

Morality for all Seasons

Santina Gatta

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	2
I. MAN IS ANIMA - 'SPIRIT'	16
1-1 THE GOOD SOUL	16
S1-2 FEAR, EVIL SPIRITS, & DEMONS	18
II. RELIGION IN ANCIENT GREECE.....	19
2-1 THE CULTURE OF IDOL WORSHIP	21
2-2 PHILOSOPHY OF THE ELITE	22
III. WHAT DOES MORALITY MEAN FOR ARISTOTLE?	24
3-1 IS THE ROLE OF ARISTOTLE'S GOD UNDEFINED IN THE <i>NICOMACHEAN ETHICS</i> ?	26
3-2 DOES ARISTOTLE'S EDUCATION MAKE MEN MORALLY EXCELLENT?	32
3-3 CHOOSING WELL	35
IV. ARISTOTLE ASKS INDIVIDUAL AND STATE TO ENGAGE IN A PARTNERSHIP.....	43
4-1 TEACHER, LEARNER DICHOTOMY	44
V. CONCLUSION.....	46
WORKS CITED.....	50

Introduction

Aristotle's ethics center on ideas of being an excellent and honorable person, rather than an adherence to a religious concept of right and wrong. (Taylor 4) There are problems with this assumption for numerous reasons. The remnants and artifacts of Aristotle's lectures are compilations of bits and pieces of his supposed original work. The language in which his lectures were given and written in, is no longer spoken or written. Depending on the time frame, these scripts must therefore be deciphered. This is a painstaking process and with little material to go with in circulation there is much guess work involved as to what actually was being conveyed by Aristotle's pupils, who wrote down his lectures. It is often said that Aristotle's work has no notions of right and wrong concepts of ethics as we understand in our day and age to mean, that with and in relationship to a Judaic and Christian concept of God. Some scholars argue that what Aristotle implies in his ethics is the very foundation and basis of the Divine Scriptures and the Judaic and Christian religion philosophy (Fisher 47) How original are Aristotle's philosophies is to beg the question, "Were the intentions of his thoughts kept intact?" It is said by various scholars that Aristotle's dialogues have been changed, lost and misinterpreted (Salem xi) Aristotle's work is said to be altered to suit personal or political agendas of those who, at the various times throughout history came into possession of his work, such as the ruling power of the day. Today's numerous translations and endless work on Aristotle attempts to come to a fuller understanding as to the meaning and intentions of his original lectures.

Are there original unaltered remnants of his work? Aristotle's work "is much disputed, over its originality, authorship, and translation." (Greenwood 5) Therefore the information which circulates and which we have come to understand concerning Aristotle's work varies in opinion and belief; therefore, both author and learners can at best "assume" what Aristotle's intentions

were when speaking on ethics and morality. Today, as throughout history, religious ideas continue to be gained or lost through position and power. The position of religious ideas is often gained or lost in wars. However, western Democratic notions often shy away from religion so as not to come across as “politically incorrect.” To give precedent to a singular understanding of God through a particular people or a particular land is to come across as being narrow-minded. It is Democratic to remove any and all notions of God, and morality from our schools, institutions, and common texts so as not to offend any religious groups whose beliefs about God are absolute. Aristotle’s ethics - cleverly democratic - remove the need to jostle for dominance because “his” notions of morality, God, and ethics are presented as being “achievable” by the use of one’s own reasoning merit and not because of adherence to any God. Ideas of right and wrong can be achieved without religion. We can be moral societies without understanding or having a relationship to any concept of God or religion is what Aristotle’s ethics is conveying (Taylor 4). We can have achieved ethics but it not need be tied with any concept of relationship to God. However, is this true? Can we have morality, ethics, and notions of right and wrong without the concept of the originator and initiator of truth, justice, and right and wrong as we have come to know God as being without erasing the truth? The premise and thesis of this paper is to state that separating right from wrong from their relationship with the truth, the source of knowledge of the Transcendent, is futile.

What do we hope to understand about Aristotle’s work? What are we trying to prove about his work?

Rene Antione Gauthier’s book, *La Morale D’Aristote*, challenges the widespread view that Aristotle’s work had no concepts of morality as we know morality to mean today. (Ogilvie 18) However, the truth often omitted is that one cannot speak about ethics and morals without

seeking the origin of morality and ethics. To talk about ethics in Aristotle's time as today is to refer back to its roots and foundation which are Judaic in concept (Fisher 49). This fact is omitted in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

The ancient Greeks did not look to their gods to make them morally better, nor did the ancient Romans. These cultures believed that a person's character was fixed and unchangeable (Ogilvie 18). However, the idea that one's character is unchangeable is not what Aristotle conveys in *Nicomachean Ethics* but rather that through contemplation one could change through choosing well toward happiness (Salem xi). Aristotle asks his listeners to distinguish between lower nature happiness - relying on pagan gods for good fortune - or the option of choosing well, through contemplation and reflection, in the pursuit of one's own happiness. (Shapiro 5) These choices relate to the topics of ethics, human nature and moral philosophy. G.E. M. Anscombe asks this very question in *Intention*. She asks "Can it be that there is something that modern philosophy has blankly misunderstood by Aristotle's practical knowledge?" (Shapiro 63)

Ancient Greece was an oral society. Ideas were shared through use of one's voice as the means of communication. Reading and writing were not prevalent skills, because reading material was not publicly available but reserved for a small elite ruling class. What is known to be circulating in Ancient Greece were scripts left behind by scribes and scholars (if not destroyed) in libraries for those who were fortunate enough to have access to them. Societies and scribes believed that what they lived and experienced had to be written down, documented and shared with future generations. They believed that this was of the utmost importance and that their experiences should be considered part of a common thread of information and knowledge, and therefore ought to be preserved as such (Shapiro 3). Divine Scriptures, that is, knowledge about societies and people who had encounters with God and God with people, were

documented. The New Testament, one of these preserved documents continues to circulate today as it did thousands of years ago. In the time of Aristotle, such letters written in Greek and circulating as written material in ancient Greece were considered valuable knowledge, which was special.

Aristotle's ethics is unclear on many counts. One idea is that doing things well need not require the help of any particular named religion or God, but one can become the sort of man Aristotle speaks about simply by following his pattern of ethics. Nevertheless, Aristotle's work says that not all people can choose well, that each of us has so much of it, because it is skills we acquire through development, through acting and behaving rightly and not through chance or good fortune. (Rackham 537) More is required in order to achieve and to choose the right acts; training and habituation are required. But what spurs one to continually choose what is right? Where is the habit of choosing well, right over wrong, acquired? This is a moral question. Then, doing right may have seemed attractive. Today, the notion of doing right as a means to achieve "happiness" may be unpalatable to some, but, to others, possibly important. Therefore, the desire to choose right from wrong stems from a base, a foundation which is missing from Aristotle's work, rendering it ineffective. (Shapiro 8)

This space between not being just, temperate, and courageous and becoming temperate, just, courageous is the role of morality. The reason one would act just is so as not to be unjust. The reason one would decide to be temperate is to decide that being intemperate is not choosing well. The decision to act courageous would be based on the idea that acting uncourageously is wrong. There would need to be a reason to act virtuously, and if there is no reason then there is no pressure to act ethically. This pressure is morality, concerning one's human nature and comportment. This paper argues that in order to become this virtuous person Aristotle claims we

can become, the role of relationship with a power greater than oneself is required; a master, a role model, a guide, is required in order to become this virtuous and moral person.

Not all believe in God. Today, as in past societies, various views circulate. There are people who are atheists and agnostics. The space between wanting and knowing what to choose and then finally acting out the right choice in matters of right and wrong is undefined.

More is required. This “more”, which controls and directs the soul to a good end (as Aristotle describes ethics), is a matter of spirituality. Spirituality concerns the soul, what is unseen. How can matter, how can mind understand, know what it is void of (the power of goodness)? This renders it implausible at least if we are to make men and women literally virtuous, but superficial contemplation without proper knowledge is not what Aristotle seems to be encouraging. “God is witness to this truth” says Aristotle. (Rackham 537)

The Greeks had many gods, but which ancient civilization’s “God” gives the option to choose right from wrong? *Nicomachean Ethics* is written as wavering between indefinable ideas of gods and ambiguities of morality and ethics, all mixed into a melting pot of possibilities as to the meaning and purpose Aristotle’s work (Salem 3). Choosing well would require knowing the difference between right and wrong. Aristotle’s work says there is a right and wrong way to do things. Morality is part of the equation in choosing well. Making good choices requires having a practical knowledge base, wisdom, and a moral compass and then the mental strength to know the difference between right and wrong and the moral skill to choose the right over the wrong (Shapiro 8). The manner in which Aristotle’s work continues to be presented shows that he was calculating and original in thinking.

