

Virtue and Vice

INTRODUCTION

IN their currently popular connotations, the words "virtue" and "vice" have extremely limited significance. Virtue tends to be identified with chastity or at least with conformity to the prevailing standards of sexual behavior. The popular notion of vice retains a little more of the traditional meaning, insofar as it implies injury to a person's character or health as the result of strong *habitual* addictions. But, as in the case of virtue, the things which are popularly called "vices" are largely concerned with pleasures or sensual indulgences.

In the tradition of the great books, however, the scope of these terms and the range of the problems in which they are involved seem to be coextensive with morality; or, in other words, with the broadest consideration of good and evil in human life, with what is right and wrong for man not only to do, but also to wish or desire, and even to think. For some of the great moral philosophers, other terms—such as duty for Marcus Aurelius and Kant, or pleasure and utility for J. S. Mill—seem to be more central. But for Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas virtue is a basic moral principle. By reference to it they define the good man, the good life, and the good society. Yet even for them it is not the first principle of ethics. They define virtue itself by reference to a more ultimate good—happiness. For them the virtues promote and serve happiness as means to an end.

THE ANCIENT ENUMERATION of particular virtues may show the range of things comprehended under the notion of virtue generally. It may also further sharpen the contrast with the contemporary tendency to use the words "virtue" and "vice" as if they applied only to

matters which fall within the sphere of one of the virtues. That one is the virtue which both Plato and Aristotle call "temperance," and which they conceive as concerned chiefly with the bodily appetites and pleasures. Plato and Aristotle give somewhat different enumerations, but courage and justice are as fundamental for them as temperance; and when certain virtues come later to be classified as the cardinal or principal virtues, these three are always named together. In that classification, there is a fourth—prudence or, as it is sometimes called, "practical wisdom."

Plato's enumeration of the virtues in *The Republic* also adds wisdom to temperance, courage, and justice. This indicates at once that the ancient conception of virtue as the quality which makes a man good, extends to his mind as well as to his character—to the sphere of thinking and knowing as well as to desire, emotion, and action. Aristotle makes this explicit by dividing all the virtues into moral and intellectual, or excellences of character and of mind. He names five intellectual virtues: in addition to wisdom and prudence (which he distinguishes as speculative and practical wisdom), he lists art, science, and what he calls "intuitive reason," which Aquinas later calls "understanding."

The division of the virtues into moral and intellectual leads, in Aristotle's analysis, to the further distinction between those intellectual virtues—understanding, science, wisdom—which represent the possession of speculative insight or theoretical knowledge, and those—art and prudence—which represent skill in practical thinking or in the application of knowledge to production and action respectively. Because it is concerned with action, or

moral conduct, the virtue of prudence is most closely associated with the moral virtues of justice, courage, and temperance. The grouping together by Aquinas of these four as the cardinal virtues carries the implication that the remaining four (*i.e.*, art and the three virtues of the speculative reason) play a secondary role. The implication is simply that a man may be made good as a scientist or good as an artist by the acquisition of these secondary virtues, but he is not made good as a man by these virtues, nor do they enable him to lead a good life and achieve happiness, as do the moral virtues accompanied by prudence.

In line with the principle by which he regards certain virtues as cardinal or indispensable for human rectitude and welfare, the Christian moralist goes further than the moral philosopher in developing the theory of virtue. Considering man's limitations and his fallen nature, he holds that more than all the natural virtues (*i.e.*, the virtues which men can attain by their own effort) is required for salvation—for the supernatural end of eternal happiness. Faith, hope, and charity, according to Saint Paul, are indispensable to lift man's life to a plane, and direct it to a goal, which exceed his nature. These gifts of God's grace are subsequently treated by Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin as virtues—supernatural, not natural virtues. Aquinas specifically calls them "theological virtues" to distinguish them from other supernatural endowments, such as the infused moral virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

THE READER MAY OBSERVE that of all the virtues so far named, only the three theological virtues are not the subject of separate chapters in this collection of great ideas. The chapters on COURAGE, JUSTICE, TEMPERANCE, PRUDENCE, WISDOM may include discussions of these qualities which do not specifically treat them as virtues. Certainly that is true of the chapters on ART and SCIENCE, and the chapter on PRINCIPLE, wherein the virtue of intuitive reason or the understanding of first principles is considered. Nevertheless, that all but one of these chapters bear the name of the traditionally recognized virtues indicates how

widely and variously they make their appearance throughout the great books—by example and comment in poetry and history as well as by definition and analysis in the ethical and political treatises. In contrast, the theological virtues appear only in Christian, not pagan literature, and then mainly in religious rather than secular writing.

