ETHICS FROM ARISTOTLE & PLATO & DEWEY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Aristotle, Plato and Dewey propose their views on ethics. This paper focuses on the three philosophers' perspectives towered ethics. This paper also examines Ethics and Morals, Pre-Enlightenment Ethics, The Meaning of the Good in John Dewey and Aristotle, The Unity of the Virtues, Moral in Education, Dewey and Ethics, and Plato and Ethics.

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Keywords: Aristotle, Plato, Dewey, Ethics, Moral, Virtues

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Aristotle and Plato were philosophers in ancient Greece. They focused deeply on topics such as ethics, science and politics. Moreover, Aristotle and Plato emphasized on the role of moral and ethics in education. Both philosophers have similarities and differences in their beliefs. Plato influenced Aristotle the same as Socrates influenced Plato. However, eventually each philosopher's work moved to a different path.

In the ancient Greek language, there are two words that are frequently rendered "shame": aidôs and aischunê. The term aidôs is the more archaic of the two, and in Homer it denotes a perspective, often inhibitory emotion. Roughly put, it is the emotion that prevents a person from acting in ways that will diminish his honor (timê) in his own and others' eyes. But aidôs can also be expressed in positive displays of respect for the honor of others. Hence, the verb video mail plus a personal object is sometimes better translated "I respect" as opposed to "I feel shame before". The word aidôs may refer to a concurrent feeling of shame or respect, as well as to an emotional disposition or character trait. Another moral emotion that is often found paired with aidôs is nemesis ("moral indignation"), the reaction one has when a person fails to show a proper sense of shame or respect (Raymond, 2013, p. 8).

Ethics and Morals:

Ethics is a debatable issue among the philosophers. However, many of them focused on the nature of ethical theories. However, they do have a distinction between ethics and morals. "In everyday life, we often associate morality with personal life, particularly sexual habits and rules. However, morality, as used by philosophers, has a much wider range of meaning, referring to how we should conduct our lives and, especially, how we should interact with others. Many philosophers define ethics as the philosophical study of morality" (Noddings, 1995, p. 95). So, ethics and morals have differences in some points. For example, ethics represent standards that are known by a group of people and morals tend to be personal action.

Pre-Enlightenment Ethics:

Aristotle's approach comes from the interest. The interest represents the current ethics that we are using in our real life. Aristotle, unlike Plato, focused his discussion on ethics by applying experiments of the real life in the community. Moreover, Aristotle emphasized the role of virtue and provided several examples. Aristotle felt that virtue should be the main goal in having a good life, and that children should be taught to act virtuously (Noddings, 1995).

Furthermore, both Aristotle and Plato focused on "virtue ethicists." Virtue has more meaning because we can apply in our life rather than act in a good manner. As I understand the word "virtue," I think of truth respect, obeying the law of the land. People's virtues become "moral" when ethics are applied (the Greek word ethos refers to the character) which should be a part of our routine in our daily lives.

By looking closely at the meaning of virtue, both Plato and Aristotle are considered as virtues in Greek society. Aristotle mentioned in the Nichomachean Ethics are derived, Plato focuses on, in many of his dialogues, about the Republic on wisdom, courage and justice. Virtue was considered the main element for happiness from the perspective of Plato and Aristotle. However, "some philosophers have complained of Aristotle's ethics that those subscribing to it will be hard put to criticize their society. All the standards and models of virtue emerge from that society; therefore, it is difficult to see how critics can recommend significant changes" (Noddings, 1995, p. 95). Other philosophers were also critical of Aristotle's ethics on where virtue should emerge. For example, Van Norden (2002) draws a distinction between "conventional" and "ethical" shame. At one extreme, conventional shame is a sort of unpleasant feeling we have when we believe those whose views matter to us look down on us (or on those with whom we identify) on the basis of a standard appearance we share. Ethical shame, in contrast, is a sort of unpleasant feeling we have when we believe that

we (or those with whom we identify) have significant character flaws. It seems that we can also have ethical shame about our actions (or the actions of those with whom we identify) (Norden, 2002, p. 60-61).

