

Chapter 1 : Aristotle's Moral Virtues – Guardian Liberty Voice

Aristotle's theory of moral virtue contends that our ultimate purpose or goal in life should be to reach eudaimonia, but to do so requires our ability to function properly in our thoughts and actions according to our sense of reason and our innate understanding of moral virtues.

Eudemian Ethics , often abbreviated as the EE. Magna Moralia , often abbreviated as the MM. The exact origins of these texts is unclear, although they were already considered the works of Aristotle in ancient times. Textual oddities suggest that they may not have been put in their current form by Aristotle himself. The authenticity of the Magna Moralia has been doubted, [3] whereas almost no modern scholar doubts that Aristotle wrote the Nicomachean Ethics and the Eudemian Ethics himself, even if an editor also played some part in giving us those texts in their current forms. The Nicomachean Ethics has received the most scholarly attention, and is the most easily available to modern readers in many different translations and editions. Some critics consider the Eudemian Ethics to be "less mature," while others, such as Kenny , [4] contend that the Eudemian Ethics is the more mature, and therefore later, work. Aristotle as a Socratic[edit] Some scholars regarded Aristotle as a Socratic thinker. While Socrates left no written works, and Plato wrote dialogues and a few letters, Aristotle wrote treatises in which he sets forth philosophical doctrines directly. To be more precise, Aristotle did write dialogues, but they unfortunately survive only in fragments. Aristotle dealt with this same question but giving it two names, "the political" or Politics and "the ethical" Ethics , both with Politics being the name for the two together as the more important part. The original Socratic questioning on ethics started at least partly as a response to sophism , which was a popular style of education and speech at the time. Sophism emphasized rhetoric , and argument, and therefore often involved criticism of traditional Greek religion and flirtation with moral relativism. It is sometimes referred to in comparison to later ethical theories as a "character based ethics". Like Plato and Socrates he emphasized the importance of reason for human happiness, and that there were logical and natural reasons for humans to behave virtuously, and try to become virtuous. He explained that it was necessary not to aim at too much accuracy at the starting point of any discussion to do with controversial matters such as those concerning what is just or what is beautiful. Nevertheless, like Plato he eventually says that all the highest forms of the moral virtues require each other, and all require intellectual virtue, and in effect that the happiest and most virtuous life is that of a philosopher. He defines happiness in terms of this theory as an actuality *energeia* ; the virtues which allow happiness and enjoyment of the best and most constant pleasures are dynamic-but-stable dispositions *hexeis* which are developed through habituation; and this pleasure in turn is another actuality that compliments the actuality of happy living. In the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle says explicitly that one must begin with what is familiar to us, and "the that" or "the fact that" NE I. Ancient commentators agree that what Aristotle means here is that his treatise must rely upon practical, everyday knowledge of virtuous actions as the starting points of his inquiry, and that he is supposing that his readers have some kind of experience-based understanding of such actions, and that they value noble and just actions to at least some degree. In fact, some regard his ethical inquiries as using a method that relies upon popular opinion his so-called "endoxic method" from the Grk. Aristotle describes popular accounts about what kind of life would be a happy one by classifying them into three most common types: To reach his own conclusion about the best life, however, Aristotle tries to isolate the function of humans. The argument he develops here is accordingly widely known as "the function argument," and is among the most-discussed arguments made by any ancient philosopher. Thus neither of these characteristics is particular to humans. According to Aristotle, what remains and what is distinctively human is reason. Thus he concludes that the human function is some kind of excellent exercise of the intellect. And, since Aristotle thinks that practical wisdom rules over the character excellences, exercising such excellences is one way to exercise reason and thus fulfill the human function. Moral virtue[edit] Moral virtue, or excellence of character, is the disposition Grk *hexis* to act excellently, which a person develops partly as a result of his upbringing, and partly as a result of his habit of action. Aristotle develops his analysis of character in Book II of the Nicomachean Ethics, where he makes this argument that character arises from

habitâ€™likening ethical character to a skill that is acquired through practice, such as learning a musical instrument. Aristotle distinguishes the disposition to feel emotions of a certain kind from virtue and vice. But such emotional dispositions may also lie at a mean between two extremes, and these are also to some extent a result of up-bringing and habituation. Two examples of such dispositions would be modesty, or a tendency to feel shame, which Aristotle discusses in NE IV. Some people, despite intending to do the right thing, cannot act according to their own choice. For example, someone may choose to refrain from eating chocolate cake, but finds himself eating the cake contrary to his own choice. Four Cardinal Virtues[edit] Prudence, also known as practical wisdom, is the most important virtue for Aristotle. In war, soldiers must fight with prudence by making judgments through practical wisdom. This virtue is a must to obtain because courage requires judgments to be made. Temperance, or self-control, simply means moderation. Soldiers must display moderation with their enjoyment while at war in the midst of violent activities. Temperance concerning courage gives one moderation in private which leads to moderation in public. War is simply a stage for soldiers to display courage, and is the only way courage can be exemplified. Justice means giving the enemy what is due to them in the proper ways; being just toward them. In other words, one must recognize what is good for the community and one must undertake a good course of action. Vices of courage must also be identified which are cowardice and recklessness. Soldiers who are not prudent act with cowardice, and soldiers who do not have temperance act with recklessness. One should not be unjust toward their enemy no matter the circumstance. On another note, one becomes virtuous by first imitating another who exemplifies such virtuous characteristics, practicing such ways in their daily lives, turning those ways into customs and habits by performing them each and every day, and finally, connecting or uniting the four of them together. Only soldiers can exemplify such virtues because war demands soldiers to exercise disciplined and firm virtues, but war does everything in its power to shatter the virtues it demands. Since virtues are very fragile, they must be practiced always, for if they are not practiced they will weaken and eventually disappear. One who is virtuous has to avoid the enemies of virtue which are indifference or persuasion that something should not be done, self-indulgence or persuasion that something can wait and does not need to be done at that moment, and despair or persuasion that something simply cannot be accomplished anyway. In order for one to be virtuous they must display prudence, temperance, courage, and justice; moreover, they have to display all four of them and not just one or two to be virtuous. In this discussion, Aristotle defines justice as having two different but related sensesâ€™general justice and particular justice. General justice is virtue expressed in relation to other people. Thus the just man in this sense deals properly and fairly with others, and expresses his virtue in his dealings with themâ€™not lying or cheating or taking from others what is owed to them. Particular justice is the correct distribution of just deserts to others. For Aristotle, such justice is proportionalâ€™it has to do with people receiving what is proportional to their merit or their worth. In his discussion of particular justice, Aristotle says an educated judge is needed to apply just decisions regarding any particular case. This is where we get the image of the scales of justice, the blindfolded judge symbolizing blind justice, balancing the scales, weighing all the evidence and deliberating each particular case individually. The highest good[edit] In his ethical works, Aristotle describes eudaimonia as the highest human good. In Book I of the Nicomachean Ethics he goes on to identify eudaimonia as the excellent exercise of the intellect, leaving it open[citation needed] whether he means practical activity or intellectual activity. With respect to practical activity, in order to exercise any one of the practical excellences in the highest way, a person must possess all the others. Aristotle therefore describes several apparently different kinds of virtuous person as necessarily having all the moral virtues, excellences of character. Being of "great soul" magnanimity , the virtue where someone would be truly deserving of the highest praise and have a correct attitude towards the honor this may involve. This is the first such case mentioned in the Nicomachean Ethics. This is the type of justice or fairness of a good ruler in a good community. Such a virtuous person, if they can come into being, will choose the most pleasant and happy life of all, which is the philosophical life of contemplation and speculation. Or, as Aristotle explains it, "The function of man is activity of soul in accordance with reason, or at least not without reason. A person that does this is the happiest because they are fulfilling their purpose or nature as found in the rational soul. The wise person will be more than human. A man will not live like that by virtue of his humanness, but by virtue

of some divine thing within him. His activity is as superior to the activity of the other virtues as this divine thing is to his composite character. Now if mind is divine in comparison with man, the life of the mind is divine in comparison with mere human life. We should not follow popular advice and, being human, have only mortal thoughts, but should become immortal and do everything toward living the best in us. Influence on later thinkers[edit] See also: Alfarabi was a major influence in all medieval philosophy and wrote many works which included attempts to reconcile the ethical and political writings of Plato and Aristotle. Later Avicenna , and later still Averroes , were Islamic philosophers who commented on Aristotle as well as writing their own philosophy in Arabic. Averroes, a European Muslim, was particularly influential in turn upon European Christian philosophers, theologians and political thinkers. Later the medieval church scholasticism in Western Europe insisted on Thomist views and suppressed non-Aristotelian metaphysics. Aquinas also departed from Aristotle in certain respects. In particular, his Summa Theologica argued that Eudaimonia or human flourishing was held to be a temporary goal for this life, but perfect happiness as the ultimate goal could only be attained in the next life by the virtuous. And supernatural assistance could help people to achieve virtue. Modern science develops theories about the physical world based on experiments and careful observationâ€”in particular, on the basis of exact measurements of time and distance. Aristotle, on the other hand, bases his science largely on qualitative and non-experimental observation. Accordingly, he made some inaccurate claims which have been overturnedâ€”such as the claim that objects of different mass accelerate at different rates due to gravity. On the other hand, The Nicomachean Ethics continues to be relevant to philosophers today. As listed in the Corpus Aristotelicum[edit] Key.

Chapter 2 : Virtue ethics - Wikipedia

Aristotle defines moral virtue as a disposition to behave in the right manner and as a mean between extremes of deficiency and excess, which are vices. We learn moral virtue primarily through habit and practice rather than through reasoning and instruction.

