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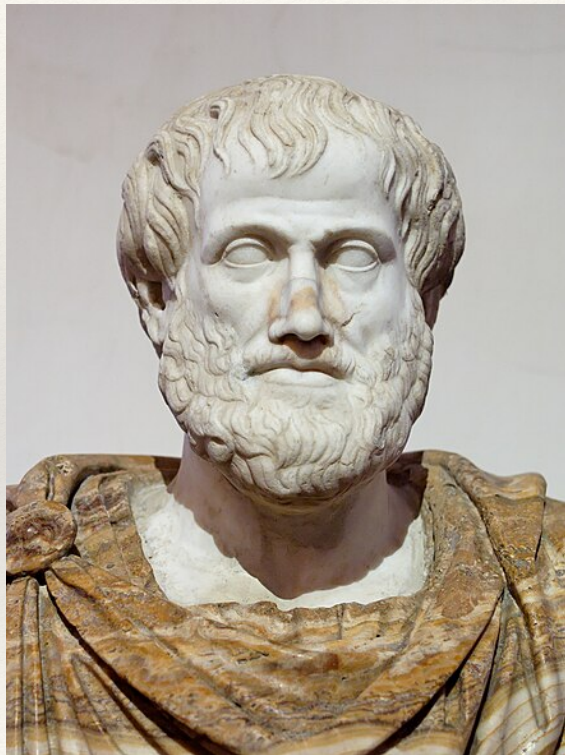
# Virtue ethics according to Aristotle

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# Aristotle

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384-322 BC

Philosopher and Polymath



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# Science (Aristotle)

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Science is a body of true beliefs, and knowledge, in order to be actual knowledge, must be part of some science

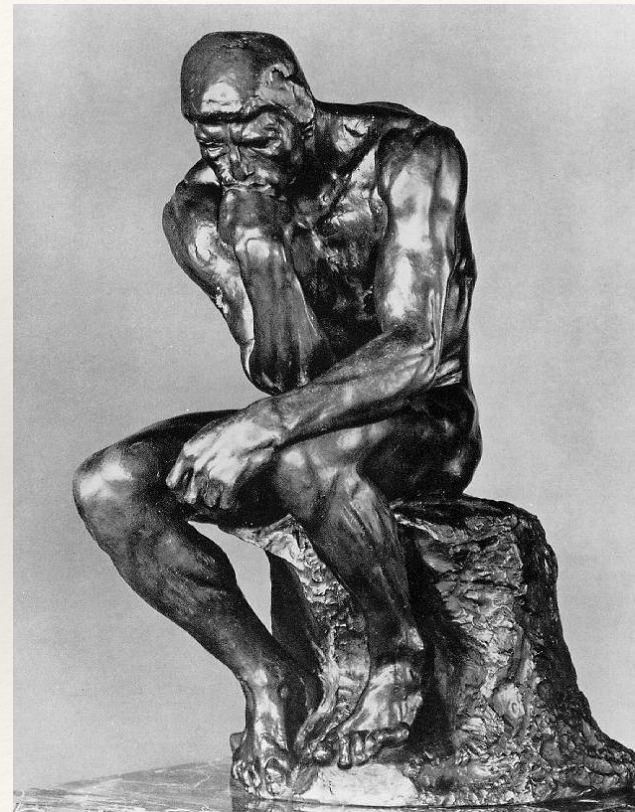
*True beliefs: statements that can be demonstrated to be necessary and universal truths based on observation and reasoning*

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# Science

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- For a long time, people thought that it would be enough to reason about the existing knowledge to explore everything there is to know.
- One single person could possess all knowledge in her cultural context. (encyclopedia of Diderot and D'Alembert)
- Reasoning, and mostly passive observation were the main techniques in scientific research





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# Science (Aristotle)

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Science is a body of true beliefs, and knowledge, in order to be actual knowledge, must be part of some science

*True beliefs: statements that can be demonstrated to be necessary and universal truths based on observation and reasoning*

Human knowledge is divided into three kinds of science:

