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# The psychological basis of Aristotle's ethics

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Thesis  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS OF ARISTOTLE'S ETHICS  
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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Aristotle's view of the psychology of man in relation to man's capacity for ethical action. By ethical action is meant action viewed as desirable and chosen in accordance with certain ideals and standards which one holds ought to be realized. Neither a particular psychology of man nor a particular set of moral values will be presupposed. Underlying the purpose of this thesis is the question: Do all people share some common psychological basis for universal values?

Perhaps it may be wondered why anyone undertaking a study of man's psychological capacities for ethical action would want to consider the thought of Aristotle. Some people may argue that Aristotle's psychology is no longer relevant or that his teachings are outdated. To discover the correct psychology of man, one should turn rather to the more extensive findings of modern psychology and psychiatry. In fact, it may be upheld, as Freud seemed to suggest, that man is so strongly ruled by unconscious libidinal desires that it is mistaken to speak of consciously and freely chosen moral values. However, part of the purpose here will be to consider whether Aristotle can provide an alternative to this view and support it

with a psychology of man which will be internally consistent and in basic agreement with empirical data.

In the first chapter of this thesis the reasons for Aristotle's confidence that human nature can be known and described will be discussed. The second chapter will examine Aristotle's view of man's psychological nature as it relates to behavior. The different aspects of man's soul to be considered will include man's desires, emotions, habits, character traits, the influence of education and learning upon these, the role of reason in action, and man's capacity for free choice. The third chapter will deal with Aristotle's definition of ethics and the basis of ethics in human nature. His description of virtue and its relation to happiness, pleasure and pain, wish and choice, and practical wisdom will be considered. Chapter IV will consider Aristotle's description of immoral behavior and questions that this description raises about free will and his moral philosophy. Chapter V will deal with man's capacity for moral action and issues which seem relevant concerning the universality of this capacity. In the conclusion it will be seen if problems and inconsistencies found in Aristotle's ethics can be traced to aspects of his psychology which need correction. In general there will be a discussion of the changes that are found needed in his ethics and psychology to provide a basis for a more consistent ethics and a more

correct description of human nature.

The works of Aristotle upon which this study will chiefly rely will be On the Soul, the Metaphysics, the Rhetoric, the Politics, and the Nicomachean Ethics. With a few exceptions, the particular virtues themselves as enumerated by Aristotle will not be discussed. The concern here is not with his list of virtues, but with the psychological presuppositions of moral life.

## CHAPTER I

### THE UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN NATURE

Before discussing the psychological aspects of man's nature, some brief preliminary remarks on Aristotle's thought may be helpful. To begin, Aristotle seems to have been quite confident that he could truly understand and describe human nature. Why he appears to have had this confidence may be explained perhaps by considering three of his statements about the meaning of actuality. In all three he holds that what an individual has the potential for becoming already exists prior to the individual. For example, in the Metaphysics, Aristotle says of actuality that what any individual may potentially become already exists in actuality in the species to which the individual belongs.<sup>1</sup> To explain what the essence of any normal human will be like, one need only examine a fully developed member of the species. "For what each thing is when fully developed we call its nature, whether we are speaking of a man, . . ." <sup>2</sup> or anything else.

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<sup>1</sup>Aristotle, "Metaphysica" ("Metaphysics"), trans. W. D. Ross, The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), ix. 7. 1049<sup>b</sup> 18. [Hereafter cited as Met.].

<sup>2</sup>Aristotle, "Politica" ("Politics"), trans. Benjamin Jowett, The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), i. 2. 1252<sup>b</sup> 32-33. [Hereafter cited as Pol.].

A second way of saying that actuality, or what an individual has a potential for becoming, exists prior to the individual is to say that it exists prior in formula. An entity has its capacity for activity or movement because it has the potential for developing into its predetermined formula.<sup>1</sup> So, in order to describe what any mature human being will be like, one may describe the formula for man. Thus, "formula" and "actuality" have similar meanings, but these may also be called "form", "for the formula . . . seems to be an account of the form . . ."2

The form of a human being is what Aristotle calls the soul, while that of which it is the form he calls the matter or body. It may be sufficient for present purposes to cite Aristotle's description of form, or soul in this case, as

substance in the sense which corresponds to the definitive formula of a thing's essence. That means that it is the essential whatness of a body . . .3

Together the soul and body form a unity. Thus, "the affections of the soul are enmattered formulable essences."<sup>4</sup>

From the above, it can be seen that Aristotle holds that to understand what the general human characteristics of any person may be like, one may define the form or soul of a

<sup>1</sup>Met. ix. 7. 1049<sup>b</sup> 13.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., viii. 2. 1043<sup>a</sup> 18-19.

<sup>3</sup>Aristotle, "De Anima" ("On the Soul"), trans. from the Greek by J. A. Smith, The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), ii. 1. 412<sup>b</sup> 11-15. [Hereafter cited as De An. 3.].

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., i. 1. 403<sup>a</sup> 24.

mature man.

A third way Aristotle states his view of man's actuality or form as existing prior to any particular individual is in his teleological concept of a final end. Aristotle states:

Everything that comes to be moves toward a principle, i.e., an end (for that for the sake of which a thing is, is its principle, and the becoming is for the sake of the end), and the actuality is the end, and it is for the sake of this that the potency is acquired.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, there is a predetermined final form toward which entities move which limits and defines their potentialities. In man it is the soul which is the final end of the body. Aristotle believes that he can understand the essence of human nature by describing the form or soul of a mature man, the development of the soul being the end toward which man aims.<sup>2</sup> His view of the final end of the soul influences especially his definition of virtue as will be seen in Chapter III.

Aristotle's psychological description of man consists, therefore, of an examination of what he believed to be the different parts of the soul. However, not every aspect of his discussion of the soul will be considered. While ultimately all the part of the soul must affect man's behavior, those which seem less directly related to man's capacities

<sup>1</sup>Met. ix. 8. 1050<sup>a</sup> 6-10.

<sup>2</sup>De An S. ii. 4. 415<sup>b</sup> 15-17.

for ethical action will not be discussed. For example, although the soul as a harmony or ratio will be considered in so far as it is relevant, Aristotle's discussion of this topic will not be examined in its entirety. Furthermore, memory, dreams, and the processes of sensation, with which Aristotle deals at length, will not be considered.

Because this is a study of the psychological basis of ethics, and because Aristotle presents his psychological and ethical views together in many instances, it is difficult to separate the discussion of psychological and ethical issues. Therefore, some of the basic psychological aspects of man's soul which relate to behavior will be presented separately in order to provide a background for the consideration of ethical issues, but other psychological aspects of human nature will be discussed later in the thesis in relation to relevant topics.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BEHAVIOR

In this chapter Aristotle's psychology of action will be examined. This will involve a discussion of what he considered to be some of the significant aspects of the origin of human behavior and the forces which help mold habits and character traits. In the first section the main divisions or functions of the soul will be mentioned as well as a closer examination of desire, emotion, and imagination. In the second section the development of habits and character types from desires and emotions will be considered as well as the instinctual, geographical, societal, and other forces which influence the formation of habits and traits. In the last section the sphere of voluntary actions, including wish, choice, and free will, will be examined along with some problems found in Aristotle's statements about wish and choice.

#### The Parts of the Soul

The soul, according to Aristotle, may be divided into nutritive, sensitive, and intellective parts.<sup>1</sup> The nutritive soul, which man shares with all other living beings,

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<sup>1</sup>De An S. iii. 10. 433<sup>b</sup> 3.

including both plants and animals, is the cause of growth, decay, and reproduction.<sup>1</sup> It is also called the vegetative soul. The sensitive part, which man shares only with the other animals, includes, for example, the faculties of perception, imagination, memory, pleasure, pain, and desire.<sup>2</sup> As for the intellective part, man alone is distinguished by the possession of reason which is his most characteristically human quality. In the philosopher's words: "The element that thinks would seem to be the individual man, or to be so more than any other element in him."<sup>3</sup> This belief of Aristotle greatly influences his ethical views.

It does not seem necessary here to discuss Aristotle's description of the process by which the mind actually receives the objects that it thinks. However, two comments may be mentioned in connection with the thinking process. First, Aristotle holds that it is possible to think falsely as well as truly.<sup>4</sup> Second, it may be mentioned that Aristotle holds reason to be divided into contemplative and calculative parts. He also refers to these parts as the scientific and the deliberative or practical parts of reason respectively. The former has to do with unchanging

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II. 2, 413<sup>a</sup> 30-33.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3, 414<sup>b</sup> 1-15.

<sup>3</sup>Aristotle, "Ethica Nicomachea" ("Nicomachean Ethics"), trans. W. D. Ross, The Basic Writings of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), II, 4, 1166<sup>a</sup> 23-24. (Hereafter cited as Nic Eth R.)

<sup>4</sup>De An S. III, 3, 427<sup>b</sup> 13.

or invariable objects of truth and the latter with variable things.<sup>1</sup> The calculative or practical reason will be seen to form an important part of behavior (especially virtuous behavior).

Of the vegetative and appetitive parts of the soul, only the latter may participate in the rational element. "The appetitive, and in general the desiring element in a sense shares in it, so far as it listens to it and obeys it; . . ."<sup>2</sup> The appetitive part thus "being intermediate, . . . can be classed as part either of the reasonable or the unreasonable element in us."<sup>3</sup> One may also say that the rational element is twofold. One subdivision will have a rational principle in the strict sense and in itself, and the other will have it in so far as it obeys reason.<sup>4</sup>

The discussion of behavior or action will be primarily concerned with an examination of the sensitive and intellectual parts of the soul. Aristotle believes that it is the soul which moves and uses the body.<sup>5</sup> There are three aspects of the soul which concern behavior: passions, faculties, and states of character. By passions Aristotle

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<sup>1</sup>Nic Eth R. vi. 1. 1139<sup>a</sup> 6-9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., i. 13. 1102<sup>b</sup> 30-33.

<sup>3</sup>William David Ross, Aristotle (2d. ed., rev.; London: Methuen, 1949), p. 192.

<sup>4</sup>Nic Eth R. i. 13. 1103<sup>a</sup> 1-3.

<sup>5</sup>De An S. i. 3. 407<sup>b</sup> 25.

means the desires and emotions, such as

anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling;  
 . . . and in general the feelings that are accompanied  
 by pleasure and pain; by faculties the things in virtue  
 of which we are said to be capable of feeling these,  
 e.g. of becoming angry or being pained or feeling pity;  
 by states of character things in virtue of which we  
 feel it violently, or too weakly, and well if we feel it  
 moderately; . . .<sup>1</sup>

It may be sufficient to say here that a faculty may be re-  
 garded as an inborn or instinctual tendency to have a par-  
 ticular desire. A longer discussion of passions and states  
 of character is needed in order to understand the process of  
 human behavior.

Desire.--According to Aristotle, appetite is the genus  
 of which desire, passion, and wish are species.<sup>2</sup> An analy-  
 sis of desire and its relation to the feelings of pleasure  
 and pain will help to explain how action originates.

Aristotle believes that because people have sensation,  
 they have the capacity for pleasure and pain and, therefore,  
 desire. Through sensation people have an awareness of  
 objects. When the objects appear pleasant or good, people  
 react to them affirmatively by pursuing them; when they  
 appear painful or evil, people react to them negatively by  
 avoiding them,<sup>3</sup> and "this is what constitutes desire and

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<sup>1</sup>Nic Eth R. ii. 5. 1105<sup>b</sup> 20-29.

<sup>2</sup>De An S. ii. 3. 414<sup>b</sup> 2.

<sup>3</sup>Idid., ii. 3. 414<sup>b</sup> 1-5.

avoidance."<sup>1</sup> Not only does the prospect of pleasure evoke desire, but also, pleasure accompanies and completes the ensuing activity to which desire leads.

Some desires may be irrational while others may be associated with reason. The irrational may include "those known as 'natural'; for instance, those originating in the body, . . ."<sup>2</sup> These may include "desires connected with taste and sex and the sensations of touch in general . . ."<sup>3</sup> Rational desires are those which people have when they believe things should be pursued either because other people have told them that these things are good or because their own reason tells them so.<sup>4</sup>

Emotion. Appetite is the genus not only of desire but also of passion and wish. In his works Aristotle uses the word "passion" to mean both desire and emotion.<sup>5</sup> Since desire has already been discussed, passion here will be taken to mean emotion, and its relation to behavior will be examined. First, he explains that

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, "De Anima" ("On the Soul"), trans. Philip Wheelwright, Aristotle (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1951), iii. 7. p. 149. [Hereafter cited as De An W<sub>2</sub>].

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, "Rhetorica" ("Rhetoric"), trans. W. Rhys Roberts, The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), ii. 7. 1370<sup>a</sup> 20. [Hereafter cited as Rhet.].

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., ii. 7. 1370<sup>a</sup> 24-25.      <sup>4</sup> Ibid., 25-28.

<sup>5</sup> Nic Eth R. i. 5. 1103<sup>a</sup> 3-6; viii. 3. 1147<sup>a</sup> 15.

the Emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgements, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure. Such are anger, pity, fear and the like, with their opposites.<sup>1</sup>

Emotions too may move one to action. For example, anger "springs to take revenge."<sup>2</sup> As with desires, it is pleasures and pains that evoke emotions causing one to act. With anger there is pain because one has been insulted or slighted.<sup>3</sup> The pleasure in revenge evokes the action to the extent that angry people enjoy the prospect of getting revenge.<sup>4</sup>

Desire and emotion seem to have similar meanings in Aristotle's works. One commentator, A. K. Griffin, asks: "Why then does Aristotle not say clearly that emotions are desires?"<sup>5</sup> The reason Griffin gives is that Aristotle always has in mind the affective content of an emotion over and above the mere desire for a certain object. An emotion is to him a desire plus that certain something which in each case makes it fear, hate, love, or some other individual emotion.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps Griffin's explanation is a useful way of distinguishing between the two. For example, one could say, in accordance with Griffin's statement, that desire for

<sup>1</sup>Rhet. ii. 1. 1378<sup>a</sup> 20-22.

<sup>2</sup>Nic Eth R. vii. 6. 1149<sup>a</sup> 31. <sup>3</sup>Ibid. 32.

<sup>4</sup>Rhet. ii. 2. 1378<sup>a</sup> 1-2.

<sup>5</sup>A. K. Griffin, Aristotle's Psychology of Conduct (London: Williams and Norgate Ltd, 1951), p. 26.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

revenge is evoked when the prospect of pleasure in revenge arouses the desire. The affective side of this desire could be called the emotion of anger. Whether Griffin's explanation can be applied to all the desires and emotions which Aristotle discusses is questionable. At any rate, it seems sufficient here to know that both desires and emotions are stimulated by pleasures and pains, and that once stimulated, the emotions and desires lead the organism to respond through activity to attain the pleasure and to avoid the pain.

Imagination.—Aristotle explains behavior also by reference to imagination. He says that what evokes appetite is the realizable good. What at once moves and is moved is the faculty of appetite (for it is both stimulated by the object and at the same time moves the individual to fulfill the desire), and that which is in motion is the animal.<sup>1</sup> Of the object of appetite which originates movement, Aristotle says that "this object may be either the real or the apparent good."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, that object which arouses appetite must be a good that can be brought into being by action, and only what can be otherwise than it is can thus be brought into being.<sup>3</sup>

Aristotle's explanation of the object which stimulates

<sup>1</sup>De An S. iii. 10. 433<sup>b</sup> 16-19.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 433<sup>a</sup> 27.

<sup>3</sup>De An W. iii. 8. p. 149-150.

appetite seems to suggest that the object must be a physical one present at the time the desire is evoked. However, the desire for food may occur when no food is present stimulating the appetite to seek food. Perhaps Aristotle should say that some desires are stimulated by biological causes without an object being present, but that the desire for a specific type of food may occur only when the food is present physically or in the imagination. One may imagine a particular type of food that one remembers having had or anticipates having in the future, thus stimulating the appetite for it.

In fact, Aristotle holds that all desire presupposes imagination. An individual is "not capable of appetite without possessing imagination . . ." <sup>1</sup> Of course, imagination without appetite would not lead to movement. <sup>2</sup> Yet, although desire must be present when imagination leads to movement, there seems to be no reason why the physical object must also be present. Aristotle himself says that not only do sensations "determine for the individual its objects of pursuit and avoidance, but . . . when the mind is wholly preoccupied with its mental images, it may likewise be moved to action." <sup>3</sup> Aristotle says further that pleasure may not only be "present and perceived, . . ." but

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., iii. 20. 435<sup>a</sup> 28-29.      <sup>2</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., iii. 8. p. 149-150.

also "past and remembered, or future and expected, . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Imagination is not explained very clearly by Aristotle. He does say that all imagination is either calculative or sensitive<sup>2</sup> and that when imagination occurs, one can call up a picture or image.<sup>3</sup> Although he does not really describe calculative or sensitive imagination, maybe he means by the sensitive type, imagination of a pleasure whose source is entirely in the body, and by the former, imagination of a good or pleasure to be attained which involves a rational concept.

#### The Formation of Habits and States of Character

It has been said so far that people have innate capacities to feel certain desires and emotions. These, when aroused by the pleasure and pain related to objects, cause the living being to respond. Now it is natural for the same desires to recur. For example, since humans will always have a need for nourishment, the natural desire of hunger will recur. Certain ways of satisfying these same desires become habitual because it is pleasant to do the same things. Because of the frequency with which habitual events recur, they are like natural events which happen always.<sup>4</sup>

From the habits people form come the types of charac-

<sup>1</sup>Rhet. i. 11. 1370<sup>a</sup> 33-34.

<sup>2</sup>De An S. 111. 10. 43<sup>b</sup> 30. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 3. 427<sup>b</sup> 19.

