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Chapter 1 : Virtue Ethics | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

A/B testing embraces failure, mitigates risk and provides insights into customer demand or performance of a proposed change. In effect A/B testing helps businesses determine where to steer product.

But in time my expectations wore away with the weather, like my name had from that rock, and I learned it was enough to stay alive. Doctorow, Welcome to Hard Times My attitudes toward work and life were shaped by an unusual early career pattern --success beyond my wildest expectations, followed by unexpected failure. Given the formative power of that experience, I will restrict my attention to only one of the many topics that an article on work and life might treat: But it also involves a job or career carried out in a competitive milieu where the usual human virtues and vices are never far from the surface. I first describe my experiences, then discuss seven characteristics of success and some practical conclusions I have drawn. Although the themes are universal, I have written with two groups in mind: Life Could Be a Dream In there could not have been many sociologists just three years beyond the Ph. The promise of the popular s rhythm-and-blues song "Shboom" that "life could be a dream" had come true. Immigrants, gold miners, and aspiring actors might head West, but as an ambitious academic born on a farm in central California I had headed east to where I thought the real action was --Cambridge, Massachusetts. I had a job at Harvard with a higher salary and a longer contract negotiated under threat of deserting to another Ivy League school than the other assistant professors in the Department of Social Relations. I taught only one course and had a mammoth corner of office, where I was protected from intruders by my own secretary in an outer office. My book Protest and Prejudice had sold fifteen thousand copies and had been translated into Japanese. Various chapters had been reprinted in more than twenty books. The major newspapers, magazines, and radio and television media gave good coverage to research I had done on the civil-rights movement, civil disorders, and community police patrols. From my experience in presenting papers at the annual meetings of the American Sociological Association I assumed that it was not unusual to receive more than requests for preprints of a timely paper. Barely a year before, in beard and sandals, I had been sitting in smoke-filled cafes on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, listening to folk music and talking about the machinations of the power elite, plotting coups and bemoaning the sad role of co-opted American intellectuals. At Harvard I became a regular on the Boston-Washington shuttle and dressed in a three-piece suit. Try to be a success. We were on the same side of the generation gap and shared intellectual interests, a desire to see research aid social change, and a quest for professional status. Training students and involving them in research was deeply fulfilling. It also allowed me to get more work done. I received several prestigious fellowships that enabled me to take leaves of absence. My name was added to the list of those under consideration to be invited for a year in residence at several think tanks. Consultation and research money was falling into my lap. CBS-TV needed a consultant for a series on urban areas. Encyclopedia Britannica wanted an article on riots. Unsolicited, funding sources such as the Urban Institute and Law Enforcement Assistance Administration offered me money for research; all they required from me was a letter of a few pages, and I would receive a grant. At a relatively young age I was fortunate to have the chance to serve on the editorial boards of several major journals and was elected to the Council of the American Sociological Association, enjoying the company of senior colleagues old enough to be my parents and even grandparents. The mail routinely brought inquiries about positions elsewhere, along with requests to write books, articles, and reviews for both academic and popular publications, serve on editorial and other boards, participate in symposia, and give lectures and deliver papers at an array of academic meetings both in the United States and abroad. The invitations removed from me the anxiety and risk many of my peers experienced as they sought professional attention. I was not conducting research with only a hope that someday, somehow, the results would be published. Instead, I could adopt the more cost-effective and safe technique of filling orders on hand. Since invitations were usually general, I had the freedom to write on whatever I wanted. In one of those nasty social principles wherein the rich got richer, each invited article or

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presentation triggered new invitations in an almost geometric expansion. Each article was an investment that earned interest. My problem was not having the goods rejected but finding it impossible to keep enough in stock. The certainty of publication probably encouraged me to produce more than I otherwise might have and perhaps to let it go to press earlier. It also may have meant a freer, more interpretive writing and research style because I did not have to conform to the expectations of an editorial board or reviewers committed to a narrow notion of sociological research. Perhaps a positive labeling effect was at work. I brushed up against a busy world of movers and shakers, elites, and academic gatekeepers. Editors, reporters, lawyers, and heads of social research consulting firms asked me to dine at expensive restaurants and private clubs or tendered invitations to cocktail parties. Often they asked me for my opinion or help on topics I knew nothing about. I negotiated a contract to do a race-relations textbook with a colleague for what seemed in to be an unprecedented sum, far greater than my annual salary. I had lunch with Vice President Humphrey and dinner with several Cabinet secretaries. I attended briefing lunches and dinners with other real and aspiring political leaders. I was approached by a former or so he claimed CIA agent still working for the government but in some other capacity. He had read *Protest and Prejudice* and wanted to talk about the student movement. I eagerly responded to a request to join a group of academics helping Robert F. This bountiful professional harvest spilled over into private life. We lived in a university-owned apartment in the heart of Cambridge in a former botanical garden. We were invited to large, somewhat formal dinner parties attended by celebrated American intellectuals in eighteenth-century homes. Our son was the only nonconnected four-year-old accepted into Shady Lane, a wonderful Cambridge school founded by William James and John Dewey. Plans for the summer home were drawn up. I developed a taste for sherry and even pretended to enjoy playing squash. I had moved from being an unknown graduate student at a state university in the outback to what seemed to be the core of American academic and political life. It was the same hallway that not long before had been graced by Pitirim Sorokin, Gordon Allport, and Clyde Kluckhohn, located in a building named after still another illustrious predecessor, William James. The periphery of the Kennedy circle of advisers from Harvard beckoned. One of my mentors, Daniel P. Moynihan, had moved on to a job in the White House. I would eagerly return to my office after an afternoon or day away in the hope of finding several neatly written pink phone messages requesting that I return a New York or Washington call. Those little pink notes were lifelines, unobtrusive symbolic indicators bearing evidence of a career in motion. The higher reaches of sociology and perhaps even American intellectual life, public service, the mass media, and a patrician life-style all seemed to be beckoning. But my situation was the reverse or so it seemed during those glorious years of ascent. I had not been denied anything I felt entitled to. Instead I sometimes felt I had received things I did not deserve. In three short years, from to , I had already achieved far more than I ever intended or expected. True, I knew that the chances of someone who had not received at least one degree from Harvard getting tenure were very slim. Clearly sociology offered a great career if you had the right stuff. Who knows where it might lead? Was life ever so sweet for a young academic? Could a surfer from California disguised in academic clothing find happiness in an eastern elite academic setting? Did the rising sun have to set? My academic knowledge of stratification and fashion should have told me that the dream could not last. That realization was not as sudden as when my chance for all-city high-school track medals was dashed when I broke an ankle just before the big meet in the Los Angeles Coliseum. There was no single calamitous incident. But gradually the sweet smell of success turned slightly rancid. As traditional achievements became less satisfying and little failures accumulated, stalagmites of disillusionment, anger, and confusion built up over several years. After the Fall In someone even younger than me, and with at the time a less impressive teaching and publication record, was suddenly given tenure in sociology. I had to give up my big office as a result. My book went out of print. A race-relations reader I edited did not sell well enough to recoup the advance. The race-relations text was never written. A partially written introductory text done with several colleagues, and which was supposed to make us comfortable and even rich, was rejected by the publisher. A number of editors I knew lost or changed jobs. After more than a decade of receiving everything I applied for, a grant application was rejected, and then

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another. The Republicans had taken over Washington. Whites writing about minority groups and favoring integration came under increased attack from segments of the left and the right. Liberal approaches to social issues became less fashionable. Advertisements made up an increased proportion of my mail. The reporter stopped calling. The pink phone messages were mostly from the library about overdue books and reminders to bring home a quart of milk and some bananas. When my two most supportive senior colleagues and mentors left Harvard for Stanford, I realized that it was time to look further afield for work. Yet by the job offers had become fewer. A long promised job in the University of California system turned out not to be there when I finally wanted it. A promised year at the Russell Sage Foundation suddenly fell through. Although certainly a good move in a market that was starting to tighten up, it was not the move to full professor that I naturally assumed would be my right should I leave Harvard. My son made some great ashtrays in his progressive private school, but my wife and I came to have doubts about its permissive learning environment. Leaving Harvard meant giving up our ideal Cambridge apartment in our ideal academic ghetto and moving to a faceless suburb with affordable housing and neighbors whose politics, life-styles, and landscaping were far from what we had become accustomed to. The engine block in our foreign car cracked.

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Chapter 2 : Aristotle's Ethics (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Virtue ethics is currently one of three major approaches in normative ethics. It may, initially, be identified as the one that emphasizes the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to the approach that emphasizes duties or rules (deontology) or that emphasizes the consequences of actions (consequentialism).

