

Arsht Research on Ethics and Community Grant

The Ethics of Everyday Life: Pathways to Pleasure and Human Flourishing through Goal Types and Modes of Activity over Time

Faculty: Blaine Fowers, Ph.D.,

Students: Robin Knapp and Emily Winakur

College of Arts and Sciences

Abstract

This study is an empirical examination of one of Aristotle's (1999) key ethical premises, that the ethical life is best understood in terms of pursuing worthwhile aims in an integrated and sustained way, which he described as *eudaimonia* or human flourishing. He understands ethics as a mode of life rather than an occasional decision, response to a dilemma, or set of rules or procedures. An Aristotelian framework suggests that unethical behavior is often a result of pursuing aims that are not intrinsically meaningful (wealth or fame) in ways that use other people as means to one's end. The promotion of modes of *eudaimonic* activity is one way to reduce exploitive use of other people as means to an end. This research will examine whether there are distinct longitudinal pathways toward achieving goals oriented to pleasure and those oriented toward human flourishing. A sample of 250 respondents will provide information about their goals, the ways in which they pursue those goals, and their level of *eudaimonic*, hedonic, and physical well-being over a 3-month period. We predict that the integrative pursuit of *eudaimonic* goals through *eudaimonic* modes of activity will lead to *eudaimonic* well-being and that the pursuit of hedonic goals through instrumental (means-ends) modes of activity will lead to hedonic well-being. We expect *eudaimonic* goals and activities to be more strongly related to physical well-being than hedonic goals and activities. The documentation of these pathways will facilitate efforts to teach and promote *eudaimonic* activities.

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