From this it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature. For instance the stone which by nature moves downwards cannot be habituated to move upwards, not even if one tries to train it by throwing it up ten thousand times; nor can fire be habituated to move downwards, nor can anything else that by nature behaves in one way be trained to behave in another. Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit. Again, of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity this is plain in the case of the senses; for it was not by often seeing or often hearing that we got these senses, but on the contrary we had them before we used them, and did not come to have them by using them ; but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e. This is confirmed by what happens in states; for legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them, and this is the wish of every legislator, and those who do not effect it miss their mark, and it is in this that a good constitution differs from a bad one. Again, it is from the same causes and by the same means that every virtue is both produced and destroyed, and similarly every art; for it is from playing the lyre that both good and bad lyre-players are produced. And the corresponding statement is true of builders and of all the rest; men will be good or bad builders as a result of building well or badly. For if this were not so, there would have been no need of a teacher, but all men would have been born good or bad at their craft. This, then, is the case with the virtues also; by doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly. The same is true of appetites and feelings of anger; some men become temperate and good-tempered, others self-indulgent and irascible, by behaving in one way or the other in the appropriate circumstances. Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities. This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind; it is because the states of character correspond to the differences between these. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference. Now, that we must act according to the right rule is a common principle and must be assumed-it will be discussed later, i. But this must be agreed upon beforehand, that the whole account of matters of conduct must be given in outline and not precisely, as we said at the very beginning that the accounts we demand must be in accordance with the subject-matter; matters concerned with conduct and questions of what is good for us have no fixity, any more than matters of health. The general account being of this nature, the account of particular cases is yet more lacking in exactness; for they do not fall under any art or precept but the agents themselves must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion, as happens also in the art of medicine or of navigation. But though our present account is of this nature we must give what help we can. First, then, let us consider this, that it is the nature of such things to be destroyed by defect and excess, as we see in the case of strength and of health for to gain light on things imperceptible we must use the evidence of sensible things ; both excessive and defective exercise destroys the strength, and similarly drink or food which is above or below a certain amount destroys the health, while that which is proportionate both produces and increases and preserves it. So too is it, then, in the case of temperance and courage and the other virtues. For the man who flies from and fears everything and does not stand his ground against anything becomes a coward, and the man who fears nothing at all but goes to meet every danger becomes rash; and similarly the man who indulges in every pleasure and abstains from none becomes self-indulgent, while the man who shuns every pleasure, as boors do, becomes in a way insensible; temperance and courage, then, are destroyed by excess and defect, and preserved by the mean. But not only are the sources and causes of their origination and growth the same as

those of their destruction, but also the sphere of their actualization will be the same; for this is also true of the things which are more evident to sense, e. So too is it with the virtues; by abstaining from pleasures we become temperate, and it is when we have become so that we are most able to abstain from them; and similarly too in the case of courage; for by being habituated to despise things that are terrible and to stand our ground against them we become brave, and it is when we have become so that we shall be most able to stand our ground against them. For moral excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of the pleasure that we do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from noble ones. Hence we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought; for this is the right education. Again, if the virtues are concerned with actions and passions, and every passion and every action is accompanied by pleasure and pain, for this reason also virtue will be concerned with pleasures and pains. This is indicated also by the fact that punishment is inflicted by these means; for it is a kind of cure, and it is the nature of cures to be effected by contraries. Again, as we said but lately, every state of soul has a nature relative to and concerned with the kind of things by which it tends to be made worse or better; but it is by reason of pleasures and pains that men become bad, by pursuing and avoiding these- either the pleasures and pains they ought not or when they ought not or as they ought not, or by going wrong in one of the other similar ways that may be distinguished. We assume, then, that this kind of excellence tends to do what is best with regard to pleasures and pains, and vice does the contrary. The following facts also may show us that virtue and vice are concerned with these same things. There being three objects of choice and three of avoidance, the noble, the advantageous, the pleasant, and their contraries, the base, the injurious, the painful, about all of these the good man tends to go right and the bad man to go wrong, and especially about pleasure; for this is common to the animals, and also it accompanies all objects of choice; for even the noble and the advantageous appear pleasant. Again, it has grown up with us all from our infancy; this is why it is difficult to rub off this passion, engrained as it is in our life. And we measure even our actions, some of us more and others less, by the rule of pleasure and pain. For this reason, then, our whole inquiry must be about these; for to feel delight and pain rightly or wrongly has no small effect on our actions. Therefore for this reason also the whole concern both of virtue and of political science is with pleasures and pains; for the man who uses these well will be good, he who uses them badly bad. That virtue, then, is concerned with pleasures and pains, and that by the acts from which it arises it is both increased and, if they are done differently, destroyed, and that the acts from which it arose are those in which it actualizes itself- let this be taken as said. Or is this not true even of the arts? It is possible to do something that is in accordance with the laws of grammar, either by chance or at the suggestion of another. A man will be a grammarian, then, only when he has both done something grammatical and done it grammatically; and this means doing it in accordance with the grammatical knowledge in himself. Again, the case of the arts and that of the virtues are not similar; for the products of the arts have their goodness in themselves, so that it is enough that they should have a certain character, but if the acts that are in accordance with the virtues have themselves a certain character it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately. The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. These are not reckoned in as conditions of the possession of the arts, except the bare knowledge; but as a condition of the possession of the virtues knowledge has little or no weight, while the other conditions count not for a little but for everything, i. Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate man would do; but it is not the man who does these that is just and temperate, but the man who also does them as just and temperate men do them. It is well said, then, that it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man; without doing these no one would have even a prospect of becoming good. But most people do not do these, but take refuge in theory and think they are being philosophers and will become good in this way, behaving somewhat like patients who listen attentively to their doctors, but do none of the things they are ordered to do. As the latter will not be made well in body by such a course of treatment, the former will not be made well in soul by such a course of philosophy. Since things that are found in the soul are of three kinds- passions, faculties, states of character,

virtue must be one of these. By passions I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, emulation, pity, and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure or pain; by faculties the things in virtue of which we are said to be capable of feeling these, e. Now neither the virtues nor the vices are passions, because we are not called good or bad on the ground of our passions, but are so called on the ground of our virtues and our vices, and because we are neither praised nor blamed for our passions for the man who feels fear or anger is not praised, nor is the man who simply feels anger blamed, but the man who feels it in a certain way, but for our virtues and our vices we are praised or blamed. Again, we feel anger and fear without choice, but the virtues are modes of choice or involve choice. Further, in respect of the passions we are said to be moved, but in respect of the virtues and the vices we are said not to be moved but to be disposed in a particular way. For these reasons also they are not faculties; for we are neither called good nor bad, nor praised nor blamed, for the simple capacity of feeling the passions; again, we have the faculties by nature, but we are not made good or bad by nature; we have spoken of this before. If, then, the virtues are neither passions nor faculties, all that remains is that they should be states of character. Thus we have stated what virtue is in respect of its genus. We may remark, then, that every virtue or excellence both brings into good condition the thing of which it is the excellence and makes the work of that thing be done well; e. Similarly the excellence of the horse makes a horse both good in itself and good at running and at carrying its rider and at awaiting the attack of the enemy. Therefore, if this is true in every case, the virtue of man also will be the state of character which makes a man good and which makes him do his own work well. How this is to happen we have stated already, but it will be made plain also by the following consideration of the specific nature of virtue. In everything that is continuous and divisible it is possible to take more, less, or an equal amount, and that either in terms of the thing itself or relatively to us; and the equal is an intermediate between excess and defect. By the intermediate in the object I mean that which is equidistant from each of the extremes, which is one and the same for all men; by the intermediate relatively to us that which is neither too much nor too little- and this is not one, nor the same for all. For instance, if ten is many and two is few, six is the intermediate, taken in terms of the object; for it exceeds and is exceeded by an equal amount; this is intermediate according to arithmetical proportion. But the intermediate relatively to us is not to be taken so; if ten pounds are too much for a particular person to eat and two too little, it does not follow that the trainer will order six pounds; for this also is perhaps too much for the person who is to take it, or too little- too little for Milo, too much for the beginner in athletic exercises. The same is true of running and wrestling. Thus a master of any art avoids excess and defect, but seeks the intermediate and chooses this- the intermediate not in the object but relatively to us. If it is thus, then, that every art does its work well- by looking to the intermediate and judging its works by this standard so that we often say of good works of art that it is not possible either to take away or to add anything, implying that excess and defect destroy the goodness of works of art, while the mean preserves it; and good artists, as we say, look to this in their work, and if, further, virtue is more exact and better than any art, as nature also is, then virtue must have the quality of aiming at the intermediate. I mean moral virtue; for it is this that is concerned with passions and actions, and in these there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. For instance, both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue. Similarly with regard to actions also there is excess, defect, and the intermediate. Now virtue is concerned with passions and actions, in which excess is a form of failure, and so is defect, while the intermediate is praised and is a form of success; and being praised and being successful are both characteristics of virtue. Therefore virtue is a kind of mean, since, as we have seen, it aims at what is intermediate. Again, it is possible to fail in many ways for evil belongs to the class of the unlimited, as the Pythagoreans conjectured, and good to that of the limited, while to succeed is possible only in one way for which reason also one is easy and the other difficult- to miss the mark easy, to hit it difficult; for these reasons also, then, excess and defect are characteristic of vice, and the mean of virtue; For men are good in but one way, but bad in many. Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess

and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. Hence in respect of its substance and the definition which states its essence virtue is a mean, with regard to what is best and right an extreme. But not every action nor every passion admits of a mean; for some have names that already imply badness, e. It is not possible, then, ever to be right with regard to them; one must always be wrong. Nor does goodness or badness with regard to such things depend on committing adultery with the right woman, at the right time, and in the right way, but simply to do any of them is to go wrong. It would be equally absurd, then, to expect that in unjust, cowardly, and voluptuous action there should be a mean, an excess, and a deficiency; for at that rate there would be a mean of excess and of deficiency, an excess of excess, and a deficiency of deficiency. But as there is no excess and deficiency of temperance and courage because what is intermediate is in a sense an extreme, so too of the actions we have mentioned there is no mean nor any excess and deficiency, but however they are done they are wrong; for in general there is neither a mean of excess and deficiency, nor excess and deficiency of a mean. For among statements about conduct those which are general apply more widely, but those which are particular are more genuine, since conduct has to do with individual cases, and our statements must harmonize with the facts in these cases. We may take these cases from our table. With regard to feelings of fear and confidence courage is the mean; of the people who exceed, he who exceeds in fearlessness has no name many of the states have no name, while the man who exceeds in confidence is rash, and he who exceeds in fear and falls short in confidence is a coward. With regard to pleasures and pains- not all of them, and not so much with regard to the pains- the mean is temperance, the excess self-indulgence. Persons deficient with regard to the pleasures are not often found; hence such persons also have received no name. With regard to giving and taking of money the mean is liberality, the excess and the defect prodigality and meanness. In these actions people exceed and fall short in contrary ways; the prodigal exceeds in spending and falls short in taking, while the mean man exceeds in taking and falls short in spending. At present we are giving a mere outline or summary, and are satisfied with this; later these states will be more exactly determined. With regard to money there are also other dispositions- a mean, magnificence for the magnificent man differs from the liberal man; the former deals with large sums, the latter with small ones, an excess, tastelessness and vulgarity, and a deficiency, niggardliness; these differ from the states opposed to liberality, and the mode of their difference will be stated later. For it is possible to desire honour as one ought, and more than one ought, and less, and the man who exceeds in his desires is called ambitious, the man who falls short unambitious, while the intermediate person has no name. The dispositions also are nameless, except that that of the ambitious man is called ambition. Hence the people who are at the extremes lay claim to the middle place; and we ourselves sometimes call the intermediate person ambitious and sometimes unambitious, and sometimes praise the ambitious man and sometimes the unambitious. The reason of our doing this will be stated in what follows; but now let us speak of the remaining states according to the method which has been indicated. With regard to anger also there is an excess, a deficiency, and a mean. Although they can scarcely be said to have names, yet since we call the intermediate person good-tempered let us call the mean good temper; of the persons at the extremes let the one who exceeds be called irascible, and his vice irascibility, and the man who falls short an inirascible sort of person, and the deficiency inirascibility. There are also three other means, which have a certain likeness to one another, but differ from one another: We must therefore speak of these too, that we may the better see that in all things the mean is praise-worthy, and the extremes neither praiseworthy nor right, but worthy of blame. Now most of these states also have no names, but we must try, as in the other cases, to invent names ourselves so that we may be clear and easy to follow. With regard to truth, then, the intermediate is a truthful sort of person and the mean may be called truthfulness, while the pretence which exaggerates is boastfulness and the person characterized by it a boaster, and that which understates is mock modesty and the person characterized by it mock-modest. With regard to pleasantness in the giving of amusement the intermediate person is ready-witted and the disposition ready wit, the excess is buffoonery and the person characterized by it a buffoon, while the man who falls short is a sort of boor and his state is boorishness.

Chapter 3 : Aristotle's Moral Philosophy - Gakuranman

*Aristotle applied the same patient, careful, descriptive approach to his examination of moral philosophy in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Here he discussed the conditions under which moral responsibility may be ascribed to individual agents, the nature of the virtues and vices involved in moral evaluation, and the methods of achieving happiness in human life.*

Preliminaries Aristotle wrote two ethical treatises: In any case, these two works cover more or less the same ground: Both treatises examine the conditions in which praise or blame are appropriate, and the nature of pleasure and friendship; near the end of each work, we find a brief discussion of the proper relationship between human beings and the divine. Though the general point of view expressed in each work is the same, there are many subtle differences in organization and content as well. Clearly, one is a re-working of the other, and although no single piece of evidence shows conclusively what their order is, it is widely assumed that the *Nicomachean Ethics* is a later and improved version of the *Eudemian Ethics*. Not all of the *Eudemian Ethics* was revised: Perhaps the most telling indication of this ordering is that in several instances the *Nicomachean Ethics* develops a theme about which its *Eudemian* cousin is silent. The remainder of this article will therefore focus on this work. Page and line numbers shall henceforth refer to this treatise. It ranges over topics discussed more fully in the other two works and its point of view is similar to theirs. Why, being briefer, is it named the *Magna Moralia*? Because each of the two papyrus rolls into which it is divided is unusually long. Just as a big mouse can be a small animal, two big chapters can make a small book. A few authors in antiquity refer to a work with this name and attribute it to Aristotle, but it is not mentioned by several authorities, such as Cicero and Diogenes Laertius, whom we would expect to have known of it. No one had written ethical treatises before Aristotle. The Human Good and the Function Argument The principal idea with which Aristotle begins is that there are differences of opinion about what is best for human beings, and that to profit from ethical inquiry we must resolve this disagreement. He insists that ethics is not a theoretical discipline: In raising this question—what is the good? He assumes that such a list can be compiled rather easily; most would agree, for example, that it is good to have friends, to experience pleasure, to be healthy, to be honored, and to have such virtues as courage at least to some degree. The difficult and controversial question arises when we ask whether certain of these goods are more desirable than others. To be eudaimon is therefore to be living in a way that is well-favored by a god. But Aristotle never calls attention to this etymology in his ethical writings, and it seems to have little influence on his thinking. No one tries to live well for the sake of some further goal; rather, being eudaimon is the highest end, and all subordinate goals—health, wealth, and other such resources—are sought because they promote well-being, not because they are what well-being consists in. But unless we can determine which good or goods happiness consists in, it is of little use to acknowledge that it is the highest end. One important component of this argument is expressed in terms of distinctions he makes in his psychological and biological works. The soul is analyzed into a connected series of capacities: The biological fact Aristotle makes use of is that human beings are the only species that has not only these lower capacities but a rational soul as well. The good of a human being must have something to do with being human; and what sets humanity off from other species, giving us the potential to live a better life, is our capacity to guide ourselves by using reason. If we use reason well, we live well as human beings; or, to be more precise, using reason well over the course of a full life is what happiness consists in. Doing anything well requires virtue or excellence, and therefore living well consists in activities caused by the rational soul in accordance with virtue or excellence. No other writer or thinker had said precisely what he says about what it is to live well. But at the same time his view is not too distant from a common idea. As he himself points out, one traditional conception of happiness identifies it with virtue—1. He says, not that happiness is virtue, but that it is virtuous activity. Living well consists in doing something, not just being in a certain state or condition. It consists in those lifelong activities that actualize the virtues of the rational part of the soul. At the same time, Aristotle makes it clear that in order to be happy one must possess other goods as well—such goods as friends, wealth, and power. Someone who is friendless, childless, powerless, weak, and ugly will simply not

be able to find many opportunities for virtuous activity over a long period of time, and what little he can accomplish will not be of great merit. To some extent, then, living well requires good fortune; happenstance can rob even the most excellent human beings of happiness. Nonetheless, Aristotle insists, the highest good, virtuous activity, is not something that comes to us by chance. Although we must be fortunate enough to have parents and fellow citizens who help us become virtuous, we ourselves share much of the responsibility for acquiring and exercising the virtues. Suppose we grant, at least for the sake of argument, that doing anything well, including living well, consists in exercising certain skills; and let us call these skills, whatever they turn out to be, virtues. Even so, that point does not by itself allow us to infer that such qualities as temperance, justice, courage, as they are normally understood, are virtues. They should be counted as virtues only if it can be shown that actualizing precisely these skills is what happiness consists in. What Aristotle owes us, then, is an account of these traditional qualities that explains why they must play a central role in any well-lived life. But perhaps Aristotle disagrees, and refuses to accept this argumentative burden. In one of several important methodological remarks he makes near the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he says that in order to profit from the sort of study he is undertaking, one must already have been brought up in good habits (1099a32-34). The audience he is addressing, in other words, consists of people who are already just, courageous, and generous; or, at any rate, they are well on their way to possessing these virtues. Why such a restricted audience? Why does he not address those who have serious doubts about the value of these traditional qualities, and who therefore have not yet decided to cultivate and embrace them? Addressing the moral skeptic, after all, is the project Plato undertook in the *Republic*: He does not appear to be addressing someone who has genuine doubts about the value of justice or kindred qualities. Perhaps, then, he realizes how little can be accomplished, in the study of ethics, to provide it with a rational foundation. Perhaps he thinks that no reason can be given for being just, generous, and courageous. These are qualities one learns to love when one is a child, and having been properly habituated, one no longer looks for or needs a reason to exercise them. One can show, as a general point, that happiness consists in exercising some skills or other, but that the moral skills of a virtuous person are what one needs is not a proposition that can be established on the basis of argument. This is not the only way of reading the *Ethics*, however. For surely we cannot expect Aristotle to show what it is about the traditional virtues that makes them so worthwhile until he has fully discussed the nature of those virtues. He himself warns us that his initial statement of what happiness is should be treated as a rough outline whose details are to be filled in later (1099a32-34). His intention in Book I of the *Ethics* is to indicate in a general way why the virtues are important; why particular virtues—courage, justice, and the like—are components of happiness is something we should be able to better understand only at a later point. His point, rather, may be that in ethics, as in any other study, we cannot make progress towards understanding why things are as they are unless we begin with certain assumptions about what is the case. Neither theoretical nor practical inquiry starts from scratch. Someone who has made no observations of astronomical or biological phenomena is not yet equipped with sufficient data to develop an understanding of these sciences. The parallel point in ethics is that to make progress in this sphere we must already have come to enjoy doing what is just, courageous, generous and the like. We must experience these activities not as burdensome constraints, but as noble, worthwhile, and enjoyable in themselves. Then, when we engage in ethical inquiry, we can ask what it is about these activities that makes them worthwhile. We can also compare these goods with other things that are desirable in themselves—pleasure, friendship, honor, and so on—and ask whether any of them is more desirable than the others. We approach ethical theory with a disorganized bundle of likes and dislikes based on habit and experience; such disorder is an inevitable feature of childhood. But what is not inevitable is that our early experience will be rich enough to provide an adequate basis for worthwhile ethical reflection; that is why we need to have been brought up well. Yet such an upbringing can take us only so far. We seek a deeper understanding of the objects of our childhood enthusiasms, and we must systematize our goals so that as adults we have a coherent plan of life. We need to engage in ethical theory, and to reason well in this field, if we are to move beyond the low-grade form of virtue we acquired as children. His project is to make ethics an autonomous field, and to show why a full understanding of what is good does not require expertise in any other field. There is another contrast with Plato that should be emphasized: In Book II of the *Republic*, we are

