

**THE NIGERIAN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY IN THE LIGHT OF
ARISTOTLE'S GOLDEN MEAN: A CRITICAL EVALUATION**

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BENIN CITY

MARCH, 2024

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**AN ORIGINAL ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
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**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work titled; **THE NIGERIAN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY IN THE LIGHT OF ARISTOTLE'S GOLDEN MEAN: A CRITICAL EVALUATION** was carried out by **UDEZE IJEZIE FAVOUR** with matriculation number **ART1901771** of the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin- City.

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DATE

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(Acting Head of Department)

DATE

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my Maker, all- knowing God, My Lecturers, and to my ever supportive mom and dad, for their love, support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I reflect upon the completion of this project, I am reminded that no accomplishment is achieved in isolation, and the need for support and companionship is an essential part of our growth. First and foremost, I want to thank God Almighty for the good health and understanding he granted me throughout my period of study at the University of Benin.

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian Contemporary Society in the Light of Aristotle's Golden Mean: A Critical Evaluation examined the concept of the Golden Mean as out forward by Aristotle, and apply it to the contemporary Nigerian Society. The work argued that the Nigerian society is not living up to the ideal of Golden Mean, and that this has led to a number of social problems. It concludes by suggesting some possible solutions to these possible problems. Using the Golden Mean as a guide, we first examined the state of the Nigerian Society, and highlight some of the main social problems. We argued that the Nigerian Society is not striking a balance between the extremes of excessive spending and excessive saving, excessive individualism and excessive collectivism, excessive selfishness and excessive selflessness. We then offered some possible solutions, including introducing the culture of moderation and balance, and promoting the values of hard work, honesty, and self reliance.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This project is entitled, “Aristotle’s Theory of the Golden Mean.” Hence, it is an 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 in 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 Socratic 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. 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 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.”²

Another notable philosopher who provided a major contribution in the field of ethics was Aristotle, which is the major concern of this work. 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. It consists of a series of short treatises possibly brought together by Aristotle's son named Nicomachus. 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."³ The end then of every human act is basically and fundamentally good. "No man acts for the sake of achieving an evil end. 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, worth tending to for its own sake, or as a means conducive to some other good."⁴

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."⁵ Hence, 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. 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. 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 another end. He further argued that it is an activity of the rational soul in accordance with virtue.

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 like I earlier said.

Aristotle divided virtue into two, and they are: Intellectual Virtue and Moral Virtue. Accordingly, "Intellectual virtues in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching while moral virtues come about by habit, whence its name "ethike" is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word "ethos" which means habit."⁶ 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 of becoming good. "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.”⁷

Aristotle described moral virtue as a state of character, condition, or disposition induced by man’s habit to have appropriate feelings. 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.⁸

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. That is why it is emphasized from the 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. 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. 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. It is then necessary to note that moral virtue should be guided by the intellectual virtue.”⁹

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 or deficiencies of them. It is not possible then, ever to be right with regard to them; one must be

always wrong.”¹⁰ 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.”¹¹ If an agent acts with no object or purpose, then his life would be pointless. 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. This end is what Aristotle calls the Eudaimonia or the condition of flourishing and living well. 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.

To be virtuous, the agent should strike the mean and avoids the two vices: excess and deficiency. 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.”¹² 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.”¹³ It is then like an archer trying hard to hit the bull’s 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. “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.”¹⁴ The agent, then, should also conscientiously examine the situations and circumstances in order to strike the mean.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Nigerian contemporary society is facing numerous challenges that ranges from political unrest, social inequality, corruption, and economic instability. These issues have led to a significant imbalance in the society and have had adverse effects on its development and progress. In order to address these challenges effectively, it is necessary to critically evaluate the society through the lens of Aristotle's concept of the Golden Mean.

Aristotle's Golden Mean suggests that virtues lie between two extremes – excess and deficiency. It promotes the idea of finding a balance in life and achieving

harmony in various aspects including ethics, politics, and social interactions. This concept can provide valuable insights into the current state of the Nigerian society and help identify areas where there is an imbalance or extreme, and find ways to rectify them.

However, this project work raises several key questions, which include the following:

How does the Nigerian society measure up against the concept of the Golden Mean? Are there evident extremes or deficiencies in various aspects of the society, such as governance, social justice, and economic policies?

What are the underlying causes of these extremes or deficiencies? Are they rooted in cultural, historical, or political factors? How do these factors contribute to the imbalance in the society?

What are the potential consequences of these imbalances on the Nigerian society? How do they affect the well-being, progress, and development of the nation?

How can the Nigerian society strive to achieve the Golden Mean and bring about a balance in various aspects? What measures can be taken at the individual, communal, and governmental levels to promote harmony, justice, and economic

stability.

What are the challenges that hinder the attainment of the Golden Mean in the Nigerian society? Are there any cultural or structural barriers that need to be addressed in order to achieve a balanced and harmonious society?

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research work includes, but not limited to the following:

- To assess how the Nigerian society measures up against the concept of the Golden Mean and identify areas of excess or deficiency in various aspects.
- To identify the underlying causes of these imbalances and understand how cultural, historical, and political factors contribute to the imbalance in the society.
- To analyze the potential consequences of these imbalances on the Nigerian society and their impact on the well-being, progress, and development of the nation.
- To propose measures that can be taken at the individual, communal, and governmental levels to promote harmony, justice, and economic stability in the Nigerian society.

- To identify the challenges that hinder the attainment of the Golden Mean in the Nigerian society and propose ways to address these barriers.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this project work includes, but not limited to the following:

- It provides a fresh perspective on the societal issues prevailing in Nigeria. It offers a framework for examination that allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities and challenges faced by the country. By conducting this critical evaluation, the study can shed light on societal imbalances, such as economic disparities, political corruption, religious extremism, and ethnic tensions, among others.
- It provides an opportunity for reflection and introspection within Nigerian society. It encourages individuals and institutions to assess their actions and behaviors in light of the Golden Mean and consider whether they are contributing to a balanced and harmonious society or perpetuating imbalances and tensions.
- It can serve as a guide for developing strategies and interventions that promote social justice, equality, and reconciliation. It can also foster

dialogue and understanding across different segments of society, leading to a more cohesive and inclusive Nigerian nation.

- The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute to the betterment of Nigerian society by critically evaluating its current state in the light of Aristotle's Golden Mean, and guiding efforts towards achieving a balanced and harmonious society.

1.5 SCOPE OF STUDY

The scope of the study on the project topic "The Nigerian Contemporary Society in the Light of Aristotle's Golden Mean: A Critical Evaluation" is to analyze and evaluate the Nigerian contemporary society using the philosophical concept of Aristotle's Golden Mean.

The study focuses on examining the various aspects of Nigerian society, including social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions. It assess whether the Nigerian society exhibits a balance and moderation in these dimensions, as advocated by Aristotle's Golden Mean.

In essence, the scope of the study will be limited to the contemporary Nigerian society and its relevance to Aristotle's Golden Mean. It will not delve into other philosophical theories or analyze societies from other parts of the world. The

focus will be on providing a critical evaluation of the Nigerian society in relation to the principles of the Golden Mean.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The Methodology that this project work adopts is analytic in nature; analytic in the sense that the concept of Aristotle's Golden Mean and how it relates to contemporary Nigeria shall be analyzed to see how tenable it could be.

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Nigerian Contemporary Society: This refers to the present-day society in Nigeria, encompassing its cultural, social, political, and economic aspects. It includes the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors exhibited by the Nigerian population.

Aristotle's Golden Mean: This is derived from Aristotle's ethical theory; it suggests that virtue lies between two vices. According to the golden mean, individuals should avoid extremes and find a moderate or balanced approach to behavior or action.

Critical Evaluation: Critical evaluation simply means a process of examining the strengths and weaknesses of a particular subject or topic, and forming an

informed judgment based on evidence and logical reasoning. In this context, it involves assessing the relevance and applicability of Aristotle's Golden Mean theory in understanding and analyzing the Nigerian contemporary society.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

Nicomachean Ethics by Aristotle is generally regarded as the most significant and the most important work of Aristotle. It consists of a series of short treatises possibly brought together by Aristotle's son named Nicomachus. 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. The end then of every human act is basically and fundamentally good. No man acts for the sake of achieving an evil end. 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, worth tending to for its own sake, or as a means conducive to some other good. 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. 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. 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. Aristotle stressed that “Eudaimonia” is the state of living well. As happiness, it is more like a 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 another end. He further

argued that it is an activity of the rational soul in accordance with virtue.¹⁵

Aristotle's Golden Mean: Vague and Inapplicable? by Yuetong Zhou states that the principle of the Golden Mean, according to which every virtue of character lies between two correlative faults of vices, as presented in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, is one of the most controversial concepts among philosophers. Some appreciate it to be a substantive theory on virtue, while others demonstrate their criticism. This essay will examine two of the strongest criticisms against the theory of the Golden Mean: the accusation of uselessness and the accusation of semantic fallacy. Based on textual analyses of Nicomachean Ethics, the author defends Aristotle's principle against these two criticisms, with the central argument that Aristotle's metaphysical understanding of "form" and "matter" can respond to both accusations.¹⁶

Aristotle, and the Golden Mean: A Diptych on Ethical Virtues Although Western and Chinese philosophy evolved from disparate doctrinal foundations, the department of ethics is a notable exception. "How to live the good life" is a subject treated by Confucius and Aristotle in a manner that exhibits many surprising points of coincidence, not least in the colossal influence of both these

philosophers on the social and political shape of their respective civilisations. This article is an attempt to correlate the relevant ideas which, as it were, build a bridge between East and West on the perennial issues that affect all mankind in the context of a civil society.¹⁷

