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THE VIRTUE OF ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS

While Aristotle's account of the happy life continues to receive attention, many of his claims about virtue of character seem so puzzling that modern philosophers have often discarded them, or have reworked them to fit more familiar theories that do not make virtue of character central. In this book, Paula Gottlieb takes a fresh look at Aristotle's claims, particularly the much-maligned doctrine of the mean. She shows how they form a thought-provoking ethic of virtue, one that deserves to be developed and refined. The first part of the book addresses the nature of virtue and the virtues, illuminated by the doctrine of the mean. Building on the conclusions of this analysis, the second part explains the mentality of the good person and the type of society that will allow such a person to flourish.

Paula Gottlieb is Professor of Philosophy and Affiliate Professor of Classics at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She was educated at Oxford and Cornell. The author of an analysis and commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* I and II for project Archelogos, she has received fellowships from the Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington, DC, and the Institute for Research in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

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To Sybil and Bernard

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Frontmatter
More information

Contents

Preface and Acknowledgments *page* xiii
Abbreviations xix

Introduction 1

1. The General Theme and the Main Argument of the Book 1
2. Interlocking Themes and Theses 3
3. Aristotle and Virtue Ethics 4
4. Philosophical Method and Solving Puzzles 6
5. Synopsis of Chapters 7

PART I. ETHICAL VIRTUE

1 **Virtue in the Mean** 19

1. A Medical Analogy and Three Aspects of the Doctrine of the Mean 20
2. The First Aspect: Equilibrium Instead of Moderation 22
3. The Second Aspect: The Mean is "Relative to Us" 25
   3.1. Particular Virtues and Particular Factors 27
   3.2. A New Approach to the Debate about Relativity 31
4. The Third Aspect: Aristotelian Triads 32
5. Reassessing the Doctrine of the Mean 36

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-76176-5 - The Virtue of Aristotle's Ethics
Paula Gottlieb
Frontmatter
More information

2 **Nameless Virtues** 38
1. The Namelessness of the Nameless Virtues 39
2. The Virtue Concerning Small Honours and the Doctrine of the Mean 44
3. The "Questionable Mean-Dispositions" 46
4. Including the Nameless Virtues 48
5. Taking the Nameless Virtues Seriously 50

3 **The Non-remedial Nature of the Virtues** 52
1. Corrective Virtues versus the Doctrine of the Mean 53
2. Conditional Value and Nameless Virtues 57
3. Gods and Humans 59
4. The Isles of the Blessed 63
5. The Function Argument 66
6. Rejecting Remedial Views 70

4 **Listing the Virtues** 73
1. Generating the Virtues on Aristotle's List 74
2. Candidates for Virtue, Ancient and Modern 77
3. Extending the Virtues 89
4. More Nameless Virtues and the Doctrine of the Mean 90

5 **Uniting the Virtues** 92
1. Socrates, Aristotle, and the Division of the Soul 94
2. The Distinction between "Involving the Correct Reason" and Being Merely "in Accordance with the Correct Reason" 99
3. Ethical Virtue "Involves the Correct Reason" 103
4. Integrating the Soul 106
5. Responding to the Objections 107
6. Integrity 110

Chart of Aristotle's Particular Ethical Virtues 112

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978-0-521-76176-5 - The Virtue of Aristotle's Ethics
Paula Gottlieb
Frontmatter
More information

PART II. ETHICAL REASONING

6 **Moral Dilemmas** 115
1. The Example of the Tyrant 116
2. Two Types of Dilemmas: A Preliminary Discussion 117
3. Aristotle's Account of Voluntary Action: Is There a Special Type of Regret? 120
4. The Problem of Mixed Actions 122
5. Mixed Actions and Moral Dilemmas 125
5.1. Regret 125
5.2. The Structure of Aristotelian Decision-making 128
5.3. Factors in the Decision about the Tyrant 129
6. A Tragic Dilemma 130
7. Aristotle's Humane View and the Doctrine of the Mean 130

7 **Fine Motivation** 134
1. Aristotle and Plato 135
2. Kantian and Utilitarian Readings 138
3. Taking Aristotle's Distinctions at Face Value 140
4. The Fine and the Brave 142
5. The Fine and the Good 145
6. Caring for a Friend for the Friend's Sake 146

