

ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF THE GOLDEN MEAN: AN EXPOSITION

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APPROVAL SHEET

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DEDICATION

To the Almighty Father,
the source and summit of my existence;

To the Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary,
the seedbed of my vocation;

To my family, relatives, friends, and benefactors,
whose love and support are ineffable and unending;

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is entitled, "Aristotle's Theory of the Golden Mean." Hence, the major problem of this paper would be the inquiry into the concept of the Golden Mean proposed by Aristotle. Furthermore, there are supporting problems to be tackled in order to facilitate the flow and to fully understand the central topic: Who is Aristotle? What is Aristotle's concept of end or good? What is the peculiar function of man? What is the Chief Good or Ultimate End of man? What is Moral Virtue? What are the conditions for the responsibility of an action? What are the particular virtues and vices? What is practical wisdom and how does it complement the golden mean? And what are the inherent vices?

The question on morality is indeed one of the major concerns in philosophy. This philosophical endeavor is conducted under the field of study called Ethics. Ethics or moral philosophy is concerned with questions on how people ought to act and on the search for a definition of the right conduct and the good life. The word "ethics" is derived from the Greek word "ethos" which means "custom" or "habit".¹

Throughout the history of philosophy, different thinkers proposed varying views regarding ethics. On Socrates' perspective, virtue is equivalent to knowledge. Knowledge will lead man to the ethical conduct. He believed that the only life worth living was that which is rigorously examined. As his famous quote reads, "An unexamined life is not worth living." He looked for principles and actions that were worth living by creating an ethical base upon which decision should be made.² For Plato, ethics comes down to two basic things: eudaimonia and arete. Eudaimonia, or "well being," is the virtue that every man should aim. The ideal person is the person who possesses eudaimonia, and the field of ethics is mostly

¹ L. Mastin, *Ethics*, (The Basics of Philosophy, 2009), https://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_ethics.html, accessed August 22, 2021

² Linda Ray, *What were Socrates' Belief on Ethics?* (The Classroom Website, September 29, 2017), <https://www.theclassroom.com/what-were-socrates-beliefs-on-ethics-12084753.html>. Accessed August 22, 2021.

just a description of what such an ideal person would truly be like. However, achieving eudaimonia requires something extra, which Plato calls arete, or excellence. Possessing arete is the way that one can reach a state of eudaimonia. A person with arete is a person who has the character traits that would lead to a eudaimonious life.³

Another notable philosopher who provided a major contribution in the field of ethics was Aristotle, the concern of this paper. His ethical view can be found on his books entitled *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Eudemian Ethics*, and the *Magna Moralia* (The Great Ethics). Among these works, the *Nicomachean ethics* is generally regarded as the most significant and the most important one.⁴ It consists of a series of short treatises possibly brought together by Aristotle's son named Nicomachus (as the title of the book reads).⁵

The book begins by inquiring the end of human acts; that every agent acts for the sake of an end. As for Aristotle, "Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be which all things aim."⁶ The end then of every human act is basically and fundamentally good. No man acts for the sake of achieving an evil end.⁷ However, we do not say that the end is always a true or authentic good, but only that it is always good after a manner; that it is at least an apparent good and aimed at because apprehended as good. It may be conceived as good in itself,

³ Eric Herboso, *Plato's Beliefs On Ethics*, (Classroom, June 25, 2018), <https://classroom.synonym.com/platos-beliefs-on-ethics-12085987.html>. September 4, 2021.

⁴ Jon Miller, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: A Critical Guide*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Introduction.

⁵ Kenny, Anthony J.P. and Anselm H. Amadio, *Aristotle*. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 2, 2021), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>. Accessed September 4, 2021.

⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, (The Internet Classics Archive, 2009), Book 1, p. 1, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.1.i.html>. accessed August 22, 2021.

⁷ Erico Joseph Cañete, *On Good and Happiness*, (Unpublished Class Lecture, Special Questions in Ethics, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary, Bohol, September 29, 2021.)

worth tending to for its own sake, or as a means conducive to some other good.⁸ Good then, in so far as man's action is concerned, can be classified into two: Apparent and Authentic Good. Apparent good is that which appears to be good but actually evil in itself. Under this notion are vices and all kinds of sin. Authentic good, on the other hand, is that which is good in itself. Under this notion are virtues like generosity, modesty, honesty, sincerity, friendliness, and the like.⁹ Human beings should rightly aim to what is authentically good.

Knowing that every agent acts for an end which is good, what would be the ultimate end of human act? What would be the chief end or the chief good which is achieved for the sake of itself and not for the sake of another end? If there is any single thing that is the highest human good, therefore, it must be desirable for its own sake and all other goods must be desirable for the sake of it.¹⁰ Aristotle then suggested that the ultimate end is the "Eudaimonia". It is the condition of human flourishing or of living well. The conventional English translation of this ancient Greek term is "happiness". However, this became problematic because people usually associate this with pleasure. Eudaimonia is not merely something which is pleasurable.¹¹ Aristotle stressed that "Eudaimonia" is the state of living well. As happiness, it is more like on man's state of living well than any contentment or pleasure. It is the highest good desirable for its own sake and not for the sake of

⁸ Charles Coppen, *Moral Philosophy*, (University of Notre Dame), <https://maritain.nd.edu/jmc/etext/mp01.htm>. Accessed August 22, 2021.

⁹ Erico Joseph Cañete, *On Good and Happiness*, (Unpublished Class Lecture, Special Questions in Ethics, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary, Bohol, September 29, 2021.)

¹⁰ Kenny, Anthony J.P. and Anselm H. Amadio, *Aristotle*. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 2, 2021), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>. Accessed September 4, 2021.

¹¹ Ibid.

another end.¹² He further argued that it is an activity of the rational soul in accordance with virtue.¹³

To achieve the chief good or ultimate end, Aristotle proposed a philosophical approach called Virtue Ethics. Virtue ethics is one of the major ethical theories together with utilitarian ethics and deontological ethics. Utilitarian ethics refers to an ethical decision being made based on the consequences of the actions. This theory is also called as Consequentialism. The second one, Deontological ethics, is associated with the father of modern deontology – Immanuel Kant. The idea is that human beings have a duty to respect other people’s rights and treat them accordingly. Virtue ethics, on the other hand, is the philosophy which stems from Aristotle. This is fundamentally based on the virtues of the person making a decision. The consideration in Virtue ethics is essentially, “what makes a person good”. This ethical approach is much more concerned with the character of the person.¹⁴

Aristotle divided virtue into two: Intellectual Virtue and Moral Virtue. Accordingly, “Intellectual virtues in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching while moral virtues comes about by habit, whence its name “ethike” is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word “ethos” which means habit.”¹⁵ Moral virtues then does not emerge by nature, rather, they arise through habit. A just man can be produced by doing just acts and a temperate man can be produced by doing temperate acts. Without doing these, no one would even have a prospect

¹² Brian Duignan, *Eudaimonia*, (Encyclopedia Britannica, July 3, 2020), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/eudaimonia>, accessed August 25, 2021.

¹³ Kenny, Anthony J.P. and Anselm H. Amadio, *Aristotle*. (Encyclopedia Britannica, March 2, 2021), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>. Accessed September 4, 2021.

¹⁴ Donald P. Bellisario, *Ethical Theories*, (The Arthur W. Page Center: Public Relation Ethics), <https://pagecentertraining.psu.edu/public-relations-ethics/introduction-to-public-relations-ethics/lesson-1/ethical-theories/>, accessed August 23, 2021.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, (The Internet Classics Archive, 2009), Book 1, p. 1, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.1.i.html>, accessed August 22, 2021.

of becoming good.¹⁶ Moral virtues include courage, temperance, self-discipline, moderation, modesty, humility, generosity, friendliness, truthfulness, and justice. Intellectual virtue, on the other hand, includes scientific knowledge, technical knowledge, intuitive knowledge, practical wisdom, and philosophic wisdom.¹⁷

Aristotle described moral virtue as a “*hexis*” (a state of character, condition, or disposition) induced by man’s habit to have appropriate feelings.¹⁸ It is through practicing virtue that man will be able to live a good and better life. To be virtuous, Aristotle suggested that man should strike the mean or the intermediate. He then proposed the theory called “The Golden Mean”. This theory suggests that man should choose the mean and avoid the two vices: extreme and deficiency. As the *Nicomachean ethics*, Book II, Article 6, reads:

Virtue then is the state of character concerned with the choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us, this determined by a rational principle, and by that principle, by which man’s practical wisdom would determine it. Now, it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect. And again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed to what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. Hence, in respect of its substance and the definition which states its essence, virtue as a mean, with regard to what is best and right an extreme.¹⁹

In this theory, there are several considerations needed to be remembered. The mean is not absolute or universal; it is relative from person to person depending on the situation he/she is in.²⁰ That is why it is emphasized from the

¹⁶ Ibid, Article 4.

¹⁷ Alex Scott, *Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, (Angel Fire Website, 2002), <https://www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/ethics.html>, accessed August 23, 2021.

¹⁸ Kraut, Richard, *Aristotle’s Ethics*, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>, accessed August 23, 2021.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, (The Internet Classics Archive, 2009), Book 1, p. 1, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.1.i.html>, accessed August 22, 2021.

²⁰ Ibid.

quotation above that the mean is relative to every agent which can be determined through the use of practical wisdom. Accordingly, practical wisdom is knowing what is right, good, and best based on a given particular set of circumstances.²¹ It is being mindful and vigilant to the situation. Wisdom, the intellectual virtue which is proper to practical wisdom, is inseparably linked with the moral virtues. Practical wisdom aids the agent in making an accurate assessment of the circumstances in which his decision is to be made.²² Moral and intellectual virtues then are intimately related. Aristotle says that it is impossible to be really good without wisdom and to be really wise without moral virtue.²³ It is then necessary to note that moral virtue should be guided by the intellectual virtue.

Furthermore, Aristotle asserted that there are certain acts which do not admit a mean. Some acts are considered to be vices inherently. Aristotle said, "For some have names that already imply badness, e.g. spite, shameless, envy, and in the case of actions, adultery, theft, murder; for all of these and such like things imply by their names that they are themselves bad, and not the excess of deficiencies of them. It is not possible then, ever to be right with regard to them; one must be always wrong."²⁴ Those things should be considered in order to clearly and comprehensibly understand the theory of the golden mean of Aristotle. Now, what is the relevance of studying Aristotle's golden mean?

As Aristotle's basic premise of his ethics says, every man acts for the sake of an end and the end which man always desires is basically good.²⁵ If an agent

²¹ Thomas Vontz and Lori Goodson, *Practical Wisdom*, (Press Books Libraries), <https://kstatelibraries.pressbooks.pub/EDCI702/chapter/module-2-practical-wisdom/>, accessed September 4, 2021.

²² Kenny, Anthony J.P. and Anselm H. Amadio, *Aristotle*. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 2, 2021), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>. Accessed September 4, 2021.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, (The Internet Classics Archive, 2009), Book 1, p. 1, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.1.i.html>, accessed August 22, 2021.

²⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, (New York: Pocket Books Publishing, 1958), Book I, Chap. I.

acts with no object or purpose, then his life would be pointless.²⁶ He further asserted that there should be an ultimate end of human act; an end which is not a means for another end and is aimed for its own sake.²⁷ This end is what Aristotle calls the Eudaimonia or the condition of flourishing and living well.²⁸ This is a condition or state of happiness which is beyond contentment or pleasure. However, this end could not be achieved easily. This can only be achieved when man constantly conforms his acts with virtues for virtue makes man good and his function good.²⁹ To be virtuous, the agent should strike the mean and avoids the two vices: excess and deficiency.³⁰ However, striking the golden mean is not that easy. Aristotle said, “It is possible to fail in many ways while to succeed is possible only in one way (for which reason also one is easy and the other difficult, to miss the mark easy, to hit it difficult). For men are good in but one way but bad in many.”³¹ There are two vices while there is only one mean. He asserted that “for in everything, it is not easy task to find the middle like finding the middle of a circle.”³² It is then like an archer trying hard to hit the bulls eye of a target board. Furthermore, the mean is not that easy to strike in the sense that it is relative to man and hence, it requires practical wisdom.³³ It is easy to feel or act a certain action or passion but it is not easy to feel or act to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and the right way.³⁴ The agent, then,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, Book I, Chap. VII.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., Book I, Chap. IX.

