

# Aristotelian Ethics and Moral Development: A Critical Evaluation

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a critical evaluation of Aristotelian ethics and moral development, ex-post-facto research design which involves events that have already taken place was utilized, the study analyzes the relevancy of Aristotle's ethics and the important roles it plays in moral development. The study highlighted that the task of ethics is however much more than the analysis and the clarification of moral terms. The study revealed that the opening of sentences of the ethics indicated very clearly the main theme of Aristotle's moral philosophy. Like his metaphysics and his concerned in relating concepts like natural function and purpose to the notion of the good life every art and every enquiry and similarly every action and pursuit is through aim at some good; and for this reason, the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. His argument rests on the development this them. Some critics of Aristotle are the anti-rationalist who held the view that, we can be virtuous if and if only our feeling and impulses have been trained to take pleasure in the right action, and we are move primarily by these sorts of feelings. Our feelings are in harmony with reason in so far as they do not pursue inconsistent aim, or aims that cannot be achieved by any means at our disposal. Again, the study revealed that Aristotle uses the term human good a lot. He established that people perform some action, to always aim at some good. For Aristotle, tire good life for human beings is a virtuous life lived in accord with reason. So, it turns out that the life of virtue is one that is responsive to dispositions and habits that are infused with reason itself, in this way, Aristotle thinks that virtuous living embodies and aligns with the functions of what it means to be human leading to human excellence. The study concludes that Aristotle's ethics provides a powerful contrast to the traditional moral theory that gave rise to the ethics of duty and provide important insight into what is at issue in living well. His understanding of "ethics" has more to do with what makes life worth living with obedience to tire moral law,

**Keywords:** Aristotelian Ethics, Moral Development

## INTRODUCTION

All human activities according to Aristotle are directed towards tire attainment of certain ends, every human action is a means to an end which is seen as good. But some ends are sought only as means to further end and not as ends themselves. There is however, one end which is not a means to another end and which is sought for its own sake. All other end is sought because they lead to this ultimate end which does not itself lead to any other end. This according to Aristotle is happiness. Happiness is the end which is sought for its own sake and whatever a person seeks as an end or as a good; he sees it as a mean to happiness. This is the goal towards which all human activities are directed. All men seek happiness, but there is only one way to attain it, and that is through morality. For Aristotle, tire purpose and standard at morality is happiness.

### Definition of Ethical Concept

The ethical concepts are norm, an agent, action, choice and value which we shall discuss, one after the other.

**Norm-** a norm is a rule of measurement, an authoritative standard; moral norm compares human actions to see if they are good or bad

**An agent-** an agent in ethics is somebody who acts or contemplates. An action in moral circumstances. To be a moral agent means that moral qualities can be ascribed to the agent. A moral agent must be free and

responsible imbued with certain maturity, rationality and sensitivity. This often applies to adults.

**Action** — in ethics, an action means a bit of behavior or conduct, the origination of attempted origination of change by an agent. It is the execution of some agents' choice or decision. This means that not acting may be an act once, it is an origination or attempted origination of the change. An act is always distinguished from its intentions motives and consequences. Though it is not always held that its moral qualities are independent of these. Rather, it is frequently held that the rightness of an act or its moral goodness or both depend, at least in part, on the character or value of its motive, intention, maxim or consequences.

**Choice** — choice in ethics refers to an agent's act of volition in deciding between two or more alternatives, choice is a well-considered act and is deliberate while preference may be spontaneous it is one's choice which determines and expresses his moral character. To decide not to choose amounts to choice in itself.

**Value** - Something that is desirable either for its own sake or the sake of other ends which it will aid in realizing.

**Extrinsic or instrumental values** — these are values employed in the achievement of other values e.g. beauty and courage.

**Intrinsic Value** — are things that are chiefly desired for their own sake; e.g. happiness, when it is regarded as the ultimate summum bonum.

### Definition of Ethics

The term ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos* meaning customary. This is equivalent to moral. It means a customary way of acting.

According to Ozumba,

*Ethics is that branch of Philosophy known as moral philosophy or Philosophical thinking about morality. It includes moral problems and moral judgment*

*Ethics therefore deals with judgment as to the rightness or wrongness virtuous or vicious, desirability or undesirability, approval or disapproval of our action* (Ozumba, 2001:4).

Ethics does not mean moralising but it embraces moralising. It equips us with the tool of thoroughness in our ethical judgements. It is concerned with morality and values. Ethics can also be defined as the systematic study of fundamental principles of the moral law, or as a normative science of human conduct.

According to Omoregbe, quoting Schweitzer states:

*Albert Schweitzer defined ethics not to be science while William Lillian says that ethics is a science. Before we can decide whether or not ethics is a science we must first of all be clear about what we mean by the word 'Science'* (Omoregbe, 1979:4).

The word can be used in a wide sense or in a narrow sense. In the wide sense, science is the systematic study of anything, according to certain intrinsic principles. Ethics is a rule of behavior based on ideas about what is morally good and bad. Ethics is an area of study that deals with ideas.

### The Origin of Ethics

When did ethics begin and how did it originate? If one has in mind ethics proper, the systematic study of what is morally right and wrong, it is clear that ethics could have come into existence only when human beings started to reflect on the best way to live. This reflective stage emerged long after human societies have developed some kind of morality usually in the form of customary standards of right and wrong conduct.

However, the process of refection tended to arise from such customs even if in the end it may have found them wanting. Accordingly, ethics began with the introduction of the first moral code. Virtually, every human society has some form of myth to explain the origin of morality.

There is no authoritative proclamation of the origin of morality right from creation according to biblical accounts, man was given a code of conduct which comprised of a series of do's and don't which were believed would guide him to attain eternal bliss. However, with the fall of man from grace, he also lost his grip on peace and happiness. This account suggests that morality is as old as creation. According to Ozumba,

*Ethics is used in three different but related senses; the first senses of ethics signifies a general pattern or way of life. This is akin to the Christian and Buddhist ethics. In another sense, ethics is used to signify a set of rule of conduct or moral code. Here ethics is of relevance to other fields as in professional and. applied ethics. Thirdly, ethics is seen as an inquiry into the measuring of ethical terms and its relation to way of life and rule of conduct. In this sense we are in the realm of meta ethics which is a branch of moral philosophy, (Ozumba, 2001:5).*

However, since the origin of philosophy its written and systematic term, is attributed to the Greeks. Ethical philosophy has willy milly traced its origin to Greece where it is said to have started in the fifth century B.C. Ethics is said to have been given its philosophical texture by Socrates who jostled men of his era into a living consciousness of their duty to live a life guided by the rational criticism of their belief and practices.

