

Aretē: Excellence or Virtue

Reading 1 – Introduction

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"Virtue is a kind of health and beauty and good condition of the soul." — Plato

"Virtue is a weapon that cannot be taken away." — Antisthenes

"Happiness is an activity of the soul that accords with perfect virtue." — Aristotle

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Reading 1

Introduction

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This reading comes from the Cave's

Aretē: Excellence or Virtue—What the Ancient Greeks Thought and Said about Aretē.

As the title indicates, it is the introduction to the book.

BE BEST." SO ran the motto of an initiative—that of a former First Lady of the United States—to help children flourish. The program's mission was to "encourag[e] children to BE BEST in their individual paths, ... teaching them the importance of social, emotional, and physical health." One of its three pillars was well-being, an objective that implied the effort to bring one's being—one's very existence and essence—into a condition of wellness, of wholeness, of fullness, so that one would be flourishing as a human being, thriving.

The underlying point of the Be Best initiative is anything but new. It is what all parents and elders, teachers, mentors and coaches have wanted for children from time immemorial. We are told, for instance, in Homer's *Iliad* (late eighth century BC) that "Old Peleus ordered his son Achilles to always be the best and to stand out among other men." Similarly, Lycian Glaucus (also in the *Iliad*) explains to his battle opponent Diomedes, "My father sent me to Troy and insistently ordered me to always be the best and to stand out among other men."¹ We hear echoes of this

encouragement, perhaps, in Led Zeppelin's 1969 song, "Good Times Bad Times," in which Robert Plant sings, "In the days of my youth, I was told what it means to be a man. And now I've reached that age, I've tried to do all those things the best I can."

From Homer on, the ancient imperative was, "Be *the* best." Articulated in a more contemporary, sub-

jective form, it is, "Be *your* best." Expressed either way, whether with the objective "the" or the more subjective "your," there was and is the recognition of a measure or standard of how to be and act—a goal, something to achieve, something to rise to, something to fulfill. To contract the two, the objective and the subjective, we might say, "Be best."²

Greek Words and Possible Definitions of *Aretē*

The Greek word for "best" is *aristos*, a word found in the English word "aristocracy" (the rule of the best, the noblest) and in the name of Aristotle (one of ancient Greece's outstanding philosophers). *Aristos* itself is a word that originally meant "most fitting," from the suffix *-isto-*, signifying the superlative, and the root *ar-*, "to fit together,"—as when an expert builder joins two walls together well or a shipwright the parts of a ship or a poet the elements of a poem. In the ancient world, therefore, to be *aristos* was to be the most fitting kind of thing. As for humans, it was to be the "noblest, bravest, most virtuous, and most excellent" kind of human being.

Related to *aristos* is the Greek word *aretaō*, a word that means "to be fit or proper, to thrive, prosper, flourish." What sort of things do so (*aretaō*)? Good deeds thrive (we are told by Homer). Fields flourish with grain (we see elsewhere in Greek literature). And humans prosper and thrive and flourish (as we also observe in the same).

This—the meaning of *aristos* and *aretaō* for humans—brings us to *aretē*, the subject of this book.

Simply put, *aretē* is "bestness"—to give, perhaps, an odd form of the word. It is what one is if one carries out the command of the fathers of Achilles and Glaucus to "be the best." It is a state or condition of thriving, flourishing, or prospering. In short, *aretē* is "excellence," an English word that itself may be traced back to earlier forms that mean something as concrete as a "hill" rising from the flatlands, and thus the adjectives "towering" and "lofty," to more abstract meanings such as "superior," "outstanding," and "prominent."

Liddell & Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* offers the following senses of *aretē* (with italics in the original).

Generally, *aretē* means "goodness, excellence, of any kind, especially of *manly* qualities, *manhood*, *valor*, *prowess*." Related to skill or the making of things (*technē*), it is "excellence in any art." In a "moral sense," and relative to "character," it carries the connotation of "goodness, *virtue*," and "merit."