It persisted as the dominant approach in Western moral philosophy until at least the Enlightenment, suffered a momentary eclipse during the nineteenth century, but re-emerged in Anglo-American philosophy in the late s. Neither of them, at that time, paid attention to a number of topics that had always figured in the virtue ethics tradition—virtues and vices, motives and moral character, moral education, moral wisdom or discernment, friendship and family relationships, a deep concept of happiness, the role of the emotions in our moral life and the fundamentally important questions of what sorts of persons we should be and how we should live. Its re-emergence had an invigorating effect on the other two approaches, many of whose proponents then began to address these topics in the terms of their favoured theory. It has also generated virtue ethical readings of philosophers other than Plato and Aristotle, such as Martineau, Hume and Nietzsche, and thereby different forms of virtue ethics have developed Slote ; Swanton , a. See Annas for a short, clear, and authoritative account of all three. We discuss the first two in the remainder of this section. Eudaimonia is discussed in connection with eudaimonist versions of virtue ethics in the next. It is a disposition, well entrenched in its possessor—something that, as we say, goes all the way down, unlike a habit such as being a tea-drinker—to notice, expect, value, feel, desire, choose, act, and react in certain characteristic ways. To possess a virtue is to be a certain sort of person with a certain complex mindset. A significant aspect of this mindset is the wholehearted acceptance of a distinctive range of considerations as reasons for action. An honest person cannot be identified simply as one who, for example, practices honest dealing and does not cheat. An honest person cannot be identified simply as one who, for example, tells the truth because it is the truth, for one can have the virtue of honesty without being tactless or indiscreet. Valuing honesty as she does, she chooses, where possible to work with honest people, to have honest friends, to bring up her children to be honest. She disapproves of, dislikes, deplors dishonesty, is not amused by certain tales of chicanery, despises or pities those who succeed through deception rather than thinking they have been clever, is unsurprised, or pleased as appropriate when honesty triumphs, is shocked or distressed when those near and dear to her do what is dishonest and so on. Possessing a virtue is a matter of degree. To possess such a disposition fully is to possess full or perfect virtue, which is rare, and there are a number of ways of falling short of this ideal Athanassoulis Most people who can truly be described as fairly virtuous, and certainly markedly better than those who can truly be described as dishonest, self-centred and greedy, still have their blind spots—little areas where they do not act for the reasons one would expect. So someone honest or kind in most situations, and notably so in demanding ones, may nevertheless be trivially tainted by snobbery, inclined to be disingenuous about their forebears and less than kind to strangers with the wrong accent. I may be honest enough to recognise that I must own up to a mistake because it would be dishonest not to do so without my acceptance being so wholehearted that I can own up easily, with no inner conflict. The fully virtuous do what they should without a struggle against contrary desires; the continent have to control a desire or temptation to do otherwise. If it is the circumstances in which the agent acts—say that she is very poor when she sees someone drop a full purse or that she is in deep grief when someone visits seeking help—then indeed it is particularly admirable of her to restore the purse or give the help when it is hard for her to do so. But if what makes it hard is an imperfection in her character—the temptation to keep what is not hers, or a callous indifference to the suffering of others—then it is not. The concept of a virtue is the concept of something that makes its possessor good: These are commonly accepted truisms. But it is equally common, in relation to particular putative examples of virtues to give these truisms up. It is also said that courage, in a desperado, enables him to do far more wicked things than he would have been able to do if he were timid. So it would appear that

generosity, honesty, compassion and courage despite being virtues, are sometimes faults. Someone who is generous, honest, compassionate, and courageous might not be a morally good person—or, if it is still held to be a truism that they are, then morally good people may be led by what makes them morally good to act wrongly! How have we arrived at such an odd conclusion? The answer lies in too ready an acceptance of ordinary usage, which permits a fairly wide-ranging application of many of the virtue terms, combined, perhaps, with a modern readiness to suppose that the virtuous agent is motivated by emotion or inclination, not by rational choice. Aristotle makes a number of specific remarks about phronesis that are the subject of much scholarly debate, but the related modern concept is best understood by thinking of what the virtuous morally mature adult has that nice children, including nice adolescents, lack. Both the virtuous adult and the nice child have good intentions, but the child is much more prone to mess things up because he is ignorant of what he needs to know in order to do what he intends. A virtuous adult is not, of course, infallible and may also, on occasion, fail to do what she intended to do through lack of knowledge, but only on those occasions on which the lack of knowledge is not culpable. So, for example, children and adolescents often harm those they intend to benefit either because they do not know how to set about securing the benefit or because their understanding of what is beneficial and harmful is limited and often mistaken. Such ignorance in small children is rarely, if ever culpable. Adults, on the other hand, are culpable if they mess things up by being thoughtless, insensitive, reckless, impulsive, shortsighted, and by assuming that what suits them will suit everyone instead of taking a more objective viewpoint. They are also culpable if their understanding of what is beneficial and harmful is mistaken. It is part of practical wisdom to know how to secure real benefits effectively; those who have practical wisdom will not make the mistake of concealing the hurtful truth from the person who really needs to know it in the belief that they are benefiting him. The detailed specification of what is involved in such knowledge or understanding has not yet appeared in the literature, but some aspects of it are becoming well known. Even many deontologists now stress the point that their action-guiding rules cannot, reliably, be applied without practical wisdom, because correct application requires situational appreciation—the capacity to recognise, in any particular situation, those features of it that are morally salient. This brings out two aspects of practical wisdom. One is that it characteristically comes only with experience of life. Amongst the morally relevant features of a situation may be the likely consequences, for the people involved, of a certain action, and this is something that adolescents are notoriously clueless about precisely because they are inexperienced. It is part of practical wisdom to be wise about human beings and human life. It should go without saying that the virtuous are mindful of the consequences of possible actions. How could they fail to be reckless, thoughtless and short-sighted if they were not? The wise do not see things in the same way as the nice adolescents who, with their under-developed virtues, still tend to see the personally disadvantageous nature of a certain action as competing in importance with its honesty or benevolence or justice. These aspects coalesce in the description of the practically wise as those who understand what is truly worthwhile, truly important, and thereby truly advantageous in life, who know, in short, how to live well.

Forms of Virtue Ethics While all forms of virtue ethics agree that virtue is central and practical wisdom required, they differ in how they combine these and other concepts to illuminate what we should do in particular contexts and how we should live our lives as a whole. In what follows we sketch four distinct forms taken by contemporary virtue ethics, namely, a eudaimonist virtue ethics, b agent-based and exemplarist virtue ethics, c target-centered virtue ethics, and d Platonistic virtue ethics. A virtue is a trait that contributes to or is a constituent of eudaimonia and we ought to develop virtues, the eudaimonist claims, precisely because they contribute to eudaimonia. It is for me, not for you, to pronounce on whether I am happy. If I think I am happy then I am—it is not something I can be wrong about barring advanced cases of self-deception. Contrast my being healthy or flourishing. Here we have no difficulty in recognizing that I might think I was healthy, either physically or psychologically, or think that I was flourishing but be wrong. Most versions of virtue ethics agree that living a life in accordance with virtue is necessary for eudaimonia. This supreme good is not conceived of as an independently defined state made up of, say, a list of non-moral