told that the best type of good is one that is desirable both in itself and for the sake of its results. Plato argues that justice should be placed in this category, but since it is generally agreed that it is desirable for its consequences, he devotes most of his time to establishing his more controversial point—that justice is to be sought for its own sake. By contrast, Aristotle assumes that if A is desirable for the sake of B, then B is better than A; therefore, the highest kind of good must be one that is not desirable for the sake of anything else. To show that A deserves to be our ultimate end, one must show that all other goods are best thought of as instruments that promote A in some way or other. He needs to discuss honor, wealth, pleasure, and friendship in order to show how these goods, properly understood, can be seen as resources that serve the higher goal of virtuous activity. He vindicates the centrality of virtue in a well-lived life by showing that in the normal course of things a virtuous person will not live a life devoid of friends, honor, wealth, pleasure, and the like. Virtuous activity makes a life happy not by guaranteeing happiness in all circumstances, but by serving as the goal for the sake of which lesser goods are to be pursued. That is why he stresses that in this sort of study one must be satisfied with conclusions that hold only for the most part. Poverty, isolation, and dishonor are normally impediments to the exercise of virtue and therefore to happiness, although there may be special circumstances in which they are not. The possibility of exceptions does not undermine the point that, as a rule, to live well is to have sufficient resources for the pursuit of virtue over the course of a lifetime. Virtues and Deficiencies, Continnence and Incontinence Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of virtue. Intellectual virtues are in turn divided into two sorts: He organizes his material by first studying ethical virtue in general, then moving to a discussion of particular ethical virtues temperance, courage, and so on, and finally completing his survey by considering the intellectual virtues practical wisdom, theoretical wisdom, etc. All free males are born with the potential to become ethically virtuous and practically wise, but to achieve these goals they must go through two stages: This does not mean that first we fully acquire the ethical virtues, and then, at a later stage, add on practical wisdom. Ethical virtue is fully developed only when it is combined with practical wisdom. A low-grade form of ethical virtue emerges in us during childhood as we are repeatedly placed in situations that call for appropriate actions and emotions; but as we rely less on others and become capable of doing more of our own thinking, we learn to develop a larger picture of human life, our deliberative skills improve, and our emotional responses are perfected. Like anyone who has developed a skill in performing a complex and difficult activity, the virtuous person takes pleasure in exercising his intellectual skills. Furthermore, when he has decided what to do, he does not have to contend with internal pressures to act otherwise. He does not long to do something that he regards as shameful; and he is not greatly distressed at having to give up a pleasure that he realizes he should forego. Aristotle places those who suffer from such internal disorders into one of three categories: 1. Some agents, having reached a decision about what to do on a particular occasion, experience some counter-pressure brought on by an appetite for pleasure, or anger, or some other emotion; and this countervailing influence is not completely under the control of reason. Such people are not virtuous, although they generally do what a virtuous person does. 2. Others are less successful than the average person in resisting these counter-pressures. The explanation of akrasia is a topic to which we will return in section 7.

Chapter 4 : Aristotle's Ethics (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of virtue (a): those that pertain to the part of the soul that engages in reasoning (virtues of mind or intellect), and those that pertain to the part of the soul that cannot itself reason but is nonetheless capable of following reason (ethical virtues, virtues of character).

Here he discussed the conditions under which moral responsibility may be ascribed to individual agents, the nature of the virtues and vices involved in moral evaluation, and the methods of achieving happiness in human life. Every activity has a final cause, the good at which it aims, and Aristotle argued that since there cannot be an infinite regress of merely extrinsic goods, there must be a highest good at which all human activity ultimately aims. Ethics I 2 This end of human life could be called happiness or living well, of course, but what is it really? Neither the ordinary notions of pleasure, wealth, and honor nor the philosophical theory of forms provide an adequate account of this ultimate goal, since even individuals who acquire the material goods or achieve intellectual knowledge may not be happy. According to Aristotle, things of any variety have a characteristic function that they are properly used to perform. The good for human beings, then, must essentially involve the entire proper function of human life as a whole, and this must be an activity of the soul that expresses genuine virtue or excellence. Ethics I 7 Thus, human beings should aim at a life in full conformity with their rational natures; for this, the satisfaction of desires and the acquisition of material goods are less important than the achievement of virtue. A happy person will exhibit a personality appropriately balanced between reasons and desires, with moderation characterizing all. In this sense, at least, "virtue is its own reward. The Nature of Virtue Ethics is not merely a theoretical study for Aristotle. Unlike any intellectual capacity, virtues of character are dispositions to act in certain ways in response to similar situations, the habits of behaving in a certain way. Thus, good conduct arises from habits that in turn can only be acquired by repeated action and correction, making ethics an intensely practical discipline. According to Aristotle, the virtuous habit of action is always an intermediate state between the opposed vices of excess and deficiency: Ethics II 6 Thus, for example: Notice that the application of this theory of virtue requires a great deal of flexibility: Not bad advice, surely. Some version of this general approach dominated Western culture for many centuries. Voluntary Action Because ethics is a practical rather than a theoretical science, Aristotle also gave careful consideration to the aspects of human nature involved in acting and accepting moral responsibility. Moral evaluation of an action presupposes the attribution of responsibility to a human agent. But in certain circumstances, this attribution would not be appropriate. Ethics III 1 First, actions that are produced by some external force or, perhaps, under an extreme duress from outside the agent are taken involuntarily, and the agent is not responsible for them. Thus, if someone grabs my arm and uses it to strike a third person, I cannot reasonably be blamed or praised morally for what my arm has done. Second, actions performed out of ignorance are also involuntary. Thus, if I swing my arm for exercise and strike the third party who unbeknownst to me is standing nearby, then again I cannot be held responsible for having struck that person. Notice that the sort of ignorance Aristotle is willing to regard as exculpatory is always of lack of awareness of relevant particulars. Striking other people while claiming to be ignorant of the moral rule under which it is wrong to do so would not provide any excuse on his view. During the deliberative process, individual actions are evaluated in light of the good, and the best among them is then chosen for implementation. Under these conditions, Aristotle supposed, moral actions are within our power to perform or avoid; hence, we can reasonably be held responsible for them and their consequences. Just as with health of the body, virtue of the soul is a habit that can be acquired at least in part as the result of our own choices. Deliberate Choice Although the virtues are habits of acting or dispositions to act in certain ways, Aristotle maintained that these habits are acquired by engaging in proper conduct on specific occasions and that doing so requires thinking about what one does in a specific way. Neither demonstrative knowledge of the sort employed in science nor aesthetic judgment of the sort applied in crafts are relevant to morality. But there is a distinctive mode of thinking that does provide adequately for morality, according to Aristotle: This faculty alone comprehends the true character of individual and community welfare and applies its results to the guidance of human action. Acting

rightly, then, involves coordinating our desires with correct thoughts about the correct goals or ends. This is the function of deliberative reasoning: Ethics III 3 Although virtue is different from intelligence, then, the acquisition of virtue relies heavily upon the exercise of that intelligence. Weakness of the Will But doing the right thing is not always so simple, even though few people deliberately choose to develop vicious habits. Ethics VII 1 This may appear to be a simple failure of intelligence, Aristotle acknowledged, since the akratic individual seems not to draw the appropriate connection between the general moral rule and the particular case to which it applies. But this difficulty, Aristotle held, need not be fatal to the achievement of virtue. Although incontinence is not heroically moral, neither is it truly vicious. Consider the difference between an incontinent person, who knows what is right and aims for it but is sometimes overcome by pleasure, and an intemperate person, who purposefully seeks excessive pleasure. Aristotle argued that the vice of intemperance is incurable because it destroys the principle of the related virtue, while incontinence is curable because respect for virtue remains. Ethics VII 8 A clumsy archer may get better with practice, while a skilled archer who chooses not to aim for the target will not. For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods. Differentiating between the aims or goals of each, he distinguished three kinds of friendships that we commonly form. Ethics VIII 3 A friendship for pleasure comes into being when two people discover that they have common interest in an activity which they can pursue together. Their reciprocal participation in that activity results in greater pleasure for each than either could achieve by acting alone. Thus, for example, two people who enjoy playing tennis might derive pleasure from playing each other. Such a relationship lasts only so long as the pleasure continues. A friendship grounded on utility, on the other hand, comes into being when two people can benefit in some way by engaging in coordinated activity. In this case, the focus is on what use the two can derive from each other, rather than on any enjoyment they might have. Thus, for example, one person might teach another to play tennis for a fee: A relationship of this sort lasts only so long as its utility. A friendship for the good, however, comes into being when two people engage in common activities solely for the sake of developing the overall goodness of the other. Here, neither pleasure nor utility are relevant, but the good is. Ethics VIII 4 Thus, for example, two people with heart disease might play tennis with each other for the sake of the exercise that contributes to the overall health of both. Since the good is never wholly realized, a friendship of this sort should, in principle, last forever. Rather conservatively representing his own culture, Aristotle expressed some rather peculiar notions about the likelihood of forming friendships of these distinct varieties among people of different ages and genders. But the general description has some value nevertheless, especially in its focus on reciprocity. Achieving Happiness Aristotle rounded off his discussion of ethical living with a more detailed description of the achievement of true happiness. Pleasure is not a good in itself, he argued, since it is by its nature incomplete. But worthwhile activities are often associated with their own distinctive pleasures. Hence, we are rightly guided in life by our natural preference for engaging in pleasant activities rather than in unpleasant ones. Genuine happiness lies in action that leads to virtue, since this alone provides true value and not just amusement. Thus, Aristotle held that contemplation is the highest form of moral activity because it is continuous, pleasant, self-sufficient, and complete. Ethics X 8 In intellectual activity, human beings most nearly approach divine blessedness, while realizing all of the genuine human virtues as well.

Chapter 5 : Aristotle: Ethics | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

The intellectual virtues he claimed were acquired by inheritance and education and the moral ones through the imitation of practice and habit. The highest virtue, according to Aristotle was intellectual contemplation.