As we will see, the word *aretē* has had a very full and varying life among the ancient Greeks—in their feelings, thoughts, speech, and writing. It is a term that has shifted meaning depending on, among other aspects, its subject (what or who is *aretē*), its context (when, where, and how *aretē* occurs), and who is thinking and writing about *aretē* (poets, for example, or playwrights, orators, historians, satirists, or philosophers). Aside from the more general definitions of "excellence" and "virtue," *aretē* has signaled "valor" and "merit" and "success." At times it has had a moral meaning, denoting "goodness," and at other times it has not.

In the final analysis, however, all understandings of *aretē* seem to come back to its relationship with *aristos*, with "best," in that whatever is *aretē* is somehow "best" (though not necessarily *the* best), whether relative to others or to itself. There is excellence (bestness) in battle (often given as "valor" in English), in governing city-states (this turns up as "merit"), in farming and household organization ("success"), and in one's internal life relative to one's character or ongoing dispositions ("virtue"). But all these words—valor, merit, success, and virtue, not to mention others such as "fertile," the excellence of soil,—are just interpretive masks for *aretē*. Behind the masks we find *excellence*. And that which is excellent is, in some sense, best.

As for the title of this book, *Aretē: Excellence or Virtue*, the explanation is straightforward. The term “excellence” covers all forms of “bestness,” including the more specific “virtue,” whereas “virtue” applies to

humans and human life alone, connoting things like wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice. More on this point in a moment under “The Organization of *Aretē*.”

Ongoing Greek Inspiration and Influence

However we define *aretē*, one point is certain. Ancient Greek thinking and writing about *aretē* and the pursuit and practice of the excellent or virtuous life has influenced and inspired others down to the present moment.

We see this inspiration and influence in the ancient world upon most Roman authors, both Latin and Greek-writing, authors such as Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Plotinus, and Boethius, toward the very end of the Classical Age. It is there in Hebrew (Jewish) literature in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint—in the prophets Isaiah, Habakkuk, and Zachariah, and the Wisdom of Solomon³), and in the first century AD writings of Philo of Alexandria. The same is true for early Christian literature. It shows up in the Christian (Greek) New Testament in the letters of Peter and Paul, and it is present in the writings of the Christian Fathers, including St. Basil of Caesarea in the East and St. Augustine in the West.

During the Middle Ages, its presence may be noted among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim writers. We see it in the “Eight Chapters” of Maimonides; in the “projected encyclopedia of human activity,” com-

missioned by the Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, a work that included a section “On virtue and vice”; in the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas; and in Al-Farabi’s *On the Perfect State or The Virtuous City*.

Moving on in time, the thought of the ancient Greeks continued its inspiration and influence past the Middle Ages into the early modern period and beyond. To give a handful of examples, we see it in the *Institutes of Christian Religion* of John Calvin, the *Ethics* of Baruch Spinoza, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* of Adam Smith, the writings and speeches of the American founders, the *Doctrine of Virtue* of Immanuel Kant, and in the short essay “On Virtue and Happiness” of John Stuart Mill, not to mention later writers.

Today, though there are a few other prominent ethical approaches that appear to be in competition with the ancient understanding of *aretē*, the inspiration and influence of the ancients is also evident. In fact, in the past half century, there has been a revival of ancient *aretē* in what has been called “virtue ethics.” Let’s take a few moments to observe some recent ideas about *aretē* alongside other views.

Contemporary Ideas about Ethics and *Aretē*

It is usual to read, as we do in the article on “Virtue Ethics” in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, that “virtue ethics is ... one of [the] major approaches in normative ethics.”⁴ Glancing at a recent anthology of ethical writing, *Ethical Theory*, we note that the others are consequentialism, deontology, contractarianism, and feminist ethics. What, in a nutshell, does each one of the alternative approaches to ethics hold? And who are significant thinkers in each? Let’s take a brief look before turning to contemporary virtue ethics.

