Intellectual Virtues in *Nicomachean Ethics* book 6

Aristotle's distinctions between different kinds of intellectual excellence (or virtue) he examines in N.E. book 6 requires discussion of the nature of the human soul – how it is divided into parts or strata, which have different functions or purposes.

Human Soul

Rational Part of the Soul. uses reason, grasps rational principles

Intellectual Virtues

Wisdom, Knowledge, Intelligence, Skill, Practical Wisdom

Moral Virtues

e.g. Justice, Courage, Temperance, Good Temper, Generosity, Etc.

"Scientific" Part of the Soul: part that contemplates, understands, investigates things that don't change

"Calculative", Deliberative Part of the Soul: part that contemplates, understands, investigates things that do change

Irrational Part of the Soul: does not use reason, though some parts can be guided by, obey, participate in reason

"Desiring", Emotional Part of Soul. feels desire, emotions
-- not rational, but can listen to, participate in reason

"Vegetative" Part of the Soul: part that carries out basic functions of life – growth, respiration, digestion, etc.

The *Intellectual Virtues* pertain to the higher part(s) of the soul – those parts that are genuinely intellectual or rational. They involve developed habits of reasoning, inquiry, knowledge, judgment.

The *Moral Virtues* pertain to the lower part of the soul – but to its highest sub-part, the portion that is concerned with desires, feelings, emotional responses, pleasure and pain, and which can involve reason. They involve developed habits that have to do with acting and feeling in the right ways.

The higher parts of the soul – the Scientific and Calculative parts – Aristotle will also refer to as two different types of Intellect: *Theoretical* (or Speculative) and *Practical* (and also Productive).

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Aristotle distinguishes five main Intellectual Virtues – ways in which we grasp or attain truth. All of these virtues are located principally within the rational part of the human soul (though practical wisdom also in a way does involve the non-rational part of the soul as well)

Rational Part of the Soul.

THEORETICAL (OR SPECULATIVE) INTELLECT.

contemplates, investigates things that don't change

Intuitive Reason (or Intuition)

Grasps basic, foundational, "first" principles needed for any sort of rational inquiry

combines

Scientific (Disciplinary) Knowledge

Investigates, works out, demonstrates body of knowledge about necessary matters through induction and deduction

PRACTICAL (AND PRODUCTIVE) INTELLECT

contemplates, investigates things that do change

Practical Wisdom (or Prudence)

Deliberates well about the means in particular situations to attain right, good, noble, worthwhile ends. Investigates the good for human beings and for self.

Art (or Skill, Productive Disciplines)

Determines how best to – and does – create a desired product or effect given tools, raw material, etc. in particular situation

grasped intuitively or through the practice of Dialectic . . .

Examples: Mathematics, Logic, Physics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Biology, Music (in a sense). . . .

deals with anything with moral value implications or issues. . . **Examples.** Politics, Household Management, Ethics,
(Literature? History? Business?)

Examples. Rhetoric, Medicine, Architecture, Strategy, Music, Fine Arts, Cooking, Shoemaking