

Developing a Personal Code of Ethics

How to Talk About Yourself, to Yourself, and
Become a Better Person

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Overview`

1. Storytime!
2. What are ethics?
3. Aristotle was a jerk ...
4. ... but he had some good ideas 🙌
5. Why talk about this now?
6. Workshop!





What are ethics?



A (personal) system or process for determining right from wrong.

How are ethics different from morals?



Morals, like the “moral of the story,” are contained elsewhere and adopted by a person into their ethical system.

What about laws?



Morals with predetermined consequences, (ideally) collectively defined, imposed upon us when we ignore them.

We've one more question...

... but first ...



Bust of Aristotle. Marble, Roman copy after a Greek bronze original by Lysippos from 330 BC; the alabaster mantle is a modern addition.

“... so is it naturally with the male and the female; the one is superior, the other inferior; the one governs, the other is governed; and the same rule must necessarily hold good with respect to all mankind.”



Source: Aristotle, *Politics: A Treatise on Government*, trans. William Ellis (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1912), <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6762>.

“... the male is by nature superior to the female, except when something happens contrary to the usual course of nature, as is the elder and perfect to the younger and imperfect.”



Source: Aristotle, *Politics: A Treatise on Government*, trans. William Ellis (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1912), <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6762>.

“... for a freeman is governed in a different manner from a slave, a male from a female, and a man from a child: and all these have parts of mind within them, but in a different manner. Thus a slave can have no power of determination, a woman but a weak one, a child an imperfect one ...”



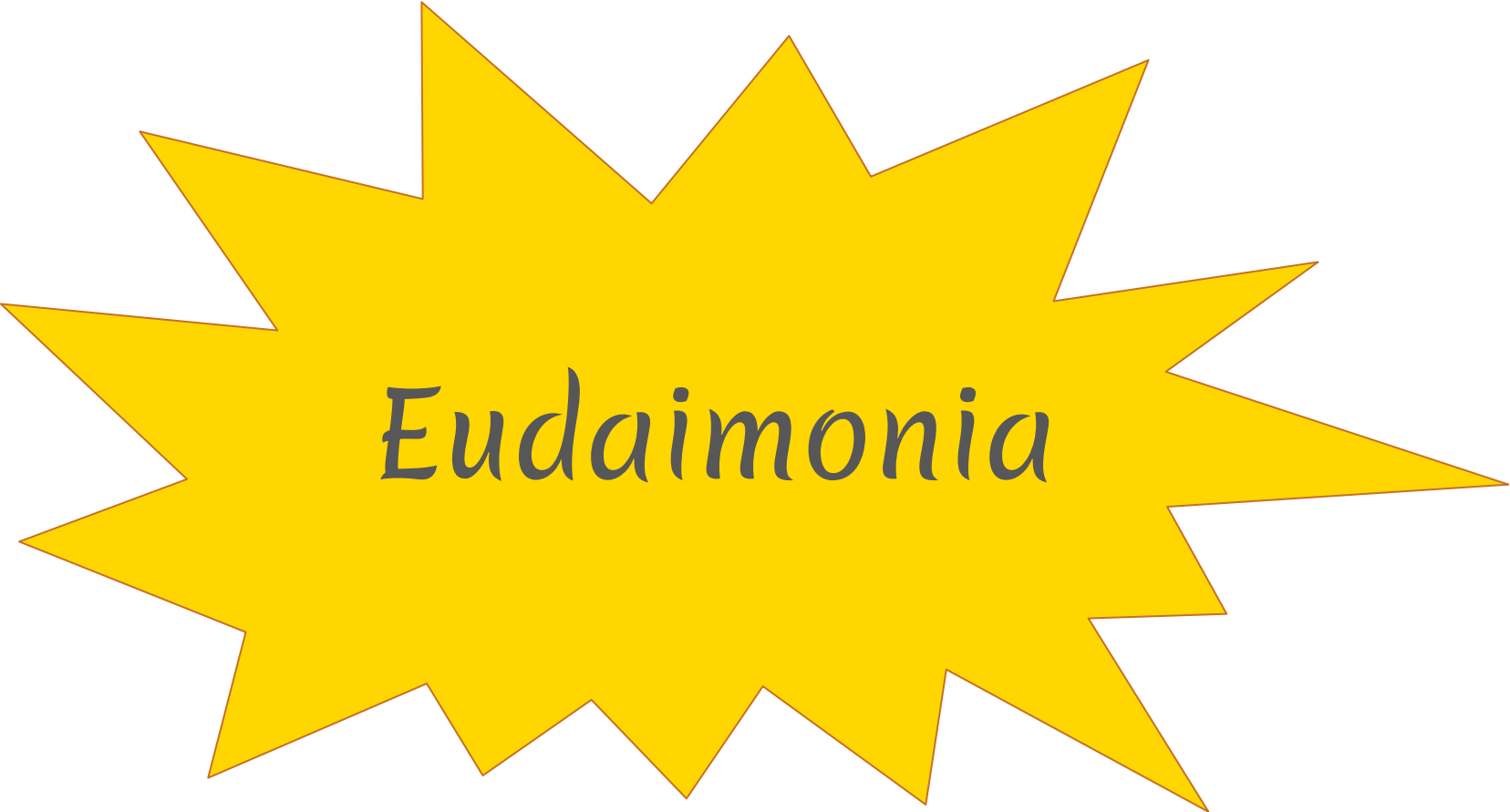
Source: Aristotle, *Politics: A Treatise on Government*, trans. William Ellis (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1912), <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6762>.