Aristotle's Theory of the Golden Mean. inquired into the concept of the Golden Mean proposed by Aristotle. The book also discusses on the question on morality as indeed one of the major concerns in philosophy. It exposes us to the fact that Aristotle's golden mean will help us to live a balanced life as it will help us to avoid both extreme. Aristotle's theory of ethics centers around his belief that everyone has a distinctive end to achieve or a function to fulfill. Because of this, his theory is properly called as Teleological. 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.¹⁸

Golden Mean: Aristotle's Guide to Living Excellently by J. Maden explained that Aristotle's ethics was centered around the pursuit of eudaimonia, meaning happiness or flourishing. This means that Aristotle believed we could achieve eudaimonia by using reason excellently in everything we do. However, we

might think: it's all well and good to define happiness as 'excellent rational activity'. But what does excellence really mean? How can we act excellently? How can we make good choices and deploy our rationality to live happy lives? To answer these questions, Aristotle introduces his famous theory of the mean, which has popularly become known as his 'golden mean'. Aristotle notes how people often appeal to 'virtues' when it comes to guiding their behavior: courage, honor, justice, prudence, generosity, and so on. Aristotle is less interested in blindly following such traits, and more interested in establishing what makes them virtuous. His answer is that the virtues are actually just examples of excellent rational activity: those who exhibit courage, honor, justice, and the like, Aristotle argues, are really just using reason well. This connection between virtue and reason is made clear, Aristotle thinks, when we recognize that all 'virtues' lie in the middle way between two extreme states: excess and deficiency. For instance: Courage is the middle way between cowardice (deficiency) and recklessness (excess). Confidence is the middle way between self-deprecation (deficiency) and arrogance (excess). Generosity is the middle way between stinginess (deficiency) and profligacy (excess). Virtue lies not in the exact middle, but at the so-called 'golden mean', which

will sometimes be closer to one extreme than the other. As Aristotle puts it in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. at the right times, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper to virtue. Excellent action, then, is “concerned with choice, lying in a mean relative to us, this being determined by reason and in the way in which the man of practical wisdom would determine it.”¹⁹

Aristotle for Everybody: Difficult Thought Made Easy by A. J. Mortimer identified that the golden mean between excess and deficiency is something we can get better at over time. He said that the the golden mean is not, like the mathematical mean, an exact average of two precisely calculable extremes; it fluctuates with the collateral circumstances of each situation, and discovers itself only to mature and flexible reason. We also saw in the book that 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. 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 of becoming good.²⁰

In *Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Person* by R. D. Abella, the author states that 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. Aristotle described moral virtue as a “*hexis*” (a state of character, condition, or disposition) induced by man’s habit to have appropriate feelings. And that 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, and for this reason, Aristotle proposes “The Golden Mean” and this theory suggests that man should choose the mean and avoid the two vices: extreme and deficiency.²¹

In *The Philosophy of Aristotle* by B. Renford, the book showed how Aristotle asserted that there are certain acts which do not admit a mean. Some acts are considered to be vices inherently. That is 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 or deficiencies of them. It is not

possible then, ever to be right with regard to them; one must be always wrong. Those things should be considered in order to clearly and comprehensibly understand the theory of the golden mean of Aristotle. 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. If an agent acts with no object or purpose, then his life would be pointless. It was 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. This end is what Aristotle calls the Eudaimonia or the condition of flourishing and living well. 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. To be virtuous, the agent should strike the mean and avoids the two vices: excess and deficiency. However, striking the golden mean is not that easy.²²

The book titled *Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction* by J. Barnes helps us to acquire knowledge regarding the theory of the golden mean of Aristotle. By knowing his theory, we are 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 us 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. The book also reminds 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 able to deliberate well about what is good and expedient for himself conducive to a good life. 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. The book also told us that human beings as rational beings, should achieve excellence according to their nature - that the rational soul should conform to virtue. It 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.²³

ENDNOTES

1. A. J. Mortimer, *Aristotle For Everybody: Difficult Thought Made Easy* (New York: Simon and Schuster inc., 2016), p. 16
2. *Ibid*, p. 22
3. *Ibid.*, p. 29
4. B. Reinford, *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, (Cambridge: Mentor Bridge, 1963), p.20
5. *Ibid.*, p. 34
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CHAPTER TWO

LIFE AND WORKS OF ARISTOTLE

2.1 Life of Aristotle

Aristotle was an ancient Greek philosopher and scientist who is considered as one of the greatest thinkers in the history of Western philosophy. He was born in 384 BC in Stagira, a small town in northern Greece, and he died in 322 BC in Euboea, Greece.¹

His contributions span a wide range of subjects, including philosophy, science, logic, ethics, politics, and more. Aristotle was born in Stagira, a small coastal town in the northern part of Ancient Greece. “His father, Nicomachus, was a physician and court physician to King Amyntas III of Macedon. Aristotle's early education included studying under his father and undergoing a thorough education in medicine. However, his passions soon shifted towards philosophy. At the age of seventeen, Aristotle moved to Athens, the intellectual center of ancient Greece. There, he became a student of Plato, another esteemed philosopher. For the next twenty years, Aristotle studied and worked closely with Plato at his Academy.”² However, their philosophies later diverged, leading to Aristotle founding his own school.

After the death of Plato, Aristotle established his own school known as the Lyceum, named after the temple of Apollo Lyceus where it was located. The

Lyceum became a hub of intellectual activity, where Aristotle taught and conducted research on a wide range of topics. He emphasized the importance of observation, analysis, and classification in his teachings, which laid the foundation for modern scientific methods. Aristotle's philosophical works covered an extensive range of subjects. He developed his own philosophical system, known as Aristotelianism, which greatly influenced Western thought. Some of his notable works include "Metaphysics," "Nicomachean Ethics," and "Politics." Aristotle explored topics such as the nature of reality, the role of virtue in a good life, and the ideal organization of the state. Aristotle made significant contributions to various scientific fields, including biology, physics, zoology, and astronomy. His works on biology, particularly "Historia Animalium" and "De Anima," laid the foundations for the scientific study of living organisms. Aristotle also developed a system of logic that revolutionized the understanding of reasoning and became the basis for deductive reasoning for centuries to come. Aristotle's influence on subsequent philosophers and thinkers cannot be overstated. His works were preserved and studied during the Middle Ages, and they formed the basis for scholasticism, a school of thought that dominated medieval philosophy. His ideas also had a profound impact on Islamic and Jewish

philosophers during the medieval period.

Aristotle's vast body of work and groundbreaking ideas continue to shape various fields of study to this day. His philosophical ideas, scientific observations, and logical insights remain relevant and continue to be studied in universities and intellectual circles across the world. Aristotle was an extraordinary philosopher, scientist, and thinker. His contributions to philosophy, science, logic, and ethics have left an indelible mark on human knowledge. His teachings continue to inspire and challenge our understanding of the world around us, making him an enduring figure in intellectual history. After establishing the Lyceum, Aristotle had the prestigious opportunity to tutor the young prince Alexander, who would later become Alexander the Great. "Aristotle taught Alexander a wide range of subjects, including ethics, politics, and philosophy. This connection would have a significant impact on Greek history, as Alexander's conquests spread Greek culture and knowledge throughout the known world."³ "Aristotle married a woman named Pythias, who was also from Stagira. Together they had a daughter named Pythias. Unfortunately, not much is known about his family life, as Aristotle didn't discuss them in his writings."⁴

After the death of Alexander the Great, Athens faced political turmoil, and as a

philosopher with ties to the Macedonian court, Aristotle fell out of favor. “In 323 BC, he left Athens to evade persecution, spending the next few years in exile. He eventually returned to Athens around 335 BC and resumed his teaching at the Lyceum.”⁵ Aristotle's written works were extensive, covering a vast range of topics. However, only a fraction of his works survived over the centuries. “It is estimated that less than a third of his original works are still extant today. Some of his works were lost due to natural causes, while others were intentionally destroyed by later scholars who disagreed with his ideas. Aristotle's interest in the natural world extended beyond theory and observation.”⁶ He embarked on a series of scientific expeditions to gather data and study various plants, animals, and ecosystems. These firsthand observations and collections greatly influenced his scientific works, allowing him to make important scientific classifications and discoveries.

During the Middle Ages, Aristotle's works were rediscovered and became a vital part of medieval intellectual thought. His ideas were incorporated into various fields such as theology, science, and philosophy. This period is referred to as the Aristotelian Revival, and scholars like Thomas Aquinas integrated Aristotle's teachings into their theological and philosophical works. While Aristotle made

groundbreaking contributions to numerous fields, it is also important to note that some of his views and theories have been criticized and debated over time. For example, his beliefs in natural slavery, which suggested that some individuals were born inherently inferior and fit for servitude, have sparked criticism and condemnation. It should be noted that Aristotle's life and works left an enduring impact not only on his contemporaries but also on generations of scholars, philosophers, and scientists who followed. His ideas continue to be studied, analyzed, and debated, ensuring his legacy as one of the most influential thinkers in human history.

“Aristotle's early life was marked by tragedy, as his parents died when he was young. He was taken in by a guardian, Proxenus of Atarneus, who provided him with a good education. At the age of 17, Aristotle went to Athens to study at Plato's Academy, where he remained for 20 years as a student and a teacher.”⁷

“After Plato's death, Aristotle left Athens and spent several years traveling and studying in various places, including Assos and the island of Lesbos. In 343 BC, he was invited by King Philip II of Macedon to tutor his son, Alexander the Great, who would later become one of the most successful military leaders in history.”⁸

Aristotle returned to Athens in 335 BC and established his own school, the

Lyceum, where he taught and conducted research for the next 12 years. “The Lyceum was a center for learning and scholarship, and it is said that Aristotle's followers, known as the Peripatetics, would walk and discuss philosophy while strolling the grounds, hence the name "Peripatetic" (meaning "walking around").”⁹

2.2 WORKS OF ARISTOTLE

Aristotle's contributions to various fields, including philosophy, science, ethics, politics, and metaphysics, have had a profound and lasting impact on Western thought. He was a student of Plato and later became the tutor of Alexander the Great. Aristotle's works cover a wide range of subjects, including logic, metaphysics, ethics, politics, biology, and physics. His writings are extensive and include treatises, dialogues, and letters. Some of his most famous works include "Nicomachean Ethics," "Politics," "Metaphysics," "Poetics," "On the Soul," and "Physics." In the field of philosophy, Aristotle is known for his contributions to logic and metaphysics. He developed a system of deductive reasoning known as syllogism, which became the foundation of Western logic. In metaphysics, he proposed the idea of substance and form, and he also discussed the concept of potentiality and actuality.