8 **The Practical Syllogism** 151
1. The Problem of Distinguishing Practical Wisdom and Technical Skill 153
2. A Solution Involving Truthfulness and the Doctrine of the Mean, and a New Puzzle 156
3. The Analogy between the Theoretical and Practical Syllogism, and the Importance of the Middle Term 157
3.1. Formulating the Practical Syllogism and the Analogous Middle Term 160

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-76176-5 - The Virtue of Aristotle's Ethics
Paula Gottlieb
Frontmatter
More information

3.2. The Middle Term and the Ethical Agent 165
3.3. The Middle Term, Ethical Virtue, and Deliberation 166
4. From a First-person Point of View 168
5. The Enkratic, the Akratic, and the Learner 169
6. Advantages of Aristotle's Account 171

9 What the Good Person Has to Know 173
1. The Good Person and the Healthy Person 174
2. The Good Person and the Physician 176
3. The Good Person and Psychology 177
4. The Good Person and Metaphysics 179
5. The Good Person and the Good Student 182
5.1. The Ethically Virtuous Person versus the Person with Practical Wisdom? 185
5.2. A More Sophisticated Two-stage Account 186
5.3. The Good Person versus the Ruler 187
6. Reading the *Nicomachean Ethics*: The Good Person and the Immoralist 187
7. Aristotelian Knowledge 189

10 A Polis for Aristotle's Virtues 191
1. The Need for a Polis: A Non-remedial View 192
2. A Political Ranking of Happy Lives, and the Nameless Virtues 195
3. Justice in the Polis 197
4. A Polis for the Aristotelian Virtues 199
5. Democracy and Polity 201
6. Collective Virtue and Practical Wisdom: An Argument from the Unity of Virtue and the Doctrine of the Mean 203

Conclusion 208
1. Aristotle's Ethic of Virtue 208
2. The Puzzles Revisited 209

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Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-76176-5 - The Virtue of Aristotle's Ethics
Paula Gottlieb
Frontmatter
More information

3. Alternative Approaches 212
4. Foreword to Aristotle 213

Appendix: Uniting the "Large-scale" Virtues 215
Select Bibliography 219
Index 237

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978-0-521-76176-5 - The Virtue of Aristotle's Ethics
Paula Gottlieb
Frontmatter
More information

Preface and Acknowledgments

In his ethical works, Aristotle presents an extraordinarily nuanced and insightful account of the different aspects of the good human being and the good human being's life. Yet many of Aristotle's claims about ethical virtue seem so puzzling that modern philosophers have often discarded them, or reworked them to fit more familiar modern theories that do not make ethical virtue central. My aim in this book is to re-examine Aristotle's puzzling claims, especially the much-maligned doctrine of the mean, showing how together they form a thought-provoking ethic of virtue, one that deserves to be developed and refined. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the most important of his ethical treatises, appeals to anyone interested in ethical character and thought, including undergraduates, graduates, specialists in ancient Greek philosophy, and modern virtue ethicists. I should be pleased if this book does the same.

There is a fine line between a work on Aristotle's ethics and a work on Aristotelian Ethics, the former being more closely tied to Aristotle's texts, the latter going into new territory, inspired by Aristotle's ideas. While I have approached Aristotle's texts from a less familiar perspective, bringing out elements in his philosophy that have not received their due, and considering them in the light of ancient and modern debates,[1] I have refrained from venturing too far from his original views. The exception is Chapter 4, where I consider possible virtues that Aristotle himself does not consider, but, even there, I keep comments on the particular virtues short and to the point.

[1] See the discussion of philosophical scholarship in Section 4 of the Introduction.

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Frontmatter
More information

The passage of more than two thousand years has yielded a wealth of scholarship about Aristotle's work, and the last thirty years has seen burgeoning interest in Aristotle's ethics, with new books and articles published every year. While I should like to be able to address every line of thought in detail, I have had to be selective. I have addressed the views of particular philosophers at length where those views clearly advanced my general argument, or were crucial in showing how I wished to change the terms of reference of a particular debate. Otherwise, I have relegated references, extra qualifications, and further more-detailed scholarly philosophical comments to footnotes.

Different readers respond to different styles of writing. Some like frequent summaries and recapitulations; others want to read an uninterrupted flow. For the first type of reader, I have provided summaries and a table of contents that allows one to see at a glance the main points of each chapter. The second type of reader may skip the table of contents and summaries.