 Some other philosophers defend Aristotle's development in ethics by explaining that ethics does not depend on a particular society. "He did attempt, they say, to identify common human situations and to name the virtues that arise in each one. For example, all human beings fear pain, death, and losses of various kinds, and situations that induce such fear require courage" (Noddings, 1995, p. 96). One concern about virtue ethics criticism is the relativism of ethics. However, moral philosophers explained that moral and ethical life could be universal. On the other side, "Ethical/moral relativism is the doctrine that moral values, including conceptions of the good and the right, are about particular societies or communities. What is good in one society may be a matter of indifference or even evil in another" (Noddings, 1995, p. 96). *The Meaning of the Good in John Dewey and Aristotle:*

John Dewey explained the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle as an outline of his ethical thought. In his 1932 Ethics, Dewey describes the ethical framework that he shares with Aristotle in terms of knowledge in several points. The formula, founded by Aristotle, means that the concept of the good is located between the meaning of virtues and practical circulation. Aristotle defines virtues as good actions of diversification. Virtues also give one a better understanding of how people are acting through the idea of the good (Fahey, 2002).

"Neither Aristotle nor Dewey conflates the aesthetic and the ethical, however. Aesthetic Harmony is neither necessary nor sufficient, for virtuous action. Both Aristotle and Dewey recognize that meaningful human action depends upon factors that are beyond our control" (Fahey, 2002, p. 1). Both Aristotle nor Dewey have the same perspective in ethics, which means that ethics could vary among societies because there are actions uncontrollable from people.

The Unity of the Virtues:

The meaning of virtues from Aristotle's perspective is nothing affair because we cannot decide to be brave in every action we take. Also, he believes that virtues come from the same source. Moreover, the word ethics comes from the Greek word *ethos*, which means character, so the virtues come from a unified character.

A good example of this was mentioned in Fahey's article 2002 and says that "the virtue of benevolence consists in acts as diverse as a gift to charity, time spent with friends, or a cheerful greeting. Depending upon the circumstances, any of these may be benevolent. Furthermore, the act of sending a check to a particular charity may or may not be benevolent. Depending upon a manifold of relations, this act could be one of benevolent concern for others, of smug self-satisfaction, pride, or a dramatic demonstration of one's sympathy for others, of deliberate blindness to the concrete details of the situation, of compulsion, of money laundering" (p.2). Furthermore, Aristotle looks at the virtues as a sensitive issue based on the situation.

Moral in Education:

As educators in the field, the most important question is how one can make people act good. Aristotle does not believe that virtue can be taught in the classroom because the meaning of virtue is broader than that. Ethics, from his perspective, is not to make people good but to explain why and what is good. The function of "schools have always played a crucial role in preparing our youth to be the responsible world, citizens. While many will agree that guidance counselors and parents are the key players in providing a child's moral compass, the opportunity of the classroom teacher in his or her daily interaction with the student to provide positive influence should not be overlooked" (Chaille & Halverson, 2004). In the current education system, ethics, morals and sincerity should not be separated from each other. According to Aristotle, "virtue is something learned through constant practice that

begins at a young age. We might understand his outlook better if we recognize the meaning of the word *Arete*, which is rendered as "virtue" in most English translations. This term more generally means "excellence," so a good horseman can exhibit arete in horsemanship without necessarily implying any sort of moral worth in the horseman" (Notes, 2014). Morals and ethics should be basic skills for every human being and can be acquired in schools or the community.

Dewey and Ethics,

Dewey has a profound view of virtues and ethics which is scattered through several of his works, such as Democracy an Education (1916), Reconstruction in Philosophy (1920), Human Nature and Conduct (1922), Experience and Mature (1925), Three Independent Factors in Moral (1930), and Ethics (1932). Dewey's ethics is radical in many ways and difficult, but once his moral philosophy is laid out somewhat systematically it is clear that he holds the virtues in human conduct to be a key element in the development of character and the progress of moral inquiry (Carden, 2006, p. 1).

Ethical theory was found in ancient Greek. By comparing Dewey's perspective on ethics with Plato and Aristotle's, all of them respond to the same social concern that was asked by Socrates. So, they dedicated themselves to the study of nature. However, Dewey explains that philosophers work involved to create an ethical theory which enhances traditional morality.

Moreover, Dewey describes the ethical theory as the assumption of a single which has created an ideal for life. On the other hand, Aristotle describes the ethical theory as a life activity that is happens with virtue. Ethical theory can also be explained as the most pleasant life, and it is a law from God that should be followed. Ethical theory producer's values to act in the greatest manner and make a kind of balance in our life between happiness and pain. "From the Greeks, and especially Aristotle, the Middle Ages inherited the picture of a closed

universe, an ordered, limited and hierarchical world order. In the order of nature, we begin

from the sphere of fixed stars--called fixed because their relations to one another do not

change: the location of the greatest perfection in nature. The ladder of nature descends from

the perfection of the stars to the less regular and perfect forms of life on earth" (Garret,

2001).

Dewey believes in the role of science in ethics while many philosophers are insisting

that science is not an inappropriate method for ethics. Dewey defines that science as an idea

of civilized life the sciences and the humanities. Also, "Dewey regards the following as key

features of the scientific method in several points: ideas are instruments for solving

problems, problems arise in concrete circumstances, in "situations." discovery requires

interaction with the environment, i.e., action upon the environment accompanied by

observation of what emerges from that interaction. These ideas are all relevant to Dewey's

view on how to think about ethics (Garret, 2001). Dewey's opposition to hard and fast

distinctions between means and ends is significant for education. He always conceived

education as having a moral dimension. Education, for him, is a passage from the worse to

the better, or it is not deserving of its name (Dewey, 1934).

Having an education philosophy goal is not just a preparation for the future. The

notion of education goes beyond this idea. It tends to reduce it to a means whose point is

postponed until after education is completed. "Happiness, or success properly understood,

involves solving problems creatively. If students come to regard education as a mere means,

then what they are learning is how to live alienated lives. But if they can be gotten to attack

problems in the right spirit, as well as with effective techniques, they will already be in some

ways successful. They will already be sharing in the good life, though not the good life in the

popular sense of a life of ease and passive enjoyment" (Garret, 2001).

Plato and Ethics:

Plato is considered one of the most influential philosophers who created a lot of ideas in Western philosophy including ethical philosophical thought (virtue ethics). However, many of people disagree on the meaning of "ethics". Some philosophers today consider ethics as moral fiction. Plato divided ethics into three main points: consequentialism, deontologicalism and virtue. Consequentialism and deontologicalism are recent ideas, but virtue was found before Plato's time. Also, virtue ethics is about the idea we call good, but is not based on what actions that we take whether deontologicalism or consequentialism, but in fact it focuses on who we are. Plato describes good as the ideal person who is acting in a good manner.

Eudaimonia and Arete:

Plato considered ethics is divided into two categories, the first one is eudaimonia and the second one is arete. Eudaimonia (well being) is the virtue that Plato believes in and thinks that all teachers must aim to achieve this. Eudaimonia requires something more, that Plato calls arete, or (excellence). "When Plato writes about ethics, most of his time is focused on what exactly arete is, with the idea that if one can figure that out, then eudaimonia will follow shortly" (Herboso, 2015, p.1). Plato's ideas on arete focused on the question: what is the positive part of the arête? For instance, he was wondering if arete includes courage? Plato argues the person's life of eudaimonia. Also, Plato believes that arete a knowledge of everything is important. Virtue is also a necessary component for any individual to achieve eudaimonia. Plato also believes in others factors for eudaimonia which include good luck and wealth.

Plato was very close to the concept of virtue ethics during his life and explained what arete and eudaimonia are. Plato discovered that true eudaimonia is not an easy to achieve on the whole world. Moreover, Plato believed arete to be a reasonable goal to have. However, "he questions whether arete is even possible without first possessing knowledge of the

universe as a whole. For this older Plato, a person cannot even know what arete really is without knowing the form of the good itself, and so the greatest good comes from knowing the measure of one's own knowledge" (Herboso, 2015).

Conclusion

Aristotle, Plato and Dewey focused their work on the concept of ethics. In the ethics of those philosophers, there is a close relationship among the character virtues and the meaning of the idea of good. During their work, they moved discussed in depth on the topics of ethics, science and politics. All philosophers are strong believers in ethics and how it is a very important element for our society.

Morals in education are also one of the essential elements for success in society, however, in the current days, ethics, moral and sincerity should not be separated from each other. According to Aristotle, "virtue is something learned through constant practice that begins at a young age". So, ethics, moral virtues, honesty, responsibility, and respect for others are the main goals that should any education system should seek to reinforce in their students.

Dewey looks to the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle for the general outlines. In many of Plato's dialogues, Socrates associates a particular virtue with ethics, Aristotle believes in a formal, aesthetic, act-based approach. Aristotle believes that the virtue ethics have two kinds of knowledge: theoretical knowledge (episteme) which focuses on the truth in some science or mathematics and practical knowledge (phronesis) which focuses on wisdom. On the other hand, Plato divides ethics into three main points: consequentialism, deontologicalism and virtue.

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