

An Analysis of Ethical Theories in the Direction of Sustainable Development: Aristotelian Virtue Ethics is the Greatest Option for Long-term Sustainability

Analiza teorii etycznych w kierunku zrównoważonego rozwoju: etyka cnót arystotelesowskich jako najlepsza opcja dla długoterminowego zrównoważonego rozwoju

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Abstract

Environmental issues such as deforestation, climate change, ozone layer depletion, greenhouse effect, and pollution of air, water, and soil are among the most difficult to address. These are the results of human beings' immoral actions. Humans are the most powerful living beings on the planet, and they have abused their physical and mental abilities to fulfill their greed rather than their needs, resulting in environmental destruction. They have abused nature and exploited it for their own economic gain, giving them control over it. Furthermore, environmental degradation and human moral decline are intertwined, necessitating a moral revolution to reform human conduct for the sake of society, with a focus on Aristotelian Virtue Ethics rather than consequentialist or deontological ethics. The main focus of Aristotelian Virtue Ethics is, on what type of persons we should be, what kind of characteristics we should have, and how we should act. This leads to the development of one's character and environmental attitudes; resulting in the smart use of natural resources and, more particularly, the preservation of the natural environment, ensuring environmental sustainability.

Key words: environmental problems, Consequentialist Theory, Deontology Theory, Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, Environmental sustainability

Słowa kluczowe: problemy środowiskowe, teoria konsekwencjalistyczna, teoria deontologiczna, etyka cnót arystotelesowskich, zrównoważoność

1. Introduction

The most difficult phase in this period is the environmental problem, which includes deforestation, climate change, ozone layer depletion, greenhouse effect, and pollution of air, water, soil, and others. These environmental concerns are shared by people all throughout the world. The principal causes of this environmental degradation include industrial growth, urbanization, overpopulation, and so on, since they degrade the ecological system, which comprises both biotic and abiotic components. The expansion in the number of industries for economic gain is generating environmental damage. For example, the earth's temperature is rising dramatically as a result of basic pollutants such as the release of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and other gaseous components from

factories, cars, rocket propellants, fossil fuels, and so on. This, in turn, causes climate change in our global environment (Grubler, 2003). It causes widespread weather problems and devastates the ecosystem. Environmental concerns are a major source of worry since they have a disproportionately negative impact on the biophysical environment. These activities must be halted because environmental issues pose a threat to the earth and, as a result, will have an impact on human life. We can rescue our world by using eco-friendly power technology, electric hybrid automobiles, public transportation systems, and wind power, among other things. To manage the destruction of the environment, we must adjust our practices and actions. Because environmental challenges pose a significant danger to our global environment, we believe that ethical values must be used in our daily lives in order to protect the environment. One such factor that arouses our considerable ethical concern is care for the environment. The moral principle indicates that, just as we should behave properly with people in our society, we should likewise conduct morally with the environment (Gert, 1998). As a result, our approach to nature or the environment should be ethical in character. This moral concern can lead to changes in our conduct and attitude toward nature, which can aid in the preservation of the natural environment. Humans are rational beings with duties to others and non-human nature (Svoboda, 2015). That is, moral responsibility implies knowledge, competence, choice, and value. When a person accepts moral responsibility for society and its surroundings, his every activity is aimed toward the well and liberty of other creatures. When dealing with nature, we must act with respect and care in light of these environmental issues. That is why we should not over-exploit nature and must exercise caution while exploiting natural resources.

As a result, the current research tries to comprehend how virtue ethics contribute to the transformation of human conduct for the benefit of society and the natural environment as a whole. To bring about a moral revolution, virtue ethics, particularly Aristotelian virtue ethics, is critical. Character is the most important aspect of ethical thought. Furthermore, Aristotelian Virtue Ethics is largely concerned with what type of persons we should be, what kind of personalities we should have, and how we should behave (Engstrom, Whiting, 1998). As a result, it places a premium on developing or refining a person's character. This eventually causes humans to pay attention to environmental issues. There is a need for virtue ethics in the environment to overcome these environmental concerns.

2. Consequentialist theory and Environmentalism

Consequentialism is a philosophy that examines the rightness and wrongness of an action. The goodness or badness of an action's outcomes determines whether it is right or wrong (Creed, 1987, 349). This hypothesis is based on the results of a certain activity. If the consequences are acceptable, the activity is morally good, but the bad outcomes of the action are morally wrong. This moral philosophy is best expressed in terms of the general truth that the ends justify the means (Wyka, Mathews, Clark, 2002). It indicates that the outcomes of an activity determine whether the action is good or negative. There is no moral thought as to whether the person is acting correctly or incorrectly. The evaluation of an activity is based on the results of that person's specific conduct. Egoism and utilitarianism are two important ethical views. Both of these ideas have the same point of view: However, there is a distinction between both in that egoism emphasizes the repercussions of the individual's (humans) self-interest, whereas utilitarianism emphasizes the universal self-interest (interest of all). A moral action, according to utilitarianism, is one whose consequences are approved by a majority of people. In other words, everyone should do the action or follow the moral code that will provide the most benefit (pleasure) to everyone involved. According to Utilitarianism, the sole intrinsic worth is pleasure or the fulfilment of interest, want, and preference, whereas suffering is regarded an inherent disvalue. As a result, they claim that the appropriate activities are those that provide the greatest pleasure to the largest number of people. Utilitarians such as Jeremy Bentham and Peter Singer have maintained that the moral interests of all sentient creatures, i.e., entities capable of experiencing pleasure or suffering, including non-humans, should be taken into account (Joseph, 2006). Non-sentient items, on the other hand, do not have intrinsic worth since they cannot convey their emotions or sentiments. As a result, non-sentient elements in the environment, such as plants, rivers, mountains, and landscapes, have no inherent worth for them. However, they only serve an auxiliary purpose in the enjoyment of sentient creatures. Human-centered ethics (also known as anthropocentric theory), a branch of consequentialist philosophy, asserts that only humans have autonomous moral worth. This approach promotes attitudes, values, or actions that give precedence to human interests over the interests of other organisms in the environment. Thus, this human-centric theory assigns intrinsic value to human beings alone.

Because of the domination of human activities over nature, we are currently experiencing a variety of natural calamities such as ozone depletion, deforestation, landslides, tsunamis, and so on. All of these disasters demonstrate the need of preserving nature's equilibrium. However, the issue of how and in what method the natural ecosystem or environment may be protected emerges. In this environment, humans must first and foremost adjust their attitude toward nature, particularly in order to safeguard it. The favorable attitude toward nature inspires humans to evaluate the laws enacted for environmental conservation. Certain ethical theories or viewpoints can be used to examine the Values. It has been noticed that environmental policy are frequently influ-

enced by utilitarian concerns of consequentialism (Szostak, 2005, 854). This approach recognizes that nature should be protected in order to serve our interests, and hence the entire approach is founded on particular instrumental values, to use an ethical word. However, from an environmental standpoint, nature should not be fostered on the basis of any intrinsic worth, but rather on the basis of an extrinsic value. In this view, the values are no longer considered as inherent values of nature; rather, they are regarded as instrumental values of nature. Assume we attach moral interest to animals and natural objects, such that ascription of interests implies that they are intrinsic to them. Nature, on the other hand, will be seen as a dummy to which we shall assign values. As a result, ethical values are not inherent in nature. Despite the fact that nature is attributed instrumental values, it is nonetheless relentlessly used for negative reasons. As a result, the damaging treatment of nature should be brought to the notice of humans in order for the implications of environmental values to be realized in order to rescue nature. Environmental ethics is concerned with the values required to develop human-nature partnerships. As a result, virtue ethics such as generosity, compassion, honesty, temperance, sensibility, sensitivity, and respect should be practiced and cultivated in human conduct so that people can come forward with a clear conscience to safeguard the natural environment. We must be mindful of nature for the benefit of future generations. Because we require our natural resources to meet our fundamental requirements. We aim to suggest that we should be reasonable and cautious with our natural resources just for the sake of humans. This demonstrates that, even within the paradigm of human-centered ethics, the instrumental value of nature cannot be neglected. As a result, virtue ethics proposes that both intrinsic and instrumental values are required for environmental conservation.

3. Deontological theory and Environmentalism

The study of good and wrong behavior within a specific setting is central to the idea of ethics. As a result, the use of ethics always serves to define the limits and bounds of human actions and obligations. The ethics that apply to responsibilities or obligations towards others is referred to as Deontology by Kant. The most major and well-known contributor to deontological ethics is Kantian ethics. According to deontology ethics, the ability to act deliberately and rationally is what distinguishes humans. According to deontological theory, every human action is deemed moral and independent of consequences, which obligates humans to be accountable for their activities in contrast to other species that behave instinctively (Sreekumar, 2012, 281). This idea distinguishes two types of obligations: duties to oneself and duties to others. According to Kant, when an activity is performed with a sense of responsibility and vice versa, it is regarded commendable. As a result, the major focus of responsibility is the link between a person's acts and the autonomy of his will. The activities that are done under the responsibility are considered morally right, while the ones that are not are considered morally wrong. Kant regards moral law as the sole moral principle, and this should be represented in every human activity in order to execute appropriate deeds regardless of the circumstances. He goes on to say that responsibility should not be imposed on people, but rather should be done for the sake of the human society. He sees obligations as a moral responsibility to do an act by following to a set of norms and principles regardless of the consequence. Moral responsibility and obligation are justified by ascribing intrinsic value to the entity to which they apply. As a result, deontological theories in environmental ethics provide inherent worth to all environmental components.

