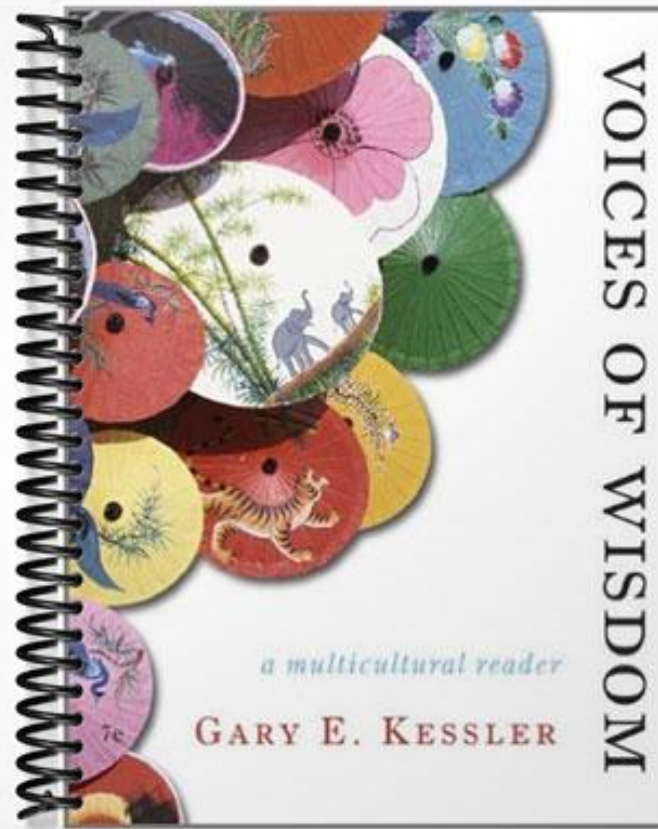


SOLUTIONS MANUAL



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CHAPTER 2

HOW SHOULD ONE LIVE?

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter students should be able to:

- Explain how ambiguity differs from vagueness
- State the difference between descriptive and normative
- Describe the Four Noble Truths and the Middle Way
- Define *ren*, *li*, *xiao*, and *yi*
- Explain why education is so important to living the good life for Confucius
- Describe the Socratic method and the divine command theory
- Define teleology and *eudaimonia*
- Describe how dharma, karma, samsara, and rebirth are connected in Hindu thought
- Identify Siddhartha Gautama, Confucius, Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, and *Bhagavad-Gita*

Key Terms

dharma
divine command theory
Eightfold Path
eudaimonia
Four Noble Truths
karma
li
Middle Way
nirvana
normative
reincarnation
ren
samsara
Socratic method
teleology
xiao

yi

Important Names

Aristotle

Confucius

Plato

Siddhartha Gautama (The Buddha)

Socrates

Chapter Outline

- I. Morality
 - A. What is the “good life”?
 - B. Answers to moral questions must not be ambiguous (have multiple meanings) or vague (unclear)
 - C. Answers to moral questions should be descriptive and normative
- II. Answers to the question, “How should one live?”
 - A. The Buddha
 1. Siddhartha Gautama (563 BCE), the Buddha, “Enlightened One”
 2. The Four Noble Truths, contained in *The Long Discourses of the Buddha* by the Buddha
 - a. The Noble Truth of Suffering
 - b. The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering
 - c. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering
 - d. The Noble Truth of the Way of Practice Leading to the Cessation of Suffering
 3. The Eightfold Path
 - a. *The Fourth Noble Truth* by Walpola Rahula
 - b. Contained in the Fourth Noble Truth
 - c. Called the Middle Path
 - d. Promotes ethical conduct, mental discipline, and wisdom
 - e. Path consists of:
 1. Right View
 2. Right Thought
 3. Right Speech
 4. Right Action
 5. Right Livelihood
 6. Right Effort
 7. Right Mindfulness
 8. Right Concentration
 - B. Confucius
 1. Introduction
 - a. Confucius was born in China (551 – 479 BCE)

