

*"We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit."
- Aristotle*

VIRTUE ETHICS

DR. KABITA DAS
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTION

- ✓ **Aristotle was born in 384 at Stagirus.**
 - ✓ **He was a great critique of his teacher Plato. Basically his theory of idea.**
 - ✓ **Aristotle's interest covers a vast range of areas includes Biology to ethics and politics.**
 - ✓ **Aristotle is known as an encyclopedic genius.**
 - ✓ **Certainly, father of logic and biology.**
 - ✓ **Aristotle was the most synthetic thinker of his time.**
 - ✓ **Aristotle was the first philosopher who realized the importance of character of a human being.**
-
- ❑ Aristotle emphasized on Virtue based theory and telos to maintain a *eudaimonic* life. The Neo-Aristotelian coined the termed virtue ethics.
 - ❑ It helps and guides people to live the life of good.
 - ❑ It focuses on behavior rather than rules or the consequences.
 - ❑ Virtue should be for the right person, for the right object, in a right amount, at the right time, for a right end in a right or appropriate way.

The Goal of Human Existence

- *Eudaimonia*
- Flourishing, Happiness
- A Lifelong Pursuit, accomplished
 - Rationally, through theoretical wisdom and contemplation
 - Functionally, through practical wisdom and politics
- * Aimed at the “perfect happiness” which is the perfect activity
- * An excellence in any activity in accordance with the nature of that activity
- * Thus, “*Human happiness is the activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue (excellence)*”. (I.8; Pojman, 394).

The Virtues

* Intellectual Virtues

- * Wisdom, Understanding, Prudence

- * SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE, INTUITIVE REASON, PRACTICAL WISDOM, PHILOSOPHIC WISDOM.

- * Taught through instruction

* Moral Virtues

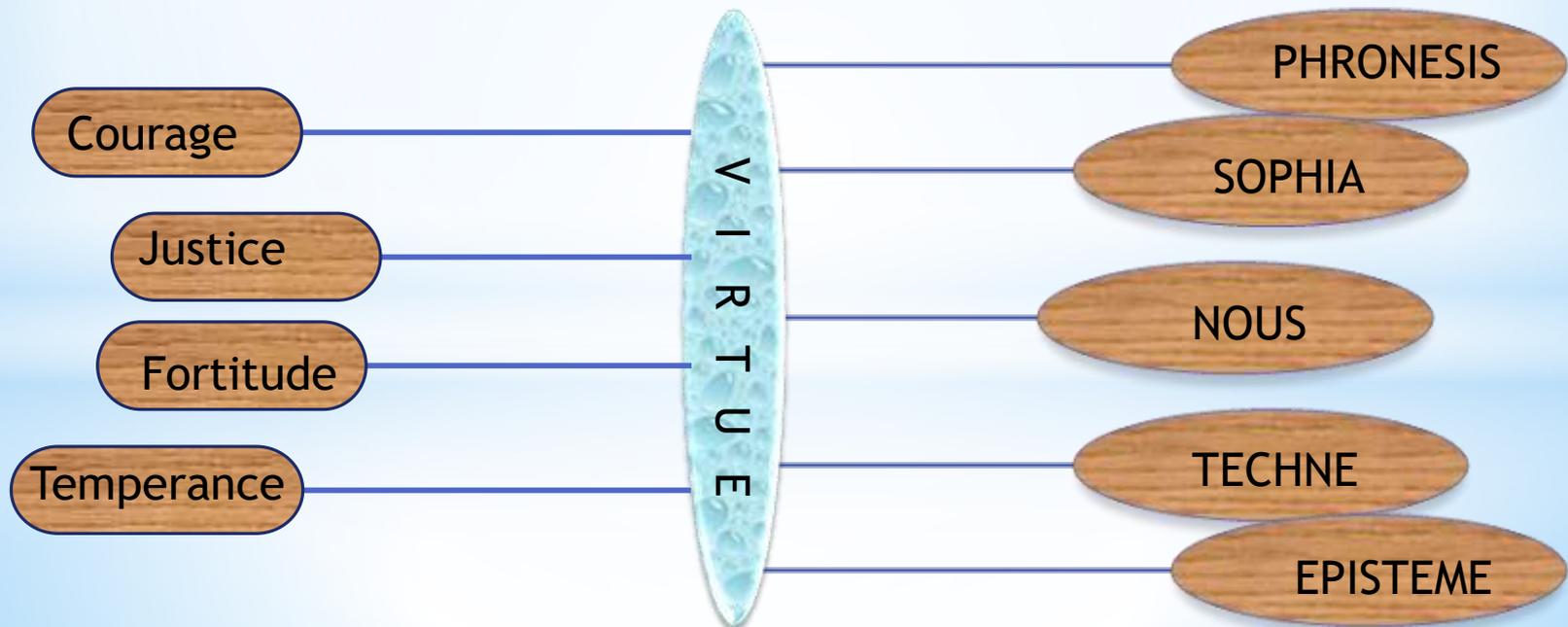
- * Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance

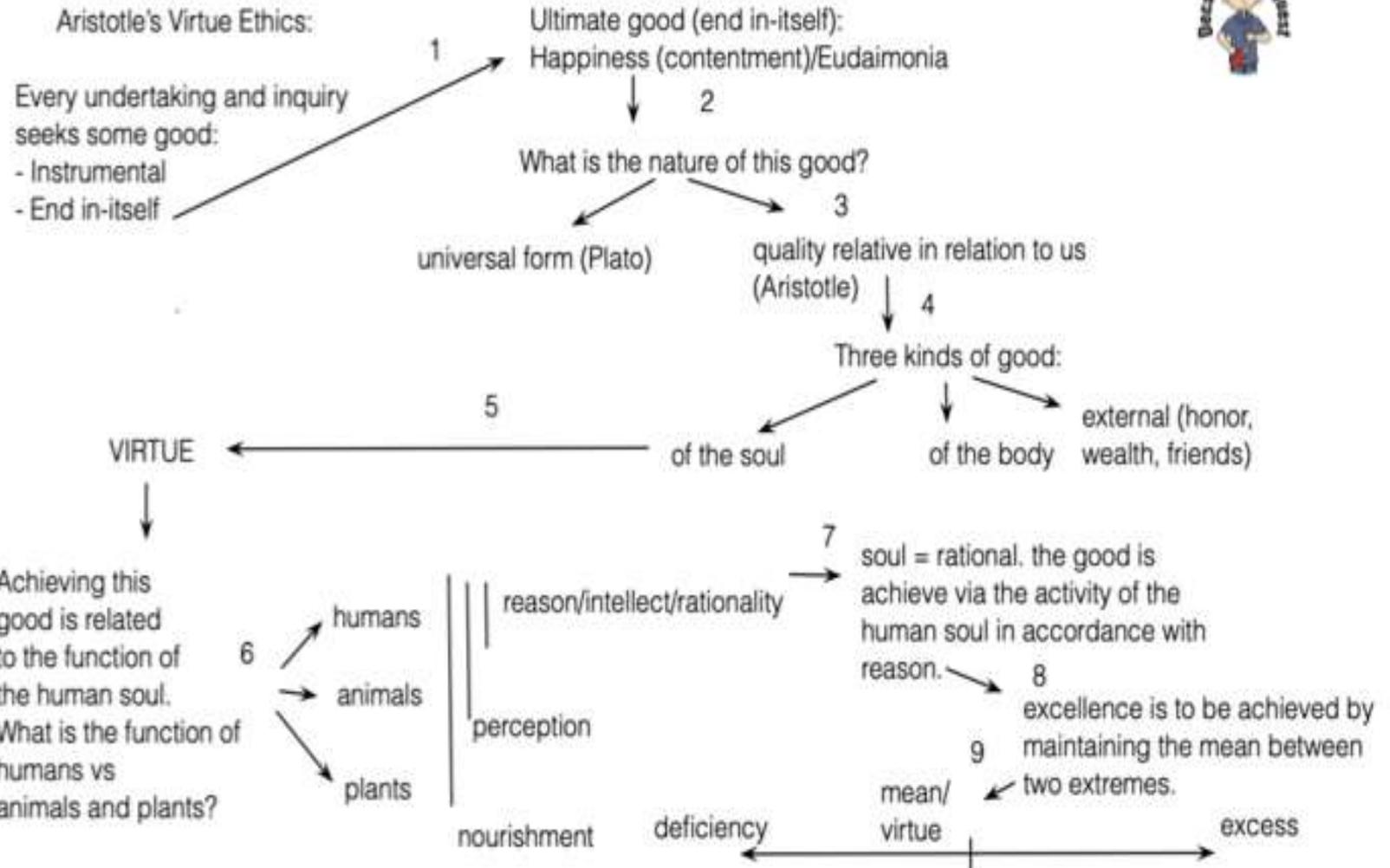
- * The result of habit

- * Not natural or inborn but acquired through practice

- * Habit or disposition of the soul (our fundamental character) which involves both feeling and action

- * It is the character that strengthen human being to flourish.

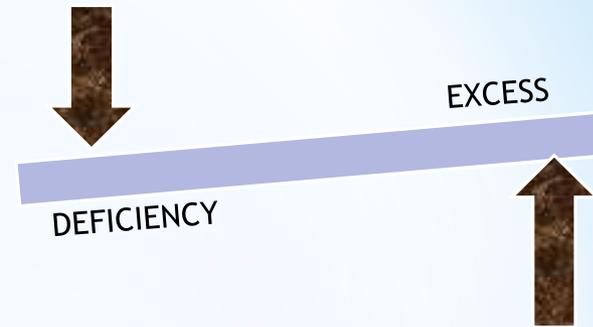




Source: <https://decafquest.com/2021/02/09/aristotle-virtue-ethics/>

The Doctrine of the Mean

- * Proper position between two extremes
 - * Vice of excess
 - * Vice of deficiency
 - * Ex- courage
- * Not an arithmetic median
 - * Relative to us and not the thing
 - * Not the same for all of us, or
 - * Any of us, at various occasions
 - * *“In this way, then, every knowledgeable person avoids excess and deficiency, but looks for the mean and chooses it”*
- * Defined through Reason
 - * Education, contemplation, reflection
- * Balanced with Other Virtues and applied using *phronesis*:
 - * To have any single strength of character in full measure, a person must have the other ones as well.*
 - * Courage without good judgement is blind
 - * Courage without perseverance is short-lived
 - * Courage without a clear sense of your own abilities is foolhardy
- * *“The virtuous person has practical wisdom, the ability to know when and how best to apply these various moral perspectives.”* (*Hinman)



virtues in different context

- * People are very different.
- * But we face the same basic problems and have the same basic needs.
