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INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY PALAKKAD

HS 3050 PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

VIRTUE ETHICS

Despite their differences, utilitarianism and Kantian ethics both address the question, **What actions are right?** Virtue ethics asks instead, **what kind of person should we be?** Moral character rather, and not right action, is fundamental in this ethical tradition, which originated with the ancient Greeks and received its fullest expression in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. **The role of ethics according to Aristotle is to enable us to lead successful, rewarding lives—the kinds of lives that we would call “the good life.”** The good life in Aristotle's sense is possible only for virtuous persons—that is, persons who develop the traits of character that we call “the virtues.” Aristotle not only made the case for the necessity of virtue for good living but also described particular virtues in illuminating detail.

What Is a Virtue?

Defining virtue has proven to be difficult, and philosophers are by no means in agreement. **Aristotle described virtue as a character trait that manifests itself in habitual action.** give honesty ex. Honesty, for example, cannot consist in telling the truth once; it is rather the trait of a person who tells the truth as a general practice. Only after observing people over a period of time can we determine whether they are honest. According to Aristotle mere feelings, like hunger, are not virtues, because virtues are acquired traits. A person must become honest through proper upbringing. A virtue is also something that we actually practice. Honesty is not simply a matter of knowing how to tell the truth but involves habitually telling the truth. For these reasons, **Aristotle classified virtue as a state of character, which is different from a feeling or a skill.** **Finally, a virtue is something that we admire in a person;** a virtue is an excellence of some kind that is worth having for its own sake. **A skill like carpentry is useful for building a house, for example, but not everyone needs be a carpenter. Honesty, by contrast, is a trait that everyone needs for a good life.**

A complete definition of virtue must be even more encompassing, because a compassionate person, for example, must have certain kinds of feelings at the distress of others and also the capacity for sound, reasoned judgments in coming to their aid. **Virtue, for Aristotle,**

is integrally related to what he calls practical wisdom, which may be described roughly as the whole of what a person needs in order to live well. Being wise about how to live involves more than having certain character traits, but being practically wise and being of good moral character are ultimately inseparable. Although the problems of defining virtue are important in a complete theory of virtue ethics, the idea of virtue as a trait of character that is essential for leading a successful life is sufficient for our purposes.

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Most lists of the virtues contain few surprises. Such traits as benevolence, compassion, courage, courtesy, dependability, friendliness, honesty, loyalty, moderation, self-control, and toleration are most often mentioned. Aristotle also considered both pride and shame to be virtues on the grounds that we should be proud of our genuine accomplishments (but not arrogant) and properly shamed by our failings. More significantly, Aristotle lists justice among the virtues. A virtuous person not only has a sense of fair treatment but can also determine what constitutes fairness.

Defending the Virtues

Defending any list of the virtues requires consideration of the contribution that each character trait makes to a good life. In particular, the virtues are those traits that everyone needs for the good life irrespective of his or her specific situation. Thus, courage is a good thing for anyone to have, because perseverance in the face of dangers will improve our chances of getting whatever it is we want. Similarly, Aristotle's defense of moderation as a virtue hinges on the insight that a person given to excess will be incapable of effective action toward any end. Honesty, too, is a trait that serves everyone well because it creates trust, without which we could not work cooperatively with others.

In defending a list of virtues, we cannot consider merely their contribution to some end, however; we must also inquire into the end itself. If our conception of a successful life is amassing great power and wealth, for example, then would not ruthlessness be a virtue? The end of life—that at which we all aim, according to Aristotle—is happiness, and Aristotle would claim that no despot or criminal or lecher can be happy, no matter how successful such a person may be in these pursuits. Defending any list of virtues requires, therefore, that some content be given to the idea of a good life. What is the good life, the end for which the virtues are needed? The virtues, moreover, are not merely means to happiness but are themselves constituents of it. That is, happiness does not consist solely of what we get in life but also includes who we are. A mother or a father, for example, cannot get the joy that comes from being a parent

without actually having the traits that make one a good parent. Similarly, Aristotle would agree with Plato that anyone who became the kind of person who could be a successful despot, for example, would thereby become incapable of being happy because that person's personality would be disordered in the process.

To summarize, defending a list of the virtues requires both that we determine the character traits that are essential to a good life and that we give some content to the idea of a good life itself. Virtue ethics necessarily presupposes a view about human nature and the purpose of life. This point is worth stressing because the possibility of applying virtue ethics to business depends on a context that includes some conception of the nature and purpose of business.

Virtue in Business

Virtue ethics could be applied to business directly by holding that the virtues of a good businessperson are the same as those of a good person (period). to the extent that. Insofar as business is a part of life, why should the virtues of successful living not apply to this realm as well? However, businesspeople face situations that are peculiar to business, and so they may need certain business-related character traits. Some virtues of everyday life, moreover, are not wholly applicable to business. Any manager should be caring, for example, but a concern for employee welfare can go only so far when a layoff is unavoidable. Honesty, too, is a virtue in business, but a certain amount of bluffing or concealment is accepted and perhaps required in negotiations. Regardless of whether the ethics of business is different from that of everyday life, we need to show that virtue ethics is relevant to business by determining the character traits that make for a good businessperson. Applying virtue ethics to business would require us, first, to determine the end at which business activity aims. If the purpose of business is merely to create as much wealth as possible, then we get one set of virtues.

