

Chapter Eight

Concluding Remarks

Chapter Eight

Concluding Remarks

It is well known to all of us that ethics began with virtue ethics and when we are examining the revival of virtue ethics, it is certainly an attempt to revive the past glory of virtue ethics. It is true to say that virtue ethics had lost its glory to other theories in the course of time. Thus, it should be kept in mind that the present investigation of virtue ethics is by no means completely different from the old ones. At the same time, it should equally be kept in mind that the present form of virtue ethics adds something new which was not present in the past or even if present in the past, it was not explicated as it would have been supposed to be the case. Virtue ethics has largely been ignored during the modern era and there has been a revival of interest in virtue ethics to the point where today it stands as one of the major ways of doing substantive philosophical ethics. In fact Anscombe's celebrated article "Modern moral philosophy" is the landmark attempt of reviving virtue ethics. It is important to point out here that in the course of time new theories appeared and took or occupied the place of other by denying the existing views. In this regard, consequentialism and Kantianism in the course of time had established their influence over traditional virtue ethics. However, the new interest has come in part as a result of dissatisfaction with the way moral philosophy has been done in modern times. Modern moral philosophy, we noticed, has given pivotal importance on moral obligation as well as moral law at the expense of the sources of morality in the inner life and character of the individual. However, the revival trend of virtue ethics in recent times has sought to make good that deficiency while at the same time adapting ancient ideas of virtue to the requirements of current-day ethical theory and to practical issues of applied ethics. It has been revealed that the revival trend of virtue ethics made an attempt to

explain something with new outlook which is distinctively absent in the present ethical theories.

We have seen that in the course of its revival, virtue ethics has largely been inspired by the Aristotelian model of ethics. However, the new outlook of virtue ethics is the outcome of incorporation both of Aristotelianism as well as other traditions of virtue ethics. This actually helps it a lot to appear as a promising approach. Aristotle tells us that a proper understanding of what is admirable and right in human action cannot be captured in general rules or principles, but is a matter of sensitivity and fine discernment incorporated into good habits of moral thought, desire and action. In fact recent thinkers of virtue ethics seem to have conceived that ethical theory in the modern era has been completely misguided. For them moral life is too rich and complex to be captured by utilitarian (consequentialist) Kantian, or social-contact approaches of the sort that seek to ground in unifying first principles.

We have seen that there is no common conception of what virtue ethics is and in this regard critique would like to say that the present calls for the revival of virtue ethics are in fact ambiguous. Some proponents have simply wanted to see one or another preferred set of moral principles supplemented by an account of virtuous traits and actions and some others have sought a genuinely free-standing ethics of virtue. Thus, as far as the revival of virtue ethics is concerned there we hardly find a uniform definition of virtue ethics. Whatever the definition may be, the cardinal point of virtue ethics is that it focuses on the inner traits of the virtuous individual, his dispositions, motives that would qualify him as being virtuous. We have noticed that many modern philosophers think of the moral life as a matter of relating properly to moral rules, but contrary to this view, virtue ethicists hold that the understanding of the moral or ethical life primarily requires us to understand what is to be a virtuous individual, what are the inner traits or disposition of the individual. In this sense it can be said that the revival trend of virtue ethics is different from other approaches as unlike