- b. Humanistic social philosophy – achievement of good social order and cultivation of humane qualities in the human spirit
 - 2. *Confucius and Moral Character* by D. C. Lau
 - a. Distinctions of ideal moral character
 - 1. Sage (*sheng jen*) – highest level of moral character
 - 2. Good man and complete man
 - 3. Gentleman (*chiün tzu*) – characterized by benevolence
 - 4. Small man (*Hsiao Jen*) – opposite of gentleman
 - b. Shu – method of discovering what other people do or do not wish done to them
 - c. Chung – doing one’s best, practicing what one has learned from shu
 - d. Benevolence consists in overcoming self and observance of rites
- C. Socrates
 - 1. The good life is the examined life
 - 2. Divine command theory – God’s command or will makes something morally right
 - 3. *The Apology* by Plato
 - a. Plato’s account of the trial and defense of Socrates
 - b. The good life is attained through asking questions and recognizing limitations
 - c. In the examined life, one seeks virtue and wisdom and looks to the welfare of others
- D. Aristotle
 - 1. Aristotle was a teleologist – he believed that all existing things have a purpose
 - 2. He was concerned with the good of all humans, or eudaimonia
 - 3. *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle
 - a. Every action and pursuit aims at some good
 - b. The things we do for the sake of a desired end are the chief good
 - c. Human good is the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue
 - d. Happiness is the activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue
 - e. Virtue is a state of character concerned with choice
 - f. Moral virtue is a mean between excess and deficiency
- E. Hinduism
 - 1. Dharma – order of the cosmos embodied in social and ethical law codes
 - 2. Karma – “consequences of action,” as you sow, you will reap
 - 3. Samsara – cycle of rebirth, death, and suffering of human life
 - 4. Reincarnation – rebirth into new physical body

5. *Bhagavad-Gita* – Hindu poem
 - a. The First Teaching: Arjuna's Dejection
 - b. The Second Teaching: Philosophy and Spiritual Discipline

2.1 Introduction

Summary

In the introduction to this chapter, students are introduced to ethical reasoning and some of the issues the selections discuss. Kessler models how one goes about formulating and understanding questions by analyzing different ways of understanding the question, "How should one live?" The distinction is drawn between the descriptive and the normative. Kessler also explores some issues and assumptions involved in asking and answering the question, "How should one live?"

Teaching Suggestions

Before students have read this chapter, have them write a one page essay on the topic of how one should live. In this introduction it is suggested that an answer to this question can be divided into three parts: 1) What is the good life? 2) How is it attained? 3) Why is such a life good, and why are recommended means appropriate?

You may wish to suggest that the students structure their answers according to this division. After they have read the chapter and the readings have been discussed, have them write another essay in which they explain how they have changed their minds and the reasons why they have changed. In other words, have them indicate how they would revise their first answer based on the reading and class discussions. If they would make no revisions at all, have them explain why they think their first answer is correct as it stands.

2.2 The Buddha and the Middle Way

The Four Noble Truths – by the Buddha

The Fourth Noble Truth – by Walpola Rahula

Summary

After a brief introduction that provides background information on the Buddha's life, two readings are provided. The first, *The Four Noble Truths*, is a sermon allegedly given by the Buddha to his followers (monks) in which he summarizes and explains the Four Noble Truths: (1) this life is suffering; (2) craving is the origin of suffering; (3) there is a way to overcome suffering; and (4) the way to overcome suffering is the Eightfold Path. This path or way to live consists of right views, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The Buddha illustrates each of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path with numerous examples.

The second selection, *The Fourth Noble Truth*, by Walpola Rahula, concentrates on the Eightfold Path and organizes the parts into three categories which, in his opinion, constitute the Buddhist answer to the question, "How should one live?" The categories are Ethical Conduct (right speech, right action, right livelihood), Mental Discipline (right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration), and Wisdom (right understanding, right thought). Each of these is explained in some detail. Although Rahula focuses more on explaining the Buddhist notion of how to attain the good life than defending it or advocating it, his analysis is clearly sympathetic and supportive.

Teaching Suggestions

Discuss the answers to the reading questions. Have two or three students provide their answers and discuss them with the class. An alternative is to give the students a copy of these suggested answers to the questions (see below) and allow them to compare their answers with this manual's suggestions. Discuss the differences. Or, if you wish, you can divide the students into small groups and have them share their answers with one another on all or some of the reading questions. Have one student report back to the class the results of the discussion.

What follows is a brief outline of some of the main ideas of early Buddhism. You may wish to use this as a handout in class in order to provide additional background information, or you may wish to use it as a basis for a class lecture.

The Buddha (563 BCE- 483 BCE) and Early (Theravada) Buddhism

I. Introduction

A. Life – born Siddhartha Gautama to a royal family in Nepal

1. Is isolated from the world by father
2. Discovers suffering (disease, old age, death)
3. Embarks on spiritual quest to find a solution to suffering

B. Education – studies under various Hindu teachers, practices extreme asceticism.

1. Almost dies, but finds no answer
2. Resolves to meditate under "Bodhi" tree until enlightened, and succeeds
3. Establishes an order of monks
4. (For a fictionalized and dramatic account of his life, see Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*)

II. Teaching – called "The Middle Way" (the mean between all extremes)

A. Four Noble Truths

1. Life is suffering – physical, psychological, and spiritual
2. Cause of suffering is selfish desire and craving for existence which leads to ego-attachment
3. There is a way to overcome suffering
4. That way is the Eightfold Path: (involving areas of Higher Wisdom, Ethical Discipline, and Mental Discipline)