Rackham's Aristotle, translated directly from Greek, uses the specific words "right and wrong" when describing the ethics of Aristotle. "For it is the special property of man in distinction from the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities" says Aristotle (Rackham 11). Does the human race instinctively choose what is perfect? No it does not.

It will therefore depend on which translation of Aristotle is being used, and how the author decides to interpret and present the material. This ambiguity and inconsistency is due to the fact that Aristotle's work is in bits of notes of his lectures and was never a complete book as we have come to know it (Rackham xiii). Aristotle's work is the compilation of his ideas combined over the centuries from *The Athenian Constitution*, Cicero, and Quintilian (Rackham xv). Therefore, there is much speculation and variance of opinion and on the subject. To say with certainty that Aristotle's ethics had no notions of right or wrong implies ancient Greek society had no personal codes of conduct amongst themselves. Rather Hellenistic culture prided itself in being advanced in its learning and was considered an evolved society. Ancient Greece was populated largely with foreigners who mixed in with the general Greek nationals' population. "Barbarians" meant "foreigners" or "strangers"; these strangers made up more than half of the general population in both the Greek and Roman Empires as early as 146 B.C.E. Foreigners worshipped their home land gods, but they could choose the gods available in the societies they inhabited in- "in their own way." (Ogilvie 4) These foreign soldiers came from differing countries but fought on behalf of the host country as paid soldiers.

Aristotle spoke about the importance of the quality of one's soul. The topic of the soul implies an understanding and discipline of what is within, as well as how to control the invisible within, and the thought, life, and action that ensues. How than does one make their soul

excellent? What knowledge base, what instruction, makes one's soul seek this superior way of being, acting and living? If we are to examine the two dichotomies of what ancient Greeks observed religiously, and what Aristotle is depicted as presenting in *Nicomachean Ethics*, the two ideas contrast. Aristotle's views are presented as opposite of what the majority of ancient Greece observed and understood about the spiritual world and the power which was outside themselves to control or affect. Seeking the favor of the gods for healthy harvest, good health or safety from war were the ancient Greek's ideas of what made them happy. Ancient Greek society did not try to understand how crops grew or how plants germinated as we do today; they just depended on the favor of the divine gods to take care of their human needs (Ogilvie 9). Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is said to be written as a precursor to *Politics*. *Politics* is said to be "...the study of all human affair leading toward happiness" (Rackham xvi). Happiness, the aim of life, depended how successfully one's day to day activities turned out, which depended in turn on the goodwill of the divine gods (Ogilvie 17). Aristotle work is depicted to say that one could now control their success and happiness. Aristotle presents the idea of coming into partnership with the state toward a manner of living which produced a best and happy end. (Rackham 563)

If the general population relied on the favor of the gods, Aristotle has a different view of God, one that is self-sufficient but not interfering with anyone or anything? His concept of God was one of non-interference. His concept of God was one of not self-preservation but self-actualization. But how does Aristotle-man become something he is not.

The ancient Greeks practiced pagan worship if they desired to do so as long as their ritualistic observations were effected whole-heartedly (Ogilvie 6). Contrary to Aristotle's ideas of religion and ethics, Aristotle advocates the importance of religion and education. But which

religion, as we know religion to signify over the course of the human history, is not mentioned in *Nicomachean Ethics*? This crucial fact is omitted from his work for reasons yet to be determined. We can ask “Why?” Aristotle writes in *Politics* “What is indispensable to the existence of a state is - that there must be care of religion which is commonly called worship.” (Rackham 573).

Is Aristotle implying that the worship of the gods of his time will now make men temperate? Rather, the exact opposite is true: he states that “...no one is temperate by mere chance...” meaning that to be temperate one must work at their character (Rackham 539). Or is Aristotle suggesting that people now begin to ask the gods to be temperate instead? That the people ask the gods to make one courageous, instead of asking for a good harvest and then waiting for the reply? Was a new god of virtue now circulating in ancient Greece?

I am distinguishing two ideas. First, the *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* does not represent what ancient Greek religions practiced and believed about god(s), but the choice to control one’s own happiness by applying Aristotle’s ideas of ethics to one’s life.

Second, given this argument, it does not mean that the ancient Greeks did not offer up or experience any form of relational reciprocities of morality in their daily interactions. People of any civilization or time do not live unto themselves, but within a community, and living amongst others requires both spoken and unspoken agreements, some of which require duties to one another in order to promote social order (Taylor 5). However simple or complex, ancient Greek society was under various forms of duty of obligation to its political leaders or emperor for example. Aristotle wrote that “...a city too, like individual has a work to do and the fulfillment of both state and individual renders the city successful.” (Rackham 554)

Aristotle is saying that moral skill requires internal work rather than that moral qualities are handed down by gods. Aristotle writes in *Politics*“...no one is temperate by mere chance, but the happy state which is best and which acts rightly; and rightly it cannot act without doing right actions and neither individual nor state cannot do right actions without virtue and wisdom.” (Rackham 537) Aristotle proposes that through a particular education, one could become virtuous in accordance with reason, all for the sake of the soul and ultimate end and happiness. His work does not say it is through the study of *Politics* that one becomes wise and ultimately happy. This newfound knowledge requires the assistance of a particular God now, and this god goes unnamed in his work, leaving the reader to wonder if Aristotle had converted to a new religion other than what was being practice by the majority in ancient Greece.

There were various ideas and practices circulating in ancient Greece, including other societies' concepts of the transcendent, such as those of the ancient Israelites, who believed in, worshipped, and followed one God only. Judaic religions wrote laws and rules for its tribes, clans, and communities. Worship of the occult, demons, and Paganism was strictly forbidden. Some Judaic rules involved banishment from the community, if one practiced witchcraft or consulted mediums, for example. Those who went against the prescribed rules of the Judaic God were to be stoned to death (Lev 24: 17). The absolute prohibition on the practice of the occult or demon worship differentiated Israelites and Greek societies. Israelite moral holiness entailed no idol worship. This is where ancient societies differ between pagan societies and monotheistic societies: what separates them is a strict moral code, with rules forbidding association with any pagan god worship and commands to worship one God, who is a jealous God, and who the Israelites came to know by the name “ I AM WHO I AM” in Ex 3:13 (Version). Collectively, the

Israelite communities obeyed moral laws aimed at a common goal, which was holiness and excellence.

Similarly, Aristotle asks those who heard his lectures to come into partnership and relationship with the city state, to follow the god of the state toward cooperation and peace. Aristotle states this would require adherence to codes and laws and which consisted of a certain mode and way of life. (Rackham 597). Through the possession of these “higher qualities and in accordance with reason all for the sake of the soul and that wise men ought to choose them for the sake of the soul. God is witness to this truth.” (Rackham 598) He seems to be saying that there is a difference between “...waiting for good fortune to come versus going out and taking hold of happiness ...” through proper action (Rackham 599). Furthermore, Aristotle writes in *Politics* “...for he is happy and blessed, not by reason of any external good, but in himself and by reason of his own nature.” (Rackham 537) Aristotle is saying, contrary to popular Greek ideas of character, that now one could control and change their character. Why does Aristotle not name his god as being a ruler, emperor, or a God as we understand it today? Pagan gods were named so as to create a relationship with them.

The Greeks believed that the ruling emperors took the role of a physical god. In his *Metaphysics* Aristotle calls this being ‘God’ who is purely spiritual and intellectual, but this god thinks only of himself and has no understanding of our physical world (Annas 25). In *Politics* Aristotle writes that “...God and the universe who have no external actions over and above their own energies, would be far enough from perfection, and this would be true as well of every individual” (Rackham 553) I. Aristotle does not advocate controlling people in his work but that each individual should self-govern through proper knowledge and learning. But is this feat actually possible that is becoming morally good on one’s own merit and ability?

The answer is of course “yes”. Notions of right and wrong can be attractive values for any civilization or people if they are morally attuned which our societies have shown to be. (Fisher 23). Being morally sensitive is not a new idea, but has been an idea that has circulated since early civilizations. The Bible documents particular people, such as Moses or Noah, who did have a relationship with God, and that these individuals were concerned with notions of right and wrong. Knowing the difference between right and wrong is not solely a Christian concept or a new world concept.