Aristotle's ethical and political works have also had a significant impact on Western thought. In "Nicomachean Ethics," he discusses the nature of happiness, virtue, and the good life. In "Politics," he examines the nature of the state and the best form of government. In the field of science, Aristotle also made significant contributions to biology, physics, and astronomy. His work on biology, in particular, was groundbreaking for its time, and he classified and studied a wide range of animals and plants. In physics, he proposed a theory of motion and the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water). In essence, Aristotle's influence on Western thought has been profound and enduring. His works were widely studied in the ancient world and the Middle Ages, and they continue to be studied and debated by philosophers and scholars today. His ideas have had a lasting impact on fields as diverse as ethics, politics, science, and metaphysics. In short, Aristotle was a prolific and influential philosopher and scientist whose works continue to be studied and admired for their depth and insight. His contributions to various fields have had a lasting impact on Western thought and continue to be relevant to this day.

More so, Aristotle's method of inquiry was based on empirical observation and analysis. He believed that "knowledge could be gained through careful

observation of the natural world and that scientific understanding required both empirical evidence and logical reasoning.”¹⁰ It should be noted that Aristotle's influence on subsequent thinkers was immense. His works were preserved and studied by Islamic scholars in the Middle Ages and were later reintroduced to Western Europe during the Renaissance. His ideas had a profound impact on the development of Western philosophy, science, and theology. In addition to his philosophical and scientific works, Aristotle also made significant contributions to literary theory and aesthetics. His "Poetics" is one of the most important and influential works on the theory of drama and poetry.

Aristotle's legacy continues to be felt in modern times, with his ideas and methods still being studied and debated by scholars across various disciplines. His emphasis on empirical observation, logical reasoning, and the pursuit of knowledge has had a lasting impact on the development of Western thought. Aristotle's influence can be seen in fields as diverse as ethics, political theory, biology, physics, and literary criticism.

Aristotle's philosophical works cover a wide range of topics, including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, and aesthetics. In his work on metaphysics, Aristotle explored the nature of reality and the concept of being. He

proposed the idea of substance and form, arguing that everything that exists is a combination of matter and form. He also discussed the concept of potentiality and actuality, which became fundamental to his understanding of change and causation.

In epistemology, Aristotle emphasized the importance of sense perception and empirical observation as the foundation of knowledge. He developed a theory of knowledge based on the idea that humans acquire knowledge through the senses and through rational thought. This emphasis on empirical observation and logical reasoning became a hallmark of his philosophical method. Aristotle's ethical works, particularly "Nicomachean Ethics," are some of his most influential contributions to the field of ethics. In this work, he examined the nature of happiness, virtue, and the good life. He argued that the highest human good is eudaimonia, often translated as "happiness" or "flourishing," and he proposed that the cultivation of virtue is essential to achieving this state.

In "Politics," Aristotle explored the nature of the state and the best form of government. He identified different types of government, including monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, and he discussed their strengths and weaknesses. He also proposed the idea of the "polis" (city-state) as the ideal political community

and emphasized the importance of the common good and the cultivation of virtuous citizens. In the realm of politics, Aristotle's analysis of different forms of government and his exploration of the nature of the state have been highly influential. His ideas about the role of the citizen, the importance of the common good, and the ideal political community continue to be relevant to contemporary political theory and practice. Aristotle's contributions to the field of biology were also groundbreaking for his time. His work on the classification and study of animals and plants laid the groundwork for the development of the biological sciences. His observations and classifications, as well as his emphasis on empirical observation, had a significant impact on the study of the natural world for centuries to come. Aristotle's influence on Western thought has been profound and enduring. His works have been studied and debated by scholars across various disciplines, and his ideas continue to be relevant to contemporary discussions in philosophy, science, ethics, politics, and aesthetics.

In metaphysics, Aristotle's exploration of the nature of being and the concept of substance has had a lasting impact on Western philosophy. He proposed the idea of hylomorphism, which posits that all substances are composed of both matter and form. According to Aristotle, matter is the potentiality of a thing, while form

is its actuality. This distinction between potentiality and actuality became central to his understanding of change and causation. Aristotle's work in ethics also continues to be influential. His emphasis on the cultivation of virtue as a means to achieve eudaimonia, or human flourishing, has had a lasting impact on ethical theory. The concept of virtue ethics, which focuses on the development of moral character and the pursuit of the good life, can be traced back to Aristotle's ethical writings.

More so, Aristotle's "Poetics" has had a profound influence on the theory and practice of literature and drama. His ideas about the elements of storytelling, the importance of plot and character development, and the emotional impact of art have been foundational to the study of literature and theater for centuries. His work continues to be studied and debated by scholars and practitioners in the fields of literary criticism and dramatic arts. Furthermore, Aristotle's impact on the development of Western thought has been vast and multifaceted. His contributions to logic, metaphysics, ethics, politics, science, and aesthetics have left an indelible mark on the history of philosophy and intellectual inquiry. His emphasis on empirical observation, logical reasoning, and the pursuit of knowledge has had a lasting impact on the development of Western thought and

continues to be relevant to contemporary discussions in a wide range of disciplines. Aristotle's influence can be seen in the works of subsequent philosophers, scientists, and scholars who have built upon his ideas and engaged with his legacy. His ideas have been both celebrated and critiqued, and they continue to inspire new avenues of research and inquiry in fields as diverse as ethics, political theory, biology, physics, literary criticism, and drama.

In essence, Aristotle's life and works have left an indelible mark on the history of Western thought. His contributions to logic, metaphysics, ethics, politics, and science continue to be studied and admired for their depth, insight, and enduring relevance. Aristotle's influence can be seen in the development of Western thought and continues to be relevant to contemporary intellectual discourse. In addition to his philosophical and scientific contributions, Aristotle's impact extended to the field of literary criticism and aesthetics. His work "Poetics" is one of the most influential and enduring treatises on the theory of drama and poetry. In this work, Aristotle examined the elements of tragedy and discussed the principles of dramatic composition. He analyzed the structure of tragedies, the role of plot, character, and spectacle, and the concept of catharsis, which he defined as the purging of emotions through art.

“Aristotle's life and works have had a profound and enduring impact on the history of Western thought. His contributions to philosophy, science, ethics, politics, and aesthetics continue to be studied and admired for their depth, insight, and enduring relevance.”¹¹ Aristotle's influence can be seen in the development of Western thought and continues to shape contemporary intellectual discourse.

2.3 CONTRIBUTIONS AND INFLUENCES OF ARISTOTLE

Aristotle, a Greek philosopher and polymath, made significant contributions to various fields. In metaphysics, he developed the concept of substance and the principle of actuality and potentiality. His "Nicomachean Ethics" delves into virtue ethics, exploring moral character and the pursuit of eudaimonia. In biology, Aristotle's "Historia Animalium" laid the groundwork for observational zoology, classifying species based on characteristics. His work on logic, found in "Organon," shaped Western thought and formalized deductive reasoning. Aristotle's political philosophy in "Politics" introduced ideas on governance and the ideal state. His influence extends to rhetoric, where he outlined persuasive techniques in "Rhetoric." His ideas permeate philosophy, science, ethics, and politics, profoundly impacting Western intellectual traditions. In addition to his metaphysical, ethical, and biological contributions, Aristotle significantly

influenced the field of aesthetics. In his work "Poetics," he explored the nature of tragedy, defining key elements such as plot, character, and spectacle. This has had a lasting impact on literary theory and drama.

Aristotle's systematic approach to knowledge, emphasizing empirical observation and classification, laid the groundwork for the scientific method. Although some of his scientific ideas have been revised, his methodology greatly influenced the development of biology and natural sciences. His classification system, particularly in "Categories" and "On Interpretation," became a basis for later developments in taxonomy and linguistics. Aristotle's teachings were pivotal in shaping medieval scholasticism, and his works were later rediscovered during the Renaissance, sparking renewed interest in classical philosophy. His enduring legacy extends across disciplines, providing a foundation for Western thought and serving as a cornerstone for subsequent philosophical, scientific, and artistic endeavors.

More so, Aristotle's impact on education is noteworthy. His work "Politics" outlines his ideas on the role of education in creating virtuous citizens. He believed in an education system that cultivates both intellectual and moral virtues, emphasizing the development of character alongside knowledge.

Aristotle's influence on rhetoric extended beyond "Rhetoric" to his teachings at the Lyceum. His emphasis on effective communication and persuasion has left an indelible mark on the study of rhetoric, shaping the art of argumentation and public speaking. In the realm of psychology, Aristotle's exploration of the soul, found in "De Anima," laid the groundwork for early psychological inquiries. He classified different types of souls and examined their functions, contributing to the understanding of consciousness and cognitive processes. Moreover, Aristotle's method of inquiry, characterized by careful observation and classification, influenced thinkers like Thomas Aquinas and later philosophers of the Enlightenment. While some of his views evolved over time, Aristotle's comprehensive body of work continues to shape diverse intellectual disciplines.