other approaches it is completely agent-focused. Ethics of rules characterise acts as morally right or wrong, morally permissible or obligatory depending on how they accord with appropriate rules. Such moral epithets are called 'deontic' in contrast with another class of ethical epithets such as 'aretaic'. Virtue ethics makes primary use of aretaic terms, such as 'morally good' , ' admirable' , 'virtuous' in its ethical characterisations. The new approach of virtue ethics takes deontic epithets as derivative or secondary. An ethics of virtue thinks primarily in terms of what is noble or ignoble, admirable or deplorable, good or bad, rather than in terms of what is obligatory, permissible. Accordingly, we think that the genesis of virtue ethics remains same in the ancient as well as in the modern age. However, some forms of virtue ethics are far more radical than others. We have observed that Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* mainly focuses on the inner traits and character of the virtuous individual than he does on what makes action good, or noble or right. In this sense, we think, his moral approach is **agent-focused** rather than **act-focused**. Although Aristotle mainly focuses on agent, but careful study would show that Aristotle also gives importance on excellence or rightness of an action without much depending on the person who did it. A more radical version suggests that ethical character of actions is not independent of how and why and by whom the actions are done, rather what is independent and fundamental is our understanding and evaluation of human motives and habits, and the evaluation of actions is entirely derivative from and dependent on what we have to say ethically about the agents who perform those actions. Thus, the more radical version of virtue ethics is **agent-based**, not merely like Aristotle's views, *agent-focused*. James Martineau advocates radical interpretation of virtue ethics and Plato in his *Republic* comes very closer to that. We think it would be very difficult to assess which form of virtue ethics is effective in the process of the revival as stated, but it is quite safe to say that all forms of virtue ethics stands as an anti-theory of the current approaches of morality.

It is important to point out that the revival of virtue ethics witnesses a conflict between *theory verses anti-theory*. Many notable anti-theorists have been very critical of ethical theory which approaches hierarchically ordered, exceptionless, and universally applicable moral principles. Such moral theories try to posit an underlying unity to all moral thought and conceive all moral disputes as resolvable by decision procedures. Many think Aristotle as a moral theorist *par excellence*, but he denies the possibility of exceptionless universal principles. Aristotle inclines to say that there has no place in his philosophy for the idea of a single kind of moral consideration in terms of which all moral issues can be resolved. Does it make sense to say that Aristotle is no longer a moral theorist? We do not think so. The question is certainly not associated with 'whether we need theory in ethics', rather 'what kind of ethical theory to adopt'. The idea that our moral understanding of things is too rich and complex to be reduced to universal principles and as a matter of fact any kind of simplifying unification in terms of a single factor is difficult to come by. In this regard we can mention the name of Thomas Nagel. Unlike Kantian, Nagel introduces the relevance of moral luck in morality. A person driving along a lonely country road and paying too much attention to the scenery might swerve into the oncoming traffic lane, incur no accident, and blame himself very little if at all for his inattention or negligence. However, if we imagine the same scenario except that a car in fact is coming in the opposite direction, with the result that an accident occurs and the other driver or the passenger in his own car is killed, the negligent driver will very much blame himself. The difference between the two cases is, from the standpoint of the agent, a matter of moral luck.

We think that in order to revive virtue ethics and thereby make it worthy of consideration in the current climate of ethical debate, we have to redevelop or polish up ancient Aristotelianism. In fact there is nothing wrong to say that many central Aristotelian ethical views appear to us nowadays to lack plausibility and although the

agent-focused virtue ethics may properly be deemed neo-Aristotelian, it is a view squarely anchored in recent ethics-theoretical debates among Kantianism, common-sense morality, and consequentialism. Although we think that the virtue ethics is based on our current common sense ethical thinking and Aristotle's own interpretation of virtue ethics is based on ordinary ethical thinking of his own day, but in the course of time situation has greatly been changed. The notion of guilt and our modern-day emphasis on kindness and compassion are not really to be found in Aristotle and Aristotle's common sense based account of ethically good action assumes a doctrine of the mean that simply cannot account for what we in modern times consider to be some of the most important aspects of the ethical evaluation of actions. In fact Aristotelian virtues involve acting in a way that lies at some point between two extreme of vice. His model of moral action may fit courage and justice and temperance, but it has no natural application to certain areas of the moral life we nowadays think of as very important. Modern moral philosophy puts considerable emphasis on virtues that do not fit the Aristotelian model of the mean and quite interestingly modern day virtue ethics in some cases has reason to resist taking over that doctrine from Aristotle.

