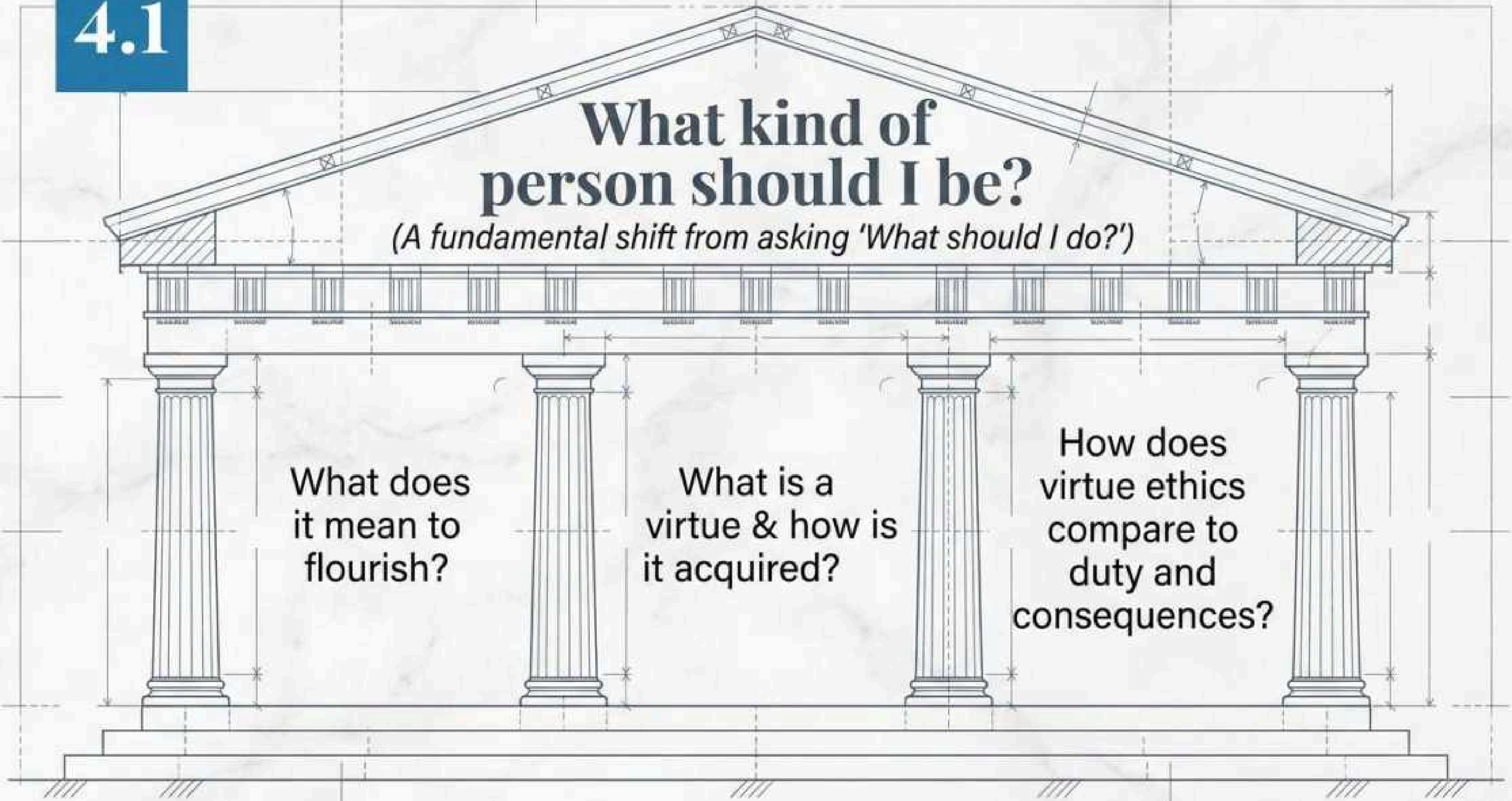
4.1

What kind of person should I be?

(A fundamental shift from asking 'What should I do?')



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4.2

It is an activity of a whole life, not a fleeting feeling.

