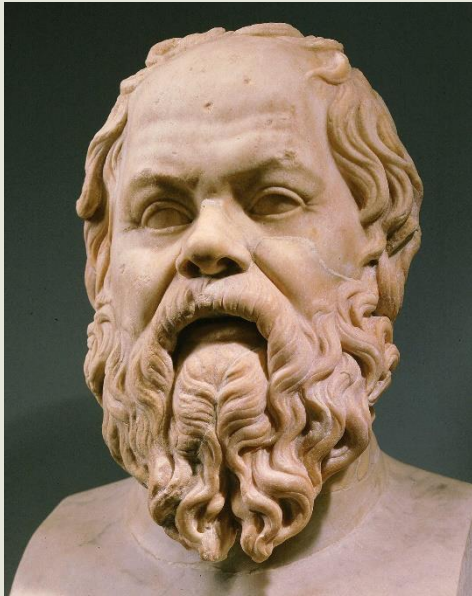


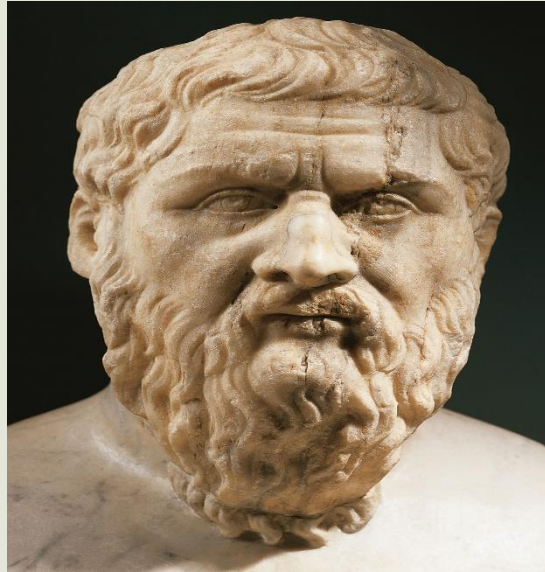
The background is a dark chalkboard with various white chalk sketches. In the top left, there's a large 'V' and a globe. Below the 'V' is a microscope. In the bottom left, there's a stack of books. In the bottom center, there's an open book with some handwritten text. In the bottom right, there's a large percentage sign and some other symbols.

Ethical Theories-Virtue Ethics

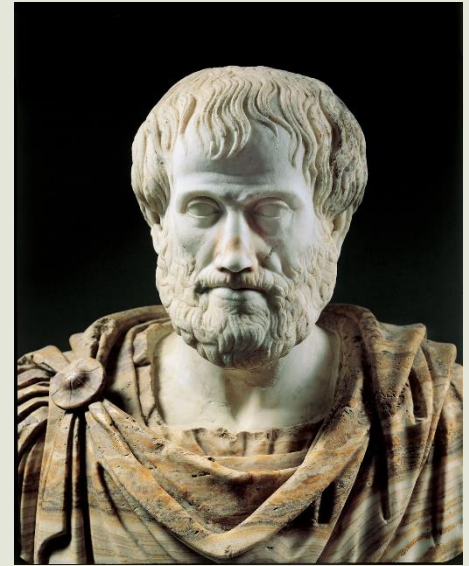
VIRTUE ETHICS



Socrates



Plato



Aristotle

PLATO'S CONCEPT OF VIRTUES

- Plato's doctrine of cardinal virtues is based on his concept of virtue.
- Virtues are reliable habits that you engrave into your identity — habits that transform and direct you toward what's good.
- According to Plato, goodness consists of the natural and proper functioning of human nature.
 - For Plato, good life is the life of virtues.
 - Virtue is Knowledge of the Good

PLATO'S CARDINAL VIRTUES

- Plato has described four important virtues in his theory of morality. According to him, the cultivation of these four virtues constitute a morally good life –
 - Wisdom,
 - Courage,
 - Temperance, and
 - Justice

WISDOM

- Wisdom is the virtue of reason.
- It consists in knowing and mastering the non-rational elements viz. spirited element and passions.
- It includes knowledge, insight and foresight based on that knowledge. It is not bookish knowledge/data/information only.
- It implies the active choice of values as against disvalues, or virtues as against vices. A man is wise in whom reason rules over the other impulses.

COURAGE

- Courage is the virtue of the spirited element.
 - It must perform its heroic function within the limits set by reason.
 - It is of two types viz. physical courage of a soldier and moral courage of a thinker or a reformer. Thus, one can be courageous in war as well as in intellectual convictions.
- Courage, therefore, is the excellence in the activity of the will. A man is brave when the spirited element holds fast to the instructions of intellect.

