

Aristotle's Virtue Ethics are considered to be the foundation of Virtue Ethics, and that tradition has been brought into the modern era through Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethic (NAVE). The most prominent philosopher articulating NAVE principles is Rosalind Hursthouse. Sukaina Hirji argues that NAVE has important differences from Aristotle's view and that many NAVE beliefs are not authentically Aristotelian. In this essay I will examine Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics through Hirji's analysis of Hursthouse's work. Ultimately I will argue that Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics is a distinct view from Consequentialism and Deontology and that NAVE is more compelling than Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, which is not distinct from Consequentialism.

Although Aristotelian Virtue Ethics are highly aligned with Consequentialism, NAVE presents a compelling ethical theory that is distinct from Consequentialism and Deontology. Hursthouse describes that a person will choose the action to take because the action expresses a specific virtue; the goodness of an action is directly a result of its relation to an agent's character rather than first-order consequences or prior rules. Hirji summarizes NAVE as two commitments, "virtues of characters are defined as traits that reliably promote an agent's flourishing" and "virtuous actions are defined as the sorts of actions a virtuous agent reliably performs under the relevant circumstances" (2019, p. 671). Hirji quotes Hursthouse as describing an action as right "if and only if it is what a virtuous agent would characteristically (i.e. acting in character) do in the circumstances" (p. 674).

Hirji (2019) argues that Aristotle focuses on virtues in relation to the consequences of those virtues. This viewpoint directly ties Aristotelian Virtue Ethics to Consequentialism because

the virtues are viewed in terms of the consequences they lead to. For example, courage is a virtue that is described by its aim to preserve a soldier's (or other actor's) life and temperance is a virtue that aims at bodily health. Aristotle explains that actions are good because they lead to good results, not because of the metaphysical priority of the character. NAVE differs from both Consequentialism and Deontology. NAVE does not reduce the morality of an action to the specific result that action bears and instead focuses on how that action actualizes a specific virtue. This makes NAVE distinct from Consequentialism. Similarly, NAVE is not reliant on a strict set of rules and instead focuses on guidance in acting in accordance with virtues. This makes NAVE distinct from Deontology.

The key aspects of the Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics as Hursthouse describes is the priority of virtue, and the relationship between virtue and flourishing (As cited by Hirji, 2019). Hursthouse describes Virtues as coming metaphysically prior to actions. This is distinct from the virtue coming temporally before the actions and distinct from virtue having more importance than the action itself. Priority of virtue is saying that virtues come from what it means to be human and from the facts of human nature, and therefore are prior to actions. As Hursthouse describes Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, the relationship between virtue and flourishing is that a virtue is definitionally something that will lead to flourishing. Because of the intrinsic relationship between virtue and flourishing, a person who cultivates virtue will flourish because they have cultivated virtues. An example of a person flourishing because they follow a virtue can be seen by considering a person following moderation. In following moderation in a person's diet, they may be able to enjoy a treat and have the joy associated with that without having the negative feelings associated with overeating or overindulging in a treat, because this person has

followed the virtue. This will lead to the person flourishing, even though they did not necessarily choose to eat in moderation specifically to lead to flourishing.

Hirji argues that Aristotle's view does not follow through the priority of value. Hirji argues that the passage that is normally used to interpret what defines a virtue, "actions are called just or temperate when they are the sort that a just or temperate person would do" (Hirji, 2019 p. 675), is not saying that a virtuous action is defined by the fact that it is what a virtuous person would do. Instead, virtuous actions can be identified as actions that virtuous people do, but the actual virtues come from the consequences that the virtues lead to. Hirji also points out that there is a difference between the way that Hursthouse and Aristotle describe the relationship between virtue and flourishing. Aristotle's view of the relationship between virtue and flourishing reinforces the idea that his belief system was consequential because his view of the relationship between virtue and flourishing is that a person should choose a virtuous action because it leads to flourishing.

I find Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics to be the most compelling for the same reasons it is distinct from Consequentialism and Deontology. I think it is helpful to think of actions as different ways to embody virtues and to choose the actions that are the most virtuous. This allows for more freedom than Deontology because the actor is not forced to follow a strict set of rules, but also allows for less active thought because the person does not have to actively consider the results of their actions, but instead just consider if the action is in line with their virtues.