Eudaimonia

Happiness / Flourishing / Living Well

Socrates — Plato — The Stoics

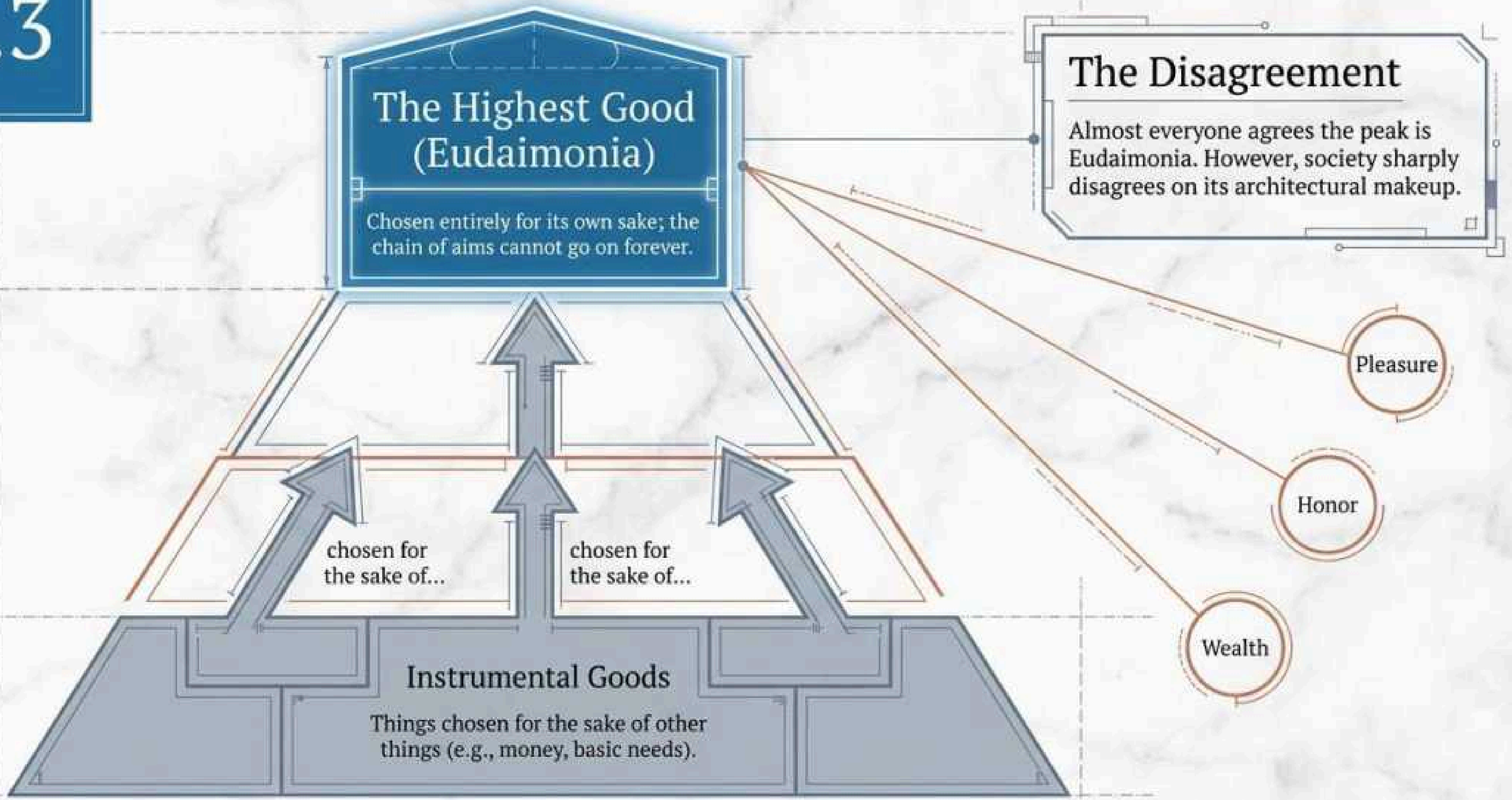
(All held that virtue is central to a good life)

Aristotle

Author of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (4th Century BCE).
Provided the most systematic and enduring account.

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4.3



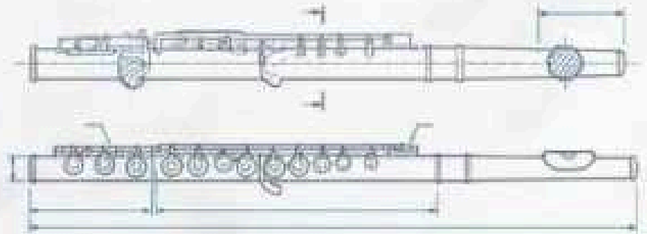
The Disagreement

Almost everyone agrees the peak is Eudaimonia. However, society sharply disagrees on its architectural makeup.