<sup>4</sup>Rhet. i. 11. 1370<sup>a</sup> 6-9.

ters they become. According to Aristotle:

This is why the activities we exhibit must be of a certain kind; it is because the states of character correspond to the differences between these. It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference.<sup>1</sup>

So, for example, it is by doing just acts that people become just.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it is at a young age that habits start to form. "In children may be observed the traces and seeds of what will one day be settled psychological habits; . . ."<sup>3</sup>

There are several influences upon the development of habits. First, there are certain instincts implanted in people by nature. For example, "from the very moment of birth we are just or fitted for self-control or brave or have the other moral qualities; . . ."<sup>4</sup> In other words, man has a natural virtue in the moral part of him.<sup>5</sup> By this Aristotle seems to mean that humans at birth have tendencies which may be developed into qualities of justice, self-control, courage, or the other moral attributes. Furthermore, "the productions of nature have an innate tendency in the direction of which they are capable, . . ."<sup>6</sup> Yet, some people

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<sup>1</sup>Nic Eth R. 11. 1. 1103<sup>b</sup> 22-26.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1.

<sup>3</sup>Aristotle, "Historia Animalium" ("The History of Animals"), trans. D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), viii. 1. 583<sup>a</sup> 32.

<sup>4</sup>Nic Eth R. vi. 13. 1144<sup>b</sup> 5-6.    <sup>5</sup>Ibid., 15-17.

<sup>6</sup>Nic Eth T. 1. 8. p. 44.

are born with strong tendencies to develop bad characters.<sup>1</sup> Other basic capacities, such as the desire of hunger and the emotions of anger, pity, fear, kindness, and the like, have already been mentioned.

Besides these innate capacities and instincts, climate, geography, race, family heredity, and custom influence the types of character which people will develop according to Aristotle. As for climate and race, some examples of Aristotle's views are as follows.

Those who live in a cold climate and in Europe are full of spirit, but wanting in intelligence and skill; . . .<sup>2</sup>

The natives of Asia are intelligent and inventive, but are wanting in spirit, . . .<sup>3</sup>

The Hellenic race, which is situated between them, is likewise intermediate in character, being high-spirited and also intelligent.<sup>4</sup>

As for family heredity, Aristotle says that good fathers are likely to have good sons.<sup>5</sup> Finally, as for custom, Aristotle remarks that people learn certain habits through custom, some of which would seem brutish to people in other cultures.<sup>6</sup>

People develop the habits of their families and societies because they are born with the instinct to imitate and

<sup>1</sup>Nic Eth R. vii. 5. 1148<sup>b</sup> 17.

<sup>2</sup>Pol. vii. 7. 1327<sup>b</sup> 24-25. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 29-31. <sup>5</sup>Rhet. i. 9. 1367<sup>b</sup> 29-30.

<sup>6</sup>Nic Eth R. vii. 5. 1148<sup>b</sup> 27.

learn. The instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, and it is through imitation that man learns his earliest lessons.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, "children start with a natural affection and disposition to obey."<sup>2</sup> Obviously, then, the immediate members of their families have a great influence on the habits they develop. Also, the customs of the society in general are imitated and learned.

In addition, the influences of formal education and the laws which control the education and customs of the society affect the formation of habits. As for education, Aristotle believes that all men by nature desire to learn<sup>3</sup> and find it pleasant to learn.<sup>4</sup> If this basic desire to learn is used to good advantage through proper training and education, the individual will form good habits.<sup>5</sup> The proper education would include being brought up from our youth "so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things we ought; . . ."<sup>6</sup>

However, the laws of society will affect the type of education its members will receive. "It is difficult to get from youth up a right training for virtue if one has not

<sup>1</sup>Aristotle, "De Poetica" ("On Poetry"), trans. S. H. Butcher, *On Poetry and Music*, ed. Milton C. Nahm (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1959), A. 4. 1448<sup>b</sup> 5-10.

<sup>2</sup>Nic Eth R. x. 9. 1180<sup>b</sup> 6-7. <sup>3</sup>Met. i. 1. 980<sup>a</sup> 22.

<sup>4</sup>Phet. i. 2. 1371<sup>a</sup> 31-34. <sup>5</sup>Nic Eth R. x. 9. 1180<sup>a</sup> 15.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., ii. 3. 1104<sup>b</sup> 12-13.

been brought up under the right laws; . . .<sup>1</sup> It is through the punishments and penalties that the laws provide that they affect the training people will receive.

With the help of all these influences and others, people tend to form certain habits from childhood. At this point, if nothing further were said, it would seem that Aristotle thinks that people have no freedom or rational control in forming their own characters. For example, certain desires and emotions are instinctual, meaning that the capacity to have them is implanted in people by nature; they are evoked by certain pleasures and pains; and the formation of habits of response is influenced by race, climate, geography, family upbringing, custom, education, laws, and other forces. However, Aristotle does speak of some actions as voluntary and done through choice. Furthermore, he praises and blames people for the sorts of character they develop.<sup>2</sup> It is at this point, then, that an explanation of the process of action must be completed. This explanation will entail a discussion of the role of practical reason and of wish in behavior.

#### Voluntary Actions

Aristotle distinguishes between voluntary and involun-

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., x. 9. 1179<sup>b</sup> 31-32.

<sup>2</sup> Nic Eth A. i. 7. 1027<sup>b</sup> 21-22; ii. 5. 1106<sup>a</sup> 1-2; 9. 1109<sup>b</sup> 17-19; iii. 1. 1109<sup>b</sup> 1-2; 5. 1114<sup>a</sup> 22-31.

tary actions; the latter include those due to chance, necessity, compulsion, and nature.<sup>1</sup> Some acts done in ignorance also are called involuntary. However, the specific type of ignorance involved will be discussed later in relation to moral and immoral actions.

All actions that are due to a man himself and caused by himself are due either to habit or to rational or irrational craving. Rational craving is a craving for good, i.e., a wish--nobody wishes for anything unless he thinks it good. Irrational craving is twofold, viz. anger and appetite.<sup>2</sup>

Since desire and emotion have already been discussed, wish and the role of reason and of deliberation will now be considered.

Choice.--Of the voluntary actions "we do some by choice, others not by choice; by choice those which we do after deliberation, not by choice those which we do without previous deliberation."<sup>3</sup> Thus, the sphere of voluntary actions extends more widely than the sphere of actions in which choice is present. Children and the lower animals act voluntarily but not by choice. They often act on the spur of the moment without the use of reason and thought, for in them reason is not present or not yet developed. However, although acts done on the spur of the moment are voluntary, they are not chosen.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Rhet. i. 10. 1368<sup>b</sup> 33-35.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1369<sup>a</sup> 1-4.

<sup>3</sup>Nic Eth R. v, 8. 1135<sup>b</sup> 9-12.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 111. 2. 1111<sup>b</sup> 7-9.

Since choice seems to be what has been decided on by previous deliberation, the latter is an important part of actions done through choice. Of deliberation Aristotle says that people do not deliberate about what is caused by nature, necessity, or chance. They deliberate only about what can be brought about by their own efforts.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, they deliberate not about ends but about means. For example, a doctor does not deliberate whether he shall heal. He assumes that health is the end to be attained and considers by what means it is to be attained.<sup>2</sup> Thus, since what has been decided upon as a result of deliberation is the object of choice, choice is "deliberate desire of things in our own power; . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Wish.--It is by restricting choice to means that Aristotle distinguishes choice from wish. "Wish relates rather to the end, choice to the means; for instance, we wish to be healthy, but we choose the acts which will make us healthy, . . ."<sup>4</sup> Also, wish may relate to impossibles, but as has already been stated, one chooses only the things he thinks could be brought about by his own efforts. As for the object of wish, it is what one rationally thinks is good, for, as it was previously stated, no one wishes for anything unless he thinks it is good. The object of wish

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3. 1112<sup>a</sup> 30.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1112<sup>b</sup> 15-16.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1113<sup>a</sup> 11-12.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1111<sup>b</sup> 27-28.

may be what is really good or only the apparent good, but the good man will wish for what is really good.<sup>1</sup>

According to Aristotle, "when movement is produced according to calculation it is also according to wish), . . ."2

In reference to calculation, Aristotle says that it refers to the means. Mind practical is that "which calculates means to an end, . . ."3 It seems, then, that calculation refers also to choice for choice is concerned with means. Since Aristotle says that whatever is produced according to calculation is also according to wish, he must mean that choice involves wish. In other words, wish supplies the end which choice calculates to attain.

Now wish is a form of appetite as has already been stated. Also, choice too must be considered part of appetite by Aristotle, for he has called choice "deliberate desire." It has already been explained that desire and emotion which originate action are also forms of appetite, so "that which originates movement must be specifically one, viz. the faculty of appetite as such . . ."4

Free will.--Since choice has to do with deliberation, and the latter occurs only in people whose reason is sufficiently developed, choice will occur only in mature people.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4. 1113<sup>a</sup> 24-28.

<sup>2</sup>De An S. 111. 10. 433<sup>a</sup> 23-25.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 433<sup>b</sup> 11-12.

Since wish was called rational craving, it too will occur only in people in whom reason is developed, at least in so far as it is a craving for the real good. Choice, which involves wish, is probably the nearest to what may be considered free will in Aristotle's works. People who act with choice are probably acting freely in the sense that they are rationally and purposefully controlling what they do. As was said before, children, in whom reason is not yet developed, are incapable of deliberation or choice. Yet, their actions are voluntary in the sense that they stem from themselves. However, their actions do not originate from the rational part of their natures, and thus, can not really be said to be in their free, conscious, and purposeful control.

Some problems in Aristotle's discussion of wish and choice.--Since children act without choice, it must be possible, then, that appetite can originate movement without choice or calculation in accordance with desire and emotion. Furthermore, Aristotle states that "appetite can originate movement contrary to calculation, . . ." <sup>1</sup> Again, in On the Soul he says: "Further, even when the mind does command and thought bids us pursue or avoid something, sometimes no movement is produced; we act in accordance with desire, . . ." <sup>2</sup> Therefore, appetite without, or contrary to, wish and choice

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 433<sup>a</sup> 25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1-4.

can cause action, but when action is caused by wish and choice, such action is also caused by appetite, for wish and choice are forms of appetite.

However, contrary to what he said of appetite originating action in all cases, Aristotle then speaks of mind causing action against appetite. He says in On the Soul:

Appetite too is incompetent to account fully for movement; for those who successfully resist temptation have appetite and desire and yet follow mind and refuse to enact that for which they have appetite.<sup>1</sup>

Again, "the continent man on the contrary acts with choice, but not with appetite."<sup>2</sup> Also, "appetite is contrary to choice, . . ."<sup>3</sup>

It would seem, then, that this is an inconsistency in Aristotle's thought, for while he said appetite in all cases originates movement, here he says that mind and choice can originate movement against appetite. Perhaps he uses appetite here to mean only desire or emotion. In any case, his definitions of choice, wish, and appetite and their relations to each other need to be clarified. Choice especially seems to need clarification. In reference to choice Ross rightly says:

His definition of it as deliberate desire errs by treating it as one kind of desire, while it plainly is not, but his statement that it may be called either desireful reason or reasonable desire implies that desire is not its genus, that it is a new thing . . ."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 6-8.      <sup>2</sup> Nic Eth R. iii. 2. 1111<sup>b</sup> 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 15.      <sup>4</sup> Ross, Aristotle, p. 200.

There is another problem in relation to choice. To state this problem will involve an elaboration of how Aristotle describes practical reason working in action. He says that both mind and appetite originate movement, appetite stimulating the practical mind to calculate the means to the desired end.<sup>1</sup> Now it seems as though this process of practical thinking refers to choice because both practical thinking and choice are related to the means to the end which appetite desires. This process of practical thinking is further described as follows. There is a universal and particular premise.

The first tells us that such and such kind of man should do such and such kind of act, and the second that this is an act of the kind meant, and if a person of the type intended), it is the latter that really originates movement, not the universal; or rather it is both, but the one does so while it remains in a state of mind like rest, while the other partakes in the movement.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, the last step of the practical mind's thinking process is identical with the movement of the organism.<sup>3</sup> When the conclusion of the syllogism is not identical with the action, then there is something preventing the person from acting.<sup>4</sup> External causes of involuntary behavior were already mentioned. Internal causes preventing the action will be discussed in relation to incontinence.

<sup>1</sup>De An S. 111. 10. 433<sup>a</sup> 13-21.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 11. 434<sup>a</sup> 16-23. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 10. 433<sup>a</sup> 16-17.

<sup>4</sup>Nic Eth R. vii. 3. 1147<sup>a</sup> 30-31.

It would seem, then, as one writer, Clarence Shute, says, that the practical mind's "purpose is to be of service, . . . it is simultaneously stimulated to seek means appropriate to satisfy desire."<sup>1</sup> So the above process of practical thinking seems to be a description of how choice works. Yet, it seems also that Aristotle believes that the process of practical thinking is present when all action occurs. For example, Aristotle states: "There is a justification for regarding these two as the sources of movement, i.e. appetite and practical thought; . . ."<sup>2</sup> However, Aristotle has said that choice does not occur in people whose reason is underdeveloped. It is unclear, then, whether the above process is a description of the deliberation involved in choice, and if not, whether it can occur without choice. In addition, it may be questioned whether this process occurs consciously or at all in every action.

Shute explains that the process of the practical mind occurs in all behavior and is not limited merely to actions which are chosen. The practical syllogism is a way of schematizing the process of action. When it occurs in actions which are not chosen, it may take the following form. One may have a desire to eat and the knowledge that a cer-

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<sup>1</sup>Clarence Shute, The Psychology of Aristotle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>De An S. iii. 10. 433<sup>a</sup> 17-18.

tain type of food is tasty. Perception of particular food of this type or imagination of it will lead to the action of eating it if nothing prevents one from acting.<sup>1</sup> If one eats to satisfy the appetite knowing that one should not, then such an action would not be chosen. However, to apply this schema of the practical mind to all actions seems artificial. Especially in regard to actions done unreflectively through habit, it would seem that this process of the practical mind would not apply.

The relation of wish and choice to pleasure and pain must also be discussed, for pleasure and pain have already been seen to form an important part of that behavior which is originated by emotions and desires. However, since choice and wish will be seen to be a significant part of virtue, the relation of wish and choice to pleasure and pain will be postponed until the discussion of virtue. This will also help to explain the difference between the good or pleasure desired by wish and that desired by the irrational appetite.

There is also need to clarify the relation of choice to the formation of habits. However, since the concern here is especially man's capacity for forming virtuous habits and the universality of this capacity, this discussion too is best postponed until after a consideration of Aristotle's definition of virtue and how it is based on his psychology.

<sup>1</sup>Shute, p. 64-66.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DESCRIPTION OF VIRTUE

In this chapter the basis of virtue in human nature will be examined. Aristotle's view of the final end of man as happiness and the latter's basis in the fulfillment of man's proper function will be described. This fulfillment of man's proper function, which Aristotle calls man's good or virtue, will be related to Aristotle's view of man as a rational being. Then, the two types of virtue corresponding to the perfection of two parts of the soul will be discussed. Next, the relation of happiness and virtue to goods outside man's character will be considered, as well as some questions concerning happiness as the final end. Another topic to be considered will be the influences upon the development of virtuous habits. This will entail an examination of the relation of virtue to pleasure and pain. Virtue as voluntary action and its relation to choice will then be considered, as well as actions which may be considered involuntary. Finally, the role of practical wisdom in virtuous behavior will be examined.

#### The Basis of Virtue in Human Nature

The final end. -- In order to define virtue, Aristotle

refers to human nature and its final end. As previously mentioned in relation to Aristotle's teleological concept of nature, every being, including man, aims at some end. This end may also be described as the being's good.<sup>1</sup> In man, therefore, all his consciously directed activities are aimed at some end.<sup>2</sup> As it has been seen, whether man acts according to rational or irrational desire, he acts to achieve some end which is a real or apparent good.

Now some ends are means to others, while some are pursued for their own sakes. However, something which is always chosen for its own sake, and never as the means to something else, is a final end.<sup>3</sup> In man the special end for the sake of which all his conscious activities are done is his final end. It is an end which man seeks as a moral agent. Aristotle says that it is obvious that there must be such an end if "we are not to go on choosing one act for the sake of another . . . with the result that desire will be frustrated and ineffectual. . . ." <sup>4</sup> Aristotle calls this final end the "absolutely good."<sup>5</sup>

The absolutely good or the final end is an end which is pursued not only for its own sake, but it is also self-sufficient. By the latter, Aristotle means sufficient in

<sup>1</sup>Aristotle, "Ethica Nicomachea" ("Nicomachean Ethics"), trans. J. A. K. Thomson (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1959), 1. 7. p. 36. [Hereafter cited as *Nic Eth T<sub>n</sub>*].

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 2. p. 26.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

itself to make life desirable and lacking in nothing.<sup>1</sup> According to Aristotle the final end at which man aims, which is both pursued for its own sake and is self-sufficient, is happiness.<sup>2</sup>

Happiness as virtuous activity.—In order to clarify the meaning of happiness, the final end or good for man, Aristotle examines the function of man. He looks to man's function because in his opinion "the good and the 'well' is thought to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function."<sup>3</sup> Now it has already been seen that man shares the functions of the vegetative and sensitive parts of the soul with other living beings. So it is the activity of reason alone, as previously explained, which is man's characteristically human function. Man is to live a life involving activities of the soul implying a rational principle.<sup>4</sup> The function of a good man is to perform such activities well.<sup>5</sup> In other words, human good is an activity of the soul in accordance with rational excellence, virtue, and if there is more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete.<sup>6</sup> This end for man, virtuous activity, is compatible with what was said about man's development of his soul as the fulfillment of

<sup>1</sup>Nic Eth R. 1. 7. 1097<sup>b</sup> 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1. 4. 1095<sup>a</sup> 13-20. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 7. 1097<sup>b</sup> 27-29.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 1098<sup>a</sup> 12-13. <sup>5</sup>Ibid., 15-16. <sup>6</sup>Ibid., 16-17.

his potentiality as a human being. Since the rational part of the soul is the most human part of man, according to Aristotle, man will be fulfilling the end for which nature intended him when he leads a rational life. As happiness is the supreme end or good at which man aims, and man's good resides in his function, when man fulfills his function or potentiality through virtues or excellences of reason, this will result in his happiness.

