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### Virtue Ethics

When it comes to ethics and accountability there are various viewpoints on the matter. There are three major approaches when considering ethics. Firstly, there is Virtue Ethics, which focuses on making decisions with regards to personal morals and beliefs. Secondly, there's Utilitarianism, which focuses on making decisions with regards to maximizing happiness. Lastly, there is Kantianism, which focuses on making decisions with regards to universal frameworks. Each of these arguments appeal to different people, so it is close to impossible to say which is right or wrong because morality is not straightforward. Nonetheless, the theory we will be discussing is Virtue Ethics. This ethical theory emphasizes cultivating good habits, or virtues, that enable people to live well and achieve happiness. According to Athanassoulis, "Most virtue ethics theories take their inspiration from Aristotle who declared that a virtuous person is someone who has ideal character traits." Through the analysis of various articles and of Aristotle's beliefs, Virtue Ethics is proven to be a strong foundation for ethical belief.

Virtue Ethics is the belief that decisions are made ethically when they are made from virtuous people. Furthermore, the people that are considered virtuous carry specific traits that make them such. These traits, according to Athanassoulis, come from natural internal tendencies that are nurtured into consistency. A virtuous person is viewed to be someone who is kind across many situations over a lifetime, in respect to their character. This means they are kind not because they want to maximize utility or gain favors, but because they choose to be kind on their

own. Virtue Ethics theories deal with wider questions such as, “How should I live?” and “What is a good life?” and “What are proper family and social values?”

With respect to Aristotle, he argued that our distinctive function is reasoning, and so the life “worth living” is one which we reason well. He believed that virtues are habits of character that enable individuals to act in accordance with reason to achieve happiness. Virtue Ethics is the concept of developing good character traits and virtues, in order to lead a flourishing and fulfilling life. Aristotle believed that virtues are developed through habituation and practice, rather than through innate qualities or rules. He argued that we should aim to cultivate virtuous habits by consistently acting in accordance with the virtues, which will eventually become second nature to us. According to Krout, Aristotle thought that people could learn to be virtuous by growing up with good habits and practicing being virtuous. Aristotle followed Socrates and Plato in taking the virtues to be central to a well-lived life. Like Plato, he regards the ethical virtues (justice, courage, temperance and so on) as complex rational, emotional and social skills. However, he didn't agree with Plato that people needed to study math and philosophy to be completely virtuous. Aristotle thought that people needed to understand how good things like friendship, pleasure, and wealth fit together in order to live well. He believed that to make good decisions, people need to learn how to use reason and consider the circumstances.

There are a handful of concerns and counters that people have about Virtue Ethics. For instance, one argument is that it is too focused on individuals and doesn't consider how actions affect others. Another is that it doesn't provide clear guidance on how to act and doesn't include enough rigid guidelines to it. Lastly, is that people can't always control how they're brought up, so it is not fair to always praise or blame them for their moral character. Regarding the first objection, a virtuous person would not be making decisions based solely on their own desires,

therefore, it fails to stand as a strong counter argument. For, it does not appreciate the role of the virtues within the theory; as the virtues can be other-regarding, such as kindness, which is about how we respond to the needs of others. Originally, I did think it was a more selfish viewpoint because Kantianism seemed to focus more on others, however, Virtue Ethics includes the virtues of compassion and such which consider others immensely. Furthermore, regarding the second objection, it is true that it lacks rigid regulations, however, Virtue Ethics is meant to stand as a guiding agent that acts differently according to the situation and formed over a long period of time from ethical education and development. Virtue ethics is not intended to be a certain set of rules that forces someone to act virtuously, rather it is something to be developed within someone so that they may eventually respond virtuously on their own. Regarding the third objection, I would argue that it is fair to judge someone based on their moral character, regardless of how they grew up because at any point in their life they are able to become virtuous or at least aim to be. Even though the “luck” you receive when you grow up, which allows you to naturally become virtuous or not does affect your standing, anyone can become virtuous later in life as well. There are many counter arguments to Virtue Ethics, however, it remains proven to be a strong standing viewpoint the more it is researched and understood.

Furthermore, there are many scenarios, in which Virtue Ethics can be used to encounter a solution. One includes a situation in which a girl is being cheated on and her best friend finds out and must decide whether or not to tell her. From the perspective of Virtue Ethics, the best friend must consider the virtues that are relevant to this situation, such as honesty, loyalty, and compassion. One approach would be to uphold the virtue of honesty and tell her friend, regardless of the consequences, due to her loyalty to their friendship. However, another approach would be to show compassion over honesty and withhold the information in order to protect her

friend's emotional damage. Regardless, I think that when considering the situation, she would end up telling her friend because the values of honesty, loyalty, and respect to their friendship would likely trump the other virtues in this decision. Her decision would not be based on following a set of rules or principles, but rather on her own moral character and values.

Regarding my personal reflections on the adequacy of the theory, I believe that Aristotle is on the right path about ethics. I think that Virtue Ethics is the most thorough and ethically just theory of them all. I think that when a person considers making a choice they must reflect on the situation and which values they believe are most important. I think that Utilitarianism results in unjust choices because it only focuses on the consequences, rather than making an ethical choice. I also think that Kantianism results in unjust choices because it only cares about the moral principles behind the decisions with no exceptions to it, rather than making the most ethical choice for the given situation. Therefore, I believe that Virtue Ethics remains the strongest argument because it reflects making decisions ethically with regards to changing real life situations, while the other theories do not. Furthermore, through the analysis of both Aristotle and other philosophers' beliefs', it is shown that Virtue Ethics remains a strong standing theory regarding ethics.

## Works Cited

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