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goods that does not include virtuous activity which exercise of the virtues might be thought to promote. It is, within virtue ethics, already conceived of as something of which virtuous activity is at least partially constitutive. Kraut. Thereby virtue ethicists claim that a human life devoted to physical pleasure or the acquisition of wealth is not eudaimon, but a wasted life. But although all standard versions of virtue ethics insist on that conceptual link between virtue and eudaimonia, further links are matters of dispute and generate different versions. For Aristotle, virtue is necessary but not sufficient—what is also needed are external goods which are a matter of luck. For Plato and the Stoics, virtue is both necessary and sufficient for eudaimonia. Annas. According to eudaimonist virtue ethics, the good life is the eudaimon life, and the virtues are what enable a human being to be eudaimon because the virtues just are those character traits that benefit their possessor in that way, barring bad luck. So there is a link between eudaimonia and what confers virtue status on a character trait. For a discussion of the differences between eudaimonists see Baril. It is unclear how many other forms of normativity must be explained in terms of the qualities of agents in order for a theory to count as agent-based. The two best-known agent-based theorists, Michael Slote and Linda Zagzebski, trace a wide range of normative qualities back to the qualities of agents. Similarly, he explains the goodness of an action, the value of eudaimonia, the justice of a law or social institution, and the normativity of practical rationality in terms of the motivational and dispositional qualities of agents. Zagzebski likewise defines right and wrong actions by reference to the emotions, motives, and dispositions of virtuous and vicious agents. Her definitions of duties, good and bad ends, and good and bad states of affairs are similarly grounded in the motivational and dispositional states of exemplary agents. However, there could also be less ambitious agent-based approaches to virtue ethics see Slote. At the very least, an agent-based approach must be committed to explaining what one should do by reference to the motivational and dispositional states of agents. But this is not yet a sufficient condition for counting as an agent-based approach, since the same condition will be met by every virtue ethical account. For a theory to count as an agent-based form of virtue ethics it must also be the case that the normative properties of motivations and dispositions cannot be explained in terms of the normative properties of something else such as eudaimonia or states of affairs which is taken to be more fundamental. Beyond this basic commitment, there is room for agent-based theories to be developed in a number of different directions. The most important distinguishing factor has to do with how motivations and dispositions are taken to matter for the purposes of explaining other normative qualities. If those motives are good then the action is good, if not then not. Another point on which agent-based forms of virtue ethics might differ concerns how one identifies virtuous motivations and dispositions. As we observe the people around us, we find ourselves wanting to be like some of them in at least some respects and not wanting to be like others. The former provide us with positive exemplars and the latter with negative ones. Our understanding of better and worse motivations and virtuous and vicious dispositions is grounded in these primitive responses to exemplars. This is not to say that every time we act we stop and ask ourselves what one of our exemplars would do in this situations. Our moral concepts become more refined over time as we encounter a wider variety of exemplars and begin to draw systematic connections between them, noting what they have in common, how they differ, and which of these commonalities and differences matter, morally speaking. Recognizable motivational profiles emerge and come to be labeled as virtues or vices, and these, in turn, shape our understanding of the obligations we have and the ends we should pursue. However, even though the systematising of moral thought can travel a long way from our starting point, according to the exemplarist it never reaches a stage where reference to exemplars is replaced by the recognition of something more fundamental. At the end of the day, according to the exemplarist, our moral system still rests on our basic propensity to take a liking or disliking to exemplars. The target-centered view developed by Christine Swanton, by contrast, begins with our existing conceptions of the virtues. We already have a passable idea of which traits are virtues and what they involve. Of course, this untutored understanding can be clarified and improved, and it is one of the tasks of the virtue ethicist to help us do precisely that. But rather than stripping things back to something as basic as the motivations we want to imitate or building it up to something as

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elaborate as an entire flourishing life, the target-centered view begins where most ethics students find themselves, namely, with the idea that generosity, courage, self-discipline, compassion, and the like get a tick of approval. It then examines what these traits involve. A complete account of virtue will map out 1 its field, 2 its mode of responsiveness, 3 its basis of moral acknowledgment, and 4 its target. Different virtues are concerned with different fields. Courage, for example, is concerned with what might harm us, whereas generosity is concerned with the sharing of time, talent, and property. Courage aims to control fear and handle danger, while generosity aims to share time, talents, or possessions with others in ways that benefit them. A virtuous act is an act that hits the target of a virtue, which is to say that it succeeds in responding to items in its field in the specified way. Providing a target-centered definition of a right action requires us to move beyond the analysis of a single virtue and the actions that follow from it. This is because a single action context may involve a number of different, overlapping fields. Determination might lead me to persist in trying to complete a difficult task even if doing so requires a singleness of purpose.

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Chapter 3 : Virtue Ethics (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Embracing failure through A/B Testing basics. Pushing the envelope, and thinking outside of the box by navigating uncharted waters is how the human species innovates.

Join For Free Adopting a DevOps practice starts with understanding where you are in the implementation journey. Pushing the envelope, and thinking outside of the box by navigating uncharted waters is how the human species innovates. Undoubtedly some attempts to innovate have less than stellar results. Some attempts fail in the most spectacular ways think the Hindenburg. Others simply sputter out but still fail But every once in a while an attempt succeeds and innovation inches forward. One of the more recent examples is the notorious SpaceX rocket landing attempts. Conducted in June of , the first attempts at landing a SpaceX rocket failed spectacularly. With a determination to succeed and willingness to innovate the SpaceX team would eventually pave the way for a monumental success. In December of SpaceX safely landed a rocket on a landing pad, thus creating the first reusable rocket in history. Inspires us to try harder, to push further and never give up. Humanities insatiable instinct to explore and innovate fuels the will to continue, despite our propensity for failure and the alluring ease to give up. How can we fail privately instead of publicly, how can we fail strategically instead of clumsily? How we embrace failure is everything. One commonality within the technology ecosphere is that innovation involves originating a good idea and iterating on it. When an organization observes a fault, some create barriers, instill fear and add process; while others remove boundaries alleviate fear and embrace failure as a learning experience. As the software landscape becomes increasingly competitive, engineering teams are under immense pressure to develop and deliver high-quality implementations on time and under budget. So how then can we innovate and learn from failure or experiment and conduct research under such tight constraints? In a practical sense it means creating features and software implementations as hypothesis and allowing the business and its customers to determine where to apply further engineering resources. The definitive approach is based on metrics and data points collected and not intuition and whim. When this occurs the non-performing option is deprecated and the failure is hidden. In a sense we are failing strategically and not publicly. Metrics are then collected to determine if an experiment worked as expected provided value or does not. Users are presented with either option A or option B and they decide, which option is better. The winning experiments are further iterated on and improved, and the failing one is deprecated. However, there are plenty of mature frameworks, which have been developed and supported by the open source software community. Some of the more popular ones are listed below.

Chapter 4 : Reflections on Academic Success and Failure

To determine good/bad actions according to Utilitarianism. 1. identify consequences and separate them as harms and benefits 2. durations must be considered 3. certainty of consequence 4. immediate harm is worse 5. will it produce future benefits? 6.# of ppl affected.

Most of them cannot be easily answered by looking up the Ten Commandments or the Catechism. Our lives are filled with ambiguity, and often choosing between two "bad" values or two "good" ones. But lessons from the field of moral theology that focus on character, virtue, and Gospel values can provide much-needed tools for the lay person witnessing in the world. A substantial part of Christian witness is living a moral life that values right relationships with God and other persons. Cultivating our personal character-- by developing a Christian worldview, participation in community, and practice-- is the best way to ensure we will do the right thing in a given situation. A Christian worldview incorporates Christian images, stories, and values into the way we perceive the world around us and helps us imagine possibilities for how the world could be. Christian community can provide common values, role models, and accountability. Character is also strengthened through the ongoing practice of moral discernment-- deciding how God is leading us to act in particular circumstances. The more we develop our character, the more we can trust our habits, disposition, and emotions when they direct us to a certain choice. We can craft our character utilizing Gospel values and practice. God graces us with life and love, and sin is our failure to respond fully and faithfully to this gift. Morality is social, so it is greatly influenced by the responsibility one associates with relationships with other people and with God. The actions we ultimately take will in turn further shape our character. Community Participating in Christian community strengthens our Christian worldview, helps us internalize religious symbols, and can hold us to greater moral accountability. Christian community also gives us an opportunity to learn from others, since we learn to be moral people by example. An active prayer life strengthens our relationship to God and can make it easier for us to recognize God in our lives. Through worship, we love God and remind ourselves of the covenant we are living out. Spirituality Spirituality encompasses life meaning that influences the choices people make in living their lives. A Christian spirituality considers the way we live our lives as a response to the love God has given us first. Image of God Our image of God has a large influence on our understanding of what is good and what actions are moral. God is good, so our understanding of who God is helps us understand goodness. But God also empowers and admonishes us to take actions in response to him, and this expectation helps define what a moral life is for Christians. Virtues and Vices Virtues are aspects of our character that incline us toward moral behavior, while vices incline us toward sin. Developing virtues helps us be better prepared when we face our next moral decision. Quotations [M]orality is concerned with answering three questions: The quality of our lives between decisions will determine what we see, how we are affected, how truthfully we examine our options, and consequently what we decide. The quality of our lives will determine our ability to discern. William Spohn Go and Do Likewise In addition to its interpretive function, the imagination also plays a creative function by helping us move into the future to create our world. So much of moral instruction is aimed at getting others to behave differently by trying to convert their wills. We try to reason with them, preach to them, badger them, or shame themselves into selflessness. But what is really at stake is not that they are stupid, selfish, closed, or uncaring. They simply lack imagination. They assume that what they are doing now is the only way to respond to the situation. If a possible way of acting is not perceived as being real, then we will never achieve it. Only if we can imagine a new way of life can we ever make it real for us. The bumper sticker that says "Imagine Peace" challenges us to imagine a world without war.