According to the Greek philosopher Protagoras, man is the measure of all things. Humans are only the appraisers of all things. They even measure what they are inside. Only humans can evaluate what is going on in the environment in the event of environmental concerns. They can think about what they should do to protect the environment. When people do this, they adopt certain measures and take appropriate procedures. Animals, creatures, species, ecosystems, and the Earth as a whole cannot teach us how to make this assessment. Deontology theory is distinct from consequentialist theory. Deontology theory stresses obligations in which an activity is done regardless of its effects, whereas consequentialist theory emphasizes the outcomes of a certain action. According to these ideas, the rightness and wrongness of an activity are unrelated to the badness or goodness of its results.

It is founded on nature's deontological worth since it is only a responsibility to safeguard nature for the purpose of duty to nature. Similarly, for example, the Prevention and Control of Water Pollution Act of 1978 and the Prevention and Control of Air Pollution Act of 1981. These acts are enacted to conserve natural resources because they are beneficial to humans. To conserve nature, we need both of these fundamental attitudes. The focus of virtue ethics is on the actor rather than the action. For deontologists, virtue is only a quality that may be used to help in the performance of duties. For utilitarians, virtues are character attributes that aid in the pursuit of universal pleasure. A person's character is more significant than the laws or ideals to be followed. As a result, everything is ultimately founded on human welfare and interest.

4. Virtue Ethics

According to virtue ethics, what is fundamental for ethics is not the evaluation of acts or their effects, as deontologists and utilitarians believe, but the judgement of agents (Simpson, 1992, 503). The essential category for

moral philosophy is the good person, and the good person is the person of excellent character, the one who possesses moral virtue. Aristotle begins this chapter by questioning if the Nicomachean Ethics' designated project has been achieved. His response is no, since the goal in practise is not to think but to perform, not to comprehend virtue but to possess and exercise it. Aristotle identifies three factors that influence our ability to be good: nature, habit, and education (Simpson, 1992, 514). There is nothing we can do to secure the first's attendance. That belongs to the genuinely fortunate as a result of divine providence. In terms of the third, instruction, it will only be effective with people whose souls have been trained to appreciate and detest brilliantly. As a result, the second of Aristotle's three points, antecedent habituation, is required for teaching. If instruction is to be effective, the hearer's character must first be predisposed to virtue and already in love with the beautiful. However, the only way to do this is by adequate training beginning at a young age, which cannot be accomplished without the necessary legislation. Virtue ethics is defined as a term of art, first created to differentiate an approach in normative ethics that stresses the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to an approach that emphasizes responsibilities or laws (deontology) or one that focuses the outcome of acts (utilitarianism). As a result, virtue ethics is a normative ethical theory that emphasizes on living a virtuous life. It covers human characteristics such as compassion, generosity, and honesty, which are required for virtue ethics. These are required circumstances for the components of human flourishing and well-being. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were the primary proponents of virtue ethics.

Aristotle gives practical guidance for life in the real world. According to Aristotle, every art and every inquiry, every action, and choice seems to aim at some good and the good has rightly been defined as that at which all things aim (Thiroux, 2004). Virtue ethics is a different form of consequentialism and deontological theories. Instead of proposing rules of conduct, it concentrates on being a good person. According to Aristotle, act as in such a way that a just person would perform (Flannery, 2013). He argues that a virtuous person is one who follows specific principles rather than merely performing activities. He stated that moral character qualities are more significant than moral deeds, and that such attributes should be cultivated through knowledge or practical intelligence. Practical knowledge is the capacity to recognize things as they are and understand specific conditions. There are certain requirements to be or feel in specific situations, according to Aristotle. The assessment of an action, on the other hand, is central to the ethical theories of Consequentialism and Deontology. The importance of actual values in life is reflected in environmental virtue ethics. It can be proved, for example, that a moral person or an ecologically oriented person constantly has enormous joy when completing various tasks such as composting, cleaning green places, and so on.

Ethics should always be founded on value, and this implies that doing the right thing for personal gain is not virtuous. Ethics is not about what we love and enjoy, or what makes us happy; it is about what is right and what we should do, whether we like it or not. Furthermore, this should not be based on any resemblance to another human being or on what raises character.

Nature must be treated with care and respect by a decent person. This concept simply states that we are a part of nature, which dispels the myth that we are superior to nature and hence have the right to exploit it. This method resolves the conflict between teleological and deontological views of nature. A virtue like respect for nature is deontological in and of itself. It may also be interpreted as teleological. We appreciate and defend nature as a result of this concept, primarily for the sake of human well-being.

5. The Sustainability and Environmental Problems and Aristotelian Virtue Ethics

According to Aristotle's virtue ethics, pleasure signifies a sequence of good deeds. In the field of virtual ethics, this ensures an attractive unification of prudential and moral viewpoints. Aristotle's theory sees a value differential between doing the correct thing and doing it as the virtuous person would do, and it also believes that the agent's joys, sufferings, and emotions are important. Moral virtue or excellent character is a propensity to act that may be formed by a person's habit of conduct. Aristotle maintained in the book *Nicomachean Ethics* that habits shape character, which is formed via practice, such as learning to play the piano. A person's character is formed via his numerous individual interactions, hence it is voluntary.

People are born with the potential to be virtuous and sensible, but in order to do so; they must first go through two stages: adopting correct habits and obtaining practical wisdom. This means that in order to gain practical wisdom, a person must first cultivate a decent character. As a result, virtue is necessary for the development of excellent character in humans, which in turn increases intellectual skills. According to Aristotle, a bad person's failures are produced by psychosomatic forces that originate as a result of his terrible actions and judgments. He is unconcerned about operating ethically since he derives much pleasure from his bad actions. To avoid such negative inner energies, healthy habits, excellent manners, and emotional thinking must be instilled in children from an early age. If these tasks are carried out correctly from childhood, the practice will be changed into habits, which will aid in the achievement of the ultimate objective of human existence.

Human beings and the natural environment are inextricably linked. Environmental ethics is the study of their ethical relationship, which provides an acceptable knowledge of the human-nature interaction. Using these

standards, it also decides on norms and creates monitoring on environmental concerns. As a result, environmental virtue ethics is claimed to be at the heart of current environmental ethics.

Environmental ethics is concerned with human ethical responsibilities toward nature, i.e. flora and fauna, and what is beneficial for our environment today. The environment should be loved and cared for. People differ in the context of environmental virtue and vice based on their commitment, educational ideals, and good activities. When it comes to environmental challenges, humans must pay close attention to the ecosystem. Our major responsibility is to safeguard and promote the environment, as well as to raise awareness about it in educational institutions and among the general public. The most effective way to address all environmental challenges is to promote ecological sustainability. Environmental ethics emphasizes human power and choice, recognizing that man has specific values and responsibilities to environment. The importance of actual values in life is reflected in environmental virtue ethics. For example, it can be proved that virtuous or ecologically committed people always have a great deal of fun when completing various tasks such as composting, cleaning green places, and so on. The natural environment aids in moral, spiritual, intellectual, and physical development, as well as providing health and aesthetic advantages. These natural advantages are more accessible to those people who enjoy and relate to nature. For some people, the natural world is a source of enjoyment, regeneration, wisdom, and nurture. Aristotle classified intellectual virtues according to whether they were theoretical or practical in nature. His thoughts on intellectual virtue began with a general study of ethical virtue and then narrowed the research to a specific ethical virtue, culminating in a comprehensive examination of intellectual virtues.

6. Conclusion

According to the preceding study of virtue ethics, virtue ethics is a characteristic motivation to the respectability, security, and brilliance of human activity towards the entire biotic community. Character building should be done as a method of a specific characteristic in every scenario since it is basically necessary at this time to focus on environmental concerns and save nature from disaster. Furthermore, environmental challenges necessitate the appropriate and optimal utilization of natural resources in order to maintain the ecosystem's equilibrium. That is why we must use nature's resources in such a manner that they may meet the demands of the current generation without jeopardizing the needs of future generations. Environmental protection is the activity of safeguarding the natural environment on an individual, corporate, or governmental level in order to benefit both the environment and humanity. As a result, we must raise public awareness about critical environmental challenges and unite and collaborate throughout the globe to safeguard our mother planet. Aristotelian virtue ethics encompasses qualities associated with character and moral virtues. It has been found that humans are not focused on the results of environmental challenges, despite the fact that they are a very essential component of their lives. If we want a better existence, we must consider temporary pleasures, the fate of others, and, similarly, we must become alert to each living and non-living component of the environment in order to conserve it not only for the current generation, but also for future generations.

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