Although Aristotle's own account of virtue ethics is **agent focused**, but the radical interpretation of virtue ethics is agent based. Unlike agent-focused, agent-based virtue ethics derives its evaluations of human actions, whether aretaic or deontic, from independent and fundamental aretaic characterizations of the inner traits or motives of individuals or of individuals themselves. Neither Aristotle's ethical theory nor the new-Aristotelian common-sense virtue ethics is agent-based in this sense. Agent-based virtue ethics is attributed as radical because it entails that the agent and her inner life are not fixed on any external action-governing moral standard. Besides agent-focused and agent-based virtue ethics, there we witness another kind of virtue ethical view which attempts to intermediate between agent-focused and

agent-based forms of virtue ethics. Whatever, the position of revival trend of virtue ethics may be, whether it is agent focused or agent based, one thing is certain that there is no place in morality to establish something as morally good or morally bad either in terms of consequence, or in terms of moral obligation or in terms of absolute moral duty. A virtuous being is always flexible in the sense that he does not ignore the surrounding of moral life, he does not ignore the external factors known as moral luck. There is nothing wrong to assume that there underlies a moral commitment when I am giving a promise to someone to do something. But at the same time, something may arise in my life which prohibits me to do this and this would perhaps not be the moral excuse. In the course of time, nobody ignores the impact of moral luck and it obstructs us without involving us into moral dilemma.

We think on the basis of the above consideration that it is difficult to decide with certainty what the best way for us now to develop what virtue ethics really is. Virtue ethics has just been reviving from a long slumber and from the standpoint of contemporary ethical theory. It is said metaphorically the 'new kid on the block'. Therefore, nobody can deny the relevance of Kantianism fully as in Kant's ethics there we can sense the relevance of virtue. More succinctly, it can be said that no ethics can stand without virtues. What is important is that the virtues we can notice in modern moral theories are secondary, but in no way primary. This is where the tussle between virtue ethics and the other forms of ethics actually hinges on. Aristotelian ethics is known as virtue ethics and virtues are the inner traits of individual, the clusters of properties of which one is more important than the other. The revival trend of virtue ethics, therefore, is an amalgamation or incorporation of virtue ethics which in turn though mostly prefers Aristotelian virtue ethics, but in no way denies the other ethical systems completely as there are some ethical issues in other ethical systems as well which in the context of situation may at times appear to be relevant. Therefore, we may not yet enough to be sure how best to develop a

contemporary relevant and plausible virtue ethics and it may also mean that the best way of virtue ethics to advance at this point is by pursuing a number of different promising lines of ethical theorizing. According to Stole as virtue ethics is just beginning to flex its muscles; it needs a more varied diet than Aristotle.

The other important aspect of the revival trend of virtue ethics is that it denies anthropocentrism. In fact it is true to say that any normative ethical study is fundamentally based on anthropocentrism. More succinctly it can be said that modern moral theories such as deontological and teleological approaches are anthropocentric in nature. The revival of virtue ethics tries to moderate anthropocentrism and thereby gives importance on non-anthropocentrism as well. We think the appearance of environmental ethics is a case in point. Environmental ethics is certainly an outcome of the revival of virtue ethics and there underlies a considerable tussle between environmental ethics on one hand and the traditional ethics on the other. We have seen that in the case of environmental ethics the intrinsic worth or value is sought for instead of external or instrumental value. A value is intrinsic if it is valuable not as a means to an end, but as an end in itself. The biotic community is valuable in themselves. We find the relevance of the revival trend of virtue ethics in environmental ethics as just like environmental ethics, the revival trend of virtue ethics gives importance on love, care, compassion, benevolence, friendship. If a person is designated as virtuous being, he thereby possesses some qualities, i.e. a cluster of qualities, through which he would be able to realise others fellow beings. Kantianism, as we have observed, gives importance on moral imperatives and moral principles dictated by reason and thereby nullifies the relevance of emotion, love, compassion, and care in the field of morality. Consequentialism, on the other hand, gives importance on the outcome of the moral action which again is unwanted to the revival trend

of virtue ethics. Environmental ethics tries to moderate anthropocentrism and thereby establishes the relevance of non-anthropocentrism. When we are inclined to talk about the revival trend of virtue ethics, we thereby sense a close proximity between the revival trend of virtue ethics and environmental ethics. This is another important supporting dimension of the revival trend of virtue ethics.