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Chapter 5 : 10 Reasons Why You Fail | Mark Manson

The virtue of bravery lies somewhere in between the deficiency of bravery (cowardliness) and the excess of bravery (rashness). So it is with all of the different virtues: the virtuous trait is that which is between the deficiency of that trait and the excess of that trait.

Changing Modern Moral Philosophy a. Anscombe In Elisabeth Anscombe published a paper titled "Modern Moral Philosophy" that changed the way we think about normative theories. A law conception of ethics deals exclusively with obligation and duty. Among the theories she criticized for their reliance on universally applicable principles were J. This approach to ethics relies on universal principles and results in a rigid moral code. Further, these rigid rules are based on a notion of obligation that is meaningless in modern, secular society because they make no sense without assuming the existence of a lawgiver an assumption we no longer make. In its place, Anscombe called for a return to a different way of doing philosophy. Taking her inspiration from Aristotle, she called for a return to concepts such as character, virtue and flourishing. She also emphasized the importance of the emotions and understanding moral psychology. The resulting body of theories and ideas has come to be known as virtue ethics. Before we go on to consider this in detail, we need to take a brief look at two other philosophers, Bernard Williams and Alasdair MacIntyre, whose call for theories of virtue was also instrumental in changing our understanding of moral philosophy. Williams criticized how moral philosophy had developed. He drew a distinction between morality and ethics. Morality is characterized mainly by the work of Kant and notions such as duty and obligation. Crucially associated with the notion of obligation is the notion of blame. Blame is appropriate because we are obliged to behave in a certain way and if we are capable of conforming our conduct and fail to, we have violated our duty. Williams was also concerned that such a conception for morality rejects the possibility of luck. If morality is about what we are obliged to do, then there is no room for what is outside of our control. But sometimes attainment of the good life is dependant on things outside of our control. In response, Williams takes a wider concept, ethics, and rejects the narrow and restricting concept of morality. Ethics encompasses many emotions that are rejected by morality as irrelevant. Ethical concerns are wider, encompassing friends, family and society and make room for ideals such as social justice. This view of ethics is compatible with the Ancient Greek interpretation of the good life as found in Aristotle and Plato. MacIntyre Finally, the ideas of Alasdair MacIntyre acted as a stimulus for the increased interest in virtue. However, he also attempts to give an account of virtue. MacIntyre looks at a large number of historical accounts of virtue that differ in their lists of the virtues and have incompatible theories of the virtues. He concludes that these differences are attributable to different practices that generate different conceptions of the virtues. Each account of virtue requires a prior account of social and moral features in order to be understood. Thus, in order to understand Homeric virtue you need to look its social role in Greek society. Virtues, then, are exercised within practices that are coherent, social forms of activity and seek to realize goods internal to the activity. The virtues enable us to achieve these goods. That end is the virtue of integrity or constancy. These three writers have all, in their own way, argued for a radical change in the way we think about morality. Whether they call for a change of emphasis from obligation, a return to a broad understanding of ethics, or a unifying tradition of practices that generate virtues, their dissatisfaction with the state of modern moral philosophy lay the foundation for change. A Rival for Deontology and Utilitarianism There are a number of different accounts of virtue ethics. It is an emerging concept and was initially defined by what it is not rather than what it is. The next section examines claims virtue ethicists initially made that set the theory up as a rival to deontology and consequentialism. How Should One Live? Moral theories are concerned with right and wrong behavior. This subject area of philosophy is unavoidably tied up with practical concerns about the right behavior. However, virtue ethics changes the kind of question we ask about ethics. Where deontology and consequentialism concern themselves with the right action, virtue ethics is concerned with the good life and what kinds of persons we should be. What kind of

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person should I be? Instead of asking what is the right action here and now, virtue ethics asks what kind of person should one be in order to get it right all the time. Whereas deontology and consequentialism are based on rules that try to give us the right action, virtue ethics makes central use of the concept of character. The answer to "How should one live? Character and Virtue Modern virtue ethics takes its inspiration from the Aristotelian understanding of character and virtue. Aristotelian character is, importantly, about a state of being. For example, the virtue of kindness involves the right sort of emotions and inner states with respect to our feelings towards others. Character is also about doing. Aristotelian theory is a theory of action, since having the virtuous inner dispositions will also involve being moved to act in accordance with them. Realizing that kindness is the appropriate response to a situation and feeling appropriately kindly disposed will also lead to a corresponding attempt to act kindly. Another distinguishing feature of virtue ethics is that character traits are stable, fixed, and reliable dispositions. If an agent possesses the character trait of kindness, we would expect him or her to act kindly in all sorts of situations, towards all kinds of people, and over a long period of time, even when it is difficult to do so. A person with a certain character can be relied upon to act consistently over a time. It is important to recognize that moral character develops over a long period of time. People are born with all sorts of natural tendencies. Some of these natural tendencies will be positive, such as a placid and friendly nature, and some will be negative, such as an irascible and jealous nature. These natural tendencies can be encouraged and developed or discouraged and thwarted by the influences one is exposed to when growing up. Our natural tendencies, the raw material we are born with, are shaped and developed through a long and gradual process of education and habituation. Moral education and development is a major part of virtue ethics. Moral development, at least in its early stages, relies on the availability of good role models. The virtuous agent acts as a role model and the student of virtue emulates his or her example. Initially this is a process of habituating oneself in right action. Aristotle advises us to perform just acts because this way we become just. The student of virtue must develop the right habits, so that he tends to perform virtuous acts. Virtue is not itself a habit. Habituation is merely an aid to the development of virtue, but true virtue requires choice, understanding, and knowledge. Virtue is chosen knowingly for its own sake. The development of moral character may take a whole lifetime. But once it is firmly established, one will act consistently, predictably and appropriately in a variety of situations. As discussed above, virtue is a settled disposition. It is also a purposive disposition. A virtuous actor chooses virtuous action knowingly and for its own sake. It is not enough to act kindly by accident, unthinkingly, or because everyone else is doing so; you must act kindly because you recognize that this is the right way to behave. Note here that although habituation is a tool for character development it is not equivalent to virtue; virtue requires conscious choice and affirmation. Virtue "lies in a mean" because the right response to each situation is neither too much nor too little. Virtue is the appropriate response to different situations and different agents. The virtues are associated with feelings. The virtue lies in a mean because it involves displaying the mean amount of emotion, where mean stands for appropriate. This does not imply that the right amount is a modest amount. Sometimes quite a lot may be the appropriate amount of emotion to display, as in the case of righteous indignation. The mean amount is neither too much nor too little and is sensitive to the requirements of the person and the situation. Finally, virtue is determined by the right reason. Virtue requires the right desire and the right reason. To act from the wrong reason is to act viciously. On the other hand, the agent can try to act from the right reason, but fail because he or she has the wrong desire. The virtuous agent acts effortlessly, perceives the right reason, has the harmonious right desire, and has an inner state of virtue that flows smoothly into action. The virtuous agent can act as an exemplar of virtue to others. It is important to recognize that this is a perfunctory account of ideas that are developed in great detail in Aristotle. Modern virtue ethicists have developed their theories around a central role for character and virtue and claim that this gives them a unique understanding of morality. The emphasis on character development and the role of the emotions allows virtue ethics to have a plausible account of moral psychology which is lacking in deontology and consequentialism. Virtue ethics can avoid the problematic concepts of duty and obligation in favor of the rich concept of virtue. Judgments of

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virtue are judgments of a whole life rather than of one isolated action. Virtue ethicists have challenged consequentialist and deontological theories because they fail to accommodate this insight. Both deontological and consequentialist type of theories rely on one rule or principle that is expected to apply to all situations. Because their principles are inflexible, they cannot accommodate the complexity of all the moral situations that we are likely to encounter. We are constantly faced with moral problems. Should I tell my friend the truth about her lying boyfriend?

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Chapter 6 : SparkNotes: Meno: Sections 86 - 96

Aristotle conceives of ethical theory as a field distinct from the theoretical sciences. Its methodology must match its subject matter—“good action”—and must respect the fact that in this field many generalizations hold only for the most part.