Virtue ethics began with Socrates , and was subsequently developed further by Plato , Aristotle , and the Stoics. Another way to say this is that in virtue ethics, morality stems from the identity or character of the individual, rather than being a reflection of the actions or consequences thereof of the individual. Today, there is debate among various adherents of virtue ethics concerning what specific virtues are morally praiseworthy. However, most theorists agree that morality comes as a result of intrinsic virtues. Intrinsic virtues are the common link that unites the disparate normative philosophies into the field known as virtue ethics. Plato believes virtue is effectively an end to be sought, for which a friend might be a useful means. Virtue theory was inserted into the study of history by moralistic historians such as Livy , Plutarch , and Tacitus. The Greek idea of the virtues was passed on in Roman philosophy through Cicero and later incorporated into Christian moral theology by St. During the scholastic period, the most comprehensive consideration of the virtues from a theological perspective was provided by St. Though the tradition receded into the background of European philosophical thought in these centuries, the term "virtue" remained current during this period, and in fact appears prominently in the tradition of classical republicanism or classical liberalism. Contemporary "aretaic turn"[edit] Although some Enlightenment philosophers e. Hume continued to emphasise the virtues, with the ascendancy of utilitarianism and deontology , virtue theory moved to the margins of Western philosophy. The contemporary revival of virtue theory is frequently traced to the philosopher G. In the paper " The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories ", Michael Stocker summarises the main aretaic criticisms of deontological and consequentialist ethics. Alasdair MacIntyre has made an effort to reconstruct a virtue-based theory in dialogue with the problems of modern and postmodern thought; his works include *After Virtue* and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*. Paul Ricoeur has accorded an important place to Aristotelian teleological ethics in his hermeneutical phenomenology of the subject, most notably in his book *Oneself as Another*. Theologian Stanley Hauerwas has also found the language of virtue quite helpful in his own project. Rosalind Hursthouse has published *On Virtue Ethics*. Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen have employed virtue theory in theorising the capability approach to international development. Julia Annas wrote *The Morality of Happiness* The aretaic turn in moral philosophy is paralleled by analogous developments in other philosophical disciplines. One of these is epistemology , where a distinctive virtue epistemology has been developed by Linda Zagzebski and others. In political theory, there has been discussion of "virtue politics", and in legal theory, there is a small but growing body of literature on virtue jurisprudence. The aretaic turn also exists in American constitutional theory , where proponents argue for an emphasis on virtue and vice of constitutional adjudicators. Aretaic approaches to morality, epistemology, and jurisprudence have been the subject of intense debates. One criticism that is frequently made focuses on the problem of guidance; opponents, such as Robert Louden in his article "Some Vices of Virtue Ethics", question whether the idea of a virtuous moral actor, believer, or judge can provide the guidance necessary for action, belief formation, or the decision of legal disputes. Lists of virtues[edit] There are several different lists of particular virtues. Socrates argued that virtue is knowledge, which suggests that there is really only one virtue. John McDowell is a recent defender of this conception. He argues that virtue is a "perceptual capacity" to identify how one ought to act, and that all particular virtues are merely "specialized sensitivities" to a range of reasons for acting. Each moral virtue was a mean see golden mean between two corresponding vices, one of excess and one of deficiency. Each intellectual virtue is a mental skill or habit by which the mind arrives at truth, affirming what is or denying what is not. Courage in the face of fear 2. Temperance in the face of pleasure and pain 3. Liberality with wealth and possessions 4. Magnificence with great wealth and possessions 5. Magnanimity with great honors 6. Proper ambition with normal honors 7. Truthfulness with self-expression 9. Friendliness in social conduct Modesty in the face of shame or shamelessness Righteous indignation in the face of injury Intellectual virtues Nous intelligence , which apprehends fundamental truths such as definitions, self-evident

principles Episteme science , which is skill with inferential reasoning such as proofs, syllogisms, demonstrations Sophia theoretical wisdom , which combines fundamental truths with valid, necessary inferences to reason well about unchanging truths. Aristotle also mentions several other traits: Gnome good sense -- passing judgment, "sympathetic understanding" Synesis understanding -- comprehending what others say, does not issue commands Phronesis practical wisdom -- knowledge of what to do, knowledge of changing truths, issues commands Techné art, craftsmanship Criticisms[edit] Some philosophers criticise virtue ethics as culturally relative. Since different people, cultures and societies often have different opinions on what constitutes a virtue, perhaps there is no one objectively right list. In contrast, one modern-era philosopher proposed as the four cardinal virtues: This conception of female virtue no longer holds true in many modern societies. Proponents of virtue theory sometimes respond to this objection by arguing that a central feature of a virtue is its universal applicability. In other words, any character trait defined as a virtue must reasonably be universally regarded as a virtue for all sentient beings. According to this view, it is inconsistent to claim for example servility as a female virtue, while at the same time not proposing it as a male one. Other proponents of virtue theory, notably Alasdair MacIntyre , respond to this objection by arguing that any account of the virtues must indeed be generated out of the community in which those virtues are to be practiced: That is to say that the virtues are, and necessarily must be, grounded in a particular time and place. What counts as virtue in 4th-century Athens would be a ludicrous guide to proper behavior in 21st-century Toronto, and vice versa. To take this view does not necessarily commit one to the argument that accounts of the virtues must therefore be static: MacIntyre appears to take this position in his seminal work on virtue ethics, *After Virtue*. One might cite though MacIntyre does not the rapid emergence of abolitionist thought in the slave -holding societies of the 18th-century Atlantic world as an example of this sort of change: While the emergence of abolitionist thought derived from many sources, the work of David Brion Davis , among others,[who? Another objection to virtue theory is that the school does not focus on what sorts of actions are morally permitted and which ones are not, but rather on what sort of qualities someone ought to foster in order to become a good person. In other words, while some virtue theorists may not condemn, for example, murder as an inherently immoral or impermissible sort of action, they may argue that someone who commits a murder is severely lacking in several important virtues, such as compassion and fairness. Still, antagonists of the theory often object that this particular feature of the theory makes virtue ethics useless as a universal norm of acceptable conduct suitable as a base for legislation. Some virtue theorists concede this point, but respond by opposing the very notion of legitimate legislative authority instead, effectively advocating some form of anarchism as the political ideal. Still others argue that it is possible to base a judicial system on the moral notion of virtues rather than rules. Some virtue theorists might respond to this overall objection with the notion of a "bad act" also being an act characteristic of vice. Although not all virtue ethicists agree to this notion, this is one way the virtue ethicist can re-introduce the concept of the "morally impermissible". One could raise objection with Foot that she is committing an argument from ignorance by postulating that what is not virtuous is unvirtuous. Subsumed in deontology and utilitarianism[edit] Martha Nussbaum has suggested that while virtue ethics is often considered to be anti- Enlightenment , "suspicious of theory and respectful of the wisdom embodied in local practices", [19] it is actually neither fundamentally distinct from, nor does it qualify as a rival approach to deontology and utilitarianism. She argues that philosophers from these two Enlightenment traditions often include theories of virtue. She argues that contemporary virtue ethicists such as Alasdair MacIntyre , Bernard Williams , Philippa Foot , and John McDowell have few points of agreement, and that the common core of their work does not represent a break from Kant. Utopianism and pluralism[edit] Robert Louden criticises virtue ethics on the basis that it promotes a form of unsustainable utopianism. Trying to come to a single set of virtues is immensely difficult in contemporary societies as, according to Louden, they contain "more ethnic, religious, and class groups than did the moral community which Aristotle theorized about" with each of these groups having "not only its own interests but its own set of virtues as well". Louden notes in passing that MacIntyre, a supporter of virtue-based ethics, has grappled with this in *After Virtue* but that ethics cannot dispense with building rules around acts and rely only on discussing the moral character of persons. Deontological ethics , sometimes referred to as duty ethics, places the emphasis on adhering to ethical

principles or duties. How these duties are defined, however, is often a point of contention and debate in deontological ethics. One of the predominant rule schemes utilized by deontologists is the Divine Command Theory. Deontology also depends upon meta-ethical realism, in that it postulates the existence of moral absolutes that make an action moral, regardless of circumstances. For more information on deontological ethics refer to the work of Immanuel Kant. The next predominant school of thought in normative ethics is consequentialism. Instead of saying that one has a moral duty to abstain from murder, a consequentialist would say that we should abstain from murder because it causes undesirable effects. Mill asserts that our determinant of the desirability of an action is the net amount of happiness it brings, the number of people it brings it to, and the duration of the happiness. He also tries to delineate classes of happiness, some being preferable to others, but there is a great deal of difficulty in classifying such concepts. Utilitarianism, Utilitarianism book, and On Liberty Virtue ethics differs from both deontology consequentialism as it focuses on being over doing. A virtue ethicist identifies virtues, desirable characteristics, that the moral or virtuous person embodies. To the virtue philosopher, action cannot be used as a demarcation of morality, because a virtue encompasses more than just a simple selection of action. Instead, it is about a way of being that would cause the person exhibiting the virtue to make a certain "virtuous" choice consistently in each situation. There is a great deal of disagreement within virtue ethics over what are virtues and what are not. There are also difficulties in identifying what is the "virtuous" action to take in all circumstances, and how to define a virtue. These very different senses of what constitutes virtue, hidden behind the same word, are a potential source of confusion. This disagreement over the meaning of virtue points to a larger conflict between virtue theory and its philosophical rivals. A system of virtue theory is only intelligible if it is teleological: It states that practicing good habits such as honesty, generosity makes a moral and virtuous person. It guides a person without specific rules for resolving the ethical complexity. Social and political philosophy Within the field of social ethics, Deirdre McCloskey argues that virtue ethics can provide a basis for a balanced approach to understanding capitalism and capitalist societies.

Chapter 6 : The Internet Classics Archive | Nicomachean Ethics by Aristotle

Aristotle believed a person is born with intellectual virtue as a sort of moral compass in which to direct a person in proper thinking and actions. A sense of justice, empathy, and integrity are.

