

## 0.7. INTEGRITY

### 0.7.1. Introduction

Integrity is one of the most important virtue terms. It is used synonymously with 'moral'. At times we distinguish acting morally from acting with integrity. Persons of integrity may in fact act immorally—though they would usually not know they are acting immorally. Thus one may acknowledge a person to have integrity even though that person may hold importantly mistaken moral views.

When used as a virtue term, *'integrity' refers to a quality of a person's character*. When it is applied to objects, integrity refers to the wholeness, intactness or purity of a thing.

Integrity is also attributed to various parts or aspects of a person's life. We speak of attributes such as professional, intellectual and artistic integrity. However, the most philosophically important sense of the term 'integrity' relates to general character.

### 0.7.2. What Is It To Be A Person Of Integrity?

Ordinary discourse about integrity involves two fundamental intuitions: first, that integrity is primarily a formal relation one has to oneself, or between parts or aspects of one's self; and second, that integrity is connected in an important way to acting morally.

A number of accounts of integrity being:

- (i) integrity as self-integration;
- (ii) integrity as maintenance of identity;
- (iii) integrity as standing for something;
- (iv) integrity as moral purpose; and
- (v) integrity as a virtue.

These accounts are reviewed below.

### 0.7.3. Integrity As Self-Integration

On the self-integration view of integrity, integrity is a matter of persons integrating various parts of their personality into a harmonious, intact whole. In other words, the integrity of persons is analogous to the integrity of things: *integrity is primarily a matter of keeping the self intact and uncorrupted.*

### 0.7.4. Integrity As Maintenance Of Identity

A related approach to integrity is to think of it primarily in terms of a person's acting according to their commitments, rather than ordering and endorsing desires. 'Commitment' is used as a broad term covering many different kinds of intentions, promises, convictions and relationships of trust and expectation.

### 0.7.5. Integrity As Standing For Something

The self-integration and identity views of integrity see it as primarily a personal virtue: a quality defined by a person's care of the self. Cheshire Calhoun argues that integrity is primarily a social virtue, one that is defined by a person's relations to others. *The social character of integrity is a matter of a person's proper regard for their own best judgement.* Persons of integrity do not just act consistently with their endorsements, they stand for something: they stand up for their best judgment within a community of people trying to discover what in life is worth doing.

### 0.7.6. Integrity As Moral Purpose

Integrity in terms of moral purpose can be described as a person's dedication to the pursuit of a moral life and their intellectual responsibility in seeking to understand the demands of such a life.

Persons of integrity embrace a moral point of view that urges them to be conceptually clear, logically consistent, apprised of relevant empirical evidence, and careful about acknowledging as well as weighing relevant moral considerations. Persons of integrity impose these restrictions on themselves since they are concerned, not simply with taking any moral position, but with pursuing a commitment to do what is best.

#### 0.7.7. Integrity As A Virtue

We take 'integrity' to be a complex and thick virtue term. One gains a fair grasp of the variety of ways in which people use the term 'integrity' by examining conditions commonly accepted to defeat or diminish a person's integrity. Integrity stands as a mean to various excesses. On the one side we have character traits and ways of behaving and thinking that tend to maintain the status quo even where acting with integrity demands a change. These are things like arrogance, dogmatism, fanaticism, monomania, preciousness, sanctimoniousness, and rigidity. These are all traits that can defeat integrity in so far as they undermine and suppress attempts by an individual to critically assess and balance their desires, commitments, wishes, changing goals and other factors.

For example, a giving into cowardice or a refusal to acknowledge new or overriding commitments indicate a lack of integrity.

### 0.8. WORK ETHICS

#### 0.8.1. What Is Work Ethic?

- ✓ **Definition:** The work ethic is a cultural norm that advocates being personally accountable and responsible for the work that one does and is based on a belief that work has intrinsic value.
- ✓ The term is often applied to characteristics of people, both at work and at play.
- ✓ In sports, for example, work ethic is frequently mentioned as a characteristic of good players. Regardless of the context, work ethic is usually associated with people who work hard and do a good job.

#### 0.8.2. Elements Of Work Ethics

Research has shown that the many characteristics of work ethic can be summarized using the following three elements:

1. Interpersonal skills;
2. Initiative; and
3. Being dependable.



### 0.8.3. Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills include the habits, attitudes, manners, appearance, and behaviors we use around other people, which affect how we get along with other people. We sometimes do not understand how important interpersonal skills really are. It's easy to laugh and make jokes about people who obviously lack interpersonal skills, but sometimes we need to examine our own impressions on others to better prepare for success in life as well as for a productive career.

The development of interpersonal skills begins early in life and is influenced by family, friends, and our observations of the world around us. But most of these characteristics are passed along to us by our parents or guardians. Some aspects of interpersonal skills are even inherited. Appearance and some personality traits are largely influenced by our genes.

For us to improve our interpersonal skills, we must first be aware of what we are like from the perspective of other people who interact with us. Habits we are unaware of, actions we think go unnoticed, and other things about us that might affect other people are impossible for us to change if we are not aware of them. One of the things that teachers try to do, starting in the early grades, is to help students correct bad habits and to develop good interpersonal skills.

### 0.8.4. Initiative

Initiative is a very important characteristic for information age workers. Direct supervision is often not a feature of the modern workplace. Without initiative, procrastination and missed opportunities can become a real problem. Sometimes poor performance results and leads to loss of a job, without any second chances.

### 0.8.5. Being Dependable

Being dependable is one of the most highly sought after traits for workers in the modern workplace. This work ethic construct includes honesty, reliability, and being on time. People who are not dependable often are very expensive to keep around because of the wasted time and resources their behavior causes. In some cases, even peoples' lives can be lost if another person is not dependable.

### 0.8.6. Other Employability Skills

During industrial age, many jobs required a work ethic that was limited and somewhat different from the characteristics necessary in today's information age workplace. People who work with information often must set their own schedule, usually work with less direct supervision, and frequently experience change and innovation in their work.

As technology advances and manual operations are replaced by machines, people increasingly must deal with the information necessary to provide instructions to a machine which in turn actually performs a task.

**Comment:** Any engineer's job usually requires technical skills and knowledge, but work ethic and work attitudes are also essential for success. Employers frequently mention work ethic and related characteristics when they describe the type of employees they seek to hire. People with these characteristics are difficult to find but not impossible. As an engineer one must develop and come to such standards. Learning about these types of skills and practicing them are certain to enhance your ability to seek, secure, and be successful on the job!

Many employers have been asked over the years to list the most important skills and characteristics they look for when hiring new employees. Among the more common answers are good communication skills, positive attitude, and the ability to be dependable, punctual, and responsible. Personal characteristics which are important include dressing properly, being polite, and displaying self-confidence.