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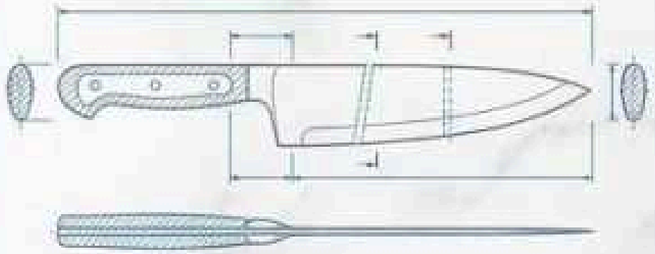
4.4

The Flute Player



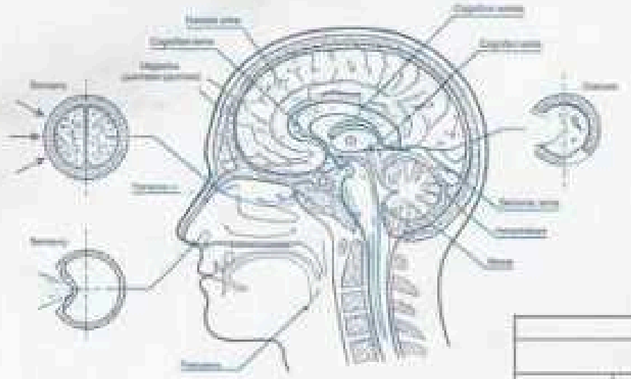
Subject: The Flute Player
Function: Playing the flute
The Good: Playing well

The Knife



Subject: The Knife
Function: Cutting
The Good: Cutting well

The Human



Subject: The Human
Function: ? Eliminating mere life (plants) and perception (animals).
Result: Activity of the soul in accordance with reason.

The Human Good = Rational activity in accordance with excellence (virtue) over a complete life.

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4.5

The Critics' Stress Test



Challenge 1

Do humans truly have a single function?

Challenge 2

Must a good life be exclusively one of reason?

The Neo-Aristotelian Reinforcement

The core idea remains highly durable: The good for a human depends fundamentally on what humans are like.

Key Defender: Philippa Foot

The goodness of any living thing is measured by the natural standards of its own biological kind.