### The Purpose of Ethics

The task of ethics, according to the analytic school of philosophy is simply the analysis and clarification of moral terms. The purpose of the study of ethics therefore, according to this school, is simply to know exactly what we mean when we use moral terms, such as "good", "bad" "ought" "obligation" "duty" etc R.M Hare tells us explicitly in his book on ethics that ethics as he conceives it, is the logical study of moral language, not only ethics but the whole of philosophy is reduced by this school to no more than the analysis of word According to Omoregbe,

*The task of ethics is however much more than the analysis and the clarification of moral terms. We do not study ethics only with the aim of finding out what precisely we mean when we use moral terms. The clarification of terms is of course useful but to say that it is the whole purpose of ethics or philosophy is to mistakenly take the means for the end, (Omoregbe, 1979:8).*

The analysis and the clarification of moral terms is a means to the end of ethics.

Ethics is a systematic study of the norms of human behavior and the purpose of studying these norms is to ensure that human behavior conforms to them.

When we study ethics, we are studying -the principles of morality and the purpose of studying these principles is not just to know them but to conform our conduct to them. That is why ethics is defined as the normative science of human conduct since its purpose is to guide human conduct along the lines of the moral law.

It is of course not necessary to study ethics in order to be able to live a good life. There are people who have never studied ethics but who live lives of high moral standard. Nevertheless, the study of ethics is intended to help and does help to elevate one's moral standard. Omeregbe maintains that

*a training in ethic should enable us to see the detects in our own and other people's conduct and to understand, their exact nature so that if the desire is there we are better able to set things right in our own conduct and to make profitable suggestions to others. (Omoregbe, 1979:10).*

### Human Nature

Does the idea of "Nature" provide any kind of ethical touch stone to guide and to limit human impacts on biochemical basis of life, and does the ideas of human nature similarly provide any kind of moral structure to

govern our use of biotechnological means to alter human being? Many would say no to both questions too quickly, just as many other would too quickly say yes, we believe that we must take a more complex and nuanced position on these fundamental question. To argue against something such as human application of biotechnology for enhancement traits because it will change human nature or is unnatural implies that we know what human nature is. When surely human nature is amorphous and slippery at best. difficulty of pinning down human nature is one reason that attitudes about nature cannot be plausible unless they are limited and complicated.

However, we may not need to know much about human nature to have moral concerns about changing it, by means of biotechnology. Neither our conception of nature nor our conception of humanity need to be or can plausibly be essentialist and static. To attach moral significance to the condition of our humanity and to be wary of the technological manipulation of it, we do not necessarily need to specify exactly what it means to be human. We do not need to have a full theory of human nature in order to have moral concerns about changing it.

According to one influential philosophical transition, to understand human nature is to grasp the essence of what it is to be human. As typically understood, an essence is the fundamental being or reality that a particular thing embodies. An essence explains the traits that a thing has, it is not reducible to those traits, however, it is unchanging and timeless. According to panza and Adam,

*as you may expect, if some philosopher thinks human nature is good some think its innately bad, if human nature is bad you have a built in disposition or orientation way from the concern of ethics resulting in an innately egoistic selfish nature, ( Panza and Adam, 2010:49).*

### **Morality of Human action**

From the moral point of view, a human action is a means to an end. To perform an action is to use the action as a means to an end that is, as an instrument employed for the attainment of a certain objective.

If the end aimed at is evil, the action as a whole is evil even if the means employed is good, for a good means cannot justify an evil end. The evil end vitiates the whole action and renders it evil. According to Omeregbe,

*If on the other hand, the end is good but the means employed to bring it about is evil, the action as a whole is also evil for a good end. cannot justify an evil means (Omeregbe, 1979:71).*

The intention of an action is the anticipated result of an action as willed and foreseen by the agent. There is a distinction between direct intention and indirect intention. The direct intention of an action is the desired and anticipated result of the action. The indirect intention is the byproduct of the action undesired in itself, foreseen but permitted to happen as in separable from the desires goal. For example, during a war, a commander may order the bombing of a military base of the enemy.

The commander foresees that some innocent civilians will surely be affected by the bombing and will lose their lives. This in itself is undesired and foreseen as a necessary byproduct of the action of bombing and destroying the military base of the enemy, but it is allowed to happen since it is inseparably connected with die desired goal.

Furthermore, in this case, the killing of some innocent civilians along with the soldiers in the military base of the enemy is lire indirect intention of the action.

There is also a distinction between immediate intention and remote intention. The immediate intention is the first objective. Omeregbe maintains that,

*the immediate intention of a university student is to obtain a degree while his remote intention could be to teach after obtaining the degree the most important aspect of an action is the intention (Omeregbe, 1979:72).*

This is true, but an intention itself is formed within a wider content which acts as a driving force of the action

and which enables one to understand both the action and the intention better, this is the motive of an action.

## Moral Development

### Moral Principles

Moral principles are guides of human conduct indicating certain kinds of action and certain kinds of behaviour which should be avoided and certain kinds of actions and behaviour which should be adopted. Their function therefore is to guide human conduct. But they also fulfil another function closely related to that of guiding conduct, namely, that of protecting value. According to Omoregbe, in his view about moral principles,

*moral principles protect and foster certain values, namely, the fundamental human values such as human life the highest value on earth, the value of justice, the value of honesty, fidelity, human freedom, and all the fundamental human right. The function of moral principles is to protect and foster these values, to prevent their destruction and to encourage their growth and development (Omoregbe, 1979:68).*

However, for example, the moral principle which prohibits the killing of human being is meant to protect the value of human life. The principles which prohibits adultery, is meant to protect the value at conjugal fidelity. Principle which prohibits stealing is meant to protect the right of every man to the ownership of his property.

Kant notices the importance of principles in ethics as opposed to mere rules, and he turned that insight into one of the world's great ethical systems. Kant thought that one single, supreme underlying principle which he called the categorical imperative; this gave rise to all other ethically important principles. He thought this underlying principle was accessible to everyone by the use of something called practical reason, and he thought that the binding force of this principle has little to do with either the consequences of one action or divine commandment. According to Panza & Adams,

*the principles that you live by should be those forged by your very own practical reason. So the defining struggle in an ethical life is the battle between two forces that motivate human action (Panza & Adams, 2010:146).*

Aristotle uses the term human good a lot. Whenever people perform some action they always aim at some good. For Aristotle, the good life for human beings is a virtuous life lived in accord with reason. So it turns out that the life of virtue is one that is responsive to dispositions and habits that are infused with reason itself. In this way, Aristotle thinks that virtuous living embodies and aligns with the functions of what it means to be human leading to human excellence.