We think that a virtue-centred view sees character at the core of morality which actually hinges in finding an answer not to the question: 'What ought I to do?' but to the question: 'What sort of person am I to be?' The virtuous person is someone for whom proper conduct emanates characteristically from a fixed disposition. Although there is not so much agreement on exactly what sort of disposition a virtue is., but virtuous dispositions lead virtuous agents to be sensitive to the goods and ills to which people are exposed in particular situations and to respond by bringing about good and preventing harm. Moreover, it has also been suggested from the epistemological point of view that the perception of the virtuous person are the original and central source of knowledge of how much good to pursue, for whom, in what circumstances, and how vigorously. We may be able to formulate rules which crudely map the decisions of the virtuous persons, but no set of rules will exactly capture them or anticipate every decision in a new situation. Nor does the virtuous person have any algorithm. Even though we may educate children into virtue by teaching them some simple rules, but mature moral agents do not require them. This leads us to say that virtue is natural to humans not in the sense that it is learned or acquired, but in the sense that virtuous agents individually and the community they compose, benefit from virtue. This fact indicates our social nature. Therefore, our main contention is that living alone, and living without virtuous, are both harmful to us.

What is said above is virtue centred view of morality. Act-centred morality thinks the other way round. Unlike virtue-centred view, act-centred view sees the point of morality as directing what we do. We may acquire habits of acting in the right ways, and these habits may be called virtues. However, their value lies in their ensuring correct action. Here if we are praised as virtuous, the praise derives from the value placed on what we do. The act-centred theorist then explains how we can know what to do by appealing to rules, laws, principles which give us a method for finding out what is right, or permitted, or obligatory. Thus, there is no counterpart in an act-centred theory for the epistemological privilege of the virtuous agent in a virtue-centred view. The subtle distinction between virtue-centred and act-centred view is that in the case of act-centred, there are certain rules or laws that require for specific actions and in such a case the so-called virtues are subordinated by rules. Thus, in the case of act-centred morality rules or laws are primary, virtues are secondary. On the contrary, virtue-centred view just speaks the other way round. It states that the virtues which are most important to morality have a life of their own and such virtues are rules or laws independent.

Moreover, the principle of morality provides the structure of morality decent common life; virtuous people will tend to contribute to the common good. How well each individual will fare in so doing is to some extent is an open question, but what is more worthy to say that everyone has a better chance of living a good life in a society dominated by virtuous people than a society where there are hardly a few virtuous people. Thus, the revival of virtue ethics makes an attempt to establish holistic pattern good life – a life that can be shared by most people of the society. Current approaches of morality either advocate staying alone or advocating staying alone without virtue. The revival of virtue ethics just makes it clear what is wrong with these approaches.

Although Kant's theory of morality has been named as the most culprit in negating the Aristotelian form of virtue ethics, but if we carefully examine the history of ethics, we can easily notice that besides Kant and modern moral theories, there are other traditions as well which are involved in interpreting Aristotelian form of virtue ethics in terms of acts or rules. The tussle between virtue ethics and Christian ethics is well known to all of us. Reid remarks, "Morals have been methodized in different ways. The Ancients commonly arranged them under the four cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice. Christian writers, I think more properly, under the three heads of the duty we owe to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbor."⁷⁵ For Reid, Christianity teaches a morality a duty, not a virtue and it understands duty in terms of acts complying with law. Besides Christianity the new science appeared in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is also responsible for devaluing virtue ethics. Act-centred virtue ethics has also been conceived by John Locke as he says by whatever standard so ever we frame in our minds the ideas of virtues or vices their rectitude, or obliquity, consists in the agreement with those patterns prescribed by some law. Even in Protestant writings, the virtue as conceived by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* is defined as a constant disposition of the soul to live according to law. The assumption is universally made by saying that if virtues are important, it is precisely because they are the habits, however formed, of obeying the moral laws. A virtuous person, according to this theory, is one whose standing dispositions lead her to do acts required by the laws of morality.