Conjure up in your mind that big failure of your life. It goes without saying, we all fuck up big time. Some people have relationship problems, some have money problems, others have anxiety issues, etc. Dealing with your fear of abandonment, or your toxic money habits, or your screwed up beliefs about what others think about you? Chances are, a profound struggle in one area of your life will bleed over into other aspects of your life. The principles of failure are rarely prejudiced. The behaviors and thoughts that sabotage you in one area of your life will stalk you in other areas. That reticence to ever ask someone out on a date probably plays out in your failure to move to a new city, to take that new job, the timidity around your domineering co-workers, your passive-aggressive relationships with your family members. And then we enact a number of strategies to avoid the pain and pressure inherent in reaching for our dreams. Below are 10 of the most common strategies for reluctance I can think of. Read it and weep. Pushing ourselves to reach our own greatness threatens the complacency of those around us, shining a light on their own squashed dreams and failed potential. In many cases, these people lash out. It makes them question themselves, which is difficult for most to handle. I talked to a fellow internet entrepreneur last night. Some have made money. All of it was struggle. Those closest to you will often become the harshest. The book was a hit. It took over 35 years for Marlantes to get his book published — more than half of his lifetime. He re-wrote the manuscript six separate times. For the first two decades, publishers hardly read it, much less rejected it. As the cliché goes, nothing worth having comes easy. You fail because you lack humility There are many people out there who accomplish a little bit and decide that they are an expert. In the world of online marketing and internet business, I began to notice a trend a couple of years ago in the business owners I met. The people who had a big mouth, who regularly went on and on about what they accomplished, exaggerated their successes and sapped the attention from the ether around them — they were moderately successful at best. Sometimes they were not successful at all; i. Yet they were more than willing to dole out their sage wisdom to anyone and everyone who would listen. But the people who were legitimate, self-made millionaires, the ones who actually did scale to the peaks of their industries, they often admitted they did not know an answer, they downplayed their successes or usually never even mentioned them. Instead, they regularly pointed out their weaknesses and how they needed to learn more. This did not strike me as a coincidence. But even in the non-professional world, isolation can undo you just as quickly. Instead of going broke, you just go depressed. Creating a wealth of social and romantic relationships hinges on the ability to meet people and connect with them in a meaningful manner. Research shows that living without regular social contact is as unhealthy as smoking cigarettes. People who are dead set on arguing why what they already believed is right despite not working are effectively breaking the chain off and not accepting feedback. Therefore they will never change. The people who suffer from this problem tend to be highly intelligent and extremely insecure. Sara Cimino I apologize if I just described the majority of your waking life. But the affliction of attention saturation disorder is not limited to useless social media interactions. Earlier this year I experimented with giving up sports and politics for a month. I was blown away with how much information I once considered vital and important soon felt like meaningless fluff — sensationalized info-tainment meant to keep me clicking rather than informing and influencing my life. To fix the problems in your life you must have power over them. Yeah, fuck people like that. For instance, one study showed that athletes who held inaccurate positive beliefs about their own abilities outperformed athletes with accurate or negative beliefs about their own abilities. And when you try and learn from your failures, you can eventually lead yourself to success. So, a little delusion of grandeur goes a long way. They lack a clear, true passion. Many of them give up quickly. Others just lose interest. Many lack the wherewithal to even begin. Chronic

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indifference is an insidious defense mechanism. It undermines the drive and motivation required to overcome it. Unconsciously, many people are terrified to invest themselves into something because investing themselves into it could potentially lead to failure and failure could potentially lead to a lot of thoughts their psyche is not yet prepared to face: Whatever happened, something happened. And something inside us makes us feel uncomfortable with the idea of accomplishing too many great things as a result. Entrepreneur and business consultant Sebastian Marshall wrote in his book *Ikigai*: Last night, I was talking with my friend. His core goal right now is total financial freedom. And I laid out a plan that would get him there. But will he do it? Hell, I offer to make people money for free, draw up a simple, clearly workable business plan, offer to help out. The heights and burdens of success make some feel like a king and others like a fraud. For many, getting what they want summons that worm-tongued voice in the back of their mind, prodding their insecurities and fears until they find a way to destroy everything they worked for. There is no other in this equation. And as much as you deny it, that fear will always linger and remain as an invisible barrier, a clear film separating you from happiness, pushed through and never broken. These issues can be overcome. In fact, most of us are somewhat deluded about ourselves. I put together a page ebook explaining how we can come to know ourselves better, just fill out your email in the form. You can opt out at any time. See my privacy policy.

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Chapter 7 : Virtue & Morality - Gospel Living

Socrates and the supremacy of virtue --Determining virtue in the here and now: -The supremacy of virtue in the Gorgias --Trying (and failing) to determine what virtue is --Socrates and Thrasymachus: Republic I --The benefits of injustice --Early education and non-philosophers in the republic --Aiming at virtue and determining what it is.

Ethics should concern all levels of life: This document is designed as an introduction to making ethical decisions. It first provides a summary of the major sources for ethical thinking, and then presents a framework for decision-making. Ethics provides a set of standards for behavior that helps us decide how we ought to act in a range of situations. In a sense, we can say that ethics is all about making choices, and about providing reasons why we should make these choices. Ethics is sometimes conflated or confused with other ways of making choices, including religion, law or morality. Many religions promote ethical decision-making but do not always address the full range of ethical choices that we face. Religions may also advocate or prohibit certain behaviors which may not be considered the proper domain of ethics, such as dietary restrictions or sexual behaviors. A good system of law should be ethical, but the law establishes precedent in trying to dictate universal guidelines, and is thus not able to respond to individual contexts. Law may have a difficult time designing or enforcing standards in some important areas, and may be slow to address new problems. Both law and ethics deal with questions of how we should live together with others, but ethics is sometimes also thought to apply to how individuals act even when others are not involved. Finally, many people use the terms morality and ethics interchangeably. Others reserve morality for the state of virtue while seeing ethics as a code that enables morality. Another way to think about the relationship between ethics and morality is to see ethics as providing a rational basis for morality, that is, ethics provides good reasons for why something is moral. There are many systems of ethics, and numerous ways to think about right and wrong actions or good and bad character. The field of ethics is traditionally divided into three areas: Our experience with applying particular ethical standards or principles can inform our understanding of how good these standard or principles are. Three Broad Types of Ethical Theory: Ethical theories are often broadly divided into three types: Each of these three broad categories contains varieties of approaches to ethics, some of which share characteristics across the categories. Below is a sample of some of the most important and useful of these ethical approaches. The Utilitarian Approach Utilitarianism can be traced back to the school of the Ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus of Samos BCE , who argued that the best life is one that produces the least pain and distress. This conforms to our feeling that some good and some bad will necessarily be the result of our action and that the best action will be that which provides the most good or does the least harm, or, to put it another way, produces the greatest balance of good over harm. Ethical environmental action, then, is the one that produces the greatest good and does the least harm for all who are affectedâ€”government, corporations, the community, and the environment. The Egoistic Approach One variation of the utilitarian approach is known as ethical egoism, or the ethics of self- interest. In this approach, an individual often uses utilitarian calculation to produce the greatest amount of good for him or herself. Ancient Greek Sophists like Thrasymachus c. One of the most influential recent proponents of ethical egoism was the Russian-American philosopher Ayn Rand , who, in the book *The Virtue of Selfishness* , argues that self-interest is a prerequisite to self-respect and to respect for others. There are numerous parallels between ethical egoism and laissez-faire economic theories, in which the pursuit of self-interest is seen as leading to the benefit of society, although the benefit of society is seen only as the fortunate byproduct of following individual self-interest, not its goal. This approach to ethics underscores the networked aspects of society and emphasizes respect and compassion for others, especially those who are more vulnerable. The Duty-Based Approach The duty-based approach, sometimes called deontological ethics, is most commonly associated with the philosopher Immanuel Kant , although it had important precursors in earlier non-consequentialist, often explicitly religious, thinking of people like Saint Augustine of Hippo , who emphasized the importance of the personal will and intention and