## Ethics and Development

The most important aspect of the development of any country is indisputably the development of human personality. It is, in other words, the moral development of citizens that constitute the country. To be sure, there are other aspects of development, for a country is a living organism with many parts each of which needs to be developed. As long as any of its parts remain undeveloped, the whole organism suffers. For, each part has its own distinctive contribution towards the growth and well-being of the whole organism.

Furthermore, it goes without saying, however, that although each part of an organism is important, they are nevertheless not all of equal importance. Some parts are of primary importance while others are of secondary importance. Those of secondary importance are subordinate to, and directed towards those of primary importance through which they make their contribution to the whole organism. Consequently, the value of the secondary part is instrumental.

However, in the organism of a country, the primary organism corresponds to the human dimension while the secondary dimension aspects correspond to the intrahuman dimension there are, the land, road, natural resources. All these are important and need to be developed. According to Omeregebe,

*the development of a country is primarily the development of the human dimension, that is, the development of*



human person. The most important aspect in the development of the human person is his moral development. Moral maturity is a mark of human development, and it is the most important aspect at national development (Omeregbe, 1979:147).

Indeed, we cannot talk of the development at of a country if its citizens are morally undeveloped and immature. The moral development of its citizens must precede other aspects of development; otherwise the process of development would be obstructed by immorality of the citizens.

The morality of its citizen is the greatest and most formidable obstacle to the development of any country. How can there be development in a country where egoism prevails? How can there be development in a country where public funds intended for development projects are diverted into private and selfish ends?

How can the economy of such a country lead to development? The economy of a country cannot develop if the citizens lack a sense of duty, a sense of moral responsibility and social accountability. In Omeregbe's view;

*a society in which everybody is only concerned above his own self-interest, with no sense of morality. Hobbes calls this society "the state of nature" and goes on to tell us that there was no development, no progress in that society. There could not have been development, of course, since there was no morality. The point Hobbes wishes to drive home with his theory of state of nature is that morality is indispensable for social progress or development (Omeregbe, 1979:148).*

### Stages of Moral Development

Kohlberg outline six stages of moral development:

- (i) The first stage is the stage of punishment. At this stage actions are avoided simply for the fear of punishment and because one feels they are wrong. Morality at this stage is a morality based on fear and punishment.
- (ii) The second stage is the stage of reward or the prompts of making some profit that prompts one into doing a good action. Morality at this stage is a morality of reward and profit.
- (iii) The third stage is the stage of conformity of social expectation. The dominant motive of action at this stage is the desire to please others, to conform to their expectations and to be accepted by them.
- (iv) The fourth stage is the stage of respect for authority and the desire to avoid letting authority down and thereby incurring sanctions. The dominant move of action in this stage is the desire to avoid disappointing authority.
- (v) The fifth stage is the stage of "right" and law. This is the stage at which morality is based on contract, individual right and democratically accepted the law.
- (vi) The sixth and the highest stage of moral development is the stage of conscience. This is the stage at which morality is based on the individual principles of conscience. At this stage one is guided by one's conscience formed according to the fundamental moral principle.

Despite the foregoing consideration, punishment or rewards, profit, society custom, the expectation of authorities, rights or even law, may at time be set aside if any of them conflict with the judgment of one's conscience. Even the threat of death itself can be set aside and ignore in order to obey the dictate of one's conscience. This is the stage at which one is prepare to die rather than do what one's conscience tells one is morally wrong.

### Mora! Standard

For Aristotle, the purpose and standard of morality is happiness. He goes further to say that anyone who wants to be happy in life must live a moral life. Across history virtue ethicists have argued about the proper

relationship between virtue and happiness. Some think virtue is necessary for happiness, while others think it is sufficient for it. The difference, according to Panzer & Adam, can be shown thus:

*If X require Y to exist, then Y is necessary for X, if X is sufficient for being Y, then X is automatically a Y.*

*So think in terms of virtue and happiness. Consider the first possibility, virtue is necessary but not sufficient for happiness (Panza & Adams, 2010:104).*

However, in this case, virtuous people could be miserable. Perhaps they lack friends, are poor and hunger, or are being tortured by a terrible disease that cause then great agony. If these things, which are external to virtue, can prevent happiness, then the key to being happy is being virtuous and having the right external goods (like food, friend, lack of pain, and so on). Some scholars, like

Aristotle, seem to hold to this view, thinking that at least some external goods are' required in addition to virtue for happiness.

Others disagree, thinking that virtue is sufficient. Famously, the stoics believe this thinking that it did not matter what condition a person live in, tire person could be poor, hungry, in pain or lonely, it just did not matter. As long as the person was virtuous, he or she would truly be happy even if they were screaming in agony on the rack, apparently.

## Moral Judgement

On kind of moral judgment is directly addressed to decision making problems. The nature of this sort of judgment can be seen most clearly in situation were one has yet to choose a course of action and one raise tire question what, if anything, morally requires in just that situation. Again someone may come for moral advice about a choice to be made. One prescription or advice would be an example of this sort moral judgment.

Furthermore, such judgment typically employ not only the term 'right' but other terms such as "obligation," "ought," "duty is to be done," and "should," According to Snare,

*some moral judgment assess persons overall, or assess certain aspects of their character (their virtues, disposition, habits traits), or them may assess them more particularly on a particular occasion (Snare, 1992:32).*

Judgment of moral goodness of persons and performances are not to be confused with judgment of the rightness or wrongness of the course of action chosen. A morally right act (i.e. we would prescribe to any one in exactly such a situation) can be performed by a bad person and even be a bad act (i.e. if done only because the agent thought he could the most for himself.

Likewise a wrong act can be done by a good person and not by a bad act (e.g. if done unwittingly, unintentionally, or by mistake). A person is not always responsible for his wrong or even his right act Some moral philosophers (e.g.

Immanuel Kant, or the stoics) have supposed that judgments of moral goodness of persons (e.g. judgment about 'virtue' and the morally good will) are of central importance in morality. Snare maintains that,

*some contemporary philosophers go even further, they do not just emphasize virtue, they typically hold that the place to begin moral philosophy is with virtue judgments. By contrast many classic ethical theories begin with rightness, and develop a theory of virtue centred, on the basis of the theory of rightness (Snare, 1992:33).*

However, this raises an important issue of priority. Some philosophers have thought it plausible that judgments of moral rightness are logically prior to judgment of moral goodness of agent. They have thought, for example, that the definition or analysis of moral goodness of an agent would involve perhaps among other conditions, a disposition to perform an act because it is morally right. On this view, the notion of moral rightness of an act is logically prior to that of moral goodness of agent.