It is also of interest to note the relation which this chapter bears to those dealing with other fundamental concepts of moral philosophy or theology. Some of the terms mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs—duty, pleasure, happiness, good—name chapters which are co-implicated with this one in the problem of how men should live and what they should seek. The Outline of Topics will reveal still others—knowledge, desire, emotion, reason, will, wealth, honor, friendship, teaching, family, state, citizen, law, sin, and grace—each of which is (or indicates) the title of a chapter that treats of matters related to virtue as cause or consequence, as psychological factor or external condition.

One chapter not yet mentioned has maximum relevance for most of the authors who offer some analysis of virtue. The chapter on HABIT treats an idea that is crucial to the definition of virtue. Aquinas, for example, allocates the discussion of virtue and vice to his "Treatise on Habits" in the *Summa Theologica*. He divides this treatise into questions concerning habits in general and questions concerning good and evil habits—or virtues and vices—in particular. But the notion that virtue combines the elements of habit and goodness is not peculiarly his. With varying degrees of emphasis and explicitness, it appears in Plato and Aristotle, in Augustine, Francis Bacon, Hegel, and William James. Kant alone expressly dissents, declaring that virtue "is not to be defined and esteemed merely as *habit*, and . . . as a long *custom* acquired by the practice of morally good actions."

THE DISCUSSION OF VIRTUE originates in the dialogues of Plato and the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle with a number of related questions. Meno's opening question—"Can you tell me, Socrates, whether virtue is acquired by teach-

ing or by practice; or if neither by teaching nor practice, then whether it comes to man by nature, or in what other way?"—requires, in the opinion of Socrates, other questions to be faced: what virtue is, how virtue is related to knowledge, whether virtue is one or many, and if many, how the several particular virtues are related to one another.

In the course of the dialogue, each of the alternatives is considered. If virtue were identical with knowledge, it could be taught and learned just as geometry is. If virtue were simply a habit, it could be acquired by practice, that is, by the repetition of similar acts. But neither practice nor teaching seems by itself to explain how men come by virtue, and even less why virtuous fathers should so often fail to produce virtue in their sons. Yet Socrates does not completely dismiss these possibilities or the possibility considered at the end, that "virtue comes to the virtuous by the gift of God." What truth there is in each of them, he concludes, cannot be determined until we know precisely what virtue is.

Another dialogue, the *Protagoras*, pursues a similar inquiry and seems to reach a similarly indeterminate conclusion. The relation of virtue to knowledge here leads to the question whether "wisdom and temperance and courage and justice and holiness" are "five names of the same thing." To the extent that each depends on knowledge of what is good and evil, they would seem to be, if not identical, at least inseparable aspects of the same thing. Protagoras objects on the score that a man may be courageous and at the same time "utterly unrighteous, unholy, intemperate, ignorant." But Socrates finally gets him to admit reluctantly that courage consists in knowledge, and cowardice in ignorance, of what is and is not dangerous.

It was Protagoras, however, who originally contended against Socrates that virtue can be taught. The reduction of all the virtues to some form of knowledge would therefore seem to confirm his opinion. Socrates, in winning the argument about virtue and knowledge, seems to overthrow his own view that virtue cannot be taught. "The result of our discussion," Socrates says at the end, "appears

to me to be singular. For if the argument had a human voice, the voice would be heard laughing at us and saying: 'Protagoras and Socrates, you are strange beings; there are you, Socrates, who were saying that virtue cannot be taught, contradicting yourself now by your attempt to prove that all things are knowledge, including justice and temperance and courage—which tends to show that virtue can certainly be taught . . . Protagoras, on the other hand, who started by saying that it might be taught, is now eager to prove it to be anything rather than knowledge.'"

