

PHIL4371 Seminar on Comparative Philosophy
Virtue Ethics: Neo-Aristotelian, Neo-Humean, and Neo-Confucian

Course Outline

Instructor: Huang Yong
Language of Instruction: English and/or Putonghua
Classroom: XXX
Class Time: XXX
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1. Course Description

There has been an impressive revival of virtue ethics in the West during the last a few decades as a viable alternative to deontology and consequentialism, the two moral theories that have been dominating the modern moral discourses. As virtue ethics focuses on the cultivation of traits of characters of the agent rather than stipulating moral principles to guide people's actions, it has become increasingly attractive. While there are varieties of virtue ethics in contemporary philosophy, which will be introduced in the first meeting, this seminar will focus on the two most influential ones, the Aristotelian eudaimonistic virtue ethics as developed by Rosalind Hursthouse and the Humean sentimentalist virtue ethics as advocated by Michael Slote (other forms of virtue ethics include those developed from the Stoic, Nietzschean, and pragmatist traditions). As many efforts have been made to compare Confucianism and virtue ethics, the last part of the course will explore some unique contributions that Confucianism can make to contemporary virtue ethics by helping it to respond to some serious objections to it, to develop ways to overcome its internal difficulties, and to expand its scope.

2. Learning outcomes

1. Develop sensitivity to the common concerns of human existence especially from a comparative perspective between eastern and western philosophy.
2. Equip students with life-long learning capacities especially through understanding of the connections between academic pursuits and life experience.
3. Relate the subject matters to human experience and/or modern life.
4. Enhance the ability to perceive philosophical problems and to solve them through comparative approaches.
5. Familiarize students with contemporary development of virtue ethics and Confucian contribution to it.

3. Course Activities and Assessments:

1. Preparation for class (read the assigned readings before the class) and participation at classroom discussion (15%)

2. Two short papers (each with 1000 English words or 1500 Chinese characters minimum); the first paper on Hursthouse due one week after the last lecture on Hursthouse, and the second paper on Slote due one week after the last lecture on Slote (20% each);
3. Term paper (2500 English words minimum or 4000 Chinese characters minimum); the paper should focus on one of the issues discussed in the third part of the course, with a comparative nature; the paper is due two weeks after the last class 8 (45%).

4. General Guidelines for Papers:

1. The papers can be either in English or Chinese;
2. Each paper should focus on and fully engage the assigned readings, both primary and secondary, on the topic;
3. The paper is not supposed to be a mere summary of the reading. Instead, focusing on one of the issues discussed in classes and readings, the paper should state the central question you want to deal with clearly; provide a brief survey of existing views on the question in the assigned reading (mandatory) and/or other readings (optional); explain the main problem(s) you find with each of these views; develop your own alternative views; and, finally, defend your view against objections, actual and/or possible;
4. A paper that has a narrow focus but goes into detail is far preferred to one that covers a broad topic with a superficial discussion;
5. Papers are to be submitted with VeriGuide Receipts.

5. Course Schedule (Subject to Changes at the Instructor's Discretion):

Introduction: Virtue Ethics vs. Consequentialism and Deontology (1st Week)

Part 1. Eudaimonistic Virtue Ethics: Rosalind Hursthouse (2nd to 5th Weeks)

1. Virtue as Benefiting Its Possessor (Hursthouse: Chapter 8)
2. Virtue as Constitutive of Being Human (Hursthouse: Chapters 9, 10 and 11)
3. Can Virtue Ethics Provide Action Guide? (Hursthouse: Chapter 1)
4. Virtue Ethics and Moral Dilemmas (Hursthouse: Chapters 2-3)
5. Virtue Ethics and Emotions (Hursthouse: Chapter 5).

Part II. Sentimentalist Virtue Ethics: Michael Slote (6th to 8th week)

1. Agent-based Virtue Ethics (Slote 2001: Chapter 1)
2. Virtue Ethics and the Ethics of Care (Slote 2001: Chapter 3)
3. The Ethics of Care and Empathy (Slote 2007: Chapter 1)
4. Partialism and Universal Care (Slote 2001: Chapter 5 and Slote 2007: Chapter 2)
5. Sentimentalist Ethics and Political Conception of Justice (Slote 2001: Chapter 4; Slote 2007: Chapter 6; and Slote 2010: Chapter 9)

Part III: Confucian Contributions to Virtue Ethics (9th to 12th weeks: November 3, 10, 17, and 24)

1. The Self-centeredness Objection to Virtue Ethics (Solomon 2007; Toner 2006, Huang 2010)
2. Two Dilemmas of Virtue Ethics (Watson 1997; Huang 2011)

