What is a ‘virtue’, according to Aristotle?

As Aristotle himself describes in Book II of Nicomachean Ethics, Virtue is the state of a character concerned with choice. Of which he describes it as being of 2 types: intellectual and moral. Intellectual virtue is the choices determined by birth and your growth. While moral virtue are the choices determined by your habits. Both types of virtues work in combination along with each person's desires to guide one's life with a decision. Virtue acts as the decision making process informed by every aspect of an individual including one's actions, passions. Informed virtue lies in a middle between what is best and what is right for the individual.

What did Aristotle take to be the main virtues of character? Do you agree with Aristotle’s list? If not, why not?

The main virtues of character where the 5 means Aristotle outlined: liberality, inirascibility, praise-worthy, truthfulness and friendliness. Personally I disagree with Aristotle’s list as it overlooks many important aspects of one's character. Two important virtues not mentioned in any of the means that come straight to mind are courage and fairness. While any action should not be completed for the sake of competing against fear, courage is an important quality to have to work as a bulwark for any type of frigenting situation. Allowing someone's other virtues of character to remain present. Secondally is fairness, once again although completing an inserting action for the sake of being fair isn’t virtues, being fair provides a baseline for all other virtues to stand on without loss of integrity.

What are the main features of Aristotle’s account of justice?

Aristotle describes justice as multiple different entities. As in once again in Book II “with regard to justice, since it has not one simple meaning”. That it has 2 kinds being the political idea and the ethical ideal that are both a mean and a rational virtue. The political idea of justice relates to the physical interpretation of the ideal helmed by the state. It acts as a means as it is a physical set of laws, while it also acts as a rational virtue of choices that should not be made. However the more important ethical ideal of justice relates much more to the rest of the discussion. The mean is the influence that just choices have on an individual. Where the rational virtue of ideal justice is the golden chief virtue that one aspires to follow however can very be obtained by our very biases.

1) What is a 'virtue', according to Aristotle?

To Aristotle, virtues are desirable character traits that allow a person to feel appropriate emotions after certain situations, and to act in a right way during the duration of ones life. Virtues allow a person to be generous, feel empathy, and properly interact with the world and people around them. He claims that there are "two kinds [of virtues], intellectual and moral intellectual excellence," which means that some virtues are rooted in logistics and facts while others are based more on a persons ethics and beliefs. Aristotle also goes on to say that these moral virtues owe their "birth and growth mainly to instruction, and so require time and experience;" he argues that ethical virtues, such as generosity and responsibility, are not born integrated into a person but must be learned and acquired through education and training. A person becomes virtuous by continually doing and practicing virtuous actions; virtues are characteristics that are gathered by the repeated practice of acting virtuously.

2) What did Aristotle take to be the main virtues of character? Do you agree with Aristotle's list? If not, why not?

Aristotle heavily emphasized the importance of virtues of character such as courage, temperance, gentleness, agreeableness, and truthfulness. He discusses each of these virtues in length, describing how living by these characteristics will allow a person to live a fulfilling, successful, and happy life. However, Aristotle does instruct that actions led by these virtues must be voluntary, for "if the doing and likewise the not doing of noble or base deeds lies with us, and if this is, as we found, identical with being good or bad, then it follows that it lies with us to be worthy or worthless men." If a person chooses to act in a virtuous nature for any other reason than his own beliefs and ethics, he is not doing this action for his own reason, and thus the doing does not lie in him and takes away from his virtuous character. This includes all of the virtues Aristotle lists as main virtues of character. I do find myself agreeing with Aristotle's list; I believe he lists many characteristics people should always live by, such as temperance and truthfulness. The truth is always better than a lie, for this only brings about dishonesty and anger, and temperance allows a person to act rationally, be slow to anger, and accept situations with a calm mind instead of immediately reaching towards the familiar feeling of rage and anger.

3) What are the main features of Aristotle's account of justice?

While Aristotle places emphasis on the fact that all virtues are important, he does make the claim that justice is chief among the ethical virtues. This is because "Justice, then, in this sense of the word, is not a part of virtue, but the whole of it;" Justice, or the act of getting what one deserves in light of fairness and reasonableness, is essentially virtue in itself, for you cannot have one without the other. Aristotle also claims another main feature of justice is that there is no mean between two distinct vices like the other virtues on his list; justice is broad and different in many circumstances, so it is fact that the term "unjustness" cannot solely represent the opposite of "justice." He compares this notion to the law; sometimes, laws are not morally correct. Does this mean then, that the man who acts according to the unjust law is just, for he is acting as the law states to, which is just? Or is the man that follows his morals and goes against the law the just one, for he is being virtuous and following his ethics? In both cases, the men can be said to be both just and unjust; hence, justice is a complex virtue that Aristotle emphasizes is the chief ethical virtue.

Reply Example:

The quote you mentioned in the third question is intriguing. People usually overlook the value of justice until they are in a moment where they need it. I think when justice is absent, individuals feel powerless and oppressed, which can lead to unrest and instability. Aristotle's definition of justice highlights its importance, and reminds us of the need to strive for fairness and balance in all aspects of life.

1:

You say in your first paragraph that in order to be virtuous you must do virtuous things and I believe that misses a large part of what virtue is about. That virtue is itself the decision making process not the goal for acting. As you say the different kinds of virtues are learned and grown into as a result everyone has different virtues making it unfair to define being virtuous as completing actions under one's own virtue. Meaning that someone with no virtue cannot be built up which is certainly not correct.

I disagree with the division of two of the cardinal virtues each being representative of the two types of virtues (intellectual and moral). I think that all four cardinal virtues contribute to both types of virtues while some contribute to one more than others. It is not a clear division between the two. In your paragraph you disregard the importance of wisdom and understanding under moral virtue as they allow greater changes in perspectives by people. As well as the contribution that liberality and temperance have on intellectual virtue being they both provide a person with the knowledge of how to properly be charitable and cautious respectively.

Although justice is a very complex virtue I believe that you are making it more complex and difficult on yourself by not breaking it down into smaller pieces as Aristotle did. Combining the Physical enactment of justice and its ever changing laws determined by an ever changing society with the Chief among virtues seems very difficult to keep straight. I suggest you divide the term into multiple parts that keep justice’s complexity however allowing it to be more easily understood by speaking on the relationship between the different parts.