The only way "this terrible confusion of our ideas" might be cleared up, Socrates suggests, is for the conversation to go on "until we ascertain what virtue is." But that particular conversation does not go on; nor do the definitions of virtue which are proposed in other Platonic dialogues seem to be decisive on the point whether virtue is knowledge or whether it can be taught. In the *Laws*, for example, the Athenian Stranger, saying that "harmony of the soul, taken as a whole, is virtue," proposes that education should consist in training "the first instincts of virtue in children" by producing suitable habits in them. But his training does not seem to be, like ordinary teaching, the inculcation of knowledge. It is "training in respect of pleasure and pain," whereby we are led to hate what we ought to hate and love what we ought to love.

In *The Republic*, Socrates compares the harmony produced by virtue in the soul with the harmony of the parts in a healthy body. "Virtue is the health and beauty and well-being of the soul," he declares, "and vice the disease and weakness and deformity of the same." Though wisdom consists in the rule of the other parts of the soul by reason in the light of "knowledge of what is for the interest of each of the parts and of the whole," it does not seem to be the whole of virtue, nor does Socrates suggest that men become virtuous simply by becoming wise. On the contrary, he intimates that "good practices lead to virtue, and evil practices to vice," and that, like certain bodily qualities, the "virtues of the soul . . . can be implanted by habit and exercise."

IT IS SOMETIMES SUPPOSED that Aristotle differs from Plato on fundamental points in the theory of virtue. The fact that Aristotle criticizes Socrates for "thinking that all the virtues are forms of practical wisdom," seems to imply a basic disagreement on the relation of virtue to knowledge. But Aristotle also remarks that Socrates was right "in saying they implied practical wisdom." His own view that the moral virtues of courage, temperance, and justice are inseparable from the intellectual virtue of prudence does not seem to differ substantially from the statements of Socrates that "virtue must be a sort of wisdom or prudence" and that "virtue is either wholly or partly wisdom." Such difference as there is appears to be not so much in what is being affirmed or denied as in the manner of statement or analysis, and beyond that, perhaps, in a method of exposition which permits Aristotle to give definite answers to questions Plato's dialogues often leave unanswered.

Aristotle's analysis, of course, sometimes changes the questions themselves to make them answerable, but this is not always so. His summary of existing opinions concerning the acquisition of virtue—that "some think we are made good by nature, others by habituation, others by teaching"—is nearly equivalent, as an enumeration of possibilities, to Meno's opening question. But where Socrates in answering Meno contents himself with suggesting that there may be some truth in each possibility as against the others, Aristotle definitely affirms that the whole truth about the matter combines all three factors. "There are three things," he writes, "which make men good and virtuous: these are nature, habit, rational principle." Even Socrates' final point, that virtue may be a gift of God, seems to be affirmed by Aristotle's comment that, in effecting virtue, "nature's part evidently does not depend on us, but as a result of some divine causes is present in those who are truly fortunate."

But in the case of two Platonic questions—the one about the relation of virtue to knowledge and the other about the unity of virtue—Aristotle's analysis transforms the problem. His basic distinction between moral and intel-

lectual virtue turns the question about virtue and knowledge into one concerning the role which one very special kind of knowledge, represented by the virtue of prudence, plays in the formation and operation of good moral habits—habits in the sphere of action and passion or of the will and the emotions. By substituting a number of distinct intellectual virtues for the single term 'knowledge,' Aristotle can definitely answer both Yes and No to the question. Not all the intellectual virtues, not art and science, or even speculative wisdom, are needed for courage, temperance, and justice; but if by "knowledge" is meant nothing more than prudence, then Aristotle affirms these moral virtues to involve knowledge of a sort.

The distinction between moral and intellectual virtue also enables Aristotle to reformulate the problem of the unity of virtue. Instead of asking whether there is only one virtue, having many aspects, or many distinct virtues, he considers which virtues are interdependent and which can exist separately from one another. Virtue has unity in the inseparability of the moral virtues from one another and from prudence. The sailor who appears to be courageous without being temperate, or the thief who appears to be prudent without being just, has only the appearance of these virtues. But though Aristotle uses the phrase "perfect virtue" to signify both the integration of these virtues and the perfection of each when it is integrated with the others, he does not include all the particular virtues in the unity of virtue. Some, like art and science, can exist apart from prudence or the moral virtues, and they from it.

