

Maduk Deng

PROFESSOR DR JEFFREY DUECK

DATE 12/08/2022

PHILOSOPHY

PHI 101 INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Two-Half: Ethical Excellence

Ethical Virtue is a philosophical theory developed by Aristotle that aims to assist humans in achieving happiness and flourishing.

To better comprehend it, I will begin by defining Ethics and Virtue. Ethics are the moral rules or guiding principles for determining right and wrong behaviour. And virtue is morally good behaviour or a positive characteristic of a person's personality. (These definitions were taken from LDOAE.)

Abandoning these broad definitions of ethics and virtue, let us now examine what Aristotle's philosophy has to say about Ethical Virtue. According to Aristotle, happiness is the ultimate goal of all human beings, and happiness can be attained by pursuing virtue.

He believes that two types of virtue exist: intellectual virtue and ethical virtue. He distinguishes between them based on their acquisition methods. Intellectual virtue can be obtained through education, which necessitates both experience and time. While ethical virtue can be cultivated through custom or habit, Aristotle also states that virtue emanates from the soul and that three conditions emanate from the soul. These are emotions, abilities, and traits. Virtue must therefore be among them. Since feelings are emotions such as love, anger, sadness, etc. that generate pleasure or pain, capacities are our ability to experience these feelings, and dispositions are how we consciously respond to them. Consequently, we can determine that virtue is a disposition. The virtuous individual must be trained from a young age to have the proper desires, to behave properly, and to act at the proper time. Obtaining virtue is not a matter of intellect, but rather of inborn dispositions of character, feelings, and actions. A person's honourable and moral character is developed through the practise of being honest, just, generous, and so on. This moral character can be viewed as an ethical excellence that a person attains through practise, similar to how a musician attains musical excellence through consistent practise. Also, according to Aristotle's theory, virtue is a medium between two vices on opposite ends of a line, each of which represents a deficiency or excess. To illustrate how virtue is a means, we can say that a person possesses courage.

The individual's courage is his virtue, whereas cowardice is a vice, a deficiency. And if a person is a daredevil, this is also a vice, but it is one of excess.

To illustrate the practical application of this philosophical theory, let's assume that two infants (John and Lucas) are born into and grow up in two families with radically different moral standards. John's family is

a Christian family, while Lucas' family is a band of thieves. John was approximately three years old when he accompanied his parents to the store.

He believed that he could take anything he desired from the store (especially toys). Based on this information, he stole a small ball from his parents' house. When they returned home, they discovered that their son was in possession of a ball that they had not purchased for him, complete with its original price tag. The parents reprimand him and explain that he is not permitted to take items from the store without paying for them. They then return to the store to pay for the merchandise. They make sure it never happens again as a result of this incident. When Lucas was approximately three years old, he accompanied his parents to a store, where he stole a toy and hid it. His parents, knowing what Lucas had done, did not pay for the toy and did not tell him he had done wrong. They instead applauded him. Every time they went to the store, he continued stealing whenever possible. He was accustomed to stealing. John grew up knowing that stealing was wrong and he never even considered doing it, whereas Lucas grew up knowing that he can steal at any time and should always be on the lookout for opportunities to do so. John is a person of virtue, whereas Lucas is a person with a vice, if we examine this scenario from an ethical standpoint. John, even if someone leaves him alone with the doors wide open to take everything he can, chooses not to do it because he knows it is wrong to do so, and this ethical value (virtue) is so ingrained in him that it has become an integral part of his character. So, as a result of this virtue's well-developed practise in him, he has become a trustworthy person who brings him many blessings. Lucas, on the other hand, became a professional thief and one day found a house with open doors, so he broke in and stole everything he could. He was exposed as the thief because he did not realise that there were hidden cameras. Unfortunately, he was captured and sentenced to a lengthy prison sentence. However, even before that, nobody in his neighbourhood trusted him, so he was not welcome there.

I believe that understanding Aristotle's Ethical Virtue Philosophy is somewhat difficult because, as the reading explains, it is a situation that manifests itself over a lifetime. In addition, multiple agents play a role in its development. I believe it is difficult to identify the ethical virtues of a society in the twenty-first century due to the normalisation or acceptance of many behaviours that were once considered immoral. Possibly, enormously evil interests are infiltrating every major decision-making entity in order to normalise things that, from a Christian perspective, are not acceptable. This leads me to believe that if we normalise these behaviours, future generations will learn them as the right thing to do, and moral ethics will deteriorate. Consequently, if the standard of moral and ethical virtues declines, their purpose, which is for humans to achieve happiness, will also decline. In the case of normalising theft, does this imply that those who engage in theft will experience happiness? Perhaps this is true for some individuals.

I conclude that Ethical Virtue assists us in comprehending what it means to be a virtuous individual. And it provides us with a guide for living our lives without providing us with specific rules for resolving ethical dilemmas.

Western Philosophy: An Anthology Reference list

Class Notes on Longman's American English Dictionary

(Dr. Jeffrey Dueck)