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4.6

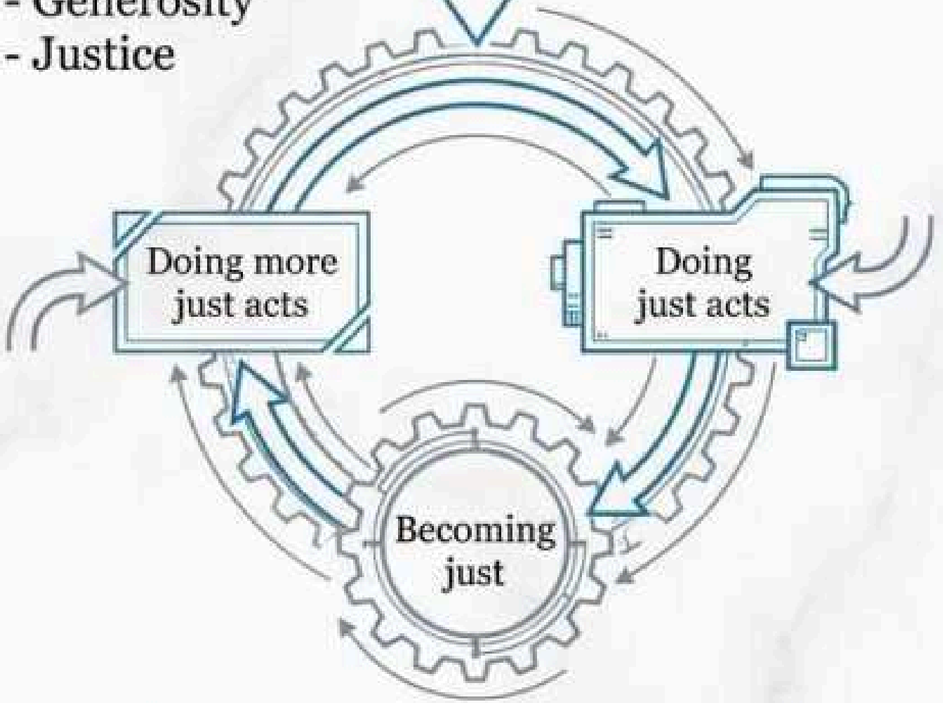
Two Types of Virtue

Virtues of Intellect

- Wisdom
- Practical Judgment

Virtues of Character

- Courage
- Temperance
- Generosity
- Justice



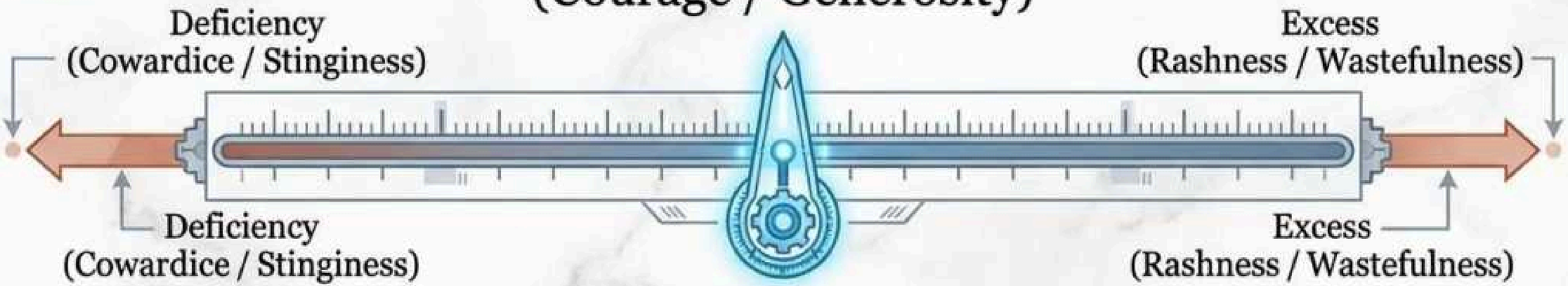
Crucial Note: Character is NOT acquired by teaching alone. It requires a good upbringing so the young learn to naturally enjoy and dislike the right things.

