

Ancient Virtues and positive psychology

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Hypothesis: Ancient virtues as a solution to redirect business into a more sustainable and liveable path

Method: Exploring four (ancient) virtues:
Practical wisdom, empathy, courage, and temperance.
Selecting four «situational» role models from Business

Inspirational source: "Positive psychology" a branch of psychology, which in a scientific manner study human strengths and virtues. It represents an open and appreciative perspective regarding human potentials, motives, and capacities. The good life is a virtuous life where individuals flourish and search fulfillment as *eudaimonia*.



Positive psychology:

Uses the Aristotelian “flourishing concept”, happiness as *eudaimonia*; the ‘fulfilled’ life is a noble and active life.

Distinguishes between **pleasure from the senses** and **gratifications**. Gratifications refer to personal strengths and virtues and need efforts to be satisfied. Happiness as *eudaimonia* cannot generally be derived from bodily pleasure, but only by activities consonant with noble purpose.

Happiness is an activity and the good life is realized through developing one’s virtues; that is doing the good things, constantly, doing it with pleasure, and for the sake of virtue

Positive psychology:

Pioneers: Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

Explore the key to human life at their best. A common body of knowledge and wisdom across cultures about virtues and strength is identified.

Six core virtues are identified:

Wisdom and Knowledge, Courage, Love and Humanity, Justice, Temperance, and Spirituality and Transcendence (Seligman, 2002, p. 11) .

“The convergence of those virtues across unrelated philosophical traditions is remarkable”.

MacIntyre and emotivism

MacIntyre (1981) attacks the 'emotive' doctrine that "all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference.."

Emotivism is embodied in our culture, and implies a degenerating and a "grave cultural loss".

The background of MacIntyre's critic is the lost morality of the past, and the loss of the language of virtue ethics that was an important part of the ancient culture.

One result is an obliteration between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations in the modern organizational context.

Another result is that there is not any discussion of the *telos*, it is only a discussion of what means are most cost/effective.

The emotivist self-

- A democratized, individualist self; set over and against the social world and social roles
- Goffman; the self is no more than 'a peg' and the life is all about role playing,
- Kirkegaard; distinguishes between three possible selves; aesthetical, ethical or religious. To live in an aesthetical mode of life involves that the ultimate enemy is boredom or despair.
- Sartre; the danger is to identify the self with a role.

Reclaiming virtue ethics for Economics

Bruni and Sugden (2013) use the language and logic of virtue ethics to defend market as an important institution.

- They argue that the market need not be seen as a virtue-free zone, but has a purpose (a **telos**) that can be understood as cooperation for mutual benefits. They then identify traits that count as virtues for market participants.

- They list the following eight market virtues;
Universality, enterprise and alertness, respect for the tastes of one's trading partners, trust and trustworthiness, acceptance of competition, self-help, non-rivalry, and stoicism about reward.

What is a virtue and what is a vice?

- Courage is not boldness alone, nor is it cool foresight alone, but a synthesis of both. This prevents courage from degenerating into a coward or a foolhardy man. It may be interpreted so that "all valuational elements, taken in isolation, have in them a point beyond which they are dangerous, that they are tyrannical, and that for the true fulfilment of their meaningthere is always a counterweight". ..So virtue is not assigned to one of these elements, but to their synthesis. (Copleston, 1946, p 337-338).

Practical wisdom

Aristotle differentiates between intellectual virtues and moral virtues. The intellectual virtues helps us to think right, the moral virtues helps us to act right. "(The moral) Virtue ensures the correctness of the end at which we aim, and *phronesis* that of the means towards it" (Aristotle 1925, 1144a7-9)

Phronesis; (latin: prudential). Practical wisdom is an intellectual virtue, but it is directly linked to our ability to act. It involves deliberating well about the things that lead to the good life for themselves and for man in general (Aristotle NE, p.142-143).

Learning mathematics vs *phronesis*.

Although the young develop ability in geometry and mathematics, they are not thought to develop *phronesis*, which involves knowledge of particulars known from experience. A young man is not experienced, because experience take some time to acquire (NE VI 8, 1142a12-17).

Empathy as a moral emotion

- Empathy is humanity's basic emotional faculty (Vetlesen 1994)
- Mature moral emotions (compassion, altruism and empathy) can be cultivated and is a prerequisite for sympathy and care.
- Emotion enters morality from the very start and provides us with access to the entire domain of human experience.
- A failure to exercise moral judgment may be caused by an emotional impairment. (Vetlesen 1994)
- The faculty of empathy is intersubjective and other directed and gives "access" to the experiences of the others pain

Courage (According to Aristotle):

Phronesis is needed to find the right direction, but courage is necessary to implement the deliberated action.

To have courage presupposes feelings of fear and to act despite of fear.

- The man who exceeds in confidence is rash and is only a pretender to courage
- Brave men act for honor's sake, but passion aids them

Temperance

- Plato: Temperance/moderation as *sophrosyne*
- Temperans (lat.) Self-discipline, self-restraint, or self-control.
- Particular relevant for the largest class in the society: the producers (farmers, business people) because they may be strongly tempted to be greedy and egoistic.

Temperance

- *Sophronesis* focus on the actors character, *phronesis* relates to the external environment and gives a focus on the situation.
- The capacity to find the balance and be self-critical (Syse, 2008, Brunstad 2009)
- *Temperantia* is connected to *tempus*; "*Festina lente*": make haste slowly
- Self-restraint needs more strength than action. "One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and one whose temper is controlled than one who captures a city". (Proverbs 16,32).
- Self-restraint is a precondition to humanity; Erasmus of Rotterdam; Defer satisfaction of need to the advantage of the other in order to have fellowship and spirit of community

Role model of empathy: Anita Roddic – the founder of Bodyshop

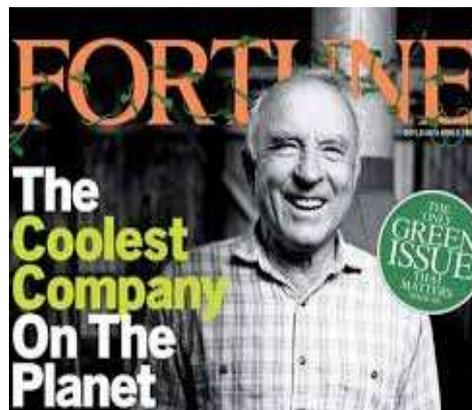
- Ban of animal testing,
- Projects: Ethical sourcing, Soft hands Kind Hearts, Give another for a mother, Community Fair Trade, Poligono Schools, etc..



**Role model of practical wisdom: Yvon Chounaird
Founder of Patagonia**



Patagonia: Buddhist philosophy





The Role Model of Courage: Rolf R Forsberg. Whale-chocolate

Opposed the big retailer chain in Norway, «The Norway Group» because he would not be forced to pay «a joint marketing fee» even if he knew he would be seriously punished. (A garbage truck ordered by “The Norwegian Group” dumped a load with 15 tons delicious Whale chocolate on the waste disposal site.



The Rolemodel of temperance: Olav Thon – From selling fox skin to becoming the property baron (1923 -). Lives a very moderate life.



Tentative conclusions

- Temperance in Plato's sense is a rich concept connected to practical wisdom. The latter should be learned in practice because it is about particularity, and is partly learned by imitation and inspiration from role models.
- Temperance in the meaning of the dictum *Know Thyself* and *Festina lente* should be interesting concepts to explore in business education and business practice
- Courage plays important roles in whistleblowing and entrepreneurship. It should also be interpreted in the sense of not be willing to accept immoral business practices, and in the meaning of standing pain. Slowness and boldness to stay calm in ambiguous situations should be seen as courageous actions.

Tentative conclusions

- Empathy as a moral virtue should gain a stronger position in teaching ethics and in practice. It has important implications for moral behavior and theories of moral development. (It means to devote more space to Gilligan than Kohlberg)
- When *telos* as a fulfilled life, *temperance*, *empathy*, *courage*, and *practical wisdom* became activated parts of the vocabulary in business education, business and in civic life, we would look at and judge a business man from a much broader perspective than measured by how much money he or she has succeeded to make.

Tentative conclusions

- The use of actual business persons as role models fits well into a virtue oriented perspective. It would mean a sharper look at the business persons character. One of the effects might be to increase the persons self-critical attitude and behavior about his way of doing business. (A disciplinary effect).
- The concept "situational role models" could be used as a contrast to the more ambitious concept "unity of virtues".