

Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics can address the questions of how one should live, what kind of person one should become, and even what one should do in certain scenarios. Would a good person perform this action under this virtue? According to Aristotle, happiness derives from living a life of virtue.

In general, the other perspectives tend to not account for emotion and social relationships.

Definition 0.1

Virtues: behaviors showing high standards. The qualities or states of character that find expression in morally good actions and morally good purposes.

Intellectual Virtues - virtues associated with reasoning and truth

Moral Virtues - habits or dispositions formed through the repetition of relevant virtuous actions. *A deep seated character trait.* Not simple just a disposition to act a certain way but also to *feel* that way.

Definition 0.2

Vices: the opposite from virtues. A vice is a character trait that prevents a human being from flourishing or being truly happy

Usually, there are two vices for every virtue, because one corresponds to excess and the other corresponds to a deficiency.

Ex: Rashness ← Courage → Cowardice

Note 0.1

Virtue ethics pays particular attention to the agent as well as the action and the consequences of the action. This touches on social contract theory, utilitarianism, and Kantianism. *A good person does the right thing at the right time for the right reason.*

Also, according to virtue ethics, moral decision making cannot be reduced to the routine application of a set of rules. Basically, moral wisdom or discernment takes precedence over any rule.

Pros

- In many situations it makes more sense to focus on virtues than on obligations or rights
- Personal relationships can be morally relevant to decision making
- There are no irresolvable moral dilemmas
- Recognizes the importance of having a say in living a moral life

Cons

- Different people may have quite different conceptions of what human flourishing is
- Virtue ethics cannot be used to guide government policy
- Undermines attempts to hold people responsible for their bad actions

What makes a moral action right?

