

UNIT ONE

1.1 The concept of virtue ethics

1.1.1 Ethics and virtue ethics

At the end of this section, you will be able to:

- 👁 *Explain what virtue and virtue ethics is ;*
- 👁 *Differentiate virtue characters from vices;*
- 👁 *Define what Ethics is;*
- 👁 *Describe the relationship between Ethics and virtue Ethics;*
- 👁 *Analyse steps for ethical decision making.*



What do you think of virtue or virtue ethics?

Virtue ethics is concerned with the development of one's character in order to prepare one for good citizenship in an organised community, with the belief that a community composed of people of good character would be a good community. It is the pursuit of understanding and living a moral life.

Virtues are citizen dispositions, habits, or characteristics that are conducive or beneficial to the healthy functioning and common good of a community. In other words, these dispositions encompass all positive behaviours and actions.

In society, responsible citizens are expected to exhibit qualities such as courage, generosity, and honesty, among others.

This character based approach to morality holds that virtue is acquired through practice. Moral virtue does not come naturally to us. Moral virtues are habits that we develop through practice and imitation of exceptionally virtuous people or especially virtuous actions. It believes that virtue ethics provides an account of what is right and wrong based on what a "virtuous agent" would do. A virtuous person is one whose character traits are all virtues or good and has no vices or bad.

- ① “A virtue,” or “virtues,” is specific character traits that tend to make a person virtuous, or good. For example, honesty, compassion, courage, and so on.
- ① The term “vice” is often associated with bad habits. Vices are the polar opposite of virtues, and they refer to evil or personal corruption. For instance, dishonesty, cowardice, or selfishness, injustice, and so on.

Case study

The Fox in The Well

A fox fell into a well once upon a time. He was not injured as a result of his fall. He was not in danger of drowning because there was little water in the well, but he couldn't get out. “Help! Help! Help! Help!” he cried, but no one could hear him. A wolf eventually passed by the well. He was awakened by the call. “Who is down there?” he inquired as he gazed into the well. “It's me,” exclaimed the fox. “I am grateful that you have come to assist me.” “How did you get down there?” the wolf inquired. “Have you been there a long time? Is the water quite deep? I pity you, poor fellow! That's not the place for you. I see you have a bad cold. I wish you were there.” “Please don't talk to me,” the fox cried. “I require assistance.

The study of what good and bad ends to pursue in life, as well as what is right and wrong to do in daily life, is known as ethics. It is the creation of reasonable standards and procedures for making ethical decisions. On the other hand, virtue ethics is a branch of ethics developed primarily by Aristotle and other ancient Greek thinkers that emphasises the role of an individual's character and virtues in determining the rightness of an action, as opposed to approaches that emphasise duties or rules or the consequences of actions.

REMEMBER

- 💡 *Deals with the moral (good) and immoral (bad) aspects of human behaviour,*
- 💡 *Is a set of principles or generally accepted guidelines for what is and is not acceptable behaviour.*

Every day, we make decisions. Every morning, moral issues greet us; they confront us individually, at school or in our daily lives. Dealing with moral issues is sometimes challenging. What questions should we ask and how should we think about an ethical issue? What factors should we take into account? This will bring us to steps in ethical decision making.

1. Virtue ethics is mainly concerned with:
 - a) Developing technology
 - b) The development of one's character
 - c) Gaining wealth and power
 - d) Passing laws in government
2. According to virtue ethics, a community with people of good character would be:
 - a) A divided community
 - b) A weak community
 - c) A good community
 - d) A wealthy community
3. Virtues are defined as:
 - a) Temporary feelings of happiness
 - b) Citizen dispositions, habits, or characteristics beneficial to the community
 - c) Legal rules enforced by the government
 - d) Natural talents with no effort required
4. Which of the following is NOT mentioned as a quality of responsible citizens?
 - a) Courage
 - b) Generosity
 - c) Honesty
 - d) Laziness
5. Moral virtues are acquired through:
 - a) Birthright
 - b) Practice and imitation
 - c) Inheritance
 - d) Government enforcement
6. According to virtue ethics, moral virtue:
 - a) Comes naturally to humans
 - b) Is learned through bad habits
 - c) Does not come naturally but develops through practice
 - d) Cannot be achieved at all

7. A virtuous agent is someone who:
- a) Always obeys laws without question
 - b) Decides what is right and wrong based on virtues
 - c) Avoids all community responsibilities
 - d) Relies only on emotions to make decisions
8. The belief of virtue ethics is that morality is based on:
- a) Rewards and punishments
 - b) Social status
 - c) The actions of a virtuous person
 - d) Political power
9. Which of the following best describes a virtuous person?
- a) A person with both virtues and vices
 - b) A person whose character traits are all virtues or good
 - c) A person who avoids society
 - d) A person with wealth but no moral values
10. The main pursuit of virtue ethics is:
- a) Living a luxurious life
 - b) Understanding and living a moral life
 - c) Following strict laws without question
 - d) Gaining political power
11. Ethics involves the creation of:
- A) Myths and stories
 - B) Rules for government only

- C) Reasonable standards and procedures for making decisions
- D) Religious practices

12. Virtue ethics emphasizes:

- A) The role of an individual's character and virtues
- B) Only consequences of actions
- C) Only rules and duties
- D) Rewards and punishments

13. In virtue ethics, the rightness of an action is determined by:

- A) Its outcome only
- B) Whether it follows laws
- C) The character and virtues of the person acting
- D) The number of people who agree

Story Questions Related to Virtue Ethics

14. When the wolf saw the fox in the well, which virtue would virtue ethics expect him to show?

- A) Courage
- B) Compassion
- C) Honesty
- D) Patience

15. Instead of only pitying the fox, what virtuous action should the wolf have taken according to virtue ethics?

- A) Give advice from far away
- B) Laugh at the fox
- C) Act to help the fox out of the well
- D) Ignore the fox's cries

16. The wolf's behaviour shows a lack of which ethical virtue?

- A) Justice B) Generosity
C) Kindness D) Loyalty

17. According to virtue ethics, the morality of the wolf's action depends mainly on:

- A) The consequences of leaving the fox
- B) The rules about helping others
- C) The wolf's character and intentions
- D) The strength of the fox

18. Which of the following virtues would have changed the outcome of the fox's situation?

- A) Courage and helpfulness of the wolf
- B) The fox's intelligence
- C) The depth of the well
- D) The amount of water

19. If the wolf ignored the fox's plea for help, virtue ethics would say he lacked:

- A) Empathy
B) Responsibility
C) Respect
D) Discipline

20. From a virtue ethics perspective, the main lesson of the story is that:

- A) Rules always decide what is right
- B) Consequences are more important than character
- C) Showing virtues like compassion and kindness makes actions truly ethical
- D) It is better to avoid wells altogether