Aristotle's enduring influence on philosophy is also evident in his contributions to epistemology—the study of knowledge. In his work "Posterior Analytics," he explored the nature of knowledge and developed foundational concepts such as deductive reasoning and the syllogism. This laid the groundwork for later developments in logic and epistemology. "His examination of causality in "Metaphysics" introduced the four causes—material, formal, efficient, and final—which became crucial in understanding the principles behind events and

entities.”¹² This causal framework played a key role in the development of natural philosophy and later scientific inquiry. Aristotle's impact on political thought extended beyond "Politics." His idea of the "golden mean" in ethics, emphasizing moderation and balance, influenced ethical theories and discussions on virtue throughout history.

Furthermore, Aristotle's works were central to medieval scholasticism, bridging classical thought with Christian theology. His influence continued during the Renaissance, sparking a revival of interest in Greek philosophy. In essence, Aristotle's profound contributions to metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, and various sciences have left an indelible mark on the intellectual landscape, shaping the trajectory of Western philosophy and knowledge. Aristotle's systematic approach to knowledge extended to his comprehensive examination of the natural world. In works like "Physics" and "Meteorology," he explored topics ranging from motion and causation to the study of weather, laying the foundation for early physics and meteorological inquiries.

His contributions to ethics, beyond the "Nicomachean Ethics," also include the exploration of friendship and the role of emotions in moral decision-making. Aristotle's nuanced understanding of human nature and social relationships has

had a lasting impact on ethical philosophy. Aristotle's influence in the field of literary criticism goes beyond "Poetics." His ideas on unity, plot structure, and catharsis in tragedy shaped discussions on literature and drama for centuries, impacting literary theorists and playwrights alike. Furthermore, Aristotle's concept of the "unmoved mover" in metaphysics contributed to discussions on cosmology and theology. His teleological view of the universe, suggesting a purposeful order, influenced philosophical and theological discussions about the nature of existence.

In essence, Aristotle's wide-ranging contributions span physics, meteorology, ethics, literary criticism, cosmology, and more, showcasing his profound impact on diverse areas of knowledge and thought.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER THREE

ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF THE GOLDEN MEAN

3.1 ARISTOTLE ON END

Aristotle's views on “end” or telos are fundamental to his ethical and metaphysical philosophy. “Telos refers to the ultimate purpose or goal of an entity.”¹ In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, he argues that “the highest human good, or telos, is eudaimonia – often translated as "flourishing" or "living well." Eudaimonia is achieved through virtuous actions and the development of moral character.”² Aristotle distinguishes between different types of ends: extrinsic ends, which are pursued for the sake of something else, and intrinsic ends, which are pursued for their own sake. He asserts that eudaimonia is an intrinsic end, valuable in itself and not as a means to another end. This notion of intrinsic value aligns with Aristotle's broader teleological worldview, where everything in nature has a purpose or function. The concept of virtue is crucial in Aristotle's ethics. He identifies moral virtues as means between extremes – the famous doctrine of the “golden mean.” Virtuous actions are those that strike a balance between deficiency and excess. For example, courage is a virtue that lies between recklessness and cowardice.

Aristotle's teleology extends to his metaphysical philosophy in the idea of final causes. He contends that everything in nature has a purpose or goal, and understanding. These final cause is crucial for understanding the nature of things.

This perspective contrasts with the mechanistic worldview of some contemporary philosophers.

It should be noted that Aristotle's exploration of “end” is woven into the fabric of his ethical and metaphysical philosophy. Telos, particularly in the pursuit of eudaimonia and the cultivation of virtue, shapes Aristotle's understanding of the good life and the nature of existence. Aristotle's concept of telos extends beyond ethics and metaphysics to his philosophy of biology. In his work “On the Parts of Animals,” Aristotle explores the idea that every organ in an organism has a specific function contributing to the overall well-being of the organism. He argues that the form and structure of living beings are intricately connected to their telos or purpose.

For Aristotle, understanding the telos of living organisms involves recognizing the inherent order and design in nature. He observes that different parts of an organism work together harmoniously to fulfill a specific function, illustrating a teleological perspective on biology. In addition to biological entities, Aristotle applies the concept of telos to the broader cosmos in his work “Metaphysics.” He suggests that “the universe itself has a purpose or final cause, and everything within it is interconnected and oriented toward fulfilling its inherent goals.”³

Aristotle's teleological approach contrasts with later mechanistic views, notably those of thinkers like Descartes and Newton. While the scientific revolution shifted towards explaining phenomena in terms of efficient causes and mathematical laws, Aristotle's teleology persisted in various forms, influencing thinkers in fields beyond philosophy, such as biology and theology. In essence, Aristotle's exploration of telos is a multifaceted aspect of his philosophy, encompassing ethics, metaphysics, and biology. His emphasis on purpose and final causes has left a lasting impact on how we understand the natural world and our place within it.

Aristotle's teleological perspective extends into his political philosophy, particularly in his work "Politics." In this Politics, Aristotle explores the idea of the "polis" or city-state as a natural and purposeful human community. According to Aristotle, "the telos of the polis is to facilitate the good life for its citizens. He argues that the best government is one that aims at the common good and cultivates virtues in its citizens."⁴ Aristotle classifies different forms of government based on whether they serve the common good or the interests of rulers. The ideal form, according to him, is a mixed government that combines elements of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. In such a government, power

is distributed, and citizens are engaged in both ruling and being ruled.

The teleological approach in Aristotle's political philosophy emphasizes the ethical development of individuals within the community. He believes that the polis provides the necessary conditions for individuals to achieve eudaimonia, the ultimate human good. Civic engagement, participation in public life, and the pursuit of virtue are integral to this telos. Furthermore, Aristotle's influence extends to rhetoric, where he discusses the purpose of persuasive speech in his work "Rhetoric." He argues that the ultimate aim of rhetoric is to lead an audience toward the truth and the good. Thus, effective communication aligns with the teleological notion of guiding individuals toward their inherent purpose or telos.

From the above, we can see that Aristotle's teleological perspective permeates his political philosophy, shaping his views on the purpose of the polis and the role of citizens within it. The integration of ethics into political thought reflects his broader commitment to understanding the telos or final causes in various aspects of human life.

3.1.1 Good

Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, delved deeply into the concept of “good” in his

ethical works, notably “Nicomachean Ethics.” He posited that human actions aim at achieving a final end, which he called "eudaimonia" or flourishing. Aristotle argued that the highest good is virtuous activity in accordance with reason, emphasizing moral virtues as means to attain this end. He categorized virtues into moral and intellectual, asserting that virtue lies in moderation, avoiding extremes. Aristotle's ethical framework has influenced Western philosophy, guiding discussions on ethics, virtue, and the pursuit of the good life. Aristotle's ethical philosophy revolves around the idea that the ultimate aim of human life is to achieve eudaimonia, often translated as “flourishing” or “well-being.” He argued that eudaimonia is not merely pleasure or wealth but a state of living in accordance with one's true nature and potential. To attain this, Aristotle introduced the concept of virtues, which he classified as moral virtues and intellectual virtues. Moral virtues, according to Aristotle, are developed through habit and practice. They are means between extremes, referred to as the doctrine of the “Golden Mean.” For instance, courage is the mean between recklessness and cowardice. Achieving virtue requires finding this balance.

Intellectual virtues, on the other hand, involve the rational aspect of human nature. Wisdom, for Aristotle, is the highest intellectual virtue, and it guides moral virtues

by discerning the mean in various situations. Aristotle also emphasized the importance of community and social relationships in the ethical life. He believed that individuals develop virtues within a social context, and the best society is one that encourages the development of virtuous citizens.

In summary, Aristotle's concept of the good revolves around eudaimonia, achieved through the cultivation of virtues – both moral and intellectual. The idea of the Golden Mean underscores the importance of moderation, and Aristotle's ethical framework has had a profound impact on ethical philosophy throughout history. Aristotle's exploration of the concept of "good" extends beyond his ethical philosophy into his broader philosophical works. In his metaphysical and epistemological writings, he delves into the nature of reality, causation, and knowledge, providing additional perspectives on the pursuit of the good.

In his "Metaphysics," Aristotle investigates the nature of existence and posits that the highest good is found in the contemplation of the divine or the study of philosophy. He argues that everything in the world has a purpose, and the ultimate purpose of human life is intellectual and contemplative activity. Aristotle's "Politics" further expands on the ethical life by exploring the structure and functioning of societies. He contends that "the state exists to facilitate the good

life for its citizens, promoting virtuous behavior and fostering conditions conducive to eudaimonia.”⁵

Moreover, Aristotle's views on ethics were embedded in his broader philosophical framework, including his teleological worldview. He believed that everything has a purpose or end (telos) and that the good is intimately tied to fulfilling this purpose. While Aristotle's works cover a wide range of topics, his discussions on the good consistently emphasize the importance of virtue, reason, and a harmonious social order. His profound impact on philosophy endures, influencing thinkers across centuries and shaping discussions on ethics, metaphysics, and political philosophy.

3.1.2 Function of man

Aristotle, in his “Nicomachean Ethics,” explores the concept of eudaimonia, often translated as “flourishing” or “well-being,” as the ultimate goal and function of human life. He argues that the unique function of humans is rational activity, particularly the exercise of virtues. Virtues, according to Aristotle, are habits developed through rational choices that lead to a balanced and virtuous life. For Aristotle, achieving eudaimonia involves the pursuit of excellence in various

areas of life, such as moral virtues (courage, justice, temperance) and intellectual virtues (wisdom, understanding). He emphasizes the importance of a harmonious and virtuous character, as well as engaging in activities that align with reason. Furthermore, Aristotle considers the concept of the “golden mean,” advocating for moderation between extremes in behavior. He posits that virtuous actions are found between deficiency and excess, highlighting the importance of balance.