## The Nature Of Aristotelian Ethics

### Aristotle's View of Ethics

In this chapter, we shall conduct a quick tour of central work by Aristotle Nicomachean ethics. This book is not primarily about morality as we understand it today. What Aristotle means by “ethics” may be discerned if we consider the ancient Greek root of the term: *ethos*. This term refers to the customs of a society, including the characteristic outlook on life that is held by most member of that society. To speak about ethics in this sense is to speak about the customary behavior of a people; the standards of human excellence they hold themselves bound to, and the attitudes through which they express their character as a people. Hooft maintains that,

*Aristotle is offering us a theory about human beings and what it is for them to flourish: a theory that will ground sound advice on how to live life well. He does not take himself to be laying down the moral law for his fellow citizens of ancient Athens* (Hooft, 2006:49).

Aristotle takes it for granted that everyone understands what actions are wrong and that no one would be tempted to think that murdering someone for example, could be any part of an answer to the question of how we should live our lives. What we should think of today as moral prohibitions of this kind were not up for discussion because attitude towards them were not optional and were not a matter for individuals judgment. For Aristotle the issue was “how should we live well”? Rather than what is the moral right thing to do.

### Ethical Principles of Aristotle

Aristotle is concerned with the sort of people we must be, if we are to live a good life. If we can become like this through proper moral education and practice in making right decisions, then we shall live the good life. But what is this good life? According to Benn,

*Every act and every inquiry and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that which all things aim* (Benn,1998:61).

To know the nature of this good is the aim of all ethical enquiries. Since it is the chief good, it is nonsensical to go on asking why it should be pursue.

Furthermore, to know what the good consists of, one must have received the right kind of moral education and formed a character in the right way, Aristotle sees the chief good for man as the *eudemonia* which means happiness. It is something final and self-sufficient and is the end of action; it is desire for itself alone and cannot be made better by any other good. This *eudemonia* is not exactly a psychological state such as a feeling of euphoria, but is really a condition of well-being or faring well.

### The Discourse of Happiness

Aristotle explains that the good for human being consists in *eudemonia* (a Greek word combining *eu* meaning “good” with *daimon* meaning “spirit” and, most often translated as “happiness”). For Aristotle, happiness is the end which is sought for its own sake, and whatever a person seeks as an end or as a good. He seeks towards which all human activities are directed all men seek happiness. But there is only one way to attain it and that is through morality. The purpose of morality and the standard of morality is happiness. If one wants to be happy one must live a moral life Ornoregbe postulated that,

*Those action that lead to happiness are good actions and those that lead to unhappiness are bad action. This view which makes happiness the standard of morality is known as eudemonism* ("Ornoregbe, 1979:164).

Furthermore, what precisely is happiness? Aristotle defines it as “activities of the soul in accordance with virtue.

Happiness is an activity of the soul, and is inseparable from virtue, namely intellectual virtues and moral



virtues, what Aristotle considered as intellectual virtues would today not be considered as virtues at all. Scientific knowledge, art practical wisdom, intuitive reason, theoretical wisdom, sound deliberation understanding and judgment were considered by Aristotle as intellectual virtue.

### Aristotle Account on Justice

Aristotle described justice as lawful and what is equal and fair, just is perfect virtues because it practices perfect virtue but it is perfect in a special way, because the man who possess justice is capable of practicing it towards a second party and not merely in his own case. Justice is the only virtue which is regarded as benefiting someone else than its possessor. For it does what is to the advantage of another, whether he is in authority or just a partner.

He distinguished between two kinds of justice, namely, universal justice and particular justice. Universal justice is practically synonymous with virtue. Remedial justice deals with fairness in human transaction. For private transactions or agreement, being divisible into voluntarily and involuntary, require an appropriate form of justice to deal with each division. According to Thomson, by voluntary transactions;

*Are meant such operation as buying, selling, loaning money out. As for 'involuntary' transactions, it may be divided into (a) secret, e.g. theft, adultery, poisoning, procuring alienating of slaves, killing by stealth, perjury; and (b) violent e.g. assault and battery, casting people into prison homicide robbery mutilation, insulting language, simulating treatment of other (Thomson, 1953:126).*

### Aristotle Account of Virtues

In Aristotle's classic work on virtue, in Nicomachean ethics, he identifies the virtues as simply characteristics that enable individual to live well in communities to achieve a state of well being (from the Greek eudemonia, meaning "happiness" or "human flourishing") proper social institution is necessary. Thus the moral person cannot really exist apart from a flourishing political setting that enable him or her to develop the virtues. Aristotle requires virtue for the good life. For this reason ethics is considered as a branch of politics.

According to Pojman and Fieser who maintains that

*The state is not neutral toward the good life but should actively encourage citizens to inculcate the virtues, which in turn are the best guarantee of a flourishing political order (Pojman and Fieser \*2006:148).*

The virtues indicate that kind of moral political characteristic necessary for people to attain happiness. After locating ethics as a part of politics, Aristotle explains that the moral virtues are different from the intellectual ones. The intellectual virtues may be taught directly, the moral ones must be lived to be learned. By living well, we acquire the right habits these habits are in fact the virtues.

Aristotle discusses the moral virtues first, they are not natural to man in the sense of being inborn, but like the other skill, are acquired and improved by exercise (like Plato, Aristotle draws frequent and very misleading analogies between moral habit and techniques or skills) for the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them. e.g. men become builders by building and lyre - players by playing the lyre, so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate act, brave by doing brave act.

*Thus, education and even legislation are important in providing the conditions and environment for acquiring correct moral habits. In saying that we become good by doing good act Aristotle means, as he explains that it is not sufficient evidence that a man is good merely that he does good act. He must know that the act in question is good and he must choose them for that reason. And thirdly, his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. A man who has constantly to struggle against temptation is a worse man even though he struggles successfully than a man who does good with ease and pleasure (Connor, 1964:58).*

To Aristotle we are on the road to virtue we have not yet arrived. That good character is stable disposition learned or established through practice is a sensible piece of moral psychology with which most people would agree. No one becomes a good man overnight. However, Aristotle has not yet told us what it is that

distinguishes good action from bad. There are two parts to his account of nature of virtue the first is the famous doctrine of the mean” the second is the part played by intellectual virtue informing virtue of character. Virtues (and indeed vice too) are state of character which are evinced in action. But the distinction between virtue and vice is that in virtuous action, we aim at a mindpoint between excess and defect, to take a typical case, between overindulging a particular natural tendency (hunger, sex, anger etc) and repressing it too far.