By showing how all of the moral virtues depend upon prudence or practical wisdom, Aristotle thinks he is able to "refute the argument . . . that the virtues exist in separation from each other." But he does not find any greater unity of the virtues than is involved in their inseparability as a result of their common dependence on prudence. Following Aristotle, Aquinas criticizes those who assert a more profound unity by claiming that prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice signify "only certain general conditions . . . to be

found in all the virtues." This, according to Aquinas, is tantamount to denying that they are distinct habits.

Insisting that they are really distinct as habits, Aquinas nevertheless suggests that "these four virtues qualify one another by a kind of overflow. For," he explains, "the qualities of prudence overflow into the other virtues in so far as they are directed by prudence. And each of the others overflows into the rest, for the reason that whoever can do what is more difficult, can do what is less difficult." The man who "can curb his desires for the pleasures of touch, which is a very hard thing to do . . . is more able to check his daring in dangers of death . . . which is much easier"; the man who can withstand the "dangers of death, which is a matter of great difficulty, is more able to remain firm against the onslaught of pleasures."

As for justice, Aquinas holds that legal justice, "by commanding the other virtues . . . draws them all into the service of the commonweal." Aristotle also sees a certain unification of the virtues, at least all the moral virtues, in terms of justice—the kind of justice he calls "general" to distinguish it from the special virtue of justice. He conceives general justice as comprising all the moral virtues, including special justice, insofar as all these virtues are directed toward the welfare of society and the good of other men. "Justice in this sense," he writes, "is not a part of virtue, but virtue entire." Holding that it "is complete virtue, not absolutely, but in relation to our neighbor," he adds that "it is complete because he who possesses it can exercise his virtue not only in himself, but towards his neighbor as well."

Some writers tend in the opposite direction toward a greater separation of the virtues. Justice, according to Marcus Aurelius, is prior to the other virtues, for "in justice the other virtues have their foundation." In suggesting that a man can secure "a favorable and commodious interpretation of his vices" by coloring them in the light of his virtues, Bacon seems to accept the conjunction of virtue with vice which is expressed in the familiar phrase, "the defects of one's virtues." That a gentleman may with honor be permitted certain

failings is similarly implied by Dr. Johnson's reference to "the genteel vices."

This comfortable doctrine that a man can be truly virtuous in some aspects of character while vicious in others seems, however, to be rejected by Montaigne and Kant, as well as by Plato and Aristotle. The standard of Christian virtue is even more stringent. What may appear to be virtues are, according to Augustine, "rather vices than virtues so long as there is no reference to God in the matter. For although some suppose that virtues which have a reference only to themselves, and are desired only on their own account, are yet true and genuine virtues, the fact is that even they are inflated with pride, and are therefore to be reckoned vices."

The theological virtue of charity—the love of God—is held by the theologians to be indispensable to the perfection of all the other virtues in a Christian life. Not only, according to Aquinas, do faith and hope lack "the perfect character of virtue without charity," but all the other virtues are imperfect in its absence.

"It is possible by means of human works," he writes, "to acquire the moral virtues in so far as they produce good works that are directed to an end not surpassing the natural ability of man. And when they are acquired thus, they can be without charity, even as they were in many of the pagans. But in so far as they produce good works in relation to a supernatural last end, thus they have the character of virtue truly and perfectly, and cannot be acquired by human acts, but are infused by God. Such moral virtues cannot be without charity . . . Only the infused virtues are perfect, and deserve to be called virtues absolutely . . . The other virtues, those, namely, that are acquired, are virtues in a restricted sense."

THAT VIRTUE IS GOOD and vice evil seems to go undisputed in the tradition of the great books, even by Machiavelli who bemoans the "necessity" of vice in a successful prince. But unanimity on this point does not preclude a variety of answers to the question, What is the good of virtue?

Is it an end in itself, or a means, and if a means, what end does it serve? Moreover, what is the principle of goodness in the virtues? Does it lie in the rule of reason, in conformity to nature, in obedience to the moral law and the imperative of duty, in submission to God's will? Or are the virtues good only to the extent that they are useful and profitable? To the individual alone or to society as well? As these questions are differently answered, different conceptions of virtue appear.