The word "happiness" may be somewhat misleading because to some it may imply pleasure. While Aristotle does believe that pleasure accompanies happiness,<sup>1</sup> he does not equate the two. In reference to this, Ross explains:

The conventional translation 'happiness' is unsuitable in the Ethics; for whereas 'happiness' means a state of feeling, differing from 'pleasure' only by its suggestion of permanence, depth, and serenity, Aristotle insists that happiness is a kind of activity; that it is not any kind of pleasure though pleasure naturally accompanies it.<sup>2</sup>

That Aristotle does not believe happiness to be a state of mind or feeling, but rather stresses it as an activity, is seen in his emphasis on results. In this connection, he mentions that the moral state of mind may exist without any good results being produced as in a man who is asleep. However, one who has the activity will necessarily be acting and acting well.<sup>3</sup> So happiness exists in the activity in.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 8. 1099<sup>a</sup> 6-30.    <sup>2</sup>Ross, Aristotle, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup>Nic Eth R. 1. 8. 1098<sup>b</sup> 32-1099<sup>a</sup> 3.

accordance with the most perfect virtue of which man is capable.

Since both the appetitive and intellectual parts of the soul may have a rational principle, and since reason is peculiar to man alone, these two parts of the soul will have specifically human excellences or virtues: Aristotle calls virtues of the appetitive part of the soul virtues of character or moral virtues; virtues of the intellect itself, he calls intellectual virtues.<sup>1</sup>

Moral virtue and the mean.—The virtue of the appetitive part of the soul will consist in a certain relationship between irrational desire and reason. This relationship will entail the passions obeying reason, for it is the existence of the rational principle as authoritative in the appetitive part of the soul that enables this part of the soul to have virtue. When man's appetite obeys reason, there will then exist a right proportion between passion and reason, and in this sense, the parts of the soul will be in harmony. To explain what is meant by right proportion, it is necessary to examine Aristotle's view of the mean.

According to Aristotle every art does its work well by looking to the intermediate as a standard. Virtue, which is even more exact, is better than an art and must, then, also aim at the intermediate. In actions involving passion, with which moral virtue is concerned, there are excesses, defects,

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6. 1138<sup>b</sup> 35-36.

and intermediates.<sup>1</sup> Acting in accordance with the intermediate means to "feel at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, . . ."<sup>2</sup> The intermediate is also called the mean by Aristotle, and it is determined by a rational principle in accordance with the right rule.<sup>3</sup> To state his full definition of virtue:

Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.<sup>4</sup>

Vice, then, will be what falls short of or exceeds what is right in actions of the appetite.<sup>5</sup>

Two more points may be mentioned in reference to moral virtue. First, although moral virtue consists in the appetite acting in accordance with a mean determined by reason, in relation to what is best and right, moral virtue is an extreme.<sup>6</sup> Second, some actions are bad in themselves, such as murder and theft, and, therefore, of these actions there are no means. To state this in another way, there can be no mean of what is already an extreme or deficiency, murder and theft being extremes of the passions involved in justice.<sup>7</sup>

Two moral virtues will be briefly described for pur-

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 11. 6. 1106<sup>b</sup> 8-15.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 20-22.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 2. 1103<sup>b</sup> 31-32.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6. 1107<sup>a</sup> 1-2.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 4-5.    <sup>6</sup>Ibid., 6-8.    <sup>7</sup>Ibid., 25.

poses of illustrating Aristotle's view of the mean. First, the virtue of courage is the mean with regard to feelings of fear and confidence. People who exceed in fearlessness have no name as this extreme is rare. They who exceed in confidence are rash, while they who fall short in confidence and exceed in fear are cowards.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle applies the virtue of courage to behavior in warfare rather than to other areas of behavior in which feelings of fear and confidence would be relevant. Another virtue is temperance which is the mean with regard to the bodily pleasures of food, drink, and sexual intercourse. The person who falls short is insensible, while he who exceeds is self-indulgent.<sup>2</sup>

Intellectual virtue and wisdom.—Intellectual virtues are excellences of the strictly rational part of the soul and include, for example, art, scientific knowledge, and practical wisdom. The intellectual virtue, wisdom or contemplation, is the highest virtue man can have. This is the case because it is the virtue of the highest, most divine part of man, his speculative reason. Furthermore, contemplation is the most continuous, least tiring activity. The activity of wisdom is the most pleasant of virtuous activities, the pleasure involved being the most pure and enduring. Finally, contemplative activity is done for its own sake and is the most self-sufficient of all the virtues.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 7. 1107<sup>b</sup> 1-3.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 111. 2. 1118<sup>b</sup> 15-16.

For example, while courageous action may be done to gain peace and honour, contemplation depends only on the person himself.<sup>1</sup>

Contemplation is also the most divine and honorable activity because this is the activity "which it would be most meet for God to have . . ."<sup>2</sup> This virtue even has the most divine objects. It has to do with first principles and causes, and since God is a first principle, the person of wisdom contemplates God.<sup>3</sup> In fact, wisdom is such an elevated virtue, which exists only for its own sake, that Aristotle says: "The possession of it might be justly regarded as beyond human power; for in many ways human nature is in bondage, . . ."<sup>4</sup> Since contemplation is the most perfect virtue of which man is capable, happiness consists in the activity of contemplation.

#### The Relation of Happiness to External Goods

Although Aristotle says that happiness depends on man's inner contemplative activity, he adds that external goods are also necessary to happiness. Aristotle holds that he who is happy is sufficiently equipped with external goods throughout his life.<sup>5</sup> He states this view not only in the Ethics but also in the Politics. In the latter, Aristotle

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., x. 7. 1177<sup>a</sup> 20-1177<sup>b</sup> 4.   <sup>2</sup>Met. i. 2. 983<sup>a</sup> 7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 8-9; i. 981<sup>b</sup> 27.   <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2. 982<sup>b</sup> 28-29.

<sup>5</sup>Nic. Eth. R. i. 10. 1101<sup>a</sup> 15-17.

explains that there are three classes of goods: external goods, goods of the body, and goods of the soul and that the happy man must have all three.<sup>1</sup>

However, Aristotle's attitude toward the importance of external goods to happiness seems somewhat ambiguous. For example, he says of great events: "If they turn out ill they crush and maim happiness; . . ."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, he says that

the man who is truly good and wise, we think, bears all the chances of life becomingly and always makes the best of circumstances, . . .<sup>3</sup>

And if this is the case, the happy man can never become miserable. . . .<sup>4</sup>

#### The Noble as the Final End

Not only does his attitude toward external goods seem unclear, but also Aristotle seems to shift his emphasis from being virtuous for the sake of happiness as the final end to being virtuous for itself or for the sake of the noble as the final end. In fact, he identifies virtue with the noble in the Rhetoric and says that the latter is desirable for its own sake.

The Noble is that which is both desirable for its own sake and also worthy of praise; or that which is good and also pleasant because good. If this is a true

<sup>1</sup>Pol. vii. 1. 1323<sup>a</sup> 27-34.

<sup>2</sup>Nic Eth R. 1. 10. 1100<sup>b</sup> 28-29.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1100<sup>b</sup> 35-1101<sup>a</sup> 2.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6.

definition of the Noble, it follows that virtue must be noble since it is both a good thing and also praise-worthy.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, in the Ethics he says that the virtuous man will sacrifice certain elements of happiness for the sake of honor or nobility. For example, he says that one can not be happy in death, and yet, the man who possesses courage will be "fearless in face of a noble death, . . ." <sup>2</sup> Again, he states that the brave man will face certain things "for honor's sake; for this is the end of virtue." <sup>3</sup>

Death and wounds will be painful to the brave man against his will, but he will face them because it is noble to do so. . . . And the more he is possessed of virtue in its entirety and the happier he is, the more he will be pained at the thought of death. . . . But he is none the less brave . . . <sup>4</sup>

It seems that Aristotle is saying here that the brave man is not virtuous to be happy, but virtuous because it is a final good in itself. Of course, the brave man may do virtuous acts solely for the sake of the honor that may be bestowed upon him. In other words, virtue in this case would not fit the requirements for the final end, for it would not be chosen for its own sake, and its exercise would rely on external circumstances. Nevertheless, Aristotle seems to imply that to be morally virtuous is good in itself even if it depends on external circumstances. For example, he seems to

<sup>1</sup>Rhet. 1. 9. 1366<sup>a</sup> 33-36.

<sup>2</sup>Nic Eth R. 111. 6. 1115<sup>a</sup> 33.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 7. 1115<sup>b</sup> 13-14. <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 9. 1117<sup>b</sup> 7-13.

imply that courage is good in itself even though it is dependent on external circumstances. Furthermore, he seems to imply that moral virtue and happiness may not entail one another and that moral virtue is at least equal to happiness in worth when he says that the brave man will be ready to sacrifice elements of happiness, including his life, in order to do what is noble. Perhaps the shift in emphasis should not be overemphasized, but throughout the Ethics, remarks such as those cited seem to indicate that Aristotle holds that the noble is good in itself, even if happiness and the pleasure it entails must be sacrificed.

In contrast to the shift in emphasis whereby the noble seems good in itself and not necessarily entailing happiness, Aristotle, in some cases, does indicate also that the exercise of virtue does not involve happiness except insofar as it accompanies the virtuous activity at its completion.<sup>1</sup> So the brave man, for example, may sacrifice immediate pleasure for the sake of better future pleasure. Moreover, Aristotle seems to indicate that virtuous actions done for the sake of the noble do involve a higher kind of pleasure.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Aristotle means, then, that virtue, especially moral virtue, is done for the sake of happiness and that when certain elements of happiness, such as pleasure, are sacrificed for the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., x. 5. 1175<sup>b</sup> 24-30; 1176<sup>a</sup> 26-29.

sake of the noble, it is because a higher type of pleasure will ensue. Furthermore, he seems to hold that simply because noble activities are good, this makes them pleasant. This is seen when he says, for example; "The Noble is . . . that which is both good and also pleasant because good."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, perhaps even if certain elements of happiness are sacrificed, the very fact that the action was good at least makes it pleasant. However, these remarks do not seem to explain away completely the shift in emphasis that was noted. Aristotle does seem to view moral virtue as a good in itself and as a final end. The brave man, for example, will not gain higher pleasure and happiness if he loses his life for the sake of the noble.

One aspect of Aristotle's view of happiness is certain. He emphasizes that it is a virtuous character and activity which are most important to happiness. Without a virtuous character, external goods alone are not sufficient to give happiness. People who possess a great amount of external goods, but are deficient in higher inner qualities, are not as happy, according to Aristotle, as those who possess external goods in a moderate amount, but have highly cultivated minds and characters.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Development of a Virtuous State of Character

Since happiness depends on a highly cultivated mind and

<sup>1</sup>Rhet. i, 9. 1366<sup>a</sup> 33-35.    <sup>2</sup>Pol. vii. 1. 1323<sup>b</sup> 1-6.

character, and since a moral state of character in itself seems to be valuable in Aristotle's opinion, the development of such a virtuous state of character must be considered. The first criterion for virtue is that "one must be born a man and not some other animal; so, too, he must have a certain character both of body and soul."<sup>1</sup> In other words, people are adapted by nature for the development of virtue.<sup>2</sup> In the first chapter, it was seen also that an instinct for virtue is implanted in man by nature.

Proper upbringing and education. --Next, according to Aristotle moral virtue is developed mostly through the formation of proper habits, while intellectual virtue owes its birth and growth mainly to formal education.<sup>3</sup> As other habits, moral habits are developed by the repetition of similar activities. As was mentioned in Chapter I, people acquire the virtue of justice, for example, by doing just acts. Again, people become temperate by abstaining from certain bodily pleasures and, in general, by partaking in the right pleasures in the right proportion.

There is a difference between doing acts which externally resemble virtuous acts and acts done from a virtuous state of character. This is why people can become just by doing just acts and yet not already be just when these acts

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 13. 1102<sup>a</sup> 40-42.

<sup>2</sup>Nic Eth R. 11. 1. 1103<sup>a</sup> 23-25. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 14-17.

are first performed. The difference may be explained by the absence or presence of three conditions. If the agent is doing the acts from a virtuous state of character, first, he will have knowledge of what he is doing; second, he will do the acts through choice and will choose them for their own sakes; and third, his actions will proceed from a permanent disposition.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the influences upon the development of habits and states of character have been mentioned. Depending on the kind of influences involved, one will develop habits which are virtuous or vicious. Since children imitate those around them, the young should not be exposed to shameful words or actions which will only encourage them to develop shameful habits.<sup>2</sup> Generally, children should be kept strangers to all that is bad. Likewise, by being in good company, they will tend to form good habits.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of the right formal education upon the development of good habits has been previously stressed. The development of the body is prior to the intellect, the irrational to the rational. "Anger and wishing and desire are implanted in children from their birth, but reason and understanding are developed as they grow older."<sup>4</sup> There-

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4. 1105<sup>a</sup> 28-34.    <sup>2</sup>Pol. vii. 7. 1336<sup>b</sup> 5-7.

<sup>3</sup>Nic Eth R. 1. 9. 1170<sup>a</sup> 11-12.

<sup>4</sup>Pol. vii. 15. 1334<sup>b</sup> 21-23.

fore, although moral habits do not depend mainly on formal schooling for their development, in so far as they do, education should be aimed at their development before that of the intellectual virtues.<sup>1</sup> The proper education for the development of moral virtues may include, for example, gymnastic exercises which develop courage<sup>2</sup> and rhythm and melody in music which encourage gentleness, courage, and temperance.<sup>3</sup> Since the soul is the final end of the body, and the virtues of the intellective part the highest, the care of the appetite should be "for the sake of reason, our care of the body for the sake of the soul."<sup>4</sup> After the moral virtues, the intellectual virtues should be developed through a program of formal teaching.<sup>5</sup> Finally, as was already explained in the first chapter, the quality of the education will depend on the laws of the society which control the educational system.

The relation of pleasure and pain to education for virtue.—In the discussion of the psychology of action, it was seen that people are stimulated to action when they attempt to satisfy or attain pleasure or when they try to avoid pain or evil. Since pleasures and pains are so

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 25.   <sup>2</sup>Ibid., viii. 3. 1337<sup>b</sup> 27.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 5. 1340<sup>a</sup> 19-21.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., vii. 15. 1334<sup>b</sup> 27-28.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., ii. 1. 1103<sup>a</sup> 14-16.

closely connected to human behavior and happiness, and since a virtue, such as temperance, consists in partaking in the right pleasures in the right amounts, the young should be educated for virtue in reference to pleasure and pain, in regard both to the right amounts of pleasure and the proper ones.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, a child should be discouraged from repeating acts which attempt to attain improper pleasures. If the child is not discouraged, immoral habits will be formed. As it was explained, the most virtuous activities contained the highest pleasures; therefore, an education for virtue would involve training one to partake only in the highest pleasures. In other words, Aristotle holds that any pleasure is apprehended as an apparent good, but he does not go so far as to hold either that every pleasure is a real good or that all pleasures are equal goods. One should be taught to enjoy only the proper pleasures and to hate the others. Neither does Aristotle think, then, that all pleasures in themselves are to be repressed. Rather, certain ones should be encouraged.

Now pleasures and pains are good or bad according to whether the activities they accompany are good or bad. Therefore, it is necessary to know which activities are good or bad if one is to know which ought to be chosen and which avoided. Since each animal has a proper function or

<sup>1</sup>Nicom. Eth. R. x, l. 1172<sup>a</sup> 19-22.

activity, each has a proper pleasure. The pleasure that accompanies the activity of the happy man, the man who is fulfilling his proper function, will be the pleasure proper to man.<sup>1</sup> This will be the pleasure which accompanies the moral and intellectual virtues, especially the virtue of philosophic wisdom. Thus, the good man finds pleasure in good deeds, these being man's proper pleasures.<sup>2</sup> In fact, if there is any question as to which pleasures are best, one need only see which the best man picks. "The pleasure of the best man is the best, and springs from the noblest sources."<sup>3</sup>

Just as Aristotle does not wish to suppress pleasure and pain as such, but rather wishes to encourage them in the proper manner, neither does he condemn appetite in itself. The appetite for noble objects is praiseworthy, the appetite for base objects culpable.<sup>4</sup> When people desire in accordance with reason, appetite is good because mind is always right, but appetite in itself may err.<sup>5</sup> Aristotle seems to change this view that mind is always right as will be seen later. When people, in opposition to reason, pursue or avoid the pains they ought not or in the wrong manner or

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5. 1176<sup>a</sup> 26-29.    <sup>2</sup>Nic Eth T. 1. 8. p. 42.

<sup>3</sup>Pol. viii. 5. 1338<sup>a</sup> 8-9.

<sup>4</sup>Nic Eth R. 2. 5. 1175<sup>b</sup> 29-30.

<sup>5</sup>De An 5. iii. 10. 437<sup>b</sup> 26.

amounts, they become bad.<sup>1</sup>

From the above one can see that virtue may be defined as the kind of excellence which does what is best "with regard to pleasure and pains, and vice does the contrary."<sup>2</sup> Virtue has been described as pleasurable in itself and the sort of pleasure one should be educated to choose. However, seemingly in contradiction to his view that virtue yields the greatest pleasures, Aristotle states:

Moral excellence is concerned with pleasures and pains; it is on account of the pleasures that we do bad things, and on account of the pain that we abstain from noble ones.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps Aristotle means here what was suggested before in another context. That is, maybe he means that the virtuous person will often endure present pain and forsake immediate pleasures of the appetite for the sake of the noble end which may yield a higher, more lasting, future pleasure.