Aristotle’s work attempts to bridge the dichotomy of what was being taught between ancient Greek culture and the elite ruling classes. Aristotle in *Politics* asks both individual and state to come together and join forces of virtuosity. He is asking for partnership and relationship (Rackham 599). This would take hundreds of generations, however. That most of ancient Greece was unlearned in matters of morality, ethics and doing what is moral superior does not imply that the people did not wish to understand or come to a deeper relationship with religion, morality and faith. Ancient Greece’s general population did not have access to the philosophies of which Aristotle spoke of in his lectures.

Aristotle never introduces the idea of a monotheistic God. History shows that the Judaic God of ancient times was worship in Aristotle’s time. The worship of this one God is what the Israelites observed, that is, one God and ruler and never many Gods or rulers.

This oneness of spirit and direction strengthened and fortified the ideas and essence of the Israelites toward the achievement of a common end and happiness.

Aristotle asks both individuals and states to collaborate toward the choosing of what was morally better in aim toward a happy life and good end both individual and state collectively (Rackham 601)

Nicomachean Ethics is about “the science of human affairs, of man’s good and happiness” (Rackham 25). Because man is living in a social context and environment, laws and customs regulating his or her comportment are important.

Aristotle writes that “not all agree as to what should be taught...” and proposes a public common education and asks whether education should be concerned with moral and intellectual virtues. (Rackham 637) Aristotle says, however, that opinion differs greatly on what should be shared commonly as useful and excellent information. Aristotle was attempting to give the people a more excellent way of living and understanding of fate and religion as a personal power rather than a pointless energy wasted in the occult of wishful expectation,. This claim is made true by the fact that none of his work promotes the worship of any particular deity.

He says that the practice of religion is important, but his work is written so as not to name any religion practice which would bring us closer to notions of practices that we could learn from or notions we have come to learn throughout human history.

This crucial fact is left unanswered for a reason yet to be determined. Education was important because how one was raised from childhood was important to the child’s well-being. Aristotle writes that a person becomes moral through this very specific education, which only the elite and the ruling class had access to.

Therefore I will argue for the view that Aristotle believed that one could learn and develop one's moral character, whereas the Greeks believed that one was born with certain character traits and did not change during their lives. Plato advocates in his dialogues the story of the cave, to come out of common thinking and see the light of the world which is able to illuminate one's soul and thought. Greek society may have exercised pagan rituals, but not all members of it did. Philosophers had deeper visions for themselves, and they practiced and defended their views adamantly such as in the cases of Stoicism and Epicureanism. Stoicism advocated personal excellence and perfection and obligations that were based on roles and duty-oriented (Taylor 48). Epicureans lived rational lives, and sought out eudemonia by minimizing pain and increasing pleasure. This was achieved through avoiding evil and increasing the good in one's life with the use of one's reasoning capacities, but not due on any supreme lawgiver. (Taylor 62)

There still remains a duty to expose the name of the God Aristotle introduces in *Nicomachean Ethics*. His references to the divine being and morality need to be determined and defined, which they are not, leaving the reader forever wondering which tradition or knowledge base Aristotle builds his ethics on. Most of his work is shown omitting this very crucial information and I am asking why and which foundation or base of moral laws his ethics stand on, because if it is the Judaic monotheistic religion, then his work should say so. If this information has been omitted by translators for any reasons, it is not giving justice to any Aristotle's work on ethics (Salem xi).

The evidence for this claim is that individuals and city rulers and the state are asked to come into partnership and unification, through family, through leadership, through state, and through property (Rackham 619). This would imply a collective effort and common ground for

this to be plausible, and would operate similar to our idea of a utilitarian society today. Aristotle work is written to display these dichotomies of learning and teaching, ruling and being ruled.

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* states that if its citizens are to become ethical and morally superior, they would require a proper education and upbringing, namely by religion - which religion is left undefined in his work; secondly, Aristotle's idea of God, the Prime Mover seems not to interact with anyone but himself. This implies that each person is already predisposed with particular abilities and skills and this would contradict Aristotle's idea of being able to learn morality or acquire more understanding or knowledge toward choosing well.

If each person already has a predisposition, there is no hope to choose what is best. If Aristotle's god does not intervene in people's thoughts and lives, then how does this make his ethics workable? I will attempt to prove that belief in a particular knowledge, that is, the knowledge of the Divine Scripture, was the determinant factor in the adherences to these higher virtues of moral and intellectual ethics, and not simply by the mere chance of being "...possessed by a good demon." (Rackham 537)

I. MAN IS ANIMA - 'SPIRIT'

Each person lives unto themselves and within each of us are hopes, aspirations and needs. Our spirit within is active; our soul as well confers and interacts with other invisible forces outside itself. The soul can be influenced through knowledge, thoughts, and ideas. Ideas are attached to moods and beliefs. One's dominant spirits determine the quality of one's life, either for good or bad. The function and good of an individual are two of the same thing. As Aristotle articulates in *Nicomachean Ethics*, each person has the capacity for contemplation, reflection and able to make choices (Salem 91). Belief in spirituality or the spirit world varies from person to person. Aristotle asks us to make good choices. In *Politics* Aristotle places a value in our choices saying that there are better choices than others and we should strive to know and choose what is are particular good choices. (Rackham 541) Therefore, the soul can be trained and habituated to function toward this good end. The word "Animistic" is a Latin term which means "possessing a spirit." Humans are animated with life and ability for thought, and reason, yet not all use their capacities for reasoning well. What then is good reasoning?

1-1 THE GOOD SOUL

Aristotle has much to say on the quality of one's soul. He places the onus in the hands of the individual, if change is required to improve that individual's character. Aristotle is advocating the exercising of one's soul toward her or his good end. For the sake of the soul, it would be wise to choose good ends and thus produce internal happiness (Rackham 539)

Aristotle is saying that one's soul can be disciplined through habituation and proper training. The soul is not visible but resides inside of the body's shell; the body acts and reacts through the knowledge and understanding of one's thoughts life. What Aristotle is suggesting is

that how one decides and thinks can be evaluated for its moral weight, that being achieved through contemplation, reflection and application of a particular knowledge. A bad soul is one that is ruled by one's impulses. The emotions should be ruled by the intellectual faculties of one's body. Aristotle implies that "I can become this good person through proper habituation and discipline if I work at it. I can believe that I am creating a good life on my own and achieve ultimately happiness." Aristotle writes in *Nicomachean Ethics* that the good of man is "an activity of soul in accordance with goodness." (Thompson 5) Aristotle asks in his lectures that one examine the quality of their soul. The function of man is the exercise of his non-corporeal faculties, or 'soul' in accordance with and not divorced from rational principles of wisdom and virtues. (Rackham 540)

Aristotle presents his ethics as being simple to effect, but they are not, because our human nature is difficult to overpower. Controlling one's lower nature is not easily achieved because the world's unhappiness is the cumulative result of poor actions taken which produce evil, pain, and suffering. Therefore, the soul is not easily well-directed or controlled, nor does it automatically know which choices affect the best results. If Aristotle implies that choosing well does not entail riches or fame yet morality it is to prove that we struggle with choosing ideas of goodness and moral excellence over lower nature desires.

The relation between bodies and souls is challenging. There is a tension within due to the dichotomy of good and evil which we contend with as human beings. Aristotle is saying that fame and riches are not better than moral excellence. Choosing well involves struggle over conflicting ideas of what is best. Often this best is uncertain as to its results and outcomes for the future of our wellbeing and lives. Because we do not live in the future, but in the present, decision making for future unknown consequences seems futile, therefore, premeditation of our

choices seem not to factor for the present time. But Aristotle is advocating that our choices now do in fact dictate the quality of one's life in the end.

1-2 FEAR, EVIL SPIRITS, & DEMONS

Spaces are vaster and greater than the physical world of objects, things, and persons. Some people today believe forces within the universe affect and make all things move and have life. Aristotle names this force the Prime Mover, which, however, does not interfere with people's lives - contrary to what the greater ancient Greek population believed. Ancient Greek society was comprised of various belief systems. In ancient times, fear dictated people's beliefs in order that their survival needs were met. The church, religion, and state used gods to keep the population hoping for what they needed for daily survival. In ancient Greece; the fear of death, attacks from demons, punishment, disaster, or failed crops, or natural disasters, was very real. It was a precarious time of uncertainty and life could be difficult.