In summary, Aristotle's view on the function of man revolves around the pursuit of eudaimonia through rational activity and the cultivation of virtues, emphasizing balance and moderation in one's actions and character. Aristotle's exploration of the function of man extends to his teleological perspective, emphasizing purpose and final causes. He argues that everything has a telos, or end goal, and the telos of humans is eudaimonia. Unlike other living beings whose functions are determined by nature, humans have the unique capacity for rationality, enabling them to pursue a more complex and morally conscious existence.

Aristotle divides the soul into rational and irrational parts, with reason being the distinctive characteristic of humanity. The rational soul allows humans to contemplate and make choices based on moral deliberation. This capacity for rationality, combined with the pursuit of virtue, contributes to the fulfillment of

one's telos and the attainment of eudaimonia. Aristotle also discusses the social aspect of human life, highlighting the significance of community and friendship. He argues that “virtuous friendships contribute to a meaningful life, as they provide mutual support and contribute to moral development.”⁶

It should be noted that Aristotle's perspective on the function of man involves a teleological understanding, emphasizing the pursuit of eudaimonia through rational activity, virtue cultivation, and the importance of social relationships in achieving a fulfilled and purposeful life. Aristotle's ethical philosophy delves into the distinction between intellectual and moral virtues. Intellectual virtues, like wisdom and understanding, involve rational thought and contemplation. On the other hand, moral virtues, such as courage and justice, pertain to character and ethical behavior in social interactions. He argues that moral virtues are acquired through practice and habituation. Virtuous actions become ingrained habits through repetition, leading to the development of a virtuous character. Aristotle places great emphasis on education and moral upbringing in fostering these virtues. A crucial aspect of Aristotle's philosophy is the connection between ethics and politics. In his work “Politics,” he asserts that the ideal state should promote the well-being and virtuous life of its citizens. A just political system, according to

Aristotle, is one that encourages individuals to develop their full potential and lead to virtuous lives. It should be noted that Aristotle's nuanced approach to ethics, integrating reason, virtue, and social dynamics, has had a profound and lasting impact on Western philosophical thought, influencing ethical theories for centuries. His exploration of the function of man remains a cornerstone in the study of ethics and human flourishing.

3.1.3 Chief Good

Aristotle, a prominent ancient Greek philosopher, posited that the chief good, or “eudaimonia,” is the ultimate goal of human life. Eudaimonia is often translated as "flourishing" or “living well.” Aristotle argued that achieving this state involves virtuous activity and a harmonious balance in life. Central to his ethical framework is the concept of virtue, emphasizing the importance of cultivating moral excellence in various aspects of life. Virtues, such as courage and justice, guide individuals toward eudaimonia by fostering a well-ordered and purposeful existence. Aristotle's ethical philosophy contrasts with hedonism and utilitarianism, emphasizing the intrinsic value of virtuous actions over external pleasures or consequences. Ultimately, Aristotle's exploration of the chief good encourages individuals to pursue a life of virtue and contemplation for a fulfilled

and meaningful existence.

More so, Aristotle's ethical theory, found in his seminal work "Nicomachean Ethics," further delves into the idea of eudaimonia by addressing the nature of virtues and the concept of the mean. Virtues, according to Aristotle, are habits of character that enable individuals to act in ways that promote well-being and excellence. These virtues are categorized into moral and intellectual virtues. Moral virtues, such as courage and generosity, involve finding the mean between extremes – avoiding deficiency and excess. Aristotle argues that virtue lies in striking a balance, or “the golden mean,” in various situations. For example, courage is the mean between recklessness and cowardice. This emphasis on moderation and balance is a key aspect of Aristotle's ethics. Intellectual virtues, on the other hand, pertain to rational thinking and contemplation. Aristotle believed that the pursuit of knowledge and understanding contributes significantly to eudaimonia. The highest intellectual virtue is wisdom, which involves the ability to contemplate the ultimate truths and principles governing the universe. Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia is not merely individualistic; it also has a social dimension. He asserts that virtuous activity should extend beyond personal well-being and contribute to the common good of the community. In this sense, ethical

virtues are interconnected with social and political virtues.

Furthermore, Aristotle discussed the role of friendship in achieving eudaimonia. He argued that genuine friendships, based on mutual respect and shared values, contribute to a flourishing life. Friendships, along with other social bonds, provide a context for practicing virtues and living a virtuous life. This means that Aristotle's exploration of the chief good involves the cultivation of virtues, finding the mean between extremes, the pursuit of knowledge and contemplation, and the importance of social relationships in contributing to a life of eudaimonia. His ethical framework remains influential and continues to be studied and debated in philosophical discussions.

3.2 Aristotle on Moral Value

Aristotle, a prominent ancient Greek philosopher, delved into moral philosophy in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. He asserted that the highest human good is eudaimonia, often translated as “flourishing” or “happiness.” Aristotle contended that moral virtue is essential for achieving eudaimonia and identified it as a mean between extremes, avoiding excess and deficiency. For Aristotle, moral virtue is cultivated through habituation and education. He introduced the concept of the “golden

mean,” emphasizing balance in ethical decision-making. Virtues like courage, temperance, and justice represent this harmonious midpoint. Aristotle argued that “virtuous actions stem from a virtuous character, developed over time.”⁷

Central to Aristotle's ethics is the idea of practical wisdom (phronesis), which involves discerning the right course of action in specific situations. He believed that ethical principles cannot be rigidly defined but must adapt to context. Aristotle explored the role of friendship in ethical living, considering it crucial for well-being. Critics argue that Aristotle's virtue ethics may lack concrete guidance in complex moral dilemmas, and its reliance on a virtuous character might be subjective. However, his emphasis on character development and the pursuit of eudaimonia has left an enduring impact on ethical philosophy. It should be noted that Aristotle's virtue ethics is rooted in his teleological worldview, viewing the purpose or end (telos) of human life as eudaimonia. He identified two types of virtues: intellectual virtues (such as wisdom and knowledge) and moral virtues (like courage and generosity). Intellectual virtues are developed through education, while moral virtues arise from habitual practice. Aristotle also distinguished between voluntary and involuntary actions, claiming that only voluntary actions are morally significant. He introduced the concept of “hexis,” a stable disposition,

to explain how virtues become ingrained traits. Virtuous actions, according to Aristotle, result from a person's character and are not solely determined by rules or consequences.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explored specific virtues, offering insights into their characteristics and challenges. For example, courage lies between recklessness and cowardice, while generosity is a mean between prodigality and stinginess. This emphasis on finding a balanced midpoint influenced later ethical theories. Aristotle also discussed justice, dividing it into distributive justice (fair distribution of resources) and corrective justice (rectifying wrongs through punishment). His discussions on equity, friendship, and the role of emotions in moral decision-making further enriched his ethical framework. While Aristotle's virtue ethics has endured, it has faced criticism for its cultural relativism and lack of clear guidelines for moral decision-making. Nonetheless, his emphasis on character development and the pursuit of human flourishing continues to shape discussions in moral philosophy. Furthermore, "Aristotle's ethics extends into his analysis of the human soul, exploring its three components: the rational part (associated with intellect), the appetitive part (linked to desires and emotions), and the vegetative part (related to basic life functions). He argued that the rational

part should govern the other two, guiding individuals towards virtuous actions.”⁸

Aristotle also addressed the concept of voluntary and involuntary actions, introducing the idea of “akrasia” (weakness of will). “Akrasia occurs when individuals act against their better judgment due to a temporary passion or desire.”⁹ Aristotle acknowledged the complexity of moral decision-making, recognizing that external factors, emotions, and circumstances play roles in shaping human behavior. His ethics influenced later philosophers, including Thomas Aquinas, who integrated Aristotle's ideas into Christian theology. However, during the medieval period, Aristotle's works were lost in the West and only rediscovered later, sparking a revival of interest in his ethical philosophy during the Renaissance. However, in recent times, virtue ethics has experienced a resurgence, with scholars exploring its applications in fields such as business ethics and environmental ethics. While criticisms persist, particularly regarding its practical guidance in specific situations, Aristotle's focus on character development and the pursuit of a meaningful life continues to be a valuable contribution to the broader discourse on morality.

3.2.1 Virtue and Habit

Aristotle's view on virtue and habit is foundational to his ethical theory. Virtue, for Aristotle, is the mean between extremes, a balanced disposition. Habits play a crucial role in cultivating virtue. Through repeated actions, habits shape character, leading to moral excellence. Aristotle distinguishes intellectual virtues (acquired through education) and moral virtues (developed through practice). Virtuous actions result from rational choice, aligning with the golden mean. Aristotle emphasizes that virtues are cultivated in community, highlighting the social dimension of ethics. Habituation, he argues, molds character, enabling individuals to navigate moral choices effortlessly. Aristotle's virtue ethics, outlined in his seminal work "Nicomachean Ethics," revolves around the concept of eudaimonia, often translated as "flourishing" or "well-being." Virtue, according to Aristotle, is essential for achieving eudaimonia. He identifies two types of virtues: intellectual virtues and moral virtues. Intellectual virtues are acquired through education and rational deliberation. They involve the development of one's intellect and include virtues like wisdom, understanding, and practical reasoning. Moral virtues, on the other hand, result from habitual actions guided by the mean between extremes. Aristotle posits that each virtue is the balance between deficiency and excess. For example, courage is the mean between recklessness and cowardice.

Habituation is crucial in Aristotle's ethics. He asserts that virtues are not innate but are developed through repeated actions. By practicing virtuous behaviors, individuals form habits that shape their character. The process of habituation is central to Aristotle's idea that ethical excellence is not a single act but a way of life. Aristotle emphasizes the importance of community in the cultivation of virtues. Social interactions and shared experiences contribute to the development of moral character. Virtuous actions are, therefore, seen as integral to a harmonious and flourishing society. In essence, Aristotle's perspective on virtue and habit underscores the significance of balanced character development through intellectual and moral virtues, with habituation playing a crucial role in shaping ethical conduct within a social context. Aristotle's virtue ethics is deeply intertwined with his teleological worldview, where everything has a purpose or end (telos). The telos of human life, according to Aristotle, is "eudaimonia – a state of well-being achieved through virtuous living."¹⁰ Virtues, then, are qualities that contribute to the fulfillment of this ultimate human goal.