Marcus Aurelius gives the simplest and most familiar answer. Virtue is its own reward. "What more dost thou want," the Stoic asks, "when thou hast done a man a service? Art thou not content that thou hast done something conformable to thy nature, and dost thou seek to be paid for it?" The virtues are not only self-rewarding but they are the only things in which a good man can take delight. "When thou wishest to delight thyself," Aurelius says, "think of the virtues of those who live with thee . . . For nothing delights so much as the examples of the virtues."

Locke seems to make profit or utility the source of goodness in the virtues. "God, having by an inseparable connexion, joined virtue and public happiness together," Locke writes, "and made the practice thereof necessary to the preservation of society, and visibly beneficial to all with whom the virtuous man has to do, it is no wonder that everyone should not only allow, but recommend and magnify those rules to others, from whose observance of them he is sure to reap advantage to himself."

The virtues seem to become conventional in Locke's view. They are whatever the members of a particular society deem advantageous. "Virtue and vice are names pretended, and supposed, everywhere to stand for actions in their nature, right and wrong; and as far as they are really so applied, they are so far coincident with the divine law . . . But yet, whatever is pretended," Locke adds, "this is visible, that these names, virtue and vice, in the particular instances of their application, through the several nations and societies of men in the world, are constantly attributed only to such actions as, in each country and society, are in reputation or discredit . . . Thus, the measure

of what is everywhere called and esteemed virtue and vice, is the approbation or dislike, praise or blame," which establishes itself in a society "according to the judgment, maxims, or fashion of that place . . . That this is the common measure of virtue and vice, will appear," Locke thinks, "to anyone who considers, that though that passes for vice in one country, which is counted a virtue, or at least not a vice, in another; yet everywhere, virtue and praise, vice and blame, go together."

Hobbes also regards the names of the virtues as "inconstant names" varying according to "the nature, disposition and interest of the speaker . . . for one man calleth *wisdom*, what another calleth *fear*; and one *cruelty*, what another *justice*; one *prodigality*, what another *magnanimity*." Yet this does not prevent Hobbes from proposing a list of virtues which derive their goodness from the natural law. "All men agree on this," he writes, "that peace is good, and therefore also the ways or means of peace, which . . . are *justice, gratitude, modesty, equity, mercy*, and the rest of the laws of nature, are good; that is to say, moral virtues; and their contrary vices, evil."

Moral philosophy, according to Hobbes, is "the science of virtue and vice" and "therefore the true doctrine of the laws of nature is the true moral philosophy." Though other writers of moral philosophy "acknowledge the same virtues and vices," Hobbes thinks they do not see "wherein consisted their goodness, nor that they come to be praised as the means of peaceable, sociable, and comfortable living."

Like Kant, he criticizes Aristotle's doctrine of the mean; or, as Hobbes refers to it, the notion that virtue consists in "a mediocrity of the passions: as if not the cause, but the degree of daring, made fortitude; or not the cause, but the quantity of a gift, made liberality." The cause of virtue, according to Hobbes, is the natural law, commanding men to do whatever is required for peace and self-preservation. In terms of a quite different conception of law and duty, Kant also says that "the difference between virtue and vice cannot be sought in the degree in which certain maxims are followed, but only in the specific *quality* of the maxims. In other words, the vaunted principle

of Aristotle, that virtue is the *mean* between two vices, is false."

It is not Kant but Spinoza who seems to bear an affinity to Hobbes in the theory of virtue. Both make self-preservation the end which determines the direction of virtuous conduct. Both consider civil peace or the good of others in relation to self. Both draw up lists of moral virtues from their enumeration of the passions, Hobbes by reference to natural law, Spinoza in terms of adequate ideas of God's nature. Spinoza identifies virtue with power and holds that "the more each person strives and is able to seek his own profit, that is to say, to preserve his own being, the more virtue does he possess." But though he makes "the endeavor after self-preservation . . . the primary and only foundation of virtue," he conceives self-preservation itself to have its foundation in knowledge of God.

