**Aristotle’s Moral and Political Philosophy**

***by Ralph McInerny***

The main sources for this exposition of Aristotle's practical philosophy will be the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*. As essays in practical philosophy, these two works will be seeking knowledge which is ordered to doing, to human action. It is always from the viewpoint of its relevance for action that we must consider the procedure of Aristotle in practical philosophy; the study of ethics and politics should not be considered something of interest for its own sake. One who would listen to discussions of what ought to be done, take copious notes and commit these to memory, without applying this knowledge to his own actions would be like one who expects to get well, not by doing what the doctor prescribes, but by listening attentively and remembering everything he is told. (cf. *Ethics* II,4,1105b13 ff.) One does not become good by philosophizing, but by performing good actions; the hope, of course, is that the considerations of practical philosophy will facilitate the choice of the correct course of action. Somewhat the same point is made in the first book of the *Ethics* (1095a5) when Aristotle observes that the young are not apt students of moral philosophy. The young in heart, whatever their age, pursue now this object, now that, as passion directs. We might object that no one needs moral philosophy more than the immature, but Aristotle will reply that, since such persons are indisposed with respect to action and the end of moral science is not knowledge but action, its study is vain and unprofitable for them. What is it that the properly disposed student has that the immature lack which enables the former to profit from moral philosophy? Moral science, Aristotle notes, in common with every discipline, must begin with those things which the student knows and of which he is a good judge. But the things with which the moral philosopher is concerned are good and just acts and the recognition of these as such requires a special disposition on the part of the student, a disposition that the science presupposes and does not confer. We will see later that Aristotle does not deny that there is a sense in which the morally immature man can learn ethics, but its true import, which is not for knowledge but for action, will be lost on such a student. It is against this background that Aristotle makes the following very important methodological remark.

Now fine and just actions, which political science [Aristotle's generic name for moral philosophy] investigates, admit of much variety and fluctuation of opinion, so that they may be thought to exist only by convention, and not by nature. And goods also give rise to a similar fluctuation because they bring harm to many people; for before now men have been undone by reason of their wealth, and others by reason of their courage. We must be content, then, in speaking of such subjects and with such premisses to indicate the truth roughly and in outline, and in speaking about things which are only for the most part true and with premisses of the same kind to reach conclusions that are no better. (*Ethics*, I,3,109b15-23)

As practical knowledge, moral philosophy is directed to action, to singular actions, as to its term; because the circumstances in which we act and we as agents vary considerably, the generalizations of ethics and political science, both premisses and conclusions, will be unable to achieve a perfect fit with action. Nevertheless, since such knowledge, though remote and tentative, is of some value when we must decide, its pursuit is justified; we notice once more that the justification comes on the side of a disposition to make use of this knowledge. The unsatisfactory character of practical philosophy just as knowledge makes the pursuit of it for its own sake, and not for the sake of using it in action, an endeavor of little moment.

If Aristotle insists again and again that the doctrine of the *Ethics* and *Politics* is only probable, more or less likely, and so forth, we must not think that he is of the opinion that convention and custom are the only rules of action and that nature has no role to play. We saw how Plato, faced with the question as to what man ought to do, turns immediately to ask what man is. Practical norms must be anchored in knowledge of man's nature. (Cf. *Ethics*, V,7) I So too, in the first book, Aristotle will ask, what is man's proper function? The answer to this question presupposes knowledge of what man is. Before turning to that discussion, however, we must first say a word on the relation between ethics and politics.

We have already alluded parenthetically to the fact that "political science" is synonymous with moral philosophy for Aristotle. His reason for this usage is to be found in his contention that man is naturally a political animal. This statement has no more alarming purport than that man, inevitably, is born into a society: that of the family since a man must have parents; that of a community of families, since men are better enabled to survive if there is a division of labor. "Naturally," in the statement "man is naturally a political animal," obviously does not mean that states are natural products in the way trees are. Rather, man's nature suggests the state, since the individual cannot achieve human perfection easily if at all in a solitary condition. The formation of the state follows, then, on the pursuance of the goal suggested by man's nature. If man is part of various communities, these communities or wholes can possess ends which are not simply the end of the individual taken as such; but, because the family and the state are the kinds of whole they are, their parts, individuals, can have ends or goals which are not those of the whole as such. This, as we have already seen, is the basis for the division of practical philosophy into ethics, economics and politics. Politics, since it is concerned with the common good of citizens, is preeminent in the practical order, and its direction of various activities to an end has more the nature of wisdom. For this reason, as terminal and preeminent, politics lends its name to the whole of practical philosophy.

