

# On the Reality of Moral Forces

*by*

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"The good is the happy mean between too much and too little," says Aristotle in his work on Ethics, pointing out the path which every investigation should follow. This simple statement contains a grand picture of three forces, two of them representing the possible deviations and the third the idea of the Good made vivid. The representative of the Good between two tempters is the picture placed before us by the pre-Christian philosopher.

Cowardliness is not a virtue. But neither is foolhardiness a virtue. The virtue is the mean between these two extremes. Stinginess is not a virtue. Extravagance is not a virtue. But the proper balance represented by economy is a virtue.

Applied to the present, the Aristotelian doctrine of virtue seems to find an excellent illustration in our times. In the age of plenty we see mankind in distress, hundreds and thousands doing without the barest necessities. The two tempters, abundance and scarcity, seem to direct the Economic Age.

Where is the middle way, the happy balance for our times? Should the great philosopher Aristotle suddenly rise up from the dead into our midst and study the difficulties of the modern age, what would he have to offer us as a solution?

He lived at a time when the human mind had not worked its way through to experimentation. This fact makes the tremendous difference between the epochs clear to us. Aristotle was a most excellent observer of nature. He knew plants and animals. He described their physical structure and habits, and it seems incomprehensible today how a single human being at that time was able to acquire such an immense knowledge of detailed fact. He writes with equal ease on almost all subjects of human knowledge. He knows not only the realms of nature but also man in all his manifold differentiations. With extreme clarity he portrays the various human types, the races, and the divergent qualities of spirit. He compares man and animal in order to find their differences and their common characteristics. He observes the expression of soul qualities in the manner of the gait, the placing of the feet, the turning of the hips; he studies arm and leg movements, posture, vibration of the lips, interplay of eye and hand, glance and gesture.

We have before us a master-judge of people and things. We may assume that what we possess is only a tiny portion of his wisdom and that he has an inexhaustible store of information for conversation and oral instruction; he grasps every momentary situation with

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a ready wit and inspiration not only in profound research but in lecturing as well.

For him, Zeus and Hermes are not merely gods. In the manner in which the sculptors represent them they are types of the Caucasian, the white man, or the negro who with his fuzzy hair and the form of ears and lips is at once suggested in the portrait of Hermes. For Aristotle, the gods of Greece were the prototypes of all the ramifications and multifarious races of mankind.

Would it not be worth while to call upon one so well versed in the nature of men and things, for whom the divine and human worlds flow together in an all-embracing unity, and to ask him what, in his opinion, is the matter with our age and what is lacking in the much more highly developed sciences of today? Let us make the attempt. Like Lessing in his Faust fragment, we will picture Aristotle appearing before us and we will question him.

It would not be easy to impress him. In spite of our enormously enlarged field of knowledge, in spite of our new inventions, he would not be at loss to show us that the roots of the things of which we are so proud were already known to him. If, for example, we were to try to impress him with our modern conception of astronomy, he would point out to us that he was familiar with the fact that the earth is a globe which moves suspended freely in space. Quoting his teacher Plato, he would easily be able to show that he and the Platonic School, whose best pupil he undoubtedly was, had a vast knowledge of the movements of the earth's axis, and he would even be able to give with sufficient accuracy the exact rate of the procession of the equinoxes in the Zodiac. Even though the language is veiled, Plato's dialogue *Timaeus* gives the number of 25,920 years as the exact time for the complete revolution of the earth's axis. Aristotle would say: "Your science is not unknown to me. The only difference is that you learn in school what we guarded as the secret of the initiated few and passed on, in the veiled form of mysteries, only to those who were properly prepared. You have developed a culture in which everything has been placed before the eyes of all men, therefore it is not so hard to understand that you have more difficulties with one another than was the case in former times, for the excess and insufficiency which reign within human souls play their game with you, with the help of the knowledge which is properly only for those who, having freed themselves from the conflict of opposing forces, have decided to live and work for the goal of all evolution. But you build machines of war with forces the knowledge of which you have derived from ancient cosmology, though by roundabout routes of which you may not even be aware."

