Virtues

Summary

This perspective focuses on the CHARACTER of the individual and his or her attitudes or traits.

Examples of virtues are honesty, courage, integrity, trustworthiness, wisdom, temperance, and justice.

Actions that are morally virtuous conform to a model set of attributes valued or inherent in a particular community.

It is the virtue that makes an act right or wrong. The individual must work to cultivate virtuous traits to ensure that he or she will act morally rightly.

Virtue ethics emphasizes that our actions both build and reflect our character and core commitments. It is an ancient theory from classic Greek ethics.

Contributions

- Broadens the perspective beyond that of the ACT to include the CHARACTER of the individual
- Encourages the identification and cultivation of human excellence, a prerequisite for good living. Specific virtues are identified as prerequisite for the practice of good medicine, good nursing, good science, etc.
- Is compatible with ethical principles

Challenges

- Lack of consensus regarding the essential virtues
- Skeptics question whether good character or virtue can be taught
- Virtue is of a very personal nature
- An agent can be of good character and do wrong - or be of bad character and do right - virtue theory does not explain this fact very effectively