

Aristotle's Ethics

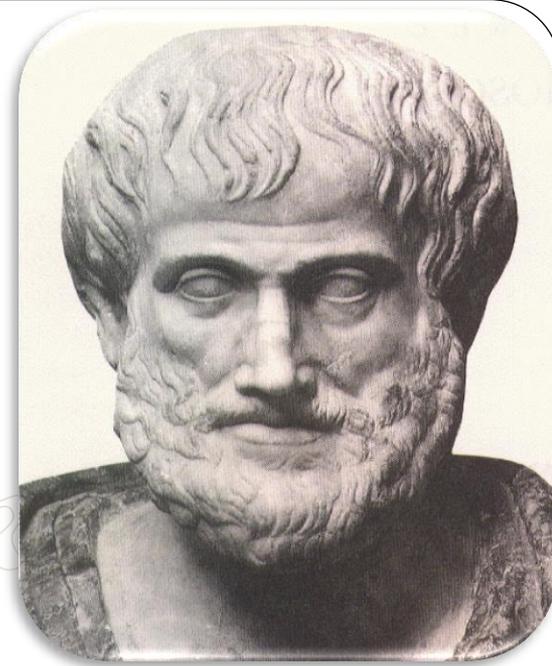
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Aristotle

384-322 BCE

- Son of a physician
- Born in Macedonia
- Attended the Academy of Plato
- Became Plato's foremost student
- Left the Academy when Plato died
- Founded the Lyceum in Athens
- Scientific thought



Man is the combination of matter and form

Passions and **appetites** are regulated by reason

Constant exercise of regulation of passions

Habitual control of passions by reason – virtue

❑ This virtue creates a good disposition and character

❑ This character is an inward organization of a settled habit of will which pertains to a good moral life.

❑ Neither appetites have to be extirpated nor have to be satisfied but appetites have to be **regulated** by person.

❑ This regulation of appetites by reason has to be carried out by moderation and tact.

❑ **Moderation** - insight into reasonable desires

❑ Neither the excess nor the denial of desires. This is the principle of **Golden mean**.

❑ In each case one has to decide this mean of rational choice.

✓ **Courage** is mean between cowardice and rashness. **Liberty** between prodigality and meanness, **Modesty** between bashfulness and shamelessness.

✓ This process is greatly helped by **virtue** i.e by the settled habit of will in the choice of the mean.

✓ This is adopted in practical life by wise man.

Social Ethics

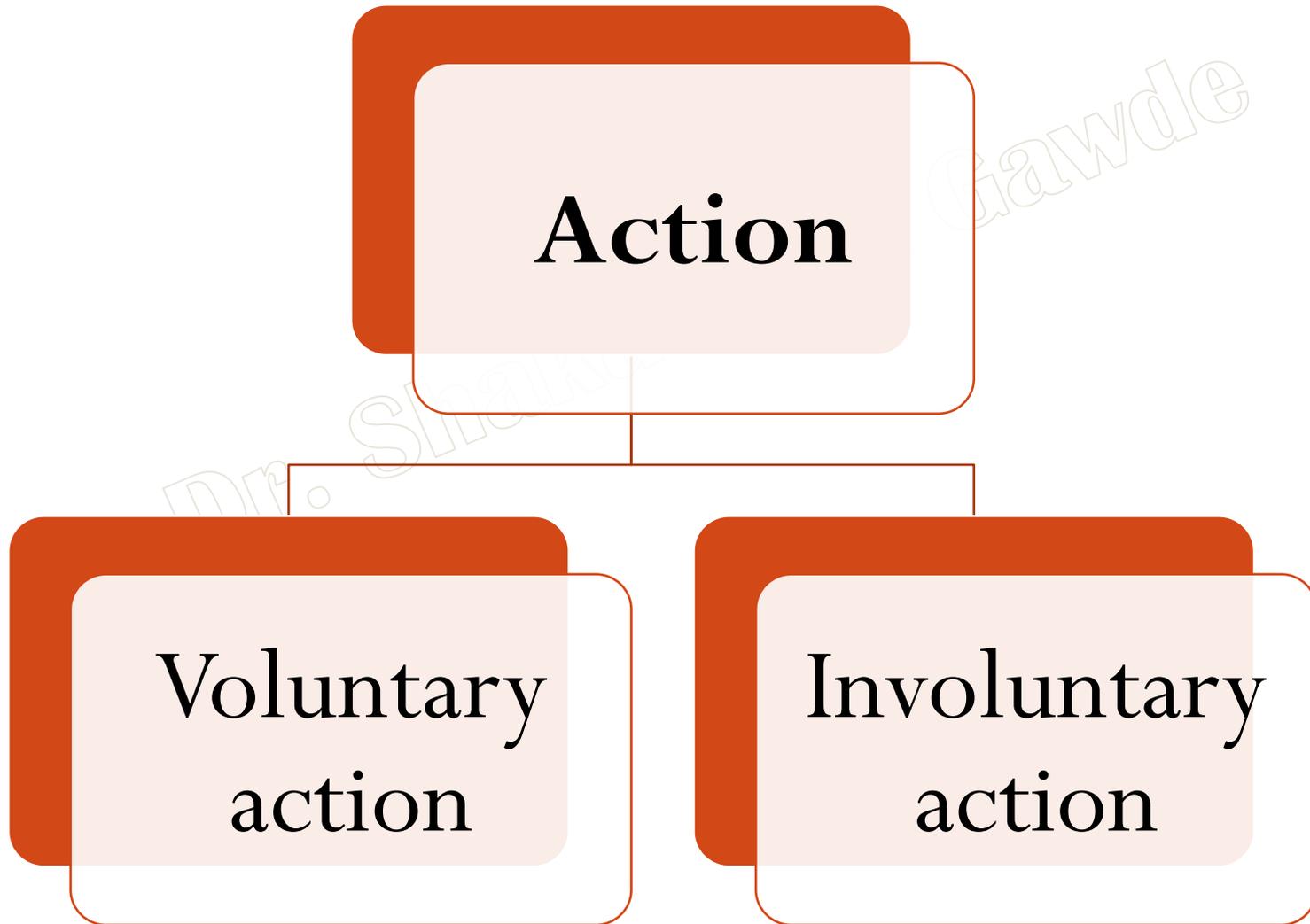
Justice

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Reward for  
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Distributive
Reward for
right activity

Corrective
punishment for
wrong actions

Moral action



❑ **Involuntary action-** compelled action from an external agency.

❑ **Voluntary action-** originates from within the agent himself and the doer has to choose the course of action with his **free will** .

❑ It is the voluntary action alone for which men are praised or blamed, rewarded or punished. Hence voluntary actions can be called **moral**.

❑ **Freedom of will** = freedom of choice

Choice has to be rational.

❑ Virtue and vice follow from free choice. He criticizes Socrates for maintaining that nobody does wrong voluntarily.

❑ **Choice-choice** for the means of the attainment of the highest end in man.

❑ Virtuous actions are not only **voluntary**, but also in accordance with **rational choice**.

❑ Aristotle criticizes Socrates for holding that man is wholly rational.

❑ Man is not wholly rational, but also an animal driven by appetites & passion. Hence, by the settled habit of will man has to control his lower passions by means of his **rational choice**.

Happiness

- ❑ End of moral life.
- ❑ Performance of virtuous activities
- ❑ Perfect happiness lies in the best activity which is contemplative.
- ❑ Virtuous activities aim at the goodness of God
- ❑ This contemplative activity is found in philosophers who are most godlike therefore happiest and the best