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4.7

THE MEAN

(Courage / Generosity)



Core Rules of the Calibration

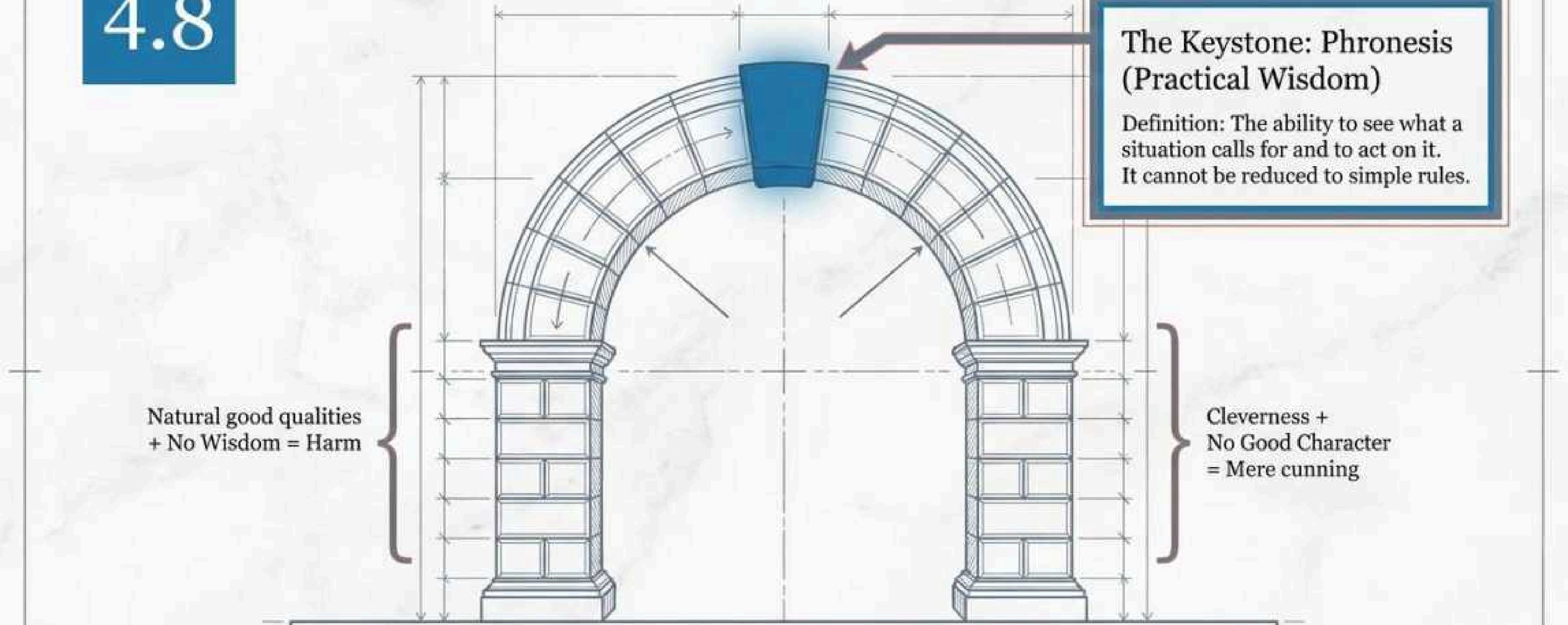
- It is a settled disposition to choose well.
- It is relative to us (calibrated to the specific situation, person, and occasion).
- It is NOT an arithmetic average; it is NOT mediocrity.
- Exception Note: Some actions/feelings have no mean (e.g., spite is always defective).