Even Grotius in the *Prolegomena* to his *Law and Peace of 1625* criticises Aristotelian doctrine of virtue consists in a mean in passion and action. The virtue-centred morality of Aristotle (the mean theory) holds that no antecedently statable set of rules or laws can substitute for virtuous character in leading people to act properly.

⁷⁵ Reid, Thomas. *Essays on the Active Powers of Man*, Edinburgh; University of Edinburgh Press. 1788, p.239.

Grotius, however, criticizes the implausibility of the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean (virtue-centred) with respect to virtues. Grotius was severed on Aristotle's concept of justice as he feels that Aristotle could not make the doctrine work when it (justice) came to this virtue. For he could not point to a mean in any appropriate passion, or any action coming from the passions, which could plausibly be said to constitute justice. Therefore, the doctrine of the mean as expounded by Aristotle has failed to live up to the expectation. Grotius further contends that some virtues do keep passion under control, but this is not due to the nature of virtue; rather it is due to the fact that right action, which virtue everywhere follows sometimes prescribes moderation. Grotius rejects another important aspect of an ethics of virtue and thereby he has confronted with Aristotelianism. For Grotius if we ignore rules or laws from ethics as Aristotle does, then at times what appears to be wrong may conceive as permissible and this is at times reflected in Aristotle as well. Aristotle himself says that 'oftentimes it is hard to decide what choice one should make'. The virtuous are simply those who obey the law where it is specific, and stay within the bounds of the permissible where it leaves room for choice. In the Grotian morality of rule and act there is no room for any special cognitive ability arising from virtue. Thus, it seems clear that Aristotelian module of virtue ethic has not lost its foothold with the appearance of Kantian module alone, nor with the appearance of consequentialistic module alone, it has been gradually losing its foothold even long before the appearance of such theories.

David Hume, we think, holds the similar view like Grotius and in fact Hume acknowledges a debt to Grotius in his second *Enquiry*. Hume also shares with Pufendorf regarding the natural-law theory. In fact Hume's distinction between artificial and the natural virtues is similar to the distinction between perfect and imperfect duties as conceived by Pufendorf and other natural law writers. Hume tells us that in explaining morality one must account for the data by the smallest number

of laws possible. He seems to have been conceived that the Grotius tradition, in distinguishing between perfect and imperfect duties, has correctly located a definite pattern in the moral approvals and disapprovals constituting his data and the pattern has to be explained. This becomes clear when we note which approvals Hume links to the different types of virtues. The coincidence between his two patterns and the Grotius dichotomy is striking. The artificial virtue of Hume, include justice, fidelity to promises and in the nature virtues. Hume gives several lists, such as, generosity, humanity, compassion, gratitude, friendship, fidelity, zeal, disinterestedness, liberality . These he sums up as benevolence. Elsewhere he lists meekness, charity, clemency, moderation, and equity as natural virtues. According to Hume the artificial virtues are the ones required if society is to exist, that of justice, concerning itself with property, being the most important of all. Hume's natural virtues plainly map the imperfect duties which serve rather to establish social life. For Hume natural virtue is normally brought about in every case of their exercise, while the good arising from the artificial virtues comes about only as a result of the existence of a general practice of exercising them, and so may not come about in each particular case. The above lists clearly suggest that Hume conceives artificial virtues in terms of laws unlike natural virtues. Therefore, we think that Hume own interpretation of virtue ethics is act-centred, rather than purely agent-focused as expounded by Aristotle.