*The End of Man*. Since every study, action and pursuit seems ordered to an end or good, Aristotle suggests that we inquire whether there is some end of the things we do which is desired for its own sake and for which all other things are desired. It does not seem likely that one thing could be desired for another, that for yet another, and so on infinitely; rather, there must be some chief good towards which all activities are directed. Knowledge of such an end, he feels, would clearly have practical import and, of the sciences, politics would be chiefly concerned with it. A sign of this is that it is left to political science to order business, the military and education itself to an end. That happiness is what all men seek in all their actions is a matter of widespread agreement, although the nature of happiness is not agreed upon. Most men seek happiness in pleasure, honor and wealth; some philosophers in the Form or Idea of the good. The life lived for pleasure is the first of three ways of life distinguished by Aristotle; it is not a human life, he observes, since it places human happiness in something common to men and animals. A second way of life is the political and this seems aimed at honor. Nevertheless, the man of practical wisdom seems desirous of honor because he is virtuous, and the suspicion arises that virtue and not honor is the end of the political life. A third way of life is the contemplative, but discussion of this Aristotle defers until the tenth book. Money is palpably not an end, since it is wanted for something else: The Platonic Good is dismissed as not taking sufficiently into account the variety of goods which also deserve the name.

The ultimate good is one achievable by action; obviously there are many goods which can be achieved by our action, but there may be one which is not sought because it is conducive to yet another good, but as terminal and final. Indeed, happiness seems to be such a good: everything else seems sought in order that we might be happy. Not only is happiness an ultimate or final good, it seems also to be self-sufficient; it is easier to agree that we would be satisfied with happiness alone than with any other good we seek. Given these two characteristics of happiness, we really have said next to nothing about it. To say a trifle more, we must ask what man's function is. It would be incredible if man had no proper function when the carpenter and plumber do, as do the eye, hand, ear, etc. Man's function is not merely to live if life is something he has in common with plants; nor can sensation be his proper function, since animals too possess that. "There remains, then, an active life of the element that has a rational principle; of this, one part has such a principle in the sense of being obedient to one, the other in the sense of possessing and exercising thought." (I,7,1098a3ff.) The properly human life is a rational one, and this can mean that an activity is in accord with reason or of reason. If this is man's function to live rationally, then we have something in terms of which we can say a man performs well or ill. But to perform well is to perform virtuously and the human good, human happiness, thus appears to be an activity of soul in accord with virtue or virtues or the best of virtues. And, since "one swallow does not make a summer" (one of Aristotle's most quoted remarks), this activity must be fairly continuous if it is to constitute happiness.

Having arrived at a general designation of the ultimate human good as happiness which in turn is a life lived in accordance with virtue, Aristotle turns to other views to see if he has hit on something others would agree with. Those who divide goods into external, corporeal and goods of the soul, with the last type the best, would seem to be in agreement with the proposed description of the ultimate good. Others have located happiness in virtue, but Aristotle wants not only this corroboration of his own view; there may be a difference. "But it makes, perhaps, no small difference whether we place the chief good in possession or in use, in state of mind or in activity." (1098b32) Happiness, for Aristotle, is an activity.

Moreover, it is pleasant activity since the virtuous man will take pleasure in virtuous actions. Finally, those who say that happiness requires external goods are not wrong; the virtuous life can be lived properly only if one has a minimum of worldly goods. Nevertheless, Aristotle does not want to identify happiness with good fortune; good fortune by definition is not something one acquires by deliberate action.