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4.8

The Keystone: Phronesis (Practical Wisdom)

Definition: The ability to see what a situation calls for and to act on it. It cannot be reduced to simple rules.



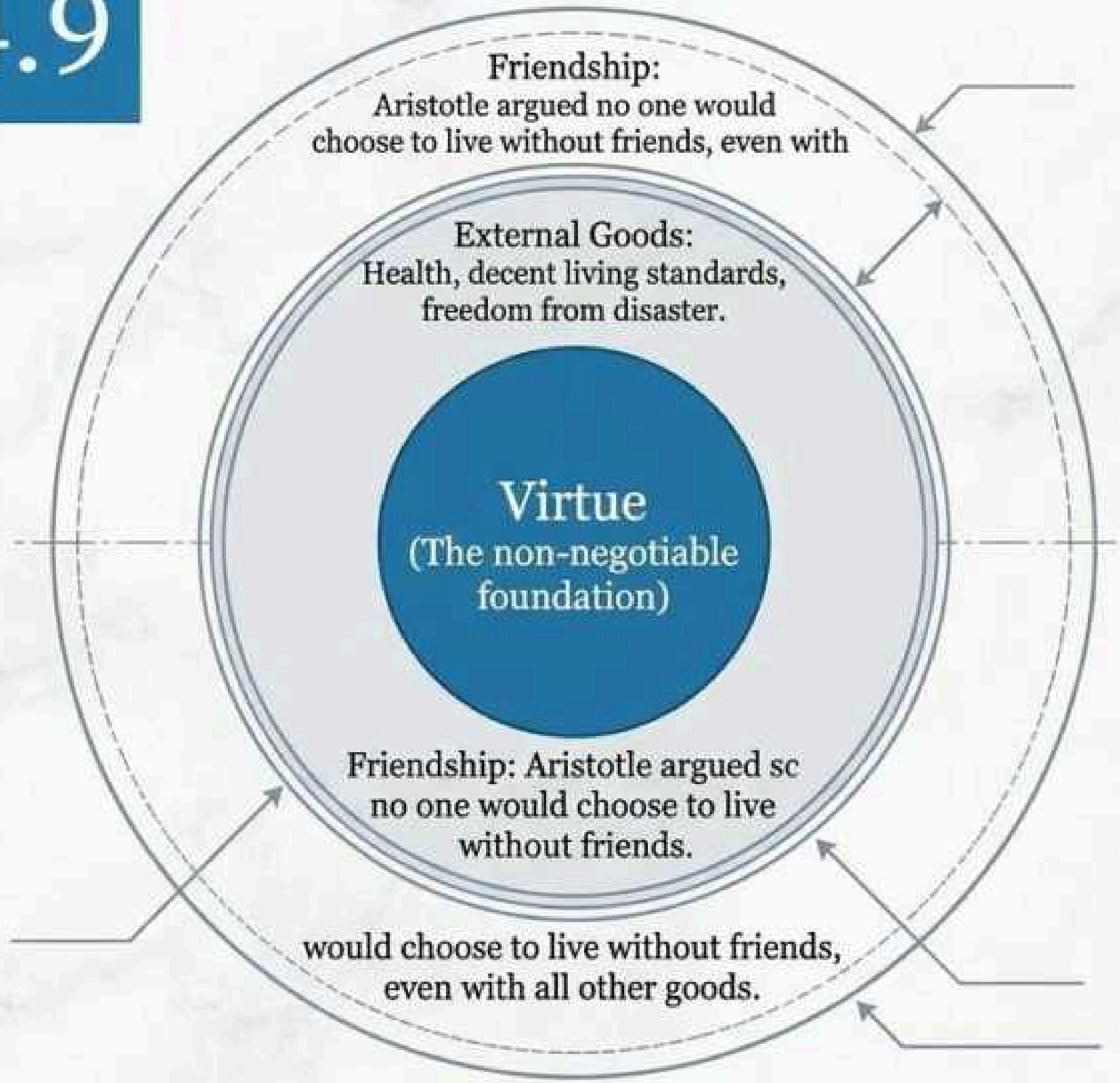
Natural good qualities + No Wisdom = Harm