³⁰ Ibid., Book II, Chap. VI.

³¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross, (The Internet Classics Archive, 2009), Book 1, p. 1, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.1.i.html>, accessed August 22, 2021.

³² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, (New York: Pocket Books Publishing, 1958), Book II, Chap. IX.

³³ Ibid., Book II, Chap. VI.

³⁴ Ibid., Book II, Chap. IX.

should also conscientiously examine the situations and circumstances in order to strike the mean.

This study will help the readers to acquire knowledge regarding the theory of the golden mean of Aristotle. By knowing his theory, the readers will be able to know and act virtuously by striking the mean and avoiding the two Vices: extreme and deficiency. On the difficulty of being good and virtuous person, the theory of the golden mean will serve as a systematic and comprehensive guide for the readers to choose and observe virtuous acts. Vices are the reasons why human beings are not able to live a good life for “it is nature of such things to be destroyed by defect and excess.”³⁵ This study will also remind the readers to conscientiously examine their act in the face of different situations and circumstances in order to strike what is good and virtuous. Through practical wisdom, man will be able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself conducive to a good life.³⁶ Practical wisdom aids the agent in choosing what is good based on the particular context or situation he is in. Remember that the mean is relative; it depends upon the particular situation or circumstances.³⁷

Human beings as rational beings, should achieve excellence according to their nature - that the rational soul should conform to virtue.³⁸ This study will serve as a systematic and comprehensive guide of the readers in order to do virtuous acts in their day to day lives and eventually achieve “Eudaimonia” – the ultimate end of human act.

This paper consists of three chapters which centers on Aristotle’s concept of the golden mean. The introduction comprises the overview, background, scope,

³⁵ Ibid., Book II, Chap. II.

³⁶ Ibid., Book VI, Chap. IV.

³⁷ Ibid., Book II, Chap. VI.

³⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1946), Book I, Chap. VII.

and relevance of the study. The chapter one exposes the life of Aristotle. The chapter two covers the exposition of the topic which is divided into three major topics: End, Moral Virtue, and the Golden Mean. The first topic is all about Aristotle's view of End. It is necessary to discuss this topic first for this is the starting point of his ethics.³⁹ Then, on his concept of the good knowing that he perceived end as fundamentally good.⁴⁰ After discussing the good, the researcher moves on to the discussion on Eudaimonia or happiness: the Ultimate Good. The researcher also discussed the peculiar function of man for Aristotle asserted that the Chief Good can only be given clearer account if one ascertains the function of man.⁴¹ Afterwards, the researcher discusses Aristotle's definition of moral virtue for this will lead to the central topic of this paper. In discussing the Moral Virtue, the researcher also tackled the conditions for the responsibility of an action since Aristotle emphasized that this consideration is necessary to better understand moral virtue.⁴² After that, the researcher proceeds to the discussion on the Golden Mean. On this section, the researcher considered the discussion on inherent vices and practical wisdom for these are essentially related to the golden mean.⁴³

The flow of the body would then be: On End with subtopics discussing the Good, Function of Man, and the Chief Good; on Moral Virtue with subtopics discussing Moral Virtue as a Habit, Conditions for the Responsibility of an Act, and the Formal Definition of Virtue; on the Golden Mean with subtopics discussing the Particular Virtue and Vices, Practical Wisdom, and Actions or Passions which are Vices Inherently. The last chapter contains the summary, conclusion, and recommendation of the paper.

³⁹ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Greece and Rome*, Vol. I, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1946), p. 332.

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, (New York: Pocket Books Publishing, 1958), Book I, Chap. I.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Book I, Chap. VII.

⁴² Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. By W.D. Ross, edited by Richard Mackeon, (Random House Inc., 1941), Book II, Chap. IV.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Book II, Chap. IV.

This study fundamentally focuses on Aristotle's theory of the golden mean. The golden mean is under his concept of moral virtue. However, as mentioned above, the golden mean should also be guided by the intellectual virtue. Hence, this paper also tackles briefly the intellectual virtue, particularly, the practical wisdom.

This study limits only to the book of Aristotle entitled, "Nicomachean ethics," and basically uses the translation of W.D. Ross. However, the researcher also considered the translations of other writers in order to have a wider horizon in understanding Aristotle's ethics. This paper is also supported by multiple secondary and online sources. It is also suggested that further study should be conducted for this does not fully exhaust the entire ethics of Aristotle.

Chapter 1

THE LIFE OF ARISTOTLE

1.1 Life

Aristotle is known to be one of the greatest philosophers in the history of Western thought. Together with Plato and Socrates, Aristotle's thought was of such decisive and influential power that it was to influence philosophy even this current time.⁴⁴ His philosophy also became one of the bases and framework for both Christian Scholasticism and medieval Islamic philosophy.⁴⁵ The range and power of his achievements place him with no doubt in the shortest of short lists of the giants of Western thought.⁴⁶

Aristotle was born in 384 B.C. in the little town of Stagira on the eastern coast of the Peninsula of Chalcidice in Thrace. His father, Nicomachus, was a court physician to King Amyntas II: the king of Macedonia and father of Philip the Great.⁴⁷ Because of his royal connection, Aristotle owed his appointment as a tutor to the boy prince who later became the Alexander the Great.⁴⁸ Aristotle's father died when he was still young and so he was raised by a man named Proxenus of Atarneus, whose son, Nicanor, was later in turn, adopted by Aristotle.⁴⁹ In 368/7 B.C., when he was about to turn seventeen, Aristotle went to Athens in order to study in Plato's school named Academy. Accordingly, in the Academy, Aristotle

⁴⁴ Samuel E. Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, Fifth edition, (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1994), p. 83.

⁴⁵ Kenny, Anthony J.P. and Anselm H. Amadio, "Aristotle". (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 2, 2021), <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>. Accessed September 4, 2021.

⁴⁶ Renford Bambrough, *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, (United States: New American Library Publishing, 1963), p. 11.

⁴⁷ Richard McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, (New York: Random House Inc.), 1941, p. 5.

⁴⁸ Renford Bambrough, *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, (United States: New American Library Publishing, 1963), p. 16.

⁴⁹ McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, p. 5.

did not enter there as a young philosopher, but simply as a freshman pursuing his education.⁵⁰ At the academy, Aristotle was known to be the “reader” and the “mind of the school”.⁵¹ He was profoundly influenced by Plato’s thought and personality even though eventually, he was to separate from Plato’s philosophical thought in order to formulate his own philosophical view.⁵² Moreover, it should be noted that Plato’s thought was in the process of change while Aristotle was at the Academy. It is usually said that Aristotle studied with Plato during the latter’s later period; a time when Plato’s interest had shifted towards mathematics, method, and natural science.⁵³ It was also during this time when specialists in various sciences like medicine, anthropology, and archaeology came to Academy. This meant that Aristotle was exposed to a vast array of empirical facts which he found useful for research and for his mode of formulating scientific concepts. Therefore, it may be that the intellectual atmosphere of the Academy marked by some of Plato’s latest dominant concerns and the availability of collected data in special fields gave Aristotle a direction in philosophy that was compatible to his scientific disposition.⁵⁴ Though Aristotle was influenced by Plato during his time in the Academy, it is said that there were already certain differences that must have been apparent between them, especially in terms of interests.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Radoslav A. Tsanoff, *The Great Philosophers*, Second Edition, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1953), p. 73.

⁵¹ Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 80.

⁵² Accordingly, while at the Academy, Aristotle wrote many dialogues in a Platonic style, which his contemporaries praised for the “golden stream” of his eloquence. He even reaffirmed, in his *Eudemus*, the doctrine which is so central to Plato’s thought: the doctrine of Forms or Ideas, which he later then criticized severely. See Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 80.

⁵³ Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 80.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ For example, Aristotle was less interested in mathematics than Plato and much more interested in empirical data. Furthermore, Aristotle’s view was much more fixed upon the concrete processes of nature, so that he considered his abstract scientific notions to have their real habitat in this living nature. In contrast, Plato separated the world of thought from the world of flux or things, ascribing the true reality to the Ideas and Forms which he thought, had an existence separate from the things in nature. It could be said, therefore, that Aristotle oriented his philosophical thought to the dynamic realm of becoming while

But whatever differences there were between these two great thinkers, the fact remains that Aristotle did not break with Plato personally as he stayed at the Academy until Plato's death.⁵⁶ Furthermore, it is said that Aristotle's later major treatises still have traces of Platonic influence despite of Aristotle's unique interpretation and approach.⁵⁷ But, his distinctly "Platonic" period came to an end upon Plato's death, when the direction of the Academy passed on to the hand of Plato's nephew, Speusippos, whose overemphasis to mathematic was uncongenial to Aristotle.⁵⁸ Later, with his radical departure from the Platonic ideas, he began to criticize some views of Plato especially on his theory of Forms. Accordingly, he realized that it was simply unnecessary to assume that there is a hypothetical realm of Forms knowing that the reality of things can be already seen here on earth; very much evident in everyday things.⁵⁹

Aristotle remained in a close association with the Academy of Plato for twenty years, until the death of Plato in 348/7.⁶⁰ In the same year, Philip of Macedon attacked Stagira. Aristotle's ancestral home was destroyed which is why he left Athens and the Academy. He was away for thirteen years.⁶¹ Accordingly, he was invited by Hermias to come to Assos, near Troy. Hermias had formerly

Plato's thought was fixed more upon the static realm of timeless being. See *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 81.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Will Buckingham, *The Philosophy Book*, (New York: DK Publishing, 2011), p. 58. It was accordingly perhaps because of his father, who is a physician, that Aristotle had a great scientific interest especially in biology. On the other hand, Plato's background had been firmly based in mathematics. This difference in background helps to explain the difference in approach between these two men. Mathematics, especially geometry, deals with abstract concepts that are far removed from the everyday world, whereas biology is very much about the world around us, and is based almost solely on observation. Plato sought confirmation of a realm of Forms from notions such as perfect circle, which cannot exist in nature, while Aristotle found that certain constants can be discovered by simply examining the natural world. Ibid.

⁶⁰ McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, p. 5.

⁶¹ Justin D. Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, (New York: Pocket Books Publishing, 1958), p. 11.

been a student at the Academy and now became a ruler in Assos. Aristotle spent his time there teaching, writing, and conducting research.⁶² While at Hermias' court, Aristotle married this ruler's niece, Pythias, who bore him a daughter. Later, when they had returned to Athens, his wife died and Aristotle entered into a new relationship with Herpylis, which was never legalized but which was a happy, permanent, and affectionate union from which bore a fruit, Nicomachus.⁶³ The famous book of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, was named after his son's name.⁶⁴ After his three years of living in Assos, Aristotle moved to the neighbouring island of Lesbos, stayed there for the time being in Mitylene, where he taught and continued his investigations in biology.⁶⁵

In 343/2 B.C., Aristotle was invited by Philip of Macedon to become the tutor of his thirteen-year old son, Alexander. As a tutor of a future ruler, Aristotle gained not only first hand experience of politics, but also the friendship and protection of the man who would become the most powerful ruler of his time.⁶⁶ When came the time that Alexander ascended to the throne after his father Philip's death, Aristotle's job as a tutor came to an end. He stayed shortly in his hometown of Stagira and afterwards, he returned to Athens.⁶⁷

Upon his return to Athens in 335/4 B.C., Aristotle embarked upon the most productive period of his life wherein he founded his own school named Lyceum. During that time, he was under the protection of the Macedonian statesman named

⁶² Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 81.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ The book *Nicomachean Ethics* is one of the most celebrated and influential of moral philosophies. Since its construction in the 4th century B.C., it has a profound and enduring effect: by later philosophers, it has been vehemently embraced and others critically rejected, but never coldly ignored. And in certain crucial respects, it has helped to shape and mould the common moral consciousness. See J.A.K. Thomson, "*The Ethics of Aristotle*," (New York: Penguin Books Publishing, 1955), p. 9.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, p. 11.

⁶⁷ Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 82.