He would say regarding the Copernican and Keplerian systems, for example, that they only represent a further development of one of his principles, a mere application of an axiom well known to him: "When you can say something in simple formulae, seek not to express it in more complicated ones." It would appear to him to be an application of his principle

that men decided to place the sun in the centre of the system, with the planets moving in elliptical orbits, instead of keeping the earth in the centre and assigning to the planets the complicated, twisting courses which they would then take. He would not even be very much astonished to learn that James Watt hit upon the idea of applying this rule by providing the steam-engine, like the planets, with this eccentric principle. He would say: "The steam-engine is a translation of the principle of Copernicus and Kepler to the earth, and your locomotives are, in reality, preconceived in cosmology." It might be that we should then contradict him in the attempt to prove that we have invented something really new. But thorough-minded Aristotle would soon go to the Patent Office and show us that the original patent document used the words "sun-wheel" and "planet-wheel" for the eccentric, and that he was right and not we. He would say: "You have become too proud, for you have made public the Mysteries and forgotten their origin." He would point out to us that progress does not consist in knowledge but in the moral consolidation of knowledge. Such, perhaps, would be the nature of an interview with the great Greek philosopher, and it would bring to light not a few surprises.

To be sure, we should have some trouble with him in certain points, for his terminology would not correspond with ours. He would, for example, ascribe souls not only to animals but also to plants, and he would treat life in general as a subdivision of the soul-and-spirit. The whole science of biology would be, for him, a department of cosmic psychology.

He would thus be in complete agreement with the latest research, which no longer finds so precise a distinction between plant and animal. But he would scold if we attempted to present our concepts overflowing into one another to the extent to which this happens in this case. He would say that plant and animal are very different and must be separated conceptually because of the divergent character of their "souls," but that what we separate conceptually, in reality flows together. For he would say that the concept under which we think of a thing is the "form," which permeates the visible and tangible and fashions it as the 'matter' which constitutes the basis for the form, but that extremely different forms sometimes replace each other even in this materiality, so that the same matter appears permeated now by one, now by another form. To express himself in everyday language, he might say: "When the wolf eats lambs he absorbs lamb 'matter.' But he retains his wolf 'form.' This shows that the lamb form withdraws from the lamb matter to make way for the wolf form. Forms change, matter remains the same." And he would have much to say about the "dispossession" of matter by a new form. Our most modern chemistry, which still marvels at the fact that radium occasionally transforms itself into lead, would not astonish Aristotle in the least. He would be able with the greatest ease to understand the constancy of matter, and with equal ease its transmutation by a change of form, and the only thing which

would be incomprehensible to him would be how such a useful and far-reaching doctrine, for whose application he took such pains, was ever lost to mankind.

Here would be a point where it would not be difficult for him to comprehend Christianity, in which the doctrine of Transubstantiation is only a special application of his universal philosophy. To understand the Sacrament at the altar would present no difficulty to him, because he would explain it rightly. And he would regret the struggles of the Middle Ages on the subject of bread and wine as the consequences of incomplete assimilation of his teaching. In many respects he would describe humanity as being involved in a process of intellectual retrogression, and he would search for the causes of this phenomenon. Thus it would be difficult to astonish the ancient Greek sage in any field whatsoever; he would not even be disconcerted by our airplanes. He would say that he had studied the question thoroughly when he was interested in the extremities of animals and had made comparisons between the fin, the talon, the hand, and so on. He would tell us that the feather had interested him deeply, especially its penetration with air, as well as the weight-saving structure of the bones of birds, which are also penetrated by air. He would not even admit that the airplane of today is constructed along the proper lines, insisting that the insects, if not the birds, are still a stage ahead of our constructions, and he would want to return after a few more centuries to see how matters stood then. Our monetary difficulties would not surprise him at all. He would say that he had predicted worldwide indebtedness and had mentioned the remedy, though perhaps not clear enough. Like many of his suggestions it was not properly built upon. He said, "Money must beget no young." He might have expressed himself thus: "There are matters where the principle of multiplication holds good without restriction. But there are also other fields where it is better to follow Artemis, and not Aphrodite, where, in other words, moderation, rightly understood, is required. It is thus readily seen that the demand for usury can neither continue indefinitely nor can it be conceived out of equilibrium with the production of the time. The claim for interest can never grow greater than the actual production permits." This is what he would stress. He would say: "Your monetary institutions lack one thing: the money which arises through the production of goods is not made to disappear again on their consumption. Because such an arrangement is lacking you leave it to the slumps to get rid of this excess. You close down factories that are socially desirable and send the workers into the street as unemployed, while pretending that the surplus is in the production. But what you call by this name is not where you seek it. Too much production exists only when the goods produced cannot be used, whereas you call surplus production anything that cannot be sold. But there is an error here, since obviously it is only your distribution-apparatus that does not function because your monetary system is not adapted to the rhythm of production, distribution, and

