

Virtue, Truth, Freedom, And The History Of Philosophy

Authors : Ashley DelCorno

Abstract : GEM Anscombe's 1958 essay Modern Moral Philosophy and the tradition of virtue ethics that followed has given rise to the restoration (or, more plainly, the resurrection) of Aristotle as something of an authority figure. Alisdair MacIntyre and Martha Nussbaum are proponents, for example, not just of Aristotle's relevancy but also of his apparent implicit authority. That said, it's not clear that the schema imagined by virtue ethicists accurately describes moral life or that it does not inadvertently work to impoverish genuine decision-making. If the label 'virtue' is categorically denied to some groups (while arbitrarily afforded to others), it can only turn on itself, thus rendering ridiculous its own premise. Likewise, as an inescapable feature of virtue ethics, Aristotelean binaries like 'virtue/vice' and 'voluntary/involuntary' offer up false dichotomies that may seriously compromise an agent's ability to conceptualize choices that are truly free and rooted in meaningful criteria. Here, this topic is analyzed through a feminist lens predicated on the known paradoxes of patriarchy. The work of feminist theorists Jacqui Alexander, Katharine Angel, Simone de Beauvoir, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Imani Perry, and Amia Srinivasan serves as important guideposts, and the argument here is built from a key tenet of black feminist thought regarding scarcity and possibility. Above all, it's clear that though the philosophical tradition of virtue ethics presents itself as recovering the place of agency in ethics, its premises possess crippling limitations toward the achievement of this goal. These include, most notably, virtue ethics' binding analysis of history, as well as its axiomatic attachment to obligatory clauses, problematic reading-in of Aristotle and arbitrary commitment to predetermined and competitively patriarchal ideas of what counts as a virtue.

Keywords : feminist history, the limits of utopic imagination, curatorial creation, truth, virtue, freedom

Conference Title : ICFHPPF 2024 : International Conference on Feminist History of Philosophy and Feminist Philosophers

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : May 23-24, 2024