For many centuries, the use of magic and the appeasing of the gods and spirits somehow encouraged the idea that the people could be helped or spared from evil if they did all the right alms and gestures. The success of nature and agriculture demanded that people seek the favor and blessings of established gods of their times, which might ward off evil spirits if asked in a proper fashion and manner. The gods of fertility, or any kind of god who could bring them good fortune, good health, and a successful yield might be consulted. Their world was centered on nature and how it could be appeased so as not to overpower them or destroy them. They had little power, or hope, other than in their religion. Religious orders of the time gave people idols, deities, and gods, so as to offer the population the impression that they had some control of their

lives. Was there really a need for all this fear or did these societies just not know any better? As people evolved and changed, to roam the land became less of a necessity and for various reasons man found he could settle down with his closest family members. As time went on these clans continued to grow and expand and create alliances with other people, both inside and outside their tribe or clan. This allowed people to stay fixed to a location and therefore grow crops, instead of relocating the animals that continually required the new grazing and fresh pasture areas. Civilizations of the past had little time for contemplation and reflection. When survival was on people's minds virtues may not have been easy to achieve. These were difficult times and staying alive was tricky and required wit and determination.

Books and education were not the order of the day for most people living in ancient Greece. Notions of education, ethics, and knowledge were to become common only much, much later in civilization.

Various groups and various ideas circulated in ancient Greece and not only the worship of pagan gods. A shift in thinking gradually and slowly occurred toward civilizations of peace and rest in a manner which individuals toiled less. The struggles, which expanded notions of civilization and change, came through the struggles of people searching and striving to exist as safely and as comfortably as possible. As clans began to expand, cities were established. Civilization begins to make more and more changes, with religion too losing rituals and gaining others.

II. RELIGION IN ANCIENT GREECE

In Robert Ogilvie's book *Ancient Culture and Society* he depicts ancient Greek culture as free to think what they wanted about the gods, as long as their religious actions performed were

effected in a respectful and proper manner and this was effected through two way communication with the gods by asking and then waiting for the answer. Knowing if one's prayers or sacrifices were acceptable was determined by if your prayers were answered or not (Ogilvie 53). The hope that these practices of prayer and ritual would bring them a better life on earth was common amongst the poorer and more oppressed inhabitants of ancient Greece.

Ancient religion became "tolerant and non-sectarian" in contrast with some philosophies of its times, which were more dogmatic and detailed in ideas and concepts, such as the Stoics and Epicurean societies who based their knowledge on factual information (Ogilvie 3). The Stoic philosophy sought excellence and perfection by being dutiful to one's role and position in life, whether parent, king, or soldier to perform one's role well and be responsible to ones calling.

The Stoic philosophy is bold in the sense that it requires a rationality of one's inner self that no one can touch or interfere with. The Stoic will, through reasoning and integrity, prevailed within toward personal excellence and not through their feelings of fear (Taylor 48).

The ancient Romans accepted nature as it was, and did not interfere with its details; they believed the exterior forces were responsible for what took place in their lives and the direct consequence of what the gods wanted. (Ogilvie 10).

Roman religion was concerned "...with success and not with sin," but believed happiness ensues simply by having success in one's everyday activities (Ogilvie 19). Some Ancient Greeks saw gods in human terms, and that they presided over the people. The gods were concerned with the forces of the universe and nature and knew best how to control these forces. Therefore, winning the favor of these gods was considered in one's best interest if they chose to believe in this manner.

The one religion in ancient world which was exclusively monotheist was Judaism. Here, the Roman and Greek philosophical order began a culture of bigotry and persecution for those who would not follow certain common religious rituals, and features ordained or placed by those in power such as the emperors of the time. The ancient populations worshipped their own choice of god in their own way as long as it was reverential manner. (Ogilvie 4).

2-1 THE CULTURE OF IDOL WORSHIP

The gods and goddesses of ancient Greece played roles in the lives of the populace in ancient Greek culture and civilization. Spring, summer, and times of harvest were important periods and people sought favor from the gods to be ensured of a fruitful season. The chief deity was a female goddess of fertility or motherhood named Rhea, and the mother of the sky god Zeus Pater. Hera was made his wife, and Athena was his daughter. There were as many gods as cities in ancient Greece. Greek religious culture did not possess any structure of priesthood, so gods and goddesses came and went and beliefs in them fluctuated at different points in time of ancient Greek history. Already by the sixth century, gods of the Olympian cult were dying off as notions, and new philosophies were being embraced especially by the sages of Greece at the time.

Still, obligation and duty were part of ancient society's ideology - it gave them a duty to stay alive, by worshipping the local gods and goddesses available at least for the general population. The ancient Greeks, were concerned with duty to their god because this is what was familiar to them. In a manner of speaking, the population was guided through various gods, religious giants and emperors. The population was made up not only of Greeks or Romans but

people who came from all over the world. With them they brought their beliefs and views of fate. Roman religious culture was similar to ancient Greek religious culture as they too had many gods (Ogilvie 10). The gods had names, and so personal relationship could be carried and expected from a named god.

Some examples of their names include 'First Plougher', Top-dresser, and Raker (Vervactor, Obarator, and Sarritor). The Greeks thought of gods residing within them so as to order their lives well. Some gods were not to be called at all, but used by patrons as a cover name (Ogilvie 25).

However, Roman religion was concerned with successful living and not with sin. Having success in one's everyday interactions and affairs was what made life happy for the Romans. Their activities were not scientifically controlled by due to divine overseeing. "Comfort and ease was the order of the day" said Horace (Ogilvie 17). Morality was not an issue and it did not matter if one was bad or good as long as their alms were recited. Consultation with the gods was an important factor for these ancient cultures as to what was proper and fitting in regards to protocol, especially in matters of ruling. Rulers were known to recite prayers and call out the names of their gods as a means to make them listen. Prayers were important and recited as legal documents by the ruling class (Ogilvie 35). There were also sacrifices made to the gods in various forms, ranging from food, animals and even young children. Divination and consultation of the gods or heaven were practiced for all their actions and decisions. (Ogilvie 63).

2-2 PHILOSOPHY OF THE ELITE

Philosophers welcomed ideas other than their widespread practices which were circulating in ancient Greece. During the years of disintegration, Greeks were known to seek out

fundamental question about science, nature and philosophy (Ogilvie 9). The learned Greeks began to look to new approaches to matters of the metaphysical, such as Aristotle. As well, not all were forced to adhere to common conceptions which were circulating; rather people believed what they wished - but more or less took their traditionally ideas and roles responsibly.

Those who were most educated were apt to be most agnostic. Cicero, a contemporary of Caesar, never gave credit or power to the gods of his time (Ogilvie 6). Socrates is an example of a person who was put to death for his beliefs. For denouncing the power of the Greek gods, he was accused of corrupting the youth of his time. His philosophy was paid with the price of his life for views which were offensive to some powerful people of his time. Socrates introduced ideas of a supernatural being, that life was an art and that knowledge was the key to it. Greece was moving into a new climate of knowledge and the old customs were being done away with. Yet Socrates who drank the cup of death was ushered as a “saint of rationalism and virtue” (Fisher 39). Plato, as a pupil of Socrates, gave homage and continuance to the life and times of Socrates’ ideas and philosophies. Greece was now going through a transformation and change of culture, ideas, and civilization. It was still Hellenistic, but with new and emerging ideas. The language of use was Attic, prevailing over dialects of ancient Greece. This language was used for commerce and polite society, and spoken from Marseilles to Antioch and even to the Jewish synagogues. This language was considered so indispensable that the Old Testament is translated into the Greek language as a result (Fisher 5).

Not all philosophies were pagan, such as the religious philosophies of Zeno in 311 B.C., who was from Cyrus. He went to Athens to teach a philosophy of a world state ruled by a Supreme power that was Omniscient of equality and human brotherhood of consciousness, and of

the duty of harmony with the divine purpose, a harmony only to be obtained by wisdom and virtue. Epicurus was the philosopher of happiness and Zeno was the philosopher of duty.

The Greek's elite intellectuals were not concerned with self-preservation but with self-realization. Some Greeks became enthralled with ideas of salvation and matters of spirituality not for protection, but for reasons and matters pertaining to their spiritual growth and the satisfaction of discipline for the mind and soul. The Greek sages turned to matters of security and spiritual fulfillment and a particular way of life. It was written that the true Greek population dwindled due to sickness, war, and infanticide, but the city of Hellas was actually inhabited by foreigners and barbarians who were Greek speaking aliens (Fisher 40).