It persisted as the dominant approach in Western moral philosophy until at least the Enlightenment, suffered a momentary eclipse during the nineteenth century, but re-emerged in Anglo-American philosophy in the late s. Neither of them, at that time, paid attention to a number of topics that had always figured in the virtue ethics tradition—virtues and vices, motives and moral character, moral education, moral wisdom or discernment, friendship and family relationships, a deep concept of happiness, the role of the emotions in our moral life and the fundamentally important questions of what sorts of persons we should be and how we should live. Its re-emergence had an invigorating effect on the other two approaches, many of whose proponents then began to address these topics in the terms of their favoured theory. It has also generated virtue ethical readings of philosophers other than Plato and Aristotle, such as Martineau, Hume and Nietzsche, and thereby different forms of virtue ethics have developed Slote ; Swanton , a. See Annas for a short, clear, and authoritative account of all three. We discuss the first two in the remainder of this section. Eudaimonia is discussed in connection with eudaimonist versions of virtue ethics in the next. It is a disposition, well entrenched in its possessor—something that, as we say, goes all the way down, unlike a habit such as being a tea-drinker—to notice, expect, value, feel, desire, choose, act, and react in certain characteristic ways. To possess a virtue is to be a certain sort of person with a certain complex mindset. A significant aspect of this mindset is the wholehearted acceptance of a distinctive range of considerations as reasons for action. An honest person cannot be identified simply as one who, for example, practices honest dealing and does not cheat. An honest person cannot be identified simply as one who, for example, tells the truth because it is the truth, for one can have the virtue of honesty without being tactless or indiscreet. Valuing honesty as she does, she chooses, where possible to work with honest people, to have honest friends, to bring up her children to be honest. She disapproves of, dislikes, deplors dishonesty, is not amused by certain tales of chicanery, despises or pities those who succeed through deception rather than thinking they have been clever, is unsurprised, or pleased as appropriate when honesty triumphs, is shocked or distressed when those near and dear to her do what is dishonest and so on. Possessing a virtue is a matter of degree. To possess such a disposition fully is to possess full or perfect virtue, which is rare, and there are a number of ways of falling short of this ideal Athanassoulis Most people who can truly be described as fairly virtuous, and certainly markedly better than those who can truly be described as dishonest, self-centred and greedy, still have their blind spots—little areas where they do not act for the reasons one would expect. So someone honest or kind in most situations, and notably so in demanding ones, may nevertheless be trivially tainted by snobbery, inclined to be disingenuous about their forebears and less than kind to strangers with the wrong accent. I may be honest enough to recognise that I must own up to a mistake because it would be dishonest not to do so without my acceptance being so wholehearted that I can own up easily, with no inner conflict. The fully virtuous do what they should without a struggle against contrary desires; the continent have to control a desire or temptation to do otherwise. If it is the circumstances in which the agent acts—say that she is very poor when she sees someone drop a full purse or that she is in deep grief when someone visits seeking help—then indeed it is particularly admirable of her to restore the purse or give the help when it is hard for her to do so. But if what makes it hard is an imperfection in her character—the temptation to keep what is not hers, or a callous indifference to the suffering of others—then it is not. The concept of a virtue is the concept of something that makes its possessor good: These are commonly accepted truisms. But it is equally common, in relation to particular putative examples of virtues to give these truisms up. It is also said that courage, in a desperado, enables him to do far more wicked things than he would have been able to do if he were timid. So it would appear that generosity, honesty, compassion and courage despite being virtues, are sometimes faults. Someone who is generous, honest, compassionate, and courageous might not be a morally good person—or, if it is still held to be a truism that they are, then morally good people may be led by what makes them morally good to act

wrongly! How have we arrived at such an odd conclusion? The answer lies in too ready an acceptance of ordinary usage, which permits a fairly wide-ranging application of many of the virtue terms, combined, perhaps, with a modern readiness to suppose that the virtuous agent is motivated by emotion or inclination, not by rational choice. Aristotle makes a number of specific remarks about phronesis that are the subject of much scholarly debate, but the related modern concept is best understood by thinking of what the virtuous morally mature adult has that nice children, including nice adolescents, lack. Both the virtuous adult and the nice child have good intentions, but the child is much more prone to mess things up because he is ignorant of what he needs to know in order to do what he intends. A virtuous adult is not, of course, infallible and may also, on occasion, fail to do what she intended to do through lack of knowledge, but only on those occasions on which the lack of knowledge is not culpable. So, for example, children and adolescents often harm those they intend to benefit either because they do not know how to set about securing the benefit or because their understanding of what is beneficial and harmful is limited and often mistaken. Such ignorance in small children is rarely, if ever culpable. Adults, on the other hand, are culpable if they mess things up by being thoughtless, insensitive, reckless, impulsive, shortsighted, and by assuming that what suits them will suit everyone instead of taking a more objective viewpoint. They are also culpable if their understanding of what is beneficial and harmful is mistaken. It is part of practical wisdom to know how to secure real benefits effectively; those who have practical wisdom will not make the mistake of concealing the hurtful truth from the person who really needs to know it in the belief that they are benefiting him. The detailed specification of what is involved in such knowledge or understanding has not yet appeared in the literature, but some aspects of it are becoming well known. Even many deontologists now stress the point that their action-guiding rules cannot, reliably, be applied without practical wisdom, because correct application requires situational appreciation—the capacity to recognise, in any particular situation, those features of it that are morally salient. This brings out two aspects of practical wisdom. One is that it characteristically comes only with experience of life. Amongst the morally relevant features of a situation may be the likely consequences, for the people involved, of a certain action, and this is something that adolescents are notoriously clueless about precisely because they are inexperienced. It is part of practical wisdom to be wise about human beings and human life. It should go without saying that the virtuous are mindful of the consequences of possible actions. How could they fail to be reckless, thoughtless and short-sighted if they were not? The wise do not see things in the same way as the nice adolescents who, with their under-developed virtues, still tend to see the personally disadvantageous nature of a certain action as competing in importance with its honesty or benevolence or justice. These aspects coalesce in the description of the practically wise as those who understand what is truly worthwhile, truly important, and thereby truly advantageous in life, who know, in short, how to live well.

Forms of Virtue Ethics While all forms of virtue ethics agree that virtue is central and practical wisdom required, they differ in how they combine these and other concepts to illuminate what we should do in particular contexts and how we should live our lives as a whole. In what follows we sketch four distinct forms taken by contemporary virtue ethics, namely, a eudaimonist virtue ethics, b agent-based and exemplarist virtue ethics, c target-centered virtue ethics, and d Platonistic virtue ethics. A virtue is a trait that contributes to or is a constituent of eudaimonia and we ought to develop virtues, the eudaimonist claims, precisely because they contribute to eudaimonia. It is for me, not for you, to pronounce on whether I am happy. If I think I am happy then I am—it is not something I can be wrong about barring advanced cases of self-deception. Contrast my being healthy or flourishing. Here we have no difficulty in recognizing that I might think I was healthy, either physically or psychologically, or think that I was flourishing but be wrong. Most versions of virtue ethics agree that living a life in accordance with virtue is necessary for eudaimonia. This supreme good is not conceived of as an independently defined state made up of, say, a list of non-moral goods that does not include virtuous activity which exercise of the virtues might be thought to promote. It is, within virtue ethics, already conceived of as something of which virtuous activity is at least partially constitutive. Kraut Thereby virtue ethicists claim that a human life devoted to physical pleasure or the acquisition of wealth is not eudaimon, but a wasted life. But although all standard versions of virtue ethics insist on that conceptual link between virtue and eudaimonia, further links are matters of dispute and generate

different versions. For Aristotle, virtue is necessary but not sufficient—what is also needed are external goods which are a matter of luck. For Plato and the Stoics, virtue is both necessary and sufficient for eudaimonia. According to eudaimonist virtue ethics, the good life is the eudaimon life, and the virtues are what enable a human being to be eudaimon because the virtues just are those character traits that benefit their possessor in that way, barring bad luck. So there is a link between eudaimonia and what confers virtue status on a character trait. For a discussion of the differences between eudaimonists see Baril. It is unclear how many other forms of normativity must be explained in terms of the qualities of agents in order for a theory to count as agent-based. The two best-known agent-based theorists, Michael Slote and Linda Zagzebski, trace a wide range of normative qualities back to the qualities of agents. Similarly, he explains the goodness of an action, the value of eudaimonia, the justice of a law or social institution, and the normativity of practical rationality in terms of the motivational and dispositional qualities of agents. Zagzebski likewise defines right and wrong actions by reference to the emotions, motives, and dispositions of virtuous and vicious agents. Her definitions of duties, good and bad ends, and good and bad states of affairs are similarly grounded in the motivational and dispositional states of exemplary agents. However, there could also be less ambitious agent-based approaches to virtue ethics see Slote. At the very least, an agent-based approach must be committed to explaining what one should do by reference to the motivational and dispositional states of agents. But this is not yet a sufficient condition for counting as an agent-based approach, since the same condition will be met by every virtue ethical account. For a theory to count as an agent-based form of virtue ethics it must also be the case that the normative properties of motivations and dispositions cannot be explained in terms of the normative properties of something else such as eudaimonia or states of affairs which is taken to be more fundamental. Beyond this basic commitment, there is room for agent-based theories to be developed in a number of different directions. The most important distinguishing factor has to do with how motivations and dispositions are taken to matter for the purposes of explaining other normative qualities. If those motives are good then the action is good, if not then not. Another point on which agent-based forms of virtue ethics might differ concerns how one identifies virtuous motivations and dispositions. As we observe the people around us, we find ourselves wanting to be like some of them in at least some respects and not wanting to be like others. The former provide us with positive exemplars and the latter with negative ones. Our understanding of better and worse motivations and virtuous and vicious dispositions is grounded in these primitive responses to exemplars. This is not to say that every time we act we stop and ask ourselves what one of our exemplars would do in this situations. Our moral concepts become more refined over time as we encounter a wider variety of exemplars and begin to draw systematic connections between them, noting what they have in common, how they differ, and which of these commonalities and differences matter, morally speaking. Recognizable motivational profiles emerge and come to be labeled as virtues or vices, and these, in turn, shape our understanding of the obligations we have and the ends we should pursue. However, even though the systematising of moral thought can travel a long way from our starting point, according to the exemplarist it never reaches a stage where reference to exemplars is replaced by the recognition of something more fundamental. At the end of the day, according to the exemplarist, our moral system still rests on our basic propensity to take a liking or disliking to exemplars. The target-centered view developed by Christine Swanton, by contrast, begins with our existing conceptions of the virtues. We already have a passable idea of which traits are virtues and what they involve. Of course, this untutored understanding can be clarified and improved, and it is one of the tasks of the virtue ethicist to help us do precisely that. But rather than stripping things back to something as basic as the motivations we want to imitate or building it up to something as elaborate as an entire flourishing life, the target-centered view begins where most ethics students find themselves, namely, with the idea that generosity, courage, self-discipline, compassion, and the like get a tick of approval. It then examines what these traits involve. A complete account of virtue will map out 1 its field, 2 its mode of responsiveness, 3 its basis of moral acknowledgment, and 4 its target. Different virtues are concerned with different fields. Courage, for example, is concerned with what might harm us, whereas generosity is concerned with the sharing of time, talent, and property. Courage aims to control fear and handle danger, while generosity aims to share time, talents, or possessions with others in ways that benefit them. A

virtuous act is an act that hits the target of a virtue, which is to say that it succeeds in responding to items in its field in the specified way. Providing a target-centered definition of a right action requires us to move beyond the analysis of a single virtue and the actions that follow from it. This is because a single action context may involve a number of different, overlapping fields. Determination might lead me to persist in trying to complete a difficult task even if doing so requires a singleness of purpose.