As its name indicates, *consequentialism* generally

argues that the value of an act is based on its consequences, that is, the results that follow from acting in one way or another. (The root word of “consequence”—*sequence*—signifies “that which follows.”) Answering the question, “What should I do?” the consequentialist response is always, “It depends on what’ll happen when you do X, Y, or Z.” The straightforward goal in acting is to get the best “what’ll happen” or results—a goal that inevitably begs the question, “What is the best?” Depending on the consequentialist you’re talking to, the best or the good may

vary. According to utilitarianism, the most extensively elaborated form of consequentialism, the best or good is “happiness,” which is founded on the thoughtful acquisition of pleasure and the equally as thoughtful avoidance of pain. Alternative forms of consequentialism may zero in on other bests or goods such as beauty, tranquility, or even, because of consequentialism’s interaction with virtue ethics, the promotion of virtue. Well-known consequentialists are Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and, from the ancient world, Epicurus.

Deontology (a word derived from the Greek words *deon*, that which is binding, needful, right, proper, and *logos*, an account, study of) generally holds that the value of an act derives from the obligatory nature—or not—of the act itself rather than any results that may or may not follow from it. In reply to the question, “What should I do?” the deontologist response is always, “You should do what you *ought* to do,” with a strong emphasis on the “should” or “ought” of doing, an imperative saturated with notions of obligation and duty, and oftentimes encapsulated in a rule (such as Kant’s “Categorical Imperative”). Of course, such notions raise many questions, and so deontology is not as straightforward as it may seem at first glance. Who has the obligation? In what sense? Toward whom? How did these obligations arise in the first place? To these we must add, thanks to deontology’s dialogue with virtue ethics, the question of virtue’s role in carrying out what one ought to do. And so on—to give only the simplest of questions. Well-known deontologists are Immanuel Kant and, from the ancient world, most of the Stoics, including Zeno of Citium and Epictetus.⁵

Contractarianism is related to social contract theory, the idea that we humans live by various agreements (contracts) that limit what we may or may not do (particularly relative to what we desire and how we may satisfy our desires, with what freedom), as well as prescribe what we must do (relative to others and the state). To give an example, the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus espouses a contractarian view of justice when he states, “There is no such thing as justice in itself. Rather, justice is an agreement neither

to harm nor be harmed that is made when men gather together from time to time in various places.”⁶ Therefore, to the question, “What should I do?” the contractarian would respond, “Whatever we’ve agreed to do.” Aside from Epicurus and others in the ancient world, who seem to have explored or espoused some form of the theory, other well-known contractarians are Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the more recent John Rawls.

Finally, feminist ethics. Rather than being “a simple, uniform approach” to what one should do and how one should live, feminist ethics insists that we should give heed to how it is that women, in contrast with men, generally approach being, living, and doing. The point is not necessarily that there *is* a monolithic *woman’s way of doing things*, or that it is always better than a man’s (assuming there is such a man’s way), but that it is or can be significantly different—a difference, feminist ethicists contend, that can and should equally contribute to the human quest to be, live, and do well, based on the feminist assumption that men and woman share moral equality. What is the factual or observational basis of this difference? In large part it has to do with the “experiences of women.” As identified by Russ Shaefer-Landau, these are the “first-hand knowledge of physical, emotional, and financial vulnerability, a sense of interdependence with and responsibility to friends and family members, and a long history of exclusions from various offices, positions, and privileges.”⁷ As with the other approaches to ethics, feminist ethics has also been influenced by virtue ethics. Well-known practitioners of feminist ethics are Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir. As for antiquity, we may point to the worldview of the Greek poet Sappho of Lesbos, though her focus was not ethics.

Now that we’ve very briefly run through each of the other approaches in “normative ethics,” let’s take a look at virtue ethics, an approach that was directly inspired and influenced by the ancient Greeks, chiefly by Aristotle and, to a lesser extent, perhaps, by Plato and Socrates.