B. Higher Wisdom

1. Right understanding – understand the Four Noble Truths; the Eightfold Path; the doctrines of impermanence, dependent origination; and ideas of karma, rebirth, and No-Self or No-Soul
2. Right thought (mindedness) – be determined to renounce cravings without craving

C. Ethical Discipline

3. Right speech – be truthful and honest
4. Right action – don't murder, steal, or commit serious crimes; practice cardinal virtues of friendliness, joy, equanimity, and compassion
5. Right livelihood – select an occupation that allows you to follow this path

D. Mental Discipline

6. Right efforts – prevent evil thoughts, eliminate evil thoughts, preserve good thoughts
7. Right mindfulness – be aware of the rise and ceasing of bodily, mental, emotional, sensate, and conscious states
8. Right concentration – practice samadhi (concentration on a single point) leading to purified consciousness

E. Liberation (Nirvana) – goal of Eightfold Path is cessation of suffering now (wisdom and tranquility) and release from round of rebirth after death

1. Samsara is impermanent (constant becoming) – humans are composed of the five aggregates (form, sensations, awareness of sensation, dispositions to act, and consciousness)
 - a. When we, in our ignorance, react by trying to selfishly cling (stop change), the result is sorrow, suffering, death, and rebirth
 - b. The world we create out of ignorance is called samsara – at its root is ignorance
2. Nirvana is release from samsara – it is learning to live with change and to accept it (this is wisdom or enlightenment, the overcoming of ignorance)
 - a. Nirvana in this life is living compassionately in accord with nature
 - b. This life is lived in the sense that we do not artificially impose a subject/object distinction and then try to control the object in order to make it be what we want it to be
 - c. Ultimately nirvana is the cessation of rebirth

Answers to Reading Questions

1. What is suffering?

Answer: The text gives a number of examples (birth, aging, death, pain) and the five aggregates of grasping are characterized as suffering. Suffering is attachment. [Note: There is no abstract definition of suffering as such. You may wish to discuss this with the students, asking them how they would define

suffering. You may wish to compare the answers to such philosophical concepts as alienation, inauthenticity, and anxiety.]

2. What is the relationship between craving and pleasure?

Answer: We crave what gives us pleasure, so in this way pleasure is the cause of craving. Pleasure is linked to sensations and so too is craving, since we crave pleasurable sensations.

3. Why does the Buddha teach that the cessation of suffering (Third Noble Truth) is the extinction of craving?

Answer: Because craving causes suffering. [Note: Although it is not discussed in this text, you may wish to introduce the idea of *attachment* here. To crave something is to become attached to it. This attachment causes suffering because, sooner or later, what we have become attached to changes or ceases to exist.]

4. Why is the Fourth Noble Truth called the Middle Path?

Answer: It is called the Middle Path because it avoids the extremes of searching for happiness through sensate pleasure and searching for happiness through self-mortification.

5. What is the relationship between compassion and wisdom?

Answer: Both are essential. You cannot achieve compassion without also achieving wisdom, and you cannot achieve wisdom without learning to be compassionate.

6. What is the difference between knowing accordingly and penetration? Can you give an example of each from your own experience?

Answer: Knowing accordingly is superficial knowing based on date, memory, and an intellectual understanding. Penetration is deeper. It goes beyond the surface and grasps the true nature of a thing without name or label.

Answers to Critical Questions

1. Present an argument showing that suffering can be good. What do you think might be wrong with your argument?

Answer: One possible way to answer this question is to have students think about common (though often relatively mild) forms of “suffering” in contemporary Western culture. You might start by showing pictures of contemporary piercing (for example, <http://www.bmezine.com/pierce/bme-pirc.html>). Here are people who have chosen to suffer by voluntarily having an unusual piercing.

Presumably, they do so because they think that the piercing is a good thing to have. Another possible example is that people choose to have surgery, which causes suffering (for example, a knee replacement). The “wrong” part of both of these arguments is that the suffering itself is not the point of the action; the action aims at some good beyond the suffering.

2. What is the good life, according to the Buddha, and how would he answer the question, “How should one live?” Do you agree? Why, or why not?

Answer: The good life is one of complete freedom, happiness, and peace. One should live following the Eightfold Path seeking moral, spiritual, and intellectual perfection.

2.3 Confucius and the Life of Virtue ***Confucius and Moral Character* – D. C. Lau**

Summary

After an introduction that provides general background information on Confucius and some of the central ideas of Confucianism, there is a selection from D. C. Lau, *Confucius and Moral Character*, which is found in Lau’s introduction to Confucius’ *Analects*. Kessler’s introduction discusses the meaning of *jen* (benevolence), *li* (propriety), *hsiao* (filial devotion) and *yi* (rightness). A distinction is drawn between intrinsic and extrinsic value.

Teaching Suggestions

In modern Western society, we tend to think about the “good life” in individual (and materialistic) terms. Thus many students will not see the social and political implications of the question, “How should one live?” You may wish to use this selection as an occasion to explore the issue of whether one can live a “good” life in a “bad” society. How would students answer this question? Compare the student responses with those based on Confucianism.