consumption. In your social structure you have forgotten Death; you have no arrangement for cancelling out what has been booked, and therefore the cancelling must be taken care of by wars and social catastrophes. You entrust to Chaos, to Chromos, Time, what should properly be fashioned by Reason, by Zeus. In fact, you mix up the gods altogether. You let Aphrodite do things which are in the province of Artemis, you leave to Chronos what Jupiter should regulate. It seems that you have quite lost your bearings. But even this I saw in advance, and it was for this reason that I compiled the table of Categories. You do not seem to have paid much attention to this chapter of my teachings. At any rate, I do not find anything sensible about it in your books. I set a Category for each god when I noticed that the gods were no longer duly respected, that the temples were becoming empty, and the oracles were silent. To Chronos I assigned Time, to Zeus, Space, and to Ares and the Titans, Substance. But it seems that you have failed to understand this properly. You have these things, to be sure, in your modern physical system of measurements in feet, pounds, and seconds, but you have allowed them to fall into confusion in your social relations. This is because you do not pay proper attention to the too much and the too little, and so the happy mean escapes you."

And then he would add with a sigh: "It is difficult to help you. For to find ones way between the 'too much' of your production and the 'too little' which the individual receives, it is necessary to realize that the 'too much' does not exist at all in reality, but only appears in your books. You have a false bookkeeping which you believe to correspond to reality. No wonder that you confuse all the gods and all the concepts." And he would be grieved to learn that his medical writings are decried as being not genuine, and that the many remedies he indicated are today to be found only in a very distorted form among the alchemists. He would say: "You have guarded very poorly all these things which I did not find out by myself but which have been known in the Mysteries for tens of centuries and to which I only gave a new form. The Magi, for example, knew at the time of Zoroaster (who lived 6,000 years before the beginning of your era) many things which you have forgotten today. The writings of the Magi (or as you would say, the Persians) already indicate the great principles which oppose one another in the world: Light and Darkness, Good and Evil. But the all-important thing is that there are two forms of Evil, 'too much' and 'too little,' and thus in reality it is not a matter of duality, of Bolshevism and Fascism and such things, but of a trinity. It is this trinity that you do not recognize. You fail to understand the significance of the three. Balance is only possible where a third is found between two opposites: this is my doctrine of 'too much' and 'too little.' You do not see this trinity, and therefore you are consumed by factions and discord. You should take a lesson from the Egyptians who knew well the importance of the trinity.

”There are various realms in this world. One realm where there is ‘too much’ and no saving, where one would like most to give away everything that is produced, is the realm of the mind. A person who creates a poem does not wish to keep it to himself but to read it to everybody, including those who have no desire to hear it! The mind gives everything away, producing everything in abundance; the mind is the realm where there is no ‘too much.’ There is no danger of your producing too much mind; I have always known it, but now I have to realize it again: you do not suffer from an excess of mind.

”But in the material realm, it is different; there, everyone wants to use what he has for himself, and people always cry they have too little.

”What has really happened in your age is that you have sent all your mind into the material world, with all your technical inventions, communications, and so on. In this way the earth has become small, and material life is so permeated with mind that it begins to run according to the laws of mind instead of purely material laws. Hence the necessity has arisen to distribute material goals which are no longer scarce, but abundant, as if they were mind. When you have grasped this fact you will have solved the problem of raw materials. In your times raw materials should be given away as if they were poems. I have seen in your newspapers that some people have already begun giving away, but it must be done in a much larger scale.

