

# **VIRTUE ETHICS**

# ARISTOTLE



# VIRTUE ETHICS SAYS...

“(VE) An act is morally right just because it is one that a virtuous person, acting in character, would do in that situation”

# THE OBJECT OF LIFE

*“all rational actions, aim at some good. The object of life then is the attainment of what is good”.*

— Aristotle

**WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF MAN?**

# EUDAIMONIA

HAPPINESS or better, FLOURISHING or BLESSEDNESS

# WHAT IS VIRTUE?

*“...it is in the nature of moral qualities that they are destroyed in deficiency and excess, just as we can see in the case of health and strength. For both excessive and insufficient exercise destroy one’s health, whereas the right quantity produces, increases and preserves it. So it is the same with temperance, courage, and other virtues. The man who shuns and fears everything and stands up to nothing becomes a coward; the man who fears nothing at all, but marches up to every danger, becomes foolhardy. Similarly the man who indulges in every pleasure and refrains from none becomes licentious. But if a man behaves like a boor and turns his back on every pleasure, he is a case of insensibility. Thus temperance and courage are destroyed by excess and deficiency preserved by the mean.”*

— Aristotle

# VIRTUE IS THE MEAN BETWEEN EXTREMES

Sphere of action	EXCESS	MEAN	DEFICIENCY
Fear and Confidence	rashness	courage	cowardice
Pleasure and Pain	licentiousness	temperance	insensibility
Getting and spending	vulgarity	magnificence	pettiness
Anger	irascibility	patience	lack of spirit
Self Expression	boastfulness	truthfulness	understatement



## WHAT ABOUT EXTREME VICES?

What is the mean for theft and murder? There can't be any. Some actions are wrong even in moderation.

## **WHAT IS THE MEAN?**

Doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right way.

# HEXIS

An active condition, a state in which something must actively hold itself.

# **FURTHER READINGS**

1. Nicomachean Ethics - Aristotle (Book I and II)
2. Lecture notes for Virtue Ethics