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Aristotle therefore describes several apparently different kinds of virtuous person as necessarily having all the moral virtues, excellences of character. Being of "great soul" (magnanimity), the virtue where someone would be truly deserving of the highest praise and have a correct attitude towards the honor this may involve.

Though written more than 2, years ago, it offers the modern reader many valuable insights into human needs and conduct. People have not changed significantly in the many years since Aristotle first lectured on ethics at the Lyceum in Athens. The human types and problems he discusses are familiar to everyone. The rules of conduct and explanations of virtue and goodness that he proposes can all help modern man to attain a fuller and more satisfying understanding of his responsibilities as a member of society and the purpose of his existence. One attains happiness by a virtuous life and the development of reason and the faculty of theoretical wisdom. For this one requires sufficient external goods to ensure health, leisure, and the opportunity for virtuous action. Moral virtue is a relative mean between extremes of excess and deficiency, and in general the moral life is one of moderation in all things except virtue. No human appetite or desire is bad if it is controlled by reason according to a moral principle. Moral virtue is acquired by a combination of knowledge, habituation, and self-discipline. Virtuous acts require conscious choice and moral purpose or motivation. Man has personal moral responsibility for his actions. Moral virtue cannot be achieved abstractly – it requires moral action in a social environment. Ethics and politics are closely related, for politics is the science of creating a society in which men can live the good life and develop their full potential. Nature of Ethics and methods of studying Ethics. Discussion of Happiness and the good as the ends of human life. Discussion of Moral Virtue. The Doctrine of the Mean. Moral purpose and moral responsibility. Discussion of particular moral virtues. Further discussion of Pleasure. Happiness, the end of human life. Relationship of Ethics and Politics. Next Chapter I Pop Quiz! According to Aristotle, three conditions must be fulfilled for friendship to exist between two people. One of those conditions is expectation of shared material abundance mutual goodwill.

Chapter 8 : Aristotle: Ethics

According to Aristotle, a virtue (arête) is a trait of mind or character that helps us achieve a good life, which Aristotle argues is a life in accordance with reason. There are two types of virtue - intellectual virtues and moral virtues.

References and Further Reading 1. A faculty seminar I attended a few years ago was mired in the opinion that Aristotle thinks the good life is one of mindless routine. Can it really be that Aristotle thought life is lived best when thinking and choosing are eliminated? On its face this belief makes no sense. It is partly a confusion between an effect and one of its causes. If this is what sticks in your memory, and leads you to that conclusion, then the cure is easy, since habits are not the only effects of habituation, and a thing that makes all the difference is indispensable but not necessarily the only cause of what it produces. We will work through this thought in a moment, but first we need to notice that another kind of influence may be at work when you recall what Aristotle says about habit, and another kind of medicine may be needed against it. Are you thinking that no matter how we analyze the effects of habituation, we will never get around the fact that Aristotle plainly says that virtues are habits? The trouble, as so often in these matters, is the intrusion of Latin. Socrates makes the point that knowledge can never be a mere passive possession, stored in the memory the way birds can be put in cages. Some translators make Aristotle say that virtue is a disposition, or a settled disposition. This is much better than calling it a "habit," but still sounds too passive to capture his meaning. We somehow set them free to speak, and give them a particular language to do it in, but they--Mr. Wilson called them "little geniuses"--they do all the work. In neither account is it possible for anyone to train us, as Gorgias has habituated Meno into the mannerisms of a knower. Habits can be strong but they never go deep. Authentic knowledge does engage the soul in its depths, and with this sort of knowing Aristotle links virtue. The word "disposition" by itself he reserves for more passive states, easy to remove and change, such as heat, cold, and sickness. He confirms this identity by reviewing the kinds of things that are in the soul, and eliminating the feelings and impulses to which we are passive and the capacities we have by nature, but he first discovers what sort of thing a virtue is by observing that the goodness is never in the action but only in the doer. This is an enormous claim that pervades the whole of the Ethics, and one that we need to stay attentive to. No action is good or just or courageous because of any quality in itself. Virtue manifests itself in action, Aristotle says, only when one acts while holding oneself in a certain way. The indefinite adverb is immediately explained: This stable equilibrium of the soul is what we mean by having character. It is not the result of what we call "conditioning. Skinner, the psychologist most associated with the idea of behavior modification, that a class of his once trained him to lecture always from one corner of the room, by smiling and nodding whenever he approached it, but frowning and faintly shaking their heads when he moved away from it. That is the way we acquire habits. We slip into them unawares, or let them be imposed on us, or even impose them on ourselves. A person with ever so many habits may still have no character. Habits make for repetitive and predictable behavior, but character gives moral equilibrium to a life. The difference is between a foolish consistency wholly confined to the level of acting, and a reliability in that part of us from which actions have their source. It should now be clear though, that the habit cannot be any part of that character, and that we must try to understand how an active condition can arise as a consequence of a passive one, and why that active condition can only be attained if the passive one has come first. So far we have arranged three notions in a series, like rungs of a ladder: What we need to notice now is that there is yet another rung of the ladder below the habits. We all start out life governed by desires and impulses. Unlike the habits, which are passive but lasting conditions, desires and impulses are passive and momentary, but they are very strong. How can such powerful influences be overcome? The latter word, that can be translated as being-at-work, cannot mean mere behavior, however repetitive and constant it may be. The moral life can be confused with the habits approved by some society and imposed on its young. What he considered good breeding is for us mere habit; that becomes obvious when some student who stood up at the beginning of a lecture occasionally gets bored and leaves in the middle of it. In such a case the politeness was just for show, and the rudeness is the truth. When a parent makes a child repeatedly refrain from some desired thing, or remain in some frightening situation, the child is

beginning to act as a moderate or brave person would act, but what is really going on within the child? What seems more likely is that parental training is needed only for its negative effect, as a way of neutralizing the irrational force of impulses and desires. We all arrive on the scene already habituated, in the habit, that is, of yielding to impulses and desires, of instantly slackening the tension of pain or fear or unfulfilled desire in any way open to us, and all this has become automatic in us before thinking and choosing are available to us at all. This is a description of what is called "human nature," though in fact it precedes our access to our true natural state, and blocks that access. This is why Aristotle says that "the virtues come about in us neither by nature nor apart from nature" a, What we call "human nature," and some philosophers call the "state of nature," is both natural and unnatural; it is the passive part of our natures, passively reinforced by habit. Virtue has the aspect of a second nature, because it cannot develop first, nor by a continuous process out of our first condition. But it is only in the moral virtues that we possess our primary nature, that in which all our capacities can have their full development. The sign of what is natural, for Aristotle, is pleasure, but we have to know how to read the signs. Things pleasant by nature have no opposite pain and no excess, because they set us free to act simply as what we are b, , and it is in this sense that Aristotle calls the life of virtue pleasant in its own right, in itself a, , Our first or childish nature is never eradicated, though, and this is why Aristotle says that our nature is not simple, but also has in it something different that makes our happiness assailable from within, and makes us love change even when it is for the worse. And the road to these virtues is nothing fancy, but is simply what all parents begin to do who withhold some desired thing from a child, or prevent it from running away from every irrational source of fear. They make the child act, without virtue, as though it had virtue. Assume a virtue if you have it not. That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat Of habits evil, is angel yet in this, That to the use of actions fair and good He likewise gives a frock or livery, That aptly is put on. Refrain tonight, And that shall lend a kind of easiness To the next abstinence; the next more easy; For use almost can change the stamp of nature Hamlet is talking to a middle-aged woman about lust, but the pattern applies just as well to five-year-olds and candy. We are in a position to see that it is not the stamp of nature that needs to be changed but the earliest stamp of habit. A habit of yielding to impulse can be counteracted by an equal and opposite habit. This second habit is no virtue, but only a mindless inhibition, an automatic repressing of all impulses. Nor do the two opposite habits together produce virtue, but rather a state of neutrality. Habituation thus does not stifle nature, but rather lets nature make its appearance. The description from Book VII of the Physics of the way children begin to learn applies equally well to the way human character begins to be formed: We noticed earlier that habituation is not the end but the beginning of the progress toward virtue. If the human soul had no being-at-work, no inherent and indelible activity, there could be no such moral stature, but only customs. But early on, when first trying to give content to the idea of happiness, Aristotle asks if it would make sense to think that a carpenter or shoemaker has work to do, but a human being as such is inert. His reply, of course, is that nature has given us work to do, in default of which we are necessarily unhappy, and that work is to put into action the power of reason. Later, Aristotle makes explicit that the irrational impulses are no less human than reasoning is. Responsible human action depends upon the combining of all the powers of the soul: These are all things that are at work in us all the time. Good parental training does not produce them, or mold them, or alter them, but sets them free to be effective in action. This is the way in which, according to Aristotle, despite the contributions of parents, society, and nature, we are the co-authors of the active states of our own souls b, The Mean Now this discussion has shown that habit does make all the difference to our lives without being the only thing shaping those lives and without being the final form they take. Quantitative relations are so far from any serious human situation that they would seem to be present only incidentally or metaphorically, but Aristotle says that "by its thinghood and by the account that unfolds what it is for it to be, virtue is a mean. Cowardice is -3 while Rashness is In our number language Aristotle points out twice that every moral virtue is an extreme a, , , but he keeps that observation secondary to an over-riding sense in which it is a mean. Could there be anything at all to the notion that we hone in on a virtue from two sides? The protagonist is not a human being, but a border collie named Nop. The author describes the way the dog has to find the balance point, the exact distance behind a herd of sheep from which he can drive the whole herd forward in a coherent mass. When the dog is too close, the sheep panic and run off in all

