

Abstract

The paper derives from various parts of my forthcoming book "Aretē and the Formation of Greek Ethical Theory." A theory of "universal" aretē is a theory of anything, not just the human psychē, that can possess aretē. Plato presents this theory most explicitly in the function argument in Republic 1. The paper begins with several linguistic and value theoretic points and concern "aretē," and related English terms "goodness" and "value." Following these points, the paper presents Plato's theory of universal aretē, including what is called Plato's "stative potentiality restriction" on aretē. Finally, the paper discusses three topics pertaining to the philosophical context of Plato's theory: the use of "aretē" in pre-Platonic ethics, the way that Plato's theory influenced Aristotle's conception of aretē as a hexis, and the relation between the use of the expressions "aretē" and "to agathon."

Bio

David Conan Wolfsdorf is Professor of Philosophy at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA, USA. Most recently, he is the author of *On Goodness* (OUP, 2019) and the editor of *Early Greek Ethics* (OUP, 2020). The focus of his current research is ancient, contemporary, and late modern value theory. He is completing a book entitled *Aretē and the Formation of Greek Ethical Theory*, whose aim is to explain how the basic structure of ancient Greek ethical theory as virtue ethical and eudaimonistic came to be.