This is another nation that may be seemed curious to us today, especially if we have been exposed to those kinds of Christianity which commend asceticism. But it is again a characteristically Greek idea. *Meden agan* means “nothing too much” was a proverb attributed to one of the traditional stage of Greece. A famous medical theory attributed to a sixteen century physician, Alcmaeon of Croton, represented health in the body as due to balance of forces and disease as the triumph of one of these over the rest.

Aristotle’s final account of virtue is that it is a habit of choosing courses of action that lie midway between indulging and repressing natural tendencies. Further, this mid-point has to be chosen in relation to the person making the choice, and the choice itself must be controlled by a rational principle (logos) such as would be determined by a man of practical wisdom - that is, by the *phronimos* who possesses intellectual virtue. We have seen what Aristotle intends by calling virtue a habit and by saying that it is a mean between extremes. But we have not considered his account of choice or what he means by “the means relative to us” nor yet how the intellectual virtues are related to the moral virtues we are discussing.

### **The Nature of Knowledge**

Any survey of Aristotle’s account of knowledge must begin with some reference to the influence of Plato. Aristotle spent many years of his life as a student in the Academy, and he is known as the most distinguished of Plato’s disciples, we may therefore expect to find many signs of Plato’s influence in his writing. This influence can indeed be seen. But more important are the differences, not only of detail but method and outlook between Plato and Aristotle. Where Plato is rationalistic, dogmatic and contemptuous of the world of the senses. Aristotle is empirically cautious, and anxious to consult all relevant facts and opinions before making up his mind. This seems to, have been a temperamental difference between the two philosophers, but it is an important one. The history of human knowledge since their time has shown decisively that a priori dogmatizing gives no lasting result in the search for truth, and that cautious empiricism does in the end give genuine insight into the nature of things. That Aristotle failed to get nearer the truth than he did must be put down to the victory of Iris platonic training over his scientific spirit.

Association with this difference in intellectual attitude is a difference of approach and emphasis. Roughly speaking, Plato, tried to deduce the nature of the universe from what he thought to be the nature of human knowledge. Aristotle started with the facts of nature as he saw them, and reduced them to a system. Cavendish postulated that,

*Aristotle found a place for human knowledge as one natural phenomenon among others in his system. This contrast is oversimplified, but it brings out an important difference between them. Unfortunately, Aristotle’s view of human knowledge was not entirely consistent. He inherited, too much from Plato to enable him to view knowledge as just one more aspect of nature* (Connor, 1964:47).

However, Plato had believed that only those things that were universal, permanent and changeless, could be genuine objects of knowledge. What was particular mutable, and contingent might be the object of mere belief or guess work but it could not, properly speaking, be known. Aristotle was sufficiently influenced by Plato to agree with this view. But as we see, he interpreted it in his own way. In particular he rejects the Platonic theory of forms. At some places in his writings, indeed, he seems inclined to allow some value to the theory. But in general he rejects it decisively. His criticism are scattered through his writings and are nowhere neatly and clearly summarized. Some of his points are trivial and some are very difficult to understand.

### **Aristotle’s Moral Philosophy**

The Nicomachean Ethics is one of the great books of moral philosophy. But for the twentieth century reader,

it seems a curious mixture. There is much acute philosophical analysis and some pioneer work in the psychology of moral action. In addition, there is a good deal of description of interest only to social historians of the various virtues appreciated by the Greeks in Aristotle's day. This culminated in what must charitably be regarded as a ponderous joke. Aristotle's account of the "great-souled," man who seems by any reasonable moral standards a pompous and ridiculous prig. Fortunately, it is not difficult to sort out the valuable parts of the ethics from the less important.

*We have to recognize at once that Greek attitudes to conduct, as to so many other things were very different from our own Modern western for better or worse by Christianity. In many of his forms, Christianity has set up external standards of morality. The good man is the man who conforms not to his own desires or to his own nature but to the will of God (Connor, 1964: 55).*

This will be thought of as embodied in some revealed code of conduct like the Ten Commandments, or in the teaching of some authoritative church believed by its adherents to be divinely commissioned, but however, it is conceived, the moral law is something external to human nature which is itself pictured as Halted or corrupted by original sin. For the Greeks on the contrary, the good man was usually thought of as following or developing his own human nature.

To do wrong was somehow to fail to develop one's natural human functions.

This is not an easy notion to make sense of and we shall have to ask how far Aristotle succeeded in working out what was the most explicit version of this Greek belief.

Again the Greeks did not make a sharp distinction as we are apt to do, between the individual and his community. The modern liberal believes that the individual man or woman is the valuable unit in society and that the various communities of men are merely devices to ensure the individual development and welfare. But this is a notion that has developed slowly, fostered partly by the ideals of protestant Christianity and partly by the growth of political democracy. It was however, a strange notion to the Greeks when it does appear in the Greek literature (as in Sophocles' *Antigone*) seems a striking and prophetic idea.

*Aristotle certainly has little use for it, He accepts with what seems to us a monstrous complacency that men are basically unequal not only in gifts and capacities (as they obviously are) but also in their right and in their worth as human being. Slavery is accepted as part of the order of nature and artisans are excluded from citizenship on the ground that the life of a mechanic is incompatible with the practice of virtue. His idea of the good, life for man was limited by his very restricted and parochial notions of the ideal society^ which he identifies with the Greek City State (Connor, 1964: 56).*

Ethics is for him a branch of politics for it is the science of politics which is ultimately concerned with human good. It will be remembered that Aristotle has divided human knowledge into theoretical and practical. But practical knowledge is not moral philosophy in our modern sense that is; it is not the reflective analysis of moral concepts and the relations between them. It is rather the art of living in the good sense of that ambiguous phrase. (It cannot be too often emphasized that "knowledge" [episteme] for a Greek meant "knowing how" [episteme] for a Greek meant "knowing how" practical grasp of technique as often as it meant the abstract understanding of fact and principle) The Nicomachean ethics or moral philosophy in the contemporary sense of these phrases. This is difficult to fit into Aristotle's classification of human knowledge, but it is what gives his ethical writing their lasting value. But he believes his work to have much more than a merely theoretical interest. He wanted himself and his audience better men.