directions; when he is too far back, the sheep ignore him, and turn in all directions to graze. While in motion, a good working dog keeps adjusting his pace to maintain the exact mean position that keeps the sheep stepping lively in the direction he determines. Now working border collies are brave, tireless, and determined. They have been documented as running more than a hundred miles in a day, and they love their work. There is no question that they display virtue, but it is not human virtue and not even of the same form. Some human activities do require the long sustained tension a sheep dog is always holding on to, an active state stretched to the limit, constantly and anxiously kept in balance. Running on a tightrope might capture the same flavor. But constantly maintained anxiety is not the kind of stable equilibrium Aristotle attributes to the virtuous human soul. I think we may have stumbled on the way that human virtue is a mean when we found that habits were necessary in order to counteract other habits. This does accord with the things Aristotle says about straightening warped boards, aiming away from the worse extreme, and being on guard against the seductions of pleasure. Alone, either of them is a vice, according to Aristotle. The glutton, the drunkard, the person enslaved to every sexual impulse obviously cannot ever be happy, but the opposite extremes, which Aristotle groups together as a kind of numbness or denial of the senses b, 8 , miss the proper relation to bodily pleasure on the other side. It may seem that temperance in relation to food, say, depends merely on determining how many ounces of chocolate mousse to eat. The example is given only to show that there is no single action that can be prescribed as right for every person and every circumstance, and it is not strictly analogous even to temperance with respect to food. What is at stake is not a correct quantity of food but a right relation to the pleasure that comes from eating. Suppose you have carefully saved a bowl of chocolate mousse all day for your mid-evening snack, and just as you are ready to treat yourself, a friend arrives unexpectedly to visit. If you are a glutton, you might hide the mousse until the friend leaves, or gobble it down before you open the door. If the state of your soul is in the mean in these matters, you are neither enslaved to nor shut out from the pleasure of eating treats, and can enhance the visit of a friend by sharing them.

Chapter 9 : About Aristotle's Ethics

Virtues, according to Aristotle, can be divided into virtues of character such as: generosity, honesty, justice, temperance, courage, and virtues of intellect: wisdom, understanding. In order to become a 'good' person and attain eudaimonia, one must be a virtuous person by exercising the virtues.

Philosophy of mind Aristotle regarded psychology as a part of natural philosophy, and he wrote much about the philosophy of mind. This material appears in his ethical writings, in a systematic treatise on the nature of the soul *De anima*, and in a number of minor monographs on topics such as sense-perception, memory, sleep, and dreams. Not only humans but beasts and plants too have souls, intrinsic principles of animal and vegetable life. If one regards a living substance as a composite of matter and form, then the soul is the form of a natural—or, as Aristotle sometimes says, organic—body. An organic body is a body that has organs—that is to say, parts that have specific functions, such as the mouths of mammals and the roots of trees. The souls of living beings are ordered by Aristotle in a hierarchy. Plants have a vegetative or nutritive soul, which consists of the powers of growth, nutrition, and reproduction. Animals have, in addition, the powers of perception and locomotion—they possess a sensitive soul, and every animal has at least one sense-faculty, touch being the most universal. Whatever can feel at all can feel pleasure; hence, animals, which have senses, also have desires. Humans, in addition, have the power of reason and thought *logismos kai dianoia*, which may be called a rational soul. The way in which Aristotle structured the soul and its faculties influenced not only philosophy but also science for nearly two millennia. A soul, for him, is not an interior immaterial agent acting on a body. Soul and body are no more distinct from each other than the impress of a seal is distinct from the wax on which it is impressed. The parts of the soul, moreover, are faculties, which are distinguished from each other by their operations and their objects. The power of growth is distinct from the power of sensation because growing and feeling are two different activities, and the sense of sight differs from the sense of hearing not because eyes are different from ears but because colours are different from sounds. The objects of sense come in two kinds: At the same level within the hierarchy as the senses, which are cognitive faculties, there is also an affective faculty, which is the locus of spontaneous feeling. This is a part of the soul that is basically irrational but is capable of being controlled by reason. It is the locus of desire and passion; when brought under the sway of reason, it is the seat of the moral virtues, such as courage and temperance. The highest level of the soul is occupied by mind or reason, the locus of thought and understanding. Thought differs from sense-perception and is the prerogative, on earth, of human beings. Thought, like sensation, is a matter of making judgments; but sensation concerns particulars, while intellectual knowledge is of universals. Reasoning may be practical or theoretical, and, accordingly, Aristotle distinguishes between a deliberative and a speculative faculty. In a notoriously difficult passage of *De anima*, Aristotle introduces a further distinction between two kinds of mind: Some—particularly among Arab commentators—identified the separable active agent with God or with some other superhuman intelligence. Others—particularly among Latin commentators—took Aristotle to be identifying two different faculties within the human mind: If the second interpretation is correct, then Aristotle is here recognizing a part of the human soul that is separable from the body and immortal. Here and elsewhere there is detectable in Aristotle, in addition to his standard biological notion of the soul, a residue of a Platonic vision according to which the intellect is a distinct entity separable from the body. Ethics The surviving works of Aristotle include three treatises on moral philosophy: Interestingly, the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudemian Ethics* have three books in common: Although the question has been disputed for centuries, it is most likely that the original home of the common books was the *Eudemian Ethics*; it is also probable that Aristotle used this work for a course on ethics that he taught at the Lyceum during his mature period. The *Magna moralia* probably consists of notes taken by an unknown student of such a course. If life is to be worth living, he argues, it must surely be for the sake of something that is an end in itself—i. If there is any single thing that is the highest human good, therefore, it must be desirable for its own sake, and all other goods must be desirable for the sake of it. One popular conception of the highest human good is pleasure—the pleasures of food, drink, and sex, combined with aesthetic and intellectual

pleasures. Other people prefer a life of virtuous action in the political sphere. A third possible candidate for the highest human good is scientific or philosophical contemplation. This triad provides the key to his ethical inquiry. Although it is impossible to abandon the English term at this stage of history, it should be borne in mind that what Aristotle means by eudaimonia is something more like well-being or flourishing than any feeling of contentment. Aristotle argues, in fact, that happiness is activity of the rational soul in accordance with virtue. Human beings must have a function, because particular types of humans e. This function must be unique to humans; thus, it cannot consist of growth and nourishment, for this is shared by plants, or the life of the senses, for this is shared by animals. It must therefore involve the peculiarly human faculty of reason. The highest human good is the same as good human functioning, and good human functioning is the same as the good exercise of the faculty of reason—that is to say, the activity of rational soul in accordance with virtue. There are two kinds of virtue: Moral virtues are exemplified by courage, temperance, and liberality; the key intellectual virtues are wisdom, which governs ethical behaviour, and understanding, which is expressed in scientific endeavour and contemplation. They are not innate, like eyesight, but are acquired by practice and lost by disuse. They are abiding states, and they thus differ from momentary passions such as anger and pity. Virtues are states of character that find expression both in purpose and in action. Moral virtue is expressed in good purpose—that is to say, in prescriptions for action in accordance with a good plan of life. It is expressed also in actions that avoid both excess and defect. A temperate person, for example, will avoid eating or drinking too much, but he will also avoid eating or drinking too little. Virtue chooses the mean, or middle ground, between excess and defect. Besides purpose and action, virtue is also concerned with feeling. One may, for example, be excessively concerned with sex or insufficiently interested in it; the temperate person will take the appropriate degree of interest and be neither lustful nor frigid. While all the moral virtues are means of action and passion, it is not the case that every kind of action and passion is capable of a virtuous mean. There are some actions of which there is no right amount, because any amount of them is too much; Aristotle gives murder and adultery as examples. The virtues, besides being concerned with means of action and passion, are themselves means in the sense that they occupy a middle ground between two contrary vices. Thus, the virtue of courage is flanked on one side by foolhardiness and on the other by cowardice. It is a distinctive ethical theory that contrasts with other influential systems of various kinds. It contrasts, on the one hand, with religious systems that give a central role to the concept of a moral law, concentrating on the prohibitive aspects of morality. It also differs from moral systems such as utilitarianism that judge the rightness and wrongness of actions in terms of their consequences. Unlike the utilitarian, Aristotle believes that there are some kinds of action that are morally wrong in principle. The mean that is the mark of moral virtue is determined by the intellectual virtue of wisdom. Wisdom, the intellectual virtue that is proper to practical reason, is inseparably linked with the moral virtues of the affective part of the soul. Only if an agent possesses moral virtue will he endorse an appropriate recipe for a good life. Only if he is gifted with intelligence will he make an accurate assessment of the circumstances in which his decision is to be made. It is impossible, Aristotle says, to be really good without wisdom or to be really wise without moral virtue. Only when correct reasoning and right desire come together does truly virtuous action result. Virtuous action, then, is always the result of successful practical reasoning. But practical reasoning may be defective in various ways. Someone may operate from a vicious choice of lifestyle; a glutton, for example, may plan his life around the project of always maximizing the present pleasure. In treating of pleasure, however, Aristotle explores a much wider field. There are two classes of aesthetic pleasures: Finally, at the top of the scale, there are the pleasures of the mind. Plato had posed the question of whether the best life consists in the pursuit of pleasure or the exercise of the intellectual virtues. The exercise of the highest form of virtue is the very same thing as the truest form of pleasure; each is identical with the other and with happiness. The highest virtues are the intellectual ones, and among them Aristotle distinguished between wisdom and understanding. To the question of whether happiness is to be identified with the pleasure of wisdom or with the pleasure of understanding, Aristotle gives different answers in his main ethical treatises. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* perfect happiness, though it presupposes the moral virtues, is constituted solely by the activity of philosophical contemplation, whereas in the *Eudemian Ethics* it consists in the harmonious exercise of all the virtues,

intellectual and moral. The Eudemian ideal of happiness, given the role it assigns to contemplation, to the moral virtues, and to pleasure, can claim to combine the features of the traditional three lives—the life of the philosopher, the life of the politician, and the life of the pleasure seeker. The happy person will value contemplation above all, but part of his happy life will consist in the exercise of moral virtues in the political sphere and the enjoyment in moderation of the natural human pleasures of body as well as of soul.