III. WHAT DOES MORALITY MEAN FOR ARISTOTLE?

Certain philosophers in ancient Greece shared similar philosophic notions with Aristotle; they were Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Socrates, and Plato. These individuals are known for separating themselves from ideas of fear, magic, spells, and superstition and invited self-direction and contemplation as a means toward happiness. However Socrates was ostracized from Greek Society, and put to death for his views. His views cannot be considered solely Greek because though the language of script in ancient Greece was Greek does not mean that the ideas and concepts of his ethics and morality were Greek in idea and historical foundation. What was written down by the Jewish scribes was written in the Greek language so it is very plausible that the Greek philosophers of the time would have read it, and this includes the Old Testament written in Greek, which was circulating in ancient times. (Fisher 52).

Moral virtue for Aristotle meant, "...what shall I strive to become in order to achieve the kind of existence that I am meant to have as a person?" (Thompson 89) To venture beyond these sane humanist approaches to social living is to go beyond the normal and into problems, and this is exactly what Aristotle was saying in his work. In order to have orderly and peaceful societies we must be ethical. Since we live in communities, everything we do has ripple effects. Therefore, choosing well is important when it will directly affect our and others quality of life. How people choose is important because choosing entails making certain decisions and taking certain actions that will produce unseen future "good" consequences. As well we can determine that making poor decision do have unforeseen "poor" consequences. This is what I believe Aristotle was advocating as rational and supreme in wisdom. I do not believe Aristotle meant choosing in a manner as we see autonomy today, meaning acting as the initiator of one's own will.

What Aristotle is saying is "Yes, go ahead and be the subject of excellent willing, but we should choose the right, because of its qualitative results," and again Aristotle is clear that what one chooses is qualitative. Anyone left to their own devices and whims is a potential disaster to society. Liberty is a silly notion without restraint and responsibility. (Dworkin 13)

There is this dichotomy and this tension between the two ideas that need a constant monitoring and balance, because what is right has become subjective, which Aristotle is saying is not.

3-1 IS THE ROLE OF ARISTOTLE'S GOD UNDEFINED IN THE *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS*?

The superior wisdoms he speaks about in his ethics ring a familiar bell with Judaic principals and teachings. His work, translated by Thompson in *Nicomachean Ethics*, does not claim to any Judaic God, or any particular God for that matter, as we have come to know Gods at various stages of human civilization. His ethics sound Judaic, because the Jews are known for having only one God. The monotheistic God had many names throughout the ancient times, such as Yahweh, Abba, and Elohim. God gave the Israelites specific ways and mannerisms to follow. This monotheistic god was real to the Israelites and not just a figure in the distance. The Israelites feared to disobey their God and its presence was great amongst them. This one God had specific names, similar to the Greek gods, who also had characteristics and functions and names. Aristotle does not speak about fearing the Prime Mover. Aristotle never mentions the Prime Mover as part of one's ethical development because the Prime Mover as Aristotle knows him does not interact with people. However, in *Politics* Aristotle writes that "...for law is order, and good law is good order; but a very great multitude cannot be orderly; to introduce order into the unlimited is the work of a divine power." This cannot describe the Prime Mover for the reason that Aristotle's Prime Mover does not intervene in matters of man. But this cannot mean for certain Aristotle is not describing concepts of a god from another society such as the Judaic God either. We cannot prove or disprove that this was not his intention.

What Aristotle is portrayed as saying in *Politics* will not mean that what was not written down could not have been Aristotle intentions or thoughts on the matters of which God he was referring to in his work. It is written that once the Old Testament was translated into Greek it was collected and stored in the great libraries of his era. Here we have a mystical philosophy founded on the influence and writing of Plato which had an enormous impact on the theology of the future Christian Church. This work had an enormous influence on the history of Europe to this day (Fisher 49).

Because Aristotle's work makes no reference to any god in particular we are left to wonder if he had a particular god in mind, or if he was inventing a new god. God is important in ethics because it is God that is known to be only good. And to be good, which Aristotle asks us to be, requires knowledge of what is good. This would help readers situate the origins and notions of his ethics as we have come to know morality and ethics throughout human history. Virtue as a means between two extremes would require the ability to reason but reason between what ideas or notions? Aristotle Prime Mover cannot be known personally, but, again, the PM is not part of *Nicomachean Ethics* nor is this god fully described in *Politics*.

Aristotle writes that "we ought to take on immortality as much as possible, and do all that we can to live in accordance with the highest element within us" for the pleasures of philosophy which, according to Aristotle, are the pleasures of contemplation with God. Thompson writes in *Nicomachean Ethics* "and from this it follows that among human activities that which is most akin to God's will bring us the greatest happiness." (Thompson 278)

Is this the Prime Mover described in *Metaphysics*? If this Prime Mover does not interfere with human life, and that man is predestined to order her or his life toward a final good end, then Aristotle would not have written that "...not all men can contemplate well..." Where will man get the knowledge to order his life well? (Rackham 539) Which knowledge, which religion, will take care of this virtuous training required? These are contradictory messages. Morality taken out of its original context of ethics makes understanding ethics confusing and I ask what the purpose of the confusion is. Is there a greater understanding and a truth that would simply help us? Did not Aristotle ask this very thing of us that we choose well, contemplate well? When Socrates and the Stoics called life according to reason, Plato and the analogy of the cave asks that we come out of ignorant thinking. The moralists of antiquity called out ignorance with the need for virtue.

But casting God aside as we know God in a new world sense has cast aside as well the true essence and meaning of right and wrong (Taylor 3).

Aristotle is introducing ideas that are not the norm for his time and place. Clearly he is not describing the pagan gods of Greece of his time. Is Aristotle advocating a theory of a god? Aristotle said that he stood on the shoulders of others, but whose ideas, the names of those he learned from, should be mentioned as to give definition and place to the context to the works of his ethical foundations. As we inherit knowledge and advancement from those before us, we want to understand where we came from, what we are going away from, and what we have become in the process.

Aristotle's work is depicted as if his newfound knowledge is apparent and common, when the most of the ancient world has not yet heard of it. If they somehow heard his notions, they were actually quite hostile to these new teachings because they were unfamiliar to Greek society.

For example, there is a difference between people begging and pleading with gods to rain down on their crops, and, say, a Judaic religion belief where their God willingly and openly wishes to bless the people with abundant rain. There was no begging or pleading involved, but a hope and assurance that the rain would come. “You care for the land and water it; to provide people with grain, for so you have ordained it, you enrich it abundantly.” (Version) These words are hopeful and comforting, rather than empty.

When Aristotle spoke of religion in *Nicomachean Ethics*, he may have been alluding to the Judaic monotheistic concept of God (Gauthier 7). He may very well be referring all his ideas to the Judaic God whom King Solomon refers to. King Solomon spoke of the love of wisdom and the beginning of knowledge, which are similar to Aristotle’s notions of supreme wisdom. King Solomon wrote in the book of Ecclesiastes, “The man who fears God will avoid all extremes. (Ecc 7:18) This is a Judaic concept and similar to Aristotle’s. King Solomon concluded his writings with, “Fear God and keep his commandment, for this is the whole duty of man. (Ecc 12:14) For God will bring into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” The author of Hebrew writes “Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.” (Heb 5:14) Here the analogy of solid food is metaphorical. It is food for the soul, and nourishment for the soul is the ability to recognize the difference between right and wrong. (Version)

These ideas are similar to Aristotle’s notions of the soul, seeking what is called a ‘particular rationality’ through habituation and training. That is to avoid all extremes and to seek to do what is good and excellent and in conformity with and in relation to God and not apart from God. How did Aristotle come into contact or have access to this particularly mysterious knowledge at his time? We know them as sounding Judaic in concept, but when he supposedly

presents them in ancient Greece to his pupils and to the elite of the ancient Greek ruling class; they are portrayed as being his original ideas. We do not know for sure if they are simply his original ideas because no authorship of religion or moral foundation is described to attribute his work to the Judaic God of Solomon or any other God, but again it sounds similar to the notions of a Judaic heritage and foundation of morality. These ideas he is presenting are new and contrary to the ancient Greek notions of religion. The God of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob was severe and authoritative or at least presented as such in the Old Testament.

Yet over time God allowed people to choose who they willed to serve and eventually kings arose and ruled kingdoms and communities. There are always some authorities watching over people as guide and protector because people no longer wish to have relationships with their God(s), since this invisible notion is too abstract to adhere or connect with. This taught that the freedom to be lawless or act outside the context of the laws of community was seen as acts of unsociability and punishable. Being different or individualist was not as common for his time and era.

Plato described the concept to the cave as people being left in the dark about particular beliefs and truths and that to get out into the light is rare but rewarding pursuit.