Cleverness + No Good Character = Mere cunning

The wise person is the ultimate standard. The virtues are permanently united only in the one who possesses judgment.

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4.9



3 Types of Friendship
1. Utility (Mutual benefit)
2. Pleasure (Shared enjoyment)
3. Character (The Highest Form - based on mutual admiration of virtue)

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4.10



Western Medieval: Thomas Aquinas

Integrated Aristotle by adding the theological virtues: Faith, Hope, Charity.

Chinese Philosophy: Confucius

Centered on the cultivation of *ren* (benevolence) and *li* (ritual propriety).

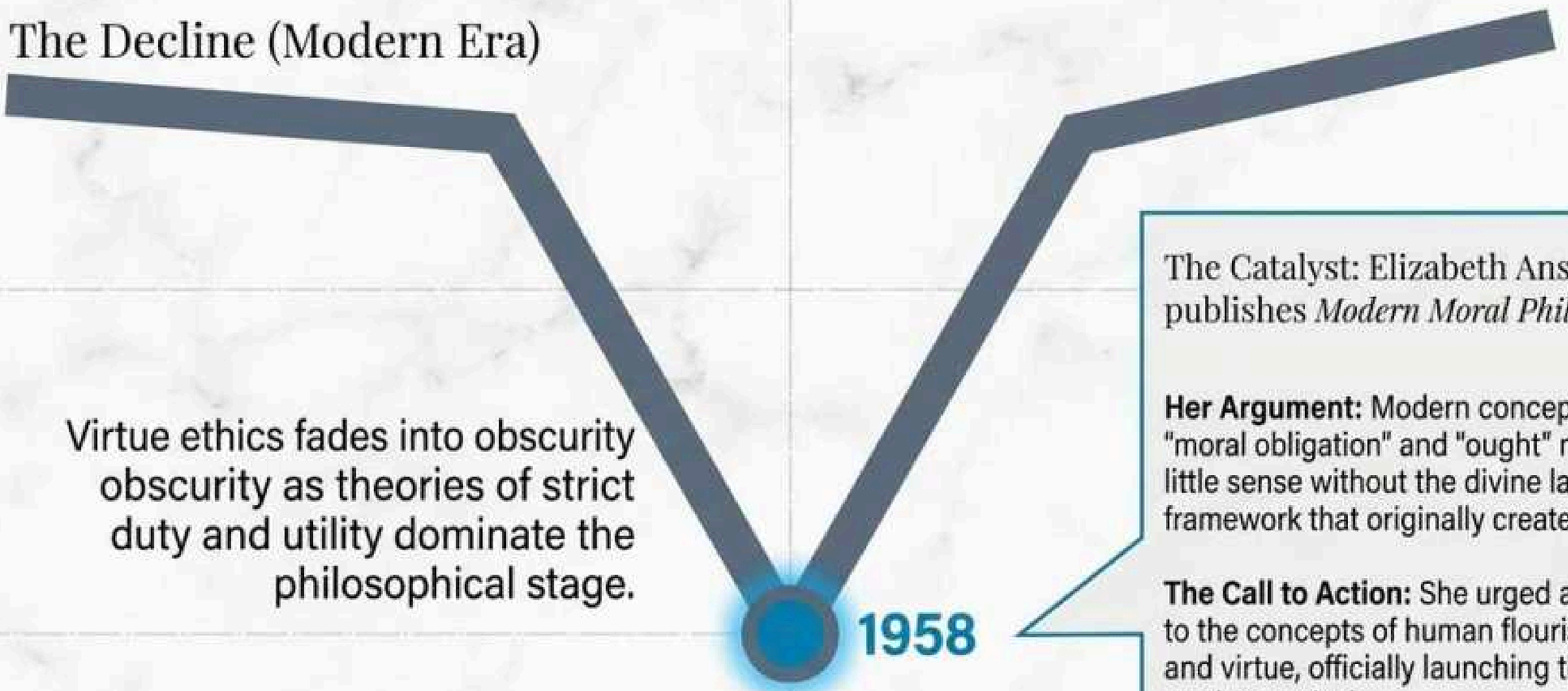
Buddhist Ethics

Deep emphasis on the cultivation of compassion and wisdom.

While the lists are not perfectly identical, there is a profound, widespread global concern with character as the foundation of ethics.

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4.11



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4.12

1978

Philippa Foot | *Virtues and Vices*

Carried the revival forward, grounding virtue in natural human goodness.

1981

Alasdair MacIntyre | *After Virtue*

Key Concept: Modern morality is just a fragment of older traditions. Virtues must be understood within “practices” and a life possessing “narrative unity.”

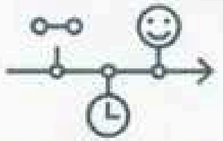
1999

Rosalind Hursthouse | *On Virtue Ethics*

Key Concept: Provides a detailed, actionable account: an action is right if it is exactly what a virtuous person would do in the circumstances.

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4.13



1 Whole Life

Treats morality holistically across a lifespan, not just as isolated trolley-problem choices.



2 Emotion

Accords emotions their rightful place (a virtuous person feels fitting emotions).



3 Connection

Naturally explains the deep human value of integrity and friendship.



4 Exemplars

Matches our natural psychology of admiring real people (e.g., a courageous nurse, a good teacher).



5 Education

Makes moral education highly practical via habit formation and imitating the wise.

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4.14

The Objection	The Reply / Reality
Fails to guide action ("Just tell me what to do!").	**Strict rules also require interpretation. A better heuristic is simply asking: "What would a person of honesty and kindness do here?"**
Cultural Variation. The specific list of accepted virtues changes depending on the culture.	
Circularity. The theory defines a virtuous person by good acts, yet defines good acts by what a virtuous person does.	

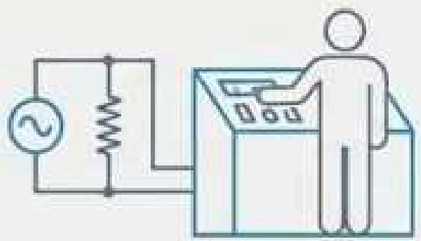
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4.15

The Situationist Challenge: Philosophers like Gilbert Harman and John Doris argue that situations dictate behavior far more than stable character traits.

Case File 1: Stanley Milgram (1960s)

Finding: Obedience to authority led ordinary people to administer what they believed were dangerous electrical shocks to strangers.



Case File 2: Darley & Batson (1973)

Finding: Seminary students—who were in a rush—were significantly less likely to stop and help a person in visible distress.



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4.16

The Defense: These empirical studies do not prove that virtue doesn't exist; they prove that virtue is exceptionally hard. (Aristotle himself noted virtue is rare and most people are ruled by feeling).

The Mitigation Plan
(Environmental Design)

1. Actively arrange our lives and environments to support good conduct.

2. Double down on rigorous moral education.

3. Build strong, supportive institutions that reinforce character rather than erode it.

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4.17

Consequentialist	Deontologist	Virtue Ethicist
"What will produce the best outcome?"	"What does duty require and what do rights forbid?"	"What would a person of good character do, and what does the act express?"

Synthesis Note: In easy cases, all three agree. In hard cases, they sharply diverge. Many philosophers pragmatically draw on all three, using each as a structural check on the others.

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4.18

The Aristotle Method (Action Plan)

Step 1: Choose a virtue you admire (e.g., courage, honesty) & name a specific exemplar who embodies it.

Step 2: Ask: What do they do in typical cases? What specific habits make their behavior possible?

Step 3: Pick one small habit to actively practice this week.

Character is formed by repeated acts. No lecture can replace the practice.

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