HOW WE OUGHT TO LIVE?

ALASDAIR MACINTYRE AND VIRTUE ETHICS.

Ratthaburt Khumsap[1]   Chalat Chongsubphant[2]

Abstracts

The purpose of this research were to 1) To understand the present environmental crisis. 2) To describe the Buberian Philosophy of I-Thou Relationship. 3) To develop an Environmental Ethic based on Buberian philosophy.

The results were summarized as the following Buber's life concern is based on inter-human and inters nature relationship. The relationship can be categorized as follows: It consists of relationship between man and world, the relationship between man and man and the relationship between man and God. According to Martin Buber, there are two modes of relationships that of It and that of Thou. The word of It is the world of things, whereas the second is the world of relationships. To understand their relationship is to meet each other, because "all real living is meeting". The I-Thou relationship must be always understood in terms of the concrete situation of life-reality.

However, man can treat others as things as the world of It. It is in confirming existence of the other's being. Man affirms his own being. In meeting the other, the relationship comes in being. If man meets the other, in this relationship he experiences the relationship between him and God. Thus in relationship man will realize the existence of others as well as his own existence. As human beings, we cannot separate ourselves from the others. Relation ship is to respect the intrinsic value of any reality and enter into relationship with it. Which this paper is all about.

In our days human rights and values are very much emphasized. If the message of Martin Buber is to the realized, then the writer considers that man will not harm not harm another man, rather man will simultaneously respects each other. We cannot

---

[1] Faculty member, Suvarnabhumi Institute of Technology.

[2] Director, Master of Public Administration Curriculum

attain peach through. Weapons but through dialogue with your partner, which begins in respecting him as yourself. This will provide sustainable peace.

A philosophy, which can serve as a foundation for environmental ethics is the philosophy dialogue of Martin Buber His Philosophy is based on the richness of the self that respects the various possibilities exist in nature even though he does not fully understand these possibilities in its completeness. This enables man to enter into a relationship with nature through the dialogue of I-Thou. This in turn brings out his very nature as a relational being and hence fulfills his nature as a human being. In an environmental ethics based on relationship between man and nature beings with deep with deep respect for one another where the self address nature as a Thou. For all real living is meeting the other with respect. This excludes the self from treating Nature as a standing reserve or a mere means or as an It.

Since Buber's philosophy can explain how the environmental crisis arose, and can also explain how humankind can be in a relationship of respect with Nature, the Buberian approach to environmental ethics is a meaningful approach that will preserve ecosystem. All real living is meeting.

Keywords: Virtue Ethics

Introduction

Ethics or Moral philosophy is a systematic endeavor to understand moral concepts principles and theories and justify them rationally. Moral philosophy thus undertakes to analyze these concepts principles and theories in the context of human behavior to see their rightness or wrongness. It discovers valid principles and relationships between these principles in an effort to build a system of arguments how man ought to act morally in f\different existential situations faced by him. David B Resnik (1997) writes;

Moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy that studies ethics. Moral philosophers attempt to justify, analyze criticize or evaluate moral and ethical standards voices and actions. Moral philosophers' debate discusses and reason about morality and ethics. Moral philosophy is a normative enterprise
Moral philosophy includes three distinct areas.

- Applied ethics, studies ethical dilemmas issues and questions as they arise in the various practical, personal institutional or professional contexts

- Normative ethics studies general theories and principles of ethics that can be applied to practical situation

- Meta-ethics studies the meaning and justification of ethical concepts, theories and principles

Fundamentally, ethics is con-cerned with values, not what is, but what ought to be. It is concerned with what is it to be a moral person or how to lead a morally good life. An ethical person asks questions like how should I live my life? What is the right thing to do in this situation? Why is moral life important? Of course, morality makes reference to right, wrong and what is permissible behavior in the light of values.

From the above, it might seem that ethics concerns itself only with rules that evaluate human conduct based on values. However, the situation is more complex than that. Ethical assessment of human behavior can fall into various domains, particularly in four domains namely;

- The Domain of Action, Where behaviors are evaluated in term of right or wrong obligatory or optional.