TEMPERANCE

- Temperance or self-control consists in keeping bodily satisfactions within limits.
 - Passions are not to be condemned.
 - It needs to be regulated and subjected to the rules of reason.
- Temperance is not complete abstinence.
 - It is the principle of self-restraint and moderation.
 - It is the controlling and ordering of natural instincts, desires and sensuous pleasures.
- A man is temperate when the spirited element or passionate element yields to intellect and obey its commands.

JUSTICE

- Justice is the virtue of the whole self or the complete person. It is the proper integration of different parts of the self.
- Thus, justice also consists of the harmonious functioning of the three parts of personality. Each part must do its function for which it is fit.
- When these three parts of the personality or the self with their three virtues of wisdom, courage and temperance function harmoniously together and are ordered and ruled by reason, then justice emerges as the resultant virtue.
- Each man is fit for a particular job in accordance with his nature. Justice consists in doing one's own job.

COMBINING CARDINAL VIRTUES

- Being morally perfect, therefore, is tantamount to being wise, valiant, temperate and just.
- Justice, then, is the supreme virtue. Just man will not indulge in the pursuit of material pleasures only.
- According to Plato, the four cardinal virtues have both individual and social significance. They are found both in the individual and in the society.

ARISTOTLE'S VIRTUE ETHICS

- What is to lead a good life? Or when do we call a human being as a good human being?
- Aristotle, being a proto-scientist began with observations.
- When can we call something a *good* scissors?
 - When it cuts
- When can we call something as a *good* pen?
 - When it writes well!
- Aristotle concluded then that to call something as good, it has to fulfill its function.

ARISTOTLE'S VIRTUE ETHICS

- Artifacts are easy, but what about plants, animals and humans?
 - Functions?
- Aristotle felt that the same logic can be extended by showing how function is tied to an exclusive quality that is possessed.
 - Function of a PM? Function of a CEO?
- For humans, it is the quality of being rational, using reason.
 - For humans then, to lead a moral life is to fulfill one's function of being a rational being in a social setting.

ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPT OF GOLDEN MEAN

- To use reason or be a rational being is to achieve golden mean in our actions
- Golden mean is to achieve the right balance between the two extremes of excess and deficiency. This golden mean helps us acquire virtues.
 - Each virtue is a balance between having too much of something and having too little of that something.
 - E.g., The virtue of moderation is the balance between indulging between too little pleasure and indulging in too much pleasure.

ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPT OF GOLDEN MEAN

- Each virtue is a balance point between two vices: the vice of deficiency and the vice of excess.
- The balance point for each virtue varies from person to person. Finding the balance point (virtue) requires using reason, the highest capacity of the soul.
- In addition to finding the proper balance point, one must learn to be comfortable with that level of the characteristic

| Aristotle's Concept of the Golden Mean | | |
|--|--------------|---------------|
| Deficiency (-) | BALANCE | Excess (+) |
| cowardice | COURAGE | rashness |
| stinginess/miserliness | GENEROSITY | extravagance |
| sloth | AMBITION | greed |
| humility | MODESTY | pride |
| secrecy | HONESTY | loquacity |
| moroseness | GOOD HUMOR | absurdity |
| quarrelsomeness | FRIENDSHIP | flattery |
| self-indulgence | TEMPERANCE | insensibility |
| apathy | COMPOSURE | irritability |
| indecisiveness | SELF CONTROL | impulsiveness |

ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPT OF GOLDEN MEAN

- To achieve golden mean requires practice.
 - It consists in doing the right thing, to the right person, to the right extent, with the right motive, and at the right time. For instance, the practice of generosity: give generously to the right person, at the right time, to the right extent, with the right purpose.
- To become virtuous is to achieve golden mean consistently, spontaneously, as a HABIT.
- Moral virtues are inculcated and not inborn. Moral training and education is essential then to cultivate these virtues.

ARISTOTLE'S VIRTUE ETHICS

- When children have moral exemplars in front of them, they copy their behaviour and adopt their attitudes.
- It is in this regard that Aristotle highlight the importance of Habits by proclaiming – “You are what you repeatedly do”
- This quote highlights how repeated spontaneous actions repeated over a period of time can become part of our character.
 - Values can be inculcated, and character developed by changing our behaviour, even if we lack the initial motivations
 - Learning to be disciplined, Being punctual

WHY DOES BEHAVIOUR CHANGE ATTITUDE?