*For we are enquiring not in order to know what virtue is but in order to become good, since otherwise our enquiry would have been of no use. At the beginning of his book, he is careful to warn his readers that the subject that he is going to discuss does not yield clear-cut proofs and indubitable conclusion. He adds that it is a sign of an educated man that he looks for only that amount of certainty and exactness in the conclusions of his study that the subject matter make possible (Connor, 1964:56).*

It is not clear that Aristotle conceived to the source of this inexactness in ethics. But it seems probable that he

would have attributed it more to the extreme complexity of the facts of human behavior than to the difficulty of understanding and verifying ethical judgment. It is however, this second problem that has chiefly exercised moral philosophers in recent years, Aristotle does not go on to specify what degree of certainty or what kind of proof we should properly look for in ethics. We have to gather this from his subsequent argument. He does not; hesitate to lay down general conclusion about the nature of virtue and its relation to human nature and to happiness. And it is difficult to understand what sort of doubt, if any, Aristotle means his readers to entertain about them. Perhaps his remark should be interpreted as no more than a warning against dogmatism in our moral judgment.

The opening of sentences of the ethics indicated very clearly the main theme of Aristotle's moral philosophy. Like his metaphysics and his concerned in relating concepts like natural function and purpose to the notion of the good life every art and every enquiry and similarly every action and pursuit is through aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. His argument rests on the development of this theme. Every human activity has its own aim or object. These objects in turn are meant to yet another ends, and so on to take mundane example. A boy may study Latin in order to pass an examination because this examination may qualify him to enter a university to study law.

Furthermore, this further study may lead to his qualifying as a lawyer, his qualification may give him a position in his father's law firm, where he can earn his living. It may well be that the boy would not choose any of those things for themselves alone. He may dislike studying Latin or law. He may take no pleasure in practicing as a lawyer. But he may wish to please his father or simply to have the means of earning a large income. And the ends that he does accept for themselves afford the motive for striving for the intermediate ends that are merely necessary stages in his progress toward his final aim. But equally to revert to the first step in the process he may study Latin simply because he finds it enjoyable. Or he may find it enjoyable and recognize that it is a step toward something else that he finds desirable. But, however, long or short this chain of activities may be, there must be at the end of it something that is sought after for it alone and not as a means to anything else.

So far most people would agree, but Aristotle assumes further that there is one supreme or final good to which all human activities ultimately tend or toward which they are finally directed. Everyone agrees, he says,

*on what to call this ultimate good. In Greek its name is eudemonia, a word often translated as "wellbeing". But this verbal agreement on the final good conceals profound, disagreement as to its nature. Some men identify it with pleasure other with the honors of political life, still other with life of theories reflective contemplation. Aristotle briefly reviews argument refuting the first two of these three suggestions and defers the third, which is his own preferred, interpretation of eudemonia, for later examination (Connor, 1964: 56).*

This threefold division of human goods was almost a platitude in Greek ethics, though a modern critic would want to question both its clarity and its completeness we may naturally ask why Aristotle assumes that there is only one final good to which all other activities are directed. The answer is that eudemonia is the only thing that is (1) always desirable for itself and never for the sake of something else and (2) self sufficient. Since we have not yet been given a definition or description of eudemonia, how can we know this about it? The answer seems to be partly that Aristotle is here anticipating later discussion and partly that this is how the word is used. He often (and properly) consults common usage to determine the meaning of a phrase or the range of a concept.

*He now proceeds to give a more specific account, of human well being. We shall be better able to do this, he thinks, if we can first identify the ergon of man, that is, his work or function. Specific kind, of men – flute players, artists carpenters, and so on - have their own specific works or functions. So do all the parts or organs of man - his eyes, his hands, his feet, and the rest. It would seem odd, then if man himself qua human being did not have his own special task or function. But how are we to find out what it is? We do this by looking for what is peculiar to man as distinct from everything else in the world (Connor, 1964:57).*

Aristotle refers here to his own "evolutionary" biology discussed above. The specifically human function cannot lie merely in the life of nutrition growth, and reproduction which we share with plants nor again with



the life of senses and the power of self-movement which we share with animals. It must therefore lie in the life of rational activities peculiar to man.

Clearly this is feeble argument. It does not follow that because one has a special function in our social role of teacher or doctor or whatever it may be that one must also have a special function in our biological status as a human being. Social roles do entail function simply because they are the product in origin at least, of purposeful activities. But to try to assimilate a biological status to a special role as Aristotle does is simply to beg one of the question here at issue. Does man, in his capacity as a human being, have any function at all? Nor does it follow that because part of an organism, for example, the leave of a plant or its stamens, have specific biological jobs to do, that therefore the whole plant has a specific job to do. So there is no reason whatever to take this argument seriously. However, let us grant for the sake of the argument, that eudaimonia does in some way still to be specified, consist in an activity of reason.

Furthermore, two obvious questions arise at once first, what kind of rational activity? Second, what in any case, is the connection between eudaimonia so defined and the morally good life? The second question is particularly important. It would after all the contrary to fact or at least contrary to appearance, to claim that indulge in rational activity. Aristotle's answer to the first question is developed gradually in the course of the ethics and is made quite explicit only in the concluding section; he never asks himself the second question. But had it been put to him, it is not too difficult to see what his answer would have been.

It is clearly implicit in what he does say. The good for man eudaimonia consists in a certain kind of rational activity practiced throughout a complete life (for as Aristotle explain, we do not call a man eudemon if he is so only occasionally). And it must be an activity in accordance with virtue and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete virtue is not a sufficient condition for the good, since Aristotle admits that it is apparently a necessary condition: a man cannot be happy without being virtuous.

## Critics

### The Argument on Virtues

Some of the rejoinder of Aristotle are the anti-rationalist who held the view that, we can be virtuous if and if only our feeling and impulses have been trained to take pleasure in the right action, and we are move primarily by these sorts of feelings. Our feelings are in harmony with reason in so far as they do not pursue inconsistent aim, or aims that cannot be achieved by any means at our disposal.

Distinctively virtuous practical reason has no essential productive role in virtue of character, because we can acquire a virtue without any distinctively virtuous practical reason. The thought we need to carry out instrumental reasoning. This is not distinctive of a virtuous person similarly, according to Irwin who maintains that:

*If the successful training of feelings and impulses is sufficient for virtue, virtue does not ever partly consist in any distinctively virtuous practical reason. We need instrumental reasoning to take us from the right aims to the right action, but this instrumental reasoning is not distinctively virtuous (Irwin, 2007:159).*

Since an anti-rationalist interpretation of Aristotle has been influential, it is worth developing in some detail, to see what sort of insight it may offer into Aristotle's position.

The features of virtue of character suggest that Aristotle developed the view that we would expect, in the light of the naturalist of the function argument; for he suggests that virtue consist in the fulfillment of human function in rational activity guiding the other elements of human nature the mark of virtue, on this view, is the full realization of one's capacity guided by practical reason.

