

Virtue Ethics and the Right to Life

Aristotle

Teleology - everything has an end or purpose or 'good'	
Eudaimonia - supreme good or 'Happiness' is the fundamental goal of life. Everything we do is done to achieve this.	
People who love pleasure (live for themselves); people who love honour (living for others); people who love contemplation (living for knowledge)	
As reason is the distinguishing mark of humanity, happiness involves using reason to work out what the good life is.	
"It is clearly a greater and more perfect thing to achieve [the good] of a community ."	
Doctrine of the mean - midway between excess and deficiency	
Not numerical - the 'golden mean' involves generosity at the right time, not just right amount	
Moral virtues (eg courage, temperance, modesty, patience, honesty, nobility) - Qualities of character attained by habit or cultivation	
Intellectual virtues (Skill, knowledge, common sense, intuition, wisdom; resourcefulness, understanding, judgement, cleverness) - Qualities of the mind developed through instruction	
Friendship is a key aspect of a eudaimon life.	

MacIntyre

Historical (narrative) context - you need to understand the story behind how ethical thinking developed	
Focus on character , not 'quandary ethics' (ethics that focuses on moral issues)	
List of virtues changes - in village societies, strength and cunning were valued in fighting off invaders; when democracy developed, these changed	

Morality relative to society (contextual) - in some societies, arrogance is disliked, while in others it is seen as confidence	
Internal and external goods (internal - qualities of character eg. being generous; external - eg. becoming rich) - these are both part of the 'good life'	
Practices - things you do for their own sake, such as play music. They are good not merely because of the external goods they bring.	
Modern society - manager, aesthete, therapist. By understanding different types of people, we can understand how to achieve the 'good life'	
In summary, you should always ask how to form and mould character instead of questions about rules or principles in order to achieve 'the good' for individuals and as a community	

Other virtue theorists

Homer - virtues apply to specific roles and vary according to your function in society	
Plato - the four 'cardinal' virtues are courage, justice, temperance and wisdom	
Benjamin Franklin - the end of virtue theory is external (utilitarianism), not internal (being a virtuous person).	
Phillipa Foot - wise people place 'value' in certain goals.	
Elisabeth Anscombe - criticised 'a law conception of ethics': relying on universal principles leads to inflexibility, and an obligation to follow rules is meaningless without a rule-giver. We need to understand emotions and moral psychology.	
Bernard Williams - our emotions and relationships are important (Foot, Anscombe and Williams are relativist)	
Martha Nussbaum - virtues are part of our common humanity and should be universal (Nussbaum is absolutist)	