It should be noted that Aristotle's ethics recognizes the interconnectedness of individual and social well-being. Ethical virtues are not solitary achievements but contribute to the common good. A just and virtuous society is one where

individuals collectively strive for eudaimonia. In essence, Aristotle's virtue ethics offers a holistic approach to morality, emphasizing character development, practical wisdom, and the pursuit of eudaimonia within the context of a virtuous community.

3.2.2 Inner Side of Moral virtue

Aristotle, in his “Nicomachean Ethics,” delves into the inner workings of moral virtues, emphasizing the importance of cultivating virtuous character as a means to achieve eudaimonia, or human flourishing. Virtues, for Aristotle, are the golden mean between excess and deficiency. Inner moral virtues, such as courage and temperance, involve a balance in emotions, actions, and desires. Courage, for instance, lies between recklessness and cowardice, while temperance finds equilibrium amid indulgence and insensibility. Aristotle's nuanced exploration of the inner dimensions of virtues reflects his profound understanding of human character and the pursuit of a virtuous life. Aristotle categorizes virtues into moral and intellectual virtues. Moral virtues, pertaining to character, are developed through habitual actions and aim at achieving moral excellence. The inner side of moral virtues involves a person's disposition and emotional responses. Aristotle argues that virtues are acquired by practicing virtuous acts, as individuals shape

their character through repetitive virtuous behavior. For example, in discussing courage, Aristotle examines the inner aspect, suggesting that true courage is not just a matter of facing danger but involves understanding when, how, and for what reasons one should be courageous. It's an internal state of character intertwined with practical wisdom (phronesis).

Furthermore, Aristotle highlights the importance of feelings and desires in moral virtue. Virtuous actions should stem from a genuine desire for what is truly good, rather than being motivated by external rewards or societal pressures. He emphasizes the role of reason in moderating desires, promoting self-control, and preventing excess or deficiency.

Aristotle's emphasis on inner virtues as habitual dispositions reflects his belief that moral character is not merely theoretical but is built through lived experiences and ethical choices, ultimately contributing to a well-lived and virtuous life. Aristotle's exploration of inner moral virtues extends to virtues like generosity, truthfulness, and friendliness. Generosity, he argues, "involves a balance between prodigality and stinginess. It is not just about material giving but also encompasses a generous spirit and attitude. Truthfulness, another moral virtue, lies between boastfulness and self-deprecation. It requires sincerity and

honesty, with a balanced assessment of one's own merits.”¹¹ Moreso, friendliness, for Aristotle, is a key virtue concerning social interactions. It is a mean between obsequiousness and quarrelsomeness. Aristotle contends that virtuous friendships contribute significantly to a flourishing life, as they involve shared values and mutual support. The inner side of these virtues involves developing a virtuous character through consistent virtuous actions. Aristotle's concept of habituation is crucial; he believes that practicing virtues repeatedly molds one's character, making virtuous actions second nature.

In essence, Aristotle underscores the importance of practical wisdom (phronesis) in the cultivation of inner virtues. It involves the ability to discern the morally right course of action in specific situations. Virtues, then, are not rigid rules but flexible principles that require thoughtful application. Aristotle's exploration of inner moral virtues encompasses a comprehensive understanding of character development, emotional balance, and the role of reason in guiding virtuous actions within the complexities of human life.

3.2.3 Definition of Virtue

“Virtue is a moral quality or characteristic considered to be good and desirable in

an individual's behavior. Rooted in ethics, virtues encompass traits such as honesty, integrity, courage, and kindness.”¹² Philosophers like Aristotle emphasized virtues as the key to achieving eudaimonia, or human flourishing, arguing that cultivating virtuous habits leads to a virtuous life. Virtue ethics, as a philosophical approach, focuses on the development of one's character to guide ethical decision-making. In a broader societal context, virtues contribute to the establishment of a moral foundation that fosters harmony and well-being. Understanding and embodying virtue involves a continual process of self-reflection and conscious effort to align one's actions with virtuous principles. Also, Virtue, often considered the essence of moral excellence, varies across cultures and philosophical traditions. In the realm of classical philosophy, Plato explored virtues in dialogues like “The Republic,” proposing cardinal virtues such as wisdom, courage, justice, and temperance. Meanwhile, Confucianism emphasizes virtues like benevolence, filial piety, and righteousness.

It should be noted that virtues are not mere abstract concepts but practical guides for ethical living. They provide a framework for individuals to navigate complex moral dilemmas and make decisions that contribute positively to personal and communal well-being. Virtuous behavior extends beyond adherence to rules,

emphasizing the development of character and the pursuit of the common good.

In religious contexts, various faith traditions highlight virtues as integral to spiritual growth. For example, Christianity underscores virtues like love, humility, and forgiveness. Virtue is often seen as aligning with divine principles and serving as a pathway to a harmonious relationship with the divine. More so, contemporary discussions on virtue include the concept of civic virtues, promoting qualities such as civic responsibility, tolerance, and environmental stewardship. This expands the scope of virtue beyond individual character to societal values that contribute to the betterment of communities.

The definition of virtue is multifaceted, encompassing personal, cultural, philosophical, and ethical dimensions. It represents a timeless pursuit of moral excellence, influencing both individual conduct and the collective fabric of society.

3.3 The Golden Mean

The Golden Mean, rooted in ancient Greek philosophy, is a concept of finding balance and moderation. Aristotle introduced it as a virtue, emphasizing the middle ground between extremes. It is not about strict equality but about choosing

the right amount for a given situation. This principle applies to various aspects of life, promoting harmony, avoiding excess, and fostering virtuous behavior. “The Golden Mean encourages thoughtful decision-making, steering away from extremes that might lead to imbalance or negative consequences. It remains a timeless guide for ethical and practical living.”¹³

In other words, the Golden Mean, or Aristotle's Doctrine of the Mean, is a key element in Aristotle's ethical philosophy. It suggests that virtue lies between extremes, finding a moderate position between deficiency and excess. For instance, courage is the virtue between recklessness (excess) and cowardice (deficiency). Aristotle identifies virtues in various areas of life, such as courage, generosity, and truthfulness, all residing between extremes. This concept extends beyond individual virtues to encompass a balanced life overall. Aristotle believed that cultivating virtuous habits and avoiding extremes lead to eudaimonia, a state of flourishing or the highest human good. The Golden Mean's flexibility allows it to adapt to different situations, recognizing that what is moderate can vary. It promotes practical wisdom (phronesis) to discern the appropriate middle ground in various circumstances. While subject to interpretation, the Golden Mean remains influential in ethics and provides a nuanced approach to ethical decision-

making.

The Golden Mean, deeply ingrained in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, underscores the idea that moral virtue lies in the midpoint between extremes. This concept, also known as the Doctrine of the Mean, emphasizes context and individual circumstances. Aristotle distinguishes between intellectual virtues (related to reasoning) and moral virtues (related to character). The Golden Mean primarily applies to moral virtues, where one must navigate between deficiency and excess. For example, the virtue of honesty stands between boastfulness (excessive truthfulness) and self-deprecation (deficient truthfulness). The Golden Mean is not a rigid formula but a call for thoughtful deliberation. It recognizes that situations vary, and what is moderate in one context might differ in another. Aristotle's philosophy urges individuals to develop practical wisdom to discern the appropriate middle ground, promoting a virtuous and flourishing life. Critics argue that defining the mean can be subjective, but the enduring influence of the Golden Mean persists, shaping ethical discussions and encouraging a nuanced understanding of virtue and moral decision-making.

3.3.1 Virtue and Vices

Virtues are positive moral qualities or traits that lead to ethical behavior. Examples include honesty, courage, generosity, and justice. These virtues contribute to personal and societal well-being, fostering good character and ethical conduct.

Vices, on the other hand, are negative moral qualities or habits that deviate from ethical standards. Examples include dishonesty, cowardice, greed, and injustice. Vices hinder personal growth and can have detrimental effects on individuals and society. In ethical philosophy, the cultivation of virtues is often emphasized as a means to lead a morally upright life. The Golden Mean, discussed by Aristotle, suggests finding a balance between extremes when practicing virtues, avoiding both deficiency and excess. Understanding virtues and vices provides a framework for ethical decision-making, guiding individuals toward actions that contribute to their own well-being and that of others while discouraging harmful behavior. “Virtues are often classified into categories such as moral virtues, intellectual virtues, and theological virtues. Moral virtues pertain to character and behavior, while intellectual virtues involve qualities of the mind, like wisdom and curiosity. Theological virtues, rooted in religious traditions, include faith, hope, and charity.”¹³

Cultural and philosophical perspectives vary in their emphasis on specific virtues. For example, ancient Greek philosophy, as seen in Aristotle, focuses on virtues like courage and temperance. Christian ethics may highlight virtues such as humility and compassion. Vices can be understood as the opposite of virtues, leading to morally objectionable behavior. Some philosophical traditions, like virtue ethics, emphasize the importance of cultivating virtues over merely avoiding vices. This approach encourages individuals to actively pursue moral excellence rather than simply refraining from wrongdoing. The study of virtues and vices plays a central role in ethical theories, guiding individuals in navigating complex moral dilemmas and contributing to the development of virtuous character. It remains a foundational aspect of moral philosophy and ethical education. Virtue ethics, a philosophical approach dating back to ancient Greece, focuses on the development of virtuous character as the key to ethical living. Unlike consequentialist or deontological ethics, virtue ethics places less emphasis on rules or consequences and more on the cultivation of good habits and virtues.