Antipater.⁶⁸ The school Lyceum was named after a grove sacred to Apollo Lyceus and the Muses.⁶⁹ It consisted of a temple of the Muses, an Altar, several lecture rooms, a library, and a map room.⁷⁰ Here, Aristotle and his pupils would walk in the Peripatos, a tree-covered walk, and discussed philosophy.⁷¹ For this reason, the members of this school was known as Peripatetics.⁷² Aside from their peripatetic discussions, there were also some lectures for some small audiences and others of a more popular nature for larger audiences. It is also said that Aristotle formed the first great library by collecting hundreds of manuscripts, maps, and specimens which he used as illustrations for his lectures.⁷³ Furthermore, Aristotle's school developed certain formal procedures whereby their leadership would take turn among members. He formulated the rules for these procedures as he also did for the special common meal and special symposium once a month when a member was selected to defend a philosophical view against the critical objection of the other member.⁷⁴ The students then were trained to become a good leader and a critical thinker. For about thirteen years, Aristotle remained as the head of the Lyceum, not only in teaching and lecturing, but above all in formulating his main and central ideas about the classification of the sciences, fashioning a

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ In Greek Mythology, Apollo Lyceus was known as the wolf-slayer. The Muses, on the other hand, were the daughters of Zeus, king of gods, and Mnemosyne, goddess of memory. They were born after the pair lay together for nine nights in a row. Each of the Muses is lovely, graceful and alluring, and gifted with a particular artistic talent. The Muses delight the gods and human beings with their songs, dances, and poems and inspire human artists to greater artistic achievements search who are the muses. See, N.S. Gill, "Who were the Nine Greek Muses?" ThoughtCo., March 17, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-greek-muses-119788>, accessed March 7, 2022.

⁷⁰ Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, p. 12.

⁷¹ According to tradition, in the mornings, Aristotle would lecture to the students and in the afternoon, the public was admitted to lectures on relatively easy subjects like rhetoric. See Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, p. 12.

⁷² The word "Peripatetics" comes from the Greek word "Peripatein", meaning, "to walk about." See Justin D. Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, p. 12.

⁷³ Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 83.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

bold new science of logic, and writing his advanced ideas in every major area of philosophy and science; exhibiting an extraordinary command of universal knowledge.⁷⁵

While Aristotle's school was running well, there suddenly happened an event which gave negative effect to Aristotle's philosophical life. There was this radical change in the political climate which negatively affected Aristotle's plan. To the rising nationalist party in the Athens (an Anti-Macedonian political atmosphere), Aristotle had always been a suspect for his Macedonian connections and his position even became much more dangerous when Alexander the Great died in 323 B.C.⁷⁶ Aristotle then left the Athens as he is said to have embarked that "lest the Athenians sin twice against philosophy".⁷⁷ An accusation of impiety was brought against him, the same as those which had been brought against Anaxagoras and Protagoras or on that which Socrates had been condemned. The specific charge was that he had instituted a private cult in the memory of his friend, Hermias, since he had established a statue to him at Delphi and had composed a poem on what was alleged to be the manner of hymns of praise in his honor.⁷⁸

Aristotle then left the Lyceum and fled to Chalcis where he died in 322 B.C., at the age of about sixty-two; supposedly of a stomach or digestive disease aggravated by overwork.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, p. 12.

⁷⁷ Richard McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, p. 5. This phrase means that if Aristotle would be executed by the Athens, then they would sin twice against philosophy for they already sinned before with the unjust execution of Socrates. That is why, Aristotle fled in order to avoid the trial and his possible execution, which would then become the second sin of the Athens against philosophy. See Joshua J. Mark, *Aristotle*, (World History Encyclopedia, May 22, 2019), <https://www.worldhistory.org/aristotle/>, accessed, March 6, 2022.

⁷⁸ McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, p. 5.

⁷⁹ Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, p. 12.

1.2 The Works of Aristotle

Aristotle wrote a myriad of works during his lifetime. However, not all of his works survived. Accordingly, it was chiefly because of his students at the Lyceum rather than through his written works that Aristotle's thought remained alive and significant in the centuries after his death.⁸⁰ Some critics said that Aristotle's writings are simply hurried notes written probably as an outline of his lectures. Other critics also said that all the works of Aristotle that we have right now are mere class notes made by his pupils.⁸¹ However, there's a controversy on this matter. Knowing that these are simply lecture notes made by Aristotle's pupils, critics would inevitably question its credibility and authenticity. It is said that some parts of Aristotle's works are of doubtful authenticity, and some alteration and interpolation have certainly been made in the original text.⁸² Furthermore, other readers somehow perceive his writings as not always ordered with logical coherence, distracting due to occasional shifts from one topic to another or due to rehearsal and repetition.⁸³ Yet, despite of their defects, they still give an overwhelming impression of the encyclopedic range, the analytic mastery, and the systematic grasp of Aristotle's mind.⁸⁴

His works fall into two groups: the exoteric works, which were mostly written in a form of dialogue and intended for general publication; and the pedagogical works, which formed the basis of Aristotle's lectures in the Lyceum.⁸⁵ The former only exists in fragments and most were lost. The dialogues and treatises, which were publicized during his lifetime, failed to survive.⁸⁶ The latter kind, on the other

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Thomson, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, p. 81.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Tsanoff, *The Great Philosophers*, p. 74.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 75.

⁸⁵ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy; Greece and Rome*, Vol. I, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1946), p. 268-9.

⁸⁶ Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, p. 12.

hand, were able to survive until today.⁸⁷ According to a traditional account, the works which survive today consists of manuscripts which were carefully guarded by Aristotle's friend and successor head of the Lyceum, Theophastrus.⁸⁸ Afraid that the anti-Macedonian party in Athens might destroy the manuscripts, Theophastrus decided to send them off to Asia Minor where they remained hidden for almost 150 years.⁸⁹ In the first century B.C., a Greek edition was compiled by Andronicus of Rhodes, and this edition represents substantially the form and order which we have Aristotle's writings in this current time, that is, the pedagogical works.⁹⁰

These writings were classified as follows: logic, dialectic, and metaphysics: Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analytics, Topics, On Sophistical Refutations, Metaphysics; science and philosophy of science: Posterior Analytics, Physics, On the Heavens, On Generation and Corruption, Meteorology, History of Animals, On the Parts of Animals, On the Motions of Animals, On the Progression of Animals, On the Generation of Animals; psychology and philosophy of mind: On the Soul, Sense and Sensibilia, On Memory and Reminiscence, On Sleep, On Dreams, On Propheying by Dreams, On Length and Shortness of Life, On Youth, Old Age, Life and Death, Respiration; ethics and politics: Nicomachean Ethics, Magna Moralia, Eudemian Ethics, Politics, Rhetoric, Constitution of Athens; aesthetics: Poetics.⁹¹

Accordingly, Aristotle's writings fall into three main periods: first, the period of his intercourse with Plato; second, the years of his activity at Assos and

⁸⁷ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy; Greece and Rome*, p. 269.

⁸⁸ Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, p. 13.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ This was taken from the introduction made by C.D.C. Reeve on the book *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, by Richard McKeon, p. 15.

Mitylene; and third, the time of his leadership of the Lyceum at Athens.⁹² In Aristotle's first period, he is said to have adhered closely to Plato, his teacher, both in content and in form. It is most probable that in the Dialogues, Aristotle utilized the Platonic philosophy and only later changed his mind.⁹³ In this period belongs the dialogue of Eudemus, or *On the Soul*, in which Aristotle shares Plato's doctrine of recollection and the apprehension of ideas in a state of pre-existence.⁹⁴ His another youthful work, *Protrepticus* or *Exhortation*, which is an epistle to Thémison of Cyrus rather than a dialogue, also belongs to this period.⁹⁵ In this work, Aristotle encourages everyone to do philosophy for even arguing against the practice of philosophy is itself a form of philosophizing.⁹⁶ It is also in this work that the Platonic doctrine of forms is maintained and the philosopher is depicted as one who contemplates these forms or ideas and not the imitations of them.⁹⁷ Furthermore, Aristotle also emphasized the worthlessness of earthly goods, and views this life as the death or tomb of the soul, which enters into true and higher life only through bodily death.⁹⁸ This view is clearly an influence of Platonic thought. This is different from his view of life in *Nicomachean ethics* where Aristotle adheres

⁹² Copleston, *A History of Philosophy; Greece and Rome*, p. 268.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 269.

⁹⁴ Aristotle argues for the immortality of the soul on lines suggested by the *Phaedo* – the soul is not a mere harmony of the body. Harmony had a contrary which is disharmony while soul has no contrary, hence, not harmony. Aristotle supposes pre-existence and the substantiality of the soul. Life apart from the body is the soul's normal state; its inhabitation of the body is really a severe illness. This is a very distinct view from that afterwards put by Aristotle when he had taken up his own independent position and departed from Platonic thought. See Copleston, *A History of Philosophy; Greece and Rome*, p. 270.

⁹⁵ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy; Greece and Rome*, p. 270.

⁹⁶ Kenny, Anthony J.P. and Amadio, Anselm H., *Aristotle: Greek Philosopher*, Encyclopedia Britannica, March 2, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>, Accessed March 14, 2022.

⁹⁷ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy; Greece and Rome*, p. 270.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

on the necessity of earthly goods, in some degree at least, in achieving a truly happy life.⁹⁹

Moving on to the next period, Aristotle started to move away from the Platonic way of thinking. His works began to depart from his former predominantly Platonic position and to adopt a more critical attitude towards the teaching of the academy.¹⁰⁰ This period is accordingly represented by the dialogue on philosophy; a work which synthesizes clear Platonic influences with a criticism of some of Plato's most characteristic theories.¹⁰¹ It is also during this period that Aristotle conducted his philosophical endeavor on metaphysics and politics.¹⁰² The Eudemian Ethics also falls on this period where Aristotle still holds to the Platonic conception of Phronesis though the object of philosophic contemplation is no longer the ideal world of Plato but the transcendent God of metaphysics.¹⁰³ Furthermore, the writings *De Castro* and *De Generatione et Corruptione* belongs to this period.

Aristotle's third period is that of his activities in the Lyceum, his founded school. It is accordingly during this period that Aristotle appears as an empirical observer and scientist.¹⁰⁴ Most of the pedagogical works belong to this period, that is, the notes written by his pupils during their lectures. However, this does not imply that each work represents a single lecture or a continuous course of lectures, but rather, they are varying lectures which were later synthesized and given an external unity by means of a common title.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 271.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy; Greece and Rome*, p. 271.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Aristotle also categorized sciences into three: Theoretical, Practical, and Productive Sciences. The end of theoretical sciences is knowledge for its own sake.¹⁰⁶ Under this heading are theology philosophy, metaphysics, mathematics, and natural sciences.¹⁰⁷ Practical sciences, on the other hand, is not merely all about knowing but also acting in the light of knowledge. Under this category are the politics and ethics.¹⁰⁸ The third category, productive sciences, is not merely all about knowing but also producing in the light of knowledge. Under this category are arts and crafts.¹⁰⁹ To simplify, theoretical sciences' basic end is to know, practical is to act, and productive is to produce.

1.3 The Contributions and Influences of Aristotle

Aristotle is indubitably able to provide major contributions and lasting influences in the different field of sciences. It ranges from biology, logic, ethics, physics, psychology, to politics.¹¹⁰ In the field of logic, Aristotle invented the logic of Categorical syllogism. He was the first one to develop a formal system for reasoning where he observed that the deductive validity of any argument can be determined by its structure rather than its content.¹¹¹ Its deductive simplicity made Aristotle's theory of syllogism to have an exceptional influence in the study of Western logic and reasoning.¹¹² Accordingly, his notes on logic remained the standard text on logic until the emergence of Mathematical logic in 19th century.¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁷ McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, p. 17.

¹⁰⁸ Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Justin Humphreys, *Aristotle: 384 – 322 B.C.E.*, (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy), <https://iep.utm.edu/aristotle/>, Accessed March 10, 2022.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Saugat Adhikari, *The 10 Contributions of Aristotle*, (Ancient History Lists, November 11, 2011), <https://www.ancienthistorylists.com/greek-history/top-10-contributions-of-aristotle/>, March 10, 2022.

