Leah Eick Bioethics Personal Reflection

 I have always been fascinated by moral law. I believed very strongly in it but could never define it or explain rules for it well. This class introduced me to moral philosophers, which helped me define those answers. Kant and Mill were certainly fascinating, but the philosopher whose theory I found so profound and most beneficial to mankind was Aristotle. His golden mean theory prevents people from falling into either extreme ends of any category. This avoids controversial rules that Kant’s and Mill’s theories produce. For example, according to Aristotle, small lies that benefit another person are permissible. Kant would say you can never lie no matter the repercussions. Mill would say it does not matter if the action is harmful to another, as long as a majority of people benefit it is permissible. According to Aristotle, one cannot be so dishonest or so brutally honest that the outcome is actually detrimental to the other person. His theory helps people see where the middle ground is so that they can choose a moderate action that provides the most moral and beneficial result.

Another aspect of Aristotle’s theory that I found to be profound was his concept of eudaimonia, or human flourishing. He states that people should partake in worthwhile activities that are done well. Essentially, people should spend their life striving to do a good job at activities that benefit others and they themselves find joy in. Encouraging people to focus on improving at a task they enjoy that also brings happiness to others creates a happy and healthy population, which I think is the essence of human flourishing.

 The article about Dax Cowart was very eye-opening to me. I had never considered assisted suicide for patients who were not suffering from a terminal illness. Hearing his story made me realize that there are more types of unbearable pain than just chronic diseases. The fact that he survived and improved his life but still wished he could not have lived through it made a strong point that his life would never be of the same value to him again. I have my worries that allowing cases like his to receive assisted suicide will lead to the vast amount of assisted suicides present in countries like Norway. However, his story should not be considered and then forgotten due to the possibility of one consequence, as many politicians do. Dax went out of his way to inform people of what he was forced to go through and that people still suffer like this today against their rational will. This made me question the morals of the situation more thoroughly and made me more open-minded to other potential uses of assisted suicide.

 As I said before, I have always been fascinated by moral law. This class, however, made me realize that I am very passionate about it, especially regarding medical dilemmas. After two days of the class I added a philosophy minor. These articles were so thought provoking that they have inspired me to learn all I can about current medical controversies. I am now looking into careers in the biomedical ethics field. I want to become a biomedical ethicist where I will learn about different perspectives on current medical issues and then use moral law to help create laws and regulations regarding the issue. No matter where my career ends up, I will always use Aristotle’s theory of being a meaningful and moral person in all aspects of my life. I will also take with me the knowledge I have learned that a problem cannot be solved without great consideration of each side.