Since Confucianism stresses the importance of study and education as necessary aspects of the good life, you may wish to conduct a debate on the question, “Can one live well without study and education?” Or you may have the students debate the difference between what “living the good life” means in contemporary American society and what it means in the Confucian notion of society. Start by listing words commonly related to the “good life” in today’s culture, and then list words related to the “good life” in Confucian philosophy.

Additional Background

See Jonathan D. Spence's article "Confucius" (*Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn, 1993) for a clear and concise historical introduction and overview of this philosophy. You may wish to place this article on reserve for your students to read. Spence traces the ups and downs of the popularity of Confucianism in China and the reasons for its renewal as communist ideology weakens.

It is difficult to say exactly what Confucius taught. The collection of sayings attributed to him, called the *Analects*, covers a variety of topics and expresses different viewpoints. Central to his thought, however, are a vision of the scholar and learned person as ruler (a vision not unlike Plato's philosopher-king) and the conviction that good government should be based on moral example and persuasion, rather than force. Practicing kindness, sincerely following traditional rites and ceremonies, showing respect, and studying diligently are dominant themes.

Answers to Reading Questions

1. What, according to Lau, is the most fundamental message of Confucius?

Answer: In being moral, one can neither be assured of a reward nor guaranteed success. Thus, morality must be pursued for its own sake.

2. What is the difference between the *chün tzu* and the *hsiao jen*?

Answer: The *chün tzu* (gentleman) is the man with a cultivated moral character, and the *hsiao jen* (small man) is the opposite. Confucius' use of these terms in the *Analects* is in the moral sense. The more typical use of these terms indicates the gentleman as someone with high social status and authority, and the small man as someone with lower social status who obeys authority. It is ambiguous whether Confucius meant for these terms to carry their usual social connotations as well.

3. Can anyone become a *chün tzu*?

Answer: No one can become a *chün tzu* in the moral sense, without a great deal of hard work and cultivation. The essence of the moral character of the gentleman is found in *jen*, commonly translated as "benevolence." Benevolence is a moral quality that is acquired only through hard work.

4. What is *jen* and how is it related to *chung* and *shu*?

Answer: Benevolence, or *jen*, is the most important moral quality a man can possess. It is the character trait that exemplifies what we call "the Golden Rule," a concept stated by Confucius as, "Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire." To achieve this trait, one must adopt the method of asking oneself what one would like or dislike if one were in the position of the person at the receiving end. This method is called *shu*, and it is the method by which one

acquires the character trait of *jen*. In order to be effective in exercising this method, one must do one's best (*chung*).

5. Why are the obligations we owe others proportionate to the closeness of our relationship to others?

Answer: Confucius used as the basis of a general morality the natural love and obligations obtained between members of a family. Obligations to people outside one's family are regarded as extensions of the obligations one has to one's own family. Thus Confucius believed that our obligations to others decrease by degrees as they extend outward and further away from the family.

6. What is the relationship between *jen* and *li*?

Answer: Confucius believed that the observance of traditional rites (*li*) is an important way of overcoming self-interest, which in turn is an essential aspect of benevolence (*jen*). He held that traditional rites are a body of rules governing action, as well as a repository of past insights into morality. The practice of *li* can instruct people to recognize and pursue appropriate behavior.

Answers to Critical Questions

1. If benevolence requires the overcoming of self-interest, then why should our obligations to others be proportionate to the benefits we receive from them?

Answer: Benevolence is closely associated with the repayment of love received from one's family members and by extension, one's social world. It is not contradictory to live by *jen*, or the principle of not imposing on others what you yourself do not desire, and to repay the love received from others (obligation).

2. Do you agree with the Confucian vision of the good life? Why, or why not?

Answer: For Confucius, the good life is associated with cultivating a moral character and honoring the obligations that we have to others. One might argue that this is not the good life because having a moral character does not guarantee a reward or being protected from suffering. One might object that the good life entails being free from all obligations. But one might argue that this is the good life because it emphasizes that we cannot control what others do, we can only cultivate what we believe is good. Also, one could say that because humans are always in relationship with others, the good life necessarily entails having obligations to others.

2.4 Socrates on Living the Examined Life

The Apology – by Plato

Summary

After presenting background information on Socrates, the Socratic method is discussed and illustrated by a summary of Socrates' discussion with *Euthyphro* on the nature of piety. This discussion leads to problems with what has come to be called "the divine command theory" of ethics. Included is the entire text of *The Apology* by Plato. Socrates defends himself before the Athenian court against the charges of impiety and corrupting the youth. In the course of his defense, he provides a justification for living a life seeking knowledge by critically examining one's beliefs. One should live, according to Socrates, a life of critical inquiry. Such a life is good for the individual and good for society as well.