¹¹³ Will Buckingham, *The Philosophy Book*, (New York: DK Publishing), 2011, p. 63.

In the field of Ethics, Aristotle's contribution was his famous book entitled the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This is accordingly one of the most celebrated and influential of moral philosophies which helped to shape and mold the common moral consciousness.¹¹⁴ Moreover, his ethics have been of great appeal to modern philosophers who have seen in his functional definition of the "good" a key to understanding the way we use ethical language.¹¹⁵ Then in the field of Biology, Aristotle was known to be the first one to venture into the classifications of living beings. He used characteristics and traits that are common among certain animals to classify them into similar group.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, he asserted that all living beings could be grouped in a hierarchy based on their position from the lowest to the highest wherein he placed the human beings as the peak of the hierarchy.¹¹⁷ Accordingly, his classification of living things dominated the Western thinking throughout the middle ages, becoming the Christian *scala naturae* (the 'ladder of nature') or the Great Chain of Being.¹¹⁸ With his study of living beings, Aristotle's classification procedures and several other treatises primarily involved different species of animal kingdom only; making him as the founder of Zoology.¹¹⁹ Moving on to the field of Physics, Aristotle made a work entitled *On Generation and Corruption* and *On the Heavens*.¹²⁰ Then in the field of Psychology, Aristotle was accordingly the first one to write a book that dealt with the specifics of psychology namely the book, "On the Soul", where he proposed the idea of abstraction that

¹¹⁴ Thomson, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, p. 9.

¹¹⁵ Buckingham, *The Philosophy Book*, 2011, p. 63.

¹¹⁶ Saugat Adhikari, *The 10 Contributions of Aristotle*, (Ancient History Lists, November 11, 2011), <https://www.ancienthistorylists.com/greek-history/top-10-contributions-of-aristotle/>, March 10, 2022.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Buckingham, *The Philosophy Book*, p. 63.

¹¹⁹ Saugat Adhikari, *The 10 Contributions of Aristotle*, (Ancient History Lists, November 11, 2011), <https://www.ancienthistorylists.com/greek-history/top-10-contributions-of-aristotle/>, March 10, 2022.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

reigns over the body and mind of a human being.¹²¹ In the field of Politics, Aristotle contributed on the theory of the government. He detailed many possible forms of political community and how they relate to the overall end of the government.¹²²

Furthermore, Aristotle also became one of the bases for the philosophy of the different religious scholars. During the emergence of Islam in the 7th century C.E., Aristotle's works were translated into Arabic and spread throughout the Islamic world, becoming an important reading for the Middle Eastern scholars like Avicenna and Averroes.¹²³ Even the notable Catholic theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, was fundamentally influenced by Aristotle. Accordingly, St. Thomas synthesized the science and philosophy of Aristotle with the revealed truths of Christianity; he reconciled the philosophy of Aristotle with the truth of Christian revelation.¹²⁴ Then in the modern period of Philosophy, Aristotle, together with Plato, became the basis for the distinction of the different thinkers. Descartes, Leibniz, and Kant are tracing the rationalist route (Platonic) while Locke, Berkeley, and Hume lined up as an empiricist position (Aristotelian).¹²⁵ The differences of the modern thinkers were as much about temperament as they were about substance – the Continental versus the English, the Poetic versus the Academic, the Platonic versus the Aristotelian.¹²⁶

Aristotle indeed provided a major and lasting contributions especially in the world of philosophy. Accordingly, he offers his unique and notable rewards:

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Daniel Cole, *Aristotle's Political Philosophy*, (Study Website), January 6, 2022, <https://study.com/learn/lesson/aristotle-political-philosophy-influences-development-impact.html>, Accessed March 10, 2022.

¹²³ Buckingham, *The Philosophy Book*, p. 63.

¹²⁴ Edward W. Younkins, *Thomas Aquinas' Christian Aristotelianism*, (Le Quebecois Libre, 2006), <https://www.quebecoislibre.org/06/060122-5.htm>, Accessed March 10, 2022.

¹²⁵ Buckingham, "*The Philosophy Book*," p. 63.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

directness of thought and expression, astounding nimbleness of analysis and reasoning, a dedication to tracing things from their beginnings, a system which embraced and attempted to unify both science and philosophy.¹²⁷ No doubt why he is considered as one of the great names in the entire history of philosophy.

¹²⁷ Justin D. Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle*, (New York: Pocket Books Publishing, 1958), p. 15.

Chapter 2

ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF THE GOLDEN MEAN

2.1 End

Aristotle's theory of ethics centers around his belief that everyone has a distinctive end to achieve or a function to fulfill.¹²⁸ Because of this, his theory is properly called as Teleological.¹²⁹ Furthermore, it is important to note that Aristotle reminded the readers not to expect precision in undergoing this ethical study for moral acts are variable and concrete.¹³⁰

In this section, the researcher will discuss the basic end of man: Good. Afterwards, the researcher will discuss the peculiar function of man for the good resides on man's distinct function. After identifying the peculiar function of man, the researcher moves on to the discussion on the Chief Good: the Ultimate End of man.

¹²⁸ Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 98. Furthermore, Aristotle states that if there is no knowable good or end in accord with which human beings can order their lives, then all human longing is fundamentally empty and pointless. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins, (United States: The University of Chicago Press), 2011, Introduction, p. 7.

¹²⁹ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Greece and Rome*, Chap. XXXI, p. 332. Teleology comes from the Greek word "*telos*" which means goal, end, or purpose. Teleology, then, is the study of ends, goals, and purposes. A moral theory is regarded as teleological to the extent that it defines and explains right actions in terms of the bringing about some good state of affairs. For example, a moral theory that maintains the rightness of an action is one which achieves the goal of maximizing happiness counts as a teleological theory. The two main types of theory brought under the rubric of teleological ethics are Utilitarianism and the varieties of ancient Greek virtue ethics. Aristotle's ethics is the most influential example of a virtue ethical theory. Teleological ethics may be contrasted with non-teleological ethics, of which deontological theories provide the best-known example. Deontological ethics recognizes a number of distinct duties. It maintains that the wrongness of actions is intrinsic or resides in the kind of action rather than the consequences it brings about. See New World Encyclopedia Contributors, *Teleological Ethics*, (New World Encyclopedia, January 21, 2020), https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Teleological_ethics, accessed April 4, 2022.

¹³⁰ Dario Composta, *History of Ancient Philosophy*, (India: Theological Publication, 2008), p. 285. As to the question of the good of man, Aristotle points out that it cannot be answered with exactitude unlike mathematics. Furthermore, ethics start from the actual moral judgments of man and by comparing, contrasting, and sifting them, we come to the formulation of general principles. It is then an inductive method of study. See Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Greece and Rome: From the Pre-Socratics to Plotinus*, p. 332-333. See also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By W.D. Ross, Book I, Chap. II.

2.1.1. Good

Aristotle begins his book on “Nicomachean Ethics” with the discussion on end.¹³¹ Accordingly, “Every art and every inquiry, and similarly, every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good, and for this reason, the good has rightly been declared to be that which all things aim.”¹³² Good, then, is the basic aim of man. It is that which everyone desires.¹³³ However, there are certain differences that can be found among ends. In some cases, the activity of doing the art itself is the end whereas in other cases, the end is some product beyond the mere exercise of the art.¹³⁴ These products are essentially superior in value than the activity itself for “it is for the sake of the former that the latter is pursued.”¹³⁵ End may be apart from the act (a product) or it may be the exercise of the act itself.¹³⁶ An example that is given by Aristotle is that of a shoe maker. The end of the shoe maker is to make shoes (end as act itself), but, his another end (end beyond the act) is to gain some money by selling those products.¹³⁷ Since there are many actions and arts, it is also logical to say that their ends are also many.¹³⁸ The end of medical art is

¹³¹ In General Ethics, end is defined as “that towards which a thing tends”. It is then a goal, purpose, or an objective. In the case of plants, they do not know their ends; in the case of brutes, they know their ends but not as an end, but as a necessity; in the case of man, they know their end through the aid of the intellect. See Cañete, Erico Joseph, *On End*, Unpublished Class Lecture, General Ethics, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary, Bohol, September 22, 2021.

¹³² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross and revised by J.O. Urnson, (United States: Princeton University Press, 1984), Book I, Chap. I.

¹³³ Again in General Ethics, good is the fundamental aim of man for no man desires for an evil end. Man will still pursue for an end, even though the action is evil, due to the good behind it. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the good is classified into two: The Apparent and the Authentic good. Apparent good is that which appears to be good but evil in itself like vices. Authentic good, on the other hand, is that which are good in themselves just like virtues. See Cañete, Eric Joseph, *On End*, Unpublished Class Lecture, General Ethics, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary, Bohol, September 22, 2021.

¹³⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book I, Chap. I.

¹³⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book I, Chap. I.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By W.D. Ross, Book I, Chap. I.

health, the end of shipbuilding is vessel, the end of strategy is victory, the end of economics is wealth, and the like. These ends would even become means for achieving another end. Aristotle calls these instrumental end: an act or end done for the sake of achieving another end.¹³⁹

From those observations, Aristotle asserted that the end or good is determined according to what the thing is or what its distinct function is. For example, a doctor is good when he fulfills his function well as a physical curer or a teacher is good when he functions well as a teacher. Having said that, what might be the function of man as a man and not as a doctor, teacher, shoemaker, and the like? What might be the end of man on the grounds of his very being? When we discover what human aim is, we will then arrive at actions for its own sake and for which all other activity is only a means: the Intrinsic or Ultimate end.¹⁴⁰ This, says Aristotle, must be the “Chief Good of Man”.¹⁴¹ In identifying the Chief Good of man, Aristotle asks first what the distinct ‘*ergon*’ (function, task, work) of human being is.¹⁴² Remember that good, for Aristotle, is associated with the special function of a thing.¹⁴³ That is why before Aristotle comprehensively discussed the Chief Good,

¹³⁹ Aristotle gives an example in “every action connected with war”. When we consider step by step what is involved in the whole activity of a war, we find, says Aristotle, that there is a series of special kinds of acts, which have their own ends but which, when they are completed, are only means by which still other ends are to be achieved. When the bridle is completed, its maker has achieved his end as a bridle maker. But the bridle is a means for the horseman to guide his horse in battle. Also, a carpenter builds a barrack, and when it is completed, he has fulfilled his function as a carpenter. The barracks also fulfill their function when they provide safe shelter for the soldiers. But the ends here achieved by the carpenter and the building are not ends in themselves but are instruments in housing soldiers until they move on to their next stage of action. Similarly, the function of the ship builders is fulfilled when the ship is successfully launched, but again, this end in turn a means for transporting the soldiers to the field of battle. These are then nothing but a bundle of instrumental ends. See Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 99.

¹⁴⁰ Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 99.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Richard Kraut, *Aristotle’s Ethics*, (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/index.html>, accessed April 4, 2022.

¹⁴³ For example, a hammer is good for it does what the hammer is expected to do; a carpenter is good if he or she fulfills his or her function as a builder. This would be true for all the crafts and professions. See Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 99.

he first ascertained the peculiar function of man.¹⁴⁴ Hence, this will be the topic for the next discussion.

2.1.2 Function of Man

The inquiry into the nature of man is one of the important matters in Aristotelian ethics. Accordingly, the Chief Good resides on the peculiar function of man.¹⁴⁵ If human actions that are properly performed are essential to experiencing the human good, then it is necessary to first understand the most characteristic functions of human beings as such.¹⁴⁶ Hence, an anthropological study of the uniquely human capacity that distinguishes them from other creatures.¹⁴⁷ As Aristotle puts it:

Perhaps, then, we may arrive at this (Good) by ascertaining what is man's function. For the goodness and efficiency of a flute player or sculptor or craftsman of any sort, and in general of anybody who has some function or business to perform, is thought to reside in that function; and similarly, it may be held that the good of man resides in the function of man, if he has a function.¹⁴⁸

To know the peculiar function of man, the components of the structure of man should be considered.¹⁴⁹ There are accordingly three major components in

¹⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book I, Chap I.

¹⁴⁵ Richard Kraut, *Aristotle's Ethics*, (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/index.html>, accessed April 4, 2022.