We think that by making the distinction between artificial and natural virtues, Hume equally anticipates the utilitarian distinction between rule and act utilitarianism. Instead of act utilitarianism he has opted for rule utilitarianism. In fact from a historical perspective, it is more accurate to describe it as Hume's attempt to show how perfect as well as imperfect rights and duties can be explained by a non-teleological virtue-centred theory. Hume's own reflection is that morality need not be imposed upon us; rather it is our own creation. In responding to the question how much human nature' can do by itself', Hume looks back to classical antiquity for an

alternative to natural law theory. For Hume motive determines the moral character of action. He says, "No action can be virtuous, or morally good unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it, distinct from the sense of its morality."⁷⁶ . For Hume all praiseworthy motives are virtues. Acts can only be obligatory if there are prior praiseworthy standing motives whose natural expression is doing them and those motives will be virtuous. Hume further contends that natural motives do not obey the laws, nor do respect property. Given the principle of the priority of virtue in motive to virtue in actions, Hume's problem is to explain why we feel moral approval of acts which display respect for property, obedience to law, and fidelity to contract. Hume elsewhere takes justice as the paradigm of morality. Justice, Hume opines, originates, when individuals becomes aware that stability of possession would be beneficial to each of them individually but is only possible if all and each steadfastly refrain from disturbing one another's transferable goods. Self-interest, redirected by the realization that one's own interest cannot be forwarded unless one controls one's avidity for possession when others do so as well, becomes the motive out of which we initially act when we act justly. The practice called 'justice' arises without any activity of the moral sentiment. Its name acquires positive moral connotations only when agents reflect on their common behaviour and through sympathy with the benefits others enjoy are moved to approve of the disposition in each agent from which such good consequences flow. The man who lacks this socialized sense of his own interests may notice the lack, and hate himself for lacking it. When he does so, he will be able to show respect for the possession of others out of a hatred for himself for lacking the normal motive and in that case he will be acting from a sense of duty. It is only on some occasions, Hume opines, that a person will perform an action merely out of regard to its moral obligations. The more standard and usual case, however, is that where there is some definite principle 'capable of producing

⁷⁶ Hume, David. *Treatise*, 479. p. 518.

the action and whose moral beauty renders the action meritorious and in this case it is the socialized self-interest on which we eventually bestow moral approval.

For Hume justice is required for us to obey the laws or customs concerning property. In fact justice is not our ability to form habits of compliance with rules, but our ability to control our sense of self so that self-interest comes to include the interests of others with whom we form a cooperating society. To share the good of others is akin to the interest of the natural virtues and when that interest is gratified, we thereby receive gratification from the very existence of the institution of justice. Thus, it seems clear that justice by its very nature benefits its possessors as well as their society. The point is that, we think, if Hume cannot attribute any special cognitive status to the virtuous agent as Aristotle does, then Hume of course does commit a big mistake, because without attributing agent, virtues cannot be sustained on rules. Thus many would like to say that like Kantianism and other modern moral theories, the theory of virtue as expounded by Hume is considered as one of the misfortune of virtue as it fails to convince those who adhere to the view of act-centred or judicial approach to morality.

Like Hume, Kant's theory of virtue is equally held to be misfortune. Kant's theory is a misfortune for virtue, not because his theory of virtue was ignored, but *precisely* because of what that theory was. If the misfortune is that virtue was neglected by moral philosophers, then part of the answer to this question is that it was *Groundwork*, not the *Metaphysics of Morals*, that until recently got most of the attention. Kant without exception inclines to say that all morality falls under a single principle which is capable of giving guidance over the whole range of the decisions we have to make as moral agents. Critiques would like to say that Kant was one of virtue's misfortunes, because he perhaps unintentionally made it uninteresting. The proponents of virtue thinkers further content that Kant was much of a misfortune as he has claimed that the virtuous agent has no epistemological privilege. Kant says

when a virtuous agent exercises her virtue she is simply choosing at her discretion among alternative ways of helping others or imposing herself, she is not displaying insight as to the morally best thing to do. Moreover, Kant conceives virtues in an un-Aristotelian way. However, Kant has been criticized by saying that his vision of the divided self is the villain here, with morality springing from an impossible pure reason in conflict with reprobate passions forever calling for discipline. The connection between virtue and the agent's own flourishing therefore cannot be made out on Kantian terms except by means of some notoriously questionable postulates. Kant's own apprehension that virtue has at best a partial role to play in morality has been vehemently rejected by the virtue theorist. For them only rules and duties cannot be the sole archetype of everything.