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of the omnipotent God who sees this interior mental state to ethical decision making. Kant argued that doing what is right is not about the consequences of our actions something over which we ultimately have no control but about having the proper intention in performing the action. The ethical action is one taken from duty, that is, it is done precisely because it is our obligation to perform the action. Ethical obligations are the same for all rational creatures they are universal , and knowledge of what these obligations entail is arrived at by discovering rules of behavior that are not contradicted by reason. The most basic form of the imperative is: Notice the duty-based approach says nothing about how easy or difficult it would be to carry out these maxims, only that it is our duty as rational creatures to do so. In acting according to a law that we have discovered to be rational according to our own universal reason, we are acting autonomously in a self-regulating fashion , and thus are bound by duty, a duty we have given ourselves as rational creatures. We thus freely choose we will to bind ourselves to the moral law. For Kant, choosing to obey the universal moral law is the very nature of acting ethically. The Rights Approach The Rights approach to ethics is another non-consequentialist approach which derives much of its current force from Kantian duty-based ethics, although it also has a history that dates back at least to the Stoics of Ancient Greece and Rome, and has another influential current which flows from work of the British empiricist philosopher John Locke This approach stipulates that the best ethical action is that which protects the ethical rights of those who are affected by the action. It emphasizes the belief that all humans have a right to dignity. When combined with the universality of the rights approach, the justice approach can be applied to all human persons. The most influential version of this approach today is found in the work of American philosopher John Rawls , who argued, along Kantian lines, that just ethical principles are those that would be chosen by free and rational people in an initial situation of equality. This hypothetical contract is considered fair or just because it provides a procedure for what counts as a fair action, and does not concern itself with the consequences of those actions. Fairness of starting point is the principle for what is considered just. Because God is seen as omnipotent and possessed of free will, God could change what is now considered ethical, and God is not bound by any standard of right or wrong short of logical contradiction. The Medieval Christian philosopher William of Ockham was one of the most influential thinkers in this tradition, and his writings served as a guide for Protestant Reformers like Martin Luther and Jean Calvin The Virtue Approach One long-standing ethical principle argues that ethical actions should be consistent with ideal human virtues. A person of good character would be one who has attained certain virtues. This approach is also prominent in non-Western contexts, especially in East Asia, where the tradition of the Chinese sage Confucius BCE emphasizes the importance of acting virtuously in an appropriate manner in a variety of situations. The Feminist Approach In recent decades, the virtue approach to ethics has been supplemented and sometimes significantly revised by thinkers in the feminist tradition, who often emphasize the importance of the experiences of women and other marginalized groups to ethical deliberation. Among the most important contributions of this approach is its foregrounding of the principle of care as a legitimately primary ethical concern, often in opposition to the seemingly cold and impersonal justice approach. Like virtue ethics, feminist ethics concerned with the totality of human life and how this life comes to influence the way we make ethical decisions. Applied Ethics Terms Used in Ethical Judgments Applied ethics deals with issues in private or public life that are matters for ethical judgments. The following are important terms used in making moral judgments about particular actions. In other words, we have a ethical obligation to perform the action. Sometimes the easiest way to see if an action is ethically obligatory is to look at what it would mean NOT to perform the action. For example, we might say it is ethically obligatory for parents to care for their children, not only because it is right for them to do it, but also because it is wrong for them not to do it. The children would suffer and die if parents did not care for them. The opposite of an ethically obligatory action is an action that is ethically impermissible, meaning that it is wrong to do it and right not to do it. For example, we would say that murder is ethically impermissible. We might say that having plastic surgery is ethically permissible, because it is not wrong to have the surgery it is not impermissible , but neither is it ethically necessary obligatory to have the surgery. Some argue that suicide

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is permissible in certain circumstances. That is, a person would not be wrong in committing suicide, nor would they be wrong in not committing suicide. Others would say that suicide is ethically impermissible. A fourth type of ethical action is called supererogatory. For example, two people are walking down a hallway and see a third person drop their book bag, spilling all of their books and papers onto the floor. If one person stops to help the third person pick up their books, but the other person keeps on walking, we somehow feel that the person who stopped to help has acted in a more ethically appropriate way than the person who did not stop, but we cannot say that the person who did not stop was unethical in not stopping. In other words, the person who did not help was in no way obligated it was not ethically obligatory to help. But we nevertheless want to ethically praise the person who did stop, so we call his or her actions supererogatory. Making good ethical decisions requires a trained sensitivity to ethical issues and a practiced method for exploring the ethical aspects of a decision and weighing the considerations that should impact our choice of a course of action. Having a method for ethical decision making is essential. When practiced regularly, the method becomes so familiar that we work through it automatically without consulting the specific steps. Here our method for ethical decision making should enable us to recognize these new and unfamiliar situations and to act accordingly. The more novel and difficult the ethical choice we face, the more we need to rely on discussion and dialogue with others about the dilemma. Only by careful exploration of the problem, aided by the insights and different perspectives of others, can we make good ethical choices in such situations.

Three Frameworks Based upon the three-part division of traditional normative ethical theories discussed above, it makes sense to suggest three broad frameworks to guide ethical decision making: While each of the three frameworks is useful for making ethical decisions, none is perfect—otherwise the perfect theory would have driven the other imperfect theories from the field long ago. Knowing the advantages and disadvantages of the frameworks will be helpful in deciding which is most useful in approach the particular situation with which we are presented.

The Consequentialist Framework In the Consequentialist framework, we focus on the future effects of the possible courses of action, considering the people who will be directly or indirectly affected. We ask about what outcomes are desirable in a given situation, and consider ethical conduct to be whatever will achieve the best consequences. The person using the Consequences framework desires to produce the most good. Among the advantages of this ethical framework is that focusing on the results of an action is a pragmatic approach. It helps in situations involving many people, some of whom may benefit from the action, while others may not. On the other hand, it is not always possible to predict the consequences of an action, so some actions that are expected to produce good consequences might actually end up harming people. Additionally, people sometimes react negatively to the use of compromise which is an inherent part of this approach, and they recoil from the implication that the end justifies the means. It also does not include a pronouncement that certain things are always wrong, as even the most heinous actions may result in a good outcome for some people, and this framework allows for these actions to then be ethical.

The Duty Framework In the Duty framework, we focus on the duties and obligations that we have in a given situation, and consider what ethical obligations we have and what things we should never do. This framework has the advantage of creating a system of rules that has consistent expectations of all people; if an action is ethically correct or a duty is required, it would apply to every person in a given situation. This even-handedness encourages treating everyone with equal dignity and respect. This framework also focuses on following moral rules or duty regardless of outcome, so it allows for the possibility that one might have acted ethically, even if there is a bad result. Therefore, this framework works best in situations where there is a sense of obligation or in those in which we need to consider why duty or obligation mandates or forbids certain courses of action. However, this framework also has its limitations. First, it can appear cold and impersonal, in that it might require actions which are known to produce harms, even though they are strictly in keeping with a particular moral rule. It also does not provide a way to determine which duty we should follow if we are presented with a situation in which two or more duties conflict. It can also be rigid in applying the notion of duty to everyone regardless of personal situation.

The Virtue Framework In the Virtue framework, we try to identify the character traits either

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positive or negative that might motivate us in a given situation. We are concerned with what kind of person we should be and what our actions indicate about our character.

Chapter 8 : A Framework for Making Ethical Decisions | Science and Technology Studies

The moral life is also a matter of trying to determine the kind of people we should be and of attending to the development of character within our communities and ourselves. This article appeared originally in Issues in Ethics V1 N3 (Spring).

Preliminaries Aristotle wrote two ethical treatises: In any case, these two works cover more or less the same ground: Both treatises examine the conditions in which praise or blame are appropriate, and the nature of pleasure and friendship; near the end of each work, we find a brief discussion of the proper relationship between human beings and the divine. Though the general point of view expressed in each work is the same, there are many subtle differences in organization and content as well. Clearly, one is a re-working of the other, and although no single piece of evidence shows conclusively what their order is, it is widely assumed that the Nicomachean Ethics is a later and improved version of the Eudemian Ethics. Not all of the Eudemian Ethics was revised: Perhaps the most telling indication of this ordering is that in several instances the Nicomachean Ethics develops a theme about which its Eudemian cousin is silent. The remainder of this article will therefore focus on this work. Page and line numbers shall henceforth refer to this treatise. It ranges over topics discussed more fully in the other two works and its point of view is similar to theirs. Why, being briefer, is it named the Magna Moralia? Because each of the two papyrus rolls into which it is divided is unusually long. Just as a big mouse can be a small animal, two big chapters can make a small book. A few authors in antiquity refer to a work with this name and attribute it to Aristotle, but it is not mentioned by several authorities, such as Cicero and Diogenes Laertius, whom we would expect to have known of it. No one had written ethical treatises before Aristotle. The Human Good and the Function Argument The principal idea with which Aristotle begins is that there are differences of opinion about what is best for human beings, and that to profit from ethical inquiry we must resolve this disagreement. He insists that ethics is not a theoretical discipline: In raising this question—“what is the good?” He assumes that such a list can be compiled rather easily; most would agree, for example, that it is good to have friends, to experience pleasure, to be healthy, to be honored, and to have such virtues as courage at least to some degree. The difficult and controversial question arises when we ask whether certain of these goods are more desirable than others. To be eudaimon is therefore to be living in a way that is well-favored by a god. But Aristotle never calls attention to this etymology in his ethical writings, and it seems to have little influence on his thinking. No one tries to live well for the sake of some further goal; rather, being eudaimon is the highest end, and all subordinate goals—“health, wealth, and other such resources”—are sought because they promote well-being, not because they are what well-being consists in. But unless we can determine which good or goods happiness consists in, it is of little use to acknowledge that it is the highest end. One important component of this argument is expressed in terms of distinctions he makes in his psychological and biological works. The soul is analyzed into a connected series of capacities: The biological fact Aristotle makes use of is that human beings are the only species that has not only these lower capacities but a rational soul as well. The good of a human being must have something to do with being human; and what sets humanity off from other species, giving us the potential to live a better life, is our capacity to guide ourselves by using reason. If we use reason well, we live well as human beings; or, to be more precise, using reason well over the course of a full life is what happiness consists in. Doing anything well requires virtue or excellence, and therefore living well consists in activities caused by the rational soul in accordance with virtue or excellence. No other writer or thinker had said precisely what he says about what it is to live well. But at the same time his view is not too distant from a common idea. As he himself points out, one traditional conception of happiness identifies it with virtue—“1. He says, not that happiness is virtue, but that it is virtuous activity. Living well consists in doing something, not just being in a certain state or condition. It consists in those lifelong activities that actualize the virtues of the rational part of the soul. At the same time, Aristotle makes it clear that in order to be happy one must possess other goods as well—“such goods as

