

WHAT IS VIRTUE?

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Virtue is your cultivation by habituation. Virtue is not cognitive; it is action of a virtuous soul. I am a Virtuous soul. Sometimes I deliberate on issues of what is right and wrong. But I am virtuous by cultivation. So my action is virtuous.

This is not my theory but the account in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. One does not consider virtuous action in terms of theoretical considerations but in the moment of action.

The habituation to virtue changes the psyche. Intuitive action of a virtuous man is virtuous. There is never any point to asking whether it would have been virtuous to do this or that in some hypothetical situation. A virtuous character will spontaneously make judgments that are virtuous. They are not always to everyone's liking, but the actual action of a virtuous man is virtuous action.

Virtue is the way human nature and nature works. We can consider some issues theoretically, and have convictions regarding some issues, but in fact virtue is something else. Virtue is what the virtuous man does when actually faced with a situation of moral import.

This is difficult for the modern age where virtuous character has diminished in value. But in fact you cannot avoid it. Whether we talk about virtue or shun it, every single human being is driven by their character. Character and virtue are not cognitive categories. It is not cognition that guides our actual moral judgment. Instead, we prepare our soul through time and habituation to act according to our virtuous character.

All this was clear to Aristotle, and many of contemporaries; it was clear as well to Ancient Egyptian aristocrats. It was clear to many contemporaries of Confucius. But it has slipped since nineteenth century in America. But we have not changed. We are still guided by our Character, whether virtuous or vicious. We are always in thrall to our Character. This is not something clear to the modern people, but its true. Situationalism and other things are misguided. It does not matter if we do different things in different situations. In all situations we exhibit and act out our Character.

If you really want to understand what it is, you need not one or two situations but follow people for months and years. Then you will know his Character. It is foolish to claim that there is a refutation of Virtue when the same decision is not made in different situations. Why should they? Virtue is in the soul and psyche and not in the decision.