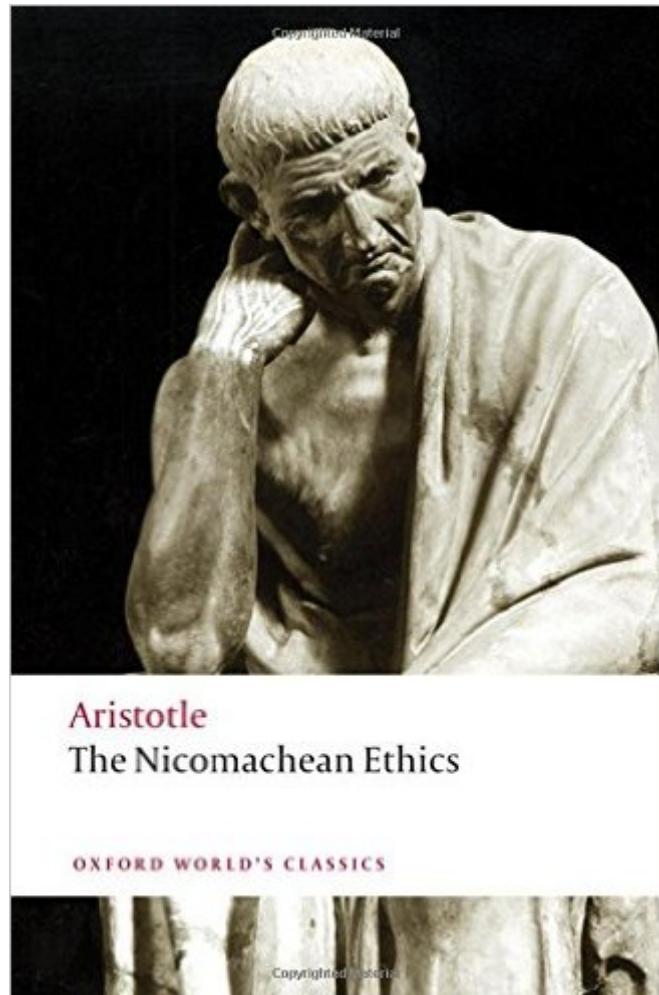


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The Nicomachean Ethics (Oxford World's Classics)



Synopsis

A student of Plato and a teacher of Alexander the Great, Aristotle is one of the towering figures in Western thought. A brilliant thinker with wide-ranging interests, he wrote important works in physics, biology, poetry, politics, morality, metaphysics, and ethics. In the Nicomachean Ethics, which he is said to have dedicated to his son Nicomachus, Aristotle's guiding question is what is the best thing for a human being? His answer is happiness. "Happiness," he wrote, "is the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing in the world." But he means not something we feel, not an emotion, but rather an especially good kind of life. Happiness is made up of activities in which we use the best human capacities, both ones that contribute to our flourishing as members of a community, and ones that allow us to engage in god-like contemplation. Contemporary ethical writings on the role and importance of the moral virtues such as courage and justice have drawn inspiration from this work, which also contains important discussions on responsibility, practical reasoning, and on the role of friendship in creating the best life. This new edition combines David Ross's classic translation, lightly revised by Lesley Brown, with a new and invaluable introduction and explanatory notes. A glossary of key terms and comprehensive index, as well as a fully updated bibliography, add further value to this exceptional new edition.

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Along with many other virtues, Aristotle has the characteristic of being extremely systematic and ordered in his exposition of subjects. It is believed that he, like Plato, wrote dialogues to illuminate his philosophy, and that those dialogues are lost and all we have is his notes for class. It is good we still keep so many notes, because of its said order and clarity. Of course, it is not an easy reading (although I wouldn't put him either among the obscure and dark philosophers). It is rigorous philosophy exposed without useless digressions. Aristotle tells us that all extremes are bad. We have to find the "golden middle". Then he proceeds to expose different sets of extremes and the virtuous middle of the road. Being mad with fury is bad, but being insensible to outrageous actions is also a measure of inhumanity and extreme weakness of character. And so with the other virtues and vices. Aristotle's system is still relevant because of the simple fact that he treats features of the human soul that are universal, regardless of time and place. His theories do not come from Divine revelation or from any mystical source. They come from common sense, and an acute observation of the humankind. Aristotle tells us that we must moderate our primal impulses and instincts, and live by the rule of reason and reasonability. No wonder Aristotle is the source of rigorous, systematic and realist Western philosophy, as opposed to the more literary, poetic and idealist school that comes from Plato, Aristotle's mentor. His is an almost scientific approach, certainly not "entertainment" or Tarot philosophy. It needs no recommendation; it has proved to be a universal work of the mind, one that will stay extant through the ages, as it has already been.

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