¹⁴⁶ Robert John Fitterer, *Bernard Lundergan's Cognitive Theory and Aristotelian Phronesis: Toward a Conception of Performative Objectivity in Virtue Ethics*, (The University of British Columbia, 2004.)

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book I, Chap. VII. Furthermore, a person could not be said to flourish as a human being unless he is exercising distinctively human faculties. See Jonathan Barnes, *Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction*, (United States: Oxford University Press, 1996), Chap. 18, p. 124.

¹⁴⁹ In General Ethics, man has two natures: individual and social nature. Under the social nature is the sexuality, the need for authority, and the need for others. Then, under the individual nature is the body and soul. The soul has two faculties, the intellect, which object is the truth, and the will, which object is the good. Under the body are the vegetative powers and sense powers. Vegetative powers refer to the

the structure of man: vegetative, sentient, and rational.¹⁵⁰ From man's structure, Aristotle excluded the vegetative powers of man such as nutrition, growth, and reproduction, for these are also shared by plants.¹⁵¹ Next, he excluded the sense powers or sentient life for these too are shared by horses, cattle, and animals of all kinds.¹⁵² There, then, remains one part which is peculiar to man: the rational soul. Aristotle repeatedly stresses that he regards rationality as the crucial differentiating characteristic of human beings or their essence and nature.¹⁵³ As his famous dictum goes, "Men by nature are rational animals." The peculiar function of man then is his capacity to reason out. After considering the nature of man and his peculiar function, Aristotle goes back to the question, "What is the Chief Good of man?"¹⁵⁴ Hence, this will be the topic for the next discussion.

2.1.3 Chief Good

End, as elucidated above, are many as arts and sciences are many. This phenomenon will naturally lead the mind to the problem of the Chief or Highest Good that should serve as the guiding principle and standard in man's choice and direction in life.¹⁵⁵ Aristotle asserted that "if there are among ends at which human actions aim, there should be one which is aimed for its own sake and man wish the others only for the sake of this end; and if man do not choose everything for

reproduction, nutrition, and growth. Sense powers refer to sense appetite or emotions and the external or internal senses. See Eric Joseph Cañete, *On the Objective Bases of Ethics Particularly Human Nature to Diagram of Man*, (Unpublished Class Lecture, General Ethics, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary, Bohol, August 4, 2021.)

¹⁵⁰ Thomson, *Aristotle: Ethics*, Book I, Chap. VII. Vegetative power is the capacity for nutrition, growth, and reproduction; sentient power is the capacity for sensation or perception; and rational power is the capacity for reasoning. Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Christian Kietzmann, *Aristotle on the Definition of What it is to be Human*, (United States: Cambridge University Press, 2019), Introduction.

¹⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book I, Chap. VII.

¹⁵⁵ Tsanoff, *The Great Philosophers*, p. 90

the sake of something else, it is clear that this ultimate end must be the Good, and indeed, the Supreme Good.”¹⁵⁶ If there will be no ultimate end, then, the process would go ad infinitum and so “man’s desire would be empty and vain.”¹⁵⁷ There should be an ultimate end of human act, that is, an end which is aimed for its own sake and not as a means for another end. Now, what might be the ultimate end of human act or the Chief Good?

Aristotle simply followed the common view that the ultimate end of human action is Happiness or Eudaimonia.¹⁵⁸ However, Aristotle clarified that happiness is not parallel with the conventional definition that it is equivalent to pleasure, wealth, and honour. Accordingly, to identify the Good or happiness with pleasure would reduce happiness as simply a life of enjoyment.¹⁵⁹ Aristotle then distinguished pleasure from happiness.¹⁶⁰ But despite of this distinction, Aristotle still asserted that happiness is a form of pleasure. Accordingly, happiness is the “best, noblest, and the most pleasant thing in the world.”¹⁶¹ His second criticism

¹⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book I, Chap. II.

¹⁵⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book I, Chap. II.

¹⁵⁸ In Greek, happiness is translated as “Eudaimonia”, which means the condition of human flourishing or of living well. The term happiness, however, is somehow unfortunate for Eudaimonia does not solely consist of a state of mind or a feeling of contentment or pleasure; it is beyond those things. See Brian Daignan, *Eudaimonia*, (Encyclopedia Britannica, July 3, 2020), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/eudaimonia>, Accessed April 4, 2022.

¹⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book I, Chap. V.

¹⁶⁰ Aristotle asserted that there are three views of pleasure: that it is never good, that some pleasure is good, but most is bad, and that pleasure is good, but not the best. He rejects the first of these on the ground that pain is certainly bad, and therefore pleasure must be good. He says, very justly, that it is nonsense to say that man can be happy on the rack: some degree of external good fortune is necessary for happiness. He also disposes of the view that all pleasures are bodily; all things have something divine, and therefore some capacity for higher pleasures. Good men have pleasure unless they are unfortunate. See Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, p. 180.

¹⁶¹ Aristotle said that pleasure is a state of the soul, and to each man that which he is said to be a lover of is pleasant; for example, not only is a horse pleasant to the lover of horses, and a spectacle to the lover of sights, but also in the same way just acts are pleasant to the lover of justice and in general virtuous acts to the lover of virtue. Now, for most men their pleasures are in conflict with one another because these are not by nature pleasant, but the lovers of what is noble find pleasant the things that are by nature pleasant; and virtuous actions are such, so that these are pleasant for such men as well as in their own nature. Their life, therefore, has no further need of pleasure as a sort of adventitious charm, but has its

with regards to the conventional view of happiness is that it is not equivalent to honor. Accordingly, identifying happiness with honor (for this is the end of political life) seems too superficial for it is thought to depend on those who bestow honor rather than the one who receives it.¹⁶² Yet, the Good that Aristotle seeks is something that is proper to man and could not be easily taken from him.¹⁶³ Furthermore, he asserted that, “men seem to pursue honor just for them to be assured of their goodness.”¹⁶⁴ This view of happiness would then devalue and limits its importance. Honor is simply an instrumental end for another end, hence, not the ultimate end that Aristotle is seeking. Lastly, Aristotle’s criticism on the conventional notion of the Good or happiness is that is it not equivalent to wealth. He said that “the life of money-making is one undertaken under the compulsion, and wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking for it is merely useful for the sake of something else.”¹⁶⁵

Now, what might be Aristotle’s view of the Chief Good or happiness? Having been considered that the Chief Good resides on the peculiar function of man (rationality), Aristotle then defined happiness as “the active exercise of man’s rational faculties in conformity with excellence or virtue.”¹⁶⁶ From Aristotle’s definition, there can be found three important key points which are needed to be discussed: activity, rational faculty, and virtue. First, Aristotle asserted that the Chief Good is essentially an activity. Since he identified the Good with man’s

pleasure in itself. For besides, the man who does not rejoice in noble actions is not even good; since no one would call a man just who did not enjoy acting justly, nor any man liberal who did not enjoy liberal actions; and similarly in all other cases. If this is so, Aristotle concluded, virtuous actions must be in themselves pleasant. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book I, Chap. VII.

¹⁶² Aristotle, *Nicomachea Ethica*, trans. By W.D. Ross and edited by Richard McKeon, Book I, Chap. V.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book I, Chap. V.

¹⁶⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book I, Chap. VII.

function, then he viewed the “good life” with “doing well”.¹⁶⁷ Happiness is not simply a possession, but an activity. It is an activity or *energeia* that is contrasted from *hexis* or “having”.¹⁶⁸ Being happy is not a matter of having some power or disposition, but it is a matter of exercising one’s powers and realizing one’s disposition.¹⁶⁹ He said that “for a man may possess the disposition without producing any good result, as for instance when he is asleep, or has ceased function from some other cause; but virtue in active exercise cannot be inoperative - it will of necessity act, and act well.”¹⁷⁰ Hence, nothing is called Good if it is not functioning.¹⁷¹ He also added that the activity “must occupy a complete lifetime, for one swallow does not make spring nor does one fine day; and similarly, one day or a brief period of happiness does not make a man supremely blessed and happy.”¹⁷² Hence, happiness should not only happen in a fleeting time, but rather, it should be constantly and perpetually exercised. The next key point to be discussed is that happiness is proper to the rational soul. Since Aristotle concluded that the nature of man is the rational faculty, he then asserted that the Good man is one who performs this function well.¹⁷³ Man will be able to achieve happiness if he performs his rationality well. Having said that, irrational beings like plants and animals are disqualified from happiness for they do not share this kind of activity.¹⁷⁴ But, how will man be able to perform this act well? According to Aristotle, man can

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, Book I, Chap. IV.

¹⁶⁸ Thomson, *Aristotle: Ethics*, p. 35.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book I, Chap. VIII.

¹⁷¹ Samuel E. Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, p. 99. Aristotle further asserted that “as at the Olympic games, it is not the finest and strongest who are crowned, but they who enter the lists, for out of these the prize-men are selected; so too in life, of the honourable and good, it is they who act who rightly win the prizes. Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid, Book I, Chap VII.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachea Ethica*, trans. By W.D. Ross, Book I, Chap. IX.

only perform his function well if he acts in accordance with virtue.¹⁷⁵ Hence, happiness or Chief Good can only be achieved when man practices virtue.¹⁷⁶ Virtue, then, will be the next major topic to be discussed.

2.2 Moral Virtue

As discussed above, the Chief Good or Happiness can only be achieved by practicing virtues. Hence, in this section, the researcher will discuss Aristotle's notion of Moral Virtue. This section is divided into three subtopics. The first topic is the discussion on Virtue as a result of Habit and its distinction from Intellectual Virtue. Then, the discussion on the moral responsibility of an action for this is the basis on judging an agent as virtuous or not. And lastly, the discussion on Aristotle's formal definition of Moral Virtue.

2.2.1 Virtue and Habit

Virtue is translated in Greek as '*arete*' which means 'excellence'.¹⁷⁷ Aristotle identified two kinds of virtues: the intellectual and moral virtues.¹⁷⁸ Accordingly,

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., Book I, Chap. VII.

¹⁷⁶ Roberto D. Abella, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Person*, (Quezon City: C and E Publishing Inc., 2016), 130.

¹⁷⁷ Michael Pakaluk, *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: An Introduction*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Chap. I, p. 5. The relevant Greek translation of virtue is "*arête*" which also broadly means any sort of excellence or distinctive power. In Aristotle's time, the term would be applied freely to instruments, natural substances, domestic animals, and not simply to human beings. If one will go into battle, for example, one would seek a horse with 'virtue' in order to draw a chariot that had 'virtue', made of materials that had the relevant 'virtues'. The term connoted strength and success, as also did the Latin term '*virtus*'. Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book I, Chap. XIII. This distinction made by Aristotle is accordingly based upon his distinction on the rational and irrational part of the soul: the part of the soul which engages in reasoning (rational) and the part of the soul which itself cannot reason but is capable of following reason (irrational). Perhaps, there's no need to extensively discuss the rational part for it is already understandable. The irrational element, however, should be elucidated. Aristotle divided the irrational element into two: the vegetative and appetitive. The vegetative part causes nutrition and growth; for it is this kind of power of the soul that one must assign to all nurslings and embryos, and this same power to full-grown creature. This power, accordingly, does not share in rational principle. The appetitive part, on the other hand, shares in a rational principle; it may listen to and obeys it. The irrational element is in some sense persuaded by a rational principle. If this element is said to have a rational principle, that which has a rational principle then is twofold: one subdivision having it in the strict sense and in itself, and the other having the tendency to obey it. Ibid.

intellectual virtue is produced and increased by instruction and therefore, it requires experience and time while moral or ethical virtue is acquired through habit (whence its name *ethike* is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word *ethos* or habit).¹⁷⁹ From these two virtues, Aristotle put an emphasis on the contemplative or intellectual side in achieving Eudaimonia for “happiness lies in the best activity which is the contemplative.”¹⁸⁰ Yet, he still asserted that reason alone would become purely contemplative and without the help of appetitive part, will not lead to any practical activity.¹⁸¹ Hence, moral virtue also plays a vital role in achieving happiness.

Since moral virtue is a result of habit, then it follows that moral virtues does not arise in man by nature for “nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature.”¹⁸² Though man has a natural capacity for virtue, yet this capacity should be brought to a full and developed state by habit.¹⁸³ Virtue, then, can only be acquired by first actually practicing them. Accordingly, “we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave

¹⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. I.