The remark of Solon that no man should be called happy while he lives, prompts an interesting digression. What the sage seems to be getting at is that only the dead are beyond the reversals and vagaries of fortune, and yet the dead may not be blessed in their descendants. Aristotle does not feel that the dead can be affected by the bad fortune or vices of just any of their descendants; at the same time he thinks those of some of their descendants must have some effect on their happiness. All this is quite tentative, of course, but it reveals Aristotle's appreciation of the strength of family ties, ties which, with the immortality of the soul, become transcendant. His more direct reply to Solon is that the sage seems to allow us to say only that a man has been happy, not that he is happy, and Aristotle wonders how something can have a past if it had no present. His final statement on how the fortunes of living descendants affect the dead is found at the end of chapter eleven. "The good or bad fortunes of friends, then, seem to have some effects on the dead, but effects of such a kind and degree as neither to make the happy unhappy nor to produce any other change of the kind." (11O1b4ff.)

Aristotle's view of the effects of fortune, good and bad, on the happiness of the virtuous man steers a middle course between making happiness result as such from these and making them a matter of total indifference. A prolonged siege of bad fortune can affect happiness, though it can also make the nobility of the good man's soul shine forth and this not because he does not feel pain. Aristotle does not think pain a matter of indifference; he feels it can diminish happiness, but he hesitates to say it can stamp it out utterly. In short, Aristotle outlines a notion of happiness consonant with man's nature, a happiness which is an activity and to be possessed in this life, although it is not utterly unrelated to another life. Nevertheless, he hesitates to speak of the happiness of the separated soul except insofar as this may seem to be affected by events here below. Obviously, this reserve is quite in keeping with the purpose of practical philosophy.

*Virtue*. Happiness having been defined as an activity of soul in accordance with virtue, Aristotle must now turn to the discussion of the nature of virtue. Earlier, he had introduced virtue into his description of human happiness by saying that a function may be performed well or ill, and that performing it well is what we mean by virtue or excellence in that order. It is human virtue as such that now interests him and since the activities which can be performed well or ill are those of the soul, the moral philosoper must presuppose knowledge of the soul. We saw earlier that psychology is presupposed by moral philosophy and took that as suggesting the place of the latter in the proper order of learning the various philosophical sciences. Now since it is a question of accepting from elsewhere a doctine of soul, Aristotle is willing to make use of the Platonic doctrine because he feels it is adequate enough for his purposes here. What he has in mind is the division of the soul into a rational and an irrational part. (He suggests that he would tend to discuss the related questions differently from the Platonists, but that does not matter here.) The irrational part of the soul is further subdivided into the vegetative and sensitive; the vegetative activities do not seem to require any specifically human direction, so they are of little interest here. Digestion is not something we concern ourselves about; indeed, it takes place, and perhaps best when we are asleep. The other element of the irrational part of the soul seems to fight against reason; nevertheless, it can be brought under the control of reason and is thus rational by participation. This leads to a division of virtue, since the good activity of reason will be one kind of virtue, the good activity of the irrational part of the soul as it is brought under the suasion of reason, another kind. Let us call these intellectual and moral virtues respectively. Books Two though Five are concerned with moral virtue; Book Six with the intellectual virtues; Book Seven is concerned with continence and incontinence and we will find there Aristotle's discussion of the claim that knowledge is virtue; Books Eight and Nine concern themselves with friendship and, in Book Ten, Aristotle returns to the discussion of happiness.

*Acquisition of Moral Virtue*. Intellectual virtue can be gotten from a teacher, but moral virtue is the result of habituation. Moral virtues are not products of nature, but neither are they acquired quite independently of nature. "Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit." (II,1,1103a24-5) We become just by performing just acts; we become temperate by performing acts of temperance, and so on with the other moral virtues. Aristotle observes that it is the purpose of law to make citizens perform good actions and thus to acquire the habit of virtue so that sanctions are no longer the motive. There is a cliché we hear often nowadays to the effect that you cannot legislate morality, meaning, it seems, that a law can't make people good. It can nevertheless make people perform good acts and thus, hopefully, be conducive to the acquisition of virtue. "It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference." (1103b24-6) Virtuous action seems to be a matter of avoiding extremes, since the virtue of temperance is destroyed both by an excess and a defect with respect, say, to food and drink. Moreover, moral excellence has to do with pleasures and pains; pleasure can induce us to do bad things and pain to refrain from good, so that the virtuous man must be well disposed with respect to pleasure and pain. Aristotle endorses Plato's view that a good deal of moral education has to do with training the young to take pleasure in and be pained by the proper objects. Virtue and vice are concerned with the same things, then, but they differ in the manner of their relation to them.