"To act in conformity with virtue," Spinoza maintains, "is to act according to the guidance of reason, and every effort which we make through reason is an effort to understand, and therefore the highest good of those who follow after virtue is to know God, that is to say, it is a good which is common to all men, and can be equally possessed by all in so far as they are of the same nature." In direct consequence, he declares that "the good which everyone who follows after virtue seeks for himself, he will desire for other men; and his desire on their behalf will be greater in proportion as he has greater knowledge of God."

ALL THOSE WHO RELATE virtue to happiness do not do so in the same way. "The multiplication of happiness," writes Mill, "is, according to the utilitarian ethics, the object of virtue." He attributes to "a very imperfect state of the world's arrangements" the fact that "anyone can best serve the happiness of others by the absolute sacrifice of his own; yet so long as the world is in that imperfect state," he goes on to say, "the readiness to make such a sacrifice is the highest virtue which can be found in man."

But Mill repeatedly insists that only an increase of happiness justifies sacrifice, and only its contribution to happiness makes virtue good. He criticizes the Stoics for striving "to

raise themselves above the concern about anything but virtue" and for supposing that "he who has that has everything . . . No claim of this description is made for the virtuous man by the utilitarian doctrine."

While admitting that virtue may come to be desired disinterestedly, as an ingredient of happiness rather than as a means to it, Mill does not regard virtue as a natural and necessary condition of happiness. "Virtue, according to the utilitarian doctrine, is not naturally and originally part of the end, but it is capable of becoming so." If there are some who do not desire virtue, either because it gives them no pleasure or because the lack of it causes them no pain, they can be happy without it.

The view taken by Plato and Aristotle seems to be directly contrary. All things which have ends appointed by their nature, Socrates argues at the beginning of *The Republic*, must also be capable of virtues or excellences whereby to achieve their ends. If happiness is the end of the soul or of human life, then we must look to such excellences as the virtue of justice and temperance to provide the means. When Glaucon and Adeimantus ask Socrates to prove that only the virtuous man can be happy, he undertakes the long analysis of the parts of the soul and the parts of the state to discover the virtues appropriate to each and to the whole. When the virtues are defined, Glaucon admits that the question he originally asked "has now become ridiculous."

The answer to the question is evident as soon as virtue and happiness are seen to be reciprocal notions, like cause and effect. Yet Aristotle's definition of moral virtue as a habit of choice, consisting in a mean—a mean relative to ourselves, determined by reason or as the prudent man would determine it—does not immediately explain why happiness is defined as "the realization and perfect exercise of virtue." The connection between virtue as means and happiness as end becomes apparent only in terms of the conception that happiness is the ultimate end *because* it includes all good things and leaves nothing to be desired.

As an object of desire, as something worth having in itself, virtue is only one type of good. It does not constitute happiness. Happiness,

according to Aristotle, includes as well such bodily and external goods as health and pleasure, friendship and wealth. But unlike these other goods, the virtues alone are capable of producing happiness because, in Aristotle's view, they are the causes of our thinking and acting well with respect to all other goods.

"We do not acquire or preserve virtue by the help of external goods," Aristotle says, "but external goods by the help of virtue." This applies to health and pleasures, no less than to wealth and friends. Because the moral virtues, together with prudence, direct our desires, determine our choices, and govern our actions in accordance with reason's discrimination between real and apparent goods, the exercise of these habits results in happiness or living well. But since external goods are goods of fortune and not entirely within our control, Aristotle finds it necessary to qualify the definition of happiness. To the statement that the happy man is one "who is active in accordance with complete virtue," he adds that he is one "who is sufficiently equipped with external goods, not for some chance period, but throughout a complete life."

According to Kant, "the connexion of virtue and happiness may be understood in two ways: either the endeavor to be virtuous and the rational pursuit of happiness are not two distinct actions, but absolutely identical . . . or the connexion consists in this, that virtue produces happiness as something distinct from the consciousness of virtue, as a cause produces an effect." Kant thinks that both the Stoic and Epicurean doctrines choose the first of these alternatives. They differ from each other, in his opinion, only in the way they conceive the identity of virtue and happiness. "The Epicurean notion of virtue," he writes, "was already involved in the maxim: to promote one's own happiness. According to the Stoics, on the other hand, the feeling of happiness was already contained in the consciousness of virtue."