3. Virtue Ethics and Moral Particularism (Dancy 2009; Stangl 2008; Huang 2014)
4. The Situationistic Criticism of Virtue Ethics (Doris 1998; Hutton 2006; Mower 2013, and Slingerland 2011, Sarkissian 2010)
5. Empathy with Devils (Huang forthcoming)
6. From Virtue Ethics to Virtue Politics (Huang 2013)

6. Readings:

- Annas, Julia. 1993. *The Morality of Happiness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Anscomb, Elizabeth. 1958. "Modern Moral Philosophy." *Philosophy* 33: 1-19.
- Angle, Stephen, and Michael Slote, eds. 2013. *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism*. Routledge.
- Aristotle. 1963. *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. by W.D. Ross. In *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. 9. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dancy, Jonathan. 2009. "Moral Particularism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-particularism/>
- Doris, John. 1998. "Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics." *Nous* 32 (4): 504-530.
- Foot, Philippa. 2001. *Natural Goodness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harold, James. 2011. "Is Xunzi's Virtue Ethics Susceptible to the Problem of Alienation?" *Dao* 10: 71-84.
- Hook, Brad. 2002. "The Collapse of Virtue Ethics." *Utilitas* 14.1: 22-40.
- Huang, Yong. Forthcoming. "Empathy with Devils: What Wang Yangming Teaches Us about Empathy." (manuscript)
- _____. 2014. "Ethics between Generalism and Particularism." *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism*, edited by Michael Slote and Stephen Angle. Routledge.
- _____. 2013. "Propriety: Why the Political is Also Personal."
- _____. 2013a. "Virtue Ethics and Moral Responsibility: Confucian Conceptions of Moral Praise and Blame." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 40: 381-399.
- _____. 2011. "Two Dilemmas of Virtue Ethics and How Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism Avoids them." *Journal of Philosophical Research* 36: 247-281.
- _____. 2010. "The Self-Centeredness Objection to Virtue Ethics: Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian Response." *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 84: 651-692.
- Hursthouse, Rosalind. 1999. *On Virtue Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (available for purchase at the University Bookstore).
- Hurka, Thomas. 2001. *Virtue, Vice, and Value*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Irwin, T.H. 1996. "Kant's Criticism of Eudaemonism." In *Aristotle, Kant, and the Stoics: Rethinking Happiness and Duty*. Ed. by Stephen Engstrom and Jennifer Whiting. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hutton, Eric. 2006. Character, Situationism, and Early Confucian Thought." *Philosophical Studies* 127: 37-58.
- _____. 2008. "Han Feizi's Criticism of Confucianism and its Implications for Virtue Ethics." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 5: 423-453.
- Kraut, Richard. 1989. *Aristotle on the Human Good*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- _____. 1998. "Egoism and Altruism." In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Mower, Deborah. 2013. "Situationism and Confucian Virtue Ethics." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 16: 113-137.
- Sarkissian, H. 2010. "Minor Tweaks, Major Payoffs: The Problems and Promise of Situationism in Moral Philosophy." *Philosopher's Imprint* 10(9), 1-15.

- Slingerland, Ted. 2011. "The Situationist Critique and Early Confucian Virtue Ethics." *Ethics* 121: 390-419
- _____. 2001. "Virtue Ethics, The Analects, and the Problem of Commensurability." *Journal of Religious Ethics*: 97-125.
- Slote, Michael. 2001. *Morals from Motives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 2007. *The Ethics of Care and Empathy*. London and New York: Routledge.
- _____. 2010. *Moral Sentimentalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Solomon, David. 1997. "Internal Objections to Virtue Ethics." In *Virtue Ethics*. Edited by Daniel Statman. Washington, DC.: Georgetown University Press.
- Stangl, Rebecca. 2008. "A Dilemma for Particularist Virtue Ethics." *Philosophical Quarterly* 58: 665-678.
- Statman, Daniel. 1997. *Virtue Ethics: A Critical Reader*. Ed. by Daniel Statman. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Stocker, Michael. 1997. "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories."
- Swanton, Christine. 2003. *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- Toner, Christopher. 2006. "The Self-Centeredness Objection to Virtue Ethics." *Philosophy* 81: 595-617.
- Watson, Gary. 1997. "On the Primacy of Character." In *Virtue Ethics*. Edited by Daniel Statman. Washington, DC.: Georgetown University Press.
- Yu, Jiyuan. 2007. *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle: Mirrors of Virtue*. New York and London: Routledge.

7. Academic honesty and plagiarism:

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.