



A Comparative Analysis of Virtue and Morality in Plato's Euthyphro and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics

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Abstract:

This study was aimed at discussing the topic of morality based on the debate in Euthyphro. This study examined the contrasting views of Plato, as represented in the character of Euthyphro, and the views of Aristotle, especially in Book II of the Nicomachean Ethics, which is the topic of the Virtue of Character. The theory of Virtue Ethics proposed by Aristotle was the theoretical background of this research. The research question focused on how the concept of virtue and morality was developed by Plato and Aristotle and how their ideals in Euthyphro and Nicomachean Ethics were similar and different. This paper provides a comparison of the approach of Plato and Aristotle on the issue of vice and virtue, morality or immorality. Through the dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro, Plato expounded on the issue of piety, impiety, holiness, morality, and immorality. On the contrary, Aristotle provided the evidence of virtue and vice. The researchers used a descriptive qualitative design to conduct the study. The conclusions of the present paper were that people should be educated to make considerate decisions between good and evil. Plato used the character of Euthyphro to illustrate this point and Aristotle gave an insight on the traits of good and bad behavior. Both philosophers advised their readers to make their conclusions rather than give them a set idea of what character should be. These moral choices are a gift that God bestows to individual consciousness as it is their ability to make these moral choices. Hence, individuals ought to rely on their personal knowledge in the daily lives.

Keywords: Morality, virtuousness, Holi, ideologies, virtuous character

Introduction

This research is intended to compare the notion of virtue and the vice in the works by Plato and Aristotle. They talk about two kinds of character and the basis of distinguishing between a good and bad character, and the implications that this has on the moral development of young people. Plato in his dialogue Euthyphro explores the essence of character and actions and poses significant questions on the topic of morality and immorality which make the young readers think critically. Aristotle, on the other hand, addresses misconceptions about virtue and vice in his work, specifically in Book II titled Virtue of Character. This study interprets the perspectives of both philosophers and examines how their viewpoints relate to individuals and society.

This study explores the answers about the virtues and vices through the two great philosophers, one raises questions, and the other gives the answers. This study is a blend of the two philosophies. It is examined what piety and impiety are. Socrates and Euthyphro belonged to religious and modern politics, but Euthyphro was unable to describe the (piety, impiety, morality, and immorality) in detail as expected by Socrates and tried to sum up things with to-the-point answers. Socrates was brought to King Archon's court to be prosecuted by Meletus on the charge of corrupting the youth.

This study also reveals how a literate person justifies himself by demonstrating patience and peace against the charges brought against him. Socrates and Euthyphro meet on King Archon's porch. Socrates has an aim to defend himself against the charge of impiety prosecuted by Meletus. On the other hand, Euthyphro's actions are concerned with religion. The occasion is the prosecution in which Euthyphro also charges his father that he has done murder. The researcher investigates Aristotle's philosophical points of view in search of the text's Euthyphro questions.

Aristotle discusses the types of characters that should be avoided and explores the nature of humanity and cruelty. He argues that the concepts of good and bad are not inherent to human beings but are adopted for specific reasons. He provides various insights about virtue and vice. For Aristotle, virtue is akin to perception; like the "virtue of eyes," people can differentiate between right and wrong. Socrates engages Euthyphro with many questions to elicit the youth's responses. The researcher will examine both philosophers to gain a better understanding of piety and impiety, as well as virtue and vice.

Research Question

How do Plato and Aristotle conceptualize virtue and moral character, and what implications do their views hold for moral education?

Review of the Literature

Nath (2014), in his research titled Is Plato a Perfect Idealist? explains the term of idealism by using the philosophy of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716). According to the theory of idealism, there are two things: one is the mind, and the second is the objective world. He connects the idealism with these two things and discusses that the mind is primary, and the objective world is just a materialistic world. Each individual has their own ideas. This quality is given by God to human beings. In comparison to these ideas the God is a superior idea, which our senses do not perceive easily, but our rational self perceives it. According to Plato, this objective world is nothing. The real thing is independent ideas.

The main objective of the Nath's research is to explore whether Plato can be called a real idealist or not. This research discusses the Platonic Philosophy. This world is the visible world or the intelligible world of ideas. He also contemplates that the four elements of matter earth,

water, fire, and air are combined mechanically. According to Plato, these elements are sensible and exist within a supersensible element. This research also discusses the process of dialectic. The world of ideas is produced by the brain, the tongue, and gesture, etc., and this is the idea of the world where true knowledge is discovered (Nath, 2014).