Aristotle concludes his general remarks on the acquisition of moral virtue by comparing art and virtue; one learns an art by repeated action, but the acquisition of moral virtue requires a number of things of the agent which are not necessary for art.

The agent also 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 their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. These are not reckoned in as conditions of the possession of the arts, except the bare knowledge; but as a condition of the possession of the virtues knowledge has little or no weight, while the other conditions count not for a little but for everything, i.e. the very conditions which result from often doing just and temperate acts. (II,4,1105a31-b4)

*Definition of Moral Virtue*. Turning to an attempt to define moral virtue, Aristotle first seeks its genus. Virtue has been referred to soul and the soul comprises passions, faculties and habits and virtue must be one of these. Virtue is not passion, no more than is vice, Aristotle remarks, since we are not praised or blamed for the feelings we may have, but for what we do when we have such feelings as anger, desire and so forth. Moreover feelings are not matters of choice, whereas virtues are. The same objections would have to be brought against the supposition that virtues are faculties of the soul; in addition, we are provided with faculties by nature, but virtue we must acquire. This leaves only habit and this, Aristotle says, is the genus of moral virtue.

Given the genus of virtue, we must now seek the mark that sets it off from other habits. Now any virtue in the sense of excellent performance makes both the performer and his work good; so too human virtue will make a man good and enable him to do his proper work well. It has already been suggested that virtue is destroyed by excess or defect.

For instance, both fear and confidence and appetite and anger and pity and in general pleasure and pain may be felt both too much and too little, and in both cases not well; but to feel them at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue. (II,6,1106b18ff.)

All these conditions have to be determined by reason under whose guidance we act; to fall short of any of these conditions is to fall from excellence to some extreme, whether of defect or excess. For this reason, Aristotle will say that the virtue in a given order lies between two vices. The determination of the mean is made in concrete circumstances by a particular individual and consequently does not have a hard and fast character. Moreover, not every action admits a mean in the sense at issue: the judicious execution of a crime cannot be called virtue.

Aristotle goes on to make these remarks more concrete. The mean with respect to fear and confidence is courage; the extremes in this area are timidity and foolhardiness; with respect to money, liberality is the virtue, prodigality and miserliness the vices; with regard to honor, the virtue is proper pride, the vices vanity and obsequiousness, and so on. The two vices related in terms of excess and defect with respect to the same passions are further removed from one another than from the virtue, and the virtue is closer to one vice than to the other; e.g., courage is more closely related to foolhardiness than to timidity. One source of this is our own tendency towards one extreme and this suggests that the way to hit the mean is to strive to avoid the excess to which we are most inclined. A sign of our inclination will be the mode of action which gives us the most pleasure, and the acquisition of moral virtue will thus entail controlling pleasure.

*Involuntary Acts*. A person is praised or blamed for those actions he performs voluntarily; if he does something involuntarily he would be pardoned or pitied, but not praised or blamed. What is an involuntary action? Aristotle says that they are those caused by compulsion or ignorance. In this way two essential aspects of the voluntary act are removed. By compulsion or violence he means an activity the principle of which is outside the agent in such a way that the agent contributes nothing to it. He exemplifies this by a man begin tossed by the wind or dragged about by others. Of some actions it is difficult to determine whether they are voluntary or involuntary; parents of the child accede to the wishes of kidnappers out of compulsion, but they act to get their child back. So too the captain who dumps his cargo in order to save his ship and crew. "Such actions, then, are mixed, but are like voluntary actions; for they are worthy of choice at the time when they are done, and the end of an action is relative to the occasion" (III,1.111Oa11ff.) Speaking generally, no one wants to give his life-savings to strangers or to dump his goods into the sea, but the force of circumstances can make these actions which are chosen.