- Cognitive Dissonance

- The basic idea is that the cognitive components of an attitude must be 'consonant' (opposite of 'dissonant'), i.e., they should be logically in line with each other.
- If an individual finds that two cognitions in an attitude are dissonant, then one of them will be changed in the direction of consonance. For example,
 - Cognition I : Pan masala causes mouth cancer which is fatal.
 - Cognition II : I eat pan masala.
- Holding these two ideas or cognitions will make any individual feel that something is 'out of tune', or dissonant, in the attitude towards pan masala.
- Therefore, one of these will have to be changed, so that consonance can be attained and the dissonance be removed or reduced.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

- After participating in a very boring experiment, a group of students were asked to tell another group of students waiting outside that the experiment was very interesting.
- For telling this lie to the waiting students, half of the first group of students was paid \$ 1, and the other half were paid \$ 20. After some weeks, the participants of the boring experiment were asked to recall the experiment, and to say how interesting they had found that experiment to be.
- The responses showed that the \$ 1 group described the experiment as more interesting than the \$ 20 group. The explanation was : the \$ 1 students changed their attitude towards the experiment because they experienced cognitive dissonance

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

The \$1 group experienced cognitive dissonance

- *"The experiment was very boring";*
- *"I told the waiting students that it was interesting";*
- *"I told a lie because for only \$ 1."*

To Reduced Dissonance

- *"The experiment was actually very interesting";*
- *"I told the waiting students that it was interesting";*
- *"I would not have told a lie for only \$ 1"*

The \$ 20 group did not experience cognitive dissonance.

- *"The experiment was very boring";*
- *"I told the waiting students that it was interesting";*
- *"I told a lie because I was paid \$ 20."*

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE & ETHICS



COGNITIVE
DISSONANCE

ARISTOTLE'S VIRTUE ETHICS

- Virtue ethics focuses on the importance of having a good character, which is achieved to the degree to which someone is an admirable type of person rather than to the degree to which a person does the right actions or follows the right principles or rules.
- Focusing on character doesn't mean that action doesn't count, however. Having a good character means that you're driven to behave in virtuous ways in situations that call for virtuous responses.
- Virtuous living is a way of life that requires harmonizing the way you experience the world at all times with the virtues themselves.

ARISTOTLE'S VIRTUE ETHICS ...

- Consider honesty, which is a stable disposition to tell the truth and to keep your word. In order to have this disposition you will need:
 - certain beliefs about how much truth it is appropriate to reveal in different cases;
 - certain emotions like feeling guilty if you have been dishonest and feeling good about telling the truth; and
 - a desire to tell the truth and a desire not to lie.
- According to Aristotle, acting virtuously requires:
 - acting knowingly;
 - aiming to do the act for the right reasons – for the act it is; and
 - acting on the basis of stable character traits.

ARISTOTLE'S VIRTUE ETHICS

- When you ethically focus on character, you hope that you and the people around you have admirable character traits.
 - Frequently, such traits turn out to be ones like honesty, generosity, courage, or loyalty. When you ethically focus on character, you make judgments about how people are as opposed to about what they do or about the rules they follow.
- Virtue ethics really stresses the fact that character, whether good or bad, defines a person. When you think that bad people do bad actions, it's because their actions express the badness of their character.
- Aristotle's notion of Eudaimonia also stresses how excellence is achieved only through a long-term achievement of a good character built on accumulation of virtues. A good life is understood holistically and neither in denial of desires, nor in complete submission

EUDAIMONIA

- Aristotle thought it obvious that all of us seek **eudaimonia**, which translates as “happiness,” or “flourishing.”
- A life of eudaimonia is an excellent life for the person living it. The happiness Aristotle speaks of is not mere enjoyment.
- It isn't only a state of mind, but rather a combination of activity and pleasure. Aristotle thought that the good life is an active one filled with wise choices and worthy pursuits. Our ultimate good
 - must not be something that is only instrumentally valuable.
 - must also be self-sufficient
 - must involve something that is *distinctive* about us, something that is uniquely human

CRITICISMS

- Different people, cultures and societies often have vastly different opinions on what constitutes a virtue.
- It is not clear as to what should be done when virtues conflict.
 - For example if you are asked to be a witness to a crime committed by your friend, you have a dilemma whether to uphold the virtue of being truthful or being loyal to your friend
- Another objection to virtue theory is that it does not focus on what sorts of actions are morally permitted and which ones are not
 - This particular feature of the theory makes virtue ethics incompetent as a universal norm of acceptable conduct suitable as a base for legislation.
 - As a result it needs to be used in tandem with other theories at times to derive a morally a correct course of action.

APPLICATION

- Virtue ethics is less dogmatic than Consequentialism and Deontology
 - It takes into account the situation and circumstances of an action than following some rule blindly
- It can be applied subjectively taking into account the actual details of the situation and what type of character you aspire to achieve.
- It underlines the need for moral education and moral exemplars for creation of a virtuous society
- It provides a moral basis for legislating morality
 - Nudging, Behavioural economics uses Aristotelian insights to bring about long-term change in character of citizens