Major figures in virtue ethics include Aristotle, who emphasized the importance of eudaimonia (flourishing) achieved through virtuous living. Virtue ethicists argue that ethical behavior arises from virtuous character, and individuals should

strive to embody virtues in their actions. Modern virtue ethics incorporates diverse perspectives, including virtue pluralism, which acknowledges various virtues as equally important. Alasdair MacIntyre and Martha Nussbaum have contributed significantly to contemporary virtue ethics discussions, expanding the understanding of virtues in the context of a globalized and pluralistic world. It should be noted that virtue ethics does not ignore vices but sees them as the result of deficient or excessive behavior. The focus remains on cultivating virtues to guide individuals toward moral excellence and a fulfilling life. This approach continues to shape discussions in moral philosophy, emphasizing the importance of character development and the pursuit of virtuous living.

3.3.2 Practical Wisdom

Practical wisdom, known as *phronesis* in ancient Greek philosophy, refers to the ability to make sound judgments and decisions in practical matters. It involves applying theoretical knowledge to real-world situations with discernment and prudence. Aristotle highlighted the significance of practical wisdom in his ethical philosophy, emphasizing that ethical behavior requires not only knowledge of general principles but also the ability to apply them wisely in specific contexts. Practical wisdom involves understanding the particulars of a situation,

considering various factors, and making decisions that align with virtuous principles.

Practical wisdom is contextual and flexible, recognizing that situations vary and may require different approaches. It involves a balance between following general ethical guidelines and adapting them intelligently to the complexities of real-life scenarios. Cultivating practical wisdom is seen as crucial for leading a virtuous and flourishing life. In modern discussions, practical wisdom remains relevant in fields such as applied ethics, leadership, and decision-making, emphasizing the importance of thoughtful, context-specific judgments that go beyond rigid rules or abstract principles.

“Practical wisdom, or phronesis, involves a dynamic interplay between experience, judgment, and moral virtue. It goes beyond theoretical knowledge and rules, requiring an individual to navigate complex, uncertain situations with a keen understanding of the context.”¹⁴ Aristotle identified practical wisdom as a key component of virtuous living, essential for making morally sound decisions. It's the ability to discern what is ethically right in specific circumstances, considering the nuances of the situation and the potential consequences of actions.

In the realm of professional ethics and leadership, practical wisdom is highly valued. Leaders with practical wisdom can make informed decisions that balance various interests, uphold ethical standards, and foster positive outcomes. This practical approach to ethical decision-making acknowledges the complexity of real-world situations and the need for adaptability. The cultivation of practical wisdom involves learning from experiences, reflecting on one's actions, and continuously refining judgment. It is a quality that extends beyond theoretical knowledge, emphasizing the integration of wisdom into daily life for the betterment of oneself and society. “Practical wisdom involves a fusion of cognitive abilities, emotional intelligence, and ethical insight. It is not a one-size-fits-all solution but requires adaptability and the capacity to recognize the unique aspects of each situation. Practical wisdom acknowledges the limitations of abstract rules and guidelines, encouraging individuals to engage with the complexities of real-life scenarios.”¹⁵

In the development of practical wisdom, the role of mentorship and learning from experiences is crucial. Exposure to diverse situations allows individuals to refine their judgment and enhance their ability to navigate ethical challenges effectively. The journey toward practical wisdom involves a continuous process of reflection,

learning, and refinement. In contemporary discussions, practical wisdom is recognized in various fields, from business and law to healthcare and education. Leaders and professionals who possess practical wisdom are often better equipped to address ethical dilemmas, foster collaboration, and contribute positively to the well-being of individuals and communities. From the above, it can be deduced that practical wisdom serves as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and effective, ethically grounded action in the complex tapestry of everyday life. It remains a valuable concept for those seeking to navigate the intricacies of decision-making with both sagacity and virtue.

3.3.3 Vices

“Vices are negative moral qualities or habits that deviate from ethical standards and hinder personal or societal well-being. They represent the opposite of virtues, contributing to behaviors that are morally objectionable.”¹⁶ Examples of vices include dishonesty, greed, cruelty, envy, and laziness. In ethical frameworks, vices are often seen as detrimental to character development and can lead to negative consequences for individuals and communities. Different philosophical traditions have their own perspectives on vices, but they generally agree that cultivating virtuous behavior is preferable to succumbing to vices. Understanding vices is

crucial for ethical reflection and decision-making, as it highlights behaviors and attitudes that should be avoided or addressed. Some ethical theories, like virtue ethics, focus on the cultivation of virtues as a means of overcoming vices, emphasizing the importance of character development in leading a morally upright life.

Vices encompass a broad range of negative traits that can manifest in thoughts, actions, or attitudes. Some philosophical traditions, like Christian theology and virtue ethics, classify vices into categories such as moral vices and intellectual vices. Moral vices pertain to character flaws and unethical conduct. Examples include dishonesty, cruelty, and selfishness. Intellectual vices involve shortcomings in reasoning or understanding, such as closed-mindedness or intellectual arrogance. Understanding vices is not solely about condemnation but about recognizing areas for personal growth. Ethical development often involves acknowledging and addressing vices, cultivating virtues in their place. This process requires self-reflection, a commitment to positive change, and, in some cases, seeking support from mentors or ethical frameworks. “Contemporary discussions on vices often intersect with psychology, behavioral economics, and sociology, exploring the impact of negative behaviors on individual well-being

and societal harmony. Examining vices contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of human behavior and ethical decision-making.”¹⁷

3.4 Aristotle’s Golden Mean vis-a-vis the Nigerian Contemporary Society

Aristotle's concept of the Golden Mean is a central principle of his ethical philosophy. He argued that “the best way to live a good life is to find a balance between extremes.”¹⁸ In contemporary Nigerian society, this idea can be applied to many aspects of life. For example, in the area of politics, it is important to find a balance between authoritarianism and democracy, between individualism and collectivism. In the area of economics, it is important to find a balance between unregulated capitalism and socialism. And in the area of social justice, it is important to find a balance between equality and liberty. When it comes to family life, the Golden Mean can be applied to the balance between individual freedom and family responsibility. In terms of education, the Golden Mean can be applied to finding a balance between academic rigor and practicality. And when it comes to personal relationships, the Golden Mean can be applied to finding a balance between self-interest and altruism. The application of the Golden Mean can help to create a more harmonious society that values both individual and collective well-being.

In essence, applying Aristotle's Golden Mean to the Nigerian contemporary society involves considering how the concept of finding balance and moderation might relate to various aspects of life in Nigeria. Below are some ways the Golden Mean can be applied to the Nigerian Contemporary Society:

➤ **Social Harmony**

Aristotle's principle encourages avoiding extremes. In a Nigerian context, promoting social harmony could involve finding a middle ground between diverse cultural, religious, and ethnic groups to foster unity and understanding. When it comes to social harmony, Aristotle's Golden Mean can help to create a society where people are able to coexist peacefully and productively. In the context of contemporary Nigeria, this might mean finding a balance between ethnic and religious identities, between traditional and modern values, and between individual and collective needs. By finding a middle ground between these different forces, it may be possible to create a society where everyone feels included and valued.

Another example is in the area of gender equality. In a society where women have traditionally been marginalized, the Golden Mean can help to promote a more

equitable and just society. For example, this might involve promoting equal access to education and economic opportunities for both men and women. It might also involve changing social norms and attitudes to be more inclusive of women's perspectives and needs. In terms of economic development, the Golden Mean can help to find a balance between economic growth and equitable distribution of resources. For example, policies that promote economic growth should also be paired with policies that help to reduce poverty and increase access to basic needs like healthcare and education.

➤ **Economic Development**

One of the key principles of the Golden Mean is the idea of moderation or balance. This means finding a middle ground between different extremes. In terms of Nigeria's economy, this could involve finding a balance between austerity and government spending. On the one hand, austerity measures might be necessary to control inflation and reduce government debt. But on the other hand, cutting government spending too much could harm economic growth and negatively affect the standard of living for many people. Another application of the Golden Mean to Nigeria's economy might be finding a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability. For example, it is important for Nigeria to

continue to develop its oil industry, which is a major source of revenue and foreign investment. But it is also important to take steps to protect the environment and address the negative impacts of oil production, such as air pollution and water contamination.

One last example is finding a balance between economic growth and social justice. For example, economic growth is important for creating jobs and raising living standards. But this growth needs to be inclusive and benefit all segments of the population, not just a privileged few. This might involve policies to improve access to education, healthcare, and other basic services.

➤ **Governance and Politics**

Aristotle's Golden Mean can also be applied to the political and governance structures of a society. For example, “the Golden Mean suggests that the best form of government is one that is neither too authoritarian nor too permissive.”¹⁹

In the case of Nigeria, this might mean finding a balance between the power of the central government and the autonomy of local governments. It might also mean finding a balance between the rule of law and the need for flexibility and adaptability in the face of changing circumstances. In essence, this means that

different branches of government should have different roles and responsibilities, so that no single person or group has too much power. In the case of Nigeria, this principle might mean strengthening the independence of the judiciary and ensuring that the executive and legislative branches of government are held accountable to the people.