Teaching Suggestions

Since only the case for the defense is given, you can ask the students to reconstruct what they think would be the best case for the prosecution. You may find I.F. Stone's *The Trial of Socrates* useful in reconstructing the prosecution.

Also ask students whether they believe that "ignorance is bliss," and why. If someone is willing to defend that position, contrast their defense with the reasons Socrates gives for living the examined life.

Another way to help students reconstruct a case for the prosecution is to assign them the task of exploring why Socrates might have looked like a Sophist to his critics through a search using the keyword, "Sophism." Ask them to look for articles that they can use to develop a list of characteristics attributed to the ancient Greek Sophists, and to write a brief essay in which they compare and contrast these traits with those that describe Socrates' life and thought. Ask students to present their findings in class.

Answers to the Reading Questions

1. What is the main point Socrates makes by telling the story about the Oracle of Delphi?

Answer: His mission to be a gadfly arose in response to a divine claim that he was the wisest man in Athens and, in an attempt to refute that claim, he made many enemies who now bring false charges against him.

2. How does Socrates defend himself against the charge of corrupting the youth and the charge of atheism?

Answer: Socrates defends himself against the charge of corrupting the youth by arguing that it is very unlikely that he, among all the Athenians, is the only one who might be guilty of this offense. He continues by claiming that if it is true,

then he must have done it either intentionally or unintentionally. He would not have done it intentionally because he knows as well as everyone else that bad things happen to people who intentionally do harm. So, if he did it, it must have been unintentional, in which case it is not a matter for a court of law, but Meletus should have privately admonished him. He defends himself against the charge of atheism by showing that Meletus' charge is contradictory. Meletus admits Socrates believes in divine activities, but charges him with atheism (believing in no gods at all). One cannot be both a believer in divine activities and an atheist. That is a contradiction.

3. Why did Socrates think that fearing death is unwise?

Answer: Fearing death is pretending to know what you cannot know. We do not know what death is and so should not choose to do something that we know to be wrong in order to avoid death.

4. At one point Socrates compares himself to a gadfly (horsefly) and the Athenians to a thoroughbred horse. What is the point of this comparison?

Answer: The Athenians are intellectually lazy and need Socrates to stimulate them to thought. He is a blessing in disguise.

5. Why did Socrates not seek a public office?

Answer: Socrates knew that he would not long survive in public office and that he could be more effective questioning the people of Athens if he did not pursue a public office.

Answers to Critical Questions

1. Socrates asserts that the unexamined life is not worth living. Imagine living your life by using the Socratic method to examine your own beliefs and actions as well as the beliefs and actions of others. Would this be a good way to live? Why, or why not?

Answer: Some students will argue that Socrates overstates his case. They appear to think that he is claiming that the person who does not have the mental capacity, the will, or the opportunity for critical examination leads a pointless and useless life. Some also interpret Socrates in a psychological sense, thinking that he is referring to self-examination, the exploration of one's personality or motives. Still others will argue that ignorance is bliss in some circumstances, that we don't always need to identify and analyze our experiences. You may wish to explore these sorts of responses in the discussion.

2. What are some basic assumptions made by Socrates in his response to the verdict of death?

Answer: Socrates argues that what he has done has benefited the people of Athens because the pursuit of virtue and wisdom is better than the pursuit of wealth. He assumes, in this argument, that virtue and wisdom are better than wealth for all the citizens of Athens. He also argues that he cannot propose any alternative penalty because that would be to propose a certain evil, while death may not be an evil. He says that no one knows whether death is an evil or a good, yet he believes that no evil can happen to a good person. Therefore, evil will happen to those who have condemned him wrongly and, he assures his friends, his death must in fact be a good. This appears to be a contradictory argument unless Socrates is assuming something like the idea that "while no one knows for sure if death is good or bad, it would appear that in my case it is a good since I am a good man."

3. What is one basic difference between Socrates' views of the good life and Buddha's? Support your answer with an argument.

Answer: Students might identify Socrates' view as having an examined life and Buddha's view as being free from suffering. Students can then compare the methods that each uses to attain the good life. For Socrates, one examines life by questioning oneself and others. For Buddha, the focus is more internal and involves changing one's behavior.

2.5 Aristotle on Happiness and the Life of Moderation

Nicomachean Ethics – by Aristotle

Summary

The introduction gives biographical information about Aristotle and explains, in general, his approach to ethics. Kessler discusses the teleological character of his thought, his notion of *eudaimonia*, his idea of intellectual virtue, and his definition of moral virtue as a mean. The selection (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I and II) begins with Aristotle describing ethics as an inexact art of inquiry and making certain remarks about the purpose of ethical inquiry. Since every pursuit aims at some good, and since ethics has to do with human actions, if we can find the good that is the end of human life, we will have found what is morally good.