#### Virtue and Vice Voluntary

Wish and choice.--In at least three ways Aristotle stresses that people are responsible for being virtuous or evil. First, Aristotle says that "by choosing what is good or bad we are men of a certain character, . . ."<sup>4</sup> Secondly, Aristotle blames or praises people in accordance with the types of character they become. Third, Aristotle holds that

<sup>1</sup>Nic Eth R. 11, 3. 1104<sup>b</sup> 21-24.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 28-29.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 8-11.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid., iii. 2. 1112<sup>a</sup> 1-2.

moral actions are distinguished from others partly by being done from the right purpose or motive.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, moral actions are intentionally good.<sup>2</sup> Thus, virtue and vice are within one's control according to Aristotle. One is capable of choosing the pleasures one ought and avoiding the pains one ought.

According to Aristotle acting whenever appetite bids one to do so is not acting virtuously. The difference between acting solely from appetite on the one hand, and acting virtuously on the other, is the absence of reason and choice in the former. Virtues are modes of choice which involve the use of reason.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is the adult person who may be capable of virtue. Thus, when one acts according to his appetites alone, one may be said to be a slave to his passions. However, when one deliberates and chooses in each situation in accordance with rational wish or virtue, one is acting in a way which Aristotle would consider free. This may involve choosing a future pleasure which reason apprehends as good instead of an immediate pleasure of the appetite. Virtue, then, may be described as found within the realm of what may be called free choice in Aristotle's opinion. One may say that when an individual

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., viii. 13. 1163<sup>a</sup> 33-34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., i. 9. 1367<sup>b</sup> 21-22.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., viii. 13. 1163<sup>a</sup> 33-34.

is acting in accordance with his true function, in accordance with rational activity and virtue, then he is acting freely in the sense of not being a slave to appetite. Since children are not capable of reasoning, neither will they be capable of virtue and happiness.

Aristotle believes that since a virtuous action is one which is done from a virtuous state of character and is intentionally pursued because it is good, virtue necessarily involves choice. However, Aristotle says also that the existence of choice involves a moral state. An action done from choice is done from a combination of desire and reasoning with a view to an end. When reason and desire are combined in the choice of an end, the action is virtuous.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, when one acts from choice, one acts from a moral state. However, it would seem that, contrary to what Aristotle says, in some instances choice could exist without a moral state. One instance might be when one acts virtuously through choice but before virtue has become a habit or state of character.

Blameable ignorance.—In the first chapter, Aristotle was quoted as saying that everyone wishes for what he thinks is good. However, as it was explained, it is possible that what one thinks is good is not the real good, but the apparent good, or to state it in another way, it may be a positive evil. Aristotle believes that every wicked person is ignorant of

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vi. 2. 1139<sup>a</sup> 32-36.

the real good which he ought to choose. In fact, it is because of this ignorance that people are wicked. Aristotle blames people for this ignorance of the real good.<sup>1</sup> This type of ignorance, then, he does not believe is involuntary. He holds that "if each man is somehow responsible for his state of mind, he will also be himself responsible for the appearance, . . .<sup>2</sup> of what seems good to him.

There is another type of ignorance which Aristotle believes is blameable. This type is acting in ignorance due to drunkenness or rage.<sup>3</sup> A person in one of these states may act wickedly due to a forgetfulness caused by his drunkenness or rage of what is morally good.

Acting from passion.--Like acting from rage or drunkenness, acting from passion is also voluntary and hence blameable. According to Aristotle one can not be excused from base acts by saying that one was compelled by desire. Aristotle feels that it is wrong to make oneself responsible for virtue in choosing noble pleasures, and to excuse oneself from base acts by saying that one was compelled to act under the stimulus of pleasure.<sup>4</sup> To call the former virtue and to excuse the latter from vice would wrongly make noble acts voluntary and base acts involuntary.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, it would make children's acts involuntary, but children's

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 111, 1. 1110<sup>b</sup> 27-34. <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5. 1114<sup>b</sup> 1-3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 1. 1110<sup>b</sup> 24-26. <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 12-15.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 1111<sup>a</sup> 24-28.

acts were said to be voluntary even though not done through choice.

Excusable ignorance.--There is one type of act done in ignorance which Aristotle does believe is involuntary, the type of act done through ignorance of particulars. As was explained before, Aristotle holds that people are responsible for knowing what is the real good in the universal sense. For example, one should know that one ought not to kill another person for no good reason. Therefore, ignorance of the law is no excuse for wrong doing according to Aristotle. However, ignorance of the particular circumstances of the act and the objects with which it is concerned would excuse one from blame.<sup>1</sup> A person may be ignorant of the particulars in many ways. One may be ignorant of his identity (in this case he would probably be suffering from amnesia), of what he is doing, to whom or with what he is doing it, and of the result his action will cause.<sup>2</sup> For example, one may strike another in play and unintentionally harm the other person because one did not realize the strength of one's blow. Actions which are involuntary due to this type of ignorance involve pain and repentance to the agent when he learns the full details of the situation.<sup>3</sup> If the involuntary, then, is when the moving principle is outside the agent or when he is ignorant of the particulars

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1-2.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3-8.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 19-21.

of the situation, the voluntary may be summarized as occurring when the agent is the cause of the action and is aware of all the particulars of the situation.

### The Relation of Virtue to Practical Wisdom

Aristotle's definition of virtue (that is, moral virtue) has been described as a state of character concerned with the choice of a mean relative to the individual in accordance with a certain standard, a rational principle or rule, which is determined by practical wisdom.

It is necessary with regard to the state of the soul . . . that it should be determined what is the right rule and what is the standard that fixes it.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the role of practical wisdom in virtue must now be examined.

Aristotle describes practical wisdom as that virtue of the understanding which enables man to make wise decisions concerning the relation of the different pleasures and pains, goods and evils, to happiness.<sup>2</sup> This virtue involves a type of calculation or excellence in deliberation. Practical wisdom enables man to deliberate well about things which conduce to the good life.<sup>3</sup> Deliberating well, in turn, involves a certain correctness of thinking.<sup>4</sup> This

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vi. 1. 1138<sup>b</sup> 32-34.

<sup>2</sup>Rhet. i. 9. 1366<sup>b</sup> 19-22.

<sup>3</sup>Nic Eth R. vi. 5. 1140<sup>a</sup> 25-27.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 9. 1142<sup>b</sup> 8-16.

excellence of deliberation involves thinking or deliberating correctly to attain one's end. However, it also involves aiming at the right end. Therefore, the evil man may deliberate well to achieve an evil end, but this would not constitute excellence in deliberation.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it is not enough to attain the right end by the wrong means.

Aristotle says that attaining a good end by a false syllogism is incorrect deliberation.<sup>2</sup> Finally, it is not excellent deliberation if one has deliberated too long even though the right end is attained.<sup>3</sup> The proper end, means, and amount of time must be present in the deliberation which exists with practical wisdom.

When the process of calculation or deliberation was discussed in the first chapter, it was explained that behavior seemed in Aristotle's opinion to involve a syllogistic type of practical thinking. As already suggested above, the deliberation or calculation involved in practical wisdom has to do with this type of thinking. Therefore, practical wisdom is concerned with both universal and particular premises.<sup>4</sup> However, again Aristotle says that it is more important to know the particulars. To illustrate this, he discusses the importance of knowing what conduces to health. For example, a person may know that the class of food con-

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.; 17-22.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 22-25.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 7. 1141<sup>b</sup> 14-16.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 7. 1141<sup>b</sup> 14-16.

taining vitamin C is healthful. However, he may not recognize that a particular kind of food is included within the class of vitamin C food. On the other hand, the person that knows that certain food is healthful, but does not know that the class of vitamin C food of which it is a part is healthful, is in a better position to attain health than the first person who knows only the universal.

According to Aristotle in practical wisdom it is intuitive reason which "grasps the last and variable fact, i.e. the minor premiss."<sup>1</sup> In reference to this, Ross explains: "Aristotle recognizes a secondary sort of practical wisdom which knows the right thing to do without arriving at it by a process of deliberate analysis . . ."<sup>2</sup> This intuitive knowledge of particulars is not learned through formal study. The knowledge of particulars comes through experience, and thus, the young man with little experience does not usually possess practical wisdom.<sup>3</sup>

In his discussion of practical wisdom, Aristotle questions its usefulness. It has been explained that knowing what is good does not always cause one to do good. Only a virtuous state of character can ensure that one will act virtuously.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Aristotle says of the man who is

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 11. 1143<sup>b</sup> 4.    <sup>2</sup>Ross, Aristotle, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup>Nic Eth R, vi. 8. 1142<sup>a</sup> 12-15.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 12. 1145<sup>b</sup> 21-25.

not virtuous, he need not have practical wisdom to become virtuous, but rather could imitate the actions of those who do have it.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's answer to justify the usefulness of practical wisdom involves four parts. First, he says that practical wisdom is valuable simply because it is a virtuous part of the soul. It is an excellence and hence a good to be attained. Second, being a virtue, it helps constitute the happiness of the virtuous person. Third, earlier virtue was described as a choice lying in a mean determined by practical wisdom. So practical wisdom seems to be at least part of the calculation process of virtuous choice.

In fact, the existence of virtue implies practical wisdom.<sup>2</sup> For example, according to Aristotle children and brutes may have natural dispositions to be virtuous, but without practical wisdom these dispositions may not only be ineffective but also positively harmful.<sup>3</sup> When practical wisdom as a certain capacity to reason is added to natural virtue, there will be virtue in the strict sense. Furthermore, not just one virtue will be present with practical wisdom but rather all the virtues, for with the presence of the right rule which practical wisdom determines, one will always choose virtuously.<sup>4</sup> The very existence of virtue

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 29-33.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1144<sup>b</sup> 30-32.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 8-10.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 13. 1144<sup>b</sup> 35-1145<sup>a</sup> 3.

implies the presence of a faculty of reasoning and a rule which determines the means of obtaining the ends toward which a virtuous character is disposed. Thus, Aristotle's fourth way of justifying the usefulness of practical wisdom is to explain that it enables the existence of all the virtues.

Furthermore, Aristotle describes virtue as he does wish. He holds that virtue makes one aim at the right end, while practical wisdom helps one take the right means to the end.<sup>1</sup> However, practical wisdom seems to be more than the ability to achieve one's ends. Practical wisdom seems to be a combination of virtue and choice, the latter two having already been described as implying one another in Aristotle's opinion. If virtue is removed from the elements that constitute practical wisdom, what is left is not choice but rather cleverness. The latter is the faculty which enables one to achieve the end which one has set before oneself, and it may exist in an immoral person who has the talent for achieving his evil goals, but practical wisdom will exist only in a moral person.<sup>2</sup> Thus, just as the natural disposition to virtue needs practical wisdom to become virtue in the strict sense, the presence of practical wisdom implies a character disposed toward virtuous ends.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1144<sup>a</sup> 7-9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 25-28.

So practical wisdom seems to be not only useful to virtue, but the existence of virtue depends on it. However, the relative importance of knowledge and habit in virtue is still ambiguous. Aristotle has explained that practical wisdom is useful because it is a certain faculty of practical reasoning added to the natural disposition toward virtue enabling one to achieve virtuous actions. Yet, Aristotle has said that knowledge itself will not necessarily lead to moral acts unless moral habits have also been ingrained in one's personality. Perhaps Aristotle means that the knowledge of the right ends alone will not lead to virtuous acts but that one must also by habit be disposed toward wishing for these ends. Once one is in the habit of wishing for the right ends, perhaps then in each new situation translating the wish into action calls for a type of practical reasoning about means which is provided for by practical wisdom. If the preceding is the correct way to view practical wisdom, it seems valid to regard the usefulness of practical wisdom in its helping wish to attain virtuous ends.

However, there still are problems present when practical wisdom is held to deal with means to ends. Practical wisdom seems to be a combination of natural virtue and cleverness or good deliberation. Yet, this combination tells nothing more of virtue except what was already said,

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that it is a habit which aims through choice at the right end. It aims at the mean which is determined by the right rule in accordance with practical wisdom. What this right rule is, Aristotle has not sufficiently explained in his discussion of practical wisdom. The latter has been shown only to deal with the same matters as choice in deliberating well. Furthermore, the particulars with which practical wisdom is especially concerned are grasped by intuitive reason through experience. This does not help the person who wishes to learn how to develop a virtuous state of character by cultivating the appropriate inner qualities.

However, before discussing any further the problems in Aristotle's views, it may be helpful to summarize the ways in which his ethical views seem to be based on his psychological description of man. In this chapter the definition of virtue was shown to be in basic agreement with Aristotle's view of man as a rational animal. As for the animal aspect of the definition, in Aristotle's psychological description of behavior, man, like other animals, was said to act through the stimuli of pleasure and pain when the appetite is aroused. When pleasurable goods are present either actually or in the imagination, the individual attempts to acquire the pleasure they offer. When pain is present, the person attempts to avoid it. On the other hand, the rational part of this definition is important in

so far as Aristotle views man as developing toward a pre-determined formula which is to be rational, for this is man's form, the one quality which distinguishes man from the other animals. It was explained in this chapter that since man is a rational animal, his excellence or virtue is found in his acting in accordance with reason. When man is acting thus, he is fulfilling his potentiality or function as an animal whose end is to be rational. Hence, when man is rational, he distinguishes himself from the other animals by choosing pleasure and pain in accordance with reason. When he does this, he forms virtuous habits. The development of virtues is subject to the same influences as other habits.

Since the value of pleasures and pains is derived from the activities they accompany, man will gain the highest pleasures in doing the best activities. These are for man the activities for which he is adapted by nature. This means that man's highest pleasures will come from virtuous activities which involve the development and use of reason in the appetitive and intellectual parts of the soul. The two types of virtue, moral and intellectual, correspond to the two parts of the soul which may have reason. Happiness, which involves the highest pleasure of all, will be the activity of the most rational part of the soul - contemplation.

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Since reason is involved in acting virtuously, choice is a part of virtue, for choice entails reasoning in action. Virtue, which entails wish and choice, involves aiming at the right end and deliberating correctly about the means to the end. Man seems most free when he is rational and chooses to reason rather than when he is a slave to passion. Finally, practical wisdom seems to be the excellence of deliberation or choice which is involved when virtue aims at the right goal.

## CHAPTER IV

### IMMORALITY

Virtue has now been described in some detail, but although instances of wrongdoing have been suggested, there has been no explicit formulation of Aristotle's definition of immorality. The present chapter will be devoted to this subject, for a discussion of Aristotle's description of ethics and its basis in human nature would be incomplete without considering his explanation of immorality and its causes. The discussion of immorality will be introduced by reviewing some of the central points made about human nature and virtue. From these points some general notions about wrongdoing will be presented. Then there will be a closer examination of some of the specific aspects of wrongdoing, especially the distinction between incontinence and intemperance. This chapter will also involve a critical evaluation of Aristotle's ethics and psychology. Some of the issues discussed will require further examination or reexamination in later chapters.

#### Some General Aspects of Wrongdoing

A general definition.--According to Aristotle the natural end of the normal person, that is a person who is

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not seriously ill or retarded, entails the development of his rational capacities. Human virtue consists in the development and perfection of these natural, human capacities; therefore, the virtues are excellences of the rational part of the soul. This suggests that vice will be the thwarting of the development and perfection of reason. Furthermore, virtuous action involves rational craving or wish for the attainment of the best pleasures and the avoidance of the proper pains. If virtuous habits are developed through the repetition of virtuous actions, a virtuous state of character will result. Since virtuous behavior involves rational craving, immoral behavior must disregard reason and cater to the whims of the appetite and to the satisfaction of base pleasures. If immoral habits are formed, an immoral state of character will result. Since in regard to pleasures and pains of the appetite the mean is the virtue, indulging in either extreme will lead to vice.

Immorality is voluntary. Since virtuous actions and a virtuous disposition are voluntary, it would seem that immorality too must be voluntary. Aristotle has said that acting immorally from either passion or ignorance due to anger or drunkenness is blameable and thus is voluntary. According to Aristotle ignorance of the law, the universal, also is blameable because one is responsible for his state

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of mind and the appearances within it.<sup>1</sup> Again, the only type of wrongdoing that may be excused as involuntary and not involving an immoral state of character of the agent himself is an act done through ignorance of one or more of the particular facts of the situation.<sup>2</sup>

The origin of wrongdoing.--Acts done through passion, such as those done through strong desires, drunkenness, or rage, are probably committed for the sake of pleasure, the pleasure being that of excess irrational desire rather than the higher type of the intellect.<sup>3</sup> However, it is not clear why someone would purposively choose a worse pleasure and a lesser degree of happiness over a higher pleasure, especially if as Aristotle upholds, all people aim for their final good, which is happiness. Since choice involves the use and authority of reason, and acts done through passion involve behavior in which appetite has authority over reason, it would seem that these acts are in fact not chosen. Aristotle would agree that they are not chosen.<sup>4</sup> If these acts of passion are not chosen, although they may be considered undesirable or bad, it may be questioned whether Aristotle is correct in considering them to be blameable.

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<sup>1</sup> Nic Eth R. iii. 1. 1110<sup>b</sup> 27-34; Ibid., 12-14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1111<sup>a</sup> 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 12-15; vii. 3. 1147<sup>a</sup> 13-18; 4. 1148<sup>a</sup> 4-11.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., v. 8. 1135<sup>b</sup> 19; vii. 10. 1152<sup>a</sup> 19.

Aristotle says that such acts of passion are voluntary, but by "voluntary" he means only that these acts stem from this agent rather than from another source.<sup>1</sup> The acts of passion are caused by irrational desires rather than deliberate decision or external forces. Voluntary acts which are not chosen do not seem to be within one's deliberate control as are acts done through choice. Therefore, the voluntary, unchosen acts of children and adults do not seem blameable or praisable in quite the same way as chosen acts. Again, it may be questioned whether these immoral acts of passion even though "voluntary" can be blamed since they are not done through choice.

