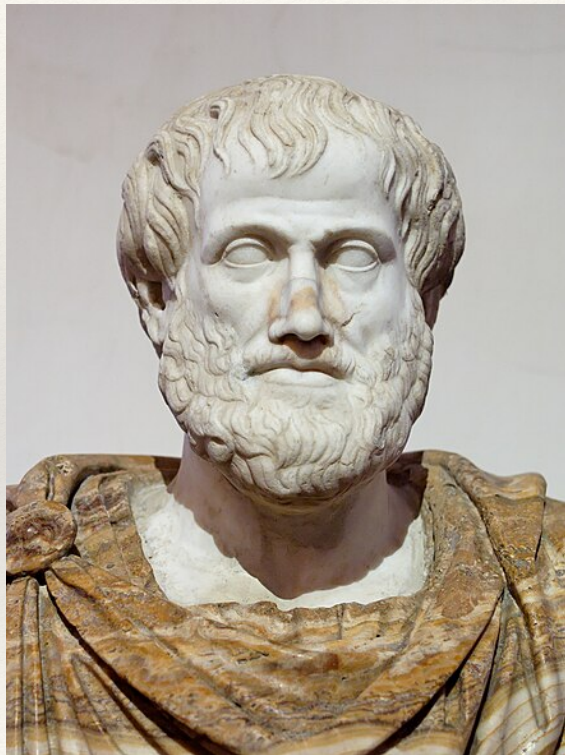

Virtue ethics according to Aristotle

Aristotle



384-322 BC

Philosopher and Polymath

Science (Aristotle)

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

Science (Aristotle)

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)*

Ethics is the science of Eudaimonia

“Arete”: virtue, excellence

❖ Human virtue == Human excellence

“Eudaimonia”: happiness, human flourishing

The Goal of Human Conduct

- ❖ 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

Soul: distinctly human

“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.”

The successful life is the virtuous life

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*

How do we reach virtue?

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.

How do we reach virtue?

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)

The moral virtue is a mean

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, ^[50] generosity, ^[51] charity (<i>eleutheriotēs</i>)	prodigality, ^[50] wastefulness, ^[51] (<i>asōtia</i>)	meanness, ^[50] stinginess, ^[51] (<i>aneleutheria</i>)

A virtue theory of friendliness

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