”You must develop an ability to recognize when matter is matter and when it has become so spiritualized that it obeys spiritual and not material laws. This you must recognize and on this basis you must create institutions, worldwide institutions. Materialism wants to possess everything itself; the mind, or spirit, wants to distribute everything to everybody.

”Your economy has changed from material to spiritual, and therefore egoism no longer has a place in economic matters.”

Thus Aristotle would regard World Economy as the result of the development of the interplay between ”too much” and ”too little,” so that spiritual laws must now take the place of material laws. And then he would say: ”If you build up what you call a League of Nations into a centre of supervision to see that excess and scarcity balance each other, instead of making it a factor in the furthering of the power of selfish groups, then you will get somewhere. But for this purpose it is necessary to divorce the purely intellectual, the questions of education and of minorities, from this League of Nations; it will only become a good and serviceable institution when it is weakened, when it has no power at all but is only the legal foundation for justice prevailing between nations with equal rights.

”But you must fashion economy on a worldwide basis, and independently. And you must recognize it as something which has to be spiritualized and in which there must be selfless dealings.

"Then your knowledge, your religion, your whole intellectual and moral life will be ordered, and you will realize that your gods have entered the earth, have entered the material world. Your spirituality must penetrate and permeate the material. If you accomplish this, the 'too much' and the 'too little' will be in proper balance, and you will have found the middle road. You will develop an unselfish economy, a strong intellectual and spiritual life, and a just law which guarantees equilibrium among the nations. Then you will no longer lament over the surplus of goods, and you will no longer complain that Olympus has become empty. You will live upon the earth as responsible human beings and groups of human beings."

And then Aristotle might pause a moment, and continue: "Plato, my master, predicted all this. He wrote in his work on the State long, long ago. The misfortune is only that people interpret what he meant to be successive, as simultaneous. He spoke of four virtues, which represent four phases. These four phases are not simultaneous, but successive: they represent whole epochs of development. They are: Wisdom, Courage, Moderation, Justice. These are four epochs.

"Wisdom was coming to an end when, as Aristotle, I wrote my works. It only remained for me to clothe it in a modern form. But the Orientals already had it. All religions, all wisdom, came from the original revelation of the gods themselves.

"Then, with the coming of the Greeks and Romans, courage was the goal, and its development was the object of human training and schooling. And now now you are in the age of economy, of moderation, where you pretend, in the midst of plenty, that you have too little. But justice is only realizable in the next epoch, which will follow upon yours. But I do not say this in order that you may retire in laziness, for if you do not make every possible effort now it will never come. World justice is the great aim toward which the world must strive. This aim was already known in the Mysteries of Trophonios, and my master Plato wrote about it. He said that in these Mysteries of the Cave the World-Soul can be seen as crucified, and that it waits in the interior of the earth for its redemption and resurrection. What we beheld in the Trophonic Mysteries was shown to you by Christ, for it was He Whom my master Plato described as the Most Just, Who would be crucified and mocked when He came. We had to show Him in the cave in the interior of the earth, for where your raw materials, the metals and territories lie for which you struggle since the gods in heaven have ceased to exist for you, there Christ let His blood flow that you might be redeemed. The Cross and the Blood are there as an admonition that the Spirit has poured into matter, and that from now onwards economy must be spiritualized and selflessness must reign in the administration of matter. But you have forgotten this in your sleep. It is now time for you to become Christians; otherwise the epoch of justice will never come. I myself have become

a Christian, for it follows from my principles.”

And thereupon the great spirit of Aristotle would withdraw, in order to see if anyone on earth had noticed that he had returned.

The great Spirits who lead mankind are eternal. It is justifiable to look at the present through their eyes. It is right and proper to apply history to our own day, even if, as here, it is done in the form of fiction. This fiction contains reality, and it would be by no means regrettable if it became a lesson for mankind.