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Ethics paper

Aristotle's view of ethics can be referred to as Virtue Ethics. A virtue is a character quality that enables something to flourish in its functional purpose and "is of two kinds, intellectual and ethical"(493). Aristotle's theory is an act-based theory focusing on human life overall. Aristotle seems to focus more on the type of person that you want to come rather than what is right to do. While Kant and Mill both introduce act-based theories, compared to Aristotle all three philosophers have different interpretations. Throughout his writing, "Ethical Virtue", Aristotle argued that living through virtue is the way to a life of happiness.

Aristotle seems to focus on human nature and what the "good life" is. He believes that the ultimate end that we all aspire for is happiness. When he refers to happiness he does not mean it in a way as a feeling but as a state of happiness, which he calls Eudaimonia. Aristotle believes life would not be complete and we would not be satisfied without this state. In order to reach this level of fulfillment he says we must excel and do well in its function, which Aristotle refers to as telos. Through this idea Aristotle says we cannot flourish without knowing what the functional purpose of something is and this is what brings about virtue. With the idea of virtue he believes that we are not born virtuous but that we develop virtues through practice.

An example of Aristotle's theory would be that we are humans and we are also animals. Therefore, all the things that could indicate the proper functioning for an animal would also be true for us as well. People are meant to grow and be healthy and fertile. But at the same time we are also a social "animal" so our function also has to involve getting along with other people as an animal would get along with its pack. Aristotle focuses on a theory in an agent based way. This means it focuses on human life as a whole. He takes this into his theory, our character, our psychology, and human nature and what a fulfilled life is really like. Another example that Aristotle gives in his writing is that "...legislators make the citizens good by instilling good habits"(493). If the legislators were to not do this they would most definitely fail at the job that they are doing. Through these examples it gives an easier interpretation to Aristotle's theory.

I believe that Aristotle's theory is somewhat logical. I feel that people should aspire to have a life full of happiness. Although, everyone does not always live in this type of lifestyle, for example people who are criminals that regret their choices and are locked up for long periods of time. So not all people can reach a state of happiness but we all are capable of being happy and we can reach for at least momentary happiness. So therefore, this theory is only somewhat logical and more evidence should be added into this topic. But I definitely believe that believing in a state of happiness is a great thing to want. He aspires to keep a median between cowardice and foolhardiness, which is courage. This idea is good because it makes a balance between trying to live a life full of happiness.

Although they have their differences, John Stuart Mill and Aristotle seem to have some similarities. In Utilitarianism, Mill believes in the greatest happiness principle and that means that picking the right action is maximizing happiness versus unhappiness or pleasure versus pain for everyone involved. This seems to be somewhat similar in a way with Aristotle's idea of state

of happiness. They both seem that happiness is the most beneficial factor in a life. Mill also had the idea of act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism. Act is choosing the action that will produce overall happiness and this seems to somewhat correspond with Aristotle's ideas. Rule is that we should lead by rules that bring the greatest good. The two different types of utilitarianism are very similar to the ideas of virtue theory. A difference that sticks out between the two is that Aristotle has an agent-based theory and Mill is an act-based theory which focuses on the outcome of actions being the determinant of moral value.

Although Mill is the most comparable to Aristotle, Immanuel Kant also does have a valid point when it comes to goodwill. Kant's theory is based on duty and principles and he believes that your actions should come from good will. He also says that the only thing good in itself is ultimately good will. He argues that a categorical imperative is the ultimate moral principle and there are two types. The first being universality and the second being acting in a way in which you treat humanity as an end in itself, not merely a means. Through these two other theories they seem to push somewhat with and against Aristotle.

Through the Virtue Theory, Aristotle makes it known what he is trying to mainly focus on, which is the human life as a whole. He seems to have a similar thought process when it comes to the philosopher's John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant. Ethics in general is knowing what is right and wrong. Aristotle dove into how it was right to have a good life and how it is much more beneficial for ourselves. Through his thoughts on virtue he gives himself a strong starting point to his theory.