

Ethics of aristotle, spinoza, kant and fichte essay

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One basic notion in Aristotelian ethics that occupies a central significance is Aristotle's belief in the role of man's activities in order for one to acquire ethical knowledge. That is, for one to become virtuous or to obtain virtues one should not merely confine himself to mere studying of these virtues but rather one should, more importantly, actualize this knowledge of the virtues. Thus, for one to become good, one should do good. Aristotle further stretches his ideas by proposing the doctrine of the mean.

The essence of this doctrine dwells on the basic precept that one ought to avoid the extremes and, instead, settle for the "mean". The actions of men, more specifically, ought to be framed upon the "mean" which is the virtue. For example, the virtue of courage rests on the mean between two extremes: cowardice or the "lack" of courage, and rashness or the "excess" in courage. On the other hand, Immanuel Kant argues in a rather similar manner to that of Aristotle except for a few distinctions and modifications to the latter's ethical arguments. Kant, through his concept of the practical imperative, suggests that man should treat other human beings not as means to an end but rather the ends themselves for which the actions are directed.

Several points also follow and are closely attached to his practical imperative. The concept of duty is central to the ethical precepts of Kant which he regards crucial by considering the differences that dwell between actions in accordance with duty and actions performed for the sake of duty. For Kant, the latter phrase implies a greater moral worth in man's actions that result from a person's greater disinclination to act merely for the sake of duty. Essentially, if a person is motivated to do a certain act simply because

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one is entirely inclined to do such an act, then the act itself is considered to be bereft of moral worth. Comparison of Aristotle and Kant on praxis The conception of the ancient Greeks regarding praxis corresponds to the types of activities free men engage themselves into. Aristotle, for the most part, argues that praxis corresponds to practical knowledge whereby the “action” of man is the end goal, such that rational action (which is its own end) on any given decision confines praxis itself. Further, it must be noted that praxis is done not for the sake of anything else that is beyond the consideration for rational actions.

In the context of Aristotle, acting rightly as a moral disposition brings guidance to the concept of praxis where prior knowledge of what is “right” is absent. Consequently, it is through this that one realizes the end in given circumstances in the sense that the end is only given light in the deliberation of the means that are to be utilized in the particular situation. In essence, praxis is then not seen as just about any action that is merely founded on simple reflection. Rather, certain qualities embody these actions such as the quest for truth, respect for other men, and a sense of commitment to the well-being of other people.

On the other hand, Kantian theory posits an assumption of a purposive activity that resembles morality in relation to the notion of the praxis. For the most part of Kantian ethics, morality is determined and confined within the scopes of pure maxims. This in turn brings us to note that Kantian ethics puts little or no significance to the degree upon which man, as a moral agent, is juxtaposed in his life world and is closely attached to his actions. Aristotle and Kant on substance and its role in praxis One of the main ideas <https://assignbuster.com/ethics-of-aristotle-spinoza-kant-and-fichte-essay/>

in Aristotle's philosophy is the idea of substance. Substance is the form of an object, quite apart from its perceivable qualities such as color (accidentals). Placing it in the context of Aristotelian ethics, one can arrive at the observation that the substance of the object or of human beings defines the actions one performs, actions that can be analyzed at the ethical level. Thus, if a person's substance is such and such, the consequent actions of that person reflect the very substance one intrinsically possesses.

Thus, Aristotle's argument can be identified in the sense that a righteous man, whose substance is reflective of the virtues, is one who is guided by his disposition of acting rightly. On the other hand, Kant argues that substance is essential. However, the derivation of its "necessity" does not dwell on the very construction of the world as it is or on how it is in itself but on the framework that our minds impose on the world in general. Thus, it can be held that Kant argues that man's actions are essentially ethical not only in the sense that they are conceived from what man ought to do but also in the sense that these ethical actions are essential because that is how our minds impose these actions as they are, regardless of what or how the world is in itself.

Fichte and the concept of thing-in-itself As Kant has in his philosophy the concept of the \neg things-in-themselves or the existence of the noumena, Fichte suggested that this idea should nevertheless be left-out and, instead, bring us to embrace the argument that consciousness is not anchored nor is grounded on what we may properly term as the "real world". Since the noumena, or the supra-sensible reality that dwells beyond the capacity of human reason and is beyond the capacity of the senses, is sharply held

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distinct and separated from the phenomena or the things “ as they appear before us”, Fichte argued that consciousness is not based on anything beyond itself. It must be noted further that Kant apparently holds the belief that what we, as human beings embodied with both reason and sensibility, can only ascertain is the phenomenal realm or that realm in which the phenomena of things exists. Beyond what the human sensibility and rationality can pursue and identify dwells the noumenal realm where the indiscernible rests. Quite interestingly, Kant holds strong to this sharp dichotomy and goes on to defend the idea that things-in-themselves are virtually unknowable. Since this is the case, these things are beyond our capabilities to be exacted with the proper essence as what our minds will dictate upon the situation.

That is, the very limits of our knowledge combined with the limits of our senses and rationality is the borderline between the noumenal and phenomenal realm. What transcends this border is already beyond the capability of our minds to grasp and, therefore, is unknowable yet it is there. Consequently, Fichte argues that the real reality is, apart from what may already been discussed by previous philosophers such as Kant himself, the pure Will, the active Reason, the moral Ego, the Good among other things. The things that the common mind of man defines as real or is constitutive of reality are nothing else but a manifestation of phenomenon itself, an imperfect translation or a mere caricature or that which is distinct from the noumenal world.

For Fichte, duty and not being is the highest and ultimate principle from which we originate and towards which we are to proceed. Consequently, the <https://assignbuster.com/ethics-of-aristotle-spinoza-kant-and-fichte-essay/>

universe is the evidence or the very manifestation of the pure Will that symbolizes the moral Idea as the real thing-in-itself and the real absolute. Hence, the act of philosophizing is not to be taken as an act for one to convince one's self that being is everything but rather it should be taken as an act to realize the fact that being is nothing and that duty is everything in its general sense. Moreover, such act amounts to recognizing the inanity of the realm of phenomena quite distinct from the essence taken from its intelligibility inasmuch as it is also to place recognition of the objective world as the result of the ego as the objectified ego and not merely as the consequence of causes that are detached from man's practical rationality. In essence, as the rest of humanity tend to incline themselves towards duty as the very end in which actions are ought to proceed, one must recall the fact that Fichte argues that one should relieve one's self of the idea of the noumenal realm and should focus instead on the universe as it is, as the ultimate \neg thing-in-itself. All the rest of the accounts of the moral relations among rational beings are to be placed subordinate to the priority of the relation of what is right. Fichte and the idea of absolute postponement

Reflective thought is aware of itself as a free, spontaneous activity, since it operates in the infinite realm of possibilities; yet the ideal it strives after is to comprehend the actual world as a system of perfect determinism. This is the impasse that Fichte avoids by the device of absolute postponement (Hegel, 1977).

In the above passage, Hegel appears to argue that, since reflective thinking or contemplation operates within the realm of infinite possibilities whereby all the rest of what one may want to think is stretched infinitely, inner

contemplation results to an unending quest or process. The reason behind this is the presumption that such a reflective thinking process aims at arriving at the explanation of the actual world or the world as it is fixated in reality. Since one utilizes a stream of consciousness that brings about the idea of unending possibilities that appear to stretch at no presumed point, it follows that one may not actually arrive at the comprehension of the world as it is, or that one may not be able to eventually arrive at decisive comprehension of the world and all the facts that are substantiated with the understanding of it. The claim that the ideal of such reflective thinking is the realization of the world as a system of perfect determinism goes to show that it aims at arriving at the idea of the world as one that is determined and is construed in ways it is intended to be made.

Thus, if the attempt of reflective thinking is the comprehension of such a world, what happens is a futile attempt to actually arrive at a fix point wherein all the rest is within the proximity of our understanding. What it does is to bring ourselves to an unceasing quest that defeats the very purpose of meeting the claim that the actual world is a system perfect determinism. Moreover, Hegel's attempt to respond to Fichte's absolute postponement is reflected in his major mission which is to take the contradictions and tensions in modern philosophy, such as the tension between self and Other and subject and object of knowledge, and interpret these tensions as part of a larger and more comprehensive, evolving, unity of rationality which he usually labels as "absolute knowledge" or the "absolute idea" throughout his works. Moreover, Hegel takes on the mission of making happen such "unity" by taking it as something that evolved

through and embodied itself in negation and contradiction. Both negation and contradiction have a characteristic which is dynamic in the sense that at every point in each area of reality such as philosophy advances to more development until the point where a rational unity is achieved. This rational unity keeps the contradictions as stages and sub-fractions by elevating them towards a higher degree of oneness.

Thus, the absolute postponement advanced by Fichte is salvaged by Hegel from utter failure by arguing for the unity between the tensions and contradictions in the former's work. This tension illuminated in Fichte's claims is the tension between reflective thinking and its aim to arrive at a comprehension of the actual world as one that is framed upon a system of flawless determinism. In essence, the impasse in the argument of Fichte is recognized and is attempted by Hegel to resolve by citing the strong relevance of the latter's concept of the unity and of, consequently, the "absolute idea".