

Gillard Louis

PHI 101

April 2023

Paper 2

Virtue Ethics

Virtue Ethics expounds on the value and purpose of life and its meaning. Aristotle expounds greatly on this Philosophical concept and establishes the argument that happiness and purpose are the driving forces to virtue. Aristotle, in his philosophy on virtue ethics, states that the ultimate goal for life; which is happiness, is also the ultimate reference point for ethics. It is important to establish then, Aristotle's definition of virtue; for it is the vehicle of his argument on purpose and happiness. Virtue is defined as a character quality required for something to excel in its function. Therefore, innate qualities of a human being, is vital for their success or failure, according to Aristotle.

Ethical Virtue according to Aristotle is not only intellectual but it also involves internal dispositions of character. As a result, a connection is made between ethics and purpose, virtue and action. The Greek words; ethos and telos are vital Greek philosophical terms of Aristotle in reference to Virtue ethics. In essence we see that a person's action is the very reflection of their thoughts and concepts.

Another key principle found in virtue ethics by Aristotle is that virtue is a mean between extremes. This refers to character traits of an individual, that provide balance between two traits that are directly opposite of each other. In this concept, the vices would refer to the two extremes; a deficient trait and an excessive trait, and the mean would refer to the trait of virtue. For example, John's consistent talking in conversation with Sue and not allowing her to share her thoughts on the subject matter would be a deficient trait, an excessive trait in this case would be John remaining silent for the majority of the dialogue; even when given an opportunity to speak. A mean in this scenario, according to Aristotle would be John exchanging dialogue with Sue in a rhythmic way; allowing both him and sue the opportunity to express their ideas on the subject matter.

The idea of repetition is key to one's virtue in Aristotle's philosophy of virtue ethics. He states, "Ethical excellence, is in this respect like musical excellence: you become good by constant practice". Aristotle's virtue theory can be categorized as agent-based because it corresponds directly to the thoughts and innate character of a person. By this concept of Aristotle, I am reminded that attitude is manifested in one's aptitude, which will determine their altitude. The aptitude of an individual in virtue ethics is heavily explored by other philosophers such as Immanuel Kant.

Unlike Aristotle, Kant; one of the astute modern philosophers on ethics, puts greater focus on act-based theories, where the focus is primarily on the act of a person itself as the driving force to their ethics and virtue. According to Kant, the 'what' of a person's response in a situation outweighs their 'why'.

I firmly believe that repetition is one of the key components to the development of one's habits, skills or demise. The intent by which the repetition is taken can also contribute to one's character and morals. Therefore, Ethical Virtue can be categorized as a developmental process of maturation, education and experience.