Nath's research also explains the exact meaning of philosopher. A philosopher is free from the two-world visible and tangible world because he has the quality to see reality. A person who loves beautiful things cannot attain the title of philosopher, but only a dreamer. A person who finds the beauty in themselves and accepts reality can easily attain the title of philosopher. Nath also uses the example of “cowness” (p. 25) to justify that matter is perceived by our sensory organs, and that is in comparison to external ideas that are perceived by our rational self. In the modern sense, Plato was never a perfect idealist because there is a clash between the modern philosopher's idealism and the ancient philosopher's idealism. Modern philosophers believe that if any reality exists, it must be a part of our mind. Plato believes the perceived things are nothing but only shadows; the real thing is the idea of our mind (Nath, 2014).

Bessant's study, titled ‘A Case for Virtue Ethics’ is about Utilitarianism and sheds light on virtues that are essential in society. In this article, six components have been explained about virtue ethics. A virtuous character is built for the social transformation of society, and it will only happen when the youth focus on education. It depends on the youth and gives them the option to select one good or bad ethic. Professional judgment is also a compulsory component of being a successful character in society. A professional should understand their duties to serve society (Bessant, 2009).

Cinta's (2023) study titled Educational objectives and criteria for the ideal teacher perspective of Plato and Al-Ghazali aims to explain the “educational goals and teacher criteria” (p.3031). He represents the two personalities of Plato and Al-Ghazali. This study explains the similarity between the two idealists' thoughts on educational goals and teachers' instruction criteria. Plato's purpose is to bring happiness to an individual's life. Plato discusses the teacher's criteria on a scientific basis. He explains the ways of character development and the state of happiness. While Al Ghazali's efforts demonstrate ways of creating good relations between human beings and Allah, the purpose of improving this pious relationship is that, in this world and the hereafter, an individual can attain true happiness. Both idealist purposes are the same; they want to implement them in the teacher's practices because he is the role model for the students. Plato is very serious about the cognitive criteria for teachers. Meanwhile, Al Ghazali emphasizes the importance of effective qualities in teachers. Teachers should possess characteristics that contribute to happiness in both, this world and the afterlife. Students ought to treat their teachers as they would treat their parents. This research outlines both idealistic concepts regarding the traits of teachers.

According to Plato, the teacher must have higher qualifications, experience, and teaching skills. The teacher must play a role in encouraging the students to ask questions because education is a way to dig out the ultimate true knowledge. The teacher must have these traits. Teachers must be experts in their subject. The teacher should be experienced in their teaching techniques. Teachers should be polite and have respectful behavior with their students. The teacher must be a motivational speaker who encourages the students to take an interest in the field of knowledge. The teacher should be able to develop democracy in their teaching methodology because teachers are role models for the students (Cinta, Maulana, & Maskud, 2023).

This research also explains Al Ghazali's three domains, named as cognitive aspects, which refers to the “intelligence and thinking power” (3039), the second is the affective aspect, which means the spirituality, and the third domain is the psychomotor aspects, which defines the

physical health and skills. The teacher must have these qualities. Teacher behavior with students resembles that of a parent. Teachers should be sincere with their students and not expect rewards or payment from them. Teachers must educate students that the ultimate purpose is to seek closeness to Allah, rather than aspiring for a higher status in this materialistic world (Cinta, Maulana, & Maskud, 2023).

Makarevičs' research titled "The concept of an ideal person in works of Aristotle" discusses the theory of personality. This theory develops the ideas under the influence of the cultural and historical development of humankind. This research aims to explore the past theoretical views and compare them with the present views. The researcher uses the method of content analysis to discover the real concept of ideal or perfect person traits. This research explores the concepts of an ideal and perfect person as proposed by Plato and Aristotle. Both philosophers agree that the soul is the essence of life; however, there is a contradiction in their viewpoints. For Plato, the soul is immortal; alternatively, for Aristotle, the soul has its specific structure. Both philosophers agree that the soul is capable of development, but the conditions for its changes differ (Makarevičs & Iliško, 2021).

According to Plato, the soul should be knowledgeable about the right actions under the law. Conversely, there should be a positive public opinion regarding the right actions. Aristotle agreed that the soul is upbringing, learning, and knowledge. The inner world of an individual is essential because it's linked with the mental process. The mental processes belong the human sensation, perception, memory, thinking, imagination, emotions, and feelings. Aristotle describes two levels of the soul. The first level is associated with a person's birth, while the second level involves gifts of higher powers bestowed upon an individual. These gifts of higher powers were given by God. Having the higher power provides the authority to a soul to make decisions consciously and achieve its ambition. Aristotle, in his *Nicomachean Ethics* further explains that every soul has a specific goal of life and only a less souls are capable of voluntarily change his/her purpose of life. The ideal person dissolves himself into the divine and becomes immortal. Plato explains that the soul in the human body gets the experiences of past lives, while Aristotle provides the complex structure of the soul (Makarevičs & Iliško, 2021).

Webber's study titled '*Virtue, Character and Situation*' aims to discuss the crude behavior that has become the trend in society to make the distinction between the lower and upper class, and this type of behavior does not fall in the traits of Virtuous character. This research aims to cultivate righteous character traits in individuals. Society needs to foster virtuousness, especially in raising children. Their behavior in various situations should be balanced, not excessively arrogant or overly polite. The best approach is to treat people as equals (Webber, 2006).

The paper by Chun, which is called *Ethical Character and Virtue of Organizations: An Empirical Assessment and Strategic Implications*, investigates the application of virtue ethics in practice. The study includes studies among companies, clients and staff to determine the significance of the good character. This study will explore the implementation of virtuous behavior in the real world. Furthermore, the research assesses not only the financial performance associated with virtue but also highlights the impact on non-financial outcomes. It investigates how businesses plan their operations, whether their approaches are grounded in ethical considerations or solely focused on success, and the levels of implementation of these principles. The research provides a framework to educate business leaders about virtue's strategic and extravagant aspects. And all these are helpful for the virtuous character to succeed in their organizational performance. Managers should practice these dimensions in their practical life, not for the sake of practice, but to make a perfect virtuous character for solving conflicts between the staff members on an equal basis (Chun, 2005).

Kesebir's study *The Cultural Salience of Moral Character and Virtue Declined in Twentieth-Century America* examines how many works have been written based on morality in the twentieth century in the United States. This study is done in two ways: first, research with the name of 'Study 1' has explored the usage of morality in practical life in the twentieth century, and the second research is on virtuous words with the name 'Study 2' (e.g., truthfulness, tolerance, kindness). And the results of this study are that in the modern world, twentieth-century people are wary of discussing morality (Kesebir, 2012).

This research has been conducted on the work of Elizabeth Anscombe's *Modern Philosophy*. Attention has been paid to the two aspects belonging to Aristotle's works, 'moral and educational' importance, which have been compared with the notions of wisdom, justice, and devotion. An American who has done the psychological surveys and the results of this survey assert that people are following the modern virtue ethics, and people are forced to follow Aristotle's notions about the good or bad characters. And Jonas complains that his contemporaries are focused on modern education and disregard Plato's views on the accounts of morality and immorality (Carr, 2024).

Research Gap

Most of the research on Plato's Virtue and Ethics has been conducted by scholars such as Bessant, whose study explains that a high literacy rate is essential. He emphasizes teaching the ethics of virtuousness so that members of society can live by implementing the characteristics of virtue. In contrast, Nath discusses both modern and ancient philosophers, describing philosophers as individuals who show a love for nature and accept reality as an integral part of the individual mind linked with consciousness.

Cinta et al. (2023), present the idealistic concepts of both Plato and Al-Ghazali, particularly regarding the traits of teachers and pious characters. The purpose of writing about virtue that Plato had is to make people happier whereas Al-Ghazali stresses on the value on the pious character that builds the connection between people and Allah.

The work by Makarevic demonstrates the possibility of development of the soul. Plato believes that the soul is immortal whereas Aristotle believes that it possesses a definite arrangement that can be developed by means of piety and virtue teachings. In his work, Webber (2011), explores the aspect of behavior especially in childhood education in the context of behaviorism by narrowing down the attributes of virtue and a pious character. Chun in his study puts emphasis on the need to educate higher authorities who are in a position to make decisions on behalf of workers. This education plays an important role in bringing justice and equality in decision-making especially when it comes to significant conflict resolution. On the contrary, the research of Kesebir shows the state of the research on the morality. It opposes the views of Carr that claim that the society is too obsessed with the new ways of teaching and is only prepared to follow the philosophies of Aristotle even at the expense of the opinions held by Plato on morality and immorality. In contrast to the earlier studies, the research paper at hand pays particular attention to the ideas of virtue and vice by Aristotle as well as the views of Plato on the pious and impious character.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design based on textual and comparative analysis. The primary data consist of Plato's *Euthyphro* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book II: Virtue of Character). Secondary data include relevant scholarly journal articles and philosophical studies related to virtue, vice, morality, and character.

To justify the qualitative approach, the study draws on Masoodi's (2017) discussion of

qualitative methods, which emphasizes the importance of aligning research questions with methodological choices. Guided by this principle, the present study conducts a textual comparison of two philosophical texts to examine notions of virtue, vice, piety, impiety, morality, and immorality. The analysis identifies areas where the views of ancient philosophers coincide and where they diverge.

The theoretical background of the study is grounded in Aristotle's theory of virtue ethics, which provides a framework for interpreting both texts. The characters in Plato's *Euthyphro* symbolize moral and immoral positions through critical questioning, leaving interpretation to the reader, while Aristotle's *Virtue of Character* addresses similar themes and encourages reflective judgment.

Data were collected through careful and repeated reading of the primary texts, supported by secondary scholarly sources accessed through academic platforms such as Google Scholar, institutional libraries, Springer, and Web of Science. Relevant ideas were identified, categorized, and analyzed in line with the selected theoretical framework.

Discussion

Aristotle studies values of morality with respect to both moral virtues and intellectual ones. He differentiates two kinds of virtue: moral virtue, which is a matter of character and intellectual virtue which applies to the mind and the reasoning. Aristotle in his publication says, it is not by birth that an individual becomes virtuous, but by practice (p. 19). Moral virtue defines the character and feelings of people and investigates how people behave in real life situations of fear, pleasure, anger, desire, and social relationships. Intellectual virtue, on the other hand, is the independent thinking that is in balance with ethical values and truths and the one that leads people to make wise decisions (Aristotle, 1999).

Two types of integrity that a character must possess are the moral virtue and intellectual virtue, which portrays the integrity of thought (Aristotle, p. 15, 1999). Education is one of the most beneficial activities that can be used to develop this integrity. The virtuous character is something that has to be practiced and felt as a habit. A character must have the ability to be virtuous and such ability must be evidenced by his or her behaviors. Virtuousness cannot be learned through observation or listening, it needs to be pursued. Aristotle explains this by saying that a person is selfless by virtue of the brave things that he or she does. A virtuous character is similarly identified by the manner of being and displaying virtuous behavior all the time.

Aristotle articulates that people are able to relate or relate unjustly to others. People usually employ emotions of fear or confidence to show their courage. According to him, this is the reason why we need to get involved in the correct activities because disparities in these activities are the disparities in our being. It is thus essential to form one kind of habit instead of another; it is indeed of a Aristotle theory vital concern" (Aristotle, pp. 6–7, 1999). People have to possess enough knowledge to understand what is right. Moral virtue is a habit that is developed with practice and not through observation as stressed by Aristotle.

Education plays an important role in the development of intellectual virtue. Aristotle states that virtuous people are supposed to be temperate, this helps them to be stable and just happy. According to him, intellectual virtue brings about a well-ordered mind better than emotions. Doing things because of their clarity and logicity leads to satisfaction and happiness in an individual (Aristotle, pp. 2235, 1999). It is a concept that is closely related to courage since courage is a sign of strength. Once an individual invents such habits, he/she is able to have the strength to stand firm in his/her beliefs and behaviors. According to Aristotle, it is correct to

state that an individual becomes a just by performing just deeds and temperate by performing temperate deeds; no one has the slightest chance of becoming a good person without performing them (Aristotle, pp. 1012, 1999).

In *Euthyphro*, Plato presents two characters, Euthyphro and Socrates, that are closely related to the Greek religion and politics. The conversation poses important questions and enables the reader to draw his/her own conclusion relying on the conversations between the characters. Euthyphro is not much able to elaborate on the definitions of the terms piety and impiety in the way Socrates wants him to because he tends to give short and direct responses. The discussion starts with Socrates awaiting at the entrance of King Archon where he is under prosecution by Meletus. and on the count of corrupting the youth. Socrates is trying to protect himself against this charge of impiety as well as questioning Euthyphro on his concept of holiness and unholiness. In Greek society, Euthyphro is unholy in his decision to prosecute his father over his murder because it is a custom that a son was not supposed to accuse his father of murder. Socrates challenges Euthyphro to provide answers on what makes the difference between virtue and vice, piety and impiety. He is out to reveal how the youths view their moral and religious responsibilities. Euthyphro is also angry about the actions his father took and feels justified to put his father on trial. This is however an assumption that Socrates brings into question and this leads to a further consideration of what moral and intellectual virtue is Plato (2007, p. 7) writes, what the gods love is pious, and what they do not love is not, which shows how hard it is to define holiness objectively.