This was the work of the word of God reaching the people on earth and establishing a relationship through them, namely through the prophets of the time as we know them to be from the tribes of Israel. These prophets foretold events that were to come.

His work is made to appear as if they are all his original thoughts and ideas and they waver between notions of pagan gods and God, without giving reference to any previous or earlier thinkers. Sometimes 'God' in *Nicomachean Ethics* is spelled with a capital G, other times

the 'god' he refers to is spelled with a small g. It is difficult for the modern reader to know if the god Aristotle refers to in his work is an idea of another pagan god or not. Is Aristotle referring to this God as the monotheistic Judaic God of the Israelites? Well, what difference does it make? The difference is in the ordering and the practicality of the decisions and acts one takes: "If therefore there is any one superior in virtue and in the power of performing best action him we should follow..." says Aristotle. (Rackham 551) In order for Aristotle's work to be plausible, that is, in order to be this moral person one chooses to be, in order to be morally virtuous one must follow the example or precept of one who is practically good. Given this argument, it follows that emulation of behavior from a role model, such as relationship with God, a mentor, or a parent was and is effective in making one virtuous and it is not simply by reading about ethics that one became or becomes ethical. Relationship with the ethical and virtuous is primordial.

Evidence shows the God Aristotle depicts in his work is unimportant, and irrelevant. Little value is placed in how God should be named in his work, rendering this God powerless. No background clues can be detected hinting as to which direction or origin his ideas come from. No one is named which this source or connection would clarify.

If morality and ethics determine the practical and moral intelligence of reasoning, then more thought should have been given to name the sources of information Aristotle spoke so highly of. Clearly he is introducing new religious notions into Athenian culture without naming his sources or God(s). To this day this information is left out of his work for reasons. The God of Aristotle is downplayed and glossed over; making it appear that his ethics can be achieved if one tries hard enough - which is not true. Aristotle repeatedly said one cannot be this rational person alone, but through a particular education and in relationship with the Divine.

There is a difference between idol worship and debauchery and orderly, holy living. We can see the difference in society's belief systems and their consequences and progressions.

In his work *Politics*, Aristotle writes about God as being divine and all-powerful, for "He is happy and Blessed" (BK. VII: CH. 1. 1323b30). Over the centuries and until today, due to translations and objectives of the state and church, his work may have been edited and censored for reasons which would be considered contrary to Aristotle's notions of moral integrity. We may never find out the truth concerning which God or religion he thought was best to adhere to.

3-2 DOES ARISTOTLE'S EDUCATION MAKE MEN MORALLY EXCELLENT?

Aristotle spoke often on the care of a particular education and that education is best had early on in one's youth. Specifically, becoming an ethical person required habituation and a particular education. Aristotle states that a pupil must be prepared mentally for learning and for the reception of education and good habit building, similar to farmland which needs to be prepared before the seeds are sown.

But Aristotle asks, what happens when the mind will not accept or be willing to adhere to logic or be swayed from his erroneous thinking with any form or reason? Not much of course, for man decides as he wills unless he is forced. Aristotle was not an advocate of force or cruelty.

(Rackham 569)

For Aristotle, this newfound philosophy was transforming and his work depicts a new way of thinking. Reading *Nicomachean Ethics*, I can clearly see traces of autonomy self-rule in

conjunction with relationship to God. Aristotle was concerned for the happiness and welfare of people's souls and lives. Aristotle said that religion's number one priority should be helping people and making them feel fulfilled, for he believed that the best life to live was through the power of good deeds, so that everyone around you could live happily too (Rackham 541). He was absolutely not advocating the ideas of the ancient world ideas of religion, which considered a man's character formed and unchangeable at birth. But Aristotle is saying that one could change for the better if they were exposed to the right education. If one was not endowed with the right disposition, a good soul, then which knowledge base was required? Would a prescribed list of actions make a man morally excellent? Does this sound reasonable? The Romans as well did not believe that religion made man morally good or better (Ogilvie 18). It did not matter if one was good or bad as long as they followed the protocol of interacting with the gods which made their alms acceptable. He spoke of happiness as being a quality of the soul in accordance with virtuous living by being and acting virtuous.

To Aristotle, virtue is the greatest and most noble accomplishment and must be acquired by study and care rather than by chance. Change however is not a simple matter.

Let us then begin with what the study and care of this education is that Aristotle speaks about in ancient Greek culture. Does habitually telling the truth make one honest? Yes, it does as long as they continually act and behave honestly. It is an ongoing gesture. To be in a state of refraining from telling lies and telling the truth would require the conscious active voice within. There would have to be this voice within that continually reminds us to be honest. This voice within is the Moral compass and guide I believe Aristotle is introducing. Obedience to this voice is also required, obedience to the good voice to be honest in every circumstance and time. Obedience to the bad voice within causes us not to be morally good and not to choose the right

but the wrong and then we will no longer have acted morally or ethically well. Therefore, the voice within, our soul, is our education. The voice is not ours by chance, but is conditioned and trained by whom? The soul must be educated in matters of right and wrong. But to turn out well she or he must have been well-educated and trained and must continue to persevere in performing good acts as a habit, and to do no wrong either with or against his will (Thompson 282).

That's easy by putting away lying, and to stop telling lies and by beginning to tell the truth. How does one do this—to stop lying and start telling the truth? She or he must be conscious and understand that lying is morally wrong and want to not lie because it is wrong (Taylor 10).

This requires knowledge of the fact that lying is wrong. We all know that lying is wrong out of duty to the people around us. But knowing that lying is wrong will not make people necessarily tell the truth.

In *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*, Dworkin says this is a paradoxical ideal. He asks how we can identify acts that are good if we ourselves are not (Dworkin 43). Ancient Greek civilization interacted with other nations, paying for goods, making exchanges; their word was to be upheld and they were to be honorable in deed. No one worked for free, so they were expected out of obligation to be paid for their labor. Still, these are civilizations of some form of governments and legislation, however effective. There were definitely forms of obligation or things that were permissible to effect yet not permitted by its citizens. This obviously entailed some kind of knowledge of ethical and virtuous behavior, for example that lying was wrong, as saying something contrary to what was absolutely true would circulate and the liar's reputation

or the reputations of those involved would be tarnished. We still have not answered how one stops lying in order to become this moral agent Aristotle speaks about. What would induce the liar to make his or her final lie and start to tell the truth as a moral obligation? Aristotle in Book Ten says that if the state decides that moral education is not worthy or required to make its citizens ethical, then it is the duty of the citizen to take it upon themselves to educate and to make themselves ethical and good persons (Thompson 283). Aristotle's work is said to make the claim that not all are agreed as to what should be taught and that these opinions varied as to which education was best or more important. (Rackham 637)

3-3 CHOOSING WELL

Aristotle is clearly speaking of acquiring conditions of the soul which entail the use of self-control. In order to be temperate, courageous or generous, one must have self-control and a duty to rationalize one's actions and comportment. This is no easy feat and requires a mind at work and in careful deliberation.

One definition of wisdom for Aristotle is being able to choose well. Walsh writes that being able to choose however cannot be this automatic catalyst or magic wand Aristotle makes choosing appear to be. That is obvious when having to make choices which are difficult and trying for us. Our intentions... "do get the better us" (Shapiro 69). If one's judgment is impaired or falters because of one's inability to control their desires, then this is more the norm and mere words will not make men more courageous or moral. There is more to human nature than Aristotle is letting us to believe. (Shapiro 63). What is choosing well and how does one choose to do this well?

What does choosing well imply for Aristotle? For Aristotle, his notions of choosing well, or autonomy as we would call it today, required more than any whim or personal ideas of choice, but particular choices which Aristotle is referring too. Aristotle's ethics and virtuous living required the responsibilities of choosing well, acting well, and contemplating well. If one manages to do all these three attributes well, then all benefit. Choosing well requires more than a list of rules to follow. It is a way of life adhered to through commitment, deliberation and contemplation.

Aristotle is introducing the notion that people can choose between options and that these options have better or worse outcomes. For his time, choosing meant a choice between the pagan practices of his time and the virtues of living a happy and contemplative life. It is also a relationship with God and the knowledge of divine which Aristotle advocates.

Virtues are a state of character concerned with choice, says Aristotle, but which kind of choosing? What does it mean to choose well for Aristotle? Is he advocating choosing one type of cake from another? Of course he is not talking about choosing between preferring a lemon meringue pie over a pecan pie, but that this end is self-sufficient so as to include parents, family, wife, children, and fellow citizens. We are all are social animals and live within community, so the final good is this self-sufficiency making life desirable and lacking in nothing but in harmony and conjunction to and with the other in mind.