We think the traditional virtue ethics has lost its ground mainly because of the fact that it fails to tackle the objections arising out of modern moral theories. Although Aristotle was the architect of traditional virtue ethics, but he does not tell us what a virtuous agent is to do to convince someone who is not virtuous. In fact Aristotle does not suggest any criteria which everyone can use to determine who is a virtuous agent and who is not. Even he does not discuss the situation in which two virtuous agents disagree seriously with one another. As a matter of fact he does not come to know the implication who would be morally defective when two allegedly virtuous agents strongly disagree. This does not, however, make sense to say that Aristotelian form of virtue ethics is irrelevant, rather it would be better to say that in the course of the development of science and technology, the development of anthropocentrism, the theoretical foundation of virtue ethics as expounded by Aristotle had lost its foothold and this has again been regaining with certain modification in the name of revival trend of virtue ethics. Many would like to say that Aristotelian form of virtue ethics has been suited to a society in which there was a recognized class of superior citizens, whose judgment on moral issues would be

accepted without question begging. However thinkers like act based virtue ethicists think the other way round.

We have seen that every moral philosopher in one context or other is virtuous. Even Kant who neglects virtue ethics most is virtuous. This would reflect that there are different approaches of virtues. In this regard we have examined two prominent approaches of virtue ethics, such as, agent focused and act focused. We claim that the so-called traditional virtue ethics is agent –focused and the modern interpretation of virtue ethics is act-focused. In this sense the traditional interpretation of virtue ethics has mostly been neglected by the modern approaches. Although both parties are talking about virtues, but in traditional interpretation virtues are thought as primary and all about of morality; whereas in the case of modern interpretation virtues are thought as secondary. We have seen in Aristotle in what sense he had conceived virtue ethics. We have also examined the view of Hume, where the virtue ethics takes a different turn in comparison to Aristotle. In *The Doctrine of Virtue*, Kant conceives of virtue as the strength of a person's commitment (maxim) in fulfilling her duty. For Kant virtue is the strength of obeying an internal sanction in the performance of ethical or judicial duties. Kant further suggests that virtue may be most perspicuous in fortitude against contrary inclinations. Our humanity is the capacity to set ends, or adopt reasons for action. The perfection of our humanity involves choice guided by reason's own principle, i.e. the *Categorical Imperative*. At the same time duty includes the cultivation of one's will (moral attitude) to fulfill every duty as such. When Kant was talking about virtues, he had in mind primarily 'powers of mind, soul, and body', as means to all possible ends'. For Kant powers of mind involves understanding and reasoning; powers of soul involves capacities of memory and imagination and the like and finally powers of body involves our animal stuff whose maintenance is required for our animal vigour. What has said above clearly indicates that virtue is required for guiding our duty, but the sole concern of morality

is not the virtue, Kant opines, but the moral duty. More importantly, like Aristotle Kant does not list here emotional capacities as among the natural powers that subserve our duty to moral perfection. However, Aristotle in most part of his virtue ethics admits the relevance of emotion.

An immediate question then really croups up in our mind: who is virtuous? If one focuses on qualities of persons rather than on qualities of acts, then an epistemological issue comes into being, because in such a case we do not able to know with any degree of certainty who really is virtuous and who is vicious. It is in fact difficult to establish an agent's true moral character. An externalist would like to say that we try to infer character by observing the conduct of moral agent as there always underlies a connection between character and conduct of moral agent. However, we think that this connection or relation is no way a necessary one, but merely a contingent one. According to Plato the most famous example of a spiritual virtue is justice which does not lie in a man's external actions, but in a way he acts within himself, really concerned with himself and his inner parts. Other spiritual virtues would include such attitudes as self-respect and integrity. These are traits which do have a significant impact on what we do, but whose moral value is not wholly derivable from the action to which they may give rise. Now if spiritual virtues are conceived as the most important of moral virtues, then the externalist strategy would be in trouble, because spiritual virtues are inner and hence are not reducible to or dependent on the outer.