Aristotle (1999, pp. 715) examines morality and character virtues and vices that determine moral character. Virtues are the qualities that are intermediate between excess and deficiency and they are expressed in our attitudes and behavior. Virtuous characters are people who are virtuous, full of integrity, courageous, moderate, sensitive and generous. On the contrary, the ones controlled by the vice can be rash, intemperate, or unfeeling toward others. Aristotle points out that moral virtue is developed by continuously practicing the right activities at the tender age. Likewise intellectual virtue, comprising wisdom and understanding needs education and a sense of altruistic action. Such participation develops the intellect and leads to rational and ethical decision-making. Both philosophers comment on such emotions as anger, fear, and joy. Such feelings as anger, envy, pity, and love can be tamed by establishing virtuous habits. By questioning Euthyphro, Socrates proves that, to understand piety and impiety, one has to think and reason and not simply follow the inner emotions or the social influence. Additionally, Plato (2007, p. 12) states that it is not true to assert that, where there is fear, there is also shame; but where there is shame, there is also fear, and implies that moral understanding must be a subtle judgment.

Both Aristotle and Plato emphasize the importance of education in the process of building moral and intellectual abilities. New generation should be taught to comprehend the notions of good and bad, and to control their emotions properly, in order to be just and prudent. The moral virtue is not something that is in-built; it is developed through repetitive informed activities. Intellectual virtue also helps people to decompose situations, reason amidst challenges and have the ability to make ethical judgments in difficult situations. The dialogues of Socrates in *Euthyphro* are also an example of Aristotle's theory as it encourages people to think, examine themselves, and internalize morality.

Aristotle and Plato give a complementary insight into character. They emphasize the significance of moral and intellectual virtues in the process of behavior, decision making, and socialization. Education, self-reflection and practice are essential in the development of a virtuous character. These philosophical lessons can be used to ensure that people can develop their moral consciousness, make right decisions and behave reasonably, which in the end will

help them grow as individuals and become a contribution to the improvement of society.

Conclusion

This study looks at the idea of piety and impiety, virtue and vice all of which are presented in the work of Socrates and Aristotle, and the development of character. It pays significant attention to the significance of knowing good character and distinguishing between good and bad deeds. Instead of making ineffective judgments without a sound ethical ground, individuals ought to grow morally literate so as to take responsibility and treat others equally. According to Aristotle, there is virtue and vice within character. In the dialogue *Euthyphro*, Socrates attempts to clarify the meaning of piety and impiety, and he emphasizes the importance of moral knowledge and contemplation rather than directing to the outer authority.

The results of this study have enormous implications to the moral education in the present day especially in distance learning. To start with, moral training must focus not only on imparting information but also on character and moral reasoning. Activities, case studies, and discussions can be introduced in the online and remote learning settings to encourage the students to ponder about righteous behavior and decision-making in the real-life experience. Second, teachers may refer to the works of Aristotle and Socrates to help students to evaluate themselves and make moral decisions. This method can assist learners to know the implications of their behavior and develop practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Lastly, in online courses fostering an organizational culture of ethical engagement, via cooperative learning endeavors, peer review, and ethical dialogue, may be useful in instilling students with moral values as a means of counseling the disconnect between theory and the application of ethical behavior.

To sum up, the study of the principles of character and virtue is not merely an issue of philosophical research, but one that must be undertaken in order to raise responsible, thoughtful and ethically conscious individuals. When integrated in both the conventional and distance learning environment, we present students with a chance to build the necessary competencies and values that facilitate ethical interaction in the society.

Character education needs to be included into the curriculum as it motivates students to discuss such valuable concepts as honesty, integrity, empathy, respect. These are virtues that are critical to the growth of a person and the community. Through character education, the students are able to enhance their academic success besides gaining the moral compass that they need to guide themselves when faced with complicated social challenges.

Online learning offers exceptional chances of character growth through collaborative projects, contemplations, and judgement that can assist students to consider the importance of their values and the outcomes of their decisions. Virtual classes can also teach students to appreciate ethical reasoning in making decisions because they would be able to interact with different points of view. In the end, cultivating an excellent sense of character and virtue will enable the students to become productive and involved citizens who can make a positive contribution to the society, thus allowing a more ethical and fair world to the generations to come.

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