The select bibliography is very select. It is intended mainly to give references to specific secondary literature cited in the text, although other influential works have been included as well. For a recent comprehensive bibliography, see Lockwood 2005. Translating Aristotle is difficult. Although some of my interpretations of the texts may be original, the translations are quite conservative so as to be intelligible in the light of available translations and past scholarly literature. Here, I am indebted to Ross and Irwin.[2]

I first encountered Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* in the gap year between high school and university more than thirty years ago. Since then, I have benefited from discussions of Aristotle's ethics with teachers, colleagues, and students. I have received many challenging questions about my interpretation of Aristotle from specialists in ancient philosophy, modern philosophers, classicists, and other professors in the Humanities, and have incorporated many of their suggestions into the text. Although I criticize various lines of thought in my book, I have learnt a great deal from their proponents. My book has also been improved by the rigorous scrutiny and generous suggestions of anonymous readers of earlier versions of particular chapters and of the whole work.

[2] Ross 1923 and Irwin 1985 and revised version, 1999.

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Some of the central ideas of my book stem from 1992–3, when I had the opportunity to take up a fellowship at the Center for Hellenic Studies in Washington, DC, to study the unity of the Aristotelian virtues. A Sabbatical leave for 1997–8, awarded by the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, allowed me to crystallize Aristotle's distinctive ethic of virtue as the general theme of my book, and to compose a detailed outline of the chapters and further work to be done. I am grateful to the Institute for Research in the Humanities in Madison for a fellowship to continue work on my book in the fall of 2001, and the Graduate School of the University of Wisconsin–Madison for several summer grants.

My earliest debts are to my teachers at Oxford and Cornell, especially Jean Austin, Michael Woods, and Terry Irwin. The present work on Aristotle's ethics is part of a continuing attempt to answer the difficult questions they posed many years ago. Thanks also to Julia Annas, David Charles, Gail Fine, David Lyons, and Nick Sturgeon for their support.

More recently, I have benefited from discussions with colleagues and numerous tutorials with students at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. I should like to thank Terry Penner for invaluable, but sceptical, comments on various chapters of the book; Claudia Card for helpful conversations and comments; Russ Shafer-Landau and Elliott Sober for generously commenting on particular chapters; Noël Carroll, Berent Enç, Dan Hausman, and Leora Weitzman for helpful discussion of the general project; and Bill Hay and Lester Hunt for bibliographic help.

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More information

An earlier version of Chapter 2 was published as "Aristotle's 'Nameless' Virtues" in *Apeiron* 27.1, March 1994, 1–15. I should like to thank Academic Printing and Publishing for allowing me to reprint it here. A revised version of "Are the Virtues Remedial?" in *Journal of Value Inquiry* 35, 2001, 343–54, is printed here as Chapter 3 with kind permission of Springer Science and Business Media. I should also like to thank Koninklijke Brill NV for allowing me to publish a revised version of "Aristotle on Dividing the Soul and Uniting the Virtues" in *Phronesis* 39.3, 1994, 275–90, as Chapter 5. I thank Blackwell for allowing me to use material from "The Practical Syllogism", published in *Blackwell's Guide to Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Richard Kraut, 2006, 218–33, for Chapter 8.

Over the past years, I have presented fledgling parts of my book in many places. An earlier version of Chapter 1 was presented at Georgia State University and at the University of Georgia in March 2001. A shorter version was presented at the annual meeting of the Central American Philosophical Association in May 2001. I should like to thank May Sim, the commentator, for her very helpful remarks. I should also like to thank those who raised questions in Georgia, especially Edward Halper, Steve Strange, Beth Preston, and David Weberman. Thanks also to Howard Curzer for helpful written comments on my paper, and to Lesley Brown for answering a question about her view.

Special thanks to Terry Penner, Constance Meinwald, and Nancy Sherman for very helpful discussion and criticisms of the original draft of Chapter 2. I have also benefited from the comments of Claudia Card, Berent Enç, Mark Munn, Roger Shiner, Elliott Sober, Jan Van Ophuijsen, Leora Weitzman, and Keith Yandell.

Ancestral versions of Chapter 3 were presented to "the Greeks" in Madison and at the Chicago Workshop in Ancient Philosophy, 1996, and at the University of St. Andrew's, 1998. Many thanks to the following for a host of helpful questions and suggestions: in Chicago, Constance Meinwald, Richard Kraut, Ken Alprin, Elizabeth Asmis, Ian Mueller, Nathan Nicol, Meredith Williams, Michael Williams, and Edyta Imai; in Madison, Terry Penner, Ruth Saunders, William Courtenay, Christopher Rowe, and Leora Weitzman; and in Scotland, Neil Cooper, Bonnie Kent, Paul Markwick, and Leslie Stevenson. Thanks also to Dale Jaquette and, most recently, to Russ Shafer-Landau for written comments.