- The Domain of Consequences where behaviors are seen in its relationship to their effect as good, bad, or indifferent.

- The Domain of Character, where behaviors are perceived in the light of the person as virtuous person, Vicious of neutral person.

- The Domain of Motive, where behaviors are related to the intention of the person concerned as in good will, bad will or neutral.

Most writers classify these four domains into two mutually exclusive domains namely the theories that emphasize behaviors in terms of action and in terms of consequence. A person becomes virtuous by repeatedly performing virtuous actions, the right actions for the fight reasons. Some of the frequently mentioned virtues include courage, compassion sympathy, honesty charity, humility patience, loyalty justice forgiveness, moderation and integrity

If we take the basic concept of morality in reference to good and right action then we must first define what is good and fight action then go on to define right in terms of attaining goodness. The theories that do these are known ad Deontological

and or Utilitarian theories. But if we accept that morality has something to do with the consequence of actions then we would prescribe right actions as those that have a consequence on the person who perform the action. These theories are called Virtue Ethic Theories. We shall considering the latter in the following page.

The History of Virtue Ethics

Like much of the Western Ethical tradition, virtue ethics originated in the ancient Greek philosophy. Discussion on virtue ethics had its beginning with the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance mentioned by Plato in Symposium. The ethics of virtue also figures prominently in Aristotle's moral theory that he explains in his book Nichomachean Ethics. The Greek idea of the virtues was later incorporated into Christian moral theology in the middle ages. During this period. The most comprehensive consideration of the virtues was from a theological perspective, as developed by St. Thomas Aquinas in his "Summa Theologica" and in his Commentaries on the Nicomachean Etnics. The idea of virtue also played a prominent role in the moral philosophy of David Hume. In our times it is developed Elizabeth Anscombe (1958) Bernard Williams (1980) and Alistair MacIntyre (1989)

Aristotle and Theory of the Virtues

Aristotle's virtue ethics can be found in the Book TI of the Nicomachean Ethics. He categorized the virtues as moral and intellectual. Intellectual virtues are Sophia (theoretical wisdom) and Prognosis (practical wisdom). The moral virtues included prudence justice fortitude, temperance and others Aristotle argued that each of the moral virtues are purposive (knowingly chosen) and are the mean between the two extremes and determined by fight reason. "Virtue" explains Aristotle "is a settled disposition that forms the character trait of a person that is established over a period of time besides it is chosen knowingly for its own sake."

Virtue lies in the mean according to Aristotle. For example courage in face of fear lies in between cowardice and foolhardiness. Cowardice is the disposition of too much fear while foolhardiness is too little fear. Thus courage is the mean between the two extremes that is the disposition to show the amount of fear appropriate to the situation. Along with virtue goes a feeling towards the other (affective response) that enables the virtuous person to posit a virtuous action appropriately meaning suitable

to the actual situation Aristotle emphasizes that virtuous action must be done for itself that is it must be determined by fight reason

Contemporary Virtue Ethics

The enlightenment philosopher Hume continued to emphasize the importance of virtues. But with the ascendency of Utilitarianism and Deontology theories virtue ethics moved to the margins of Western philosophy. The contemporary revival of virtue ethics can be traced to the philosopher Elisabeth Anscombe's (1958) essay on "modern Moral Philosophy" and to Philippi Foot's (1958) collection of essays entitled as "Virtues and vices"

- Elisabeh Anscombe

- Bernard Williams

- Alasdair Macintyre

Research Problem

There are many ethical theories in vogue today yet there are very few ethical persons or virtuous persons of moral character. In our troubled world we need more and more men and women of moral character or virtuous persons. What is virtue ethics? How can we recognize a virtuous person in our society? How does Macintyre see a virtuous person?

Research Thesis

Virtues are inner dispositions that shape the moral character of a person over time by knowingly choosing and practicing it, that shape a virtuous person and appropriate ethical behavior flow from it in diverse situations.

Objectives

To investigate

- The nature of Virtue ethics

- Alasdair Macintyre's under-standing of Virtue ethics

- The Criticism leveled against Virtue ethics

Section 1
The Nature of Virtue Ethics

Being Human

What is the meaning of being human? Interest in human nature takes many forms like the questions and answers pertaining to the various aspects of being human: intelligence, virtuous life motivation to act morally, to attain happiness in life and so on. Philosophers through the centauries have asked the question, what it means to be human but most often they were interested in what differentiates human being from other living beings generally from the point of view of the natural world in which they live. The answer they have most often given to such questions relates to the distinctive features of human nature or with the mental functioning of human beings more specifically with their intellectual and moral powers. It has been widely agreed that the respect in which human being differ from the higher animals is their capacity for rational thought that makes the difference

The many-ness of human beings has served as an essential premise of the approach to issues in ontology of human beings. Even so, we are individuals in relation to one another, where one ed-sistence stands out in relation to another ek-sistance (ex-sistere means in Latin is to stand out) that has not been examined sufficiently in any real detail Her I would like to translate ek-sistence or standing out as "presence" Each individual stands out as a presence to the other presences. Thus being presence is the meaning of existence. Our understanding of ek-sistence needs to be amplified to what it means to be an ek-sistence or presence, by the ways we relates to the essential plurality of human beings and the kind of community to which this gives rise to would be at the center of the discoussion here. The distinguishing feature of the relation of one human being to another to which such an analysis would appeal is the symmetry or equality of presence through interrelationship namely that each individual presence is there for the other, as the other is for you. This is in fundamental contrast to the radically asymmetrical relation in which we stand to the natural world, and it is also markedly different from the only imperfectly symmetrical relation in which we stand to other animals. This relationship between human beings in one sense stable and its role in most philosophical thought on human beings are seen as social and moral beings. It may, therefore be legitimeate to think that if this feature of ek-

sistence as presence were to be made more fully explicit. In living man has attempted ingeniously to deny this symmetry of ek-sistence or presence through wars and conflicts that have left their marks on the relationship among human beings in both private, public life and in human history as a whole.

What I am suggesting is that a fuller understanding of this ethical dimension of finite co-ek-sistence, should be assigned a high priority. From this co-presence with on another is the foundation for ethical relationship. In standing out as presence need each individual be developed more fully by being a more mature individual or being a virtuous person? David B Resnik (1997) defines Virtue Ethics as

Virtue ethics hold that people should strive to develop good moral characters or to be virtuous people one can acquire this good moral character otherwise known as virtues through education training and practice. Since virtues are psychological and behavioral habits, constant practice is the key to becoming virtuous. A person becomes virtuous by repeatedly performing the right acts for the right reasons. Some frequently mentioned virtues include courage, compassion sympathy, honesty, charity, humility, patience loyalty, justice forgiveness, moderation and integrity.

The aim of ethics, as noted above, is to develop among people good character. Researches made in the field of developmental psychology suggest that factors such as family environment, parental disciplinary styles, peer group reinforcement and others are the basis for the development of what we commonly call "good moral character"

The plain study of ethics can nave no more influence on a person's character that the study of mathematics can alter a person's basic quantitative Intelligence. The moral character develops through practice supported by environment as well as through intentionality

The study of ethics can provide some understanding of basic ethical principles, and strategies of moral reasoning, that can be used in discussions and debated in support of positions on moral issues. It is not enough simply to have a viewpoint on a moral issue to enter into intelligent discussion on the moral issue, any more than it is enough simply to have a theory in order to do science. The more that is required in science is some evidence to back up the theory. In the moral discussions. What is required is a reasonable analysis of the moral situation, and a considered application

of moral values and together suggests why the viewpoint should be accepted. Without this rational basis for the offered viewpoint, moral discussion offers noting better than a dogmatic insistence that a given view is correct is a futile endeavor.

Virtue theory is one of the oldest areas of philosophy and moral thought. It dater back as mentioned earlier to the ancient Greeks especially Aristotle who wrote his account on ethics in around 350 BC. Aristotelian understanding of Character of virtue is a state of being. It is having the appropriate inner state. For example the virtue of kindness involves inner feelings towards others. Character also requires acting accordingly. Having inner disposition will also involve being moved to act accordingly. "This Kindness is the appropriate response to a situation and feeling appropriately and will also correspondingly attempt to act kindly." (Encyclopedia of philosophy.) Paradoxically I believe virtue theory is the most relevant ethical theory. Virtue theory is based on a very simple idea to be a human being is to be virtuous person or to be a man of Character.

Virtue ethics   holds that people

should strive to develop good moral characters or become virtuous persons. One can acquire this good moral character, otherwise known as virtues, thorough education training, and practices. Since virtues create psychological and behavioral habits, constant practices are the key to becoming virtuous. The process is that when a person is faced with a challenging life situation and has an understanding, primarily to the normative dimension of a virtue ethics, and then an action is carried out according to this understanding.

Another distinguishing feature of virtue ethics is that they become character traits that are stable. They are reliable dispositions. A kind person will always act kindly in all situations and over a long period of time. Another aspect is this inner disposition is it takes time to develop into a moral character. It takes a long time intentionality and action before one becomes a virtours person. We are born with various tendencies, both positive (friendly nature) and negative (jealous nature). These tendencies can be encouraged and developed or discouraged or thwarted. This depends on various environmental factors such as parents. Teachers, peers, and role models. These tendencies are the raw material that need to shaped and developed through time until it becomes a habit.

Challenging situation	Normative Understanding	Action
Situation	of Virtue	Virtuous

Moral education in the early stages of life is essential particularly good role models. It is though just acts that a person develops the virtue of justice. Yet virtue is not a habit because along with it should go choice, understanding and knowledge. "Virtue is chosen, chosen knowingly and chosen for its own sake" The long and gradual process of moral character development may take a long time perhaps a whole life time. But once established that person become a virtuous agent'

The task of value (virtue) judgments and its realization are different across cultures. A cross-cultural analysis of specific virtue has both descriptive and normative elements in it. These cross-cultural value judgments cannot be overlooked in our development of values or virtues. In doing this we can distinguish three specific areas in which value judgments will occur. First we may pass judgment on some specific cultural practices. Thus people Asian tradition looking at the Western tradition ay feel that there are more challenging situations in regard to their treatment of the elderly than we realize. Similarly people of Western tradition may point to the challenging situations such as female genital mutilation that are practiced in some African countries. Second. We may pass judgment about specific virtues. Some people in the United States consider machismo as a virtue may well argue that it is strength of character though it has too many liabilities associated with it. Similarly Westerners looking at Asian expression of respect for the elderly and those in power may conclude that some of our virtues are misplaced and inappropriate. Finally we may pass judgments about the ways in which a culture may translate specific virtues into action. This is an important distinction, for it allows one to affirm someone else's values without necessarily approving of all their actions intended to instantiate those values.

Alasdair Macintyre and Virtue Ethics

Alasdair Macintyer is a senior Research Professor of the University of Notre dame Indiana. He is one of the well known moral philosophers of our time. It is fair to say Macintyre is one of many thinkers whose work benefited greatly from the influence

of the study of historical thinking on the practice of the study of historical thinking on the practice of philosophy in the Western Tradition. In the recent surge of interest in virtue ethics which identify the central question of morality as having to do with how should one live one's life. It does not look into individual moral acts. But with moral problems as those having to do with how to make the most of the entire human life. However, he is not silent on such matters but approaches them not from a moral rule but on the wider context virtue. This approach as mentioned earlier approach to moral philosophy that demonstrates that good judgment of individuals emanates from the development of good moral character. The underlying principle, upon which goodness and evilness are grasped through what a virtuous person decides, says or does.

It focuses on that a good moral judgment by an individual emanates from the development of a good character. It affirms that a virtuous person will decide rightly even in the most difficult situation. Macintyre emphasizes the importance of moral goods defined in respect to the virtuous person (internal goods) rather than focusing on external phenomena such as the obligation of a moral agent (deontological ethic) or the consequence of a particular moral act (utilitarianism). He considers moral good as internal good of the subject rather than an external good.