After suggesting several possibilities such as health or pleasure, he settles on happiness as the true end, since it is self-sufficient or the "final" good. A discussion of the nature of happiness follows. This eventually leads to the issue of how one can become happy. Focus shifts to the topic of virtue, and Aristotle discusses the nature of moral virtue in terms of a mean between extremes. A life of moderation is recommended if humans are to attain happiness.

Teaching Suggestions

Students find Aristotle hard to read, and you will need to help them. Tell them to mark particularly difficult passages as they read. In class have two or three students indicate those parts they found the most difficult to understand. Read them aloud and walk the students through an interpretation of what is being said. You may also need to give a lecture on Aristotle's ethics in general, either before or after you discuss the reading questions, to make sure the students see how his various ideas connect. It can also be helpful to give the students a copy of this manual's suggested answers to the reading questions.

Assign students to find an Internet article, using the keyword "happiness" in the search. Ask them to choose an article which relies heavily on some notion of happiness. Assign them the task of summarizing in a brief essay the differences and similarities between Aristotle's notion of happiness and the assumptions about happiness found in their selected article. Be sure to require that they properly document their sources.

Additional Background

Although too advanced for the beginning student, C.D.C. Reeve's *Practices of Reason: Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) will provide useful background information for lectures. Reeve argues that *phronesis* (practical judgment) is only one of the practices of ethical reason; the others are *nous* (intuitive intellect) and *episteme* (scientific knowledge). Primary *eudaimonia* is *theoria* (study that expresses *nous* and *episteme*), while secondary *eudaimonia* expresses *phronesis*.

It may be helpful to hand out the following outline and comment on it in class. It will help the students connect Aristotle's ideas and provide an example of how he goes about trying to analyze and answer the question, "How should one live?"

Outline – First two books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*

- A. Since every human action aims at some good, human action as a whole must be purposeful, that is, it must aim at some supreme good
- B. If we can identify the good at which all human action aims (the supreme or highest good), this will tell us how we ought to live, since it will tell us what the good life is
- C. Let us call this supreme good *eudaimonia* (happiness or flourishing) and see if we can discover precisely what this is
- D. Is *eudaimonia* health or wealth or pleasure? These are human goods and humans do seek them, but are they the supreme good?
 - 1. If something is a supreme good, it should be final (desired for its own sake and not for the sake of something else) and self-sufficient (complete in itself, nothing needs to be added)

2. Health, wealth, and pleasure are neither final nor self-sufficient, since they are not pursued for their own sake, but pursued for the sake of something else (happiness) and not complete in themselves (a wealthy person will also seek health if ill)
- E. We can define *eudaimonia* more precisely if we can discover the unique qualities of human nature
1. Humans share with other animals a nutritive power (psyche or soul) that makes nourishment and growth (biological life) possible
 2. Humans also share with other animals a sensitive power (soul) that makes movement, desire, and sensations possible
 3. Unique to the human animal is a rational power (soul) that makes theoretical and practical knowledge possible
- F. The intellectual virtues
1. There is a virtue or excellence (*arête*) associated with theoretical capacity, and it is called *sophia* or wisdom
 2. There is a virtue associated with the practical capacity, called *phronesis* (prudence or practical wisdom)
- G. The intellectual virtues make it possible for humans to know what is right or good in general (*sophia*) and to decide in specific situations (*phronesis*) what is the best thing to do
- H. In order to live the good life, we must not only know the good and choose the good, but also do the good – there must, in addition to the intellectual virtues, also be moral virtues
- I. We are now in a position to define *eudaimonia* more precisely – since it is clear that happiness for the human animal (as for others) is realizing the full potential of its nature, it follows that the good life and hence happiness centers on cultivating and living in accord with the intellectual and moral virtues
- J. But what precisely are the moral virtues?
1. They are a mean between two extremes (excess and deficiency) with respect to both feelings and actions – for example, with respect to confidence, courage is the mean, rashness is the excess (too much), and cowardice is the deficiency (too little)
 2. The mean will vary with the individual
 3. Moral virtues (hitting the mean) can only be developed by practice – they should become fixed and habitual so done naturally, and hence moral education is crucial, since character is more easily shaped as a child, and early and repeated practice forms habits
 4. Humans are not virtuous by nature and so good role models must be provided early in their education to form moral character
 5. Some actions have no mean (e.g., murder)

Answers to Reading Questions

1. What, according to Aristotle, have others declared the good to be, and why? Why must the chief good be desired for its own sake?

Answer: The good has been declared to be “that at which all things aim.” The chief good must be desired because if it were not, then our desire would be empty and vain, going on infinitely without satisfaction.

2. Aristotle said that on a very abstract level, happiness can be considered as “living well and doing well.” If so, the next question becomes, “Of what, specifically, does this consist?” Aristotle argued that whatever it is it must be something final, chosen for its own sake, self-sufficient, and an end of action. If this is so, why will not health or wealth or pleasure or honor (all of which are goods) count as the chief good or happiness?