- * Everyone needs **courage** as danger can always arise.
- * Some people are less well off, so we will need **generosity**.
- * Everyone needs friends so we need **loyalty**.

Strengths of Virtue Ethics

- ❖ Importance of the Person, Motive, Heart, Conscience
Connection to Community
- ❖ Realization that morality is not defined by moments but by a long-term process
- ❖ Allowance for Gray areas, varying contexts, different levels of moral maturity and life contexts
- ❖ G.E.M. Anscombe revived Aristotelian virtues and named them as virtue ethics.
- ❖ Michel Sandel, Charles Taylor, Philippa Foot, MacIntyre, Amrtya Sen are the communitarian followers of Aristotle's Ethics.

References:

- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics: Book I*. Trans Crisp R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, Chapter 7.**
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics: Book II*. Trans Crisp R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, Chapter 5.**
- Foot P in Crisp R and Slote M, eds. *Virtue Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997: Chapter 8.**
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics: Book II*. Trans Crisp R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, Chapter 6.**
- Anscombe GEM (1958) Modern moral philosophy. *Philosophy* 33: 1–19.**
- Antes AL, Murphy ST, Waples EP et al. (2009) A meta-analysis of ethics instruction effectiveness in the sciences. *Ethics and Behavior* 19: 379–402.**