Robert C. Solomon, who develops a virtue ethics-based view of business in his book *Ethics and Excellence*, argues that mere wealth creation is not the purpose of business. Rather, a virtue approach, according to Solomon, considers business as an essential part of the good life. Solomon contends that individuals are embedded in communities and that business is essentially a assert something as a position in an argument. communal activity, in which people work together for a common good. For individuals this means achieving a good life that includes rewarding, fulfilling work; and excellence for a corporation consists of making the good life possible for everyone in society. Whether any given character trait is a virtue in business, then, is to be determined by the purpose of business and by the extent to which that trait contributes to that purpose.

PROFESSION, PROFESSIONAL AND PROFESSIONALISM

PROFESSION:

Profession stands for an occupation which requires some specialization in a particular area and the purpose of a profession is to provide skilled services and guidance to others in return for a fee. Profession requires a strong foundation in knowledge and skills and their application in service of humanity.

Common characteristics of a Profession:

1. It demands possession of knowledge and its practical applicability.
2. It demands social service.
3. It involves a code of ethics.
4. It requires a continuous in-service training of its members.
5. It demands a transparency in work.

PROFESSIONAL:

A person who undertakes a profession is called a professional. Depending of the profession a person undertakes, she is identified with a special name relevant to the profession. So a person taking up engineering profession is called an Engineer.

Very important aspects of professional behavior are listed here:

a). Respect for others. It includes:

1. Being courteous and having good manners
2. Being punctual
3. Keeping confidential matters strictly confidential.
4. Being fair in all dealing.
5. Keeping personal opinions of people private
6. Doing your duties promptly and not leaving it to others.
7. Acceptance of constructive criticism.
8. Being fair in giving feedback.
9. Dealing with sensitive issues privately
10. Listen to others
11. Apologize for mistakes
12. Speak clearly with transparency.

b). Responsibility and integrity:

Most importantly this is where a professional is tested. A professional need to take up responsibility for themselves and their work. She should be always aware of the consequences of her actions and its impact on others.

Further:

1. Honesty is extremely important – avoid even the smallest of lies at all costs.

2. If you are assigned with something, come what may, you should complete the task. In case of any delay the other person should be intimated promptly.
3. Being a professional means to be competitive with other professionals, so point out your benefits rather than their faults.
4. Be prepared with the reports of all the tasks assigned in due time.
5. Ensure you have made yourself clear to avoid any miscommunication.
6. NO room for partiality: keep personal bias and intolerances out of the business world.
7. Be reliable and dependable
8. Take appropriate actions when you feel wronged by someone else.

As a professional you should aim to give the best you can, and should give to the customer the due they expect. Never give to the customer anything on which you are not proud to have your name reflecting.

PROFESSIONALISM:

A level of **excellence or competence** that is expected from a professional is called professionalism. Professionalism means *behaving in an ethical manner* while assuming and fulfilling your rightful responsibilities in every situation without fail. It means having the ability to be worthy of the **confidence** others place in you. It means having already made the **right choices** so that you attract the right sort of customers and make the best of your business opportunity.

Most importantly in professionalism one willfully gathers **responsibility rather than avoiding it**. If you are not responsible you will seldom make right choices to do what is necessary to achieve consistent success for your employer, your employees, your clients, or yourself. If you are not responsible you are not a professional.

Professionalism strictly requires: Honesty, Respect and Courtesy, Work ethic and Communication

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF A PROFESSIONAL

Being a professional in your own field means much more than wearing a coat and a tie or possessing degrees and titles. Professionalism also has to do with how you conduct yourself during your business affairs. True professionals possess a number of important characteristics and virtues.

Appearance: Neat appearance, should exceed the requirements of your company's dress code esp. when you meet clients.

Demeanour: outward behavior. Be polite and well-spoken whether you are interacting with customers, superiors or co-workers, should keep calm even during tense situations.

Competence: You will be judged by your competence in a group. This means that you should continue your education by taking courses, attending seminars and being up to date in your specific area.

Accountability: Professionals are accountable at all times. If you make a mistake own it and try to correct it.

Ethics: Ethical behavior at all times.

Be calm and reflective: when facing difficult situation

Phone Etiquette: use of phone a workplace, introducing yourself to customers and beign polite over the phone.

Organizational skills: A professional can quickly and easily find what is needed. Your work area should be neat and organsied

Accountability: Professionals are accountable for their actions at all times. If you make a mistake, own it up and try to fix it if possible. Don't try to blame it on some others. If your company made a mistake, take responsibility and work to resolve the issue.

ROLES AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PROFESSIONAL:

Supervisory role: professional managers supervise and oversee the performance of the employees in the department. They identify the tasks needed to help the organization and department realizes its objectives. They assign duties and divide personnel into different units or teams with various responsibilities. The manager is responsible for formulating objectives and ensuring that employees work towards fulfilling them. He has to provide a professional atmosphere for employees so that they can carry out their tasks effectively.

Decision making: Professional managers coordinate with heads of other departments in making decision regarding the operational functions of the organization. They need to consult with one another so that the decisions of one department do not negatively affect another. Managers typically have the power to reprimand, discipline and dismiss employees.

Leadership skills: Employees look to their professional manager to provide guidance. Through his leadership skills, he offers on-the-job training, support and coaching to his subordinates. Leadership involves having the ability to motivate employees to work toward organizational successes. Professional mangers try to encourage employees to be enthusiastic and independent.

WHISTLE BLOWING

Please see the attached document.

PRIVACY

Please see the attached document and give more attention to the following sections: Introduction, Challenges to privacy, Employee privacy, Workplace monitoring, Consumer privacy, Meaning and value of privacy, Definitions of privacy, Utilitarian Arguments, Kantian Arguments, Privacy on the internet.