Perhaps Aristotle's point is that acts which involve choice and hence wish are virtuous and that one can be blamed for not developing habits of choice. However, children, whose reason is not yet developed, do not act from choice, and very often people develop from childhood, due to cultural and other influences, habits which are not in agreement with choice and rational desire. It would seem because of such influences, some people never even have had the opportunity to develop the virtuous habits of choice and hence virtuous dispositions. In other words, it would seem that such people can not be blamed for not having

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<sup>1</sup>Rhet. i. 10. 1368<sup>b</sup> 33-35; Nic Eth. R. iii. 2. 1111<sup>b</sup> 7-9; i. 10. 1369<sup>a</sup> 1-4.

habits and states of character which they have had no power or opportunity to develop. Only those people who have developed habits of choice seem responsible for their behavior. Yet, such habits were developed from childhood and were not originally chosen. So it is questionable whether people are really deliberately responsible for their good characters. Finally, once habits of choice are formed, it seems unlikely that one would act against them if, as Aristotle believes, all people wish for the good and choose the means to the end of wish.

Maybe the person who commits undesirable acts is responsible for his behavior because he originally chooses to lead a life dedicated to satisfying the appetite rather than to developing the intellect. Similarly, although acts done in drunkenness are not chosen, perhaps one can be blamed for such acts because he chose to become drunk in the first place. However, why a person would purposely choose to become drunk or to live a life of passion is incomprehensible, as this would mean choosing against virtue and happiness. Maybe a person would become drunk or commit acts of passion through the motivation of strong desires, but here again choice would not really be involved, and so it may be questioned whether such acts could be blamed.

It is possible that one would choose to act for a lower pleasure because one wrongly apprehends this pleasure

as a higher one. This would result in an act done through ignorance of the proper ends. Ignorance of the universal or the law leads to vicious behavior and according to Aristotle is blameable. However, contrary to what Aristotle believes, it would seem that this ignorance is outside of one's control. Since Aristotle holds that the good or virtuous activity yields happiness, and all people aim at happiness, he could not say that people would deliberately choose to be deceived or ignorant about what is really good. Therefore, it would seem that this type of ignorance is not chosen and is involuntary. Aristotle has suggested ways in which bad habits may be formed by influences of heredity and environment which are beyond one's control. Perhaps ignorance of the proper ends may be due to similar causes. Imitation of immoral customs and improper education may be responsible not only for the formation of evil habits, but also for ignorance of the good.

Thus, if habits of choice are developed in the mature adult, it would seem that the adult can not act against choice and wish for the good since he aims for happiness. It seems wrong for Aristotle to blame people who act as a result of passion when deliberate decision is absent. Since habits begin to form in the life of the child with the help of outside influences before his reason has matured enough to enable him to choose, one can not blame the person for

not developing habits of choice. Ignorance as a cause of wrongdoing also could not be chosen if one aims toward the good and happiness; consequently, it is difficult to understand how such ignorance is blameable. Therefore, it seems inconsistent of Aristotle to hold all of the following: that wrongdoing is blameable, that people aim for the good and happiness, and that they choose in accordance with wish. Perhaps a closer examination of Aristotle's definition of wrongdoing, especially his distinction between incontinence and intemperance, will help to clarify the definition of immorality and its causes.

#### Brutishness

Aristotle describes three basic types of wrongdoing: vice, incontinence, and brutishness. Although he often uses "vice" in a general sense, he also uses it to mean a specific type of immorality. Before discussing the other two types of wrongdoing, brutishness will be considered briefly.

According to Aristotle brutishness is rarely found, and when it does occur, it is usually caused by disease or deformity.<sup>1</sup> It seems correct that some destructive and antisocial acts are done by people who are mentally ill or retarded, and therefore, whose reason is defective. Such people can not be blamed for their behavior since they do

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Eth. R. vii. 1. 1145<sup>a</sup> 29-33.

not have the freedom to do otherwise.

### Incontinence

While Aristotle says that brutish acts are rare, in his opinion acts due to incontinence constitute the most common type of wrongdoing. The incontinent person knows what the good end is and knows that he does not do it. He acts as he does as a result of passion. The continent person, on the other hand, knows that his appetite is bad, but refuses to give in to it, and instead follows his reason.<sup>1</sup>

People are incontinent especially in respect to bodily pleasures.<sup>2</sup> In fact, in incontinent people the body may appear to rule over the soul, for these people are carried away by passion to act against the right rule. However, they are not carried away to the extent that they lose their knowledge of the right end or the wish to do it.<sup>3</sup> An example of an emotion which might cause such a state of incontinence is anger, which Aristotle says is natural to man. Such an emotion causes people who have knowledge of the good to do harmful acts of injustice.<sup>4</sup> However, the agents of these acts are not themselves unjust or wicked.<sup>5</sup>

Aristotle has said that people always wish for what

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1145<sup>b</sup> 12-14.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1148<sup>a</sup> 4-11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 8. 1150<sup>a</sup> 20-26.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid., v. 8. 1135<sup>b</sup> 20.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 10-24.

they know to be good. Furthermore, the incontinent person has knowledge of what is good. Therefore, he must wish for the good. By committing acts that he does not think he should do, the incontinent man thus acts against his wish.<sup>1</sup>

How does one come to act against his wish for what he knows to be good? Aristotle supports the view that the incontinent person does not purposely choose what is bad but does wrong because he cannot help himself. For example, Aristotle says of the incontinent man: "He acts with knowledge but not after deliberation, . . ."<sup>2</sup> Otherwise, he deliberates but does not abide by the conclusions of his deliberation.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the incontinent person must not have practical wisdom, for Aristotle says that he who is practically wise not only has knowledge but is able to act in accordance with it. The incontinent person, however, is unable to act in accordance with his knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Since practical wisdom and deliberation are concerned with choice, and the incontinent person acts without either, the incontinent person must act without choice.

Aristotle holds that when people choose, they choose the good, but when they do wrong because of strong passions, choice is not involved. Both good and bad acts are voluntary, but only good acts which are done through reason for

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 9. 1136<sup>b</sup> 7-8.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 8. 1135<sup>b</sup> 19.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., vii. 10. 1152<sup>e</sup> 19.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid., C-9.

a future good to which appetite is directed are acts which are chosen. It seems then that the incontinent person should not be held responsible for his behavior because he acts from passion without deliberate decision. Yet, Aristotle says that "incontinence is not only to be avoided but is also a thing worthy of blame; . . ." <sup>1</sup>

In support of the view that people should not be held responsible for or blamed for incontinent behavior is Aristotle's statement that there is one type of incontinence which is innate and another which is due to habit. <sup>2</sup> Both types are difficult to cure. <sup>3</sup> As for the innate type, some people by nature have appetites which are more easily stimulated than others; hence, they are always under the influence of violent desire. Furthermore, people at one age seem to be more prone to incontinence than at others. For example, younger people may have stronger passions and therefore be more incontinent than older people for biological reasons. As for the incontinence due to habit, habits were said to develop largely through influences outside the individual's control in early childhood before reason has fully developed. So again, incontinence seems to be caused by conditions beyond one's deliberate control.

However, Aristotle holds that people are responsible

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4. 1148<sup>b</sup> 5-6.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 10. 1152<sup>a</sup> 28-29.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 31-32.

for both good and bad behavior. Furthermore, he says that the incontinent person "acts willingly (for he acts in a sense with knowledge both of what he does and of the end to which he does it), . . ." <sup>1</sup> Therefore, Aristotle seems to hold inconsistently that the incontinent person acts without choice and yet is responsible for his behavior, that incontinence may be innate or due to habit or natural desires, that the natural end of man is the development of the rational parts of the soul, and that happiness is the final end for man and is derived from virtuous activity.

Perhaps how the incontinent person can be held responsible for his behavior and how one may come to act against his knowledge and wish will be clarified after considering Aristotle's more detailed account of the process of incontinent behavior. In one of his accounts of how incontinence may occur, Aristotle suggests that the incontinent person may have the universal premise but not the particular. To use Aristotle's example, he may know that dry food is good for all people, but he may not know that a particular food is dry or only have the knowledge at the back of his mind. <sup>2</sup> What Aristotle means by having knowledge at the back of one's mind is not clear. It would seem that either one knows or does not know that a particular food is dry at any one particular moment. If one does not know it or forgets

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 15-17.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3. 1147<sup>a</sup> 1-8.

it at the crucial moment of action, then he will not have the necessary knowledge of one of the particulars of the situation. However, a bad act due to lack of knowledge of one or more of the particulars is neither blameable nor voluntary according to Aristotle. So this explanation of incontinent behavior fails to explain how the latter is blameable.

Aristotle presents another way in which the incontinent person may have knowledge and yet not use it. In this case, the person will have knowledge and yet not have it. However, how a person can have knowledge and yet not have it at the same time is unclear. Aristotle suggests that one can have and yet not have knowledge when one is asleep, angry, drunk, or especially when one is under the influence of any strong, irrational desires.<sup>1</sup> To say that knowledge is inactive or asleep is not much different than saying that the individual does not possess knowledge at that time. In any case, the knowledge is not existing in the person's consciousness. Furthermore, Aristotle must explain why a person who has knowledge would deliberately choose to act contrary to it by originally becoming drunk.

It seems then that Aristotle is saying in these explanations of incontinence that one could not act incontinently unless the knowledge of what is good is somehow absent from

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<sup>1</sup>ibid., 10-10.

one's consciousness and that no one could act wrongly with knowledge. This would mean that, contrary to what Aristotle first states, there is no moral struggle within the incontinent person in the sense that there is no strong passion motivating him to act against the knowledge of the good and the wish to do it, the knowledge being absent. However, this lack of conflict between desire and knowledge or opinion seems contrary to what actually does occur. People often seem to have opinions or knowledge of what is right but act wrongly regardless and then regret their actions later.

Ross says in regard to the description of incontinence which makes the latter caused by lack of knowledge:

Aristotle elsewhere shows himself alive to the existence of a moral struggle, a conflict between rational wish and appetite, in which the agent has actual knowledge of the wrongness of the particular act that he does.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that elsewhere Aristotle does not seem to want to make incontinence due to a lack of knowledge. He has said that incontinent people act with knowledge against wish and that they do so because of strong desires. He says also that there are elements in the rational soul which oppose and resist the rational principle.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle seems to recognize at this point that there is a moral struggle in

<sup>1</sup>Ross, *Aristotle*, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>*Nicom. Eth. R. i. 13. 1102<sup>b</sup> 17-19.*

behavior which may result in incontinence when one is too weak or impetuous to resist the irrational appetite.

In his discussion of one other way in which incontinence may occur, Aristotle does not seem to deny that one acts incontinently either involuntarily or without knowledge. Aristotle suggests that one suppose that two premises are present. The first states that "everything sweet ought to be tasted"<sup>1</sup> and the other that "this is sweet."<sup>2</sup> As was already explained in the discussion of the practical syllogism, the action is identical with the conclusion. Especially if a strong appetite is present, the conclusion will be that one will taste the object. Suppose now that these premises are present: "everything sweet is pleasant"<sup>3</sup> and "this is sweet,"<sup>4</sup> and that there is also the universal forbidding one to taste.<sup>5</sup> If the appetite to taste is strong enough, one will taste the object. It is the end to which appetite is most strongly directed that will be sought.

The premise which states "this is sweet" is not contrary to the rule "one should not taste sweet things." However, the appetite bidding one to taste is contrary to the right rule.<sup>6</sup> In other words, Aristotle seems to be

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vi. 3. 1147<sup>a</sup> 29.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.    <sup>5</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., vii. 3. 1147<sup>a</sup> 32-1147<sup>b</sup> 1.

saying that there are no conflicting premises involved in the action.<sup>1</sup> It is the passion or appetite rather than another premise which overrides the knowledge or universal premise that one should not taste. The conclusion "this should not be tasted" which follows from the universal "one should not taste sweet things" and the particular "this is sweet" is not heeded because of the desire to taste which is stronger than the desire for a rational good.

However, this account of incontinent behavior seems to be inconsistent with Aristotle's teleological view of man. It seems that the natural end of people is not living in accordance with their rational capacities. In Chapter III it was explained that man's final end, happiness, resides in his characteristic function, the activity of reason. This is the end intended for man because of his very nature. However, even with rational knowledge of the good, people often seem instead to satisfy their irrational desires. Furthermore, these desires themselves are natural to human nature according to Aristotle.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, satisfying irrational desires seems just as characteristically human as acting in accordance with reason.

There are similar problems in regard to Aristotle's description of the two general types of incontinence. The first kind of incontinence may be called impetuosity. It

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1-2.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 5. 1149<sup>b</sup> 5-10.

occurs when people, led by emotion, do not deliberate at all. In the second type, which is caused by weakness, deliberation occurs, but because of strong appetites, the conclusions of the deliberation are disregarded.<sup>1</sup> It seems to be the case that people do often act without deliberation. However, in this case, it would again seem that behavior to satisfy irrational appetite is more natural than behavior which satisfies wish.

In the other case, one would deliberate and would arrive at the conclusion that he should not taste this object. Then, because of his inability to resist his irrational appetite to taste, he would act from weakness of character. He would not act in accordance with the conclusion of the practical syllogism which has the rational rule as premise. Even with the knowledge of the right rule and the correct particular as well as the wish to do the good, one may act incontinently through strong appetite and weakness. Therefore, people may knowingly aim at a lesser good. They may not aim at what will give them the greatest happiness. It would seem again that the natural end of man is not be the development of his rational capacities since people naturally act in opposition to this end.

Finally, there is still the question whether one can be blamed for not acting from choice. One may say that a

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 1150<sup>b</sup> 19-28.

person should resist his irrational appetite for a future good, but as has already been pointed out before in this chapter, perhaps one can not help acting as one does. Perhaps once habits of incontinence are formed, one can not develop habits of choice and a character which resists immediate desires. This raises questions about the universality of the capacity for virtue which will be discussed in the next chapter.

#### Intemperance or Vice

While the continent person has strong desires which he is able to resist, the temperate person does not have excessive desire.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Aristotle says that the temperate person is better than the continent one. However, it may be questioned whether the temperate person or the continent person is more deserving of respect. One seems to achieve good behavior because he does not have the desire to do otherwise, while the other has desires which Aristotle says are natural to man and are even more innate in some than in others, but he is able to resist them. In any case, Aristotle is convinced that although the temperate person is better than the continent, the intemperate person is worse than the incontinent.<sup>2</sup>

One reason that the intemperate person is worse than

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vii. 2. 1146<sup>a</sup> 9-13.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 7. 1150<sup>a</sup> 30-31.

the incontinent one, is that, according to Aristotle, in the incontinent person the right rule and the right wish are present, but he has not mastered them enough to act in accordance with them. On the other hand, in the intemperate person the first principle and right wish are no longer preserved.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the incontinent person, unlike the intemperate one, does not act through choice in Aristotle's opinion. The intemperate person, however, deliberately intends harmful, wicked, and unlawful acts. He "is led on in accordance with his own choice, thinking that he ought always to pursue the present pleasures; . . ."<sup>2</sup> The incontinent person is also likely to repent of his acts because he does them through weak will rather than deliberate purpose. The intemperate person is not likely to repent of his acts "for he stands by his choice; . . ."<sup>3</sup> Not only are the acts of the intemperate person immoral, but the person himself is an unjust, vicious person.<sup>4</sup> For these reasons the intemperate person, unlike the incontinent one, is incurable.<sup>5</sup>

Aristotle has described moral virtue as a mean in regard to certain feelings and vice as an extreme. What motivates the incontinent person is an excess of passion

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 8. 1151<sup>a</sup> 20-26.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3. 1146<sup>b</sup> 22-23.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 8. 1150<sup>b</sup> 29-30.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., v. 8. 1136<sup>a</sup> 1-4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 7. 1150<sup>a</sup> 21-23.

and weak will. The intemperate person, on the other hand, deliberately chooses to follow the irrational appetite even though he does not have strong desires.<sup>1</sup> As has been explained, he so acts because he no longer possesses knowledge of the good or right wish.

The intemperate person like the incontinent one is deserving of blame according to Aristotle. Aristotle was quoted as saying that each man is responsible for his state of mind and the appearances in it. Furthermore, Aristotle says that one is driven to take one of two views. Either one believes that the end is not imposed on people by nature but is due partly to themselves, or one believes that

the end is given by Nature but virtue is voluntary, because the virtuous man does voluntarily whatever he has left himself to do in order to attain his end. In either case vice will be just as voluntary as virtue.<sup>2</sup>

However, it does not seem obvious how vice will always be voluntary and blameable. If the end is given by nature, perhaps the one to whom the right end is given will have the opportunity to develop choice to achieve that end in action, and virtue would be for him voluntary and praiseworthy. On the other hand, if the end is given by nature to some people but not to others then the vice of the latter would be involuntary.

Furthermore, Aristotle realizes also that upbringing

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 27-30.    <sup>2</sup>Nic Eth T. iii, 5. p. 92.

influences the character one will develop. As was suggested before, perhaps people are therefore not responsible for their states of mind since they do not control their upbringing which helps form their characters before their reason has matured. In other words, perhaps people are not always responsible for the first principle either being destroyed in them or having never been given a chance to develop.

Aristotle has said also that it is possible to think falsely as well as truly. Hence, reason may err, and people may be intemperate due to mistaken principles. "The rational principle may be mistaken and fail in attaining the highest ideal of life, . . ."<sup>1</sup> Aristotle says that "the good man differs from others by seeing the truth in each class of things, . . ."<sup>2</sup> To blame people for not being good because of a natural error does not seem justified. One's reason may err about the good even though one has the desire to act in accordance with real good. Thus, evil which is caused by the wish for what is not really good due to ignorance of the universal law may not always be blameable.

Vice which involves evil wish and ignorance of the law, both for which one is responsible, would be voluntary and blameable. Aristotle says that it is originally in a

<sup>1</sup>Pol. vii. 15. 1334<sup>b</sup> 10-12.