The writings of Alasdair Macintyre are not easy to classify. It is different in character from that of many others to whom the label virtue ethics can be applied. And this classification of him would not prepare one for the detailed discussions of the moral theory implicit in Homer or of the ethics of Aristotle Augustine And Aquinas of that is to be found in some of recent books in the field. Furthermore, it would expect one to know more about the concrete features of modern society. Macintyre's work seems to suggest that he is more a social critic than a moral philosopher.

This classificatory problem reflects Macintyre's unusual intellectual career. He has taught in both philosophy and sociology departments; he was a Marxist (of a kind) at one time; he has been strongly influenced by Wittgenstein's later philosophy; and is now a catholic who draws his intellectual inspiration for the most part from Aristotle and Aquinas. His books are enormously stimulating, and very distinctive in orientation, particularly his most recent books, "After Virtue," "Whose Justice?" "Which Rationality?" and "Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry"

Macintyre's writings

Macintyre's early writings on Christianity and Marxism show his sense of alienation from modern liberal society. He felt that common values by which individuals could understand and guide the livers are missing from the modern society. The book "After Virtue" provoked great strom of controversy in the West. It begins with the disquieting suggestion that moral discourse in the West has lost its meaning, and it serves as a disguise for the expression of preferences attempts to gain power emotion and attitudes, and has ceased to have any relation to what is truly good and attitudes, and has ceased to have any relation to what is truly good and fight. Macintyre argued that modern ethics has lost sight of its roots. Modern philosophers have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. He pins responsibility for the collapse of Western ethics on the Enlightenment. The book goes on to criticize various aspects of enlightenment philosophers like Hume, Kant, the Utilitarians, the Emotivists and the cotemporary Liberal political Philosophers such as John Rawls. McIntyre sees only two ways to go beyond the errors of modernism and liberalism, namely either we must accept Nietzshean nihilism or return to the Aristotelian virtue ethics. He considers return to Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas is extremely important however this return is not a simple return to the Greek or Medieval system of thought. It has to be in consonant with modern science. This means that the telos or end of man is not to be understood as determined by biology; rather it is to be determined by understanding human history practices and traditions. Macintyre writes in "After Virtue"

The virtues therefore are to be understood as those dispositions

Which will not only that sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers temptation and distraction which we encounter and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good. The catalogue and increasing knowledge of the good. The catalogue of the virtues will therefore include the virtues required to sustain the kind of house-holds and the kind of political communities in which men and women can seek for the good together and the virtues necessary for philosophical enquiry about the character of the good. He have then arrived at a provisional conclusion about the good life for man: the good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for

man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enabb14 us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is.

Enlightenment isolated morality from real life and created three caricatures of human persons.

- The Bureaucratic Manager who is manipulated by a system and who in turn manipulate other. The value is efficient management not moral values

- The Rich Aesthete who pursues greater and more exciting pleasures and experiences. The image is the rock star whose female conquests out number his hit records. The woman is to be thin and glamorous in an expensive home and the man has a younger trophy of a wife. It is a celebrity obsessed media life.

- The therapist who helps to continue this sorry show. He is there to take away the pains and disappoint-ments caused the style of life, so that they can continue seeking after pleasures of life.

Macintyre looks to Greek epic stories where man is seen in the context of virtues and vices. They portray virtues of courage fidelity and so on. Courage is the essential quality of an individual who sustains the family and the community. Such person is someone who can be relied on and be friendly with. Fidelity is crucial for friendship for it guarantees a person will to support and help. The epics see these are the virtues of a good person.

Macintyre sees a moral society as one in which people recognize commonly agreed virtues and aspire to attain them. These virtues individuals clarify and improve them. These virtues are valued by societies in past and they pass them on as from Greeks to Middle Ages to democracy and continues on. There are two types of people those who stand within this tradition and those outside. Our postmodern culture is in general lives outside that tradition.

Section 2
Objection to Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics has been a response to the criticism that moral theories like Utilitarianism and Deontology that emphasize obeying an objective rule, which brings praise or blame. This does not take into consideration human relationship or appropriateness of the action by the agent It does not take into consideration the

human person. But virtue ethics as proposed as its defects. Here we shall consider three defects or objections leveled against virtue ethics; Self-centeredness Action-guiding and Moral luck.