Initially, when it was first developed mid-twentieth century, virtue ethics was a response to the

above-mentioned normative theories, but in particular to consequentialism and deontology, which both propose precise moral principles or prescriptions or maxims that one may utilize to know how to act in any given situation (for example, John Stuart Mill's "Greatest Happiness Principle" or Immanuel Kant's "Categorical Imperative"). For a number of reasons, the philosopher Elisabeth Anscombe criticized this approach in her paper, "Modern Moral Philosophy" (1958). In its place, she proposed what came to be known as "virtue ethics," an approach that focuses on a person's intellectual and emotional states (those that occur in what has traditionally been called the soul—and so the significance of human psychology in virtue ethics, from the Greek *psychē* or soul), character and virtue (both ongoing dispositions), and end, that is, the end or goal of flourishing as a human being (rather than, say, any other animal or kind of being, such as an angel or god). Others took up the standard of virtue ethics. Well-known and influential individuals include Philippa Foot, Alasdair MacIntyre, Martha Nussbaum, Rosalind Hursthouse, Michael Slote, Christine Swanton, and Julia Annas.⁸

What, then, *is* virtue ethics? If we look at it in terms of its fundamental question, as we did above with the other approaches, we observe that rather than primarily asking, "What should I do in *this* specific situation?" virtue ethics more broadly queries, "What sort of person should I be so that I may generally flourish as a human being?" Allied questions are, "How should I live?" and, "What is the good or happy life?"

Since the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle forms the foundation of virtue ethics, we'll begin with him in answering these questions and thereby lay the groundwork for virtue ethics' more recent developments.⁹ For Aristotle, the human good or end or goal (*telos*) "is the activity of the soul that accords with excellence or virtue (*aretē*)."¹⁰ Such activity is happiness (*eudaimonia*), and so the human good or end is happiness. Accordingly, the answer to the question, "What sort of person should I be?" is, "One who acts in accord with virtue." If we ask why we should act in such a manner, the response is, "So that

we may flourish as a human being," which is to say, "so that we may be happy." Virtue itself is a disposition cultivated and established (it is an ongoing, steady thing, a habit or possession) by means of doing acts of one virtue or another until we finally possess a virtuous disposition or character. How do we know whether some disposition or act is virtuous? We do, according to Aristotle, because it allows for the flourishing, the blooming, the excellence of one aspect or another of human nature. For instance, relative to other animals, we humans are rational; therefore, we act virtuously when we act in accord with reason. At bottom, the key factors of Aristotle's virtue ethics are human nature (particularly relative to the soul), the good or end or goal of human life (human flourishing or happiness), and the means by which or the way in which we may live out this end in an ongoing, steady manner (virtue, character).

Recent virtue ethics has emphasized various aspects of Aristotle's approach. What follows is an all-too-brief and admittedly inadequate account of each major branch of virtue ethics.¹¹

Eudaimonism or eudaimonist virtue ethics centers on the notion of the overall goal of human life, which is *eudaimonia*, happiness or human flourishing. One may protest, But isn't that consequentialism? Isn't one shooting for some end or goal, some consequence, one called *eudaimonia*? The simple answer is, Yes. But the difference is huge. Whereas consequentialism notes a fundamental distinction between the act, which is neutral in itself, and the consequence or goal, which is good, useful, advantageous or not, eudaimonist virtue ethics sees both as one and the same: the virtuous human life *is one and the same with* the happy, flourishing human life. To be virtuous *is* to flourish. The difference may be illustrated with one statement each from Epicurus and Aristotle. In typical consequentialist fashion, Epicurus states that "We choose the virtues *for the sake of* pleasure and not on their own account, even as we take medicine for the sake of health." By contrast, Aristotle observes that "happiness *is* an activity of the soul that *accords with* perfect virtue."¹²

If eudaimonist virtue ethics identifies certain activity ("activity of the soul that accords with perfect vir-

tue”) with happiness and human flourishing, then agent-based virtue ethics—while accepting the eudaimonist tie of acting and *eudaimonia*—takes a deeper look, we might say, at what is going on in the human being who is engaged in such activity. What is the virtuous individual’s ongoing motivation or motivations for acting in accord with virtue? How does he feel—what are his emotions—as he does so? What are his enduring dispositional states? And furthermore, how does such a person serve as an example, an exemplar, for others who wish to live virtuously?