Another important aspect of governance is the relationship between the government and civil society, which includes organizations such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, and community groups. The Golden Mean would suggest that the government should not be too weak or too strong in relation to civil society. For example, the government should not completely control civil society, but it should also not be so weak that civil society can easily disrupt the government's functions.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 EVALUATION

It should be noted that examining the Nigerian Contemporary Society through the

lens of Aristotle's Golden Mean involves analyzing the balance between extremes in virtues. This evaluation delves into how Nigerian societal values align or deviate from Aristotle's concept of moderation in areas such as governance, social relations, and economic policies. The critical assessment aims to highlight parallels, contradictions, and the overall impact on societal harmony. In evaluating the Nigerian Contemporary Society using Aristotle's Golden Mean, one must consider how virtues like courage, justice, and generosity manifest. Assessing political governance, the study would scrutinize whether leaders strike a balance between excess and deficiency, aiming for a virtuous mean. Similarly, examining societal values and interpersonal relationships explored the extent to which moderation is practiced. Economic policies and wealth distribution were scrutinized to ascertain if they aligned with Aristotle's principles of equitable balance. This analysis provides a nuanced understanding of how the Nigerian society navigates virtue in its contemporary context.

One more point to consider is that “the Golden Mean can help to create harmony and balance in relationships. When you strive to act virtuously, it can lead to more positive and productive relationships with others. This can be seen in the virtues of friendship, which are based on the Golden Mean.”¹ For example, you should be

neither too clingy nor too distant in your friendships. Another positive aspect of the Golden Mean is that it can help to create a sense of inner peace and contentment. This comes from finding a balance between desire and satisfaction. If you are always seeking more and more, you will never be satisfied. But if you are content with what you have, you can find a deep sense of peace.

More so, “the Golden Mean can lead to greater happiness in life. This is because it focuses on the present moment and finding contentment in the here and now. It doesn't focus on the past or future, but on the present. This can be a powerful tool for finding happiness and meaning in life.”² Also, the Golden Mean can help to create a sense of purpose and meaning in life. When you strive to live according to the virtues of the Golden Mean, you can feel a sense of purpose and direction. This can be especially helpful in times of uncertainty or difficulty.

This nuanced examination of the Nigerian Contemporary Society against Aristotle's Golden Mean provides a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics within its political, economic, and societal dimensions. In the context of political governance, an in-depth analysis delved into the structure of institutions, the rule of law, and the ethical conduct of leaders. The evaluation aims to identify instances where leaders exhibit virtues like prudence and wisdom, avoiding

extremes of authoritarianism or indecisiveness. The economic dimension involved assessing policies related to trade, investment, and social welfare programs. Striking a balance between economic growth and social justice would be a key focus, ensuring that policies neither lead to unchecked wealth accumulation nor societal neglect.

However, one criticism of the Golden Mean is that it can be difficult to determine where the “middle ground” is in certain situations. For example, it can be hard to find the middle ground between two extremes like lying and telling the truth. Some argue that the Golden Mean is too simplistic and does not take into account the complexities of real life. Another criticism is that the Golden Mean can lead to inaction or compromise, rather than taking a firm stand for what is right. This is true for the fact that people, especially the Nigerians I know can hide under guise of the Golden Mean to compromise at the slightest opportunity instead of taking a firm stand on issues.

More so, the Golden Mean can be used to justify unethical or harmful behavior. For example, someone might argue that they are following the Golden Mean by being “balanced” in their hatred of another person, rather than completely loving or completely hating them. This kind of logic could be used to justify violence or

other harmful actions. Furthermore, it has also been argued that the Golden Mean is too subjective, and that what one person considers to be the “middle ground” might be different from what another person considers to be the “middle ground.” For example, what one person considers to be the “middle ground” between two political parties might be very different from what another person considers to be the “middle ground.” This is what we call the problem of subjectivity, and this problem of subjectivity makes it difficult to apply the Golden Mean in a consistent way.

Some philosophers have also criticized the Golden Mean for its focus on the individual. They argue that it does not take into account the needs of the community or society as a whole. They argue that sometimes, the best course of action might not be the “middle ground” for the individual, but might be something that is best for the greater good. Some critics have also argued that the Golden Mean is too focused on the present moment. They argue that it does not take into account the long-term consequences of our actions. For example, a short-term “middle ground” solution to a problem might have negative consequences in the future.

Some have also argued that the Golden Mean can lead to a kind of “moral

relativism,” where people can justify any action by claiming that they are taking the “middle ground.” They argue that the Golden Mean can be used to avoid making difficult decisions, or to justify unethical behavior. Some have also argued that the Golden Mean can lead to inaction, or what they call the “nirvana fallacy.”³ This is the idea that we cannot achieve perfection, so we should not even try. Hence, this can be a problem with the Golden Mean, because it can lead to people not taking action to improve the world. I am of the opinion that even if we cannot achieve perfection, we can still make progress towards a better world. Critics have argued that the Golden Mean can be used to defend the status quo, or the current state of affairs. They argue that “the Golden Mean can be used to resist change and preserve the status quo, even if it is unjust or harmful.”⁴

From the above, it can be seen that Aristotle's Golden Mean is a practical and flexible approach to living a good life; it takes into account the realities of human nature and allows for individual differences and circumstances. It also encourages moderation, which is a virtue that many people find appealing. On the negative side, some people might find the Golden Mean too limiting or inflexible. They might prefer a more individualistic or open-ended approach to living a good life. Another positive aspect of Aristotle's Golden Mean is that it encourages self-

awareness and self-improvement. It is not just about following a set of rules or principles, but about constantly striving to be the best version of yourself. This means constantly evaluating your actions and thoughts to see if they align with the virtues of the Golden Mean. Over time, this can lead to personal growth and development.

4.2 CONCLUSION

Examining the Nigerian Contemporary Society through the lens of Aristotle's Golden Mean reveals both challenges and opportunities. Striking a balance between extremes in governance, socio-economic policies, and cultural practices is crucial for fostering a harmonious society. Embracing moderation, ethical virtues, and finding a middle ground can contribute to a more balanced and sustainable future for Nigeria. In the context of governance, Nigeria faces the challenge of finding the golden mean between authoritative rule and chaotic governance. Striking a balance that promotes democratic principles while ensuring effective leadership is essential for societal stability. Economically, addressing the wealth disparity and pursuing policies that balance prosperity with social justice can contribute to a more equitable society.

Culturally, embracing Aristotle's idea of moderation in traditions and values can help navigate the complexities of Nigeria's diverse cultural landscape. By avoiding extremes and fostering tolerance, the nation can build a cohesive identity that respects its rich heritage while adapting to contemporary challenges. In essence, the critical evaluation of Nigeria in light of Aristotle's Golden Mean emphasizes the need for thoughtful moderation in governance, economics, and culture to foster a resilient and balanced contemporary society.

In other words, Aristotle's Golden Mean can guide efforts to preserve traditional values while embracing progress. Encouraging a dynamic cultural identity that values heritage without hindering societal evolution can contribute to social cohesion.

Culturally, the application of the Golden Mean involves navigating the diversity of Nigeria's ethnic and religious groups. Encouraging dialogue, understanding, and respecting differences can help forge a national identity that transcends divisive elements. In fact, a comprehensive assessment applying Aristotle's Golden Mean to Nigeria underscores the importance of balance and moderation in political, economic, and cultural realms for a thriving contemporary society.

In the realm of governance, Nigeria's leaders should consider Aristotle's concept of the Golden Mean to strike a balance between the centralization of power and decentralization. Empowering local communities while maintaining a cohesive national framework can foster effective governance and participatory democracy.

Economically, promoting sustainable development aligns with Aristotle's emphasis on balance. Nigeria could focus on diversifying its economy, investing in education, and creating policies that address both short-term economic goals and long-term environmental concerns. In other words, "Aristotle's Golden Mean suggests steering clear of excessive capitalism or overly restrictive economic policies. Striking a balance between free-market principles and social responsibility can foster economic growth without exacerbating inequality, contributing to a more sustainable and inclusive society."⁵

In summary, applying Aristotle's Golden Mean to Nigeria requires nuanced approaches in governance, economics, and culture to navigate complexities and foster a resilient and well-balanced contemporary society. Examining the governance landscape further, Nigeria might benefit from incorporating Aristotle's emphasis on justice and fairness. Establishing institutions that ensure equal opportunities, protect individual rights, and address corruption can contribute to a

more just society. Economically, the Golden Mean implies avoiding extremes like excessive wealth accumulation or neglecting poverty alleviation. Implementing policies that foster inclusive growth, support entrepreneurship, and address infrastructure gaps can lead to a more stable and equitable economic environment.

Culturally, embracing diversity while nurturing a sense of unity aligns with Aristotle's principles. Encouraging educational programs that promote understanding and respect for different cultural perspectives can strengthen the social fabric and contribute to national cohesion. In essence, applying Aristotle's Golden Mean to the Nigerian Contemporary Society necessitates a holistic approach encompassing governance, economics, and culture, emphasizing justice, moderation, and inclusive development for a balanced and thriving society. Delving into governance, Nigeria can draw inspiration from Aristotle's idea of virtue ethics, encouraging leaders to prioritize moral character and integrity. Implementing transparent and accountable systems can enhance trust in public institutions, fostering a more ethical governance framework.

On the economic front, the Golden Mean suggests finding a middle ground between market-driven policies and social welfare. Balancing economic growth with social responsibility, investing in education and healthcare, can contribute to

a more resilient and compassionate society. Culturally, promoting Aristotle's concept of moral virtues can guide efforts to instill values such as honesty, courage, and compassion in the population. Initiatives that celebrate diversity while emphasizing shared ethical principles can contribute to a harmonious cultural landscape.

In summary, applying Aristotle's Golden Mean to Nigeria entails cultivating virtuous leadership, balancing economic pursuits with social welfare, and nurturing a culturally rich yet morally grounded society for sustained progress.

ENDNOTES

1. M. Nussbaun, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 61
2. *Ibid.*, p. 63

3. B. Reinford, *The Philosophy of Aristotle*, (Cambridge: Mentor Bridge, 1963), p. 79
4. L. Jurgen, *Aristotle and the Golden Mean: A Diptych on Ethical Values*, *The European Legacy*, Vol. 26, Issue 2, pp. 149-169
5. A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, (Indiana: University Of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 88

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