Ignorance too can be the cause of involuntary action; by ignorance here Aristotle means a lack of knowledge of the circumstances of an act. For example, the man shoots his son thinking him an intruder. When he discovers what he has done, he is abject; only ignorance productive of a result contrary to what one wills involves the involuntary; one who collects bits of metal and learns afterward that they are extremely valuable has acted out of ignorance, but ignorance is not productive of an involuntary act since the result does not go contrary to the will of the agent. Aristotle rules out the ignorance consequent upon rage and wine as causative of the involuntary, since in such cases ignorance is a concomitant of something else to which the act must be ascribed.

*Choice and Deliberation*. Choice is involved in voluntary action but is not synonymous with it; choice is taken here to mean that which bears on means to an end and not on the end itself; wish or intention has the end as object. It is choice, and not action for an end, which sets the human agent off from all others. We deliberate or take counsel about the ways to achieve an end we intend, but it is not this cognitive activity alone which is choice. Aristotle makes this point by asking whether choice is identical with opinion. That opinion is involved in choice is not denied, but the question is, are the two one and the same thing? A sign of their difference is that we are not praised or blamed for what we think so much as for what we choose.

And we choose what we best know to be good, but we opine what we do not quite know; and it is not the same people that are thought to make the best choices and to have the best opinions, but some are thought to have fairly good opinions, but by reason of vice to choose what they should not (III, 2, 1 11a7 ff.)

Choice, Aristotle will say later, can be looked upon either as a knowing willing or a willing knowing. Deliberation and choice are important for the consideration of virtue, since the latter is concerned with the means.

*Knowledge and Virtue*. After the points just mentioned, Aristotle alludes to the Socratic position that no one does evil knowingly. He will turn to this position again in Book Seven after discussing in some detail the virtues of courage, temperance, liberality, magnanimity, etc. in the remainder of Book Three and in Book Four, and a discussion of justice in Book Five. Book Six is devoted to virtues he had earlier opposed to moral virtues, namely the intellectual virtues. Of particular interest in that book is the discussion of practical wisdom or prudence. We shall turn immediately to the discussion of the Socratic position and make allusions to the doctrine on prudence from that vantage point. In Book Seven, Aristotle is concerned with the continent and the incontinent man. Virtue is a state of character thanks to which the one having it and his operation are rendered good. It is a determination to the good of action so fixed and habitual that it is accompanied by pleasure. When the virtuous man must decide, he is disposed to see his circumstances with an eye to the good and to follow with ease and pleasure the dictates of reason as to how the good can be obtained. The continent man is something less. He is not totally indisposed to the good; he can judge the circumstances in which he must act with an eye to the good and even do the right thing. However, he does not do this easily and with pleasure, but by means of a certain constraint, despite himself, so to speak. It is in this context that the problems of incontinence and the incontinent man are approached and immediately the position of Socrates looms large.. Is it possible for a man who judges rightly to behave incontinently? Socrates, we are reminded, rejected this possiblity and maintained that no man can act contrary to what he judges is best. If a man does the wrong thing, this is only because of ignorance. Noting that this view plainly contradicts the observed facts, Aristotle suggests that one must ask what is the manner of ignorance to which Socrates refers. The incontinent man is one who, before he acts, does not think that he should act as he does. Perhaps then it was not really knowledge that the incontinent man had, but only opinion. Aristotle feels that this would be too great a concession, for we might sympathize with a man who acts contrary to a weak as opposed to a strong conviction, but we do not sympathize with wickedness. One thing is certain as far as Aristotle is concerned and that is that the knowledge which the incontinent man has is not that of practical wisdom or prudence. This he has earlier defined as the virtue of the practical intellect which complements the possession of moral virtue. Thus prudence is the knowledge of the one possessing moral virtues who will act on the knowledge he has. The knowledge of the incontinent man, on the other hand, allows for actions which are not in keeping with it.