Finally, target-centered virtue ethics focuses on the end or target of a virtuous act or virtuous behavior. In this case, the target is not *eudaimonia* per se,

though it is not excluded, but the particular aim of a specific virtue. For example, the point or aim of courage is to deal with danger and the fear that typically arises with danger.

There’s more, of course, to each of these branches of virtue ethics, and there are other takes as well. For instance, we could explore how the Roman Catholic Church has largely used what may be termed a virtue ethics approach to morality and the good life from its inception down to today.¹³ But for now, and given the focus of this book—what the ancient Greeks had to say about *aretē*, about excellence or virtue—, these summary overviews will have to suffice. We turn, then, to the contents of this book.

The Organization of *Aretē: Excellence or Virtue*

Whatever we may think about virtue ethics and excellence today, what is certain is that the Greeks had their own thoughts about and unique uses of the term *aretē* for a period spanning well over a millennium. Beginning with the epic poetry of Homer some 2,700 years ago, many Greeks recorded these notions in works of poetry, drama, comedy, history, rhetoric, satire, philosophy, and the like. To name just a few, there were the poets Sappho of Lesbos, Theognis of Megara, and Simonides of Ceos; the playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; the historians Herodotus, Thucydides, and Diodorus Siculus; the philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, not to mention the many other philosophers up to Plotinus, who wrote a thousand years after Homer; the satirist Lucian of Samosata; and the orators Isocrates, Demosthenes, and Dio Chrysostom.

Given the wealth of testimony relative to our subject, the straightforward goal of *Aretē: Excellence or Virtue* is to present in their own words what the Greeks felt, thought, and said about *aretē*. Although there are drawbacks to such a presentation, the strength is that the Greeks can speak directly to us. What did the farmer-poet Hesiod say about *aretē*? And what about Diotima, the prophetess and teacher of Socrates? Or the Cynic philosophers Diogenes of Sinope or Crates of Thebes? And how did the Theban leader Epami-

nondas exhibit *aretē* in battle? Or in what way did Epicrates, the young man dear to and mentored by the orator Demosthenes, demonstrate his laudable *aretē*? And finally, how did Lucian of Samosata lampoon all the eager philosophical discussion about *aretē* and other abstract concepts, as well as the failure to practice *aretē*?

Prior to the advent of philosophy in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, there was no truly systematic thinking among the Greeks about the nature of *aretē*. Consequently, we typically find some idea of *aretē* in the mouth of a hero in an epic poem, or expressed by the chorus in a tragedy, or displayed by one man, woman or another in a history. That there were general and even consistent notions of *aretē*, we can affirm. To discover more precise, carefully mapped out ideas, however, we must wait for philosophers such as Pythagoras and Socrates. We are told by the ancient biographer Diogenes Laertius that the latter philosopher “was the first to talk about the conduct of life” in terms of the best way of living. Diogenes adds that Socrates “investigated ethical or moral matters in workshops and in the marketplace”—including, as we know from Plato and Xenophon, the nature and way of *aretē*.¹⁴

This shift over time from non-systematic to systematic presentations of *aretē* explains the basic or-