<sup>2</sup>Nic Eth R. iii. 4. 1113<sup>a</sup> 31-34.

person's power to become bad or not, although once he becomes bad it is difficult to change.<sup>1</sup> It seems that one becomes intemperate through repeated incontinence. In support of this Aristotle says: "Passion perverts minds of rulers, even when they are the best of men."<sup>2</sup> By letting oneself be carried away by passion too often, the wish for the good is destroyed. Aristotle says that excess and defect destroy strength and health, and it is the same with the virtues of the soul. The man who flees from dangers and fears many things will become a coward. By repeating acts of a certain nature, one develops the habit always to act so. Once the habit is formed, it is difficult to change. Eventually, the knowledge of the good, the first principle, is destroyed in him, and his habits become incurably vicious.

The person who has been ruined by pleasure or pain forthwith fails to see any such originating cause---to see that for the sake of this or because of this he ought to choose and do whatever he chooses and does; for vice is destructive of the originating cause of action.<sup>3</sup>

However, it still may be questioned whether acts of incontinence are blameable. Aristotle merely describes different types of actions. In actions through choice one deliberates about what is to be done, resists the irrational

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 5. 1114<sup>a</sup> 20-23.    <sup>2</sup>Pol. iii. 16. 1287<sup>a</sup> 31.

<sup>3</sup>Nic Eth R. vi. 5. 1140<sup>b</sup> 17-19.

appetite for immediate pleasure, and acts to attain the end which rational wish presents. In acts of incontinence due to weak will or impetuosity, one gives in to the immediate pleasure of the irrational appetite. Aristotle does not give a psychological or metaphysical account of how or why it would be within one's power to resist irrational appetite except to say that when habits of choice are formed in youth, one tends to resist appetite. If such habits are needed for continent behavior, then it would seem that continent or incontinent behavior is not voluntary. If one has the power to act with choice in each new situation regardless of past influences on one's character, then Aristotle has not provided an explanation of how this is possible. The issue concerning habits determining one's moral character will be discussed further in the next chapter in relation to the universality of the capacity for virtue.

## CHAPTER V

### VIRTUE FOR ALL?

It was stated that one of the questions underlying this study is concerned with whether Aristotle's psychological description of man can support a definition of virtue which will have universal application. Aristotle has given as a definition of virtue, activity chosen in accordance with reason, and has based this definition on his formula of man. In accordance with his teleological view of nature, when man aims at the end for which nature intended him, he is developing his form which consists of the rational part of the soul. When man is fulfilling his form or potentiality, he is acting virtuously by developing excellences of reason, and man is most happy when he does this. This view of man and his position in nature as a rational animal seems to apply to mankind as a whole. Therefore, virtuous activity, which is the development of man's natural potentiality, seems to be the same for all people. In other words, Aristotle seems to intend one standard of virtue to apply to all people at least insofar as they do not radically deviate from the norm as would, for example, a mentally retarded person.

However, contrary to what one might expect, Aristotle does not seem to think that all people have the same potential for virtue nor are Aristotle's boundaries for the norm as large as one might expect. In the last chapter it was stressed that there are environmental and cultural influences which are beyond one's control which affect the character one will develop. Furthermore, according to Aristotle one's traits inherited at birth affect whether or not one may develop a virtuous state of character. The factors which may influence the capacity for virtue and Aristotle's view toward the average person's capacity for virtue will be discussed in this chapter. Included also will be a consideration of Aristotle's opinion of the capacity for virtue in women and slaves.

#### The Capacity for Virtue as Limited

There are several factors which Aristotle mentions that may affect one's capacity for virtue. In discussing such factors, Aristotle seems to be stressing the role of chance in limiting people's capacities for virtue.

"Chance" is used here to mean what can perhaps be accounted for scientifically but which is beyond the control of the individual. Aristotle's original requirement for virtue is that one be born human with an ability to reason. However, this ability to reason does not extend to everyone

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according to Aristotle. Thus, in his opinion some people are born deficient in this capacity which is necessary for virtue.

The ability to reason: slaves and women. --In the Politics Aristotle holds that there are some people, who because of their psychological natures, or to be more specific, because of a lack of certain innate qualities, are fit by nature to be slaves. Others who possess the necessary basic attributes are intended by nature to be masters. While the latter are intended to rule, slaves are meant to obey. The slave's function is to serve as an extension of the body of his master.<sup>1</sup> He is to be another man's property, a human being who is also a possession.<sup>2</sup> According to Aristotle certain societies are composed of whole populations who by nature are servile, and therefore, fit to be slaves. In Aristotle's opinion this would apply, for example, to barbarians and Asiatics.<sup>3</sup>

According to Aristotle the reason that the slave is to serve another person as the other's living instrument can be explained by the fact that the slave has no real rational principle. Because of this lack, nature intended him to be subject to another. It was explained that within the soul of a rational person, there are two principles,

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<sup>1</sup>Pol. 1. 6. 1255<sup>b</sup> 6-14.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 4. 1254<sup>a</sup> 15-20.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., iii. 14. 1285<sup>a</sup> 20-23.

that which is intended to rule, intellect or reason, and that which can participate in a rational principle by obeying, the appetite or passion.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle says that to have the intellect and appetite equal in rule, or to have the appetite rule over the intellect, would be hurtful and inexpedient.<sup>2</sup> Man would, in such a case, be thwarting the development of his potentiality as a rational being. Thus, the inferior, whether it be the appetite within a single person or the man that lacks the rational principle between two people, should be under the rule of the superior, the master.<sup>3</sup> The relationship between slave and master can be justified further because the rational principle of the master enables him to foresee by the exercise of his mind the good for all.<sup>4</sup> The slave, although he does not have this principle himself, can apprehend it in another and be useful in carrying its judgements into effect.<sup>5</sup>

Aristotle also notes differences between the innate capacities of men and women. He states:

In all genera in which the distinction of male and female is found, Nature makes a similar differentiation in the mental disposition of the two sexes.<sup>6</sup>

According to Aristotle women are also more prone to emo-

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., i. 5. 1254<sup>a</sup> 35-36.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1254<sup>b</sup> 2-9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 15-20.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 2. 1252<sup>a</sup> 32-34.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 5. 1254<sup>b</sup> 20-22.

<sup>6</sup>Aristotle, "History of Animals," ix. 1. 608<sup>a</sup> 21-23.

tional expression and cowardice than men.<sup>1</sup> He notes other differences, but most significant here is his belief that although women, unlike slaves, do have a deliberative faculty, this faculty is without authority in the female sex.<sup>2</sup> The male, then, is superior by nature to the female in Aristotle's opinion. Since the male is a "naturally finer being"<sup>3</sup> than the female, his qualities and actions will be more noble.<sup>4</sup>

It is not Aristotle's views toward slaves and women which themselves are of concern here, but rather what is of concern is the capacities of women and slaves for virtue. It seems that Aristotle does not mean his definition of human beings as rational to apply to all people. Since, according to Aristotle it is the rational principle which most distinguishes humans from other animals, and since he holds that the rational part is more the individual person than any other part, it can be questioned whether, according to Aristotle's description of them, slaves and women can rightly be considered human. Exactly what Aristotle means by the rational principle in women being without authority is not clear. Perhaps he means that reason in women does not have the authority to rule the appetite so that women are incapable of moral behavior. In this case women would possess a

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 608<sup>b</sup> 10-15.    <sup>2</sup>Pol. 1. 13. 1260<sup>a</sup> 13-15.

<sup>3</sup>Rhet. 1. 9. 1367<sup>a</sup> 17-18.    <sup>4</sup>Ibid., 12. 1259<sup>b</sup> 3-4.

rational principle which is ineffective and thus would hardly be more qualified to be considered human than slaves who possess no rational principle.

Next, since according to Aristotle neither women nor slaves partake fully or at all in a rational principle, it can be questioned whether they are capable of choice. Aristotle holds that children are incapable of choice because of an immature deliberative faculty. It would seem, then, that neither would women and slaves who possess no intellect or ineffective ones be capable of choice. Since it seems that women and slaves must be incapable of choice, neither can they be capable of virtue which involves choice. Therefore, they must also be incapable of attaining happiness. In fact, in the Politics Aristotle himself states that slaves like brute animals have no share in happiness.<sup>1</sup>

However, even after stating his views on the rational principle in slaves and women, Aristotle still asks whether there might not be some excellence or virtue of which women and slaves are capable. He says that although the slave does not have a rational principle himself, he can apprehend it in another. Therefore, as stated before the slave possesses instrumental and ministerial qualities.<sup>2</sup> Beyond this Aristotle questions whether the slave is capable of a

<sup>1</sup> Pol. iii. 8. 1280<sup>a</sup> 33-34.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., i. 13. 1259<sup>b</sup> 22-33.

further excellence. In answering this Aristotle seems to be beset with difficulties. He realizes that if slaves are capable of virtues, there will be no difference between them and their masters. Furthermore, Aristotle admits that they are men, while at the same time he seems to realize that according to his previous description of slaves as having no rational principle, they could not qualify to be called human. Therefore, now Aristotle says, contrary to his previous view, that slaves do share in a rational principle and must have virtue.

On the other hand, since they are men and share in a rational principle, it seems absurd to say that they have no virtue.<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle's attitude toward slaves seems quite undecided here. It appears almost as if he wants to admit that they are human and at the same time refuse to them the qualities and capacities that he has attributed to other humans.

Even though he has now admitted that slaves have a rational principle, Aristotle explains that there still is a difference between them and rulers. The difference is not of degree but of kind. It is not

a question of degree, for the difference between ruler and subject is a difference of kind, which the difference of more or less never is.<sup>2</sup>

In solving how women and slaves can have virtue and yet be different from rulers, Aristotle says that a consideration

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., i. 12. 1259<sup>b</sup> 28-29. <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 36-38.

of the constitution of the soul will help. In repeating again what he has said in the Ethics, he explains that one part of the soul rules, the other obeys. In one part of the soul will be the virtue of the rational part and in the other, the virtue of the appetite.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps in mentioning this again at this point, Aristotle is suggesting that slaves and women are capable of obeying or having the virtue of the appetitive part of the soul. However, if this is what he means, then he must also hold that women and slaves possess the reason of the intellective part of the soul which commands the passions to obey, for even moral virtue, according to Aristotle's definition, requires that this intellective reason be authoritative in the appetitive part of the soul. In this case it would seem to be more a question of difference of degree rather than of kind.

Aristotle, as if realizing this, now says:

Although the parts of the soul are present in all of them, they are present in different degrees. (Italics mine.)<sup>2</sup>

So Aristotle contradicts his first statement that the difference is one of kind. Perhaps he does want to say that all people have enough of a rational principle for at least some moral virtue, although slaves and women are not capable of intellectual virtue. Yet, in his very next statement he again says:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1260<sup>b</sup> 4-7.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 9-13.

The slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority, . . .<sup>1</sup>

As was previously explained, without a deliberative faculty, according to Aristotle, one could not be capable of virtue. If Aristotle means that women and slaves have no effective rational principle of their own, but obey the reason of their rulers, certainly their obedience will not be human virtue, but rather, will be behavior such as that within the capacities of some of the lower animals who can be trained to obey their masters.

Nevertheless, Aristotle still does seem to want to maintain that slaves and women are capable of moral virtue. In reference to the moral virtues he says that everyone should partake of them, but only in the manner and to the extent that they are necessary to each person for the fulfillment of his duty. A ruler, for example, must have perfect moral virtue for his function requires a master artificer. The rational principle is such an artificer, and according to Aristotle when such a principle is completely developed, one will then be perfectly virtuous. Subjects, on the other hand, need only that amount of moral virtue which will enable them to fulfill their particular functions. Thus, the temperance and courage of a man and woman are not the same. For instance, Aristotle holds that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 13-15.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 16-24.

the courage of a man is shown in commanding and ruling, of a woman in obeying.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, he holds that the virtue of a slave rests in the fulfillment of his duty. The slave is useful for the basic physical wants of life according to Aristotle, and therefore, should possess only so much virtue as executing the fulfillment of these wants requires.<sup>2</sup>

Two points may be mentioned in reference to these last statements. First, it is still unexplainable how slaves and women are to partake of virtue if one accepts Aristotle's belief in their lack of a rational authority in their souls. Second, in the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle seems to regard virtue especially from the point of view of the individual's achievement of his own fulfillment and happiness. Yet, in the Politics Aristotle seems to regard virtue more from the point of view of how it contributes to the fulfillment of one's function in the state. Both points seem to suggest that Aristotle's definition of virtue and definition of human nature need clarification. If slaves and women are to be considered human according to Aristotle's definition of man, then he must admit that they have a rational principle, or else change his definition of man, or perhaps both. How he means to define man will affect how he regards virtue, whether it is to be a fulfillment of the same potentiality in all, or whether it is to be a fulfillment of different

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 16-24.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 31-36.

functions for which nature intended different people.

Whether or not Aristotle's definition of man is correct, his description of women and slaves can not be fully accepted. First, people born with defective rational principles would be considered mentally retarded, and therefore, not normal human beings. Aristotle does not seem to mean that slaves, and classes of people that he calls servile such as the Asiatics, are abnormal in the sense of being mentally retarded. Furthermore, it seems that scientific study has not found that women are generally less intelligent than men or that their rational principles have less authority in controlling their passions.

According to Ashley Montagu studies such as the one made during World War II called "Psychological Effects of War on Citizen and Soldier" (1942), by Dr. R. D. Gillespie, substantiate the opinion that although women tend to be more free in expressing their emotions than men, women are better balanced emotionally than men, and are also less likely to break under emotional strain.<sup>1</sup> For example, although women openly express feelings of sorrow more than men, more men become alcoholics by trying to release these feelings indirectly.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, Montagu states that women are generally

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<sup>1</sup>Ashley Montagu, The Natural Superiority of Women (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 84.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

not inferior in intelligence than men. "From school age to adult life females attain a significantly higher average rank on intelligence tests than men."<sup>1</sup> He uses the results of such tests as the Kuhlmann-Binet IQ Test to support his statement. Montagu states further: "The age-old myth that women are of inferior intelligence to men has, so far as the scientific evidence goes, not a leg to stand upon."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, according to Aristotle's definition of virtue in the Ethics, there is no reason why women and slaves can not have the capacity for at least moral virtue. Perhaps Aristotle upholds his incorrect view of slaves and women because of his wish to support the practices and views of his society. Nevertheless, Aristotle does not seem to mean that slaves are mentally retarded, and his description of women seems to be incorrect according to scientific findings.

However, one implication in the Politics does seem worth considering. This is his belief that not all people have the same potentialities or are fit to have the same functions and virtues. Probably everyone does not inherit or develop exactly the same intellectual capacity. Moreover, some people make better leaders than others who are perhaps better adapted to functions which do not require leadership. Therefore, probably not the same excellence or virtues would apply to everyone. For example, if women are not to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 116.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

partake in battle, the virtue of courage, as Aristotle describes it, would be useless to them. Thus, although Aristotle's description of slaves and women can not generally be accepted, the conflicting statements he makes in the Politics regarding them show perhaps that his definition of virtue and human nature must be reexamined. The re-examination of these definitions will be the consideration of the next chapter.

Moral feeling.--Besides the capacity to reason and the authority of the rational principle, Aristotle says that one must be born with a disposition which has a kinship to virtue, a disposition which has a natural love for what is noble and hatred for what is evil.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in the Rhetoric Aristotle stresses moral feeling above reason as being more important to virtue. "Reasoning leads us to choose what is useful, moral goodness leads us to choose what is noble."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, a tendency toward nobility seems to depend on one's ancestors according to Aristotle. He says that those who have better ancestors are likely to be better themselves "for nobility is excellence of race."<sup>3</sup> Inheriting from nature such a disposition toward virtue leaves virtue to chance.

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<sup>1</sup>Nic Eth R. x. 9. 1179<sup>b</sup> 29-31.

<sup>2</sup>Rhet. ii. 12. 1389<sup>a</sup> 34-36.

<sup>3</sup>Pol. iii. 13. 1283<sup>a</sup> 35-37.

Aristotle himself states:

Nature's part evidently does not depend on us, but as a result of some divine causes is present in those who are truly fortunate; . . .<sup>1</sup>

This last statement seems to indicate that Aristotle thinks that not everyone is fortunate in inheriting a natural disposition toward virtue. In fact, it seems that he thinks that some people are born with a psychological disposition toward evil. For example, at one point he says of immoral actions that these "arise in some by nature . . ."<sup>2</sup> It is questionable whether Aristotle is correct that some people inherit from birth a disposition which is prone toward evil. It may be rather that such a disposition is acquired after birth due to influences in early life. However, there are other factors not within the individual's control which Aristotle believes affect the capacity for virtue.

The effect of age on character. -- Biological factors influence the capacity for virtue, and these change with age according to Aristotle. For example, very young children live at the beck and call of appetite and are incapable of mature reasoning and choice.<sup>3</sup> In youth strong passions are prevalent. Because of them, those in youth are apt to be

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<sup>1</sup>Nic Eth R. x. 9. 1179<sup>b</sup> 21-23.

<sup>2</sup>Nic Eth R. vii. 5. 1148<sup>b</sup> 29. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 12-13.

incontinent and quick-tempered.<sup>1</sup> However, the hot tempers and hopeful dispositions of youthful people tend to make them more courageous than older ones.<sup>2</sup> Yet, often their courageousness becomes rashness. Young people also lack practical wisdom because as stated earlier this virtue is concerned not only with universals but with particulars also. Knowledge of particulars is gained through experience which young people lack to a large extent.<sup>3</sup>

Men in their prime according to Aristotle seem best fitted for virtue. They are neither too confident nor too timid.<sup>4</sup> They will be brave and temperate and consider both what is noble and useful.<sup>5</sup> Unlike people in their prime, those in old age have become cynical and distrustful. Experience has made them small-minded and stingy, and they tend to go toward the opposite extreme than youth in being timidly and cowardly.<sup>6</sup> The activities of the mind also deteriorate with age. In the Politics Aristotle says that the mind itself grows old,<sup>7</sup> while in On the Soul he attributes the decline of intellectual apprehension not to the decay of the mind itself but to the decay of the vehicle of

<sup>1</sup>Rhet. ii. 12. 1389<sup>a</sup> 4-10.