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An earlier presentation that included some ideas from Chapter 4 was given to the Institute for Research in the Humanities at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in the fall of 2001. Thanks to the following for their questions: Sally Banes, Paul Boyer, Phillip Harth, David Hillman, Robert Kingdon, Ullrich Langer, Mike Shank, David Woodward, and especially Claudia Card, Noël Carroll, and John Longeway.

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A version of Chapter 6 was presented at an invited session at the Pacific meeting of the American Philosophical Association, 2004. Thanks especially to Susan Sauvé Meyer and Christopher Rowe, the commentators, for their helpful criticism and encouragement. Thanks also to Adrian Moore, David Charles, Paolo Crivelli, Lindsay Judson, and Ben Morison for questions in Oxford, and Terry Penner and Mark Lovas for generous written comments.

While working on the topic of Chapter 7, I benefited from commenting on John Kultgen's paper on civic courage at the annual meeting of the Central States Philosophical Association 2002, and from the Kantian objections of Christine Korsgaard. Thanks also to Jim Butler and Tony Chu, and to Terry Penner for helpful, though sceptical, discussion.

The first version of Chapter 8 was presented at a conference on *Nicomachean Ethics* VI at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1997, the latest at the Berlin workshop on the practical syllogism, 2007. I should like to thank the following for detailed comments on earlier versions of this chapter: Norman Dahl, Mark Gifford, R. J. Hankinson, Rachana Kamtekar, John Longeway, Terry Penner, Ruth Saunders, Elliott Sober, and Leora Weitzman. Special thanks to Richard Kraut for a host of helpful suggestions.

I have benefited from discussing the issues raised in Sections 1–5 of Chapter 9 with Terry Penner, Leora Weitzman, David Hillman, and members of the Department of Philosophy at the University of

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Milwaukee, especially Margaret Atherton, Mark Kaplan, William Wainwright, Robert Schwartz, Eric Shank, Joan Weiner, and also Gene Fendt and Mark Kucsewski. Thanks also to those who attended a colloquium at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, especially Alexander Bird, Neil Cooper, Robin Smith, Dory Scaltsas, and Paolo Crivelli. I should also like to thank Terry Irwin for helpful discussion of *Nicomachean Ethics* I 4. I am grateful to Ted Everett, Malcolm Forster, Bernard Gottlieb, Terry Penner, Ruth Saunders, LaVerne Shelton, Elliott Sober, Leora Weitzman, and also G. Anagnostopoulos, Lloyd Gerson, Mark Gifford, V. A. Goutorov, Sergei Karpyuk, Fred Miller, Richard Pianka, R. Purtill, P. Schollmeier, E. W. Schütrumpf, I. G. Tchernychov, and J. Wilcox for questions about Sections 5 and 6 of Chapter 10, which were originally presented at the sixth international conference of the International Association for Greek Philosophy, on *Aristotle's Political Philosophy*. Thanks also to Cora Lee Kleinhenz, Andrew Ruis, and Shawn Welnak for helpful discussion. Most recently, I have benefited from written comments on the whole chapter by Claudia Card and Josiah Ober.

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Finally, I should like to thank Henry, with love.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations for Aristotle's works are as follows:

A Post.	*Analytica Posteriora*
A Pr.	*Analytica Priora*
de An.	*de Anima*
EE	*Ethica Eudemia*
EN	*Ethica Nicomachea*
Fr.	*Fragmenta*
HA	*Historia Animalium*
MA	*de Motu Animalium*
MM	*Magna Moralia*
Mem.	*de Memoria*
Metaph.	*Metaphysica*
Ph.	*Physica*
Pol.	*Politica*
Rh.	*Rhetorica*
SE	*Sophistici Elenchi*
Sens.	*de Sensu*
Top.	*Topica*

Aristotle's works are cited by book, chapter and Bekker page, and column and line numbers. Plato's works are cited by dialogue, Stephanus pages, and columns. *CAG* refers to *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, edita consilio et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regiae Borussicae: Berolini typis et impensis Georgii Reimeri, vols. 19–20, 1889. Abbreviations for other works are included in the Select Bibliography.

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