Kant's own resolution of what he calls "the antinomy of practical reason" seems to depend on his conception of the *summum bonum*. For him it is not happiness; it consists rather in being worthy of happiness through

doing one's duty. "Morality," he says, "is not properly the doctrine how we should *make* ourselves happy, but how we should become *worthy* of happiness." Under the moral law, to be happy is not a duty, but to be worthy of happiness is. In Kant's view, therefore, virtue is related to happiness through the medium of duty. Virtue, he declares, is "a coincidence of the rational will with every duty firmly settled in the character." It is "the moral strength of a man's will in his obedience to duty."

But in addition to being the will's strength in overcoming obstacles—"the natural inclination which may come into conflict with the moral purpose"—virtue, or rather "the imperative, which commands the duty of virtue," includes "besides the notion of constraint, that of an end." Not an end that we have, Kant explains, but one that "we ought to have," an end "which, therefore, pure practical reason has in itself, whose highest, unconditional end (which, however, continues to be a duty) consists in this: that virtue is its own end, and by deserving well of men is also its own reward."

THE ISSUE BETWEEN Kant and Aristotle concerning the good of virtue, as a means or an end, involves the whole of their moral philosophy. It goes to the central conflict between their fundamental principles, which is discussed in the chapters on DUTY and HAPPINESS. Fundamental differences in political philosophy also arise from different views of virtue in relation to the forms of government and the ends of the state.

The ancients, for example, define aristocracy in terms of virtue. The point is not only that aristocracy is a form of government in which the few who are most virtuous rule; it is also that form of government the principle of which is virtue, as liberty is the principle of democracy, and wealth of oligarchy. Nietzsche believes, "Every elevation of the type 'man' has hitherto been the work of an aristocratic society."

Montesquieu makes virtue the principle in republican government, in contrast to honor as the principle in monarchies and fear in despotism. "What I distinguish by the name of virtue, in a republic," he explains, "is the love

of one's country—that is, the love of equality. It is not a moral, nor a Christian, but a political virtue; and it is the spring which sets republican government in motion, as honor is the spring which gives motion to monarchy." Since for Montesquieu both democracy and aristocracy are forms of republican government, the former rests on virtue as much as the latter.

Agreeing that the conditions Montesquieu sets for republican government "could not exist without virtue," Rousseau criticizes him for failing to see that, "the sovereign authority being everywhere the same, the same principle should be found in every well-constituted state, in a greater or less degree, it is true, according to the form of government." So for Mill, virtue defines the aim of good government itself, without respect to particular forms. "The most important point of excellence which any form of government can possess," he writes, "is to promote the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves."

The virtues which a government promotes, however, may be those of the good citizen rather than the good man. This distinction between civic and moral virtue occupies the ancients, related as it is to the problem of the virtuous man living in a bad society—a problem which Socrates actually faces, as well as discusses, in the *Apology* and the *Crito*.

"The virtue of the citizen," Aristotle writes, "must be relative to the constitution of the state of which he is a member . . . Hence it is evident that the good citizen need not of necessity possess the virtue which makes a good

man." Yet "in some states, the good man and the good citizen are the same."

In this vein Aquinas, considering whether the laws should try to make men good, says of a tyrannical or unjust law that "in so far as it has something of the nature of law, its aim is that the citizens be good." At least "it aims at being obeyed by them; and this," he adds, "is to make them good, not absolutely, but with respect to that particular government."

It is this type of moral relativism with respect to one's form of government that Tocqueville finds repugnant. "There are some universal and permanent needs of mankind on which moral laws are based," and nations have always redefined virtue for their own purposes. Quoting Plutarch, Tocqueville cites the example that courage in ancient Rome became so valued that "in Latin 'virtue' came to mean 'courage.'" Other societies have equated virtue with skill in war or loyalty to a monarch. In America, as Tocqueville foresees it, "all those quiet virtues which tend to regularity in the body social and which favor trade are sure to be held in special honor," while "all those turbulent virtues which sometimes bring glory but more often trouble to society will rank lower in the public opinion."

Although Aquinas believes virtue is relative to particular governments, he also contemplates the need for disobeying a civil ordinance if it demands too great a sacrifice of virtue by requiring the citizen to violate the natural or the divine law. As Rousseau later says, "a man's duty" takes precedence over "that of a citizen."