To raise doubts about our ability to know who is virtuous is to bring skepticism into the centre of virtue ethics. Kant says that the real morality of actions, their merit or guilt, even that of our own conduct remains entirely hidden from us. Like Kant, Aquinas too has subscribed to a similar skepticism. Aquinas says, "Man is not competent to judge of inferior movements, that are hidden, but only of exterior acts which are observable; and yet for the perfection of virtue it is necessary for man to

conduct himself rightly in both kinds of acts." ⁷⁷ Revival of virtue ethics takes help from Aristotle to give a satisfactory answer to this issue. Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* seems to have conceived that a good man, i.e. a man of practical wisdom can easily learn what is pleasurable to us. Even in discussing the intellectual virtue of practical, Aristotle begins by announcing that we shall get at the truth by considering who are the persons we credit with it. Aristotle clearly says that Pericles 'and men like him' are *phronimoi*, 'because they can see what is good for themselves and what is good for men in general.' Here Aristotle is dealing with a small face-to-face community; where the pool of potential *phronimoi* generally come from certain well establish families who are well known throughout the *polis*. Within a small face-to-face community of this sort, one would naturally expect to find wide agreement about judgment of character. Moreover, Aristotle's own methodology is itself designed to fit this sort of moral community.

What is the relationship among virtues? This question is difficult to answer as Aristotle does not mention this point at all. We have seen that virtues are the clusters of properties and many philosophers give different types of list of virtues. Even some philosophers have designated some virtues as cardinal virtues. The point is that what the relationship among virtues. Do they form a unity? If they do, then on what basis? Should virtues be justified? Do virtues really replace principles or rules? We think the last question is most important and it has been has discussed a lot. The revival of virtue ethicists would like to say that virtues cannot be replaced by laws or rules. Virtues are no longer rules or laws; virtues are qualities, nor laws, because laws are something external, whereas virtues are inner trait or something internal. Laws guide moral agents, virtues helps one to visualize laws. Virtues makes a men prudent, makes a man kinds, lovable, careful. Therefore, virtues by no means are replaceable by laws.

⁷⁷ Aquinas, Thomas. Saint. *Summa Theologica*. 1-11, q.91, a, 4.

We think virtue ethics of the revival trend appears as a criticism of both deontology as well as utilitarianism as both views share mistakenly that the task of ethical theory would give rise to a decision procedure for determining right action. It is further said that what was right about the actions everyone already agreed about right, by showing them to be grounded, or justified, by the rules in questions. The revival trend of virtue ethics attack on the idea that moral dilemmas were best resolved by finding general principles received unexpected support. According to Kantian approach a true moral motive involves acting for the sake of duty. However, Michael Stocker highlighted the oddity of supposing that ideally your friend should visit you in the hospital, because it was his duty rather than simply because you were the friend. Similar objections were pressed against the prevailing assumption that talking up 'the moral point of view' involved being impartial- according to all rational agents or the interests of all sentient beings, equal value. The revival trend of virtue ethics inclines to say that impartiality or justice was put on virtue among many and that how one should act in relation to one's own children, partners, parents, friends, students, and so on was a central aspect of morality that was being ignored in modern morality as expounded by deontologist as well as the consequentialists.

We think before the reemergence of virtue ethics in the revival form, Anglo-American moral philosophy was largely influenced by Rawl's theory of justice according to which there are just two main or basic concepts in ethics, such as, 'the right' and 'the good'. However, after the reemergence of virtue ethics, it has largely been accepted that the concept of virtue is as important as other two. Another important aspect of the revival of virtue ethics is that it has made its mark that can be seen in the extent to which moral philosopher have retreated from their earlier position that a normative theory must come up with a decision procedure that will give rise to specific practical guidance in different situations. The virtue ethicists', however, stress on the importance of *Phronesis* (practical or moral wisdom) eventually brought recognition

that such wisdom is needed to apply rules or principles correctly, and that they cannot be usefully applied in difficult situations by people who lack experience, moral insight and moral sensitivity, in short, virtues. This is where the genesis of the revival movement of virtue ethics actually hinges on.

.....