- ❖ **Productive**

- ❖ *Making something (farming, writing poetry,...)*

- ❖ **Theoretical**

- ❖ *Concerned with truth (mathematics, natural science, theology)*

- ❖ **Practical**

- ❖ *How we are to behave among ourselves (political sciences, ethics)*

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# Ethics is the science of Eudaimonia

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**“Arete”**: virtue, excellence

❖ Human virtue == Human excellence

**“Eudaimonia”**: happiness, human flourishing



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# The Goal of Human Conduct

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- ❖ All distinctively human actions (rational, conscious, and voluntary) aim at some goods
- ❖ Some goods are ends, and others are means to an end
- ❖ The highest good is that which we desire for its own sake, and never for the sake of another

**Highest good == Eudaimonia**

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# Soul: distinctly human

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*“The function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle”*

*“Reason plays two different roles in our lives, one **practical** and the other **theoretical**. **Practical reason guides our appetites and emotions with correct principles of action,** while **theoretical reason works on its own, seeking truth.** “*

*“Human virtue is to attain excellence in both the practical and the theoretical areas of reason’s influence.”*



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# The successful life is the virtuous life

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Virtue	Excellence in:	Acquired:	Aiming at:	Requiring:	Examples
Moral (character)	practical sphere	habit	intelligent conduct	<i>phronesis</i>	liberality, temperance
Intellectual	theoretical sphere	learning	discovering truth	experience and time	<i>sophia,</i> <i>phronesis</i>

*Wisdom,  
Prudence*





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# How do we reach virtue?

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**Intellectual virtue** in the main owes both its birth and its growth to **teaching** (for which reason it requires experience and time), while **moral virtue** comes about as a result of **habit**, whence also its name (*ethike*) is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word *ethos* (habit). 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.

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# How do we reach virtue?

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Aristotle notes that a person of virtue must also **perform the action in the right way**: she must *know* that it is the virtuous thing to do (it can't be only coincidentally virtuous), she must choose the action for its own sake (and not as a means to some other end, such as glory, honor, pleasure, or wealth), and she must choose and act “from a firm and unchangeable character” (i.e., her virtuous actions must become habitual)



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# The moral virtue is a mean

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**A virtue theory of courage**

Concerned with	Mean	Excess	Deficiency
fear ( <i>phobos</i> )	Courage ( <i>andreia</i> ): mean in fear and confidence	First Type: Foolhardy or excessive fearlessness; overindulges in fearful activities	Cowardly ( <i>deilos</i> ): excessive fear; deficient in confidence
confidence ( <i>thrasos</i> )		Second Type: Rash ( <i>thrasus</i> ): excessive confidence	





# The moral virtue is a mean

## A virtue theory of ambitiousness

Concerned with	Mean	Excess	Deficiency
lesser honor ( <i>timē</i> ) and dishonor	laudable/proper ambition, industriousness	(Over-)ambitiousness ( <i>philotimos</i> )	lack of ambition ( <i>aphilotimos</i> )

## A virtue theory of generosity

Concerned with	Mean	Excess	Deficiency
giving and getting (smaller amounts of) money	liberality, <sup>[50]</sup> generosity, <sup>[51]</sup> charity ( <i>eleutheriotēs</i> )	prodigality, <sup>[50]</sup> wastefulness, <sup>[51]</sup> ( <i>asōtia</i> )	meanness, <sup>[50]</sup> stinginess, <sup>[51]</sup> ( <i>aneleutheria</i> )

## A virtue theory of friendliness

Concerned with	Mean	Excess	Deficiency
general pleasantness in society	<b>friendliness, amiability</b> (something like <i>philia</i> )	<b>First type:</b> obsequious ( <i>areskos</i> ), if for no purpose	quarrelsome ( <i>duseris</i> ) and surly ( <i>duskolos</i> ), churlish, peevish
		<b>Second type:</b> flattering, fawning ( <i>kolax</i> ), if for own advantage	

WHAT I LACK IN AMBITION  
I MAKE UP FOR IN  
ABSOLUTELY NOTHING.

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