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friends, wealth, and power. Someone who is friendless, childless, powerless, weak, and ugly will simply not be able to find many opportunities for virtuous activity over a long period of time, and what little he can accomplish will not be of great merit. To some extent, then, living well requires good fortune; happenstance can rob even the most excellent human beings of happiness. Nonetheless, Aristotle insists, the highest good, virtuous activity, is not something that comes to us by chance. Although we must be fortunate enough to have parents and fellow citizens who help us become virtuous, we ourselves share much of the responsibility for acquiring and exercising the virtues. Suppose we grant, at least for the sake of argument, that doing anything well, including living well, consists in exercising certain skills; and let us call these skills, whatever they turn out to be, virtues. Even so, that point does not by itself allow us to infer that such qualities as temperance, justice, courage, as they are normally understood, are virtues. They should be counted as virtues only if it can be shown that actualizing precisely these skills is what happiness consists in. What Aristotle owes us, then, is an account of these traditional qualities that explains why they must play a central role in any well-lived life. But perhaps Aristotle disagrees, and refuses to accept this argumentative burden. In one of several important methodological remarks he makes near the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he says that in order to profit from the sort of study he is undertaking, one must already have been brought up in good habits (1095a36–b1). The audience he is addressing, in other words, consists of people who are already just, courageous, and generous; or, at any rate, they are well on their way to possessing these virtues. Why such a restricted audience? Why does he not address those who have serious doubts about the value of these traditional qualities, and who therefore have not yet decided to cultivate and embrace them? Addressing the moral skeptic, after all, is the project Plato undertook in the *Republic*: He does not appear to be addressing someone who has genuine doubts about the value of justice or kindred qualities. Perhaps, then, he realizes how little can be accomplished, in the study of ethics, to provide it with a rational foundation. Perhaps he thinks that no reason can be given for being just, generous, and courageous. These are qualities one learns to love when one is a child, and having been properly habituated, one no longer looks for or needs a reason to exercise them. One can show, as a general point, that happiness consists in exercising some skills or other, but that the moral skills of a virtuous person are what one needs is not a proposition that can be established on the basis of argument. This is not the only way of reading the *Ethics*, however. For surely we cannot expect Aristotle to show what it is about the traditional virtues that makes them so worthwhile until he has fully discussed the nature of those virtues. He himself warns us that his initial statement of what happiness is should be treated as a rough outline whose details are to be filled in later (1095a20–21). His intention in Book I of the *Ethics* is to indicate in a general way why the virtues are important; why particular virtues—courage, justice, and the like—are components of happiness is something we should be able to better understand only at a later point. His point, rather, may be that in ethics, as in any other study, we cannot make progress towards understanding why things are as they are unless we begin with certain assumptions about what is the case. Neither theoretical nor practical inquiry starts from scratch. Someone who has made no observations of astronomical or biological phenomena is not yet equipped with sufficient data to develop an understanding of these sciences. The parallel point in ethics is that to make progress in this sphere we must already have come to enjoy doing what is just, courageous, generous and the like. We must experience these activities not as burdensome constraints, but as noble, worthwhile, and enjoyable in themselves. Then, when we engage in ethical inquiry, we can ask what it is about these activities that makes them worthwhile. We can also compare these goods with other things that are desirable in themselves—pleasure, friendship, honor, and so on—and ask whether any of them is more desirable than the others. We approach ethical theory with a disorganized bundle of likes and dislikes based on habit and experience; such disorder is an inevitable feature of childhood. But what is not inevitable is that our early experience will be rich enough to provide an adequate basis for worthwhile ethical reflection; that is why we need to have been brought up well. Yet such an upbringing can take us only so far. We seek a deeper understanding of the objects of our childhood enthusiasms, and we must systematize our goals so that as adults we have a coherent plan of life. We need to engage in ethical theory, and to reason well in this field, if we are

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to move beyond the low-grade form of virtue we acquired as children. His project is to make ethics an autonomous field, and to show why a full understanding of what is good does not require expertise in any other field. There is another contrast with Plato that should be emphasized: In Book II of the Republic, we are told that the best type of good is one that is desirable both in itself and for the sake of its results. Plato argues that justice should be placed in this category, but since it is generally agreed that it is desirable for its consequences, he devotes most of his time to establishing his more controversial point—that justice is to be sought for its own sake. By contrast, Aristotle assumes that if A is desirable for the sake of B, then B is better than A; therefore, the highest kind of good must be one that is not desirable for the sake of anything else. To show that A deserves to be our ultimate end, one must show that all other goods are best thought of as instruments that promote A in some way or other. He needs to discuss honor, wealth, pleasure, and friendship in order to show how these goods, properly understood, can be seen as resources that serve the higher goal of virtuous activity. He vindicates the centrality of virtue in a well-lived life by showing that in the normal course of things a virtuous person will not live a life devoid of friends, honor, wealth, pleasure, and the like. Virtuous activity makes a life happy not by guaranteeing happiness in all circumstances, but by serving as the goal for the sake of which lesser goods are to be pursued. That is why he stresses that in this sort of study one must be satisfied with conclusions that hold only for the most part. Poverty, isolation, and dishonor are normally impediments to the exercise of virtue and therefore to happiness, although there may be special circumstances in which they are not. The possibility of exceptions does not undermine the point that, as a rule, to live well is to have sufficient resources for the pursuit of virtue over the course of a lifetime. Virtues and Deficiencies, Contenance and Incontinence Aristotle distinguishes two kinds of virtue. Intellectual virtues are in turn divided into two sorts: He organizes his material by first studying ethical virtue in general, then moving to a discussion of particular ethical virtues temperance, courage, and so on, and finally completing his survey by considering the intellectual virtues practical wisdom, theoretical wisdom, etc. All free males are born with the potential to become ethically virtuous and practically wise, but to achieve these goals they must go through two stages: This does not mean that first we fully acquire the ethical virtues, and then, at a later stage, add on practical wisdom. Ethical virtue is fully developed only when it is combined with practical wisdom. A low-grade form of ethical virtue emerges in us during childhood as we are repeatedly placed in situations that call for appropriate actions and emotions; but as we rely less on others and become capable of doing more of our own thinking, we learn to develop a larger picture of human life, our deliberative skills improve, and our emotional responses are perfected. Like anyone who has developed a skill in performing a complex and difficult activity, the virtuous person takes pleasure in exercising his intellectual skills. Furthermore, when he has decided what to do, he does not have to contend with internal pressures to act otherwise. He does not long to do something that he regards as shameful; and he is not greatly distressed at having to give up a pleasure that he realizes he should forego. Aristotle places those who suffer from such internal disorders into one of three categories: 1. Some agents, having reached a decision about what to do on a particular occasion, experience some counter-pressure brought on by an appetite for pleasure, or anger, or some other emotion; and this countervailing influence is not completely under the control of reason. Such people are not virtuous, although they generally do what a virtuous person does. 2. Others are less successful than the average person in resisting these counter-pressures. The explanation of akrasia is a topic to which we will return in section 7.

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Chapter 9 : Introduction to Logic

Why do critics of virtue ethics often accuse it of failing to provide enough help in solving moral puzzles? They believe that when we are trying to figure out how to behave, we'd like to have something more than the advice: do what a virtuous person would do.

