

Explain Virtue ethics - its strengths and weaknesses?

Firstly the strengths of virtue ethics are; virtue ethics places much less emphasis on what rules people should follow in their everyday life on earth and instead focuses on helping people develop their character traits such as kindness, caring and generosity. Therefore we are made into a better person because of our better decision making. So by allowing all our decision makings in everyday life to be based on generosity, caring and kindness we as a person and a human will be made into a better person. Also with using these key acts in our everyday life we are in turn breaking down any bad habits that we happen to carry, so on the whole our character will slowly over time be tuned to having good habits and losing bad habits.

Plato came up with four virtues which he saw as the four main virtues in life. These virtues are as follows: wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice. He came to believe followed by Aristotle that by acquiring these four key good virtues into our life and character, that we are helped in reaching morally correct decisions in difficult situations or any other situations in fact that may come about in life no matter how big or small. Therefore using these good virtues in life will have its own good reward on our character.

An example that doing good will have its own reward and make you a better person is: If you have just been newly married and you are in your house, and you see a pile of dirty plates that need washing in the sink, you will most likely not want to clean these dishes. Yet you know that you or your wife will have to clean them, and again would mostly likely prefer your wife to clean them. But if you clean the dishes, you will find yourself morally satisfied because even though it is not a pleasant act to do, you know you are doing good and your wife will be very pleased that she hasn't got that task of cleaning them and therefore she will feel good and you yourself will be morally satisfied and your character traits will improve.

Another reason why virtue ethics can be popular and why they can make an important contribution to our understanding of morality is that they emphasize the central role played by motives in moral questions to act from virtue is to act from some particular motivation.; thus to say that certain virtues are necessary for correct moral decisions is to say that correct require correct motives.

Neither teleological nor deontological theories are required in our moral decision making in virtue ethics, but we are taught we should desire certain outcomes and should want to accomplish certain goals in our actions and decision making for our self. Which basically desires to do good using the good virtues that we carry in our decision making in order to be a good person of virtue.

Lastly virtue theories promise that once we are successful in creating the sort of person we want to be, then arriving at and making decisions will come to us naturally for the rest of our lives as we have achieved the good person we want to be.

The weaknesses of virtue ethics are as follows; contrary to what many would believe good about virtue ethics, the reality isn't quite so neat and simple. Although many common moral decisions can be easily solved by a person of the "right" moral character, the fact of the matter is that many moral dilemmas require a great deal of careful reasoning and thinking. So having the right moral character obviously cannot be enough to make the right decision, and therefore the fact that rule and duty based on ethical systems are complicated and difficult to employ does not make a person of good character any better than anyone else at making the right choices.

Also another problem of virtue-based ethical systems is the question of what sort of character is a person and what should they have. Many virtue theorists and believers would answer to this question that the answer would be self evident. But in that case one person's virtue may be another's vice, and one person vice in one set of circumstances may be another's virtue. So this creates difference in people's views in virtue ethics and therefore would lead you to believe that you are the only person that decides what is virtuous. So this would be taking a subjective view on virtue ethics which is in turn a weakness.

Many virtue theorists say that we determine right virtues by asking a virtuous person, but then this hits another hitch, because how do they know what is right and how can happiness always coincide with virtue because they will not always agree on what is good. Also to find a virtuous man must mean we know what virtue is for him to tell us, therefore why would we be asking this man what virtue was, if in the first place we knew what it was as he held the knowledge to be able to tell us? So in these cases there shows no real way of actually determining what virtue is.

Lastly, virtue theorists rule out any formulae of situations to be taken into account when making decisions. They believe decisions should be acted only on what you indeed see good or right. So how can we make full moral decisions with not knowing the full information involved in the situation.