Self-control would entail refraining from doing something. You are controlling yourself from a tempting action. You are stopping yourself from doing something that you would otherwise easily do.

As Aristotle stated in his work, no one becomes virtuous by chance, but virtue is worked for and struggled for collectively as “being these equals” of and within communities which all aim at this best possible life and end, all the while practicing these particular virtues. But only some could attain the desired end, “...while others have little or none of it.” (Rackham 38) Acting with virtue is a vital need in any society. We value living together peacefully and happily.

The topic of Aristotle’s virtuous ethical framework shows the importance of moral excellence and goodness for the benefit of all.

This structure is also used to ground Aristotle’s proposition that the aim is to perform the right action, to the right extent with the right person, and at the right time and in the right way. Virtuous ethics highlight roles of practical wisdom, when making judgment calls. The most important element in making judgment calls is when what is good and what is appropriate is achieved, because society depends more on the moral trustworthiness of its citizens and leaders than upon structures and systems.

The origins of natural law can be traced back as far as the 5th century B.C.E., yet there are moral obligations to be derived from natural law because of our common humanity, and how we all live in accordance with this human nature and adhere to a commonality of (un)spoken rule and laws. Aristotle is asking us to reflect on our human nature and reason appropriately. We can discover this good life which we aspire to attain within the whole framework of human nature and the entire scheme of natural things in which humans have their place.

Can a professor in a classroom who teaches law but has never practiced law be convincing? The problem is the teacher who is teaching law, but has never practiced law is missing a dimension to his or her teaching which is absent from their knowledge base and which

students could otherwise benefit from. Can the professor who knows information only theoretically and not practically be an effective educator? Is this space between practicality and theoretical information of any value? In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Thompson writes about Aristotle's view on "people may appear to be their own best physicians, although they would be incapable of doing anyone good." It is what one practices and does which makes them skilled. (Thompson 284) Aristotle states in Book Ten that a doctor does not become qualified merely by reading books on medicine, but through practice and habit of mind (Thompson 285). It is a base but it will never replace what has been experienced practically. It is similar to a business professor who teaches business through books, but has never operated a business. A question can be posed: should a person who has never employed people, never balanced ledgers, teach students business? Should the world of practicality and theoretical knowledge be bridged then, and why has it not been done more often?

Aristotle's work has won general approval and his ideas are selected and used to represent our present structures of civilization (Thompson 286). Should a person who has never balanced a book be allowed to teach accounting? If this is the case with Aristotle, why have we made Aristotle's ethics universal? What authority does his ethics have? Should not those who have practiced morality, those whose morality have ruled their lives then teach morality and be the authority on morality and ethics?

Can we therefore question the authority of Aristotle's work for its practicality and effectiveness if those who advocate it never practice ethics or morality or cannot even describe what it is?

Should the mathematician who does not understand or know any concepts of mathematical theories teach mathematics? Of course not, but we have done this with ethics. Anyone can talk

about ethics without knowing its foundation, basis or purpose. Morality and ethics does however have a foundation and this foundation began with God.

Aristotle was a teacher and philosopher; his work and ideas probably never went further than the classrooms of his society, meaning his ideas were not common notions of his society. Aristotle became famous after he passed away, but not necessarily before his death. His father was a physician to the king of Macedon. Aristotle was Athenian and remained one most of life. At the age of seventeen he pursued his education at what was called the Academy where he remained for twenty years. Among his achievements, he became the pupil of Plato and is known to have tutored Alexander the Great and set up a large library in Athens (Rackham 10).

Did Aristotle speak from experience about ethics? Was Aristotle an ethical man? Has anyone ever asked if Aristotle was a moral man?

What was a moral person like in his time? What did a moral person act like, and can I become this ethical person Aristotle speaks of becoming? More importantly, how do I become this ethical person Aristotle says is best to become? Do I want to become the ethical person Aristotle says I can become by mere words or ideas? It is not fair or good to put this much emphasis on work that is lacking in an authoritative foundation and bases.

Whose background is without adequate resources and references? It would be similar to saying that morality without any reference point is acceptable, which it is not, and this is what Aristotle is asking the hearers of his philosophy to become that is morally excellent with instructions.

Notions of laws were derived from God: we have proof of this truth from the Bible. These are collections of facts from communities and societies which lived, and followed rules and regulations under the direction of a God. In *Nicomachean Ethics* Thompson writes “if a man is to

turn out well he is to be properly trained and do no wrong, either with or against his will. This can be produced only by submitting one's life to the guidance of the intelligence systems with truth as its form. (Thompson 282)

Some of these systems of laws have been chiseled in stone and written in manuscripts parchment from authoritative sources. To present any work without its history background is unfounded. We do not know much of Aristotle's upbringing and background nor where his true aspirations came from. This is a problem for the authenticity of his work of ethics.

Similar to a mathematician, a mathematician accepts the ground work that has been laid down by those before him or her and makes their work plausible and useful. She or he applies foundational notions, without disputing certain principles or notions, because they are simply believed as truth and are used, undisputed, because of the foundation they have been built on. The authority and word of what has been laid down as truth is accepted and unchallenged as an authoritative truth. When Aristotle states in *Politics* that not all people choose well, was he in fact saying that each person has the freedom to be able to choose but did not know what choosing well entailed? If ancient Greek society was pagan and had never come in contact with superior wisdom, as Aristotle describes, should the mass population then be condemned as pagan and backwards?

What then is required for this illumination or this spark to take place, enabling each individual to think for themselves about what is best for them? And should this decision be left up to an agent without any reference to past ideas and thinkers? Similarly with the mathematician, she or he is not starting from scratch but basing ideas and a framework on theories of those before them.

Can we not apply the same logic to morality and ethics, and that what Aristotle was advocating was in fact knowledge, ethics, and morality that were conceived before him, tried, tested, and proven?

Certainly in ancient Greece people were considered autonomous in the sense that they had no particular religion, but that they followed their own inclinations and honorable positions.

The word autonomy itself derives from *autos* (meaning self) and *nomos* (the rule of law). This term was used to refer to the Greek ancient city states. A city had this autonomy when its citizens made their own laws, as opposed to being under an overpowering control.

A person is truly autonomous when she or he is making his or her own free decisions in cooperation and conjunction with all others when appropriate and required, if and when it is understood correctly on the basis that the rule is issued upon. Another very important aspect of autonomy is adhering willingly and humbly to a higher authority as a sign of respect and submission to a powerful and protective order.

This relationship is not counter-balanced, but a protective and powerful aid cannot be overruled, and there is no need to overrule what is good and perfect when self-ruling.

But what happens when religion comes into play concerning one's conscious? Religion has always tried to direct and give set directives rather than leave it up to the masses to decide what is moral (Dworkin 13). But we can see over the centuries that particular religions have grossly erred in their decisions and policies. Man is not a sure barometer of what is perfect or just or right on every possible count and situation, because he cannot see the future or the future of his actions. Man is not impartial: he is not able to be perfectly good because he is imperfect and cannot make perfect judgement calls on a habitual basis.

A moral man would make no distinction between anyone and ask that collectively everyone act and adhere to a common mode of behavior and mannerism. But which common mode of behavior?

This idea of a moral man requires everyone to adhere to a common and collective attitude, habit, and comportment that is alike for all. This is fairness and justice for all. Choosing well entails choice with the other and with the whole in mind. Man is not able to order their life alright, because his or her future is undetermined and unknown. Not knowing the outcome and future of one's decision is a deterrent that controls and influence's one choice to great extents. This is why a collective moral code is required. Religion can and does go awry. Religion is therefore not the answer Aristotle is advocating, but a moral collective ordering which all actions come to a good end.

Aristotle was not advocating in his ethics that choosing well implied being the author of her or his own moral principles, making them up as one goes along (Dworkin 35). Rather, moral autonomy means deciding to adhere to already existing rules or law willingly. This is moral autonomy, again giving up to the higher existing authority or notion.

Deciding to obey or not to obey is autonomy - the freedom to choose to obey what is already prescribed as law or a rule is to act autonomously. What I believe Aristotle was advocating in his *Politics* is to choose well, because it does not require that one make any assessment on its value or truth or belief or action, but to obey because the source is established as true or already judged lawful, or excellent. Just as the state or city has prescribed rules and obligations which are to be adhered to and followed not to be opposed because they are already proven true and accepted

A person who walks by a bleeding man lying on the sidewalk without helping him might be seen as being appropriately autonomous. He made the choice to walk on by, but he is moral and ethical in reacting as such?