Each represents, in principle anyway, a distinct variable, and each varies independently of the other four. There are, then, any number of ways to miss the mark with respect to anger. One can display anger too frequently or not frequently enough, too mildly or too violently, for too short a time or for too long a time; one can feel anger toward people who have done nothing to make anger appropriate or fail to feel anger toward people who have done something to which anger is a proper response; one can feel anger at insignificant things or fail to feel anger at important wrongs. But this picture, replete as it is with possibilities for error, still does not capture an important part of what Aristotle is saying. Getting angry at the wrong people is not primarily a matter of getting angry at too many people. Nor is getting angry on occasions when anger is uncalled for a simple matter of feeling anger too often. And not getting angry when one should get angry cannot fairly be characterized as simply getting angry on too few occasions, or as a simple matter of reacting too mildly. Once again the continuum model seems misleading. The errors Aristotle is talking about cannot be so easily characterized. Excess and deficiency, it seems, are not to be unpacked in the simple quantitative way the continuum model suggests. True even-temperedness, like true courage and any other true excellence of character, is "for the sake of the noble. It is possible, I suppose, to attend scrupulously to my liability to anger, taking care not to be too violently angered by situations, or angry at the wrong people, or for too long a time; if I do this simply to impress others with my self-mastery or from fear of being blamed by someone, this is not genuine Aristotelian even-temperedness. It is not done for the sake of the noble. Not only must my acts and reactions fall within the proper range on the continua set out above; they must do so for the right reasons, in the right spirit. Excellence of character demands that excellent states be sought and chosen for the sake of the noble. As in the case of courage, we cannot tell whether a person deserves commendation for her temper unless we know something about her -- in particular, about what she is especially provoked by, what sorts of situations and people she is especially sensitive to, and so on. People differ widely in these respects. Some people are naturally quick-tempered; others are so as a product of upbringing. Some others are at the opposite extreme: A naturally slow-tempered person may find it easy to deal with some not necessarily all anger-provoking situations. A naturally hot-tempered one may not, and her hot temper may flare only in certain settings and not others. First, avoiding extremes is only one necessary condition for hitting a particular dispositional mean-state. It is not sufficient. The extremes must be avoided for the right reasons, for the sake of the noble. Secondly, how the extremes are best avoided is not as simple as the continuum model suggests. We do not effectively avoid the extremes simply by seeking moderation in everything. We do not avoid the extremes simply by aiming to land a shot within a certain range on even several one-dimensional continua, hard as that might be. What is excellent or commendable does typically lie within such a range, but its excellence or commendability consists of more than its place on various continua. Here, I think, is where the target and archery similes are most useful. Aristotle tells us that excellence, like an archer, aims at a target. Now an archer trying to hit a target must take into account various things which would cause him to miss the mark. He must since he cannot possibly hold his bow perfectly still coordinate his release of the bowstring with the subtle movements of the bow. If there are strong crosswinds he must aim slightly into the wind, and the wind will blow his arrow onto the part of the target he wishes to hit. If he is aiming into the wind, he must aim high to compensate for the slowing effect of the wind. If he is aiming from the crest of a hill above the target, he must adjust for the effects of gravity. Hitting the mark involves being aware of, and adjusting for, factors like these. Our emotional constitutions provide us with a set of these complicating factors which can cause us to miss the mark, and will do so if we do not compensate for them. Each of us will, e. If I am

naturally timid, I may in some settings have to aim toward what is rash to overcome the effects of my timidity. A naturally confident person, on the other hand, would be blown in the opposite direction; she must in certain circumstances aim at what is timid to avoid being blown further toward the rash. Likewise, a naturally slow-tempered person may have to work very hard to get angry at certain things he is naturally prone to endure meekly. The hot-tempered or bitter person might have to aim at what is timid in order to counteract her tendency, under particular sorts of conditions, to fly off the handle at slight provocations. These are the things of which an equable temper is made. This is one of the reasons why Aristotle says that particular excellences of character involve observing a mean relative to us. It is also why he says that the mean relative to us cannot be determined with arithmetic precision: Hitting the mark is a matter of active, engaged participation in a complex situation. How, and how much, and when, and in what ways we should adjust is not something that can be said prior to close attention to the circumstances of the situation. There is no procedure we can go through which will enable us to fix in advance the location of the mean. It is worth noting that the verb *stochazesthai*, literally "to take aim," e. *Politics* b28; b7; *Rhetoric* b10; cf. *On Ancient Medicine*, chapter 9. Our word "stochastic" has some of these connotations, though unlike its Greek ancestor it suggests randomness. Hitting the mark set by particular virtues, as we have seen, requires acting or reacting for the sake of the noble. An archer who is good at hitting the bullseye of a target under difficult conditions can use his skill to miss the mark when he finds occasion to do so, e. He can use his skill as well for unworthy purposes -- destruction of property, e. Genuine excellences of character cannot be bought off in this manner. Facility in hitting the mark, however commendable and essential to excellence of character, is not sufficient. Avoiding extremes of excess and deficiency is a necessary condition of true excellence of character, but is not by itself sufficient for such excellence. Excellence or virtue is not mere skill. IV All this makes it very hard to say in advance with any precision where the mean lies relative to us: Still, Aristotle has some general advice to offer those who are aiming at, trying to observe, the mean: What is necessary first in aiming at the mean is to avoid that extreme which is the more opposed to the mean. Since of the two extremes one is a more serious error than the other, and since hitting the mean accurately is hard, the second-best thing. The best way to do this is as we said. We must also attend to what we ourselves are most prone to, for different people naturally incline to different faults. We must drag ourselves away in the opposite direction, for if we stay away from error we will attain the mean. And we must beware especially of what is pleasurable; none of us is an unbiased judge when it comes to pleasant things. All this makes it apparent that it is the mean disposition in every case that is to be praised, but also that sometimes we must lean to the side of excess and sometimes to that of deficiency, for this is the easiest way of hitting the mean and of doing well. To determine where the mean lies in a particular case, and what the observance of the mean demands, I must attend to the details of the case. Among these details are those concerning my own character. I must realize, and adjust for, the aptnesses I have to various sorts of errors, most noticeably those involving excesses and deficiencies. I must compensate for my tendencies to over- or under-react, my susceptibilities to certain things and situations, my prejudices and biases. This may require that I overcompensate, aiming at what were I to land a shot there would be wide of the mark. I must realize that certain settings bring out the worst in me, and try to avoid those settings, or again compensate for their tendency to bring out the worst in me. And I should be especially wary of aspects of situations which I find pleasurable: All this seems to me very sound advice. That it is procedural and schematic, not substantive and informative; that it is not precise; that it does not by itself provide me with detailed and unambiguous guidance in particular cases, would not have bothered Aristotle. All that can be offered at this level of generality is a sketch. b Detailed informative advice comes only after close attention to particular cases. the point, after all, of the archery simile; in aiming at the mark we must "look to what suits the occasion." a It may be that most of us are more prone to err to the right-hand side of the continua above; there may be some feature of human nature which accounts for this. Few of us are naturally prone to be too liberal with our possessions; in most the tendency is to the opposing extreme see e. In some cases, then, one extreme is "more opposed to" the mean than the others -- and these will have to be compensated for by most

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people trying to hit the mean. Still, there is no general way, no algorithm or principle, to fix or define the mean in particular cases. The details of particular situations, which are too fine for coarse-grained rules to capture, can be caught by careful perception. *Krisis* is judgment or discernment of the sort that rests on balanced and careful and active appreciation of the particulars of the case. As an archer aiming at a target, the person aiming at the mean must be sensitive to a very complex situation, and must be able to anticipate and adjust to minute changes in that situation: This is why, in the account of excellence or virtue quoted above [ba2], it is in observance of a mean relative to us, determined by reason, as the practically wise person would determine it, that excellence consists. The practically wise person has a knack for hitting the mean, hits it consistently in a wide variety of circumstances. She is the balanced person, the person who is ethically healthy and whose character and emotions and actions therefore exhibit "proper balance or proportion. He does suggest, however, that the reactions, opinions and considered judgments of the practically wise person are important standards to which we may find it useful to appeal in deliberation. Still, in the situations we face the mark we are interested in hitting is a mean that is relative to us, not to the person of practical wisdom. Such a person may be good at hitting such a mark, but she cannot do it for us. She may be able to advise us; but it is up to us to hit the mark b Nor is it the simple-minded view that "every virtue Aristotle develops the notion of the mean, as we have seen, as part of his account of excellence or virtue. Excellence is preserved by the observance of the mean a Hitting the mean is not so much a matter of hitting one particular point on a target as it is a matter of avoiding the variety of mistakes it is possible to make in a complex situation. Observing the mean -- and so virtue or excellence -- is primarily a matter of careful awareness and avoidance of errors. Excellence of character, like health, involves a balance of opposite tendencies to act and react, a capacity to respond in various ways when and as occasions demand.