

CHARACTER ETHICS

Also known as **Virtue Ethics, The Ethics of Self-Realization, The Ethics of Self-Perfection**

Traditional ethical theories have emphasized '**doing**' before '**being**' (= what to do vs. who you are = thus the concern is: "tell me what to do – give me rules to tell me what to do – give me a theory that grounds the rules that tell me what to do")

Character Ethics holds that this "gets the ethical cart before the horse" and emphasizes '**being**' over '**doing**' (= who you are / who you are becoming - as what you do is a manifestation of who you are)

Aristotle's ethics are an example of Character / Virtue Ethics (which is "the Greek way of doing ethics.")

Character is composed of **character traits** = dispositions to behave and to emote (have emotions) in particular ways in particular circumstances – to do so consistently

A character trait that is 'good to have' is called a **virtue**

A character trait that is 'bad to have' is called a **vice**

People are mixtures of virtue and vice – the challenge is to increase the number and strength of one's virtues and to decrease the number and strengths of one's vices

What makes a character trait good to have? – **eudaimonia** = 'well-being'
- virtues increase and preserve well-being

What makes a character trait bad to have? = **dysdaimonia** = the opposite of well-being
- vices decrease eudaimonia and increase dysdaimonia

We are able to recognize '**good persons**' = eudaimonic persons = persons whose virtues are many and strong and their vices are few and weak. These persons evidence **phronesis** = 'good practical-moral judgment' (we recognize that they consistently "know the right / good thing to do")

Acquiring virtues / good character:

We experience **recognition** and **admiration** of good persons

We seek to become like good persons by a process of **imitation** of good persons

We develop good – virtuous habits by a process of **habituation**

We are influenced by **moral traditions** within which we learn the virtues / what it is to be a 'good person'

We are influenced by **moral communities** within which we learn the virtues / what it is to be a 'good person'