¹⁸⁰ Thomson, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, p. 181. Aristotle said that Contemplation is preferable to war or politics or any other practical career, because it allows leisure, and leisure is essential to happiness. Practical virtue brings only secondary kind of happiness; the supreme happiness is the exercise of reason, for reason, more than anything else, is man. Man may not be wholly contemplative, but in so far as he is so he shares in divine life. The activity of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative. Of all human beings, the philosopher is the most godlike in his activity, and therefore, the happiest and the best. Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, p. 173. See also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Harvard University Press, 1946, Book II, Chap. II. Both kinds of virtues are real goods that we need for a good life. But moral virtue plays a special role in our pursuit for happiness, so special that Aristotle tells us that a good life is one that has been lived by making morally virtuous choices or decisions. See Mortimer J. Adler, *Aristotle for Everybody: Difficult Thought Made Easy*, (New York: Simon and Schuster Inc., 1997), Chap. 12.

¹⁸² An example of a stone was being presented by Aristotle in order to support his point. A stone, which by nature moves downward, cannot be habituated to move upwards even if one tries to train it by throwing it up ten thousand times. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By W.D. Ross, Book II, Chap. I.

¹⁸³ David Bradshaw, *Virtue and the Golden Mean*, (Philosophy 260, 1998), <https://www.uky.edu/~jjord0/ArisIII.htm>, Accessed March 27, 2022.

acts.”¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, Aristotle asserted that actions may either produce or destroy virtue. By doing acts, man may become just or unjust; by doing acts in the face of danger, man may become brave or cowardly; or in feelings of anger, some men become temperate or good-tempered.¹⁸⁵ From this, Aristotle concluded that man’s moral dispositions are formed according to their corresponding activities. That is why, “it is incumbent in us to control the character of our activities since in the quality of these depends the quality of our disposition.”¹⁸⁶

However, a difficulty may arise as to what Aristotle means by saying that in order to become just men, they should do just acts or to become temperate, they must do temperate acts.¹⁸⁷ On what grounds are we rightly called just and temperate men? On what grounds are we morally judged with these virtues? Here, Aristotle considered the moral responsibility of an act.¹⁸⁸ Hence, this will be the topic for the next discussion.

2.2.2 Inner Side of Moral Virtue: Conditions for the Responsibility of Actions

When Aristotle characterized virtue as a habit or an activity, he advanced the study of moral science in a positive direction - the study on the will.¹⁸⁹ Having said that men are called just by doing just acts or temperate by doing temperate acts, Aristotle considered the moral responsibility of man’s action for this is where they are rightly judged as moral or immoral agents.¹⁹⁰ Accordingly, acts done in

¹⁸⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. I.

¹⁸⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book II, Chap. I.

¹⁸⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. I.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, Book II, Chap. IV.

¹⁸⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By Terence Irwin, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), p. 19.

¹⁸⁹ Paul J. Glenn, *The History of Philosophy*, (New York: B. Herder Book Co., 1949), p. 205.

¹⁹⁰ Aristotle discusses the conditions for moral responsibility of an action because he wants us to show how his account of the nature of virtue supports the common belief that we are justly praised and blamed both for virtuous and vicious actions and for being virtuous and vicious people. See Aristotle,

conformity with virtues are not done justly or temperately if they are not morally responsible of the said action.¹⁹¹ To be morally responsible, “the agent must be in a certain condition when he does them: in the first place, he must have knowledge, secondly, he must choose the acts and choose them for its own sake, and thirdly, his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character.”¹⁹² To put it simply, the agent must have knowledge, voluntariness, and freedom. Hence, virtue should flow from man’s voluntary actions for this is where they are rightly praised or blamed. Involuntary actions or actions which take place under compulsion or ignorance are not the main concern here for it lacks or terminates moral responsibility.¹⁹³ To be morally judged, man should act with knowledge, freedom,

Nicomachean Ethics, trans. By Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), p. 19. This is also the case in General Ethics. There are accordingly two kinds of act: act of man and the human act. Act of man flows from the animality of man which is why this kind of act could not be the basis for moral judgment since this may be involuntary and may be acted out of ignorance and impaired the control of the will. Human act, on the other hand, flows from the rationality of man and hence, the basis for moral judgment. See Eric Joseph Cañete, *On Acts of Man and Human Act*, Class Lecture, Special Questions in Ethics, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary, Bohol, September 8, 2021.

¹⁹¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. IV.

¹⁹² Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. By W.D. Ross, Book II, Chap. IV.

¹⁹³ In general ethics, involuntary actions are also called as acts of man. These are acts which flow from man’s animality and not rationality. These are acts which flow from man’s biological, physical physiological, chemical functions, and not controlled by the will. For example, vegetation, digestion, blinking of the eyes, perspiration, feeling hungry or thirsty, and the like. Then, these are acts which are performed by an insane or imbecile persons or intellectually incapacitated. These are also acts which are performed through an influence of physical or external force and acts which happen in a fortuitous or accidental manner. See Eric Joseph Cañete, *Acts of Man and Human Acts*, Class Lecture, Special Questions in Ethics, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary, Bohol, September 8, 2021. Furthermore, there are also certain conditions that an act may be impaired or modified by some factors and hence, would lessen, diminish, or increase one’s moral responsibility. The impairments of required knowledge are ignorance, error, and inattention. The impairments of free consent or will are passion, fear, violence, and habit. These modifiers or impairments of human acts, or acts which flow from man’s rationality, may lessen, increase, or extinguish the moral responsibility of an agent. See Cañete, Erico Joseph, *Modifiers or Impairments of Human Acts*, Unpublished Class Lecture, Special Questions in Ethics, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary, Bohol, September 8, 2021.

and voluntariness.¹⁹⁴ It should then flow from man's choice.¹⁹⁵ After clarifying this matter, the researcher proceeds to Aristotle's formal definition of virtue.

2.2.3 Formal Definition of Virtue

In defining virtue, Aristotle first identified the three things that are found in the soul. Accordingly, these are passions, faculties, and state of character or disposition.¹⁹⁶ By passions, Aristotle means appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly, hatred, longing, emulation, pity, and in general, the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure or pain.¹⁹⁷ Then by faculties, he means the things in virtue of which men are said to be capable of feeling emotions like becoming angry or being pained or feeling pity.¹⁹⁸ And then by state of character, Aristotle means the things in virtue of which man stand well or badly with reference to passions.¹⁹⁹ After identifying those three, Aristotle deliberated as to whether where virtue belongs. First, he negated that virtues are passions for "we are neither called good nor bad on the ground of our feelings; but we are so called on the ground of our virtues and vices; nor we are either praised or blamed for our feelings; but we are praised and blamed for our virtues and vices."²⁰⁰ Hence, virtues and vices cannot be passions for passions *per se* are morally indifferent.²⁰¹ Furthermore, he

¹⁹⁴ Glenn, *The History of Philosophy*, (p. 205).

¹⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book II, Chap. III.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Book II, Chap. V.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ For example, a man is not praised for being frightened or angry, nor is he blamed just for being angry; it is for being angry in a particular way. See J.A.K. Thomson, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, Book II, Chap. V.

²⁰¹ Morally indifferent act is an act which is neither good nor bad. (Erico Joseph Cañete, *On Acts, General Ethics*). Though passions or emotions are not virtues *per se*, Aristotle asserted that virtues are concerned with passions or emotions for this is where they will be able to admit an excess, deficiency, or mean. And since every passion is accompanied by pleasure or pain, hence, virtue is also concerned with pleasures and pains. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book II, Chap. III.

asserted that passions arise not by choice while virtue is an expression of man's choice.²⁰² Next, he negated that virtue are faculties for by the same reason, "men are neither called good nor bad, nor praised nor blamed, for the simple capacity of feeling the passion; again, men have faculties by nature, but they are not made good nor bad by nature."²⁰³ Since Aristotle concluded that virtues are neither passions nor faculties, they should then be a state of character.²⁰⁴ But, what sort or kind of character is it?

Here, Aristotle first made a remark that since virtue or excellence brings into good condition of the thing and makes the work of that thing to be done well,²⁰⁵ therefore, the virtue of man also will be "the state of character which makes a man good and which makes him do his own work well."²⁰⁶ But how would this happen? Aristotle simply made an analogy of an art (which he usually does). Accordingly, if the way in which every art or science performs its function well by looking at the mean and apply that as a standard to its production,²⁰⁷ then virtue, which is much more accurate and better than any form of art, has the quality of hitting the mean.²⁰⁸ Virtue, then, is all about hitting the mean or the intermediate. He particularly refers this to moral virtue for "this is concerned with emotions and actions, in which one

²⁰² Ibid. Remember that man can only be morally judged as virtuous or vicious if he acts with knowledge, freedom, and voluntariness. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. By W.D. Ross, Book II, Chap. IV.

²⁰³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. V.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book II, Chap. V. The example that was given by Aristotle was that of an eye. If an eye is excellent, then the eye is good and performs its work or function well. Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book II, Chap. VI.

²⁰⁷ Aristotle asserted that in a perfect artwork, you cannot take away nor add something to its perfection while adherence to the mean preserves it. See Aristotle, "*Nicomachean Ethics*," trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VI.

²⁰⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VI.

can have excess or deficiency or a due mean.”²⁰⁹ Hence, the central topic of the paper: the Golden Mean of Moderation.

2.3 The Golden Mean

Virtue, as discussed above, makes man good and do his function well in order to achieve the Chief Good. Virtue is when one strikes the mean and avoids the two vices: extreme and defect. Hence, in this section, the researcher will extensively discuss Aristotle’s notion of the Golden Mean. In discussing the Golden mean, the researcher exposed the particular virtues and vices being identified by Aristotle. Afterwards, the researcher will tackle the important considerations in understanding the golden mean: Practical Wisdom and Inherent Vices.

2.3.1 Virtues and Vices

After discussing the nature of virtue, the researcher now proceeds to the discussion of the golden mean of moderation. In elucidating the golden mean, Aristotle first made a remark that “it is nature of things to be destroyed by defect and excess while the intermediate produces and preserves the good.”²¹⁰ Hence, anything that is excess or defect gives badness to a thing. This is also the case of vices and virtues: the excess and defect are vices and the mean is virtue.²¹¹ That is why, Aristotle asserted that an agent should strike the mean for it is the “mark of virtue.”²¹² Since excess and defect is a form of failure while the intermediate is praised and is a form of success, hence, this is the virtuous state for being

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachea Ethica*, trans. By W.D. Ross Book II, Chap. II.

²¹¹ An example given by Aristotle was that of temperance and courage. Accordingly, the man who flies from and fears everything and does not stand his ground against anything becomes coward, and the man who fears nothing at all but goes to face every danger becomes rash; and similarly, the man who indulges in every pleasure and abstains from none becomes self-indulgent, while the man who shuns every pleasure as boors do, becomes in a way insensible. Temperance and courage, then, are destroyed by excess and defect, and preserved by the mean. See Aristotle, *Nicomachea Ethica*, trans. By W.D. Ross, Book II, Chap. II.

²¹² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VI.

successful and praised are both characteristics of virtue.²¹³ Virtue, then, is a kind of mean since it aims at what is intermediate. However, it should be noted that this mean is not an objective mean but a relative one. Aristotle said that “the intermediate is not in the object but relatively to us.”²¹⁴ The mean of one person is not the same with the mean of the other person. By saying that the mean is relative to man, Aristotle wanted to emphasize that the mean depends upon the situation, context, and circumstances of an agent.²¹⁵ Hence, Aristotle defines virtue as “a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, that is, 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.”²¹⁶ It is then a relative mean between two vices: excess and defect. It is a mean state in which the vices either fall short of or exceed what is right in terms of feelings and actions (for virtue is concerned with feelings and actions) and virtue ascertains and adopts the mean.²¹⁷ After Aristotle has presented the general definition, he consequently applied it to

²¹³ Ibid. By living virtuously, one is living one’s life well or excellently, hence, success. See Gavin Laurence, *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, (United States: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 35.

