Ethical Theories: Virtue Ethics

- Recent interest in virtue ethics has increased because some philosophers feel that it accounts for factors missed by Kantianism, utilitarianism, and social contract theory.
  - E.g. personal and family relationships, emotions, moral wisdom, etc.

- Focus of virtue ethics: What kind of person should I be? Discover virtues (i.e. ideal character traits) through virtuous role models or reflection and develop them

- What virtues do humans need in order to flourish and be truly happy?

- Traces all the way back to Aristotle and the ancient Greeks. According to Aristotle:
  - Virtuous inner states (dispositions) lead to virtuous behavior.
  - Virtuous character traits are stable and consistent. Once established, a virtuous person will act consistently and appropriately in different situations
  - Virtuous character develops over a long period of time. Moral character shaped by other people e.g. parents, role models and peers.
  - Virtuous character developed through the repetition of relevant virtuous actions. The virtuous agent recognizes the value of virtue and why it is the right thing to do.
  - Virtue associated with feelings (e.g. courage with fear). Virtue involves reacting with an appropriate amount of emotion
  - Virtue requires the right reason and the right desire

- Summary of Virtue ethics:
  - A right action is an action that a virtuous person, acting in character, would take in the same circumstances.
  - A virtuous person is someone who possesses and lives out the virtues over time
  - The virtues are those character traits humans need to flourish and be truly happy.
Utilitarianism theories are ________________.
Kantian theories are ________________.
Virtue ethics is _________________.

In some ways, virtue ethics combines the approaches of the other theories we’ve examined by paying attention to the agent as well as the action and its consequences.
  ○ I.e. a good person does “the right thing at the right time for the right reason”.

Strengths of virtue theory:

Weaknesses of virtue theory: