Question 1. Discuss virtue ethics. How is it different from deontological ethics? Explain.

Ans: Virtue ethics is a broad term for theories that emphasize the role of character and virtue in moral philosophy rather than either doing one’s duty or acting in order to bring about good consequences. A virtue ethicist is likely to give you this kind of moral advice: “Act as a virtuous person would act in your situation.”

Most virtue ethics theories take their inspiration from Aristotle who declared that a virtuous person is someone who has ideal character traits. These traits derive from natural internal tendencies, but need to be nurtured; however, once established, they will become stable. For example, a virtuous person is someone who is kind across many situations over a lifetime because that is her character and not because she wants to maximize utility or gain favors or simply do her duty. Unlike deontological and consequentialist theories, theories of virtue ethics do not aim primarily to identify universal principles that can be applied in any moral situation. And virtue ethics theories deal with wider questions—“How should I live?” and “What is the good life?” and “What are proper family and social values?”

Virtue ethics is a system of ethics that emphasizes on the virtues or the moral character of the people. This means that it is based on what the person had done if he has done bad things then he has a bad moral character.

Supposing that someone needs help then, someone that practices the virtue ethics will eventually help him if he is a good person, he would help him because in that case the person that is helping is doing charity or benevolence.

Now I’ll explain it with an example that I’ve seen in the class of Mr. Stevens: Suppose that there is a train that is going to crash five people and if you turn the roads of the train you kill one person; suppose that person is good and the other five are bad people with bad moral character so someone that practices virtue ethics will let the train to kill the five people.

Virtue ethics is based on some features that are:
- Its guiding question: What should I do?
- Emphasis on character, not on individual actions. The goodness comes from the people that perform the act not vice versa, this means that the good people here is the one that performs the act.
- It is based on the character of the person that you are helping if he is someone that has patience or benevolence he has virtues, and if he is someone that has cowardice or laziness, etc he has vices and he is not a virtuous person.
- To have a virtue is to respond to some certain sorts of situations or circumstances in the appropriate way, for example: having courage in a difficult or dangerous situation.
- Good people are virtuous and they don’t have vices.

It is important to remember that the virtue ethics were created by the Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato. It was originated in the Greek Philosophy on that time.

Deontology

Deontology, also called deontological ethics, is a system of ethic that judges the morality (if it’s a good action or it is a bad action) of an action if the action is based on some rules or duties. So deontologists do their actions according to a rule or a duty that we can find in two main schools of deontology that are:

Kant:

As I have said before Deontology obeys rules and Inter Kant, that was a deontologist proposed three laws:

"Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law of nature.

"Act as though the maxim of your action were by your will to become a universal law of nature.

Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only."

This one was old, he was born on 1724 and died on 1804. There is other school of deontology and it is more modern that is the W.D.Ross (1877-1971)

He says that the actions on deontology were judged according to some duties that he stated, that are:

Duties stemming from one’s own previous actions:
1. fidelity: duty to fulfill (explicit and implicit) promises/agreements into which one has entered
2. Reparation: duty to make up for wrongful acts previously done to others
Duties stemming from the previous actions of others:
3. gratitude: duty to repay others for past favors done for oneself
Duties stemming from the (possibility of) a mismatch between persons’ pleasure or happiness and their "merit":
4. justice: duty to prevent or correct such a mismatch
Duties stemming from the possibility of improving the conditions of others with respect to virtue, intelligence, or pleasure:
5. beneficence: duty to improve the conditions of others in these respects
Duties stemming from the possibility of improving one’s own condition with respect to virtue or intelligence:
6. self-improvement: duty to improve one’s own condition in these respects
Special duty to be distinguished from the duty of beneficence:
7. Non-maleficence: duty not to injure others