ganization of this volume. Reflecting the shift, *Aretē: Excellence or Virtue* is divided into several parts. Part 1, “The What, Who & How of Aretē,” mostly presents the various masks worn by *aretē* before the coming of Socrates and moral philosophy. (I say “mostly” because the philosophers are included at times.) Part 1 answers several questions: What things, human or otherwise, could be termed *aretē*? What was *aretē*’s basic nature? How or by what means did a thing or person possess *aretē*? Aside from answering these questions, Part 1 affirms that *aretē* was a significant goal of life for most early Greeks. It also presents many models or examples of *aretē*. Part 2, “Thinking about Aretē,” offers Greek philosophy’s systematic exploration of *aretē* and the virtuous life in the form of lively dialogues, quips, lecture notes, and expository writing. Each philosopher’s view is summarized at the end of each chapter. Then, just as we are growing serious with the philosophers, Part 3, “Comic Interlude,” comes along and lampoons their abstractions and their, at times, inept approach to actually living the virtuous life. It is our chance to laugh a bit at all our (and the Greeks’) earnestness and, yes, failures. Finally, getting serious again, Part 4, “Talking about Aretē,” presents selections from the speeches of four orators that offer an idea of what each thought about *aretē*, though not in systematic fashion.

We should note that although it is broadly representative, *Aretē: Excellence or Virtue* is not a comprehensive survey of Greek beliefs about *aretē*. Instead, as the Cave Bonfire Series tagline suggests, it is the best of Greek thinking and speaking on the topic. This means that some of what the Greeks had to say is left out. For instance, you will not find here the short work attributed (falsely) to Aristotle titled, *Virtues and Vices*. Nor will you find any selections from

the biographer and moral writer Plutarch’s several essays on or related to virtue. The reason is not that these are worthless—*au contraire*! Rather, it is because they do not present anything essentially new. The same could be said of other authors and works.¹⁵

We should also glance at another issue, that of terminology. We’ve already noted that *aretē* is a multivalent term, one with many possible meanings. Nevertheless, in this book *aretē* is translated with two words alone: excellence or virtue. The general rule is that, prior to the philosophers, *aretē* is given as “excellence,” whereas after philosophy and thus with the philosophers, it is given as “virtue.” (This also holds for Part 1 when the philosophers occasionally show up.) Regardless, whenever you spot the words “excellence” or “virtue,” you should know that *aretē* is the Greek term lurking beneath. We leave it up to you to substitute other words in place of these. For instance, in battle situations, “valor” could have been given in place of “excellence” (and often has been in other translations). Or when we see in Hesiod that “the immortal gods have put sweat in front of Excellence,” we could have exchanged “Excellence” for “Success.”¹⁶

One last point before we launch. Read *Aretē* in whatever order you wish. If you read it from beginning to end, you will have a strong sense of how Greek feeling, thinking, and speaking about excellence and virtue changed over time, from roughly 700 BC to the end of the third century AD and beyond (the final author, Procopius, who appears a few times, hails from the sixth century AD). On the other hand, if you wish to read it more meditatively, contemplating reflections on *aretē* and the good life, now from this author and now from another, you may wish to skip around. Either plan will work. (For a few other features of the book, see “NOTE” below.)

Let’s Go!

However you read, and however familiar you already are with virtue ethics or other conceptions of excellence or virtue, you will likely pick up a new or refined way of looking at *aretē*.

It is this new way, this new understanding, that is

at the heart of *Aretē: Excellence or Virtue* and many other books in the Cave Bonfire Series. Yes, the quest is to learn about history, about what the Greeks thought and said. But more, the goal is the discovery of the earliest light the Greeks have to offer us for a

brighter light today. So, in learning something new, we will be learning something old, something that has been tested over time and found valuable.

Anyway, let's go! There's much to hear and learn from the Greeks, and just as much to practice.

NOTE: from here on, *aretē* is mostly no longer italicized and often appears on its own without definition or further explanation. If you require a reminder as to what *aretē* means, please consult the Glossary toward the back.

As for each chapter in *Aretē*, you'll notice a few common features. First, each one begins with a brief introduction that will serve to orient you to the contents of the chapter, or, if the chapter presents a single thinker or writer, to the central facts about that author's life, works, and ideas. Next the material coming after the subtitle **IN THEIR OWN WORDS** presents the thoughts and words of the Greeks from the many works that have come down to us. Interspersed in *italics* are short commentaries explaining

the content or purpose of the selections and passages that follow.