The naturalist position requires conception of virtue; if virtue fulfils the nature of human being as a rational agent, it must consist essentially (though not exclusively) in practical reason. Hence Aristotle conception of practical reason must be broad enough to show how the difference between the virtuous person and other is a difference in the development and realization of practical reason. More specifically, practical reason must be



competence to select the aims and preference of the virtuous person over those of the vicious person or the incontinent person or other non-virtuous people; virtuous. People's choice of the right ends in their lives must be explained by the excellence of their practical reason.

*The rationalist new need not make practical reason the sole and sufficient determinant of virtue, independently of all other aspects of human nature; but it implies that practical reason makes the decisive difference, in some way to explained - between virtues and. other state (Irwin, 2007: 158),*

Our discussion of a life of action (praxis) of the rational part' has already ascribed this broad conception of practical reason to Aristotle. We have argued that he takes the distinctively human function to consist not merely in the use of reason and not merely in the use of reason to select one action over another. But also in the use, reason in praxis in action chosen for its own sake. Reason would not have this use unless it were capable of justifying the choice of actions as ends in themselves.

*With this claim in mind, we expect Aristotle's account of virtue of character to identify a virtue with (perhaps among other things) the appropriate excellence of practical reason selecting ends in themselves. His account of virtue fits the nationalist claims in the function argument if and only if he explains how practical reason can fulfill this role. (Irwin, 2007: 159).*

We must, therefore consider whether Aristotle has the broad conception of practical reason that we have describe, and whether he incorporates it into his account of virtue and so we must discuss any apparent reason. The antirationalist interpretation might begin from Aristotle's claims about the importance of non-rational moral education. The proper training for the non- rational part is habituation (ethismos), which from the right habit and traits in the well-trained person; and the most prominent aspect of habituation is training in the appropriate pleasure, pains and other affective reactions.

Furthermore correct habituation is crucial for the formation of character. It is difficult for reasoning and teaching to make any impact if we have not been brought up in the right habits otherwise we will not have the right starting points for formal instruction. Simply understanding what is good or fine will not move us to do anything about it, because thought itself move nothing. If we are to aim at the right end, we must have acquired virtue of character by habituation. Aristotle may appear to confirm this view in acknowledging that reason and prudence are confined to discovering of the means to this right end.

According to this Anti-rationalist view we are virtuous if and only if our feelings and impulses have been trained to take pleasure in the right action, and we are moved primarily by these sorts of feelings.

However, our feeling are in harmony with reason in so far as they do not pursue inconsistent aims that cannot be achieved by any means at our disposal. Distinctively virtuous practical reason has no essential productive role in virtue of character.

Though we need to carry out instrumental reasoning this is not distinctively of a virtuous person. Similarly, if the successful training of feeling and impulses is sufficient for virtue, a virtue does not even partly consist in any distinctively virtuous practical reason. We need instrumental reasoning to take us from the right aims to the right action, but this instrumental reasoning is not distinctively virtuous.

## **Epicurus Argument**

Epicurus maintains that pleasure is the beginning and end of the blessed life. This means that the attainment of pleasure is at least a necessary condition of the good life. This is true, as Epicurus stresses, even of the pleasures of the stomach. But is the attainment of pleasure a sufficient condition of the good life? The limit of pleasure, Epicurus argues, is to be found in complete absence of pain, and it arises both from the satisfaction of desire and from the equilibrium subsequently attained. According to Hamlyn,

*Pleasure is a natural phenomenon, it is in man's power to attain that limit but it must be noted that pain must sometimes be endure in order for greater pleasure to result. For this reason, Epicurus argues that the wise man will be happy even on the rack (Hamlyn, 1964: 67).*

But at this point Epicurus begins to adjudicate on what sort of pleasure is to be pursued. He is not content merely to say that, the pursuit and attainment of pleasure being natural, the good life consists in its pursuit. For apart from the general invalidity of the move from statement about what is natural to statements about what one ought to do, the view that we should pursue pleasure in general because it is natural would lead to ethical views other than those which Epicurus wishes to maintain. In other words, the attainment of pleasure is not in itself a sufficient condition of the good life. Not any pleasure is to be pursued, Epicurus maintains that, pleasure may be natural and necessary, natural and not necessary, or neither natural nor necessary. The last kind of pleasure is to be eschewed and the first made the primary object of one's aims (Hamlyn 1964:67).

Epicurus has started from this premise that pleasure is a natural phenomenon, at the crucial point where the supposed ethical consequences are drawn, not all pleasure is allowed to be natural.

It is clear that this last use of word "natural" is at least partly normative, so that to say that Epicurus deduces what men ought to do from an account of human nature is not strictly true. To say that certain pleasures are natural is to say that they are at least permissible not that it is human nature to pursue them.

It follows that the good life is not any life according to any view of nature, but the life according to the view that incorporates in its conception of what is natural the end to be sought. Epicurus' conception of the good life is a life of friendship without fear of what lies beyond. Nevertheless, in putting forward his

view of morality, Epicurus was bold enough to set it against any conventional morality. One of his sayings is "*I spit upon what is noble i.e. what men call noble) and upon those vainly admire it when it does not produce any pleasure*" (Hamlyn, 1964: 67).

However, whether or not pleasure is a sufficient condition of the good life, it is certainly for him a necessary condition. In a similar way he maintained that,

*There is no such thing as absolute justice which has value apart from the conduciveness to the production of pleasure. Justice is the result of a sort of social contract to which men adhere for the sake of expediency* (Hamlyn, 1964 : 69).

The Epicurean view of morality is not of the sort that is likely to have far-reaching social effects, and it is cleared that unlike stoicism, Epicureanism had no widespread influence. It was a view meant to provide guidance and comfort for the individual or the group of individuals bound together by ties of friendship. The metaphysical view of nature, which is the essence of Epicureanism, was an austere one that possessed a certain grandeur, but not one that could provide an acceptable view of the world to ordinary man. In its approach to social affairs it was too negative.

Nevertheless, it stands as a clear cut example of a deductive metaphysical system with every explicit end. The same will be seen to be true of stoicism, to which it may be opposed. But the stoic provided a conception of man's place in nature such that it was eventually capable of acceptance as a philosophical basis for Roman humanism.

### **Argument on Happiness and Virtue**

Aristotle's account of the virtue one important point is that virtues are not just good or admirable in some abstract way; they are needs. We all need the virtues that is, we need to possess them ourselves, rather than merely profit from the possession of them by others. For Aristotle they are needed in order to be happy.

Happiness is an activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue. To lack virtue is therefore to lack happiness, which is the good.

However, what is meant, in general, by saying that one thing is a need for something else? Sometimes there is a straightforward means-end relation.