<sup>2</sup>Nic Eth R. iii. 12. 1119<sup>b</sup> 5-6.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., vi. 8. 1142<sup>e</sup> 12-16.

<sup>4</sup>Rhet. ii. 14. 1390<sup>a</sup> 30-32. <sup>5</sup>Ibid., 1390<sup>b</sup> 35.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 24-40. <sup>7</sup>Pol. ii. 9. 1270<sup>b</sup> 40.

the mind or "of some other inward part; . . ." <sup>1</sup> At any rate, it is obvious that Aristotle believes that each period of life has its own particular capacity or incapacity for virtue.

External goods.---There seems to be another influence upon the development of virtue which would affect the number of people who can be virtuous. In the third chapter it was stated that Aristotle thinks that external goods have some relation to happiness. Their significance to happiness is unclear, but he does seem to think that having a certain basic amount of external goods is necessary. Likewise, in relation to virtue Aristotle states also that a certain amount of external goods is necessary for the performance of good actions.<sup>2</sup> He says that "in many actions we use friends, and riches and political power as instruments; . . ." <sup>3</sup> Furthermore, certain moral virtues depend on ownership of goods for their existence. For example, one can not be liberal or generous with one's possessions unless one has possessions with which to be liberal. Moreover, if one has no access to certain goods, one will not have the opportunity for certain types of incontinence or

<sup>1</sup>De An S. 1. 4. 408<sup>b</sup> 23-25.

<sup>2</sup>Pol. vii. 1. 1324<sup>a</sup> 40-42.

<sup>3</sup>Nic Eth R. 1. 8. 1099<sup>b</sup> 2-3.

intemperance.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, one's inherited psychological disposition, ancestors, age, and external possessions affect one's capacity for virtue according to Aristotle. Yet, perhaps these factors do not completely determine virtue. As stated before it is questionable whether one inherits an innate disposition toward goodness or toward evil from birth. It seems more likely that one's moral disposition is learned through environment. Furthermore, good parents may have had children as well as the opposite. As for external goods, their lack may prevent one from carrying into some areas of action one's disposition for virtue, but the disposition itself will not be affected. Age seems to present a real factor which influences the execution of virtuous actions. In regard to practical wisdom, if one's knowledge of particulars is not sufficiently broadened through experience, one will be hindered in acting virtuously. However, here again one's basic disposition toward virtue will not be affected by age, although it may be more difficult at some ages than at others to live by virtue. The passions of youth or the failings of old age do not seem to present an insurmountable barrier to the person who is virtuously disposed.

#### The Capacity for Virtue as Universal

Moral disposition and social instinct. -- Aristotle pre-

<sup>1</sup>Pol. ii. 6. 1265<sup>a</sup> 34-33.

sents another point of view toward at least some of these factors which affect the capacity for virtue. In fact, from other statements it would seem that Aristotle does not believe that the number of people who can achieve virtue is to be limited by chance. First, sometimes Aristotle seems to indicate that the disposition toward virtue is found in everyone. For example, in reference to the moral qualities, Aristotle says that "both children and brutes have the natural dispositions to these qualities; . . ."<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, he even ridicules being wellborn in the *Rhetoric*. He says that being wellborn means coming from a fine stock which does not mean being true to the family nature. In fact, he says that most of the wellborn are poor characters, for a good stock does not perpetuate itself and shortly becomes decadent.<sup>2</sup>

Aristotle supports the view that the disposition toward virtue is universal in his discussion of the social instinct. According to Aristotle man is by nature a social animal.<sup>3</sup> He calls man a social animal not only because man is not self-sufficient, but also because people would have the will to live together even if need did not hold them together.<sup>4</sup> This desire for companionship is the basis of

<sup>1</sup>*Nic Eth N.* vi. 13. 1144<sup>b</sup> 9.

<sup>2</sup>*Rhet.* ii. 15. 1390<sup>b</sup> 22-27. <sup>3</sup>*Pol.* i. 2. 1253<sup>a</sup> 1-3.

<sup>4</sup>*Polit.*, iii. 9. 1280<sup>b</sup> 31-33.

friendship. The social instinct stems from passion which enables people to love and hence beget friendship.<sup>1</sup> According to Aristotle even the happy man who is most self-sufficient will need others for companionship, for no one would want to live without friends.<sup>2</sup>

The social instinct seems to exist in everyone, to be the basis for many virtues, and to provide the opportunity for doing virtuous deeds. For example, friendship provides friends which the good person needs to do well by.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the social instinct is the basis for justice for according to Aristotle "the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality."<sup>4</sup> In general, friendship causes one to be kind and helpful toward others.<sup>5</sup> The social instinct, then, may be regarded as an instinct which sets people in the direction of choosing to be responsible to others for their own sake.<sup>6</sup>

External possessions.—Aristotle tends also to diminish the importance of external goods to virtue in other statements. For example, he suggests that the goods of fortune tend to make people insolent and in more need of

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vii. 7. 1328<sup>a</sup> 1-3.

<sup>2</sup>Nic Eth R. ix. 9. 1169<sup>b</sup> 17-19. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., viii. 1. 1155<sup>a</sup> 27-28.

<sup>5</sup>Pol. ii. 5. 1263<sup>b</sup> 5-6.

<sup>6</sup>Nic Eth R. viii. 1. 1157<sup>b</sup> 28-33.

justice and temperance than most people.<sup>1</sup> He suggests that the possession of wealth affects the understanding and that wealthy people tend to be ostentatious and vulgar.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, while in some statements Aristotle emphasizes that the capacity for virtue is left to chance, in others he stresses that it is the result of one's own activities and choices. He says for example: "No one is just or temperate by or through chance."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Aristotle says of happiness, which he has associated with virtuous activity:

Assuming that it is a better thing to reach happiness by these efforts of our own than by a state of luck, we may reasonably think that happiness is in fact reached that way.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, it seems that Aristotle now believes that virtuous activity is reached by one's own efforts. However, just because it is better that happiness and virtue are reached by one's own efforts does not justify the assumption that they are in fact reached that way.

The Affect of Early Influences on the Development of Virtue

Influences limiting the development of habits of choice.—Perhaps Aristotle upholds that the social instinct is universal and that dispositions to do evil are not inherited. Perhaps also he could have been convinced that all

<sup>1</sup>Pol. vii. 15. 1334<sup>b</sup> 27-30.

<sup>2</sup>Rhet. ii. 16. 1390<sup>b</sup> 13-14.

<sup>3</sup>Pol. vii. 1. 1323<sup>b</sup> 29-30.

<sup>4</sup>Nic Eth. E. 1. 9. p. 44.

people who are not retarded have enough capacity and authority of reason for moral virtue and that external possessions are not essential for the capacity for virtue. Yet, for other reasons it would still seem that the number of people capable of virtue will be limited by chance circumstances beyond their control.

First, not all people have the same degree of intellectual capacity or interest for the highest virtue that Aristotle describes--contemplation. In this sense, the number of people capable of virtue will be limited by chance.

Differences in intellectual capacity and interest are especially influenced by environmental factors. Furthermore, the social instinct may be the source of virtuous actions only when it is refined by a character that has developed habits of choice. Only the friendship which springs from mutual love is the kind man ought to have, and mutual love involves choice.<sup>1</sup> However, the development of habits of choice, and therefore the social instinct, are also influenced by environmental factors which are beyond one's power to control.

Aristotle states: "We control the beginning of our states of character . . ."<sup>2</sup> However, in the second chapter

<sup>1</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* R. viii. 5. 1157<sup>b</sup> 28-33.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iii. 5. 1114<sup>b</sup> 34.

and again in discussing immorality it was explained that, in Aristotle's opinion, habits which people form in childhood lead to the types of character people develop. In childhood choice does not exist because reason has not yet matured. The child forms habits by imitating others. If his acts are in harmony with choice, he will form virtuous habits. For this reason it makes a difference whether people begin in childhood by doing just or unjust acts. It was explained that the acts children perform will in turn depend on their home upbringing, formal training, and education, which are all influenced by the culture and its laws.

Aristotle recognizes that the influence upon the development of habits are not the same in all cases either among different cultures or within the same culture. His view can not be accepted that all people who live in Europe are full of spirit but lacking in intelligence and skill while the opposite applies to the natives of Asia. However, cultural differences do exist which may result in differences of emotional restraint. In other words, some cultures may encourage the gratification and expression of certain emotions which Aristotle may consider incontinence. Furthermore, within the same culture some children may be encouraged to develop habits of reasoning and choosing while others may be influenced to seek the immediate gratification of their irrational desires and emotions. As mentioned

above the capacity to reason and habits of reasoning may be subject to environmental influences.

Thus, the capacity for virtuous behavior, behavior in accordance with rational wish and choice, will be subject to early influences even if all people are naturally disposed toward virtue. Therefore, even if Aristotle's definition of man is universal in the sense that all people at birth have the same capacity for at least moral virtue, environmental influences will greatly affect this potential. Some children will be encouraged to use their reason and to choose, others to gratify irrational desire without regard for others. Because of these early influences, the capacity for virtue will be limited. Furthermore, once the wrong habits are formed, they are difficult to change. "Any one who is to listen to lectures about what is noble and just, . . . must have been brought up in good habits."<sup>1</sup> For this reason, Aristotle seems wrong in blaming incontinent behavior which people can not change.

The behavior of the majority. In describing the majority of people, Aristotle says that they do not achieve virtue. First, he says that it is difficult for most people to attain virtue. "It is no easy task to be good."<sup>2</sup> To do the right thing in the right manner and situation is not

<sup>1</sup> Nic Eth R. 1. 4. 1095<sup>b</sup> 3-6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 11. 9. 1109<sup>a</sup> 24.

easy, and therefore, goodness is rare.<sup>1</sup> Since the mean is so difficult to attain, as second best Aristotle feels that people should aim for the extreme which is the least of the evils.<sup>2</sup>

Most people are not really bad or intemperate. Their wish for the noble is still preserved, only instead they act to gratify their irrational desires.<sup>3</sup> They tend to think selfishly only of themselves, to be greedy, and to follow "pleasures" which are not inherently pleasurable.<sup>4</sup> Happiness becomes identified with tangible goods such as wealth, the gratification of the appetite, and prestige.<sup>5</sup> What is lacking in most people is an inner standard of the real good and a sense of shame. They abstain from badness more through a fear of punishment rather than from a sense of shame. According to Aristotle it is impossible by argument to change such people.

It is hard, if not impossible to remove by argument the traits that have long since been incorporated in the character; and perhaps we must be content if, when all the influences by which we are thought to become good are present, we get some tincture of virtue.<sup>6</sup>

I summarize some of the issues of this chapter, first, Aristotle limits his definition of man as rational

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 25-27.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 33-35.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., viii. 13. 1162<sup>b</sup> 35-36.

<sup>4</sup>Nic Eth I. iii. 8. p. 42.    <sup>5</sup>Ibid., i. 4. p. 29.

<sup>6</sup>Nic Eth II. x. 9. 1179<sup>b</sup> 17-10.

to exclude slaves and women. However, there is no evidence that some people are born without the rational capacity for moral virtue. Insofar as Aristotle regards virtue as the fulfillment of the potential for acting in accordance with reason and habits of choice, all people seem capable at birth of moral virtue. As for specific virtues, Aristotle's definition of courage, for example, will not apply to everyone but only to those in battle. As for the capacity for intellectual virtue, perhaps not everyone is born with the same powers for contemplation.

Furthermore, as for virtue being dependent on the right inherited disposition, age, and possessions, it would seem that the basic capacity is not endangered greatly by the absence of these, although these factors may influence the ease with which one may perform specific virtuous acts.

It seems more likely that the disposition toward evil would be fostered by one's upbringing than inherited at birth. Early environmental influences seem to determine largely whether one will form habits of choice and a high level of reasoning or whether one will lead a life of incontinent behavior and ignorance of the real good. In fact, according to Aristotle most people seem to lean toward incontinence and identify happiness with pleasures of the irrational appetite. Therefore, Aristotle's conception of the highest virtue, contemplation, seems somewhat unrealis-

tic for most people. Furthermore, if nature intends man to develop his reason especially for contemplative activity for its own sake, either nature has failed in its purpose or Aristotle has misinterpreted its intention for man. It must be remembered that nature is also the source of the desires and emotions which most men indulge in gratification.

Aristotle believes that one can learn the end for man by examining man in his mature state. However, the description of most people in their mature state that Aristotle has supplied is not compatible with his ethical ideal. Thus, it is necessary to determine how far his psychological description of man's nature can be accepted and to what extent his definition of virtue can be upheld.

## CHAPTER VI

### EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

#### The Final End of Human Nature

Aristotle is confident that he can describe human nature because what a person can become exists prior to the individual and therefore can be known. First, one's actuality exists prior in the species to which one belongs and can be known by examining a fully developed member of the species.<sup>1</sup> Second, one can know human nature by examining the formula or essence of a mature person.<sup>2</sup> Third, one can understand human nature by examining the predetermined end or final form toward which man moves.<sup>3</sup> Aristotle believes that man's soul is his essence, that the development of the soul is the end toward which man grows, and that human nature can be understood by describing the soul of a mature person.<sup>4</sup> The most human characteristic of the soul is its ability to reason.<sup>5</sup> The development of reason and living a life in accordance with reason is the final end of human

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<sup>1</sup>Met. ix. 7. 1049<sup>b</sup> 18; Pol. i. 2. 1252<sup>b</sup> 1.

<sup>2</sup>Met. ix. 7. 1049<sup>b</sup> 13. <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 8. 1050<sup>a</sup> 6-10.

<sup>4</sup>De An S. ii. 1. 412<sup>b</sup> 11-13; 4. 415<sup>b</sup> 15-17.

<sup>5</sup>Nic Eth R. i. 7. 1098<sup>a</sup> 12-13.

nature.<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle is correct in describing reason as one of the chief characteristics of human nature. However, man has other characteristics which other animals do not share. These may include, for example, religious feeling, aesthetic sensitivity, and a desire to create and master. There are in addition other attributes of human nature which animals besides man may share. Nonetheless, these qualities are also characteristically human. These are the irrational passions. Aristotle himself says at one point that "the irrational passions are thought not less human than reason is, . . ."<sup>2</sup> When Aristotle describes the causes for incontinence, he says that incontinence is often due to emotions and desires which are natural to man and are found in some people more than in others by nature. Aristotle should include desires and emotions in his description of the soul of a mature person. When he describes how action occurs, he does include them. However, his account of man's non-rational nature could be changed to include some of the concerns of more recent inquiry such as the existence of unconscious and repressed emotions. Furthermore, his psychology of behavior could be broadened to include unconscious motivation.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1097<sup>a</sup> 35-1097<sup>b</sup> 1; 23; 1098<sup>a</sup> 8-9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., iii. i. 1111<sup>b</sup> 1-2.

Although Aristotle discusses the irrational nature of man in relation to behavior, when he describes man's essence and the end at which man should aim, he gives the irrational passions a subordinate position. Again, reason is held to be man's chief characteristic quality and its development, the final end for man.

When Aristotle elevates reason to a place of such significance, he is not describing the soul or behavior of the majority of mature people. As he was described as saying in Chapter V, most people do not live a life of reason. Thus, it is questionable that any such end of the rational life exists in nature as man's predetermined goal. Insofar as Aristotle upholds that such an end does exist as predetermined in nature, his psychology of man seems to be incorrect.

Aristotle himself seems at times to be uncertain about whether the development of reason is man's predetermined goal. In fact, although he describes reason to be man's most human quality, elsewhere he considers it a divine element in human nature. "If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life."<sup>1</sup> Besides here considering reason as a divine element in man, he seems to view the life of reason as beyond or above the realization of man's

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., x: 7. 1177<sup>b</sup> 30-31.

typical nature. This is expressed in the following passage.

When a man accomplishes something beyond his natural power, or beyond his years, or beyond the measure of people like him, or in a special way, . . . his deed will have a high degree of nobleness, goodness, and justice, or of their opposites.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in the preceding passage Aristotle too seems to think that he is not describing what the mature person is really like when he discusses the life of reason. Again, his psychology of man needs to be corrected to state that reason is only one of man's typical characteristics; the life of reason is atypical and not nature's predetermined end for every person.

It may even be questioned whether there is any final end given by nature for man. If there is an end for man to develop his main characteristics or functions, then it seems that there is a variety of ends for man depending on the main traits or functions of each individual. The state which most people do develop is far from the ideal of virtue that Aristotle describes. It seems more likely that human nature is not fixed and that man can not be described just in terms of reason. In fact, by holding that man's final form is predetermined, Aristotle defines human nature as static and fixed rather than as evolving. Perhaps human nature may be capable of more than Aristotle envisions. Occasionally he seems to recognize that a person may be able

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<sup>1</sup>Rhet. i. 7. 1365<sup>a</sup> 20-25.

to attain higher goals beyond any reached before him and beyond any that could be predicted. Aristotle seems to recognize this when he describes moral good as an end to aim for beyond the average life and also when he says that all should strive toward what is noble and strain every nerve to attain the greatest of goods.<sup>1</sup>

If Aristotle's ideal of the moral good is taken as one which man can perhaps potentially attain but not as a predetermined end, this ideal would have merit. Maybe Aristotle stresses man's rational abilities most in his ethics because he does realize that people are prone to living for the gratification of the irrational appetite and that they tend to go to extremes to acquire this gratification. Perhaps also Aristotle realizes that to rely as the basis for moral goodness on man's social instinct and need for friendship and companionship would be to place virtue on an insecure foundation. People also tend to be selfish, and as Aristotle says, the social instinct needs to be controlled by reason and deliberation if it is to form the basis of virtuous deeds. Thomas Hill states:

Aristotle's effort to ground duties of consideration for others solely in man's natural altruism shows an insufficient appreciation both of the narrowness of man's actual selfishness and of the sweep of his potential unselfishness.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nic Eth R. 1x. 8. 1169<sup>a</sup> 8-11.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas E. Hill, Ethics in Theory and Practice (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1956), p. 154.