Answer: Health, wealth, pleasure, and honor are not final because they are not desired for their own sake by people who are wise, and they are not self-sufficient because they require additional goods to make one happy. Wealthy persons will desire health if they are ill, and even those who pursue honor may lose it if others are unwilling to bestow it.

3. How did Aristotle arrive at the conclusion that the human good (happiness) is an activity of soul in accordance with virtue? (Hint: His argument begins with the notion that human beings have a function.)

Answer: He isolates that function or activity unique to humans, which he calls “life of the rational element,” by arguing that nutrition and perception, while activities of humans, are also activities of every animal, but rationality is not. He then draws an analogy with a lyre-player. If the function or activity of a lyre-player is to play the lyre and if the activity of a good (excellent or virtuous) lyre-player is to play well, then the function of a rational person is to act rationally and, if good at it, to do it well. Since rationality is an activity of the soul (psyche) and since doing something well is to be excellent at it (virtue or *arête*), the human good or happiness must be an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue.

4. What are the two kinds of virtue, and do the moral virtues arise by nature (are we born with them?) or by learning and practice?

Answer: There are intellectual and moral virtues. Intellectual virtue comes about by teaching, and moral virtue is the result of habit.

5. State in your own words what Aristotle meant when he claimed, “Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.”

Answer: Virtue is a quality of our personality concerned with making a rational choice, the results of which lead to finding the mean for us (that which is neither excessive nor deficient for us).

6. What are the excesses, deficiencies, and the means with respect to (a) feelings of fear and confidence, (b) giving and taking of money, (c) honor and dishonor, (d) anger?

Answer: The table on the next page may help identify and compare these concepts.

<u>Feeling</u>	<u>Deficiency</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Excess</u>
fear	foolhardiness	courage	cowardice
confidence	cowardice	courage	rashness
giving and taking money	meanness (miserliness)	liberality	prodigality
honor and vanity dishonor	undue humility	proper pride	empty
anger	irascibility	good-tempered	irascibility

7. In Book 2, section 9, Aristotle gave some advice for those who wish to practice virtue (hit the mean). Summarize his advice.

Answer: Consider the things toward which we are most drawn or which arouse in us the most intense desire. This can be determined by the pleasure and pain we feel. Avoid such things. Also, do not be overly attracted by what provides immediate pleasure. Sometimes, in order to hit the mean, we must be inclined toward the excess or the deficiency.

Answers to Critical Questions

1. Given what Aristotle said in Book I, Section 9, about how happiness is acquired, how do you think he would respond to the question, “Can someone be happy even if he or she suffers bad luck?”

Answer: On the one hand, since happiness is an activity of the soul and hence can be learned and developed by anyone, it is not dependent on luck, but on education. On the other hand, one day of happiness does not make a person happy. So one must live a complete life, which is in part dependent on luck. Also, some goods must pre-exist as a condition of happiness and others co-operate with it. These other goods are not entirely dependent on our actions but on our luck as well (e.g., health). Therefore happiness is possible even if one suffers bad luck, but complete happiness does seem to be at least partially dependent on chance.

2. Why did Aristotle conclude that virtue must be a state of character, and do you agree or not? Why?

Answer: It cannot be a passion, since no one is praised or blamed for feeling something. And it cannot be a faculty, since we have our faculties by nature, and we are not made good or bad by nature. Since it must be one of these three (feelings, faculties, or state of character) and it is not the first two, it must be the last, namely, a state of character.

3. What are the similarities and differences between how a Confucian (see Section 2.3) would answer the question, “How should one live?” and how Aristotle would answer it? Does Aristotle’s answer agree with Confucius’ answer or not? Explain your reasoning.

Answer: Both Confucius and Aristotle emphasize living a life in which the individual cultivates virtue. For Confucius, we do this by finding balance and harmony. For Aristotle, we do this by finding the mean that is proper to the individual.

2.6 The Song of God ***Bhagavad-Gita* – Hindu poem**

Summary

Background information on Hindu thought and the Bhagavad-Gita is provided. The concepts of *dharma* (duty) and karma are explained, along with a formal statement of the moral dilemma that Arjuna faces (and that we all face in one form or another, according to Hindu thought). The selection is from Books 1 and 2 of the *Gita*.

Book 1 describes Arjuna as sorrowful because he is trapped in a dilemma that seems to be without solution. If he does his duty as a warrior, he must fight and kill members of his family. If he kills members of his family, he violates his duty to protect his family. Since violation of moral duty produces bad karma and assures a poor rebirth, Arjuna will suffer both moral and cosmic consequences no matter what he does.

Book 2 offers a solution to this dilemma. Krishna tells Arjuna that karma is certain as long as he clings to the consequences of his actions. Once he realizes nonattachment to consequences and realizes his true identity as an eternal self not subject to death, he can perform his duty as a warrior (fight) without producing karma.

