

PHI 105 - Unit 3

The Ancient Greeks on Morality



Aristotle and a Virtue-Based Morality

Aristotle (384-322 BCE)

A Virtue-Based Morality

I. Philosophical Background -

A. Socrates -

1. Virtue is *knowledge*
2. Knowledge is *sufficient* for acting virtuously

B. Plato - Virtue is the harmony between the parts of the soul

1. Appetite
2. Spirit
3. Reason

C. The Cardinal Virtues:

1. Courage
2. Temperance
3. Justice
4. Wisdom
5. *Piety*

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II. Aristotle's Ontology - The Nature of Being (*ousia*)

A. Subjects and Predicates -

1. **Primary Substance** - things *neither* said *of*, nor *in* (*particulars*)
2. **Secondary Substance** - that which *is* said of, or in (*universals*)
 1. species
 2. genera

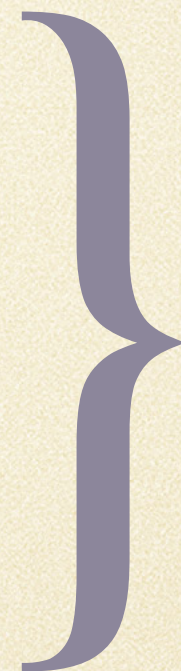
universal

Being

Living Being

Animal

Man



Secondary Substance
that which is said “of” or “in”

particular

A man



Primary Substance
that which undergoes change

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II. Aristotle's Ontology - The Nature of Being (*ousia*)

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B. The **Hylomorphic Composite** - the “*whatness*” of Primary Substance

1. Matter
2. Form

C. Causation -

1. **Material** - the “stuff”
2. **Formal** - the *form* the “stuff” takes
3. **Final** - the function of the composite
4. **Efficient** - *that which* brought about the composite

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III. Aristotle's Methodology - Teleology and the Hierarchy of Goods

A. Two Types of Ends:

1. **Intermediate** - done for the sake of something else
2. **Final** - done for its own sake

B. Social science/knowledge (*episteme*) is an intellectual activity that aims at some end -

1. Economics - an orderly economy of the household and state
2. Strategy - victory in war/foreign policy
3. Rhetoric - persuasion in public speech
4. Medicine - health for the individual and *polis*

C. **Politics** is the knowledge of all the social sciences

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IV. What is the *goal* of Political Knowledge? Happiness - *eudiamonia*

A. What is the *cause* of happiness?

1. Pleasure -
2. Wealth -
3. Honor -

B. What is Man (*human*)?

1. Four types of souls -
 - a. **nutritive** - plants
 - b. **sensate** - animals
 - c. **social** - political animals
 - d. **rational** - humans
2. **Man** is the ***Rational Political Animal*** - using reason to achieve the highest possible state of being (i.e., virtue)

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V. What is Human Virtue/Excellence?

- A. **Intellectual Virtue** - a discipline of the mind through education
- B. **Moral Virtue** - discipline of action acquired through habituated moral action
- C. *Acting* virtuously is not *being* virtuous -
 - 1. One must *know* their action is virtuous - no **ignorant** virtue
 - 2. One must *will* to be virtuous - no **accidental** virtue
 - 3. One must *act consistently* - no **occasional** virtue

VI. How do we achieve moral excellence?

- A. **Excess** - Vice
- B. **Deficiency** - Vice
- C. **Mean** - *Virtue*

Moral Virtue is a *state* of deliberate moral purpose, consisting of a *rational mean*, relative to our character.