However, Hill is incorrect here. It is perhaps because Aristotle recognizes the potential selfishness of human nature that he may stress the importance of reason in utilizing the social instinct. Therefore, the ideal of moral good, controlling with reason and deliberation one's emotions and desires in reference to oneself and others, and acting in accordance with choice, seems to be a worthy aim for man.

#### Happiness and Virtuous Activity

Aristotle states that all people aim toward a final good which is happiness. It seems true that most people desire happiness although there seems to be no definition of it that all people agree upon. Aristotle says that the final good at which most people aim is in the activity of their characteristic functions as human, for one's good resides in one's function. However, Aristotle seems to be using interchangeably two definitions of the word "good." One is the good which happiness is as a desired end, the other the good functioning of something. However, the first is not necessarily identical with the latter. Furthermore, moral good and good functioning are not necessarily identical. If it were true that all people aim at happiness, the latter being the activity of their rational functions, it would seem that more people would naturally

be virtuous and live according to reason and choice.

However, although it can not be shown that happiness and moral good logically entail one another, it may be still asked whether most people are or would be happiest living a rational life in accordance with the virtuous ideal. In many circumstances it would seem that the answer would be negative. For example, the virtuous person who is the victim of great misfortunes is not going to be happy. According to Aristotle:

Those who say that . . . the man who falls into great misfortunes is happy if he is good, are, whether they mean to or not, talking nonsense.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, doing virtuous deeds often requires sacrifices which take away from one's happiness. For example, Aristotle says that the courageous person must be willing to sacrifice even his own life. Aristotle seems to realize that happiness and virtue do not always go together also when he stresses virtue as a final end for its own sake or for the sake of the noble rather than as a means to happiness. Ross too points out that Aristotle "does not relate the virtuous act to the final good of human life, but treats it as simply right in its own nature."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Aristotle's confusion about the final end noted in Chapter III is due

<sup>1</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, vii. 13. 1153<sup>b</sup> 18-20.

<sup>2</sup> W. D. Ross, *Foundations of Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), p. 5.

to his confusing different types of good which can not be equated and to his incorrectly holding that man is happiest when he is fulfilling a certain function for which he was intended.

On the other hand, however, viewed in one way it would seem that of two people with identical external circumstances, the one who leads the more virtuous life would be the happiest in the sense of being most free from conflicts and compulsions. This would seem to be the case insofar as a person seems happiest when he is freest, living in accordance with choice rather than compulsively or neurotically always trying to fulfill conscious or unconscious insatiable desires. In this sense Aristotle seems to realize the psychological connection between being happy and leading a life in which conscious goals and purposes control one's actions. Viewed this way, virtue would be useful not only to guarantee altruism but for personal fulfillment as well.

Perhaps this is what Aristotle means when he says that the good person is both a lover of self and will benefit others.

The good man should be a lover of self (for he will both himself profit by doing noble acts, and will benefit his fellows), but the wicked man should not; for he will hurt both himself and his neighbors, following as he does evil passions.<sup>1</sup>

By leading a controlled, reasonable life, by not disre-

<sup>1</sup>Nic Eth R. ix. 8. 1169<sup>a</sup> 12-15.

garding or using others for the indiscriminate gratification of his desires, and by using his social instinct with rational control, the good person will benefit others. At the same time he will be a true lover of self by not becoming a slave to the beck and call of an appetite which is insatiable. Rather, he will live to fulfill conscious purposes and goals. Furthermore, the virtuous person will then be more self-sufficient because of his reliance on inner qualities than the incontinent one who is more at the mercy of external circumstances.

#### Virtue as a Mean

In one instance it would seem that moral virtue is a mean. Insofar as moral virtue implies living a life of moderation in which passion is neither completely repressed nor satisfied indiscriminately, then the life of virtue would be a mean. This life would entail moderation of feeling and appropriateness of the correct feeling in the right situation. As for being a mean in the sense of being in the middle of two specific, opposite emotions, Aristotle's definition of moral virtue as a mean is too narrow.

Aristotle himself often abandons the concept of mean in this sense as being inapplicable in many cases. For example, there is no mean in reference to theft and murder.

These are evil in themselves and admit of no excess or deficiency. Aristotle shows that the concept of the mean in the narrower sense is not always applicable also when he gives as extremes of one emotion, feelings which are not really opposites. For example, Ross says that actually cowardice is the opposite of courage while rashness is opposite discretion.<sup>1</sup> According to Ross

what he [Aristotle] has seen, though he has not expressed it very well, is that, in many cases natural reactions to stimulus go in pairs of opposites. There is not only a tendency to avoid danger, but a tendency to rush into it.<sup>2</sup>

Ross further states that it is just a very frequent accident that the right action is intermediate between extremes.<sup>3</sup> The essential aspect of Aristotle's definition of moral virtue according to Ross is not that it is a mean but that it is an appropriate action determined by a right rule or principle.<sup>4</sup>

#### Contemplation the Highest Virtue

It may be questioned whether there is a psychological basis for regarding contemplation as the highest virtue. Aristotle emphasizes reason as man's most human characteristic and the highest activity of man as the functioning of his reason, contemplation being the supreme form of this

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<sup>1</sup>Ross, Aristotle, p. 206.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

functioning. First, it has already been stated that reason is just one aspect of human nature, and Aristotle was described as saying that most people do not live lives in which contemplation has priority. Furthermore, perhaps not all people would find happiness or pleasantness in the activity of contemplation. Perhaps some would prefer other activities such as artistic creativity, for example. Neither may all people have the same ability for contemplation. Although it would seem that normal people do not lack sufficient reason for moral virtue, it would seem that in some cases one's inherited nature may limit one's ability to achieve a high degree and quality of contemplation. Thus, there seems to be no psychological necessity for regarding contemplation as the highest virtue for man.

Whether contemplation should be considered the highest ideal for man to strive for is also questionable. Although contemplation may be, as Aristotle holds a self-sufficient virtue, it is also a self-centered ideal. Ross believes that

in the whole Ethics outside the books on friendship very little is said to suggest that man can and should take a warm personal interest in other people; altruism is almost completely absent.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that in encouraging contemplation, Aristotle is not encouraging personal interaction with others. In this

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

Aristotle overlooks what he recognizes elsewhere that man is a social animal possessing a social instinct. Therefore, to make virtue compatible with human nature, it seems that reason should be utilized to benefit both oneself and others. In the Rhetoric Aristotle shifts his opinion and does not uphold contemplation as the highest virtue. He says for example:

And those qualities are noble which give more pleasure to other people than to their possessors; hence the nobleness of justice and just actions,<sup>1</sup>

If virtue is a faculty of beneficence, the highest kinds of it must be those which are useful to others; and for this reason men honour most the just and the courageous, . . .<sup>2</sup>

In upholding moral virtue rather than contemplation as the highest ideal for man, Aristotle seems to be upholding a worthy ideal and one which is more compatible with human nature.

#### Aristotle's Description of Virtue Incomplete

Aristotle's ideal of a rational, moderate life in which one deliberately chooses appropriate behavior with the welfare of others in mind rather than acts compulsively as a slave to passion is a worthy ideal. However, this is a very general description of the moral life, and a more specific account of virtue and how to attain it is needed. Aristotle's account of the particular virtues is also not

<sup>1</sup>Rhet. i. 9. 1367<sup>a</sup> 13-17.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1366<sup>b</sup> 3-5.

satisfactory. For example, appropriate feelings of confidence and courage should apply to all, not just to men in war. No matter what one's function in society is, rational, deliberate behavior should apply. Neither is the notion of the mean in the narrow sense satisfactory. What is missing in Aristotle's account of virtue is a specific standard for virtue, the right rule or principle which Ross holds to be the essential part of Aristotle's definition of moral virtue. To rely on reason alone, or in other words, to state only that one should use one's reason to choose correctly in each situation is not sufficient. Reason can err, and as Aristotle says: "The soul continues longer in the state of error than in truth."<sup>1</sup> Thus, more specific standards to guide one in choosing are needed.

Aristotle says that the good and appropriate choice in each situation is determined by a rational principle. This in turn is determined by practical wisdom. The latter helps one choose the right pleasures and avoid the ones that should be avoided. It helps determine through deliberation "the mark to which the man who has the rule looks, . . ."<sup>2</sup> Hill says of practical wisdom:

Prudence is a truth-attaining quality in relation to the things that are good for human beings.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>De An S. iii. 2. 427<sup>b</sup> 2.

<sup>2</sup>Nic Eth R. vi. 1. 1138<sup>b</sup> 21-22. <sup>3</sup>Hill, p. 131

However, as stated in Chapter III Aristotle's account of practical wisdom, which is supposed to determine the right principle, does nothing further to enlighten one about the right rule or standard which determines moral action. Aristotle's account of how practical wisdom is acquired also does not clarify what this standard is. Practical wisdom according to Aristotle is concerned with the knowledge of particulars, and this knowledge is acquired through experience and intuition. This account of moral virtue is still too vague to serve as a practical guide to action. Aristotle says that with virtue one not only aims at the right end but one acts to attain it. The same applies to practical wisdom, that with it one will act for the right end, but by what rule or standard this right end is determined is not clear.

In Chapter III Aristotle was quoted as saying that wish and choice aim at the best pleasures, that the best pleasures accompany the best activities, and if there is any question as to which activities and pleasures are best, one need only see which the best person or the most prudent chooses. If the prudent (the practically wise) person is to supply the standard for moral action, then Aristotle's definition of the good turns out to be circular. To say that what is best is what the best person would choose, tells nothing more of the standard for good for it does not

supply the criteria or standard by which the best person is to be identified. The standard or rule for determining the good is still not explained. Therefore, Aristotle never really gives an adequate definition of the good. What is needed is a more precise definition of virtue or a more complete psychological description of practical wisdom and of the prudent person.

#### Enlargement of Definition of Vice and Free Will Needed

Although Aristotle's definition of moral good is incomplete, however one defines the good, the right disposition toward the good and habits of choosing as well as of acting unreflectively in response to passion begin in childhood. In other words, the use of reason is subject to early determining influences. Probably at birth the capacity for developing the right disposition and habits is universal; however, once one's disposition and habits become formed in a certain direction, they are difficult to change. In this sense Aristotle's account of the development of character seems correct. However, to blame people for incontinent behavior which began as the result of influences beyond their control does not seem justified. The same holds true also of vice which stems from such incontinence. To blame a person for immoral behavior, Aristotle must hold that the person had the proper upbringing and has the knowledge of the

moral good, but still deliberately chooses not to act in accordance with virtue. His action must not be a result of ignorance, of outside forces beyond his control, or of inner psychological forces of which he either has no knowledge or can not control. The person must have the wish for what is morally evil and choose in accordance with this wish. Aristotle must say that people can wish for what they know is not morally good.

Furthermore, to blame a person for evil behavior, Aristotle would have to establish that a person has the power to act contrary to former habits and dispositions. In order to praise meaningfully a person for wishing for and choosing the good and blame him meaningfully for not doing so, Aristotle would have to establish that a person is flexible enough to break at least partially with his past character and behavior and has the power in each new situation to change somewhat. A psychological or metaphysical account of such a power is lacking in Aristotle's works.

Ross states:

On the whole we must say that he [Aristotle] shared the plain man's belief in free will but that he did not examine the problem very thoroughly, and did not express himself with perfect consistency.<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle seems pessimistic that such a power exists in human nature. From many of his remarks, it would seem

<sup>1</sup>Ross, Aristotle, p. 201.

that he holds that the mature human character is inflexible. Once a certain type of character has been formed, Aristotle holds that it is difficult to change it.<sup>1</sup> Once habits of incontinent behavior have been formed, it is difficult to educate a person to do otherwise. He

who lives as passion directs will not hear argument that dissuades him, nor understand it if he does; and how can we persuade one in such a state to change his ways?<sup>2</sup>

Griffin believes that Aristotle viewed people as always changing. In reference to habits Griffin says:

The . . . way in which we have been compelled to consider these . . . may perhaps insensibly lead us to think of them as habits which when once formed are irrevocably fixed. This is quite a mistake. . . . No one is more aware than is Aristotle of the constant flux of human character according to age and circumstances, . . .<sup>3</sup>

However, change due to forces such as age and circumstances is still not change freely determined as a result of knowledge, wish, and choice. Whether the power to change or act freely in each situation exists, especially in adulthood, is undetermined in Aristotle's works, but Aristotle seems correct that people are largely influenced in childhood to become what they do become.

Given the proper upbringing from the start, therefore, it would seem that people would be able to attain the ideal

<sup>1</sup>Nic Eth R. v. 9. 1137<sup>a</sup> 5-7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., x. 9. 1179<sup>b</sup> 26-28. <sup>3</sup>Griffin, p. 179.

of a rational, moderate life and act in accordance with deliberate purposes. Not only may easily recognizable emotions be mastered, but perhaps incontinent and compulsive behavior which is the result of unconscious emotions may be eliminated. Given the right upbringing, people may have a great chance of attaining both personal fulfillment and also behavior which takes into concern the welfare of others. However, more precise rules and standards for moral virtue are still needed in Aristotle's ethics before the proper upbringing could be adequately determined. However, Aristotle does set one in the right direction for determining moral good by emphasizing the importance of basing a description of moral good and standards of good action on human nature even though perhaps his own ethics is not always compatible with human nature.

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## ABSTRACT

Aristotle believes that the development of the soul, the form or essence of man, is the natural end of every person. One can understand human nature by examining the soul of a mature adult. In describing the psychology of human behavior Aristotle discusses especially the appetitive and intellective parts of the soul. These two parts partake in reason which Aristotle believes is man's most characteristically human quality.

Desires and emotions, faculties, and states of character are important aspects of behavior. One has the faculty for feeling desire for pleasure. When desire is aroused, the individual seeks the pleasure in action. If pain is apprehended, the individual is stimulated to avoid it. Desires of the body are irrational, those of the intellect are rational and are called wish. The capacity for the stimulation of desire presupposes imagination.

In attempting to satisfy desire or avoid pain, habits of response are formed. The habits one forms affect the type of character one will develop. One is responsible for the character one does develop. However, habits begin in childhood and are subject to many environmental influences.

Actions done by one's own efforts are voluntary; those done after deliberation are not only voluntary but chosen.

Wish for what one rationally thinks is good supplies the end to which choice seeks the means. Wish and choice occur in adults whose reasoning is mature.

The final good or end at which all people aim is happiness. One's good resides in one's function, and man's function is the activity of reason. Thus, happiness is virtuous activity or living in accordance with reason. Moral virtue is rational activity of the appetitive part of the soul and is a mean between two extreme feelings. Happiness is most identical with contemplation, the highest virtue of the intellective part of the soul. Sometimes Aristotle seems to say that happiness and virtue do not coincide and that virtue should be sought whether or not it yields happiness.

People develop virtuous states of character by developing the right habits of response to the right pleasures and by avoiding the appropriate pains. The right influences on the development of habits in childhood are necessary to the development of a virtuous character. When one chooses in accordance with reason, one acts virtuously and most freely. Practical wisdom determines the right rule which enables one to choose wisely the pleasures and pains to seek or avoid. The right rule is not explained any further by Aristotle.

Immorality involves extremes of passions and the disregard of reason in behavior. Aristotle blames people for immoral action except when it is due to ignorance of one or

more of the particulars of the situation. The three types of wrongdoing are brutishness, incontinence, and intemperance. With incontinence there is knowledge of and wish for the good, but one acts without choice against the good. Incontinence occurs when appetite overrules the knowledge of the good. Aristotle's other accounts of how one may act incontinently against wish are unsatisfactory. Intemperance seems to be caused by repeated incontinence and involves loss of the knowledge of the good and the wish for it.

It may be questioned whether one is really responsible for incontinence or intemperance. According to Aristotle habits of choice or incontinence begin in childhood and are subject to many influences which seem beyond one's control. Once formed habits are hard to change. Therefore, it would seem that the development of habits of incontinence and intemperance may be beyond one's control. Aristotle has not explained how or if it is possible to break with past habits and states of character to form new ones. Perhaps also Aristotle's definition of happiness as virtuous activity is not the final end at which all people aim since the incontinent person knows the good but does not do it.

Sometimes Aristotle holds to certain prerequisites for virtue as being universal. At other times he says that these prerequisites are limited to those who are fortunate. It would seem that all people have a sufficient capacity for at least moral virtue at birth, but that early environmental

influences which are beyond one's control affect the development of habits of choice. Therefore, Aristotle's ethical ideal of contemplation as the highest virtue does not seem compatible with human nature. In fact, most people as Aristotle describes them do not approximate this ideal.

Aristotle's psychology, in which reason is the most human characteristic of man, seems in need of correction. The development of reason does not seem to be a predetermined end for man. Human nature does not seem to have any fixed form or essence. However, to strive for a rational life and moral good seems to be a worthy ideal for man especially since people tend very easily to go to the opposite extreme, namely, unreason.

Happiness as virtuous activity is not the end at which most people do aim. Also, moral good and happiness do not seem to logically entail one another. Neither does being morally good seem to guarantee happiness in all cases. Yet, it would seem that most people would probably be happiest leading a moral life, at least insofar as they would then be free from the dictates of passion.

Aristotle's more narrow definition of moral virtue as a mean between two specific emotions does not hold in all cases. Neither does contemplation as the highest virtue seem to be compatible with human nature. As an ideal for which to strive contemplation is unsatisfactory because it is a self-centered activity and neglects man as a social

animal. A moral life as a moderate, controlled life seems to be a worthy ideal, but Aristotle's account of how the right rule or moral standard is determined is too vague to serve as a practical guide to moral action.

Aristotle seems to blame people for immoral behavior for which they may not be responsible. To praise or blame meaningfully Aristotle must give an account of how a person has the power to change at least partially and act contrary to past determining influences on his character. In spite of shortcomings in his psychology and definition of ethical behavior, Aristotle sets one in the right direction for determining ethical behavior by basing virtue on a psychology of human nature.