Teaching Suggestions

Have students describe cases in which they felt "damned if I do, damned if I don't." Determine what made them feel this way and whether, in retrospect, they think there might have been a solution that they missed at the time. Ask them whether they think there is some way one might live that would avoid such situations. After explaining the law of karma, you might ask how many believe in such a law and why. Review the dilemmas discussed in the introduction and make sure students understand why these constitute true dilemmas.

Assign students to find an article with the keyword "karma" in their search. They will find some contemporary applications of this concept that attempt to give direction on how to live. Ask them to bring their article to class, and have them summarize for the class the way the concept of karma is applied in a practical way by the author. Are they persuaded that this concept can be a valuable part of living well?

Answers to Reading Questions

1. Why does Arjuna declare, "We don't know which weight is worse to bear—our conquering them or their conquering us"?

Answer: If he loses the war, evil will triumph. If he wins the war, whatever he gains will be tinged by "blood-guilt."

2. What reasons does Krishna present to Arjuna in support of his advice to fight?

Answer: He provides several: 1) Our embodied self is eternal, although our bodies are temporal. 2) The self can neither kill nor be killed because it is birthless, deathless, endless, unchanging. 3) Do not grieve for what is unavoidable, since birth, death, and rebirth are inevitable. 4) This is a just war, and your duty as a warrior requires you to fight. 5) To refuse to fight will lead to dishonor. (6) Victory or defeat are one and the same—death brings heaven, victory enjoyment of the earth.

3. What is the method of "spiritual discipline"?

Answer: It is described in a variety of ways: 1) Be intent on action, not on the fruits of action. 2) Give up attachment to the fruits of action by being impartial to failure and success. 3) Seek refuge in understanding and contemplation.

4. What are the characteristics, according to Krishna, of a person "deep in contemplation whose insight and thought are sure"?

Answer: Such a person is characterized as one who has 1) given up desires because he or she is content with the self within, 2) lost craving for pleasures, and is no longer troubled by suffering, fear, and anger, 3) given up preference for fortune or misfortune, 4) withdrawn his or her senses from sensuous objects, 5) focused on Krishna, and 6) attained serenity or peace of mind.

Answers to Critical Questions

1. How would following Krishna's advice solve Arjuna's dilemma?

Answer: If Arjuna is unattached to the consequences of his action, he will not accumulate any karma because the consequences of what he does will not disturb or attract him.

2. Do you think living the sort of life Krishna recommends (knowing the true nature of the self, doing one's moral duty, being unconcerned about the results of one's action, devotion to the divine) would be a good way to live? Why, or why not?

Answer: Students could approach this from the perspective that it is a good life because it frees one to live only according to the right action in a particular situation rather than focusing on the results, which one cannot control. Students might also argue that it is not a good way to live because the consequences of one's actions can be foreseen and ought to be taken into account when one chooses to act or not to act.

3. How do you think Socrates would respond to Krishna's advice? Support your answer with an argument?

Answer: Socrates would likely agree with Krishna's advice because he argues that one should choose to seek truth rather than to avoid death. We do not know what death will be or what the future will hold, but we can determine what the right thing to do is now, so it is better to choose a definite good than to avoid an uncertain future.

Discussion Question

Of all the answers that we have studied in trying to answer the question, "How should one live?" (Buddhist, Confucian, Socratic, Aristotelian, the *Gita*), select

the one that appeals the most to you. Describe its central ideas, and defend it with the most compelling arguments that you can construct. To aid in your selection, create and fill in a grid patterned after the one found on the next page, which identifies the essential elements of these views on the good life.

[Note: You may wish to distribute the handout on the following page to the class after students have had a chance to fill in their answers in the appropriate cells. They can then use this to check their own work and help in their selection of a view to defend.]

	Buddhism	Confucius	Socrates	Aristotle	Gita
WHAT is the Good Life?	Freedom from suffering (nirvana)	A life of virtue (superior person or sage)	The examined life	<i>Eudaimonia</i> (happiness or flourishing)	Release or liberation from craving, fear, selfishness and ignorance
HOW can the good life be achieved?	Eightfold Path, or Middle Way	Cultivating <i>jen, li, hsiao, yi</i> , and other virtues through practice and education	Socratic method of critical analysis	Practice of virtue	Yoga (karma, jnana, bhakti)
WHY is such a life good, and why does the means lead to it?	A life free from suffering is better than a life of suffering, and the proof of the Path is in its practice	Virtue is intrinsically good, and a life of virtue leads to a life of balance and social harmony, in accord with the Way of Heaven	Use of critical reason is a duty for humans, since humans are rational creatures	Humans are uniquely moral and rational animals; so their purpose or end is to perfect as far as possible these capacities	Liberation from ignorance overcomes the effects of karma