Is the distinction, made by those inclined to agree with Socrates, the distinction between knowledge and opinion, relevant here? Aristotle thinks not. From the point of view of action, there seems to be little perceptible difference between those who have opinion and those who know. Striking a wry note, Aristotle says that in general men seem no less convinced of what they opine than of what they know -- "as is shown in the case of Heraclitus." What is of relevance here is the twofold way in which we use the word "know." Both the man who has knowledge and is not using it as well as the man actually using it are said to know. Thus, there would be an important difference between the man who has knowledge and uses it in acting and the man who, although he has knowledge, does not make use of it in action.

In the reasoning involved in action, there are included general judgments and singular ones; for example, "Dry food is good for every man," on the one hand, and, on the other, such judgments as "I am a man" and "This is dry food." Obviously, there is a difference between these kinds of judgment, and Aristotle observes that it would indeed be surprising if the incontinent man had both the knowledge involved in the general judgment as well as that involved in the singular ones when he acts incontinently. As a matter of fact, he claims, what the incontinent man knows is expressed in general judgments and, though he may be said to have the knowledge expressed in singular judgments, he is not using that knowledge when he acts. And, since action is concerned with the singular, the use of general knowledge by the incontinent man is compatible with not making certain singular judgments when he acts. What is important in action is seeing the singular circumstances in the light of the universal and it is just this that the incontinent man fails to do.

Since what Aristotle is doing, in effect, is pointing out that "knowledge" has many more senses than Socrates apparently suspected and that, once these various meanings are brought to light, the identification of knowledge and virtue appears unduly simplistic, resting as it does on a univocal acceptation of "to know," it is not surprising to find him going on to point out further nuances in the distinctions he has already made. Thus, the distinction between having knowledge and not using it necessitated by a variety of causes. The geometer who is asleep, gone mad or drunk is not using his knowledge and, moreover, is incapable of using it. Now this is also the case with one buffeted by passions, particularly such passions as anger and sexual appetite. Just as those mad or drunk are incapable of making use of the knowledge they have, so too the incontinent man. Nor does it matter that he can even then "use the language that flows from knowledge" -- even the mad and intoxicated can do this. Aristotle employs another important analogy, that of beginners in a science who can orally repeat what pertains to the science although they do not know it, for it has not yet become a part of themselves, an independent possession. In a moment, we will be able to say something about what it means for practical knowledge to become part of oneself.

Continuing his analysis, Aristotle next compares the reasoning of the speculative intellect with that of the practical intellect. In speculative matters, the mind need only affirm a conclusion, whereas precisely an action. For example, given "Every injustice should be avoided," and "This action is unjust," it is theoretically a simple matter to formulate and assent to the conclusion. But in practise, the judgment about the singular can involve a host of difficulties.

Consider the "practical syllogism" of a temperate man. Assume that he knows as true that every sweet ought to be tasted as well as that the tidbit on the table before him is sweet. Unless his hands are tied, the action dictated is obvious and follows smoothly. Taking a more realistic example, the just man, knowing that every injustice is to be avoided and recognizing a possible course of action as unjust, avoids it. So too, to give vice its due, the intemperate man, working in terms of the general view that every delight is to be pursued, goes in pursuit of what appears delightful to him. What, in terms of such "practical syllogisms," is the procedure of the incontinent man?

The incontinent man is distinguished from the virtuous man because he does not have his passions disciplined and under control. Nevertheless, the incontinent man knows as well as do the virtuous and continent men that delights are not to be pursued inordinately. Such a universal, however, is not decisive for action, since actions are singular. The incontinent man, whose passions are by definition uncontrolled, when faced with a concrete possibility of pleasure has present to his mind, so to speak, conflicting general judgments: that delights are not to be pursued inordinately, and, what is involved in the uncontrolled movements of his emotions, that every delight is to be caught on the wing. His passions being aroused in the presence of a pleasurable object, the universal that he and the virtuous man both know is pushed rudely aside. Then, judging somewhat in this way, "But of course this is not prohibited," a judgement prompted by his aroused passions, he dismisses the general view that prohibits seeking this pleasure and acts, in effect, under the formality of the general judgment that every delight is to be pursued.