Aristotle
384 – 322 BCE



Aspasia
~ 470 – 428 BCE



Eudaimonia

A summary of Aristotelian Ethics

- Everything has a purpose.
- Therefore, humans must have a purpose: *eudaimonia*.
- Because humans have the ability to think, reflect, and reason, and (according to him) nothing else has those abilities, *eudaimonia* must involve these behaviors.
- The way they do so: by finding the “sweet spot” between both too much and too little of a thing.
- ... What are those things ...



Virtues

What are virtues?



Qualities, or characteristics, of an ethical system that can lead toward *eudaimonia*.

Virtues and their vices...

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| ● Ugliness | ● Beauty | ● Vanity |
| ● Cowardice | ● Strength | ● Recklessness |
| ● Dependence | ● Power | ● Isolation |
| ● Apathy | ● Compassion | ● Abnegation |
| ● Untrustworthiness | ● Honor | ● Inflexibility |
| ● Egotism | ● Humility | ● Deprecation |
| ● Dourness | ● Mirth | ● Foolishness |
| ● Impudence | ● Reverence | ● Certainty |

Virtues and their vices...

- Ugliness
- Cowardice
- Dependence
- Apathy
- Untrustworthiness
- Egotism
- Dourness
- Impudence

● “Men have their virtues and their vices, their heroisms and their perversities; men are neither wholly good nor wholly bad, but possess and practice all that there is of good and bad ...”

- Humility
- Mirth
- Reverence
- Precation
- Mess



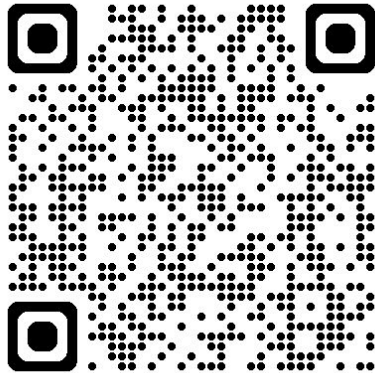
Why consider all this now?



We live in interesting times. Daily, maybe hourly, we are confronted with ethical dilemmas the likes of which we may not expect and may not be prepared for.

Unless we make ourselves ready.

Finding your Virtues



“Living into our values means that we do more than profess our values, we practice them. We walk our talk—we are clear about what we believe and hold important, and we take care that our intentions, words, thoughts, and behaviors align with those beliefs.”

Brené Brown



Accountability	Creativity	Health	Nature	Serenity
Achievement	Curiosity	Home	Openness	Service
Adaptability	Dignity	Honesty	Optimism	Simplicity
Adventure	Diversity	Hope	Order	Spirituality
Altruism	Environment	Humility	Parenting	Sportsmanship
Ambition	Efficiency	Humor	Patience	Stewardship
Authenticity	Equality	Inclusion	Patriotism	Success
Balance	Ethics	Independence	Peace	Teamwork
Beauty	Excellence	Initiative	Perseverance	Thrift
Being the best	Fairness	Integrity	Personal fulfillment	Time
Belonging	Faith	Intuition	Power	Tradition
Career	Family	Job security	Pride	Travel
Caring	Financial stability	Joy	Recognition	Trust
Collaboration	Forgiveness	Justice	Reliability	Truth
Commitment	Freedom	Kindness	Resourcefulness	Understanding
Community	Friendship	Knowledge	Respect	Uniqueness
Compassion	Fun	Leadership	Responsibility	Usefulness
Competence	Future generations	Learning	Risk-taking	Vision
Confidence	Generosity	Legacy	Safety	Vulnerability
Connection	Giving back	Leisure	Security	Wealth
Contentment	Grace	Love	Self-discipline	Well-being
Contribution	Gratitude	Loyalty	Self-expression	Wholeheartedness
Cooperation	Growth	Making a difference	Self-respect	Wisdom
Courage	Harmony			

Developing a Code of Ethics

- Consider your virtues and what they mean to you.
 - Consider the roles you perform, e.g. professional, advocate, partner, steward, teacher, learner, seeker, etc.
 - Develop a series of personal ethical statements that link virtues to your actions in the context of those roles
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Adaptability:

The ability to remain flexible, to assess any given situation, and to respond accordingly. Further, to be willing, when presented with the same or a similar situation again, to reassess and learn from both past mistakes and successes. My long-term interest in and relationship with Eris is enhanced by remaining adaptable.

Spirituality:

My spirituality is my own; it is ever changing, and I follow the maxim of 38 Special: “hold on loosely, but don’t let go.” As it shifts, I shall adapt to its needs even as I adapt to the needs of others. I have hesitated to engage the divine fully; frequently, I’ve been at a loss as to whether I’ve encountered them “for real” or if it was all in my head. At this time, I’m beginning to feel like I need to become a better steward of my own scepticism if I want to deepen my spiritual practice.

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation: we do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have these because we have acted rightly; ‘these virtues are formed in [us] by [our] doing the actions’; we are what we repeatedly do.

Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit: ‘the good of [humanity] is a working of the soul in the way of excellence in a complete life ... for as it is not one swallow or one fine day that makes a spring, so it is not one day or a short time that makes [one] blessed and happy.’”

Source: Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the World's Greatest Philosophers*, ch. 2 "Aristotle and Greek Science," sec. 7 "Ethics and the Nature of Happiness" (1926)

(The quoted phrases within Durant's quote are from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 2, ch. 4; Book 1, ch. 7.)



Thank you!

Track me down later:

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- [The Firefly House](#) ([Discord](#))
- [Dashifen.com](#)

Current Projects

- [The Church Lab](#)
- [Moral Mondays](#) w/ Repairers of the Breach
- [The Longest Table](#) in DC (October 4)
- [MinuteMarshals](#) in DC

