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

Distributive
Reward for
right activity

Corrective
punishment for
wrong actions
Moral action

Action

Voluntary action

Involuntary 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