What does all this have to do with the position of Socrates? Aristotle leads the discussion back with the surprising remark that, from his considerations, "the position Socrates sought actually seems to result." Does this mean that Aristotle agrees that knowledge is virtue and evil doing a matter of simple ignorance? We have already seen Aristotle's concern to take into account the various meanings "to know" has. Insofar as knowledge refers to a theoretical, general, knowledge about actions, knowledge is not virtue. Actions are in the singular, are concrete. What Socrates is right in suggesting is that, when a man knowingly does wrong, he is not considering the general knowledge relevant to the circumstances in which he acts, but Aristotle will insist that there is no contradiction in saying that such a man knows that general knowledge to be true. In the case of the incontinent man, this knowledge is pushed aside by passion and, when he acts, he is not using it.

It is just this distinction between judgments made in moral science and judgments made by one who possesses practical wisdom or prudence that is expressed by later distinctions between judgments "by way of knowledge" of, and judgments "by way of inclination" to, or connaturality with the good. The virtuous man is determinately disposed in his appetite with respect to the good of reason. That is why there is no impediment in his appetitive condition when it comes to judging his particular circumstances in the light of a rationally recognized norm. Well-disposed appetite is indispensable for the kind of knowledge which is efficacious for action, i.e., for practical wisdom or prudence. Lacking this disposition, that is, lacking virtue, the incontinent man does not apply the knowledge he has.

Judgments made by way of knowledge are those made in moral philosophy where it is not circumstances which are at issue, but typical circumstances. We have already seen that an efficacious study of moral philosophy presupposes a well disposed student. But whether morally well disposed or not, judgments in moral philosophy require the assignment of communicable reasons for a proposed course of action. These reasons and their validity do not depend on the subjective condition of the one giving them, a sign of this being that even the intemperate man can give useful advice on the acquistion of temperance.

Aristotle's point with reference to Socrates, then, is that knowledge is and is not efficacious for action -- it all depends on what one means by knowledge. There is on the one hand general knowledge, the sort of thing one is after in moral science, but possession of such knowledge is compatible with actions contrary to it. There is as well practical wisdom or prudence, the kind of knowledge had by one who possesses moral virtue which disposes him to judge correctly the contingent and particular circumstances and to act in conformity with that judgment.

*Justice*. The fifth book of the *Ethics* is concerned with the virtue of justice; we shall hint here in but the briefest way the direction the discussion takes. Noting that we can often arrive at the nature of something by examining its contrary, Aristotle observes that injustice is the unlawful and unfair or unequal. This suggests to him that justice is action in accordance with law and concern for equality. The equality or fairness is guaged in terms of goods connected with prosperity and adversity, and this suggests that we have to do with two meanings of injustice and justice. The justice which is synonymous with living in accord with the law is not restricted to those goods mentioned above, since the law sanctions the practice of every virtue insofar as a virtue brings us into relation with our neighbor. In other words, there is a form of justice, legal justice, which is the same as virtue as such; but when we designate all virtue by the term justice we are specifying virtuous acts, not absolutely, but insofar as they bring one man into relation with others. The type of justice which is concerned with those goods involved in prosperity and adversity is a special virtue included in legal justice and divided from other virtues also included in justice in the wide sense, e.g., courage, temperance and so forth. This particular justice is divided by Aristotle into two species, one of which is concerned with the equitable distribution of goods to citizens of a state, the other of which has to do with transactions among citizens. Aristotle has much to say about how equality, the just mean, is established in each of these species of justice, and how they compare on this basis.

*Friendship*. It falls to moral philosophy to discuss friendship because this is either a virtue or dependent upon virtue; moreover, it is necessary for life. Indeed, at all stages of our life we are in need of others, of friends. It is not the necessity and usefullness of friends alone which commends friendship, however; we praise it as something noble in itself and feel that there is a connection between being a good friend and a good man. In describing friendship, Aristotle always has one sense of the term in mind and, if he speaks of kinds of friendship, these are not so much species of a genus, as imperfect imitations of friendship properly so-called. Generally speaking, friends are those who bear goodwill to one another in such a way that this is mutually obvious and they wish one another well for reasons of the good, of utility or pleasure. "Perfect friendship is the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other qua good, and they are good in themselves." (VIII, 3, 1156b7ff.) Friendship based on utility or pleasure falls short of this.