²¹⁴ Accordingly, in everything that is continuous and divisible, it is possible to take more, less, or an equal amount, and that either in terms of the thing itself or relatively to us; and the equal is an intermediate between excess and defect. By intermediate in the object, Aristotle means that which is equidistant from each of the extremes which is one and the same for all men; by the intermediate relatively to us is that which is too much nor too little – and this is not one nor the same for all. For instance, if ten is many and two is few, six is the intermediate, taken in terms of the objects; for it exceeds and is exceeded by an equal amount. This is intermediate according to arithmetical proportion. But the intermediate relatively to man is not to be taken so: if ten pounds are too much for a particular person to eat and two pounds too little, it does not follow that the trainer will order six pounds for this is also perhaps too much or too little for the person who is to take; too much or too little for the beginner in athletic exercise. Thus, the master of any art avoids excess and defect, but seeks the intermediate and chooses it – the intermediate not in the object but relatively to man. Again, since Aristotle asserted that virtue is much more accurate and better than any form of art, hence, this principle would also apply to virtues. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By W.D. Ross Book II, Chap. VI.

²¹⁵ For example, in the case of eating: the mean will obviously be different for an athlete and for a little girl. Or when one gives money, liberality as the mean between prodigality and stinginess, is not an absolute figure but is relative to one’s assets. See Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, 1994, p. 101.

²¹⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book II, Chap. VI.

²¹⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VI.

particular virtues. He asserted that “in practical philosophy, although universal principles have a wider application, those covering a particular part of the field possess a higher degree of truth; because conduct deals with particular facts, and our theories are bound to accord with these.”²¹⁸ From his book, Aristotle identified twelve particular virtues namely courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, proper ambition, patience or good-tempered, truthfulness, wittiness, friendliness, modesty, and righteous indignation.²¹⁹ Each virtue has corresponding excess and defect which the researcher will discuss one by one.

The virtue in fear and confidence is courage. He asserted that he who exceeds in confidence is rash while he who exceeds in fear or is deficient in confidence is cowardly.²²⁰ Aristotle said that a courageous person not only fears rightly but also is confident about the right things, in the right way, and at the right time.²²¹ Concerning the pleasures and pains, the observance of the mean is temperance and the excess is profligacy.²²² The man who is deficient in the enjoyment of pleasures is called insensible.²²³ The profligate persons are the ones who enjoy things they should not, enjoy things more than they should, enjoy things more than most people, enjoy things in the wrong way, and preferring these pleasures to other pleasures.²²⁴ However, it should be noted that Aristotle only applied this to the pleasures of the body and not to the pleasures of the soul. He said that people are not called temperate nor profligate in relation to the pleasures of learning.²²⁵ Concerning the giving and getting of money, the mean is liberality

²¹⁸ Ibid, Book II, Chap. VII.

²¹⁹ Thomson, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, p. 104.

²²⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII.

²²¹ Howard J. Curzer, *Aristotle’s Account of the Virtue of Courage in Nicomachean Ethics*, (The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter), 1996, p. 8.

²²³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII.

²²⁴ Charles Young, *Aristotle on Temperance*, (The Society of Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter, 1985), p. 9.

²²⁵ Ibid., 2.

while the excess and deficiency are prodigality and meanness. The prodigal exceeds in giving and is deficient in getting whereas the mean man exceeds in getting and is deficient in giving.²²⁶ The liberal man, on the other hand, is “one who will give to the right people, the right amount, and at the right time; with all other qualifications that accompany right giving.”²²⁷ Another virtuous disposition related to money is magnificence. Magnificence, according to Aristotle, is different from the liberal since the former deals with large amounts while the latter with small ones.²²⁸ The excess of this virtue is called tastelessness or vulgarity while the defect is paltriness or pettiness.²²⁹ The magnificent man, on the other hand, sees what is fitting and spends large sums tastefully which the expense should be worthy of the result or the result should be worthy of the expense.²³⁰ Then, concerning honor and dishonor, the observance of the mean is Greatness of the Soul or Magnanimity while the excess is vanity and the defect is smallness of the soul or Pusillanimity.²³¹ Magnanimity is concerned with high honors above and beyond what is possible for the average person.²³² Accordingly, a magnanimous man thinks that he is worthy of great things provided that he is really worthy of

²²⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII.

²²⁷ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book IV, Chap. I.

²²⁸ Aristotle said that magnificence is also a virtue concerned with wealth. But, this is not like liberality which extends to all actions that are concerned with wealth, but only to those that involve expenditure; and in these it surpasses liberality in scale. For, as the name itself suggests, it is a fitting expenditure involving largeness of scale. But, the scale is relative; for the expense of equipping a trireme is not the same as that of heading a sacred embassy. It is what is fitting, then, in relation to the agent, and to the circumstances and the object. The man who in small or middling things spends according to the merits of the case is not called magnificent, but only the man who does so in great things. For the magnificent man is liberal, but the liberal man is not necessarily magnificent. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book IV, Chap. II.

²²⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII.

²³⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book IV, Chap. II.

²³¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII.

²³² Matthew Wilcken, *Aristotle on Magnanimity*, (United States: Benham Young University), 2004.

them.²³³ Furthermore, he seeks honor not for its own sake, but rather, achieves it as a byproduct of living well.²³⁴ Aristotle also identified virtue which is concerned with small honors for “it is possible to aspire to minor honors in a right way, or more than is right, or less.”²³⁵ He who exceeds in aspirations is called ambitious while he who is deficient is called unambitious.²³⁶ The mean, on the other hand, is proper ambition.²³⁷ Man should be blamed ambitious in aiming honor more than what is right and from the wrong sources and the unambitious man as not willing to be honored even for noble reasons.²³⁸ An ambitious man, then, is he who desires small honors in the right way or manner. Moving on to the virtue concerning anger, the virtuous disposition is gentleness while the excess is irascibility and the defect is spiritlessness.²³⁹ The man who is considered gentle is praised for being angry under the right circumstances, with the right people, in the right manner, and at the right time.²⁴⁰ Concerning the truth, the virtuous disposition is truthfulness while the exaggeration is boastfulness and the understatement is self-depreciation.²⁴¹ Accordingly, “the boastful man is thought to be apt to claim the things that bring glory when he has not got them, or to claim most of them than he has, and the self-depreciator, on the other hand, disclaims what he has or belittles it, while the man who observes the mean is one who calls a thing by its own name, being truthful

²³³ Drew Maglio, *Aristotle’s Magnanimous Man: What Does it Mean to be a Great-Souled Individual?* The Great Conversation, 2020, <https://www.greatconversationpublication.org/aristotle-magnanimous-man-what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-great-souled-individual>, Accessed April 2, 2022.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Benjamin Mcevoy, *How to obtain the Virtue of Ambition in the Light of Aristotle’s Ethics*, July 22, 2019, <https://benjaminmcevoy.com/virtuous-life-challenge-week-6-ambition/>, Accessed April 2, 2022.

²³⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII.

²⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. By Martin Ostwald, (United States: New Jersey Printing Hall, 1999), Book II, Chap. VII.

²⁴¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII.

both in life and in word, owing to what he has, neither more nor less.”²⁴² Truthfulness then is one who is truthful both in words and in acts and claims what he really has with no exaggeration and no belittling. Concerning the pleasantness in social amusement, the middle character is wittiness or tactful while the excess is buffoonery and the deficient is boorish.²⁴³ Accordingly, buffoons are people who carry humor to the excess and strives humor at all cost just to raise a laugh rather than saying what is becoming and avoiding pain to the object of their fun.²⁴⁴ He is then insensitive in making humors. The boorish, on the other hand, is one who can neither make a joke themselves nor put up with those who do.²⁴⁵ The tactful one jokes in a tasteful way: he says and listens to such things as befit a good and well-bred man.²⁴⁶ The well-bred man’s jesting differs from that of a vulgar man and the joking of an educated man from that of an uneducated.²⁴⁷ Then concerning the general pleasantness in life, the man who is pleasant in proper manner is friendly while he who exceeds is flatterer and the deficient is quarrelsome or surly.²⁴⁸ Accordingly, friendship of men is formed when both of them possess virtue or

²⁴² Benjamin Mcevoy, *How to Obtain the Virtue of Truthfulness in the Light of Aristotle’s Ethics*, July 22, 2019, <https://benjaminmcevoy.com/virtuous-life-challenge-week-9-truthfulness/>, Accessed April 2, 2022.

²⁴³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII.

²⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachea Ethica*, trans. By W.D. Ross Book IV, Chap. VIII.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ He further asserted that the buffon is a slave of his humor and spares neither himself nor others if he can raise a laugh while the boor, on the other hand, is useless for such social intercourse for he contributes nothing. Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII. In gatherings of men, in social life and interchange of words and deeds, some men are thought to be obsequious (flatterer), namely, those who give pleasure and praise in everything and never oppose, but think it their duty to give no pain to the people they meet; while those, who are in contrary, oppose in everything and care not a whit about giving pain are called churlish or surly. Those states are the excess and defect in the virtue of friendliness. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tans. by David Ross and revised by Lesley Brown, (United States: Oxford University Press, 2009), Book IV, Chap. VI.

goodness.²⁴⁹ Their friendship lasts long as they are good for goodness is an enduring thing.²⁵⁰ A friendly man deals with other persons in the right things, manner, and way.²⁵¹ Moving on to the dispositions concerning emotions, the virtuous state is modesty while the excess is bashful and the deficient is shameless.²⁵² Aristotle defines shame as a kind of fear of dishonor and produces an effect similar to that produced by fear of danger while shameless is to be not ashamed of doing base actions.²⁵³ Modesty, on the other hand, is the feeling of shame at the appropriate manner and appropriate time.²⁵⁴ Lastly, concerning the pain and pleasures felt at the fortune of one's neighbors, the virtuous disposition is righteous indignation while the excess is envy and deficient is malice.²⁵⁵ The righteously indignant man is pained by underserved fortune; the jealous man exceeds and is pained by all the good fortunes of others; while the maliciousness man falls short of being pained that he actually feels pleasure.²⁵⁶

To capsulize and to have a better overview on all of these, the researcher provides a table of the golden mean:

²⁴⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachea Ethica*, trans. By W.D. Book VIII, Chap. III.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tans. by David Ross and revised by Lesley Brown, Book IV, Chap. VI.

²⁵² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VII.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

SPHERE OF ACTION OR FEELING	EXCESS	MEAN	DEFICIENCY
<i>Fear and Confidence</i>	Rashness	<i>Courage</i>	Cowardice
<i>Pleasure and Pain</i>	Licentiousness	<i>Temperance</i>	Insensibility
<i>Getting and Spending (Minor)</i>	Prodigality	<i>Liberality</i>	Illiberality
<i>Getting and Spending (Major)</i>	Vulgarity	<i>Magnificence</i>	Pettiness
<i>Honour and Dishonour (Major)</i>	Vanity	<i>Magnanimity</i>	Pusillanimity
<i>Honour and Dishonour (Minor)</i>	Ambition	<i>Proper Ambition</i>	Unambitiousness
<i>Anger</i>	Irascibility	<i>Patience</i>	Lack of Spirit
<i>Self-Expression</i>	Boastfulness	<i>Truthfulness</i>	Understatement
<i>Conversation</i>	Buffoonery	<i>Wittiness</i>	Boorishness
<i>Social Conduct</i>	Obsequiousness	<i>Friendliness</i>	Cantankerousness
<i>Shame</i>	Shyness	<i>Modesty</i>	Shamlessness
<i>Indignation</i>	Envy	<i>Righteous Indignation</i>	Malicious Enjoyment

Figure I. Table of the Golden Mean²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ Thomson, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, p.104.

Moral virtue, then, is the mean between two vices: excess and deficiency. However, Aristotle suggests that we must sometimes incline towards the excess and sometimes towards deficiency for this is a way that man can easily hit the mean and what is right.²⁵⁸ It is then not absolutely necessary that we always observe what is moderate for sometimes, exceeding or falling short from it entails the right and virtuous way of disposition. Furthermore, Aristotle stressed that in everything, it is not easy task to find the middle just like finding the middle of a circle.²⁵⁹ It is easy to be angry or to give and spend money, but to do this in a right way, to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with right motive, and the right way, is not easy.²⁶⁰ How, then, will man be able to strike the mean with all those considerations? How will he be able to observe the virtuous state considering the varying context, situations and circumstances? This is where the topic on practical wisdom will be discussed.

²⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book IV, Chap. IX. Aristotle here cited an example with regards to anger. He said that it is difficult to determine both how and with whom and on what provocation and how long should one be angry; for we too sometimes praise those who fall short and call them good-tempered, but sometimes we praise those who get angry and call them manly. The man, however, who deviates little from goodness is not blamed, whether he do so in the direction of more or of the less, but only the man who deviates more widely; for he does not fail to be noticed. But Aristotle asked, up to what point and to what extent that a man must deviate before he becomes blameworthy? It depends, accordingly, on particular facts and decisions in perception. It is then plain that we must incline sometimes towards the excess, and sometimes towards the deficiency, for so shall we most easily hit the mean and what is right. Ibid. Furthermore, this may also explain why some authors would say that the mean is a metaphorical term; virtue is not, in any literal sense of the term, a matter of picking the mid-point. This is implied in his own exposition. When Aristotle finds it necessary to state what the mean 'relative to us' is, he gives a perfect clear account in which no trace of the literal sense of the term 'mean' hampers the analysis: to feel things when one should, and in the conditions, and towards the people and for the end and in the way one should – that is the middle and the best course. Act in accordance with the mean thus becomes act as you should act. See Thomson, *The Ethics of Aristotle*, p. 25.

²⁵⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by W.D. Ross, Book IV, Chap. IX.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

2.3.2 Practical Wisdom

As Aristotle defines virtue, “it is a state of character concerned with choice lying in the mean relative to us, this being determined by rational principle and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.”²⁶¹ Now, what does he mean here by practical wisdom and how does it complement the moral virtue? Aristotle defines practical wisdom as “a reasoned and true state of capacity to act with regard to human goods.”²⁶² Furthermore, he asserted that practical wisdom is not only concerned with universals, but also with particulars for practical and practice is concerned with particulars.²⁶³ A man of practical wisdom is able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself conducive to a good life.²⁶⁴ Hence, practical wisdom aids the agent to deliberate well in doing an act considering the differing circumstances in order to achieve the good. A man with practical wisdom has the capacity to assess a given situation and to find what is best and most effective way of acting.²⁶⁵ This, then, is connected with the definition of virtue by Aristotle stating that it is a mean relative to man; the mean depends upon the situation and circumstances of an agent. That is why, the challenge for man seeking virtue is to determine the proper path in a certain situation aided by practical wisdom.²⁶⁶ Considering the differing situations, man should conscientiously examine them in order to act virtuously. This will only be possible through the aid of practical wisdom.²⁶⁷ Practical wisdom complements the

²⁶¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachea Ethica*, trans. By W.D. Book II, Chap. VI.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, Book VI, Chap. V.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, Book VI, Chap. VII.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Book VI, Chap. IV.

²⁶⁵ Daniel C. Russell, *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, edited by Ronald Polansky, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 199.

²⁶⁶ Kate and McKay Brett, *Practical Wisdom: the Master of Virtue*, Art of Manliness, April 24, 2020, <https://www.artofmanliness.com/character/behavior/practical-wisdom/>, Accessed April 13, 2022.

²⁶⁷ Thomas Vontz and Lori Goodson, *Practical Wisdom*, (Press Books Libraries), <https://kstatelibraries.pressbooks.pub/EDCI702/chapter/module-2-practical-wisdom/>, accessed September 4, 2021.

moral virtue for it aids the agent to look at the relativity of the mean and determines the right means in achieving the good. As Aristotle puts it, "Virtue makes us aim at the right mark and practical wisdom makes us take the right means."²⁶⁸

2.3.3 Vices *Per Se*

Though Aristotle asserted that an agent should avoid the two vices and strike the mean which is virtue, there are certain actions which do not admit a mean for they are vices inherently. As Aristotle puts it:

Not every action or emotion however admits the observance of a due mean. Indeed the very names of some directly imply evil, for instance malice, shamelessness, envy, and of actions, adultery, theft, murder. All of these and similar actions and feelings are blamed as being bad in themselves; it is not the excess or deficiency of them that we blame. It is impossible therefore ever to go right in regard to them – one must always be wrong; nor does right or wrong in their case depend on the circumstances, for instance, whether one commits adultery with the right woman, at the right time, and in the right manner; the mere commission of any of them is wrong.²⁶⁹

It is then absurd to say that one will be able to find a virtuous disposition in actions which are vices inherently. One cannot say that killing, stealing, and the like are good as long as done moderately. No matter what the circumstances and the situation may be, those things will always be vices and will never become virtuous.

²⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By W.D. Ross Book VI, Chap. XII. Furthermore, practical wisdom accordingly encompasses possession of ethical virtue for Aristotle repeatedly asserts that the correctness of the end depends upon the moral virtue while the correctness of the means to the ends depends on practical wisdom. See Russell, *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 197.

²⁶⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. By H. Rackham, Book II, Chap. VI.

Chapter 3

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

3.1 Summary

Aristotle begins his ethical inquiry with the discussion on end. He asserted that every agent acts for an end for if man acts with no end, then his life would be pointless and purposeless. The end which every agent aims is fundamentally good. However, there are a myriad of ends. It may be the act itself or an end which is a means for another end. Since there are many ends, Aristotle suggested that there should be something which is final and self-sufficient, that is, an end which is not a means for another end but is aimed for its own sake: the Intrinsic or Ultimate End. This, according to Aristotle, must be the Chief Good of man. But before he elucidated the Chief Good, he first considered the peculiar function of man for the goodness of the thing depends on how it performs its distinct function. For example, an eye is good when it performs its function well, that is, it is able to see clearly. Hence, a good man is one who performs his function well, or more specifically, his peculiar function. After considering the structure of man, Aristotle concluded that the peculiar function of man is his rationality. After considering this, Aristotle proceeded to the discussion on the Chief Good. He simply followed the conventional notion that the Chief Good is Happiness or Eudaimonia. However, he distinguished happiness from that of the common belief that it is the same with honor, pleasure, and wealth. To identify happiness with these three devalues its importance since those things are just aimed for the sake of something else, hence, not the Ultimate End. Happiness, for Aristotle, is an activity of the rational soul in accordance with virtue. From the definition, there can be found three important points: activity, rational soul, and virtue. Happiness is essentially an activity and not simply a possession. Furthermore, it should not happen in just a fleeting time, rather, it should be constantly exercised. Then, happiness is proper to the rational soul for this is the peculiar function of man. Happiness will be achieved when man performs or exercises his rationality well. Man will be able to perform this function well through Virtue. In defining virtue, Aristotle considered the

three things that can be found in the soul: faculty, passion, and disposition. He asserted that virtue cannot be a faculty nor passion for they are morally indifferent *per se*. An agent is not morally judged solely on his passion or faculty. He then concluded that virtue is fundamentally a disposition. But what kind of disposition? He said that it is a disposition to choose the mean and avoid the two vices: excess and defect. It is a mean in the sense that anything that is defect or excess destroys the goodness of a thing and the mean produces and preserves the good. Aristotle identified twelve particular virtues namely Courage, Temperance, Liberality, Magnificence, Magnanimity, Proper Ambition, Patience, Truthfulness, Wittiness, Friendliness, Modesty, and Righteous Indignation. Each of these virtues has corresponding excess and defect. However, Aristotle made it clear that the mean is not absolute; it is not the same for all people. The mean is relative to man. The agent should consider the situation and circumstances in order to strike the virtuous disposition. This is one of the reasons why Aristotle said that being good is not easy. Aside from the difficulty of hitting the mean like hitting the bullseye of a target board, there is also a difficulty in conscientiously examining the situations and circumstances. One should act or feel in the right manner, with right motive, at the right place, to the right person, and at the right time. That is why, Aristotle emphasized the importance of practical wisdom in order to become virtuous. This will aid the agent in choosing the mean in spite of the varying situations and circumstances. Furthermore, Aristotle stressed that there are certain actions or passions which do not admit a mean for they are vices inherently. It is absurd to say that there's a virtuous disposition or mean in actions which are vices inherently.

3.2 Conclusion

Aristotle indubitably provided us a systematic, comprehensive, and intelligible guide of ethics in order for us to attain our ultimate end which is happiness. It is systematic in the sense that his philosophical inquiry into the human good has an organized and well-structured process in order for the readers to gradually comprehend his ethical ideas; comprehensive in the sense that he rigorously examined every element or aspect pertaining the human good and

conduct so as to make his work extensive; and intelligible in the sense that his ethical ideas are comprehensible and may be applied in the context of life. He indeed offers us ethical ideas which are conducive to a good life. He is able to contribute for the enrichment and deepening of ethical philosophy. As one author said, "Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is among the first systematic treatments of ethics, and it is probably the most important and influential philosophical work ever devoted to its field."²⁷⁰ No doubt why he is considered as one of the greatest names in the history of Western philosophy.

3.3 Recommendation

The theory of the golden mean proposed by Aristotle may be a good basis in studying and dealing different moral, political, and social issues. One applicable issue would be the rampant existence of internet addiction. According to a research, internet addiction is a growing social issue which may ruin lives by causing neurological complications, psychological disturbances, and social problems.²⁷¹ The golden mean of Aristotle would somehow be helpful in dealing this issue for it reminds us to strike the intermediate and avoid the excess and defect. Exceeding of internet usage would make an individual digitally addicted and falling short from it would somehow detach himself from the trends and important information's in the realm of social media. Hence, one should utilize internet moderately and in the right manner and at the right time. This topic would be a good contextual discussion on Aristotle's golden mean. Another good topic to be tackled would be the lingering problem of crime. According to the report of the Philippine National Police, the crime volume dropped by nearly 14 percent last 2021. Data from the PNP showed that 37,626 incidents were recorded in 2021 compared to the 43,696 documented in 2020.²⁷² Though it decreased in number,

²⁷⁰ Daniel C. Russell, *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, edited by Ronald Polansky, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p.1.

²⁷¹ Hilarie Cash, Cosette D. Rae, and Alexander Winkler, *Internet Addiction: A Brief Summary of Research and Practice*, (United States: Bentham Science Publishers, 2012), Introduction.

²⁷² Emmanuel Tupas, *Philippine Crime Rate Drops by 14%*, Manila: The Philippine Star, January 29, 2022.

still, it is an alarming issue for it has not been fully terminated. The ethical theory of Aristotle would remind the people that crimes are vices inherently and hence, would be a hindrance in achieving the Chief Good. Another issue that is recommended to be tackled would be the widespread existence of fake news. According to Inquirer, the issue of fake news in media worsened in all areas since December 2017.²⁷³ Are we really exercising our peculiar function as a man, that is, our rationality? As beings endowed with reason which object is the truth, are we being critical in dealing and treating various informations? Are we observing the virtue of truthfulness? This will only be given clearer account by exposing this in the light of Aristotelian ethics. Another applicable issue would be the response of Ukrainian president against the aggression of Russia. Pres. Volodymyr Zelensky said that his country was ready for a Russian attack, vowing: "If they [Russia] attack, if they try to take our county - our freedom, our lives, the lives of our children - we will be defending ourselves."²⁷⁴ In the light of Aristotle's ethics, is the act of Pres. Zelensky a courageous one or a vice of rashness? This would then be a good discussion in the context of Aristotle's golden mean of moderation.

Those are some of the recommended ethical issues and topics that may be tackled in Aristotelian ethics. Furthermore, the researcher recommends that further study should be conducted for this paper does not fully exhaust the entire ethical theory of Aristotle. It is highly recommended to study his concept of Intellectual Virtue for this also plays a major role in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. The researcher also suggests to read the *Eudemian Ethics* and *Magna Moralia* for these are also significant ethical books of Aristotle.

²⁷³ *70% of Pinoys say fake news a serious problem – SWS*, Philippine Daily Inquirer, February 28, 2022, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1560828/sws-70-of-pinoys-say-fake-news-a-serious-problem>, accessed April 20, 2022.

²⁷⁴ *Ukraine Conflict: President Zelensky Warns Russia: We Will Defend Ourselves*, BBC News, February 24, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60497510>, Accessed April 20, 2022.

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