end of the eye, the act with reason done well is the end of man.

Likewise, if we ask what is to man as cutting well is to the knife, we are forced (to preserve the likeness of ratios) to say that the act with reason well done is to man as cutting well is to the knife. Hence, since cutting well is the end of the knife (for a knife has fully achieved its purpose only when it cuts well), the act with reason done well must be the end of man.

And if the purpose of the cook is not only to cook, but to cook well, then the end of man must be what is to man as cooking well is to the cook. This is, of course, the act with reason done well.

Finally, even more precisely, we can say that if the purpose of the eye is not only to see well for a day but through life, then also the end of man must be the act with reason done well throughout life.

A third way of coming to see in outline the end of man is to start from the common agreement that the goal of man is to live well. And then by a disjunction asking whether a man is living well by the life he shares with the plants or by the life he shares with the beasts or by the life which is his own, the life with reason. Clearly a man does not live well just by the life of plant or a beast for then man would be no more than a beast or a plant. Aristotle, in the Tenth Reading of the First Book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, proceeds somewhat in this way.