Therefore we too ought perhaps to call such people friends, and say that there are several kinds of friendship -- firstly and in the proper sense that of good men *qua* good, and by analogy the other kinds; for it is in virtue of something good and something akin to what is found in true friendship that they are friends, since even the pleasant is good for the lovers of pleasure. (VIII, 4, 1157a30)

Aristotle's view of friendship, even of perfect friendship, is sometimes thought to be deficient because it appears to involve egocentricity. Such remarks as the following cause difficulty.

And in loving a friend men love what is good for themselves; for the good man in becoming a friend becomes a good to his friend. Each, then, both loves what is good for himself, and makes an equal return in goodwill and in pleasantness; for friendship is said to be equality, and both of these are found most in the friendship of the good. (VIII,5,1157b33)

A minimum of reflection enables us to grasp Aristotle's point. We love that which is good and a good for ourselves. Now when a good man becomes the friend of another he becomes a good for that other and good men when they are friends love what for them is good in loving one another. What the good man loves for himself, he loves or desires for his friend; self-love accordingly is the basis of love for another, but this must not be construed in terms of utility. Even in the supernatural order, only God can be loved more than oneself (See St. Thomas, *Summa theologiae*, II-II,q.26,a.4) so that the primacy of the self in love among men can hardly be thought of as pagan.

*Contemplation*. In the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle returns to the notion of happiness, man's last end, and endeavors to say a few more things about it. He recalls his earlier remarks to the effect that happiness must consist in activity and in an activity which is sought for its own sake. Virtuous activities seem to meet this requirement and happiness should be activity in accord with the highest and best virtue. Contemplation, the activity of philosophic as opposed to practical wisdom, constitutes human happiness.

For firstly, this activity is the best (since not only is reason the best thing in us, but the objects of reason are the best of knowable objects); and, secondly, it is the most continuous, since we can contemplate truth more continuously than we can do anything. And we think happiness has pleasure mingled with it, but the activity of philosophic wisdom is admittedly the pleasantest of virtuous activities; at all events the pursuit of it is thought to offer pleasures marvellous for their purity and their enduringness, and it is to be expected that those who know will pass their time more pleasantly than those who inquire. And the self-sufficiency that is spoken of must belong most to the contemplative activity. For while a philosopher, as well as a just man or one possessing any other virtue, needs the necessaries of life, when they are sufficiently equipped with things of that sort the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others in the same case, but the philosopher, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient. (X,7,1177a20-bl)

He goes on to point out that it above all is loved for its own sake and depends on leisure; in a word, contemplation best saves the characteristics of happiness discerned in the first book.

Despite this, contemplation seems to be somewhat more than a human activity and a secondary type of happiness must be recognised, also rational activity, but that involved in the exercise of the moral virtues. Aristotle characteristically is not carried away by his own eulogy of contemplation to the extreme of saying that only in it can happiness be secured.

*Politics*. The *Ethics* ends with a discussion which provides an easy transition into the *Politics*, for Aristotle begins to point out that legislation is required if the end of man is to be achieved. We must content ourselves with the barest outline of the contents of the *Politics*. Aristotle begins with a discussion designed to show that the state is natural, that man is by nature a political animal. The state is the perfect community and aims at the perfect good; its difference from other communities is discovered by examining the parts of which it is composed, villages and households. The state is organized to provide necessities but it is also the vehicle for securing the good life. In discussing the nature of the household, Aristotle argues that there is a natural basis for slavery insofar as some men require to be ordered to the good of others. This is easily one of the most controversial doctrines in the *Politics*. Aristotle classifies constitutions in three groups: the good ones are monarchy, aristocracy and polity; their perversions are tyranny, oligarchy and democracy. He has much to say on the variations in the three types of good constitution as well as on revolutions. The *Politics* we possess is not a completed work; it ends with a discussion of education which advances no farther than a treatment of music and gymnastic.

The moral philosophy of Aristotle is most striking because of its judicious blending of the ideal with the possible; the movement from the way things are to the way they can and should be is present throughout, from the appeal to human nature to discover that function in terms of which man's peculiar excellence can be computed to research into existing constitutions as a background for the treatment of what the best constitution would be.