As for the different authors, the following is how each will be mentioned in *Aretē*. Typically, the author of the text is given in italics before offering his or her own words. For example: *Bacchylides* I declare—and I will declare—that the greatest glory is to possess excellence. (Note: there are no quotation marks as we know these are the poet Bacchylides' own words.) That said, if the author is presenting someone else's thoughts or words, as with Socrates in Plato's dialogues, or the chorus in Sophocles' plays, or a politician in Thucydides' history, then the speaker is noted in parentheses. To give an example: *Sophocles (the Chorus is speaking)* "Soon the glorious voice of the flute will go up for you ... divine music responsive to the lyre. For the son of Zeus and Alcmena is rushing home, carrying the spoils of every excellence." Lastly, if a whole chapter is devoted to an author, as is the case in parts 2-4, or if the author is obvious from the surrounding text, then mention of the author is absent.

So ends Reading 1. **See you in Reading 2, "Determining the Goal—*Aretē* as the *Telos* of Life."**

NOTES

¹ According to Anthony Everitt, the latter admonition inspired the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great and the Roman statesman and orator Cicero, as well as countless other Roman boys, "to be the best and the bravest." See *Cicero: The Life and Times of Rome's Greatest Politician* (New York: Random House), 46.

² We should note that "subjective" here is not a matter of mere feeling or how one "identifies," to use recent parlance, without any objective reference; rather, the subjective implies or points to the objective, whether one's roles, talents, relationships, responsibilities, and the like. It refers to the specific or individual rather than the general or universal.

³ Regarding virtue or the virtues, the Wisdom of Solomon declares, "There is nothing more valuable in the life of man" (8.7). Isaiah 43.21 reveals God's motivation for preserving his people: they were "to declare my virtues."

⁴ Rosalind Hursthouse and Glen Pettigrove, "Virtue Ethics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ethics-virtue/>.

⁵ That the Stoics were deontologists is only true from one angle. From another and perhaps better perspective, they were simply virtue ethicists—to use modern terminology. For more, see chapters 11 and 12. See also *The Best of Early Stoicism* (Sugar Land: The Classics Cave, 2021).

⁶ Epicurus, *The Principal Teachings* 33, in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 10.150. See the Cave's *The Best of Epicurus* (Sugar Land: The Classics Cave, 2021).

⁷ Russ Shafer-Landau, "Introduction to Part XII," in *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2013), 689.

⁸ Virtue ethics has also influenced the field of psychology, particularly that of "positive psychology." See "Character Strengths" (Chapter 6), in Christopher Peterson, *A Primer in Positive Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 137-164. See also, C. Peterson and M.E.P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press; Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2004). For a study of virtue within various cultures and through time, see K. Dahlsgaard, C. Peterson, and M.E.P. Seligman, "Shared Virtue: The Convergence of Valued Human strengths across Culture and History," *Review of General Psychology* 9 (2005): 203-213.

⁹ For Aristotle's view in his own words, see 9, "Aristotle."

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7.15-16 (1098a).

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¹¹ For a general introduction to each, see Part XI, “Virtue Ethics,” in the above-cited *Ethical Theory: An Anthology* for essays on various aspects and kinds of contemporary virtue ethics. See also, the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*’s article on virtue ethics referenced above.

¹² Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 10.138. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7.15-16 (1098a). See also Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 7.96-97 for how the Stoics taught that the virtues were both means and ends.

¹³ For a brief introduction, see Article 7: The Virtues, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1994), 443-450. For a more extensive treatment, see Pope Benedict XVI, *The Virtues* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 2010), and Peter Kreeft, *Back to Virtue* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).

¹⁴ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2.20-21.

¹⁵ This asserted, if we at the Cave have overlooked and left out anything essential, please contact us at www.theclassicscave.com to let us know. Emendations are always in order.

¹⁶ As is found in the Cave’s *The Best of Hesiod’s Theogony & Works and Days* (Sugar Land: The Classics Cave, 2021).