He should help the bleeding man and have compassion for him, because if the man who passed by was the one on the sidewalk, he would want a person to stop and help him. This is what Aristotle was referring to when he spoke of choosing well. Choosing what is morally and ethically superior in wisdom and contemplation and thought: autonomy means that no one else, not man, woman, child or God can reproach or something to say about the behavior or actions. Your behavior and action is perfect, where no law can apply to your action.

IV. ARISTOTLE ASKS INDIVIDUAL AND STATE TO ENGAGE IN A PARTNERSHIP.

Aristotle makes the claim that the best life lived is both for the individual and the state to achieve together. (Rackham 602) He goes on to further describe what make an ideal state. Here he is going to impose “imaginary conditions” because he may be only stating what he would like to see happen, rather than what was of is state. He says that a city is to be like the individual who is to be busy in work of some sorts.

That is producing wares and services and interchanging their goods and services. Aristotle advocates law as being orderly and beneficial, but notes that to achieve the ordering of a large city or people was difficult but reserved for the divine power. Good government for Aristotle is where a state or city allows itself to be governed says McKeon (McKeon 42). A city attains this virtuous state only when its citizens share in the virtuousness of the state. Here Aristotle is advocating justice and fairness between both parties.

He defines the notions of a person's character as being effected through certain habits and upbringing. These particular men should strive to assist and join the efforts of the state so as to promote its flourishing and happiness. This partnership is calling for order and a unity. He writes that all people whether ruler or servant should learn to take turns in governing and being governed, as this is to promote equality and fairness (McKeon 43). Men must both take orders and obey and be able to give orders as well. States are seen therefore as being partnerships between people and is seen as a good thing and aim at a good end (Rackham). Aristotle writes in *Politics* "For it is the special property of man and woman in distinction from other animals that she alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities." (Rackham 529) But is this claim true? Do we automatically know the difference between good and evil, right and wrong? We do not and we cannot continually and systematically overcome our limitations or inadequacies on a systematic basis unless we remove the fault or weakness from within. Aristotle does not explain how personal weakness be changed or over thrown. A particular partnership therefore can assist us in overcoming where we fall short or are inadequate in. In *Politics* Aristotle asks "We must therefore consider whether the rulers and subjects ought to change, or to remain the same through life." (Rackham 601)

4-1 TEACHER, LEARNER DICHOTOMY

Aristotle was concerned for the welfare of people and his state. He taught what might make a good individual and the state flourish and be happy. However not all have or had access to education on what and how one could become this virtuous and morally excellent person. This moral training is not obviously learned or acquired.

Wisdom differs from moral excellence in the sense that moral intelligence is chosen whereas wisdom or practical intelligence is learned for its own end (Shapiro 6). Because man is unable to know his end and future he will rely on information and experiences that have been established and proven. Most of our existence is based on this learning and teaching dichotomy. The human race is a compilation of collective experiences and experiences passed down from generation to generation. However, if one has the privilege of being taught do we evaluate the knowledge for its weight and value? Aristotle asks us to learn what is better. However, the truth remains that even though a master or teacher attempts to convey knowledge that does not mean that the receiver of the information will process the information correctly or in the manner it was intended by the orator or author or originator of the ideas. This space in between can make all the difference in the quality of one's life. It is therefore important to know whom we learn from and what we are learning. Aristotle tries in many ways to demonstrate superior wisdom versus knowledge which is base or useless. We as well, Aristotle states, we reciprocate between learning and teaching at various stages of our lives.

This reciprocity or exchange is developed through relationship and partnership. Learning ethics and moral excellence void of a mentor or relationship is laissez faire ethics and morality.

V. CONCLUSION

Much of what is valued today is thanks to the Greek culture of long ago. Our culture of science, mathematics, morality, and reason is thanks to the ancient Greeks and their quest for truth and knowledge which was lively and universal and is owed to the love and perseverance of the Greek population's quest for growth and freedom.

This population is cosmopolitan and varied rich with ideas and offerings that advanced its civilization and progress. While it is said that the knowledge of sciences and literature came from the Greek speaking world, the religion of Europe that has been passed down for the centuries is essentially Jewish in nature (Fisher 50). This idea is the premise of my paper. Our morality science is owed to Socrates, who was accused corrupting the youth of his time, by introducing "strange supernatural beings" and who did not believe in the gods of the cities. (Fisher 39) Socrates was behind the changes and evolution of his time. He as well as many lost their lives for the sharing of simple truths which in reality did not harm but shed light on matters of the soul and happiness. The spirit of free inquiry and happiness can come to mean different things for people today. As our civilizations have evolved and strengthened we cannot forget the growing pains and struggles the human race has come through. Long ago, happiness entailed a good harvest; today, happiness may mean a million dollars in one's bank account. Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* argues that happiness, true happiness, is a contemplative life of choosing right from wrong. This is not only an Aristotelian concept of morality. Today, the Christian faith says that goodness, kindness, love, and holy living can be achieved with relationship to Christ.

The early disciples of Jesus Christ were not concerned with writing things down nor did they desire to see the beginning of a new state religion. What they were asking, as Isaiah the prophet did long ago, was to simply accept Christ's Messianic authority as law giver and as one who was "good".

The Apostle Paul brought Christianity to the Gentiles. Paul belonged to a society which spoke and thought in Greek. Paul spoke to and addressed the Hellenic population of his time and his message was about adhering to higher aspects of morality and ethically living.

His message was then passed on from Asia Minor toward Europe from, "which however brutal, no religious power has ever eradicated its spiritual influence from the world as we know it." (Fisher 51) Here we see the evolution of an ethical system transforming over the centuries and what now the western world know and understand because our fore fathers.

Aristotle's notions of ethics might not have been the norm for his society and civilization. Aristotle may have had access to special knowledge and learning - possibly scripts written in Greek of the Old Testament which spoke of ethics and a collectively practiced morality. He could expand his knowledge base and ideas with the best thinkers of his time who did accept and embrace new learning and ideas and which ensured that a growing and powerful civilization was to come. If we go back thousands of years to ancient Greece, we will learn that the religion of the time was quite different from how we understand and know it today, yet this will not mean that its civilization did not want to evolve in understanding.

I have disagreed with Richard Taylor's claim that in ancient Greece, Aristotle's notions of ethics did not revolve around notions of right and wrong or duty. Taylor writes, "The ancient Greeks never got around to drawing the fundamental distinction between what is right and wrong." (Taylor 60) To imply that concepts of morality were not prevalent in the fifth century B.C. E is to deny what the Jewish people have experienced and written down as religious and moral material. I have argued how they may very well have been slowly introduced to these notions of ethics. Greek manuscripts- though Greek, incorporated actually the ideas and philosophies of many people from various cultures this includes the texts of Judaic concepts of morality which were circulating in ancient Greek. It would depend as well from what perspective one was coming from. Wars, famines and living in uncertain times rested on the minds of much of its civilization. Civilization and man's increasing victory over fears brought on deeper understanding of religion and its power. Other societies enjoyed much progress and evolution in their civilization, as ancient Greece was an open society which waged its wars on secular issues rather than religious issues. In evolved and learned societies such as the Hellenistic cultures, the spirit of free inquiry and curiosity lead them to become great thinkers and inventors of their time and to this day we owe our basis of civilization and democracy to them. (Fisher 50)

While Greek societies introduced the sciences and literature as we know them in our modern world, the religion of the world originated among the Jewish people and spread throughout Europe. Greek society was comprised of people from all areas of the world and these "new people" brought with them their ideas, and made brilliant contributions to the arts, and philosophy.

The Greek language had become the language of learning. (Fisher 37) In Egypt, the Libraries of Alexandria were known as centers for learning manuscripts and parchments that stored critical knowledge, copied by slaves and orated by scholars, that was said to be the basis of all European progress and influence

The mystical writings and the works of great philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato were based on the philosophy and work of the Old Testament which was translated from Hebrew into Greek, and which is said to affect a profound influence upon the Christian world as we have come to know it now throughout the centuries. (Fisher 47)

It is not ethical to speak about Aristotle's work and not be free to entertain notions of morality, with God. How civilization has come to live and experience morality is incomplete without its authoritative beginnings. It would be paramount to erasing history or hiding the facts. It is not just to talk about Aristotle's work and not be allowed to talk about God, as we know God to be in character and soul the perfect goodness at which all good things aim.

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