Self-centeredness

Morality is about the agent's action that affects other people. It considers how far one's actions promote or not promote the well being of our fellowmen on which I am praised of blamed. The normative ethicians say that virtue ethics is self-centered and promote the eudemonia happiness of one's won. It aims at developing the agent's own character rather than the well-being of other. It is interested in the acquisition of virtues for one's own well being and flourishing. It is essentially self-polishing. As virtues are seen as values that has to be seen for its own sake not because they benefit our neighbor. One should behave compassionately, kindly or honestly because this make the agent happy

This accusation fails to appreciate the role of virtues in human relationships. A virtuous person responds with kindness to the needs of the other. Virtue promotes humanness both in the agent and in the neighbor. Of course the virtuous person makes effort in developing his character in relationship to others. He responds to the other with human-heatedness in an appropriate way depending on the need of the other. This response of the virtuous person is not at random but in a stable manner, because he has developed a disposition towards it. Here the good of the agent and the good of other are not two separate things rather one. The well-being of booth is taken into the kind act. It removes the gap between the two which is not considered sufficiently by normative ethics. By being virtuous the agent and neighbor attains happiness and well-being

Action guiding

Moral philosophy is concerned with practical issues of everyday living, namely how we should do things rightly. Virtue ethics has criticized consequentialist and deontological theories for their inflexible approaches to situations as they rely on rule or principle. These principles are action guiding in the sense that they tell us what to do. The normative ethicians criticize that virtue ethics is imprecise and does not tell

people how they should behave. It fails to give us any help with the practicalities of everyday life.

Virtuous person is an exemplar. True virtue ethics is imprecise but it is situation sensitive and does action guiding by the example of the agent. The Virtuous agent not only possesses moral character but also acts accordingly which is a guide to others in their own life. Besides virtue ethics tells everyone that they have an obligation to develop moral character first and actions will follow. Thus moral life is not by internalizing a principle but growing into a morally virtuous person. Thus the person is transformed into a moral person and action follow appropriately from him according each situation what is important is moral maturity.

Moral Luck

Another criticism leveled against virtue ethics is that it leaves individuals to rely on luck in each situation. Neither can we give praise nor blame anyone for their behavior since becoming a virtuous person depends on life opportunities. Some are lucky to have such opportunities while others are not.

Virtue ethics says moral actions are personally responsible actions and controlled by agent himself not by principles from outside.

The individual knowingly and appropriately responds to each situation. All must take the responsibility to develop a virtuous life from which all actions will flow. True some person may miss opportunity which is the result human condition rather than luck.

Conclusion

Virtue ethics is an answer to the question, how we ought to live? Or what makes a person good? In this paper I tried to answer these questions from a historical point of view leading to Alasdair Macintyre's perception of Virtue ethics. Virtue ethics concentrates on the moulding of a good person and virtuous actions are an out flow from this goodness. It emphasizes the internal dispositions and emotions of the individual rather than on doing one's duty or on the consequences of the action. Virtue ethics is an ethics of aspirations to be an ideal good person hence it is a character based ethics. The virtuous person is the ideal to be followed.

Virtue ethics has its roots in Aristotelian moral virtues that must be lived out habitual manner. Virtue is the mean between two extremes. Virtue ethics began to appear in the modern scene around 1970 with Anscombe and Bernard Williams, Macintyre and others Utilitarian and deontology ethics approaches morality as doing while virtue ethics being. Virtue ethics focuses on how we should live our lives.

Bibliography

Macintyre, Alasdair (1999) Dependent Rational Animal: Why Human being need the Virtues. Chicago, I11: Open Court.

-------------------------------(1990) Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press.

-------------------------------(1988) Whose Justice? Which Rationality? Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press.

Orton John, & Susan Mendus (eds) (1994) Alasdair Macintyre. Critical Perspectives on the work of Alasdaire Macintyre. Notre Dame Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press.