According to this critic, who maintains that,

*A man might, in this sense, need to be hard working in order to realize his ambition to be rich or famous. What he values is the end result alone, but he knows that he will not get it unless he cultivates a habit of work. In this case he does not value industriousness for itself he may prefer, other things being equal, to do as little as possible. This is only an accidental relationship between the means and the desired end (Ben, 1998; 165).*

If he could attain the aim without working he would do so. But it is not in this sense that we need the virtues in the Aristotelian scheme. Rather, there is a part of happiness. Virtue is need for happiness, but not in a simple means end way there could not even in principle be any happiness apart from virtue. The good for man happiness is to live according to a rational principle. Virtue is a disposition to choose what would accord this rational principle. Man fares well in a state of eudemonia (happiness) when he lives and chooses according to it.

### **Aristotle's Account of Choice**

Aristotle's account of choice is not by any means an attempt to solve so-call problem of free will. This was not a problem with which the Greeks were much concerned. Its prominence in later philosophical discussion has been largely a consequence of two factors Christian doctrines of divine fore-knowledge, omnipotence and grace and the modern scientific world-picture.. Aristotle is concerned simply with the condition under which we assign responsibility for action or in his own words. "Praise and blame"

*Aristotle contrasts such actions with those which we pardon or even pity on the ground that they are involuntary. If an action is involuntary, it does not qualify for assessment as moral or immoral and. it is involuntary if it is due either to compulsion or to ignorance. An action is compulsory if its source is external to the agent (Connor, 1964:58).*

This is not a very satisfactory criterion as the morally crucial cases are just those in which we find it difficult to say if the cause of the action is external to the agent or not.

However, suppose for example, a resistance worker gives away secrets under torture or a bank clerk hands over money at the point of gun. Are such actions voluntary by this view or not? Aristotle himself is uncertain about such cases and says, unhelpfully, that "it may be debated whether such action are voluntary or involuntary. However, that they are more like voluntary act. Aristotle realizes of course, that most temptation and spurs to action are external to the agent. But this of itself does not make the action involuntary. Otherwise, he says all act would be reckoned so. And as to the second cause of voluntary action, it is not any kind of ignorance leading to action that exempts us from praise or blame. For example,

*Ignorance of right and wrong does not excuse. But ignorance of the relevant circumstances in which we have to act may excuse us if the ignorance itself was unavoidable. Suppose another example, that. I start my car not knowing that a child had crawled under it in play and so cause an accident (Connor, 1964:58).*

Any action which is not for one or both of these reasons involuntary is voluntary. But not all voluntary actions involve choice (proairesis) of the kind. Aristotle has specified in his account of virtue many voluntary acts, even of rational moral creature, may be spontaneous or impulsive. These are voluntary but not chosen.

Under this heading would fall any action of which the moving principle is in the agent himself, he being aware of the particular circumstances of the action such action being like those of small children and the his/her animals. Choice involves deliberation and we do not ate about the ultimate end of otu\* action but only about the means by which, we may achieve them.

However, the object of our action may be (1)Determined by our desiring nature (orexis) or (2) decides upon after deliberation as a means to (1) once decided upon they too must be sought by further intermediate means until deliberation shows us something which both here and now in our power and a step to by ultimate goal. Connor gives an example,

*I desire x A is known to be a means to x and B is a means to A, C is a mean to B and D is a mean to C.*

*Now D is something that I can do here and now I therefore choose to do it (Connor, 1964:59).*

This account of choice is perhaps description, so far as it goes, of how a perfectly rational man would behave. But to say the last only a small minority of human being are perfectly rational men. And it takes no account of those spontaneous or impulsive action that often are the objects of moral praise or censure-unreflective generosity or meanness, bravery or cowardice and so on. Moreover, it is important that a theory of virtue should take account of the fact that many of our action are done through weakness of will we may know quite clearly tire action that our accepted moral standards prescribe.

Nevertheless, we fail to do it. Our desire for what we believe to be wrong is somehow “stronger than” our desire for what we believe to be right. And not all such acts for what we believe to be right. And not all such acts are done impulsively. It is notorious that we sometimes seem to follow the worse course even after deliberation and reflection. Can Aristotle account for this? He spent time in book VII of the ethic in trying to explain these fact consistently with the theory of conduct he has expounded. The outcome of a long tentative and undogmatic discussion is that the weak willed man (akrates) is not really fully aware of the circumstances in which he is acting.

Part of Aristotle’s solution is that when we act under the influence of passion we are like “men asleep” drunk or mad who know the moral principles and fact relevant to the situation but who are not in a position to make use of his knowledge. This is a quite unsatisfactory solution. If Aristotle is to be consistent with what he has already said, he must call such action ‘involuntary’ and not only is this at variances with common moral opinion, as he has already admitted but it endorses the views of Socrates on virtue and knowledge which he has already rejected. Perhaps Aristotle could hardly have got to grips with this problem without concerning himself with the wider issues of free will and determine are as we have said above no Greek philosopher deals seriously with this problem.

## CONCLUSION

The reason why Aristotle is so important in the history of philosophy is the degree to which he affects his successor particular, the philosopher of the Middle Ages, despite a conscious reaction against him, those of the seventeenth century. However, if we understand the Aristotelian ethic and his moral development we can accommodate some and the insights of the moral conservative. For his ultimate enemy is the radical who seek to reject principle that he cannot see an immediate reason to preserve.

Aristotle’s ethics provides a powerful contrast to the traditional moral theory that gave rise to the ethics of duty and provide important insight into what is at issue in living well. His understanding of “ethics” has more to do with what makes life worth living with obedience to tire moral law. Given that human beings have purposes built into their very made of being, virtue is whatever helps us to achieve those purposes.

Aristotle has identified as parts of the soul the four level of existence the fulfillment of which constitute our happiness; his theory becomes normative in that he regards certain behaviours, especially those that relate to pleasure, as worthy of human beings but other behaviours as not worthy. The reason that one should be virtuous is, it is honourale to be so.

Despite the appeal and importance of Aristotle’s conception of ethics it was overcome by subsequent intellectual movements in the west.

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## Certification

I certify that this research work was carried out by **Emiewo O. Ruth** with the Matriculation Number **020107060** of Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos under my supervision.

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**Date**

**Prof. Muyiwa Falaiye**

***Head of Department***

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**External Examiner**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## Dedication

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God who in his infinite mercy provides all the need for this work to be successful.

To my Late parents Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel S. Emeiwo, and also my siblings Mr. Lucky Emeiwo, Mr. Augustine Emeiwo, Emmanuel Emiewo, Jonathan Emiewo, Richard Emiewo, Mrs. M. Robinson, Mrs. Q. Ini just to mention a few, for their financial support.

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